

MASS-MEDIA ȘI OPINIA PUBLICĂ

FROM THE TOTALITARIAN LANGUAGE TO THE INFORMATIVE  
DISCOURSE. A ROMANIAN MEDIA DISCOURSE ANALYSIS  
DURING THE '90S

LUMINIȚA ROȘCA\*

ABSTRACT

FROM THE TOTALITARIAN LANGUAGE TO THE INFORMATIVE DISCOURSE.  
A ROMANIAN MEDIA DISCOURSE ANALYSIS DURING THE '90s

This study aims at emphasizing the institutional transformations that occurred in the public environment following the events in December 1989 in Romania, focusing on the dismantling of mechanisms that marked the transition from the national-communist propaganda discourse to the informative discourse, which laid the foundation of the public sphere in post-totalitarian Romania.

The hypothesis is that Romanian media was slow in abandoning the communist press model, which explains the manichaeist discourse of nowadays media, the involvement of politics in media business and, last but not least, the extremely poor market – the poorest in Eastern Europe, as showed by the latest studies.

The analysis has two components: the context analysis (historical, political, and ideological) and the media discourse analysis, in line with the view of certain authors (C. Sparks) with respect to the transitions in Eastern Europe and the role the media played in these processes. The discourse procedures of the totalitarian language were emphasized by investigating a corpus formed of the main publications of the printed press before and after 1989.

**Keywords:** informative discourse, totalitarian discourse, Romania.

1. INTRODUCTION

The economic inefficiency, the people's dissatisfaction and the fall of communist regimes led to the unstoppable riot of the Romanian population. Unlike the other former socialist countries, where the communist oligarchy had been removed peacefully, the Romanian communist regime was done away with as a

---

\* Correspondence address to Dr. Luminița Roșca: Press Department, Faculty of Journalism and Communication Studies, University of Bucharest; University of Bucharest, Faculty of Journalism and Communication Studies ([www.fjsc.ro](http://www.fjsc.ro)), Iuliu Maniu, No. 1–3, Complex Leu, Corp A, Etaj 6, Sector 6; Bucharest, Romania; e-mail: [lumirosca@yahoo.com](mailto:lumirosca@yahoo.com).

result of a bloody riot, with hundreds of civilians and military men being killed, the events being qualified as: “revolution”, “coup”, “palace coup”, and “the December events”. What followed the chasing of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu (their brief trial, their death conviction, and their execution on Christmas day), Romania’s political evolutions in 1990, delaying the economic reforms and the privatization process – all these brought a feeling of distrust regarding the new regime in Bucharest.

The first free elections took place in May 1990 and the citizens overwhelmingly voted for the group of reformist communists, F.S.N. (The Front of National Salvation), who won 65% of the Parliament seats. They arrived in power on the “revolutionary wave” (a cliché of the political language at that time), being led by Ion Iliescu, a former member of the communist hierarchy, yet in opposition with Nicolae Ceaușescu’s politics in the 1970’s. Historical parties (Partidul Național Țărănesc – The Peasants’ National Party and Partidul Național Liberal – The Liberal National Party), reborn during the days of the Revolution, lost the elections, after a campaign that had brought them little recognition. The results of the first free elections after 1989 can be explained in connection with the political and civic level of education that Romanians had at that time, as they were not used to political pluralism and they preferred passionate confrontation over rational arguments. This result was also influenced by the F.S.N.’s control over the media during the election campaign, as this new political group relied on the bureaucratic structures of the former regime, which were still functioning, in a spirit of inertness.

In 1980’s Romania, the communist propaganda had created an immense gap between the power’s speech, ideology and daily life of the people, and the official or organized lie, according to a formula used by Vaclav Havel, had took institutional forms.

The unique party’s power was increased and the citizens’ resistance was weakened by nationalizations, mass indoctrination with utopist notions such as “collective property” or “the birth of the new man”, by the party’s domination and the fact that people were under a propaganda pressure. Meanwhile, the communist propaganda aimed at increasing the party’s credibility inside and outside the country and weakening the popular resistance, through well conducted campaigns (alphabetization, electrification, industrialization, and agricultural mechanization). The compulsory industrialization, which dislocated a major part of the rural population from villages to the city, had serious effects on a long term, perverting the social and moral values and allowing the use of wide sections of the population as a mass of maneuver.

During the 1970’s, The Romanian Communist Party refocused its politics towards national-communism, promoting the idea of pure communism, which implied a very radical ideology. Thus, the idea of systemizing localities<sup>1</sup>, a

---

<sup>1</sup> A process through which the communist regime tried to eliminate the small property and the rural communities practices by massive demolition of houses and by relocating the citizens to block of flats. The process also aimed at destroying churches and certain monuments which were not in consonance with the communist ideology.

characteristic of Ceaușescu's politics in the 1980's, took the notion of collectivism to the extremes, with the purpose of eliminating the small peasants' households, destroying the individual and collective cultural roots, ruining the family solidarity and neutralizing once and for all the civil society.

The exacerbation of the cult of personality corroborated with "rewriting" history played the role of reanimating the nationalist current. These actions were amplified by the way that the official historiography presented the communist regime as an extraordinary epos, following the line of Romanian's great patriotic battles.

## 2. THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The public sphere notion comprises the spaces of public communication, the individuals' reference to notions such as freedom, truth and public authority (Arendt, 1972), the reference to the principle of publicity and to the public exercise of reason (Habermas, 1989), the mass communication means and methods, as a way of putting the dominant ideological values of the analyzed era into circulation (Charaudeau, 1997; Fowler, 1994).

