

REVIEW

by Assoc. Prof. Ivanka Slavchova Sakareva, PhD

South-West University “Neofit Rilski”, Blagoevgrad

for the academic degree of “Doctor of Sciences” in the doctoral programme “Theory and Practice of Translation”, in professional field 2.1. Philology

Candidate: Assoc. Prof. Boris Anatolievich Naimushin, PhD

Title of the dissertation:

“TRENDS AND PERSONALITIES IN DIPLOMATIC TRANSLATION IN BULGARIA IN THE PERIOD 1944–1974 AND SOME COMPARISONS WITH THE USSR, THE USA, ROMANIA, HUNGARY AND CUBA”

I. Brief biographical information about the candidate

Boris Naimushin is an established translator, lecturer, researcher, and editor with extensive professional experience in translation and foreign-language education. Since 1990, he has worked as a freelance interpreter and translator, and since 1995 he has been a lecturer at New Bulgarian University. Since 2014, he has been Editor-in-Chief of the scholarly journal *English Studies* at NBU, indexed in Web of Science and a number of other international scholarly databases. He holds a doctoral degree and master’s qualifications in Bulgarian Philology and English, Hebrew Studies, and interpreter training, as well as the academic rank of Associate Professor in Theory and Practice of Translation. He is a member of the Union of Translators in Bulgaria and the European Society for Translation Studies, and his professional language profile includes Russian, English, French, Spanish, Italian, and Greek.

II. Overview of the candidate’s scientific and research-applied output

All submitted works are accepted for evaluation. The dissertation represents a large-scale interdisciplinary study of the history of diplomatic translation in Bulgaria during the period 1944–1974, situated at the intersection of Translation Studies, history, diplomatic studies, and biographical approaches. The dissertation, comprising 286 pages, consists of an introduction, an author’s preface, acknowledgements, five chapters, a conclusion, a statement of scientific contributions, and a bibliographical corpus. Each chapter includes an annotation and concludes with findings, which facilitates the reader’s orientation.

In the Introduction, the author substantiates the relevance and scholarly significance of the topic, the aim and objectives, the research concept, the state of research on the subject, the theoretical and methodological framework, and the source corpus of the study devoted to diplomatic translation in Bulgaria during the period 1944–1974, placing translators at the centre as active participants in diplomatic communication and as a professional community whose presence often remains scarcely visible in traditional historical narratives. A strong feature is precisely this

conceptual thread linking the individual case studies: the translator as an “invisible participant” in diplomatic contacts. The object and subject of the study, the central thesis, the aim, and the specific objectives are clearly formulated, focusing on tracing the professionalization and institutionalization of diplomatic translation, reconstructing translators’ biographies, and analysing their role in official and unofficial diplomatic contacts. The relevance and scholarly significance of the topic stem from the insufficiently developed history of diplomatic translation and from the need to reconstruct the role of linguistic mediation in the development of international relations and the translation profession. The main aim is to trace and analyse the institutional, professional, and political factors that determined the formation and development of diplomatic translation in Bulgaria, while at the same time reconstructing professional biographies, models of training and professionalization, and specific practices of translation mediation.

The author defines the chronological and geographical scope, situates the study within the context of the early and classical Cold War, and justifies 1974 as a symbolic boundary associated with the establishment of the Union of Translators in Bulgaria and the institutional consolidation of the profession. A broad and diverse source corpus is presented, including archival documents, memoirs, periodical press, photographs, audiovisual materials, and other published and unpublished evidence, while the principles governing their critical use and comparison are also clarified. In a world of digital technologies, Naimushin also emphasizes that contemporary computer-assisted writing tools, including artificial intelligence systems, were used in preparing the study solely for language editing, text structuring, and discussion of possible interpretive approaches.

Methodology is one of the strengths of the study. The author employs historical-descriptive and comparative-historical analysis, a biographical approach, critical analysis of documentary and memoir sources, microhistorical and prosopographical approaches, visual analysis, and elements of oral history. A significant advantage is the critical attitude towards memoir sources and authorial subjectivity.

The scholarly novelty and originality of the study are clearly outlined: a comprehensive historical investigation of diplomatic translation during the Cold War, the reconstruction of professional biographies, and the introduction into scholarly circulation of new archival, photographic, and memoir sources, including the identification of translators involved in specific international events, as well as the distinctive structure of the study.

Chapter One provides a critical review of the scholarly literature, normative documents, memoirs, and archival sources related to the history, theory, and practice of diplomatic translation in modern times. It examines the development of diplomatic interpreting, the status and role of the diplomatic translator, professional ethics, confidentiality, and the principal models of translation mediation – the neutral and affiliated translator. The analysis emphasizes the need to combine high linguistic competence with knowledge of the political, cultural, and protocol context. Bulgarian normative and scholarly sources are also examined, including publications, manuals, and translators’ testimonies. The review demonstrates that diplomatic translation remains an insufficiently researched field, with the available literature relying predominantly on memoir testimonies, interviews, and a limited number of archival sources.

