

REPORT

on the scientific production and other scientific activities of Assoc. Prof. Doktor of Science Kiril Plamen Kartalov, participant in the competition for "professor", announced by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in the professional field 2.3. Philosophy (Philosophical Anthropology - The Vatican's Policy during World War II and its Attitude to the Jewish Question), for the needs of the "Anthropological Research" section of the Institute of Social Sciences-BAS, published in the "State Gazette" No. 61 of July 29, 2025.

by Prof. Iskra Baeva PhD, Lecturer in Contemporary History at the Faculty of History, Sofia University „Kliment Ohridski"

1. Personal data of the contest participant

The only candidate for the academic position of "professor" at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology – BAS is Assoc. Prof. Kiril Kartalov, PhD. Born on April 27, 1982, in Blagoevgrad, he completed his higher education in Italy in 2007 at the Catholic University of Milan with a master's degree in political science, specializing in international politics. This field of study predetermined his further path in science, dedicated to the history of Catholicism through the prism of its international activity.

Kiril Kartalov's dissertation for the academic degree of "Doctor" is entitled "The Diplomatic Mission of Monsignor Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, Apostolic Visitor and Delegate to Bulgaria (1925-1934)". It was prepared and defended on April 16, 2013, at the same university where he received his higher education—the Catholic University of Milan. He qualified as an associate professor in 2016 at the Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge—BAS. On September 25, 2024, Assoc. Prof. Kiril Kartalov defended his doctoral thesis on "The Flowers of Nations: The Essence, History, and Significance of Pilgrimage" at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology – BAS, receiving the academic degree of "Doctor of Science."

2. Scientific and research achievements

The most important criterion for awarding the academic position of "professor" is the quality of the candidate's scientific output. Assoc. Prof. Kiril Kartalov has an impressive number

of publications – two monographs published abroad, six in Bulgaria (some of which are translations of those published abroad), 17 articles and studies, as well as articles in dictionaries.

In this competition, Assoc. Prof. Kartalov participates with his monograph "The Sound of Silence. Pius XII and the Jewish Question in the Light of the Vatican Archives" (East-West, 2025). With his impressive 560-page book, Assoc. Prof. Kartalov joins a long-standing debate: how to assess the Vatican's position under Pope Pius XII during World War II, especially its attitude towards the extermination of European Jews. The author has formulated the aim of his scientific work as follows: "to explain the position of the Holy See, represented by Pope Pius XII, on the Jewish question during World War II" (p. 42). As the title of the monograph suggests, Associate Professor Kartalov has developed his point of view on the basis of the declassified Vatican archives from that period, which has enabled him to engage in a debate with the conclusions of other authors who have studied this issue.

The monograph is structured into a preface, three chapters, an epilogue, and a bibliography, and follows a problem-based approach: the Holy See's attitude towards wars, different ideologies, and repressions, the most vivid embodiment of which during World War II was the attempt to destroy European Jewry, known as the Holocaust or Shoah. The source and historiographical basis of the monograph is impressive, and of greatest importance to Assoc. Prof. Kartalov's thesis are the documents from the Vatican archives on the pontificate of Pope Pius XII, which have been declassified in recent years. The total number of archival documents used from various, mainly Italian, archives reaches 260. The bibliography, limited in a somewhat strange way – only to publications after the death of Pope Pius XII in 1958 – includes 345 items in Italian, German, English, French, Italian, and Portuguese. However, the lack of publications in Bulgarian, including by the author of the monograph, is striking. This lack can be explained by the fact that Bulgarian historiography has not dealt with this issue (this is also stated as one of the contributions of the book), but it seems to me that at least the literature on Bulgarian Jews during the war and on the repression of Catholic priests in Bulgaria in the early 1950s could have been cited.

The very formulation of the thesis reveals the author's polemical attitude, but also his profound knowledge of the history of the Catholic Church not only in the 20th century, but also in previous eras, as well as the evolution of Catholicism under the pressure of modernity and its most destructive manifestations – the two world wars. Assoc. Prof. Kartalov's in-depth

knowledge, including in the field of theology, is due to his education, but also to his numerous previous studies.

In the first part of his book, Assoc. Prof. Kartalov presents Eugenio Pacelli's path to his election as Pope Pius XII, emphasizing papal diplomacy, of which Eugenio Pacelli was one of the most prominent representatives. This is followed by the most important part, which presents in detail the positions, actions, and inactions of the papal institution during World War II, how the Vatican arrived at its position of "equidistance" and "impartiality" in the conflict, what role Christian anti-Judaism played in the anti-Semitism that raged during this period, and how this predetermined the tragedy of European Jews. The author devotes the last part to the post-war investigation into the Pope's "silence" on Nazi repression, seeking explanations for it in the changing ideological, religious, and geopolitical circumstances during the fierce military operations in Europe.

The monograph makes a strong impression with the depth with which the issues are explored, the search for different explanations for the dilemmas facing the Vatican, the author's ability to place the events of World War II in the context of the broader historical era, to trace the evolution of Catholic dogma, which faced the challenges of the Enlightenment and the revolutions inspired by it. The positions of not only Pope Pius XII and his predecessor Pius XI (1922-1939), but also Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922), who had to deal with similar challenges during the years of World War I.

