

***The Role of the Media in
Greek-Turkish Relations –***

***Co-production of a TV programme window
by Greek and Turkish Journalists***

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I. Introduction

A fortnight after my arrival in Turkey the newspaper Milliyet ran the headline “*Ültime to Athens ... last warning to Athens*” and threatened to make use of its right to “self-defence”¹. One week prior to my departure the daily Hürriyet under the headline “*Bravo Yorgo*”², expressed praise that was directed at the new Foreign Minister Georgios Papandreou. Curiously enough, a period of 6 months, from February to August 1999, lay between the threat of war and the hymn to the Foreign Minister.

Without doubt Greece and Turkey were on the brink of war in February this year, when PKK (Kurdistan Liberation Army) leader Abdullah Öcalan was kidnapped from the Greek embassy in Nairobi. The fact that Greece, of all countries, was the host to Turkey’s no.1 enemy – a man regarded by the Turks as responsible for the death of more than 30,000 people during the 15-year-long war against the PKK-- brought the prolonged tension in Greek-Turkish relations to a climax. As if that was not enough, a false passport indicating Cypriot citizenship was also found on Öcalan. Turkey asked Greece officially to renounce any further support for the terrorist organisation PKK. Greece was accused by Turkey of holding training camps for the PKK on Greek territory, hence, Turkey set an ultimatum upon Greece to cease supporting such actions.

The sudden and unexpected turn of events, the unexpected praise for Greece’s chief diplomat is due to the fact that the former Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs Theodoros Pangalos had to resign over the Öcalan affair and was succeeded by the more moderate George Papandreou. In the meantime, Papandreou has acknowledged the existence of a Turkish minority in Greece. The Turkish-Greek round table talks started in June and Athens sent generous help in rescuing victims of the earthquake catastrophe in July this year to Turkey – revolutionary and unprecedented events in Greek-Turkish relations.

But what seems to be a détente in the bilateral relations cannot be expected to be a lasting process unless it is backed by the civil society in both countries. The positive and emotional headlines in the press mirror the emotional atmosphere surrounding bilateral relations – extreme emotions switching from aggression to praise in the course of 6 months. One should be careful in expressing one’s relief however, since emotions are subject to manipulation and both countries have made ample use of them in the past for a variety of reasons apart from foreign policy.

It is therefore too early to signal the all clear for Greek- Turkish relations. The process of rapprochement needs to be backed by changes in media coverage and a more conscientious information policy in both countries.

In order to achieve a lasting improvement in bilateral relations, people in both Greece and Turkey need more honest information on their neighbouring country to replace the usual repetition of past prejudice that proves “the other” to be the historical enemy. It has therefore been suggested that the joint production of a programme by Greek and Turkish journalists should be initiated and broadcast by two nation-wide news channels in Greece and Turkey.

¹ Milliyet, February 23, 1999

² Hürriyet, July 28, 1999

This was the focus of the present author's work in Vienna and Istanbul during the past 12 months.

1. The projects' background

This report is based on a project funded by the Robert Bosch Foundation. The Robert Bosch Foundation awards a scholarship to 20 young academics for practical work in the field of international understanding each year. The author worked for 13 months on the topic of the Role of the Media in Greek-Turkish relations. She has been working with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the Istanbul branch of the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation. The result of the project was the initiation of a programme window for television co-produced by Greek and Turkish journalists. Although I had also travelled to Greece twice in the past 7 months, the scholarship was intended for work in Turkey, not in Greece. This may account for the fact that greater emphasis was laid on the observation of the Turkish media.

2. Continuing tensions in Greek-Turkish relations

Continual tension and a number of conflicts and disputes dominate the relations of Greece and Turkey over a diversity of issues. Some experts, who argue that it is most unlikely that the conflict may escalate and become a war, have disputed the severity of this conflict. And even if it is so, the argument runs, there will always be a Bill Clinton and his telephone, instructing the Prime Ministers of both countries to get their troops back and calm down.

I do not agree with this opinion. The Greek-Turkish conflict carries a special danger of escalation. The reason is that, depending on the atmosphere in public opinion created and controlled by the mass media of both countries, the conflict may at any time get out of hand. This should not be regarded as a minor possibility. The consequences of such escalation would be the first war between NATO allies.

However, it is not my intention to make predictions concerning the possible escalation of such a conflict. Even the present situation should be regarded as most undesirable. This appears even more so when one considers the fact that both Greece and Turkey are members of European and International Institutions committed to the spirit of co-operation: the OSCE and the Council of Europe, as well as the NATO. Both countries are also members of other platforms of dialogue, such as the Black Sea Co-operation and others. However, the tone and language used by politicians and the mass media hardly comply with the idea of dialogue and co-operation. Hostile statements made in public are directed towards the home population, not the neighbouring country. They are designed mostly for domestic rather than for foreign policy. This may be one of the reasons why the statements are usually extremely nationalistic. It is also a fact that quite naturally the statements are being eagerly picked up, interpreted and often also misinterpreted by the government and press of the neighbouring country. There will be ample opportunities to show examples of this practice below: press statements concerning (alleged) Greek support of Öcalan and the PKK; the Cyprus issue; the Greek government blocking Turkey's access to the EU; Greece's "siding" with the Serbs during the war in Kosovo or the demilitarisation of a number of islands in the Aegean and violations of Greek airspace by Turkish military planes – to cite just a few of the numerous issues of dispute.

This is not just a theory; large parts of the population in both countries are more or less directly affected by this situation: there are the members of the Turkish minority in Western

Thrice. There are the few remaining ethnic Greeks in Turkey. Also, there are the residents of the Aegean islands, who do not know whether the plane flying over their house is a Greek or a Turkish warplane. There are the residents of the Aegean islands, which Turkey regards as belonging to the “grey zones”, indicating that their status is disputed. There are also the inhabitants of part of northern Cyprus occupied by the 30,000 Turkish troops, suffering from economic and political isolation in daily life. Moreover, there is the population of both countries, experiencing cuts in the education, health and social security sectors, while enormous proportion of the GNP of Greece and Turkey are spent in the military sector (4 % of the GNP in Turkey).

It is believed that the main reason for the continuation of tensions, at least on the Greek side, is fear. Most Greeks feel threatened by Turkey and, when asked about the base of this fear, they point to the fact that the Turkish population outnumbers the Greek population. Greece has a total of 10 million inhabitants which is even smaller than that of Turkey's capital Istanbul, estimated to have 14 million inhabitants; and the whole of Turkey has around 64 million people.

3. Where the media comes in

i. Few fact-based reports

The governments of neither country work in a vacuum. They are guided by national opinion and vice versa. National opinion, however, is produced by the mass media. Compared with other Western European countries, media in Greece and Turkey play an especially important role. This is mainly due to two factors: the lack of pluralism in the structure of the media landscape in both countries and the lack of facts in reporting. These two issues will be a focal point in my examination.

It is an indisputable fact that the media create an atmosphere of fear, which may in some cases even come close to causing hysteria among the public of the countries, by drawing respective future scenarios of conflict. This emotional approach is sometimes far from being a sober reflection of reality or an objective assessment of realistic possibilities. The effect, however, is that political analyses cannot be reflected and decisions can no longer be taken on the basis of factual assumptions. And this is the point where the conflict is in danger of getting out of control – and even out of the control of Washington.

ii. Media as “Watchdog of democracy”

Moreover, the role and importance of the media should also be viewed in a more general, but not less important context: their often-quoted role as “watchdogs of democracy”. Media have the task of informing the population, of providing it with facts so that the people may take a responsible political decision in electing their government. Also, in a democratic society, print and electronic media are a forum of discussion, of a dialogue of adversary opinion-holders. However, due to the above-mentioned factors, that is, media concentration and lack of fact-based reports, the media in these countries are being prevented from fulfilling this function.

iii. Hate speech

One of the forms this phenomenon takes is what may be referred to as “hate speech”. Diatribes are usually directed against “the other”, that is, the Turkish or the Greek state or they aimed at national minorities in one's own country. A close observer of Greece and former director of the Goethe Institut in Athens, however, stated that hate speech is also directed against

intellectuals in the home countries.³ This perception was confirmed by a letter from the prominent journalist Ricardos Someritis, directed to the Athens Journalists` Union (ESIEA), in which he wrote that “...*Many Greek journalists, mainly on radio and television, behave like soldiers in the front: they have chosen their camp, their uniform, their flag. If they are columnists, it is their right to do so. Nevertheless, how come that even the Patriarch is censored by many media?...*” and he continues in the same letter: “...*All journalists with a point of view different from the dominant one or who dared offer the information that others refused to give are being threatened or humiliated (e.g. a newspaper agreed to publish an interview in which I am called a `Franco-Levantine`).*⁴ *Others have lost the right of expression (our colleague Manolis Vasilakis was fired by the newspaper `Exousia`...)*”.

These statements, made in March 1999, coincided with the war in Kosovo, also illustrate the world-wide difficulties met by local journalists in situations of conflict and tension: the dilemma of someone faced with the choice of being either a “bad journalist” or a “bad patriot”. When facing this dilemma, certain journalistic principles and basic qualities are completely lost. The dangers involved here became quite obvious in the two wars taking place on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. In view of this, it is even more astonishing that so little attention is given to the media in situations of conflict and tension and thereto-related actions as an effective instrument for conflict prevention.

4. Starting point and basic questions

The starting point of my project was the question which I had posed myself when living in Greece some years ago: how is it possible that nearly a hundred per cent of a country`s journalists hold the same opinion and use the same language when they are writing about Turkey? Why are there only reports on politics and security, and readers and audiences get no information on the ordinary society in the neighbouring country? How in fact is it possible that most Greeks know as little about Turkey as West Germans used to know about East Germany – Turkey being little else than just a white spot on the landscape and number one enemy?

When starting my work in Turkey, it soon became clear to me that I had to find out more about the structure of the media in both countries in order to understand the underlying reasons for this. Only after talking to a number of people could I start to formulate possible approaches for changing the language and the form of reporting. Nevertheless, I also had to keep in mind the political climate and whether this approach was in the least realistic. Then of course the tragic-comedy of the hiding and capture of Öcalan, the war in Kosovo, disputes over a number of islands and the victory of nationalist parties in the Turkish elections was not exactly an ideal political setting for such an attempt. The circumstances made it quite unlikely - -not to say ridiculous-- that an attempt to establish co-operation between Greek and Turkish journalist would be successful.

