

*Chapter XI*

**IN THE MIRROR OF MEDIA\***

*E. Baruh, L. Marinkova, M. Grekova, S. Popova*

One of the main hypotheses dealing with media and corruption was that quite a few publications play with the subject because it is a hot topic. The confirmation of this hypothesis indicates there is a special maintaining of *public tension on the subject of corruption*. Does such “playing” come about when a need to write about corruption is felt, but there is no event, which can be a topic of publication?

Don't some newspapers create perceptions of corruption through use of a particular word, hints, allegations, and generous use of anonymous sources? Do other papers lay the stress on specific cases for which it seems there are sufficient data for corruption?

The expectation was that the press does not present corruption as a social relationship. The corrupt side appears on their pages much more frequently than the corrupting one. But if corruption is not a relationship, what is corruption then, according to media publications on the subject?

Particularly interesting were individual cases of corruption reported by the press, as they are the ones that provide some factual basis on which media “talking” about corruption ultimately rests upon (including articles that do not display specific cases) as well as “talking” about corruption in general.

These cases are specific legal cases where side by side with facts providing the reader with some opportunity for a personal assessment, there is “moralising” on the part of the reporter. Unfortunately, journalists dealing with corruption have not made it a constant practice to follow the development of a given issue. One can talk about the effectiveness of media efforts only if the specific cases of corruption do not remain locked in isolated stories, if they are reflected in the journalist field (“field effects” by P. Bourdieu). Is there such persistence?

## **1. CORRUPTION: “CORRUPTING - CORRUPT” OR “THE CORRUPT”**

### **1.1. The problem of corruption**

What is the convention which corruption breaks, hence becoming an invisible, deliberately concealed social relationship? Where is the problem? Rational human beings acting rationally enter a relation of exchange and it is satisfactory (albeit to a different extent) for both sides.

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\* The study comprises a six month period (February 1 - August 1) of 1998. The object of content-analysis was 9 national daily newspapers: Democratsia, Douma, Standart, Continent, Troud, 24 Chassa, Novinar, Sega, Pari and three national weekly newspapers: Capital, Banker and 168 Chassa. The total number of the articles connected with the corruption topic is 1318.

*1.1.1. Corruption as relationships*

Corruption might be viewed as *an inevitable relationship in a situation of transition* during the reformulating of institutions, social positions, rules, etc. That is, a situation lacking standards. Certain people make decisions not in conformity with well-known rules valid for everyone, because there are no such rules, and decisions are made of their own will. The will must be stimulated in order not to remain idle, i.e. it must be rewarded for its action. Thus for both sides of the relationship the acts of “giving” and “taking” (or “demanding compensation for the effort” and “compensation”) seem “normal”(no matter whether adequate for the general situation of the transition or the specific situation both sides happen to be in). The motives of both sides seem to be in harmony, too, as “such are the rules of the game”. Moreover, the satisfaction with the outcome should be identical for both sides. However, no one knows how many persons (or collective subjects) are “out of the game”.

Corruption might be seen, as *a necessary relationship in certain real-life situations* where the most important thing psychologically is the confidence that the expected action of the other person involved in the deal will be adequately performed. There is no lack of rules; on the contrary, it was they that formed the expectations. But along with the rules and the expectations for their observance there also exists the fear or doubt that they may also be broken. If, however, the motive of “the person who gives” is fear, then it is “racketeering”. It is irrelevant that from an outside point of view one can claim that the “individual who gives” has nothing to fear. If he fears that the other side will not perform the actions expected from him (in conformity with the active rules), and this is a socially produced fear (rather than the natural human fear for one’s safety, health, future, life of a relative) he is actually the victim of a racket. On the other side, however, if it is not done through striking fear on purpose, “the one who receives” is involved in an act of corruption. This is perhaps the most dangerous variant, because in fact everyone can find himself in such a situation (not by choice) so that fear makes him susceptible to “racketeering-corruption”.

