

The Freedom of the Press, a National Fraud (I)

Did Klaus Iohannis visit Grivco in 2009, as his opponents assert, or not, as he claims (it's already been proven that he had NOT been to the Dante Villa to meet with Băsescu)? This issue itself is of little importance (even Băsescu had to resort to help from Dan Voiculescu in 2005), besides testing the candidate's sincerity. The public forgives almost anything in politics, but not lies. 30,000 demonstrators came out last fall not only for Roşia Montană, but also against Ponta's outrageous campaign lie, that he was against, and will not support the Gold project, a lie that came undone immediately after his rise to power.

I will use a recent example to explain why the issue of the press in Romania does not only concern media analysts, but is important for every citizen. It's because people need to be certain. They are presented for the first time with a candidate who is new to politics, Klaus Iohannis, someone who few know much about, who is momentarily Victor Ponta's main opponent, and who appears almost elected. **Those who do not want Mr. Ponta are seeking to find answers about Mr. Iohannis, something to justify whether to vote him or not. How could they learn if he's sincere or not? They should through the press.** And how does the press verify the whole GRIVCO scandal? By seeking evidence: recordings, pictures, independent witnesses. But what does the press do?

We will begin our case study from the very beginning. The press swings in one of two ways. "Pontist" or "Băsişt". The Pontist media is quick to confirm that there was such a meeting. They don't concern themselves with any evidence. Given that they already present Mr. Iohannis as someone who stole six houses, traffics children and is an overall loser, they don't usually care much for evidence. Their message comes daily, is clear, and in your face. What is the Băsişt press all about? They receive an email (before denunciations used to be via post) that says the following: "Iohannis lies. I was there when he met Voiculescu at GRIVCO. Voiculescu's a powerful man. He would not have named him in charge of the GRIVCO coalition without meeting with him first, and without having any guarantees." An email that praises Voiculescu should not be high point for Băsişti, but things are often not what they seem. The author, a convicted criminal and the right hand man of the one Băsişti call "Varan" is immediately interviewed by the owner of *Evenimentul Zilei*, Dan Andronic. Quite professional. From the questions asked it becomes evident that Codruţ Sereş was not actually present. The unprofessional thing to do is to let go of such a story from a single dubious source, one who admits that he was not present ([here](#)). But the interview is an excuse to spread the message of an "eyewitness." The story begins to take off, first on B1TV, where the owner, alongside DacAir, through Olferryboat SA, is George Constantin Păunescu, the father of George Marius Păunescu, an associate of Dan Andronic at *Evenimentul Zilei*. Here the title uses the word "revelations", which is instantly associated with the story as it grows due to the chain of related publications and "well-intended" politicians, often introducing new moderate terms such as "incredible" and "devastating". Only two websites, that make a living commenting what's on TV give away who the actual source is, Voiculescu's right hand man – could this not be relevant, perhaps? The rest of the media does not mention who he is or what his conviction is for, subsequent news holding that he was present ([see here](#)).

But why would the right-leaning press be going after Iohannis? Maybe because there is no such thing as the right-leaning press, but only a press with a few select beneficiaries. For example, if one of Mr. Andronic's political consulting firms had Elena Udrea (and Gold) as clients, directly or through business association (through PR firms working directly for them), and if the newspaper went broke, the advertisers are, at the end of the day, the source that finances most the employees (eg Marius Ghilezan, enthusiastic

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chronicler of cyanide, without being known as a brilliant expert, I think we can pretty much agree he does not love cyanide wholeheartedly and interest free). Either that, or the newspaper is officially in insolvency, and the customers are who they are (Mr. Andronic is a clean transparent man who fully supports the idea of a clean press, so why make a secret out of something everyone knows anyway).

Clearly, Mr. Iohannis could easily turn the tides and change the situation by purchasing the services of these entrepreneurs, especially since TV stations close to bankruptcy sell their news hours like in a fast-food drive-through, at six o'clock they may cater to Mrs. Udrea, at seven switching to Ioan Niculae, eight o'clock is saved for a little dose of real news (just for credibility's sake), and at nine they're open for business! Saxons, it's a well know fact, though sometimes it may take a while for people to understand that *nothing* is for free. This is the political economy of the once free media. One who does not cater to an interest group will be "exposed" until he plays ball and joins one group, or pays all of them. And since Mr. Iohannis is purely an accident, chosen as a result of his success in early polls, in a moment of existential threat to the liberals, with no links to the Voiculesții, the Păuneștii, other "talibans" from Ciuvică to Cristoiu, nor with the lobbyists who gathered signatures a year early for Cătălin Predoiu (of course, without expecting anything in return), I don't predict a happy ending for him. The public will not have access to information about who he is and what he wants, because those who own the media have stopped informing for free for a rather long time. The content presented by the political media clearly follows the money trail, with "good" and "bad" publicity being decided by those tossing the cash (as they say), and how much of it.

