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HATE SPEECH AND STEREOTYPING IN TRADITIONAL AND NEW MEDIA

Darija Stjepić



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Hate Speech and Stereotyping in Traditional and New Media

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Milan Nedeljković

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Darija Stjepić

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Radmila Đurđev



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Introduction

Critical public awareness can be characterized as an ideal of a democratic society based on the principles of discussion underpinned by universal human rights. Human rights as a social consensus can be considered, their understanding made more comprehensive, while their denial to certain groups would at the same time represent a step out of the historical context of human rights, as their particular applicability would negate the concept itself, with universality being its basic feature. The media as the basic constituent of the public can also be defined as a mirror of the level of respect for human rights in society. Namely, the media reflect both the socio-historical context and the attitudes of media workers, which are also the result of the society in which they live. "Journalists are only humans - born, raised and educated here, often in very patriarchal families, with many prejudices they introduced first into their newsrooms, and then into their media. That is how the society influenced the media content, and the media content then influences the media consumers" (Tamara Skrozza, source: Cenzolovka)¹. It is in this circular cause-and-effect interaction of society and the media that one can find the difficulty regulating the media system in a society without harmonized practice and legislation. The conclusion of several different media surveys conducted in Serbia in recent years shows that Serbia has good legislation in the field of media, however, that practice shows numerous violations of these laws, which go unpunished (Valić Nedeljković, Janjatović Jovanović, 2020). If the media violates the law in a way that could have long-term and dangerous consequences for society, then it is necessary to notice and deconstruct such practices.

This publication is a brief overview of non-professional media practices that violate the basic human rights of various social groups with hate speech, stereotyping, and prejudice. The publication intends to try to identify the existence of different narrative patterns of this practice to clearly point out why it is inadmissible and illegal in the professional sense and dehumanizing in the ethical sense.

¹ Predić, I. (2019). Humiliation of women has reached unbearable levels, Pink and Happy would have to answer legally. Cenzolovka. cenzolovka.rs [online]. Available at: <https://www.cenzolovka.rs/etika/ponizavanje-zena-doslo-do-nepodnosljivog-nivoa-pink-i-hepi-bi-morali-zakonski-da-odgovaraju>. Accessed on 17/09/2020.

Also, the phenomenon of modern means of communication will be analyzed, by which persons from the public sphere, but also persons in positions of power, can communicate directly with the audience without editorial mediation. This phenomenon creates opportunities for various abuses, and communication itself, though it can be identified with media practice by certain characteristics, in this online system setting cannot become media practice. In that sense, it is important to present the analysis of hate speech in the online sphere in Serbia. For these purposes, an analysis of hate speech in the online sphere will be presented on a sample of the 2020 election campaign, as an event of exceptional social importance.

1. Hate Speech, Stereotyping and Unprofessional Reporting in Traditional Media

1.1. We and Others: Labeling, War Announcements, and Constant Threats

The Serbian society is still trying to establish a harmonized and unified attitude towards the events and experiences caused by the civil war in the last decade of the 20th century, the conflicts in Kosovo, NATO bombing in 1999, then additional changes in the state's territorial structure that have happened with declaring the independence of Montenegro, as well as the independence of Kosovo in the first years of the 21st century. The fact that Serbia was at war or some other kind of conflict with most countries in the region has reflected in the discourse about neighbors in the media, which is often colored by stereotypes, labeling, hate speech, and even the announcement of new conflicts. When it comes to neighbors, the most frequent targets of media attacks are Albanians and Croats.

1.1.1. The Image of Albanians in the Serbian Media

Although the term Shiptar does not originally have a negative connotation, the continuous media practice of using the name Shiptars whenever they want to present the Albanians in a negative context has led to the fact that naming Albanians Shiptars is in itself a stereotyping, and depending on the context, can provoke national intolerance and be considered hate speech and moral discrediting.

"In recent years, we have witnessed a sharp increase in explicit hate speech against national minorities and neighboring nations on the front pages of tabloids. Informer's labeling practice, by which the one they favor is declared a Serb (Trump, you Serb²! Putin, you Serb³!), and the one

² Informer. (2016). TRUMP, YOU SERB! Here is how the Informer's editorial office congratulated the new president of the USA!. informer.rs. online. Available at: <http://informer.rs/vesti/politika/299102/trampe-srbine-evo-kako-redakcija-informera-cestitala-novom-predsedniku-sad>. Accessed on 17/09/2020

whom they don't favor is declared a Shiptar (Trump Shiptar?!⁴) is the most low-minded form of public communication." (Jovović et al., 2018: 30) Media in Serbia will declare someone a Shiptar 491 times a month (Nedeljković, M. interview), which indicates a frequent practice of labeling and creating value-negative narratives about Albanians.

1.1.1.1. Albanians as the Subject of Numerous Fake News

In previous years, the FakeNews Tragač and Raskrikavanje portals have deconstructed dozens of fake news about Albanians, which spread prejudices, incite hatred, and intolerance. Creating misinformation and manipulative news about Albanians takes place in several narrative matrices, noticed by the journalists of FakeNews Tragač:

Albanians as "Haters of Serbs" - Warriors and Criminals

The narrative is characterized by constant announcements of wars between Serbs and Albanians (which will be caused by the Albanians), "anti-Serbian actions" are associated with the money Albanians earn by producing and selling drugs, as well as labeling Albanians as a criminal people.

Albanians as Ungrateful

Albanians living in Serbia are presented as usurpers of Serbian hospitality with numerous fake news which, among other things, state they use songs to call for the massacre of Serbs, spread out the Albanian flag in the center of Novi Sad on the anniversary of the 1999 bombing. The culmination of narratives about Albanians as ungrateful happened when the owner of a bakery in Belgrade was falsely accused by numerous media of showing the had symbol of, as the media then claimed, Greater Albania, which resulted in gatherings of extremists in front of the bakery, singing derogatory songs and threatening, citizens were invited via social networks to report

³ Informer. (2016). Dodik in the Kremlin - PUTINS, YOU SERB! Russian president supports the right of Serbs in RS to a referendum!. informer.rs. online. Available at: <http://informer.rs/vesti/srbija/290470/samo-informeru-kinezi-srbiji-nude-rakete-dometa-300-kilometara>. Accessed on 17/09/2020

⁴ Informer. (2017). TRUMP TOO IS SHIPTAR?! The USA leader took a photo with a Shiptar extremist who calls for war against the Serbs!. informer.rs. online. Available at: <https://informer.rs/vesti/politika/317473/nije-valjda-trump-siptar-lider-sad-slikao-siptarskim-ekstremistom-koji-poziva-rat-protiv-srba>. Accessed on 17/09/2020

Albanian bakeries in their cities, which caused the closure of several bakeries owned by Albanians, and some moved from Serbia for fear of their own lives.

