



## OPINION<sup>1</sup>

Prepared by

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*(scientific position, scientific degree, name, surname, educational/scientific institution)*

for the acquisition of the Scientific degree "Doctor/Doctor of Sciences" in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences (\_\_\_\_\_)

with a dissertation paper on: "Photography and propaganda in the Bulgarian press in the period 1919-1944" \_\_\_\_\_

presented by Tsvetan Tomchev \_\_\_\_\_, full-time/part-time/freelance doctoral student at the Department of Press Journalism and Book Publishing of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication with supervisor:

Associate professor Georgi Lozanov \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>1</sup> Note: The text in italics gives reference points for evaluating research findings. Recommended volume of the Opinion – 2-3 standard pages



Let me start with the pleasant feeling it comes to heart when a person from practice turns to theory and tries to make sense of his professional experience and convey it to students. It is a very positive trend for me. It is still fragile and needs to be supported. In some sciences, success means theoretical knowledge becoming practical. The turning point is important too - when the accumulated practical experience becomes the basis for a theoretical generalization.

This is why I was so happy to find out that Tsvetan Tomchev, a proven professional, sat down to develop and defend his doctoral thesis. In my opinion - he has succeeded in this endeavour, which shows that a journalist is a journalist everywhere - at any event, in the archives or in the auditoriums.

Its topic is contemporary. At the very least, such research on photojournalism is not common among Bulgarian media specialists. As you know - "visual information" or "pictures" (in the old fashioned way) present a major factor in the creation of certain suggestions. Professor Veselina Valkanova theoretically clarified this process in her works, and it is no coincidence that the author often refers to her. Everyone knows from the practical field - the catchphrase of an American editor who received a very nice photo from an event. Naturally - he published it with a comment: "Another thousand words in the basket". Because pictures often say more than words.

His research is thorough, he used a lot of archive materials, and he has this "theoretical density". The topic is not new to him. Tsvetan Tomchev is already the author of two monographs: "The Great Photojournalists of Bulgaria 1912-1960", as well as "The Great Photojournalists of Bulgaria 1960-1989". The aim of the present study is not only to show respect for the past, in which Bulgarian photojournalism has its rightful place in the media world, but also to reveal the evolution of photography, as well as the principles of photographic narrative in the news.

The author studied 600 issues of "Illustrated Week" (with 40-60 photographs per issue), as well as the photographic material in the newspapers "Zora", "Zarya", "Utro", which is a fundamentally new and comprehensive study of Bulgarian photojournalism for the specific period. Nobody has done a large-scale thing like this in our country as of today. He creates a new classification of forms and genres in Bulgarian photojournalism until 1944 and how they are used by official propaganda. He correctly collected his empirical data and gives us a new interpretation of it.



The goals and tasks of the work are correctly set, one of them - aroused my special interest. Namely - what is the role of the legislation to limit the relevant photographic material in wartime and in peacetime. Precisely this issue was addressed in detail in the third chapter. It is well developed, showing all the legal "shackles" that have stopped the freedom of expression of journalists, including photojournalists. The Press Act passed in 1883 and updated in 1921, the Defence of the State Act passed in 1924, the Temporary Press Act of 1938 and finally the Wartime Press Act. Being tempted by the "law-censorship-media" connection, I want to ask the PhD student:

- The cited laws impose censorship. How does it differ from the censorship imposed after 1944?
- The author claims that "Propaganda in the studied period has the character of an educational and moral goal of the publishers". Does he believe that propaganda as a process really has any positive sides?
- Is there "good" propaganda and "bad" propaganda, what are their characteristics (if such distinction is made) and what distinguishes them? In the end - doesn't it depend on the point of view of the person who makes it and the person to whom it is directed?

I am convinced that Tsvetan Tomchev will prepare convincing answers to these questions. The contribution nature of his work is indisputable. He systematized for the first time the types, forms and genres in Bulgarian newspaper photography and their development. Last but not least, he reveals to us the activities of the "Association of Bulgarian and Foreign Journalists in Bulgaria", which is also a novelty for Bulgarian media historiography.

With regard to the other mandatory parameters for an opinion on his work - he has accumulated a significant bibliography, his text complies with the compositional requirements for proving a doctoral thesis, there are no discrepancies of the literary norms and the abstract fully matches the dissertation work.



He presented the necessary publications for participation in the competition, used a lot of illustrative material to prove his theses and meets all the requirements of the Regulations for the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions at the St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia, for approving and disclosing the results of the research according to Art. 5, Para. 5 and the minimum national requirements are covered under Art. 63, Para. 1, Item 4, and Art. 69, Para. 3.

In conclusion: The qualities of the proposed doctoral thesis are indisputable, as are the contributing moments in it. For this reason - I will definitely vote for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor of Science" to Tsvetan Tomchev.

Date: 27 March 2023

Reviewer: (\_\_\_\_\_)  
**Prof. Dr. Efrem Efremov**