

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Tina Georgieva,

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for the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor, in the field of higher education, 2.2. History and Archaeology (Modern History: History of the Great Britain in the 19th Century) for the needs of the Faculty of History, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", in the State Gazette, No 24, p. 58 of 17 March 2023.

Dr. Ljubomir Tsvetanov Krastev is the only candidate in the announced competition.

He received his bachelor's degree in 2011, and in 2013 completed a master's degree in history with excellent results (Master's Program „Crises, conflicts and diplomacy in world politics XVI-XX c.“) in the Faculty of History, Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“. In 2017 Dr. Krastev defended his doctoral thesis on „Napoleon Bonaparte in British public opinion“. Since 2014 he has been a part-time assistant, and since 2017, he is a senior assistant in modern history in the Department of Modern and Contemporary History.

For nearly ten years Ljubomir Krastev has been leading seminars, lectures, and specialized courses on modern history, and during these years he has established himself as a competent researcher and devoted lecturer. He is actively involved in the academic life of the Faculty of History and the university. He has presented his research in 27 conferences in Bulgaria and abroad. Dr. Krastev participated in five research projects and was the head of two of them („Early Modern Europe: boundaries and contradictions“ and „From the Black Death to Cholera. The fight against epidemics in historical perspective: XIV-XIX Centuries“). His broad scientific and teaching activity includes the supervision of graduate students and the participation in editorial boards. He has participated in the organization of many prestigious scientific events such as conferences, round tables and exhibitions. He speaks English, German and French. His serious research activity consists of two monographies, one study and 15 articles.

In the competition for the Associate Professor position, Ljubomir Krastev participates with two monographs, one study and 11 articles. As the main habilitation work in this procedure the candidate presents the monograph *'Palmerston`s War. Great Britain. The Crimean War and the Balance of Power*, Sofia, UI St. Kliment Ohridski, 2022. The book consists of a preface, eight chapters and a conclusion, with a total of 280 pages.

Several particularly valuable things should be noted in the monograph. The author makes a very thorough analysis of Palmerston's views on British foreign policy in the mid-19th century and of Britain's participation in the Crimean War as an element of the overall concept of international relations developed and defended by the British politician. Palmerston's attempts to impose his point of view, his main arguments in its defense, as well as the efforts to implement it in practice, are examined. Palmerston's actions are presented as an essential element of the parliamentary struggles that took place over the issue of the military conflict and what role the kingdom should have in it. Both the views of the Foreign Secretary and the political debate in England are shown in the context of international relations, of London's aspirations for rapprochement with Paris, and against the backdrop of French President Napoleon III playing a dominant role on the continent.

Ljubomir Krastev analyses the way the Crimean war has been presented in the press and how it has been perceived by the British people. The facts presented in the book, with examples from the periodical press during the period under study, including the government's actions to combat Russian agents in England, vividly demonstrate the strong anti-Russian sentiments shared by a large part of the political elite on the island, but also by wider circles in general. The Russophobic attitudes shared by the British society are commented on as an element of the general idea of Britain's place on the continent and of the principles Britain's government should be guided by in its foreign policy. All this contributes to the author recreating a picture of public expectations and moods of the ruling class, thanks to which Palmerston's views and actions become clearer and more understandable.

Some special attention must be given to the way Dr. Krastev analyses the role and significance of the Crimean war. Apart from being an event that fundamentally changed the balance of power in Europe and a key moment in the realization of Palmerston`s foreign policy concept, the war is presented as a turning point in the way military conflicts are conducted: marking the beginning of the end of a time when generals operated free of the political control of their countries. The monograph traces the contribution of the Eastern War to the development

of medicine, technology, logistics such as the telegraph, as well as other specifics that would be used in the following decades during future military conflicts. Dr. Krastev pays special attention to the epidemics during the Crimean War as a problem that accompanied the military confrontation and continues to be the cause of high mortality rates on the battlefield.

The book is written in an engaging and professional language. To write his book Ljubomir Krastev uses documents impressive in both volume and variety, some of which are unpublished and are being introduced into scientific circulation for the first time. The author demonstrates the profound knowledge of both the studied problem and the historiography devoted to its various aspects. The distance consciously sought by the author makes a favourable impression: his effort to avoid the idealization or stigmatization and to construct an objective, critical if necessary, picture of the British society and its political leaders. This all undoubtedly testifies to the scientific maturity of the author and to his in-depth knowledge of the period in question.

The second monograph that Dr. Krastev is presenting at this competition is „Napoleon Bonaparte in British public opinion (1796-1815)“ (Sofia, UI „Kliment Ohridski“, 2023). It is an expanded and revised version of the author's doctoral dissertation. The book explores the image of Napoleon Bonaparte that had formed in British society. Building on a solid literary basis, the text presents the various representations of the French leader that existed on the island, as well as the evolution of British attitudes towards him. The image of Napoleon is analyzed in the context of the traditional French-British rivalry and the dramatic social and political changes taking place on the continent.

The other publications with which Dr. Krastev participates in the competition for Associate Professor are related to his research interests in the field of diplomacy, international relations, and socio-political history of Great Britain. A particularly good impression is made by the candidate's ability to analyse issues in great depth and to fit them into the broader framework of world events.

The presented scientific works are his personal work and do not raise any suspicion of plagiarism. Dr. Krastev has the mandatory minimum of scientific citations. The scholarly contributions in his dossier are well presented and justified.

The publications with which Dr. Krastev participates in the competition, together with the rest of his scholarly activity, present him as an accomplished historian with a broad approach to the problems he studies.

The candidate's undeniable research skills, his outstanding teaching abilities, a diligent approach when working with students and an ability to work in a team earned him the respect and support of both his colleagues and the students in the Faculty of History.

The attached lists of publications, citations, references, scientific notes show that Ljubomir Krastev fulfils the minimum national requirements for the scientific field of Humanities, professional field 2.2 History and Archaeology.

All of the above gives me reason to believe that the candidate possesses the necessary scholarly qualities and meets all the requirements for holding the academic position of Associate Professor according to the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria and its implementing regulations. As a member of the scientific jury, I give my positive assessment and support Dr. Ljubomir Tsvetanov Krastev in the announced competition for associate professor of the Faculty of History of Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“.

Sofia, 20 June 2023 г.

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