Chapter Two presents the terminological and methodological foundations of the study of diplomatic translation in Bulgaria during the period 1944–1974. Diplomatic translation is defined as a form of consecutive interpreting and chuchotage in high-level diplomatic contacts, while its specific features are distinguished from conference interpreting, as are the roles of the “diplomatic translator” and the “diplomat-translator”. The methodological framework combines a historical-descriptive, biographical, and comparative-historical approach with archival and memoir research, visual analysis, a prosopographical-microhistorical method, and oral history. Particular importance is attached to photographs, interviews, and personal archives as non-traditional sources for reconstructing translators’ professional activities and biographies, as well as to issues of subjectivity, translator identification, and the emergence of myths concerning translation errors. The chapter substantiates the need for an interdisciplinary approach to recovering poorly documented aspects of the history and practice of diplomatic translation.

The study demonstrates a very good command of the scholarly field. The theoretical foundation is convincingly linked to the working definition of “diplomatic translation”, its distinction from conference interpreting, and the distinction between a “diplomatic translator” and a “diplomat-translator”.

Chapter Three examines the role of foreign brigadiers and Bulgarian brigadier-interpreters in the international youth brigade movement in the People’s Republic of Bulgaria in 1946–1949, viewing the movement primarily as an environment for translation and intercultural mediation. On the basis of archival, memoir, and biographical sources, the organization and specific features of translation activity are reconstructed, as well as the diversity of translators’ functions – linguistic mediators, cultural and educational workers, and political instructors. The Bulgarian experience is placed in an international context through comparison with the USSR and Yugoslavia, with particular attention paid to the participation of future intellectuals, public figures, and diplomats. Among the study’s contributions are the identification and biographical reconstruction of the translator Donka Melamed (Daskalova), as well as the substantiation of the thesis that brigadier-interpreters constituted an important and insufficiently researched stage in the development of interpreting and diplomatic translation in Bulgaria and a distinctive school for the formation of linguistic, organizational, and intercultural competences.

It is particularly valuable that the literature review is not limited to Translation Studies but is linked to historical methodology and the study of professional communities. This is appropriate to the interdisciplinary nature of the work.

Chapter Four examines the formation and development of diplomatic translation in Bulgaria and the USSR during the Cold War, tracing the training, professional careers, and biographies of translators engaged in high-level international political contacts. The changes in the diplomatic corps after 1944 and the various forms of training for translators and diplomats are analysed, including specialized courses, training at Soviet institutions, and programmes at the University of Geneva. The study shows that, unlike in the USSR, a more flexible system developed in Bulgaria, in which, alongside employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, university lecturers, literary translators, editors, and journalists also participated. On the basis of archival and memoir sources, the diverse professional and ethical

challenges faced by translators are revealed; their functions extended beyond linguistic mediation and included participation in complex intercultural and interpersonal situations. The prosopographical approach contributes to restoring the institutional memory of this insufficiently researched professional community and to outlining the significant place of diplomatic translators in the history of Bulgarian diplomacy and international relations.

Chapter Five examines the role of translators and linguistic mediators during the 15th session of the United Nations General Assembly in 1960, identifying the participants in the delegations of Bulgaria, the USSR, Romania, Hungary, and Cuba and reconstructing their involvement in official and unofficial diplomatic contacts. On the basis of archival documents, memoirs, photographs, periodical press, and audiovisual sources, various forms of translation mediation and the specific features of diplomatic communication in the conditions of the Cold War are analysed. Particular attention is paid to the professional biographies of translators and linguistic mediators and to the meetings between Nikita Khrushchev and Fidel Castro and between Todor Zhivkov and Fidel Castro in New York, at which the translators Menia Martinez and Stella Avishai are identified. The study highlights the significant, yet often overlooked, role of translators as active mediators in international relations and contributes to bringing little-known figures and practices from the history of diplomatic translation during the Cold War into scholarly circulation.

In the concluding part of the dissertation, the results of the study of the formation and development of diplomatic translation in Bulgaria during 1944–1974 are summarized. On the basis of an interdisciplinary approach and a diverse body of sources, diplomatic translation is presented as an independent and promising, yet still insufficiently developed, field in Translation Studies and historical research. The analysis of archival documents, memoirs, photographs, audiovisual materials, and oral testimonies, combined with prosopographical and microhistorical approaches, makes it possible to reconstruct professional biographies and practices that have remained outside traditional historical narratives. It is established that the development of Bulgarian diplomatic translation was strongly influenced by the Soviet model but gradually acquired specific national characteristics, including the more flexible involvement of university lecturers, journalists, editors, and literary translators alongside professional staff of the foreign-policy apparatus. The study reveals the importance of international youth brigades as an environment for developing intercultural mediation skills and demonstrates that translators' activities went beyond technical linguistic mediation, encompassing participation in official and unofficial contacts, the building of trust, and the facilitation of intercultural dialogue. The analysis of international contacts, including the 15th session of the United Nations General Assembly in 1960, contributes to identifying a number of translators and reconstructing their role in specific diplomatic interactions. In summary, the study places translators and their professional community at the centre of the analysis and contributes both to expanding knowledge of the history of translation and to a fuller understanding of diplomatic processes and international relations in Bulgaria during the Cold War, while also outlining prospects for future research.

