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Media News

Prepared by the
SAFAX News Agency Sarajevo
<http://www.mp-institu.com/>

• **Journalism and Democracy**

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No 29, Vol I,

Sarajevo, April 5, 1999

F e d e r a t i o n T e l e v i s i o n R e s t r u c t u r i n g

The Draft Law on RTV of the BiH Federation Is “Waiting”

Harmonization of the Draft Law on RTV has been going on in the Government of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina for almost three months. In searching for an answer to the question of how far the restructuring of RTV BiH has come and what is the fate of the above law, the SAFAX Agency has found out from sources in the BiH Federation Government that the Draft Law on the RTV of the BiH Federation will be sent to the Parliament of the BiH Federation for the “first reading”. After that the text of the law will be sent back to be improved by the BiH Federation Government, following which it should be adopted by the BiH Federation Parliament in the form of a bill. That is the procedure leading to the final adoption of the law. However, it is unknown when the BiH Federation Parliament will meet, so the Draft Law is currently “waiting”.

The RTV BiH Managing Board convened recently and, in the presence of international community representatives, discussed activities concerning the overall restructuring of RTV BiH. According to Ante Domazet, Managing Board President, the attendees presented their general view and feeling that activities on restructuring this organization have been slowed down and blockaded. Bigger support was sought from the international community in order to speed up work. *Slobodna BiH* wrote that Deputy High Representative for Media Simon Haselock said he hoped “the recent assassination of Deputy Minister of the Interior Jozo Leutar will not hamper the establishment of federal television.” Haselock criticized both Croat and Bosniak representatives participating in negotiations on this television station for insufficient willingness to reach agreement.

While the federal television law is waiting in the government, the RTV BiH Managing Board has formed working groups to prepare a law on a common state RTV BiH and a law on the Public Transmission and Broadcasting Corporation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

As far as the establishment of federal RTV is concerned, we have found out from the Independent Media Commission (IMC) that the Commission, pursuant to its mandate, has carried out its part of the work and has legally freed a frequency area for the work of the federal RTV so that it can start working as soon as it is established. Namely, IMC has already brought a decision on terminating the re-broadcasting of HRT programming because its re-broadcasting “occupies” space for RTV BiH Federation broadcasting. All 29 transmitters that both RTV BiH and Erotel claim right to are now under IMC supervision. However, Commission spokesperson Zinaida Babovic has told us that HRT will stop broadcasting in Bosnia-Herzegovina only when the Law on Federal Television is passed. Until then, no measures will be undertaken with regard to this foreign medium.

(E. M.)

Analysis of Media Coverage

The First Week of War in the Neighborhood

The *Media News* office initially planned to make an *ad hoc* analysis based on Bosnian-Herzegovinian media reports – press, radio and television – during the first 24 hours of NATO air strikes on FR Yugoslavia. However, as dramatic events from the immediate neighborhood kept arriving one after another, we abandoned our initial idea without much hesitation, and decided to make a monitoring/analysis of the first week of the media coverage of air strikes on military and strategic targets in Yugoslavia (March 24 – 31).

In view of our publishing dynamics, this service will not be completely fresh when it reaches our readers, but that is not our primary goal. The point is to give a summarized picture of the media coverage of an uncommon and really historic event in our neighborhood. It need not be emphasized how much this concerns not only our closest neighbors, but also the entire region, and even wider. That this is so is convincingly confirmed by almost 24-hour programs on NATO strikes on Yugoslavia produced by leading international TV stations.

We did not stick to a strict chronological order, nor did we distribute “responsibility in equal shares”. We primarily focused our attention on the first hours and initial reactions as they are the most indicative, primarily on television as the most powerful medium. In our



Media News- all the media news of BH collected in one place.

Issued every second Monday in English and Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian. Texts by local author are published in whatever variant is appropriate to the author.

Published by **Media Plan - Safax**

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Thanks to the Soros Open Society Fund for BiH, local media will receive this service free of charge

research methodology, choice of the right approach, manner of presentation and other relevant modalities, we refrained from commentaries, lecturing, accusations, morals and other subjective judgments or, in short, from damaging politicization. If there are some elements of commentary, they are only aimed at giving the background of presented facts, which we used as a starting point. We believe that this approach will enable news organizations and engaged journalists, interested media institutions, and most of all the general public, to gain an insight into the manner in which journalists dealt with this professional challenge and how they overcame the many professional obstacles so characteristic of this type of reporting.

