MEDIA PROFESSIONALISM –
TURNING AN IDEOLOGY OBJECTIVE

Prof. Mihai Coman, Ph. D.

Nothing can be more ill-fated for mass media than for it to be born out of a revolution. The press that emerges from such social upheaval bears the marks of the crises, confusion, pathos and hope out of which it has emerged, as well as the inherent features of the ideology through which it has promoted its legitimacy. The journalists that this kind of press launches are deeply scared by the pathetic moments they lived through, sometimes as observers, but more often than not as actors in the events. For them, journalism is equal to making history (and not to writing chronicles of the ordinary), to mobilizing the masses, to defying the institutions and the powers-that-be, to changing the course of events, to becoming idols of the people and messengers of new eras. Born and shaped in the tumultuous days of December 1989 and the unsettle of 1990, the Romanian post-communist press is characterized not only by a multitude of media institutions and products, but also by an ideology, a professional image-set, and a mythology peculiar to it.

Between profession and liberal arts

According to sociological definitions, professions are those callings whose practitioners have come to collectively control labor and its purposes. In a study on the professional status of journalists, R. A. Beam considers that the following features define a profession:

a)   this calling revolves around a systematic corpus of theories on specialized knowledge and skills;

b)   the members of the profession have 'professional autonomy'; they are free to do their job as they see fit, but also the

obligation to assume the responsibilities that come with this exercise;

c) the profession develops a 'professional culture', meaning a sum of common values, symbols, and norms. They are inculcated in the new members, either by learning in specialized institutions, or by practice in production, along with the working techniques. Based on the values instituted, the profession tends to be self-governed, to control the selection, integration, evolution and exclusion of its members, producing ethical codes and regulations for this purpose.

d) the profession has the tendency to 'idealize' its social usefulness; it displays itself as being in the service of public interest, concealing or avoiding the economic advantages emerging from its exercise;

e) for its members, the profession is a long-term commitment, often for life (R. A. Beam, 1990).

Since last century, journalism has come the long way that separates a secondary occupation from a full profession. It has created its own professional culture, has gained social legitimacy, has gained ever greater autonomy in carrying out its specific activities, has drawn up specific norms and values, has become a definitive occupation, and main source of income for its practitioners. This route is not at its end. As K. B. Jensen remarked, 'compared to other professions, like medicine and law, journalism is incompletely defined, and many of the standards being used are of the ad-hoc type' (K.B. Jensen, 1986, p. 26, see also J. M. Charon, 1997, pp. 17- 36, S. Splichal, C. Sparks, 1994, pp. 20- 26, J. Tunstall, pp. 56-57). From this perspective, journalism appears as a sum of quantifiable social features, and reaching certain well-defined parameters marks reaching the professional level.

From another perspective, the process of professionalization presupposes defining a territory, meaning setting clear-cut limits, able to distinguish the field of one profession from other professional fields. This means that professionalism is a matter of ideology, or,

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more precisely, a matter of confrontation between ideologies, and of naturalizing (or making official) a dominant ideology. In journalism, this process started at the end of the 19th century, by separating the journalistic discourse from other types of discourse centered on subjectivity: the literary discourse and that of the statement of opinion. This tendency was favored by the influence of positivist philosophy, by the prestige of science and empiric observation, and by the emergence of literary currents like realism and naturalism, which valued both a clear style of writing, of the descriptive type, and rendering and observing the day-to-day human behavior. (See P. Bourdieu, 1991; Th. Leonard, 1986, M. Schudson, 1978). During this period of time, journalists start claiming exclusively certain specific techniques, capable of ensuring the 'objectivity' of presenting facts, in antithesis with other means of presentation, based on subjectivity. They claim that journalistic procedures allow them to distinguish fact from opinion, and to rank information based on its intrinsic importance. The ideology of 'objectivizing' offers the elements necessary to specialization, and implicitly those necessary to separation from other kinds of discourse: literary, essay, philosophical, political, etc. Thus, after configuring its specific field, journalism acts on its autonomy and closes it, blocking the access for representatives from other fields to activities considered typical of journalism: collaborators can write commentaries and notes (a statement of their personality, thus subjective), but only accredited journalists can make news, reports, interviews (genres that ask for mastering specific techniques). Acceptance or refusal is now expressed in the terms of the opposition between professionals (specialists) and amateurs (clients). In this way, professionalism is determined by the self-image of a group and the symbolic mechanisms that this ideology imposes, makes legitimate, and naturalizes.