Comparisons of Albanians and Serbs

This narrative is constructed to show that Albanians are in fact Serbs who have revolted against their people and is supported by fake news and absurd claims such as "Serbian DNA" accounting for the majority percentage in "Albanian DNA", as well as by promoting fake stories about Albanians who want to convert to Orthodoxy because they feel like Serbs (Mihajlović, 2019).

The frequency of targeting Albanians with hate speech and fake news in recent years is also the result of the unresolved Kosovo's status issue. Thus, there is a noticeable trend of increased production of fake news in periods when an event important to both nations is happening (marking anniversaries, current topics on the issue of negotiations, if some state announces or withdraws recognition of Kosovo, and the like).

1.1.2. The Image of Croats and Croatia in the Serbian Media

Along with Albanians, Croats are the most frequent targets of hate speech in the domestic media (Teofilović, i dr., 2018: 18). The term "Ustasha" appears in 508 media articles per month (Nedeljković, interview), while the *Informer* tabloid, or more precisely its editor, offered a non-existent proof that at least 90% of Croats are Ustashas (Đorđević, 2019). Apart from the constant identification of the neighboring people with the fascist movement, also noticeable is the constant militarization of neighborly relations. Croatia is presented in the tabloids as a country that is constantly threatening with a new war (Marković, 2018), (Janjić and Šovanec, 2018: 54), and the tabloids further dramatize the situation with false claims such as "Serbs in Croatia are hunted like wild beasts" (Vučić and Radojević, 2019: para. 20).

Narratives colored with a hostile tone can also be seen as an effective means of the tabloids wanting to deal with a public figure who has gone beyond this discourse with his actions. A very vivid example of this practice is the tabloid attacks on Serbian tennis player Novak Đoković, a person very positively represented in the Serbian media, when he publicly supported the Croatian national football team (Nikolić, 2018) or when he hired Goran Ivanišević, a former Croatian

tennis player, as a coach. (Sovilj, 2019). Calling Đoković an "Ustasha collaborator" or a "fool worthy of contempt" is a clear attempt to media-delegitimize a person who did not join the narrative of hostility actualization.

Narratives that support the rivalry and intolerance between Serbs and Croats spill over into topics that more belong to "interesting facts". Thus, the manipulative interpretation of the research on the honesty of different nations concluded that Serbs are more honest than Croats (which was not, nor could be proven by the mentioned research), and then the news was transmitted by both Public Services in Serbia, apart from numerous tabloids (FakeNews Tragač, 2019).

1.2. Migrants in Serbian Public - from Solidarity to Confrontation

The migrant crisis is a relatively new socio-political circumstance the causes, current events, but also consequences of which are discussed by European countries, primarily those that are on the so-called "migrant route", as well as those that are determined as a desirable final destination. In the context of the migrant crisis, Serbia is defined as a transit country with an extremely small number of asylum applications - last year, 252 persons entered the procedure, while 33 were granted asylum (FakeNews Tragač, 2020).

However, from the very beginning of the crisis, the Serbian media have been polarized in terms of approach to the topic, as well as attitudes towards migrants. While during the five years of the crisis, certain media, such as Južne vesti, Istinomer, RTS, are characterized by impartial, objective, and inclusive reporting, there are media, specifically Alo, Telegraf, and Koreni portals, which publish texts containing fake news, generalizations and manipulative metaphors spreading fear and warning of the danger of migrants. In those texts, migrants are most often identified with terrorists, there is talk of "Serbia Islamization", and their lack of civilization is pointed out. (Janjatović Jovanović, 2020).

Recently, there has been an increase in posts on social networks and online portals expressing intolerance towards migrants, spreading fake news, recycling old news about migrant attacks, and presenting them as new and current.

In an interview with Raskrikavanje, the director of the Belgrade Center for Human Rights explains that the cause of that can be found in gaining cheap political points (Ljubičić, M., 2020). Although there are certainly abuses for political purposes, it seems that much more has been achieved with such campaigns directed against migrants. Namely, there has been a noticeable trend of activating citizens on social networks to protect Serbia from migrants. Rarely does a topic and initiative manage to attract such a large number of citizens, as one Facebook group did, and perhaps more importantly, rarely does a topic trigger so many negative reactions among citizens, encourage them to spread hate speech and intolerance. The phenomenon refers to the Facebook group "STOP Naseljavanju migranata" ("STOP Migrant Settlement"), which currently has 331,200 members. In the information section, it can be seen that the administrators stated that the group was not allowed to spread fake news, hate speech, comments calling for lynching, and violence. However, going through the posts published in the group, one finds contents that are supposedly forbidden - fake and manipulative contents are published which warn of "jihadization of Serbia", "secret plans for settling migrants" are revealed, it is claimed that Serbs should not apologize to migrants for being white, migrants are identified with criminals, drug dealers, and rapists. The group posts have several thousand likes and hundreds of shares and comments which are explicit hate speech - "flood them, and then drown the survivors in the sea, and the problem is solved", "I personally would kill his whole family and turn him on a spit I would surrender to the police immediately, answering 'eye for an eye', and what I love nobody can touch as I don't touch anyone's ... And I would tell God judge me however you want but I no more want to see evil as evil is always ahead of the good on this planet.", "S***w them, tread them, there is an article in the law saying you can and may use deadly force in case of extreme necessity, so if your life is definitely endangered, and if you are attacked by 5 jerks who are also armed, you are doing the world a service."