*1.1.2. Expectations and results*

We expected that the media’s image of corruption would not distinguish between varieties. We expected that the media image of corruption would focus not on corruption as a social relationship but on “corrupt persons”, institutionalised rather than specified (because the latter needs evidence). Our expectations were confirmed.

The number of newspaper articles on corruption in which the word “corruption” or its derivatives were only mentioned surpassed our expectations – 486 articles or 36% of the total of 1318 articles surveyed. Of the other 832 articles, 424 or 51% presents corruption as a relationship,

155 out of them are stories in which corruption is mentioned on the occasion of a “specific case” (out of a total of 179), 109 are articles in which corruption is mentioned on the occasion of a “specific person” (out of a total of 185), 90 are stories in which corruption is mentioned on the occasion of “speaking about corruption” (out of a total of 269), 51 are articles in which corruption is mentioned on the occasion of “assumptions, suggestions, rumours...” (out of a total of 136), 19 are stories in which corruption is mentioned on the occasion of an “analysis of corruption as a phenomenon” (out of a total of 64).

And if at first glance the articles which talk about *corruption on the occasion of a specific case, but don't consider corruption a relationship* seem few – “only” 23 or 12,9% of the total mentioning specific cases – still, it is worth asking the question what this “specific case” is that is described, or probably investigated and analysed without being discussed as a relationship. There exists “the one who takes” (the corrupt one) but there is not “one who gives” and respectively a corrupting one who receives something (no matter whether it is deserved or not).

The picture gets more perplexing if we take a look at the data showing that in 60 publications related to a specific case of corruption, no corrupting person is mentioned – i.e. the corrupting is missing not only in 19 (out of 23) publications in which corruption is not a relationship (let alone the four publications treating corruption not as a relationship but which states there is a “corrupting person” although acting without “clear motives”), but in 41 more “specific cases” of corruption in which it is presented as a relationship. We cannot help posing the question: why is the image of the corrupting person not presents?

As if it is obvious that corruption without a person ready to give something (no matter whether forced by circumstances or lack of rules or...) in order to receive something else is simply impossible. This could confirm the idea that the corrupting person is forced and the corrupt person exercises free choice. Or perhaps this supports the notion that the figure of public importance is the corrupt one because he has the power, because he possesses by the force of institutional status a deficit resource, while the corrupting figure is simply an average person.

At the same time one can see that the publications on a specific instance of corruption are not really interested in the motives of the corrupting: in 60 publications such a person is absent, and in 54 more articles the motives of the corrupting are vague, i. e. in 64,4% of the “specific cases” *the reader does not know who and for what reason a person “corrupts”*. Is it uninteresting, socially unimportant or unable to be inferred?

But if there is no way to understand who performs the secret act and for what reason, how can we claim that there is corruption, an identified corrupt person, in other words, that a certain individual who seems to be abiding by the rules but in fact is breaking these rules? That “the corrupting” “obtains” something remains unnoticed, and this is exactly as unlawful as the person on the other end of the deal is. Not only because it can be at somebody’s expense, but also because it is a result of that same unregulated relationship that allows “the corrupt” to profit. Let us see how things are with the other side of the relationship, “the corrupted” in the “specific cases”. This is the point where we should stress that in articles on a specific case half of them, 90 out of 179, do not pay attention to what “the corrupting” “gives” (in 72 of the cases what is given is presented as a personal resource). In other words, what is given to make a person corrupt turns out to be rather uninteresting, while what the corrupt (how exactly he became corrupt is unknown) “gives” is of much stronger interest.

But if corruption thrives due to the wish for personal profits of the corrupt, then the curiosity should be directed exactly to what he receives. The focus of the articles, however, is in what he gives without consideration of the fact that it is what the corrupting person gives. And although in 95 of the “specific cases” the articles present what is “given” by the corrupt as an “*institutional resource*”, there is again a sufficient number of cases, 52, in which what “the corrupt” gives is not described.

There are many publications, 37, devoted to specific cases which *do not describe what the corrupting gives or what the corrupt gives*. The question of what the “specific” is in the “specific example” is relevant, and how it is presented as a case of corruption as what is exchanged remains obscure. Is it possible to claim that somebody corrupted somebody else that a relationship of corruption was found between two persons without knowing what was given or in exchange for what?

