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## The Press, Democracy and History: Journalism and Democracy in Transitional Societies

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# **The Press, Democracy and History:**

## **Journalism and Democracy in Transitional Societies**

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Dublin Institute of Technology

**A thesis presented in fulfillment of  
the requirement of the award of PhD.  
(Doctor of Philosophy) by prior  
publication**

**Dublin Institute of Technology**

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**School of Media**

**Supervisor: Dr Brian O'Neill**

**December 2013**

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## Acknowledgements

Firstly, I wish to acknowledge and thank my supervisor, Dr Brian O'Neill, who was not alone a supervisor but also a travelling colleague on journeys to the Balkans, Central Asia and more recently, Africa. This dissertation was a bit of an unknown journey for both of us, I think.

I also wish to thank the President of DIT, Prof Brian Norton, for his encouragement.

Travelling first to the Eastern Europe and the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia and more recently, Africa, was such a rewarding and pleasurable experience thanks in part to the journalists, media academics and latterly the UNICEF personnel. I have fond memories of debates and arguments in restaurants and bars right across what used to be called the Eastern Bloc and beyond.

I must also thank Dr Piaras Mac Éinrí, of University College, Cork. Dr Mac Éinrí, received his PhD from London Metropolitan University London by prior publication and he was most generous in advising me on how to present the material and what might be contained in the overarching essay. He was also generous enough to send me a copy of his own dissertation. I would also like to thank the two external examiners, Professor Tadhg Foley of NUI, Galway and Professor Stjepan Malovic, of the University of Dubrovnik, Croatia.

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Michael Foley

Dublin

Dec 2013

## Introduction

A PhD dissertation by prior publications is still unusual enough to leave the candidate with a number of decisions to take, where the regulations governing such an undertaking are silent. The area of format and how the material should be presented is one such area.

In preparing this dissertation I decided to adopt the style of the dissertation submitted by Dr Piaras Mac Éinrí to London Metropolitan University for a PhD by prior output. Dr Mac Éinrí presented his work as it appeared in journals, each with different layout, typeface and design, in accordance with the regulations of London Metropolitan University. As the DIT regulations do not specify how the work should be presented the articles and book chapters being considered have been downloaded from the DIT Arrow repository of research, which does give a uniformity of style, as well as all the information about the original publication. It is in that format they appear in this dissertation.

In line with Dr Mac Éinrí this introduction is followed by the overarching essay and that by the articles being considered. Obviously my dissertation differs, Dr Mac Éinrí is a geographer, and I have included some work of journalism. That work appears as printouts from electronic versions rather than original cuttings. As the electronic sources differ, the look of the pieces also differs. I wanted, as far as possible the original look to be part of this dissertation, especially for the articles from *Index on Censorship* as they include some photographs taken by me to illustrate the articles.

As the article and book chapters have their original pagination, it was not possible to include a contents with page numbers.

Michael Foley

December 2013

Note on electronic version. This electronic version of the PhD dissertation, *Journalism, Democracy and History: Linking Europe, East and West*, has links to the articles considered for the award as they appear in the DIT repository, Arrow, and can be assessed via the web link. The same applies to the one appendix item.

## **Journalism, Democracy and History: Linking Europe, East and West**

### **Overarching Essay**

In 1989 the Berlin Wall came down signalling the beginning of the end of the post World-War-Two settlement that had divided Europe and created the Cold War. The communist world crumbled over a few years, but at a cost. There was a bitter war in the Balkans, shorter, but equally bitter conflicts in the Caucasus as well as in Central Asia. The Soviet Union fell apart leaving in its place new states varying in size from huge countries like Ukraine to the tiny states of the Baltic coast and Kyrgyzstan in far Central Asia. There was also enormous poverty as unemployment soared and incomes collapsed.

It was expected that the region – a word often used by those working anywhere between Poland and Kazakhstan – would quickly embrace democracy and be market led. Aid poured in to facilitate that. Some countries in Eastern and Central Europe either fully or partially developed democratic institutions, and the market, especially in those countries seeking EU membership. Nevertheless, despite efforts by western donors, not all countries took equally to such developments. Some, like Belarus or Turkmenistan, developed authoritarian regimes, far worse than anything that had gone before. Moreover, in many countries there developed nostalgia for the former Soviet regime, as poverty increased and pensions lost value.

Of considerable concern was the state of the press, radio and television and how the media was to be transformed from one that served the state and the Communist Party to one that would operate as one of the pillars of democracy. This concern led to programmes designed to develop the media and professionalise journalism. This writer was involved in a number of these programmes.



My introduction to the countries of the former communist regimes was through media development, training and education: I taught ethics to young journalists in Croatia, worked with journalists in Macedonia on establishing a code of ethics, worked with journalists in central Russia on journalism and journalists' rights, and in Belarus on basic reporting. Later, I was involved on journalism education in Bulgaria, Ukraine and Azerbaijan and, more recently, with issues around children's rights and journalism practice with UNICEF in Turkey, the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

I have chosen seven articles and a number of pieces of journalism for this submission. The work represents a number of years work in media development and also attempts to put the issues in some historical context. For reasons of consistency I have not included reports and submissions made in relation to individual projects in Eastern Europe, even though at least one, the final report for a project at the University of Sophia in Bulgaria, which I was the author, was central to developing ideas that appear in my article in, *Ethical Space*, 'Promoting Values- as West meets East' (Foley, 2006). The syllabus document, *Children's Rights and Journalism Practice: A Rights Based Perspective*, has been included in the appendices, as it is the context for the article, 'Journalism Education and Children's Rights: New Approaches to Media Development in CEE/CIS Countries': (Foley *et al*, 2012).

The wider context for all the articles submitted has been the role of the press in democracies and development of democracy. How journalists relate to the wider society is important, which is the reason for the inclusion of 'Absolutism and the Confidentiality Debate: Confidentiality and Journalists Sources': (Foley, 2004).

The contributions in the second section, on press history, relates to how journalism and society developed and the role of the media in those changes. In the first instance it was by reading Irish 19<sup>th</sup>-century history, when the country developed what might be described as a democratic culture and the role of the press in that development, when the press moved from a political to a commercial one, that some tentative comparisons with the former communist world were made. The Irish press during this period, does appear to mirror what was happening in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century in parts of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Europe.

Secondly, the discovery of Bouchier and of O'Donovan's work, discussed in 'The Reporting of Edmond O'Donovan: Literary Journalism and the Great Game' in *Global Literary Journalism: Exploring the Journalistic Imagination* (2012), was an opportunity to look at issues relating to the press and identity, exploring the Balkans in the case of Bouchier and of the Caucasus and Central Asia, in the case of O'Donovan.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

Part of the originality of my contribution to research and knowledge was to evolve a critique of media development as well as a wider consideration of issues concerning media and democracy and to contextualise it historically. This critique addressed the failure of the training model of media aid and development, as well as its ideological base. This informed the way a number of later projects were the designed, especially those at university media faculties, in Bulgaria, Ukraine and Azerbaijan as well as informing the Child Rights Syllabus, (see appendix A). The Child Rights syllabus is an example of a practical application developing from a theoretical critique.

Some wider concerns relating to democracy were addressed by examining two important historical figures, Bourchier and O'Donovan, undeservedly previously ignored. Relatedly, research that asks why Ireland was able to achieve a relatively free press within its new democratic system after 1922, and the conditions that allowed that to take place – in contrast to the countries of Eastern Europe and beyond – is presented. In turn, this research was used to address pedagogic issues concerning journalistic professionalism.

This submission also includes a number of pieces of journalism that address some of the same themes, but with an immediacy and engagement as demanded by journalism itself. This demonstrates the inherent capacity to address important issues through a variety of media, addressing different audiences, or even the same audiences differently.

### **Media Development and its Context**

It is difficult to quantify, or even trace, the amount of money that went to media development since 1989. Some was allocated under broad democracy-building programmes, where media was but a small element. In other instances funds were allocated for education programmes, but might include journalism education within a university context or election education, with a media component. However, we do know that between 1985 and 2001, the United States government and US non-government agencies spent \$600 million in media assistance, the bulk going to former communist countries. In 2004, the US government donated \$40 million, with about \$25 million going to the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and, through it, to two independent agencies, Internews and the International Research and Exchange Board (IREX/Promedia). The balance went to media development through

the State Department (LaMay, 2007: xiii).

The philanthropist and investor, George Soros, donated about \$20 million annually, mainly through his Open Society Institutes. A number of individual governments also aided media development, as did the United Nations and its agencies. According to *Media Missionaries*, a report by Ellen Hume for the US Knight Foundation in 2002, the non-US assistance was also considerable. 'The European Union has probably donated as much as the US government in money, training, equipment and legal advice' (Hume, 2002: 19). Hume cites many other agencies and governments who also funded media assistance. In total, LaMay suggests that there are hundreds of US and European non-governmental organisations funding media assistance (LaMay, 2002: xiii).

Hume's *Media Missionaries* (2002), (and the title of her report is without irony) writes of hundreds of Americans rushing to Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics to spread the gospel of democracy: 'Among them were some of America's most altruistic journalists who hoped to midwife a newly independent press.' But even Hume's upbeat report is forced to concede: 'In much of the former USSR, for example, millions of dollars in aid have not produced a viable independent media' (Hume, 2002: 9). She could just as easily have included a number of countries outside the former USSR and even one or two countries that qualified for EU membership.

But it was not only American journalists who went to the former communist countries. European ones did also, including this writer. For journalists, this was an amazing opportunity to work with colleagues in countries that had been closed to all but a few journalists for decades, and to teach that which most of us did instinctively, journalism.

This section of the dissertation will concentrate on published articles and book chapters based on my interest in Eastern and South Eastern Europe and the former Communist world that goes back to the mid 1990s when I was asked by the editor of the journal, *Index on Censorship*, to deliver a paper to a conference in Budapest. Due to contacts made at that conference, I became an occasional trainer with the US agency, IREX Pro Media. My first assignment was to give a series of training seminars to young journalists in Belarus. I wrote an article for *The Irish Times* on Belarus, and later developed that into an article for *Index On Censorship* on Minsk, Moscow and Kiev. Arising from this contribution, I became a consultant for the International Federation of Journalists, and extensively for the BBC's media charity, the World Service Trust, later re-named BBC Media Action.

While both the academic work and journalism that has been chosen for this dissertation relates directly to the former communist world, working in that part of the world also influenced my thinking in areas such as media ethics and media regulation. As well as working with the journalist's union in Macedonia on a code of conduct, a major part of a project in Bulgaria, which dealt with media education, had a major component on establishing a media council and code of ethics, on which I advised. Other projects included developing modules for universities in Ukraine and Azerbaijan in media ethics.

### **Coherence of Publications**

Obviously 30-years of journalism and research was not planned as a whole. The journalism was written because journalism training in Eastern Europe offered an opportunity to comment on a region that was changing fast, through war, civil unrest and political change. These societies – where corruption and crime threatened

stability and the nascent democracy – were relatively unknown, having been cut off in the first place by the Iron Curtin and then, after 1990, because of war or unrest. The growth of independent journalism in these countries was, therefore, all the more important. Given my own presence and interest in the region, I was able to observe at first hand, over an extended period of time, the health, or lack of it, of the media.

In academic terms, my work is concerned with issues of democracy and the media, some historical and some contemporary. While each piece was written and researched independent of each other, some common trends do emerge, notably the link between journalism and democracy. The opening up of the former communist world forced journalists and academics to confront the link again, to question its nature, to ask whose interests are served by it, and to interrogate assumptions about the role of the press in Western societies, in the light of developments in the post communist world. It is these common concerns and trends that I address here.

Unlike traditional academics, I come to this area from my former position as media correspondent of *The Irish Times*. The earliest pieces were written by a working journalist: descriptions of places not well known to Irish readers, accounts of exploring that which is different, or possibly even strangely familiar (like the McDonalds sign that could be seen from the KGB headquarters in Minsk), or laying open the corruption endemic in Kiev. If that was the first rough draft of history, the second, slightly less rough, included more academic reflections, presented at conferences or published in book form. For me, one led to another and that is something that is implied by the joint presentation of journalism with scholarly and academic publications.

To see a vast area – from Poland to Kyrgyzstan – go through fundamental change, sometimes, but not necessarily always, for the better, was a huge privilege and professionally rewarding. This process offers a chance to reflect on how I reported and responded professionally, journalistically and academically.

The three pieces of work cited below reflect an interest in the media's role in transitional democracies, and the international response to the role of media in the former communist countries.

**Michael Foley, 'Promoting Values - as West meets East', *Ethical Space: The International Journal of Communication Ethics*, Vol. 3, Nos 2/3, 2006**

**<http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschmedart/40/>**

The article, 'Promoting Values – as West meets East', appeared in the journal, *Ethical Space*<sup>1</sup>, following my involvement in a project in Bulgaria, at Sofia University's Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communications between 2004 and the end of 2006. It represents a reflection on that project and other work in Eastern Europe until then. It proposes a different model to the traditional training one then common in media development in transitional democracies with an emphasis on media findings its own voice rather than imposing a western model.

The traditional training model, and how it was applied, assumed the countries concerned constituted one undifferentiated region, and it assumed countries from the Baltic to the Balkans had much in common. Americans and West Europeans during the Cold War period tended to see the nations of communist-dominated, but non-Soviet Europe – Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Eastern Germany, Romania.

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<sup>1</sup> The article was developed from a conference paper delivered at the Second International Scientific

Bulgaria, Albania and Yugoslavia – as a ‘bloc’, which eventually became known as Eastern Europe. But as Applebaum reminds us: ‘This is a political and historic term, not a geographic one... before 1945, they had never previously been unified in any way, and they have startlingly little in common now, aside from a common historical memory of communism’ (Applebaum, 2013: xxvii).

Contrastingly, Hallini and Mancini (2004) write of differing journalism traditions, dividing Europe horizontally, which would put much of the Balkans in the same journalistic band as Italy and Spain, while the Baltic countries, and Poland, would probably lie more easily with Germany, or even the partisan and intellectual traditions of the European continent rather than the traditions of objectivity espoused by journalists in the UK and the USA. Whatever the truth anymore of an ‘Anglo Saxon’ tradition of impartial and objective journalism, with its impersonal and lean writing style, that is what was taught in the former communist countries. It was as if one tradition, a sort of idealized hybrid, according to Colin Sparks (Sparks, 1998), lying somewhere between the *New York Times* and the BBC, was *the* definitive form of journalism. Countries, such as Bulgaria, were much criticized for developing a tabloid press and that criticism often came from trainers who came from media cultures that included the partisan Fox News or the *Sun* newspaper.

‘Promoting Values – as West meets East’ provided a critique of the training model and examined the reasons for its failure. Those reasons included a failure to understand different cultures, not knowing local languages, and assuming that the development of media system that resembled the west would encourage both modernity and the market. Some of that critique is carried over to the article that appeared in *Irish Studies in International Affairs* (2012)



‘Promoting Values – as West meets East’ posited a different approach – liaison with the very institutions whose function is to interpret culture, and work with universities in a spirit of cooperation rather than in ways that could be seen as colonialist or condescending. The prevailing practice within media development suggested there was such a thing as a western media model, that was definable and worthy of being imported. It was also being proposed that the western media model was synonymous with the liberal economic market.

It was also argued that it was counterproductive to ignore the older universities with their communist legacy, who were, after all, the institutions that had educated journalists for years, and continued to do so. The new universities that had been developed since 1989 often offered a western-based curriculum that had more in common with the American mid-west than Eastern Europe. In ‘Promoting Values – as West meets East,’ it is suggested that the different countries should be supported in finding their own journalistic voices.

Also included is an article, ‘Journalism Education and Children’s Rights: New Approaches to Media Development in CEE/CIS Countries’, published in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 23, 2012. This essay followed a presentation I gave at the annual, Royal Irish Academy, International Affairs conference in 2011. The article outlines the link between media and democracy and the place of media development within the context of the university. Significantly, it also explored areas concerning children’s rights, and so explored the teaching of rights within the context of journalism. This article explores not only the broad issues relating to media and democracy, but also specifically to issues relating to journalism practice and children’s rights. The textbook referred to in this article can be found in Appendix A.