Along this century, journalism has sketched its boundaries even more firmly. This process is not finite: the emergence and development of new technologies led to the emergence of new types of media, new press products, and thus of new professional roles and typologies; the public's exigencies demanded a constant diversification of messages, centered either on information, or on

entertainment or documentation, which enlarged the journalists' sphere of action; finally, in spite of constant preoccupation with strict control of the professional field, journalists have kept open the access venues to the profession (according to G. Bourdon's metaphorical formula, 'in journalism there are no walls, therefore no doors either'), attracting people of diverse academic or non-academic formation, with various interests and life philosophies, which contributed to journalism's being 'populated' by a great variety of human and professional types. For this reason, the profession perpetuated a 'constitutive vagueness - of its status, of the control structures, of its missions and practices'; through this opening towards other professional fields, journalism 'has managed its heterogeneity by avoiding the imposition of very strict norms' (D. Ruellan, 1993, p. 94; see also Remy Reiffel, 1993, pp. 1021-1022).

Professionalism: empirical coordinates

Determining professionalism was a constant theme of debates on the post-communist press. The discussions involved an analytical dimension, and a pragmatic one. From this perspective, non-professionalism becomes an explanatory mechanism for the phenomena under study: the incapacity to respond to the exigencies of democracy, to carry out their civic mission, and to come in line with the standards of Western journalism has only one cause— the journalists' lack of professionalism. From the second perspective, the matter of professionalism generates two types of strategies: a) a normative one, marked by the complex assembly of Western support programs for raising journalistic professionalism (for present and future practitioners); b) a commercial one, defined by these countries importing tabloid journalism, which, although based on non-professional behavior, ensures significant incomes. As one can easily deduce from the above, debates on journalism are anchored in doubly-comparative perspective: between journalism and well established profession, and between Western and post-Communist journalism.

The search for indicators to define the level of professionalism becomes, in the light of the observations made so far, a crucial matter in the scientific evaluation of mechanisms and tendencies that characterize post-communist press. From my point of view, this problem involves two types of approaches: a quantitative one, based on establishing indicators able to point out the compatibility of the social, demographic and cultural status of the representatives of this profession with the referential situations where there exists a correlation between proven professionalism and certain socio-demographic and cultural constants; and a qualitative one, based on searching for ideological constructs used by the group of practitioners to establish an identity, to set its social role, and to configure its specific mythologies.

From the first point of view, we can use the numerous sociological investigations dedicated to this profession in countries where the journalist's professional status is better defined. This research offers us a number of empirical indicators: professional training (university, in editorial offices, short term programs), experience, the position in the office (decision or executive), professional mobility (number of offices in which he/she worked), mission (dissemination of information, opinions or entertainment), the position against the Power (adversarial, support, neutral), attitude on professional values (respect or ignorance) etc.

In order to understand well the structure of the post-communist profession of journalism I asked (by means of my students) some journalists to fill in a simplified version adjusted to the local characteristics of the questionnaire created by D. Weaver-W. Wilhoit (1986). Eventually, I collected the responses of a group of 398 journalists: 134 of them, in central printed media and 108 of local printed media, 95 of Bucharest radio stations and 52 of Bucharest TV stations. The number of those who refused (more or less politely) to fill in the questionnaire is much higher than those who filled it in. Although this is not a sampling, this segment represents a significant group for the profession.

