

Opinion

of Prof. Dr. Boriana Buzhashka from the University of Library Science and Information Technologies, member of the scientific jury regarding the announced competition for the academic position of "professor" in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, by professional direction 2.2. History and archeology (International relations in the Balkans in the 1940s), announced in the "State Gazette" (No. 55 of 15.07.2022) of the scientific works of Assoc. Dr. Biser Petrov, presented in the competition for the academic position of "Professor" for the needs of the "Modern Balkans" section of the Institute of Balkan Studies with in trachology "Alexander Fall".

Only one candidate participated in the announced competition for "professor" - Associate Professor Biser Petrov. The candidate has submitted all the required documents, including references for compliance with the national scientometric indicators, testifying that his academic results cover the necessary minimum requirements for holding the position of "professor".

1. General characteristics of the works

The main monographic work presented for the competition is the book 'Diplomacy and Subversion in the Balkans. British policy towards Albania during and after the Second World War'. The book is a logical continuation of Biser Petrov's enduring research interests in Balkan history and the politics of the Great Powers.

There is no historical event that has been more widely covered and analyzed than the Second World War. The huge number of documentaries, hundreds of scientific books and memoirs, including from the most significant military and political factors, shed light in detail on this event unprecedented in scale, casualties and destruction in the history of mankind. The vast majority of these materials are objective, well-intentioned and impartially reveal the course of the war and the role and conduct of the belligerents. Among this group of materials is the work submitted for review by Biser Petrov "Diplomacy and Subversion in the Balkans". British policy towards Albania during and after the Second World War'. It belongs to the category of books on war, which offers a reading of Albanian-British relations with an emphasis on both diplomacy and military action, which makes it interesting not only for narrow specialists, but also for a wider readership with interests in war and Balkan history. A different chronological period was also chosen - ten years with an initial limit of the spring of 1939 and an upper limit - the beginning of the 1950s.

The author has structured his presentation in an introduction, two chapters with 5 paragraphs each and an afterword with a conclusion. A huge amount of factual material has been drawn on, which shows the author's rich historiographic awareness. A critical historiographical analysis of the previous main literature has been made, where the author does not fail to give his point of view on some of the main opinions. The specificity of the source base should be explicitly emphasized. Regardless of the fact that he used many memoirs that more or less distort the historical truth, the author approached them critically and the research is accompanied by an excellent analysis of the historical sources.

In the first chapter, Albania is explored as the Italian rear. A full-blooded picture of the complex Albanian-Italian and Albanian-British diplomatic relations is painted. It has been examined through the prism of many literature and archival materials, which makes it significant in the assessment of the author's scientific merits. The given information and analysis show a little-known picture of the relations on the eve and beginning of the Second World War, which is an indisputable contribution of the author. The exposition is very interesting and readable. The British position regarding Albania with its ups and downs is particularly detailed. In this exposition, it corresponds with all foreign policy events in Europe and the world, as well as with the plans and concrete steps of Hitler's Germany and Italy. The entire exposition shows the general unpreparedness of British policy towards Albania and failure to adapt to the new challenges within the country itself, such as the emergence and growth of the resistance movement and the role of the Albanian Communist Party.

Chapter Two reveals the transition from civil to cold war.

A little-known strategy of Hitler's Germany for the "voluntariness" and respect for the "independence" and "neutrality" of Albania is shown. The local chiefs and leaders are very well represented, who have only local power and are strongly tempted by collaborationism. This conscious collaborationism of a part of the anti-fascist forces, also found in other countries, is outlined. Albanian-Yugoslav relations and claims to Kosovo are very modestly hinted at. A motley panorama of characters is outlined, making the exposition of places too chatty and difficult to navigate. The reader is left with the feeling of the British inability to make correct and realistic decisions, which leads to the failure of Britain's Albanian policy. In this part of the exposition, a huge amount of factual material is drawn. The value of the study is in the details, which very methodically reveal the impasse in British policy and the impossibility of preventing civil war in Albania. Albania invariably found a place in British plans for subversive activity either

against the Axis powers or against the Communist camp. Of course, this is motivated by actions against the enemy.