### 2.1. THE POLITICAL SPACE

After December 1989, Romania's main conquest was the elimination of the political control over the media, the beginning of the reality demystification process and the set up of "the free market of ideas" mechanisms, based on the principle of "supply and demand" on this market.

The way that the Ceaușescu's trial was conducted and the political power was taken over in Bucharest after December 1989 generated a wave of distrust from the European governments with regard to the newly installed authorities, which lasted for a long time and affected the economic<sup>2</sup>, political<sup>3</sup> and social evolutions. All of these caused a feeling of dissatisfaction with some important groups of population towards the "neocommunist" leaders in Bucharest. At the beginning, there were shy voices that affirmed that monarchy would have been a proper type of governing for Romania, even more so as the former sovereign Mihai the First of Hohenzollern was living in exile and could have returned to the country at any moment. After the 1990 elections, the anticommunist opposition rallied

---

<sup>2</sup> Few important foreign companies developed major investments in Romania, while the International Monetary Fund avoided giving a consistent financial support to Romania for a long time, as it had done with the other former communist countries in Europe.

<sup>3</sup> Romania became a member of the European Council only in 1993, being usually treated with reserve by the European institutions.

around this exact idea of monarchy, as a solution to completely reform the country and break away from the past. At that time, during the anticommunist demonstrations in Piata Universitatii in Bucharest, one could often hear the slogan “Monarchy saves Romania!”. Despite an increasingly noticeable anticommunist opposition, the 1992 elections were once again won by the political group led by the former communist leader Ion Iliescu, now renamed Partidul Democrației Sociale din România (The Social Democracy Party of Romania). This option determined the forces of the democratic opposition to rally against the authority installed in December 1989, considered a follower of the interests of the former communist oligarchy, in order to achieve the development of the civil society and the set up of a public sphere capable of supporting an well informed public opinion.

The institutional transformations such as: adopting the Constitution (1991) and installing a political pluralist system, passing the Broadcast Law (1992), The Public Radio and Television Law (1994) and the amendments to the Criminal Code (1969) had long term effects on the process of axiological elucidation of the Romanian society.

Between 1990 and 1995 the public sphere is being set up based on promoting a “relaxed” public speech, with diversified themes, which demystifies a number of myths from the totalitarian era, claiming the forefront for the public debate and the democratic values. The speech used by the authorities in Bucharest in the 1990’s, which was resumed by the media, comprised themes such as: the main enterprises’ privatization, the private property, the institutional reform, the reorganization and the transition toward democracy and market economy, social peace and political pluralism. Inserting these subjects within the public speech played the role of propaganda for a long period of time, since the changes were slow and the transition was painful (a cliché used by the political speech of the era). The demystification process by political speech and by the media was a long one and it played an important role in the democratization of the Romanian public life.

With the help of the free media, people obtained information about the communist taboos such as: the Monarchy’s history, political imprisonment, the way that the Security recruited its informants, the daily life of the communist oligarchy, the anecdotes about the presidential couple, stories about the activity of journalists from *Europa liberă* (Free Europe) and *Vocea Americii* (America’s Voice) radio stations.

The most important subjects of debate for the society at this moment concerned initiation of economic and moral reform, the latter being strongly connected to the straightening of the civil society and to the defense of human rights.

## 2.2. JOURNALISTS ADMIT THEIR "GUILT"

The most valuable asset that the Romanian society acquired after December 22, 1989 is thought to be the right to the freedom of speech and the media's freedom to inform the people with no restraint from the power structures of the state. In order to underline this democratic "acquisition", many media institutions changed their name, by adding the "free" adjective: The Romanian Television became the *Free Romanian Television*, *Scînteia tineretului* daily became the *Free Youth* or by transforming their name from *The Information to Freedom*, for instance. The semi-official organ of the Communist party, *Scînteia* was published from December 22 to December 25 under the name of *Scînteia poporului*, thus indicating that it was free from the communist ideology guidance, and after December 25 the publication was renamed as *Adevărul*. Many local publications also changed their name in order to reinforce the idea of "freedom", of exclusion of the ideological pressure.

Thus, on December 22, the press agency *Agerpres* transmitted a press release to the Romanian and foreign media: "The Romanian Press Agency *Agerpres* no longer needs special approvals from the censorship in order to transmit false statements and national attitudes lacking any real foundation". The text was edited by the journalists working with the Romanian Press Agency, the same ones who, a few days before, "were forced to misconstrue the reality and to systematically misinform the national and international public opinion" (Vrânceanu, 2000: 136).

The new daily edited by *Scînteia*'s journalists, a newspaper named *Scînteia Poporului*, which first appeared on December 22, 1989, is qualified by the desk as being: "a new, real, patriotic expression, a publication of the people". The journalists addressed the public on the first page of the newspaper with a pathetic text filled with platitudes, in order to reassure the public that, from that moment on, they would only write the truth:

"We shall write with passion, with human and patriotic responsibility, becoming the wide and large echo of masses, for the consistent effort that we, the citizens, are now required making in order to set along the real road of freedom and respect for the man and the truth (*Scînteia poporului*, „Victoria adevărului” (The Victory of Truth), 22 December 1989).

At the same time, the "blemished" leaders of the desks were replaced and new chief-editors were appointed, the latter being chosen amongst the sub-editors who were already working with the editorial boards at that time. Thus, the chief-editor of „*Scînteia*” was chased away from the editorial offices, and the leadership was taken over by the second "echelon" of the former board. At „*România liberă*”, the top management positions were attributed to dissident journalists Petre Mihai Băcanu, Anton Uncu and Mihai Creangă, eliminated from the editorial board in 1989 after their subversive actions (editing an anticommunist publication) have been discovered. As a matter of fact, the leaders' dissidence at „*România liberă*”

marked the newspaper's editorial policy, as it expressed an opposition to the recently installed power: FSN and its leader, Ion Iliescu.