In order to discover the reasons, I intended to have a closer look at the following factors:

- form of reporting/ distinction between facts and opinions/ citing of sources of information
- diversity of and access to sources of information
- media pluralism; who controls and influences the media (holdings, politicians, army ?)
- contents of the reports: emphasis on issues of foreign and security policy; to what extent are topics about the civil society being taken into account; what could “peaceful journalism” (in contrast to war journalism) look like;

³ Interview with Günther Coenen, December 1999

⁴ Letter by Ricardos Someritis to Mr. Nikos Kiaos, President of ESIEA, dated March 31, 1999

- perception of bilateral problems by the population of Greece and Turkey on the basis of media coverage
- information and perception of international law by the population
- objective information and serious discussion of international law in the context of Greek-Turkish relations by the media

II. The Role of the Media in Greek-Turkish relations

1. The example of the Imia/ Kardak crisis

The crisis over the island of Imia (its Turkish name is Kardak) in 1996 is, in retrospect, a ridiculous but most convincing example of how the media brought Greece and Turkey to the brink of war. Had American President Bill Clinton not intervened in person, the populist action of a mayor and journalists would have resulted in more than one casualty. The “story” runs as follows:

In late December 1995, a Turkish merchant vessel ran aground on the coast of the rocky islet Imia/ Kardak in the Aegean. This incident was followed by a small but silent dispute between Greek and Turkish authorities on who were to rescue the ship, the Turkish captain demanding to be rescued by a Turkish tugboat. The Turkish government in a verbal note argued that Imia/Kardak belonged to Turkish territory, which was disputed by Athens. After an exchange of notes, Greek authorities finally sent a Greek tugboat to the aid of the vessel.

This incident, took place on an islet of a size that was appropriate only for keeping goats but hardly of any other use, would have gone unnoticed had the Greek TV station ANT1 not aired the exchange of diplomatic notes nearly four weeks after the incident occurred. Only one day later on January 25, 1999 the mayor of Kalymnos (an island situated next to Imia in the Aegean) took action and planted the Greek flag on the rocky soil of the island – his eagerness being additionally fuelled by the ongoing inner-party disputes of PASOK. This was the spark that inspired the Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet* to fly in a helicopter with a team of journalists and photographers to the tiny islet, asking the mayor to remove the Greek flag and hoist the Turkish one. The action took place, and of course *Hürriyet* could not refrain from triumphantly publishing the photograph of the journalists removing the Greek flag on its front page the very next day.

As may be expected things took a more serious turn from that moment on. The Greek Navy changed the flag within 24 hours and by January 30/31, 1996 Greek and Turkish naval forces stood opposite to each other in the Aegean.⁵ A Greek helicopter crashed (others assumed that it was hit by Turkish fire – a fact that was later concealed by the governments of both states in order to prevent further escalation), causing the death of its pilot. If it weren't for a phone call by the President of the United States in person to the governments of Greece and Turkey, the situation would have escalated into a military showdown between the two NATO allies.

⁵ The facts of the incident stem from “‘hate speech’ in the balkans”, edited by Mariana Lenkova and Internationals Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, ETEPE, Athens 1998

Due to the practically negligible-sized island where only goats pasture, the incident drew the world's attention through its comic aspect. For Greeks and Turks, however, it had almost become a tragedy.

But the crisis also served as a warning to the parties of conflict and to some journalists. A small group of journalists set up the Platform of Journalists of the Aegean and Thrace, a forum for around 200 journalists from both sides which has met on the anniversary of the crisis over the past years... At least that was the case until January 1999 and until the capture of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in the Greek embassy in Nairobi, after which bilateral relations seriously deteriorated once again.

Interesting enough, the journalist Stratis Balaskas published an interview in January 1999 in the daily Eleftherotypia with a photo-reporter of the newspaper Hürriyet, the very one who raised the Turkish flag on Imia/Kardak. The interview is worth reading for its revelations about the motives of the young reporter, who was then in his early twenties, and the ignorance of those who sent him. It was not an "invasion of Turkish forces", as the Greek media had presented it in great exaggeration, but the greed of the media that sparked off the crisis.⁶

It would be too monotonous a job to cite the hate speech of both the Greek and the Turkish press with which the crisis was covered. Intermingling facts and opinion achieve ample exploitation of emotions. The terms used in the reports were not to describe the event accurately but were solely chosen to evoke anti-Turk or anti-Greek stereotypes among the general public. While the Greek press depicted the "landing" of Turkish journalists using a vocabulary such as "agents' assault", "invasion", "provocative action of Ankara", the Turkish press indulged in praise of the country's strength – "Turkey can overwhelm Greece in 72 hours"(Sabah).⁷

The dangerous consequence of this media coverage was that public opinion heated up by the media, put considerable pressure on both governments to react "tough." "Let's stand up at Thermopylae" and "Ciller for Imia? We for Constantinople" wrote Greek newspapers. The Turkish equivalent was "Soysal: There must be war."⁸

2. Media reflecting and feeding public opinion

The role of the media is a twofold one: it reflects and feeds public opinion thus creating a vicious circle concerning the perception of "the other". Decade-old stereotypes and especially the nationalist and emotional policy of the former Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou have not failed to make their mark on a whole generation of journalists. The views of the same people find their way back into society through their articles – a process encouraged by politicians like Mr. Pangalos or Archbishop Christodoulos.

Regarding Southeast Europe in general and Greece and Turkey in particular, there is no doubt that there is a psychological aspect involved. Greece and Turkey are very young states and both suffer from an "inferiority complex", as many observers call it. The Republic of Turkey has only existed since 1923. Turkey still has not recovered from the nightmare of the loss of

⁶ Stratis Balaskas in Eleftherotypia, January 19, 1999: Interview with the former Hürriyet photo-reporter Cesur Sert

⁷ Vasiliki Neofotistos and Ferhat Kentel in "‘hate speech’ in the balkans", International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, ETEPE Athens, 1998

⁸ "‘Hate speech’ in the balkans", p. 67

the Ottoman Empire and of having become a state somehow lost between Europe and the Arabic countries. It neither fully belonged to the East nor accepted by the West. It was Mustafa Kemal who created and imposed something like a national identity upon this multiethnic people, a Turkish identity.

The Greek people as well live on their heroic past in antiquity but have little to come up with in the present. Among the European countries Greece is perceived as a greedy member of the European Union, devouring great sums of financial aid, often blocking the EU decision-making process and hindering any steps towards a rapprochement between Europe and Turkey. Greece declared its independence from the Ottoman Empire only in 1822, and its independent status was confirmed in 1830 after a 7-year war of independence. It had little chance to gain experience as a democratic state in the 20th century, when it suffered from the German, Italian and Bulgarian occupation in the Second World War, followed by civil wars and a dictatorship that lasted until 1974.

Therefore, both peoples tend to build their nationalism on their adversary towards each other, each nation being born from a war with the other. A proverb well known in Greece and in Turkey runs “my enemy’s enemy is my friend” and in many cases even foreign policy decision-makers seem to follow this principle.

Nationalism and propaganda towards minorities and foreigners in Greece has reached a new dimension over the past years. Greece still has not recognised the existence of an ethnic Turkish minority in Western Thrace. It only speaks about a “Muslim” minority for the fear that the recognition of a Turkish ethnicity would encourage territorial claims from Turkey on its North Eastern territories. In recent time, an alarming combination of nationalist voices paired with “Albanophobia” and verbal attacks on the Macedonian minorities has been observed.

Alkis Kourkoulas, correspondent of the Athens News Agency in Istanbul, rightly observed that between the Greeks and the Turks, there is no respect for each other. In Greece, there is the general notion of the Turks as a “Barbarian”, uncivilised people, while the Turks perceive the Greeks as greedy for “lost territories” and still supportive of the “Megali Idea”, the big idea. There is no respect for the culture, traditions and achievements of the other – in fact, people are completely ignorant of what *is* the culture of each other. Few Greeks are informed about Islam, the great architect Sinan, contemporary Turkish literature and music. The Turkish people are much more open to contemporary Greek music and writers, but the Turkish state cares little about ancient Greek sites and Byzantine churches or villages deserted by the Greeks during the 20th century. Nationalists have desecrated Muslim cemeteries in Greece and Greek orthodox cemeteries in Turkey.⁹

It is this lack of respect and the need to adhere to historical stereotypes for the purpose of defining one’s own nation state that makes the initiation of a dialogue so difficult. Also, this makes it so easy for the media to follow these old footsteps and keep up the same stereotypical notion of the other. It is a vicious circle emanating from the society into the media, from where it makes its way back again to the people.

⁹ Süddeutsche Zeitung, May 12/13, 1999

III. Features of the Greek and Turkish Mass Media

1. The Structure of Turkish Media

a) Media structure dominated by Holdings

The most striking feature of the Turkish media sector is the fact that it is dominated by a duopolistic structure: the Sabah/Bilgin Group and the Milliyet/Dogan Group. These two groups hold about 70 % of the market share in national daily newspapers and are the owners of ATV and Kanal D¹⁰. In 1998, the two television channels, together with Show TV owned by Erol Aksoy, are considered the most important private television channels.