The Facebook page "Narodna patrola" ("People's patrol") gathers people of similar orientations. It publishes photos and recordings of migrants, citizens are urged to be careful, with claims that they have taken up prostitution, drug sales, and car theft in Belgrade. Citizens are also very active in this group, expressing their concern, fear, and resentment in the comments, but they also call for action (to beat migrants, to ban them from buying groceries, etc.).

Numerous reactions to such content (which is mostly fake and manipulative) published on social networks all the more point to the media responsibility. Fake news about migrants appears primarily on portals that are not in the media register, without mastheads, and without signed texts. So, although the source of the news is such that it should raise doubts about its credibility, citizens still believe and react violently to such announcements. The reason for that should be sought in the nature of the topic they deal with and the feelings that they encourage in people. Namely, each of these announcements arouses fear of migrants, warns of danger, and thus prevents people from perceiving the situation rationally, while the number of worried people confirms to them that their fear is justified. It is in this phenomenon that the challenge that appeared in parallel with the emergence of social networks is reflected - the possibility of easy and efficient engagement of a large number of people, with arguments that would not pass the review test of any professional media.

1.3. Media about Women - Stereotypes and Misogyny

The portrayal of women in the media can in a sense also be considered a reflection of what value and social role is culturally attributed to women. Thus, Jelena Višnjić, analyzing texts in online media from a gender perspective, concludes: "Models of media representation of the bodies and identities of women victims of violence are involved in revitalizing traditional culture in our society, which understands and justifies violence against women. A woman is a media object on the cover, because a woman's body, naked, eroticized, beaten and dead, becomes market capital that ensures the sale and accumulation of profits, as well as maintaining the order of male power" (Višnjić, 2016: 177).

An analysis of media coverage of violence against women, conducted in the first half of 2019, tells us that "almost half of media publications (46%) contained sensationalist or stereotypical expressions for violence, survivors/victims and perpetrators", while in six percent of cases responsibility was shifted from the perpetrator to the victim (Predić, 2019). A significant example of such reporting can be found in the Alo tabloid, which reported that the husband "set his wife on fire because she did not give him insulin⁵", adding that due to the large age difference

⁵ M.O. (2019). SHE DIDN'T WANT TO INJECT HIM INSULIN?! A quarrel between the spouses escalated, the husband set on fire 11 years younger wife Slavica! Stories are circulating in Mol. Alo. alo.rs. online. Available at:

and the fact that the woman liked "to expose herself on social networks, which caught everyone's eye", the husband was extremely jealous.

Narratives accusing a woman of violence against her, while at the same time justifying the perpetrator with jealousy or other circumstances, lead to the establishment of a stereotypical understanding of the role of women as subordinated, defendants, while women themselves, believing in that, contribute to remaining in such a reality - "The results showed that media features with a sensationalist way of reporting in which the perpetrator is justified, and the blame for the violence is sought in the victim's behavior, strengthen the already present prejudices in society. They influence the victims to be discouraged from reporting violence as they believe that they too will be "blamed" for the violence by the competent institutions and the environment." (Lacmanović and Milanović, 2017: 50). Indirectly, therefore, the media themselves become complicit in crimes against women.

It is important to mention the case of the murder of singer Jelena Marjanović and the continuous tabloid reporting on it, but also the investigative procedure. Sensationalism, readership, and apparently political abuse have produced a situation where the Alo, Informer, and Kurir tabloids have been reporting on this murder for over four years (since April 2016), searching for motives for the murder, the killer, abusing family and friends of the victim, often accusing them too of the murder. The then Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, as well as the politician Vojislav Šešelj, were also actively involved in the case, giving statements about the investigation and expressing their views on how the investigation should take place (among other things, Šešelj attacked political opponents and said that they too should be interrogated, and Vučić asked the name of the killer not to be published before the election, claiming that the killer was known, but that there was still no material evidence). In addition to absolute unethical behavior, the work of tabloids during the entire period of reporting on the murder was marked by publishing misinformation: "The largest number of news items with proven inaccurate data was published in Kurir (at least 50 out of 232), then in Informer, and the least proven inaccurate data were found in Alo." (Maksimović, 2019: para. 2)

<https://www.alo.rs/vesti/hronika/svada-medu-supruznicima-eskalirala-muz-zapalio-11-godina-mladu-slavicu-u-molu-kolaju-price/231452/vest>. Accessed on 17/09/2020.

Although media regulations do not allow this type of reporting on violence against women, it seems that in the case of the Serbian media it is not effective enough. In an interview for N1 television, Aleksandra Nestorov from the Autonomous Women's Center described the experiences of this organization with the institutions in charge of the media - REM, the Press Council, the Prosecutor's Office, and the Ministry of Culture and Information: "These bodies are not mute, REM issues warnings, the Press Council decides positively, newspapers announce that they have violated the code and continue to violate it. The point is that the measures have no effect."⁶

Hate speech towards women often occurs as a consequence of their holding a public office or a job the general public has insight into, such as journalism. Taking into account the results of media work of certain female journalists, some media use unfounded moral discrediting, hate speech based on physical characteristics or disrespect for stereotypical roles of women in society, and the like, which results in frequent threats to female journalists, both anonymous and in person and direct (Apro, 2020).

1.4. Media Dealing with Political Dissidents

If the media are a mirror of society, then it should come as no surprise that the state of general polarization - seemingly increasingly present not only in Serbia but throughout the planet - is also reflected in the media discourse of our society. The public in Serbia is politically extremely polarized, which is also expressed in the media discourse. Given that public officials often use their appearances to attack their political opponents, the media favoring these politicians, as their extended arm, harmonize their editorial policy accordingly.