The new Constitution proclaimed the abolishment of censorship: "Censorship of any kind is forbidden. No publication will be suppressed." In the Criminal Code, the articles directly related to the journalists' activity referred to: "calumny", "defamation", "insult", "threats", and "encroachment of the state safety".

Although ideological and governmental control disappeared in 1989, there were still subtle forms of control, manipulation and intimidation of the media, because the state-party could not be abolished through laws, decrees or popular will. There were still functional interests networks constituted of all the people who had been a part of the immense bureaucratic party apparatus, as there were still authoritative reactions that were trying to subordinate the media. Thus, some authors who performed a radiography of the media situation during that period (Gross, 1999: 111–126) showed that some formulations in the Criminal Code could be interpreted as threats to the exercise of the journalistic activity independently from the political forces, that ignoring the media signals of government functionaries crossing the law and the direct defamation of some journalists were subtle methods of telling the people that the media had no real influence on the society's functioning.

### 2.3. MEANS OF CONTROL OVER THE MEDIA

A form of control kept from the communist era was the economic control. Thus, the state had a monopole over the paper production, as "Letea" was the main paper producer, there were no facilities for importing paper and most newspapers' distribution was done by the state company which took over the distribution network during the second half of 1990 (RODIPET). This was possible mainly as a consequence of delaying the process of privatizing the state companies, until 1995–1996.

Yet, the state control was diminished because starting with 1990–1991 almost all the old publications had become private businesses, either as joint stocks companies or as limited liability companies, using methods that were sometimes just on the line of the law, while the newly established publications had a private capital. The emergence of private media companies helped to the elimination of the state monopole over the printing devices, as they were buying their own equipments – printing houses, rotary presses (*România liberă*, *Cotidianul*, *Renașterea Bănățeană*, *Monitorul de Iași*) and even their own distribution networks, different from those belonging to the state monopole

The year 1990 marked an explosion of the Romanian media. Thus, if there were 36 dailies and 459 periodicals in 1989, there were 65 dailies and 1,379 periodicals in 1990, 100 dailies and 987 periodicals in 1993 and 73 dailies and 1,059 periodicals in 1995 (*Romania's Statistics Annual, 1996*). It is a noticeable

fact that five years after having changed the communist regime, the *dailies and periodicals* were sold in double quantity, and, simultaneously, the themes diversification was astonishing even to those who were familiar to the media systems in the western democracies. These publications were the property of certain legal persons: political parties, editorial consortiums, religious groups, churches, literary, academic, civic, cultural, trade union and physical (individuals, families) associations. Apart from the governmental *Vocea României*, all the publications that appeared during this period were independent from the executive power, but, obviously, not from political and economic interests of the owners who were financially supporting them.

The circulation numbers varied based on the supply and demand from the market, which was a new thing for the Romanian media. An article appeared in *Adevărul* on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1990, referring to the circulation numbers for the central publications, in which the editors complained about the “chicanes and abuses” from the “Presa Liberă” publishing house, which had forced a limit of only 200,000 copies for distribution (apart from subscriptions). This article was actually a subtle manner of “exposing” the mixture of the Minister of Culture, Andrei Pleșu in the matter of circulation numbers and his bias towards *România liberă*, *Adevărul*’s rival. Thus, in June 1990 *Adevărul* and *România Liberă* reached circulation numbers of 1.5 million copies per day and in 1992 the two dailies were at the level of 200,000–250,000 copies per day. *Evenimentul Zilei* which appeared in 1992 had a growth in circulation numbers, the very year of its publication, from 150,000 copies per day to 400,000 copies and its circulation has constantly been higher than that of any other daily newspaper in Romania (Roșca, 2006).

The abundance of general information dailies, of popular press, of specialized, information and debate weeklies, of publications focused on entertainment and sensationalism is the main characteristic of the media at this moment. This “colorful” and very diverse media responded to the public’s need for information and political debate, as the Romanian readers had been submitted to indoctrination for a long period. This is how we may explain the “hunger” for information, as well as the public’s lack of exactness towards the quality of the information provided by the media, the latter finding itself in an era of what Peter Gross (1996) called “pre-professionalism”. By the medium of this information “puzzle”, the public was discovering all those information domains that had been banned for nearly half a century: the information about religious, historical (in a large sense), entertainment, sensationalist, everyday occurrence, sexual and paranormal matters. More over, there were disclosures about less known aspects of the old and recent history of the country, of the life and activity of the communist leaders, of the revolution’s backstage, as well as about the numerous events of the

day: strikes, manifestations, political processes, election campaigns, economic changes and so forth.

After 1992, the evolution of the print media is strongly affected by the explosion of broadcast private stations, the public's interest being turned to the private radio and TV stations' programs, to the stars that these stations launched, to a new style of media that was being perceived as "vanguard" or something borrowed. A new type of program appeals to the public: the talk show and the star-anchor man/woman. It is in this context, between 1992 and 1995, that the print media is characterized by a decrease in circulation numbers, by the vanishing of a great number of information and political debate weeklies and by the elimination of publications belonging to the political parties from the real competition on the market. The local media becomes more important, the first media trusts are being created and they concentrate the informational power by financially supporting the print and broadcast media: Media Trust, Intact Trust, Monitorul Trust).

The newspapers' price grew almost ten times in three years, as a result of the national currency devaluation, but mostly as a consequence of the process through which the media became financially independent, as it was no longer supported by the state and it was forced to "fight" for survival on the press market.

