



OPINION

from Assoc. Prof. Svetla Vladimirova Tsankova, PhD, Department of Media and Public Communications, UNWE

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

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD) in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications - Photojournalism) 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 of Press Journalism and Book Publishing of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication with supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Georgi Lozanov

I. Evaluation of the qualities of the text of dissertation

The presented dissertation on topic "Photography and Propaganda in the Bulgarian Press in the Period 1919-1944" of the doctoral student Tsvetan Todorov Tomchev is dedicated to an extremely interesting topic which has been insufficiently studied by the Bulgarian journalistic science. It is undoubtedly significant because it is related to an important part of the history of the Bulgarian media and because it is dedicated to the possibilities of photography for impact on the audience through the specific means of expression of the image.

In the very introduction, the author points out that theoretical sources on this topic are too scarce and this requires from him to perform impressive research work to present the leading names of Bulgarian photojournalists and also printed media in the period 1919-1944 that pay particular attention to photography as an important part of the news content. In his dissertation, Tsvetan Tomchev puts the problem of the possibilities of photography as a means of propaganda in a much broader framework, tracing its evolution from a simple image that simply complements journalistic content to a special message that has independent functions, is characterised by genre diversity and undoubtedly achieves significant effects on readers. Based on a number of examples from the world and Bulgarian photojournalism, the doctoral student concludes that there are photos that not only visualise significant political, social, cultural and other events, but have also become recognisable cultural emblems.

Tsvetan Tomchev traces the development of photojournalism worldwide, presents leading foreign illustrated publications and some of the most famous photo reporters who have had a significant impact on the world reportage photography to prove further in his dissertation work that Bulgarian



photojournalism undoubtedly follows the world models and the main trends, but over time, it acquires its specificity, develops interesting genre forms and reaches its stylistic and professional maturity. It is noteworthy that in the process of analysing the impressive volume of photographic material (nearly 20,000 images from the beginning to the middle of the 20th century) he not only manages to identify the leading genre forms in Bulgarian photojournalism, but also to explore the influence that political events in the country have on its development, the economic problems, the legislative base, the state media policy, the policies of the individual newspapers and magazines examined, and the views of their publishers and editors. All of these factors have their imprint on the Bulgarian newspaper industry and specifically on photojournalism in the period 1919 – 1944.

The leading research thesis of the doctoral student is that “propaganda with pictures in the Kingdom of Bulgaria served mainly the goals of education, culture, patriotic education and the support of the monarchy institution”. On the basis of the analysis of the collected photographs, Tsvetan Tomchev concludes that the promotion of education was raised in a cult, as the newspapers published very often photos of excellent students and young talents, of famous Bulgarian authors and artists. At the same time, it is obvious that the thematic diversity of the published photographs is extremely wide – political, criminal, economic, sports topics, accidents and natural disasters are reflected, there are also entertaining and sensational plots. The doctoral student concludes that “the Bulgarian newspaper industry has its own specific development, which does not follow the European way of doing business with news” and this is reflected even on the photos that create and maintain the cult of the monarchic family. The propaganda through journalistic photography, according to the author, serves to cultivate education, donorship and patriotism, and this does not contradict the commercial interest of newspaper and magazine publishers.

The dissertation includes 217 photos of foreign and Bulgarian photojournalists which very convincingly support the trends presented by Tsvetan Tomchev and the conclusions made – this is one of the serious achievements of his research. Much of this illustrative material has not been studied so far and has enriched to a significant extent the research of Bulgarian journalism between 1919 and 1944.

The dissertation work of Tsvetan Tomchev on the topic “Photography and Propaganda in the Bulgarian Press in the Period 1919-1944” is logically structured, which allows the author to present his research qualitatively, to demonstrate excellent knowledge of the problems and to fulfil the tasks assigned. The high language competence and rich vocabulary of the doctoral student also make an impression.

The dissertation summary meets the accepted standards and presents in a convincing way the results achieved by Tsvetan Tomchev in the dissertation work.



II. Contributions of the dissertation research

The indisputable contributions of the dissertation work of Tsvetan Tomchev are related to the identification of the main stages in the development of Bulgarian photojournalism between 1919 and 1944, the systematization of genre forms, the presentation of leading Bulgarian photojournalists from this period and the conclusions made about the propaganda role of photography. The results achieved can be used in the process of training journalism students.

III. Notes and recommendations

I recommend to the doctoral student Tsvetan Tomchev to continue his work on the study of Bulgarian photojournalism, which will be a serious contribution to the journalistic science in our country.

IV. Publications and participation in scientific forums

The dissertation summary lists the two books “The Great Photographers of Bulgaria”, Part 1 and 2, published by the author as well as 2 publications on the topic of the dissertation and participations in scientific forums of the FJMC, which prove that the doctoral student Tsvetan Tomchev has fulfilled the requirements of the Rules on Conditions and Procedure for obtaining scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, for the approbation and disclosure of the results of the research according to Art. 5, Para 5 and has met the minimum national requirements under Art. 63, Para 1, item 4 and Art. 69, Para 3.

V. Conclusion

The dissertation is distinguished by the high quality of the empirical research conducted, by an original and thorough analysis of the problems, precise and reasoned conclusions, by the convincingly proven thesis and excellent language competence. This gives me reason to highly assess the dissertation on the topic “Photography and Propaganda in the Bulgarian Press in the Period 1919-1944” and to express my positive opinion for the doctoral student Tsvetan Todorov Tomchev to be awarded the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD) in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications - Photojournalism).

Date: 24.03.2023

Jury Member: Assoc. Prof. Svetla Tsankova, PhD