

Institute for Historical Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences: Scientific achievements and prospects for development

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Abstract. Since its founding in 1947, the Institute for Historical Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences has been active in finding sources and researching topics in Bulgarian and world history. The Institute has established itself as a leading centre in the field of Bulgarian historical studies and has contributed to the research of the Balkan, European and world history. Thanks to its associates' teaching activities at universities and to the doctoral programs, as well as through the preparation of numerous expert reports for various state and public institutions, it has also become an active educational and expert centre on historical issues. Through their overall work, scientists help to implement national research development strategies in Bulgaria in terms of exploring and promoting Bulgarian cultural and historical heritage and preserving Bulgarian national identity in the context of European and world cultural diversity.

Keywords: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Historical Studies, development, scientific potential, bibliography

The Institute for Historical Studies was established on 6 March 1947 by a decision of the Governing Council of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences under the name Institute for Bulgarian History. It succeeded the Standing Committee on Collecting and Publishing Bulgarian History Sources, set up in 1938. Since its main task was finding evidence for the Bulgarian past, which for the moment seemed ideologically and politically more neutral, such distinguished researchers as Ivan Snegarov, Gavril Katsarov, Ivan Duychev could start work at the Institute although they were already stigmatized as bourgeois scholars. Soon, however, along with the construction of the Stalinist model of socialism, the eradication of pluralism in society and the total imposition of communist ideology in science, education and culture, the Institute's activities were placed under heavy party and state control. Scholars were forced to actively promote the Marxist-Leninist concept of national and world history.

The partial liberalization of the political regime, which started in the second half of the 1950s, allowed the emergence of positive trends in the Institute's scientific work. Its representatives subjected to serious criticism a number of perversions in historical science during the so-called "cult of personality", especially those concerning the national question. In the mid-1960s the preparation of a multi-volume history of Bulgaria began, which would create a more complete and adequate picture of the long history of the Bulgarian people, without, of course, going beyond the established Marxist-Leninist model. In the early 1980s, once again prominent scholars from the Institute insisted on starting serious changes in historical science, based on the development of new topics in the field of cultural, social, and economic history. It was required that the quality of research should improve by placing it in a broader context - Balkan, European, and world.

Thus, regardless of the increasing or weakening in certain periods, but invariably exercised party control over historical science, from the 1960's to the end of the 1980's a lot of serious works were also created for which considerable source material was collected and systematized. If one ignores the inevitable ideological clichés of the era, these studies can still serve as a good basis for further research in the field they examine. A large number of such valuable publications written in the last decades of socialism came under the pen of many worthy research associates of the Institute of History at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. It is hardly possible to enumerate in a short overview all the scholars who created significant works in the period up to 1989. At the risk of missing someone, it is necessary to mention the names of Dimitar Angelov, Vasil Gyuzelev, Ivan Bozhilov, Vera Mutafchieva, Bistra Tsvetkova, Elena Grozdanova, Krumka Sharova, Virzhiniya Paskaleva, Tsvetana Todorova, Elena Statelova, Stoycho Grancharov, Georgi Markov, Lyubomir Panayotov, Konstantin Pandev, Mito Isusov, Vesela Chichovska, Konstantin Kosev, Vitka Toshkova and others.

The fall of the communist regime almost immediately created an entirely new situation and opened new horizons for the development of historical science and for the Institute for Historical Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, in particular. Full freedom of research was soon established. The choice of topics depends already on the sole decision of scholars and the research centres' scientific bodies. The new scientific works and their concepts are based on examination of the available source material and on the professional qualities of the researchers who defend their theses before specialized scientific councils, and not in certain offices of the Communist Party city and district committees. In the new conditions, historical science is turning more decisively to the world and to the diverse research schools and fields.

The widely opened archives reveal to scholars and hence to society secrets deeply guarded by the previous regime. Documents that have hitherto been accessible only to historians proven loyal to the Communist Party are now in the public domain. The freedom of scientific writing and the "archival revolution" made it possible to initiate a large-scale process of reassessing and rethinking theses and evaluations of events, social groups and historical figures. The change of 1989 normalized the historical science in Bulgaria. It lost its functions of a

major legitimate factor of the communist regime and became a science whose purpose is by exploring the past to explain the present and predict the future.

However, in the new political context, funding of science emerged as a significant problem. With the withdrawal of state control and guardianship, the necessary financial support for the adequate development of science is unfortunately also withdrawn. For historians, this problem is particularly painful as regards their international contacts and appearances and prevents them from taking advantage of one of the major opportunities of the modern era - free communication between scholars. Low personal remunerations further diminish their public authority and undermine the prestige and attractiveness of the profession of scientist among young people.

