REVIEW

from **Assoc. Professor Dr. Sc. Maria Popova**, Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, History and Theory of Journalism Department, Scientific field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications – Theory of Journalism and Media)

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

with a dissertation on the topic: „**Typology of the French-language Press – Bulgarian and Foreign in Bulgaria (1878-1944)**",

presented **Velina Krassimirova Velinova**, doctoral student in the History and Theory of Journalism Department, Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski"

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

Reason: The scientific jury has been established with an Order РД 38-666/20.10.2025 of the Rector of the Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski".

I. Presentation of the doctoral student

Velina Velinova is a full-time doctoral student in "History of the Bulgarian Journalism" at the History and Theory of Journalism Department in the period from 2019 to 2024. She has significant journalistic experience – she was a reporter, editor and columnist on the television channels BBT, TV+, Bloomberg TV, Eurocom, TV1, AGRO TV, on the websites of the newspaper "Pressa" and magazine "Tema", Kmeta.bg Actualno.com, radio Focus. She graduated from the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication with a bachelor's degree in "Journalism" – profiles "Television" and "International Journalism". She has a master's degree in arts, Media Culture from the Dutch University of Maastricht.

II. Assessment of the qualities of the text of the dissertation

1. Structure and volume.

Velina Velinova's dissertation has a total volume of 422 pages and includes an introduction, an exposition in three chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography.

2. Relevance of the topic.

The dissertation is dedicated to the interesting and important topic of the possibilities of the Bulgarian press from the first half of the 20th century to present national topics and problems to a foreign audience. The aim is to show that certain Bulgarian newspapers and magazines were used by the Bulgarian authorities as a means of popularizing their political and economic decisions to a European and Bulgarian audience. The combination of historical, media theoretical and sociological approaches allow for a modern analysis of journalistic activity and media practice from the respective historical period.

3. Aims, Object, Subject and Content.

The **object** of the study are 103 Bulgarian newspapers and magazines published in French, which have not been analysed comprehensively so far. The **subject** of the study are three key newspapers, which had been funded and created by the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Religious Affairs in the first half of the 20th century – “L'Echo de Bulgarie“, “La Bulgarie“ and “La Parole Bulgare“, as well as a number of smaller in volume, circulation and influence newspapers and magazines, which had been specialized in the field of economics, culture and science. The **goals** of the study are both the typology of the observed publications and the study of political propaganda strategies in the French-language press in Bulgaria and in Europe. Various **research methods** are used – deductive, typology, content analysis

The **first chapter** of the dissertation research on the use of foreign languages, especially French, by Bulgarian newspapers and magazines to overcome the narrow linguistic framework imposed by the Bulgarian language and the emergence of the national isolation after the Liberation. Attention is paid to the use of the French language in the diplomacy and trade, which began even before the Liberation, as part of the Ottoman Empire's policy of using French political models in adopted laws (including the first Press Law in the Ottoman Empire from 1864). But the French language also has an influence in culture, because it is used by Bulgarian writers and journalists, who realize the need for the foreign newspapers and magazines to present Bulgarian national goals to a foreign audience, and translations of the French literature broaden the thematic horizons of Bulgarian readers. As Velina Velinova writes: “Through the

press, the Bulgarian reader can "look" in the European mirror, discover himself, find his place in the information flow. (…) The search for national identity at a time when Bulgaria has been erased from the world political map is of utmost importance for the self-awareness of the Bulgarian society." (p. 25)

Also, in the first chapter are described basic media concepts such as communication, manipulation, propaganda and censorship, their meanings and variants, their manifestation within communication models are analysed. The positions of both leading media researchers and Bulgarian researchers are shown. The scientific observation is refracted through the model of functioning and thematic segmentation of the observed newspapers, the connection of the print propaganda with diplomacy, the regulatory frameworks through the press laws adopted in Bulgaria, the functioning of the media institutions such as BTA, the information techniques used to mix content with emotional evaluation, in parallel with the censorship introduced by the state.

In the **second chapter** of the dissertation, the author's own typology of the observed publications is made, which are segmented by key criteria such as financing, place of publication, subject matter, periodicity, character. According to the conclusions of the doctoral student, the largest volume is the Bulgarian French-language newspapers, magazines and bulletins published in Bulgaria, in contrast to Bulgarian media in French, which is published abroad (mainly Paris and Geneva) and foreign media in French, published in Bulgaria. Newspapers and magazines with a political focus or with mixed topics (politics, literature and economics) dominate, in contrast to those with narrow specialization (philately, education, trade, medicine, culture).