From Crimea to Kosovo: A Mini Genesis of War Reporting

Reporting from Crimea (first the Russian-Turkish War of 1851, and then Britain and France siding with Turks) is considered to be the very beginning of modern war journalism. The Anglo-Saxon school of journalism had a lot of influence on war reporting, and numerous American journalists acquired full affirmation when reporting from European battlefields (Reed, Hemingway, Sulzberger). In contrast to the media coverage of the Korea front, when there was absolute consent among American and Western journalists in general on the goals of the war, the Vietnam War was some sort of a turning point, because considerable disagreement was shown on the (non) effectiveness of American interference in the Vietnam War. The media coverage of the Falklands/Malvene War was accompanied by noticeable siding of journalists with one or the other side, while the Gulf War, that is, the war against Iraq, again enjoyed unison support from Western colleagues.

It is understandable that civil wars, *sui generis*, are experienced in diametrically opposite ways, especially by local journalists and reporters. As much as a cool head, sensibility, wisdom, restraint and, before all, professionalism are necessary, emotions almost inevitably accompany reporting, especially in the case of local journalists, from the local (bloody) arena. That is how it was in the American Civil War, in Russia in 1917, in the Spanish Civil War, and it was like that in the wars following the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991, no matter how much some of them were garnished with foreign interference, or the like.

It is obvious that the character of war significantly determines the character of war reporting. In the so-called Yugoslav case, the character of reporting has been considerably influenced by whether journalists and media were direct involved in the war, that is, whether they were part of one warring faction, or whether they were foreigners and more or less independent and impartial reporters. Deep emotions in the former case have inevitably been reflected on the content and quality of journalism. Such reporting, more or less, has had to be in the function of official propaganda, so journalists in war could not have been expected to adhere to the usual journalistic standards. That is why in any war, the function of the so-called independent or third sources is important for the general public. They can significantly balance the propaganda-focused reporting of the journalists engaged in war. Their presence in modern wars cannot be hampered or excluded thanks to new technologies for gathering and spreading news and items presented by broadcast and electronic media.

Emotions Suppressed, Improvisation Dominates

The first cursory conclusion after the announcement of the first wave of air strikes could be that journalists, primarily TV studio moderators, have almost absolutely suppressed their emotions and understandable frustration. There has been no euphoria, gloating or uncontrolled expression of emotions which, objectively speaking, could have been expected. On the contrary, there has been genuine, true sincerity in their facial expressions and voice intonation because they were aware of the gravity and complexity of the situation.

Almost all TV stations (except for SRT), most of all RTV BiH, OBN and Studio 99, produced special programs in the evening hours of Wednesday, March 24, after it was confirmed that air strikes had started, from time to time carrying world TV stations' programs – CNN, BBC, EuroNews and others – but also occasionally presenting Radio Television Serbia (RTS) reporting. An announcement of a new style in local TV and radio journalism was given a day before the intervention by the editor of Studio 99's OKO 22 program, Ermina Gakic, with probably the most complete review of the situation until that time, with the help of CNN and EuroNews programs, correspondents from Washington, Belgrade, Podgorica, Skopje and guests in the studio. The first day, as well as the following days, showed that most broadcast media in Sarajevo experienced some sort of media maturity in using different sources of information (which had not been the case until then), rapid reaction and usage of different media potentials. Improvisation was most obvious in poor simultaneous interpretation.

However, in contrast to the Gulf War, which showed a real media revolution in the way in which an area/events was covered, the latest war has been characterized by a lack of authentic reports from the site of air strikes. As an illustration, in the first 24 hours of reporting, all TV stations, both local and international, were dominated by footage of a fire being put out in the Klisa settlement near Novi Sad (Ministry of Interior Staff Education School), or details from the Aviano Base and a number of ships in the Mediterranean.