## **Published work in the context of existing literature**

The context of the work in question is media development or assistance. The dearth of scholarly work on media development in the former communist countries of Eastern, South Eastern Europe and Central Asia continues to be remarkable. Only about a dozen books and reports exist on the subject of international media assistance, written by journalists, some scholars and development aid workers, according to Graig LaMay (*Exporting Press Freedom*, 2007: xvi). If one was to look at the five former Soviet Republics of Central Asia one finds even less, according to Freedman and Shafer

Media research since 1991 has largely ignored the five former Soviet Republics in Central Asia – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – primarily due to the region’s perceived remoteness and because it was off limits most Western scholars during the Soviet period. (Freedman and Shafer, 2011: 2)

It is not as if media assistance was a new idea. A link between development issues, democracy and press freedom was made by the Nobel prize winning economist, Amartya Sen, who argued: ‘A free press and an active political opposition constitutes the best early warning system a country threatened by famine could have’ (Sen, 1999: 181). Indeed, he insists on the importance of transparency and the role of an ‘enterprising news media’ especially when there are incentives – provided by a democratic system – for bringing out facts that may be embarrassing to the government. But the connection between a functioning free press and democracy goes back even further, to arguments espoused by John Milton in the 17th century, in

*Areopagitica*, his treatise on censorship.

As early as 1831 the French political thinker, Alexis de Tocqueville, noted in *Democracy in America* that the press

...makes political life circulate in all sections of this vast territory. Its eye, always open, constantly lays bare the secret springs of politics and forces public men to come in turn to appear before the court of opinion. (De Tocqueville, [1835] in Mansfield and Delba (2000): 179)

### **The Public Sphere**

The idea of a public sphere, where discussion and debate would take place, has always been an attractive one for journalists. It was, of course, formulated by the German philosopher, Jurgen Habermas, in his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962 [trans 1989] *passim*). The argument went that early democracy, from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, was encouraged by a vibrant press that stimulated debate and discussion of ideas, and that those debates took place in coffee houses and taverns, often themselves part of printing houses that printed the papers. This, Habermas argued, transformed Europe from a representational culture to an *Offentlichkeit*, or public sphere, or from a passive culture to one where citizens took an active role in society. In that transformation, of course, the media were central.

While Habermas is still viewed as an important thinker, his idea of the public sphere has been criticized for suggesting a golden age for the press. John Keane, in his classic, *Media and Democracy* (1991), more or less dismisses Habermas for harbouring 'a certain nostalgia for the heroic ideals of the early modern public sphere' (Keane, 1991: 35). Habermas' own view of the modern media is certainly not a rosy

one, and he has been critical of the modern mass media because it encouraged a passive culture. Despite his own critique of modern media culture, he is often seen as the intellectual justification for media development projects as though the work of such projects was designed to bring to the former communist countries a belated public sphere. In my work I have not dismissed Habermas, but at the same time it would be nonsense to transport an argument centred on 18<sup>th</sup>-century Western Europe to 21<sup>st</sup> century Eastern Europe. However, that public sphere might be interpreted as now being centred on universities and other public institutions interested in democratic development. What was also important was to ensure the recent history of Eastern Europe was not ignored as if it had never taken place.

**Foley, Michael (2004) Absolutism and the Confidentiality Debate:**

**Confidentiality and Journalists Sources, *Ethical Space: The International Journal of Communications Ethics*, Vol 1 Number 2**

**<http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschmedart/38/>**

This article deals with liberty of the press and source protection. The intellectual tradition of defending the liberty of the press and free speech is important to modern journalism, which sees itself as the heir to that tradition. The argument that journalism is central to democracy comes directly from Milton and Locke, through Jefferson, to the First Amendment of the American Constitution, and has been accepted by judicial courts on both sides of the Atlantic. The major libel case of *Sullivan V the New York Times* accepted the special position the media holds in society, as recounted by Anthony Lewis in, *Make No Law, The Sullivan Case and the First Amendment* (1992).

The European Court of Human Rights has ruled on the role of the journalist, that is, to

be a watchdog on behalf of the public, and whose role is central to the workings of democracy itself. In the landmark Goodwin case, the Court held:

... freedom of expression constitutes one of the essential foundations of a democratic society and ... the safeguards to be afforded to the press are of particular importance ... Protection of journalistic sources is one of the basic conditions for press freedom... Without such protection, sources may be deterred from assisting the press in informing the public on matters of public interest. As a result the vital public-watchdog role of the press may be undermined and the ability of the press to provide accurate and reliable information may be adversely affected. Having regard to the importance of the protection of journalistic sources for press freedom in a democratic society and the potentially chilling effect an order of source disclosure has on the exercise of that freedom, such a measure cannot be compatible with Article 10 of the Convention unless it is justified by an overriding requirement in the public interest. ( *Goodwin v UK* [Application no 17488/90](#), [1996] ECHR 16 (27 March 1996)

This ruling has been accepted by journalists as an endorsement of the absolutist view of source protection, which I address in *Absolutism and the Confidentiality Debate: Confidentiality and Journalists Sources*. This was published in, *Ethical Space* and was included in a published collection, *Communications Ethics Today* (2006) (Keeble, R, ed, (2006) Troubador Press, Leicester , UK). The commitment to the absolutist stance on source protection is probably the only real rule in journalism. The willingness to go to prison rather than divulge the name of a confidential sources is

something that gives journalism its ideology, a rule that sets journalism apart and emphasises its importance in society. The whistle blower can feel safe telling their story to a journalist.

It has to be said, however, that journalists tend to be unwilling to read the full Goodwin judgement, cited above, which states that protection of sources cannot be justified where there is an 'overriding requirement' in the public interest to reveal a sources' identity.

My own article, which was developed from an opinion piece in the *Journalist*, the newspaper of the National Union of Journalists, was attacked in the same newspaper, as it was obvious journalists were not ready to consider some of the issues raised. As the article points out philosophers, such as Onora O'Neill, have questioned the principle, suggesting the journalist might use source protection where there is no source at all. In so doing she gets to the heart of the modern dilemma for journalists: are they trusted, and even more fundamentally, who can call themselves a journalist in a world of instant self publishing via internet technology? The question of source protection has been raised in a new forum, the International Criminal Court and the special tribunals for former Yugoslavia. While this is not specifically dealt with in the article it is clear from the attitudes of some journalists who have appeared before the tribunals that there is a more flexible approach to source identification in these international tribunals than has existed in domestic courts.

Media academics and journalists in the former communist countries had often been educated in philosophical discourse to a far higher degree than their counterparts in the west, so, while debates concerning the protection of sources were sometimes difficult, they were rewarding. However, projects funded by many western agencies

offered rules that were to be followed, whether it be the inverted pyramid style of news writing of an unquestioned adherence to source protection. Any suggestion that we might move away from western journalism norms and explore other means of journalism were resisted by those delivering projects.

The main code of ethics cited by Eastern European journalists was that of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). Where journalists had developed their own codes, they were heavily influenced by the IFJ. Its code states: 'The journalist shall observe professional secrecy regarding the source of information obtained in confidence.' The article leaves no room for nuance. It is absolute. Most codes offer what might be called a public interest let out, but not source protection. My own thinking around this came from involvement in helping journalist bodies develop their own codes, in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria. While such an absolute rule provided something constant and satisfying, I questioned whether such inflexibility was sustainable given the complexity of the media and what was being reported. 'Absolutism and the Confidentiality Debate: Confidentiality and Journalists Sources', does not abandon the idea of journalists giving protection to anonymous sources and does suggest that it would be only in the most extreme cases that a promise of anonymity could be broken and only where the public interest was so overwhelming that the same of a source might be disclosed. The problem in the former communist world, however, is that as the media is generally not trusted and many journalists have little professional education, the fear would be that to hold to such an absolute position, to invoke a Kantian notion of duty, might lead to cynicism among the public as to the motive of the journalist, as Onora O'Neill (*op cit*) suggests.

Nick Davis argued in *Flat Earth News* that as he researched his book on the British

press he found ‘falsehood, distortion and propaganda running through the outlets of an industry which is supposed to be dedicated to the very opposite, *ie* to telling the truth’ (Davis, 2008; 2).

The world described by Davis is one where powerful public relations companies can dominate under-resourced journalism, especially true in the former communist world. The argument was made not that journalists can never offer anonymity but that the public needs to know that the use of an anonymous source is an exception, used in order to protect a source from harm or other damage and is not simply hiding the identity of a paid publicist.

**Michael Foley, Noirin Hayes and Brian O’Neill, ‘Journalism Education and Children’s Rights: New Approaches to Media Development, in *CEE/CIS Countries*’, *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 23, 1-12, 2012, Royal Irish Academy, DOI 10.3318/ISIA.2012.23.47**

**<http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschmedcon/25/>**

This article was written in collaboration with two DIT colleagues. In essence the article describes an application of what was argued in ‘Promoting Values – as West meets East’. DIT was approached by the UN children’s agency, UNICEF, through the BBC World Service Trust, to design a syllabus that would encompass issues surrounding children’s rights within the context of teaching journalism practice. That syllabus is contained in Appendix A. The syllabus was a radical and practice based outcome of both the development work I, and then DIT, had been involved with and of the critique that had developed from that work. The article brought together ideas about media development, democracy, and issues relating to training and education



within a human rights context.

The very idea of media development rests entirely on an acceptance that there is a link between media and democracy and that an independent media is the embodiment of freedom of speech. However, there is no one theory of democracy. The cultural historian, Jacques Barzun, who presciently asked, three years before the fall of the Berlin Wall, 'is democratic theory for export?' (Barzun, 1986) suggested that there was no theory, only a proposition that can be generally accepted. That proposition, he said, was simply: 'For a free mankind, it is best that the people should be sovereign, and this popular sovereignty implies political and social equality' (Barzun, 1986). Barzun suggested that there was no one agreed democratic theory that could be exported, no perfect model.

Jasper Strombeck, however, adds some certainty. He says there are four theoretical models of democracy (Stombeck, 2005): Procedural Democracy (free and fair elections); Competitive Elections; Participatory Democracy (citizen participation); and Deliberative Democracy (discussions among the public and their representatives). The first two are based on the election of representatives and the second two depend on more direct forms of citizen participation. All four depend on journalism though. In the first two, the journalist plays the classic role of watchdog, or the Fourth Estate. In the second two theories, the citizens have more room to speak for themselves, but the journalist still plays a key role, because 'democracy can never become more deliberative without the active participation of media and journalism' (Strombeck, 2005: 340).

Despite the certitude that surrounds the idea of a free press and its central role in democracy, a number of thinkers have questioned this in the modern context. John

Keane's, *Media and Democracy* (1991) suggests new forms of public service media in order to combat the media conglomerates, which, he maintains, were never envisaged by the earlier press freedom thinkers. Brian Winston (2005) suggests that public support for free expression is now in decline, while the philosopher, Onora O'Neill (2002), likewise questions some accepted truths concerning the media and journalistic practices and, like Keane, asks whether a free press was ever envisaged as something that could be held by a giant corporation. O'Neill in her 2002 BBC Reith Lecture series on public trust, on which her book was based, said:

Like Mill we may support freedom of discussion, think that it is fundamental to democracy, and so support freedom of the press to foster what in the USA is charmingly called wide-open, robust debate. But for that very reason we cannot support freedom for media conglomerates to orchestrate public 'discussion' in which some or many voices are unrepresented or caricatured, in which misinformation may be peddled uncorrected and in which reputations may be selectively shredded or magnified.. (O'Neill, O., 2002; 94-5)

However, as far as modern journalism studies goes, the most important work, in terms of its impact, is probably *Four Theories of the Press* by Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (1962). In it, the three writers outline their understanding of the links between the mass media and society. Written at the height of the Cold War, the four theories outlined were the authoritarian, libertarian, Soviet and social responsibility models. Nearly every article and book dealing with the philosophical basis of journalism, especially in the US, alludes to the *Four Theories*. Even though it is a book of its time, of the Cold War, and now dated, it is still often cited as one of the most influential books by scores of journalism scholars and graduates of journalism

schools.

*Four Theories* put forward a classic interpretation of the press and its role; that people are rational and able to discern between truth and falsehood and, therefore, can choose between a better or worse alternative. Man is capable of determining his own destiny, and given all the facts will make the right choice.

Rooted in this theory, which is the basis of the thinking behind the formulation of the First Amendment to the US Constitution<sup>2</sup>, that if man exercised reason, the majority, as a group, would make sound decisions, even if individual citizens might not.

They did not advocate a purely libertarian view, often articulated by some defenders of the First Amendment, but came down in favour of a social responsibility viewpoint. The authors warned:

The power and near monopoly position of the media impose on them an obligation to be socially responsible, to see that all sides are fairly presented and that the public has enough information to decide; and that if the media do not take on themselves such responsibility it may be necessary for some other agency of the public to enforce it. (Siebert et al 1962: 5 )

However, *The Four Theories*, while influential as a classic proponent of the liberal view of journalism, has its critics. Dennis McQuail says that Seibert *et al* did not include any theory that would encapsulate the developing world (McQuail *Mass Communications Theory: An Introduction* (1987), rather, he added two more theories:

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<sup>2</sup> The First Amendment to the US Constitution states: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

the development theory and the democratic-participation theory. Thus, even a critic such as McQuail adopted the Siebert model of the four theories, but just added more.

*Four Theories* was published 15-years after the report of the Commission on the Freedom and Accountability of the Press in 1947. The Commission, also called the Hutchins' Commission (after its chair, Robert Hutchins, Chancellor of the University of Chicago) made a number of recommendations, which included making the press note its obligations to society – be committed to accuracy, truth, objectivity and balance. The authors of *The Four Theories of the Press* were, like so many media academics at the time, influenced by the events of the Second World War and the role the media had played, in that the press had been used for propaganda purposes.

Resistance to Nazi occupation was often organised around clandestine newspapers, and at the end of the war, both the Americans and the Russians funded newspapers in their zones of occupation. The role of propaganda during the war and the need to aid the development of the media after it, led to fresh thinking about the role of the press. The German historian, Heinz-Dietrich Fischer in *Parteien und Presse in Deutschland Seit 1945* (Bremen, 1971) described how reorganization of the press was an important part of the German de-nazification programme and the encouragement of democratic principles and practices. One of the most influential books in convincing the UN and its agencies to embark on media development projects was Daniel Lerner's *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1958). Lerner spent much of World War Two analyzing the effectiveness of propaganda with the US Army psychological Warfare Division.

It was not necessarily a given that the Hutchin's Commission would be influential at all. Even the authors of *Four Theories of the Press*, who were favourable towards the

Commission's reports, agreed that some of its findings were 'unrealistic' (Siebert et al 1962: 103). Following the publication of its report, it was criticised for the way it went about its business – it excluded the media from many of its hearings – and could well have been forgotten but for *Four Theories*. According to Stephen L. Vaughn:

It was nearly two decades later when *Four Theories of the Press* became a landmark in journalism scholarship that the report came to be considered a directive for 'moral order' - a call for American journalists to help impose democratic ideals on the world. (Vaughn, *Encyclopedia of American Journalism*, 2007: 219)

*Four Theories of the Press*, through the Hutchin's Commission, was a link to the first media assistance and development, following World War Two, and was influential among a generation who attended journalism schools from the 1960s, or who had taught in journalism schools – the very generation who flocked into Eastern Europe after 1989. They had been brought up on *Four Theories*, with its categorisations of Soviet and authoritarian, on the one hand, and libertarian and social responsibility on the other. For journalists brought up during the Cold War, that was clearly how it was.

The notion of one side having won after the fall of communism was very strong and had a major influence on media development, similar to that at the end of the Second World War. In the post 1989 period, it was a case of the end of the socialist project and its replacement by something else, market-driven liberal democracy. For journalists and journalist academics, it was as if it was for that they had read *Four Theories of the Press*. But not all agreed. James Carey, one of the most respected journalism academics, said in 1991:

For the past year or more American journalists and intellectuals have been

travelling east in order to teach these newly liberated peoples the practical arts of writing a first amendment, managing a modern newspaper or television station, or, more elementary yet, writing and editing Western style journalism. We regularly assume these days that we have something to export to the peoples of Eastern Europe. We are less open to the thought that we might have something to learn from them, that they might teach us something about democracy and civic culture. (Carey in Stryker, Munson and Warren, 1997: 210)

### **The End of History**

The most outspoken claim was made by Francis Fukuyama, for whom 1989 marked the end of history itself. He did not mean there would be no more events or struggles, but that the course of human development was set to approximate US market-driven, capitalist democracy.