For both the Dogan as well as the Sabah Group, the media business constitutes just one sector of their investments. Both holdings are engaged in a number of other businesses. The fact that television and the big national dailies are in the hands of a number of holdings has important implications for the content of the media. The holdings are greatly involved in public works and depend, to a great extent, on works commissioned by the state. It is an open secret that the former Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz gave lucrative energy contracts to media bosses that are also involved in the electricity market. These contracts are now being disputed in the Supreme Court.¹¹ Moreover, they receive a considerable number of public loans. Experts believe that several million US-dollars worth of credits originating from the state were directed to the media sector via banks in the 1990s.

i. Television

The medium with the greatest impact on public opinion is television. The history of private television in Turkey is not even a decade old. Until the late eighties, the state-owned Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) enjoyed a monopoly. It was only in summer 1993 that private broadcasting was permitted in Turkey by parliament. Nevertheless, the first private television sector started well before 1993 when Ahmet Özals, the son of the late Prime Minister Turgut Özal, and his partner Cem Uzan started broadcasting from Germany, thus helping his father in his election campaign.¹² Others followed the example of Özal and by the time parliament legalised private broadcasting there were already around 700 private radio and television stations in Turkey. Today television is a prospering sector with 16 national and about 360 regional television stations.

ii. Radio

Radio plays an inferior role in providing information to the population. Although there is an estimated total of 2000 private radio stations throughout Turkey, many of them are tiny amateur stations and concentrate on music programmes.

iii. Print media

The impact of the print media in Turkey is fairly low. The average circulation of the daily newspaper is 4 million, serving a population of 64 million inhabitants.¹³ This is partly due to the fairly high price of newspapers, which are not affordable for a large part of the Turkish

¹⁰ Medien in der Türkei, Publikation der Deutschen Botschaft Ankara, 1998

¹¹ İlnur Cevik in Turkish Daily News, April 11/12, 1999

¹² Turkish Probe, January 24, 1999

¹³ World Association of Newspapers WAN, World Press Trends 1999, Turkey

population. One newspaper costs more than two loaves of bread. High prices in turn are partly due to the state monopoly on paper and high import taxes for paper

These figures also show that the profits in the print media market are not made by selling 4 million issues per day, but mainly through advertisement revenues. Around 41 % of the countrywide advertisement expenditure is invested in newspaper.¹⁴ Advertisements in the big national newspapers cost around 6000 to 10 000 DM per page – a multiple of the price in most Western European countries.

Also, due to the dependence on state commissioned works and public credits, press reports never take an adversary stance to state interests. In order to guarantee that remains unchanged, the state ensures the duopolistic structure in the print media to remain untouched. According to some close observers of the Turkish print media, the best proof of the silent and mutual understanding between the state and the media was the case of building contractor and owner Türkbank Korkmaz Yigit. The story runs that Yigit had been encouraged by the former Prime Minister Yilmaz and a state minister to enter the media sector. He invested several hundred million US-dollars in buying newspapers. One of his acquisitions is the newspaper Milliyet owned by the Dogan Group. Milliyet is the most popular newspaper in Turkey. It did not take long for rumours to be launched and according to which Yigit had connections to the terrorist PKK. Some believe that state authorities to restore the old duopolist order in the print media market also spread these rumours. Korkmaz Yigit received a prison sentence and lost his trophy Milliyet, which went back to the hands of its former owner.¹⁵

The readership of newspapers has been declining continually since the 1980s. Civilians in Istanbul explain this by the 1980 coup of the army that seized many publications and newspapers. The newspaper a person read could easily reveal his or her political views – and a leftist political view was dangerous in the late 1970s and the period following the military coup.

An alarm signal for the print media sector was a further decline in newspaper circulation even prior to the national elections in April 1999. Professor Sezer Akarcali of the Communication Faculty in Ankara University explained this trend by the big media scandals of the past years that caused people to lose trust in the ability of the press to provide them with objective and impartial information. “How can I trust the papers to have impartial and unbiased information, when I’m pretty sure that some of their columnists are lobbying on behalf of their bosses, while others are involved with political parties?” Professor Akarcali was quoted in a newspaper.¹⁶

b) Headlines and contents designed by sales experts

When trying to answer the question of why the views expressed by most national newspapers are rather nationalist, especially regarding the standpoint taken towards relations with Greece (and also Cyprus), some additional non-economic factors may be taken into account. For example, subscription to newspapers is rare and single copy sells amount to 90 percent.¹⁷ This

¹⁴ WAN, World Press Trend 1999, Turkey

¹⁵ Turkish Daily News, April 8-9, 1999;

¹⁶ Turkish Daily News, April 8-9, 1999

¹⁷ WAN, World Press Trends 1999, Turkey

means that a newspaper cannot count on a guaranteed number of readers but has to “conquer” its readership on an every day basis anew. To attract the attention of the public, there is a continuous search for headlines containing either scandals or nationalist issues in foreign affairs. In regard to the latter sort of headlines, Greece, the Republic of Cyprus and the relations to the European Union are a never-ending source of attraction. Such headlines are no longer made by the investigative journalists but by professionals aiming at increasing the day’s single copy sales.

Another practise to increase the number of issues sold is the offer of coupons for all kinds of household wares or food, ranging from knives to plates and other things useful in Turkish kitchens. This practice, however, is becoming less and less frequent.

c) Contents: opinions and hard policy issues prevail

Moreover, opinions prevail over fact-based reports in journalism. In Turkey, all newspapers have a number of so-called “köşe” (meaning “corner”)-writers. These corners are exclusively designed for opinions, and journalists or academics publish in them on a regular basis, enjoying a high reputation and an even higher salary.

As regard to the contents of reports related to Greece, issues of hard politics dominated from February to August 1999: the capture of Öcalan, Greece’s support for thePKK, the resignation of Rahmen Koc from the Greek-Turkish businessmen’s association and the like.

d) Sources of Information

When following the Turkish and Greek press, one gets the impression that only a limited number of information sources are being used by journalists. Also, the quotation of sources is extremely rare, and in many cases even interview partners are not named. Nevertheless, neither in Turkey nor in Greece may the possible sources of information be described as limited. Beside the news agencies, all kinds of international newspapers, magazines and other sources are available and at the disposal of the journalists. It seems, however, that these sources are not being fully used by journalists. Most of them rely on information from national sources, especially national press agencies. This practice, especially true in Turkey, is not only due to an insufficient training of journalists, but to the fact that many journalists do not belong to the professional elite and their command of English or other foreign languages is inadequate.

e) Factors contributing to self-censorship

Self-censorship is a common feature of both Greek and Turkish journalism. In both countries there are specific factors that encourage the practice of auto-censorship on the part of the journalists.

In Turkey, one of these factors are regulations in the Penal Code, the Anti-Terror Law and Law No. 5816 concerning crimes committed against Atatürk that restrict the right of freedom of expression. Moreover, there is the Radio and Television Law of April 13, 1994 (RTÜK) allowing the closure of television and radio stations for days or even weeks. This practice forces smaller stations to give up their activities altogether due to losses in advertising revenues and market shares. Confiscation of newspapers and magazines is also practised through court orders – the NGO Reporter Sans Frontieres recorded the suspension from publishing of thirty-one publications in 1997. In the same year, thirty-three daily newspapers or

periodicals faced confiscation seventy-eight times.¹⁸ A total of at least eighty-nine media had been suspended for certain periods or closed down in 1997. A report titled “There are no Turks in Greece or Bulgaria, and no Kurds in Turkey” caused the seizure of the first issue of the newspaper Sokak by a State security court for “elements of separatist propaganda” in early 1997.¹⁹

State prosecution does not only take place in cases when a journalist expresses his own views that are in conflict with state interests, but also when journalists publish interviews with or statements by another persons whose standpoints the state considers to be hostile. This is the case with the journalist Oral Calislar (Cumhuriyet) who was sentenced to imprisonment and large fines for publishing an interview with Abdullah Öcalan and PKK activist Kemal Burkay.²⁰ Another example is the charge and imprisonment of Ragip Duran, who worked for the BBC and the French newspaper Liberation, for publishing an interview with Öcalan in 1994. One interview with the PKK leader published in 1991 got through without prosecution by public authorities.²¹ This practice of state prosecution results in a serious deprivation of objective information for the population in Turkey. The Turkish citizens do not have access to a spectrum of information necessary to form a correct picture of problems of Turkish internal and external policy.

State prosecution of journalists is mainly based on the Penal Code, the Anti-Terror law and the Law No. 5816 concerning crimes committed against Atatürk. Thus articles that make people unwilling to serve in the military are forbidden. Insulting the moral personality of Turkishness, the Republic, Government and State ministers as well as the military is a crime according to the penal code. Article 8 of the Anti-Terror law forbids propaganda against the indivisibility of the state. Insulting the memory of Atatürk in a single sentence may be penalized with up to three years prison sentence. The RTÜK Law is used quite often for blackout decisions affecting the electronic media. It is extremely vague in its wording: “broadcasting is not to contradict national and spiritual values of society” and “the general morality, civil peace and structure of the Turkish family”.²²

It is obvious that the wording of the above mentioned stipulations is so open to interpretation that owners of newspapers, editors and journalists can never clearly anticipate whether a critical report will trigger off charges from the state prosecution service or not.

In addition to pressure on the media from the official side, journalists face restrictions from the part of the editors that result from the specific non-pluralist media structure. Thus, a journalist that risks getting into conflict with state authorities easily risks being fired -- something that even happens to highly reputed journalists such as Mehmet Ali Birand who was forced out of the daily Sabah in late 1997. Needless to say, there is no efficient legislation protecting the rights of the employed journalist, and most of them do not even possess a written employment contract.

f) RTÜK and the Ministry of Internal Affairs

¹⁸ RSF Rapport Annuel 1998, online edition

¹⁹ Reporters Sans Frontieres Report 1998

²⁰ Open letter of Article XIX Director Andrew Puddephatt to Minister of Justice Hikmet Sami Turk, dated July 8, 1999; Human Rights Watch Report, April 1999

²¹ Human Rights Watch Report, April 1999

²² Human Rights Watch Report, April 1999; Reporters Sans Frontieres 1998 Report

An important role is played by the state institution RTÜK, the High Council on Radio and Television consisting of nine members, out of which five are appointed by the government and four named by the opposition parties.

The RTÜK does not only issue licences to private broadcasting companies but it also controls the contents of the programmes. According to the Radio and Television Law of 1994, programmes contradicting “the national and spiritual values of society” and “the general morality, civil peace, and structure of the Turkish family” are forbidden. If radio or television do not comply with the provisions of the RTÜK, the RTÜK may either issue a warning or decide on a temporary closure of the relevant station. Thus, any spectator of Turkish television soon gets used to finding a black screen when the day before he could still receive the regular TV channel. A few lines written on the screen inform him that the relevant channel was forbidden to broadcast by the RTÜK according to the relevant legal provisions. This usually indicates that the channel has broadcast a programme containing information or opinions on the Kurdish issue or Atatürk not in line with the official state policy.

The same happens to small radio stations. For them closing down for a couple of days is usually synonymous with bankruptcy and the end of its transmissions.

