

ry rightfully due to him as a great explorer and discoverer. Alonso de Oheda was the first discoverer of America, the creator of the first European city and the builder of the first Church in the world. He laid the foundations of the Spanish overseas empire and corrected Columbus' erroneous assumption that the newly discovered lands were the "West Indies". Alonso de Oheda—Dragan Ohridski was trying to mobilize the Spanish Kings against the Ottoman Empire. With his discoveries he attempted to make Spain richer and mightier for an eventual war with the suppressors of his own country. But, Spanish attention, like that of the rest of Europe was turned not to the Ottoman Empire, but to the unknown world, called by him "Hard Land". There was an avid desire for adventure, discoveries and gold. Dragan Ohridski's last wish was to be buried under the entrance of the chapel of the monastery of the Franciscan Order in Santo Domingo, on the island of Espanol, so that every one would walk over his bones for having failed to fulfill his duty to his homeland.

During the last few months (1981-82), many interesting articles about Alonso de Oheda—Dragan Ohridski have been appearing in many publications in Bulgaria and abroad. They all appear to be the outcome of the diligent and persistent research of Ivan Dimitrov, who is preparing a book and a monograph of the works of Dragan

Oheda, the Spanish discoverer and of Christopher Columbus's colleague".

As I was reading the publications of Ivan Dimitrov, I felt proud that the star of a great Bulgarian sailor—discoverer, forgotten by both the Bulgarian and the Spanish historiographers, was reemerging from the dark past. It was then, that I was possessed by the desire to meet Ivan Dimitrov and to acquaint the readers with his difficult journey as a discoverer. Here is the interview:

Q. Mr. Dimitrov, when did you hear about Alonso de Oheda for the first time?

A. During the summer of 1942, as a highschool student, I heard talks about the diary of Mary-Madlisen Joseph, the nephew of Di Villar, the Bretonian Herzog. The diary was from 1491-1509. In it, Mary Madlisen announced that Alonso de Oheda was also known by the name of Dragan Ohridski. At that time the diary was the possession of Baron von Cramer, the heir to the Spanish Herzog Galias. Sometime during his possession, Cramer had established that Lihida was the ancient name of Ohrid.

You cannot imagine the desire that took hold of me to study the deeds of Dragan Ohridski. I had a weakness for foreign languages from the age of six. At the time, I spoke freely several of them, and immediately began to check every possible foreign encyclopedia. Little was written about Alonso. Some of his tra-

memoirs, Americo Vespucci, who envied the success of Alonso de Oheda, also called him "Alonso Negro".

Later I extended my research to Vienna. There, I found the "Mapa Mundi", drawn by Juan de la Cosa, with the help of Alonso de Oheda. On it, some of the islands and the coastal lands of South America, discovered by Alonso de Oheda had Bulgarian names. This map has subsequently been falsified and changed.

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ALONSO DE OHEDA or DRAGAN OHRIDSKI - new proofs about the great Bulgarian

portrait of Alonso de Oheda (Dragan Ohridski)

ponente.

«Dunque nasce & lochi per Alonso negro ritrovato. Cop. ex. m. di de Nouembrio. M. cccc. xlii. il a questo canchile re doue forto con la nave di quali fuito uiti. «Qui del pacifico uento a nave fenza timore alcuno: porta ro quel oro che al presente se trouaeno. Quantu e el uito po co. N. de la forte. & bonta de padra: troueno moiti belli Pipa e gli de molti colorati era siuissima tempera fenza fredo. «Non a ta di nefe de Nouembrio quella gente e de bona natura: fan no fenza foga alcuno: uita la node con le fue brache uentano a nave fenza timore come in cafo loro. Ma fono uiti de fue doue legati facciano fare indite. & molto reme che uito e ti gran quantita de bambai che da fue pella nalle fenza coltura a le canche le uito fono loro barighe. «Dopo partendo de qua rke ferendo per quea colpa de canche matene un loco bellu tra con calchenti: & cabelli pure a fi son fumi. & cardini: che mai uide piu belli: uiti nel qual uolendo de montare: uiti uita il contro piu de il. M. nonni armati a uanza loro: uiti per uita il qua del mondo mai uoleno ne pacen amida ne pacto alcuno: demontra uano in loro grandissima raffica: uiti quiti pare uano homini bianchi non elfuente che gli uano belli homini: & gra: portenati uiti de loro corpi bianchi de colore: & uiti uiti uiti»

ze: it proves without a doubt, that Alonso de Oheda is the Bulgarian Dragan, employed by the Spanish, as were many foreigners in the United Kingdom. In the XV and the XVI centuries, not a single Italian, Spaniard or other European was called a "Negro". Since Alonso was white, Americo Vespucci did not have any reason for calling him a "Negro". This fact is known from a description given of him by a contemporary, the chronicler, Bartolome de las

the war in Granada. Dragan-Alonso was a very domineering person and he treated the Florentian only as an adviser and recorder. This third-rank role given to Vespucci by Dragan Ohridski irritated and humiliated him painfully. Later on, however, he would avenge this humiliation by writing a series of fabricated stories, in which he described himself as the hero, and every time he had to mention Alonso de Oheda, he did not call him by his full name but by the derogatory nickname designating the "bad Bulgarian, that is 'Alonso Negro'".

It might be of interest, to look briefly at the life of Americo Vespucci. He was born on March 9, 1451, in Florence, Italy, the third child of the impoverished noble family, Anastasio and Elizabeth Mini. Americo received an education that was excellent for his time. He worked as a bank clerk in his native city until his fortieth year, then he began to work for the Florentine business firm of Luannotto Berardi in Seville. This firm was equipping four ships for a distant sailing, on behalf of the Spanish Kings.

On January 12, 1494, Americo received the sum of 10,000 marvedis from the king's treasurer, Pinedo. On February 3, 1496, the ships set sail for the Indies, but after two weeks they sank in a terrible storm. Vespucci was saved along with the most famous people of the Indies—Christopher Columbus and Alonso de Oheda. Vespucci showed a desire to participate in the next expedition, most

of Dragan-Alonso de Oheda, to king Manuel the Fortunate. He also advised Manuel the Fortunate to take the newly discovered lands of Brazil but only those lands south of Cape Branco, at the 10th parallel. Manuel was an energetic king and immediately ordered a whole flotilla, which was to be led by Americo Vespucci, to set sail towards those lands. To Vespucci's chagrin, however, he was again given a third-rank position of an adviser and a controller. Portugal, that time had many experienced sea captains and pilots, thus the ambitions of Vespucci remained unsatisfied. He led the Portuguese along the path of Dragan-Alonso and the lands somewhat south between the 10th and the 20th parallels. It was the Portuguese commanders of the Flotilla that claimed the coast of Brazil for the Portuguese Crown and not Americo Vespucci's reward for the expedition from the Portuguese monarch was humiliation. This forced him to return to Spain and he sought comfort in writing a letter to Lorenzo de Medici, in which he praised himself for undertaking his second sailing; this letter, however, remained unknown to the general public until its publication in 1789, by Bertoloci. In his descriptions, Americo invented two additional expeditions, which in reality he never undertook. In 1505 on the recommendations of Columbus, Vespucci obtained Spanish citizenship and was appointed Chief Inspector of Sea Expeditions, at which job