And here, at last, we come to *the issue of guilt*. It is true that everybody is presumed to be innocent until proven guilty. If we also use this legal presumption, it seems normal that in 85 of the specific cases the issue of guilt is not addressed. The media believe that they only inform the public, and that there are other bodies to judge culpability. But then how can we explain the fact that in 64 publications (out of 179 devoted to specific cases) the answer to the issue of guilt is “the corrupt is guilty”, while in 17 articles the answer is “both are guilty”. How did the journalists feel justified in passing judgement?

### *1.1.3. Major conclusions*

The conclusions can basically be cut down to three:

- The media consistently lump significantly different varieties of corruption into a seemingly one-dimensional phenomenon;
- The phenomenon of corruption acquires the shape of corrupt persons, a vague shape, albeit frequently named. The corrupt persons are simply part of real life in Bulgaria and elsewhere;
- The corrupting persons do not fall in the focus of media interest, maybe because everyone can identify with them.

## **2. HIDDEN MESSAGES**

### **2.1. Talking as keeping silence**

The data received proved the vitality of one of the research hypotheses: media talk about the “phenomenon” of corruption much more than they describe it. One of the reasons is that reporters take examples from real life where corruption is more frequently talked about and rationalised.

This fact is most easily visible in the proportions of major reasons to write about bribes: specific cases of corruption, persons who performed (or allegedly performed) such acts, talking about corruption by institutions, politicians, experts, journalists, as well as rumours and assumptions. All these social faces of corruption, both real and merely talked about, become reference points for articles. The majority of the articles were prompted by institutions and people simply “talking” about the subject (32,2%) but some stories were based on anonymous sources (rumours and assumptions accounted for 16,3%). An original type of talking about corruption is the analysis of the phenomenon (7,7%) by journalists, experts and other social actors. Media reports on corruption are *more conjecture than factual*. This is reflected in the data collected.

Additional data about the volume and meaning of stories talking about bribes are found in other proportions connected with the interpretative levels in presenting the phenomenon: description, interpretation, and assessment. It is easy to notice that a high percentage of the articles do not describe

the phenomenon (73,7%), do not explain it (76,2%), and do not assess it (50,8%). And when there are no descriptions, explanations or assessments, the articles mostly just talk about corruption, and secondly use rumours and assumptions (a percentage higher than the average). It turns out that the “talking” contributes to *“the narrowing” of the form and the rationalisation of the phenomenon.*

The assessments of bribes, if any, are more than descriptions and explanations. Assessments, however, go along the path of the least resistance, with priority given to dominant everyday truths (corruption is an illness of society, an illness of power, a means for personal profit -- 26,3%). They consider to a much less extent social features (a system of compensation for rewarding favours; a social relationship causing injustice, caused by the lack of professionalism -- 13,4%) and psychological motors of the bribe (a mechanism for satisfaction of interests, guarantees of safety, a means for discrediting others -- 11,2%).

As grounds for publication, “talking” about bribes presupposes an unspecified, somewhat general story. While stories referring to specific cases, persons, and institutions most often tell about bribes in state institutions and administration (i.e., we have a specific image of the official in power 58,4 % of the time, and structures of power are found in 25,3%), in the articles that only talk about corruption the structures of power are featured more often (41,6% of the time), and the state institutions are mentioned in 33,8% (i.e., here comes the guy in power-turned-criminal, with a minimum level of specificity). The analyses of corruption are similar (in 31,3% of the stories it is situated in the structures of power, and in 1,2% of the stories in state institutions). Talking ever more frequently becomes a reason for *evading specificity and for enlarging general fears, suspicions and expectations.* In its sense, it feeds itself.

