

MASS MEDIA INTERSECTION WITH THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

In this article we intend to present the evolution of Romanian society from the December 1989 Revolution until the present day. The focus is on how mass - media in general intersected with the political power. Freedom was the biggest gain as a squence of the bloody separation from the communist dictatorship. The study also follows the evolution and the degree of independence, along with the three fundamental powers: legislative, executive and judiciary and that of the fourth unofficial one, namely press. The need for information determines the political frame to intersect with mass - media. We find out that mass - media and politics are complementary and, in addition, have many points of intersection, mutual conditionings, giving rise sometimes to a number of ambiguities, which cause confusion and distrust among citizens. The idea that prevails is that the press today becomes increasingly dependent on advertising contracts.

At the end of the article, the author presents a personal opinion on how the political class should have looked like meant to lead a country with a young democracy. According to this view, it would have been necessary to have promoted as leaders those who had no connection with the nomenclature of the former communist regime.

Key words: *mass media, politics, revolution, freedom, information*

Twenty five years ago we gained the freedom to decide *who we are, where we come from and where we head to*. Then it was the detachment from a past which remained uncomfortable for what was to become the aspirations of a people which came to its senses, awoken by the noise made by the history in our vicinity, this time, from East to West, from Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev to Erich Honecker.

The freedom, won at the cost of the lives of those who were against the tanks and the bullets proved to be *the most important gain of an atypical revolution, which meant rather a lesson of ideological repentance, than a profound change of regime*.

The revolution of December 1989, even though, insured the overthrow of the communist dictatorship and the transition from a despotic

socialism to the market democracy and economy (features of modern capitalist societies) it was victorious, bringing to the forefront of the post-revolutionary political scene leaders who assumed the power, they themselves former communist leaders too, converted "overnight" to the values of the capitalist society.

The public framework began to be the test site of the birth, growth and growing up of the four fundamental powers genuine of the democratic regime: the legislative, executive, judiciary and media.

When talking about the first two branches of the state of law, the legislative and the executive, we have to involve the politicians, both in their architecture and in their functioning. A third power, the justice, is by definition outside the politics (or at least should be, which did not happen after 25 years of communist mentality).

The press, included in this count too out of habit, even though it is not not caught in the legal text, was dedicated and respected as such.

The independence of the four powers generated a show, more than once incomprehensible, originating passions, wounded pride, and last but not least, vendettas, falsifying most of the messages addressed to citizens either on the background of the exacerbation of confidence in these *pillars of democracy*, or through actions in order to undermine the importance of Article 16, paragraph 2 of the Constitution: "No one is above the law".

The political framework has been invaded by the media through the door left open by some political leaders favoured by some media institutions. Thus, one can speak of a division of the media, according to the colors of the political scene. In the news televisions UNPR PSD-PC-PLR were "sympathized" by RomâniaTV and

Antena 3, while ACL (PNL and PDL) Realitatea TV and B1.

One of the conflicting reasons of these last 25 years was the independence of the Justice, a conflict treated by politicians in the media, even invading an area subdued by the invasion of the territories either of the press or of Justice, where the arguments were not credible or did not have any more the force required to support them.

So we talk about the intersection of the political framework with the media in a common point of interest, called *the need for information*, the congruence point, which is meant to equal forces to focus them on the real values of power management, bringing to the same denominator the common intentions and achievements, summed up in the phrase *the achievement of electoral promises*. This support point with strong valences as center of gravity of the system defines the coordinates of *information*.

The information is defined by the ability to transmit new data or simply data about a situation, known or unknown. "Knowing" becomes the synonym of "being informed".

Today it is known that the main role of the mass media is to collect, synthesize and transmit information as the political class is the main receiver of information, with which it builds its political approach to master the power or to reach it.

There are already four terms and as many actions: *information, news, political class power*. With their help we can build sentences like:

1. "He who owns the information, owns the power."
2. "The press can distribute biased information, influencing the sharing of power in the political framework".
3. "Between media and the political class the information becomes the true trade currency."
4. "He who gets the information first gets first to power".
5. "The information is the prerogative of the media, the power being the mistress of the political framework".