Fukuyama said that in past decades many could foresee a socialist future, but today most would have difficulty imagining a world radically different from 'our own', by which he meant American capitalist democracy:

We cannot envisage to ourselves a world that is essentially different from the present one, and at the same time better. Other, less reflective ages also thought of themselves as the best, but we arrive at this conclusion, exhausted, as it were, from the pursuit of alternatives which we felt had to be better than liberal democracy. (Fukuyama, 1992: 46)

If Fukuyama's phrase, 'the end of history', seemed to sum up the events of the collapse of communism, for the sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman, the events of 1989 and

beyond was the foremost event in marking the end of modernity itself. Bauman declared that 'it was under communism, not capitalist auspices that the audacious dream of modernity, freed from obstacles by the merciless and seemingly omnipotent state, was pushed to its radical limits, grand design, unlimited social engineering, huge and bulky technology, total transformation of nature' (Bauman, 1992: 179).

If Sparks sees in Bauman's work a call to produce a new, post-modern, account of the human condition, one that starts 'from the fact that there is no longer any possible alternative to the capitalist system, but recognizes that this is not the simple and unproblematic system of unalloyed benefits its unthinking adherents proclaim it to be' (Sparks, 1998: 7), it is clear from Bauman's later work and his public comments that if he was ever a total optimist, which was never quite the case, his own colleagues clearly see in the work of this former Marxist a far more complex analysis of the fall of communism than the quasi official work of Fukuyama would suggest.

His concern is how to save the ethical principles of socialism when communism is finished. He thought about all of this years before everyone else, and saw the collapse of communism as a great opportunity, but as the 1990s wore on he became increasingly depressed that these ethical issues were not being addressed and, instead, consumer values were more deeply entrenched than ever.' (Ian Varcoe quoted in Bunting, *The Guardian*, 5 April 2003)

For journalists, and especially American journalism academics, the collapse of the communist states of Europe and Central Asia was an important contribution to their own world-view. Many Marxist theorists had questioned the role of journalism and the certainty that surrounded journalism's view of itself, but the end of communism was not only a perceived victory for liberal capitalist democracy, but for the liberal

theory of the press also. This was the context of the sort of media development work I was involved in from the mid 1990s.

### **The Liberal Theory of the Press**

According to the liberal theory of the press, the press operates under a ‘free press’ model whereby anyone is free to publish a newspaper or magazine without having to be licensed by anyone in authority. Indeed, for Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, journalism owes its first loyalty to citizens and not any other authority and has as its primary purpose providing those citizens ‘with the information they need to be free and self-governing’ (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007:12).

The view of the press being essential to democracy is a compelling one and gives journalists a view of their own worth. The highly respected American journalist, Anthony Lewis, writing in 1997, said:

The theory of democracy is that the citizens are the ultimate sovereign. But in today’s world, individuals cannot personally observe events and reach decisions in a forum, as in ancient Athens. They necessarily depend on the press to be informed’. (Lewis, 1997: 62)

However, it has its critics, Sparks being one, and also Curran and Seaton, who in their work, *Power without Responsibility* (2003), suggest the liberal, or free market view of the press, stands or falls on the democracy of the free market and ‘press freedom is a property right exercised by publishers on behalf of society’ (2003: 287). The questioning of the classic view as expressed by Lewis is also interrogated, not alone by Curran and Seaton, but also by Keane (1991) and O’Neill (2002). Curran, moreover, in *Media and Power*, raises the issue of ownership of the media:



Traditionally, liberal theory holds that government is the sole object of press vigilance. This derives from a period when government was commonly thought to be the 'seat' of power. However, this traditional view fails to take account of the exercise of economic power by shareholders and managers. A revised conception is needed in which the media are conceived as being a check on *both* public and private authority' (Curran, J, 2002: 291)

The absolute link between democracy, as a political system, and journalism was made by James Carey:

Journalism is another name for democracy or, better, you cannot have journalism without democracy. The practices of journalism are not self-justifying; rather, they are justified in terms of the social consequences they engender, namely the constitution of a democratic social order. There were media in the old Soviet Union just as there was communication and even something resembling news business. There just wasn't any journalism because there was no democracy, which alone gives rise to the social practice of journalism. (Carey, 1996)

The German/Australian scholar Beate Josephi suggests Carey's view is a 'blinkered', not to say an arrogant view. 'In effect, in his statement journalism is claimed for an exclusive club of countries only – those who have achieved full democracy.' (Josephi, 2012: 2)

Josephi cites Hallin and Mancini's work, *Comparing Media Systems* (2004) as showing the 'untypicality' of the North Atlantic or liberal model, which is but one system among the western democratic countries, but was, of course, the model, or at

least an idealized version of it, that was suggested for the former communist countries.

As Cole and Harcup argue in *Newspaper Journalism*, scholars and observers, influenced by Marxism, hold that the media in general and journalists in particular play ‘an ideological role, irrespective of the intentions of the individual involved’ (2010: 171). Sparks argues that a truly free press is impossible in a free market. A Marxist critique suggests that, in Western capitalist societies, the media in effect helps to spread and reinforce a ruling class ideology. Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* suggest that:

The class, which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. (1965: 61)

Or, as Marx and Engels say more succinctly in the *Communist Manifesto*: ‘The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class’ (1848: 51).

Stuart Hall describes ideological power as the ‘power to signify events in a particular way, although ideology can also be a ‘site of struggle’ between competing definitions (Hall, 1982: 69-70). Seeing the media and the press in this ideological light then, for all its diversity, and with various exceptions, the routines and practices of journalists tend to privilege the powerful and foreclose discussion before it strays too far beyond the dominant ideology.

There are, of course, divisions and subtleties within Marxist theory. There are convincing arguments that suggest the emphasis on the ideological content of journalism downplays the agency of journalists and might fail to take into account the complex ways an audience might read media texts. A close reading of the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, would convince most to be cautious of applying a Marxist dialectic too mechanistically in analysing the role of the media.<sup>3</sup> Gramsci's theory of 'hegemony' suggests that the ruling class needs consent and to make alliances in the area of civil society to maintain its dominant position. Gramsci wrote about journalism as able to 'create and develop its readers' needs' and 'progressively enlarge' its readership (quoted in Forgacs, 1988: 383 ). Gramsci also argued for a broad press to reflect both public opinion and different levels of social and cultural development, rather than a single press reflecting the views of a centre (Forgacs, 1988: 380). Nick Stevenson sounds a cautionary note about the tendency of media theorists to overstate the incorporating power of ideology (Stevenson, 2002: 46), while Tony Harcup suggests that to say journalists have agency is 'not to deny that journalists operate in a world of constraints but to argue that structural forces do not totally determine individuals actions' (Harcup, 2004: 6).

For many 'media missionaries', though, 1989 was the triumph of the liberal theory of the press and the failure of those theories that questioned the role of the press and its relationship with democracy. It meant there was no theoretical questioning of why media development was taking place and what shape it should take. Any alternative critique could be dismissed as part of a failed system.

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<sup>3</sup> See general discussion of Gramsci in Showstack Sassoon (1982) and in Mouffe (ed) (1979), especially Chantel Mouffe's own essay, Hegemony and ideology in Gramsci. See Gramsci on journalism in *A Gramsci Reader*, Forgacs (ed) (1988)

## **Modernisation and Democracy**

Since at least the end of the Second World War it has been more or less assumed an independent and robust media would facilitate democracy. Media development not alone meant media was funded in the post war period as part of the denazification programme in Germany, but in France many papers that were too close to the German occupiers were closed and new papers established. The Voice of America and Radio Free Europe were early examples of media being used to encourage democracy, with little effect, it must be said.

Proponents of the liberal theory of the press and others not only assumed democracy would follow the development of an independent media, but that you could not have one without the other. However, the growth of new media and a move away from the modernization paradigm has called the traditional view of the relationship between media and democracy into question. Scholars (Bennett *et al*, 2007; Sparks, 2007; Morozov 2011) and advocacy organisations, such as Index On Censorship and *Reporters Sans Frontieres* (RSF) have pointed out that contrary to the liberal communications view the globalisation of communications – through technology, social media and ownership – has failed to spark a global democratic transition that was predicted at the end of the Cold War.

## **The Post-Communist World**

If there is a dearth of material concerning media development this has not been the case with political development in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe since the collapse of communism. Not surprisingly, there has been a vast literature surrounding the collapse of communism and especially the war in former Yugoslavia, much of it written by journalists who covered those events. In many instances,

historians and journalists have used the opportunity to reassess the Balkans and the relationships between the countries of the region. In a number of countries, especially Russia, Poland and the former GDR, the opening of archives has led to a critical reassessment of the Soviet period. However, while Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Russia, at least European Russia, have received considerable attention from journalists, political scientists and historians, the further east one travels, the less journalistic and scholarly work one will find. In fact, it would be fair to say, much of the assessment and analysis of the post-communist period has been undertaken by journalists. That would help explain why those countries that have received most attention were also those parts of the former communist world that received most media coverage.

Poland received most academic and journalistic attention. This was hardly surprising since it was one of the first countries in the region to change its regime. The war in former Yugoslavia led to a plethora of works that assessed the developments and how the war started and why. *The Death of Yugoslavia* (1996) by Laura Silber and Allan Little, which came out of a BBC documentary, was an early work. It was followed by a number of works by Misha Glenny, formerly the BBC's Eastern Europe Correspondent. Presumably with one eye on Frances Fukuyama, he published *The Rebirth of History*, optimistically subtitled *Eastern Europe in the Age of Democracy* (1991). That was followed by his *Fall of Yugoslavia* in 1992 and then his magisterial, *The Balkans, Nationalism War and the Great Powers 1804-1999*, (1999), which put the Balkans during the Cold War into a historical context. Later he wrote *McMafia: The Globalisation of Crime* (2008), which, while dealing with the growth of organized crime world wide, was, without doubt, influenced by the huge growth of crime in Eastern Europe, in the guise of the Russian, Serbian and Bulgarian Mafia. It

dealt with a major problem that was felt capable of undermining the fragile democracies of some of the countries and was also a major concern of journalists in Bulgaria. Glenny, and a number of writers on Eastern Europe, have become increasingly pessimistic, and one of the institutions they are most pessimistic about is the media. Many journalists, including Glenny, use the term ‘mafocracy’ to describe where many Balkan countries appear to be heading, and which the media seemed unable or unwilling to analyse or expose.

Robert Kaplan’s *Balkan Ghost: A Journey Through History* (1993) was a political commentary, history and travelogue. Kaplan’s work might at one level be considered a contribution to the long line of travel writing going back to Rebecca West’s 1941 classic, *Black Lamb and Gray Falcon*, and beyond, or even the journalist, John Reed, who wrote *Ten Days that Shook the World* (1922), but also published reportage from the Balkans (Reed, 1916). Edmond O’Donovan’s *The Merv Oasis, Travels and Adventures East of the Caspian During the Years 1879-80-81* (O’Donovan, 1882), which will be discussed in more detail later, was an interesting early work that sought to explain the Caucasus and Central Asia at a time when it was being drawn into the Russian Empire.

Kaplan’s work was influential and was reputed to have been a major influence on President Clinton and his policy towards the Balkans, which, of course, led to the NATO intervention and the bombing of Kosovo and Serbia. However, it did repeat many stereotypes concerning the Balkans, of a place populated by a people addicted to irrational violence, terrorism and genocide. It was the sort of work that spoke of ‘ancient passions’, the very views that most of writers on the Balkans and Eastern Europe were revising. Interestingly, it is the journalist, O’Donovan, writing over a

hundred years earlier who consciously tried to avoid such national stereotype that Kaplan feels free to use in place of analysis.

Mark Mazower's *The Balkans, A Short History* (2000), dealt with similar issues but as a historian. However, he suggested, rather than a people acting on ancient passions, it was the importation of a Western ideology – nationalism – that had led to the wars and the violence that seemed to define much of Balkan history throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Other works started a discourse on the Balkans itself. Maria Toderova in *Imagining the Balkans* (1997) explored the idea of the Balkans and how the Balkans was constructed as the Other. The Bulgarian philosopher, Tzvetan Toderov, in his work, *The Fragility of Goodness* (trans. 2001), explored questions concerning the Balkans and Bulgaria through a study in morality concerning the question as to why Bulgarian Jews survived the holocaust.

The journalist, Tim Judah, wrote a number of well-received histories of Serbia and Kosovo, while Mark Thompson, in his important work, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina* (1999), examined media manipulation in former Yugoslavia. He showed how the media was used to make war possible and suggested such actions were a clear sign war was coming. What Thompson showed was how dangerous it is when the press and journalists are used for propaganda. He goes so far as to suggest that it was the media that made the break up of Yugoslavia and war possible.

The other side of Thompson's sober account of a compliant media being used by the Milosevic regime, are those works that concentrate on individual media outlets. Tom Gjelten's *Sarajevo Daily: A City and its Newspaper under Siege* (1995) uses the story

of the newspaper, *Oslobodjenje*, as a metaphor for the resistance during the siege of Sarajevo. The newspaper and its reputation have been in decline since. Matthew Collin's work, *This is Serbia Calling* (2001) tells the story of the rock music station, B92, and how resistance to the Milosevic regime was centred on its news and music output.

Both works present the journalist/ media worker as hero and highlight the ultimate power of independent media. *This is Serbia Calling* presents media as potentially rebellious, romantic and powerful. According to its blurb, B92 'waged a 10-year campaign for freedom armed only with a radio transmitter, some rock n roll records, and a dream of truth, justice and another kind of life' (2001). B92 was still there when Milosevic was overthrown and still campaigning.

Why the lack of analysis of media development might be due to the journalists who were involved in it were unused to self-reflection and preferred to write about political and other developments rather than their own work.

There were some positive signs. The role of the media during Ukraine's Orange Revolution led to the overthrow of the election results in 2004-5 and in Georgia, during its Rose Revolution the media ensured accountability and democratic practices. The problem was the notion of a free and independent press with journalists sure of their professionalism was hardly bedded down and the media reverted to its usual role when more authoritarian politicians gained power.

While major change in journalism and the press has been noted in Poland, the Czech Republic and the Baltic republics, the pattern seems to be slower or non-existent in those countries that were more isolated during the Soviet period. As Dean Mills noted the degree of media change coincided with the 'degree of isolation before the collapse



of communism' (Mills in Aumente *et al*, 1999:124)

**Michael Foley (2012), 'The Reporting of Edmond O'Donovan: Literary Journalism and the Great Game' in *Global Literary Journalism: Exploring the Journalistic Imagination*, Richard Lance Keeble and John Tulloch (eds) Peter Lang, New York**

**<http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschmedbk/23/>**

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**Michael Foley (2010), 'From Bruff to the Balkans; James David Bouchier'. in Maureen O'Connor (ed), *Back to the Future of Irish Studies*, Peter Lang AG, Berne.**

**<http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschmedbk/11/>**

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**Michael Foley (2004), 'Colonialism and Journalism in Ireland', *Journalism Studies*, Volume 5, Number 3: 373-385**

**<http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschmedart/41/>**

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**Foley, Michael (2011), 'How Journalism Became a Profession' in *Irish Journalism Before Independence*, Kevin Rafter (ed), Manchester University Press.**

**<http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschmedbk/22/>**

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The four pieces included in this section are based on media history, but within a context of some unhappiness at the way media history has developed in Ireland. Media or press history in Ireland is still at a very early stage and is characterized by a reliance on essays, rather than more comprehensive scholarly works and often lacks analysis or context. In the introduction to *Irish Journalism Before Independence - More a Disease than a Profession* (Rafter, 2011), the British media scholar, James Curran, commented on the absence of Ireland and its newspaper culture from the anthology he edited with George Boyce and Pauline Wingate on newspaper history in 1978, this was due to the ‘relative dearth of research in the Irish press’ (p xi). Thirty years later, in 2008, the Newspaper and Periodical History Forum of Ireland was founded (this writer was the founding chair) to address what was still a dearth of research in the area. In the intervening years there were a few works of major research, including Marie-Louise Legg’s important work, *Newspapers and Nationalism: The Irish Provincial Press, 1850–1892*, John Horgan’s overview, *Irish Media: A Critical History since 1922* (2001) and Chris Morash’s (2013) *A History of the Media in Ireland*, an interesting and more theoretical approach, that crosses disciplines.

