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# *Media News*

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## **Reconstruction of RTV BiH**

### **Compromise on TV Channels?**

SAFAX has found out from sources in the Government of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina that the federal minister for education, science and culture and his deputy (this ministry is responsible for the field of information) have harmonized disputed positions on the draft law on Radio Television of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and that the bill may appear in the House of Representatives of the Federal Parliament already on February 24.

Last month the draft law, which was prepared by the Provisional Managing Board of RTV BiH, was discussed by the Federation Government, but the Bosniak and Croat ministers had different views on Article 16 of the law. The article stipulates that program will be broadcast on two complementary television channels using equally all official languages in the Federation. Those who drafted the law were resolutely against the idea of introducing national or language channels, and they even restricted such a possibility by the provision that "names and logotypes of channels shall not include national attributes nor point to national determination." The Croat side, however, was in favor of each people (Croats and Bosniaks) having their own channel.

As usual in the work of the Government of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the prime minister charged the responsible minister (who is a Bosniak) and his deputy (who is a Croat) to harmonize positions on this disputed issue.

A compromise was then reached, which was also suggested by international organizations. A formulation will be included into Article 16 which will enable one channel to broadcast programs that are predominantly in the Croatian language, and the other channel to broadcast programs predominantly in the Bosnian language. The entire program will equally cherish the cultural, traditional and national characteristics of all constituent peoples

living in the Federation, and programs in minority languages and foreign languages will also be shown.

It is still difficult to predict whether the deputies in the parliament, who generally represent the “two sides” and their often opposing stands, will be satisfied by the compromise. Its formulation, whatever it may be, can be interpreted differently, which usually happens here. The handicap in the entire discussion on the federal television program so far is that politicians, jurists and RTV officials were the ones who spoke the most about its character and design. Journalists and program producers who will have the task to turn legal formulations and political objectives defined by the ruling parties into a program that listeners will like to hear and listen to (and, of course, pay subscription to it), on the other hand, have spoken the least.

Let us start with the term “complementary channels.” Only experts in TV production and its sources know how difficult it is to compose a program that will be harmonious, especially with modest own resources and limited money for purchasing foreign program. No less difficulty, and certainly a lot more confusion, is caused by the formulation (which we still do not know precisely, but we do know its spirit) on “predominantly Croat and predominantly Bosnian language” on the two TV channels. Without a pilot schedule of such programs, it is impossible to guarantee that their creators will not stumble already on their first step on two tacit, concealed intentions. The first is that exclusively language or national channels will be introduced through small doors using simple language majorization. The second is that, due to relatively modest potentials of the Croat people in Bosnia-Herzegovina in terms of staffing and other resources, this equality may turn into a language imbalance that will destroy the otherwise fair concept of complementary programs.

It seems to us that the lack of a better defined program vision of the new television is standing in the way of faster agreement on it and giving a chance to all sorts of fears, mistrust and different interpretations. Perhaps the key issue is how the newsrooms will be organized and what the program editing method will be, which of course is not a legal matter. Will responsibility for overall program, including the promotion and protection of its multi-attributes, will be borne by the entire staffing and management structure of the RTV (of course ethnically balanced), or will care for national attributes and their protection be taken over by nationally (ethnically) identified editors and their staff? Will news editors – Bosniak and Croat – rotate each day and in line with the interests of their peoples (or better said, of the ruling parties), and today make “this kind” of news program and tomorrow “that kind” of news program, as has already been seen in the crisis months of the disintegration of Yugoslavia? Or will it be possible to edit a balanced news program, which will not feature commentaries on issues that are still open in inter-ethnic relations between the two communities? Journalists must answer the question of whether they will be able and in what way to make a program which will be comprehensive, informative and will not reproduce political tension and misunderstanding. Finally, using the



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language of professional journalists, it is necessary to answer, for instance, also the question of whether the viewers of the future federal TV program will watch one movie sub-titled in Bosnian and another sub-titled in Croatian, or will both channels, perhaps only at a different time, feature the same movie, sub-titled in both languages? Similar to this, how will sports events be broadcast: by combining reporters who report on the same event in two languages, by rotation – one event in one languages and another in the other, or the same event on both channels in the “predominant language”?