"Knowing" is not a right, it is a challenge of reality, a trade coin with which you can build axiological systems, with no assurance that they guarantee the finding of the *"right path"*. Each

concurrency has its *right path* which we follow in order to find again our expectations and aspirations.

Returning to the two raised areas (media and political) we believe that it is necessary to strike their roots without exacerbating the academic tint, keeping ourselves in the chronology of facts, even if it were only to rediscover ourselves for what we are today, in the similar reactions of our ancestors so that we can recompose the evolution of the two territories, which, we must recognize, are not only complementary, but have a variety of points of intersection, mutual conditionings, sometimes resulting in a number of ambiguities, which do nothing else but simply multiply the confusion and the distrust of those who believed in the political messages disseminated through the media.

Before talking about the "media age", which begins after the invention of the printing press, we will encounter a series of *<structured methods of public communication imposed by the need for information "top-down" and vice versa, an action desired as fast, as accurate and complete as possible through which the rulers had the duty to pass the measures, the provisions, the acts of all kinds, on the one hand, and on the other hand the need to obtain "news" about what is happening at the level of those who were ruled, was a reality. This need as well as the "curiosity" itself acted before the advent of writing and, obviously, before the invention of printing.>* [Arie Grunberg-Matache, "Introduction to the History of Press - Media Relations - Literature in the Romanian Culture"]

But the Chinese news bulletins, TI BAO belonging to the Han Dynasty, 2nd century BC, and to the issue of the first printed newspaper, **May 17 1605** (at which time Abraham Verhoeve, typographer in Antwerp, published the weekly journal "Nieuwe Antwersche Tijdinghe" with numbers and dates of occurrence) had to pass more than 3500 years.

Is it much, is it little?

A much more accurate answer would be the reconciling Jewish finding "everything occurred at the right time."

Let's remember one year, 1771 when there appears in Timisoara, the first newspaper printed on Romanian soil, even if it was written in German, "**Temesvarer Nachrichten**"

Observing the chronology of events let us recall in this sequence of significant moments in the birth of the media, about "the Jewish posters" "the Greek ephemeris", the Pontiff annals, Acta Senatus, Acta Diurna. All these communication supports of information are actually a kind of official newspapers, which include, among others, news about city life, decisions regarding the community, imperial decrees or provisions.

Continuing the radiography of the geological layer of the press we discover *the Oral Chronicle that involves the people whose job was to travel and inform*. They were what the same Eugene Dubief called "des journalists sans journal".

Then, the of gathering the information in registers will be born - a kind of journal - based on which, manuscript copies were made for distribution .

There **appears**, in this way - as a means of information - *the manuscript journal*, a form that will continue to survive the printing press, the examples being quoted until the beginning of the seventeenth century. **These "newspapers" will last for more than two centuries.** Moreover, in the sixteenth century the manuscript journal will reach an exceptional threshold of success ".

Between 1438 - 1450, Johan Gutenberg Genfleisch manages to achieve in Strasbourg and Mainz the printing press with metal mobile type isolated in molds.

Surpassing the copying of manuscripts or the tabular print and the ensuring of fast prints in a growing number of copies meant exceptional events. (As shown by Elisabeth Geck ("Gutenberg and the Art of Printing"))

In 1884, after 434 years, Ottmar Mergenthaler will invent the linotype - the New York Tribune newspaper will use this technique of culling first, and after only 62 years, in 1946, **will invent the photography culling.**

Let us remember that the first printed newspaper appeared in 1605 in Antwerp. The first daily newspaper was going to appear after almost half a century, in 1650, "**Einkommende Zeitung**". It appears on July 1 1650, in Leipzig, but the idea is not called for yet, even if the need was felt. For the eighteenth century there remains as typical the weekly paper.

It was not until the next century that the daily formula will gain over and conquer Europe. The

first evening newspaper "The Star", is issued in London only in 1788.