### 3. THE MEDIA DISCOURSE

The print media's anchorage in the liberal model is a long term process. All the characteristics regarding professional, discursive and economic practices of the liberal media are to be found only at the beginning of 2000, after more than ten years of democratic exercise.

#### 3.1. A HYBRID MEDIA MODEL

The 1990's implement a formula of hybrid journalism where forms of militant writing and propaganda coexist with aspects of the journalistic expression typical of the liberal model. It is a unique form of journalistic expression which combines the propaganda rhetoric with uncensored freedom of expression. The political partisan attitude vehemently assumed and "framed" in "super-intellectualized reflections and in a brilliance packaged in verbosity" (Gross, 1999: 126) was nearly generalized by 1993<sup>4</sup>.

The extreme political polarization of the media took the shape of propaganda and went from adulation („Adevărul”) to exposure („România liberă”). Some forms of militant attitude identified in the communist press are to be found in the

---

<sup>4</sup> More precisely, after the second free vote exercise of Romanians in a noncommunist country.



first years of post totalitarian media as well, in even more aggressive forms, redoubled by a revolutionary pathos, even more vehement than in the 1980's. If we compare the forms of propaganda that the media used in this period to the other moments in the history of the Romanian media, we shall find a great resemblance to the 1950's propaganda, an era of "extinguishment" of the bourgeois regime. The forms of propaganda used in Ceaușescu's era are now doubled by exposures and fake exposures, by the provocative Manichaeism, by the revolutionary, romantic, almost ecstatic pathos of the "barricades" and by the vehement adhesion.

The following texts show the *revolutionary pathos*: "Glory to our free country, to her heroic people!", "The dictatorship has fallen, the people are free!", "The popular revolution won! We now need reason, calm and vigilance in order to defend our freedom and our national values!", "Freedom, fellowship, real democracy, unity!" (*Scînteia poporului*, December 22, 1989), "After the long night of dictatorship, the Romanian people have regained their freedom and their dignity!" (*Scînteia poporului*, December 24, 1989).

**Revolutionary imperatives:** "Soldiers and officers of the Army, of the People's Security! In the name of freedom, gained with sacrifices, in the name of your brothers, parents and children, do take the stand, once and for all, of the people, put an end to the blood share and defend the sacred conquests of Romania!", "Let us defend the assets built by the labor of our people as the apple of our eyes!" (*Scînteia poporului*, December 22, 1989), "Citizens, members of the patriotic guards! Join our army units and act with all determination! All those able to use a weapon – use it!" (*Scînteia poporului*, December 24, 1989), "Do defend the democracy, the tranquility conquered with the price of shared blood!" (*Adevărul*, January 14, 1990).

**Exposures:** "Welcome, comrade Ion Rațiu!" (*Adevărul*, April 4, 1990), "Lies and horror in the backstage of the red man-of-war" (*Tineretul liber*, April 12, 1990). Starting with December 22, 1989 and continuing all through 1990, the Romanian media tests all propaganda methods and activates even the ones less visible in Ceaușescu's era, such as exposures, vehemence, the pathos of barricades fight and all the forms of adhesion to democracy, Romanians' new "religion".

More rare forms of propaganda were revealed and used especially during periods of crisis, such as: editing texts in the three colors of the national flag (*Tineretul liber*, December 22, 1989), using poster-pages (*Tineretul liber*, December 26, 1989, *Adevărul*, January 12, 1990), white pages with a significant text: the first page of *Adevărul* on May 20, 1990 (election day) with the slogan of F.S.N. (Tranquility!), quotes from the bible on the frontispiece of the newspaper (*Adevărul*, 12, may 20, 1990), quotes from the work of the national poet, Mihai Eminescu (*Adevărul*, June 15, 1990, *România liberă*, October-December 1991, 1992, 1993), memorable inscriptions in the editorial box, such as: "Special edition on the Romanian people's rebirth day" (*Tineretul liber*, December 22, 1989), "A daily newspaper of all patriotic and democratic forces in Romania" (*România*

*liberă*, December 1989, January 1990), “Justice, crying eyes demand to see you!” (*România liberă*, February–March 1990), “The sleep of nation raises monsters” (*România liberă*, March–April 1990).

The Romanian journalists’ choosing of the liberal model for the media was a radical option against the authoritarian model that had ruled over the public life and the media in Romania for more than half a century. The liberal media model signifies, first of all, the absence of the state’s control levers, the fact that the media is a part of “the free market of ideas”, where the individual has no restraints in reaching the information, and the market’s laws regulate the media system.

Thus, „Evenimentul zilei”, a newspaper was often blamed for letting sensationalism dominate the information and being too obeyed to commercial logics. Actually, the paper “revolutionized” the standard recipe of Romanian dailies, by retrieving the everyday occurrence into the journalists’ sphere of interest and directing the media towards the great public and not only towards the elites. The success that daily had with the audiences forces almost the entire informative media to change its strategies: from the reevaluation of the everyday occurrences to the weight of journalistic genres, – and the news story was the great winner in this process – to the “relaxation” of the language used by the press. „Evenimentul zilei”, even influenced the Romanian publications’ design: the informative titration was chosen over the inciting one, they completely gave up on cliché-titles, inherited from the communist press, they also gave up on the agglomeration of information in the page by typesetting the texts with small fonts, which also caused a simplification of the text’s display within the page. The novelty to the 1990’s media was the recipe of popular press, which had also been a successful recipe in the media in between the two World Wars but had been forbidden during the communist era. The paper was perceived by some journalists from that era as a threat to the elitist model of press, which believed in the dominance of the educative function of the media, whilst the new publication brought the information of any kind and of any interest to the citizen to the forefront. The journalists’ agenda added the everyday fact to the official one and the anecdote to the opinion genres. In the 1990’s context, the burst of this type of press, “tabloid” press, a part of the great family of popular press, played a significant part in diversifying the themes, in “braking” the dogma of linguistic clichés and of editorial inertness.