None of the issues we have raised are hypothetical, but very real. Those who know how to make TV program know that they will have to answer these and similar questions when they take the law on television, whatever it may be like, into their hands. It would be fatal for the new federal BiH television if these professional issues are neglected at the very beginning when the law is adopted and are later pulled out as jokers. Let us hope that the federal TV will not have the same fate as the state ministry of foreign affairs and even the federal government, whose ministers usually find out from newspapers what their deputies have decided, and vice versa. (Z. Udovicic).

## Research

### What People Read, Watch, Listen To... (3)

The Sarajevo-based Center for Minorities and Media Plan Institute conducted a research on the views of the population on current political, social, cultural and other issues that significantly determine the position of the citizen in society. Within the research, which encompassed 2,800 respondents from 22 towns in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, we analyzed citizens' answers on what they listen to, watch and read.

In this issue of *Media News* we will give a review of media that, according to respondent's answers in the research, people like to follow the most in Bihac, Doboj, and Trebinje.

#### **Bihac: Croatian TV Has Highest Ratings**

According to polled residents of this town, *Dnevni avaz* (53.0%) and *Oslobodjenje* (24.0%) are the daily newspapers they like to read the most. Of newspapers from Croatia, *Vecernji list* rates the highest (8.0%).

HTV is the TV station that most people watch (84.0%). Behind it are TV BiH (61.0%) and cantonal TV (30.0%).

The two radio stations with the highest ratings are Radio BiH (41.0%) and local Radio Bihac (32.0%). Of radio stations outside of Bosnia-Herzegovina, most people listen to Croatian Radio (22.0%) and Radio Rijeka (19.0%).

#### **Doboj: Belgrade-based *Vecernje novosti* With Biggest Readership**

Of 200 polled residents of Doboj, 41.5% included the Belgrade *Vecernje novosti* among their two most favorite newspapers. The second paper on their list was the Banjaluka *Dnevne nezavisne novine*. Papers from Belgrade, *Politika* with 6.5% and *Blic* with 6.0% readers, are the most wanted papers from outside of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Serb Television Banja Luka has many viewers among the respondents (75.5%). It is followed by Croatian TV (28.5%) and TV Serbia (22.0%).

Among the numerous radio stations that can be heard here, Serb Radio Banja Luka (62.0%) is in the lead, and after it is Radio Serbia (21.5%). Of radio stations from the Federation, according to respondent's opinions, most people listen to FERN (17.0%). Local Radio Doboje has a small number of listeners (12.0%), but its relative rating is high because 60% of the respondents who are able to receive its signal said Radio Doboje is among their two most favorite radio stations.

### **Trebinje: Belgrade Press In the Lead**

Newspapers from Belgrade are read the most in Trebinje. *Večernje novosti* (43.0%) and *Dnevni telegraf* (33.0%) are in the lead. However, 31.0% respondents do not read any newspaper.

Serb Television Banja Luka (87.0%) and TV Serbia (19.0%) are television stations that rate the highest. People here also watch quite a lot TV Niksic – Montenegro (15.0%) and HTV (11.0%).

Serb Radio (49.0%) and local Radio Trebinje (44.0%) are followed by most respondents in the research. The only independent private radio station in this part of the Republika Srpska is Radio Pegaz and it has 26.% listeners.

**In our next issue: Sarajevo and Final Analysis.**

## **Monitoring**

### **A Professional Step Forward**

Media Plan's Monitoring Center watched the primetime news programs on the two strongest, conditionally speaking, state television stations in Bosnia-Herzegovina for seven days (February 8 – 14), in order to gain an insight into their current informative potentials and editorial policy. The primetime news program at 7:30 p.m. was taken as a representative sample.

The two televisions' programs were reflected through two of the most topical events in the past days – arbitration on Brcko and negotiations on Kosovo in Rambouillet. Particular emphasis was put on monitoring the coverage of the two entities and the state as a whole.

### **Television of Bosnia-Herzegovina (TVBiH)**

In the monitored period two issues dominated in the Television BiH program – the arbitration process on Brcko in Vienna and the negotiations on Kosovo in Rambouillet. For as many as four days, top news in the program were events concerning the Brcko arbitration, while on February 10, 11 and 13 this issue gave up the beginning of the news program in favor of the adoption of the new Bosnian-Herzegovinian anthem and the Kosovo negotiations.

## **Brcko**

Television BiH had its own reporter (Zvonko Maric) at the arbitration hearing in Vienna, who sent his reports by telephone, but also using satellite links which enabled listeners in Bosnia-Herzegovina to hear statements from some of the witnesses in Vienna.

