

MUSIC FOR THE PEOPLE ON THE MEDIA FRONT*

Ventsislav Dimov is a specialist with multilateral activity, scientific, pedagogical and applied scientific achievements. His longtime work in media music is one of them. In this field, as well as in other scientific areas, he is appreciated not only among professionals in Bulgaria, but also in the circles of the international scientific community. His professional training, vast experience and practice in several areas of the humanities help this high recognition.

A new interpretation of socialism and media in Bulgaria through soft power – this thematic aspect of research summarizes the scientific study of Ventsislav Dimov in recent years and it is developed in his monograph “Music for the People on the Media Front (The Soft Power of Peoples and Popular Music in Socialist Bulgaria)”. The book is structured into four sections. The first one outlines the theoretical and terminological bases of the research: power and soft power, socialism and media, approaches and fields; music for the people and relation to the popular and folklore. The second section examines media music in ideological regulations (narratives of power, i.e. how power sees and speaks about media music, how it describes the world through the relations media–music). Other topics are also researched: how songs and singing describe the world and the person in categories, such as folkloric, democratic, ideas of the party, peace and socialist camp, working people, new people. The heroes: party leaders, partisans, foremen, unit managers, tractor drivers, youth are analyzed. The antagonists: the enemy outside and the enemy inside are shown. The third section presents music in ideologized media practices and organizations (functioning in the system of the socialist media, i.e. how power acts with media music in sound recording, radio and television; how power narratives are imprinted in media-music texts). Radio as a tool for propaganda and its soft power through music for the people are examined (shows, scripts, figures, parts of radio programs). Section four looks for an answer to the questions how specific media and music texts and figures (scripts, shows, songs, singers, radio presenters) are perceived by the audience, i.e. reception. The author of the book analyzes how power narratives, reflected in media and music as well as power media practices receive a life outside of the media context and channels from top to bottom (folklorization). He also presents how low media-music idioms, which can be in dissonance with the official ones, flourish from the bottom up.

What are the main contributions of this study?

I will point out some of the most important. A major contribution is the multifaceted research of power–media–music–audience relations in Bulgaria from 1944 to 1989. A large number of sources are used, some of which are included for the first time in such a study. There are combined different innovative approaches that show the research subject as a whole. The new approach to music for the people in the media through socialism in

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Bulgaria is another important contribution. It is very important that the research is constructed as a network – a system in which different points of view are intertwined: creation, functioning and reflections of the soft power of folk and popular music in Socialist Bulgaria. A flexible, dialogical and many-layered look at media music for the people and music of the people presents a holistic picture, which is another important contribution of the research.

Among the contributions of this monograph is the attempt to look at the recent past in a new way. The focus is not “from above” and by the inertia of the usual negative presentation of totalitarian power models and ideologized dictate, but “in the middle” and “from below”. The observations and analyzes are through the work of intermediaries (media, creative unions, artists) and through the practices of the audience in its everyday life. This also determines the choice of the key concepts – *music for the people* and *music of the people*. They are, as it turns out, not only below, but outside the singing loudspeakers on the square, where not only “fanfare and spells”, but also intimate confessions and sentimental messages sound. These are the objects and processes where the soft power of media music in the time of Bulgarian State Socialism is sought by Ventsislav Dimov.

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