After 1993 the Romanian media moves away from the opinion press model by diversifying the information and the methods of editing, by diminishing the political partisan attitude, by increasing the advertising spaces and simultaneously the number of pages. This stage also signifies the victory of information and entertainment over opinion and partisan polemics. Also, the creation of publications with individual private capital – such as *Cotidianul*, whose owner was Ion Ratiu, a Romanian who lived and made a fortune in Great Britain, conceived after the western model, offered the Romanian readers an alternative to the native

model and favored the competition. Within this context, the leaders of media companies find financial resources for the diversification of media products (supplements, other publications) or for acquiring means of production that would allow their competitiveness (printing houses, rotary presses, computers and so forth) and their success on the market. The liberal media model does not bear the tyranny of political power and of ideology, but it does abide the tyranny of profit, of great audience numbers which create successful advertising recipes. If advertising was not the main way to gain profit for the media before 1990, but only a sporadic one, sometimes used only to “fake” an independent type of media functioning, after 1990 the print media gradually assumes its financial dependency on the advertising buyers.

Thus, we can find a promotional ad on the first page of *Tineretul liber* on January 9, 1990, under the title “Classified ads in «Tineretul liber»”, through which the newspapers’ readers were informed that classified ads, but also advertising materials from Romanian and foreign companies would be introduced into its pages. As a consequence of this announcement, we shall find a classified ads and advertising rubric on January 23, 1990, measuring half a page and an entire page containing this type of ads on May 11, 1993. *Adevărul*, another publication with no “tradition” in selling advertising space published on March 1, 1990, less than half a page of classified ads and, on October 10, 1992 – a page of classified ads and four pages of advertising materials. As for what „România liberă” is concerned, as it already had a “market” of advertising in 1990, it got to for pages of advertising and two pages of classified ads in 1993.

This curve in advertising space sales shows that the Romanian media rapidly assimilated the “lesson” of liberal press, where advertising recites are the main source of profit for the company. This stage stands for the beginning of gaining the financial independence, accumulating profit and truly exercising self-management, a necessary exercise in an emergent market economy.

### 3.2. PROPAGANDA AND MISINFORMATION

In the process of assimilating the liberal media model, the Romanian media went through two important stages: the provocative civic missionary attitude (1989–1993) and the assimilation of the informative speech typical of the liberal media system, after 1993. The elimination of institutionalized forms of control over the media was not instantaneous and it did not occur immediately after the fall of the Communist Party as they continued to appear in the media in inertial forms.

The missionary attitude of the media may be explained, primarily, by the role played by the press in the December 1989 events: the “live” revolution or “TV-revolution”, as it was called (amongst other names), the mobilization of masses in order to defend the free media, as one of the most important “conquests” after the fall of communism (“May the number 1 issue of *Tineretul Liber* not be the

only one. Defend us! We are by your side!”), December 22, 1989), “the fight” of journalists, during the revolution days<sup>5</sup>, in order to be able to publish and distribute the revolution’s newspapers (“A newspaper written under fire, a newspaper defended by our country’s map”, „Tineretul liber”, December 24, 1989). On the other hand, the journalists’ guilt feelings led them to a state of elation, which they later transformed into an assumption of a purifying civic mission that would absolve their sin of having served the communist regime. With regard to these matters, the editors and correspondents of former publications *Scînteia tineretului* and *Suplimentul litera și artistic* would apologize to the readers “for the long moments and days when they did not serve the truth”, in „Tineretul liber” on December 22, 1989 (“We apologize”).

On a discursive level, this stage of civic missionary work is characterized by the valorization of all propaganda forms and of the communist misinformation, in a more softened way (festive manifestations) or in a more accentuated way (pathos), to which we may add some aspects of the informative speech that was in an incipient stage. The official speech continued to be present in the informative dailies’ pages by publishing all official documents, speeches from the new F.S.N. administration’s leaders, telegrams and letters of gratitude, press releases, laws, decrees of the new administration, thus contributing to the citizens’ information, but also to the official recognition of the political powers’ actions. The press releases, decrees and laws issued in this period have the purpose of eliminating those norms of the legal system that were obviously affecting the citizens’ way of life, as well as the laws that “defined” the communist political system.

The media’s official language, also influenced by the publishing of the new political leaders’ speeches, creates and brings the new political and journalistic stereotypes to the forefront. During the first weeks after the installment of the new regime, the media continues to publish the politicians’, new leaders’ speeches in full length, in accordance to the totalitarian media model.

As the journalists become aware that information gets through without the media being a simple tribune that mediates the contact between the public and officials, the full coverage of official speeches gradually disappears. Amongst the publications that had appeared before 1989 too, *Adevărul* is the one which finds it most difficult to give up on discursive practices typical of the totalitarian speech. As the media no longer publishes official speeches, the dialogue textual forms: the interview, the conversation, the declarations play a gradually more important part.