The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *The Irish Times*, in 2009 resulted in a number of histories, mostly unscholarly, with the exception of Mark O’Brien’s history of *The Irish Times*. The collapse of the *Irish Press* newspaper group in 1995 resulted in two histories, one by Mark O’Brien, which emphasized the links with the founding DeValera family and Ray Burke, a former journalist at the *Irish Press*, whose work, *Press Delete: The*

*Decline and Fall of the Irish Press*, concentrated on the collapse of the newspaper group. The collection of essays, *Irish Independent: A History* (Rafter, and O'Brien, 2012) only served to emphasise the lack of a serious history of Ireland's most successful newspaper and media group.

Much of the work has been descriptive, often failing to put newspaper history within a theoretical framework. Historians who have drawn on newspapers as source material have taken accounts of events at face value, with little understanding of media analysis. The emphasis has been on the business of newspapers, the editors and even shareholders. I have addressed in the three pieces in this section journalists and their place in the world, what journalists reported, and how they interacted with the world around them. I have begun to write what James Carey saw as a history of reporting. In his famous essay 'The Problem of Journalism History' he said:

Prior – both logically and chronologically – to journalism being an institution, or business, or a set of rights, or body of technology, journalism was a cultural act, a literary act. The technology of journalism existed prior to news or newspapers. Journalism is essentially a state of consciousness, a way of apprehending, of experiencing the world. The central idea in journalism is the 'idea of a report' and the changing notion of what has been taken to be an adequate report of the world (Carey in Munson and Warren 1997, p 90)

Meanwhile, media studies scholars have preferred to address areas concerned with broadcasting, media literacy, film as well as theoretical areas relating to them. Issues such as the development of journalism, analysis of its role and how it reported and influenced events have tended to be ignored. Where analysis has taken place it has tended towards the quantitative rather than qualitative, more interested in the press

rather than journalism. The press in Ireland as a player in events has not been covered. In contrast there are a number of works on how British newspapers covered events in Ireland. The consequence for Irish journalism studies has been that as far as historians have been concerned, Irish journalism developed as a provincial form of English or possibly a wider British journalism. There has been little room for journalism studies within Ireland's history or media departments.

In looking at two Irish journalists who worked mainly as foreign correspondents for London newspapers, an attempt was being made to develop an argument made earlier in an article, 'Colonialism and Journalism in Ireland' (*Journalism Studies*, vol 5, no. 3, 2004: 373-385) that Irish journalism developed within the context of colonialism and its development was markedly different from that of England, from the sort of stories covered, to the social class of Irish journalists to how and why they developed a sense of professionalism or a self awareness, to the sort of impact journalists, journalism and the press had on developments that eventually led to independence in 1922.

That article asked why Ireland had developed what might be called a democratic culture in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and what contribution had journalism made to it. The question had been prompted by the apparent failure of so many transitional states in Eastern Europe and the rest of the former communist world, to develop a press that was able to play a role in the new democratic institutions.

Although nearly a century separates the events surrounding Irish independence and the collapse of Communism in Eastern and South-eastern Europe, it is still worth asking why the press in Ireland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries did not display the problems evident in today's transitional political

cultures as Ireland moved from a colonised country, through the struggle for independence to independence itself, and how it developed a media operating more or less in step with professional norms. This paper explores Irish journalism during the colonial period in order to see what it was in Irish history that led to Ireland's peculiar development within the post-colonial world. (Foley, 2004 ; 374

Both Bouchier and O'Donovan were 'British' journalists, in that they worked for the British press at a time when Ireland was politically an integral part of the union, following the Act of Union in 1800. Both were Irish, but only referred to themselves as Irish occasionally. Even Edmund O'Donovan, an active Irish nationalist and member of the Fenian Brotherhood, usually referred to himself as English throughout his book on his travels to Merv, which is the main focus of the article in O'Donovan.

Michael Schudson (Schudson 'The Objective Norm in American Journalism' *Journalism* 2001, 2: 167) questions Jean Chalaby's view of the similarities between British and American journalism and how it developed an objective norm (Chalaby Jean 1996, 303-326). Schudson suggests the British case might be a half way house between what he refers to as the growth of American professionalism and...

the continental tradition of party-governed journalism with high literary aspirations. Even so, Chalaby's explanation that French journalism could not partake in the Anglo American discursive revolution because it was dominated by literary figures and literary aspirations is a point well taken. (Schudson 2001 p 167)

Schudson's article is an important contribution to the debate about notion of objectivity in journalism. He sees it developing first in the USA because of particular

social and political conditions as well as changes that took place in the US long before they emerged in Europe.

The space that could be occupied by ‘objectivity’ as a professional value in American journalism was already occupied in European journalism. It was occupied by a reasonably successful journalistic self-understanding that journalists were high literary creators and cosmopolitan political thinkers. European journalists did not have the down and dirty sense of themselves as laborers whose standing in the world required upgrading the way American journalists did. If there was to be upgrading, in any event, it was to a literary rather than a professional ideal. (Schudson, 2001: 166).

The discussion has been framed in terms of who developed certain norms first and why. In that it appears American journalists developed, for many reasons, modern journalistic practices, with Britain following close on its heels in the development of what is still often referred to as Anglo Saxon journalism. Mancini asks if we can ‘talk of a unique model of European journalism that is different from the one that is commonly defined as “Anglo American’, or “Anglophone” or ‘Anglo Saxon” model? (2005). Sibert *et al* wrote that ‘ Great Britain, the United States and some of the British Dominions follow a common pattern in what has been described as the “Anglo –American tradition”’ (1956; 57). Ireland, it is assumed, was part of that same pattern. However, Declan Kiberd suggests one distinction between journalism in Britain and Ireland and possibly America. For Kiberd the distinction between the journalist and the artist or literary writer did not exist in Ireland.

The major debates of the Irish revival were conducted in the pages of the *Daily Express* and *United Irishman*. Contributing journalists belonged to a

profession for which a university degree was not a prerequisite, which accounts for the democratic tone and suspicion of aristocracy in these exchanges. Many supported movements for “self- help”, whether in adult education or Abbey Theatre, on principles first laid down by Jonathan Swift. He had shown in his brilliant polemics that it was quite possible to close the gap between journalism and art. (Kiberd, 2000, p. 464)

Kiberd’s view would place Irish journalists close to the European continental pattern, But another distinction is the adherence to notions of impartiality or even what Schudson refers to as the objectivity norm, as mentioned earlier.

As Schudson suggests, there are a number of theories as to why ‘objectivity’ became the norm in English speaking journalism, which is often more a number of journalistic practices, the lean, sparse writing style, the inverted pyramid – with the most important parts of the story at the top – an insistence on both sides of the story being included, than a grand philosophical position. In journalism discourse objectivity and impartiality are often used as if they meant the same. There has always been a technological determinist argument, that the telegraph allowed news agencies to be established which sold news to numerous clients who might not all agree politically; that the telegraph often broke down, so it was important to have the important parts of the story at the top and so on. This sort argument would suggest objectivity would become the normal journalistic practice in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, along with other arguments about the growth of social science, the invention of the linotype machine and so on. Schudson, however, does not agree with this and suggests: ‘At this point – the 1920s – the objective norm becomes a fully formulated occupational ideal, part of a professional project or mission’ (Schudson 2001; 163).

For non-journalists the debate about objectivity, neutrality or impartiality often seems obscure, but it is important because it comes to define journalism as a profession and even the commercial appeal of journalism. According to Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel:

...the market appeal that came to characterize American journalism started in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and that grew in the 20<sup>th</sup>. That appeal was built on independence as a source of journalism's trustworthiness. It adopted a neutral voice, taking no sides and claiming to cast a sceptical eye on all sources of power on behalf of the public. (Kovach and Rosenstiel: 2007:128)

The situation was different in Ireland, there was no doubt as to the increasingly middle-class nature of journalists themselves and their literary aspirations, but they were also political with many being politically active, especially in the Irish Parliamentary Party, but also in the physical force nationalist movements, as it emerged and also unionism. However, the special circumstances in Ireland, coercive legislation, the use of libel and criminal libel ensured a real need for accuracy, so as to offer a defence in any court case – hence the use of shorthand as a qualification for professional membership. There was also impartiality as a radical response to a colonial government. Impartiality meant everyone was questioned and the journalist felt professionally obliged to stand back, even from governments and their agents.

From the mid-19th century, journalists in Ireland had forged a professionalism based on concepts of impartial reporting along with political engagement. In the case of Irish journalists, a belief in objectivity or impartiality and the professional skills to deliver it was often necessary to ensure employment in a small media market. It meant that journalists could move from newspaper to



newspaper regardless of the editorial line or even the ownership or whatever their own political opinions. We have seen how Andrew Dunlop moved from nationalist to unionist newspapers and how Fenians felt comfortable working for unionist newspapers. Professionalism meant a journalist could work for a newspaper whose editorial position he did not agree with. (Foley, 2004: 383)

So it would appear Irish journalism developed differently from that in Britain as a response to colonialism and developed impartiality, objectivity and other professional practices as defence mechanisms.

Whether it was this development of professional practices that made Irish journalists popular in Britain is worth discussing, but Edmund O'Donovan and JD Bouchier were just two of the many Irish journalists working abroad for British publications.

The Irish journalist in London was a type known enough to be mentioned, though not necessarily with flattery in the House of Commons. In 1810 William Windham, while attacking the press noted that the Irish came over from Ireland and took their chance at becoming either "porters or reporters" (MacDonagh<sup>4</sup>, nd, p 321)

Indeed, Irish journalists became a stereotype, as drunkard denizens of the pubs of Fleet Street, the most famous in Thackeray's novel, *Pendennis*,

There is another story, of course, near Fleet Street stands St Paul's Cathedral, and on a monument in the Cathedral's crypt are listed a number of Special Correspondents, including a number of Irish journalists who covered military campaigns in the Sudan, and other areas. The monument includes, of course, Edmond O'Donovan of the *Daily*

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<sup>4</sup> McDonagh tells of Peter Finnerty former editor of the *United Irishman* newspaper and later a parliamentary reporter for the *Morning Chronicle*, reporting the first session following the Act of Union and the last reporter to be called before the Bar of the House of Commons.

*News*, who had worked for the *Freeman's Journal*, and Frank Power of *The Irish Times*, and then *The Times* of London.

O'Donovan, as the article included in this dissertation illustrates, was a war correspondent and an active member of the Fenians who worked in Spain in 1873 covering the Carlist rising for the *Freeman's Journal*. He subsequently contributed to the *London Standard*, *The Times* and then the *Daily News*. He also reported from Central Asia, which is the subject of the article included.

O'Donovan's book on the Merv became a best seller and an abridged version was also published. It sold well in Britain and the US. He was acclaimed, went on speaking tours and was paid well. As well as being lionized in Britain he was also contributing to the Fenian cause. When he died in the Sudan, it was assumed he had gone over to Britain's enemy, the Mahdi, based on the Fenian and Irish nationalist principle that England's pain being Ireland's gain.

Also listed on the monument in St Paul's is Sir William Howard Russell, of *The Times*, 'the first and greatest war correspondent' (including a list of his campaigns). Russell was from Tallaght, Co Dublin, and educated at Trinity College, Dublin. However much he might have wished to be part of the British establishment he was always an outsider in British society, in the way that Irish people were in 19<sup>th</sup>-century England. This, of course, might have been one reason they appeared to be good reporters. Being outsiders is a theme that comes up in both historical biographical pieces

Russell desperately wanted to be accepted in England, but even though Anglo-Irish he was Irish as far as the British establishment was concerned. According to a certain Captain Clifford, for example, writing from the Crimea in 1853 Russell was:

a vulgar low Irishman...but he has the gift of the gab, uses his pen as well as his tongue, sings a good song, drinks anyone's brandy and water and smokes as many cigars as foolish young officers will let him, and is looked by most in camp as a Jolly Good Fellow. He is just the sort to get information, particularly out of the youngsters. And I assure you more than one "Nob" has thought it best to give him a shake of the hand rather than the cold shoulder *en passant*, for [he] is rather an awkward gentleman to be on bad terms with' (quoted in De Burgh, 2000: p 34)

The discovery of John David Bouchier, a Limerick-born journalist, who was a hero in Bulgaria, with streets named for him, statues to him and plaques on the wall of the hotel where he lived and more recently a metro station in his name, became a subject of research. He was unknown in Ireland and his Irish life and background was unknown in Bulgaria.

Most of the research on the life of Bouchier was undertaken in Bulgaria after coming across a chance mention of him in a travel book, which described him as an Anglo - Irish journalist. I visited his grave in the mountains at the fabulous Rila Monastery and later discovered he was a serious and important historical figure in Bulgaria. I quizzed Bulgarian historians and filled in gaps they had concerning Ireland. I was asked to give a paper at a conference on Bouchier on 'James D Bouchier and Ireland' and later was the co-director of the Bouchier Seminars. The Irish Ambassador, Geoffrey Keating, was the other director.

Bouchier could be used to investigate the complexity of Ireland's own history: how an Irish Unionist journalist became a Bulgarian nationalist was itself a question to be explored. There were also interesting points of comparisons; Irish nationalism and

many Slavic nationalisms developed along the same lines, and at the same time – the Young Irelanders were mirrored in Eastern European Pan Slavism, the physical force movements in Ireland of the Fenians and the Irish Republican Brotherhood had counterparts in revolutionary nationalists in the Balkans. While looking at the grave of an Irish Unionist and member of the Church of Ireland, who was a champion of Bulgarian nationalism in Rila Monastery, the heart of Bulgarian Orthodox spirituality, it was interesting to try and work out why the outcome of those 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century movements had been so different.

As contributions to knowledge the three pieces attempt to place journalism and journalists into the centre of developments in Ireland, the development of a democratic culture and how particular socio-cultural and political developments shaped Irish journalism. That links these to other pieces that investigate the link between journalism and democracy. The articles also show how Ireland developed a different journalism culture borne out of colonialism and the nature of the events reported in Ireland. That consciousness was taken from Ireland abroad and probably had an influence on events and on journalism outside Ireland also.

‘How Journalism Became a Profession’ in *Irish Journalism Before Independence*, was a contribution to a collection of essays on press history, published in 2011. It relied heavily on research undertaken for an earlier article ‘Colonialism and Journalism in Ireland’ (2004). I was invited to contribute on the topic of the growth of professionalism and the self-awareness of journalists as a distinct working group, based on the earlier research that informed the analysis of the development of journalism. While ‘How Journalism Became a Profession’ used material reformulated from the earlier article, the purpose of the two pieces was different.

Today the media system in Ireland is seen as firmly within the liberal model. Hallin and Mancini's work (*op cit*) showed that Ireland shared with the UK and the US a media system that relies on market mechanism and is dominated by commercial media. The question is how did Ireland get there?

Carey's statement that journalism is another name for democracy might suggest that Irish journalism could really only happen within Britain, as is obvious for reasons of colonialism, that Ireland's democratic development was much different from that of Britain's.

Dr Beate Josephi suggests another view, how journalism can develop outside democratic systems:

Debate, however, is central to democracy but largely a by-product of journalism practice. More central to journalism practice, it can be argued, is the provision of a service to the public by offering accurate and verified information that rests on independent news judgment and is responsible to the interests of the public. Democracies offer a legal framework to protect such activity, but journalism offering accurate and verified information that rests on independent news judgment also happens in places that are deemed non-democratic. (Josephi, 2012: 13)

Josephi was not, but could have been describing that which occurred in Ireland, a system of journalism practices that ensured verified and accurate information among a group of men and increasingly women who identified themselves as journalists, who contributed to a democratic culture by reporting events and were able to report professionally events internationally.