Freedom of the press always depends on economic strength and the struggle to survive is hard enough for the more than 2000 radio and more than 36 private television stations operating nation-wide. Their income depends on advertisements, and potential advertisers or old clients lose interest in co-operating with a station that is shut down.

RTÜK also played a vital role before the elections in April 1999, banning political broadcasts at the end of February. This decision caused some chaos and would have resulted in the blackout of eight national television stations, since every station broadcast speeches by politicians. One week later, however, RTÜK revised its decision to the effect that television stations were allowed to broadcast political statements related to government activities and those of party leaders, provided that they did not contain elements which may be regarded as propaganda in the elections.²³

It is obvious that the kind of vague guidelines issued by RTÜK, restricting programmes on political issues for a period of 3 months prior to the elections, causes great insecurity among editors and journalists alike. Nobody can know for sure what is allowed or what is not and when they transgress the limits, their channel may be punished with a blackout at any time. The policy of RTÜK also casts some light on the right to freedom of expression and the right to receive information, factors especially important in the electoral campaign in order to give the citizens access to information to form a responsible decision on their voting behaviour.

On May 20, 1999 Turkish newspapers announced that the Ministry of Internal Affairs had issued a list of 37 words on April 26, 1999, which were to be substituted by other terms in the context of the Kurdish issue. This index was binding for the state-owned radio and television TRT, as well as for the official press agency Anadolu Ajansi. For example, instead of using the term “Guerilla”, were suggested the terms “terrorist, bandit” as more “appropriate”. The same was the case with “PKK”, which was to be specified as “PKK terrorist organisation, bloody terrorist organisation”.²⁴

²³ Turkish Daily News, March 4, 1999

²⁴ Milliyet, May 20, 1999

g) Implications for freedom and standards of reporting

The constellation in the media sector and the interference of state authorities have far-reaching implications. The media can no longer fulfil their two main functions: they may no longer serve as a “watch-dog of democracy”, being too much mixed up with state interests. And secondly, they are no longer able to inform the population impartially due to censorship or auto-censorship.

The practice of RTÜK or the Ministry of Internal Affairs cannot, of course, simply be marked as censorship – although the long-term effect will be the same. The fear of being shut down contributes to auto-censorship of editors and journalists alike.

The same applies to the practise of the extensive use of libel laws or charges for the violations of laws brought against journalists by the state prosecutors. Even if the Appellate judges acquit a journalist sentenced by a court, this will more likely than not lead him to practice auto-censorship. Especially a young journalist will never forget the traumatic experience and will be cautious of not making similar remarks again.

Also, the high level of competition arising from thousands of national and regional newspapers (2000 radio stations and 350 television broadcasters) means that news must be able to sell. This is only the case if the headlines are scandalous enough. Issues of civil society or efforts of Greek-Turkish understanding are hard to sell. This leads most journalists and editors to the practice of automatically ruling out a number of issues, which may be a possible content of their reports, for economic reasons – a step which comes even before the probably unconscious process of auto-censorship.

Thus, news concerning political issues as well as civil society undergoes a process of multiple stages of pre-selection and selection:

At the first level, in the stage of pre-selection, those news items, which are not believed to be exciting enough “to sell”, are sorted out. Although of course this process takes place everywhere, it seems that in Turkey and Greece most news concerning cultural or academic topics are already eliminated at this stage. On the second level auto-censorship comes in, i.e. those news items that risk (or which the journalists believe risk) provoking a negative reaction on the part of the editor or state officials are ruled out because the issue may be too hot. In a third step, although the issue itself may remain untouched, the tone of language and especially the manner of presentation, that is, the articles’ headlines, will be changed in order to increase the single copy sells for the day. When an article or news item has passed all these stages, little of its original character will be left. And news on issues of civil society or international understanding won’t even enter this process.

With regard to direct pressure put on journalists by their editors or from politicians, information is contradictory. Some observers and journalists say that there is such pressure, others state that they are free to write whatever they want.

However, it is a fact that journalists who take too critical a stand especially towards the state are in danger of being fired. This even applies to senior and professional journalists, such as Mehmet Ali Birand who was fired from Sabah.

Others are charged with offences and receive prison sentences or high fines. These cases are numerous and are thoroughly recorded and reported by Reporters Sans Frontieres, Human Rights Watch, IFEX, Action Alert and others.

On the other hand, at time very critical articles can be found in newspapers. When the journalist Oral Calislar began his prison sentence for conducting and publishing interviews with Abdullah Öcalan²⁵ in spring this year, one could read lengthy interviews with a lawyer of the PKK leader in Turkish Daily News without any consequences for journalists or editors. It therefore is unpredictable when prosecution might be taken up and when not. Ahmet Altan, a novelist and columnist is quoted in a report from HRW: *“You can say there is no freedom of expression, you can say there is press freedom, and you are right in both statements. It’s not like in a typical dictatorship – the borders are not clear, you can’t know where they are.”*²⁶

2. The Structure of the Greek Media

a) Concentration in the Greek media sector

The structure of the Greek print media market is less concentrated than that in Turkey. Nevertheless, only five publishers account for more than 65 % of newspaper sales and absorb three quarters of advertising. Lambrakis Press and Tegopoulos Publications are showing the highest profits. Both Tegopoulos Publication and Lambrakis Press are also shareholders in Teletypos, a group of publishers running the channel Mega TV, one of Greece’s most important private channels.

There are currently 22 countrywide dailies and 17 Sunday editions published in Greece. A downward trend in the circulation of daily newspapers has been recorded since 1990, the average circulation of Athenian dailies dropped from 930 000 in 1988 to only 420,000 in 1998.²⁷ Similar to Turkey, newspaper selling to subscribers is negligible, amounting only to 5%, while 95 % of the newspapers are sold as single copies. It is a common practice that new readership is often attracted by coupons for all kinds of other goods rather than by the newspapers’ contents.

The media market in Greece is a highly competitive one. A total number of 124 private TV stations (12 operating nation-wide), 1200 radio stations (300 broadcasting nation wide) and 13 national dailies compete in a population of 10 million. It is obvious that the profits are not made from sales but rather from advertising revenues. About 50 percent of newspaper and 80 - 90 percent of magazine revenues come from advertisement.²⁸ However, as competition for advertisement is similarly high, it has been suspected that the owners of newspapers are not so much interested in profit making as in politically motivated factors.

With declining readership of the print media, the operation of TV channels has become a booming market for investors in the media sector. The private television market lacks regulation and the absence of efficient legislation for this sector is often being criticised.

²⁵ Human Rights Watch Report, April 1999, online edition

²⁶ HRW Report 1998, online edition

²⁷ Hermes, monthly magazine, February 1999

²⁸ WAN World Press Trends 1999, Greece

Until 1990, Greek television was completely in the hands of the state. Television entered Greece in the 1960s under the dictatorship of the colonels. Since that time it has always been under state control and linked to the government's interest. It was only in 1989 that the first private channel started broadcasting and was followed by a boom of other TV stations. As a result, public broadcasters suffered great loss of audience and private channels and business interests dominate the market.

Nevertheless, the TV market was still subjected to the interests of day-to-day politics and could be manipulated easily through the awarding or the refusal of licences according to the stand the broadcaster took towards the government. In 1994 for example, when the PASOK party got back in power from the conservatives, licences were awarded to Sky TV and 902 TV that had been denied by the former government due to their support for the Socialist opposition.²⁹

One of the most disquieting consequences of the deregulated media sector is cross-ownership. Today Mega Channel and Antenna TV dominate the TV sector in audience figures as well as market share. Mega Channel is owned by a group of publishers, among them Lambrakis press that controls one third of the major newspapers and magazines in Greece directly or through subsidiaries. Minos Kyriakou who is also involved in Antenna radio owns antenna TV. The principal shareholder of Sky radio and TV is also active in the print media market.

b) Implication for contents and quality of reporting

Very much as in Turkey, most reports in Greek newspapers do not distinguish between facts and opinions. Reports regarding Turkey are usually restricted to meetings on the political level and security issues. There seems to be two reasons for the one-sidedness of reporting:

Firstly, there is the argument of many journalists that news on other issues rather than hard politics or security problems regarding Turkey "would not sell". As has been outlined above, the media market is highly competitive, and with 95 % single copy sells, newspapers have to "win" their readership with exciting headlines on a day-to-day basis. Nationalist slogans sell fairly well. The second reason is the trend towards strong nationalism in the Greek society over the past years. It was fuelled by the disintegration process of the former Yugoslavia, the coming into existence of FYROM, the stream of refugees and immigration of Albanians, the war in Kosovo and territorial disputes in the Aegean. These events brought back the fear that the ethnic minorities in Greece would make claim for sovereignty. Among others there are 50.000 ethnic Turks in Western Thrace. These nationalist feelings were also encouraged by the Orthodox Church, especially Archbishop Christodoulos, reminding the Greek people of its common religious roots and traumata with its Serb "brothers". Religious feelings were once again mingled with politics and historic traumata – both Serbs and Greeks had lived as Orthodox Christians under the Ottoman Empire for about 400 years. By stirring up emotions, old stereotypes are revived and the enemy is defined easily. The threat is believed to come especially from foreigners but also from the "Muslim" minority within Greece's own borders. Journalists are part of this society, of course, and cannot stay clear of these perceptions. They are also infected by the nationalistic trends.

Unfortunately, there is also a lack of professionally skilled journalists who conduct thorough investigations. Despite the fact that more than 58.6 per cent of journalists have a university

²⁹ Stylianos Papathanassopoulos, *The Politics and the Effects of the Deregulation of Greek Television in European Journal of Communication*, 1997, Vol. 12(3), pp. 351-368

degree³⁰, there are few dissenting voices on subjects regarding Turkey. It seems that practically the main source of information on Turkey is the Athens News Agency (ANA). Apart from the correspondent of ANA, there are only 4-5 journalists reporting from Turkey on a regular basis (while there are 20 correspondents working for German newspapers and TV stations). Considering the fact that Turkey plays the most important role in Greece's foreign policy, it is remarkable how few sources of information there are.

IV. Libel Laws and Criminal charges against journalists in Greece and Turkey

There is no doubt that the violations of the right of freedom of expression in Turkey are much more numerous and genuine than those recorded in Greece over the past few years. However, it should be noted that in Greece both in 1998 and 1999, several criminal charges for libel, defamation and disclosure of state secrets were brought against journalists and newspaper editors. The practice of imposing prison sentences or disproportionate fines on journalists is a breach of the obligations from Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) and contradicts the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.

Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) states the right to freedom of expression. Paragraph 2 of Article 10 allows restrictions to the freedom of expression by "penalties as are prescribed by law". However, it should be underlined that Paragraph 2 allows only such restrictions "*that are necessary in a democratic society*".

The possibility of imposing restrictions constitutes an exception to the right of freedom of expression and, therefore, is subjected to very strict interpretation. Prison sentences imposed by courts are usually to be regarded as "not necessary in a democratic society" and constitute a disproportionate means of dealing with cases of libel or defamation. Also, the European Court of Human Rights in the Tolstoy Miloslawski case held that extremely high sums of compensation for libel or severe fines can be a violation of Article 10 ECHR.

Greece as well as Turkey are signatory states to the ECHR. The ECHR is binding for both states and it supersedes national law. In contrast to their contractual obligation under international law, journalists in Greece and Turkey are repeatedly being sentenced to prison sentences or high fines.

In August 1998, Greek Minister of Justice Evangelos Yannopoulos even proposed an amendment to the penal code providing prison sentences of a minimum of two years in cases of insult and defamation through the electronic media. Only after international protest was the proposal withdrawn.³¹ In April 1998, an Athens court against Makis Psomiadis confirmed a prison sentence of four years and four months for libel and publishing a false document. In September 1998, five journalists received prison sentences between four months to four years and eight months for libel, defamation or insult. In October last year an Appellate Court in Athens acquitted four journalists from charges of disclosure of state secrets.³²

³⁰ Interview with Stylianos Papathanassopoulos, Athens University, Department of Communication and Media Studies

³¹ International Helsinki Federation, IHF Focus distributed through Greek Helsinki Monitor on June 18, 1999

³² IHF Focus, Greek Helsinki Monitor June 18, 1999

These cases show that journalists received criminal charges not only in Turkey, but also in Greece. With regard to the far more numerous cases of prison sentences and even extra-judicial killings in Turkey, I refer to the numerous Human Right Reports on this topic. What is important, however, is the knowledge that this practice exists. And despite the fact that there does not seem to be a case of criminal charges brought against journalists in the context of an article on Greek-Turkish relations, it is noteworthy that the state interferes with freedom of expression. Most often violation of the right of freedom of expression by the state leads journalists and editors to impose involuntarily auto-censorship when reporting on the so-called “sensitive” issues. Thus they select the topics, the contents and the method of reporting carefully.

V. Forms of Hate speech

The term “hate speech” describes a way of reporting or spreading opinion that is designed to enhance the national self in contrast to “the other”.

1. “Greeks” and “Turks” as a collective

It is one of the most harmful factors to bilateral relations that the Turkish media usually talk about “Greece” or “Athens” and the Greek media cite “Turkey” or “Ankara” when talking about hostile actions. This gives the reader the impression that it is the Turkish/Greek country, the state, the people that acts in a hostile manner. A closer look into specific constellations of inner-state organisation or even the composition of the government or ruling parties shows that this impression is wrong. In the case of the Imia/ Kardak crisis, it has been suspected that the action of the mayor of Kalymnos was due to a testing of forces between the nationalist and liberal wing of the then ruling PASOK party.³³ On the other hand the planting of the Turkish flag on the island of Imia/Kardak by a group of journalists was attributed to the Turkish state by calling it “invasion”, “landing”, “agents’ assault” in the Greek media.

The same applies to reports in the Turkish press on the Öcalan scandal. Although the antagonisms in the ruling PASOK party and even within the Foreign Ministry was a well known fact to close observers, the action of hosting Öcalan in Greece and later in the Greek embassy in Nairobi was ascribed to the Greek government without any differentiation. “Athens supports terrorism” and “Kivikoglu: Athens caught red-handed” were headlines that appeared in the newspapers Cumhuriyet and Turkish Daily News³⁴. Although the incident has not been cleared up altogether yet, there seems to be little doubt that prime minister Simitis would not have supported any such action had he known of it. It seems that he had not even been informed of Öcalans’ presence in Greece or Nairobi and that certain government officials had acted on their own initiatives.

2. Use of Stereotypes

Of course, this phenomenon exists throughout the world. Nevertheless, in Southeast Europe and especially in Greece and Turkey, it has a special touch – probably due to the history of the Balkans. Both Greece and Turkey are comparatively young nation states that tend to define the national self through its opposition to “the other”. The Greeks spent 400 years under he

³³ Panayotis Elias Dimitras in “‘Hate speech’ in the balkans” , see above

³⁴ Cumhuriyet, February 23, 1999; Turkish Daily News, February 27, 1999

Ottoman rule (from 1453 to the declaration of the independence in 1822). Turkey and the Turks are, therefore, still regarded as the historical enemy.

At the same time, the Turks feel that the Greeks have betrayed them. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire is perceived as being the result of a conspiracy of the Allies that manifested in the Treaties of Versailles and Sevres, when the Ottoman Empire lost a large part of its territory. The Republic of Turkey has existed only since 1923.

The Treaty of Versailles and the corresponding convention³⁵ in a euphemistic wording also provided for the “exchange” of the Greek and Turkish population – except the Greek inhabitants of Constantinople and the Moslem inhabitants of Western Thrace. However, the nightmare and the atrocities that took place in this “exchange” inflicted enormous national traumata on both sides.

Nevertheless, except for a short *détente* during the era of Eleftherios Venizelos and Mustafa Kemal in the 1930s, the historical animosity between the two people continued. In 1955, riots in Istanbul broke out and a mob attacked Greek houses, shops and churches demanding the annexation of Cyprus by the Turkish government. In 1973, the Greek Junta ran a coup against the Cypriot government of Archbishop Makarios and replaced him with an old enemy of Turkey, Nicol Sampson. In 1974, Turkey invaded Cyprus arguing that this was necessary in order to protect the Turkish population.

Finally in 1996, the territorial dispute over the island of Imia/Kardak broke out and in early 1999 Turkey’s no. 1 national enemy, the PKK leader Öcalan stayed several days in Greece and was finally captured from the Greek embassy in Kenia’s capital Nairobi.

All these crises that took place at regular intervals kept the old animosities and prejudices alive.

The Greek press does not get tired of reminding the Greek people of the atrocities committed by the Turks during the expulsion of the Greek population from old Smyrna (today’s Izmir) and the invasion of Cyprus by the Turkish army in 1974 ordered by Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit. Similarly, the Turks keep alive the memory of the aggression of the Greek army invading Anatolian territory in 1919 and the attempted coup by the Greek junta on Cyprus in 1973. When Öcalan was captured and brought to Turkey in February 1999, the governing Prime Minister Ecevit, responsible for the operation in Cyprus in 1974, had become celebrated in the daily Sabah, as the one that caused the “Cypriot defeat” and now the “Apo defeat.”³⁶

The recalling of such stereotypes has the “advantage” that the media no longer have to make the effort to explain political incidents to their readers. Nonetheless, the catchwords such as “Cyprus”, the “Catastrophe of Smyrna” or the “Megali Idea” of the Greeks trigger off the intended association automatically in the readers/viewers.

This is one of the reasons why the articles and reports in both countries are becoming less and less factual. Repeatedly quoting old stereotypes is enough to produce the intended results. Fear in the population, which is reaching a dangerous level in Greece, has the benefit that it can always be turned into aggression and may be used as a nation-wide re-uniting factor in

³⁵ Lausanne Treaty of July 24, 1923 in Article 142 and the Convention concerning the exchange of Greek and Turkish populations signed by Greece and Turkey on January 30, 1923

³⁶ Sabah, February 19, 1999

elections or in times of domestic unrest. The disadvantages are often neglected, that is, the fear becoming so big that it may turn into aggression and consequently get out of hand.

3. Hate speech against national minorities and intellectuals

Hate speech is not restricted to reports on Greece or Turkey. While the Greek media extend their hate speech to the Albanians and, especially during the war in Kosovo, against their Nato allies, the favourite subject of the Turkish media is the member states of the European Union and their “double standards”.

What may be regarded as more troubling is the fact that hate speech is not restricted to the “external enemy” but is also directed against intellectuals and minorities in the home countries. Regarding Turkey, this is a well-known fact, especially as far as the Kurdish issue is concerned. However, hate speech also extends to other minorities. Once again, it is difficult to reproach the Turkish media as a whole for the intentional use of hate speech. The astonishing flexibility of the Turkish journalists may be illustrated by the reaction of the editor of one of Turkey’s leading newspapers to a letter from Ishak Alaton. Ishak Alaton, one of Turkey’s outstanding intellectuals and businessmen, wrote a letter to the newspaper, complaining about a report on a crime, in which one of the criminals had been described as being a Jew. In his letter, Mr. Alaton rightly pointed out that there was no reason at all to mention the religious origin of a criminal in this context. The very next day, the newspaper issued an article taking up the criticism of Mr. Alaton and apologising for the mistake.³⁷

The Greeks have their own “internal enemies” like, for example, the 50,000 people of the Turkish minority in Western Thrace. The statement of Foreign Minister Georgios Papandreou in July may be described as a revolutionary turn in official policy towards the Turkish minority. He implied that he saw no problem in calling the minority in Thrace “Turkish” as long as they would not raise any territorial claims.³⁸ The comment was regarded as scandalous by the Greek media and population. Up to now, Greece has only recognised a Muslim minority, but always denied the existence of a Turkish minority in its north-western region. Of course, Greek nationalists demanded the resignation of George Papandreou.

There are other examples like the former mayor of Pergamon, Sefa Taskin, whose opponents used to call him a “Greek Marxist” (“Yunanli marxist”) because he engaged in the rapprochement of Greco-Turkish relations.³⁹ Of course, Mr. Taskin and other mayors in the Izmir region lost in the April local elections – it is a time of nationalism, in Turkey as well as in Greece.

