

S T A T E M E N T

On the dissertation work of
Vyara Aleksandrova Angelova, PhD

Assoc. Prof. in the "Radio and television" department of the Faculty of journalism and mass communication at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"
on the topic "Bulgarian radio during Socialism 1944-1989"
for awarding the scientific rank of "Doctor of science" in professional division 3.5. Social communications and information sciences – Media and communication
from Prof. Lozanka Peycheva, Dr.Sc.

The dissertation "Bulgarian radio during Socialism 1944-1989", submitted for review, is 299 pages long, structured in an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of the used literature and a list of examined archive materials.

The dissertation is the first of its kind comprehensive, highly informative study, focused on the current, insufficiently studied and promising subject of the history of Bulgarian radio during Socialism, by reconstructing moments of its development in the period, significant for the institution.

Assoc. Prof. Vyara Angelova, PhD proposes the following thesis: "The general philosophy, guiding this study, is based on the understanding of Bulgarian radio as a part of the shared European media culture", because "it shares common processes of development with other European radio stations". This research thesis is consistently developed in the course of the study.

In her analytical observations, Assoc. Prof. Vyara Angelova, PhD, traces the ways, in which the crossing forces of ideology and history shape the structure and content of Bulgarian radio in Bulgaria's socialist years taking into account not only the political instrumentation of radio, but also its professionalization, which, according to Angelova, "appears to ally Bulgarian radio more with non-socialist radio stations, rather than its socialist partners" around the end of the period.

Different aspects of radio work are subject of analysis in the dissertation: institutional affiliation; administration; program activity; multiprogramming; matters of personnel; radiofication; professional roles; professional themes and solutions; music; international relations; shows for abroad; audience; western radio stations; professional publications about radio; the work process in radio; the workers' views on censorship, etc. This is the first time such a comprehensive multifaceted study on the development of socialist radio has been carried out in Bulgaria, on this scale.

Important questions about the relation between the musical and textual content of radio are clarified in the dissertation. A significant accent is put on music, which is critically presented and discussed in chapters one and three.

In the second part of chapter one (titled "By program activity") Dr. Angelova delves deeper in the professional debates of the radio's administration and pays special attention

to radio music, raising a number of important and critical questions, related to the key role of music in radio. She systematizes data about the “speech – music”, “musical genres”, “Bulgarian – foreign music” ratios, convincingly and logically. In the general look at music, the author draws attention to the acquiring of new music and the purging of the musical fund from “unwanted” works”.

It is noted, that music has significant expressive power, contributes to radio programming substantially, and is qualified as “the load-bearing element of radio”. Music is examined in a “sociocultural perspective”, in order to analyze “the targeted use of music in radio” and present, in accordance with the studied archival documentation, the specific content, constant change, some achievements and flaws of radio music through the examined period.

Dr. Angelova focuses on the **musical layout**, examined in some of the archival documents as the “main carrier of the emotional charge in the show”. It is precisely noted, that “the musical layout is a problem not only of the shows, but the whole program”, because it has a central significance for the structuring and development of the radio program.

Another important moment, analyzed in the section about music, is the **speech-music ratio**. It is noted, that in the 1950s it is 40 to 60; in the 1960s – around 30 to 70. After the 1970s the 1 to 3 ratio (speech-music) is firmly established, which is preserved until the end of the 1980s. One of the possible explanations for the growing share of music, compared to speech, is in “the assimilation of music as an indirect way to influence the audience” and the growing role of radio as a source of entertainment. The potential of music to amplify verbal suggestions and transmit things (emotions, psychological states or idea messages), which surpass the possibilities of speech, can be added to the aforementioned explanatory scheme.

The specifics of the **ratio between musical genres** in the program are outlined. The choice of music, which will be part of the program, is, not coincidentally, defined as “one of the touchiest matters”, because radio is still the dominant mainstream media in Bulgaria, until the second half of the 1960s (when television becomes increasingly widespread) – it has potential to reach any area in the country. Radio music is a specific extension and development of the different areas of music culture, and every musical genre gains popularity and new dimensions of its expressive potential through radio. Dr. Angelova presents a table, wherein she operates with data, gathered from documents in the CSA, in order to reflect the combination and ratio between musical genres in the radio program. It is precisely noted, that popular music is established as a significant share of the radio program and takes up around a quarter of the entire musical program, with the leading political line of popular music gaining a “more-defined national form” and “higher artistic merit”.