Such conclusions are supported by two-dimensional distributions, which outline the character of the descriptions, interpretations and assessments when they are present:

When corruption is described (26,3% of all stories), it is characterised as a main feature of Bulgarian society and of societies in transition (48,4 and 46,2%). Talking about corruption presupposes a description of the phenomenon as “Bulgarian”, and avoids the extension of the framework and the essential meaning of the bribe, too. When corruption is explained (23,8% of all articles), social reasons (a lack of regulations in society) are mostly stressed in publications produced by talking about corruption (43,8%) and in analyses of the event (31,3%). This is one of the few results of the research where speaking about corruption leads the narration through explanatory logic to less evident interpretations of the phenomenon, above individual inclinations and towards social laws and compulsions. When corruption is assessed (50,8% of all articles), no clearly stated connection is seen between the assessment and the reason for the publication (in the sense in which we rationalise a specific bribe or talking about corruption). The articles contain assessments without consideration of the referent; the assessment layer of the article does not seek its factual construction or a basic logical structure, and without being explained or described, the event often is assessed. Despite this general and important conclusion there are some smaller nuances: the less articles go for social and psychological evaluations of corruption (i.e., when general and inertia-based evaluations of the type “an illness of power”, “an illness of society” prevail), the more they are reasons for talking about corruption and analysis of the bribe as a phenomenon.

In the opposite case, the more social and psychological layers of the event are involved in its evaluation, the more frequently reasons for the articles are specific cases of corruption practices.

Talking about corruption generally presupposes *rapid qualifications and a simple cause-and-effect structure*. The media are void of interpretation, and instead they present themselves very modestly in the descriptions of corruption and instead engage in more assessments.

This allows us to draw the conclusion that when reason for the articles is the talking about corruption, *the image of corruption in the media is more of a construction* produced by means of definitions rather than a reflection of reality built on observation, personal accounts, references to specific examples and logical reflections.

## **2.2. Non-transparent vocabulary**

The interpretation of some “meaningful absences” found by this research is one of the ways to find the hidden messages locked in the pages of the press.

Access to these messages is also provided by the *analysis of the titles and illustrations*, which can act as parallel reports functioning independent of the article, and can remain unread or merely scanned.

Those 878 headlines, which signal to readers that they can read something about corruption there, have preferences namely for the word “corruption”. It was used in 225 headlines. Side by side with it the following appear (according to their frequency): affair, bribe, shady deal, racketeering, palm-greasing, blackmail, under the table, presents. These words semantically aiming at the topic are more alike than different: all of them designate something complicated which cannot be seen (sometimes the thing performing the act is displayed), which remains secret, about which one is never absolutely certain, if the actual doer is not willing to disclose it.

What do the lexemes accompanying the above more explicit names of the event look like? In order of frequency of occurrence, they are Mafia, scandal, dirty money, fraud, smuggling, channel, trafficking, octopus, pyramid, discrediting material, tariff, laundry, riding the gravy train, pharaohs (a reference to leaders of pyramid schemes), scoundrels, wrestlers-turned-criminals. All of these words present the vocabulary for social pathology. With some minor exceptions they trigger not their nominative meanings but their figurative ones formed in the present days. In order to extract the meaning of words like pyramid, dirty money, laundry, channel, trafficking, pharaoh, and wrestler one needs a modern and bitter social experience. And the mysteriousness of the Mafia remains the same after one has seen “The Godfather “ and “the Octopus”. The vocabulary in the headlines in this layer, which directly names the event, is *in fact mysterious and unexplorable*. Lexemes like anti-Mafia and anti-corruption do not increase the clarity: the fight against something complicated and abstract, measured in cosmic figures is simply part of the abstraction of the media landscape.

## **2.3. The patterns of activities**

The activities accented upon by the titles can be described through an analysis of the verbs and participles. If we ignore the non-verb headlines and the verbs that do not designate actions *of or towards* the corrupt and the corrupting, we have a total of 268 lexemes.

### *2.3.1. Analysis*

The analysis shows that the accepting of a bribe is described much more colourfully than the offering is. This is an assessment in the spirit of the general results of the study, which indicate that the one

who accepts the bribe is more explicitly described and reproached. Some of the verbs (20) clearly stress the resource of exchange chosen by the corrupting as institutionalised, and the state is in the role of the affected: drains, plunders, milks, and deceives. Unnamed yet implied is the act of “pouring” money into private structures, i.e. the title indirectly assess the private as profiting at the expense of the state.