Ad hominem attacks on opposition leaders are best reflected in the epithets and nicknames these media use to address them. The president of the Party of Freedom and Justice, Dragan Đilas, is most often marked in the media as a tycoon, which alludes to his allegedly illegally acquired

⁶ Stefanović, S. (2016). Nestorov: If you call a crime against women a quarrel, you are undermining the problem. N1. rs.n1info.com. online. Available at: <http://rs.n1info.com/Vesti/a492315/Nestorov-Ako-zlocin-prema-zenama-nazovete-svadjom-to-je-umanjivanje-problema.html>. Accessed on 17/09/2020

wealth. In Srpski telegraf, he is a tycoon who "reliefs frustrations at the epidemiologist"⁷, and in Alo, he is a tycoon behaving "imperious" with his party "pal"⁸. The leader of Dveri, Boško Obradović, was labeled as a fascist or Ljotićevac (member of the Serbian Volunteer Corps): "Informer's "fascist Boško Obradović tore down the Serbian flag and created chaos in the assembly"⁹ or Kurir's "Boško admitted that he was a Ljotićevac and a homophobe".¹⁰ Examples of labeling are similar to examples of general denial of the credibility of political dissidents. In the text listing the alleged Đilas' affairs, Kurir labels this politician as haughty, who curses students and goes wild on the road with an expensive jeep¹¹; Alo once demonstrated how the president of the People's Party, Vuk Jeremić, showed arrogance and ignorance¹²; and Srpski telegraf categorizes the president of the Movement of Free Citizens, Sergej Trifunović, as a simpleton¹³. The allegations of systematic and continuous attacks on the opposition are supported by frequent defamation lawsuits filed by these politicians against tabloids: Vuk

⁷ Republika. (2020). Shameful move! The tycoon reliefs his frustrations at the epidemiologist: Đilas brutally attacked Dr. Kon!. republika.rs. online. Available at: <https://www.republika.rs/vesti/srbija/200109/sramni-potez-tajkun-leci-frustracije-epidemiologu-Đilas-brutalno-napao-doktora-kona>. Accessed on 17/09/2020

⁸ Alo. (2019). BOY THOSE TWO HAVE FUN Here is how tycoon Đilas and his friend Borko act imperious in the tavern! They do this when they think no one is watching them! (VIDEO). alo.rs. online. Available at: <https://www.alo.rs/vesti/politika/evo-kako-se-u-kafani-bahate-tajkun-dilas-i-njegov-pajtos-borko-ovo-rade-kada-misle-da-ih-niko-ne-gleda-video/208839/vest>. Accessed on 17/09/2020

⁹ Informer. (2020). EXCLUSIVE VIDEO! HERE'S HOW FASCIST BOŠKO OBRADOVIĆ TORE DOWN THE SERBIAN FLAG AND MADE CHAOS IN THE ASSEMBLY! (VIDEO). informer.rs. online. Available at: <https://informer.rs/vesti/politika/515861/ekskluzivni-snimak-evo-kako-fasista-bosko-obradovic-srusio-srpsku-zastavu-napravio-haos-skupstini-video>. Accessed on 17/09/2020

¹⁰ Kurir. (2019). Boško Obradović is a DICTATOR! He BRUTALLY deals with colleagues and kicks them out of the movement BY SUMMARY PROCEDURE. kurir.rs. online. Available at: <https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/3233568/bosko-obradovic-je-diktator-obracunava-se-s-kolegama-brutalno-i-izbacuje-iz-pokretapo-kratkom-postupku>. Accessed on 17/09/2020

¹¹ Kurir. (2019). WHEN YOU SAY HAUGHTY, YOU MEAN DRAGAN ĐILAS! CURSED students, WENT WILD ON THE ROAD with an expensive jeep! Demolished RTS, threatened the police ... CONTINUE THE SERIES ... THERE IS NO END TO THE OPPOSITION LEADER OUTBURT'S! (VIDEO). kurir.rs. online. Available at: <https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/3339405/kad-kazes-bahat-misli-dragan-Đilas-psovao-studentima-majku-skupim-dzipom-divljao-po-putu-lomio-po-rtis-pretio-policiji-nastavi-niz-nema-kraja-ispadima-lidera-opozicije-video> Accessed on 17/09/2020

¹² Alo. (2020). HIS IGNORANCE AND ARROGANCE AGAIN Vuk Jeremić embarrassed himself, congratulated Sretenje and posted a photo of the Takovo Uprising!. alo.rs. online. Available at: <https://www.alo.rs/vesti/politika/vuk-jeremic-se-posteno-izblamirao-cestitao-sretenje-a-stavio-sliku-takovskog-ustanka/288496/vest> Accessed on 17/09/2020

¹³ Republika. (2020). (PHOTO) Sergej Simpleton! Came to television as if going to the beach. republika.rs. online. Available at: <https://www.republika.rs/vesti/srbija/205219/foto-prostak-sergej-dosao-televiziju-kao-plazu-posao>. Accessed on 17/09/2020

Jeremić against Informer and Srpski telegraf¹⁴, former president of the Movement of Free Citizens Saša Janković against Informer and Alo¹⁵, Dragan Đilas against Informer¹⁶. In addition, the alleged allegiance of these politicians to the West is often integrated by these tabloids with these politicians' intentions of illegal overthrow of the government: Srpski telegraf writes that "Jeremić counts on foreign forces to change the will of the people and return him to power" (Republika, 2019), Alo announces that "Boško and Đilas are destroying Vučić with the help of the West" (Alo, 2018), while Informer claims that "Đilas admitted he is negotiating chaos in Serbia in the USA" (Informer, 2019).

When it comes to the opposition leaders representation, the situation is not much different with the main pro-government television stations with a national frequency. According to the five-month monitoring of the Bureau for Social Research (BIRODI) from September to January this year, the most negatively represented were the opposition parties boycotting the elections and their leaders on Pink TV - the parties were negatively portrayed in 90% and their leaders in 97% of the time on this TV station (BIRODI, 2020: 6). The situation was no different in the period before the election campaign - monitoring of central news programs on national coverage TV stations conducted by the Center for Research, Transparency, and Accountability (CRTA) shows that among the five most represented politicians, the only representative of the opposition Dragan Đilas is also the only primarily negatively shown actor, most negatively again on Pink TV (CRTA, 2020: 12). Quantitative-qualitative analysis of the central news program of this television conducted by the Novi Sad School of Journalism shows an "extremely high" percentage of journalists' bias towards the topic and the subject, which is reflected in the fact that Pink TV journalists and editors did not sanction or omit "statements with offensive elements against opposition representatives" (Valić Nedeljković and Isakov, 2020: 24). As an example of Pink's presenters' bias, a feature was singled out beginning with the words: "To another flam of the Alliance for Serbia" (Ibid: 25), and a similar tone was highlighted in the analysis of the

