

## OPINION

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**CONCERNING:** The competition for acquiring the academic position of **Associate Professor** in *Film Studies, Film Art, and Television* (history of the Bulgarian cinema; archives and institutions) professional direction 8.4 Theater and Film Art, (published in State Gazette issue 41 of 09.05.2023) for the needs of the *Screen Arts Department* of the Institute of Art Studies, BAS with only one candidate Dr. Deyan Ivanov Statulov

Dr. Deyan Statulov takes part in the competition with scholarly publications and documents proving scientific, expert and teaching activities. He holds the position of Chief Assistant at the Institute of Art Studies since 2016, i.e., for more than 7 years, he is a lecturer at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (more than 2 years), he has been a program director of the House of Cinema, editor-in-chief, scriptwriter, film commentator in television, edits festival newspapers and participates in the organization of national and international film festivals, etc. All this fulfils the requirements of Article 24, of the ADASRB. The submitted monograph and publications prove the serious potential of the candidate as a scholar. The issues Dr. Statulov analyzes in his publications and monograph outline a consistent scholarly interest in the field of film history and the use of cinema by the totalitarian government as an instrument for the manipulation of public consciousness in Bulgaria.

In the habilitation thesis entitled "(Re)commissioned Films" and the subtitle "Propaganda Practices in Bulgarian Cinema 1944-1989", Dr. Statulov sets himself a topical goal: "to examine the mechanisms, means and institutions through which propaganda was carried out in Bulgarian cinema", focusing the research mainly on feature films and examining the processes in the film industry from the point of view of the ideological canons of totalitarianism.

The monograph is a kind of continuation of the candidate's doctoral dissertation, in which he explored censorship in our cinema and the mechanisms of pre- and post-control over films, while the present work focuses on the structures for using cinema as an instrument of propaganda. The five chapters of the text examine the emergence

and nature of propaganda from a global and historical perspective; the imposition in Bulgaria of the Soviet model and style of life after 1944; and the overall unification of citizens' lives through the importation of Bolshevik practices into the state-controlled Bulgarian film industry. The author has studied a large array of archival documents that reveal the dynamics of the development of the process of awareness of the propaganda potential of cinema as a mass medium and the imposition of a model for its use.

Dr. Statulov's personal contribution consists in the systematization and in-depth analyses of the establishment and operation of the overall apparatus of ideological control over the production, distribution, and exhibition of feature films in Bulgaria in the period in question and the impact of this ruthless interference on the development of Bulgarian cinema and society. The author shows skill and dexterity in handling archival materials and skillfully inserts evidence from them into the analytical text without compromising the sense of integrity and readability. Despite the short historical distance to the period under study, he presents a relatively comprehensive picture of totalitarian propaganda practices in Bulgarian cinema through the eyes of a theorist and a practitioner. The monograph analyses iconic works that most accurately demonstrate the author's thesis and the issues he explores.

I would recommend the author to continue his research on totalitarian practices in their attempt to encompass the whole social cultural life by expanding the perimeter of the research to documentary, popular science cinema and television, as well as documentary reportages, theory, and education. I believe that the place of film theory and film criticism in the process of control and censorship should not be downplayed. This recommendation of mine is based on my excellent impression of the author's theoretical publications submitted for habilitation.

Dr. Deyan Statulov's monograph is of undeniable interest to the film community and film students, as well as to readers with a certain interest in our recent past. Moreover, there has been a deliberate tendency recently to idealize this dark period in our history. The text is written in a strictly scholarly and objective way.

The candidate's teaching and research activities have been conducted at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and the Luben Groys College. In addition, he is a practitioner of film exhibitions as a programmer and director of cinema, a participant in the organization of festivals as a leader and member of the organizing team.

## CONCLUSION

The habilitation thesis submitted by the candidate - the monograph "(Re)commissioned Films" with subtitle "Propaganda Practices in Bulgarian Feature Cinema 1944-1989" contain original contributions, further develop and enrich the scientific knowledge of the history of Bulgarian cinema and film theory in general and meet all the requirements of the ADASRB, AIADASRB and the Regulations of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences on the Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and for Holding Academic Positions.

In view of the above and considering the overall creativity, presence, and authority of the candidate among the colleagues, I strongly recommend the Scientific Council of the Institute of Art Studies to elect Dr. Deyan Ivanov Statulov to the academic position of Associate Professor in Film Studies, Film Art, and Television in professional field 8.4. Theater and Film Art.

Sofia

12.09.2023 Prof. Dr. M. Meltev