

On Thursday, 2nd of December, the Petitions Committee will consider a petition on "The Freedom of The Press in Romania".

For your correct information on this issue, please find attached two documents:

Summary concerning the private media trusts in Romania; Excerpts.

Best regards,

Theodor Stolojan

Head of the Romanian Delegation in the EPP Group

Concerning the private media trusts in Romania: ownership, political agenda and corruption

NOTE: On Thursday at 10.00AM, PETI will consider a petition on "The Freedom Of The Press In Romania". The petition is completely disingenuous. It could mislead MEPs into concluding that there is officially sanctioned persecution against the press in Romania. Following is a basic presentation of the current situation of the press in Romania.

Description and political positioning

- There are two media empires in Romania: Realitatea and Antena. Both of them operate through 24h news channels: Realitatea TV and Antena 3. Their general output is heavily biased and promotes an open denigration campaign against the Government and President Basescu

Ownership

- Realitatea is owned by Sorin Ovidiu Vantu, a billionaire who made his fortune under dubious circumstances. Vantu is under criminal investigation for mass defrauding the deponents into a huge mutual fund (FNI). Around 300000 people lost their savings. He is also prosecuted for abetting an accomplice who fled a Romanian arrest warrant. Vantu is also accused of financially supporting the aforementioned suspect in Indonesia. The suspect is to be extradited by the Indonesian government. Vantu is on public trial. His judicial file is also public and parts of it (scripts of legally authorised phone tapings) were published by various newspapers. Currently, Vantu's media empire is led by a front man. Vantu maintains effective control of the board.

- Antena is owned by Dan Voiculescu, another billionaire who started his fortune before the fall of the Communist regime. Records of the Securitate archive were by law made public and proved Voiculescu was at least a Securitate informer.

### The National Security Strategy and the Press

- The new National Security Strategy approved by The National Security Council mentions in paragraph 6.2, among other national vulnerabilities:

" the command press campaigns ordered with the purpose of denigrating state institutions through dissemination of false information; also pressures applied by media trusts on political factors in order to obtain economic advantages or a favored position in relation to the state institutions"

The text deals with the widespread political blackmail and character assassination used by the main private media trusts

### Documents

The phone tapping scripts published in Romania were picked up and printed by the press from the public judicial file built against Sorin Ovidiu Vantu. The phone tapings were legal as they were authorised by a judge. The tapings concern Vantu and Vantu only. The other individuals that appear in the script are persons that Vantu contacted. A majority of them are journalists and other stuff working for Vantu's TV station Realitatea. No journalist was listened to or intercepted separately.

### The Peti Commission situation

A number of Antena 3 employees have submitted a petition claiming various instances of press harassment in Romania.

The petition was declared admissible and can lead to a very serious misrepresentation of the actual situation of the Romanian media. Antena and Realitatea are not victims but part of the problem. Their vicious anti-Basescu and anti-Government campaign is an undeniable fact. The sort of journalism they are promoting is a very serious danger for the press ethical standards and an open attempt to mislead the romanian public opinion.

The facts are amply documented by the attached scripts.

## Guidance

The names and positions of the persons talking to Sorin Ovidiu Vintu in the phone tapping scripts:

- Bogdan Chireac - journalist employed by Vantu's Realitatea TV. A couple of years ago he was proved to be part of a network dealing in military communication equipment imports and banned from journalism by the Professional Association of the Romanian Journalists
- Doru Buscu - journalist and close collaborator of Vantu. Was employed by Vintu's Realitatea trust.
- Catalin Popa - one of Vantu's Realitatea TV editorial managers
- Sorin Enache - director general of Vantu's Realitatea TV

Stelian Tanase - a writer and a broadcaster, recently hired by Vantu's Realitatea TV as an editorial director

## Excerpts

1) Vântu owner of Realitatea TV speaks to journalist B.Chireac employed by Realitatea TV

S.O.VANTU: And, to tell the whole truth, the impeachment (of President Basescu) was carried out as a result of the alliances I myself built for this impeachment, because he had opened the Banca Agricola (Agricultural Bank) case against me.

CHIRIEAC: Yes.

S.O.VANTU: And I wanted to teach him a lesson, but not all the way through.

CHIRIEAC: Yes, I know this detail, too.

S.O.VANTU: Yes, old man."

2) Vântu financier pf Academia Catavencu magazine speaks to D Buscu editor in chief of the magazine

S. O. VINTU: It (the magazine) must now meet the interests of the employer. The business interests of the owner. People must be told this. Patience! The delicate time has arrived now: I want to hire a team of kids aged 19, 20, 21 that shouldn't have any prejudice whatsoever, and who shouldn't be shit-headed in any way, people who understand exactly the kind of times we are living in.