It is beyond dispute that air strikes had been expected, and therefore the factor of surprise cannot be an alibi for the excessive improvisation on the part of experienced international agencies in the first 24 hours of media coverage of the Kosovo crisis. Local journalists tried to make up for this, reporting on what they could see and hear from their apartments, offices or some other place. The lack of live footage, that is, authentic television from the war arena itself, in favor of so-called delayed broadcasting of very modest television material is partly due to a Serbian authorities' ban on live reporting and expulsion of foreign journalists. Let us recall that during the fiercest attacks on the Iraqi capital, Saddam Hussein allowed Peter Arnett (CNN) to send regular reports from the most luxurious Baghdad hotel. It is obvious that the Belgrade authorities have not learned the Gulf lesson although they did revoke their initial decision to expel foreign cameramen and reporters. If foreign journalists had been allowed to remain in the field, in particular at Kosovo, they probably would have alleviated the fatal effect of different forms of propaganda and confusion based on controversial and sometimes even unfounded information that the Serbian and world public was showered with in the past days (such as allegedly the killing of Kosovo intellectuals, credibility of Milosevic-Rugova meeting, a concentration camp at the Pristina stadium, etc.).

Realizing that the Kosovo crisis has been experienced in a different way in at least one half of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the international community decided to nip in the bud any passionate or inflammatory reporting. The first criticism was aimed at two state television stations – SRT and RTV BiH – and a newspaper – *Dnevni avaz*. The reasons for the accusation are indicative, especially in the case of the two media from the Bosniak part of the Federation. *Avaz* and RTV BiH were criticized for their usage of words qualifying Slobodan Milosevic. TV BiH apologized the following evening (“inexperienced moderator”), while *Avaz* reacted quite fervently. Let us recall, it was a headline in *Avaz* that was disputed: “Finally bombs on the Balkan butcher” (March 25). In its response the following day, the paper's editorial office reminded the international community that the disputed syntagm “Balkan butcher” was invented by American journalists (it was first launched by *The New York Times*, note by Media Plan Institute), and therefore cannot be “inflammatory, and even less insulting to Bosnian Serbs.” SRT, on the other hand, was criticized for using only one source – Yugoslav – mostly RTS, which abounded in propaganda.

The impression that is given is that the international factors which issued warnings to the local media had insisted on balanced reporting much more at the beginning of the

intervention. That is when the United States was trying to soften negative Serb reactions by sending messages from the highest level, while a telephone line was opened for Slobodan Milosevic through which he could prevent further attacks.

Media in the Republika Srpska Caught off Guard

Although military intervention was imminent, it seems that media in the Republika Srpska believed there would be no intervention. That is why they were caught off guard by the dramatic events. As an illustration, the Banjaluka-based *Glas srpski* on Thursday, March 24, featured only one box across three columns at the top of its front page, with the superscript headline: “Latest news”, headline “Yugoslavia attacked” and sub-headline: “Srna’s correspondent reported that the NATO alliance launched an attack on Yugoslav army targets last night at around 20,00 hrs., and strong detonations were heard around Pristina, Belgrade, Podgorica and Novi Sad.” And that was it.

Judging by the front page and the inside articles, and even more by its headlines, also the Banjaluka-based *Dnevne nezavisne novine* of March 25 had some presentiment of “what was rolling behind the hill”, but it did not even report that military intervention against Yugoslavia had started!

SRT’s news program *Dnevnik 2* (March 24) did not confirm speculation that air strikes on Yugoslavia had started until the end of the program. After that it carried RTS programming, but there was no special program that evening. SRT has not had any special programs so far, and neither has Serb Radio.

SRT did not get away only with the accusation that its reporting was not balanced and that it was presenting only Belgrade’s propaganda. The accusation was followed right away by some sharp correspondence between Westendorp/Haselock (the High Representative and his deputy) and Kozomara (SRT general director). The essence of Westendorp’s letter was – balanced reporting or the withdrawal of international support and equipment donated to SRT. Haselock’s letter of the following day was even stronger and more explicit in its demands: “Air a full, unedited block of BBC World Television News coverage of the Kosovo crisis between the hours of 1800 and 2200. This will be accompanied by full, accurate translation in the local language of all audio material ... The BBC is among Europe’s most respected independent broadcasters with a reputation for balance, fairness and intellectual depth. Air full coverage, preferably live, of a NATO briefing with accurate, unedited translation, not a summary.”

