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MULTICULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN SERBIAN PUBLIC SPACE¹

Abstract: With the arrival of the information revolution, the methods, techniques and skills of the journalist profession have rapidly changed, which has resulted in the creation of the new identity of the public communications. Media become new totems, sources of powerful, usually manipulative messages, which explains all political, historical and cultural phenomenons of the past and present. Fetishizing of items, easy profit and individual money-making, wrecked conventional notions of tradition and spirit of time, thus offering a variety of short-lasting, frivolous, sensational, tabloid and kitschy (trashy) pleasures, using their fascinating pictures and treacherous contents to attract people's attention. In a multitude of high technology elites people have become more and more alienated, while mass media take over distribution of social power pouring consumers every day with new packages of spectacle and sensations.

The Democracy waves today are flooding the planet, creating dramatic and intensive changes on an evolutionary political path. Exciting statistic triumph of neoliberal order excite the humanistic orientated part of our planet, but, behind the democracy screen, human rights and economic welfare are hiding lots of social problems, important for further concept of political development (an energetic and ecological crisis, stock market problems worldwide, first signs of planetary recession, growing unemployment...). The catalog of modern crisis depends on many agents which can decide whether the new established democracy will survive the numerous illnesses that attack it.

An increasing number of contemporary intellectuals are discussing the issue of democracy future, facing the ethical dilemmas coming from the more frequent information manipulation, done by a more and more alienated governing elite. Multiculturalism is being put on a global market pedestal of ideas and opinions, and massmedia are being pushed forward as desirable tool for communication among everybody and about everything. However, the problem lies in the fact that planetary media giants are avoiding information circulation among smaller ethical communities, commercially non-worthy and uninteresting, bringing to doubt the public debate concept. The new dogmatism is hidden in the shadow of the new world order, which is likely to lead towards creating self-sufficient, closed, ethnical or religious homogeneous groups, which by accepting the "victim" role, in the future will represent a suitable soil for unpredictable and painful political, religious, cultural and economic tectonic disturbances.

New redistribution of power gives a stalwart role to cultural patterns, national identities, social conflicts and life styles, thus participating in reconfiguration of the traditional state which is naively trying to resist the changes, unwilling to relocate the cultural energy from state and bureaucratic cabinets to the open market or under favor of civilian society. Democratic culture implies the right for a variety of cultural values and models, lawfulness of national institutions and specific cultural identity

Key world: Politics, massmedia, communicative actions, multiculturalism, democracy

Being on the crossroads of Latin, Muslim and Christian world, confronted with turbulent and sometimes haughty gusts of postindustrial society, Serbia, on boundary of centuries and millenniums confronted the pre historic, geopolitical, communicational and international challenges essential for the survival of the state itself, and also for peace and stability on Balkan and European area. For political processes and movements researchers it means great number of dilemmas based on transformation of public power and hipper directed vision of technical progress in which intercultural communication and exchange of information get more

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prominent position, specially in multi ethnical and multi confessional communities which become important pendulum in political deciding.

Serbia, having about eight million inhabitants and about 30 ethnic groups, which make almost one fifth of all inhabitants², built, for very long time, the atmosphere of peaceful, multi ethnical and multicultural coexistence. However, brutal civil and religious conflicts waged in neighborhood, and also on some parts of its territory, left long term consequences, instability and scars, opening the catalogues of minority rights, starting from keeping of ethnic identity, right to be represented in representative bodies and other bodies, religious belonging, up to the right to use the language, to express and to receive the information in mother tongue. Territory ethnic homogeneity had to be accomplished within legal state which meant radical break up with declarative norms and truthful orientation towards the development of civil community. The problem was in the fact that the state was under catastrophic international sanctions which destroyed the economy body and were suitable for extreme inflation as well as for different nationalisms leading to degradation of other ethnic groups rights. Closing in own ethnic pen inflamed hidden tribe passion which, urged by media flame, composed the torch that essentially slowed down the spreading of democratic processes and including in European integration flow. The consequences of a half a century long one party dictatorship reflected in tacit understanding that media are assistants to the government, so in politically changed circumstances matured slowly the idea of necessity of the need for polyphony information distribution.

