

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Tina Georgieva,

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for the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor, announced by the Institute of Balkan Studies with the Centre of Thracology - BAS, in the field of higher education, 2. Humanities, professional field 2.2 History and Archaeology (International Relations of the Balkans in the 19th Century) for the needs of the section "Modern Balkans", in the State Gazette, No 85 of 25 October 2022.

Dr. Simeon Andonov Simeonov is the only candidate in the announced competition. He holds a Bachelor's degree from the University of Heidelberg and two Master's degrees in History from the University of Heidelberg and in Social Sciences from the University of Chicago. He defended his doctoral thesis at Brown University, Providence. He has worked at the McNeill Center for Early American Studies (Philadelphia) and at the Institute of Balkan Studies with the Center of Thracology, a visiting lecturer at Brown University.

In the competition for the Associate Professor position, Simeon Simeonov participates with two monographs, six studies and articles published in Bulgarian and English, most of them in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in international databases and publications (Diplomatic History, Journal of Political History, Journal of Global Slavery, Journal of the Early Republic, History, Journal of Etudes Balkaniques, Bulgarian Ethnology, Cinema). He has presented his research at 13 international conferences. He is the head of the project '*Empire of the Consuls: Consulate, Sovereignty and Empire in the Long Nineteenth Century*'. He speaks five languages: English, Spanish, German, Russian and French.

As the main habilitation research in this procedure the candidate presents the monograph '*Francisco de Miranda in the Balkans: the birth of the idea of independence of Latin America*', Sofia, IZCT, 2022. The book consists of a preface, six chapters, a conclusion, with a total of 155 pages. It is devoted to the journey that the Venezuelan revolutionary and fighter for Latin American independence undertook in 1786 through the Balkans and the newly annexed territories of the Black Sea, a little-studied period of his life. Based on a thorough analysis of F. Miranda, the author presents the Balkans as seen and understood through the eyes of a

member of Latin America's Spanish elite. He traces his acquaintance with the region's ancient past, his impressions of the local population and customs, and his encounter with the peculiarities of the Ottoman regime and with issues such as slavery and the post-Ottoman era.

The book is not a simple picture of the Balkan lands - each with its own colour, specificity and contradictions in the specific historical period. It exposes the peculiarities of the perception of the Balkans from the outside, with the attitudes and prejudices typical of Western observers and researchers. Particularly valuable is the author's endeavour to draw a parallel between the Balkans and Latin America as two peripheral - according to the characteristic Eurocentrism of the era - regions, and to find commonalities between the Spanish Empire and the other "sick man" of Europe, the Ottoman Empire. In this context, it sounds logical to conclude that Miranda's balkanization was at the heart of his creolization, and his familiarity with the European Southeast played a key role in the Venezuelan revolutionary's maturation as a leader of the Latin American struggle for independence.

The book is written in good language, it is engaging and professional. Simeon Simeonov's endeavour to argue with concepts established in the scientific circles and to offer a new, different point of view on the Balkans is a proof of the excellent knowledge of the historiography on the subject, but also a testimony to the author's scientific maturity. The candidate demonstrates a profound knowledge of the social and political processes taking place in the two hemispheres in the second half of the 19th century - knowledge that should form a solid basis for his future work on the Balkans.

The second monograph that Dr. Simeonov is presenting at this competition is '*Builders of the Western World: How Consuls Created the Modern International Order*'. ISBN 978-619-7179-30-9. It is an expanded and revised version of the author's doctoral dissertation, in which he explored the development of consulates during the long nineteenth century. Building on a solid documentary basis, the author analyses the development of the consular institution and its place in the established international system. The topic of consulates, which occupies a central place in the candidate's scholarly activity, deserves special attention as a key element of the soft diplomacy of the European powers conducted during the period under study.

The other presented publications with which Dr. Simeonov participates in the competition for Associate Professor are related to his research interests in the field of diplomacy and international relations. Balkan issues are present in them only in the context of the political changes taking place in the world and the emergence of modern nation-states. What is

impressive is the candidate's ability to deeply analyse the issues under study and to "fit" them into the general framework of common world processes.

The presented scientific works are his personal work and do not raise any suspicion of plagiarism. Dr. Simeonov has the mandatory minimum of scientific citations. The scholarly contributions in his dossier are well presented and justified.

The publications with which Dr. Simeonov participates in the competition, together with the rest of his scholarly activity, present him as an accomplished historian with a broad approach to the problems he studies.

The attached lists of publications, citations, references, scientific notes show that the candidate fulfils the minimum national requirements for the scientific field of Humanities, professional field 2.2 History and Archaeology.

All of the above gives me reason to believe that Dr. Simeon Simeonov possesses the necessary scholarly qualities and meets all the requirements for holding the academic position of Associate Professor according to the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria and its implementing regulations. As a member of the scientific jury, I vote with conviction that he be proposed for election by the Scientific Council of the Institute of Balkan Studies with the Centre of Thracology - BAS.

Sofia, 24 February 2023

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