D. BUSCU: But, Sorin, it takes years to train people like that.

S. O. VINTU: Yes, it takes years, I agree with you, but I can no longer conceive any kind of dissenter inside Academia Catavencu. Academia Catevencu, just like any other media organization which is part of my trust, shall meet the interests of its owner. End of story! This time I have talked to Sergiu, he is going to come and we are going to talk openly with everybody. Whoever likes it can stay, whoever doesn't, can leave. I will have no more funny stuff like editorial independence, which allows people to do their own shady business.

D. BUSCU: Yes, I understand, it's absolutely OK.

S. O. VINTU: Well, sonny, of course, I'm not an idiot, I'm not going to interfere in issues of... but when it comes to editorial strategy, no one will put a toe out of line. If we decide, for instance, that as of tomorrow we are Basescu's buddies... well, as of tomorrow everyone will let Basescu alone. It's just an example. Or, tomorrow we abuse, we over-criticize the institution of f...ing in Romania. Everyone will start insulting the institution of f...ing in Romania.

D. BUSCU: On condition that the government's activity deserves to be supported. Because if...

S. O. VINTU: No, you haven't understood me: the only condition here is Vintu's decision. This is what I've been trying to explain to you, Dorulet.

D. BUSCU: A true media owner!

S. O. VINTU: Yes, sonny, this is an owner-oriented business. End of story, that's it subject closed.

3) Vântu owner of Realitatea TV speaks to S.Enache a manager of Realitatea tv

Vantu: So we are at war, my dear friend. At war against Mr. Basescu and his gang of c... suckers. We behave as such. So you go about this as I'm telling you to because I'm an expert in these things. Especially since you have done nothing to compromise yourself, nothing complicated.

Enache: No, I haven't.

Vantu: These are simple things that you must do. The rest falls to my lot.

Enache: OK.

S. O. VÂNTU: This is the correct approach that we must take. They have again turned this into a cause but it's not a personal cause. Please believe me that I quite like little Boc (Prime Minister Emil Boc). You have my word of honour, he is a funny little man. I feel amused by his desire to show that he gets all chummy with people, that he's done everything in his life, that he's drunk palinca, that he's also done woodwork, that he's driven goats...

S. TOADER: ... he's conducted the... what's its name... the brass band...

S. O. VÂNTU: He's conducted the brass band... The little man amuses me, I find him funny. You have my word of honour, I have nothing personal against him or any of the ministers of his cabinet. It's just business, like the Americans say. If Mugur Isărescu (Governor of the Central Bank, ex-Prime Minister) were in his place, I would have given him the same treatment. Do you get it, Sergiu?

S. TOADER: Yes, I do.

S. O. VÂNTU: I would f... Mugur Isărescu just the same, without blinking, although you are aware of the respect I have for that individual. If my business interests asked for it, I wouldn't hesitate for a moment, Isărescu would be painted as shitty, nasty, if this meant two rating points for me. Do you agree or not?

S. TOADER: I do, yes.

S. O. VÂNTU: Of course there's no shame! More so, my dear Sergiu, do you know what your position actually is? What your real role is, my dear friend? You are the editorial representative of the owner. In any media trust the real owner of the media trust has an editorial representative who takes care of the owner's interests.

S. TOADER: I am the Soviet commissar.

S. O. VÂNTU: Absolutely, no doubt about it. And foreign organizations, despite what they communicate to the outside world for the idiots in Eastern Europe, have known this thing for hundred of f...ing years, not since yesterday.

S. TOADER: Well, Mardoc (Murdoch) doesn't have such an officer.

Murdoch makes a phone call from Australia directly to The Sun in London, and says Go and f...ing change my front page.

S. O. VÂNTU: You see! It's so simple! I mean, come on, why bother? Why suck it through a handkerchief? Why suck c... through a handkerchief? No way! It is an organization that must meet the business interests of the owner. End of story.

4)Vântu patron of Realitatea TV talks to S.Tanase journalist employed by Realitatea TV and new editorial manager

Tanase: But what do you think will happen on Sunday (Presidential election day, in December 3009)9?

SOV: Geoana (Presidential candidate of The Social Democratic Party) will win, Stelian.

Tanase: So help us God!

SOV: Definitely.

Tanase: Well, cause last night (tv debater) he didn't perform very well.

SOV: Yes, he got f...ed real good. He didn't perform well indeed – you mean he was catastrophically bad!

Tanase: He wasn't well prepared.

SOV: He lost one, maximum two percent.

Tanase: Sorin, if only he had called me to have a talk for one hour, so I can train him, so that you make sure he goes well prepared on the show.

SOV: I told him about it, I really did.

Tanase: I don't want anything from him.

SOV: But of course not, what the hell!