By monitoring reporting on Brcko, we acquired the impression that the federal side (or more precisely, the Bosniak side) was quite doubtful about the impartiality of the international community in the process. For instance, on February 8, the anchor when announcing the report from Vienna emphasized the fact that the federal delegation was staying in a hotel known for a scandal involving tapping OPEC members in the seventies, and the Serb delegation in the hotel where the arbitration was being held. After that the reporter said that the federal delegation was “appalled by Carlos Westendorp’s proposal to prolong the final settlement on Brcko.” Also, the report from Vienna of February 12 said the head of the OSCE mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina Robert Barry met in Vienna with the Serb delegation and talked about Kosovo. The reporter wondered: “What business has Barry got talking with the Bosnian Serbs on Kosovo, in Vienna at that.”

A characteristic of this reporter’s reports on the arbitration process on Brcko is giving comments through reporting, as well as emphasizing certain facts that, sometimes, were favored over more complete information from Vienna. For instance, on February 9 the reporter based his report on Robert Farrand’s statement that the HDZ, as well as some parties from the Republika Srpska, were ultranationalist, and that the Serb delegation was divided into two sides – Poplasen’s and Dodik’s. This information may have been interesting, but the viewers also deserved to hear how the arbitration process itself was proceeding and who was saying what. On that same day another problematic issue was the news anchor’s announcement that the “allocation of 250 pieces of land to Serbs in Brcko was labeled by Farrand as a biological wall.” However, by following other media, we reached the conclusion that this was something that a journalist said at Farrand’s press briefing, and Farrand commented that “maybe it could be called that.”

On February 12 the station broadcasted interviews made in Vienna by the reporter with the head of the Serb and federal delegations, Nikola Sarovic and Ejup Ganic respectively, and a Croat witness, Ivan Krndelj. However, the report was edited in such a way that some of Sarovic’s words were “taken out” and then Ganic’s and Krndelj’s words were “pasted” on them. Practically, Sarovic’s every assertion was refuted by Bosniak or Croat arguments. For instance, Sarovic said that the process was being held about the arbitration line for Brcko area, while Ganic said it was not true, and that arbitration was about the whole city. In principle, it does not matter who of the two was right at that moment, but such journalistic editing is in professional way unfair and it raises the question of why everyone was not allowed to express their views and the viewers left to draw their own conclusions.

Monitoring of the arbitration process on Brcko was garnished with items that contained statements, mostly made by Bosniaks, who insisted that Brcko should belong to the Federation. On February 8 a reporter from Tuzla made a reportage in which refugees from Brcko were interviewed. At the beginning he gave a comment. “It would be good if the arbitration participants came to Plutace (the place where the refugees were from).” He concluded the report with the following words: “These people should have the right to their beautiful houses and the city they love.” On February 14 the station presented an interview with demonstrators in Vienna who insisted that Brcko should be given to the Federation. Among the demonstrators was Tillman Zulch, president of the Society for Threatened Peoples, who repeated twice that “the day will come when Brcko will be free.”

## **Kosovo**

The Kosovo negotiations in the chalet of Rambouillet, near Paris, were followed for Television of Bosnia-Herzegovina by Dzevad Sabljakovic, a journalist who lives in Paris. Sabljakovic chose pure reporting without making comments, he only stated facts and possibly gave wider explanation for the sake of enabling viewers to have better understanding of the situation. His reporting was supplemented by numerous news agency items and items from Eurovision exchange. Specifically, on February 14 viewers had an opportunity to hear and see statements by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Serbian President Milan Milutinovic.

The sources of news on Kosovo and the negotiations were diverse and came from both the Serb and the Albanian side. According to what was said, the sources were the agencies BETA, ONASA and BH Press, the newspaper *Koha Ditore* and the station's own reporter from Pristina.

That TV BiH considers the Kosovo situation very important is shown by the fact that the primetime news program on February 11 began with the news that the Serbian delegation had accepted the international contact group's principles for solving the conflict, and on February 13 with a series of information on Kosovo. The anchor started the news program on that day with a news agency item that U.S. President Bill Clinton was willing to send 4,000 troops to Kosovo. That was followed by a report sent by the special correspondent from the negotiations in Paris and numerous news agency items that completed the picture. At the end of the bloc on Kosovo, the station featured a report on a panel discussion held in Sarajevo addressed by a once prominent ethnic Albanian politician from Kosovo, Azem Vllasi, which enabled viewers to hear the Albanian position on the issue first-hand.