The bibliography includes 378 titles and 87 archival units from the Central State Archive.

The submitted author's abstract adequately reflects the content of the dissertation within 30 pages.

The author's publication activity includes a total of 65 publications, of which 6 are scholarly articles and papers published in refereed and indexed editions, 53 are publications in non-indexed scholarly journals and edited collective volumes, 6 are co-authored publications, and 1 is a dictionary to which the author contributed as a compiler.

The bibliometric indicators meet the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act and the Regulations for its implementation.

All submitted works are the author's own work. No plagiarism or other practices incompatible with academic integrity are evident anywhere in the works.

III. Scientific Contributions, Originality and Independence of the Research

The contributions are clearly stated and correspond to the main concept of the study. Among the most significant are: the comprehensive historical study of diplomatic translation in Bulgaria during the Cold War; the reconstruction of professional biographies through a prosopographical approach; the introduction of new archival, photographic, and memoir sources; the study of professional training; the analysis of the international youth brigade movement as an environment for the formation of translation personnel; the clarification of specific features of the Bulgarian model of diplomatic translation; and the reconstruction of translation mediation during the 15th UN General Assembly, where the comparison of different types of evidence in the cases concerning the international brigades emerges as a particularly strong practice.

Of particular significance is the contribution associated with the identification of poorly documented translators and the reconstruction of professional trajectories. The source base is impressive in both scope and diversity. Documents from the Central State Archive and regional archives, the Bulgarian News Agency (BTA) archive, foreign electronic collections, UN archives, memoirs, periodical press, photographs, audiovisual materials, and interviews have been used. The author notes that some of the archival materials are being introduced into scholarly circulation for the first time.

The originality is convincingly demonstrated through the combination of historical reconstruction, Translation Studies, prosopography, and microhistory. The author states that the study is independent and is not related to his previous works submitted for the acquisition of a doctoral degree and habilitation.

IV. Opinions, Recommendations and Remarks

The dissertation "Trends and Personalities in Diplomatic Translation in Bulgaria in the Period 1944–1974 and Some Comparisons with the USSR, the USA, Romania, Hungary and Cuba" is of high scholarly value for the history of translation, diplomatic studies, and the study of professional communities. It also has potential practical value for translator training, as it demonstrates the historical transformation of the professional roles, training, and institutional models of diplomatic translators.

As a possible addition, a brief section entitled “Contemporary Dimensions of the Historical Findings” could be included which, without disrupting the historical perspective, would show how the reconstructed models – trust, confidentiality, institutional affiliation, linguistic competence, and professional training – relate to the contemporary theory and practice of diplomatic and political translation.

The rich illustrative material and the direct incorporation of photographs and visual evidence into the analytical text are particularly impressive. The author has also paid attention to the provenance and status of the images.

My editorial recommendation, which is not mandatory, concerns conciseness. In places, the detailed biographical and documentary narrative could be shortened or structured in tables/appendices without losing the evidentiary material. This would allow the analytical line to stand out even more clearly.

The interdisciplinary nature of the study, in which approaches and tools from Translation Studies, history, prosopography, and microhistory are organically combined, is of particular scholarly value. This makes it possible to reconstruct specific professional biographies and shed light on difficult-to-access or insufficiently researched translation practices that remain outside traditional historical and Translation Studies narratives. The international perspective of the study, manifested both in its comparative context and in the author’s publication activity in Bulgarian, English, and Russian, is also among its undeniable merits. In this way, the dissertation goes beyond the framework of a national study and places the issue of Bulgarian diplomatic translation within the broader context of international research on the history and theory of translation.

V. Conclusion

In view of all the above, I conclude that the submitted dissertation possesses significant scientific, methodological, empirical, and interdisciplinary contributions. As a member of the scientific jury, I give a positive assessment of the work of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Boris Anatolievich Naimushin entitled “Trends and Personalities in Diplomatic Translation in Bulgaria in the Period 1944–1974 and Some Comparisons with the USSR, the USA, Romania, Hungary and Cuba” and fully support the awarding of the academic degree “Doctor of Sciences” in field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology, doctoral programme “Theory and Practice of Translation”.

Date: 30th Sept, 2026

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivanka Sakareva

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