The official political language becomes a form of more relaxed communication, made up of short speeches, with different forms of addressing, with a more permissive vocabulary and a less rigid terminology, which avoids the

---

<sup>5</sup> In Casa Scînteii many journalists received guns in order to defend the « free press » and became « military guards » with the role of ensuring the security and control of the editorial desks which they were a part of.

clichés of the “golden age”. As for what the forms of addressing are concerned, the public speech is defined by “distinguished citizens”, “distinguished compatriots”, phrases that replace “dear comrades and friends” from the communist linguistic clichés. The official communication retrieves the first person pronoun and by doing so regains the assumption of the speech, an important aspect of communication. Thus, in his first speech as prime-minister, Petre Roman says: “Please excuse me for the pretty difficult voice I have right now”, “Now I’ll get back to the matter I started with”, “I have no idea how I started talking from the balcony of the Central Committee building”, “I am striving as hard as I can to rise to the occasion of this movement” („Adevărul”, December 27, 1989).

Sometimes, using the first person pronoun is justified by the speaker’s intention to admit his/her past: “As for what I am concerned, I have nothing to hide. I’ve been a public figure and a lot of people in the country know me. I am the son of a railway worker... I too, at the age of 12, was arrested... As a pupil and as a student, I was a part of the youth movement. I was... My conflict with Ceaușescu... Not only have I been a stranger to totalitarian, dictatorial practices” (the allocution of Ion Iliescu, president of C.F.S.N. on January 26, 1990).

The first official speeches also had the role of introducing ideas and formulas into the public circuit, that would explain or give a name to events that troubled the public opinion or that would legitimize certain actions of the new administration: “the Romanian revolution is the result of a spontaneous action of the masses, an expression of the discontent accumulated throughout the years”, “The Front of National Salvation’s Council is the result of the movement and it did not precede the movement”, “the old apparatus of repression is trying to terrorize the population”, “the purpose of the terrorist actions is to stop the stabilization of the economic and social life”, “they are trying to ruin our equilibrium”, “the only force is to maintain this unity that is based on the general consensus of all creative forces in the Romanian society”. These became the clichés of the new official language, and also methods of setting axiological frames to the reality.

We find all types of adhesion in the media, especially during the first year after the December events: telegrams, letters, messages of gratitude and congratulations, manifestations of solidarity, adhesions, the publishing of excerpts from the international media as a sign of valuing the Romanian people. The media speech also contains expressions of criticism towards certain discursive proceedings that are perceived as being part of the communist propaganda “arsenal”. Thus, concerning the publication of letters, telegrams, all kind of messages in the media, „România liberă” (December 28, 1989) publishes a text of “rectification” concerning the excessive use of the epistolary genre, used by the propaganda as a way of intoxicating the public in order to reinforce the idea of masses’ adhesion to the party-state politics (A different type of telegrams). As a matter of fact, pathos is a ballast that the media would give up on with considerable effort, after the 1989 events.

Open letters, retorts, frequent in the 1990's media are expression methods that allow the change of ideas between officials, experts, journalists and the public. This form of communication, a "revelation" of the free press is a characteristic of the entire print media during this era. Received as a way to enrich the forms of communication through the media, this "trend" of open letters has quickly become a stereotype of media communication towards the end of 1993.

An evaluation of this phenomenon underlines the diversity of textual forms put into circulation through the media. There were open letters to Ion Iliescu, to the generals of the Romanian Army, to the Ministry of Education, The Ministry of Labor, The Culture Council, to the patriotic citizens: "letter to the parents from a former pupil of the Military School of Officers in Brasov, killed in action", "open letter to the editorial staff of *Adevarul*" signed by "a group of peasants from the Bogati-Arges village", "A letter: to our parents", "Open letter to the President of the USA" (*Adevărul*, 1989–1990).

Perceived as a "trend", as a cliché, this procedure was eliminated from the media and as a consequence the "open letters" almost don't exist anymore in the newspapers, starting with 1993.

In the 1990–1993 media, the answers, as a reply to open letters, the rhetorical questions, the denials, the protests, the affronts, the retort, the rectification, the confession (as in a religious form) are frequent. Moreover, we can find slogans, calls and declarations, as expression formulas of adhesion, militant attitude and pathos borrowed from the totalitarian speech. As a matter of fact, the social and political life of the 1990–1993 period encourages the use of media as a tribune for opinions circulation, as a mean of influencing the masses to the detriment of information. What makes the difference from the communist era is the diversity of opinions, which makes both the purposes and the effects of propaganda quite relative. Some texts that were published in the media during this period show critical attitudes towards communication in the public sphere or towards the reiteration of propagandistic formulas by the media that lacked any critical attitude. Thus, in a text called "Slogans" (*România liberă*, May 8, 1990) the author analyzes the presence of the militant style in public communication in the form of slogans that comprised true offers for the leader of FSN: "Iliescu don't forget, the city of Suceava also belongs to you", and also represented dangerous examples of anti-culture: "Eminescu's country votes for Iliescu" (the national poet's name is combined in the purest form of electoral propaganda).

The festive style of public communication does not change with the switch of regime in 1990. The celebrations of the "golden age" are now replaced by those of the new "freedom era" and the celebration methods are the same with those used by the media in Ceaușescu's era: festive pages and issues, odes, homage, to which new textual forms are added. Thus, they commemorate «moaning days in the memory of the Revolution's martyrs», «three years from the miners' riot», religious celebrations, the memory of the Revolution's martyrs, a week from the

Revolution, two weeks from the Revolution, six months from the Revolution, 100 days from the Revolution, 50 years from the occupation of Basarabia and North Bucovina.

The homage, the ostentatious festive manifestations are gradually replaced by a serious and at the same time discrete festive attitude and the holidays calendar becomes very extensive after the elimination of taboos. Thus, they celebrate: the memory of Marshal Antonescu, The Hispanic Day or the memory of the Romanian citizens who contributed to save some Jewish citizens during the Second World War. These forms of commemoration revitalize certain “forgotten” departments of the vocabulary, such as the solemn and religious vocabulary.