In the monitored period the TV BiH news program did not comment on the Kosovo situation. Reporting was "cold" and comprehensive. The main aim, to give the viewers a deep insight into this complicated issue, was achieved.

## **Coverage**

The primetime news program on TV BiH has only relative coverage with information from the entire Bosnia-Herzegovina. The largest number of items and news are from Bosniak-majority territories of the Federation, followed by information from outside the country, and finally by events from the Croat part of the Federation and the Republika Srpska.

During the monitored period the news program featured only four items from the Republika Srpska (February 8, 9, 13 and 14), of which only one was based on news agency items. Three items were from territories where the Croats are in majority (February 9, 11 and 14).

Still, this data can be regarded as encouraging in terms of coverage in view of the fact that the authors of the items were so-called domicile reporters, meaning journalists who live in the communities they reported from. TV BiH, at least according to the frequency of reporting, has found permanent correspondents in Banja Luka (Miso Vidovic) and Orasje (Tihomir Bijelic). We have also noticed that a number of journalists from western Herzegovina have been reporting for TV BiH lately. This TV house also sends out reporters from Sarajevo from time to time to cover certain events, usually not so topical, in territories that had been inaccessible until yesterday. In the monitored period we saw one such "excursion" by journalist Sanela Prasovic, who covered the conflict between the Franciscan Order and the Vatican in western Herzegovina (February 13).

It is interesting that TV BiH has a Belgrade correspondent (Slavisa Numic), but does not have one in Zagreb (at least that was our impression in this monitoring cycle).

Reporters calling in from the Republika Srpska, FR Yugoslavia and so-called Croat territories are doing their job very professionally. Their reports usually focus on the most important events in the region (Vidovic covers the entire western Republika Srpska and Bijelic the Croat part of Posavina) and they consist of presenting information and facts without additional comments. However, that is not characteristic of other TV BiH reporters. We have already mentioned the Tuzla correspondent who draws attention in his reports to injustice towards Bosniaks. However, he does not do it by stating facts, but by giving his own comments.

TV BiH news programs also include investigative journalism items dealing with domestic political and economic issues. These items vary in quality. We will single out one positive and one negative example.

An example of an exceptionally interesting item was a meeting in Kotor Varos between the Serb refugee association "Ostanak" ("Remaining") and Bosniak refugee associations (February 13). However, the event was also an opportunity to make a wider report that shows the essential difference between Serb and Bosniak refugee stances. The former want all Serb refugees to remain in the Republika Srpska and to exchange their property, while the latter want to return to their earlier homes. The journalist gave each side a chance to present their stances, which is not always the case in local media.

A day later a report from Bihac was broadcast, whose aim was to investigate Ombudsmen's allegations that human rights of opposition followers were threatened. However, the entire report resembled a defense by the authorities from the Ombudsmen's attack. The report first featured a statement by a local Ombudsman who said there were numerous reports that the human rights of those with different views from the authorities were threatened (he did not give specific examples, but the reporter could have found them in a written report). The reporter then presented statements by a local SDA leader, the director of TV Cazin and random passers-by in the street who said that was not true. In the end the reporter concluded: "Cazin did not need this in the moment of recovery of human souls." This conclusion of the type "make peace, folks" has nothing to do with investigative journalism (in essence, wasn't any investigative journalism). It befalls the fact that there is not only a clash between two political options in the Bihac Krajina as a consequence of a bloody inter-Bosniak war, but also laborious introduction of democracy.

TV BiH's primetime news program is edited by two editors but only one appears in the role of anchor. In the monitored period, based on name identification, Bosniaks appeared 11 times and a Serb was once a co-editor. A Croat once appeared also (but his role was solely one of anchor, not of editor).

The general impression is that TV BiH's primetime news program has become more open than in earlier monitored periods, with a larger number of correspondents from different parts of the country. However, if this television station really wants to become a federal television, and even maybe a public television for the entire Bosnia-Herzegovina, it must expand its correspondent network even more and give more airtime to political options that do not correspond to the Bosniak vision of the country's future. Also, some of the station's correspondents from certain regions are not entirely professional. It is the monitors' impression that they have kept their position only due to the fact that they remained faithful to reporting for this station during the war.