Kozomara’s reply expressed serious doubt in the objectivity of OHR’s media monitoring. In that sense, he proposed that what he called objective monitors should review the entire material from the previous period, so that it does not happen again that SRT is asked to broadcast President Clinton and Secretary of State Albright’s addresses to the citizens of Serbia (as Haselock allegedly demanded), although that had already been done the previous day, at the primetime of 1930 hrs.

A part of a paragraph from Kozomara’s letter deserves to be quoted because it describes Republika Srpska journalists’ dilemmas and frustrations in an indirect way:

“ The way to canalize the truth, in this tragic moment for Balkans and my entire people, shows that basic elementary principles about the time and space and its own place and role in history have been lost in the part of developed and democratic world.”

However, the correspondence yielded results. SRT began substantially to quote other (Western) sources as well and to carry their reports. Still, the summarized conclusion is that there is absolute consensus among Republika Srpska media in qualifying the NATO alliance’s

strike on Yugoslavia. “Aggression” is the commonly used term, not only by media but also by politicians, and even citizens of the Republika Srpska who are shown in media polls and footage of demonstrations. According to sources at the Independent Media Commission (IMC), “some stations will perhaps lose broadcasting licenses because their reporting on the Kosovo crisis has violated the media code.”

Turnabout in Media in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina

Preventing a humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo was the main pretext for the NATO intervention in Kosovo. However, in media in the Bosniak part of the Federation, that component was pushed in the background for a certain period. But, alarming news from Kosovo dealt with refugee situation, in particular those reported by refugees themselves, and briefings by the main protagonists of the military action against Yugoslavia, again brought up this aspect of the Kosovo crisis in media in Bosniak-controlled parts of the Federation, especially after the announcement of terrifying figures on expelled persons and the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo and partly of Sandzak. There was information of 100,000 to 250,000 and even up to 500,000 expelled people and refugees. Emotions and tension suppressed or even erased for a certain period, again rose. So refugee drama became a dominant issue, in particular in the especial programming of broadcast media. At the same time, the broadcast media in the Republika Srpska almost did not even mention that issue.

Anchors/moderators faced again well known professional perplexities. In NTV 99’s call-in program (March 29 and 30) the moderator interrupted several inflammatory listeners, but a number of them were able to go on air. Or, seeming negligence or carelessness on the part of TV BiH (March 30); morning program: Larry King Live (CNN) talks with Vladislav Jovanovic, Yugoslav ambassador to the United Nations. When the ambassador started explaining his country’s position, the re-broadcasting was suddenly interrupted at 0843 to make place for TV Shop!?

Oslobodjenje, which otherwise covered these events extensively and professionally, in its issue of March 30 featured a commentary “NATO against *gusle* (a music instrument resembling a folk fiddle used traditionally by Serbs), written by its commentator Gojko Beric. Beric strictly adhered to his thesis which puts all (underlined by the Media Plan Institute) Serbs on the same level – supporters of Milosevic, slaves to *gusle*, Kosovo mythomania, etc. We will say more about print media later on in this article.

We have already mentioned that the largest amount of information on the humanitarian catastrophe and crimes in Kosovo was based on refugees’ accounts, not on journalist sources and international community sources on the spot. It is hardly to note another war or volatile area in the world where a decision on the withdrawal of all foreign monitors and representatives has been carried out so consistently, and the Belgrade regime’s decision to expel foreign journalists fit in perfectly.

Inflammatory Reporting or the Right to a View?

While broadcast media tended to avoid commentaries, leaving that to viewers and listeners, the press was full of their own commentaries at the end of the first week of military intervention. This is chiefly true of newspapers in the Bosniak part of the Federation.

