

EVENTS AT MAIDAN NEZALEZHNOSTI OF UKRAINE IN AUTUMN 2013 – WINTER 2014 (IN VIEW OF DIFFERENT UKRAINIAN AND RUSSIAN PRINTED MEDIA)

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Abstract

The article deals with some peculiarities of highlighting sociopolitical events in Ukraine in autumn 2013 and in winter 2014 by some leading Ukrainian and Russian printed mass media and their personal attitude concerning the course of these events.

Sociopolitical situation that was created in Ukraine at the end of 2013 proved that sizable gap between the public and power holders' conscience, progress and regression. The discrepancies in the future vision of geopolitical location of Ukraine led to the mass protests that started in November 2013. The events that took place in the night from 29th to 30th of November and during January - February 2014 made the front page of all mass media, both Ukrainian and foreign, and those of the Russian Federation in particular.

Great attention to highlighting the Ukrainian events during autumn 2013 and winter 2014 was paid by the journalists of the leading media, such as P. Beba, K. Matsehora, Y. Medunitsia, V. Protsyshyn – reporters of the central Executive body newspaper “Uriadovyi Kurier” (translated as “the governmental messenger”); O. Kucheriava, S. Lavreniuk – the newspaper of Verkhovna Rada “Holos Ukrainy” (translated as “the voice of Ukraine”); E. tor of Haladzhnyi, D. Deriy, O. Dubovyk – the Ukrainian Russian-language newspaper “Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraini” (translated as “the komsomol truth in Ukraine”); P. Dulman, E. Hrushyn – the Russian language newspaper “Rossiyskaya Gazeta” (translated as “the Russian gazette”); A. Zakharova – the Ukrainian Russian- language newspaper “Segodnia” (translated as “today”). At the same time the events related to the sociopolitical protests that were covered in all mass media had some tonal marking: positive to the authority, negative to the authority, negative to the opposition, reserved to the opposition, negative to MIA (Ministry of Internal Affairs), positive to MIA, negative and positive to the participants of the mass protests, neutral, etc.

Key words: Euromaidan, protesters, participants of mass protests, authority, opposition, MIA, mass media, “Uriadovyy Kurier”, “Holos Ukrayiny”, “Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine”, “Fakty”, “Segodnya”, “Moskovskiy komsomolets”, “Rossiyskaya gazeta”, “Kommersant”.

The main function of the press in a democratic state implies that all participants espouse ethical and responsible views, while not dismissing both the independence and critical approach. The press should serve the cause of freedom of expression of opinions that includes the right to receive and disseminate the information upon condition of the respect for

Rights.

Today the mass media share a number of characteristic features that make them a significant force in politics and culture which is an important constituent part of the environment within which the other social forces and institutions operate and seek to understand goals set, including state governmental bodies. Novikov [2013] points out that “the press is the traditional enemy of the state because it can dominate feelings and thoughts of people. A person is nobody to the state and nothing to the press”.

From the most general point of view, the opinion of the majority of the researchers in this field of activity can be referred to as two opposing concepts that are conventionally divided into liberal pluralism and critical approach as for the activity of the mass media. For instance, the concept of liberal pluralism in the area of mass information determined by D. Gallin and P. Manchiny represents the dominant views on the way the mass media functions in Western liberal democracies where the power in this or that way is distributed between the rival political groups (“elites”) and none of them has advantages in the political arena. And on the contrary, another thesis about the audience representation and its sovereignty assumes that the main content of the information products distributed by the mass media is formed exclusively taking into account the society’s priority tastes. It is acknowledged by this that the mass media constitute a potential paradox for liberal science because, as it was mentioned before, the media are both business entities and public institutions.

The sociopolitical situation in Ukraine as it has developed at the end of 2013 showed a significant disparity in the mindset of society and high-ranking officials, progress and regression. The clearly defined position of the Ukrainian nation failed to convince the authoritatively-oriented officials to choose the right path of the country’s development. The disparities about the future geopolitical position of Ukraine led to the massive protests that started in November 2013. A dispersal of the peaceful protest rally in the night from 29th to 30th November, 2013 provoked by a non-signing of the Association Agreement of the membership of Ukraine in EU by the state security forces served as the main pretext of the mass public protests in Ukraine.