Serbian people nationalistic interests were in diametrically different strategy from that carried out by ruling elite during 90's. Instead of accusing others xenophobic suspicions, repression on political opponents and stubborn insisting on romantic myths about justice and truth that will, sooner or later win, it was necessary to understand (by the strategy of wisdom and tolerance) to make a route for the new way for multicultural society. The existing instruments of political will realization of national elite, dominant media by distribution of selective, uniform and by propaganda intonated information, were abused in creating obedient psychology, which made it suitable spreading of further ethnic intolerance. Violent civil war, which severely threw on territory of once brotherly people, is the example of how, by directed and skillfully controlled political-media hunt, ethnic-religious conflict can be provoked, with catastrophic and unforeseeable consequences.

The famous American futurist, Alvin Tofler was among the first who suggested that the future is going towards three part system of power: agricultural economy on the bottom (in old fashioned and undeveloped societies) the chimney economy in the middle (in ex post communist and socialist states not ready to adjust with the changes in neighborhood) and *"economies based on knowledge, or economies of the Third wave which, at least for same time, are on the top of global pyramid of power"* (Tofler 1998: 93). New elite are made of people unburdened of mythological prejudices, nationalistic stereotypes, racial, religious or ideological difference, frustrating ambitions or any form of paternalism toward minorities in surrounding. The process of building such multiethnic, multi confessional and open (civil society) is complex, long and hard, filled with paradoxes, and very often with absence of permanent dialogue with opponents. Balanced and correct research-analytic journalism of mass media will bring closer the vision of new system with multidimensional picture, word, sound and voice suitable for differences which, in such communities obviously exist.

New order is made of different social groups, and we differentiate: 1) body; 2) character; and 3) group of tribunal stigmas (race, nationality, religious belonging). For multiethnic structure of Serbia and its approaching to democratic standards, the study of communicational relationship, within third group is specially important. *"While watching each other, in the pupils of our eyes two, different worlds are reflected. It is possible, by standing in a suitable position, to reduce to minimum that difference in views, but it must be merged in one to become one man in order to eliminate that difference"* (Bahtin 1991: 23). It is about of the building of collective identity and inter lingual communication which, via mass media will make it possible the discourse of public speech which will not mean unanimity, but autonomy of all citizens and making of the invisible public contract on mutual elite of majority and minority with equal obligations and rights, of each. Jan Jak Ruseau, in his famous sentence *"The most powerful is never strong enough to always be the master, unless he turns his power in right and obedience in obligation"* (Ruseau 1949: 11), understood the necessity of mutual respect because the roles of majority and minority may change by the time.

² According to official evidence in 2011., total number of inhabitants, without Kosovo and Metohia is 7. 186.862 – members of national minorities are 1. 198.769.

The fear of multilingual communication in public media is the relapse of sad, romantic past, based on poverty, social differences, ideological one mindedness, the terror of majority over minority, loss of faith and utopia understanding of domination ones over others. When Albanian minority on Kosovo and Metohija, at the beginning of 90's during the previous century, left the mixed Serbian Turkish editorial offices and withdrew in illegality, few people understood that self isolation will further lead to social crises and instability. The lack of inter-ethnic communication extinguishes the flames of democratic processes, so the mistake of ruling oligarchies is to be corrected by spreading of civil community conscience which will function on economical principles in which everyone recognizes his interest. Bozidar Slapsek, talking about that period says: *“By destruction of “brotherhood and unity” ideology preached by old regime, changes in collective identities were inevitable. History was understood as collective power which defines the root of nation, arouse constitutive myths of ethnic communities and intensifies national identities”* (Slapsek 1993: 16). Insisting on genetic or religious differences creates territorial-political dimension of living of societal entirety within state, whether on border lines, in lend parts or is spread over the of the whole territory. Such political-social differences create terror, authoritarianism, totalitarianism, dogmatism and similar forms of dictatorship which resist thanks to permanent paradigm of mutual “endangerment”. Such a philosophy is specially expressed in the states of “socialist welfare” where bureaucratic centralism decided on behalf of “human engagement” of brotherly nations and nationalities. The intellectual potential was expressed only in the function of ideological engagement, while each different opinion and public speech was anathematized in advance, declared as “hostile”, “anti state”, “distractive” “treasonable” and alike. Alienated political bureaucracy is based on negative selection of obedient personnel and it almost did not hide suspicion and non adjustment to structural differences with minority opinion, naturally, looking for support from the nation majority. The vacuum in multi cultural, bilingual and multi confessional communication was greater, but by via skillful propaganda rhetoric, the seed of evil was pushed underground, while it did not break out on surface.

