

STATEMENT

On the dissertational work “Bulgarian radio during Socialism 1944-1989”, authored by Asst. Prof. Vyara Aleksandrova Angelova, PhD, SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”

for the awarding of the academic and scientific rank of “Doctor of sciences” in professional division 3.5. Social communications and informational sciences – Media and communications

by Asst. Prof. Ventsislav Dimov Dimov, Dsc., SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”

The proposed text is in accordance with the requirements of the Development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria act – formally and content wise. The subject is serious, the research problem – Bulgarian radio during Socialism – is a challenge, which has yet to find an adequate solution in Bulgarian science. The work of Asst. Prof. Vyara Angelova, PhD fits in the common construct of social sciences and humanities, which have recently had significant achievements in historical, sociological, art science, interdisciplinary research of the socialist near past. Moreover, it outlines a new direction and takes the first steps off the beaten path. I will use metaphors – if there are highway studies on power, the culture front, professional unions, the re-plowed burrows of Socialism, etc. (by Iv. Znepolski, Iv. Elenkov and others), this text does not “travel” on a ready-made highway; rather it discovers a new path. We should then be grateful to the author, that she continues something, which began as a history of radio with Veselin Dimitrov’s two-volume edition (research on Bulgarian radio in the 1929-1944 period), and helps develop science beyond the borders of the first period, and beyond the history and description of facts. Angelova not only describes Bulgarian radio after 1944, but also implements new methods, has different priorities, commensurable with current ideas and approaches in sciences, researching media, power, near history, Socialism.

1. Subject, object, aims, tasks and methodology

As the author points out, her work’s aim is “to give a more comprehensive picture of the way socialist Bulgarian radio functions in three directions – institutional construction and administrative principles; the work processes and worker’s specifics, as well as professional publication’s reflection on the radio’s problems”. The aim determines the main tasks: finding a

broad basis of documents for the institution, systematizing the guidelines, based on them, studying the publications about radio as a different network, an attempt to see radio “from the inside”, through the stories of radio people. The choice of subject is also grounded in the low degree of research on the matter, as well as its importance and perspectives in the field of media studies.

The primary object of research – Bulgarian radio in the 1944-1989 period – is understood as a complex of: institutional affiliation; administration; program activity; matters of personnel; radiofication; professional roles; professional themes and solutions; music; international relations; shows for abroad; the audience; western radio stations; professional publications about radio; censorship, etc. Angelova insists that radio is a special case of a socialist institution, which proved to be functioning before the socialist state, in the Bulgarian case. Simultaneously, she reaches the conclusion, that Bulgarian radio during Socialism should not be viewed only through the stereotypes for totalitarian media, but also as a modern institution, sharing common European characteristics.

The chosen methodology is logically backed by qualitative research: finding, observation and analysis of archives; content analysis of a number of specialized professional publications; in-depth interviews.

2.Characteristic and evaluation of the dissertational work and contributions

The dissertation is 299 pages in volume, structured in an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The reference apparatus is respectable: over 120 titles of scientific literature in several languages, additional literature and online sources, over 2000 archival units from the CSA and SA – Sofia, 26 in-depth interviews, conducted by the author and a research team of students, supervised by her, in the field in the last year. Most of the archival sources and field materials (interviews) are introduced in scientific circulation for the first time.

The text’s chosen structure – three chapters, united by a common logic, works, because it allows for the sequential uncovering of: the development of the institution “from above”, through documents of the party-state power and of the media institution, its administration, structures and organization; the image of radio “from the side”, through the publicity of professional publications about radio; and the look “from the inside”, toward the functioning of the media

through the memories of the people, who worked there. The conclusion summarizes the research and outlines several conclusions: the asymmetrical institutional development of the media; the dual role of the party power in regard to radio – enclosing it in an ideological frame, but also catalyzing its professionalization.

The abstract corresponds with the content of the dissertation and relays its main accents accurately; it contains the work's contributions.