¹⁴ Politika. (2017). Vuk Jeremic sued "Informer" and "Srpski Telegraf". politika.rs. online. Available at: <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/376602/Politika/Vuk-Jeremic-tuzio-Informer-i-Srpski-telegraf>. Accessed on 17/09/2020

¹⁵ Cenolovka. Saša Janković sued the Informer and Alo portals. cenolovka.rs. Available at: <https://www.cenolovka.rs/etika/sasa-jankovic-tuzio-portale-informer-i-alo/>. Accessed on 17/09/2020

¹⁶ N1. SAA: The court forbade Informer to call Dragan Đilas a thief. rs.n1info.com. online. Available at: <http://rs.n1info.com/Vesti/a616902/SSP-Sud-zabranio-Informeru-da-Dragana-Djilasa-naziva-lopovom.html>. Accessed on 17/09/2020

morning program of this television, hosted by Predrag Sarapa who uses phrases such as "Đilas's madness" and "Wishful thinking of the Opposition" (Ibid: 80-81). In addition, Pink is characterized by open letters from the owner of this television, Željko Mitrović, intended for his political dissidents, read by the presenter in its entirety in the central news programs. In these letters, Mitrović uses "extremely inappropriate language and insults against the person he is talking about", and an example in the analyzed period are letters for Dragan Đilas, as well as his party colleague and mayor of Stari grad municipality in Belgrade Marko Bastać (Ibid: 17).

Finally, given the growing volume of public and political discourse taking place in the online sphere, it is worth mentioning the most recent example of the systematic promotion of government and dealing with dissidents on social networks. Namely, in April this year, the Stanford Internet Observatory published an analysis of tweets by 8,558 bot accounts that promoted the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, and attacked his opponents, and that were deleted by this social network. According to the analysis, the network of these accounts began to expand in mid-2018, just before the beginning of the "1 in 5 million" protest, and at the time of their shutting down, they posted over 43 million tweets (Bush, 2020: 4). The most common types of tweets were those that shared links to content on other websites - about 15 million links were shared - and three of the four most common addresses to which these links led, in addition to the Serbian Progressive Party's official website, were pro-government media sites – of Informer, Alo, and Pink (Ibid: 12). The support and promotion of Aleksandar Vučić was the main modus operandi of this network of bots, but another important task was the attack on the opposition. Mostly mentioned in negative context was the account of Dragan Đilas (about 340 thousand times), followed by the account of the Alliance for Serbia (about 310 thousand times), and then Vuk Jeremić (about 235 thousand times) (Ibid: 13). In addition, the author of the research, Daniel Bush, mentioned another tactic used by this network: "flooding the tweets of opposition leaders and leaving critical responses, in order to give other users the impression of their unpopularity" (Radojevic, 2020: para. 27).

2. Hate Speech in New Media: 2020 Facebook Campaign

According to all international conventions and regulations that guarantee human rights, and the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia: everyone has the right to express their opinions and express themselves freely. However, the other part of the regulation is often forgotten, which guarantees the right to freedom of expression to the extent that it does not endanger the rights and freedoms of other people. At least half of the electoral lists (which symbolically confirms the thesis about the polarization of society) in this year's parliamentary elections could be said to belong to the right ideological spectrum, i.e. that the attitudes of these political options are traditional and conservative. As a legitimate political gender, such an orientation in itself is neither unusual nor wrong. However, it is important to say that during the monitoring by the Novi Sad School of Journalism, it was registered that more often than the "left", right-wing political options with their ideas, attitudes, and narratives "slipped" into extremism and violated the rights and freedoms of others.

What is especially worth paying attention to is the importance of new media and social networks, which, despite the editorial control, codes, and ethical principles of the journalistic profession that prohibit hate speech, have opened space for all, including xenophobic, misogynistic, nationalist and homophobic ideas. With all the positive aspects of social networks that enable the exchange of ideas and opinions, we are witnessing that freedom of expression is often abused and that this space is used in a way that endangers the rights of others (Pokuševski, 2018: 8). Research by the Belgrade Center for Human Rights and the Liber New Media Center shows that there is a strong presence of hate speech on the Internet in Serbia, and the characteristic targets of hate speech attacks are members of political parties or different ideological orientations, and then members of other nations and LGBT people. (Vehovec, Kišjuhas, and Vehovec, 2016: 30-31). "The characteristic content of hate speech refers to the political or ideological affiliation, and then to national affiliation and sexual orientation, with attacks on personality and physical appearance," while the dominant frameworks or social and value contexts in which hate speech takes place on the Internet in Serbia are "the context of political (ideological) fight, as well as the context of ethnocentrism and homophobia, with the intertwining of these spheres" (ibid.).

Gender equality (zero percent), *the rights of LGBT members* (one percent), and *other human rights and democracy* (two percent) were almost non-existent in the Facebook campaign for the 2020 parliamentary elections, according to monitoring conducted by the Novi Sad School of Journalism. (Valić Nedeljković and Sigeti, 2020). Even when it was talked about, the attitude towards the topic, but also towards the objects, was often negative, politically incorrect, and the narratives used were common, stereotypical, sometimes characterized as hate speech.

2.1. About Migrants in the Campaign: a Key Topic or Topic to Avoid

The targets were mostly migrants, who were usually talked about negatively. It is interesting to point out that the topic of the *migrant crisis* and *migrants* as objects, although a very current and important issue in society, are almost unmentioned in the campaigns of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia (they were represented both as a topic and as objects by zero percentage each in both parties). At the same time, conservative parties based their campaign on this issue, so migrants were mentioned in the Leviathan Movement - I Live for Serbia campaign in as many as eight percent of cases, i.e. they were the fifth most represented object, and the migrant crisis the fourth most addressed topic. It is important to mention the video that appeared on social networks in early May, in which a man, uttering racist insults, enters the Reception Center for Migrants in Obrenovac, secured by the Serbian Army, after which the president of the Leviathan Movement Pavle Bihali took to Twitter, claiming that this was a member of this Movement, Filip Radovanović, who, as he stated, "could no longer withstand harassment by migrants and decided to do this"¹⁷, and that the boys from Leviathan are so "emotional and righteous". However, the leading topic in the campaign of this coalition was vaccination (health represented by 20 percent), and the representative of the electoral list Jovana Stojković, known as an advocate of anti-vaccine attitudes, which is why she is being prosecuted before the Court of Honor the Medical Chamber, presented her ideas that the vaccine against the disease caused by the new coronavirus could be a means of control (Komarčević and Živanović, 2020: para. 23).

