OPINION

Of Professor Elena Getova, PhD, Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv

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

with a dissertation on the topic: “Typology of Bulgarian and foreign periodicals published in French in Bulgaria (1878-1944)”,

presented by Velina Krasimirova Velinova, full-time doctoral student in the Department of History and Theory of Journalism of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

with supervisor: Professor Zdravka Konstantinova, PhD

I. Evaluation of the qualities of the text of dissertation

The dissertation text aims to research journalistic publications written in French and published in Bulgaria and abroad in the period after the Liberation until 1944. The choice of empirical material itself reveals the contributions of the work as these periodicals have not been subjected to detailed scientific analysis. The temporal boundaries fixed in the title of the dissertation also present a scientific challenge because within several decades in Bulgarian history many significant changes developed, both politically and socio-culturally: the post-liberation structure of the new state, wars, uprisings, political coups, national catastrophes – events that were in the focus of the journalistic publications studied here. All this factuality definitely poses serious challenges for its theoretical structuring and articulation within the framework of a dissertation. Despite the seriousness and complexity of the task set in this dissertation – to systematize and categorize previously unstudied periodicals in French, Velina Velinova has chosen an effective scientific and theoretical approach and has applied scientific methods and classification models that have been successfully tested and proven in practice. In this direction, the research work of Vladimir Simeonov and Maria Popova, for example, are cited – in order to apply five type-forming factors to the empirical array of the dissertation. Furthermore, Harold Laswell's theories on the presentation of the propaganda functions of communication are also mentioned. Certainly, references to prominent researchers in the theory and history of journalism are not limited to the above. This is evident from the rich bibliographic list of the scientific sources cited in the dissertation.

Very important for the research approach in the dissertation is the combination between, on the one hand, typological patterns that help to classify the working array of publications, and on the other hand, the convenience of journalistic materials lending themselves to historical contextualization. This convenience also benefits the obvious chronological framework that can be and has been applied to the empirical corpus of titles.

The richness and variety of political events in the chosen time period (1878 – 1944) support the admissibility of two scientific hypotheses and their straightforward confirmation in the course of the dissertation research: the first, about the diverse nature of the materials published in French in the monitored editions, and the second, about the political orientation and ideological subordination of almost all of the studied periodicals (it turns out, according to the dissertation's statements, with one exception (Bulletin sismographique de l'Institut météorologique central de Bulgarie [Seismographic Bulletin of the Central Institute of Meteorology in Bulgaria], Sofia, 1905). In this sense, in search of evidence for the dependence between politics and the press, the journalistic concepts of *propaganda*, *censorship* and

manipulation are subjected to distinct terminological definitions in Velinova's research, which in the specified historical perimeter are clearly applicable. It is worth emphasizing that Velinova accepts the theoretical position of the *neutral connotation* of the concept of *propaganda*, which is considered as a scientific phenomenon. However, I think that with a similar scientific status in a research text as the current dissertation, the other concepts, formatting the implications of the study, such as *censorship* and *manipulation* could be used.

Applying familiar interpretations to new empirical material presents fewer risks. At the same time, the contextualization of the publications studied in detail suggests a completely new journalistic aspect of visions of important historical events and leading historical figures configured in the scientific exploration – a fact that stands out in Velina Velinova's research. The diversity of journalistic publications, subjected to classification in the dissertation, requires both thematic and chronological filters to categorize the flow of information in these 103 editions. Therefore, in my opinion, it is a real find and an insight that supports the course of the research that three publications in French, selected to illustrate the relationship between politics and journalism (L 'Echo de Bulgarie, thematizing the Balkan Wars and the First World War; La Bulgarie, the 9th of June Coup, the September Uprising and the Coup d'état of May 19, 1934; and La Parole Bulgare, the policy of neutrality at the beginning of the Second World War, the acquisition of Southern Dobrudja, and the accession of Bulgaria to the Tripartite Pact) are essentially not only a field for expression of the symbiotic connections between the ruling party and the press in French, but also cover the entire temporal segment from 1913 to 1943. Thus, the dissertation traces a sequence of periodicals, unprecedented in the history of journalism: every subsequent publication appears immediately after the end of the previous one. Justifiably, the three publications mentioned above are called by Velinova "pillars of the foreign policy propaganda of the Kingdom of Bulgaria" (Avtoreferat, p.11).