John Walter, a businessman and coal merchant, originally created "The Daily Universal Register" (1785) a newspaper which will become, **in 1788, "Times", a publication that continues to be issued even today after 226 years.**

It will become emblematic for the modern press. JN Jeanneney quotes the following conclusive characterization: "If I were to convey the future generations a proof of the English civilization of the nineteenth century, I would neither choose the docks, the railways nor our ways, our public buildings, nor even the magnificent Parliament. It would be enough for me to give this evidence, a simple issue of the "Times ".

The area of the Romanian language can not be avoided of what has already become in Europe a strong media pressure, more and more present at great decision making. Thus, the Romanian Courier **appears in 1829 (April 8) in Bucharest, edited by Eliade Radulescu; the same year, on June 1, there appears in Iași Albina Romaneasca, headed by Gheorghe Asachi; in 1838, on the 12th of March, there appears Gazeta de Transilvania issued by George Barițiu.**

It goes without saying that **these three papers are considered as the foundation of the Romanian press.**

Thus, a professional publication should meet the six conditions that will prove fundamental for its compelling recognition: its periodicity, printing, circulation, distribution, advertising.

Today when we talk about the media, we talk about journalists, newspapers, television, radio stations, news agencies, online pages, blogs, social networking. We are talking about newspaper editorials, printing, radio and television studios, offices of news agencies recorder, video cameras, satellite dishes, smartphones, TVs, LCDs. WLAN Wi-Fi, connections, www sites, search motors on the Internet.

Today we are witnessing an almost delirious show of *breaking news*, a live broadcast show, which does not only accompany us, but becomes part of our lives. We are involved in real-time news consumption or sometimes we ourselves become its architects .

Let's go back in time when those *Acta Diurna* were written, to listen to Eugene Dubief, drawing our attention that these "*acta diurna* obeyed the censorship of the power" [Eugene Dubief, "Le Journalism"]

Here's how, at the same time with the evolution of media, we capture the increase of self-defense reflex of the power over those who try to disclose its weaknesses, a discovery which, beyond the "public opprobrium" also means *hindering their personal* or public schemes with the community.

At the same time, the Power is urged by regulations to ensure hygiene of the public space, keeping it within the bounds of honesty, of truth and justice.

Thus <in 1275 a royal ordinance stipulated in England the punishment of those who disseminate false news.

In 1534 censorship becomes a reality in France.

Between 1569-1572 *Pope Pius V imposes severe penalties, up to including the death penalty for those holding or spreading "aviosi" which contested the Catholic Church.*

As first victim, the first "martyr" of journalism, is quoted, a name worth to be withheld as inventory "**Nicolo Franco, killed by hanging in 1570 by order of Pope**". (Marian Petcu, "The Power and The Culture")

The same Marian Petcu ("The Romanian Teaching Book") quotes from the "**Rule of Vasile Lupu (1646) the death penalty for those who swear and offend him with the writing**". The rule covers all the forms of wording of some critical documents, accusatory or insulting. Moreover, "*the one who will find a letter with swears or blame against someone and will not tear or burn it, but will show it to his friends or to whoever he will find, he will be held to contend alike the one who has done it.*"

Neither the media in Romania, the moment when its presence will be felt, will be able to avoid this conservation reflex of the Power.

Let us not forget that in the proclamation of Iasi (March 1848) it is required in paragraph 34 "the abolition of censorship", that in the "Points of the Romanian Transylvanian Nation", adopted at "the Great Assembly from Blaj in paragraph 7 it was mentioned: "The Romanian nation demands the freedom to speak, write and print without censorship" or the famous Proclamation

of the Romanian Country, in June, in paragraph 8 it was explicitly demanded "the absolute freedom of press".

The first official act of state to recognize the freedom of the press is the **Decree No. 3 of the Provisional Government of June 14, 1848** which says: "According to the will of the people, censorship is abolished forever. Any Romanian has the right to speak, write and print freely."

Among the fundamental documents issued by Cuza it is also included "*The Law of the Press enacted in March 1862*, a law that proclaims the freedom of everyone to express their ideas through the press without censorship (see Articles 26 and 27) and which recognizes the right of any Romanian citizen to found a newspaper.