## **Serb Television (SRT)**

The topics that dominated SRT's central news program *Dnevnik* were the arbitration process on Brcko in Vienna and the Kosovo situation with particular emphasis on the negotiations in Rambouillet. A snow storm in the western part of the Republika Srpska also

had a prominent place in the news program. The station reported continuously and extensively on these topics.

## **Brcko**

During the first three days of the arbitration process Serb Television had its own correspondent who went there from Banja Luka (Milka Ceremidžic), after which her place was taken by a journalist from the Belgrade-based *Vecernje novosti* (Zoran Mirkovic), who was announced as a special reporter for SRT. On as many as five days SRT's news program began with events from Vienna, while on two occasions primacy was given to the big storm in Europe and the Republika Srpska (February 11) and to reciprocal economic measures imposed by the Republika Srpska towards FR Yugoslavia (February 10).

The station's own correspondent from Brcko, as well as SRT's anchor in the studio, kept calling the Brcko issue "an arbitration dispute on one part of the inter-entity line near Brcko," although representatives of the international community had denied that several times. In contrast to them, the above mentioned *Vecernje novosti* reporter called the Vienna process an "arbitration process for the town of Brcko."

SRT chose the variant of relatively cold reporting on the issue, without emotional reports. Reporters' items were generally telegraphic and only spoke about the course of the process itself. We have only two remarks on reporting, one on February 9 when the reporter stated that "during the testimony Farrand was an impartial and neutral person in the dispute," and on February 14 when the journalist emphasized Federation President Ivo Andric Luzanski's words, who opposed creating a district in Brcko. The journalist then concluded that "there is disunity in the Bosniak-Croat delegation in Vienna."

On February 13 RS Prime Minister Milorad Dodik and Parliament Speaker Petar Djokic spoke for the news program from Vienna by telephone. They announced what they would be speaking about at the hearing, stressing the importance of the final ruling. Of course, they said Brcko should finally be given to the Republika Srpska.

## **Kosovo**

Serb Television's *Dnevnik* covered the negotiations in Rambouillet every day through a specially engaged Paris correspondent of the Tanjug news agency. Tanjug's correspondent sent so-called clean reports without additional comments, but he usually emphasized Serb positions presented in Rambouillet. Exceptional place on February 12 was given to Serbian President Milan Milutinovic, who expressed readiness to meet directly with the Albanian delegation. Both footage and sound of Milutinovic's statement were shown, taken from international exchange.

Although the events in Kosovo were not always at the top of the news program, they were given a lot of time, sometimes up to 10 minutes of the *Dnevnik*. In most of the monitored days the station's policy was to first broadcast the latest report from Rambouillet, followed by numerous news agency items featuring international officials' reactions to the Kosovo negotiations and presentation of the (security) situation in Kosovo. The editors did not always state the sources of the news items, but based on what they did state, they were using the news agencies Tanjug, Srna, Beta and the newspaper *Koha Ditore* (probably quoted by Beta).

SRT's journalists did not show propagandistic partiality in this Serb-Albanian conflict. However, they did use negative selection of information, putting in the foreground news in which international officials accused only the Albanian side or both sides for the bloodshed in Kosovo and the stalemate in the negotiations, while criticism at the Serbs' expense was put in the background.

On February 13 SRT made a noteworthy (and praiseworthy) report on Kosovo. It presented, through the news agency Beta, the most important annexes of the possible peace agreement on Kosovo. SRT explained to its viewers what the civilian implementation of the agreement will be like, structure of authorities, conduct of elections, precisely how many police and troops each side will be allowed to have, how Kosovo's and Serbia's borders will be protected... For many viewers in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also in Serbia itself, this was a novelty.

## Coverage

Most items and information broadcast in SRT's *Dnevnik* program came from those parts of the Republika Srpska where the Coalition Sloga is in power (or shares power). Territorially speaking, these are mostly the western parts of the Republika Srpska and Bijeljina in the east. However, this political factor should not be taken as the sole reason because many regions where the SDS and the Radicals are in power are not too interesting for media. In the monitored period we noticed that SRT had correspondents in Trebinje, Serb Sarajevo and Pale. From time to time Srbinje (Foca) was activated. It is obvious that SRT is no longer in the territorial isolation it was in a year or two ago, when the political crisis in the Republika Srpska was at its peak.