The analysis of the next group of lexemes indicates a curious nuance which otherwise is not as explicitly evident elsewhere in the study: arrested, sacked, fight with corruption, convicts, investigated, discovered, inquire (about somebody in connection with corruption), accused, caught, nabbed, busted, handcuffed, taken inside (all in order of frequency of occurrence).

These 171 lexemes undoubtedly dominate the image of the action in the headlines. They are almost the same number as the articles in which specific cases of bribery are narrated (178). All of them present effective actions for restriction and overcoming of the phenomenon. This is a specific vocabulary of the former wrestlers, distinguished by a high level of explicitness: arrested, convict, sacked (97). Every fifth title reports on nothing else but the effective fight against corruption. A high degree of coincidence between the articles narrating the fight against corruption and the articles “entering” the media as a specific case of bribery is quite possible.

This stress in the headlines shows the strong inclination of the newspapers to publish official information from institutions, especially the Interior Ministry. So the efforts to fight bribery must not be neglected but it seems that “*the vocabulary of the former wrestlers*” is a further indirect statement. Although unsystematically rather than purposefully the media contribute to this “fight” -- in their striving to respond to the interest of the public in a specific topic, they also strengthen the image of the authorities.

### *2.3.2. Conclusions*

The main conclusions drawn by the articles on corruption are the following:

- The survey shows that there are more articles written due to verbal events -- talk about corruption - - than real cases of bribery. Thus corruption is more talked about than shown;
- Talking about corruption increases the quantity parameters of the topic but not the quality and the level of its rationalisation;
- When a reason for the articles is talking about corruption, media reports on corruption are made more out of qualifications than facts and interpretations;
- The headlines act as parallel messages where corruption is “dressed” in mysterious vocabulary. The corrupting practically disappears. The specific wrestler’s vocabulary claims clearly its presence in the headlines, which suggest the fight against a phenomenon, which remains incomprehensible.

## **3. “SMALL” CORRUPTION**

It seems that every government declares war on crime and corruption. Time has kept memories of the propaganda of R. Indjova (“Bulgaria is ruled by Multigroup”), of Z. Videnov (his appeal to the same group to separate its shady activities from its legitimate business—literally to “tear off its lizard tail”)

and the UDF's rise to power with I. Kostov saying "We must win the state back from crime." Thus crime and corruption become enemy No. 1, and a premier subject for the media. It is easy to guess that the enemy will most often be found in the guise of the political opponents of those in power and their economic groupings. All this poses the risk, to which the expert must be sensible, for the disclosures of corruption to hide economic self-interest. Attempts at discrediting enemies in front of the public, while rarely leading to prosecution, come into service.

### **3.1. The position of the press**

In fact, the lawbreakers acting with impunity and the reform of the judicial system which has dragged on are the background against which the disclosures of shady affairs shape the manner of thinking of "a nine-day wonder". Due to its shape and character the Bulgarian press with pleasure reports with fireworks without thoroughly studying the affairs. Such topics include the money that has fled Bulgaria, the unpunished credit millionaires, the unpunished deeds of the former government, the export of grain, the friendly circle, etc. The press maintains a moderate position between the crusading government and the inefficient legal proceedings.

The philosophising attitude of the press is proven by the study. The expectations of the team that the articles instigated by certain cases of corruption would represent a small part of the total number were justified -- this cases number 179, i.e. 21% of the total. It turned out that for 129 of them it was not clear how they "came" to the media and only 14 cases are "*discoveries of the editors*". (The publications "take" a topic of another publication in 21 articles and they "follow the thread of their thought", i.e., they keep on discussing a topic they previously wrote about, in 15 articles.) It is logical to suppose that most cases come officially, so to speak, from institutions, mostly from the press centre of the Interior Ministry, though this is not always stated by the editors, as they prefer to personify the information.