In fact, the *Constitution of July 1866* enshrined in Article 5: "The Romanians enjoy the freedom of the press, the freedom of assembly" and Article 24 stated that "any newspaper or publication shall not be suspended or suppressed" (Grunberg Area Matache "Introduction to the History Press - Media Relations - Literature in the Romanian Culture").

The violent reaction of government, especially the one dictated by a possible defense against the allegations made in the disclosures conveyed through the media, becomes a habit of dispute between the government and newspapers, between the power and the media.

The reported attitude perpetuated in time as a reflex, and no government got rid of. Thus a reality, hard to be annihilated, was founded, namely that the opposition will always side with the media, will give satisfaction to the disclosures of the newspapers, fueling them with all kinds of news, the most virulent ones addressed to the political opponents in government, while the power will invariably attack those publications that interfere with their shaping the future according to image and resemblance of their own interests.

Even though at principles level both the power (accountable by a majority vote of the people) and the press, which is defined not only metaphorically, "the watchdog of society" side with the national interest between these two powers there are actually side effects, "life and death", fight shades, the press attacking a corrupt

power or which should “look corrupt” in the eyes of the people, while the power does not hesitate to manipulate through an increasingly ingenious range of censorship.

Advertising, in time, will decisively influence both the media development and especially the ability of publications to resist the pressures of the power that has specialized in time in subtle but profound forms of economic censorship. Public money has always been a temptation for those who had full access to it directly or not. If the advertising “squeezed in” newspapers in Montaigne’s time, focussed on a “social role” registers “in the extension of the charity works” the XXI century advertising in mass media has come to be in control of the keeping on the market of some or decimation of the rest lacking this significant *oxygen supply*.

The press of this beginning of the 3rd millennium becomes dependent on advertising contracts, which are not pro bono, the consistency of some major amounts of the nature to modify the rankings, may transform the beneficiary publication into true war machines, at the service of those who pay.

The role of the advertising contract in media intoxication is crucial. The government advertising turned a daily paper the «National Journal», for example, from a modest newspaper of 15,000 copies / day, into an important influential newspaper, that, since the moment it was favored in government advertising contracts in 2004 its circulation rose to 138,000 copies / day (spite!). With such a jump it is very easy to do your job in press, while the vast majority of competitors on the market were increasingly afraid of the lack of media advertising contracts for as long as the post-revolutionary economy never did well, while the cost of publishing a newspaper, for example, topped by two to three times its selling price.

Advertising has become the engine that can still guarantee the press freedom, even if, we must acknowledge that it becomes largely subjective, dependent, entering into compact with, the one who pays for its interests, even if they “do not hurt anyone.” The lack of security of the media, the “security belt” of the only professional institution that conveys the

information as news of public interest is a shortage which the power should take upon itself, thinking that compliance of constitutional provisions fall under its responsibility, concerning *The Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, Article 30, the freedom of expression*. “(1) The freedom of expression of thoughts, opinions, or beliefs, and freedom of creations of any kind, through words, in writing, images, sounds or other means of communication in public, are inviolable. (2) **Any kind of censorship is prohibited.** (3) **The freedom of the press also involves the free setting up of publications.** (4) **No publication can be suppressed.** (5) The law may impose mass media the obligation to make public their financing source. (6) **The freedom of expression shall not be prejudicial to the dignity, honor, privacy of person, and the right to their own image.** (7) Any defamation of the country and the nation, calls to war and aggression, ethnic, racial, class or religious incitement to discrimination, territorial separatism or public violence, as well as any obscene, indecent are prohibited . (8) Civil liability for any information or creation made public falls upon the publisher or producer, author of the artistic performance, the owner of the copying facilities, radio or television station, under the law. Indictable offenses of the press shall be established by law. “

What is missing further in this article are the special laws which should ensure the implementation of these imperatives, especially Alin. 4 (“No publication may be suppressed”), as long as the economic censorship in Romania, offers them the misfortune to “self-suppress” to bring the press on the verge of generalized bankruptcy, a situation that can be seen freely while analysing the circulation of newspapers issued in Romania, circulating relative to the number of people, compared to other European countries.