Coverage of events in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina was extremely poor and usually consisted of a bloc of several news items from the Federation in the middle of the program, always announced by the anchor: "News from the Federation is on next." In this segment of program, SRT's professionalism was very questionable. It used absolutely negative selection of information, emphasizing and presenting ugly things in the Federation and problems in its functioning (the murder of a Croat in Travnik, suspension of Bosniak officials in Bugojno, misunderstandings and serious accusations between Bosniaks and Croats at federal level, emphasizing stances seeking to destroy the Federation...).

This legacy from the war is softened by the fact that SRT's TV crew from Serb Sarajevo regularly covers sessions of Bosnia-Herzegovina's common state bodies in Sarajevo, reporting quite professionally. On February 10 an interesting and professionally fair item was presented from Sarajevo, in which High Representative Carlos Westendorp met with representatives of a number of civic associations (Circle 99, Alternative Council of Ministers), who presented their views on Brcko as a district and the necessity of cooperation between the entities and nations in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

All *Dnevnik* editors and anchors (usually the names of three are written, but only one can be seen) are of Serb nationality.

The general impression is that Serb Television has made considerable professional progress. Most items are professionally and technically good. The language of hatred, once characteristic of this station, has completely disappeared. However, there is still negative selection of information, which is especially reflected in the bloc of news from the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and there is also complete neglect of "hot" issues, such as return of refugees, war crimes...

Essentially, this TV station does not have any ambition to emerge out of entity borders like TV BiH. News from the Federation is given equal importance as news from the rest of the world, while the station's own reporter crews go to the Federation primarily in connection with certain Serb interests, such as, for instance, the common state bodies. In terms of statistics, SRT crews came to Sarajevo three times, and in the monitored period the station featured 35 short news agency items from the Federation.

This television station's political stance is best seen in the weather forecast at the end of the program, which is given separately for the Republika Srpska and for the Federation of B&H, or – "The whole Bosnia in two parts". (Media Plan Institute – Monitoring Center).

### **The Power of Political Caricature**

There is a shortage of articles in the local press that deal with certain journalistic genres in an investigative and analytic manner. There are especially not enough articles about **caricature**, that very complex visual-graphic and journalistic technique.

The latest issue of the Sarajevo magazine *Svijet* (February 21) featured as one of its main articles a text on political caricature written by its associate Faida Rahmanovic. The main part of her story is New Year's caricature by Bozo Stefanovic published on the front-page of his newspaper *Oslobodjenje*, and a clumsy reaction to it by one of SDA's leaders (the caricature was assessed as an attack on the Bosniak people and its leading party). The point of Rahmanovic's article is not only to show incorrect interpretations of caricatures, but also the futility of very discourse on the issue.

However, there are certain ambiguities in the way the article was presented by the editors, who suggested one thing on the front-page: "The state and caricature: Sad laughter," and something completely different inside: "Laughter and politics" (superscript headline) and "Caricature of political caricature" (headline)?! This headline deviates from the context of the article, which the author agrees with. Still, this does not lessen the value of the article itself.

### **Criticizing the "Komšilik" (Neighborhood)**

Is it still necessary to prove to anyone the magic power of the word "**komšilik**" (neighborhood, but hardly to be translated exactly)? Although a Turkish word – "komşu", adopted in the Bosnian language, this word is still a metaphor with strong charge, especially political. However, in a weekend supplement called *Puls* in the Banjaluka paper *Glas srpski* (February 6 and 7), "komšilik" was slammed in an article written by Zarko Janjic. His piece is actually a compilation of stories from Norway by Zeljko Vukovic (who was presented to readers as the "last president of the Association of Journalists of the former Bosnia-Herzegovina"), collected in the work "Potemkin's Sarajevo."

Vukovic reveals the "destructiveness" and "conspiracy" of the institute of drinking coffee with neighbors, which is allegedly a Turkish invention in order to find out what Serbs in their homes are thinking about Turks?! The way the article was presented by the editors is worrisome: "Coffee, death and life" (headline), while a smaller title in the text literally says: "Komšilik was an absolute lie..."

### **SRNA in Sarajevo: Professional**

SRNA's journalist Milan Nogo recently made an extensive interview with the new head of the Serb Orthodox Church (SPC) in "federal Sarajevo," priest Zoran Perkovic. They talked about a variety of topics – from the state of churches, return of the Metropolitan office, through funerals and cemeteries, to religious celebrations and weddings. In the entire interview, whenever they were mentioned, the authorities (both cantonal and federal) were placed in a positive context.

