

REVIEW

by Prof. **Stiliyan Stoyanov**, Ph.D.

member of the scientific jury for the defense of a dissertation for the degree of

Doctor of Science by Assoc. Prof. **Boris Anatolyevich Naimushin, Ph.D.**

in scientific field 2. Humanities,

Professional field 2.1. Philology, scientific specialty "Theory and Practice of Translation"

Subject: "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"

Reason for writing: Order No. 3-PK-239/15.07.2026 of the Rector of the New Bulgarian University

Boris Naimushin is an associate professor of theory and practice of the translation at the NBU, Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures. He holds a master's degree in Bulgarian philology with a second major in English, both from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". In 1997, he defended his dissertation for the award of the ONS "doctor" on the topic: "Pastive constructions in the Bulgarian and Russian languages and some comparisons with the English language". He holds a master's degree in Hebrew studies, as well as a master's degree in interpreter training, obtained from the School of Translators at the University of Geneva. He is a member of the Union of the Translators in Bulgaria, as well as the European Society for Translation Studies. Editor-in-chief of the journal English Studies at NBU , indexed in authoritative databases including WoS , ERIH PLUS, EBSCO, RINCI, etc. The attached CV shows that he is a freelance translator and interpreter, and the dissertation shows that he has many years of experience as a diplomatic translator.

In this sense, the dissertation work proposed for defense " 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" quite logically fits into the profile of Boris Naimushin: an oral and written translator with many years of experience, on the one hand, and on the other - a theorist and researcher in the problematic field of translation studies. This let me emphasize right now, gives density and persuasiveness to the theses, plots and comments developed in the text of the dissertation. This is a text in which the grayness of the theory with the green tree of life are extremely appropriately combined, if I may allow myself a reference to Goethe's Mephistopheles. In fact, the theory has not even managed to turn gray and perhaps one of the reasons is the scientific curiosity and persistence with which Boris Naimushin investigates diplomatic translation. In essence, the dissertation is a very interesting story about the history of diplomatic translation in Bulgaria, set in multiple contexts: biographical, political, sociocultural, geopolitical, each of which is condensed with memoirs, archival documents, and photographs.

In institutional terms, the scientometric report attached to the documentation shows that Boris Naimushin meets, with a large margin, the national requirements for acquiring the scientific degree "Doctor of Science".

The dissertation has a total volume of 309 pages and consists of an introduction, five chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography and an appendix containing an inventory of archival materials.

The introduction logically and convincingly states the relevance of the study, its object and subject, goals and objectives, methodology. The scientific novelty and originality of the dissertation are well outlined: for the first time in Bulgarian historiography and translation literature, diplomatic translation is considered as an independent object of complex historical research. Biographies, professional practices and forms of mediation of diplomatic translators are

documented and reconstructed, new archival, photographic and memoir sources are introduced into scientific circulation. In my opinion, the examination of the brigade movement of the second half of the 1940s as an environment in which a significant part of the later established diplomatic translators and diplomat translators began their translation practice is extremely valuable. An environment of strict ideological control and surveillance, in which the requirements for professionalism and loyalty to the socialist state are intertwined. As noted in the introduction, the research is interdisciplinary in nature and combines approaches from the fields of history, translation studies, biographical studies and historical anthropology. In this sense, it is logical to clearly state that the main research interest is directed at the people who carry out language mediation, their professional profile, training, biography and participation in diplomatic contacts.

The first chapter of the dissertation offers a critical review of selected literature related to the history, theory and practice of oral diplomatic translation in recent times. Boris Naimushin is familiar with an impressive number of texts devoted to diplomatic translation, and rightly claims that research on diplomatic translation is for the most part of a popular science nature, lacks a methodological basis and ultimately the emphasis is not so much on the theory of diplomatic translation as on stories, sometimes of an anecdotal nature, related to translation and the translated. Boris Naimushin notes that translators often write memoirs, in which, however, the emphasis is not on the methodology of translation (the specifics of the craft, roughly speaking) but on some reconstruction of facts and events, very often influenced by the emotion, political beliefs and biases of the translator. Boris Naimushin draws attention to the subjective nature of memoir literature as a source of information about diplomatic translation. The memoirs of diplomats, translators and political figures in Bulgaria who worked in the period under study were, without exception, published after 1989, and accordingly, the

syndrome of "rewriting biography and transforming creativity" (Plamen Doinov) and the mass subjective perspective should be taken into account.

Boris Naimushin devotes a subchapter to memoir literature thematically related to diplomatic translation in the first chapter. The other two subchapters examine the scientific and media literature in Bulgaria on the problems of the diplomatic translation and the body of archival materials, commented on the following chapters of the dissertation.

The second chapter specifies the terminology and methodology of the study. The fields of the different types of diplomatic interpreting are specified: consecutive, simultaneous, whispering, as well as the specifics of the diplomatic and conference interpreting.

In methodological terms, the dissertation is based on the historical-descriptive approach. Boris Naimushin motivates his choice by saying that this approach involves the use of all available materials: scientific research, media articles, memoirs and interviews, archival documents, photographs and newsreels, and, accordingly, comparisons between them. The main methodological tool is the prosopographic-microhistorical approach, which combines the analysis of the collective characteristics and professional trajectories of diplomats and translators belonging to different generations and institutional environments with a detailed study of specific translation situations and individual professional trajectories. The historical-anthropological perspective proves to be extremely successful – translation is not viewed simply as a linguistic result; the study is interested in translators as historical actors, whose decisions, biographies, social background, professional training and personal contacts influence the processes of communication.