The profession is young, with an average age of 32,5 years (34 for local media and 29 for the Bucharest); 46% of them are women, while 54% are men (33% women in the local press and 52% in the central press, which

shows that in the central press the ratio by gender is more balanced). In the group studied, 46,7% come from families where the parents have university degrees (with a higher share in the local press – 55,9%, as compared to the central press – 44,1%); out of families with parents without university degrees come 14,8% of the journalists; 26,3% declare they have parents who are pensioners, which does not allow for placing them clearly in the categories mentioned above; 12,2% did not want to declare their level of training and their parents' occupation. Similarly, 64,2% have university degree (of which only 13,5% in journalism, probably part of them being graduates of the former school of journalism of the former Romanian Communist Party); 25% - high school degree (with a larger share in the local press – 35% and a lower one in the central press –15%) which once more underlines the shortage of specialists in the local press, where the youngsters with university studies, attracted by the miracle of the capital, do not want to come back; the rest up to 100% are non-responses.

The average time spent in media is 6,5 years, and 3,5 years in the same newsroom (this fact proves the journalists' high professional mobility in the period taken into consideration). 26,7% are defined as reporters, 58% as editors and 14,8% in leading positions (the rest up to 100% are non-responses). The position of editor, specific for the list of functions in the audio-visual domain, implies the same activities as those of the reporter; consequently, over two thirds of those surveyed are in the executive field.

The journalists use various mass media sources for information: 67% declare that their main source of information is the television, and 48% use the radio (without mentioning the stations); as to the press, they identified the newspapers read: 'România libera' is read by 61%, 'Adevarul' by 48%, 'Evenimentul zilei' by 52%, 'Ziua' by 43%, etc; as to the press agencies, Mediafax was used by 55,5%, and Rompres by 29%; from among the foreign agencies, Reuters was mentioned by 22% of those surveyed. They rate radio as the most reliable media (32% "very reliable" and 42% "quite reliable") followed by the printed press (13% "very reliable" and 57% "quite reliable") and television (6% "very reliable", 57% "quite reliable").

The attitude on the major values of the profession was shaped by granting of points to the most important qualities of a news item, the role of

the press, the journalist's qualities (with pre determined lists). When defining the role of the press, the people surveyed ranked first the rapid seeking of the information (1927), followed by the « analysis of the social and political problems » (1655), debating the major ideas (1589), educating the public (1412), investigating the government's activity (1397) and offering entertainment (1098). The ranking regarding the quality of a good news item is as follows: social scope (1593), national interest (1531), political importance (1373), the sensational character (1315) and the emotional power (991). This classification of the declared values represents the reverse image of what is going on in the post-communist press, dominated by entertainment (the touching event of the day, the sensational events, the intriguing disclosures etc) and by the investigation of the actions of the Power and very little preoccupied with seeking information, checking it and analyzing the social phenomena in detail. In the same system, the qualities of a young journalist should be: spirit of initiative (1845), easiness in writing (1694), curiosity (1689), autonomy of movement (1526), mastering the new technologies (1220), charisma (1073).

There are obvious discrepancies between the declared values and the professional practice; one possible explanation would be the double-standard discourse : we declare something but we do something else ; another explanation would be the impossibility of carrying out the profession according to the assumed values: the journalists know how it is best but are obliged by those who lead them to choose a certain type of events and produce a certain type of report, in sharp contradiction with the declared standards of values.

These data, correlated with the axes of typologies shown above allow for shaping a standard profile of the post-Communist journalist: a young person who has worked in the media after the revolution, who usually has university studies (but in various domains), who has become trained in the profession by working in the editorial offices, who has a fairly high professional mobility, carries out especially operative work and has little confidence in the credibility of the press.

These data show, compared to David Weaver's conclusion (1996), that there are common elements with those of the surveyed journalists – which could suggest that Romanian journalists reach some of the most important standards of professionalization.

Professionalism: ideological coordinates

The image journalists hold of themselves is a self-referential cultural construct, aimed at legitimizing and promoting a social and professional category that often feels it is undervalued and criticized by its public. The slow process of gaining autonomy and separation from other professions has led to the creation of a professional consciousness, and consequently of a specific mythology. Thus, journalists (who also hold a monopoly over texts and discourse aimed towards the public) have a tendency to idealize their profession and to exaggerate both its achievements (heroization) and its failures (victimization). In this context, the analysis of discourse by means of which journalists in the Romanian post-Communist press define their identity and give legitimacy to a certain mission can uncover the strategies and tactics ('tricks') used by this socio-demographically, culturally and politically heterogeneous group to gain justification that is at the same time moral, professional, and political.