The events that took place at Maidan Nezalezhnosti in Kiev in the night from 29th to 30th November, 2013 and the events of January-February 2014 were sensational for all mass media, both Ukrainian and foreign, including the Russian Federation. The reporters of the major editions, in particular, of such newspapers as “Uryadovyy Kuryer” – journalists P. Beba, K. Matsehora, Y. Medunytsia, V. Protsyshyn; “Holos Ukrainy” - O. Kucheriava, S. Lavreniuk; “Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraini”- E. Galadzhnyi, D. Deriy, O. Dubovyk; “Rossiyskaya Gazeta” – P. Dulman, E. Hrushyn; “Segodnya” newspaper – A. Zakharova, gave exclusive attention in their articles to the events in autumn 2013 and

winter 2014. At the same time the events related to the sociopolitical protests that were covered in all mass media shared some tonal marking: positive to the authority, negative to the authority, negative to the opposition, reserved to the opposition, negative to MIA, positive to MIA, negative and positive to the participants of the mass protests, neutral, etc.

The content analysis of the Ukrainian and Russian print media that were covering events during November 2013 - February 2014, including newspapers “Uryadovyy Kurier”, «Holos Ukrainy», «Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraini», «Fakty», «Segodnya», «Moskovskiy komsomolets», «Rossiyskaya gazeta», «Kommersant» (Russia) is of particular interest. The vast majority of these editions took pro-government position or tried to cover events from the neutral side, without providing any benefits to the opposition. The attitude of each edition is clearly evident in the publications that came out in newspapers columns during the sharpest conflicts, including November 30, 2013 at the time of the attempt to disperse Euromaidan; on December 1, 2013 during the clashes between the protesters and law-enforcement forces on Bankova street (where the Presidential Secretariat is located); on January 19-22, 2014 during a confrontation on Hrushevskoho street and on February 18-20 – on Instytutska street. Thus, the official newspaper of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine named “Uryadovyy Kurier”, from the very beginning of the conflict on Bankova Street on December 1, 2013 took a very negative attitude towards radically-oriented protesters, a negatively reserved attitude to the MIA and an absolutely restrained to the power [Musyt peremohty ...].

At the same time, the public address of Mykola Azarov (the then Prime-Minister) on December 4, 2013 in the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian parliament) regarding the government personnel changes and sociopolitical situation in the country allowed the editors of the “Uryadovyy Kurier” to cover this speech in favour of the government and to give a sharply negative assessment of the actions of the opposition, shifting the blame for igniting the conflict to the latter [M.Azarov: “V Uryadi bude provedeno..”]. In general, during December 2013 the position of the newspaper “Uryadovyy Kurier” remained positive towards the government’s actions and mostly negative towards the actions of the opposition and protesters [Viktor Yanukovych: “Bud Yakyy, Navit Pohanny Myr Krashche..”; Medunytsya, 2013]. The position of this edition clearly shows that in December 2013 the Yanukovych team held the power tightly and had an absolute influence on this newspaper.

However, the January events on the Hrushevskoho Street in 2014, the government’s policy of uncertainty and wait-and-see attitude of Maidan changed somewhat the position of “Uryadovyy Kurier”. In particular, in the article titled “Beat Constitution with Molotov cocktail?” and “Address of the President to the Ukrainian people”, the newspaper sharply took a neutral position to the government and the Interior Ministry, but at the same time did not change its reserved negative attitude towards the opposition and protesters [Protsyshyn, 2013; Zvernennya Prezydenta...]. The “Uryadovyy Kurier” newspaper followed the same policy until February 20, 2014. The following articles of these media are the proof: “Aggression on the Unity Day is twice destructive” from

