

# Diversities in the Macedonian Media reporting during the wars in former Yugoslavia

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## Introduction

It probably won't be an understatement if we say that the development of the print media in Macedonia during the nineties, after the break up of former Yugoslavia, is not very different from the other countries which went through the similar process of post-socialist transition. However, fragmentation and consequential positioning of the main actors in this part of the media business has its own local specifics and tendencies, among which as most prominent we can mention their inconsistency and partisan-like style of work. While the TV media tried their fortunes almost right after the monopoly of the state media was revoked (e.g. RTA TV started transmitting in 1992 and A1 TV broadcasted its first program in 1993), the print media needed almost five years to take the first steps (Sopar: 2003). Before the actual onset of the daily newspapers in Macedonia, which started in 1996, the only enterprise publishing daily newspapers was NIP "Nova Makedonija" which produced 4 dailies, two in Macedonian language (Nova Makedonija, Vecer), one in Albanian language (Flaka) and one in Turkish language (Birilik). Beside this, NIP "Nova Makedonija" was distributing nine more editions, targeting different groups of readers (ibid).

The first daily newspaper to break this firm monopoly was "Dnevnik" (1996), and then followed: "Fakti" daily newspaper in Albanian language (1998), "Makedonija Denes" in 1998, "Utrinski vesnik" (1999), "Vest" (2000), "Roma Times" (daily newspaper in Roma language, 2003), "Vreme" (2004) and "Koha Ditore" (in Albanian language, 2004). Concerning the weekly newspapers, they had similar timeline of emerging, "Fokus" in 1995, "Denes" (1997), "Start" (1999), "Kapital" (1999), and finally "ZUM", "Aktuel" and "Lobi" (in Albanian) in 2000.

## Methodology

In an attempt to shed a light on the way Macedonian print media were covering the wars in former Yugoslavia, the method of so called quantitative and qualitative analysis was applied specifically concerning the articles published in the *Nova Makedonija* and *Flaka* newspapers during three defined periods of reporting (i.e. beginning of the war in Slovenia, the massacre on the Sarajevo green-market and the start of the Kosovo conflict). In the analysis the following elements were included:

- main headlines and subtitles for the aforementioned events;
- genre and structure of the articles;
- number of the page where the article is published, in reference to the priority of the news
- author of the text (journalist, news agency);
- sources for the information;
- photographs accompanying the text;

Why is this research focusing only on *Nova Makedonija* and *Flaka*? Considering the specifics of the Macedonian media, especially Macedonian print media, several

arguments should be mentioned. In the first period of the research (25 June to 02 July 1991) *Nova Makedonija* and *Vecer* (both printed by NIP Nova Makedonija) were the dominant duo of daily newspapers and *Flaka* was the only daily newspaper in Albanian language in Macedonia. The position they had is clearly signaling what the potential influence on the readers was.

During the second period of the research (5 February 1994 to 12 February 1994) the positions of *Nova Makedonija* and *Flaka* on the print media market basically remained the same, although the competitive pressure that the increased number of new TV stations was putting on them has to be emphasized. Only the last period of the researching (24 March to 1 April 1999) is methodologically questionable considering the fact that the situation in the Macedonian print media was dramatically changed before the Kosovo war started, compared to the two previous periods of the research. Newly opened and fully functioning daily newspapers (*Dnevnik*, *Utrinski vesnik* and *Fakti*) pushed *Nova Makedonija* and *Flaka* to the brink of the business. It can be also noted that these two newspapers today have lost most of their readers, but concerning the factor of continuity and historical perspective the research will concentrate on them exclusively.

## **The Journalists**

„Je ne suppose rien, je ne pronose rien, j'expose -  
*I don't imply anything, I don't suggest anything, I just display*“  
*Auguste Comte*<sup>1</sup>

It can be noted that in most of the cases journalists claim that the principles which lead their work directly derive from the ideals of the positivism and the legacy of Auguste Comte. They actually expect that readers should believe in advance in such an approach by the reporters. Taking into account the cultural fact that the written word usually has more credibility than the spoken statement, based on the assumption that reporters invest more time, responsibility and checking of their published articles, the work of the journalists in the print media frequently escapes the necessary critical approach and public scrutiny. “The Modern Macedonian Man” has more skepticism for the manipulative potentials of the electronic media than for the “good old newspapers”. Therefore, there is a necessity to question and analyze the work of the local reporters and journalists, not in order to put additional pressure on them, but to help the process of establishing more professional journalism in Macedonia and also to discover the leading principles in the work of the journalists.