¹⁷ Bihali, P. (2020). Filip is a member of the Movement. Filip could no longer put up with the harassment by the migrants and decided to do this. Although he did not wear the colors of the Movement and did it as a solo player, I will not distance myself, such are my guys, emotional and righteous. twitter.com. [online]. Available at: <https://twitter.com/pasazot/status/1258116747065987074>. Accessed on 15/09/2020.

As far as migrants are concerned, the situation is similar in the campaign of the Sovereignists (the Enough is Enough movement), where this group is the fourth object, and the migrant crisis is the seventh topic by representation. Although the attitude of this list towards migrants (seven percent) was not always completely negative, it could easily be read that this group is not desirable in Serbia due to the statements that migrants were sent "to destroy the sovereign countries of Europe" and that they are "a means of achieving the goal"¹⁸ (Apostolović and Stjepić, 2020: 125).

The impression is that the mentioned two electoral lists mostly used the space of social networks to express misogynistic and pseudo-scientific views, and they most often addressed their followers "live", i.e. in live recordings on Facebook and YouTube. Both lists emphasized the closedness of the media for the topics they deal with, and the electoral list Sovereignists, in addition to regular conferences from the National Assembly that was broadcast on the YouTube account, found the channel to the audience via the YouTube show "Open Conversations" hosted by a member of the Enough is Enough movement, Hana Adrović, in which the president of the Movement, Saša Radulović, and the deputy president, Branka Stamenković, most often talked, and during which the spectators could also ask questions.

To a lesser extent, but also often, two more lists spoke about migrants - the Serbian Radical Party and the People's Bloc (five percent representation of *the migrants* variable and four percent representation of the topic of *migrant crisis* in the campaign of both lists). Noting that the radicals "are not xenophobes", Aleksandar Šešelj suggested that Serbia help migrants by taking them to the border with the European Union, and when asked by a journalist how when the borders are closed, Šešelj concluded they had not "come to Serbia and showed their passports" at the border crossing, but arrived illegally. So, it is how they will enter the European Union. What is the problem?"¹⁹ (Apostolović and Stjepić, 2020: 100).

¹⁸ Radulović, S. (2020). How the authorities settled migrants on dark nights. facebook.com. 26/05/2020 Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=553809028843075>. Accessed on: 04/07/2020

¹⁹ Šešelj, A. (2020). Prohibit illegal migration! Migrants in Serbia should be escorted to the EU. facebook.com. 03/06/2020 Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/srpskaradikalnastranka.srs/videos/190563662190502/?v=190563662190502>. Accessed on: 03/07/2020.

2.1.1. The Migrants Topic Out of Campaign

On the eve of the elections, the political activism of right-wing currents was visible even among those who decided to boycott the elections. Thus, during the election campaign, protests against the authorities were held in front of the Serbian Parliament, supported by certain nationalist groups such as Worthy of Serbia, the Light Movement, the Serbian People's Info portal, and the Police Employees' Union, gathered around former bodybuilder Petar Čelik who also read during a protest the "Declaration on the Proclamation of the People's Republic of Serbia", by which this imaginary republic was "founded" (Vučić, 2020: para. 11). The whole event was followed by the nationalist songs of Baja Mali Knindža, and it was broadcast live on Facebook.

Ideologically close, but seemingly another nationalist current, was led by former MP and former member of the Serbian movement Dveri, Srđan Nogo, who also gathered his supporters just before the elections and on the election day and announced a plan to elect representatives - 250 people, who will enter the Assembly. At the gatherings led by Nogo, nationalist songs could be heard from the loudspeakers and flags "No Surrender, Kosovo is Serbia" could be seen, and in addition to chanting "We won't give up our shrines", "Kosovo is the heart of Serbia", one could also hear "Return migrants home". The last slogan is not surprising, since on May 9 this year, on the Day of Victory over Fascism in the Second World War, Nogo led a march in which groups of people chanted "We don't want migrants", as well as messages against the 5G Internet network and vaccinating children (Komarčević and Živanović, 2020: para 7).

Nogo's former party colleagues and opposition politician Bosko Obradovic also conducted an anti-immigrant campaign earlier this year, and one of Dveri's campaign slogans was "Petition against the government's migrant policy - a signature that guarantees the safety of your children" (Hajrić, 2020: para. 9). In addition, Obradović used the openness of social networks to express racist views and by tipping between three glasses - empty, full of water, and full of black liquid on his YouTube channel - demonstrated how migrants will flood Serbia and physically replace its current population, which, according to the estimates of sociologist Darijo Hajrić, based on the data about the submission of asylum applications, could happen in about 291,667 years.

The importance of social networks for spreading unfounded and unproven claims about migrants is also shown by the example of the mentioned Facebook group "Stop migrant settlement", which has already been discussed, and which now has 326,538 members. The so-called "people's guard", a group of men who intercepted refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq at the Belgrade bus station, used the social network YouTube for their promotion, telling them that they "heard there were many problems with them in Belgrade" and that "they must not touch women and children" (Hajrić, 2020: para. 2). On that occasion, they handed out pamphlets that read: "Due to frequent sick attacks on Serbian women and girls, you are forbidden to move outside the migrant centers from 10 pm to 6 am and to move in groups of more than three people during the day." Attacks on our citizens will not go unpunished."