Since 1990, the journalists' discourse on the press has undergone a paradoxical evolution. In the first part of this period, journalists frequently expressed opinions in both daily and weekly publications about the role of the press and about various phenomena characteristic to post-Communist press. After 1994, this debate disappeared from the daily or weekly press of wide circulation, and moved to cultural magazines; the debate also changed its actors: instead of journalism we see intellectual personalities, without experience in the day to day practice of journalism. This change may have several explanations: it could be that the calming political climate defused the conflict between publications and lowered the interest for principle debates about the role of the press (as a tool for simultaneous self-evaluation and annihilation of the opponent's legitimacy); maybe it was that many of the voices of this debate migrated towards audio-visual talk shows, and the most passionate participants in this dialogue disappeared; maybe journalists realized that too many debates on the role of the press leads to loss of credibility; or maybe after two or three years of polemics and

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effusiveness they thought themselves placed well enough in the boat of the fourth power to be interested any longer in promoting their image by self-referential discourse (as opposed to the intellectual elite, whose opinions found themselves in the news press less and less, which was even more critical of the functioning of media institutions, and no longer had access to the specialized publications).

Thus, we can distinguish in the Romanian media landscape two types of discourse: that of 'professional' journalists, and that of the intellectual elite. In analyzing the first type, we followed the most important titles of the year 1990: 'Adevarul' (at that time, left-wing independent, pro-government", 'Azi' (official publication of FSN, in power at that time), 'Dreptatea' (daily representing PNT-CD, main opposition party), 'Romania Libera' (right-wing independent, anti-government), 'Tineretul Liber', (independent, non-committal), and 'Viitorul' (daily of the opposition Liberal Party).

Of all these newspapers, only 'Adevarul' and 'Romania Libera' have withstood the test of time, and have kept their representative and functional place in the press today; the others were agonizing even as of 1992 (under pressure from the 'gossip' press), and disappeared or changed profile.

The articles which debate media institutions have three major themes: the press's situation and mission, the activities of TVR (national television), and the usefulness of a law of the press, or lack thereof.

1990	Role of the press	T.V.R		Total
Adevarul	24	5	6	35
Azi	21	5	2	28
Dreptatea	24	11	3	38
România Libera	17	11	3	31
Tineretul Liber	10	5	-	15
Viitorul	18	6	4	28
Total	114	43	18	175

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It is obvious that the preferred theme for the newspapers in the chosen corpus is the role of the press: in the period we have analyzed, we find 114 articles on this subject (65.14% of the total); TVR gets 53 texts, focusing mostly on professional or political mistakes (30.28%); only 18% refer to the law of the press (10.28%). As for the interest they have for the press, there are no significant differences between newspapers: only 'Tineretul Liber', with 15 texts (8.57%) is at the bottom of the list in terms of concern for this debate; the other dailies get involved to a roughly equal extent (between 28 and 38 texts).

The greatest part of articles on the media have an obviously polemic character: the matter of the law of the press triggers a struggle against government-proposed projects; TVR is criticized for favoring the party in power, and ignoring or falsifying the opposition's image; the role of the press is tackled from the perspective of the conflicts between editorial teams (political, ideological, and personal).

The percentages of polemic articles are as follows: 'Adevarul' (5 articles out of 24); 'Azi' (17 out of 21); 'Dreptatea' (16 out of 24); 'Romania Libera' (10 out of 17); 'Tineretul Liber' (3 out of 10). These texts are the result of conflicts within a limited field: the newspapers favoring the incumbent party oppose those supporting the opposition; they accuse each other of spreading false information, of propaganda, immoral conduct, slander, lies, and especially of being 'remote controlled' by their 'political masters'.

Besides these well-aimed texts, many articles complained in generic terms of the press's 'deplorable' state. In this yarn, there are some recurring motifs: the journalists' *independence* (real or illusory), considering their being employed by a newspaper either belonging to a specific party or with evident partisan tendency; the *excess of pamphlet*, especially injurious violence, vulgarity and ad hominem attacks, slander, and the lack of legal means of protection for its victims; the *denials*, a common occurrence, (what is true today proves false tomorrow). The essence of the evil confusing this ever-warring press can be expressed by a formula used by the daily 'Adevarul': 'No one agrees with anyone' (18 Feb. 1990).