## **The War in Slovenia (25 June – 02 July 1991)**

Today, thirteen years after the war in Slovenia, anyone who will try to get more information about the way how *Nova Makedonija* daily covered the Slovenian war, would find relatively balanced news about these events, although *Nova Makedonija* used to be a strong pro-government newspaper. The newspaper had a special reporter from Slovenia who initially was supposed to cover the celebration of the Slovenian independence but suddenly found himself in the middle of a conflict and started to report

about the unexpected events in Ljubljana, informing in details about the problems that the regular Slovenian citizens were facing during “Ten Days’ War”. On 25<sup>th</sup> of June 1991 the front page of *Nova Makedonija* quotes “Behind the Democracy lies Separation?!”. The title indicates a sort of confusion and doubts that Nova Makedonija journalists were experiencing about the announced proclamation of the independence of Slovenia. In regard to this we can also mention the following: in the text under this title dominates a strong nostalgic feeling of the unsigned author who concludes: “Most of the Yugoslavian citizens consider the disassociation of Slovenia and Croatia as separation and definite end of Yugoslavia”, while the Slovenian citizens are “calmly accepting the process and consider it as a done deal”. In addition to the emotional feeling of the reporter is the photograph of Ljubljana followed by the sentence: “Ljubljana prepares for the fateful day”. On the fourth page a reader can find more details about the daily activities of the Slovenians just before the historic day, also termed as “D-day”, followed by the information on how the new Slovenian army will function and the list of legal acts that are about to be proclaimed.

The next edition of the newspaper for 26<sup>th</sup> of June reads in capital letters: “Slovenia and Croatia left Yugoslavia”. The photographs of Ljubljana and Zagreb are followed by the subtitle “Unilateral decisions of Slovenia and Croatia brought fear and doubts about the fate of Yugoslavia”. The front page and the single commentary in this edition are clearly emphasizing the negative opinion about the Slovenians in the light of the current events, who are depicted as “crafty people” who are trying “to profit from confusion”. In such circumstances the presentation of Slovenia and Croatia resembles an image of troublemakers. The label “unilateral” signals the attitude of the reporters who reflect on Yugoslavia as an entity, but an entity which apparently is facing the challenge of disintegration. These mixed feelings gradually result in ambivalent outlook of the reporters on Yugoslavia. Once Yugoslavia is termed as “outdone community”, but they also write: “We shouldn’t give up that easily (on Yugoslavia), it lasted for seven decades so everyone has some obligations towards the joint state“. The position of Macedonia in the new state of the affairs is not discussed. It can be said that, at least for the examined newspapers, the journalists generally didn’t anticipate the events, didn’t contribute with suggestions on how things can be resolved and also didn’t suggest the position that Macedonia should take during the Slovenian turmoil.

As the situation was quickly degenerating, *Nova Makedonija* started to give more space for the events in Slovenia. Consequently, the edition for 27<sup>th</sup> of June has to five pages on the situation in Slovenia. In order to report about all relevant happenings, this edition presents the photograph of the Slovenian police officers deployed at the new border between Slovenia and Croatia informing in the text under the photograph what measures Slovenian authorities were taking during the last twenty-four hours. The newspaper continues to report about the situation in Slovenia with the same intensity. The next day *Nova Makedonija* added some more pieces to the drama publishing photographs of tanks and soldiers regrouping on the Slovenian territory clearly presenting the state of war. One of the titles quotes “Shootings in Ljubljana” which indicates that the reporters and the journalists of *Nova Makedonia* were not trying to hide anything from their readers and were certainly not attempting to exercise a euphemistic approach to the reporting.

In regard to the sources for the reports and information, the careful reader can see that beside the daily reports from the accidental war correspondent from Ljubljana, the newspaper is using the news and announcements of the Yugoslavian press agency *Tanjug*, but also quotes *Delo* (Slovenian newspaper), *Oslobodjenje* (Bosnian newspaper), as well as the reports of *Radio Kopar* from Slovenia. Most of the articles have transparent sources of their information, but at different occasions reporters are using expressions like “there are some reports” which is indicating that they were using some unofficial and unconfirmed sources of information. But the journalists are well aware that the quantity of unconfirmed information is very high so in one of the reports in this edition they explicitly say: “This information should be treated with caution, since it is not confirmed officially”. At another occasion the reporter quotes that: “The (Slovenian) Ministers are giving contradicting, confusing and partial information which are very different from the information distributed by the Yugoslav army”, pointing out the attempts by the reporters to take an impartial position and criticize both sides in the conflict. As the tensions were increasing, the journalists were becoming more aware that they are actually placed in the middle of a political *galimatias* where statements, denials and accusations are given by both sides on hourly basis and the responsible side for the crisis is always the opposite one. One of the texts reads: “statements are coming from all sides, but all that they have are accusations for the other side”. We can note that *Nova Makedonija* is gradually leaving the initial position of criticism on the one side and starts taking a more balanced position towards the both sides involved in this conflict. They are considered equally responsible for the war drama that is taking place just in front of their eyes.

