

## STATEMENT

concerning the competition for the academic position “PROFESSOR”  
(field of higher education **2. Humanities**, professional field **2.2 History and Archeology (Contemporary History - History of the United States and Latin America)**),

for the needs of Faculty of History of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”,  
announced in the State Gazette (Darzaven vestnik), no. 99/22.11.2024.

The statement was prepared by:

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(member of the Scientific Jury on the basis of Rector's Order No. RD 38-18  
of 13.01.2025)

### **Competition Data**

The procedure for the competition for a professor in the field of **Contemporary History - History of the United States and Latin America** was initiated by the Department of Modern and Contemporary World History at the Faculty of History (FH) of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. The competition was announced in accordance with the current legislation and the applicable university regulations. The requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA), the Regulations for the Implementation of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the Regulations on the Terms and Conditions for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at SU “St. Kliment Ohridski” are met. Only one candidate - Associate Professor, PhD Aleksandar Mihailov Sivilov - submitted

documents for participation in the announced competition. The scientific jury was appointed in accordance with the legal and regulatory requirements and in due time with a Rector's Order № RD 38-18 of 13.01.2025. A curriculum vitae, publications on the competition, an author reference for the scientific contributions, a reference for the citations and scientometric indicators of the candidate were also presented, which fulfils the minimum national requirements (according to Art. 2b, par. 2 and 3 of DASRBA) and, accordingly, the additional requirements of SU. The above information gives reason to assume that the competition procedure is legitimate.

### **Data on the candidate**

A. Sivilov is a graduate of SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”, where he received all three degrees of higher education - Bachelor, Master and Doctor. In 2003 he graduated from the MA program of SU "History of Russia" with a successfully defended MA thesis “M. Gorbachev and N. Rizhkov - Two Perspectives on the Perestroika”. In May 2009 he successfully defended his PhD thesis on the topic “The Transitions in Chile 1970-1993”. After winning a competition, he started working as an assistant professor at SU in 2010. He habilitated as Associate Professor in professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology (History of the USSR) in 2017.

### **Description of the Scientific Publications of the Candidate**

For the competition the candidate submitted 2 monographs, 7 studies and 4 articles. A list of additional publications on topics related to contemporary history was also provided. The presented scientific publications meet the minimum national requirements (under Art. 2b, par. 2 and 3 of DASRBA) and the additional requirements of Art. 5 of the Rules for collecting, updating and using scientometric

data. They do not repeat those from previous procedures for obtaining a scientific title and academic position.

### **Scientific contributions**

Undoubtedly, the most significant contributions of the candidate can be found in his two monographs. In “The Gangsters of the Prohibition and the Great Depression in US Social History” the author weaved together the historical, social, and economic processes underlying the rise of gangsterism during the Prohibition and the Great Depression, and showed with academic sophistication the US social reality as the basis for the emergence of organized crime. What is more, he managed to illuminate such lesser-known (and less spectacular) elements of the topic as the connection between gangsters’ infiltration of labor unions and the government actions against the left-wing forces, or as the role of the law enforcement - criminals clashes during the Prohibition and the Great Depression in transforming the created in 1908 Bureau of Investigation into J. Edgar Hoover's nearly "omnipotent FBI." Sivilov managed to convey the symbiotic relationship between organized crime, economic depression and social fractures and discords. He enriched his historical research by using interdisciplinary approach and nuanced analysis that brings to the fore the social element of an essentially criminal phenomenon. The study includes a compelling narrative of the complex personalities of infamous figures such as Al Capone, Bugsy Siegel, Lucky Luciano, Bonnie and Clyde, and John Dillinger, while also shedding light on lesser-known but equally historically fascinating characters.

The author's interdisciplinary approach, which draws not only on history but also on sociology, criminology and cultural studies, enriches the historical analysis of the topic. This, as well as the a wide range of sources, both primary and interpretive, makes the monograph a worthy contribution to Bulgarian

historiography in the field of contemporary US history. With its reliable factual basis and engaging style, the monograph is of interest not only to academic audiences but also to the general public, making it a valuable source of information for anyone interested in the relationship between crime, economic problems, politics, and social collisions during a turbulent and profoundly transformative period of American history.

Some recent developments in the world (especially the war in Ukraine), as well as the January 2025 change of presidential administration in the United States, have made the topic of the authoritarianism, leaders, and periods of transition and transformation in contemporary history particularly relevant. Sivilov's monograph "Leaders, Authoritarianism and Transitions. On the Example of Russia and Chile" builds on this current relevance of the topic by taking on the challenge of comparatively analysing the political developments in Chile and Russia - two very distant, geographically and culturally countries - during the 1980s and 1990s.

