

OPINION

from **Prof. Dr. Evgenia Kalinova**, Department of History of Bulgaria,
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For the academic achievements of **Assoc. Prof. Kiril Plamen Kartalov**,
participant in the competition for the academic position of "professor"
in the professional field 2. 3. Philosophy,
announced by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology – BAS,
in the State Gazette, No. 61, July 29, 2025.

Information about the competition:

The competition for the academic position of "professor" has been announced for the needs of the "Anthropological Studies" section at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The mandatory legal deadlines and procedural requirements have been met, and the documentation submitted is complete and properly formatted in accordance with Article 43 (1) of the Regulations on the conditions and procedures for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The only participant in the competition is Assoc. Prof. Kiril Plamen Kartalov, PhD.

Brief information about the candidate:

Kiril Kartalov graduated from the Catholic University of Milan [Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano] in 2007. He holds a master's degree in political science with a specialization in international politics. Six years later, in 2013, he defended his doctoral thesis at the same university on "The Diplomatic Mission of Monsignor Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, Apostolic Visitor and Delegate in Bulgaria (1925-1934)" ["L'opera di mons. Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, Visitatore e Delegato apostolico in Bulgaria (1925-1934), alla luce delle nuove fonti archivistiche"]. ["L'opera di mons. Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, Visitatore e Delegato apostolico in Bulgaria (1925-1934), alla luce delle nuove fonti archivistiche"]. Kiril Kartalov obtained his next academic degree, Doctor of Sciences, with his dissertation "The Flowers of Nations: The Essence, History, and Significance of Pilgrimage," defended in September 2024 at the Institute of Philosophy at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Assoc. Prof. Kartalov has been teaching since 2010 as an assistant professor of political science at the University of Library Science and Information Technologies and of history of international relations and institutions and history of treaties and international politics at the Catholic University of Milan [Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano]. Since 2012, he has been a "corresponding member" of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences [Pontificio Comitato di Scienze Storiche], and in 2016 he was elected associate professor in the field of "Philosophy" at the Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge (since 2019 – IFS) at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Fulfillment of the requirements for the academic position:

The minimum national requirements that candidates for the academic position of "professor" must meet in their scientific and teaching activities are set out in Article 2b of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB). The information provided by Assoc. Prof. Kartalov on the fulfillment of these requirements is accurate, detailed,

and proves that he not only fully meets but even exceeds the required number of points for the individual indicators.

Assoc. Prof. Kartalov fully meets the requirements set forth in Article 29 of the Higher Education Act and Article 5, item 4 of the Regulations of the Institute of Physics at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences on the conditions and procedures for acquiring academic degrees and occupying academic positions for candidates for the academic position of "professor": he holds a doctoral degree and a doctor of science degree, as well as the necessary experience (more than the required 7 years) and meets the minimum requirements of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences for the relevant professional field. I would also like to emphasize here that Assoc. Prof. Kartalov fully complies with the requirement of Article 6 (3) of the aforementioned Regulations of the Institute of Philosophy, which stipulates that candidates for the academic position of "professor" must have "a clearly defined scientific field in which they are leading researchers." He is participating in the competition with a published monograph – "The Sound of Silence. Pius XII and the Jewish Question in the Light of the Vatican Archives" (Iztok-Zapad Publishing House, Sofia, 2025, 560 pp.), which is different from his doctoral and postdoctoral dissertations and from his application for the academic position of "associate professor," which is a requirement under Article 43 (1), item 5a of the Regulations of the Institute of Philosophy. In addition, Kiril Kartalov presents another monograph and 12 articles and studies published abroad in Italian, French, and English, as well as three articles and studies in English published in Bulgaria. None of them contain any proven plagiarism or inaccuracy of scientific data in accordance with the established legal procedure.

Opinion on the candidate's research activity:

In accordance with the requirements of Article 46 (2) of the Regulations of the Institute of Philosophy for the academic position of "professor," I will attempt to highlight some of the main achievements in the scientific activity of Assoc. Prof. Kiril Kartalov. Within the limited scope of this opinion, I will only consider the habilitation thesis "The Sound of Silence. Pius XII and the Jewish Question in the Light of the Vatican Archives."