We can add that most of the time the highest Slovenian state officials are being cited and asked for information including the President, Prime Minister, President of the Parliament, members of the Parliament and high representatives of the main political parties. From the “Yugoslav side” the statements of the federal institutions and officials dominate (The Federal Executive Council, Secretariats of Defense and Interior, Federal Council, ministers, e.t.c). The opinions and statements of the international leaders and representatives are present on the pages of *Nova Makedonija* but apparently not too much. From the articles and the reporting it can be concluded that there is a good cooperation of the Slovenian officials with the journalists through regular press conferences and meetings. However, the Macedonian reporters from Slovenia consider the good organizing of the contacts of Slovenian representatives with the media as: “part of the propaganda war”. The statements of the federal institutions are published regularly after they are received from the state news agency *Tanjug*. More space is given to these statements and announcements, as they are treated as separate news, while the reports from Slovenia are frequently being compiled in one, relatively extensive, article.

Generally, the newspaper remains to be neutral although occasionally it leaves this position and tries to criticize both sides (e.g. Slovenian decisions are termed as unilateral, while Yugoslavia is qualified as hysterical). After analyzing the majority of articles we can say that Macedonia is clearly trying to stay aside of the *Slovenian chaos*. This is quite understandable considering the distance between the two countries, but with the crisis continuing to develop, discontent and fear of further escalations among the citizens of Macedonia was growing, especially among the families that had relatives serving in the Yugoslav army (JNA). The image of Slovenia as calm and quiet, almost idyllic, country is slowly shattering in the eyes of Macedonian people. Suddenly, it becomes “a place

where people are shooting at each other, inhabitants are being arrested or killed, it is a place filled with uncertainties and disturbances". The moments when stereotypes are breaking up always tend to be emotional rather than cognitive process (Breton 2000: 83). But even in this "version", Slovenia is still felt as part of the common state as the reporters often write about the Slovenian war as "the clashes in our country".

On the other hand the reporting in the *Flaka* daily newspaper in Albanian language about Slovenian war is rather reduced. The newspaper doesn't have a reporter from Slovenia, and the entire reporting about the events is based on the quoting of the news from different news agencies, among which *Tanjug* is the most common source.

For example, with a one day delay *Flaka* on 26<sup>th</sup> of June reports about "Democratic resolving of the Yugoslavian crisis" using information by *Tanjug*. The approach of transmitting the news of other news agencies does not provide conditions for objective and professional reporting. Also, the balancing of the news from different sides and more in-depth reporting are out of the question, since all the news have already been processed by other editorial boards and journalists. As a result, Albanian readers were actually disadvantaged concerning the information in their language about the critical events in Slovenia.

On page six of this edition some more space was given to the Slovenian side in which the reporter elaborated the position of Slovenia and its firm decision to leave Yugoslavia, in this text termed as "dismemberment from Yugoslavia". Also some doubts on the issue whether the Federal Prime Minister Ante Marković will deploy the army in order to prevent Slovenia from leaving the federation were presented in the same article. Compared to the adjective "unilateral decisions", mentioned in the *Nova Makedonija* article, *Flaka* reporter is more reserved concerning the criticism on Slovenia for taking the decision to become independent. If we try to find the answers on the question how much are journalists devoted in preserving the *status quo* concerning the structures of power in a community (Sadkovich 1998: 1-2) then it is clear that the resistance of *Flaka* reporters towards the possible changes is softer.

The next edition for 28<sup>th</sup> of June 1991 is filled with short articles and information on the situation in Slovenia and Croatia, which previously proclaimed independence. The newspaper is trying to depict the drama in Slovenia by showing a photograph of JNA tank and armed soldier standing next to it. In addition, the statement of the Slovenian President Kucan was quoted in which he says that: "Slovenians will defend their sovereignty by all means necessary". According to him, the strong resistance that exists against JNA is a result of the "brutal actions of the federal army and acts of aggression on the sovereign and independent Slovenia". The source of this statement is *Tanjug*. It is interesting to mention that the "war of words" between the two sides is openly presented on the pages of *Flakai* (E.g the sources from Ljubljana inform about "movement of the armed units of JNA in Slovenia" and "JNA controls the borders of Slovenia", while on the other side the Federal Secretariat for Defense informs about "measures undertaken for securing borders of Yugoslavia". The war of words that continues simultaneously with the war on the ground is transmitted without any censorship on the pages of *Flaka*. On the third page of the same edition, the letter of Kucan to the presidents of other republics is quoted in which he emphasizes "the aggression on Slovenia". It can be said that the presenting of the statements and press releases from the two sides provide opposite opinions on the matter, but this is still not sufficient in order to conclude that the

newspaper has balanced and punctual reporting. This conclusion mainly derives from the fact that the presented news are out of date for at least one day, so this results in different sorts of confusions and contradictions. The reader is facing an ambiguous picture of the events, with different pieces just scattered throughout the pages of *Flaka*. The conclusions of James J. Sadkovich are confirmed in the case of reporting:

“Journalists are trained to compile, not analyze, information. They assure credibility by keeping their opinions moderate, ignoring unbelievable news, using authoritative sources and selecting evidence acceptable to their editors and public” (Sadkovich 1998: 3).