Review the "*Lost Illusions*" by Balzac or Maupassant's "*Bel Ami*" and you will surely stumble across the blackmailing press model, as it was in its infancy, at the start of the nineteenth century, finally established here after 25 years of transition and strategic errors by the media NGOs, who instead of taking on dirty publications by suing in civil court promoted a misconception of what "press freedom" really means. Monica Macovei, who advised me to not take anyone to court when the daily news constantly bombarded the public with the idea that I'm an undercover CIA agent, or sent by Budapest, that I'm into adolescents, while also being a lesbian, has changed her mind after 15 years, ironically when having to sue Antena 3 for their news about her siding with the miners, when she actually investigated the miners and those from the secret services that helped the miners. Those from the right-leaning public that don't believe me should ask themselves two questions.

Why is there a site for political gossip (*știri pe surse*, those that I caught with 4772 likes on all posted items, what a coincidence! They have been more careful ever since), which contributes at the same time to *Evenimentul Zilei* (right) and *Obiectiv.info* (left). Hard to believe that the content is split in such a polarizing manner (ie it frequently happens that those with the same customer publish the same material, unchanged, on 3-4 sites), if you're not privy to the information that the leftist propaganda source (Bogdan Teodorescu) has a long history of political consultancy with the rightist propaganda source (Dan Andronic). At that time their owners were Mr. Hrebenciuc and Mr. Mihailescu (Micky). The usual target was mainly polls with no participants, perverting former students of mine and spending lavish amounts from the Secretariat General of the Government (SGG). Today they discreetly share the market, but imagine that the people in charge are all like a band of brothers, with half their income coming from this side and half from the other, on days with exit polls agreeing amongst themselves what to tell the people, and so forth. Fighting between Palada and Lăzăroiu? These boys are like brothers!

That is not the only question. How is it that the two news stations engaged in a bitter battle, the market leader - the aggressive Antenna 3 and the combative beating B1 (maybe you can't recall who the

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Păuneștii, Bancorex and DacAir are, though you should, since you paid out of your pocket for the holes they created in the State budget) have a common denominator, in a certain Mr. Sorin Oancea, a long time associate of Dan Voiculescu at Antena 3 and Radio Zu, today 50% shareholder in B1 AND manager? How is it that this great battle seems to be taking place between some providers of Hrebenciuc and some associates of Voiculescu, and since yesterday or today, complete with some first generation state looters such as those coined “Păuneștii”? Do these camps indeed portray differing values and ideologies, a different press style, and so on, such as good logic would dictate? (since we’re on the topic, one of the blackmail-oriented boys from Mr. Seres’s former Antenna department, a certain Negrea, has been making a fuss these last few days, at first I could not recall where I heard the name before. Mr. Negrea wrote the “compromising” 2012 article about Raed Arafat, posted on sites where Andronic’s PR firm had purchased airtime, including long after Arafat had won the battle and Basescu had lost, but that’s what happens when the bill is payed in advance). Additional proof that human resources are limited, including on the front lines – these people get passed from side to side, and are the ones doing much of the dirty work (ie blackmailing through the press medium by writing negatively about one until they pay, after which you write only good things, PR can be black or white). Alright, so meanwhile the justice system caught up with the Voiculescu family and their new executive director, Alexandrescu, but also remembered about Dan Diaconescu, whom has yet again taken up campaigning. That’s why we say that it’s blind (the justice system), but at least one can finally recognize that we’re not dealing with the press anymore, but with blackmail. And the blackmail that is exerted through the press is a criminal offence, like all forms of blackmail.

Such is the current state of the media at the beginning of this campaign round and end of the “Basist” era, all due to some “visionaries” who four years ago realized that **you cannot fight Voiculescu without turning to the same weapons he employs, they hired people like him or to work directly for him, but all this just to offer him some good old competition.** This is the end product of the orange years, contrasted to the beginning of Băsescu’s reign, when enemies used to attack, but the free press segment used to defend him without payment and while playing by the rules of the trade, but only when he truly deserved being defended. **If you want to know who Iohannis is take a trip to Sibiu or visit his campaign sites, but don’t rely on the “compromising” press, they will not offer anything of value. This press is split amongst ideologically committed former communists, who play with their cards on the table, and former communist mercenaries that go to the highest bidder and are somewhat like a PR market. Simplistic, but not really.**

The next episode will discuss the results of the Coalition for a Clean Press (financial sources, insolvency, criminal matters) and what (more) we can do.