In Romania, in 2014 the circulation of newspapers experienced a sharp fall from 13 to 15 times (National Journal from 138,000 copies / edition in 2004, comes to sell 10,563 copies / issue) in 2014, while in England, France or Italy the decrease of circulation did not exceed 20-30%, in times of crisis, as IFJ statistics show (International Federation of Journalists). To

exemplify this collapse which, the government should perceive as an important warning sign, that would highlight the direct attack on Art.30 of the Romanian Constitution, on the freedom of expression, the analysis of the circulation provided by RAOT is enough (Romanian Audit Office Transmedia) compared to the years 2004, 2011 and 2014 to realize the constant crash amplified by the crisis, but maintained after the crisis too, with an alarming downward trend.

At the same time, we shall consider a possible rescue coming from online area, the cyberspace becoming more and more friendly with the traditional print media consumers. Thus the paper newspapers, whose circulation collapsed 10-20 times, from 40,000 copies / issue, reaching 4000 copies / issue, acknowledge a revival in the online space. Here are some illustrative examples of post-revolutionary press, choosing three daily papers monitored RAOT in the first two trimesters of 2014:

Adevarul (The Truth) is a central newspaper founded in 1888 by Alexander Blediman. [Ciprian Chirvasiu, "The Story of Blediman, Founder of Adevarul"], Its circulation in 1990 was about 1.5 million copies / edition. In 2014 it decreased by 150 times, reaching a gross circulation of 13.247copies / edition out of which 9229newspapers were sold, 9532 copies being distributed.

At the same time the site of the publication www.adevarul.ro gathers (on August 26, 2014) 419,925 endorsement, 179,340 visitors and 140,372 unique clients.

Evenimentul zilei, the daily paper which was "given birth" by Ion Cristoiu and Cornel Nistorescu in 1992 from a circulation of 850,000 copies/day, in 1993 reaches a maximum sales of 650,000 copies per day. The year 2014 emphasizes the decline of the paper in gross circulation of 20,322, out of which 13,554 are sold, by circulating 13,877 copies/issue, however keeping it among the newspapers that "still stand in the forefront of the Romanian media."

On the website, at the address www.evz.ro we find at the same time, August 2014, 517 862 impressions, 130,858 visits and 96,894 unique clients.

Let's also analyse the *National Journal*, edited by the Intact Trust and led by Marius Tuca,

collapsed from a circulation of 138,000 copies/edition in 2004 to 16.122 gross circulation copies/edition, which sold 10,301 and 10,563 copies/edition are distributed in 2014.

The online page of the same newspaper gathers, in the same period of 2014, 150,338 impressions/edition, 76,417 visits and 66,264 customers.

Here is how we can avoid our reactions that we are forced to face in connection with the profound changes that the Romanian media market has to face too. Hardly did we get used to the Gutenberg Galaxy performances, that we must move into the New media, in the virtual world of the Internet a place where there are no boundaries like "mainstream media" and "local media", all posts being accessible worldwide, defining the term *planetary press*, where there is a LAN or Wi-Fi connection.

The honoured professor Anton Carpinschi senses that "Unlike the institutional transition to democracy and market economy, generally achieved, the transition of attitude is" the transition after the transition". [Gheorghiu, Sergiu "Votes and Policies. The Dynamics of the Romanian Parties during the Last Decades" Anton Carpinshi "Partidocracy and the Ideological Shortage. Could it be otherwise?"]. It is about an, essentially incipient, instructive educational process in a society that has not fully consumed its modernity. When I say this, I mean the two historical attempts to modernize Romania - the liberal-capitalist and the communist-statist one- the first one brutally interrupted the second, fundamentally failed. "

Thus the finding that, in this area in Eastern Europe, nothing is over, the events which succeeded one another, at a higher rate than the way we were able to mobilize to integrate the world we live in, always got ahead of us, forcing us to build on still non-functional resistance systems, is credible. It can be said without exaggeration (even if we invoke the value of metaphor) that in the 75 years of vibrating history in Romania there was *built on sheer air*.