Unsurprisingly, the work is engaged in searching for an answer to the important question for the **ratio between Bulgarian and foreign music on air**. Regarding the concept of “the realization of a national radio program”, which emerged in the 1960s, and the notion, that “radio is a part of the national identity and security”, it is rightly emphasized, that the ratio between the transmitted Bulgarian and foreign music is especially important. Dr. Angelova presents the concern of the governing bodies about the Bulgarian-foreign music ratio on the radio’s air and brings out several important observations on the state of this

ratio, found in the archival document: (1) “practically, there are more western melodies seeping into socialist Bulgaria, than eastern melodies finding their way onto the Western European air”, which proves the statement, that “The Iron Curtain is more permeable from West to East, than vice versa”; (2) “The aspiration toward a national radio program leads to an abundance of mediocre musical performances” in the production of *Estrada*, attributed to “the relatively restricted creative potential and capacity of Bulgarian authors”; (3) “The illusion that a specific Bulgarian radio sound can be achieved is actively supported almost until the end of the socialist period”. The problem with the optimal ratio Bulgarian-foreign music on national radio and the discussions around this subject don’t lead to practical and significant changes and functional solutions, to this day.

Another focus of the dissertation is on the **purgation of the musical fund** (through scrapping and destroying tapes of recorded music). Unsurprisingly, along with the periodical “operative purges” of the sonic fund to decommission technically compromised tapes, several ideologically motivated campaigns to “purge the musical fund” of the radio were carried out, at the discretion of a “special committee”. As a result, tapes were decommissioned and thousands of gramophone records, containing “retrogressive and low-quality music”, “recordings of songs, glorifying the cult of personality”, were destroyed. These important observations register a specific radio practice, continued in the following decades of radio development.

In Chapter three, Dr. Angelova presents her analysis of 26 in-depth interviews with socialist radio workers (journalists and hosts; speakers; musical journalists; technical-engineering associates) and proposes a model to explain the work in radio through “inside voices”. The analysis is separated into several thematic nests.

The matter of the Bulgarian-foreign music ratio in the radio is reexamined through the stories of the interview respondents, who remember the existence of a quota principle in determining the communication policy for musical programming in the national radio. It is emphasized, that the percentage quotas “can never be adhered to completely”, but the accent was generally on Bulgarian music. She makes the significant observation, that during the 1980s control over the percentage ratio of music is relatively slim, “the requirement to only include 5% western music is suddenly void”, giving start to a new trend – “around 1989 a period, wherein “Kiss” is played more than “Shturtsite” is entered”.

Regarding the genre based musical layout in radio programs, Dr. Angelova argues, logically and well, the existing tendency to exercise constant control over the styles and genres of broadcast music. Respondents remember the prohibitions on broadcasting certain musical styles or performers, “for political reasons”. They disclose that an artistic committee realizes the selection of the musical repertoire for broadcasting on radio programs, deciding what can and cannot appear on air; musical editors decide what will be heard on the radio.

Dr. Vyara Angelova directs her attention to the matter of renewing the musical fund and successfully uncovers some of the mechanisms for the “half-legal” acquiring of music (needed to enrich and renew the sonic fund of the radio). She qualifies this spontaneous process of different individual initiatives as “a special order of volunteering”, “functioning of a second network” for replenishing the radio’s record library through acquiring music from private persons.

The primary achieved results in the dissertational work are summarized in the conclusion, again emphasizing the work's main thesis – that Bulgarian radio shares a common audiovisual European development.

The abstract is developed in accordance with the requirements and the content of the dissertation. The prepared self-reference for the contributions correctly reflects the real achievements of the study and corresponds to its scientific value.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation presents an original study of Bulgarian radio in the years of Socialism; contains rich historical facts; has the merits of a serious scientific work. It meets the requirements for relevance of the problem, a clearly formulated thesis, subject, aim and tasks; offers important analyses and conclusions, showing the social place and significance of socialist radio, and has a contribution towards the building of new knowledge, as well as broadening and enriching the existing knowledge on the developed subject.

This gives me reason to support the study and vote positively for the awarding of the scientific rank of "Doctor of sciences" in professional division 3.5. Social communications and information sciences – Media and communications, to Assoc. Prof. Vyara Angelova, PhD.

16. December 2019

Signature:

Sofia

Prof. Lozanka Peycheva, Dr.Sc.