The monograph has an appropriately chosen structure, consisting of three thematically distinct chapters. The preface outlines the significance and specificity of the main theme: the author shares his understanding of the "extreme nature" of the Jewish genocide (p. 11) and uses it to argue for "the need to study and recount it, valuing new documents and new perspectives, which is the true way to remember" (p. 12). I would describe his choice to present Pope Pius XII's behavior on the Jewish question — behavior that still provokes mixed assessments today and requires a deeper understanding of the multifaceted problem of the relationship between the desirable and the possible, both during World War II and in the present day, when we evaluate historical events and personalities. As a historian, I agree with the author's assertion that historiography "does not develop in a vacuum" (p. 34) and is strongly influenced by its surrounding environment, which reinforces stereotypes that are difficult for historical science to break down. Even in these introductory pages, the indisputable erudition of Assoc. Prof. Kartalov is evident, as is his excellent knowledge of the various approaches to the subject of the Holocaust and of the research specifically on the behavior of Pope Pius XII and his "silence" on the "Jewish question" during the war.

Kiril Kartalov places at the center of his research a clearly formulated goal—to "explain" (which is the true task of every professional historian, rather than to condemn or glorify) the position of Pope Pius on the Holocaust through the prism of the Vatican archives, placing this

explanation in the context of the evolution of the Catholic Church's position on "anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism through the centuries" (p. 42). I consider one of the most significant merits of the monograph to be the author's approach to archival documents and his work with them, and I think that it is only out of modesty that he did not mention in the preface that these include not only the Vatican archives, but also several other archival collections in Rome, London, New York, and Paris. No less impressive is the bibliography, which includes 345 titles in the main Western European languages. This documentary and historiographical basis guarantees the high quality of Kiril Kartalov's monograph, which I can already assess here as a serious contribution to Bulgarian historical science.

The first chapter, "Pius XII. Introduction," consists of two paragraphs. The first, "Opus iustitiae pax" ("The work of justice will be peace" – a phrase from the prophet Isaiah, the motto on the papal coat of arms) presents the main points of the biography of the future Pope Pius XII against the backdrop of the achievements of his predecessors and the key moments in European history in the first decades of the 20th century. Special attention is given to his election as head of the Catholic Church (March 2, 1939); the formation of his conviction of "peace through the promotion of justice" (p. 86) and his adherence to the "doctrine of impartiality" from the beginning of World War II. This paragraph is based mainly on a number of studies, but also on documents from the Vatican archives, revealing above all the essence and effect of the papal encyclical of October 20, 1939, "Summi Pontificatus," which presents Pope Pius' understanding of events in Europe and the world; his attempts to prevent the war from spreading, and then his encouragement of charitable activities to help the victims of the war and his calls for its cessation and the achievement of a just peace. This overview is undoubtedly important for Bulgarian readers, for whom Pope Pius XII is a relatively unknown figure. But it also provides a necessary foundation for understanding the pope's philosophy and principles. The possible use of Bulgarian studies, but not only, would allow this section to avoid some inaccuracies in the presentation of the general historical background (e.g., on pp. 139-140, in the description of the beginning of the Cold War, the author could have relied on the abundant literature on the subject; or on p. 141, regarding the parliamentary elections in Eastern European countries, the author states that "in none" of them did the Communist Party win, but in fact the situation is more complex and, for example, in Bulgaria this is not factually the case). In this paragraph, the pages covering the period from 1943 to the end of the 1950s are much poorer in terms of the use of archives and scientific literature.

The second paragraph, "Triumph and Crisis," tracks the twists and turns in the historiographical debate on the pontificate of Pope Pius XII—from the recognition of Holocaust survivors and prominent representatives of the Jewish community and the new State of Israel and the apology in Catholic journalism to the reversal ("the revisionist process," p. 184) in the attitude towards him, presenting him as "greedy, cold, and anti-Semitic" (p. 187) and accusing him of "silence" on the Jewish question. The author also reveals what is perhaps the most important result of this debate – the publication after 1965 of 11 volumes of selected documents from the Vatican archives on specific areas of his activity during the war and the granting in 2020 of access to a huge number of documents from the pontificate of Pius XII – a fact of key importance for current and future scientific research.

