

O P I N I O N

**OF THE TEACHING, SCHOLARLY, ORGANIZATIONAL,
SCHOLARLY-PRACTICAL AND PROJECT ACTIVITY OF**

SENIOR ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

DR. LYUBOMIR TSVETANOV KRUSTEV,

CANDIDATE IN THE ANNOUNCED COMPETITION FOR

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IN A PROFESSIONAL FIELD 2.2. HISTORY

AND ARCHEOLOGY (MODERN HISTORY - HISTORY OF GREAT

BRITAIN IN THE 19TH CENTURY), FOR THE NEEDS OF THE

FACULTY OF HISTORY OF SOFIA UNIVERSITY "ST. KLIMENT

OHRIDSKI", PUBLISHED IN STATE GAZETTE, NO. 24 OF 17.03.2023

Due to the circumstances, I have had the opportunity to get acquainted with the research potential and scientific achievements of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Lyubomir Krastev, since I was one of the reviewers of his doctoral dissertation "Napoleon Bonaparte in British Public Opinion", defended in 2017. With that Lyubomir Krastev already demonstrated a detailed knowledge of historical research, excellent ability for historiographical analysis, a skill for systematic search in the relevant British archives, and what is particularly significant, an ability to interpret the investigated phenomena in an exhaustive manner and from an original perspective.

Lyubomir Krastev majored in history at the Faculty of History of Sofia University (with a Master's degree in 2013, specializing in "Modern and Contemporary History", 2013). In 2014-2017, he was a part-time Assistant Professor of Modern (General) History in the Department of Modern and

Contemporary History of the Faculty of History, and since 2017 he is a Senior Assistant Professor.

It is evident from the documents for the competition of Dr. Lyubomir Krastev, that he has extensive teaching work related to conducting seminar exercises, reading general and special courses (at BA and MA level) in Modern and Contemporary History and Contemporary International Relations. They are conducted at the Faculty of History and the Faculty of Classical and New Philologies of Sofia University. He was also a visiting lecturer at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz under the Erasmus+ program (2018) and at the Department of Modern History at the University of Cologne (2021).

Over the years, Lyubomir Krastev has taken part in a wide range of scholarly-practical and project activities: as head of the scholarly projects "From the Black Death to Cholera. Fighting against Epidemics in a Historical Perspective, 14-19th Centuries" (2020); of the conference "The City in History" (Kyustendil, 2019); "Early Modern Europe: Borders and Contradictions" (2021), financed by the Scientific Research Fund of Sofia University; he participated as an organizer or co-organizer of scientific events and conferences: the international conference "Conflict Situations and Their Consequences" (Sofia, 2014); of the national conference "Memory and Forgetting in History" (Kyustendil, 2018); of the national conference "Early Modern Europe. Borders and Contradictions" (Sofia, 2021); of the international conference "From the Black Death to Cholera: Fighting against Epidemics in Historical Perspective, 14-19th centuries" (2022); of the national exhibition "One Faculty - Four Anniversaries. 50 Years of the Independent Existence of the Faculty of History of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (2022).

Lyubomir Krastev has shown an undiminished affinity for problems of Modern British history in (specifically the 19th century), constantly expanding the problem-chronological framework of his scientific interest.

As the only candidate he enters the competition with two monographs - "Napoleon Bonaparte in British Public Opinion (1796 - 1815) (Sofia: University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski", 2023, 300 p.), which is a revised version of his doctoral dissertation and "Palmerston's War. Great Britain, the Crimean War and the Balance of Power" (Sofia: University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski", 2022, 278 p.), and twelve scholarly articles and studies.

Lyubomir Krastev was a postdoctoral fellow at the Faculty of History in 2019-2021, working on the topics "The British Public between Francophobia and Russophobia on the Eve and during the Crimean War" and "The Eastern Question in the Diaries of Queen Victoria during the Years of the Crimean War." He has respectively published articles related to British policy on the Eastern Question, Russo-British relations and the Crimean War ("Emperor Nicholas I's Visit to Great Britain in 1844"; "The Conflict between Catholics and Orthodox over the Patronage of the Holy Places in Palestine on the Eve of the Crimean War"; "Cholera among the Allied troops during the Crimean War, 1853-1856"; "Reflections on Russophobia in Britain in the First Half of the 19th Century"; "British Public Opinion and the Crimean War, 1854-1856").