On the main question: how to assess the "silence" on the Holocaust, Assoc. Prof. Kartalov, as a true historian and researcher, presented various explanations without attempting to justify or condemn Pope Pius XII, but rather to explain his motives with the higher goals and tasks of the Catholic Church. The Pope preferred not to take a public position so as not to harm both the persecuted and the Church, which had to maintain its position as a moral pillar and arbiter. According to Assoc. Prof. Kartalov, this is a clash between the moral imperative of Christian opposition to evil, on the one hand, and the political necessity to preserve the global role of the Catholic Church, on the other. This contradiction is not new; it also manifested itself during World War I, but unlike then, during the pontificate of Pope Pius XII, the challenge is much more complex, since in the case of the Jews (and not only them), it is not just a matter of repression but of extermination, and from a geopolitical point of view, the emergence of the

atheistic Soviet Union frightened the Pope more than Nazi Germany, often perceived as the lesser evil.

The topic developed by Assoc. Prof. Kiril Kartalov is new not only to Bulgarian historiography, but also to Bulgarian society, which makes his research socially significant.

3. Critical remarks

My high praise for Kiril Kartalov's monograph does not mean that I have no comments on it. As might be expected, these relate to historical facts, minor inaccuracies that are probably due to the fact that the author is not a historian *sensu stricto*, and in some cases may also be a matter of translation from Italian.

Here are some inaccuracies: On page 71, it is stated that on January 30, 1933, Franz von Papen became Chancellor of Germany, but at that time the government was headed by Adolf Hitler. On p. 89, it is stated that Poland rejected Germany's proposal for an alliance, while Polish Foreign Minister Col. Józef Beck, who wanted his country to join the war against the Soviet Union, while it was Hitler who preferred to test the "blitzkrieg" strategy in Poland; p. 117 – the "strange war" did not take place between November 1939 and February 1940, but lasted from September 3, 1939, to May 10, 1940; p. 134 – The Soviet Union is not opposed to the creation of a new world organization – it is opposed to the restoration of the League of Nations, but wants a new one in which it can play a leading role; p. 137 – Churchill's visit to Moscow in October 1944 was not intended to limit Soviet influence in Eastern Europe, but to preserve British influence in Greece at the cost of concessions in Eastern Europe; p. 140 – in 1946, there was no party congress in the USSR (the last one was in 1939 and the next one was in 1952); Stalin never liked the Comintern, so he was unlikely to want to revive it – he always preferred direct control over other parties; p. 141 – it is not true that no communist party won any post-war elections, because in 1946 the Czechoslovak Communist Party did so, and in the November 1945 elections the Hungarian Communist Party received 17% of the votes, not 14%; p. 146 – after the defeat of the Hungarian Revolution, Cardinal József Mindszenty did not flee, but took refuge in the US Embassy in Budapest, where he was forced to live until the autumn of 1971; p. 266 – I find it difficult to agree with the statement that the Nazi regime cannot be considered totalitarian until the beginning of the war, since Hannah Arendt formulated her thesis on totalitarianism precisely on the basis of this regime, which she knew from her own experience in 1933; p. 270 – The four-

party alliance between the Third Reich, Italy, France, and Great Britain did not actually come into force because it was not ratified; p. 375 – Religious persecution in the Soviet Union is indisputable, but it did not occur during the war because in 1941 Stalin sought the support of the Russian Orthodox Church. As can be seen, these purely factual inaccuracies do not alter his high assessment of the monograph.

4. Teaching and other activities

In addition to being a researcher, Assoc. Prof. Kiril Kartalov is also a lecturer, ready to share his scientific achievements with young people. From 2010 to 2016, he was an assistant professor of political science at the University of Information Technologies, where he taught a 30-hour course as an adjunct lecturer. "History and Basic Principles of Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution" in the Master's program "Israel: History and Politics" at the Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski." He has also taught at the New Bulgarian University, in Italy, and Japan.

In recent years, Assoc. Prof. Kartalov has led one international project, participated in two others, and one national project. He has read papers at over 40 scientific conferences.

5. Evaluation of the scientific indicators

A review of the scientometric indicators shows that Assoc. Prof. Kiril Kartalov meets the requirements for the academic position of "professor" according to indicators A, B, and C, and exceeds them according to indicators D, E, and F.

6. Conclusion

A review of the scientific research of Associate Professor Kiril Kartalov, DSc, shows that it is of a high scientific standard and makes a significant contribution to the field. He has participated in scientific projects and taught at various universities. The achievements of Assoc. Prof. Kiril Kartalov give me reason to recommend to the esteemed scientific jury and the management of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology that he be awarded the academic position of "professor" in professional field 2.3. Philosophy (Philosophical Anthropology – Vatican Policy during World War II and its Attitude towards the Jewish Question) for the needs

of the Institute of Philosophy at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, for which I will vote with conviction.

November 3, 2025

Reviewer:
(Prof. Dr. Iskra Baeva)