# Journalism

Journalism studies has tended to see journalism as something to be studied, like a sample under a microscope. When scholars are not peering at journalism, it is dismissed as trivial and shallow. One of the worst slanders within the academy is for one's work to be dismissed as 'journalese'. James Carey, the American journalism and communications scholar, however, defended journalism and its place within the academy, saying it was itself being a field of enquiry and combined a number of scholarly areas within it, history, philosophy, and language:

Journalism naturally belongs with political theory, which nurtures an understanding of democratic life and institutions: with literature, from which it derives a heightened awareness of language and expression and an understanding of narrative form; with philosophy, from which it can clarify its own moral foundations, with art which enriches its capacity to imagine the unity of the visual world; with history, which forms the underlying stratum of its consciousness. (Carey, 2000: 22)

Furthermore he writes of journalism as 'a social act, a political phenomenon, an imaginative construction of the social.' (Carey, 2000: 21)

A number of pieces of journalism, which appeared in *The Irish Times* and *Index on Censorship* have been included as part of this dissertation. They appear because they give context to the academic articles and book chapters that form the main part of this dissertation.

I first travelled to Eastern Europe while media correspondent of *The Irish Times* but also wrote for *Index on Censorship*. The articles in *Index on Censorship* might be defined as quasi academic, in that they were more timeless than traditional journalism as *Index* is a quarterly publication. *The Irish Times* are all comment and analysis rather than news pieces.

*The Irish Times*, founded in 1859, is the main quality newspaper in Ireland and has a tradition of covering international affairs. It was the only Irish newspaper to send a reporter to cover the Spanish Civil War and its editor, Bertie Smylie, travelled throughout Germany in the 1930s and wrote a number of pamphlets warning of the impact of German rearmament. In more recent years it has had correspondents in Moscow, Beijing, Brussels, London, Washington, New York, Berlin, Paris, Rome and South Africa. It also had correspondents who covered the war in former Yugoslavia and well as other post-communist conflicts.

The foundation of *Index on Censorship*, was inspired by two prominent Soviet dissidents, Pavel Litvinov grandson of the former Soviet Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov, and Larisa Borgoraz the former wife of the writer, Yuli Daniel, who had written to *The Times* in 1968 calling for international condemnation of the rigged trial of two young writers on charges of 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda'. (One of the writers, Yuri Galanskov, died in a camp in 1972).

The poet, Stephen Spender, along with, Stuart Hampshire, David Astor, Edward Crankshaw and founding editor Michael Scammell founded *Index* to cover censorship and freedom of speech issues in right-wing dictatorships such as Greece, Portugal, and the military regimes of Latin America, as well as in the former Soviet Union and

its satellites. I started writing for *Index on Censorship* in the mid 1990s and edited a special edition on Ireland. I am a member of its advisory board.

It was the Polish journalist, Ryszard Kapuscinski, writing about the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, who developed the idea of participant observation, who said: 'Fieldwork is not only recommended for anthropologists, but is also a fundamental condition for the job of the reporter' (Kapuscinski, 2006: 31).

Meanwhile, Canadian journalism scholar, G Stuart Adams wrote an essay as part of his seminar series at the Poynter Institute of Media Studies, 'Towards a Philosophy of Journalism' defining journalism as a cultural practice:

Individual works of journalism comprise inquiries by individuals into the state of things. So journalism is a cultural practice, a section or part of the modern Imagination that in its broadest and most comprehensive sense includes all the devices we use to form consciousness. Journalism- or more precisely, the journalistic imagination- is the primary method of framing experience and forming the public consciousness of the here and now. (Adams, 1993: 45)

Writing about literary journalism, Richard Keeble and John Tulloch said

...what literary journalists perhaps share, with documentary filmmakers, is the impulse to 'claim the real': an assertion about truthfulness to verifiable experience, an adherence to accuracy and sincerity which practitioners assert are the crucial features that distinguish their narratives from 'fiction'. Unless they are actively practicing bad faith, in some sense they believe that their writing is rooted in the disciplined observation/witnessing/depiction of "real"



people woven into narratives of “real” events which are, in principle (though not necessarily in practice), verifiable. Sources can be checked, places revisited, but in truth the claim to authenticity can chiefly be tested by consistency of detail and the character/authority of the narrative voice and the level of confidence it inspires. (Keeble and Tulloch, 2012: 7)

This notion can be accused of being dated and out of kilter with post modernism and a harking back to a now unfashionable notion of a stable text and stable reality. John Carey in his collection, the *Faber Book of Reportage* suggests it is axiomatic of modern critical theory that there are no accessible ‘realities’ only texts that relate to one another intertextually.

But even if he believes this, the good reporter must do everything in his power to counteract it, struggling to isolate the singularities that will make his account real for his readers– not just something written, but something seen. (Carey, 1996, xxxii)

The journalist deals with different issues, media, politics and in all cases, observation and discussion. None could have been written without being there. In some cases they add to more traditional journalism and in all cases they inform readers about life in the former communist world, often by using small details and descriptions.

However, I make no further claims for the journalism included other than they are examples of the journalist as witness, of being there and of supplying, one hopes, compelling accounts of what it was like.

## **Conclusion**

Media development has moved on. Much of central and eastern Europe has joined the

EU, so deemed to be democratic and not eligible for development aid. Central Asia, still the recipient of some media development, is seen by many donors as remote, autocratic and authoritarian. Turkmenistan, where O'Donovan's work is still read, though he is considered an English journalist, comes 177<sup>th</sup> in the world press freedom rankings in 2013. Only North Korea and Eritrea fared worse. (<http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2013,1054.html>, Reporters Without Borders. Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> Oct, 2013)

Media development firstly tended to concentrate on the Arab world, the BBC World Service closed many of its language services, including a number in Eastern Europe and the Balkans in favour of increased concentration on the Arab-speaking world.

In Africa, where media development was viewed as an adjunct to development aid programmes, teaching women to breast feed, or AIDS/HIV education programmes, there has been a new emphasis on the media and governance, often due to lessons learnt in Eastern Europe.

The period of the 1990s and early 2000s was a unique period in European history. Media development played a role in the changes taking place and many of the theories that had developed over the previous century were put to the test. The former communist world was a sort of media laboratory, with journalists and academics attempting to apply ideas of media and democratic development. Some worked, some did not. There is still much research that should take place. It would be wrong to abandon the world that stretches from the Balkans to Central Asia, to leave its media without guidance just because the global concerns have move to other areas of the world.

# Index on Censorship

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## The Orange Revolution Loses Its Zest

Michael Foley *Index on Censorship* 2006 35: 11 DOI: 10.1080/03064220600

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## THE ORANGE REVOLUTION

## LOSES ITS ZEST

MICHAEL FOLEY

ONE YEAR ON, UKRAINIANS HAVE LOST FAITH IN THEIR NEW GOVERNMENT AND THE MEDIA IS ALL AT SEA IN THE RUN UP TO MARCH ELECTIONS

One Kyiv newspaper's analysis of Ukraine's first year under the Orange Revolution led with the headline: 'One year later what's the difference'. The

paper did, however, go on to list the many changes that had taken place in the year since thousands of people camped out on Kyiv's busiest street, Khreschatyk, and in Independence Square calling for fair elections and eventually ensuring the victory of their hero, Viktor Yushchenko.

One year on and President Yushchenko's image is somewhat tarnished. Thousands came to see him and celebrate his first anniversary, but spirits were muted. It was not the cold, rain, snow and slush underfoot: the citizens of the capital are used to such things. It was more that this exercise in revolutionary democracy, which delivered a banker to the highest office in Ukraine, was meant to deliver more.

However, on the night itself – 22 November 2005 – thousands jostled their way into Independence Square, along with an impressive number of riot police. But even as they arrived to swell the crowd, many were already leaving, long before Yushchenko spoke. The Ukrainians know how to put on an impressive show: they came with hundreds of orange flags on telescopic flag poles while all along the street, people were selling the orange tee-shirts, scarves and mugs that were such a hit last year. Meanwhile, on the platform with its giant screens, a political soap opera was playing out.

Some months earlier, Yushchenko had sacked his prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko, the second half of the heroic 'revolutionary' double act, but this did not keep her away from the celebrations. Yushchenko welcomed her with a kiss on the cheek, but if the crowd was hoping for a reconciliation they were disappointed. When she was criticised by Yushchenko, Tymoshenko folded her arms and appeared to cry; when the crowd chanted her name, Yushchenko stood patiently then chided the crowd for its rudeness in preventing his speech.

Tymoshenko is a cross between Eva Peron and Marianne, the French symbol of revolution. She is striking looking (her picture adorns t-shirts, flags and badges) and her image was as much an icon of the revolution as was Yushchenko's pock-marked faced, caused, as we now know, by an attempt to poison him. She understands the power of her image perfectly. Her blonde hair is always in a braid across the top of her hair, which for Ukrainians is highly symbolic. For them, she is both modern and a reminder of the peasant folk traditions so beloved by Ukrainian nationalists. She was brought to the stage on the shoulders of her supporters dressed in a white coat and an orange scarf with a Ukrainian flag clutched in her hand. She looked like the embodiment of the nation: a nineteenth century nationalist figure in modern day Ukraine, with an eye on next March's parliamentary elections. You do not need a detailed understanding of semiotics to see her image as pure theatre, pure media.

The media has been central to Ukraine's development since 1991 and its fortunes a useful indicator of the health of civil society. For a number of years, it was one of the most dangerous places to be a journalist. During last year's presidential election and the Orange Revolution, which followed the second

round, it was a decision of journalists at one of the country's television services to declare they would operate with an unusual degree of impartiality that helped ensure Yushchenko's victory. The declaration also highlighted the normal highly partisan behaviour of a media that was either state-owned and unfailing in its support of government, or so called independent, which usually supported some sort of power interest. It was also a system in which editors were served with *temniki*, or unofficial edicts from the administration, which dictated what should and should not be covered. What was lacking was anything that might be called impartial: a media that covered events in the interests of the electorate rather than of its owners and benefactors. Now, some journalists working for opposition TV networks took to sporting orange items of clothing and badges supporting Yushchenko on air.

Today, most observers agree that one of the pluses since the Orange Revolution has been press freedom and a degree of transparency. There has been a huge decline in press harassment from the central authorities and a corresponding decline in the number of reports of pressure on journalists from local authorities. During his speech in Independence Square, Yushchenko talked of his support for independent journalism. Yet many in the profession are disappointed that there has been so little movement in the investigation into the killing of journalist Georgy Gongadze, a murder that has become a touchstone of how far Ukraine has travelled on the media front.

On 16 September 2000, 31-year-old journalist Georgy Gongadze, publisher of the Internet journal *Ukrainska Pravda*, disappeared (Index 1/03, 3/03, 2/04, 3/04). He was later found headless in a ditch in a suburb of Kyiv. He had been investigating corruption at the heart of President Leonid Kuchma's administration. At least two more journalists have been killed since.

At the time, it caused barely a ripple outside Ukraine, but the case against the alleged killers of Gongadze has just been sent to the country's Supreme Court. The decapitation of the young reporter is now seen as a slow-burning flame that grew with others into the conflagration of last year's Orange Revolution. But the glacial progress of the murder inquiry encapsulates both the ills of Ukraine's *ancien régime* and the disillusionment of many people who helped topple it.

Two former policemen are expected to stand trial for the murder of Gongadze, but Kuchma denies ordering the killing, and many Ukrainians believe Yushchenko has granted him immunity from prosecution as part of the political deal. Kuchma's former interior minister and an ex-police general have been accused of planning the murder: the minister was shot dead in March, hours before he faced questioning about the case, while the police chief has disappeared. For Gongadze's relatives, for the international journalism bodies that have taken an interest in the case, as for many Ukrainians generally, the Orange Revolution has many questions left to answer.

The much publicised Yushchenko-Tymoshenko divorce was only a symptom of the crumbling of the Orange team. As the economy slumped, in-fighting within the government burst into the open when the president's chief-of-staff quit and accused his inner circle of being more corrupt than the ousted cronies of the former Moscow-backed president. Yushchenko's sacking of Tymoshenko prompted old allies to brand him a traitor to the revolution, and the heckling grew when he struck a deal with Viktor Yanukovich, his Kuchma-backed opponent in 2004's election. The president also agreed not to prosecute pro-Yanukovich officials who helped rig the elections that triggered the revolution. Now, with the two figureheads of the revolution likely to split the pro-reform vote in parliamentary elections in March, polls put Yanukovich in the lead. The January dismissal of the entire government by the Rada (parliament) has been challenged by the justice ministry, but it seems uncertain what steps Yushchenko can take to remedy this. According to State Secretary Oleh Rybachuk, a key test for the leadership is to ensure 'honest and transparent' parliamentary elections in March and prevent undue manipulation by those currently in office.

In office, Yushchenko launched many reforms, but most have run into the ground. The media, meanwhile, happily charts the infighting at the top of the administration and its failure to sort out the economy, end corruption or even find out who poisoned the president. Although Yushchenko himself is not tainted by corruption, the media has focused on the high living and fast cars of his 19-year-old son, and his bizarre attempt to patent the slogan of the revolution: 'Tak', Ukrainian for 'Yes'.

The English-language Kyiv Post, in an analysis piece suggested that the decline in the popularity of both Yushchenko and Tymoshenko, whose standing in the polls has tumbled to well below 20 per cent, can actually be blamed on the media: 'Of course, much of the appearance of disarray in Ukraine's new administration can be blamed on the emergence of a free press that is no longer afraid to criticise top officials.'

What the Orange Revolution did not do was end the tradition of the media's political engagement, but there is now some internal confusion. With political alliances being forged and broken and new ones being forged again, it is often difficult for the media to work out if it is for or against the government, especially with two of the original groups within the Orange Revolution forming both the government and elements of the opposition. Former pro-government media do not know how to be oppositional; former opposition newspapers, radio and television stations suffer the same situation in reverse. Few understand the real meaning of media impartiality or objectivity. Most opt for criticism of those in power with little supporting evidence for their position.

The Ukrainian media has a low level of professional skills. Maintaining a professional distance from the subject of news is something new; questioning, challenging, maintaining a professional code of practise is something

journalists are not trained to do. At the same time, low salaries have encouraged chequebook journalism. One public relations practitioner suggested he actually helped maintain a free media by subsidising so many journalists' pay in this way. He saw nothing wrong, questionable or bizarre in this.

The changes brought in by the Orange Revolution were hardly likely to change the quality of reporting news and current affairs overnight; both print and broadcast journalists mostly work according to post-Soviet standards characterised by excessive and uncritical attention to central and local government's official decisions and spend little time investigating behind the scenes. But with greater press freedom, some have begun to focus on how well the Ukrainian media actually does its job. No doubt there have been major changes in Ukrainian society, but by and large, the media has been left floundering.

Michael Foley is a lecturer in journalism at the Dublin Institute of Technology. He has been working on curriculum reform at journalism schools in Bulgaria and Ukraine

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Michael Foley *Index on Censorship* 1996 25: 17 DOI: 10.1080/03064229601

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**MICHAEL FOLEY**

# Democracy courtesy Thomas Cook

*A sensitive moment: Old City, Jerusalem*

**Eight hundred international observers pronounced the Palestinians' first election 'free and fair', but the media failed to come up to scratch**

**I**T IS doubtful if there was ever an election more closely observed and monitored than Palestine's. Everywhere in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, international observers were there to ensure that Palestinians were able to vote in a free and fair election without intimidation. The ink was hardly dry on the ballot papers before EU foreign ministers announced their satisfaction with the election and Yasser Arafat was being congratulated on his huge victory. The Palestinian people had experienced democracy.



There were muted references to some flaws in the process, but few suggested that lack of a free press and the extent of intimidation against newspapers and journalists might raise serious questions about just how free and fair the election had been.

Take Palestine's leading newspaper, *al-Quds*. Its editor, Dr Marwan Abu Zuluf, regards it as the authoritative voice of Palestine, in the way *El Pais* might be of Spain, *Liberation* of France or the *Guardian* of Britain. Last August following the publication of a statement from the Islamic group, Hamas, Abu Zuluf received a phone call ordering him to close. Four 'thugs', as he describes them, arrived to ensure that he did. If he had not, his vans would have been hijacked, he says with a resigned shrug. So when his night editor, Maher al-Alami, placed a story concerning Yasser Arafat on page eight and was summoned to Jericho on Christmas night and asked why he had not placed the story on page one, Abu Zuluf did not even report the incident in *al-Quds*. Alami was held by the Preventive Security Services for six days. Arafat personally ordered Alami's release. He is reported to have patted the veteran journalist on the head and said that if it happened again he was to dump some of the page one advertising. Arafat would pay (see page 73).