January 23, 2014 [Ahresiya u Den Sobornosti]”, “The capital has never known such a large-scale confrontation before” from February 19, 2014. Despite the fact that at the beginning of February 19, 2014 there were half of a hundred of the killed citizens and hundreds of the wounded by the authorities at Maidan, the authors of the article continued to accuse protesters of the armed attacks on the buildings of the state power bodies, organizations and arson of houses, causing serious body injuries to the law enforcement bodies, using firearms, etc. [Matshehora, 2014]. Only after the downfall of Yanukovych’s regime on February 21, 2014, the “Uryadovyy Kuryer” newspaper took a negative attitude to the power and neutral to the opposition, in particular, in the article “The language of the diplomats can be sharp” from 21.02.2014 where the issue of the sanctions against the perpetrators of violence against protesters was raised [Beba, 2014].

Another periodical edition, the official newspaper of the Verkhovna Rada “Holos Ukrainy” took a rather different attitude in the coverage of the revolutionary events in Ukraine, in November 2013 - January-February 2014. In particular, during the clashes of the protesters with security forces on Bankova street on December 1, 2013, the newspaper “Holos Ukrainy” in its articles “The Cabinet of Ministers is in blockade” [Kokhanets, 2013] and “President’s address to the Ukrainian people” [Zvernennya Prezydenta] expressed its full support to the government’s actions and mostly negative attitude towards opposition actions. Synchronically, the force method of solving social and political problems in Ukraine caused a negative reaction in the edition. Thus,

A. Shevchenko, the author of the article “Violence cannot be a method of solving a problem” expressed a negative attitude to the actions of the authorities [Shevchenko, 2013]. The most negative attitude to the actions of the authorities in the “Holos Ukrainy” newspaper was described by S. Lavreniuk in the article “Baptism by water, fire and tear gas” where the author entirely condemned the brutal violence of the power holders over the people. Thus, the neutral attitude to the opposition is evident in the article [Lavrenyuk, 2013].

It should be noted that the events on January 19th created a certain imbalance in the country, there was no logic and explanation to the actions of the high-ranking officials, as well as the prognosis of the events as for the near future was not clear enough. This situation had led to the fact that the “Holos Ukrainy” newspaper after the January events began to cover events in the city center of Kyiv through the prism of neutrality and sharply negative attitude to the opposition. This trend was observed especially in the further issues of the newspaper until the end of the confrontation [Verkhovna Rada Stala Tsentrom Kerivnytstva.; Zhodnykh Peredumov.; Chto s Nami budet zavtra; Shevchenko, 2013]. Given the fact that the official office of the “Holos Ukrainy” newspaper which was the edition of the main representative body in Ukraine was supposed to defend the interests of the people, but such trend in its activity was almost invisible. However, the neutrality of this edition indicates a much lower impact of the Yanukovych’s regime on the level of objectivity of the information and wide experience of the editorial board in coverage of such social and political events.

An interesting position concerning the events in the center of Kyiv in November-December 2013 - January and February 2014 took the newspaper “Komsomolskaya Pravda in Ukraine”, founded by B. Lozhkyn - Chairman of the “Ukrainian Media Holding” [Komsomolskaya Pravda..] with chief editor - Oksana Bogdanova who worked as a staff reporter of the “NTN” TV-channel in Russia in 2004-2005, and from January 2006 – a staff reporter in Russia for “1 + 1” Ukrainian TV channel [Leonova, 2014]. In particular, during the autumn and winter coverage of the events in Kyiv, in the actions of the “Komsomolskaya Pravda in Ukraine” newspaper several trends could be traced:

