

“The General Said”: A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Covid-19 Memes of General Mutafchiyski

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Abstract: *Starting from the premise that internet memes are units carrying cultural information and the fact that they are usually ideological as well as intertextual in nature, the paper provides an analysis of a corpus of memes featuring General Ventsislav Mutafchiyski, the Chair of the National Crisis Management Staff during the first wave of COVID-19. The memes were circulated in social media, mostly Facebook, between 13 March and 30 May, 2020. In order to analyze the general ideas that users in Bulgaria saw as humorous in the presentation of the new crisis and to find the underlying ideology and the intertextual references employed to that end, the paper resorts to Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) as well as CDA, the former being preferred when analysis of verbal and non-verbal means of expression is required, while the latter is used in matters that touch on ideology and the way it is related to a particular social reality. Some of the main conclusions reached are that the image of General Mutafchiyski is presented through various intertextual references to events, artists (both Bulgarian and international), fairy tales, movies, even aliens, for the sake of providing a general idea of his position in the fight against COVID-19. Despite the humorous effect, the image of the general is predominantly positive and shows the respect of the authors behind the memes circulating in social media at the time.*

Keywords: *internet memes, Ventsislav Mutafchiyski, COVID-19, MDA, CDA*