REVIEW[1]

by **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Desislava Andreeva**, St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, Faculty of Modern Languages, Department of Journalism and Public Relations,

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications – History of Bulgarian journalism)

with a dissertation on the topic: "**TYPOLOGY OF THE FRENCH-LANGUAGE PRESS – BULGARIAN AND FOREIGN IN BULGARIA (1878-1944)",**

presented by **VELINA KRASIMIROVA VELINOVA**, full -time doctoral student in the Department History and Theory of Journalism of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

with supervisor: **Prof. Dr. Zdravka Konstantinova**

I. Presentation of the doctoral student based on the submitted documentation

Velina Velinova is a graduate of the Journalism Education Program of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication. She obtained a Master's degree in Arts and Media Culture from Maastricht University. She was a full-time doctoral student at the Department of History and Theory of Journalism until 2024. Her professional path includes work in her field across television, radio, newspapers and print media websites. She has built a substantial portfolio of original media products - programs, interviews, news items, and others—related to the coverage of various public spheres. She was an editor and a co-host. She has excellent command of English and French, which greatly contributes to the high quality of the translation work carried out for the dissertation. The choice of dissertation topic also corresponds with Velinova's commitments to the Francophone journalistic network "Theophrastus".

[1] *Note: The text in italics offers reference points for evaluating the research results. Recommended volume of the review - about 6-7 standard pages*

II . Assessment of the qualities of the text

The submitted dissertation consists of **427 pages** (according to the manuscript provided to me by the doctoral candidate himself **)** with the bibliography and comprises an introduction, conclusion and a main body of 3 chapters.

The significance of the topic is indisputable, as it offers the first panoramic study of the entire array of our French-language publications for the period of capitalism. The number of such publications is 103, with a large part of them being introduced into scientific circulation for the first time – this is **one of the study's main objectives**.

In the globalization imperative of our time, the topic of expanding the communication fields of the media and journalism through the combined potential of technology and languages is more than **relevant**. Also relevant is the delicate question of the use of media by those in power, which, within the context of the dissertation, concerns their deployment for foreign policy image-making of the rulers, the country or individual public spheres, as a lever of economic influence, etc.

The object of the research consists of the French-language publications registered by Dr. Dimitar Ivanchev between the Liberation and the end of World War II. **The tasks** of the dissertation work can be defined as: a) formal – classifying empirical sources according to selected typological criteria, and b) content-analytical - "probing" representative publications from each typological category and conducting a detailed reading of their media content to identify evidence of political, economic, scientific, educational, cultural, or, more broadly, transmission and modernization functions. Different tasks imply the use of different **methodological tools** – typology (classification), case studies and content analysis.

The subject of the research is the identification and analysis of the distinctive features of the distinct typological groups within the corpus of French-language publications in Bulgaria (abstract, p. 3). **The working hypotheses** consist of two deductively formulated assumptions:

- that the press acted as a modernization agent, stimulating contact and exchange with French culture and expanding communicative fields for Bulgarian journalism;
- that it was strongly politicized and instrumentalized due to power and diplomatic priorities.

The first chapter is 123 pages long and consists of two paragraphs, the second of which is quantitatively predominant due to the nature of issues addressed. This chapter seeks to balance between the two key discourses at the core of the study: the historical and the communicational.

A leading emphasis in **the first paragraph** is the examination of *the lingua franca* in journalism. It is demonstrated that the presence of a foreign language in Bulgarian media communication resulted from the political, cultural, diplomatic, and media context of the period, which established French as the preferred linguistic code for legitimizing Bulgaria to the world. Through educational integration, France shaped 30% of the highest segment of the Bulgarian Renaissance intelligentsia, thereby predetermining its significant role in forging the modern Bulgarian statehood (dissertation, p. 23) . The mechanisms of French linguistic and cultural penetration were education as well as newspapers and magazines, which in essence served as "agents" of Enlightenment during the Revival period. The publication of Bulgarian newspapers in foreign languages effectively represents **a modernization of the modernization agent itself**. French-language editions and individual materials published in French in the Bulgarian press turn out to be points of contact between two civilizations with mutual interest yet guided by different motives.

The narrative emphasizes the productive communication established during the Revival between Bulgarian society and the European world through “markers of adaptability” (according to E. Getova, p. 17). In this case, the potential of foreign language code to legitimize, integrate and modernize is reinforced by the universality of the print media, which perform exactly the same functions. The inertia of educational, cultural and programmatic uses of the French language is enriched after the Liberation with the extraction of political, economic and diplomatic benefits from both sides.