Although the proceedings against certain members of the "people's patrol" were initiated, sociologist Dario Hajrić (2020: 6) expressed doubts about solution, reminding that the "people's patrol" like-minded on the issue of refugees, Goran Davidović, former leader of the banned Nacionalni stroj, recently returned to Serbia "with a big return by appearing on a television station with a national frequency", and that he presented the public with a series of photos showing the bottom of the political vat: Vojislav Šešelj, Miša Vacić, anti-vaxxer Jovana Stojković and Pavle Bihali from Leviathan. Hajrić (2020, para. 21) concludes that the opposition "using him as a tool or integrating him with coalition partners, participates in the normalization of fascism". If he continues on that path, Hajrić believes, the only threshold many of them will pass in some future elections will be the height of the raised right."

2.2. Emphasizing National Identity in the Campaign

The presence of conservative political options during this year's campaign was not only visible on the street but also on social networks, which is confirmed by the fact that the variable *emphasizing national identity* is the fifth topic most often discussed in the Facebook campaign, immediately after *economic issues* (10 percent, not counting the *announcement poster and event announcement* - nine percent), as shown by the monitoring of the Novi Sad School of Journalism. The importance of national identity to political options in Serbia is evidenced by the fact that this issue has been discussed twice as much as aggregately about *gender equality*, *the rights of LGBT members*, and other human rights and democracy. In addition, it should be

mentioned that members of minority peoples as an object were most often represented in one or zero percentage in most lists that are not lists of national minorities, with a few exceptions. It is important to understand that the national identity was not emphasized in the campaign in the context of the story of, for example, cultural and historical heritage, but as fear of losing national identity, drowning in European history and culture, and remaining without specialness, which is characteristic of Eurosceptics in Serbia. (Jovanović, 2019: para. 9). Such fears are not justified, since, according to historians, the key problem is the inadequate attitude towards one's own cultural and any other heritage. Negligence is so great, concludes Jovanović, that it omits many important elements building the identity of a space and the people who live on it, as opposed to emphasizing the qualities that call for unity.

It is important to note that the list that managed to pass the threshold and ensure 11 seats in the National Assembly - the Serbian Patriotic Alliance - on its Facebook page, in the highest percentage compared to all others, emphasized the importance of *national identity*, (19 percent) and Serbian sovereignty, then the importance of cooperation and communication of all social and political actors. The campaign of this electoral list is therefore recognized as an integration campaign (constructive campaign) which "does not advocate radical change", but "insists on national unity, on goals leading to homogenization of social tissue" (Slavujević, 2007: 135 according to Apostolović and Stjepić, 2020: 105). As can be deduced from the name of the list, the Sovereignists also gave the most space in their campaign to the idea of sovereignty, so on the Facebook page of this list, *national identity* was most often talked about (10 percent), and sharp criticism of Western countries, especially Germany, and the European Union, which was called an "artificial globalist creation"²⁰ was registered (Apostolović and Stjepić, 2020: 125). Insisting on the *national identity* of Serbia and Serbs (14 percent), frequent use of these very words - *Serbia, Serbs, Serbian* - is a feature of the campaign of the Serbian Party Zavetnici, in which the most important topic was the issue of Kosovo (15 percent), and speaking about the economy (eight percent), the importance of rebuilding *Serbian* villages and advocating economic patriotism was also emphasized.

²⁰ Radulović, S. (2020). How the authorities settled migrants on dark nights. facebook.com. 26/05/2020 Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=553809028843075>. Accessed on: 04/07/2020

On the other hand, emphasizing national identity, but also hate speech towards the inhabitants of neighboring countries, was registered especially in the campaign of the Serbian Radical Party and the People's Bloc when the list's representatives - Nemanja Šarović and Velimir Ilić - used the derogatory name "Shiptars" almost always when talking about Albanians, and Velimir Ilić finds faults with the Prime Minister Ana Brnabić for her national affiliation, considering that the fact that we have "Croats in the Government"²¹ is shameful (Apostolović and Stjepić, 2020: 121).

In addition, the two observed parties of national minorities attached great importance to *national identity*, and this topic was the third most represented in the Democratic Action Party's campaign (eight percent), right after *the issue of the past and war crimes* (13 percent), while during the entire campaign, the most talked about was decentralization and the issue of Sandžak autonomy (37 percent). The second national minority party, the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, put the greatest focus on emphasizing national identity (15 percent), which was the second most represented topic after the *campaign* (28 percent).

2.3. On Gender Equality and the Rights of the LGBT+ Population in the Campaign

It is not surprising that the issue of gender equality is the topic that was least represented in the campaign (zero percent), since gender imbalance is a finding systematically present in all pre-election monitoring conducted by the Novi Sad School of Journalism since 1996. Women were found in the role of the subject much less often than men; more precisely, they were represented three and a half times less. It should be noted that women were the more represented gender in the campaign of three electoral lists (Milica Đurđević Stamenkovski - Serbian Party Zavetnici, Citizens' Group: 1 out of 5 million and the Leviathan Movement - I live for Serbia), and that they were the first on the electoral lists in only two cases. (Valentina Reković on the list of the Movement 1 out of 5 million and Jovana Stojković on the list of the Leviathan Movement - I live for Serbia) (Apostolović and Stjepić, 2020: 83).

²¹ Ilić, V. (2020). New Serbia Čačak. facebook.com. [online]. 17/06/2020 Available at: https://www.facebook.com/novasrbijainfo/posts/3061244873959119?_tn=-R. Accessed on: 04/07/2020

However, despite that, the issue of gender equality was almost never mentioned in the campaigns of those lists, so this topic was represented with one percent in the campaign of Zavetnici, and with zero percent in the campaign of the other two lists. On the contrary, anti-feminist attitudes and stereotyping of gender roles were noticed on several occasions in the posts on the Facebook page I Live for Serbia Movement - Dr. Jovana Stojković. This is shown by examples of posts stating that this movement consists of: "anti-feminists, married women, mothers, female doctors, lawyers, dentists, patriots plus our dedicated and supportive men"²², as well as a photo showing members of the I Live for Serbia Movement, dressed in white, with one of them being pregnant, and two with children in their arms and a stroller, while on the other side of the photo there are members of the Leviathan Movement, dressed in black and with the heads of wild animals, with the explanation that the picture symbolizes one of their slogans: "Let's be the voice for the voiceless."