3. Competence, relevance and innovativeness of the subject and work

The author is a connoisseur of the object and its scientific study. Her multiannual in-depth research work presents her in this text as one of the few experts, who not only know facts, but can also rationalize them. Angelova knows the primary publications on the matter in science worldwide, uses current approaches. A new area in the scientific field of media and communications, of media history in Bulgaria, is developed. A concept is laid out as the philosophy of the work – Bulgarian radio shares common audiovisual European development and is a part of the shared European media culture during Socialism. The outlined significant conclusions about Bulgarian radio during Socialism are a testimony of the depth and systematic of the work, of the innovation of its author. I will recall the main ones: radio marks a significant development in the socialist period – technological, personnel, professional, multi-program, intermediary. Radio is established as an institute for propaganda of the state and party politics, during Socialism, but it becomes more multilayered, containing different cultural, educational and political narratives, simultaneously, i.e. it can be thought through the mutual influx of the political and professional discourse.

4. On the personal contributions of the author and text

The author states contributions in six directions. I accept the self-reference for a more comprehensive review of radio during Socialism, according to which the contributions are in these aspects: institutional functioning, public image and the work in socialist radio; introducing archival documents from meetings of the radio's administration, selected and thematically analyzed; the role of specialized periodicals about radio, unexamined before this work; a new understanding of the role of foreign radio stations in the modernization of Bulgarian radio sound; a new interpretation of the use of genres, related to the professional growth of radio and the

political tasks before it; new theses and interpretations on socialist radio, in the context of its belonging to the European audiovisual culture.

One of the author's primary contributions, in my eyes, is the large-scale work in archives. The memory, preserved in archival documents, is not merely a source of information about institutions and their activity, but also about human relations to power and media as an organization, and the role of social actors and media figures. Vyara Angelova has the industriousness to find and systematize a huge massive of archival materials about the history of radio, has the skill to notice these details, which show the real mechanisms of the media institution as a field of collisions and resistance, but also concords and service to power, in these prima facie boring documents.

I identify the anthropological directions in Vyara Angelova's work as contributions. They have already been claimed in the book "BNR and BNT between the state and society 1989-2015" (which she compiled). The dissertational work points to her implementing current methods of media anthropology, has a vision for the narrative of media figures, for the role of personal memories and biographical stories. I welcome the addition of the third chapter "Inside voices" to the study, with its discursive presentation of the content of 26 in-depth interviews with radio workers from the socialist period. I find the coherency between the three chapters of the dissertation especially valuable – there are comparisons between the documental testimonials from chapter one, their media images in chapter two and the verification of their implementation through the personal testimonials of the radio figures. The personal testimonials about the forceful (and not quite) acts of power, about censorship (and not quite) and its euphemisms or similar, but not identical practices of control, regimes of prohibition and toleration, restrictions, etc., are valuable.

I expect the work to be published and I expect the interviews, conducted by the author, as well as some of the archival documents, to find their place therein, as appendixes.

5. Conclusion

Asst. Prof. Vyara Angelova, PhD "Bulgarian radio during Socialism 1944 – 1989" is a serious theoretical study, which treats a significant theoretical issue. Based on rich empirical material, analyzed in-depth, containing an in-depth and critical review of scientific achievements

on the matter, the study fills a void in existing knowledge, enriches the scientific field. The doctor's dissertation is in accordance with contemporary standards of research activity in media studies, it has scientific validity and innovation, it stands out with its preciseness and originality.

I congratulate the author for the contribution work, as well as the scientific collective of the "Radio and television" department of FJMC at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" for the academic atmosphere, which contributed to the presentation of this work and its procedural realization as a doctoral study. I recommend the Scientific jury unanimously vote for the awarding of the scientific rank of "Doctor of sciences" in professional division 3.5. Social communication and information sciences – Media and communications, to Asst. Prof. Vyara Angelova, PhD, for her dissertation on "Bulgarian radio during Socialism 1944-1989".

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