Concerning the accuracy of the collection, processing and analysis of empirical data, we must emphasize the precise de visu study of the editions mentioned in the bibliography. Many of them have served as illustrative material for important statements in the dissertation. Furthermore, since the subject is periodicals, one must pay attention to the visual layout of the publications (color scheme, formatting, titles, illustrations, attachments, advertisements). Perhaps a few more pages and appendices should be devoted to this aspect in the upcoming publication of the dissertation. The bibliography at the end of this dissertation shows good and purposeful bibliographic awareness. Considering the compositional construction of the dissertation text, it is possible to point out some easily correctable inaccuracies in the titles of the individual chapters, for example "List of Bulgarian periodicals in foreign languages and in foreign languages in Bulgaria (1878–1944)" (p. 414). In this case, only publications in French are listed. Here is one more example – the title in the third chapter: 1.1. V. L'Echo de Bulgarie (Sofia, 1913–1923), where V. means newspaper, it would be better to write out the whole word.

Regarding the linguistic and stylistic qualities of the presentation and the degree of deviation from the literary grammar, spelling and punctuation norms – I would recommend seeking the help of an editor and a professional proofreader in the future edition of the dissertation. This is necessary in connection with the noticed inaccuracies of a spelling nature, as well as the use of some outdated and stylistically inappropriate expressions, for example, "on an equal footing with" (p.7) or "smearing the enemy" (p.11). Since the cited examples are from the abstract (Avtoreferat), it is necessary to point out that, conspicuously, in the text of the abstract much more attention is given to the first and second chapters and the information from the third chapter is too superficially touched upon and presented. This creates a feeling of imbalance, specifically because the significant, substantial contribution to

the value of the dissertation is precisely the third chapter.

II. Contributions of the dissertation research

The most significant contribution to the dissertation is the presentation, systematization and analysis of periodicals that have not been studied by science so far. Typologization is also attached to their characteristics, which creates a general and consistent perception of the essence of periodicals in French from the period under study. An advantage is that the dissertation candidate has attached her own translations of the materials published in French, as well as photographs that visually illustrate the publications studied. This makes her research accessible to readers who are not fluent in French as well. The publications that are included in the dissertation cover a large perimeter of the information presented in it and are thematically subordinated to its research goals. I support the proposal to publish the dissertation as a book to assist future research on this issue.

III. Notes and recommendations

In the course of evaluating the achievements in Velina Velinova's dissertation, I pointed out that in order to improve the form of titles, spelling and visual messages in the future book, it would be beneficial to include a section with appendices, where the quality of the published visual materials would be significantly improved. Attention should also be paid to improve the academic style of the dissertation text, since episodic stylistic inaccuracies are evident with stylistically inappropriate expressions.

IV. Publications and participation in scientific forums

The publications correspond to the topic of the dissertation and the participation in conferences shows a continuous interest in scientific forums at home and abroad, at which Velina Velinova's research in the dissertation text can be presented and discussed.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, I must emphasize that the requirements of the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia have been fulfilled for approbation and disclosure of the results of the study, according to Art. 5, item 5 and the minimum national requirements under Art. 63, para. 1, item 4 and Art. 69, para. 3 have been met.

Based on all of the above, I believe that there are all grounds for awarding the educational and scientific degree of Doctor to Velina Krasimirova Velinova, a full-time PhD student at the Department of History and Theory of Journalism at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Jury member: Professor Elena Slavova Getova, PhD

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