4. Other forms of hate speech

a) Omission of information/ Silencing of non-nationalist voices

In late May 1999, a fairly revolutionary event took place. The ecumenical patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church, Patriarch Bartholomew, in an interview with Stratis Balaskas in Istanbul stated that “nationalism is heresy and a threat to Orthodoxy.” This statement sounded fairly unusual in the ears of the Greek orthodox citizens, who are used to the nationalist comments of the popular Archbishop Christodoulos. The remark of the Patriarch and the

³⁷ Interview with Ishak Alaton in July 1999

³⁸ Hürriyet, July 28, 1999

³⁹ Eleftherotypia, May 17, 1999

interview were announced on the front page of the daily *Eleftherotypia*⁴⁰ and were printed in full length in the same edition. However, no other Greek media ever mentioned the fact that the interview took place and what its essential message was. The non-governmental organisation Greek Helsinki Monitor observed: "...A thorough look at the media in Greece, including the state news agencies, would show that these statements went unnoticed and usually totally unreported, except for the Patriarch's appeal for a cease-fire."⁴¹

Another example of omission of important information is the press coverage of a meeting between a prominent group of Greek and Turkish women: WinPeace of last spring. Zeynep Oral, a founding member of WinPeace and senior journalist, complained that while the meeting got ample press coverage in Turkey, hardly any Greek newspaper had taken notice of this event – a phenomenon that seemed like sabotage to the Turkish initiators.

b) Opinions rather than facts

Commentators enjoy a high reputation and even higher salaries. The so-called "köse" writers (corner writers) in Turkey are reported to receive salaries that West European journalists can only dream of. Köse writers and their Greek counterparts have the advantage that at least the readers are aware that the writers are writing comments, not reports. A more disagreeable point is that most reporting in Greek and Turkish newspapers does not consist of facts alone, but facts mingled with opinions and could easily be mistaken for comments – except that they are not labelled as such.

The use of opinions disguised as facts and the excessive use of adjectives to fact reports is one of the greatest deficits in the journalism of both countries. This keeps the bi-national relations tense and the population uninformed. This especially applies to the misleading portrayal of certain incidents, regardless of the conceptions of the international law.

An incident over the island of Limnos may serve as an example of how attributes change the perception of what really happened. On March 19, 1999 a Turkish F-16 reportedly flew over the Greek Island of Limnos and was detected and followed by Greek defence fire. The island of Limnos belongs to Greek territory according to the Lausanne treaty. The Turkish daily *Hürriyet* reported the incident as follows: "The cold-headed pilot prevented the war. Our F-16 pilot, merely doing a test flight, behaved very rationally. Without hitting the automatic fire battery, he called his headquarters. The headquarters gave instructions to the pilot 'keep cool, return immediately'."⁴² *Hürriyet* added that Greece, in violation of the Lausanne treaty, had installed a military base on the island. This information is incorrect; Article 13 of the Lausanne Treaty only provides for the demilitarization of the islands of Mytilene, Chios, Samos and Nikaria but does not mention the island of Limnos.⁴³

c) Unspecified Allegations on hostile incidents

Mutual suspicion for acts of sabotage is common in the media of both countries. When woods are burning in Greece, which is the case every summer, Greek media will more often than not suspect Turkish agents of causing the fire.⁴⁴ In turn, when the Canadian scientist Karl

⁴⁰ Interview in *Eleftherotypia* of March 29, 1999

⁴¹ Report of Greek Helsinki Monitor of April 1, 1999

⁴² *Hürriyet*, March 29, 1999

⁴³ Lausanne Treaty of July 24, 1923

⁴⁴ *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, July 7, 1998

Bucktought had predicted a major earthquake in mid-July 1999 in Thrace (also the European part of Istanbul), his Turkish colleagues rejected the warning. The Turkish media found out that he was of Greek origin and accused him of trying to harm the Turkish tourism business.⁴⁵

On June 1, 1999 Turkish Daily News reported on an incident when “a group of Greek sailors raised a huge Greek flag on the Aegean island of Esek (Agathonisi) in a move that is expected to further heat up the most recent island dispute between arch-rivals Turkey and Greece...”.⁴⁶ Cumhuriyet commented on this: “In creating a factual situation in the Aegean in order to attain sovereign rights, Greece is proceeding with its illegal initiatives.”⁴⁷ This comment implies that Greece is acting in violation of international law, despite the fact that the islands are at most disputed, but do not belong to Turkish territory.

d) False information – a wedding ceremony shakes bilateral relations

Another mixture of tragic and comic -- although it was clearly a tragedy in terms of the quality of the journalistic work -- was the (assumed) crisis over the island of Platia (in Turkish Keci) in May. The information on a planned wedding ceremony of a Greek fisherman with his Italian bride on the island of Plati in the Aegean caused hot tempers and harsh accusations against Greece in the Turkish press, since Ankara considers the sovereignty of the island as undetermined.⁴⁸ The incident might have had more serious repercussion but turned out to be no incident at all: a Turkish official had confused the name and location of the islands “Plati” and “Platia”, the latter being disputed by the Turkish authorities. It turned out that the ceremony took place on “Plati”. Nevertheless, tensions were serious enough and Greek and Turkish patrol boats were summoned to the area and swarms of journalists lingered in the neighbourhood, waiting for “their story.”⁴⁹ Of course, Greek officials could not withhold their mockery: “why don’t you open a map” suggested Greek newspapers, citing Greek minister of defence Akis Tzochatzopoulos.⁵⁰

e) Quoting officials: vague terms and outspoken insults

Hate speech is hardly disguised when it comes from government officials. The media in both countries would not miss a chance to pick up extreme statements, without scrutinising their justification, softening or even criticising their own politicians. “Grey zones” for example is an attribute given to a number of Greek islands in the Aegean by the Turkish president Süleyman Demirel.⁵¹ It implied threats and the need to take action on this territory.

The daily Kathimerini quoted prime minister Simitis when referring to Ankara in a conversation with Romano Prodi: “foreign policy cannot be made by idiots.”⁵² The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs even issued a small booklet in February this year, titled “Greece and the PKK” which it distributed through its embassies to the public.⁵³

⁴⁵ Stuttgarter Zeitung, August 21, 1999

⁴⁶ Turkish Daily News, June 1, 1999

⁴⁷ Cumhuriyet, May 28, 1999

⁴⁸ Hürriyet, May 15, 1999; Cumhuriyet, May 16, 1999; Turkish Daily News, May 17, 1999;

⁴⁹ Turkish Daily News, May 17, 1999; Cumhuriyet, May 16, 1999

⁵⁰ Eleftherotypia, May 17, 1999

⁵¹ Turkish Daily News, May 17, 1999

⁵² I Kathimerini, May 18, 1999

⁵³ “Greece and the PKK”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, February 1999

Moreover, Turkish media as well as government officials accuse Greece of blocking Turkey's access to the European Union. Although there is no doubt that Greece opposes Turkey's access to the EU, this does not mean that Turkey's failure to obtain an EU membership is *because* of objections raised by Greece. Such accusations without the mentioning of other relevant factors as to why the EU has denied the membership status to Turkey so far, must also be regarded as open hate speech.

Of course, the former Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos went further; those persons claiming the existence of a Macedonian minority in Greece were insulted as "perverted intellectuals and perverted journalists", "monkeys and animals". In January he stated that "the Greek journalists are the worst enemies of the Greek government" when asked about the Greek-Bulgarian relation. Ludmilla Alexeyeva and Aaron Rhodes, President and Director of the International Helsinki Citizen Federation responded to these remarks and expressed their grave concern over these kinds of statements in an open letter dated January 25, 1999.⁵⁴

Greek Archbishop Christodoulos, who enjoys overwhelming respect among the Greek people, does not lag behind Mr. Pangalos. It was him who stated in a comment on the situation in Kosovo that "our Orthodox brethren are being bombarded" and that the whole situation "has its origin in the Muslim element."⁵⁵ Whenever their leaders go to the extreme, the media do not miss an opportunity to quote them.

When looking at the above examples, one has to keep in mind that these terms come from the mouths of government officials, diplomats and educated people. One also has to keep in mind that the delegates of these governments are represented in the organisations such as the OSCE whose aim is to collaborate in the spirit of co-operation among its member states and to reduce tension through dialogue. Civilised people should despise any primitive use of language, since it cannot be a basis for dialogue. And by becoming a member state of the OSCE, they have committed themselves to dialogue.

In view of the fact that even the elite uses open insults, it can easily explain why journalists and citizens do not refrain from this kind of language either.

f) Hate speech against international organisations

In this context it must also be mentioned that hate speech is also directed against the international community and international organisations, i.e. NATO, the European Union, Western Europe and so on. This has important implications since it weakens the uniting function of these organisations for its members and undermines the validity and the value of the international law. The main function of the international law and many international organisations is the regulation and management of conflicts. If they lose value in the eyes of people and nations, they can no longer fulfil their primary function.

A GHM report may serve as an example, quoting the daily Ta Nea: "What is Adolf (Hitler) now doing: is he merely coming out of his tomb or is he also opening new tombs' one sparrow asks another, in a caricature showing Hitler rising from the dead and leading NATO troops

⁵⁴ Open letter of L. Alexeyeva and A. Rhodes directed to Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos, January 25, 1999

⁵⁵ GHM Report, April 1, 1999

into Kosovo' ... The newspaper concerned is no other than "Ta Nea", Greece's largest selling daily."⁵⁶

VI. (Auto-) Censorship and Pre-selection of Information

1. Censorship following broadcasting and publication

When talking of censorship in democratic societies, one must be careful. I have not come across a clear case of censorship prior to publication or broadcasting of journalists' work, although there are cases that come close to this. The above mentioned list of 37 words issued by the Turkish Ministry of Internal Affairs to avoid any positive mentioning of the PKK is one example. The bans on political broadcasting more than 3 months prior to the national elections in Turkey is another one.

This is different regarding indirect censorship following broadcasting or publication. In Turkey, it is possible that a ban is put on radio or TV stations for one or more days, usually enforced by imposing a blackout on them. This practice is unknown in Greece. Moreover, Turkish writers and journalists are often charged with high fines or prison sentences for their articles or statements.

These cases, however, inhibit discussion within the national societies and the initiation of a dialogue between the two states. The discussion over the necessity of compulsory military service and the right of conscientious objection, for example, is closely linked to defence issues and the bilateral relations. In Turkey, this is still a taboo and journalists touching on the issue face the possibility of having charges brought against them.