Such intimidation was not unique. *An-Nahar*, a pro-Jordanian newspaper, was ordered closed for the month of August 1994. It emerged with a new editorial line and even a new masthead, showing the Dome of the Rock, a very potent symbol for Palestinians. Asa'd al-Asa'd, the editor of *al-Bilad*, a new newspaper, does not fear Arafat. He is a novelist, a former president of the Palestinian Writers Union, and was imprisoned by the Israelis for publishing a banned cultural journal. He knows Arafat well, he says. Nevertheless this does not stop pressure being placed on him. He was contacted days before the election by 'Arafat's office' and asked to explain why he had not published any photographs of the chairman that morning. Asa'd tells the story to indicate how fearless he is and how he is above intimidation. The fact that such a phone call was made was taken as normal.

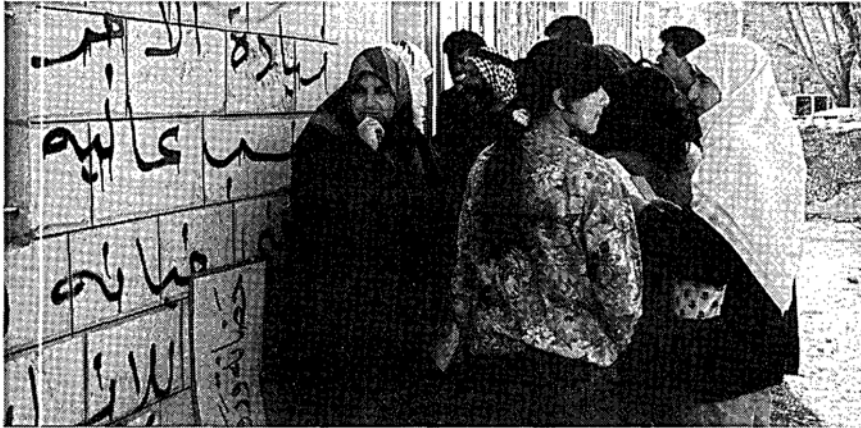
These lessons, and many more, were not lost on journalists. The press and broadcasting coverage of the election was cautious in the extreme. Instead of investigations and analysis journalists offered the public uncritical interviews, or a sort of public education

journalism that informed voters about the election process, how to vote, who the candidates were and exhorted them to use their franchise. Broadcast

journalists maintained that the two uninterrupted minutes of radio time given to every candidate on Palestine Radio was evidence of balance and impartiality.

The election was an advertising bonanza. Sixty-five per cent to 70 per cent of page one, and every page after that, was devoted to political

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*Palestine 1996: West Bank voters and the writing on the polling station wall*

advertising in all newspapers. This, some journalists claimed, led to huge commercial pressures to produce the sort of journalism that would not threaten this financial windfall.

Meanwhile, in little villages outside Jerusalem, in small sports and community halls, candidates were grilled and questioned. There was no fear, no intimidation, just an exercise in democracy and the media had little or no role in it.

So if the media were not acting as watchdogs, who was? The international community, of course, in the shape of some 800 official observers for an electorate of 1.3 million. They were everywhere: sitting in at public meetings, investigating election education sessions, keeping an eye on classes for election officials. They filled in forms, kept notes and generally appeared serious and earnest. Most did not speak Arabic. They were recognisable in their blue shirts, blue sleeveless jerkins, with the EU stars, or the name of their country or organisation on the back. Alongside the official observers were an unknown number of the ubiquitous NGOs who wore blue baseball caps with 'NGO' emblazoned on the front. They were lawyers, consultants and researchers. With clipboards they questioned Palestinians, who have experienced occupation for nearly 30 years, about human rights violations. Observers squealed with delight when they bumped into somebody they had not seen since the South African, Mozambique, or maybe it was the Cambodian, election. Many had seen

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The most famous observer was former U S President Jimmy Carter. His arrival at Salah-din Street post office, one of the most sensitive polling stations in East Jerusalem, was high farce. Here was a man whose very presence was meant to be a guarantee of democracy who had such a security cordon of Israeli and American personnel that voting while he was around was nearly impossible. He did demand, successfully, the release of Palestinian observers detained by Israelis. But it did little good really. Throughout the day at Salah-din Street post office the Palestinian observers were ignored. Canadian and Belgian observers helped people vote if they could not read or write. It was they who spoke to the media. It was not until some US politicians noticed that one of the observers, a student, was pretty and spoke English that she was drafted in to stand beside the politicians while they looked concerned for Palestinian democracy with a real Palestinian. It was human rights tourism, or democracy by Thomas Cook.

So what about the journalists? Some will tell you that while there are

about 400 journalists in Palestine, the reality is that only about 20 have the skills to produce newspapers, radio and television news with fairness and balance. Most have found it difficult making the transition from supporting the struggle for liberation to a commitment to democracy and the electorate. Palestinian journalists had little freedom of movement. They were unable to travel between Gaza and the West Bank. Travel between one town and another required going through Israeli checkpoints. They assumed they would not be allowed to publish anything critical of Fatah and Arafat. Most did not try. Hussein Daifallah of the Palestinian human rights organisation, Al-Haq, says that after 28 years of Israeli censorship Palestinian journalists are used to guidelines. Without official censorship they have imposed self-censorship. Even with serious press restrictions in law, Mr Daifallah blames the media itself. He will not accept that it will take time for a free press to develop. It was important for Palestinian democracy for the media to be involved and acting as a watchdog during this first election. They were not. •

*Michael Foley is media correspondent with the Irish Times. He was in Palestine with the International Federation of Journalists working on the IFJ's programme, Media for Democracy, with the Arab Journalists Association*

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## CentralAsian state that hasn't quite turned its back on the Soviet past

Thu, May 24, 2012

**KYRGYZSTAN LETTER:** The mainly Russian population is aging. Young ethnic Russians and Ukrainians are leaving, writes **MICHAEL FOLEY**

KYRGYZSTAN WEARS its Soviet past lightly. A statue of Lenin, exhorting the people of the capital, Bishkek, to revolution used to stand in the main square, then called Lenin Square, but was moved. Not to an obscure suburban park or even the scrapyard, but to a slightly lesser square, one block away. He stands, 10 metres tall, still pointing, with his jacket and coat open as he asks "What is to be done?" Lenin was replaced by a statue of a flame-bearing woman, surrounded by symbols of the newly independent Kyrgyzstan.

A wonderful statue of Marx and Engels faces the American University of Central Asia, where, presumably, little of Marx and Engels is discussed.

However, the compromise here is that their names have disappeared from the plinth, so they look like two anonymous Victorian gentlemen having an intense discussion, which, presumably, they often did in life. The hammer and sickle are still proudly carved into the pediment of the American University, as they are on so many buildings in central Bishkek.

However, the most remarkable relic of the former regime is in the State Historical Museum. There are the artefacts recalling Kyrgyzstan's pre-historic past and the history of its nomadic people, but what is remarkable is a collection of huge bronze tableaux recalling the revolution and the life of Lenin and a wonderful painted ceiling telling the history of the Soviet Union.

In most former Soviet countries, such an exhibition would have long been moved, but here in Kyrgyzstan it still stands, whether because of an ambiguity towards the recent past or just indifference is not clear.

In the immediate post-Soviet period Kyrgyzstan was seen as a beacon of democracy in the region. Not necessarily a very strong one, but clearly better than its neighbours.

That is probably still the case – its scores in indicators such as press freedom indexes are far better than those of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, countries with which it shares a border. It also has a border with China. However, its record is flawed with election irregularities, corruption, the harassment of opposition figures and journalists, and the closure of newspapers. In the south there have been ethnic tensions between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. Two post-Soviet presidents have been swept from power, the second only a year ago.

Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who became president in 2005, was ousted following riots and demonstrations around the country due to high energy prices, corruption and lack of economic progress. The president also ordered the closure of several media outlets. As with previous political crises, the West took little interest, presumably because not enough people tweeted about it.

What interest there was came as a result of the presence of Russian and US military bases. The US base at Manas airport, the main international airport for Bishkek, serves the US military in Afghanistan. There has been much speculation about the role of Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin, in the crisis. He was opposed to the renewal of the lease for the US airforce base, and there is no doubt that elements of the Russian media ran a campaign against Bakiyev.

Bishkek is a pleasant city, full of trees, shrubs and parks, which serve to hide or disguise the cracked concrete, the peeling plaster and rusting ironwork so common in most post-Soviet cities. However, a few hours' drive from Bishkek is Balykchy, right beside Issy-Kul, the enormous lake 182km long and up to 60km wide that dominates the mountains of northern Kyrgyzstan. Balykchy shows starkly the real state of Kyrgyzstan, which is one of the poorest countries of the former Soviet Union. Here there are few trees to hide the closed factories, with the broken windows, rusting pipes and cracked pavements and roads.

The mainly Russian population is aging and falling in number. Younger ethnic Russians and Ukrainians are leaving.

Old people try to sell visitors dried fish from the lake, waving their produce at passing traffic or surrounding anyone who gets out of a bus or car. The ethnic makeup of Kyrgyzstan is, to a large extent, a result of Stalin's policy on nationality. Ethnic Germans were moved to Central Asia during the Great Patriotic War, Russians and Ukrainians were sent to a sort of frontier to run factories and other enterprises. Cosmonauts and pilots trained at Lake Issy-Kul, which was a closed, secure area. It was also a holiday area for the Soviet elite.

All collapsed upon independence, though it is believed Boris Yeltsin liked to holiday at Issy-Kul and a statue is said to be somewhere in the region.

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## A tale of three cities

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**MICHAEL FOLEY**

# A tale of three cities

**New ideas concerning the role and purpose of journalism have provoked debate throughout the former Soviet Union, and more than a little confusion**

**T** here is a monument outside Moscow's Central House of

Journalists depicting a Soviet journalist wearing a fine military uniform, high boots and a cape. He has a camera slung from his neck and holds a notebook with pencil poised. It is dedicated to all the journalists who covered the Great Patriotic War.

The journalist looks confidently ahead as the snow settles on his notebook, military cap and fine moustache. His role is to bring honour and glory to the Motherland and the Communist Party.

Today few journalists are certain of a wage let alone a statue. Even the restaurant at the Central House of Journalists, formerly a meeting place for writers and journalists, has been contracted out. Few members of the Union could, in any case, afford to eat in it now.

None of this gloom is enough to stop a celebration though and the Russian Union of Journalists recently organised a conference and a whole number of receptions to celebrate its eightieth anniversary.

Over 200 delegates from journalists' unions from the length and breadth of Russia, as well as from central Asia, Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic countries •were at the House of Journalists. They came from Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia. They included the young journalists' associations, the bodies that have sprung up to represent journalists working in the new and small independent media and to fight for press freedom.

The leaders of the old unions are survivors. Some were members of the old Communist Party; in its new incarnation, the same Party that is now calling for tighter control of the media. The older among them are clearly nostalgic for the time when they were certain of their role and of a good income at the end of the week. Now they call for press freedom and freedom of expression and are linked to international organisations that were on the other side during the Cold War. At one of the many receptions a few old journos, after a number of vodkas, started to sing softly the old Soviet National Anthem. Gradually the sound increased. The little band that had been playing dance tunes joined in hesitantly at first, until more and more people started to stand up. Some of the younger delegates



looked edgy and embarrassed as they saw that foreign guests had just recognised the tune. 'It's just old men remembering,' said one.

But while the leadership was celebrating the survival of its Union, even if as a shadow of its former Soviet self— the membership is about half what it was — there was little else for the media to celebrate. Seven years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there is still little press freedom. From Kazakhstan to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Belarus and Ukraine, the story is a dismal one: tax laws are used to harass financially; there is a growing body of laws forbidding insults of those in high places as well as of the president; compulsory registration of the media is common. Speaker after speaker accounted for the appalling state of press freedom in their countries. It was like that old comedy routine where two men compare the poverty of their youth: 'You think living in a cardboard box was bad. We couldn't even afford a box.'

And just to show that elections, or what usually passes for elections in this part of the world, are bad for journalists, several journalists with state-run news agencies in Kazakhstan reported to Human Rights Watch that they were explicitly warned against submitting stories even obliquely critical of President Nursultan Nazarbaev in the campaign leading up to the 10 January elections.

Back in Moscow, the Russian Union held a ceremony one evening where the union's president, Vsevolod Bogdanov, presented commemorative medals to the children of journalists who had died while reporting, a reminder that journalism is still a dangerous career option in Russia.

Meanwhile, in Kiev, a journalist attending a reception at a US diplomat's apartment, casually says that he has been fined US\$1 million by the state. His newspaper is operating without telephones and has had to vacate its newsroom. He is not worried: US\$500 would have worried him; that he would have had to pay. The harassment of his newspaper means he has not been paid for six months. Thankfully for him his wife has a job.

He and a few other Ukrainian journalists have been invited so that a US visitor can be apprised of the state of press freedom. The Ukrainians present seem amused at this interest in their media. I

cannot help wondering if they are thinking of the US media and the Clinton/Lewinsky coverage and pondering just how much they have to learn about a free and independent press.

Kiev is a wonderful old city. Its stuccoed pastel coloured buildings glow in the harsh light reflected by the snow. The opera house is magnificent and the audience at the ballet reacts to the dance the way fans of football do in other cultures, cheering and shouting approval for a particular piece or movement. It is also the Wild West. A driver taking a group to the airport was not being stopped by the many militia along the road as was everyone else. 'My car is a good big car. They think I might be Mafia,' he says. The driver, who looks about 16 years old, produces a police identification. If they do stop the car he has no intention of handing over the customary bribe. He will simply show his identification.

'But no one will believe you are a policeman?'

'No, but they don't know who gave me the ID, he grins. He has masses of other identification as well, including a card that gives access to the Parliament.

The main school of journalism in Ukraine is the Institute of Journalism at the Kiev Taras Shevchenko University. It is housed in the impressive if Stalinist former Communist Party School. The place is like no other university anywhere. No graffiti. None at all. The females wear skirts and the males ties. There are no books to be seen. None of the piles of books and papers that occupy desks and shelves in other universities. Discussion is similarly tidy. At a seminar organised as part of an E U programme to aid journalists, academics and journalists read paper after paper. Any questions were responded to with the comment that the question was interesting and would be dealt with later. Later never came.

Outside the warmth of the institute, ordinary journalists take two more jobs just to survive. Militia were taking money; flash foreign cars drove Mafia through the city. With elections looming, there is a view among human rights groups and journalists that press freedom is getting worse and that President Leonid Kuchma is moving closer to that ground now occupied by President Aleksandr Lukashenka of neighbouring Belarus.

Journalists working in Minsk, the Belarus capital, fare worse than in any of the former Soviet republics. The former collective farm manager, now president, is almost universally shunned, and cannot even get membership of the Council of Europe, a body that is willing to embrace Turkey, Croatia and Ukraine. Independent newspapers are continually harassed and the biggest, *Svoboda*, has to be printed in Vilnius, across the border in Lithuania.

There is little or no investment in the independent press. Only one per cent of the economy is in the private sector and, in 1997, total foreign investment was only US\$40 million. The electronic media is almost totally state-owned and the print media is forced to use state-owned printing plants where it is at the mercy of the authorities, as it is in its dealings with the state-run distribution system.

Sometimes one is left with the impression that Lukashenko is playing with the press. There is no doubt he could simply close it down completely if he chose; he prefers, instead, simply to make its life a misery.

The most recent case of harassment was of the Belarusian-language newspaper *NashaNiva* which was warned that it had violated the Laws on Press and Other Mass Media for deviating from the accepted form of spelling and punctuation. The newspaper was using a form of spelling common in the 1920s until banned by Stalin. The Supreme Court ruled, on this occasion, in favour of the newspaper, but the chairman of the Committee on the Press, Mikhail Padgainy, has already filed a complaint and a request that the court revoke its own decision

Minsk has had a bad press. One old joke goes that you could build a wall round Minsk, call it Stalinland and people would pay to go into it as though it were a theme park. Some are convinced that it is the model for Malcolm Bradbury's take-off of all those East European travel guides that used to extol the beauty of the tractor factory: 'Welcome to Slaka'.