1) neutral [Dubovik, 2013; Myatezhnaya Stolitsa..]; 2) neutral to the power holders [Ryabokon & Galadazhiy, 2013]; 3) negative to the opposition [Galadazhiy, 2013], 4) positive to security forces and the Ministry of Internal Affairs [Bili szadi v golovu], 5) negative to the protesters and radicals [Ryabokon et al., 2013; Supricheva, 2014]. The analysis of the articles of “Komsomolskaya Pravda in Ukraine” newspaper has shown that this edition gave the biggest advantage even not for government’s actions but to the actions of the security forces. However, despite the constant criticism of the protesters, the newspaper gave approval to their mood several times. In particular, in the article “Priests blessed to put up a fight with “berkut” (the “Berkut” is the special riot police force within the Ministry of Internal) published on December 3, 2013, an astonishing unity of the Ukrainian people and their decisive firm mood was described [Deriy, 2013]. Only on February 22, 2014 after the shift of considerable part of the law enforcement bodies on the side of the protesters, “Komsomolskaya Pravda in Ukraine” published an article “Participants of mass protests are not happy with ceasefire” where a significant support to the actions of the protesters was traced [Deriy, 2014].

Among the leading aforesaid print media that treated the events at Maidan Nezalezhosti in autumn 2013 - winter 2014 ambiguously, an important place is given to the “Fakty” newspaper owned by Victor Pinchuk, with Alexander Shvets being the chief editor [Fakty i komentarii]. In particular, after the crackdown of the students in the night of 29th to 30th November 2014 and after the events on Bankova street on December 1, 2013, the “Fakty” newspaper expressed a very negative attitude regarding government actions in the article “What will be with us tomorrow” where it emphasized the fact that the bloody events were a point of no return in the mind of the Ukrainian society and brought millions of people to the streets [Chto s nami budet zavtra]. In general, during the autumn and winter (2013-2014) protests in Kiev, the color tone of the “Fakty” newspaper embraced two trends: 1) strongly negative attitude to the authorities, the Interior Ministry and “berkut”; 2) positive to the actions of the protesters. In particular, in the publication “Brain is refusing to believe that is happening in reality” from December 4, 2013 (interview with the victim) [Mozg otkazivaetsa verit..], “We can’t leave wounded people” on December 5, 2013 (interview with a medical volunteer) [39], “The berkuts drove us as if we were dogs. We were running along the street and bullets flew to our backs” [Berkutovtsy gnali nas kak sobak ...] and in other publications the actions of the security forces and power holders were harshly condemned. However, in such articles as “Lots of mercenaries were brought to Kiev” on January 22, 2014 [V Kiev

svezli ogromnoe kolichestvo..], “Sergey Nyhoian “Keep fighting – we will overcome, for God helps us” on January 23, 2014 [47], “Interview with the victims of the security services actions” [Intervyu s postradavshimi..] an active support of the mass protesters is seen. It is important to remark that clear support for the opposition and its activities during the confrontation was not recorded on the pages of “Fakty”.

It should be noted that not many printed media were loyal to the protesters. Thus, the content analysis of the articles of the “Segodnya” newspaper owned by Rinat Akhmetov [Kollektiv gazety “Segodnya” o resehnii Akhmetova...] during the period of November-December 2013 and January - 2014 shows that from the beginning of the collision between the protesters and force blocks on December 1, 2013, the newspaper tried to adopt a neutral position towards all parties [Stolitsa na barikadakh]. However, during the bloody clashes in the center of Kyiv on January 19, 2014, the “Segodnya” newspaper issue from January 20, expressed a negative attitude towards activists and at the same time maintained a neutral attitude to the actions of MIA in the article “Once again Maidan made an assault” [Maydan snova poshol na shturm]. January events in which two protesters were killed somewhat changed the tonal coloring of the “Segodnya” newspaper. In particular, the article titled “The protester on Hrushevskoho street: “Get away from here! Here is a hell” from January 23, 2014, a sharply negative emphasis was placed on the actions of the Ministry of the Internal Affairs and neutral position concerning the protesters [Zakharova, 2014]. The analysis of such articles “Five reasons to impose a state of emergency” (from 24.01.2014) [Pyat prichin vvesti..], “Exploded ceasefire” (from 19.02.2014) [Vzorvannoe peremirie], “Only an emblem was not allowed to put on barricades” [Na barikady ne pustili tolko gerb] shows that the position of the “Segodnya” newspaper remained relatively unchanged, adhering to neutral and negative approach to the Interior Ministry. On February 21, 2014 on the “Segodnya” newspaper columns an article “The fear and hatred of two fronts” was published where the authors tried to justify the rightfulness of the actions of MIA [Strakh i nenavist...]. The variability in the tone of the “Segodnya” newspaper confirmed the unaccountability of the social and political movement. In addition, the subsequent events forced the newspaper editorial office to take a generally neutral position.