2. Auto-censorship for political reasons

Ilnur Cevik on July 26, 1999 titled his editorial in the daily Turkish Daily News "*As we mark 91 years of life without censorship... Is this a bad joke?*". In his comment he sharply analyses the situation in Turkey: "*So 91 year ago, the authorities decided that they would no longer apply censorship to the press. Ever since then, censorship has been applied in the press in various forms in Turkey, and press freedom in recent years has become a meaningless phrase, as the authorities have imprisoned so many journalists and writers for expressing their views.... Authorities have summoned Turkish journalists to various state departments and told them what is taboo and what is not, and thus many newspapers have applied self-censorship. Newspapers that have refused to toe the official line on certain sensitive issues like the Kurdish problem or religion have faced official harassment and financial pressure.*" Referring to the media landscape he continues: "*Another form of censorship has been the result of monopolistic trends in the media. If you resign from one newspaper you will not get a job in a rival newspaper because the bosses have agreed not to enlist such journalists. So many prominent journalists have to stay with their newspapers and do what they are told. Then, of course, there is the notorious conservative establishment in Turkey, which is used to intimidate journalists who decide to speak their minds on taboo subjects such as religion, secularism, ethnic problems and the military. If a journalist steps out of line, he is punished*

⁵⁶ GHM Report, March 26, 1999

with character assassination, and if that has not deterred the person, they create an excuse to put him behind bars... ”⁵⁷

3. Auto-censorship for economic reasons

Parallel to politically motivated auto-censorship, there is also economically motivated self-censorship. As already pointed out above, this is due to the heavy competition in the media market, where media owners compete for audience shares and readership. The audience share in their hands will guarantee profitable advertising revenues. This leads journalists and editors likewise like to choose issues and a style of reporting from a single point of view, simply asking themselves: “does the story sell?”.

VII. Positive examples: Individuals investing in the Greek-Turkish dialogue

In reviewing the very sad and unbalanced events related to freedom of the media in the context of the Greek-Turkish relation, one should not neglect positive examples of reporting on the neighbouring country and forms of co-operation among journalists.

Following the Imia/Kardak crisis in 1996, a number of journalists from Greece and Turkey reacted to their responsibilities and founded the Platform of Journalists in the Aegean and Thrace. In the meantime, the Platform consists of around 200 journalists meeting on a yearly basis on the anniversary of the crisis in order to discuss the problems and perceptions in Greece and Turkey. Sad enough, the last meeting planned in Komotini --a town in Northern Greece where the ethnic Turkish population amounts to 50 % -- had to be cancelled due to threats and attacks by nationalists. The car of a member of the Platform and editor of a newspaper in Alexandroupolis was burnt⁵⁸ and a bomb exploded in front of the Turkish consulate in Komotini that very weekend. The next meeting of the movement was postponed indefinitely.

Another successful programme was launched by the news channels NTV and NET: on July 12, 1999, they broadcast a live discussion between Greek and Turkish journalists, businessmen and academics on the issue of Greek-Turkish relations.

Although the media are stingy with positive news on Greek-Turkish relations, the melting of the icy political climate between the two states has some impact on the newsmakers as well. More space was given to the Greek steps initiated by the new Foreign Minister Papandreou who introduced a “peace package”⁵⁹ into the new diplomatic relations. The bilateral talks resulting from this measure found ample coverage in the Turkish press.⁶⁰

The press also reported accurately and even enthusiastically on the conciliatory approach of Georgos Papandreou, who took over the post from his much hated and highly non diplomatic predecessor Theodoros Pangalos after the Öcalan scandal. The daily Sabah reported on a suggestion put forward by Papandreou concerning the re-writing of history school textbooks.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Turkish Daily News, July 26, 1999

⁵⁸ see the newspaper “Paratiritis” of February 5, 1999

⁵⁹ Sabah, June 29, 1999

⁶⁰ Turkish Daily News, 1999

⁶¹ Sabah, May 26, 1999

It is a “revolutionary” turn after the sensitive talks on the revision of history books in the 60s, which had been buried for some decades.

But Papandreou touched on more delicate issues. In July, he expressed the view that he could not see anything wrong in the Turkish minority calling itself “Turkish” (instead of Muslim) as long as this did not result in territorial claims on the part of the Turkish state. *Hürriyet* applauded and wrote “Bravo Yorgo” in bold type on its front page,⁶² a praise from the Turkish side, that turned out to be a curse in his own country, creating furious demands in the Greek media for his resignation.

The Greek magazine *KLIK* in its May edition asked Greece’s most popular journalists what they thought of the role the media had played during the war in Kosovo. Many views expressed contained self-criticism of the Greek press. This discussion proves that there exists an awareness of the important role the media had during this conflict.

The Ipekci prize, awarded to Greek and Turkish journalists for outstanding work on Greek-Turkish relations and a prize awarded by the Konrad-Adenauer foundation in Ankara for the same thing should also be mentioned in this context. These examples are by no means a complete list of journalist activities and support for a dialogue.

I. Interviews

Conducting interviews with journalists and intellectuals in Greece as well as in Turkey actually was the most rewarding and interesting part of this year. Their readiness and interest in discussing the role of the media in bilateral relations demonstrates their openness and sensitivity to this kind of issue. However, the interviews also revealed the fears and moods that dominate journalists’ practice.

The first interviews were designed to give me a picture of what the media landscape in Turkey and Greece was like and who the main actors were.

Before being able to suggest an approach to abolish hate speech in the press, I had to understand who exactly initiates it. Was it the governments of both countries, who “ordered” their media to publish a certain kind of information and who also decided on the timing? Or was it rather the media that control and influence the government? In short: to what extent is the Greek-Turkish conflict politically motivated and manipulated by exerting control over the media?

These questions could not simply be answered by collecting the facts from the Human Rights reports of a number of NGOs active in this field. I, therefore, had to start conducting interviews with journalists and intellectuals in both countries. In doing so, I had the great honour and was fortunate enough, to meet the most interesting and impressive people in Turkey as well as in Greece.

Disappointingly enough, however, I did not find the truth that I had set out for in the beginning of my search. In retrospect, I am happy that there is not a single truth. I am happy, because there is not simply one homogenous Turkey and therefore there is not only repression in the

⁶² *Hürriyet*, July 28, 1999

media but also freedom. In talking to friends and professional journalists, I must admit that I met quite a remarkable diversity of opinion in Turkey. And although there are limits to the freedom of expression in the mass media, people spoke very frankly on the most delicate issues, such as how to handle the Kurdish question, the problems with Mafia organisations, and human rights issues.

One of the first and most impressive conversations was the meeting with the heads of the Greek and Turkish section of the BBC World Service, Messrs. Babis Metaxas and Hüseyin Sükan in London in March 1999. I had proposed to them to host a programme window jointly produced by Greek and Turkish journalists based in their countries. They were very amicable and open to new approaches, but at the same time, very sceptical on the idea itself. It was Mr. Metaxas who said that he was afraid of losing the Greek audience if he started such a programme. At the outset of the project, I felt I could not have received a more disillusioning answer from a senior journalist – if even the BBC would not touch the sensitive issue of Greek-Turkish dialogue, who else would do so!

When choosing my interview partners, I was quite astonished to discover that there are only about 5 correspondents of the Greek media in Turkey. This fact is a remarkable one, in view of the enormous importance Turkey has in Greece's domestic and foreign policy. Also, I was astonished to see that one of the most important correspondents has been in Turkey for 15 years, but his Turkish is, nevertheless, rather insufficient. This is a very remarkable fact, since the great majority of people in Greece, either from the media and the general public or businessmen and politicians derive most of their information about Turkey from this journalist.

Also, the definition of what the function of journalism is appears to differ substantially from that adopted in Western European countries. When I asked Alkis Kourkoulas, the correspondent of the Athens News Agency ANA in Turkey, whether he primarily reports about political issues or whether his reports cover cultural, economical or academic activities in Turkey as well, he answered that he concentrated on political topics. When I asked him why this was so, he told me that the notion of "news" would necessarily imply *political* news and political views only. When I asked him why he did not lay stress on cultural topics or economic exchange he answered there were not many things going on in those fields and even if there were, nobody in Greece would be interested in learning about them.

Considering the fact that he is the correspondent of the Greek News Agency and that most Greek journalists will use the information coming from him as their single source of information, it means that many topics related to Greece's most important neighbour are not covered. Journalists and the public cannot have a correct picture of a country when they see only its tail, but not its body, its head, its character. And seeing only the tail makes the people draw misleading conclusions on the rest of the giant across the Aegean.

Although Mr. Kourkoulas is a serious journalist and he is one of the most experienced in his field, his statements still show how the pre-selection of information takes place. The fault, however, does not lie with him since a single journalist cannot be expected to cover all topics. A variety of information and viewpoints can only be delivered by a variety of resident journalists.

II. The initiative to establish a programme window co-produced by Greek and Turkish Journalists

The idea to initiate the joint production of a programme window stems from the consideration of creating a forum for those journalists and intellectuals in both countries who take a different stand from mainstream journalism.

The intention is to establish a programme window broadcast by Greek and Turkish television on a monthly basis in both countries. The programme window will have the character of a report on issues concerning civil society in both countries. The programme will be co-produced by one Greek and one Turkish journalist working as a team (for every series a different team). The journalists will travel together, do the research together, conduct interviews together, collect the same facts and also interpret these facts together. In working together, they will be urged not only to use their own national sources of information, but also to counter-check information with each other and to use the sources from neighbouring or third countries. The team will have to come to common findings in the form of documentary programme, which they have to present at the end.

The background of the idea stems from the observation that for both Greeks and Turks, the neighbouring country is more or less a bland spot on the map. The media in both countries portray the other country mostly in the context of politics or issues of national security. By doing this, they create a perception in their population which is restricted to perceive the other as “the historical enemy.” There are only few exceptions, where articles or programmes try to communicate the “whole”, a more elaborate and exact picture of the neighbour. But few journalists bother to investigate thoroughly enough to reveal such a picture. For example, it would be important to make clear that the other country does not only consist of its government, but also a civil society, with considerable achievements, endeavours and cultural life.

Moreover, it is believed that the lack of knowledge in both societies is dangerous and may eventually lead to an escalation of tension between the two states, which have actually increased over the past few years.