#### *3.1.1. Reasons for publications*

The reasons for the publications in the newspapers are classified as follows: a specific case (21,4%), a specific individual, an institution (22,2%), talking, suppositions, analysis (56,4%). We must note that the entry "a specific case, institution" includes only articles in which persons and institutions involved in corruption are indicated -- they are mentioned or hinted at -- but there is no "case". These articles are a little more frequent than the ones regarding specific cases. Indeed, we have specific writing on corruption only in one-fifth (21,4%) of the publications, in 22,2% we have the "charge", suspicion or at least a mention without needed specification and arguments (something similar to "rapid degrading").

The list of *the mentioned specific individuals and institutions* shows greater frequency of mentioning persons. The institutions number 51 (from 181 articles), 14 of them abroad.

The list of the specific *cases*, which indicate repetitiveness, is also reduced to a small figure. There is a partial coincidence of the mentioned specific persons and institutions as well as the specific cases. This coincidence "reinforces" certain cases and the names mentioned in other publications are now familiar. Thus the cases of the deputy mayor of Varna and the prison doctor become incontestable favourites with the public. Actually the press centre of the Interior Ministry, with the active help of the media, publicised the case (which was welcome, we must acknowledge, because of the resistance to

the bodies for investigation and prosecution) that the doctor of a prison, Dr. Madjakov was arrested on the spot with a bribe of DM 3 000 for a false diagnosis. This bombshell came to tell how a lot of other criminals were set free. Behind the case of the deputy mayor of Varna one can see struggles in the local structures of power. These two cases most frequently mentioned by the press come to affirm the hypothesis expressed in the beginning that the media obtain the information about the cases from institutions and due to *conflicts of interests of different type*.

### *3.1.2. Distribution in spheres*

When reason for the articles are specific cases, they are more frequent than the average about a state institution -- 104. At the same time, they are much more seldom in the structures of power -- 45. This again shows the outlining of “minor” crimes (under the above principle) and the obscuring in suspicion and talking of more substantial ones.

The articles about specific cases in state institutions are mostly in the areas of police and health care, followed by customs. Police and customs hold the first position, too, in the articles on specific persons and institutions. The specific cases of corruption in state institutions are mainly disclosures of the bodies of the Interior Ministry. If we go back in time, we will remember that Multigroup, the wrestlers, the invasion of the insurance agents, the rings for car thefts were “taken” from the reports of the police. In this aspect we can also comment that the most recurrent image is of a man in uniform (police and customs officers, doctor) involved in corruption -- this perhaps has a threatening effect on the system itself. The Interior Ministry fights corruption not only on all fronts, but also in the system itself.

### *3.1.3. Distribution of the cases in the different structures of power*

When the articles are on a specific case, the corruption is shown much more frequently to be in the local administration (23) than in the central one (11). Similar is the situation with articles on specific persons and institutions, with 32 in the local and 22 in the central administration. However, figures in general show the opposite: there is more writing about corruption in the central than in the local administration. Obviously, cases of corruption in the local power are more easily led to a definite stage of specification.

### *3.1.4. Conclusions*

- The Bulgarian media gleefully report fireworks without studying thoroughly the specific affairs;
- The media obtains the specific cases from institutions as well as on occasions of clashes of interests;
- Newspapers in particular present “minor” crimes from the “lower” ranks of the power and the institutions.

## **4. PROFILE AND STYLE, ORDER AND MESSAGE**

Newspapers do not create events. They reflect them. This means first that they go after the event, and the reflection is secondary, and is influenced by many factors.

#### **4.1. Reaction of the press to the political order**

The peak period of the studied time coincides with the period in which the anti-corruption efforts were announced as a priority of the Cabinet. Almost one-third of the publications was in the final month of the survey.

Bulgarian media instantly reacted to the introduced *political order* to concentrate attention on the corruption phenomena. The formal winner per number of articles was “Standart”. Regarding the content, the winner is “Democratsia”. Of all the articles in this study, 13,8% appeared on the pages of “Standart”; of all the articles in which corruption is the major topic, 17,6 % were published in “Democratsia”, which is much more than the rest of the newspapers.

