OPINION[1]

by Prof. Milko Dimitrov Petrov, DSc, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, retired

for the award of the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in the professional field 3.5. "Public Communications and Information Sciences, *"History of Bulgarian Journalism"*

with a dissertation on the topic: "*Typology of the French-language press - Bulgarian and foreign in Bulgaria: 1878-1944 (Media and Communications),* presented by Velina Velinova, doctoral student in the Department of "*History and Theory of Journalism*" at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Dr. Zdravka Konstantinova

I. **Assessment of the quality of the dissertation text**

– ***Relevance and significance of the problem addressed in the dissertation***

The dissertation is an interesting scientific study of the French-language press (Bulgarian and foreign), which is the subject of scientific analysis over a period of almost seven decades (1878-1944). The scientific analysis does not present new facts about the influence of the French language on culture in the Ottoman Empire. Doctoral student Velina Velinova rather elaborates on the historical fact that during the period under study, many Bulgarian students graduated from Francophone universities in Europe. In detail and with the necessary competence, she analyzes the influence of some French-language media publications on Bulgarian culture and periodicals in the first years after the Liberation.

- Depth and comprehensiveness of the study of theoretical sources

Doctoral student Velina Velinova presents a dissertation of an impressive 419 pages, of which 393 are text and 26 are bibliography. She demonstrates serious scientific awareness of the theoretical sources, which are based on periodicals published in French in Bulgaria during this historical period. The dissertation analysis is based on an extensive bibliography in Bulgarian and French, excellently organized by type—scientific sources, educational sources, and journalistic materials. A review has been made of a large array of 103 periodicals, which are compared in terms of common similarities and differences. This is a scientific guide for individual types of readers who can find the processes, events, and characters that interest them in these periodicals.

– **Proving with new means essential aspects of already existing theories, hypotheses, etc.**

Doctoral student Velina Velinova examines in detail the relationship between journalism and propaganda, while showing the influence of periodicals published in French in Bulgaria on the development of Bulgarian national periodicals.

– **Creating new classifications, methods, technologies, etc.**

The doctoral student uses an original methodology based on the following scientific construct: first, she creates a typology of French-language publications according to five main characteristics,

indicating the main similarities and differences between the individual publications. Second, she analyzes the content through specific surveys in the array of specific newspapers and magazines published in French, which is the empirical basis for her scientific conclusions and generalizations.

– ***Accuracy in the collection, processing, and analysis of empirical data***

The dissertation is based on some of the doctoral student's scientific research on the typology of French-language periodicals in Bulgaria, the expansion of their influence and media propaganda, and the emergence of military censorship. The entire scientific study makes theoretical generalizations and empirical research based on the French language, in which some newspapers and magazines are published. The French language brings colour and elegance to media publications and assessments of a number of personalities and events from the spiritual life of the country after the Liberation.

– ***Reliability of the material on which the contributions are based***

The empirical materials used by the doctoral student are authentic sources, newspapers, and magazines written in French and published in Bulgaria. She bases her conclusions on original press publications in French, thoroughly examining the influence of the French language on the development of Bulgarian journalism. Her thesis that the use of foreign languages in the Bulgarian press is in fact an attempt to present Bulgarian culture to the civilized world through the French-language press, to promote Bulgaria's economic, cultural, and political opportunities to the world, and to present pressing Bulgarian issues to world public opinion.

– **Obtaining and proving new facts**

The doctoral student makes an original scientific interpretation of known facts related to the influence of the French language in the Ottoman Empire, which established itself as the main diplomatic language. She analyzes in detail and depth the segment of Bulgarian students in France during the period under study, who were the most numerous group of foreign students. The dissertation also examines in detail another historical fact - a large part of Bulgarian periodicals were also published in French. This ensured the use of a popular foreign communication channel, which significantly accelerated Bulgarian modernisation.

– **Obtaining facts confirming already known theories, interpretations, etc.**

The doctoral student examines in detail various periodicals published in French in Bulgaria. This shows that Francophonie had a significant cultural influence on the creation and development of the Bulgarian intelligentsia in the period after the Liberation, its educational aspiration to measure up to the leading representatives in the cultural space of Europe. The scientific analysis is based on the typological elements of the empirical media mass - Bulgarian periodicals published in French in Bulgaria; Bulgarian periodicals published in French abroad; foreign periodicals published in French in Bulgaria; foreign periodicals published in French abroad, with the participation of Bulgarians; and anonymous periodicals published in Bulgaria and abroad, for which there is relatively little data.

