

# *Political communication through “Koha jonë” editorial (1997)*

*Valmora Gogo\**

## **Abstract**

This study will fully analyze and elaborate the political communication and message carried over to all newspaper readers, from Feb-March 1997 through “Koha Jonë” editorial.

My main goal will be the understanding of the media’s role in conveying political messages to the public masses, considering the impact that this newspaper, in particular, had on the Albanian public at the time.

Through a detailed analysis I will aim to bring a closer view to the style, tone, figuration and all elements used by this type of journalism.

A considerable part of the same analysis, will be the role of this editorial as a catalyst of the political developments.

As I will analyze the message, I will also intend to analyze its author (i.e., editor, director of the newspaper and the like) as a political information communicator and in some stances even as a key player taking over the role of a political party. My analysis will be based on political communication literature and peer reviews.

The 1997 newspaper “Koha Jonë” marked the last period of this linear media that flourished at the time.

## ***Introduction***

The daily newspaper “Koha Jonë” has played a significant role in the history of the Albanian press in the country. It was founded in 11<sup>th</sup> of May 1991, 6 years later making it an irreplaceable asset for the Albanian reader along with preceding and impelling political developments in Albania. Having not an entirely impartial role the newspaper abided with the public views, whosupposedly followed its political editorial line in strongly opposing the ruling party during that period of time headed by Sali Berisha.

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\* Valmora Gogo, PHD Candidate, [Newsbomb.al](http://Newsbomb.al), [valmoragogo@gmail.com](mailto:valmoragogo@gmail.com)

Circumstances appeared not that positive for the Albania of '97. "Koha Jonë" had been warning about dangerous occurrences for the country, which in fact resulted in riots and clashes with guns, pyramid schemes collapsing<sup>1</sup>, armory depots across the country were opened, and definitely "Koha Jonë" which had been considered as the only influential newspaper in the public opinion as it was regarded as objective had been on continuous basis lobbying for the dismissal of the government.

### *Hypotheses*

The paper aims at testing the main hypothesis related to the opposition role of "Koha Jonë" newspaper which has been regarded as not only unbiased and critical, but as well as having the role of a "political party". At the end of this paper key findings resulting from the analysis of editorials during February and March 1997 will be listed.

Transition in Albania did not seem to end and at the same time were demonstrated backwards indicators that affected every post-communist country.<sup>2</sup>

"KJ" is being linked to politics through editorials due to the fact that advertising and the political PR was not fully developed.<sup>3</sup> The media and in particular the print media are significant to the political process in a more direct way. Although analysts can discuss about subjectivity in reporting, the newspapers take pride about their "public voice"-editorials, in which it is articulated their political opinions. More than often these have been presented as "the readers' voice" and are being addressed to policy makers. Alternatively, they can be considered as the settled and authoritative voice of the editor, who is observing the political scene from a distant way. In both cases the editorial implies

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\*Valmora Gogo, PHD Candidate, Newsbomb.al, valmoragogo@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> Note: Foundations where Albanians have casted their savings so they could triple their money within three months.

<sup>2</sup> Fatos Tarifa, *Paradigma e tranzicionit demokratik: "Fundi" i tranzicionit apo një tranzicion pa fund*, Tirana, Ombra GVG, 2009, pg.47-77

<sup>3</sup> Brian McNair, *Hyrje në komunikimin politik*, Tirana, UET Press, 2009, pg.26

political interference and is often interpreted as such by a government or a party.<sup>4</sup>

According to McNair, printed press is associated with the politics in various ways: 1. Editorial; 2-Journalist; 3. Column or analysis (OP-ED); 4.Main article; 5.Troubadour (humor, satire, irony, cartoon; 6. Political interview; 7. Political experts. But the press has the most "authoritarian" form of intervention in politics. The most significant "voice" of a newspaper is its editorial, which embodies its political identity... The editorial seeks to articulate what newspaper publishers perceive as the collective voice of its readers".<sup>5</sup>

### *Timeline of "Koha Jonë" newspaper*

"Koha Jonë" has been considered as the most influential newspaper before the riots of '97. It had a circulation of over 40 thousand copies a day and the readers stood in the queue in order to receive a copy. Its editor was Nikollësi and the editorials were written in two forms, signed at the end "Koha Jone", indicating that were drafted by the editorial staff of the newspaper, or in another form with the name of authors<sup>6</sup> like Vladimir Prela, Frrok Çupi, Skender Minxhozi, Blendi Fevziu, Martin Leka etc. Even when the columns were associated with the names of authors, they were published in the same position of the newspaper. The newspaper was comprised of 24 pages, a daily one and only during Mondays lacked on the market. It was at a smaller size format "RilindjaDemokratike" and "Zëri i Popullit. It was proclaimed as an independent channel of information.