Democratic changes in Serbia marked the important step toward orientation to getting in the large family of European community, opening the door of changes of the effective legal standards. carrying out the European principles defined by Article 9 of the Convention on Equality and Protection of National Minorities of Council of Europe, Article 11 of European Declaration on Regional and Minority Languages issued 1995 and Frame Convention on Minority Protection of Council of Europe issued 1998, new government normatively prepared quality foundation for creating general-social, media regulations suitable for democratic surrounding. In accordance to this it is of special importance the “Declaration on Human and Minority Rights and Citizen Freedom”, march 2003, which was complimented by OEBS and Council of Europe. It is practically the continuation of “International Pact on Citizen and Political Rights of United Nations” which sais in Article 19, clause two: *“each person has the right on freedom to express himself regardless of the border, which means the freedom of finding, accepting and spreading information and ideas of all kinds in speech, writing, press or art or in any other way as he chooses.”* In hereinabove Declaration, Article 26 paints out “each person has right on freedom of thought, conscious, belief or religion” in private life, but as it is well known that only word a letter or a picture have influence on public opinion, transferred by mass media, Article 30 in detail explains the rights that come from them. It is important to know that *“everyone may, without approval found newspapers and other means of public information. Television and radio stations are founded in accordance to legislation of member countries”*, as well as that there are *“no censorship”*. Obviously, it is not the redesigning of previous laws, but reformed group of regulations by which the Serbian community is being adjusted to interests of European family, precisely harmonizing and improving basic principles of minority politics protection. This is explicit in Art 52 which, defining right to preserve particulars in paragraph one (right to express, preserve, cherish, develop and publically express national and ethnic, cultural and religious literacy); Article 3 (freedom to use his own language and writing) Article 11 (complete and objective informing in his language, including right to express, receive, send and exchange information and idea) and Article 12 (based on own means of information) builds mutual tolerance and dialogue with surrounding cultures.

It can be stated that, in Vojvodina moved the furthest in minority languages media development, where each large national and ethnic community had its own publisher (:Forum” in Hungarian, “Libertatea” in Romanian, “Kultura” – “Culture” in Slovak, “Rusko slovo” – “Ruthenian Letter” in Ruthenian and so on). Bulgarian community had newspapers “Bratstvo” – “Brotherhood”, Bosnians in Sandzak published “Has” and alike, while real revolution was in the ether of Serbia. By the end of the last century over 150 radio –

television stations were founded which broadcasted their programs in minority languages, but few of them fulfilled the professional standards³. The most numerous are in Gypsy language (about 30) of which only three prepare their own informative program. The rest broadcast celebrations and similar commercial program without important social power and influence. Press, radio and TV could be read, heard and watched in Hungarian, Ruthenian, Gypsy, Albanian, Bulgarian, Vlah, German, Slovak, Romanian and Ukrainian, including Croatian, Bosnian and majority Serbian that gives the variety of 13, in total, languages which is pursuant of democratic standards.

One should be naive or altruist in order to conclude that normative regulations will solve all the problems in real life. One Declaration, even a pack of Law projects that followed in the mean time (Law on Radio-diffusion, Law on Information, Law on Telecommunication, Law on information availability and alike) can not remove the decades of authoritarian governing when minorities were used only as a decor in demonstrating “ brotherhood and equality”.

The problem has never been in quantity of media (for example: in Vojvodina Radio television Novi Sad broadcasts program in several languages: Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovak, Ukrainian, gypsy and Serbian; 22 municipal local stations created program in minority languages, even 150 papers and publications were pressed) but in communicational understanding without which there is no key of inter cultural understanding. To paraphrase Vitgenstaj: what it can not be talked about (we do not understand the content of symbols) is not worth discussing!