As an illustration, *Ljiljan* (March 29 and April 5) had a specially designed front page dominated by Milosevic’s picture in a broken mirror, with a large headline: “The Executioner’s End!”. In the editorial, deputy editor-in-chief Dzevad Hodzic openly rejected OHR’s and IMC’s warnings (“inflammatory media coverage of the events in Kosovo will not

be tolerated”) and, which is very interesting, spoke on behalf of all Bosnians (underlined by the Media Plan Institute): “Bosnians not only approve and welcome the bombing of military targets in FR Yugoslavia, but they look forward to the *executioner*’s (italicized in original article) end.” The editorial ends with the following sentence: “Hence, Bosnians are happy.” This, but also some other mentioned articles, give rise to at least two professional dilemmas: (1) Do local media, due to their specific responsibility for the success of the Dayton Agreement (creating a spirit of tolerance and reconciliation) have to be more balanced and “have a shorter tongue” than those operating outside the region. And (2), how long will we close our eyes to the fact that two, if not three public opinions have been established in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and therefore it is, to say the least, untrue that “all Bosnians think the same.” Of course, if under “Bosnians” we refer to all citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In a commentary in the same issue of *Ljiljan*, one of the paper’s editors, Sejo Omeragic, writing on the theme of the Kosovo myth and NATO strikes, ridicules a cult poem by poet Desanka Maksimovic “Krvava bajka” (“A Bloody Fairy Tale”) which insults not only Serb feelings, but the feelings of many anti-fascists.

Newspapers in the Republika Srpska in the monitored period did not feature commentaries, but suggested their position by the way they treated articles (placing headlines on articles and reports, agency news, etc.). One can freely conclude that the given headlines had the force of commentary and had the same general tone as media reactions in Serbia. Here are several characteristic ones: “Disgraceful scars made by the dropped bombs,” “You cannot destroy our pride” (a report on a protest rally by Banjaluka high school and university students), both examples from a double issue of *Glas srpski* (March 27-28). Or, “The spirit of freedom is indestructible” – a report on demonstrations in Trebinje, in the *Dnevne nezavisne novine* of March 29. The same newspaper featured the following announcement on its front page the next day: “NATO imposing Orwellian-like fear,” statement by Amfilohije Radovic, Montenegrin-Primorje bishop. The same page featured a picture of Belgrade children in a shelter. In short, the above examples plainly illustrate the general mood in the Republika Srpska, but also the clearly defined and articulated position of their media, both those controlled by the establishment and independent ones.

Slobodna BiH, which is unofficially considered a Croat medium in Bosnia-Herzegovina, generally presented facts on events in the eastern neighborhood.

In our last year’s monitoring (*Media News* no. 12, August 10 ’98) on how daily newspapers were covering events in Kosovo, we summarized our research in a striking headline: “Kosovo As a Litmus Paper.” This conclusion has in the meantime been convincingly reinforced. All the complexity and severity of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian reality is clearly reflected in the Kosovo example.

In short, our conclusion is – reporting on Kosovo has been a reflection of the deeply divided public opinion in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Media in the Bosniak parts of the BiH Federation took advantage of the abundance of sources of information, while media in the Republika Srpska relied mostly on their own sources and sources from FR Yugoslavia.

(Media Plan Institute – Monitoring Center)

Croatia: Disciplining of Media (1)

Media News in its last issue started to publish a series of articles on the media situation in the neighboring countries, maintaining that neither political nor media issues in the three former Yugoslav republics can be viewed completely isolated from one another. In our last issue we featured an analysis of the media situation in Serbia. Although we then announced a media portrait of Montenegro, due to the current situation in FR Yugoslavia, the article that we ordered was late. Therefore, in two parts we are publishing an article on the media situation in Croatia written by our associate Ivica Juric from Split.

At the Tail of Transition

Return of refugees and displaced persons, election laws, media. Or: media, election laws, return of refugees and displaced persons. These are the three key points on all lists of criticism that the international factors are regularly sending to Croatia, regardless of whether it is the Council of Europe, European Commission, OSCE, State Department reports... The state of media freedoms is at the top of the list that separates Croatia from the full standards of the democratic world and that brings its “democratic borders,” instead of to a Central European environment, to the very edge of eastern Europe or even the Central Asia region. Croatia is placed there, for instance, in reports and assessments made by various international organizations dealing with evaluation of the state of media freedoms in the world, such as Freedom House, International Press Institute, etc., and in which evaluation of media freedoms in Croatia is closer to that which characterizes the authoritarian transition syndrome, than the Czech Republic, Hungary or Poland. In any case, when media are concerned, Croatia is at the tail of countries in transition.