Thus, the discourse about the press appears as a political discourse about the press politics: journalists fight among themselves

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(rarely in their own name, usually on behalf of their institutions or a political formation), using slogans about the mission of the press or about the shortcomings of the press turned into a weapon for destroying opponents. The lack of self-criticism is only an echo of the general state of the Romanian post-revolutionary society, divided into fronts, tortured by contradictions, of breakdowns in communication, by hysterical fits, fears, and stubbornness.

If we look at the few texts that tackle the topic of the press exclusively, we can extract several (symbolic) values on which the journalistic profession image-set was founded. Trapped in the whirl of political strife (which they present and create through their discourse), many of those who treat the topic of the press feel they are victims of a pitiless avalanche. They complain of the violence of the political and social environment, as it appeared (often exaggerated) in the media discourse: 'And, finally, why so much verbal violence, since everyone speaks of dialogue and national healing? What kind of dialogue is this, when words are bearers of cannon-powder, and microphones gleam like rifles? The verbal or written message reaches its peak'. ('Adevarul', 8 Feb. 1990) From this point of view, violence and anarchy are perceived as a price to be paid for the recently gained freedom of statement: 'Many aberrations are written under this regime of total freedom of the press. There are no limits, neither ethical, nor professional or political, there's not even a limit of common sense. [...] But the worrying fact is not that a lot of poppycock is written. In order to count on intelligence and wisdom, we must assume the risk of ensuring a space of manifestation for possible stupidity also'. ('Adevarul', 24 Feb. 1990) (see also 'Tineretul Liber', 15 Nov. 1990). This shock is greater as journalists perceive themselves as representatives of a cultural elite, bearers of a mainly educational message: 'The press is an institution drawing its information from culture, and which, by informing, produces culture. [It is] an institution whose sole weapons are the credibility and moral authority of the people working within it.' ('Romania Libera', 13 Apr. 1990) Most articles deplore the lack of professionalism and / or culture of the people producing the press: the intellectual dimension is seen as a panacea against the errors of the press, as a weapon against manipulation, as it appears in this apparently

paradoxical confession: 'In fact, the role of a television [station] is that of having the courage to maintain its choices, with arguments, and tenacity. We want to be manipulated by the charm of ideas, by the charming intelligence of television people. We can achieve this by taking in as reporters well-trained people, [people] with imagination, even supporting their judgments, and pleading credibly for a certain cause'. ('Adevarul', 5 May 1990)

The concept of 'professionalism' is rarely invoked. If the press's mission is relatively clear (to cure the nation of 'silence', to support democracy by debates and conflicts of opinion), the means by which this mission would be carried out are vaguely defined ('To talk about professionalism is an efficient method to not speak of practical experience' - D. Ruellan, 1993, p. 96).

The legitimacy of the intellectual journalist stems from his personal merits, which means it stems from his 'work' (in this case, not from the published articles or from press institutions, but from a certain civic responsibility and from professionalism). 'A journalist's professionalism is a result of three factors, of which the most important is talent'. ('Azi', 21 Sep. 1990) Through this artifice, the journalist's profile leaves the context of social and political determinations, and is projected towards an unclear area, difficult to define, and which cannot be captured in an ethical or professional debate. The myth of the journalist's natural talent places him closer to the artist, freeing him from the burden of professional determinations (specific education, deontological responsibility, dependency on a system of characteristic norms and values). Same as an artist, the journalist is now seen as a pure and fragile entity, victim of an aggressive system (that which generates verbal aggression and political pressure), who deals involuntarily with impostors, and tries by any means to regain the innocence of his creation and his elementary freedom of statement.

