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**Gross, Peter, Mass Media in Revolution and National Development: The Romanian Laboratory Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1996. xiii+206pp.**

Gross's book has a twofold objective: to provide information about media in Romania, and to sum up the lessons for media in the first years of post-communism. The three introductory chapters thus offer a diligent account on the subject matter of Romanian media. while the next three chapters provide more speculative views. The book opens with a discussion of the Romanian media legacy. with most attention given to the Ceausescu era. when twists in media development were directly linked to political intricacies. Key issues here are the party control. the censorship (officially abolished in 1977) and the paranoid self-censorship that came to replace it. The journalists. mostly party activists whose code of conduct was to be found in the staggering press law of 1974. were involved in creating a manipulative meta-reality of information chaos and Orwellian newspeak.

Consequently, Gross claims, three informational realities co-existed: an official one of disinformation, a second one of ill-informed gossip, and a third provided by the objective western media. The rejection of 'glasnost,' the harsh treatment of the scarce dissidents and the expulsions of foreign correspondents in the last years of Ceausescu's regime had also added to the international isolation of the country on the eve of the Velvet revolutions. Chapter 2 describes the role of media in the Romanian coup of December 1989. Gross separately

considers the roles played by the press, the domestic broadcasting, and the foreign media. He mentions some media machinations of the neo-communist government that came to power because of this revolution, though he does not go into detail.

Gross claims that the evidence of manipulation of media (TV in particular) is insufficient and avoids commenting on the specifics of the revolution as a 'TV' one. Next is a discussion of the media on a non-communist footing. First, Gross deals with their spectacular growth. The press had tripled in size within two years (bringing along pornography, as well as a crisis in cultural publications). Independent broadcast media had emerged more successfully in radio, less in TV. New media legislation had been partially introduced encompassing a new constitution (1991), an audio-visual law (1992), and a public radio and TV law (1994). Laws on the press and on access to information continued to be under consideration. However, significant shortcomings have characterised the journalism that has emerged. In Chapter 4, Gross describes the partisanship and irresponsible reporting that has marked the journalistic discourse as a reflection of a 'marginally developed civil society'(p.111 ). The 'quasi-cynical' attitude of Romanian journalists to internationally accepted codes of conduct, and the fact that 'the journalistic discourse remains completely unprofessional, tentatively professional, or only partially professional' (p.111) lead Gross to the conclusion that journalists at all levels need retraining.

This is probably the most interesting part of the book, as it raises and addresses issues of cross-cultural importance. In his discussion of the effectiveness and influence of the new media (Chapter 5) Gross is very critical, and occasionally bitter. The confidence in media has sharply decreased, and the public has started viewing them 'as entertainment, voyeuristic, sensational, and marginally informative, questionably or distantly relevant' (p.126 ). Gross.

however. fails to answer why things evolved that way. He denounces. for example, the cynical disinformation strategy of 'Evenimentul Zilei,' but does not explain why such a tabloid would enjoy the widest circulation. Chapter 6 contains a systematic account of the lessons Gross had learned through his involvement in recent media aid programs in Romania.

The lessons address confronting partisanship in journalism. improving foreign media assistance. and providing more adequate training programs. Communication scholars and practitioners involved in media assistance programs in various Eastern European countries would very much benefit from reading this part of the book. Gross's study is a well organised and systematic account on a subject that has been underrepresented until now in international communication scholarship: media in Romania. It also offers a number of important observations and conclusions. Yet. the book has two major shortcomings. First. the post-1989 political background that Gross provides in his discussion of media is insufficient. The lack of explicit discussion of Romanian politics makes it impossible to understand the source of the clear-cut partisanship which the author so sharply criticises. Either Gross wrongly assumes that his readers are familiar with the peculiar Romanian political context. or he wants to avoid getting involved by clearly stating his opinion on current Romanian politics. In any case. the author does not adequately discuss major situations in which the interaction of Romanian media and politicians has been of prime importance: the 1989 TV take-over and manipulative staging of TV revolution by Iliescu and his entourage, the 1990/91 'miner's' incidents, and the University square events. These incidents of media manipulation by the post -19 8 9 government. however, are the ones that gained notoriety internationally, and it is quite natural to expect that the book would address them. It is not that Gross should have devoted his study exclusively to these. There is, indeed, a scattered discussion on some aspects of media and politics. Nevertheless. important questions remain unanswered.

Secondly, Gross completely neglects issues of minority languages and media, and the nationalist press. In the case of Romania, however, with its large Hungarian, Gypsy, and other minorities, these are of utmost importance. Gross has been involved with the restructuring of media education in Romania since 1990. It is, most likely, his involvement with programs of media assistance (which necessarily need to be endorsed by the powers-that-be) that prevents him from confronting politically awkward issues.

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