Enver Hoxha's victory put Britain's relations with Albania on a new plane. There is a clear disregard for Albanian interests and an inability of Britain to oppose the communist regime. The two-year period after the arrival of Enver Hoxha marked by tension, ideological incompatibility, suspicion and of course the post-war division of Europe is very clearly and analytically presented.

Some conclusions can be drawn from the presentation presented:

1. The presented work is extremely valuable with the new data and facts that it analyzes, with the huge historiographical and archival material involved, with its scientific language and readability. A positive element in the narrative is the long time span of the events. Conclusions are very strong and reasoned. The research is an indisputable success for the author and a reason for high evaluation of Biser Petrov's scientific pursuits.

2. The legal diplomatic and illegal diversionary activity shown does not speak of full-fledged diplomatic relations between the two countries, which is also noted by the author. Of course, the assessment of W. Churchill and his government, which undoubtedly made a major contribution to the victorious end of the war against Nazi Germany, is not unequivocal. The question of why the Foreign Office is so closely involved in the development of a policy towards Albania - with peaceful and subversive actions - remains not very well clarified. It would be good in this part of the presentation to explain in more detail how Britain is indirectly a party to Albania's problems with its neighbors and other countries and what its interests are. Otherwise, there is no way to explain Britain's hidden activity against Albania, which far exceeds the diplomatic one in terms of intensity and time. There is no mention of the role of Russia and its influence on the British position.

3. The whole activity of the British secret services in places seems to be taken out of the general picture of the war and gives the impression of an improvised action. Albania's complex relations with Greece and Yugoslavia have not been fully developed, which implies knowledge of another line. It is true that those implementing the British line of conduct in Albania have a similar ignorance on the subject. But the reader should be informed and find British politics among general world trends. Albania ranks very low in the hierarchy of Britain's military priorities. Therefore, political goals are secondary to it. But this does not prevent them from being considered in the extended context of her relations with her neighbors.

Despite the remarks made, the work presented is a very serious scientific study and should be evaluated with the highest evaluation. The theme is very dynamic and variable in many metrics. The research will fill in these little-explored territories about the Second World War, which, regardless of the seemingly small strokes made, reveal more objectively the general picture of the time.

1.2 Articles and studies in periodicals and reports from scientific forums

The articles and studies attached to the competition documents are distinguished by a wide range of topics. The emphasis is on Balkan politics and the Slavic movement.

Biser Petrov's first monograph is on a topic that he justifiably and reasonably assesses as an undesirable object from a historiographical point of view. It is about the Slavic idea and its use for political purposes, immediately after the Second World War, cleared of pathos and external gloss. This segment of post-war history is understudied, but with a charge to activate in our time as well. Combining the Slavic idea with the "people's democracy" model is an interesting example of the Soviet leadership's search for a reaction to the declared "cold war".

Research on the post-war division of the Balkans is an indisputable contribution to the subject. To this day, this issue has not lost its political and historical sensitivity. The articles in the presented scientific publications are an achievement for native historiography. Here, there is no episodic interest, but long-term accumulations that build Biser Petrov as an indisputable scientific capacity and expert, whose experience can be shared not only in the scientific sphere.

III. Conclusion

On the basis of the scientific contributions highlighted so far, I believe that the research activity of Associate Professor Biser Petrov fully corresponds to the specific requirements of the announced competition and is covered by the legal requirements for occupying the academic position of "professor".

Therefore, with conviction, I give my positive assessment and propose to the members of the respected Scientific Jury to vote positively for awarding Assoc. Dr. Biser Petrov the educational and scientific degree "Professor" in the field of higher education

2. Humanities, by professional direction 2.2. History and Archeology (International Relations of the Balkans in the 1940s), for the needs of the Institute of Balkan Studies and Center for Tracology "Al. Foul "

22.10.2022 Prof. Dr. Boryana Buzhashka