The second paragraph (numbered third in the presentation and in the abstract, likely due to the inertia of the initial version of the manuscript) sets out the doctoral candidate’s ambition to position her topic within the broader problem framework of the symbiotic relationship between state power and media propaganda, which provides selective publicity to interpretations of reality that are convenient for the political elite. This is a thesis advocated by many - from Plato to Ellul. In the course of her argumentation, Velinova revisits fundamental foreign and Bulgarian contributions to communication studies, recalling key

research and conceptual models relevant to propaganda, manipulation, and censorship. The long list of cited authors is enriched with the in-depth consideration of the research of David Welch (2013), Robert Summers (1942) and Marc Bloch (1921), which reveals the effort of the dissertationist to support his observations in a rich theoretical base. This is especially useful in further clarifying the functional profile of the French-language press in our country. The task is inherently challenging for any researcher, given that communication, manipulation, propaganda, and censorship are all-encompassing and polymorphic phenomena. Yet it is also productive, because the theoretical overview illustrates the broad definitional boundaries within which the researcher may operate.

Velinova approaches the unequivocally negative connotations of the term “propaganda” with caution, reasonably emphasizing the importance of the “operative context” (pp. 36, 76), which determines the evaluative “sign” of the phenomenon—defined by Ellul as an “organizing myth.” Applied to her research strategy, this means that before analyzing any media content, one must always consider the intentions of all actors in the communication field, as well as the imperatives of the historical situation. For example, propaganda may be viewed as a strategic program for the effective defense of state interests, sovereignty, and legitimacy—especially during wartime. This methodological conviction is consistently followed and becomes particularly evident in the final chapter.

The first paragraph aims to outline the theoretical foundations of the study, focusing logically on principles for the **systematization of print periodicals.** The dissertation states clearly that the sources will be segmented and analyzed according to both formal and content-related indicators—topos (place of publication), periodicity, character, type, subject.

The second paragraph most directly aligns with the framework set by the dissertation title, showing clearly how the available French-language publications fall into specific classification categories. Several shared characteristics of the otherwise diverse media corpus are noted. These include:

- Sofia-centric orientation,
- a broad thematic “fan”,
- significant specialization. Among the most influential issues are political, economic, and philatelic newspapers, magazines, and bulletins.

No substantial difficulties arise in assigning individual publications to the typological groups. The classification based on the selected criteria serves the pragmatic purpose of organizing the research effort and guiding attention toward media worthy of more detailed examination.

The typological elements are applied to a corpus divided into five groups (Author's abstract, p. 12): Bulgarian periodicals in French published in Bulgaria, Bulgarian periodicals in French published abroad, Foreign periodicals in French published in Bulgaria, Foreign periodicals in French published abroad with Bulgarian participation, Anonymous periodicals published in Bulgaria and abroad (author's abstract, p. 12).

The final chapter of the dissertation, titled "*Analyses of Distinct Journalistic Materials*", is the most extensive and detailed one. The thematic segmentation of the examined print media includes: foreign policy propaganda (the most extensively discussed category), politics - with a focus on the Macedonian movement, specialized publications, foreign periodicals in Bulgaria. The researcher devotes the most substantial attention to politically oriented publications, which cover all landmark events in Bulgarian history between the Balkan Wars and the Second World War. Among the most prominent analyzed editions are *L'Echo de Bulgarie, La Bulgarie, La Parole Bulgare, Le Mouvement Macédonien.*

In addition, the personality factor in the media is examined. This is unquestionably the chapter with the highest scholarly contribution, demonstrating the greatest investment of effort, the most polished structure, and the highest quality of analysis. It provides full-scale, detailed descriptions that account for all code systems—text, font, page architecture, images, angle of framing, advertising content—and the decoded layers of meaning—textual, subtextual, and supratextual.

As she has already stated in the previous chapters, V. Velinova subjects the content analysis to the task of revealing the propaganda techniques used by communicators, as well as identifying all the communication intentions of the publications from the other typological groups. The newspapers and magazines are described in detail and presented through a sufficient number of their publications, enabling readers to form a clear understanding of their appearance and content - not only editorially, but also advertising. To the shared characteristics identified in the previous chapter, the dissertation adds the dominant

politicization of the vast majority of the examined publications, including those claiming to be apolitical youth editions (e.g., *La Jeunesse Bulgare*).

The case-study method is complemented by quantitative and qualitative content analysis. The content analysis is, in turn, extended and enriched through an examination of the rhetoric and emotional intentions found in the printed sources. The criterion for selecting these materials is the presence of a focus on the propaganda purpose and functionality. This is most thoroughly analyzed in the first paragraph, where the dissertation leads readers to the conclusion that foreign-language press tied to the state and governing authorities functioned as a bulletin, a translated "press review" of state propaganda, a state-sanctioned or courtly media "entourage," whose main function was to communicate the talking points of governments that often came to power by unconstitutional means. The dissertation provides extensive quotations and illustrative material for each analyzed publication—an approach that is highly effective and beneficial. Based on the detailed observations of the content, Velinova identifies some newspapers as a "textbook example" of propaganda press (p. 190).

Scientific literature used

The dissertation employs 141 sources, among which are works by authoritative Bulgarian historiographers predominate—such as Nikolay Genchev, Zdravka Konstantinova, Elena Getova, Rumen Avramov, Rayna Manafova, Vasilka Tankova, Maria Deenichina—and media theorists such as Eliezer Alfandari, Vladimir Simeonov, Maria Popova, Chavdar Hristov, Ventseslav Bondikov, and others.

