



OPINION¹

from Prof. D.Sc. Lubomir Stoykov, UNWE

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

for obtaining educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD) in a professional field 3.5.
Public Communications and Information Sciences (Photojournalism)

with a dissertation on the topic: "Photography and propaganda in the Bulgarian press in the period 1919 - 1944", presented by Tsvetan Todorov Tomchev, a full-time doctoral student in the Department of "Press Journalism and Book Publishing" at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

with supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Georgi Lozanov

I. Evaluation of the qualities of the dissertation text

Tsvetan Tomchev focused on a curious and little-studied field of newspaper photography in the Kingdom of Bulgaria during the period 1919-1944. The subject of the dissertation is well chosen, which is related to the differentiation of report photographs of a propaganda nature from the entire image-information array at that time. The goal of the analysis is reasonable, namely - the enrichment of knowledge and ideas about the images and themes in the Bulgarian illustrated editions between the two world wars and the structuring and refinement of the genres in photojournalism in the context of propaganda communication in this historical segment of the existence of the Bulgarian monarchy. The main tasks are correctly indicated, among which the doctoral student's intention to discover and interpret the merit of Bulgarian photographers to professional photography, the importance of foreign photojournalists, the relationship between press legislation, its embargo nature and restrictions on freedom of speech and photographic means of expression, etc. The doctoral student's working hypothesis is logical, in which he points out not only the fact that report photography in our country has reached its professional and genre maturity and completion, but also that its propaganda aspects are mainly expressed with photographs of the king and the royal family, as well as with printed images promoting Nazism and the rise of Germany (after 1941).

¹ Note: The text in italics offers reference points for evaluating the research results. Recommended volume of the opinion - 2-3 standard pages



In the first chapter "From a photo illustration to a photo message", PhD student Tomchev clarifies the type of messages through photos and the propaganda carried out through photographic images; stops at photography in the news, considers it as an independent carrier of information; examines leading technological and professional concepts; focuses on the personality of the photographer and through brief features of renowned masters of the lens, such as Jimmy Hare, Erich Salomon, André Kertész, Brassai, Willi Ruge, Martin Munkácsi and Weegee. The emphasis in the second chapter, "The Candid Camera" and the "Golden Years" of Photojournalism, falls on the competition of the new media with the press, the Berliner Illustrate magazine, the peculiarities of the photo essay and photo reportage in the 1930s, the Spanish Civil War - respectively – psychologism in reports and the so-called "golden years of photojournalism".

The author deepens his analysis in the third chapter "Bulgarian photojournalists - "creators of culture", in which he competently and reasonably interprets the Bulgarian illustrated newspapers and magazines between 1919 and 1944, photography as propaganda, the State Protection Law, the Bulgarian illustrated press, makes personal characteristics and brings out features of the work style of Atanas Damyanov, Georgi Genovich, Danail Krapchev and Stefan Tanev. In this part of the dissertation, Tsvetan Tomchev does not fail to outline the role of the layout in Bulgarian periodicals, the thematic scope of the news and the correlation Bulgarian photojournalism - "candid camera". The analytical skills and abilities of the doctoral student are clearly evident in the fourth chapter "Forms and genres in news photography until 1945", in which he focuses on Bulgarian photojournalism between the 1920s and 1940s, the appearances of photojournalists in Bulgarian newspapers, along with the difficulties in establishing the authorship of the photographs, etc. The knowledge and erudition of the doctoral student are also evident in his personal analyzes of Ivan Yuskeseliev, Dimitar Katsev, Bozhidar Karastoyanov, Anton Antonov and Luben Antonov. Of special interest are the segments in this part of the dissertation related to the forms of the photographic narrative, the photographs from the genres "politics", "sports", etc.; accidents and crimes, social photography, portrait varieties, patriotic shades and entertainment.

In conclusion, the doctoral student has managed to reliably systematize the main results of his research. I agree with his statement that "The influence of photographs, advances in layout and graphic stylistics in print lay the foundation for modern journalism to this day" (p. 257).

II. Contributions of the dissertation research

Among the more important achievements and contributions in the dissertation, I will highlight:



1. Summarizing the techniques and contributions of significant American and European photojournalists who create the basis for today's photojournalism.
2. The positive experience of defining definitions for types, forms and genres of photojournalism and visual journalism.
3. The proposed overview and systematization of the main stages in the development of Bulgarian photojournalism.
4. The conceptual clarification of the form of propaganda through photography in the Bulgarian press during the period 1919-1944.

I will especially point out that an important factor for the good results of this impressive study is the fact that Tsvetan Tomchev is among the most distinguished professional Bulgarian photographers. He has a specific expression and an original approach to working with the camera. Thanks to his excellent practical skills combined with his theoretical preparation, a dissertation of high scientific and scientific-applied value is available.

III. Notes and recommendations

In separate places in the dissertation text, the descriptive beginning dominates the analytical one, which is at the expense of the depth of the research. The titles of some of the chapters are not quite up to the spirit of academic and scientific standards and sound journalistic rather than theoretical (I mean chapters two and three). In some places in the summary parts, the text is overloaded with additional and unnecessary/repetitive summaries. Inexplicable to me is the excessively short volume of the central conclusions (p.256 - 257), where in two small paragraphs an attempt is made to indicate the most important, but without the corresponding symmetrization, structuring and arrangement of the conclusions - generally about labor. I will emphasize, however, that the remarks made in no way detract from the value and excellent impression of Tsvetan Tomchev's dissertation, and that these flaws are of a secondary nature and can easily be removed in the author's subsequent research and publications.

My recommendation is that the dissertation text submitted for defense be published as a book or textbook on photojournalism – supplemented or in that form, at the discretion of the author.

IV. Publications and participation in scientific forums

The author has proposed a list of three of his publications on the dissertation topic, which I accept, but with the remark that their description does not correspond to bibliographic standards (publishers, years, cities, in some cases titles, etc. are not indicated). There is no information on when, with what, and in which FJMK seminars the doctoral student participated.



V. Conclusion

I strongly recommend to the respected scientific jury to vote "Yes" to the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to Tsvetan Todorov Tomchev in scientific field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Photojournalism).

Date: 27.03.2023

Jury member:

Prof. D.Sc. Lubomir Stoykov