In multinational surroundings information should not be confronted, but met together, imbue and enrich. Post modernist would, probably point to existence of virtual community where ethnic belonging, social status, political orientation, religiousness or other determinants are unimportant, because of abolition of national boundaries, sovereignty and regulatory limitations communicate in universal language of common communication (mostly often in English). Such theories point out organizing order of absolute freedom of citizens, who by choice of participation in electronic commune change interpersonal communication into public, which slowly becomes collective (global). Problem is that individual may, for sometime be in virtual game but by pressing the button that turns us off from multi medial sphere, again is confronted with reality, occurrences and processes of multi ethnic community he lives in. *“Anyway, it is shown that already today active participants of virtual communities not rarely isolate from the problems of real community they belong to”*. (Willson 1997: 159)

New media (computer information highways, lasers and fiber optical nets, music CDs, compact disque players, miniature video cameras, digital faxes, mobile telephone and lap top computers) bring in fundamental changes, progress and distribute messages. The lower the price of technique is the reason for more dynamic and faster life, without illusions: digital waves destroy, but also rise the obstacles between inter ethnic groups! The alienation danger of communicational process is hidden in its linguistic limitations, because in universe will come up the separation or selection of messages, depending on discourse or diffusion channel. Numerous social groups do not have economic potential which will obtain their presence in main stream media, by which they agree to margins within boundaries of wider community. The practice showed that the radio as mass media has specially pointed power in the sphere of multi lingual communication⁴, because broad spectrum of contents (starting from informative, entertaining, educational, art, scientific, up to sport and musical) stirs the inter cultural communication.

Right on information to be presented in mother tongue does not mean that it can be “ put into storage” of the mind of the member of other ethnic group, codified in the degree of matching which obtains understanding of modern audience. Former Yugoslav peoples, for very long time nourished formally the right to communicate in minority languages, but programs themselves, because of hermetic closing in and misunderstanding of other ethnic groups were more like flower arrangement of democracy than the base of the dialogue. They spoke, but they did not hear each other, simulating the understanding. The picture of political events was one

³ Only one fourth of these stations were municipal. The rest are private media, except for few founded by non government sector.

⁴ Linguistic audio script preserve phonetic picture of the mother tongue which is in connection to majority culture always endangered and submitted to assimilations. written word is not enough, and television picture overpowers the strength of speech part of the message, so that radio is the most functional media for protection of minority language, says Dubravka Valic-Nedeljkovic (Valic-Nedeljkovic 2003: 1) metaphorically understanding the mass media as bridged in multi lingual communities.

sided, rhetorically and historically recognizable, which, as a feedback had readiness of audience to have negative cultures and religions. If ethnic intolerance is permanently urged, as reaction we may expect destruction, escalation of crises and request for new rearrangement of the political power. Comparatively analyzing the situation of minority people and groups in western Europe, Sinisa Tatalovic concluded how first requests by which different instruments for solving of existence questions are looked for, and accomplishing them go into requests for getting from multinational community. Often inter-wine and complex relations of majority and minority, after the realization of international standards, misuse of political attitudes may be turned into non principal ways “*from separation of minority nation into separate state or merging into home countries, up to political tolerance and trust*” (Tatalovic 1997: 150).

Freedom to organize on minority bases fulfils different political, cultural, social and other interests, comprising the right of self governing of minorities which include regional autonomy (examples of Serbia, Switzerland, Belgium, Italy, Spain, France, Finland, Russia, Hungary,, Romania and others). However it is to point out that “*international law does not ask from states to give to minorities (even not on the part of the territory where they are majority, even important majority) on its territory some kind of special self-governing (autonomy)*” (Krivokapic 2006: 181). Variety of documents confirming this thesis (The Declaration of United Nations on Rights of the Members of National, Ethnic, Religious and Language Minorities. Declaration of United Nations on principles of International Law of Friendly Relations and Countries Cooperation (1970), additional program of Convention for protection of human rights and fundamental freedom which refers to persons belonging to national minorities (additional part of the Protocol of Council of Europe No. 1201 (1993), International pact on civil and political rights (1996) and so on) and point on potential that wrongly interpreted freedom may lead minorities towards secession, merging into mother country or creating an independent country, which is Pandora’s box without the end. Anyway, on consequences that might be produced by minorities who go into self orientation, Butros Gali, former secretary of United nations, point out in his well known Agenda for Peace (1992): “*If each ethnic, religious or language group would ask for citizenship, there never would be the end of separation, reaching peace, safety and economic welfare would be hard to realize (1992, paragraph 17)*” Hence, the single meaning of communication flows is condition sine non of global order.