In this way, he condensed the historical background of the monograph "The Palmerston War: Great Britain, the Crimean War and the Balance of Power" (Sofia: University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski", 2022, 278 pp.), submitted for habilitation.

The Crimean War has been extensively researched and interpreted from all possible angles by English, French, Russian, Turkish, German, American, Bulgarian and other authors, and as Lyubomir Krastev points out, the literature is immense. But regardless of that, new horizons and research angles can be discovered, for we always evaluate historical phenomena from a contemporaneous point of view.

The interest in the Crimean War as one of the most important events in the history of the 19th century dates back to the time it was fought, had lasted for more than a century and a half, and is likely to continue to be intense given the resonance of events in the region in recent years. Lubomir Krastev has chosen to examine this war through the prism of the personality and politics of the long-serving Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston. The biographical approach is justified, for after all, history is not a game of abstract and impersonal forces, but is created by specific individuals and social groups, with corresponding specific characteristics and motivations. The biographical approach is a way to bring life to history and to humanize it, so to speak.

Lord Palmerston, although somewhat controversial figure in political and moral terms, was indeed, one of the most prominent makers of the history of the 19th century in Britain and globally. He has been called "the most English minister that ever ruled England", which is supposed to mean a total dedication to the quest to enforce Pax Britannica on a world scale, sometimes by quite brutal methods.

The task that Lyubomir Krastev has set himself to, is huge given the colossal volume of documentation, so the monograph is particularly impressive on first place with the soundness of the research. The author has drawn on documents from the National Archives at Kew Gardens, the Manuscript Department of the British Library, the National Army Museum at Chelsea, the Royal Archives at Windsor, the City Archives of London, the parliamentary debates, collections of published documents and a variety of press. The author did not undertake a detailed review of the historiography in the introduction, because that alone would deserve a separate monograph, but the text shows a detailed knowledge of the previous studies.

The author's aim with the monograph is to highlight the significant role of the British politician in his efforts to restrain Russian expansion in Europe, the culmination of his policy being British participation in the war against Russia in 1854-1856. Lubomir Krastev is thus willing to oppose to the traditional approach to the interpretation of the Crimean War, that is, by examining the war through the paradigm of the Eastern Question, the personal politics of the Russian Tsar Nicholas I or by emphasizing Napoleon III's attempts to legitimize his power by means of foreign policy successes.

According to the author, the main motive of Palmerston's policy in this case was "an atypical concern for the preservation of the relative balance of power in Europe." The main goal of British politicians, like everyone else, is to ensure the national security. During much of the modern times, Britain, although practically no longer having any European possessions and had no territorial ambitions, saw the rise of any power to a dominant position on the continent as a direct threat to the country. In such cases, to counter such developments, a coalition with other European powers was resorted to, in the case of the Crimean War, with France, a traditional opponent. British involvement was also motivated by the prevention of any potential challenge or threat to global naval dominance (the so-called "double standard"). The war of 1853-56 was called "Crimean", but it also had global dimensions - the British fleet operated in the Baltic Sea and even in the Pacific Ocean, with the main strike being against Sevastopol - the most important Russian naval base. The threat to British India from the Russian side, despite the debate about the real or mythical nature of the "Great Game" in Asia, is also not insignificant.

That is why we can agree with the author that Palmerston's activity during the Crimean War cannot be defined solely as a manifestation of Russophobic policy, but was based on a comprehensive concept of international relations that was formed after the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

While focusing on Palmerston's politics, the author also presents a vast panorama of the various aspects of the war - military, technological, economic, diplomatic, medical and otherwise - and its aftermath.

Lubomir Krastev's work offers a coherent analysis of the researched topic while challenging some established narratives. The thorough research and an original perspective makes the monograph "Palmerston's War. Great Britain, the Crimean War and the Balance of Power" a remarkable scholarly achievement. With his performances and achievements, Lyubomir Krastev stands out as an accomplished and authoritative researcher and teacher.

From the report on the implementation of the minimum national requirements under Art. 26 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff, it can be seen that Lyubomir Krastev has the required number of points to occupy the academic position of "associate professor".

The teaching, research and scholarly-applied activities of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Lyubomir Tsvetanov Krastev meets all the requirements for occupying the academic position of "associate professor", specified in the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and in the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law. Therefore, I strongly support the decision to elect him as an "associate professor" in a professional field 2.2. History and Archeology (Modern History - History of Great Britain in the 19th century).

June 20, 2023

Prof. Roumen Genov