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Presei**



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Nationalist message in mass media

A Report on Print and Electronic Media in Eastern European Countries (Hungary, Romania and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia)
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Foreword

During the Balkan crisis, the journalist was fairly often looked upon by all parties engaged as the enemy. Sometimes the very institutions of the media were the explicit target of attacks. It serves our point to mention the bombing of the television building in Belgrade. May the journalist have been the victim of his noble calling to objectively and impartially cover the violent events that he was witnessing? Sometimes yes. However, this was not the reason why he was aggressed intentionally. Mark Thompson, the British writer and journalist, the author of a study on the Yugoslavian mass-media during and immediately before the war (*Forging War*) is very firm: in Yugoslavia, the war had started five years before the first gunshot, namely in the press. Obviously, it was not the press that started interethnic tensions. But because it had lost its independence and the journalists' critical mind gave in to nationalist pressure, the press became the first weapon in the war.

Under such circumstances, acting according to the logic of war, it seemed justified to use guns to respond to the attack. The analysis of what had been written in the old Yugoslavian press revealed edifying nuances: in the republics where the 'war' was carried out almost peacefully – such as in Slovenia – the press preceding the political event of secession from Yugoslavia managed to maintain its professional distance from nationalistic passions. In his monograph, Mark Thompson warns about the terrifying, destructive power of the press – when controlled by nationalistic governments - to instigate ethnic hatred.

Those above are extreme cases. But they are real. So is the danger of disseminating nationalistic-extremist and racist messages through mass media. In Romania – to use a handy example – a magazine first published in 1990, with a racist and nationalistic-extremist discourse, led to the setting up of a party that, at present, is the most important opposition party. In the countries where the Roma population is significantly represented, violent incidents and racial discrimination are facilitated by the maintenance of negative stereotypes in the mass media.

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The program called “Nationalist Message in the Mass Media”, coordinated by the Media Monitoring Agency – Academia Catavencu, aims mainly at objectifying the ‘hate-speech’ level that exists in the national press of the countries of origin of those organizations that participate in the research. Our hope is that the results published in this volume will urge the community of journalists, and generally that of public speakers – politicians, opinion leaders - to reflect. In other words, we provide our fellow journalists and all those addressing the general public with a useful instrument to enhance their professional responsibility.

The fundamental premise of the freedom of speech is the existence of a professional conscience that is free of political influences and prejudices against our fellow beings.

Mircea Toma

Director of the Media Monitoring Agency – Academia Catavencu

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