In fairness to the residents of Minsk, once Stalin had decided to reward them for their heroism in World War II by demolishing the old city, ancient urban heart of Europe's Jewry, and replacing it with a model 1950s neo-brutal 'Hero Town', they were not given much

choice as to their surroundings. It is probably the least unreconstructed part of the former USSR. Lenin looms down from plinths in the Metro and even the KGB has never felt it necessary to change its name. Its pale yellow stone Soviet neo-classical building stands impressively within a few blocks of a McDonalds.

Despite President Lukashenka, the poverty of those begging in the underpasses, the ubiquitous camouflage-wearing militia, I cannot help having a soft spot for Minsk. It might be a minority taste, but I like the way the river meanders through the city, its many parks, the old Soviet architectural grandeur and, above all, the friendliness of the people.

It is a city of policemen, who are everywhere in camouflage outfits, as if ready for a guerrilla war. They stop cars for spot checks and blow whistles if you attempt to cross one of the vast boulevards - wide enough to land a Boeing 747 they seem - without using the underpasses.

Meanwhile, back in Russia, the economic crisis has hit journalists in different ways. Regional newspapers have had to withdraw Moscow correspondents because of the costs. Some say this has placed them even more firmly under the thumb of the local authorities.

Journalists are also increasingly willing to write complimentary pieces about local politicians or business interests in return for a fee. 'It's easy to be ethical when you're paid a wage,' one told me when we Western journalists expressed horror at this.

There has, however, been one unexpected benefit from the economic crisis. Alexei Simonov of the Glasnost Defence Foundation which monitors media abuses and provides legal help, says that the economic crisis forced the media to be less obsessed with themselves. They began to understand that survival was not just a media problem but one that concerned the whole of society; and that outside the power structures there was a society waiting to be addressed. Newspapers started to write 'how to survive' stories and have become more relevant. The number of newspapers has fallen, but total sales have increased. For the first time since the end of the Soviet Union, people are buying newspapers because they are useful and important to their lives.

The 'least bad situation' is in Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova, says Simonov. It is getting worse in Ukraine which, like Kazakhstan, appears to be closing media ranks with Belarus. Turkmenistan, he adds, is the very worst case: 'There is no problem with freedom of speech in Turkmenistan because there is no such thing.' In Armenia there is a free press, of sorts, but there are no laws; In Azerbaijan, as in Belarus, there is one-man rule and little room for press freedom. •

*Michael Foley is a media commentator at the Irish Times and a lecturer in journalism at the Dublin Institute of Technology*

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## The Vardar Shores of Peace

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# THE VARDAR SHORES OF PEACE

## MICHAEL FOLEY

The Stone Bridge over the River Vardar in the middle of the Macedonian capital, Skopje, divides more than just the old city and the new: it divides two communities, the Albanians and Slav Macedonians.

On one side, the Albanian, are the minarets and domes, the bazaars and the Ottoman architecture. Small boys try to sell you lighters and ballpoint pens, men in white skullcaps play backgammon and drink tea. Some women are veiled. This side of Skopje is Asia and Muslim. A walk across the stone bridge, built on Roman foundations, and one walks into modernity.

The 'new' Skopje rose out of the ruins of the earthquake in 1963. To suffer an earthquake that left 100,000 without homes was bad enough; to suffer twice over with the neo-brutal rebuilding of the city under a 1960s communist regime compounded the tragedy. The city was rebuilt in concrete, with highways cutting swathes through it. Today, apartment blocks are streaked with water stains. Here and there a balcony has fallen, giving a building the look of a mouth missing a tooth or two. Paving has subsided and grass and weeds are growing between the cracks. The street furniture, the traffic lights, direction signs, manholes, are rusty. Scaffolding usually means something is being held up rather than repaired. Green spaces running along the centre of roads or between buildings are full of weeds. More recent buildings are little better, especially churches, whose architects seem to specialise in their own particular form of brutalism.

Along the embankment of the Vardar in central Skopje, young Macedonians sit looking across the slow-moving river towards the mountains that surround the city, at the domes and minarets. They sit outside the new trendy bars: the Irish bar with its dark wooden interior; the New York-style bars with cocktails; the sophisticated bars decorated in chrome and mirrors. Given that few are wealthy in Macedonia, it would be invidious to suggest that on one side of the Vardar sit the wealthy looking over at the poor on the other, but that is what it looks like to a visitor. On one side the Orient, poor and exotic; on the other, the bars and banks of a richer, more powerful people. Albanians account for 70% of social welfare. Macedonia was always the poorest part of Yugoslavia and has hardly prospered since independence in 1991. Since the outbreak of violence last summer, what little economic activity there was has slowed to a trickle.

Macedonia is a strikingly beautiful country. Eating at a former monastery in the mountains overlooking Skopje, it is easy to forget that quite close is a village where The Hague War Crimes Tribunal is investigating the deaths of Albanian villagers.

It is still a tense country, despite the peace deal. Driving from Skopje to Ohrid you pass what Macedonian friends say are policemen. They sit in sandbagged emplacements with heavy machine guns poking out. They wear camouflage and body armour and check cars carefully. Since the Framework Agreement was signed, violent incidents, border shootouts and bomb blasts have continued to take place on a regular basis.

Whenever there is an incident, NATO and EU officials appear on television saying the agreement is in place: there is no war. Macedonian journalists say there is a difference between incidents and war. Anyway, they say, most incidents take place within the Albanian community, between different guerrilla factions, emphasising, again, the separateness of the two communities.

If any Macedonians ever read this, they will throw their eyes heavenwards in frustration and say that such an analysis is typical of Western journalists who have misunderstood the Macedonians and the Albanians since the violence last year. Macedonians are a friendly people and are great company. However, they do feel aggrieved. The treatment of the ethnic Albanians has been appalling but, as far as many Slav Macedonians are concerned, the Albanian minority has achieved concessions by terrorist means. Outside the parliament building in Skopje, there is a permanent protest against constitutional changes.

Macedonians believe the international media have been unfair to them. At a meeting of the Journalists' Association, called to discuss a new code of conduct and partly intended to stop the attacks the ethnic media make on each other, one journalist asked if there was any way to stop the foreign media from supporting 'Albanian terrorism'. The Macedonians do have a point. Western journalists covered the plight of the Macedonian Albanians as an extension of the war in Kosovo, as if Albanians in Macedonia had suffered the same degree of ethnic cleansing. Albanian guerrilla leaders were portrayed as romantic figures, even though the NATO General Secretary, Lord Robertson, has described the Albanian National Liberation Army as 'a bunch of murderous thugs'.

Macedonians feel they have few friends. Bulgarians to the north-east claim Slav Macedonians are Bulgarians. Macedonians believe Albania and Kosovar Albanians want to make Macedonia part of a Greater Albania. The Greeks, of course, oppose Macedonia even being called Macedonia and insist the country be called, awkwardly, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, or FYROM.

When ethnic violence erupted, the international community rushed in to find a solution as fast as possible; there are so many conflicting claims that any conflict in this small country could ignite the whole region, bringing in Serbia, Kosovo, Albania, Greece, Bulgaria and even Turkey. Since a peace was brokered by Western diplomats last year, foreigners have been present in the form of consultants, monitors, mediators, facilitators and even soldiers. And

since the Framework Agreement was signed, the international community has been trying to force one compromise after another on the two sides. The carrot for the people of Macedonia and their political leaders is aid money. Earlier this year, €307 million was committed to the country for development and reconstruction. Whether all this effort has dealt with the country's deeply rooted problems of inter-ethnic tensions, corruption, nepotism and organised crime is a moot point.

Some observers have talked of the two main ethnic communities living in separate parallel worlds. Albanians and Macedonians pass each other in the streets, deal -with each other in shops, but that is it. There is no interest in the culture, the music, the literature or drama of the other side.

This parallel world extends to politics. The 15 September general election saw two distinct and separate campaigns: one within the Macedonian community, another in the Albanian. The other smaller ethnic groups — there are so many that the French coined the phrase *salade macedoine* for their mixed, multi-vegetable salad — pick up seats where they can. Macedonia is one of the few, possibly the only, country where there have been Roma members of parliament.

As much as any other institution, the media conform to this parallel universe. There are the Macedonian media and the Albanian media. They both cover the same events, but from totally opposing viewpoints. What unites them is a cavalier attitude to sources: they run stories without sources, publish rumours as fact, include unsourced comments, put quotations into people's mouths and insert opinion directly into the middle of a news items. Journalists do not even train together. At the journalism school at Skopje's university there is only one Albanian student.

There is a huge amount of media for a country of about 2 million people. A spokeswoman for the Macedonian Institute for the Media estimated that there were around 130 radio and television stations, including pirate stations, and about 50 newspapers. TV stations and newspapers are either supported by the state or by political and business interests, none of which is any guarantee of independence. It goes without saying that there is little concept of public service media. Given that on top of all this

journalists are inexperienced and badly paid, the question of whether the Macedonian media were at all capable of covering the election competently had to be asked. At least one researcher involved in an EU-funded media monitoring exercise said he thought not.

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Journalists are aware of the problems, but few of the international bodies that are involved in journalism training or media support have addressed either ownership or pay and conditions. The journalists, through the Association of Journalists of Macedonia and the International Federation of Journalists, have formulated a code of conduct and have begun to implement it. The code is the first serious attempt to confront issues such as a lack of professionalism and solidarity, hate speech and problems associated with ethnicity. However, even such worthy and genuine initiatives are problematic: the council charged with implementing the code has no Albanian journalists taking part in its deliberations. •

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## Waiting in the Wings

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## WAITING IN THE WINGS

MICHAEL FOLEY

INCLUSION IN THE EU MAY BE THE  
ONLY WAY OF RESOLVING CONFLICT  
AMONG THE COMPLICATED ETHNIC  
MIX OF THE BALKANS

The past is a different country and nowhere is this more evident than in the former communist countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. Take, for instance, Sofia, which expects to be an EU capital in 2007. The degree of change is such that in the early 1990s the *Rough Guide* to Bulgaria was hard pushed to find a decent restaurant outside an overpriced hotel. Sofia, it says, was never the liveliest of Balkan capitals, 'its social life suffering from the endless moralising of a regime which frowned on ostentation and promoted modesty of habits'. Back then it could say things were improving and that state-owned restaurants and cafés were attaining financial independence. In those days, the remnants of communist rule were still in evidence. The Georgi Dimitrov mausoleum that once housed the body of the founder of communist Bulgaria was still in place in central Sofia, even if Mr Dimitrov's body had been removed elsewhere. Today it is gone and until recently a large ad for Tullamore Dew Irish Whiskey stood in its place.

Today Boulevard Vitosha, Sofia's main street, is full of designer shops. All around central Sofia are ultra-cool bars and restaurants. Luxury goods from Western Europe and the US are on sale at Western European and US prices. A large four-wheel drive with tinted windows is a favourite vehicle. But behind the modernity is evidence of another Sofia. Granted, there are still signs of the former regime: the old party headquarters, a magnificent example of Stalinist neo-classical architecture, still straddles a junction looking like a great ship, dominating the centre of the city. But look even closer, and you find that the cracks have not quite been covered over. Criminal gangs are regularly involved in shoot-outs. Journalists tell you that corruption exists at every level and if you are wondering who can shop at all those designer shops, well, hardly anyone actually, as so many are simply money-laundering operations.

But there is another Sofia, where people live on little more than €100 (cUS\$75) a month. A 10-minute walk from Boulevard Vitosha and its

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But there is another Sofia, where people live on little more than €100 (US\$75) a month. A 10-minute walk from Boulevard Vitosha and its designer shops is the Ladies' Market, a huge network of stalls and market buildings that sells everything and sells it cheap. Here one can get a glimpse of what Sofia might have been like before the communist takeover of 1947 and the more recent mafia rule. Even some of the buildings have an Ottoman feel. Here, farmers come to sell bags of potatoes, handfuls of herbs and bags of spices, tomatoes and cucumbers fresh from the fields; the smells are not of pizza and McDonald's but of kebabs. Here Sofia becomes the capital of a South-East European country.

Take the metro to the end of the line, to Obelia, one of the communities of crumbling concrete apartment buildings that house Sofia's working class, built during the 1960s and 1970s. Here, green areas are knee-high in weeds. The shops are rusty metal stalls. In some places, residents have tried to brighten the

place by sowing some flowers or vegetables but it is just too bleak and desolate to make a difference. In the distance, across a large scrubby green space are more crumbling buildings.

Back in the centre and behind the facades of Western shops and fast-food plastic shop fronts the plasterwork is falling off in chunks, windows are covered in plastic sheeting, pipes are rusty and the walls are discoloured by water stains. The roads, including the main roads, are pock-marked with holes; even the main road from the airport to the centre of the city is pot-holed to excess. The pavements of Sofia are more or less a jigsaw of cracked and broken paving that clicks and kicks back as you walk. Street furniture such as traffic lights, traffic signs and bollards are rusted and broken. There are inexplicable lumps of metal sticking out of the pavements that once

presumably had some function, but are now waiting to impale passers-by. In another culture this would be compensation heaven.

Bulgaria may have dangerous levels of corruption and organised crime; it may have high levels of poverty; but it has embraced the market economy and is joining the EU by 2007.

So popular is the EU that almost the first thing you see on arriving at Sofia airport is a huge EU flag descending from the ceiling over passport control. Outside, the blue and golden stars of the EU fly alongside the Bulgarian flag over government buildings. Near the Sheraton Hotel, the sellers of cheap souvenirs and postcards sell little Bulgarian flags and, of course, the EU one as well. One visitor suggested that Bulgaria was hoping some EU official would see so many flags he'd assume the country must already have joined without anyone noticing.

It would be a mistake to see Sofia as simply a European capital waiting patiently for its turn to take up its EU membership. It has, no doubt, achieved a remarkable turnaround; it is, after all, only 10 years since inflation was so high the government just had to chop zeros off the value of the currency as it became increasingly worthless. Today, the economy is stable and inflation under control.

Political observers in Bulgaria do not view its EU membership as a favour but a right. It is the culmination of a debate that was taking place since liberation in 1876 right up to the communist victory in 1947: does Bulgaria face Russia or Europe? Does it modernise or, in the words of one political scientist, become a mafiocracy? If it continues on its journey towards the EU, it means much of South-Eastern Europe follows. If the initial impetus to a union within Europe was to stop further conflict after World War II, then stability in today's Balkans must be ensured by offering the region membership without strings.

Bulgaria will be the first of the old communist Balkan countries to take up its

right. In Sofia, journalists and academics remind visitors that Bulgaria was a model of stability and peace throughout the 1990s. It was the first country to recognise Macedonia, despite what some might see as unfinished business in terms of its borders. All of this will confer the further right to join European institutions; and, if Bulgaria has that right, so does the rest of the Balkans; and if the Balkans join, so does Turkey.

Bulgaria may have lived under the Ottoman yoke, as they say in this part of the world, for 500 years, but the people of the country have a shared history; one of the two parties in the present coalition is the party of the

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EUROPE: BULGARIA

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## CentralAsian state that hasn't quite turned its back on the Soviet past

Thu, May 24, 2012

**KYRGYZSTAN LETTER:** The mainly Russian population is aging. Young ethnic Russians and Ukrainians are leaving, writes **MICHAEL FOLEY**

KYRGYZSTAN WEARS its Soviet past lightly. A statue of Lenin, exhorting the people of the capital, Bishkek, to revolution used to stand in the main square, then called Lenin Square, but was moved. Not to an obscure suburban park or even the scrapyard, but to a slightly lesser square, one block away. He stands, 10 metres tall, still pointing, with his jacket and coat open as he asks “What is to be done?” Lenin was replaced by a statue of a flame-bearing woman, surrounded by symbols of the newly independent Kyrgyzstan.

A wonderful statue of Marx and Engels faces the American University of Central Asia, where, presumably, little of Marx and Engels is discussed.

However, the compromise here is that their names have disappeared from the plinth, so they look like two anonymous Victorian gentlemen having an intense discussion, which, presumably, they often did in life. The hammer and sickle are still proudly carved into the pediment of the American University, as they are on so many buildings in central Bishkek.