Sources cited in Latin script number 42. The bibliography of primary sources consists of 101 French-language publications.

The stylistic qualities of the presentation are among the merits of the dissertation work – orthographically accurate, with a rich vocabulary and an almost literary approach to the analyzed material. The analysis includes extensive translation and critical interpretation of foreign-language sources, a task that is both demanding and time-consuming.

The submitted abstract, totaling 22 pages (with unified spacing of 1.5 pt), presents the major parameters of the study, the thematic emphases of the structural units, the observed patterns and specificities of the examined objects, as well as a formulation of the scholarly contributions.

III. Contributions of the dissertation research

- Among the most substantial contributions is the introduction into scholarly circulation of a large corpus of media publications from the period
- Translation work carried out on individual publications allows overcoming the language barrier for researchers who do not speak French.
- It provides a basis for a future comparative research on the French-language press and the press in other languages in Bulgaria.
- For the first time, the political and diplomatic discourse in foreign-language Bulgarian media is being examined in such detail.
- The dissertation conclusively demonstrates the existence of a preconditioned agenda, in which manipulative communication intentions aim to achieve:

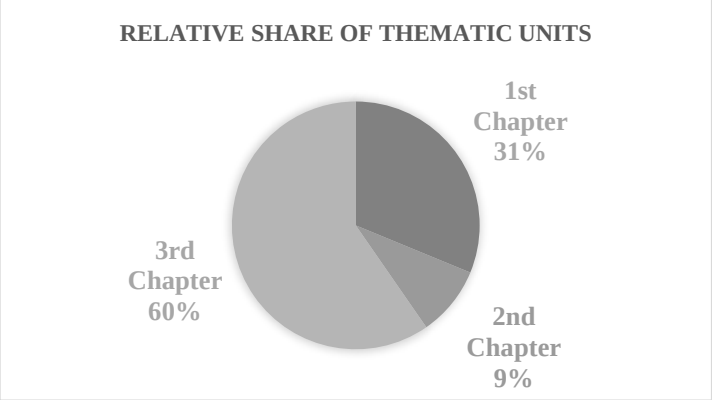
- foreign-policy legitimation (international credit of trust),
- media comfort for the ruling forces,
- the promotion of national causes abroad.

- Projections are drawn for future research that will continue in chronological order the line of research on the influence of Francophonie on Bulgarian journalism through subsequent historical periods up to the present day (p. 406).

IV. Notes and recommendations

- The dissertation encompasses an impressive body of primary sources, analyzed competently, meticulously, and systematically. The composition of the manuscript follows the logical sequence of the chosen research design:
  - desk research of theoretical foundations,
  - work with reference sources,
  - classification of the defined objects of analysis,
  - work with archival units,
  - selection of representative publications for each category (case-study),
  - quantitative and qualitative content analysis of the material in each publication.

- Since there is a noticeable imbalance in the relative weight of the chapters, it would be advisable—at the stage of publishing the dissertation, which I strongly recommend—that the author consider dividing the final chapter into two parts.



- The recommendation to refine bibliographic descriptions remains in effect (see, for example, Adhikary's article – it is not in ResearchGate, but in *Bodhi, An Interdisciplinary Journal 2(1), March 2010, DOI:10.3126/bodhi.v2i1.2877*). My advice is to separate scientific sources from the rest by groups – media, reference works, textbooks, etc. It is necessary to optimize the approach applied in the bibliographic description in the text of already cited and indicated sources – you can use "*Ibid.*", etc.

- As ideas for further research on the topic of the dissertation, I would highlight the necessity of examining the audience. As the doctoral candidate correctly notes, this was clearly an intelligent, educated, cosmopolitan readership—represented by the urban Francophone intelligentsia (p. 403). It remains to be determined how these publications were received and whether they achieved the effect intended by their creators.

- In this regard, it would be interesting to conduct more detailed observations on the circulations of the publications highlighted in the analysis. Among the most influential, only *La Parole Bulgare* provides evidence of circulation, ranging from 4,500 to 2,000 copies.

- The doctoral candidate makes a very strong impression with her effort to refine and expand her text, approaching academic debates with both dialogue and sound argumentation. I wish her continued success and development in this academic attitude.

V. Publications and participation in scientific forums

According to the reference under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of the *Act of the Academic Staff Development of the Republic of Bulgaria*, the doctoral student has fulfilled the minimum national requirements in the scientific area: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences. She presents two published papers in an online scientific journal in 2024, and a paper, accepted for publication in a collective monograph in 2025.

VI. Conclusion

Considering the significance of the topic and the extensive research work conducted on the empirical material—which has the potential to be analyzed through a complex methodology and through the lenses not only of historiography, but also of communication studies, political science, and linguistics, **I recommend with conviction to the esteemed members of the scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"(PhD) in professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications - History of Bulgarian Journalism) to PhD student VELINA KRASIMIROVA VELINOVA.**

Date: 11/11/2025 Reviewer:

/Assoc. Prof. Dr. Desislava Andreeva/