The third chapter, "Foreign foremen and Bulgarian foremen translators during the foremen movement in the People's Republic of Bulgaria in 1946–1949," examines the foremen movement as a specific space for intercultural

communication and an environment for translation cooperation. Examining the foremen movement from such a perspective is undoubtedly one of the contributions of the dissertation. Boris Naimushin's analysis is dense, the story is more than interesting, and the evidence is convincing. The translators, as stated in the second chapter, are examined as historical figures with their specific biographies: Yeshua Almaleh, Serefim Serafimov, Chavdar Dragoychev, Zhana Molkhova, Iskra Panova, the Kyuranov brothers, Donka Melamed, Ruscho Ikonopisov, etc. The observation that the foreman translators later entered the main corps of diplomatic translators, diplomat translators and conference translators, as well as the significant names in the field of literary translation, is well-founded. Boris Naimushin's systematic research work with archival materials allows him to convey the specifics of that time, when there were almost no trained translators loyal to or inspired by the ideas of the new government; when translators from the time before 1944 were viewed with suspicion; when loyalty to the dominant ideology was more important than the accuracy of the translation; when foreign foreman translators, among whom the names of Alain Rob Grier and Mercia McDermott stand out, were offered living and food conditions unthinkable for Bulgarian foreman translators, and yet Alain Rob Grier lasted only four days in the foreman translator camp, after which he traveled around Bulgaria; when the official authorities wonder how to cover up and conceal the politically and sexually unacceptable behavior of the foreign foremen comrades, bordering on Trotskyism or – equally reprehensible – homosexuality.

The idea of continuity is also helpful – both in terms of the professional path of translators and in terms of their training. Boris Naimushin shows that there are attempts at training, but in general the emphasis is placed on forming the correct ideological position. The basic (and seemingly the only) lecture delivered to future translators at the Ninth International Festival of Youth and Students is “The Translator and Foreign Intelligence”.

The fourth chapter of the dissertation focuses on the construction of a new diplomatic service and the formation of a new generation of diplomatic translators. Naimushin aptly draws parallels between the processes in Bulgaria and the USSR, outlining the similarities and differences in a reasoned manner: the long-serving Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, Vyacheslav Molotov, was looking for engineers to be trained as diplomats and translators; in the non-industrialized Bulgaria of that time, lawyers and, as is well demonstrated in the dissertation, remists were needed. The scientific value of the fourth chapter is undoubted: Boris Naimushin, relying on numerous memoirs and archival materials, some of which he discovered and introduced into scientific circulation, comments on the dynamics of processes in the field of translation through the biographical and professional trajectories, sometimes very interestingly intersecting, of leading names in translation: Anna Lilova, Lilyana Atanasova, Hristo Smirnenski's nephew Veselin Izmirliiev, Vilhelm Filipov, the translators of the Bulgarian National Radio broadcasts abroad, some of whom in certain situations are also diplomatic translators, such as German Miovski, for example. The chapter again presents and defends the thesis that the institutions of the socialist state are looking for not just a translator, but a trusted person, an intermediary. He, in turn, must feel flattered that they trust him, and work, as the documents exhibited by Boris Naimushin show, for 1.25 leva per hour, but no more than 10 leva per day in 1968. Still, the authorities had some idea of the nervous tension characteristic of the work of a simultaneous interpreter, and in the following year, 1969, they raised the fee to as much as 20 leva per day.

The thematic center of the fifth chapter is the Fifteenth Session of the UN General Assembly in September-October 1960, which brought together leaders from all over the world, including Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, who, as a sign of disagreement, knocked on the bench in the UN hall with his removed shoe (or

sandal). An anecdotal incident for which Boris Naimushin found evidence in the stories of the translators in the Bulgarian delegation.

In fact, the anecdote is an essential thematic area in both the history of diplomacy and the history of diplomatic translation, something that Boris Naimushin clearly demonstrates in two of the chapters of his dissertation: the second and the fifth. Boris Naimushin traces the meetings and conversations that the people of the Bulgarian delegation, and especially its leader Todor Zhivkov, had in the fall of 1960 in the United States. Not without reason, Naimushin believes that among the most significant results of the dissertation is the identification of Stella Avishai as the translator at the first meeting between Todor Zhivkov and Fidel Castro. I should note that the dissertation contains numerous identifications of translators who until now were either unknown or had been misidentified. The personal emotion of the translator Boris Naimushin to bring the diplomatic translator out of the twilight zone assigned to him institutionally or rather traditionally has undoubtedly helped the researcher of diplomatic translation Boris Naimushin to tell the history of this type of translation in Bulgaria through the biographies of the specific translators, whom he literally – through memoirs, archival materials, meetings with heirs of significant translators, photographs – brings out of the twilight zone. This, I am convinced, is the main contribution of the dissertation. I completely agree with the contributions systematized by the author of the dissertation: methodological contributions, contributions to the history of diplomatic translation, a generalizing contribution.

I have no critical remarks about the text, but rather recommendations for its future existence in the form of a book, which book, I am convinced, will be useful and, above all, interesting to a wide range of readers:

- Better motivation of the connections between individual paragraphs or subchapters, especially in chapters four and five;

- Removing the rare oversights, let's say that the dissertation says that the news of the death of Vesselin Izmirliiev was published in 1985 in the newspaper "Duma", and the photographic material shows the predecessor of "Duma" "Rabotnichesko Delo" that actually existed in 1985.

Conclusion Everything stated so far gives me reason to confidently recommend to the esteemed scientific jury to award the scientific degree of "Doctor of Sciences" to Assoc. Prof. Boris Anatolyevich Naimushin, Ph.D. in the scientific field 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology, scientific specialty "Theory and Practice of Translation"

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Blagoevgrad,

25.09.2026 г.

(Prof. Stiliyan Stoyanov, Ph.D.)