

REVIEW

from PROF. DR. VESSELINA VALKANOVA
Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in
scientific field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences
with a dissertation on the topic: „PHOTOGRAPHY AND PROPAGANDA IN
THE BULGARIAN PRESS IN THE PERIOD 1919 - 1944”

presented by TSVETAN TODOROV TOMCHEV, full -time doctoral
student in the Department “Press Journalism and Book Publishing” of
the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication
with supervisor: Assoc. PROF. GEORGY LOZANOV

PRESENTATION OF THE DOCTORAL STUDENT ON THE BASIS OF THE SUBMITTED DOCUMENTATION

Tsvetan Todorov Tomchev was enrolled as a full-time doctoral student in the Department of Press Journalism and Book Publishing on January 10, 2019, with a scientific supervisor Assoc. Prof. Georgy Lozanov. After completing the activities according to the individual plan, successfully passing the exam in the specialty, he was awarded with the right to defense and submitted his dissertation text for preliminary discussion. The doctoral student successfully approved her dissertation work on January 9, 2023 in front of

the extended staff of the Department of "Press Journalism and Book Publishing" and on the basis of two written reviews by qualified professors.

DISSERTATION AND AUTHOR ABSTRACT INFORMATION

The dissertation has a total volume of 268 pages, structured in a preface, four chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography containing 116 titles (in Cyrillic and Latin), 275 photographs, a summary of scientific contributions and a list of publications related to the topic.

As an internal reviewer in the Department of Press Journalism and Book Publishing, where the preliminary discussion took place, I must note that the dissertation work was further revised and edited, with the doctoral student conscientiously taking into account the opinions and recommendations of the reviewers and colleagues who participated in the discussion.

The abstract, attached to the defense documentation, has a volume of 20 pages and presents the dissertation work through a description and analysis of: the content of the dissertation work, the topics, object and subject, goal and tasks, research methodology, scientific results, conclusions and summaries, a summary of scientific contributions and a list of publications on the topic of the dissertation. The self-abstract is adequate to the dissertation, reflects substantially the structure, approach, and main summaries, and meets the requirements for self-referencing a dissertation, although there are some discrepancies in chapter and section headings.

ASSESSMENT OF THE ACTUALITY OF THE PROBLEM

The subject of this dissertation is photography in the press with a focus on news and reportage photography, mainly in illustrated editions, which are a source of propaganda suggestions, and the period between the two world wars proves to be fruitful for the researcher with trends, phenomena, names, examples. The relevance of the research is indisputable - the influence on the public, including with images, is among the main topics of modern communications, and systematic attempts to instill opinions and beliefs through photographic means of expression became widespread during and after the First World War and ranged from lithography, graphics, illustration as carriers of convincing images.

During the studied period, Soviet propaganda and the ideological work of educating the masses of the Russian Communist Party were particularly active, as well as Nazi propaganda in Germany, where the National Socialists actively used propaganda tools and techniques to achieve their goals. The first decades of the 20th century were a time of modernist techniques and exciting new styles in the visual arts, which, often ideologically determined, settled on the graphic scene in Europe and around the world.

The development clearly shows the professional commitment of Tsvetan Tomchev to the topic and object of research - he is the author of the books "GREAT PHOTOJOURNALISTS OF BULGARIA 1912-1960" and "GREAT PHOTOJOURNALISTS OF BULGARIA 1960 - 1989", tracing the history of Bulgarian photojournalism in Bulgaria from the first decades of the 20th century until the 1990s.

ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITIES OF THE DISSERTATION TEXT

In this first study in our country, dedicated to Bulgarian photojournalism and its propaganda functions, printed publications rich in photo images published until 1944 were examined - it is about the magazine „Ilyustrovana sedmitsa“, the newspapers „Ilyustrovana politika“, „Nashenets“, as well as the dailies „Utro“, „Zarya“, „Zora“ and "Dnevnik".

During the study of the object, the author looks at the processes and phenomena in the complex political and economic context of the time from 1919 to 1944, although the complete communistization and sovietization of the country began later - from 1949 with the fifth congress of the communist party.

For the purposes of the research, the author uses a methodology that includes the analysis of visual texts, comparative analyses, makes the necessary typologies of the visual newspaper narrative, determines the means of expression and characteristics of the photographic images in order to outline the genre, stylistic and professional profile of the research object.

On the basis of a solid empirical array studied and analyzed, Tsvetan Tomchev formulated the working hypothesis that *"during the period 1919-1944, reportage photography in Bulgaria acquired its genre, stylistic and professional maturity... For the studied period, we define as suggestions of a certain ideology with a propaganda purpose, the photographs instilling love for the homeland, for nature, for education and education, for the praise of cultural, technical and sports achievements of the Bulgarians"* (p. 15, dissertation), and the thesis that *"propaganda in the researched period has*

nature of an educational and moral purpose for the publishers" (p. 15, abstract).

