

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Naoum Iliev Kaytchev, PhD
(Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Faculty of History)
on the dissertation of Andoni Kirilov Andreev
on the topic

„EVERYDAY LIFE AND THE PRESS IN YUGOSLAV MACEDONIA (1945 – mid-1960s)“

for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”

Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Faculty of History

Scientific field: 2. Humanities

Professional direction: 2.2. History and Archaeology

Thus formulated topic of the dissertation work of Andoni Kirilov Andreev, a full-time doctoral student at the Department of "History of Byzantium and the Balkan Peoples", was chosen in 2018, taking into account his previous interests, also expressed in his BA and MA theses, and especially in view of the existing gap in research on this topic, not only in Bulgaria and the present-day Republic of North Macedonia, but also globally.

To study the attitude of the press towards everyday life in Yugoslav Macedonia (Democratic Federal Macedonia until the end of January 1946, the People's Republic of Macedonia in 1946-1963, and the Socialist Republic of Macedonia after April 1963) is a difficult and serious scholar challenge due to the impossibility of building on a significant research foundation so far - since even for the political history of the southernmost Yugoslav republic there is no classical comprehensive detailed monographic study, this applies even more to its social history. At the same time, the study of the history of everyday life in general is not particularly advanced both in relation to the second, federal Yugoslavia as a whole, and in relation to its Balkan neighbours, including socialist Bulgaria.

The dissertation has largely managed to overcome these difficulties by addressing and taking into account the previous theoretical approaches in the field of the history of everyday life, by carefully studying the scholar literature in Bulgaria, North Macedonia and other countries, which has, albeit a marginal relation to the issue, and above all by carefully analysing the huge printed corpus left by periodicals in Yugoslav Macedonia, as well as by using some collections from the State Archives of the Republic of North Macedonia.

The specificity of the topic and the individual approach of the dissertation have led to the more unusual structure of the dissertation - it is 411 pages long and contains an introduction, eleven chapters (ten of which are accompanied by one additional "fragment"), a kind of conclusion "Attempt to synthesize the obtained results" and a list of sources and bibliography. A significant number of studies from Bulgaria, North Macedonia, the other former Yugoslav republics, English-speaking countries, Germany and Russia have been used. The long and painstaking work with general theoretical literature, a rich base of primary sources and many secondary studies has allowed the doctoral candidate to build a full-fledged study that successfully explores and analyses many aspects of the topic under consideration.

In the introduction, Mr. Andreev carefully presents some of the trends in contemporary historiography, with mainly two of them - social history, launched by West German historians such as Hans-Ulrich Weller and Jürgen Kocka, and *Alltagsgeschichte* (history of everyday life) of their compatriot Alf Lüdtke, being used to some extent as an approach and providing inspiration for the selection of topics in the study.

The unusual structure of the work stems from the complex methodological challenge and the dissertation's immense desire to overcome it to the maximum extent: "Everyday life has multiple projections and practically touches "everything", in the full comprehensiveness of the meaning of the word." "Total" history is beyond the power of any single study, and in our study we have attempted to highlight the "major tracks" of everyday life" (p. 8). Accordingly, in his desire to get as close as possible to a

comprehensive study of everyday life through the prism of modulation and its reflection in the press, the doctoral student has examined in separate chapters (chapters 2–11) the testimonies in the press on the ten main aspects of everyday life: the political process and everyday life, everyday life in the village, work and everyday life, everyday life of youth, everyday life of pioneers, leisure and everyday life, the socialist emancipation of women and everyday life at home, tragedies and everyday life, humour and everyday life, personalities and everyday life. Ten "fragments" have also been added to them: individual, less affected aspects or specific cases and plots related to everyday life: everyday life and debulgarization, the elimination of the veil and the Turkish emigration wave from the People's Republic of Macedonia, education, transport, the everyday life of children outside the image of the pioneer organization, unorganized recreation, the showcase of socialism - "Na-Ma" ("People's Shop"), "care for the health of the people", "red laughter", the leader and the little man. In addition, an introductory first chapter is offered on the political and social state structure, that created the conditions of everyday life; this chapter is built exclusively on the basis of the archive funds of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Macedonia and the ASNOM stored in Skopje. The very listing of all these topics and themes shows what an enviable breadth the author has achieved in his unrecognized aspiration to approach the "total history" of everyday life. Many similar studies, not only on the Southeast Europe, are limited to only one or several of the above-mentioned spheres of everyday life.