Even if these evaluations (and comparisons) are stereotype and unfounded in some elements, there is no doubt that Croatia’s authoritarian policy gives them much reason for that. Truly, there are few countries in which senior state officials such as heads of state have sued journalists, where party-controlled state television has no competition at national level, where the print media distribution network has been “privatized” in such a way that endangers the survival of the most popular independent dailies and weeklies, where the intelligence service is suspected of following and tapping undesirable politicians but also many journalists, or is using a number of media for political settling of accounts.

Croatia does not have an information ministry and has a relatively liberal Law on Information (that is, on public information as it is officially called), which has received the “blessing” of Council of Europe experts, but that is only a facade behind which the incumbent regime possesses (and applies) different mechanisms of systematic obstruction and repression against media freedoms and development of independent and professional journalism. But, let us go in order.

Determined Pluralism

An unbelievable number of 1,620 print media are registered with the Government Information Office. However, according to assessments by Vibor Bozic of the Office, only

some hundred or so print media are active. There are 10 dailies in Croatia, eight weeklies, while other editions are issued bi-weekly, monthly or periodically.

Among the most important print media, *Vjesnik*, *Vecernji list* and *Slobodna Dalmacija* are controlled by the state. *Vjesnik* and *Slobodna Dalmacija* are controlled formally in view of their ownership structure, while *Vecernji list* is owned by a mysterious Caritas Fund from the Virgin Islands. *Jutarnji list* is privately owned, as are the *Rijeka Novi list* and the *Pula Glas Istre*, which are owned by the papers' employees. The Split *Slobodna Dalmacija* was owned by its journalists and graphic workers until 1993, when its privatization was scandalously annulled in a state-party operation and the paper was turned over to HDZ tycoon Miroslav Kutle who brought this once eminent and profitable paper to the verge of collapse and in the end had to give it back to the state. As far as *Vecernji list*, the biggest circulation daily in the country, is concerned, it is unknown who is its true owner, so it is assumed with full right that behind the phantom Virgin Islands company is an HDZ affiliate.

In Croatia there are also 25 regional newspapers, 15 business and tourism newspapers, 29 bulletins issued by political and professional associations, 12 culture and design magazines, 10 dealing with technological information, 12 women's and family magazines, 14 magazines specializing in sports, seven dealing with rock and youth, etc.

Croatian state television is the only state-level television station. Four television stations have concessions for broadcasting at cantonal level, and there are also six city stations.

Three radio stations broadcast at national level, and 17 at cantonal level. According to the Government Information Office, 80 radio stations operate at city level.

There are three news agencies working in Croatia: the state agency HINA, the independent private agency STINA and the Information Catholic Agency IKA.

However, in this unnegligible media pluralism, Croatian Radio Television (HRT) holds a dominant place and in many ways throws this media pluralism in question. Almost every criticism of the media situation in Croatia starts (and many also end) by stressing the unacceptable status and role of this most influential medium, which many see and assess as a media "Bastille" of the incumbent regime. Formally a public station, HRT is a classical example of a state-partisan instrument, often used to openly glorify the incumbent authorities on one hand, and to hush up and conceal in a sophisticated manner the key political, economic and general social problems on the other. Or, to use target propaganda commentaries in primetime news programs to settle political accounts with those who criticize the regime.

The Battle for the Media "Bastille"

What this is really about is best shown by data from a research ordered by the Croatian Journalist Association, financed by the European Community and carried out by the renown research agency PULS using the Gallup method.

The research confirmed that Croatian state television is the most significant source of information. About 90 percent of respondents are informed about events in Croatia through this medium, and for 74 percent it is the only source of information. The second most often used source of information are daily newspapers from which 50 percent of respondents get their information, while 40 percent of respondents do not read newspapers at all.

This "dependence" on TV information focuses the battle for media freedoms in Croatia mainly on TV.

Under a lot of pressure from international factors, local opposition and journalist circles themselves, Croatian policy started making "cosmetic" changes on national TV, which are supposed to show that the aim is to transform it into a really public national medium (new law

on HRT, bringing a new management to the national TV house which includes some eminent professional journalists such as Mirko Galic, bringing back into program a number of journalists who had been “on ice” for years, etc.). However, at the same time a “purge” continued of everything that was jeopardizing the key goals of the political instrumentalization of the main national medium.