##### *4.1.1. Character of the publications*

The newspapers write in a way characteristic of the style of the great and financially dependent: *a lot of words and few facts*. About one-fifth of the publications are written on a specific occasion; the same is the number of the publications written about specific persons (21-22%). Most “specific” is “Troud” (20,8% of all publications written about specific persons are on its pages); the least articles on a specific occasion appeared in “Standart” and “Sega”(3,9%). This fact shows that the journalists shy away from specifying, and shows the predominant intensity of constants not changing with time and place. This means a simplified analysis of what is happening.

The overall picture shows that anonymous talking about corruption prevails: less than 54,8% of the articles are signed; the others are either not signed or the name of the newspaper is within or the journalists hide behind pseudonyms and initials. If we assume that journalism is an expression of an active civil stand, then this manifests *the low social effect of the publications*.

The placard style of the journalistic writing, characteristic of the central daily newspapers in past years, makes the message sound like a declaration, deprives it of depth and persuasiveness, and contributes to the shortening of the distance between talking in the streets and the style of the reporter. It furthermore spoils the effect of the journalistic statement, which can hardly be included in the category of an expert’s analysis.

##### *4.1.2. The approach*

The results from the study definitely prove that the phenomenon of corruption is stated but not analysed.

- In 74,2% of the articles in which corruption is talked about, the tone is one of assertion, an informative one;
- Half of the articles do not present corruption as a social relationship;
- In 63,7% of the articles it is not described;
- In 76,2% of the articles corruption is not explained;
- In 49,2% of the articles corruption is not assessed;

- In 56,4% of the articles corruption is not given any shape.

Obviously, the image of corruption lacks the dimensions of its content. That is true not only for all studied publications but also for those articles which describe specific cases -- in one third of them there is corruption but the corrupting person is missing! The corruption phenomenon flows in the media space as a sense of indefinite tension, as a spot with imagined contours, as a haze you can touch, even pass through, without understanding what happens in it.

The stories try to lead the reader to specific plots and persons, but the stories exist by themselves; they are not analysed from the point of view of the structure they refer to, they become a reason for considering the existing system of dependence, so even if the story is persuasive, if it appears to be one and the same in different newspapers, it does not lead to an insight into the core of the process but instead leads to an insinuation of names placed low enough in the hierarchy to be not dangerous. When there are no landmark cases, as much as individual customs officers are talked about, the myths about the customs department keep nurturing the prevailing public ignorance.

The journalistic approach of the butterfly deprives the newspapers of the possibility (desire or ability) to show to what extent the corruption processes are visible and from where begins the opaque veil of the conscious darkening. The silent political agreement on this opaqueness is also an object of analysis.

#### *4.1.3. The personal aspect*

There have been no disclosures of corruption in the higher administration in Bulgaria. Although Vice-Premier Alexander Bozhkov is known by the nickname “Mr. Ten Percent” in articles and caricatures, there is no serious investigation of these rumours.

10,6% of the publications over the seven months of the study are qualified as articles, which attempt to discredit, and appear two times more frequently than the articles about legal proceedings and six times more than the articles referring to other institutions. This newspaper style, especially on the theme of corruption, is not a surprise for media analysts, especially those of the Bulgarian press over the last 8 years who have manifested strong inclination for the suggested and unproven statements.

The tendency of the newspapers to take part -- deliberately or not -- in the discrediting of public figures might be explained with political order, seeking of sensationalism, philosophising or professional carelessness. The effect of such writing is the low level of confidence between newspaper and reader, moreover it sets limits to knowledge and obscures an already vague picture, either negative or positive one depending on the newspapers’ orientations and the general conjuncture. On this general scheme are put the profiles of the different newspapers, which talk about corruption in the tone their editors have chosen.