It is believed that being deprived of a broad base of information and even of sufficient access to information on the national level, the population is not able to elect and control its governments in full responsibility. Therefore, the co-production of a programme window by Greek and Turkish journalists is designed to fill this gap, to enable the citizens of both countries to rethink and to form a fact-based opinion on the behaviour of the other.

1. The intention

The establishment of a programme window co-produced by local Greek and Turkish journalists, is intended to have two effects.

The first is the effect on the audience and public opinion. The programmes are intended to show that “the other” is not merely the enemy, but that the enemy consists of individuals, with their own culture, achievements and also common problems and solutions. It is intended to give the “enemy” a human face and to create a positive curiosity towards the culture and identity of the neighbour. However, the character of this programme window should not be of

a strictly documentary, “emotionally clean” nature, but should also involve individuals and their views.

Moreover, the public will be provided with broader information on the neighbouring country, extending to aspects of civil society and not only issues of foreign and security policy. Although it is true that there cannot be an “objective” information supply, the programme co-produced by journalists from Greece and Turkey should nevertheless present the relevant facts, arguments, perceptions and fears of both sides to the public.

The second, and probably a more important impact, is to make an educational contribution to the work of journalists. The journalists --one Greek and one Turk for each feature report-- will travel together, will conduct the research together, will conduct interviews and find the facts together and, which may be more important, will also interpret the facts together. By working together, the journalists who will be doing the reporting on a certain topic, they will reach common conclusions, which will help them present the programme itself. This requires thorough research and analysis of the facts and arguments from both sides. Whenever contradictory information is present, more thorough research would be conducted.

By working together, Greek and Turkish journalists not only get acquainted with each other, but also have to deal with the view of the other in regard to a selected topic. Thus, they will also be forced to use sources other than their own national news agencies. They will have to (counter) check on sources of the other side (Turkish or Greek ones respectively) and even the ones from a third party in order to conduct thorough research.

2. Outline of the Programme Window

The programme window will be co-produced by Greek and Turkish journalists situated in their countries and will be broadcast on a monthly basis. It will be aired simultaneously in both countries in the Greek and Turkish languages.

Each programme window will deal with a certain issue, as suggested below. This issue will touch on questions of interest to both Greece and Turkey. One Greek and one Turkish journalist will produce each programme. They will work together for as many days as required. They will do the investigations and the necessary trips together and they will also present it together. Therefore, they will be a team presenting a joint product at the end of this period of co-operation.

While hosting the programme window, the Turkish and Greek broadcasters concerned will have an editorial veto right after having consulted each other.

3. Possible Contents

The Programme window is intended to deal with certain “soft issues” (though not necessarily conflict-free issues) in Greek-Turkish relations.

Possible subjects to be dealt with could be:

- Illegal immigrants at the Greek and Turkish borders
- Environment, i.e. the nuclear plant planned for Akkuyu
- Architecture (“from the Hagia Sophia to Sinan”)

- Trade contacts and business co-operation
- Minorities
- Mosques in Greece/ Churches in Turkey
- Mixed Communities in the Ottoman Empire
- Women
- History School textbooks
- Fishermen
- Re-migrants: culture shock and adaptation
- Film production/ film festivals
- Balkan Studies: the faculties at the University of Saloniki and at the Sabanci University in Istanbul (opening in autumn 1999)
- The Patriarch in Constantinople and the Muftis (both) in Thrace
- What has become of the Black Sea co-operation

4. Broadcasters and Producers_

The news channel NTV (private) in Turkey and the state-owned TV station NET in Greece have expressed their readiness to broadcast the programme. The Greek channel ET3 is also interested in being involved in this project.

Two production companies, one in Greece and one in Turkey, will carry out the production.

5. Co-ordinating Organisation: ECCG

In order to ensure the sustainability of the project, a co-ordinating organisation is required. The task of this organisation is to formally apply for the necessary funds and to co-ordinate the local journalists, as well as at a later stage, the local broadcasters and producers. Moreover, it will evaluate the project on a regular basis concerning its effects on the participating journalists and with regard to the feed-backs from the audience.

The co-ordinating organisation will fulfil two criteria: it should have experience in the field of media and it should hold a neutral position in Greek-Turkish relations in order to be accepted by both sides. It is believed that the European Centre for Common Ground (ECCG) in Brussels is in the right position to conduct this.

ECCG is situated in Brussels and is carrying out a number of projects with the intention of conflict resolution. ECCG has been active in the Greek-Turkish dialogue for a long time and has long-standing contacts. In May 1998, the ECCG together with Unesco organised a meeting of journalists from Greece and Turkey. Moreover, the organisation has initiated and is carrying out successfully a number of projects related to media in situations of conflict. One of the most recent examples in Europe is the activities of ECCG in the FYROM.

6. The state of the project on a programme window in August 1999

A number of contacts have been established with journalists in Greece as well as in Turkey. Most of the contacts as listed below have been made personally. These persons have expressed their willingness to contribute to the project in one way or another and there is some guarantee that they have no nationalist approach to the issue of Greek- Turkish relations.

In regard to the present state of the project, broadcasters have been found who have consented to conduct the project.

a) Broadcasters for television: NTV, NET, ERT3

As regard to television, NTV from the Turkish side, as well as NET and ERT3 from the Greek side have consented to broadcast such a programme window. In talks about consensus, this is the general idea. The realisation will depend on the contents of the programme as well as the quality of journalists who are going to do it. Moreover, it is self-evident that all agreements are made subject to the provision that a third party will supply funding.

NTV is a private television station and together with ATV, forms Turkey's biggest news channel. Director Nuri Colakoglu will decide on the rough outline of the programme and the production. Regarding to the details of the programme, they will be delegated to Ms. Elvan Özkaya, editor of the International News department of NTV.

NET as well as ERT3 are Greek state television companies. ERT3 is more specialised in cultural programmes and its head offices are in Thessaloniki, while NET is based in Athens.

The responsible person of NET is Stelios Kouloglu, a highly experienced journalist who has already conducted a live panel discussion with Nuri Colakoglu. The director of NET, Mr. Antonopoulos, has delegated any programmes related to Turkey to himself. However, NET is still very careful. Mr. Kouloglu indicated that in principle they would consider doing this, however, details should be discussed at a meeting in September with NTV. NET insists on the involvement of a production company, probably the producers Messrs. Elmacioglu.

Mr. Lefty Kongalides from ERT3 has approached me on his own initiative. The relevant contacts were established through CIRCOM (Boris Bergant), an organisation of regional televisions specialising in transfrontier co-productions.

b) Broadcasters for radio: ERA, TRT

As regard to the possibility of having a programme window on radio, the Greek state radio ERA through its director general Giannis Tzannetakos and director Nikitas Lionarakis expressed their willingness to do this. The Turkish public radio TRT will only make a final decision after the contents have been assessed and a draft budget from a production company has been produced.

As for TRT radio, contacts have been established with its general director Cetin Tezcan. Details have been discussed with Nail Ekici, Co-director of TRT Radio Istanbul.

c) Production and Funding

There are a number of factors that are in favour of involving producers. There would be one producer in Greece and one in Turkey, helping in co-ordinating the journalists, dealing with bureaucracy on site (visa, permissions to film one site), advising non-TV journalists, co-ordinating interview dates and so forth. In order to come up with a draft budget, they would need at least one example scenario by one team of journalists.

It has been estimated that a total of \$ 200,000 would be sufficient for the production of 10 programmes for TV. A request for funding has been submitted to the European Commission by the European Centre for Common Ground. Additional funding will be requested from IPDC (Unesco), Soros foundation, CIDA, Council of Europe, and various foundations (Bertelsmann etc.).

X. Summary

The tragic events in the Balkans over the past years showed that public opinion created by the mass media can produce *fait accomplis*. The same may well happen in Greece and Turkey, where the fear and nationalism that has been bred over decades may boil over easily.

There is no justification why so little attention has been attributed to the role of the media in situations of conflict in the past. Encouraging a forum of public discourse and dialogue that offers broad information to citizens of the relevant country is a highly efficient way of conflict prevention that has the additional advantage of producing comparably little cost.

The possibilities of conflict prevention in this sector have not been fully exploited yet. This was the case with the conflicts in FRY before the Kosovo war broke out and is also the case in Greece and Turkey today.

Conflict prevention has to focus and rely on the constructive forces of civil society in the relevant countries. In order to do so, it is of utmost importance to give a forum to journalists critical of the states' policy and to provide the population with the access to the widest possible sources of information.

Support may also be obtained from the facilities of a third country. One way to do so is to consider involving the BBC World Service or the Deutsche Welle in this task. These broadcasters could offer their frequencies and facilities to independent journalists striving for sensitive solutions to bilateral issues.

It is up to the international community and to the particular institutions such as the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Council of Europe and others, to lay stress on these kinds of alternative solutions.

Words of thanks

I would like to thank especially Mr. Freimut Duve and his advisers, including Bei Hu, for hosting me in the Vienna office and their confidence in my work that enabled me to visit Graz, Strasbourg, Brussels and Baku.

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It is impossible to name all those that I have talked to, that have encouraged me and supported the project. I saw fifty people in both Greece and Turkey and learned a lot from them. Nevertheless, I would like to mention some of those to whom I owe special gratitude:

The project would be unthinkable without the help of Stratis Balaskas who generously introduced me to colleagues in Greece and Stelios Kouloglu, who took the initiative immediately after hearing of the project. Giannis Tzannetakos and Nikitas Lionarakis were the ones that consented first to broadcast a programme window on radio. Neslihan Özgünes from ECCG helped me with a lot of contacts in Turkey and her enthusiasm for the project.

Ambassador Karen Fogg devoted two hours of her time to discussing the project, advising me and offering contacts. She and Margarita Papandreou made me realise that the project could happen if one tried hard enough.

In Turkey, I would have been lost without the help of Sahin Alpay, Yavuz Baydar, Halil Berktaş, Taifun Ertan and Nuri Colakoglu. Süleyman Gencil and his wife Yesim generously hosted me in their house in Izmir.

Finally, I want to express my happiness to have met Arzu Aslanoglu and Selgüen Yüceci, who did not only teach me a moderate knowledge of Turkish, but also love and enthusiasm for the country itself. They, together with Sami Karabiyikoglu and the family of Özlem Temizkan made the time I spent in Turkey an extremely beautiful one.