The writings were published writings in this way: Cover story with title, subtitle, superscript headline, a large photo displaced at the right part. The editorial has been published with the title in bold and largely on the left side, signed "K.J" at the end. There were smaller titles at the bottom of the first page. Other sections were: Feature article, Politics (2 pg.), Economy (2pg.) Advertising (5pg.)

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<sup>4</sup>Brian McNair, *Hyrje në komunikimin politik*, Tirana, UET Press, 2009, pg.66

<sup>5</sup>Brian McNair, *Hyrje në komunikimin politik*, Tirana, UET Press, 2009, pg.83-84

<sup>6</sup>Hamit Boriçi, *Gazetaria 2. Probleme të mjeshtërisë dhe format e pasqyrimit publicistik*, Tirana, Shtëpia Botuese e Librit Universitar, 2004, pg.207

Chronicles (2pg), World news (2pg), Entertainment (3 pg.), History (1pg), Sports (2pg) Crossword (1pg).

During February were almost published daily editorials and were all linked to political developments in the country and harassments done to journalists. Some of the headlines included: "The forgotten pyramids"; "How much money does the foundations have"; "Koha Jonë in prison"; "Up to the last cent..."; "Milosevic has been surrendered, Berisha is still not"; "It's time for politics"; Vladimir Prela, "Why the block has not split apart?"; FrrokÇupi, "Protect the journalists from the government"; "Second April of DP"; "Murders - tragedy could have been avoided"; SkenderMinxhozi, "Doctor, this is the end!", and many others.

Its opportune market position was thanks to its political stance, as the researchers HamitBoriçi and Mark Marku have stated<sup>7</sup>. During this period of time "Koha Jonë" strengthens its "struggle" as a true opposition, a role vested by itself unlike what might happen with a common media<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup>Boriçi, Hamit, Marku, Mark, "Histori e shtypit shqiptar. Nga fillimet deri në ditët tona", Shtëpia Botuese e Librit Universitar, Tiranë, 2010, pg.270

<sup>8</sup>After March 1992, "Koha Jonë" became the main newspaper in the country and gained editorial authority after started to strongly oppose the Sali Berisha democratic government emerged after March 22, 1992, elections.

In the beginning, the newspaper became known as the result of President Berisha opponent articles, which have abandoned Democratic Party and were keen to denounce the authority stance of Berisha.

Giving space to authors who were Berisha opponents made the newspaper to in opponents with the government. This position was so clear that in the public opinion was thought that the real opposition in the country was "Koha Jonë" and not Socialist Party, the main opposition party in the Parliament.<sup>8</sup> "After March 1992, "Koha Jonë" became the main newspaper in the country and gained editorial authority after started to strongly oppose the Sali Berisha democratic government emerged after March 22, 1992, elections.

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## ***Editorial analysis***

The newspaper's editorial was clear. It was always placed on the left of the main page<sup>9</sup> in the same length, approximately extended in one column. The editorials had political stands, mainly written by the newsroom editors<sup>10</sup>.

ArtanFuga categorizes "KJ" as an independent newspaper<sup>11</sup> with a political profile that gives "equal opportunities."As HamitBoriçi also explains the editorial content relatively express the character of newspaper independence<sup>12</sup>.

The "Koha Jonë" editorials during this timeframe can be considered operative as a subtype and general from the political

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Because of this stand, the newspaper gathered the main left-wing personalities. They started to publish their articles at "Koha Jonë".

On the other hand, "Koha Jonë" merely was professional in its allegation against the government and in the most of the cases it was also abusive.