Open censorship has been applied for undesirable political TV programs (such as the political magazine “Jedan plus jedan” which was even removed from program and some of its items were taken out or edited without the editor’s knowledge), rare editors whose critical programs were very popular with the audience have been sacked (Croatian journalist of the year Ivo Loncar, who succeeded in turning the agricultural program “Plodovi zemlje” into one of the more popular TV hits), those who could not reconcile to political pressure have left the management (Mirko Galic).

The election year and the approach of elections does not give much hope that significant change can be expected. On the contrary, fear that complete control over the main national medium will take place seems more realistic. Announcements of special media rules for the forthcoming parliamentary elections, which should establish some kind of equality among political parties, if they are adopted, will probably be reduced to a minimum. The ruling party will find a way to compensate abundantly for the media tidbits that it will grant the opposition, even if it is forced to discard the previously used method of showing several-hour-long HDZ election conventions and Croatian President Tudjman in primetime programs.

In addition to state radio, national frequencies are allocated only to Catholic Radio and Open Radio. The latter has an exclusively entertainment and commercial character, without news and political programs. The most popular independent radio is the well known Radio 101 in Zagreb which, although local, covers an area inhabited by around one million people, and whose program is the only more significant alternative to the controlled electronic media.

The Broadcast Alternative – Even Local is Dangerous

Another, none less significant element of obstruction, when chances for democratization of the media environment in Croatia are concerned, is contained in the fact that the ruling party has rejected the possibility of privatizing one of the three national television channels. The ruling HDZ, as some sort of surrogate for the constant requests that it provide at least one national private channel, has offered the possibility of announcing a concession for a new national channel. Experts assess that the price of introducing a fourth national channel would be about 40 million DEM, which is a big investment in the current economic situation in Croatia. In view of the very uncertain commercialization conditions, it will be difficult for the project to attract potential investors. The overall media “cake” in Croatia is estimated at 80 million DEM, which is, for instance, half the size of that in Hungary.

There has been an attempt to create a surrogate for alternative national television through the establishment of a pool comprising a number of local TV stations and program production via a distribution organization called “TV Network,” which is financially supported by media tycoons Ninoslav Pavic (*Globus, Jutarnji list*) and Miroslav Kutle (*Slobodna Dalmacija*). However, the project collapsed due to financial difficulties. A similar project is now being developed – Europapress holding production.

In the broadcast media space the ruling party has some powerful instruments in its hands: the Telecommunication Council, which decides on allocating concessions to broadcast media, and the Law on Telecommunications, which regulates the basis of their work.

Problems that local and regional broadcast media are faced with are best illustrated by the fact that a National Association of (local) Televisions (NUT) was recently founded, which

has requested that the Law on Telecommunications urgently be modified. NUT is requesting changes in the provisions of the law which forbid private stations to associate, thus preventing them from producing and purchasing cheaper programs; a cut in the high prices of concessions which must be paid a year in advance; and restrictions in HTV's marketing monopoly.

In addition to all this, the local media situation is constantly characterized by "purges" and blockades in work. In the situation in which the main national media channels are under the complete control of the ruling party, incidents increasingly occur on local TV and radio stations. Their orientation, to be plural and open to the opposition and to be as critical as possible, in order to try to compete (in some places with more and more success) with the national media organizations, often ends in different forms of "disciplining." The ruling party uses different mechanisms to achieve that, from dismissing editors and directors of these media in places where it controls the situation at local level, to putting pressure through financial police or the Ministry of Traffic and Communication, which directly or indirectly control frequencies and concessions, in places where the ruling party does not have direct power at local level. The list of such cases is increasing: Radio Labin, ATV Split, TV Marijan Split, Radio Ritam Sibenik, Radio Libertas Dubrovnik, TV Moslavina, Radio Vukovar, Radio 042 Varazdin

(to be continued)

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) Annual Report

24 Journalists Killed

The prestigious U.S. non-governmental agency seated in New York – Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) – in its latest 400-page annual report titled: "Attacks on the Press in 1998," presented an extensive review of the state of journalistic freedoms in the world. In addition to facts, the report contains analyses of press freedom issues in 118 countries of the world, as well as four special reports, and compelling accounts of 500 cases of attacks on different grounds – hampering, silencing, arbitrary arrests, censorship and legal abuses.