#### *4.1.4. The civil position*

Above all, it must be noted that no struggle for media space on corruption topic is observed. There are almost no names of journalists mentioned in the editorials. Except for a few journalists, the authors of the articles in question are different, their names appearing only once or twice, so in this sense they are amateurs not specialists in the field.

The practice of using only the newspaper's name instead of the reporter's, from one point of view, outlines the position of the editorial staff on a given topic and from the other side it diffuses responsibility for what is written and deprives it of individuality. Keeping in mind that the articles on corruption aim low enough to pose a serious threat for the journalist, this approach could hardly be seen as protecting the reporter. It is rather in conformity with the adopted manner of newspapers writing over the last years.

The "decision makers" do not like to arrange the pleats of a dress they do not like. It cannot be denied that the dress is part of the "wardrobe" of the present leaders, so the more vague the silhouette is the less images are discerned and the more comfortable is the situation from which one talks about tendencies and not about their proponents.

The newspaper which least shows the image of corruption is "Democratsia" (22% of the studied newspapers which is 85,5% of all the articles on the topic appearing on the pages of the newspaper). If we assume the general statement that the corruption phenomenon not only exists, but reaches a threatening extent, then the newspaper of the Union of the Democratic Forces evidently does not like to create its image and to publish its visual variants because they refer to the current ruling circles.

The high assessment value of "Douma" and the discrete silence of "Democratsia" show that even when it comes to threatening epidemics, which undoubtedly corruption is the integrity of the whole society, the thinking and the approach are committed. There is no an insight that there comes the moment when the players in corruption lose their party colour, that in the non-transparent circles of high affairs they form a partnership, illogical from a party-scheme point of view; that from a certain stage the only principle of forming a coalition is the number of zeroes. It would be interesting for the readers of both "Democratsia" and "Douma" as well as for the whole nation to know which high party leaders of the two political forces are partners in huge financial shenanigans. No one newspaper knew for example why the war against Multigroup began, why it ceased and why a new one was declared later on. It seems that no one comprehends that the natural disasters and corruption cannot be analysed from a party point of view. It could be said that either journalistic naiveté or journalistic weakness exists whenever questions in connection with great financial interests are posed.

The survey ended before the opening of the autumn parliament session of the National Assembly when the President said "After the power in the last 55 years was considered a great table around which friends, relatives and partisans always sit, now the moral responsibility of UDF is to put an end to this shameful syndrome." This way, as newspapers wrote, the President took the corruption phenomenon out of its abstract use. "And to lay the responsibility for the in/actions of the new economic stratum on those who make it." After this statement of the President Petar Stoyanov, the Kostov Cabinet indicated that corruption existed mainly in local administration.

Here is a survey of the daily newspapers made before these statements were made:

- Corruption is not in the government, "Novinar" (15%), "Democratsia" (14,4%) and "Troud" (13,6%);
- Corruption is in the central administration, "24 Chassa" (16,7%), "Continent" (13%) and "Pari" (13%);

- Corruption is in local administration, “Douma” (22,6%) and “Democratsia” (16,7%);
- Corruption is in judiciary system, “Novinar” (18,5%);
- Corruption is in Parliament, “Standart” (16,7%);
- Corruption is on more than one place, ”Democratsia” (27,5%) and “Sega” (17,4%) say.

#### *4.1.5. Conclusions*

The data stresses the relationship between the image created by media and the political talking. There appears the question, which of them exerts the greater influence; to what extent the government draws information from the structures it has created and to what extent the information on which it bases its strategies is given by journalists. Can we talk about the interference of coherent waves or rather the effect of the mirror when we analyse publicity on the topic of corruption? Here are some major conclusions:

- Corruption is not in the article or the implied meaning of newspaper publications;
- Corruption is in the purview of journalists but is out of their publications over the last seven months;
- The reasons for this should be the object of another analysis.

The media talk about corruption involves some specific facts and some general ideas thus creating ideas and notions in the public. In the articles there are explicit sides of the phenomenon as well as implicit suggestions, which colour to a great extent the image of the messages. In this sense the study aims at outlining the obvious and “concealed” characteristics of corruption implicated in a variety of articles.