The interview was carried in full first in *Dnevne nezavisne novine* (February 8), under the headline "Return of Orthodoxy to Sarajevo," and a day later in *Glas srpski*: "Orthodoxy returns to Sarajevo." It is interesting that both newspapers had an identical sub-headline: "Serbs in Sarajevo have their rights, but do not seem to want to exercise them enough."

(Media Plan Institute – Monitoring Center)

### Protection of Professional Rights of Journalists

The Independent Media Commission (IMC), established on 11 June 1998 by the High Representative Carlos Westendorp under Annex 10 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Article V of the Conclusions of the Bonn Peace Implementation Conference 1997, promotes and defends the professional rights and privileges of journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is done in accordance with Human Rights Declaration (1948) and the European Convention for Human Rights (1950). Furthermore, the importance of facilitating the freedom of expression and the freedom of media is stressed in commitments of the participating states of organisation for security and co-operation in Europe and in documents and recommendations of the Council of Europe. These the provisions and standards are the ground on which the IMC developed and built its concept for the protection of the professional rights of journalists. The IMC Help-line is part of this concept and of the general IMC task to promote the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

#### To Act as a Point of Contact

The IMC in its Notice to the Media of 1 August 1998 stated as part of its purpose that it will “assume responsibility for... representing the rights and interests of journalists and media organizations”. Part of this responsibility includes acting as a point of referral for all agencies and institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina to advice of possible instances where journalists are harassed in their work circumstances in which the development of a “free, pluralistic, professional and independent media” is inhibited.

The **IMC Help-line** offers the journalists working in Bosnia and Herzegovina to report on instances where they are hindered in performing their profession in accordance with journalistic ethics and internationally agreed and respected standards. Within the provisions and measures under its authority, the IMC can investigate instances referred by journalist. Furthermore, the IMC writes reports on such instances brought the attention of the IMC and puts them on records for documentation purposes. The IMC makes such instances widely public, given that the individual journalist contacting the Commission on such matters gives his/her permission to do so. In all cases where this is wished by the professional rights of journalists, and defamation will be made available to the public.

#### 657 378 IMC Help- line in Sarajevo

The *IMC Help-line*, number 657 378 in Sarajevo, is open since the beginning of February 1999. The line is operational 24 hours, during office hours calls are taken by IMC staff, after office hours messages can left on the answering machine. The service is available in the local languages and in English. The telephone rings, what happens then: The IMC staff member taking the call enters all information provided in specific Call Report Sheets, which are part of the documentation kept by the IMC. On the request of the journalist seeking help, IMC staff can make the reports on instances widely known to the public, provide advice on certain issues to individual calling, or can help, if appropriate channeling the information to and establishing contact with other organisations or institutions engaged in the protection of journalist. To that end the IMC is contact with a number of agencies and institutions, amongst which are the OSCE and the different associations of journalists. The IMC highly appreciates the co-operation with other agencies concerned with the protection of journalists and actively involved in it, and therefore the Commission is in the process of contacting as many of them

as possible in order to achieve the goal with joint efforts. To that end the IMC *Help-line* offers the facility to collect information on the violation of the rights of journalists at one focal point, from there it can be channeled further in order to provide co-ordinated support to journalists seeking help. As experience shows so far, this offer is appreciated among the journalist community in Bosnia and Herzegovina as in the first two weeks of the IMC *Help-line* operating, 14 journalists contacted the IMC to report on their instances (14 individuals as of 14 February 1999). The information provided ranges from open threats to journalists to subtle mechanisms of pressure reported, however, mostly the journalist informed IMC that they face difficulties and are hampered in their work.

### **Decriminalisation of Defamation Law other IMC Recommendations**

The IMC recommends in accordance with internationally accepted standards and outlines provisions

- ◆ Full commitment to objective editorial policy and fair treatment in the work place defend the professional rights of journalists.
- ◆ Full commitment to the general rule that journalists, and particularly radio and television journalists, should be authorised to be accompanied by their own sound and film technicians and to use their own equipment in order to conduct their job.
- ◆ Similarly, journalists may carry with them reference material, including personal note files, to be used strictly for professional purpose.
- ◆ Journalists shall perform reporting and professional activities in accordance with the journalists' codes of conduct and the law.
- ◆ The IMC highly recommends fair and unbiased reporting according to the international codes of journalistic ethics and standards.
- ◆ IMC recommends both the rights of journalists and the rights of individuals to be respected. Every citizen has the right to request retraction or apology or reply in print media, and IMC urges public awareness in this respect.
- ◆ The IMC furthermore, believes that there is a need for a broad and urgent review of media-related law in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- ◆ IMC strongly recommends the decriminalisation of libel law to better protect journalists from judicial abuse. There are strong indications for a pattern that journalists are muzzled by the prison sentences transformed into period of 'soft and pleasant reporting' not criticising anything or any body, particularly not holders of public offices.