“We wish to fight for our right ourselves, for too long others spoke on our behalf”, was published in Freedom’s Journal in 1827, the first media of American negroes published by John Rasvorm. Although long time has passed since then, it can be concluded that the aim of minority groups in media is in the need to speak and communicate for themselves, not others to do that. In order for system to harmoniously function it is necessary to exist harmony between all parts, so that lack of contact, misunderstanding and atmosphere of mutual mistrust do not have perspective of multiculturalism.⁵ The possibility to be informed in the mother tongue, leads us along never ending one way street, to hermetic closing up of ideas, attitudes, beliefs, values for members of other members of community. The freedom to use language and to express oneself does not mean that other ethnic groups will participate equally. The approach to channels of public communication has to be available to all ethnic groups, because this is the only way for forming modern democratic public, but in difference from previous times relations between social groups must lead to gathering of language communities, whether around the language of majority or minority! It is essential that they understand each other, mutually participate, to symbolically connect to, homogenize in interaction which makes democratic public. It means that texts, because of language boundaries have to be translated, titled to be available in any other way to other cultures that habitat on common territory, without national excluding, fear or worry that this will lead to majority paternalism.

Otherwise, nations and minorities will live next to each other, but not with each other, which is a tragic loss of time at the moment when Europe and the world is being united in the planetary village. Language similarities must be used for bringing together cultures and mutual including into international market. In certified community, people are arranged differently in status than in multinational communities where the structural division may be at ethnic level, religious, ideological and other kind of belonging.

The target of modern communication is to change post communist habits by composing new media relations and public in the way to have, firstly multilingual or bilingual communication as essentially different

⁵ Turnover of one traditional public area-mono culture, political, national, where private and public sphere clearly separated- in multicultural space is not possible by simple mechanical increasing of his coefficient of equality sees Andrea Semprini (Semprini 2004: 119).

model in relation to all previous ones. In our opinion, this is the way that inhabitants of multiethnic surroundings should take in order to communicate between themselves, for the sake of avoiding the favoritism of discourse of majority, the languages of other should be learned. The future is not in the *conflict of cultures*, as Huntington writes, but in their meeting together, imbuing, enriching. For example, in Kanjiza and Backi Petrovac, the same program is broadcasted by two announcers: one speaks in Hungarian, the other in Serbian language, but they do not interpreter each other but they *equally* add to each other in thoughts and information, creating the atmosphere of understanding and collective interest. Something similar is performed on “Multiradio” in Novi Sad where the program is performed in several languages at the same time (Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Gypsy and Slovakian) without translations. As Enike Halaz, the editor in chief of the media, points out, it is specially important “*for minority groups not to talk only about themselves, and not only in their language, because this will return to old times*”, but fast exchange of short speech forms not longer than 90 seconds (because the attention weakens with those who do not understand) and music, keeps attention of numerous auditorium.

The area of public communication is free only if the independence of editorial policy and media literacy of professional communicators exist, and also those recipients who use it. Minority groups in multinational surroundings have right to present their interest, ideas, attitudes, opinions not questioning the same rights and freedoms of others ethnic communities. The dominant idiom has to be turned towards the dialogue and tolerance, creating of special mechanisms which will, by economic measures, impose new communication matrix. The domination of one language form means potential for conflict or controlling, which as history proves, leads to increasing extremism and limited socio-political influence.

Language identity is dynamic phenomenon because by mutual communication of community members acquire new knowledge, information and announcement. Pretty words do not last long and can not bring back the destroyed pride, violently killed forefathers, made worthless culture or humiliated religion! In geographical linguistics and dialectology, are specially examined local languages (or speeches) and dialects as well as semantic differences that tend to mother land. That is why media has to ruin the dogma that state, nation or language consider as pillars of independence of creation social structure, favor aspect of rights and obligations of equal citizens who equally use mother tongue in public community.

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