The informative media speech after 1989 preserves certain aspects of the totalitarian speech in diminished forms but approaches, especially after 1993 the so called informative speech of the media, a characteristic of economic and political liberalism systems. The themes diversity, the alternative speeches, the different textual forms, the call for arguments in detriment of seduction tools, the presence of explicative speeches about certain forms of indoctrination or about the persistence of certain practices specific to the totalitarian speech are the bases of eliminating this totalitarian language.

### 3.3. THE INFORMATIVE DISCOURSE

Rediscovering the speech, or as F. Thom (1987) said, “the natural language”, rediscovering the human religious dimension and the right to talk about it, to freely inform the audience about any theme of public interest fundamentally marked the media speech at this stage. Journalists, especially those working for the former publications that belonged to the communist propaganda considered the presentation of these aspects as forms of legitimizing the media in the new historical context.

They wrote about rediscovering the language:

“We are learning to speak. We are re-learning to speak our true language, the language of our land, of our mother and country. We speak Romanian, truly Romanian; we speak as we haven’t done it in a long time” (*Tineretul liber*, December 22, 1989).

One of the most important characteristics of the stereotypical language was being questioned, the elimination of the personal noun “I”, which led to a diminished subjectivity in communication, that meant non-communication:

“The language that “officiated” without saying anything but continuously spread itself and eroded our individual being used the Impersonal as the best form to camouflage our existence and not express us...It was decided, it was applied, it was acted, it was promoted, it was mistaken by with: not me, how me? Me who? “Me”/“I” did not exist...”: „Cui îi e frică de pronumele de persoana I?” (“Who is afraid of the personal noun I?”), „România liberă”, March 11, 1990.

Rediscovering the language also meant identifying and defining the phenomenon which had altered the meanings. Some explicative texts published in the media played the role of dismantling the manipulation and misinformation mechanisms used by the communist media. In the spirit of the assumed missionary role and informative purpose, the informative media that addressed the large public would publish demystifying texts about the mass manipulation and the role of roomers in the misinformation process. Journalists had also gained the freedom to write about the religious individual, as it is well known that the communist regime set a number of interdictions on the religious cults' freedom and on the religious practice in accordance to individual belief:

“In a few days we will be celebrating Christmas. I'm overwhelmed with emotion when I think that after so many centuries of darkness, the light of Your name, Jesus, can finally shine in the pages of this newspaper for the young, too”: „Celebrăm Crăciunul“ (“We are celebrating Christmas”), *Tineretul liber*, December 22, 1989.

The journalists' desire to legitimize themselves as members of a free press created a series of aberrant discursive forms such as: the exclusion of certain days related to “bad memories” from the calendar or the canceling of orthographic norms so as to minimize certain people or eras. Thus, Nicolae Ceaușescu's birthday (January 26) is noted as “January 25 *Adevărul*”, being preceded by the following explanation: “We apologize to the readers who celebrate their birthday today, but, for reasons that we all know, we should note the date of 25 *Adevărul* in the calendar, at least this year” (*Tineretul liber*, 1990)<sup>6</sup>.

The numerous articles that appeared in the media used orthographic rules with an axiological purpose: from December 1989 until December 1990, the names of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu, the Romanian Communist Party or other names related to the former regime were written in small letters. Thus, we can find forms like: “Nicolae” and “Elena Ceaușescu”, but also “pcr” (the Romanian Communist Party), “utc” (Union of the Communist Youth). There was another linguistic taboo about the names of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu: they were named using personal pronouns or nominal phrases and nouns such as: “the dictators”, “the tyrants”, “the dictatorial clan”, “the dictator and his sinister wife”.

The informative component became more important through the diversification of information and textual types that the media put into circulation: opinion polls, stock exchange and financial news, horoscopes, the religious calendar, religious rubrics, society themes, news about the informational taboos of the communist era, such as the freemasonry, sexuality, extraordinary facts, the marginal side of society, criminality, violence within families and within the society. These were completed with information from the country's history,

---

<sup>6</sup> Prior to the events in December 1989, January 26, Nicolae Ceaușescu's birthday, was celebrated with pomp in the communist media.



“arrested” (a word used by the media at that time) by the communist regime, about the monarchy, political parties and Romania’s position in the Second World War.

The informative speech adopted by the Romanian media implied the actualization of the contract-based relationship between journalist and the public, which led to the revitalization of some less exploited “journalistic genres” in the communist media: investigations, interviews, reporting stories, feature stories, news in brief.

Investigative journalism, which did not exist in the communist era, asserts itself through investigations which the journalists and the readers consider, more and more, as signs of journalistic professionalism. The critical aspects in the media are the result of the journalistic branch’s regain of the right to criticize the negative traits of the society, without any interference on the behalf of the political power. Investigations related to corruption, government abuse, the visas traffic at the US Embassy, the battle over commercial locations, the money spent by a Romanian member of the Parliament in order to create a new biography for himself reintroduced the discursive practices specific to investigation, that were an important factor in eliminating suspicion, fears and unanimity from the Romanian society, which was timorous after 50 years of political censorship. Information is not only focused on actuality, but also, frequently, on the past. Disclosures brought the aberrations to the light: about Elena Ceaușescu: “the non-promoted member of the Academy”, about the scientific starvation of Romanian people, about AIDS; the crimes of Ceaușescu’s totalitarian regime and the abuses of the communist era: “A disappeared block: Uranus”, “*România* – a regained clandestine newspaper”.