(By Elena Drozdik, Co-ordinator of the IMC Regional Offices and in charge of the project Protection of the Professional Rights of Journalists)

## **News**

### **American Resource Center in Sarajevo**

An American Resource Center (within the United States Information Agency/Service (USIA/USIS) has been opened in Sarajevo last Thursday (February 18). This information and cultural institution of the United States was opened in Sarajevo for the first time in 1975 (at that time named as US Information Center). In the spring of 1992, at the very beginning of the war, its rich library holdings were moved to the Sarajevo suburb of Dobrinja where they were protected thanks to a young Sarajevan who had been a reader of the U.S. library.

Now the center is equipped with a large number of books and other publications with extensive information about the United States of America. Its users can also use a large number of computer data bases, the Internet and CD ROM programs.

You can contact the American Resource Center through the center's coordinator Rusmir Niksic, tel. 387 71 665-851, 665-841 or fax 665-836, e-mail: [irc@bih.net.ba](mailto:irc@bih.net.ba)

There is also an Education Council operates within the Center. The exchange coordinator is Margaret Sarhan tel. 387 71 665-851 or 665-841, fax 665-836.

Address is Fra Anđela Zvizdovića 1/X, Sarajevo.

## **Pressure on Radio Prnjavor**

Radio Prnjavor's broadcasting has been seriously threatened. According to *Dnevne nezavisne novine* from Banjaluka, the Executive Committee of the Municipality of Prnjavor intends to evict the radio station from its premises, which the municipality plans to use for inspection services. The municipal authorities earlier confiscated a part of the radio's premises, in which they set up the Municipal Misdemeanor Court. Already that has made the radio's operation difficult.

According to the Banjaluka paper, the dispute between the municipality and the radio is of a political nature and dates back to last year when the Republika Srpska Government appointed provisional administrators for a number of radio stations, including Radio Prnjavor. The SDS-dominated municipal authorities, in contrast to the radio's staff, have never accepted the new radio director, claiming that he is a big fan of the Coalition Sloga.

According to *Dnevne nezavisne novine*, Radio Prnjavor is open to all political options. However, SDS representatives have refused to state their position on it.

In addition to threatening to evict the radio from its premises, the municipal authorities have also reduced financial assistance to the station.

## **International Community Dissatisfied with RTV BiH Changes**

"In the past six months the international community provided two million marks for RTV BiH," Deputy High Representative for Media Simon Haselock told *Vecernje novine*. However, he said, the OHR is not satisfied with how the money was spent.

"We want program reconstruction, not financing of infrastructure and administration," Haselock said, adding that the international community is ready to invest \$3.5 million in TV BiH if this media organization is transformed successfully.

In his opinion, a serious problem for RTV BiH is the huge number of employees – as many as 1,500. In comparison, Haselock said that OBN's entire program is produced by 130 workers. He announced that another foreigner will become a member of the RTV BiH managing board, most probably again from Slovenia.

## **NUPN Mostar: "New Fraud the HRT Way"**

Union of Independent Professional Journalists (NUPN), Branch Office East Mostar, released a statement on the occasion of documentary reportage "Na svjetlu dana" ("On Daylight"), broadcasted by HRT (Croat Radio Television), on February 17, 1999, at primetime. In a sharp tone, *inter alia*, is stated: "... Changing theses, twisting facts, in so-called documentary story, HRT manipulates with facts and footage in the way that victims from the 1993 war in East Mostar are in this film presented as Croat sufferers".

In addition of it, the NUPN statement reminds that decision of international community regarding re-broadcasting of HRT programs in B&H was correct stand, bearing in mind that “HRT did not show ever even intention to act as a public television, with no political influence “.

Finally, the NUPN Mostar calls the Independent Media Commission (IMC), to investigate this unpleasant media case, and in accordance with its mandate and authority, to take appropriate steps.

# On the Threshold of a New Century



Listen with your ears!



Look with your eyes!



Think with your head!

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## Council:Media Plan Institute

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