The newspaper reached its peak in the 1996-1997 timeframe as a result of the big impact that it has in the public, mostly in the areas that were left-wing oriented" Boriçi, Hamit, Marku, Mark, "Histori e shtypitshqiptar. Nga fillimetderinëditëttona", ShtëpiaBotuese e LibritUniversitar, Tiranë, 2010, pg.274-275

<sup>9</sup>Borici, Hamit, "Gazetaria 2. Probleme të mjeshtërisë dhe format e pasqyrimit publicistik", Shtëpia Botuese e Librit Universitar, Tiranë 2004, pg.209

<sup>10</sup>The editorial is characterized, as journalist article, is the main article of the daily newspaper or in a periodic outlet. It is written from the publisher (editor) or the director of the newspaper with an orientation or permission from the newspaper publisher and often it expresses a stand or an opinion about one of the most important issues of the day. As journalism article is similar with the main headline, but falls under another category. The authorship belongs exclusively to the publisher. The latter, that also finance the newspaper has the editorial idea but is written by one of the executives staff. Boricci, Hamit, "Gazetaria 2. Problemetëmjeshtërisëdhe format e pasqyrimitpublicistik", ShtëpiaBotuese e LibritUniversitar, Tiranë 2004, pg.206

<sup>11</sup>Fuga, Artan, "Media, politika, shoqëria (1990-2000). Ikja nga kompleksi i Rozafës", Botimet Dudaj, Tiranë, 2008, pg. 89, pg.141

<sup>12</sup>Borici, Hamit, "Gazetaria 2. Probleme të mjeshtërisë dhe format e pasqyrimitpublicistik", Shtëpia Botuese e Librit Universitar, Tiranë 2004, pg.206.

standpoint. Often these elements were combined in the same editorial<sup>13</sup>.

It seems that there is a strong connection between the political message that the newspaper gives through its editorial and the reader behavior toward this message.

It is a fact that "Koha Jonë" was a success in terms of selling. It reached 40 thousand copies per day while today overall circulation of daily newspapers in Albania don't exceed 30 thousand copies.

The readers continued to demonstrate the same behavior toward the newspaper for a long time. The newspaper publisher and his trusted editorial team kept writing for their readers. They continued providing them analyzes over the facts and phenomena from the objective reality, based on the assessment of public toward them: through thesis argumentation.<sup>14</sup>

As Borici would explain, "...editorial has a strong impact on the creation of a specific public opinion, in the motion and development of the society thinking and acting"<sup>15</sup>

"KOHJA JONË" 1 FEBRUARY-2 MARCH 1997					
TOTAL No.ofNewspapers	TOTAL No. ofEditorials	PoliticalEditorials	Position/L eft-Top	Auth or	NoAuth or
24	24	24	24	15	9
Note:Written by authors are 15 editorials (Frrok Çupi, VladimirPrela, Skënder Minxhozi, Martin Leka, Blendi Fevziuect. Keywords: "state", "politics", "funds", "blood", "blueblock", "journalists", and "protests"					

Table 1. Categorization

<sup>13</sup>Boricii, Hamit, "Gazetaria 2. Probleme të mjeshtërisë dhe format e pasqyrimit publicistik", Shtëpia Botuese e Librit Universitar, Tiranë 2004, pg.209

<sup>14</sup>Boricii, Hamit, "Gazetaria 2. Probleme të mjeshtërisë dhe format e pasqyrimit publicistik", Shtëpia Botuese e Librit Universitar, Tiranë 2004, pg.207

<sup>15</sup>Boricii, Hamit, "Gazetaria 2. Probleme të mjeshtërisë dhe format e pasqyrimit publicistik", Shtëpia Botuese e Librit Universitar, Tiranë 2004, pg.208



Example: “Koha Jonë”, February 1, 1997

### ***The connection between Editorial and the Main Article***

The “KJ” editorials were against the political system. They are connected with the main articles and they explain the state of the country.