This explains why at the end of 1989, the communism was so easily shattered by the gesture of the four million members of the

Romanian Communist Party, when most of them burned their *red membership cards*, considering that in doing so they *got rid of the devil*. The revolution was blood-dripping as the new political actors' endeavour *to seize the power*, producing a veritable *cram* during which the front rows were inevitably occupied by those who had nothing to do with what a responsible political class should do, which should take upon itself not only the image of the leader, but rather the *responsibility and competence of government in the interest of the people*. This minus, among the great failures, was accounted for in all these 24 years that followed 1990.

The normal configuration, which the political architecture of the power of a country emerged from an anti-communist revolution should have had, ought to have highlighted another political regime (as it happened), except that at leaders' level, there failed to be brought, to the forefront of power, those who had had no connection with the deceased communist regime nomenclature. The alternation in government, in the seven electoral confrontations was split almost equally between the main political forces of the country, between the *left and right* of the political spectrum. Thus between 1990-1996 the *left wing* was in power, between 1997-2000 the country was governed by the political *right* (CDR), between 2001-2004 again the *left wing* comes to power, so that between 2004-2012, the country to be "captured" by a pseudo-political alliance, firstly PNL-PD, then, after 2008, with PDL to remain in power. From 2004 until spring 2012 the accession to power was "forced" by President Traian Basescu, who refused to accept the nomination of the Prime Minister, as customary, by the party that had won the majority of votes in elections and who succeeded in forming a parliamentary political majority coalition. From spring 2012 the leadership is incumbent on the *left wing* again, this time in a political alliance with the Liberal Party, which imposes itself as a 70% parliamentary majority, under the banner of USL. Then, in 2014, there followed ACL and USL-2. *The agony and the ecstasy*.

This dynamic picture of alternation in government it is rendered evident in the *black hole* that consumed the political energy, *the struggle to reach and preserve power at any price*. Only in

2012 the electorate sanctioned for the first time since 1989, the governments' carrying out of 2008-2012 term policy. In 2014, at the presidential elections the popular vote sanctioned "the plenitude" of those who wanted not only all the power, but they did not take into account the inalienable right of citizens to vote wherever they are, if the law allows it.

Also, Victor Ponta wins by far in his confronting Klaus Johannis, but woefully loses confronting his own electorate, stiff in the satisfaction of choosing the President, so, on the *victory lane* Johannis finds himself the only runner...

The 2014 presidential elections were won by a person, foreign to the reflexes of a politician from Dâmbovița. The fact that this Johannis is not the product of the present day Romanian politics, it is a certainty, we do not know whether the elected president by "the swan song" given on Facebook by the new generation will not have the uninspired curiosity to learn from Vasile Blaga et.comp. or from the news television anchorman, to get along with the crowd and become a politician.

Anton Carpinschi in the article "The Partidocracy and the Ideological Shortage. Could it Be Otherwise?" issued in the collective tome by Sergiu Gheorghiu "Votes and Policies. The Dynamics of the Romanian Parties During the Last Decades" notifies the main cause of this ontological obstruction, firstly accounted for by mentality. We demolished *the communist hut*, we built the capitalist block, but we did not take into consideration that its tenants would get into the elevator with feet covered in clay, on Saturday, bringing their band to play in the fourth-floor balcony. "I mean, Anton Carpinschi, says, the shortage of political culture and civic responsibility among the population, the shortage of competent and honest politicians and, therefore, the generalization of the populist and clientage politics of partidocratic impression as well as the inflation of the new politicians.

This image immediately transpires in the relationship that media has with the political power, both trying to do their job.

It would be redundant to talk about how necessary the four independent powers are in supporting the setting up of a democratic regime. What happens in Romania of the last quarter of

century can be considered an open lesson necessary for the understanding of the real fact, built from irrational parts, illogical, without explanation but in the burdensome register of deviation from regulatory consideration, the brutal descent into the underground register of the Robert Musil's *people without features*, who manages to give us the key, with which we could actually unlock and understand *what we are, what we do, what we get to be and, especially, what it will follow*: "Some mistakes are steps towards the truth."

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