It is important to emphasize that "public advocacy, support and treatment by prejudices, customs and other social patterns of behavior based on the idea of gender subordination or superiority, or stereotypical gender roles in the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination (Article 20) is recognized as discriminatory behavior and prohibited, as well as discrimination based on sexual orientation (Article 21). The rights of members of the LGBT community were almost not mentioned (one percent), and even when they were - in almost all cases, the attitude towards the topic, but also towards this community, was negative. An example that stands out is the campaign of the electoral list People's Bloc, led by Velimir Ilić, the president of New Serbia, when he repeatedly insulted this group, and most often cited as an example that "it is a shame that we have members of the LGBT population in the government" alluding to the Prime Minister of Serbia Ana Brnabić (Apostolović and Stjepić, 2020: 121). Contradictory attitudes towards this issue were registered in the campaign of the electoral list Ivica Dačić - Socialist Party of Serbia - United Serbia - Dragan Marković Palma. The LGBT population was mentioned only twice during the coalition's campaign, once positively, when former LGBT rights activist and SPS official Boris Milićević spoke about the equality of all vulnerable groups, and once negatively when the

²² I Live for Serbia Movement - Dr. Jovana Stojković (2020). When you ask WHO? antifeminists, married women, mothers, female doctors, lawyers, dentists, patriotics plus our dedicated and supportive men. We don't pose, we take pictures for the billboard. facebook.com. [online]. 12/06/2020 Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/ZivimZaSrbiju/photos/a.242745606373298/598517907462731/?type=3&theater>. Accessed on 15/09/2020

second on the list of the SPS-US coalition Dragan Markovic Palma said at the pre-election gathering that he respects all European values "except the one they want to impose on us, you know, those ... we will never vote for them"²³, and in the context of previous statements of this official it is clear that these are the rights of LGBT communities (Apostolović and Stjepić, 2020: 97-98). The gathering was broadcast live on the SPS Facebook profile, which gave such ideas, although they may not have been transmitted in the traditional media, wider space for the audience on social networks. Discrimination against sexual orientation is especially problematic when present among political actors who as public figures have a significant influence on the attitudes of citizens, and with this, they directly violate legal provisions (Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, which clearly prohibits any conduct aimed at violation the dignity of persons on the basis of their personal characteristics "especially if this creates fear or a hostile, humiliating and offensive environment".

2.4. About the Media

During the election campaign, criticism of the media was mostly focused on the media's closedness to opposition electoral lists, especially in the context of the story of election conditions. Moreover, insults against the work of independent media were registered on several occasions. An example is when in the Serbian Progressive Party's campaign, the president of the Freedom and Justice Party and one of the leaders of the Alliance for Serbia, Dragan Đilas, was associated with a text published by the Crime and Corruption Reporting Network (KRIK), showing a photo of the Serbian President's son, Danilo Vučić, in the company of a member of the football fan group "Janjičari". In several dozen posts, party officials condemned this action by KRIK journalists, whom Prime Minister Ana Brnabić called "Đilas's dirty propagandists"²⁴, saying they were "mud", while other officials targeted them as tycoon-agency systems that "organize a hunt for his children's heads ", assessing such attacks as "monstrous". It is important

²³ Markovic, D. (2020). #draganmarkovicpalma koalicija SPS – @domacinski_js #IvicaDacic #mistojimopostojano. facebook.com. [online]. 18/06/2020. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=307749447056886>. Accessed on 15/09/2020

²⁴ Brnabić, A. (2020). You are the mud you say you are fighting against. sns.org.rs. according to facebook.com. [online]. 11/06/2020 Available at: https://www.facebook.com/snsrbija/posts/3380308791999865?__tn__=-R. Accessed on 15/09/2020

to note that such conduct by state authorities is not in line with the Law on Public Information (Article 4), which clearly guarantees the freedom of the media. "Discrimination against editors and journalists, as well as exerting pressure and endangering the editorial autonomy of the media and the free flow of information through the media is explicitly prohibited." What is additionally problematic in connection with the mentioned statements is that a large number of them were transmitted on the website of the Tanjug news agency, which violated the Code of Journalists of Serbia, stating that a journalist "must oppose anyone who violates human rights or advocates any kind of discrimination, hate speech and incitement to violence" (Article 5, paragraph 1).

Conclusion

The media practice of spreading narratives expressing hate speech, stereotyping, and polarization in society can be explained by the socio-historical context, layered ideological heritage, and long-term reports documenting the decline in media freedom in Serbia (Valić Nedeljković and Janjatović Jovanović, 2020). Language and propaganda, though abstract in their forms, leave significant consequences on people's lives, which indicates the necessity of deconstructing such practices.

"Stigmatization enables the beginning of legalized verbal violence, and in extreme cases, it is an introduction to persecution and mass murders. (...) To stigmatize means to dull the ethical feeling, the only one that allows a person to put himself in the position of another." (Šare, 2004: 167/8)

It is in the multi-layeredness of the causes of the presented media practices that one can look for the reason, i.e. the possibility of legislative system non-functioning in the field of media. Observed contexts and narrative patterns addressed to different social groups indicate that polarization in society is pronounced and that this polarization continues to be implemented both through media communication channels and in the online sphere in which people in positions of power communicate directly with their audience.

Media unprofessionalism and the online spread of hate speech and stereotypes turn out to be a symptom of a politically unstable and ideologically unclear situation, decades of struggle for the emancipation of various social groups, and a great humanitarian (often called migrant in the media) crisis. At the same time, this symptom reflects the crisis in the field of human rights, most obvious in the impossibility of free opinion and expression, which is then transmitted to the individual lives of citizens.

Public discussion among media experts usually ranges from unwavering persistence in demands for the improvement of the media, to pessimism conditioned precisely by socio-political circumstances. However, one of the most frequently advocated practices is training citizens, primarily the youngest, for critical interpretation of media messages, as any practice without well-founded criticism would be a return, that is, a stay in the system of human rights violations, without which there is no freedom of either the individual or the society.

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ONLINE INTERVIEW:

Marko Nedeljković, researcher and director of the Center for Media Professionalization and Media Literacy, June 2020