The front page of the issue for 30<sup>th</sup> of June is again entirely covered with the news from Slovenia and the main headline quotes “After the clashes ceasefire has been reached” accompanied with pictures of armed confrontations from the previous days. Furthermore, another headline quotes “Who is not respecting the ceasefire, Slovenia or JNA?” In this article the reporter informs about the “successful mission of European Community which finally resulted in acceptance of the conditions for peace from the leaders of Yugoslavia”, as well as about the declared three-month moratorium for secession of the republics. So the Summit of the European countries in Luxemburg is appreciated as successful thus promoting the role of the international community as decisive and very positive.

In the following days and after the intensifying of the confrontations on the ground, *Flaka* continues to transmit the statements and press releases from *Tanjug*. Observation shows that the separate articles are not edited and are not composed systematically so that they can present the situation in Slovenia in logical, or some times even chronological, order of events and reactions, as it should be the case in a more organized approach. It can be concluded that most of the events were covered lightly and “panoramically” without extensive analysis or comments neither from the journalists nor from the parties involved in the conflict. Additionally, the fact that the newspaper is reporting about the events on two days basis is further complicating the objective reporting. It is very difficult to obtain clear picture of the situation in Slovenia using the information only from *Flaka*, as this newspaper practically kept reporting about the war just on its surface.

### **The War in Bosnia and Herzegovina (05 February – 12 February 1994)**

For the war in Bosnia of special significance is the massacre in the center of Sarajevo, that took place at the beginning of February 1994. This tragic event deeply disturbed the entire international public. How did *Nova Makedonija* cover this incident? The first, very short information is published in the first analyzed edition (05 February) citing a report of “two grenades thrown at the queue waiting for humanitarian help in a settlement in south-western Sarajevo”. Although it is mentioned that there were nine fatalities, including three children, the article has just ten lines. The sources for this report are AFP (Agence France-Presse) and DPA (Deutsche Presse-Agentur). The following day, the newspaper publishes a report on a front page informing about “a new attack in the center of Sarajevo in which 58 persons were killed”. A photograph from the place of the incident was published as well, showing the bodies of the killed. In the initial reports the

number of the killed is subject of different speculations and is changing depending on the source: Sarajevo City hospital informs about 59 victims, eyewitnesses reporting a number of 120 injured, while Radio Sarajevo estimates that 200 persons were killed. The incident remains to be the top story in the following days, and each day new shocking photographs from the green market were published.

Careful observation shows that the approach of the journalists is mainly descriptive, meaning that all sides (Bosnian authorities, Serbian representatives, international representatives) are quoted, but the background, explanations and the possible effect of this incident were not mentioned. The articles frequently resemble to a reporting of a score from a sport event and do not provide in depth coverage of the massacre. Whole range of sources were used including: Bosnian President Izetbegović, Bosnian Prime Minister Silajdžić, the leader of Bosnian Serbs Karadžić, representative of the Bosnian Croats, Radio Sarajevo, press bureau of the Bosnian Army, spokesperson of JNA, UNHCR medical coordinator. Also, the use of unofficial sources is very frequent. Usually the unofficial sources are cited as following: according to the eyewitnesses, different military experts (from NATO, UN, Belgrade), anonymous diplomats, political analysts from Belgrade, reliable sources from UNPROFOR, sources close to the leaders, e.t.c. The quantity of unofficial sources used in the texts in *Nova Makedonija* in this period shows that the construction of the media reality was firmly based on unconfirmed reports and speculations.

After the unanimous condemnation of the tragic incident and strong reactions from all sides, the newspaper shifted its focus on the international representatives and world leaders in an attempt to clarify the possibilities of intervention in Bosnia and chances of air strikes against artillery positions around Sarajevo responsible for bombing of the civilian population in Sarajevo on daily basis. Once again, most of the statements are taken from *AFP*, *DPA* and *Tanjug*. Finally, few days later, the newspaper started activating its broad network of correspondents from Belgrade, Sofia, Moscow, Brussels, London, and Cologne trying to get more information about the mentioned dilemmas and plans. It is important to mention that *Nova Makedonija* did not have a correspondent from Sarajevo during the period of the research who would inform about the course of the events from the spot.