The second chapter, "Papal Diplomacy and the Jewish Question (1933–1945)," is the core of Assoc. Prof. Kartalov's monograph. It covers nearly 250 pages, i.e., almost half of the book, and is structured in six paragraphs. The first is an extensive and in-depth analysis of the concept of "anti-Semitism" and its place in Catholic thinking from the 19th century to World War II. The

author's conclusion is that on the eve of the war, the most widespread attitude among Catholics was "in favor of moderate anti-Semitism," and in this he sees an explanation for the weak reaction of the Holy See and international Catholic opinion "in the face of Nazi anti-Semitism" (p. 242). The analysis in this paragraph is convincing proof of Kiril Kartalov's ability to search in depth for the causes of historical events and prepares the reader to understand the issues presented below. In the second paragraph, these are the events from 1933 to 1938, when manifestations of Nazi anti-Semitism began and the first calls for Pope Pius XI to take a stand against it, which are illustrated in the pages of the monograph with extensive quotations from the Vatican archives. The Holy See's attempt not to oppose but to seek dialogue with the Reich, which led to the signing of the so-called Concordat (July 20, 1933), is explained in a reasoned manner, with historical facts and the necessary criticism. The role of Cardinal Pacelli (the future Pope Pius XII) in shaping the Vatican's policy towards Germany is convincingly and in detail described, including the publication in March 1937 of Pope Pius XI's anti-Nazi encyclical "With Burning Anxiety," which caused a serious stir (pp. 282-289), but did not change the plans of those in power in Berlin.

The section "We Are Spiritual Semites" presents the reaction of Pope Pius XI and Cardinal Pacelli to the intensifying anti-Jewish persecution in Germany and the evolution of the Holy See's position on the Jewish question in the face of racist sentiments and actions in Italy itself. Here, too, the author remains faithful to his critical approach and his desire to avoid possible bias in his assessments and proposed hypotheses. An important place in the second chapter is occupied by the paragraph in which Kiril Kartalov analyzes a principle of papal diplomacy that is essential for understanding the main issues in the book – that of "perfect impartiality" towards the countries involved in the First and Second World Wars. The author emphasizes that this principle makes the Holy See "suspicious of others," but allows it to maintain "acceptable relations" with everyone and thus successfully carry out humanitarian initiatives (p. 355). The pages devoted to Pope Benedict XV's behavior during World War I and his calls "to open space for politics and close it for weapons" (p. 362) testify to the author's deep understanding of the essence of both papal diplomacy and the psychology and mentality of politicians on both sides of the front line who would like the pope to clearly identify with their national cause. This "return" to the Great War is entirely justified, as it allows Assoc. Prof. Kartalov to compare and assess more accurately the behavior of Pope Pius XII during World War II in applying the same principle of "impartiality." I hope that readers of the book will appreciate the pages in which Assoc. Prof. Kartalov highlights the alternative behavior that Cardinal Eugène Tisserant proposed to the Pope—not to be "impartial," but to call for "the individual duty to obey the dictates of conscience" (p. 374). The author gives a convincing explanation of why the Pope did not follow this advice, but also recalls the cardinal's own actions to save Jews, which once again proves how complex the picture of the Vatican's behavior during the war is. The next paragraph, "Rumors of Extermination," details Pope Pius XII's strict adherence to "impartiality" in response to pressure from the warring parties to publicly condemn the enemy in the complicated situation following the outbreak of the German-Soviet war. Assoc. Prof. Kartalov finds among the archival documents some that suggest that the Pope was beginning to realize the different nature (compared to World War I) of the global conflict, without, however, taking the next step – specifically exposing and condemning it (p. 395). Against this backdrop, the author presents information about the extermination of the Jews during the German advance to the east in 1941-1942, with an emphasis on efforts to disseminate it and search archival documents for answers to the logical questions of how much of it reached the Vatican, how it treated its authenticity, and

what steps it took. I would highlight this part of the study as undoubtedly valuable, and the conclusions at the end of the paragraph (pp. 433-434) sound professional and convincing. Although brief, the last paragraph, "New Avignon," will undoubtedly pique the reader's interest with the facts revealed about Hitler and the German military's attitude toward the Vatican as an institution and Pope Pius XII as a person.