Great influence on the minds of the Ukrainian society had the printed media of the Russian Federation in Ukraine where a considerable attention was given to such newspapers as “Moskovskiy Komsomolets”, “Rossiyskaya Gazeta” and “Kommersant”(Russia). In late autumn 2013 - beginning 2014 the revolutionary events that took place in Kiev were actively highlighted on the pages of these editions. However, the tone in covering those events by these media was different.

In particular, the newspaper “Moskovskiy Komsomolets” after the dissolution of students in the night November 30, 2013 in the article “The Christmas Tree on the spot of slaughter” highlighted negatively the position of the “Berkut” special division and Yanukovich in this situation, supporting the position of the Maidan [Bazak, 2013]. However, the events that took place on December 1, 2013 near the Presidential Administration in Bankova Street allowed the newspaper “Moskovskiy Komsomolets

Komsomolets” to change slightly its position. In the article “In the name of Revolution” on December 3, 2013 a full responsibility for the conflict was laid on the organization of “Brotherhood” of Dmytro Korchynskyi that involved allegedly professional mercenaries. Thus, the protesters on the newspaper pages were arbitrarily divided into two categories - radicals and peace protesters whose actions were highlighted in the negative and positive line respectively [Bazak, 2013]. The newspaper’s editorial office held the similar position till January 2014. However, the conventional distinction between peaceful protesters and radicals was obliterated more and more, most of them becoming radical-minded protestors [Bazak, 2013]. In addition, the more radical action took the authorities, the more favourably the newspaper treated Yanukovych and more negatively the opposition [Rostovskiy, 2014]. Even the mass murder of the people at Maidan in February did not change the policy of the “Moskovskiy Komsomolets” newspaper.

Other edition such as “Rossiyskaya Gazeta” - contained two clear positions in terms of covering the events in the city of Kyiv in autumn 2013 - winter 2014: 1) negative towards protesters and opposition leaders; 2) positive to the authorities. The content of the key articles acknowledges this position in the sharpest moments of confrontation. In particular, in the article “Play by play: Kievskaya, next street of barricades” on December 3, events in Ukraine were characterized as ‘pogroms’ that aimed to stagger the power in Ukraine [Novikov, 2013]; in the publication “Baptism of fire” from January 20 the opposition leaders and AutoMaidan were accused in clashes on Hrushevskoho street, where the heroism of the law enforcement officers was highlighted [Dulman, 2014]; in the article “Play-by-play. Ukrainian night: the end of the silence” from February 20, the protesters were charged sharply with capturing warehouses with arms and the opposition was made responsible for the deaths of the people [Aleshina, 2014]. Only on February 24, 2014, “Rossiyskaya Gazeta” in the article “Yanukovych was twisted to Europe - around his little finger” negatively characterized the actions of all parties of the conflict - the government, opposition and radical-minded protesters [Shestakov, 2014].

A more neutral position towards autumn and winter events in Ukraine held Russian newspaper “Kommersant”. In particular, at the initial stage of the revolution in the article “Maidan was dispersed until the lack of control”, the newspaper neutrally reacted to the events [Yusin, 2013], but with further development of the events in Bankova street on December 1, 2013 in the article “Ukraine does not fairly trust the government”, the newspaper took the side of Yanukovych and bright shade of negativity towards the opposition [Yusin, 2103]. January events made the newspaper more neutral towards the authority’s actions, while maintaining a negative vision towards the actions of the opposition and radicals [Barabanov, 2014]. In turn, the February mass murder of the people forced the newspaper “Kommersant” to cover events on the neutral background [Barabanov, 2104].

