

REVIEW

By Prof. Dr. Plamen Mitev, Department of History of Bulgaria,

Faculty of History, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Regarding: the scientific output and submitted materials

By Dr. Simeon Andonov Simeonov,

Participant in the competition for the academic position of "associate professor"

In the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology

(Modern Balkans)

Information about the competition:

Simeon Andonov Simeonov is the only candidate in the competition announced by the Institute of Balkan Studies with Centre of Thracology (IBCT) for the academic position of "associate professor" for the needs of the department "Modern Balkans" (SG, No. 85 of 25.10.2022). The legal deadlines and procedural requirements have been met. According to the submitted documents, the candidate meets the national requirements and those laid down in the Rules of the BAS for the implementation of ZRASRB and in the decision of the SC of IBCT dated 13.11. 2018 minimum scientometric requirements.

Brief information about the candidate:

Simeon Simeonov completed his higher education in the period 2007-2012 at Heidelberg University, Germany. In 2014-2015, he successfully studied a second master's program at the University of Chicago, USA, and in the following years he prepared a doctoral thesis at Brown University, Providence, which he defended in 2021. During his doctoral studies, he worked as a researcher at the Center for Early American Studies McNeill, Philadelphia (September 1, 2019 to May 31, 2020). During the 2021/2022 academic year, he was a guest lecturer at Brown University, Providence.

In the last five years, Dr. Simeon Simeonov has participated in two scientific research projects, one of which he is the head of, and presented reports on the topic of the competition at 13 international scientific conferences, of which 6 in the USA and one in Spain, Serbia, Russia, England and Denmark. A sign of his recognition among specialists in new and modern history at home and abroad is his membership in four authoritative international scientific organizations such as the Organization of American Historians (OAH) and the Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR).

Comments on the presented scientific works of the candidate:

Dr. Simeon Simeonov participated in the competition for "associate professor" with two monographs, four studies and two articles. The One Monograph (№ 2) - Builders of the Western World: How Consuls Created the Modern International Order. Veliko Tarnovo: "Faber", 2022, 311 p. - essentially overlaps with his doctoral dissertation, therefore, in accordance with the requirements of the ZRASRB and the Regulations for its application, it will not be peer-reviewed.

The habilitation thesis of Dr. Simeon Simeonov - "Francisco de Miranda in the Balkans: the birth of the idea of Latin American independence. Veliko Tarnovo: Faber, 2022", has a volume of 155 pages and is structured in an introduction, six chapters, a conclusion and a detailed bibliography of the used sources and scientific literature. For the convenience of the readers, a brief biographical reference is included before the introductory pages about the little-known Venezuelan revolutionary Francisco de Miranda, and seven illustrations have been added at appropriate places in the book.

In the introduction (p. 11 – 24), the author clearly and reasonedly outlined the goals and tasks he set for himself, as well as the research methods and approaches he applied when developing his chosen issue. I find Dr. Simeon Simeonov's reflections on the need to rethink some historiographical mantras that have come into force in the last hundred years, related to the imposition of the so-called, to be particularly valuable and relevant. "Western-centrist" account of the European Southeast from the 18th-19th centuries and the national revolutions of the subject Balkan peoples. Although brief, the analytical review of the studies and sources for Francisco de Miranda (especially those related to his adventures in the Ottoman Empire) gives a correct orientation of what has been achieved so far, illustrates the author's historical erudition and reveals a very good knowledge not only of - the old, but also the most recent Balkanistic publications on the subject.

In the first two chapters of the monograph (respectively pp. 25-41 and 42-57) Dr. Simeonov traces the life path of his hero from his native Caracas to Dubrovnik, and in the next four chapters he presents in detail the Creole's experiences during his travels in the Balkan provinces of the High Gate and his stay in Russia (pp. 58-128). The exposition in all six chapters convincingly shows the professional maturity of Simeon Simeonov. His research style is characterized by academic thoroughness, ability for critical analysis and synthesis, ability to defend with concrete arguments his personal position on controversial or understudied issues of the biography of Francisco de Miranda. Indicative in this regard are the fascinating accounts of de Miranda's numerous meetings and conversations with various diplomatic officials, senior military officials, administrative officials, with representatives of the local elites in the USA, England, Italy, Dubrovnik, Russia, the Ottoman Empire, the Danube principalities. The descriptions of the individual episodes of the life of the future Latin American revolutionary until 1787 are filled with details, allowing to reproduce in a much greater completeness the polyphonic environment in which Francisco de Miranda's views/attitude towards slavery, towards despotism were formed and evolved and social ills in multinational empires, to liberalism and republican ideas. An indisputable merit in Dr. Simeon Simeonov's book is the panoramic view of what is happening in each of the countries where fate takes his hero (I mean the main economic, social, political, cultural and church-religious trends and specifics of development of the respective regions and countries). Acknowledgment also deserves the skillful use in the study of the interdisciplinary approach, as well as the possibilities of the so-called "transnational" and "intertwined" histories.

In the peer-reviewed monographic work, I will highlight five more significant contributions:

- Based on the critical analysis of various sources, important facts from the biography of Francisco de Miranda have been added and specified;
- For the first time, the travels of Francisco de Miranda in the European Southeast (Dubrovnik, the Balkan dominions of the Ottoman Empire), Anatolia and Russia are described and analyzed in detail;
- The influence that Francisco de Miranda saw and experienced during his stay in the Balkans and in Russia had on the formation and evolution of his political views is highlighted;

- New, previously unused documentary material not only about the life of de Miranda, but also about the affairs of foreign diplomatic representatives in the countries of the European south is included in the scientific circulation;

- A different from the previous Eurocentric approach is proposed for understanding the specifics of the so-called "oriental despotism", about the relations "West - East" and "center - periphery" in the context of the European New Age.

The professional qualities and skills of Dr. Simeon Simeonov mentioned so far are also confirmed when familiarizing with the other publications with which he participated in the competition for " associate professor" announced by the IBCT. Formally speaking, the proposed six articles and studies have points of intersection and common elements with the author's two monographs, but I would like to emphasize that each of these publications has its own sound in the context of Dr. Simeonov's efforts to reveal the role of the network of consular offices in the Balkans of one or another country for the development not only of the great Eastern question, but also of global international relations in the 19th century. The construction and functioning of the various diplomatic missions can also be seen as a kind of matrix for the implementation of certain policies by the great powers in the Balkans and in Latin America, regardless of the specifics of their geopolitical interests. Just as an example, I will point out the observations, comments and assessments that Dr. Simeonov makes about the actions of the Russian consulates in the Balkans. The author's reflections on the evolution of the US consular services can be assessed in the same direction; about the "hidden" potentials of consular officers to solve various issues at the local level; for the example that the Balkan peoples set at the beginning of the 19th century for the upcoming national-revolutionary upheavals and changes on the "old" continent.

Conclusion:

The above-mentioned contributions and the results of the scientific production and research activity of Dr. Simeon Andonov Simeonov give me reason to confidently recommend to the Honorable Scientific Jury to award him the academic position of " associate professor" in professional direction 2.2. History and archaeology.

Sofia, 08.03.2023

(prof. dr. Plamen Mitev)