In the third chapter, "Forms of Silence," Kiril Kartalov reflects on the dilemmas faced by Pope Pius XII on the issue of the destruction of the Jews. With impartiality, criticality, and insight into the logic behind the Pope's decision to ultimately choose the path of "cautious, half-hearted protest," the author encourages the reader to think more deeply and beyond the obvious. The scientific courage with which a series of questions about the benefits and harms of the Vatican's silence are formulated and answered with well-reasoned arguments deserves high praise.

Assoc. Prof. Kartalov's monograph is definitely a valuable contribution, filling a significant gap in Bulgarian historiography and meeting the criteria for a habilitation thesis for the academic position of "professor." Last but not least, the book is distinguished by its excellent style and scholarly tone. Explanations of some terms and translations of Latin phrases would only make it easier for a wider readership to understand the author's ideas. The layout of the book leaves an excellent impression, and the inclusion of a large amount of photographic material in the presentation is well thought out and really complements the text.

Kiril Kartalov is also submitting another monograph for the competition – "Transformations in Politics: From the Twentieth Century to the Global Era. (Ars Millennium MMM Foundation for Art and Culture, Sofia 2025) and 15 other articles and studies, some of which also examine the "Jewish question" and the Vatican, as well as the rescue of Bulgarian Jews during World War II. This volume of scientific publications fully meets the requirements for obtaining the academic position of "professor."

Assessment of the candidate's teaching activity:

The attached report on the teaching activity of Assoc. Prof. Kiril Kartalov shows that it is an important part of his academic activities. In recent years, he has lectured on "History of Cultural Diplomacy" in the master's program "Cultural Diplomacy. Arts and Digital Media for International Relations and Global Communication" at the Catholic University of Milan [Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano]. Since 2024, Assoc. Prof. Kartalov has been teaching a course on "History and Basic Principles of Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution" in the master's program "Israel: History and Geopolitics" at the Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski." Also since 2024, he has been teaching at the New Bulgarian University Traditional Religions and Counterterrorism, Contemporary International Conflicts, Evolution of International Peacekeeping," and in the summer semester of 2023, he taught a course on EU foreign policy at the Department of Political Science at the same university.

These lecture courses reflect the main scientific interests of Assoc. Prof. Kartalov (as well as his undoubtedly excellent command of several languages in which he teaches). He also realized his teaching potential as a visiting scholar at the Sir Naim Dangoor Centre for Universal Monotheism, Bar-Ilan University, in July 2023, and in January 2024, he lectured at the Graduate School of Humanities, Osaka University.

There is no doubt that teaching in an academic environment is an important testament to the scientific qualities and competence of the candidate, especially when it takes place at Bulgarian

and foreign universities. Based on this criterion, Assoc. Prof. Kartalov's achievements fully meet the requirements for the academic position of "professor."

Significance of contributions to science and practice:

The significance of scientific research in terms of its practical application is an important criterion for the quality of candidates for the academic position of "professor." In the competition documents, Assoc. Kartalov mentions participation in two international and one national project ("Lectures - Bulgaria during World War II and the fate of Bulgarian Jews"), organized by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture. He is also the head of an international research project entitled "La diplomazia pontificia alla prova: la Santa Sede nel sistema internazionale tra la fine della Guerra Mondiale e l'inizio della Guerra Fredda (1943-1950)" ("Papal diplomacy put to the test: the Holy See in the international system between the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War (1943-1950)") at the Catholic University of Milan.

I believe that academic growth requires an active role in the life of the academic community, and I would therefore like to emphasize that since his election as associate professor in 2016, Kiril Kartalov has participated in over 20 scientific conferences and other forums in Bulgaria and abroad. His scientific publications are highly recognized among the scientific community. The attached documents show that, of the publications submitted for the competition, one book edited by him has three reviews in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned scientific information databases, and eleven of his publications have been cited 13 times in Bulgaria and abroad. According to the minimum scientific requirements for professional field 2. 3. Philosophy, the required points for this group of indicators ("D") are 120, while Assoc. Prof. Kartalov has 160. He has also submitted an additional list of nearly 25 selected citations.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the scientific publications of Assoc. Prof. Kiril Kartalov and his teaching commitment give me reason to confidently recommend that he be awarded the academic position of "professor" in professional field 2. 3. Philosophy.

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(Prof. Dr. Evgenia Kalinova)