The role of the leaders in the context of the transition from authoritarianism to democracy is explored through case studies of Boris Yeltsin and Augusto Pinochet. Sivilov examines the "perestroika" of M. Gorbachev as a reform process that began the transformation of the Soviet authoritarian model but ultimately failed to complete the transition to sustainable democracy. Highlighted is the significance of the complex and contradictory personality of the "democratic" Yeltsin - on the one hand, for the dismantling of the authoritarian model of the Soviet system, and on the other, for the political instability and growing concentration of power that undermined the democratic aspirations of the Russian people. The monograph also analyses Chile's long and complex transition from Augusto Pinochet's "military dictatorship with a strong personalist element" to democratic rule - a process that was in many ways "guided", but one that failed to permanently eliminate the

"authoritarian enclaves" and consequently did not lead to a lasting consolidation of the country's democratic model.

The 7 studies and 4 articles that Associate Professor Sivilov presented for the competition reflect the progress of his research interests and his academic achievements in the study and popularization of the knowledge of contemporary world history in general and of Russia, the USA and Latin America in particular. All of them show the author's detailed knowledge of the subject matter. They bring into academic circulation many (often new) primary sources and facts and are written in engaging yet academically rigorous style. Thus they enrich the national (and not only) historiography of contemporary world history. I would like to distinguish some of the publications.

Sivilov's analysis of the theoretical problem of the nature of totalitarianism and the interdependency, and even subordination, of the interpretations of the concept to the emerging ideologemes of the Cold War ("The Theory of Totalitarianism as a Political Weapon Before and at the Dawn of the Cold War") is undoubtedly a contributory one. The study "US Policy Towards Russia as a Base for the Creation of Multipolar Geopolitical Order 2000-2013" traces the Russian-US relations in a volatile period of contemporary world history. Drawing on primary and secondary sources, both already known and newly introduced into scholarly circulation, the author examines and analyzes the evolution of US " Russian " policy and the role the different presidential teams played in the dynamics of Washington - Moscow relationship. Sivilov's interest in the history of the two superpowers of the twentieth century - the USA and Russia/USSR, is also evident in his study "Preconditions for an Emerging Superpower - on the Case Studies of USSR and USA". It provides an in-depth comparative analysis of the two countries' approaches

to modernization and governance and explains how these approaches affected their subsequent transformation into superpowers.

Of particular value, from the point of view of Bulgarian historiography, is the study of the little known in Bulgaria processes of development of the Latin American leftist ideology ("Excerpts from the Latin American Left as a Different Reading of Marxist Ideology"). Also of a contributory nature, and not only for Bulgarian historiography, is the article "The Forbidden Tango USSR and Argentina", which analyses the seemingly inexplicable partnership between the Soviet leadership and General Jorge Videla's military junta in Argentina.

Our colleague Sivilov, as is evident from the competition documents, has participated in a number of prestigious scientific forums, as well as in national and international scientific and educational projects. The citation record submitted for the competition is a manifestation of the importance of his research and of his reputation in the academic community.

### **Teaching Activity**

The submitted reference for the candidate's classes shows that Associate Professor Sivilov teaches a series of lecture courses to undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students, the thematic variety of which are indicative of the broadness of his academic interests and his competence as a lecturer. In my opinion, the teaching experience of our colleague undoubtedly contributed to the persuasiveness of the theses laid down in his publications. The in-depth knowledge of the topics from his monographs and his other publications has given his analyses and conclusions theoretical importance, but also some practical applicability in the day-to-day educational process. The high level of teaching commitment of Alexander Sivilov is

also reflected in his scientific supervision of five PhD students, two of whom have already successfully defended their dissertations.

I would also like to add that research and teaching work in general, and in the field of history in particular, is not and should not be an end in itself. That work sustains the knowledge of history. The knowledge provides reference points for nowadays world, and the propagation of that knowledge has a socio-political role to play in our times. In this sense, the popularizing and educational work of Assoc. Professor Sivilov through television and Internet media channels deserves admiration.

### **Conclusion**

Based on his numerous scientific and academic contributions, and his many years of fruitful teaching work, I believe that **Aleksandar Mihailov Sivilov** meets all the requirements and deserves to be rewarded the academic position of **“Professor”** in professional field **2.2 History and Archeology (Contemporary History - History of the United States and Latin America)** in the Department of Modern and Contemporary World History at the Faculty of History of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

7 March 2025

Veliko Tarnovo

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Assoc. Prof., PhD S. Aleksandrova