The analysis conducted indicates some differences and factors affecting the tonal coloring of the Ukrainian and Russian publications. Firstly, coverage of the events on

the pages of the Ukrainian newspapers owned by the state such as “Uryadovyy Kuryer” and “Holos Ukrainy” depends largely on which political party is in power and the figure of the chief editor. During the “Euromaidan”, the “Uryadovyy Kuryer” newspaper was almost entirely pro-governmental. This position is also explained by the fact that the chief editor of this edition (S. Braga) having been appointed by Yanukovych in 2010 was of the Russian nationality and completely under control of the Party of Regions (the Presidential party). Meanwhile, the newspaper “Holos Ukrainy”, an official edition of the Verkhovna Rada, although had a pro-governmental inclination, took a neutral position in coverage of the above-mentioned events. The important role was played by A.F Gorlov, the chief editor of this edition, who has been working in the media since 1972 and had a great experience in covering events during the revolution.

Secondly, the coverage of the events on the pages of such private editions as “Komsomolskaya Pravda in Ukraine”, “Segodnia” and “Fakty” was somewhat different. In particular, “Komsomolskaya pravda” owned by B. Lozhkin tried to report neutrally about the actions of the power and opposition (political maneuvering), but strongly negatively covered the actions of the protesters, whose support could negatively affect the relationship between Yanukovych and B. Lozhkin. At the same time, the “Segodnya” newspaper controlled by Rinat Akhmetov, overall tried to maintain a neutral attitude to the government and activists, but sometimes approved of the actions of the Interior Ministry. The “Fakty” newspaper owned by V. Pinchuk, led policy in support of Maidan.

Thirdly, almost all Russian editions analyzed in this study supported the position of the government and the Interior Ministry and had negative attitude towards protesters. Besides that they often focused their attention on Putin’s public addresses on the situation that occurred in Ukraine. However, a common feature of these editions is that they took a negative or neutral attitude against the opposition and did not speak in favor of it.

Taking into account the aforesaid, it is worth paying attention to the fundamental change in the relationship between media and public authorities. If in the early 90’s of the XX century the relationship had subject-object nature, i.e. public authority had a dominant influence on the domestic audiovisual mass media both at the national and local levels, at present a change of the vector of influence is observed – national TV and radio channels practically ran out of control of public authorities and significantly affect the implementation of the state policy in all spheres of the public life. Obviously, the character of the mutual relations at this stage has gained a subject-subject feature.

Summarizing, it should be noted that a change in the paradigm of the relationship between the government and media are inextricably linked with reconciliation of the present-day vital issues, especially those related to the public sovereignty in the information area in which a paradoxical situation has formed: on the one hand, the Ukrainian society has declared its commitment to the European community, and the national legislation in terms of the freedom of speech is quite liberal and, though slowly, but gradually approaching the standards of the Council of Europe, on the other hand - almost every state agency continues to maintain for its budget (i.e. at the expense of

the society) its own print edition.

As we have mentioned before, the position of this or that mass media during active social and political processes in the country depends directly on the position of the official power. In addition, the tonal coloring of the printed media news has a considerable influence on the formation of public opinion. According to the results of the study, the ambiguous coverage of the autumn and winter events in Ukraine of the above-mentioned media, had a positive impact, on the one hand, because one could contemplate the objective reality while analyzing different sources, on the other hand

- the bulk of the population that consumes only information without analyzing it found itself in a state of confusion, that partly spawned panic sentiments in the society.

Therefore, one of the main conclusions, in our opinion, is the belief in the need of denationalization of the press in Ukraine. All calls and arguments about the “right of community” on establishing its newspaper bear the prefix “pseudo” and are originating from “evil” as such press will work mostly for its own interests and for those persons who have direct access to the budget allocations at the cost of which the edition is funded. While the right of community consists in the possibility of the free access to the objective and impartial information, the right to the diversity in the mass media, that is to say the right to its creation, receipt and distribution without impediment.

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