In the article published on 8 February 1994 in one of the rare commentaries from the editorial board, the author of the text says that: "It is difficult to judge who is responsible for the massacre, one can not blame with certainty any of the sides involved in this war. We cannot point the finger just towards Bosnian Serbs, Croats or Muslims, they are all under suspicion". There is also a note of activism in this commentary since the author further in the text prompts strong measures and punishment against the perpetrators when sufficient evidence is found. *Nova Makedonija* continues to give relatively equal space for the three sides of the Bosnian war and to the international community representatives. It is difficult to estimate the general objectivity of the newspaper during this period, primarily because most of the sources for information were the foreign press agencies and actually, they were the decisive factor for forming of the media image of these events and consequently the public opinion in Macedonia. It can be stressed that during this period of reporting it is apparent that the theory of colonizing of the local media by the western media conglomerates becomes realized once again (Sadkovich 1998: 42).

In the article of the issue for 9<sup>th</sup> of February, the newspaper surprisingly published the statements of the Macedonian political and party leaders given seven months ago in a meeting with the American senator Kevin Levin who had visited Macedonia during the summer of 1993. The discussions were related to the possible military intervention in Bosnia and the prospective reaction of the Macedonian citizens in that case and the eventual deployment of American troops at the Macedonian border with Serbia. After reminding about the statements of the Macedonian state officials from seven months ago, which were generally approving military intervention only if that would stop the war in Bosnia, the reporter concludes that practically since then there are no reactions from the Macedonian side, although the international community was considering the military intervention more than ever. It is easy to get the impression that Macedonia once again tried to stay away from the Balkan wars and not interfere in any way. The caution from the journalists when they were reporting about the war in Bosnia just followed the firm position by the authorities. This approach put the reporters in position just to trail the events and incidents. They continuously explained the events and the Bosnian war through the irrationality of its actors, and did not try to analyze the factors of rationality and planning of the parties involved in the conflict.

*Flaka* did not cover the Sarajevo massacre extensively. In the edition for 6<sup>th</sup> of February, there are no articles, which are informing directly about the incident. On the third page the newspaper informs about the letter of the Bosnian President to the international representatives asking for NATO intervention in Bosnia because the location of the massacre was actually inside the UN protected zone. In that context the statement of the foreign mediator Stoltenberg was given in which he opines, “The division of Bosnia is inevitable, and is without any alternatives”. In this way, this issue tried to promote the European peace plan, which was suggesting the division of Bosnia in three parts, a plan that the Government in Sarajevo was strongly resisting.

The article suggests that the plan should be implemented as soon as possible and that the full implementation of the plan will restore the stable ceasefire. These pieces of information were prepared by AFP and Makpress.

The next edition of *Flaka* brought the main headline “The end or the beginning of the bloodshed?” referring to the decision of the American President Clinton to support the request of the UN Secretary General for military intervention in Bosnia and bombing of Bosnian Serbs’ positions around Sarajevo. Right next to this article the statement of leader of the Bosnian Serbs was published in which he threatens the western allies and the UN in case they attack the army under his command. The commentary of the journalists E. Sadiku is published on the fourth page. He describes the latest events as “a result of the monstrous aspirations of Serbs for the Great Serbia where cannibalism and barbarism are used as weapon of the degenerated Serbian nation capable of such atrocities”. He also criticizes the statement of Milosevic that “the victims of this incident are victims of war criminals, not of the war itself”, calling him directly “a true war criminal”. With this text *Flaka* journalist gives his personal comment on the situation after the massacre and it is clear that he is not trying at all to be unbiased. It can be noted that most of the texts that require more information that are confirmed or further analyzing and comparisons, are actually filled with emotional comments. It looks like the emotional discourse was regularly implemented as compensation for the analytical approach.

The next number of *Flaka* reduced the articles on Bosnia and published just a couple of articles on the fourth page informing about the decision of NATO that Serbian forces should withdraw their artillery to 20 km distance from Sarajevo and the worldwide reactions on the planned air strikes in Bosnia after the ultimatum given to the Bosnian Serbs. Main sources for all the information are *Makpress* and *AFP*. It is noticeable that the newspaper did not cover the Bosnian war comprehensively during the period 5-12 February 1994. Moreover, the articles and the statements from the involved sides were not distributed equally thus preventing any estimation that the reporting could be qualified as professional and unbiased. Statements and considerations of UNPROFOR and the international community were significantly neglected. The Albanian readers with this approach of the reporters and the editors in *Flaka* were not able to obtain a clear picture of the situation in Sarajevo and Bosnia. The pages of newspaper in this period became just a playground for the rhetorical and propaganda war of all sides without exception.