Media communication was also diversified by the valorization of all journalistic genres and procedures. Unlike what happened in the communist era, choosing the interlocutors is now done freely and the events are the only cause for certain constraints: journalists prefer those interlocutors who are connected to the actual event, and their main quality is to respond to the general interest of the public. The postcommunist media “discovers” the functioning within the limits of the media information contract and it adjusts its information strategies according to the targeted public’s expectations. Through reporting and feature stories, the events of the streets occupy a major place in the newspapers’ pages. Reporting and feature stories become really important in the publications’ strategy because it is with them that the general public finds out what happened on the spot.

Romanian media revitalizes narration as a textual type, the authentication method with details from the fact scene, the quality of a media text to be credible, procedures that were either simulated, or avoided by the communist media, as “the spot” was a rarely reflected reality in the communist press. The feature story and the reported story are valorized by the informative media: a story from a destroyed village, Sunday, February 18 in Victory Square – the Government offices under siege, photo-story from the demolition of Lenin’s statue, the events in University Squar and the Capital – the story of the hottest day, begun with planting flowers,

ended with dead and injured people and fire – the failed coup, the mysterious death of Costel the cheater, Bucharest under terror.

An important place in the pages of newspapers is taken by reporting stories from the Parliament assemblies, a professional practice that did not exist in the communist propaganda press, but extremely present and productive in the media in between the two World Wars and at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, under the name of “parliamentary column”. The new forms of public communication favor the birth of certain textual types related to them such as reporting stories, notes, news from the state institutions’ conferences that now play an important role in the informative agenda of publications. The most spectacular “recovery” in the media informative speech is the regain of the occurrence, which had been marginalized and even eliminated by the communist media. Introducing the occurrence (and the news in brief) in the media accelerated the elimination of the official and institutional speech and favored the journalists giving up on the misconception that the political information and the politically approved social event are the only ones worthy of the journalist’s attention, an idea that had been induced in the professional practice by the communist ideology mechanisms. Introducing the public sphere, especially by the occurrence, in the media’s interest domain brought the press closer to the public and thus created the premises for the birth and development of the popular press segment.

Although it was severely criticized when it first appeared, „Evenimentul zilei” revitalized the occurrence and the natural language in the media and it played a major part in the process of returning to the media informative speech, by eliminating clichés, redefining the interest themes for the media. The tabloid shocked the journalists when it first appeared, it shocked a part of the public, it shocked the elites, but it achieved its purpose: attracting the medium public to reading the media, as these readers wanted to learn information about themselves and about the ones nearby, not only about the people who held the power. In a world still affected by the media propaganda, the popular daily favored the news and the information, especially the news in brief, in detriment of the official information, commentary and stereotypical language.

## CONCLUSIONS

Posttotalitarian speech of the Romanian media, a hybrid between propaganda manifestations and forms of the informative speech promoted by the media is characterized by the presence of “remains” of the earlier stage, but most of all by the effort of relocating in the frames of the liberal media.

The abundance of information and the diversity of speeches promoted by the media led to a form of manipulation, the manipulation by overinformation, which is said to diminish the receivers’ capacity to separate information based on signification, value and impact. Diversifying the information and the methods of

editing it, diminishing the political partisan attitude, the increasing importance of advertising spaces and simultaneously the increasing number of pages, paying more attention to the editing conditions – these also mean the victory of information and entertainment over opinion and partisan polemics.

Also, the creation of publications with individual private capital conceived after a western model offered an alternative to the local model to Romanian readers and favored competition.

#### REFERENCES

1. ARENDT, HANNA (1972), *Le système totalitaire*, Paris, Seuil.
2. CHARAUDEAU PATRICK (1997), *Le discours d'information médiatique. La construction du miroir social*, Paris, Nathan, Institut National de l'Audiovisuel.
3. FOWLER, ROGER (1994), *Discourse and Ideology in the Press*, London and New York, Routledge.
4. GROSS, PETER (1996), *Mass-media in Revolution and National Development: the Romanian Laboratory*, Ames, Iowa University Press.
5. GROSS, PETER (1999), *Colosul cu picioare de lut*, Iași, Polirom.
6. HABERMAS, JURGEN (1987), *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Cambridge, Polity.
7. HABERMAS, JURGEN, (1989), *The structural transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society*, Cambridge, Polity
8. HARTLEY, JOHN (1982), *Understanding News*, London and New York, Routledge
9. ROȘCA, LUMINIȚA (2006), *Mecanisme ale propagandei în discursul de informare. Presa românească în perioada 1985–1995*, Iași, Polirom.
10. SPARKS, COLLIN (1998), *Communism, Capitalism, and the Mass Media*, Sage Publ.
11. SPARKS, COLIN (2010), “Theories of Transition”, in *Revista romana de Jurnalism si Comunicare*, 5-th year, No. 3, p 5–18.
12. THOM, FRANCOISE (1987), *La langue de bois*, Paris, Julliard.
13. VRÂNCEANU, FLORICA (2000), *Un secol de agenții de presă românești (1889–1989)*, Pitești-Brașov-București-Cluj Napoca, Paralela 45.
14. YOUNG, JOHN WESLEY (1991), *Totalitarian Language. Orwell's newspeak and its nazi and communist antecedents*, Charlottesville and London, University Press of Virginia.

#### SAMPLES

*Adevărul*. 1990–1995.  
*Cotidianul*. 1991–1995.  
*Evenimentul zilei*. 1993–1995.  
*România liberă*. 1985–1995.  
*Scânteia*. 1985–1989.  
*Scânteia poporului*. 22 december 1989.  
*Scânteia tineretului*. 1985–1989.  
*Tineretul liber*. 1989–1995.

