

Opinion

on the scientific work and academic activities of Momchil Nikolaev Metodiev, D. Sc., an applicant for a competition for the academic position of “Professor” in the professional area of “2.2. History and Archeology”. The procedure has been announced in the State Gazette, issue 54/16.06.2020, and according to the requirements of New Bulgarian University (NBU), Department of History,

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As an outcome of the online meetings of the Scientific Jury, I accepted the proposal and was chosen by its members to write a review on the research and academic activities of Mr. Momchil Nikolaev Metodiev, D.Sc.

The competition is announced publicly according to a standard procedure and he is the only participant in it. The submitted documentation is complete and in accordance with the numerous regulatory requirements for such cases.

The academic biography of Momchil Metodiev could be traced in an ascending order with the completion of his higher education in 1995 with a MA in History in the Department of History of St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University. Shortly afterwards the applicant enrolled in a doctorate program in the Department of Ancient History, Thracology and Medieval History of the same university. He successfully defended his dissertation entitled “Evolution of the Papal Institution (early IV - early VII century)” and acquired a doctoral degree. In June 2010 he was titled Doctor of Philosophy with his research “Orthodox Church and Communist Regime in Bulgaria”. In the same line of upskilling and developing his professional qualities,

his specializations and work in prestigious academic centres around the world have been highlighted in his autobiography.

Momchil Metodiev presents 5 (five) monographs as evidence for his scientific work, two of which bear direct relation to the current competition for a Professor at NBU. Also, he presents significant pieces of three collective monographs in Bulgarian and English, a part of a valuable educational tool, dozens of articles and papers in various languages in respected scientific and esteemed independent publications; excerpts from his work under national and international research and educational projects; texts from his participation in academic forums here and abroad; 6 (six) voluminous specialized documentary editions that provide a solid basis for current and future historical research, etc. - all works emphasizing the indisputable achievements of a remarkable scientific and research work, spread over several areas - political and social history, and church history, offering deep and valuable cultural and theological dimensions of events, biographical research in the perspective of historical sociology, documentary and archives... His achievements have a strong impact and influence on professional communities which are expressed and shared through repeated references to his name. In addition, the applicant holds prestigious positions in academic and state institutions, and non-governmental organizations. He has media presence, too. All these factors contribute for the advancement of our humanitarian community and the modern Bulgarian society as a whole.

His own lectures and seminars are another confirmation of the development and progress of his academic career. Over the years he has developed and conducted various seminars and lecture courses at the Faculty of History and Theology at Sofia University and at the Department of History of the New Bulgarian University. His curricula are distinguished by its design, content and immediate implementation with high scientific merits, methodological endurance and unequivocal teaching achievements.

The monographs “Metropolitan Andrey of New York. Biography, memories, diaries” and “State security – An Inherited Advantage. Professional biographies of leading officers”, presented as a basis in his application to the competition, are research works that have no previous analogue. They are a natural centre of gravity for all his works presented in the current competition that provide all the grounds to be accepted as a representative summary of his overall research experience.

Although developing different research topics, the common feature of the two books could be the empirical density of the reconstructive creation of the historical text on the basis of completely unknown and poorly studied archival documents, the methodological diversity of the analytical procedures and the irrefutable, unequivocal credibility the final conclusions. The study, dedicated to Metropolitan Andrey of New York, is based on the difficult task of shedding light on the personality and deeds of one of the most controversial leaders of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church from the 1930s to the 1960s. By combining the biographical approach with the methods of historical sociology, the applicant Momchil Metodiev recreates the history of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church through the personality of Metropolitan Andrey. The narrative unfolds between the two World Wars offering internal clashes of views on church governance, external orientation and the presence of the Church in public; these severe internal left unresolved until the beginning of the communist regime in our country.

On this basis, the author defends the thesis of continuity in the history of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church before and after 1944, a continuity, passing in radically different new political circumstances and, alas, continuity mostly related to unresolved intra-church antagonisms and intransigence of individual opinions of the clergy with the highest ranks. Against this background, Metodiev brings out the personality of Metropolitan Andrey, his views on church and public issues with a direct referral to the establishment and construction

of a Bulgarian diocese in North America. In relation to them, the author highlights and traces new factors after the Second World War and their impact - the Bulgarian political emigration, the organizations of the Macedonian Bulgarians abroad, the intervention of the Bulgarian communist state.

Metodiev's study examines the life and deeds of Metropolitan Andrey woven into the history of the Bulgarian diocese in North America and its location in the broad international context of the development and change of the universal Orthodoxy during the Cold War and the related struggles between the various national churches within their own dioceses in the New World. Finally, the author achieves a penetrating critical analysis of the reasons for the division of the Bulgarian church community in America and the creation of the Bulgarian diocese, which joined the Orthodox Church in America.

With his other research, presented for the competition for a professor, "State Security - An Inherited Advantage. Professional biographies of leading officers", Momchil Metodiev achieves a complete overview of the State Security system. Written on the basis of hitherto completely unknown documents on the structure, staff, organization of work, professional development of its employees and their relations to the leading figures of the system, Momchilov takes the topic out of the field of media speculation, conspiracy theories and memoir self-justification. He introduces it first into the circle of scientific historical research. The historical-sociological approach applied to the biographies of the employees from all levels of the State Security achieves an understanding of the system as built on the basis of the class-party approach in the inclusion and career development of its employees, instead of their education or professional qualities and competencies. This detailed historical-reconstructive work, in conclusion, challenges the speculative exaggerations of the elite character of the institution and convincingly defends the thesis that the strength of the State Security does not rest on the professional qualities of its employees, but on the

institutionalized arbitrariness assigned by the regime, thus imposing extrajudicial repression at all levels in the Bulgarian society.

I have no remarks or critical objections that deserve a place in the opinion. By reviewing the overall scientific work of the candidate, I can confirm that his work is undoubtedly a scientific achievement with a major emphasis in political and church history. It is also interdisciplinary research with clear contributions to understanding the human situation in recent historical times.

Emphasizing the high quality of the scientific work of Momchil Metodiev, its empirical diversity, its theoretical, methodological and interpretive merits; pointing out the visible projections of the creative work he presents in science and publicity; considering his fruitful academic career, teaching practice and undisputed authority in the collegial community, with full conviction, with these words concluding my review, I call on the esteemed Scientific Jury to vote without hesitation with "YES", choosing him as a Professor of History at the New Bulgarian University.

Prof. Ivan Elenkov, D.Sc.

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