### **Kosovo conflict (24 March – 01 April 1999)**

Perhaps because of its vicinity, the Kosovo crisis preoccupied the Macedonian media much more than the previous wars in the Balkans. *Nova Makedonija* reports about Kosovo on the first day of the research, informing about the situation at the border crossing point Blace. A photograph is presented showing how deserted the place is and in that condition, it resembled a distant army border post rather than a usually frequent border crossing. On the central lower part of the photograph, a starving dog is shown making the picture very symbolic how unfriendly Blace was for the people at that moment. All the details on the front page (headline, photograph and article) are direct signs of the local fear from the possible wave of refugees from Kosovo. In the first lines of the text the reporter quotes that at that moment the information that the two border crossings toward Kosovo are closed have been confirmed only by the Associated Press and Reuters press agencies citing officials from the western counties. Further in the text a vague statement from the spokesperson from the Macedonian Ministry of Defense is quoted declining to confirm the reports of border crossings being closed. The poor communication between the reporters and the Government representatives is obvious, putting the journalists in a position to quote the information from their foreign colleagues on regular basis, although the actual events were taking place just 15 kilometers from their offices. One of the conclusions is that the positions of the Macedonian establishment towards the situation in Kosovo at that point were not defined clearly and consequently the reporters of pro-government *Nova Makedonija* were briefly puzzled on the editorial policy that they should take. However, it is obvious that there was no aprioristic approach by the Macedonian reporters before the start of the war in Kosovo, unlike the situation in different parts of former Yugoslavia where previously accumulated stereotypes were just waiting to be activated. The situation with *Nova Makedonija* is different because of the fact that as strong pro-government newspaper at that moment it had to be politically correct towards the Albanian side in the conflict because of the fact that one of the political parties participating in the government coalition was Albanian political party. The articles in *Nova Makedonija* virtually had to signal the good relationships within the Government and the stable situation in the coalition. The reports of the professionalism of

the police forces deployed at several important positions on the way to Kosovo border were the only signs that the newspaper is strong government supporter. Smaller part of the front page is dedicated to the unsuccessful talks between the American envoy Richard Holbrook and the Yugoslav President Milosevic. The news is transmitted from Reuters but this source is combined with the statement of Milosevic for the state television of Yugoslavia in which he demands that the deadline for the political agreement on Kosovo should be discharged. Although both sides were quoted it is obvious that much larger space was given to the Western diplomats and representatives.

The next issue of *Nova Makedonija* on 25<sup>th</sup> of March has a large photograph of the American President Clinton on the front page taken at the moment of his announcements of the beginning of air strikes on Yugoslavia. Interesting to note is that the photograph was borrowed from the CNN breaking news TV announcement. The main headline quotes "NATO bombed FR Yugoslavia" adding more details about the locations that were hit by the first wave of air strikes. All reports were quoted from Reuters. The front page was almost entirely dedicated to the western and international representatives with sporadic short statements from the Macedonian authorities confirming "the calm and stable situation in Macedonia" after the beginning of the NATO campaign. Only relevant observation concerning this issue of *Nova Makedonija* is the "framing" tendency of the reporters (Breton 2000: 101), in this context meaning that they composed the articles in order that will present the plans and explanations of actions just from one side. In that composition the story of that side is covered in details while the other side is presented just in formal way citing its opposition and denials. The front page of this edition evidently indicates the more subtle support for Western allies from the Macedonian media already given on the ground. In additional comment a member of the editorial board elaborates different scenarios that could take place after the bombing. The use of the so called "word-traps" (ibid 101-102) where certain choice of words and order of words has specific effect (Andreas Freund cited in Breton 2002: 102), is frequent. The effects of phrases like "stubborn Milosevic", "tough Milosevic" are ease to anticipate, and as a result it derails the reporting from neutral and unbiased. It is worth noting that the name of Milosevic is entirely personifying the leadership of FR Yugoslavia. He dominates the space given to the Yugoslav side and the statements from other high ranking officers or officials are rare.

On the third page of this edition some information was published on other relevant events for Macedonia most notably reports about the controlled flow refugees entering the country. This instance represents breaking point for the journalists in *Nova Makedonija* who in the following days refocused their interests towards the refugee crisis. The information about the conflict in Kosovo and the bombing of Yugoslavia were reduced.

In the edition for 26<sup>th</sup> of March *Nova Makedonija* special reporter from Belgrade started to inform on daily basis about the situation in Belgrade and Yugoslavia. Her reports were based on the statements and press releases of the Yugoslav authorities as well as on the reports and articles of the local reporters. The contribution of the special reporter from Belgrade brought more balance in the reporting but the publishing of more information from the western side remained approximately in ratio 2 to 1. Mathematical comparisons about the number of articles published on the basis of information from the western press agencies compared to the Yugoslav *Tanjug* and state

television could be considered as problematic and uncertain having in mind the fact that the flow of information and news from the western agencies is significantly larger. But relevant observation is that the special reporter from Belgrade informed regularly about the clashes on the territory of Kosovo citing only Serbian sources and press announcements from the Yugoslav army. These sources were frequently cited as “according to the relevant Serbian sources”, “Military Commentator of Serbian television”, and different words or phrases that serve as euphemisms for uncertain source: “apparently”, “evidently” or “according to the previous experiences”. The local reporters of *Nova Makedonija* were trying to reduce this gap by citing Western reports on the situation on the territory of the Kosovo province.