The **third chapter** describes the results of the conducted content analysis of the three leading foreign policy newspapers, which are presented as examples of political propaganda through mass media and are examined through the prism of the several significant historical events. The doctoral student's findings are that the first two newspapers – "L'Echo de Bulgarie" and "La Bulgarie" – are official publications of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Religious Affairs, and the third – "La Parole Bulgare" is rather independent. All newspapers have a format of about four pages, there are almost no illustrations, with rare exceptions, the genres used are the extended report and the commentary (or the mixing of commentary with news), as well as the interview. The newspapers are published almost daily, and the thematic emphasis is on

foreign policy, but there are also cultural and economic topics. It is characteristic of all three newspapers that their editors and authors are leading Bulgarian writers, philosophers, military personnel, diplomats, etc., which activity is presented. The study focuses on the media coverage of the specific historical events such as the Balkan Wars and World War I, the June 9th Coup of 1923, the September Uprising, the May 19th Coup of 1934, the Second World War, the Macedonian Question. The analysis outlines the propaganda techniques used, the writing style and layout, and the emotionally charged expression used. Velina Velinova's conclusions are that: 'the Bulgarian press in French during the period under study, both in Bulgaria and abroad, was marked by the social and political unrest in the respective time-period. They find an echo on the pages of the press as current events that shaped the appearance of the post-liberation Bulgaria with the ambition to influence the way in which our country is perceived in the field of the international relations. We are talking not only about major wars in which we participated until 1944, but also about the internal political upheavals such as coups and uprisings. The studied press creates a chronicle indicative of our history. Some of the studied newspapers can also be perceived through a diplomatic prism, as they illustrate the diplomatic efforts of the Bulgarian state to build a certain image for itself. Therefore, it can be assumed that they have both journalistic and historical and diplomatic value." (p. 400) The issues in the third chapter are analysed competently, with knowledge of the historical and media specifics, the information is significant in volume and precise in structuring.

4. Used scientific literature.

99 sources were used, of which 81 articles, studies and monographs in Bulgarian, and 18 in French and English.

5. Abstract

The presented abstract has fully reflected the content of the dissertation.

III. Contributions to the dissertation research

The contribution of the study is that for the first time a detailed study of the Bulgarian newspapers and magazines published in French is being conducted. This allows both their typology and an assessment of the activities of the leading figures behind their creation. The contribution is the understanding of the possibilities for using foreign-language newspapers and magazines as a means of pursuing diplomatic goals by the Bulgarian state. The study of specific

important events from Bulgarian history, which are reflected in French-language newspapers, with the aim of popularizing the Bulgarian political position before the world community, is of a contributing nature.

IV. Notes and recommendations

The dissertation is voluminous, detailed, uses a clear and competent style and language, cites numerous Bulgarian and foreign authors, reviews many Bulgarian newspapers and magazines, presents a variety of examples. A significant historical period is covered, demonstrating scientific interest, the ability to draw own conclusions, and includes many of own images.

V. Publications and participation in scientific forums

The doctoral student has three scientific publications – in the scientific book collection "Media and Communications" and in the scientific online journal Media of the 21st Century (newmedia21.eu). All texts meet the set quality standards, and the requirements of the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for testing and disseminating the results of the research according to Art. 5, item 5 are met and the minimum national requirements under Art. 63, para. 1, item 4 and Art. 69, para. 3 are met. She has participated with reports in four national and two international scientific conferences, as well as taking part in one international scientific project.

VI. Conclusion

The dissertation is dedicated to the important, interesting and currant topic of the use of French-language newspapers and magazines published in Bulgaria and abroad as a means of popularizing Bulgarian national topics and problems to a foreign audience. The dissertation is significant in terms of volume, detailed in terms of outlining the historical and media context. Based on the presented dissertation, **I strongly recommend the respected scientific jury to award VELINA VELINOVA the educational and scientific degree "doctor' in scientific filed 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications – History of the Bulgarian Journalism)**.

Date: 03.11.2025 Reviewer:

/ Assoc. Professor Dr. Sc. Maria Popova /