Among states in which a real explosion of violence against journalists was reported are Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo, Jordan and FR Yugoslavia. The two latter states in particular because they have adopted draconian press laws.

Columbia was the most lethal country for journalists. In the last 10 years, 43 journalist were killed there!

The absolute "champion" when it comes to imprisonment of journalists in the last five years is Turkey. A total of 27 journalists languished in its prisons last year, compared to 29 in '97. Most are victims of government repression related to reporting on the Kurdish rebellion in Turkey.

A new medium – the Internet – has also started generating victims, not only of journalism, but of freedom of speech in general. A person was arrested in China who had been exchanging e-mail messages on a dissident web-site!

The trend of expansion of restrictive media laws is alarming, especially in the field of slander and defamation, which considerably limits the freedom of the press. Journalists are

faced with a choice: choosing between self-censorship and going to jail for “inflammatory” reporting.

In addition to announcing that 24 journalists were killed last year, the book also contains a graphic survey of more than 470 journalists killed over the past 10 years, presented by countries and regions.

In this latest report Bosnia-Herzegovina is not especially emphasized. There is an interesting statement in the book’s introduction related to the conflicts in our region, according to which the international community focused on ending the conflicts at the expense of the articulation of the freedom of press.

Media News will feature some wider excerpts from the book in its next couple of issues.

N e w s

Journalism Studies in Mostar

The Journalism Studies Center of the University in the western part of Mostar is to be transformed into a four-year faculty, which is due to start working in the next academic year. The Center’s manager Dr. Vladimir Laznibat told *Slobodna BiH* that future journalists will be able to choose fields that are most needed and to do their graduation thesis in narrow areas such as radio, TV, press and public opinion surveys. Staff for the future faculty has already been provided.

The Faculty Council of the Mostar Journalism Studies Center is also working on establishing a Croat Journalism Institute. According to Professor Laznibat, the Institute is planned to have nine departments, which will chiefly be oriented towards public media research. The Center has received support from the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia and the Faculty of Political Sciences and Croatian Studies in Zagreb.

OHR Condemnation

The OHR condemned an attack on two TV crews from the Republika Srpska that happened in Banja Luka on March 25. The crews were filming violent demonstrations and protests in front of U.S. and British diplomatic missions. Both crews were attacked by a mob armed with knives and other objects. A cameraman was seriously wounded, while other members sustained lighter injuries.

The OHR said it does not deny anyone the right to demonstrate and express their opinion, but it should be done in a peaceful and democratic way.

The OHR called on the local police to investigate the case and take measures against the perpetrators.

Attack on TV Kiseljak Crew

A TV Kiseljak crew was attacked March 22 in Sarajevo by members of the Sarajevo Canton Association of Fallen Soldiers.

The crew was trying to record an item on the eviction of people living in the apartment of a man called Mirko Basic. Journalist Branka Vrebac and cameraman Pavle Condric were held for two hours and were released after they handed over the recorded tape.

IPTF, SFOR, IMC and other international organizations have been notified about the incident.

New Radio-Television Station

Another RTV station has appeared in the already rich media space of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is a Bosniak radio-television station called "BRT Int," which is already broadcasting signal on the 24th channel. The station was established by fusion of two earlier organizations, Bosniak-Moslem Radio Hayat and Bosniak Television (whose start of broadcasting had been awaited for two to three years).

For now the new TV is carrying satellite program, and according to unofficial information, its own program should start in 15 days. In a statement for the Sarajevo daily *Oslobodjenje*, Mahir Zisko, director general of the newly-formed RTV station, said this medium will be Bosniak-oriented. He said the station plans to open departments for news, music, religious, cultural and other program. At the beginning the station is to broadcast 16 hours of programming a day, and later 24 hours a day.

Eighth Generation of BBC School of Journalism

The eight generation of students at the BBC School of Journalism was promoted in Sarajevo on March 24. Seventeen young journalists from different media in Bosnia-Herzegovina completed the school's training program encompassing all aspects of electronic media.

The students received diplomas from the Independent Media Commission Director Krister Thelin and Soros Media Center Editor-in-Chief Boro Kontic.

On the Threshold of a New Century



Listen with your ears!



Look with your eyes!



Think with your head!

Council:Media Plan Institute

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