Founded in 1990 and 1992, the two cultural magazines '22' and 'Dilema' try to capture a constant elitist audience, meaning intellectuals interested in both the debates of ideas, and the political current events. '22' is published by the Group for Social Dialogue, which gathers most intellectuals who opposed former president Ion

Iliescu. 'Dilema' was set up around Andrei Plesu (dissident during the Communist period, then Minister of Culture in the Romanian Government), and Mihai Botez (dissident and émigré, ambassador to the UN in post-Communist Romania, and ambassador to the US). These two publications are very critical of the 1992-1996 governments, and have an elitist discourse, analyzing politics and generally the Romanian history from the point of view of the principles of political philosophy, not of circumstance. This causes a certain hiatus with reality, a certain Jacobinism, and oftentimes, a displayed misanthropy.

Starting with 1993, the press becomes an important topic of articles appearing in the two weeklies named above. The editorial strategy of the two accords privilege to debates organized in editorial offices, whose content is then published almost verbatim. In the period under analysis, we identify 24 pages and thematic groups (of a total of 68 articles). In the two magazines we find a critical review of the quasi-periodic press; moreover, in 1995, 'Dilema' sets up a supplementary, though irregular feature dedicated to television. In fact, most articles of these publications look at the TVR situation—the attitude of journalists being generally critical and polemical, condemning the subordination of the national television to the incumbent power.

„22"

	1993	1994	1995	1996	TOTAL
Press	12	6	6	3	25
T.V.R.	12	7	2	4	27
TOTAL	24	13	8	7	52

„Dilema"

	1993	1994	1995	1996	TOTAL
Press	3	7	4	3	17
T.V.R.	1	5	9	8	23
TOTAL	4	12	13	11	40

The authors of these articles have (and show) an obvious critical distance from the press and journalists. Even though they are hired, or are contributors to a weekly, they identify themselves as guardians of cultural values. The elitist discourse is mainly built by mediating between two contradictory values: on the one hand, supporting journalists or the press as instruments for criticizing the power, and promoting democracy (the source of vehement criticism aimed at public television, considered 'the fifth column' infiltrated in the post-totalitarian media institutions, because of its pact with the Power); on the other hand, criticizing the press and journalists for their lack of professionalism.

Intellectuals are delighted by the fact that the press ensures freedom of statement in Romania: 'I would say that there are extremely visible changes, in the sense that we have become a society that speaks, that blabbers enormously. Before, we lived in silence [...] Privacy has almost disappeared, the private space is more or less occupied by the public space, the discourse space . We read and write newspapers, we walk down the street and risk being interviewed...' (Radu Toma, 'Dilema' nr. 13, 1993) 'I was able to observe how, in the case of a man who had been terrorized by the censored press, the fear continued into freedom, while I, who had had no contact with this terror, felt no fear. [...] The problem of the after-1989 journalist is a lack of inner censorship'. (Rodica Palade, '22', nr. 316, 1996)

In agreement with the general opinion, the participants in the debates consider that the main mission of the press is to ensure free circulation of ideas and dialogue among people with opposing points of view: 'I think that one of the main aims of the press after 1989 should be what we call a pedagogy of freedom. [...] If the press does not take seriously its role of teaching us to be free, showing us that this freedom cannot exist without laws and principles, we run the risk of having the chance of enjoying freedom of statement turn against us'. (E. Stefoi, 'Dilema', nr. 66, 1994)

Respecting these values, the authors frequently accuse the two monsters that threaten the press: on the one hand, its transformation into a chameleon of various political centers, mainly belonging to the incumbent power; on the other, its degradation: the press has become

an easy-going instrument for entertainment, concerned with the most commercial of sensationalism. In fact, the success enjoyed by the popular weeklies and dailies (based on promoting gossip and the mundane), and several years later, that of commercial television stations, causes irritation and nags these journalists. '22''s editor-in-chief launched, among other things, the anathema against the publications with 'street' tendencies: 'Black Press', 'Murder and Rape', 'Prostitution', but also against photographs of mutilated bodies in 'Infractorul', reports of rape of elderly women in 'Tineretul Liber', and 'spicy' images in VIP (Gabriela Adamesteanu, '22', nr. 157, 1993). Several years later, Bogdan Ghiu criticized the success of PRO TV, a commercial television station, which 'applies market laws in a spectacular, and sometimes brutal, manner, corrupting the viewer, buying off the audience, […] who is invited to watch non-stop that particular channel…' ('Dilema', nr. 158, 1996)

If the civic, educational mission of the press runs the risk of being forgotten, the journalist is the sole guilty party. Chroniclers frequently recall 'the immense lack of professionalism' (Liviu Antonesei, '22', nr. 155, 1993), 'mining, provincial, festive reports' from TVR, where there is 'a vast dose of incompetence' (Andrei Plesu, 'Dilema', nr. 86, 1994), at the same time criticizing the fact that 'the professional criterion is abolished in the choices made by journalists' (Horatiu Pepine, '22', nr. 171, 1993).