– ***Bibliographic awareness***

– ***Compliance with the compositional requirements for the dissertation text***

Velina Velinova demonstrates serious bibliographic awareness. Much of her analysis and summaries in the individual chapters of the dissertation are based on source data and the author's review of a number of French-language publications in Bulgaria. The bibliography in the dissertation is structured in separate sections, which makes it clear and significantly easier for any reader.

– ***Assessment of the linguistic and stylistic qualities of the exposition and the degree of deviation from the literary grammatical, spelling, and punctuation norms***

The dissertation is written in correct Bulgarian, which complies with the literary norms, grammatical, spelling, and punctuation rules of the Bulgarian language.

– ***Assessment of the correspondence between the text of the abstract and the text of the dissertation***

The abstract presents the content of the dissertation in a comprehensive and detailed manner, divided into main chapters and sections.

II. **Contributions of the dissertation research**

– ***Nature of the contributions: novelty for science (new theories, hypotheses, methods, etc.);***

The main contribution of this dissertation research is the convincing proof of the doctoral student's leading hypothesis that with the help of the French language, Bulgarian journalism, in the years after the Liberation, expanded its field of communication and, to a large extent, educated Bulgarian readers by introducing them to a number of leading ideas of French culture. This strengthened Bulgarian-French cultural exchange, and a series of cultural facts, events, and ideas in France became accessible to Bulgarian readers, broadening and enriching their cultural horizons.

– ***Enrichment and critical analysis of existing knowledge; application of scientific achievements in practice, realized effect;***

The analyses and summaries made in the dissertation are based on a large empirical array – 103 periodicals, which until now have not been the subject of comprehensive scientific analysis. Through content analysis of a number of publications in French in Bulgaria, the doctoral student expands the field of journalism studies on the Bulgarian periodical press in the period after the Liberation.

– ***Assessment of the contributions in the dissertation and the publications based on it;***

Based on a number of periodicals published in Bulgaria in French, the doctoral student analyzes and interprets some of the leading communication strategies that bring a different discourse to the media and cultural field of post-Liberation Bulgaria. She offers her own research interpretation of the activities of a number of prominent figures in Bulgarian political, public, and media life, such as Simeon Radev, Velcho Velchev, Petar Uvaliev, and others. According to the doctoral student, the dissertation text "reveals them as Francophone publicists, bearers of the Bulgarian narrative on the European media scene." The dissertation examines some key events in contemporary Bulgarian history in the context of the press, which in this historical period was published in Bulgaria in

French. These press publications are analyzed as journalistic, but also as historical documents that recreate various ideas, events, and personalities that embody the spirit of their time.

The dissertation also contains some scientific and applied contributions. As a scientific study, it provides a basis for future research and publications that present the numerous communication techniques in the press directly related to persuasive communication, propaganda, and manipulative techniques.

– ***Assessment of the possibilities for using the results obtained***.

This dissertation will be of great benefit to some interdisciplinary studies linking the history and theory of journalism, contemporary history and political science, public communication, rhetoric, and media manipulation.

III. **Comments and recommendations**

– ***A reasoned proposal for the directions of further work by the doctoral student with a view to improving the presented work.***

My main recommendation is that this original scientific research be published (in print or online). It will be of interest to professional historians, media analysts, researchers of diplomacy in Europe and Bulgaria, experts in the field of marketing and communication practices in Bulgaria and Europe at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. Such research will certainly be of interest to certain groups of educated readers who are avid admirers of the French language and culture in Bulgaria.

IV. **Publications and participation in scientific forums**

The doctoral student has presented three scientific publications that are directly related to the topic of the dissertation and have been published in authoritative scientific journals.

V. **Conclusion**

The dissertation meets the requirements of the *Regulations on the conditions and procedures for acquiring academic degrees and occupying academic positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for the approval and publication of the research results in accordance with Article 5, item 5, and whether the minimum national requirements under Article 63, paragraph 1, item 4, and Article 69, paragraph 3, have been met.*

The doctoral student Velina Velinova proposes an original topic for scientific analysis in her dissertation, demonstrating in-depth knowledge of the development of French-language publications in Bulgaria in the period after the Liberation until 1944. The scientific analysis is based on numerous facts from media history and propaganda in Europe during this historical period. In her research, the doctoral student uses modern communication practices, the history of diplomacy, as well as a number of French-language periodicals that are an integral part of the history of Bulgarian journalism. Considering these very serious scientific arguments, I **fully recommend** that the esteemed members of the scientific jury award the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" to Velina Velinova, doctoral student in the Department of History and Theory of Journalism,

professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences *(Media and Communications - History of Bulgarian Journalism).*

Date: 27.11.2025 Reviewer: Prof. Milko Petrov, DSc

[1] *Note: The text in italics provides reference points for evaluating the research results. Recommended length of the opinion – 2-3 standard pages.*