Starting from this edition the reports from Kosovo began to be published in the frames of the previous matrix of the newspaper which is dividing the main domestic news from regional or foreign news, so the extensive reports on situation in Kosovo and Yugoslavia were pushed from the front page.

One of the articles that was noticeably biased was the report about the anti-NATO protest held in Skopje as a sign of support to Yugoslav authorities by organized groups from Macedonia. During the protest several foreign Embassies were attacked and their property was damaged. The reporter strongly condemned the organizers of the protests but didn't mention any concrete reports on the damage, number of arrests or other relevant and precise information. He concentrated in his text only on his personal impressions of the event giving the article strong expressive note.

In the edition for 29<sup>th</sup> of March the newspaper started publishing the reports from its special correspondent from NATO headquarters in Brussels. The reports “from the spot” brought more new information on the pages of *Nova Makedonija* and offered more insights on the NATO operation. Most of these reports were based on the press announcements and statements by the NATO representatives.

More indicative article was published in the same issue from Belgrade in which the special reporter transmitted the reports of the local media on the occasion of the ten year anniversary after the revoking of autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina. The text is directly presenting the strong rhetoric of the Serbian authorities and their views on this act considered as “an event that returned under control of Serbia all its territories”. The cited texts praised the decision to revoke the status of autonomy for Kosovo and Vojvodina given with the Yugoslav constitution from 1974. Apparently the “directive style” of the text was well noticed by the local responsible parties and as a result the reports from Belgrade and Yugoslavia in the following they were cited more carefully marking the strong statements by Serbian and Yugoslav officials with quotations. As the propaganda war intensified, the journalist of the newspaper tried to implement a more critical approach towards the Serbian side locating and underlying the obscure and ambiguous statements by their officials such as “Colonel Novaković didn't mention the number of injured civilians and soldiers” (*Nova Makedonija*, 29.03.1999). In the following days the reporting on Kosovo remained operating in these frames and the most visible change in these editions was the countdown from the beginning of the bombing.

On the other side, the reporting in *Flaka* about Kosovo in the period between 24 to 31 March 1999 is much different than in the cases of Bosnian and Slovenian wars. The influx of information in one edition is considerably increased, the articles are more extensive and they are better organized. The informing is regular and it is noticeable that

all the relevant events during the war are covered. The most frequent source of information is *Kosovapress* news agency, while MIA (Macedonian Information Agency), AFP, Reuters, Radio Dykaxhini (local Kosovo radio station), NATO and UN representatives are also included. During the crisis the newspaper didn't have reporters in Kosovo, although it was obvious that the interest of the readers of *Flaka* for the happenings in Kosovo are at a high level, as well as are the empathy and the sentiment for the Albanians in Kosovo. The pages of *Flaka* are filled with bombastic and intriguing headlines, but on the other side the newspaper is not reporting about the air-strikes on the territory of Serbia and Montenegro. The framing of the newspapers is transparent and the policy of the editors is clear in terms that the only focus of the reports in *Flaka* is the fate of the Albanians in Kosovo. Most of the reports are written in *bombastic* style and have a dose of ethnocentrism. One day before the bombing of Belgrade the pages of *Flaka* are covered with short news about the Albanian victims in Kosovo, reporting in details about the civilian victims, burnt houses and bombing of the Albanian villages by the Serbian security forces, which are frequently named as "terrorists". All the articles have a lot of details; they regularly inform about locations of attacks on Albanians, number of victims identifying the numbers of women, children and elders, the number of displaced persons, injured and killed. The reader can certainly get a clear but one-sided picture of the events in Kosovo. We can just repeat the aforementioned observation that the number of details is sometimes blocking the real content of the text. Also the continued focus on just one side of the war in Kosovo and the marginalization of other relevant events distorts the real picture of the war. Following this logic of reporting the articles in the next days continued to be dramatic and striking. The rhetoric against the Serbian side intensified and the sufferings of the Kosovars were vividly reported. If the accent until that reporting day was on the displaced persons and the killed Albanians, in the following days the newspaper started to report about "series of killings and massacres", "Serbian tanks and armored vehicles attacking Albanian refugees", "genocide on the Kosovars", and "the exodus of the innocent Albanian people in Kosovo". Also when *Flaka* is transmitting news from foreign news agencies they are selected only when they are dramatic enough, such as the report about "Serbian gangs of death on the streets of Pristina" (according to AFP). The process of "over-lexicalization" is apparent, meaning that the reporters are using increased number of words with similar meaning inducing negative connotations (Dimitrijević-Kazić 1999: 293) with intention to increase the emotional effect of the articles.