On the same tone, two famous university professors emphasized the fact that TVR anchors 'express themselves with difficulty', and do not have 'the technical capacity to build sentences in Romanian'. (Sorin Antohi, '22', nr. 175, 1993) 'I am more alert to the cultural dimension in the press, and to cultural information, which often sounds aberrant, and also towards the grotesque lack of professionalism'. (G. Dimisianu, '22', nr. 316, 1996) The authors of these two articles consider this symptom of lack of professionalism as a defining one for the Romanian post-Communist press. According to them there is no excuse or alibi for this fact: 'The press has not achieved effective professional solidarity - the fact that, at present, the most widely read newspaper in Romania is also the least credible points to the fact that the issue is not only the consumer's psychology,

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but also the psychology of the professionals.' (G. Adamesteanu, '22', nr. 165, 1993) 'Unfortunately, in our country the journalists themselves, and with them, the representatives of the intellectual elite, have not managed to naturally relate to their own freedom. If the press does not accept its own normalcy, those in power have no reason to treat it in a normal fashion, and the public has no reason to read it, in the wish to find in the press the direction for returning daily life to normal. (E. Stefoi, 'Dilema', nr. 66, 1994)

A paradoxical situation emerges, in which the 'sick society' of post-Communism cannot be healed by the Messianic journalist, since he too is corrupted by the surrounding evil, losing 'normality', getting involved in power games (political or commercial). In other words, only the intellectual elite, isolated in the world of principles, insensitive to the surrounding epidemic, will be able to have a positive, healing influence, to transform the society disheveled by post-Communist phantoms into true civil society.

This summary research indicates that two groups practiced discourse about journalists and media institutions: daily press journalists, and intellectuals in cultural magazines. The first used the press debate to gain ground opposite their adversaries (mainly political), and in order to destroy their legitimacy, presenting them as 'deviants' from professional norms and purposes. Owing to the enormous audience success enjoyed by the post-Communist press, owing to the way in which journalists were reclaimed or courted by the political structures, they didn't need a discourse to differentiate and gain them autonomy. After 1993-1994, the self-referential discourse disappeared from the daily press, where it was 'manifest', as a statement of opposition to incumbent power, of the combative side of journalism. The debate on the role of the press is taken over by cultural magazines, where the intellectual elite, isolated from the profession, condemns the overly-popular style, the commercial style in the press, and, through this, the journalists' lack of professionalism (synonymous, in their opinion, to the lack of culture).

The two types of discourse had neither a common voice, nor a common purpose: journalists speak of the press as an institution, intellectuals analyze some of its manifestations. The discourses stem

from different philosophies, and have different purposes, like self-granting legitimacy, and withdrawing legitimacy. Finally, they express the drama of the journalists' post-Communist evolution: from representatives of a category identified with the intellectual elite, they became—due to their status of advocates of political interests, revealers of scandals, agents of 'commercialism', concocters of false and slanderous information—the symbol of non-intellectualism. And this without being supported by a discourse of professional specificity, and therefore, of a well-defined social identity.

Professionalism can be measured by quantitative and qualitative indicators. The first involve a normative and comparative dimension. We can measure the level of professionalism of journalists from a certain country by comparing social, demographic, educational indicators, as well as those regarding the mechanisms of production with those obtained by research on journalists in countries where mass media is highly professional.

The latter are self-referential and value-oriented. They show the symbolical constructions by which representatives of the profession define their mission, role, effectiveness, and their cultural frame. Professionalism is now an ideological construct, which should not be evaluated by comparison with external models, but by its internal coherence.

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