In the first chapter of the dissertation "FROM PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION TO PHOTO-MESSAGE", the author devotes himself to an analysis of the emergence and development of illustrations in the press, brings out the important statements and answers for proving this thesis - about the impact through a photographic image and about the role of the photo as independent carrier of information, about reportage photography and photojournalism, about the role of color as part of the message in a printed publication, about the great personalities in the development of photoreportage, about the success and the impact of news.

In the second chapter of the dissertation "THE CANDID CAMERA AND THE 'GOLDEN YEARS' OF PHOTOJOURNALISM" or "THE ERA OF 'BREATHING LIFE' INTO PHOTOGRAPHY" (there is a discrepancy between the chapter titles in the abstract, in the contents of the dissertation and on the very pages at the beginning of chapters in the dissertation, p.80) Tsvetan Tomchev considers photography as *"life through the eyes of the photographer"*, emphasizes the experience of "Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung" in undirected, "sincere" photography, which significantly influenced styles and practices not only in Europe, but also in America. Here, the author defines and examines two of the essential genres of photojournalism - the photo essay and the photo report, which were seen in the dynamics of the 1930s, analyzes the method of the "candid" camera, the psychologism in the captured frames, the original approaches of the photographers who document the events.

In the third chapter - "BULGARIAN PHOTOJOURNALISTS "CREATORS OF CULTURE" OR "PROPAGANDA WITH PHOTOGRAPHY IN BULGARIA (1919 - 1944)"" (another discrepancy between the content and text of the dissertation and the abstract - p.100), the doctoral student examines the Bulgarian illustrated newspapers and magazines from the outlined period through the political, economic and legal prerequisites for the development of printing. The emphasis is on the figure of photojournalists, but also on publishers and editors, who gave impetus to Bulgarian photojournalism. The photographic content, propaganda techniques and the role of the Press Act and the State Protection Act on the development of press journalism and press photography in our country before the Second World War are analyzed.

The subject of analysis in the fourth chapter of the dissertation "FORMS AND GENRES IN JOURNALISTIC PHOTOGRAPHY UNTIL 1944" is the development of Bulgarian photojournalism from the 1920s to the 1940s. The exciting work of bright photojournalists who worked during the period is analyzed - undoubtedly contributing to science, despite the linear and descriptive approach. An attempt has been made to formulate types, forms and genres in photojournalism and their dynamics in the twenties and thirties of the twentieth century in the press.

QUALITIES OF THE DISSERTATION PAPER

The dissertation represents a definite contribution to the researched field. The text is easy to read, contains interesting and new facts about science and research in photojournalism and press journalism. The development demonstrates the doctoral student's professional reflection on the research field and extensive studies on the topic.

The research and theses are original and authored, Tsvetan Tomchev has demonstrated critical thinking towards the researched problem. Narrative analysis, discourse analysis, content analysis have a certain predominance in the dissertation, strengthening the theoretical analyzes or a precise empirical study based on an algorithm developed by the author would scientifically strengthen the text.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- With a view to the future publication of the thesis, the connections and analyzes based on the statement of the scientific problem can be strengthened, as well as the text can be restructured to achieve a logical organization and to avoid repetitions;
- There are a number of discrepancies between the dissertation and the abstract, between the names of the chapters and parts in the content of the dissertation and within it (for example, the third chapter on page 100 is entitled "Propaganda with Photography in Bulgaria (1919 - 1944)", in the content is named "Bulgarian Photojournalists - "Creators of Culture");
- To edit the conclusion, which gives a clearer view of the statement of the problem, the implementation of goals, tasks,

proving theses/hypotheses; conclusions; prospects; applicability;
Results analysis; general summaries.

QUESTIONS:

- What influences of European styles and national characteristics can be traced in Bulgarian visual communication and mainly in our periodicals between the two world wars?
- Are the large number of significant names of artists in the field of graphics, the magazine, the book of that time, as well as the "Rodno Izkustvo" movement reflected on the photographic image and the poster? For example, the increased presence of drawings and caricatures in a number of editions does it apply to styles, compositions, genres in photography?

CONCLUSION:

The present dissertation work has a certain contribution in the researches in public communications and information sciences, in press journalism and photojournalism.

The dissertation demonstrates considerable accumulation and research on the subject, which, together with the above-mentioned contributions of the research and despite some structural and technical imperfections, give me reasons to RECOMMEND TO THE RESPECTED MEMBERS OF THE SCIENTIFIC JURY TO SUPPORT THE AWARD OF THE EDUCATIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC DEGREE "DOCTOR" BY 3.5. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SCIENCES - PHOTOJOURNALISM OF TSVETAN TODOROV TOMCHEV FOR THE DISSERTATION PAPER

"PHOTOGRAPHY AND PROPAGANDA IN THE BULGARIAN PRESS IN THE PERIOD 1919 - 1944".

Prof. Dr. Veselina Valkanova



25/3/2023