However, the most remarkable relic of the former regime is in the State Historical Museum. There are the artefacts recalling Kyrgyzstan’s pre-historic past and the history of its nomadic people, but what is remarkable is a collection of huge bronze tableaux recalling the revolution and the life of Lenin and a wonderful painted ceiling telling the history of the Soviet Union.

In most former Soviet countries, such an exhibition would have long been moved, but here in Kyrgyzstan it still stands, whether because of an ambiguity towards the recent past or just indifference is not clear.

In the immediate post-Soviet period Kyrgyzstan was seen as a beacon of democracy in the region. Not necessarily a very strong one, but clearly better than its neighbours.

That is probably still the case – its scores in indicators such as press freedom indexes are far better than those of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, countries with which it shares a border. It also has a border with China. However, its record is flawed with election irregularities, corruption, the harassment of opposition figures and journalists, and the closure of newspapers. In the south there have been ethnic tensions between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. Two post-Soviet presidents have been swept from power, the second only a year ago.

Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who became president in 2005, was ousted following riots and demonstrations around the country due to high energy prices, corruption and lack of economic progress. The president also ordered the closure of several media outlets. As with previous political crises, the West took little interest, presumably because not enough people tweeted about it.

What interest there was came as a result of the presence of Russian and US military bases. The US base at Manas airport, the main international airport for Bishkek, serves the US military in Afghanistan. There has been much speculation about the role of Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin, in the crisis. He was opposed to the renewal of the lease for the US airforce base, and there is no doubt that elements of the Russian media ran a campaign against Bakiyev.

Bishkek is a pleasant city, full of trees, shrubs and parks, which serve to hide or disguise the cracked concrete, the peeling plaster and rusting ironwork so common in most post-Soviet cities. However, a few hours' drive from Bishkek is Balykchy, right beside Issy-Kul, the enormous lake 182km long and up to 60km wide that dominates the mountains of northern Kyrgyzstan. Balykchy shows starkly the real state of Kyrgyzstan, which is one of the poorest countries of the former Soviet Union. Here there are few trees to hide the closed factories, with the broken windows, rusting pipes and cracked pavements and roads.

The mainly Russian population is aging and falling in number. Younger ethnic Russians and Ukrainians are leaving.

Old people try to sell visitors dried fish from the lake, waving their produce at passing traffic or surrounding anyone who gets out of a bus or car. The ethnic makeup of Kyrgyzstan is, to a large extent, a result of Stalin's policy on nationality. Ethnic Germans were moved to Central Asia during the Great Patriotic War, Russians and Ukrainians were sent to a sort of frontier to run factories and other enterprises. Cosmonauts and pilots trained at Lake Issy-Kul, which was a closed, secure area. It was also a holiday area for the Soviet elite.

All collapsed upon independence, though it is believed Boris Yeltsin liked to holiday at Issy-Kul and a statue is said to be somewhere in the region.  
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## The Irish Times

12<sup>th</sup> Oct 1997

By Michael Foley, Media Correspondent.

Just over ten years ago the English comic writer, Malcolm Bradbury, wrote "Why Come to Slaka". It was a satire on all those guides and accounts of Central and Eastern Europe written by the authorities. The sort of thing that praised the output from the tractor factory, and the peace loving people, in extrable and pompous English.

With the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and the Soviet Union all that ended, or so we thought. Slava still exists. It is called Belarus.

Belarus has been called an open museum of the Soviet Union. One foreigner working there suggested that if a wall was built around the capital, Minsk, the authorities could demand that people pay in to visit the theme park "Stalin-land"

Minsk is the only city in what is now the CIS where the street names were not changed, other than one central avenue changed the Skaryny Prospect, named after the man who translated the Bible into Belarussian.

Everywhere else there are Lenin's Streets. Both Karl Marx and Frederick Engels remain as street names, as does Communist Party Street and Komsomol Street. Lenin is still asking "What is to be done" in Independence Square and workers clutch hammers and sickles on giant murals. What is truly surreal is to stand at the statue honouring Felix Dzerzhinsky, the much feared founder of the KGB and see the yellow neo classical KGB headquarters to the left and further down the street, to the right is the giant red M of McDonald's.

Belarus has retained the name, KGB, and a few weeks ago members honoured their founder on the occasion of the 120th anniversary of his birth by laying a wreath at his statue. The KGB are also seeking the funds to do up the statue and give proper respect to the man who carried out Stalin's purges.

A protest was held, Minsk is a great city for protests. A wreath of barbed wire was laid at the statue as well. It lasted about ten minutes before being removed. One man was arrested and fined.

The presence of the KGB is not just simply a curious throwback to the Soviet era. It is evidence of gross insensitivity and an indication of what is happening to Belarus. Outside Minsk at a place called Kurapaty a mass grave was discovered in 1988. In Belarussia's own Killing fields there was evidence of perhaps 250,000 from Belarus and Poland were shot between 1937 and 1941. The discovery of Kurapaty and the Chernobyl fallout in 1986, in which Belarus received 70 per cent of the fall-out seriously polluting 23 per cent of the land.

The fact that there was a cover up as to just how serious the fallout was and a real sense of paranoia directed at Russia (some believe that Russia seeded the clouds ensuring that polluted material fell on Belarus rather than Russia)

Both Chernobyl and Kurapaty have had a big effect on the national conscience and have probably done more to forge a feeling of nationhood than almost anything else.

Nationalism, it must be said, is rather confused in Belarus. Independence was declared after the hard-line putsch against Gorbachev failed in 1991. The leadership in Minsk had taken the other side.

Young Belarussians take a pro independence line and many speak Belarus, but older people remember the Soviet period with some nostalgia, when Minsk was one of the most wealthy cities of the USSR.

The country is now ruled by Alexander Lukashenko, a former collective farm manager with dictatorial tendencies and a distinctly pro Russian attitude. So pro Russian is Lukashenko that not only does he wish to promote union with Russia, many believe very seriously that he has ambitions to be the next Russian President himself.



There are signs of change though. Independent newspapers exist beside the state funded ones, though they are vulnerable and suffer constant harassment. While the old Soviet system of shopping is the norm, where you queue up to seek what you want and get the price, queue again at a cashiers kiosk to pay and get a ticket and queue again to get the goods, new shops have opened. Foreigners are easily spotted. They are the quizzical ones watching carefully to try and work out what is going on.

Economic observers say that the economy is becoming increasingly centralised, and that the state sector accounts for about 70 per cent of activity. Some foreign shops, such as Benetons, have opened, but the private kiosks that are everywhere in Russia, are not so much in evidence.

One popular Spanish restaurant was closed, on the orders of the president, for whom no detail is too small. The reason, it was not serving Belarus food. It has since re-opened.

Minsk was totally destroyed in the last war. The city was rebuilt and is now almost entirely a 1950s and 60s city. It was to be a workers paradise, a model city for the rest of the Soviet Union. It can be grim in the rain, when all that concrete turns grey, but it is unexpectedly impressive as well. No one style was adhered to and there is neo everything. There is even a small "old town" that the guidebook says gives a glimpse of what Minsk was like in the 19th century, only it was built in the 1950s as well.

It is a city of wide streets and trees, with hundreds of parks. It is also a city of policemen, who are everywhere in camouflage outfits, as if ready for a guerrilla war. They stop cars for spot checks and blows whistles at you if you attempt to cross one of the wide avenues, wide enough to land a 747 some of them feel, without using the underpasses.

# Between communism and global capitalism

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The Irish Times

First published: Sat, Aug 6, 2011, 01:00

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**TRAVEL: *On the Road to Babadag: Travels in the Other Europe* By Andrzej Stasiuk Translated by Michael Kandel Harvill Secker, 255pp. £14.99**

I WAS once in Uzhgorod, a town in western Ukraine, the bit that sticks into central Europe, only two kilometres from Slovakia, and a short drive from Hungary, Romania and Poland. Uzhgorod had been part of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, independent Ukraine, the capital of an independent Carpathian republic, the USSR and then Ukraine again. It is the sort of place the Polish writer, Andrzej Stasiuk, loves – a place of drifting identity, where languages clash, where borders are porous, and where it is difficult to tell the border guards and the smugglers apart.

Stasiuk travelled all around the border area of Ukraine, Romania and Slovakia and did visit many places like Uzhgorod, because he is drawn to places in “decline, decay” to everything that is not as it should be.

Stasiuk is a major writer in Eastern Europe. He is the author of about a dozen works, including a collection of short stories written following his imprisonment for deserting from the Polish army in the early 1980s. He and his wife also run a small publishing house.

*On The Road to Babadag: Travels in the Other Europe* is a work of philosophy, memory and exploration, an attempt to find the essence of eastern and south-eastern Europe. Using buses, cars, trains and ferries, he travels through the small towns and villages of Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, Albania, Moldova, Ukraine and even strange little Transnistria, a slither of Moldova that has ceded and declared itself, all 200km long and 30km wide, to be an independent country, a group of states which is now almost a parody of the former Soviet Union. His description of the red and white pole at the border post leading to Ukraine in the middle of miles of wheat fields is a wonderful observation of hubris and folly.

The Europe he sees is changing and not necessarily always in a welcome way. There is the old man who is delighted when Stasiuk recognises Ceausescu in the photograph on the wall of his little farm house, as well as those who pine for the communist period. The heart of Stasiuk’s Europe, he says, “beats in Sokolow Podlaskie and Husi”. The first is a town in Poland and the second in Romania, but they could be any of the towns and villages he wanders through. It definitely does not beat in Vienna, Budapest or Krakow: “Those places are all aborted transplants. A mock-up, a mirror of what is elsewhere.”

Stasiuk travels incessantly. His passport, he tells us, has nearly 200 stamps. He glories in the ordinary, an old man in a bar, the cattle wandering the little roads and, above all, the Gypsies.

Outside the town of Baia Mare, he describes an industrial suburb, or the rust belt that surrounds so many eastern European towns: "The flat field was choked with rusting metal, pieces of concrete, abandoned plastic. Landfill smouldered sleepily, reeking. The sun shone on red-brown construction beams, on the broken windows of factories, on gutted warehouses, on lifeless cranes, on corroded steel, and on eroded brick." And on it goes. But then: "Among these ruins and dumps, cows grazed on patches of maltreated grass, In the shadow of a giant steel chimney trotted a flock of sheep. In Baia Mare, time circled. Animals walked between inert machines". The animals which had endured since the "beginning of the world" were now "quietly triumphant".

In other places he writes of the little wooden houses covered in vines, of lovingly tended gardens, of hospitable people inviting him for a *borovocka*, a *cujka*, a *rakija*, a raki or a vodka, depending on the country.

The book probably needs more extensive notes. Writers, historical figures, thinkers are introduced or mentioned in passing without explanation, which might be confusing to some. However, for those who know something of the region it makes you want to go back and find some of those small towns and villages, where fields are still ploughed with horses and seeds scattered by hand.

Stasiuk has been compared to Jack Kerouac, which is a bit misleading; a better comparison might be with a fellow Pole, the literary journalist, Ryszard Kapuscinski. There is a feeling of the "magic journalism" of Kapuscinski about Stasiuk's work. But, where Kapuscinski wanted to translate one culture to another, mainly Africa to the West, Stasiuk is on a personal journey into the heart of that other Europe, balanced between its communist past and its uneasy relationship with its capitalist and global present and future.

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[Fri, Feb 22, 2013, 02:43](#)

## Journalists still face harassment, death

*Last Updated: Friday, February 8, 2013, 00:40*

It was the French historian Alexis de Tocqueville who suggested that in order to enjoy the "inestimable benefits that the liberty of the press ensures" it is necessary to accept the "inevitable evils it creates". There are those who might maintain that the "inevitable evil" now outweighs the "inestimable benefits", but for many journalists the reality of life in the 1990s is one of harassment, imprisonment and even death.

This year World Press Freedom Day takes on a special significance as journalists in the Balkans find that they are considered legitimate targets and events in Serbia and Kosovo bring into stark relief issues concerning press freedom, freedom of expression and the role of the journalist as witness.

Since the beginning of the decade Yugoslavia has been a particularly dangerous place for journalists. Between 1992 and 1995, 45 journalists died, according to the New York-based Committee for the Protection of Journalists. In the past two weeks Slavko Curuvija, a Serbian publisher and journalist, was murdered in Belgrade and more recently NATO has determined that Yugoslav television is a legitimate target.

World Press Freedom Day was designated by the UN to celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom. It serves as an occasion to inform citizens of press freedom violations - a reminder that in dozens of countries publications are censored, fined, suspended and closed, while journalists, editors and publishers are harassed, attacked, detained and murdered.

The role of the press has become increasingly controversial since the end of the Cold War. It was Radio Mille Collines that was central to the genocide in Rwanda and in Yugoslavia it was Slobodan Milosevic's control of the media that made the war possible.

In the words of the journalist William Shawcross, writing in the preface of Mark Thompson's study of the role of the media in former Yugoslavia, *Forging War*: "The war could not have been begun, or sustained, by Serbia without the co-operation of the Serb media as the willing creatures of the Milosevic government."

Even though the media can be both an integral part of a developing democracy, or be used by tyrants to destroy it, the international community has rarely seen the development of independent media as being central to emerging democracies. During the Palestinian elections a few years ago, the EU was able to declare the elections to the Palestinian Authority as free and fair, even though journalists and the press had been harassed and imprisoned.

In the latest worldwide survey from the Committee to Protect Journalists, *Attacks on the Press*, in 1998, Ms Sylvia Poggioli, the senior European correspondent for American National Public Radio, writes that harassment of the media is not exclusive to the Balkans: "But what makes ill treatment of the media in the former Yugoslavia particularly disturbing is that this region has been the object of intense diplomatic involvement and scrutiny by the international community over the past several years, yet Western diplomacy has focused mainly on regional stability at the expense of freedom of information and free speech."

FOR much of the world the reality for journalists is either they are mouthpieces of the powerful, acting merely as propagandists, or they are independent, and are witnesses and watchdogs, and that is dangerous. Already this year at least 10 journalists have been killed, not counting those who died in the bombing of the Serb television station by NATO. In 1999 the most dangerous place to be a journalist is Sierra Leone.

According to the World Association of Newspapers, 28 journalists were murdered in 17 countries in 1998, with 117 held in prison and censorship and other forms of repression of the press existing in 119 countries.

But it is not just the obvious cases of murder and imprisonment. Most of the new democracies, and even some of the older ones, have constitutions that guarantee freedom of expression and a free press. However, the reality is somewhat different.

Defamation laws, tax laws and special statutes that forbid insulting top officials are used to ensure the new independent media is kept under control. In Belarus, for instance, newspapers are forced to be printed outside the country. In Ukraine, newspaper editors have been fined thousands of dollars. The situation is the same in most former eastern bloc countries.

Long before the NATO bombs began to fall, the Serb authorities singled out independent journalists for special treatment. According to the International Press Institute's annual World Press Freedom Review, the deputy prime minister and leader of Belgrade's Radical Party, Mr Vojislav Seselj, described independent editors as NATO officers and the general secretary of NATO, Mr Javier Solana, "the man who decided on the bombing and destruction of Serbia and the killing of its citizens" as their "chief editor".

World Press Freedom Day might seem to have little relevance in Ireland. Rather than an extension of press freedom, there seems to be a view that regulation is probably more appropriate. However, the Government has decided against incorporating the European Convention on Human Rights, with its

strong traditions of defending and extending media rights, into Irish law, while at the same time important institutions, including the Garda, have been exempted from the Freedom of Information Act.

At the same time local authorities hold sessions "in committee" so as to exclude journalists. One authority actually discussed the Freedom Of Information Act in committee.

In Ireland World Press Freedom Day was marked with a unique act of solidarity. For the first time both the employers and the journalists' trade union issued a joint statement. The National Union of Journalists, the National Newspapers of Ireland and the Regional Newspaper Association of Ireland have called for reform of the libel laws as recommended by the Law Reform Commission in 1991.

The statement has committed the industry to funding the establishment of an independent newspaper Ombudsman to investigate breaches of press standards. The industry says, however, that in order for the Ombudsman to operate effectively, libel laws have to be reformed.

Michael Foley is a lecturer in journalism at the Dublin Institute of Technology and has been involved extensively in journalist education in Eastern and Central Europe

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## Appendix One

Foley, M. Hayes, N. and O'Neill, B. Children's Rights and Journalism Practice: A Rights-Based Perspective.

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