Despite these difficulties and in accordance with the Institute's strategy for development the scholars expand their research topics in the field of Bulgarian past from ancient times to the present, in European and world history, in archival and documentary studies, genealogy, etc., and continue to search for and publish sources for Bulgarian history. The Institute enhances its national and international recognition by publishing five periodicals with the expert editorial involvement of its scholars: *Istoricheski pregled* ("Historical Review"), *Bulgarian Historical Review*, *Izvestiya na Institutata za istoricheski izsledvaniya* ("Proceedings of the Institute for Historical Studies") (Fig. 1-3), *Byzantinobulgarica* and *Pomoshtni istoricheski disciplini* ("Auxiliary Historical Disciplines").



Fig. 1. *Istoricheski pregled* ("Historical Review") - the oldest and most prestigious historical journal in Bulgaria published since 1945



Fig. 2. *Bulgarian Historical Review / Revue Bulgare d'Histoire* - an organ of the Institute of History (Institute for Historical Studies) since 1989, first published in 1973

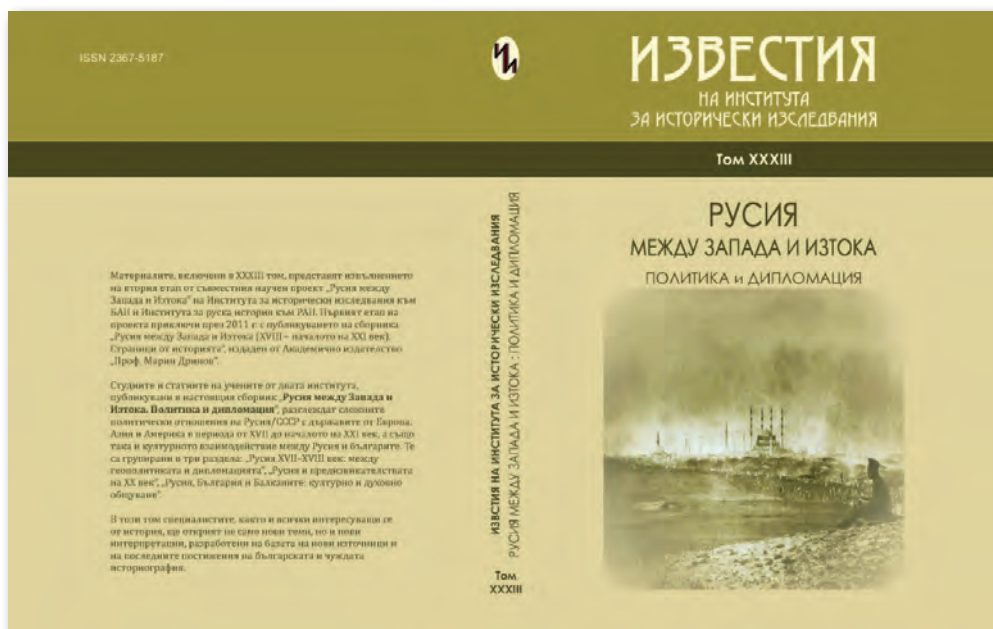


Fig. 3. *Izvestiya na Institutata za istoricheski izsledvaniya* (“Proceedings of the Institute for Historical Studies”) - a periodical of the Institute for Historical Studies

The diversity of topics and the innovative approach are also maintained through a multilateral dialogue with universities, museums and other municipal institutions in the country and with scholars from Europe and the world. On the basis of long-term cooperation agreements and through various forms of promoting scientific contacts joint projects with scientific centres in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Russia, China, the Republic of Northern Macedonia, Serbia and others are being developed.

The long-term teaching work in the higher and secondary education system, carried out by the scholars, the participation in the development of strategies for Bulgarian education, the writing of textbooks and last but not least - the training of PhD students in four programs increase the national and international weight of the Institute. The preparation of expert documents for state and local government institutions and the membership of scientists in national and foreign expert committees of different nature complement the multidirectional activity of the Institute.

In the context of the dynamic challenges of modern development, the Institute has established itself as a leading centre in the field of Bulgarian historical studies and has its contribution to the Balkan, European and world history research. Through their work, the scholars support the implementation of the national strategies for scientific research in Bulgaria with regard to the study and promotion of the Bulgarian cultural and historical heritage and the preservation of the Bulgarian national identity in the context of European and world cultural diversity.

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