The study of these diverse aspects of everyday life has been carried out with maximum precision and informativeness, by drawing on a huge number of sources from the periodical press of Yugoslav Macedonia – not only the central newspaper “Nova Makedonija”, but also a number of other publications aimed at specific professional or age groups.

The contributions of the dissertation work are undoubted, which for the first time manifests and explores most of the outlined aspects of everyday life in Vardar Macedonia after 1944, insofar as they are reflected or modulated by the periodical press. Almost all the main chapters of the dissertation contribute to the history science,

but in my opinion, those on work and everyday life, youth, pioneers, recreation (physical education and tourism), as well as on the socialist emancipation of women and domestic everyday life, stand out especially. In these and a number of other cases, for the first time in Bulgarian and world historiography, these spheres of everyday life in early Yugoslav Macedonia have been analyzed and presented in detail (in this case, with the help of press sources). A huge corpus of publications in the periodical press has been attracted and introduced into scholar circulation for the first time, as well as a number of unpublished documents of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Macedonia and ASNOM, stored in the central archive of the Republic of North Macedonia. The press sources are not only in the form of text, but also of photographs, many of which are published as a harmonious part of the study. Although on the periphery of the main issues, the dissertation contributes to the study of some problems rather from the field of political history: it reconstructs the series of the main rallies and other most mass political forums in the second half of the 1940s in Skopje (pp. 75–97) and offers new sources and evidence for the efforts of the highest party body (the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Macedonia) to build and impose a new Macedonian national identity (pp. 62–63) and a language norm (pp. 57–59), reveals additional aspects of the ongoing process of debulgarization, including through the press for the youngest, for the pioneers (pp. 98–105).

Last but not least, I would like to note that the dissertation work is distinguished by a particularly correct use of scholar terms. The doctoral student's precise handling of the complex political-historical and geographical terminology related to Macedonia (and Yugoslavia) is one of the indicators of his undoubted growth as a researcher of the history of that region.

In the dissertation, as well as in one of the articles ("The Socialist Yugoslav Macedonian Youth in the Period of *Renewal* (1945-1946)"), the tendency to introduce a comprehensive Yugoslav period of "renewal" is noticeable, which lasted approximately from May 1945, the end of World War II and the establishment of the power of the CPY over the entire state territory, to April 1947, the adoption of the first five-year economic plan in Yugoslavia (pp. 69, 83, etc.), i.e. it chronologically to a

certain extent coincides with the time of the so-called "People's Democracies" in Eastern Europe. The author himself admits that this is a "socio-political construct" or "propaganda construct" trumpeted by the mass media. In this sense, we would suggest that in a future monographic publication of the dissertation, a careful review of the historiography and official Yugoslav documentation from this period, related to the term, and to use the term "renewal" possibly only in relation to the economic development of Yugoslavia and its federal units. We would also recommend a conclusion that not only summarizes, but also offers some of the main conclusions from the study, and perhaps also provides ideas for subsequent research.

These notes in no way diminish the already highlighted merits of the dissertation, which is written in a lively and figurative language, at times with a careful sense of humour, which is usually a distinction of historians who are well acquainted with the time they are studying.

In conclusion, taking into account the aforementioned undoubted merits of the dissertation work, I confidently vote in favour of the Honorable Scientific Jury awarding the educational and scientific degree of "doctor" to Mr. Andoni Kirilov Andreev.

Member of the Academic Jury:

Sofia, 16 February 2026

(Assoc. Prof. Dr. N. Kaytchev)