Some main article headlines are: "Just 60% for the people/ VEFA, Kamberi, Silva and Cenaj decrease their interest rates by 3%. The government appoints the criteria for getting the money from the people. Xhaferri \$170 million for mandates," or "Gjallica dies. Xhaferri 52% /Government pledges only 52% for 210 thousand Xhaferri clients/ Sali Berisha declare Gjallica bankruptcy. FitimGërxhalliu was arrested. The military occupies Vlora," or "Tomorrow: Tirana in a rail/40 thousand people from Vlora raises the flag against

Berisha/Opposition calls the citizens living in the capital at 12 o'clock in "Skënderbej" square".

Other main article headlines are:"Vlora: Berisha in the sea/Just 4 thousand creditors take the money from Populli and Xhaferri/ 30 thousand people from Vlora protest all day long. Police shoot with fire gun, 20 wounded","Today Tirana like Vlora," "Tirana press Tirana/ KastriotIslami was brutally beaten. Nano: The protest should continue/ Thousand police forces and secret agents beat thousands of protesters. Opposition lockup,"ect.

In one case the editorial and the main article are signed K.J: "Europe: Albania in a cave/ students of Tirana boycott the school. The Forum: No a second mandate for Berisha/ MI: EU withdraw from the request of new elections. It requests dialog. The humanitarian help questionable."

The headlines of the articles besides the literal aspect have also a figurative dimension. The headlines that confirms it are those of February 12 and 13: "Meksi "drowns" in Vlora" and "Doctor, go to the doctor"

Other examples are: "The eagle start to loose... British MPs ask Berisha investigation/British press calls a gangster the Albanian government "PD eagle carries arms and drugs"<sup>16</sup>, "Caught in the act"<sup>17</sup>, "Meksi bells"<sup>18</sup> "Lushnja booed Berisha"<sup>19</sup>, "Berisha unleashed", "Europe: Albania in a cave", "Berisha Number 1, on Monday becomes Number 2"ect.

### ***The editorial content***

The titles of editorials are short like: "Forgotten pyramids," "Koha Jonë in a prison", "Now time for politics", "Why the block is not going to break", "Save the journalist from the state" "The April 2nd of DP", "Doctor, this is the end!", "The government outside the globe", "The state has to keep calm," etc.

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<sup>16</sup>"Koha Jonë", 15 february 1997

<sup>17</sup>Koha Jonë", 16february 1997

<sup>18</sup>Koha Jonë", 18february 1997

<sup>19</sup>Koha Jonë", 19february 1997



They analyze the political problem, the words are striking.

In the "The April 2nd of DP" is written that the Berisha regime has his hand full of blood: "...Despite the circumstances, Berisha regime has his hand full of blood. The victims of yesterday can consider as double victims of the state, which first took their money and then their life"<sup>20</sup>

In the February 13 Berisha is called to reflect because he is in his last days. "A government like that staying in the power gives the opposites the moral right to seek the opening of the health files of whom are leading the party in the power, including also the Prime Minister. Rumors inside DP says that Berisha can have health problem"<sup>21</sup>

In another editorial of FrrokÇupi is written that: 'Berisha government has become disgusting': "Where does this government stand? All across the world the cycle of letting it out is closed, now even in Albania the Berisha government has become disgusting"<sup>22</sup>

One of "Koha Jonë" directly calls the state asking to stop and cool down and call it "an iron machine which is getting peoples lives": "We beg the state to stop this iron machine which is getting people lives: Stop your hand and cool your mind. Stay from the peace side and the blood will stop running."

The editorials are short, straightforward and most of the time harsh tones seem to prevail. It is interesting how frequently used words such as "state", "politics", "funds", "blood", "blue block", "journalists", and "protests", are the main vocabulary of journalism at the time.

## ***Conclusions***

Feb-March period of "Koha Jonë" editorial is one of the most political themed editorials of the time, closely related to all

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<sup>20</sup>Koha Jonë", 11february 1997

<sup>21</sup>"Koha Jonë", 13 february "Doctor, this is the end!", Skënder Minxhozi

<sup>22</sup>"Koha Jonë", 15 february 1997

developments in the country. The message it conveys is clear: Change the leadership.

The political communication carried by the "Koha Jonë" editorial more than often claimed the part of any "opposition party" in the country.

"Koha Jonë" editorial marks the "frontline", while being in a full synthesis with the headlines, but with a more powerful message

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