Also it should be mentioned that most of the articles and reports are accompanied with photographs showing burning houses, crying women and children and other disturbing scenes. The number of Serbian victims out of Kosovo during the NATO campaign is not reported. On the fourth day of the bombing there is a report of "18 killed soldiers of Serbian army, captured tank, armored vehicle and two vehicles near Drenica". Later the newspaper reports about the intensified NATO campaign on different locations throughout Yugoslavia and the support that NATO commanders received from the American President Clinton. *Flaka* repeatedly transmitted anonymous statements from NATO officials, but the reports of NATO airplanes being shut down are not confirmed even from these sources. On the contrary, the newspaper is giving more space to the denials of these reports even when it was obvious that the NATO had some losses on the ground. The losses of "Milosevic troops" were regularly reported. Although in this phase

the rest of the newspapers in Macedonia were more concentrated on the refugee crisis and the humanitarian disaster, *Flaka* remains to be focused on the “Serbian terror in Kosovo”, and the “barbaric genocide of the Serbs on Albanians”. With this way of reporting the journalists of *Flaka* are clearly marking the area of their interest, which geographically coincides with the areas populated by ethnic Albanians. The reporters did not try to take a more analytical approach to the events.

## **Conclusion**

Most of the relevant conclusions were already specified in the previous sections of the text. However, several other observations are important to be mentioned as well. One of the more important remarks is that the Macedonian journalists failed to elevate their profession to the level of relevant social force during the historic changes and the wars in former Yugoslavia. More moderate critics would probably operate with different factors of slow transition of journalism in post-socialist countries, but the lack of efforts to try to positively affect the course of the events and inform the readers in more objective and transparent way is evident. There were no decisive steps to make the reporting independent and more analytical and no attempts were made to reaffirm the journalistic professionalism proclaimed and praised by the local media. In the observed reporting periods we can rather speak about constant struggle by the journalists to find *modus operandi* between protections of: existing structures of power and authority, cultural or local ethnical values and the ideals of the modern journalism. Even today when the larger competition is offering better conditions for journalist to accept more challenging reporting tasks, we can say that this kind of approach is still only an exception.

Also during the research of the Macedonian print media it became clear that the professional reporting stands for more than citing all conflicting sides and quoting different sources. According to Sadkovich (1997: 42) the tendency of the journalists to remain on the level of “micro-ethics” (discussing only the surface of the events, not trying to look for the background or real actors in the conflicts and their intentions) actually devaluates the reporting and the journalist work. In our case the reporting was limited to micro-ethical approach, and the reporters nearly never tried to explore the dimension of the background of the events. Human ethics in small doses was a successful formula for the local journalists in this period.

In reference to the more specific local factors in the reporting we can add that the differences that exist between the Macedonian and Albanian newspaper are generated by many factors among which the language and culture have the central role. It is common, not only for the two observed newspaper, that during periods of crisis they mainly reduce the scope of their targeted readers, usually on ethno-linguistic lines. Also, the efforts of the journalists to be informed about the specific preferences of the readers from different communities in Macedonia are unsatisfactory. Not knowing the cultural differences or the specifics of the different groups of readers in the society is relevant problem and is a continuing trend. While most of the Albanians use or understand the Macedonian language, most of the Macedonians don't understand Albanian and they cannot follow how Albanian newspapers are covering different events. The language factor is often a barrier between the communities, but is certainly not the only one. Another obstacle is the lack of professional approach to the process of informing the public which requires fulfillment of at least four criteria: objectivity, accurateness, punctuality and relevancy.

Other important criteria for the course of the informing and its quality are the sources. In case when *Flaka* is shouldered on *Kosovapress* and *Nova Makedonija* on foreign news agencies or its local correspondent network, differences are inevitable. Finally, it is not so uncommon for the reporters to take sides of different political circles or centers of power during “war and peace”, but the first victim of that approach is their own professionalism, a scenario very usual for the journalists in the region. The ideas of freedom of the press and independent reporting are quickly collapsing in the cases when journalism becomes subjected to political control or manipulation. The outside pressure on journalism, not only during war time, has different backgrounds and the journalists are well aware of all its forms. They are also aware of their own disadvantages which are challenging the standards of their work, but the focal problem has been the weak local tradition of independent journalism which is making the journalists vulnerable to political pressure. This draws them directly to the “dark zone” of political propaganda where they have only one role, to be the weapon of intolerance and negative stereotyping.

The journalist of *New York Times* would summarize: “The freedom of the print media is guaranteed only by its (real) owners”.

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