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Media News

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• Journalism and Democracy • Media in Transition

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Application of the IMC Broadcast Code of Practice

The Code on Decency and Civility Had Breached

The Independent Media Commission (IMC) has been in the focus of media attention. Its decisions have often provoked heated discussions, and even disapproval, primarily as reaction to warnings and sanctions pronounced as a result of disregard for the IMC Broadcast Code of Practice.

Although the Commission's decisions and elaboration are public, journalistic circles often do not have an opportunity to find out what are the guidelines that IMC uses in making its decisions. *Media News* will from time to time present these arguments in the hope that an insight into them will inspire media to apply the Code more consistently and that it will at the same time reduce misunderstanding between journalists and the Commission.

First Example: Zoom on the Face of the Late Jozo Leutar

IMC on May 13 issued a warning to Radio-Television Mostar for disrespecting the Code in the part "Decency and Civility." The warning referred to a TV report broadcast on March 16 in which "a shot was made from a distance of four meters and the full screen showed a hospital wheelchair with Mr. Jozo Leutar in it, as well as several members of medical staff... As the wheelchair was entering the hospital, the camera zoomed the face of Mr. Leutar, showing that he was seriously injured and that he might have been in some kind of shock."

The part of the paragraph from the Code which the Commission considers has been violated states:

“Radio and TV organizations shall show consideration in selecting material that shows the consequences of natural disasters, accidents and human violence. Before showing such scenes, radio and TV organizations shall establish a balance between the desire to satisfy the need for truth and the desire for compassion, in contrast to risking sensationalism, causing distress or a possibility of reasonless violation of privacy.”

The editor of RTV Mostar said in his response that it was possible that the footage had upset emotions, but the omission was caused by the short deadline for preparing the report. He said that in the future more attention will be given to such potentially controversial reports.

Second Example: HTV Makes an Insult – EROTEL Re-Broadcasts It

EROTEL on December 16, 1998 at 20.50 was re-broadcasting Croatian Television (HTV) program and the broadcast “Ecology and Ethics – Sipa“ by Branka Separovic. IMC monitors noticed that the following language constructions were used in the broadcast: “...the main person is certainly George Soros, a crazy backroom dealer and malicious speculator. He has stolen billions, he gives millions and he always collects interest in the form of blank ink”;...the disgusting Serbian-Jewish lobby which keeps appearing over and over so that Croatia would be toppled. These are cautious masons, many of them are sexual perverts”; “...Privately they are all generally homosexual.”

IMC maintains that such expressions in the broadcast were not in line with the provisions of the Code in the part referring to Decency and Civility, and that anti-Semite, anti-Serbian and homophobic comments were given, framed in an ecological metaphor based on sipa, in order to illustrate that Serbs, Jews and homosexuals have had damaging influence on Croatian economy and society.

EROTEL denied its responsibility for the case because, as its management has said, EROTEL could not influence the content of that authorial broadcast produced by HTV. IMC did not accept the explanation, because “EROTEL bears full responsibility for re-broadcasting HRT using the ground network in Bosnia-Herzegovina.”

For this, and two other similar cases, Erotel was fined 2000 KM by the same IMC decision.



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Third Example: RTV Srebrenica Does Not Keep Program Recordings

The Independent Media Commission on May 13 fined Radio-Television Srebrenica with 800 DEM for two cases of disrespect of the Code. We will describe one of the two cases here.

On February 15, 1999 IMC asked RTV Srebrenica for a recording of programming broadcast on February 7 and 8 between 1500 and 2000 hrs. The reason it was done was to review a complaint received from SFOR and the United Nations Mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina which alleged that RTV Srebrenica had broadcast material that may not have been in line with the IMC Code (the material in question is a statement by the Committee of the Serb Radical Party – SRS). The IMC justified its request by the obligation that all electronic media have, that “radio and television stations shall make complete sound and/or video recordings of all programs that are broadcast. These recordings shall be kept for a minimum of 30 days or longer, if so requested in a special case by IMC.” However, the editor of RTV Srebrenica, according to the Commission, first refused in an insulting manner to cooperate with the Commission, and then sent a letter to the Commission with the statement from the Municipal Committee of the Serb Radical Party with the warning that it differed from the statement protested by SFOR and the UN Mission to the Commission. It is not known if that was the statement that was broadcast on RTV Srebrenica.

In the official statement, SRS strongly condemned and requested sanctions for the “organized departure of some 15 or so Serbs, so-called “Poturice” (historical derogatory name for Bosniak Moslems used by Serb nationalists) from Srebrenica to Tuzla, at the invitation of Hakija Meholic, who had slaughtered, burned and inflicted pain on Serbs from Srebrenica in the past war which had been imposed on us, and who took the lives of our dearest.” It also says that the Serb Radical Party forbids these Serbs in the future “in the name of Srebrenica’s Serbs, patriots and in the name of the Serb municipality of Srebrenica, to offer a ‘hand of reconciliation’ to Moslems who caused us grief and who destroyed everything we have.”

As RTV Srebrenica could not prove what it had broadcast in its program, IMC decided to trust the SFOR and UN Mission allegations, in particular because the official text of the SRS statement confirmed their allegations. IMC maintains that the broadcasting of the statement violated the part of the Code on “Decency and Civility, in the part that says: “...Language which may inspire violence, unrest of hatred shall not be used. Unreasonable usage of language that may cause offence shall be avoided.”

M e d i a P r e s e n t a t i o n

Reporter – a Faithful Image of Its Name...

Another Weekly at a Bad Time?

In issue no. 57 of May 26 this year, the editorial was titled “Birthday,” and it recalled that the first issue of *Reporter* appeared on May 20, 1997, which means two years ago, on 48 pages (today on 76). The editorial contained several striking sentences: “In the first issue we wrote that, as far as *Reporter* was concerned, the war was over. We were referring to the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Two years later we have a war in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and in newspapers there are already polemics on scenarios for its end. Strongest reactions have been provoked by the hastily adopted term ‘denacification’ from a different time. While we are completing this issue, it is definitely clear to us that due to a power failure in Serbia we

will not receive three articles ordered from there. In the beginning, as in those previous times, there will have to be – electrification.”

The most difficult task is to say a lot using just a few sentences. And to be witty at that. That is actually the most reliable barometer of writing skill and with it also of journalistic skill. That precisely is *Reporter*'s home ground, but we will speak about that a little later on.

Besides *Reporter* and the earlier launched *Nezavisne novine* (also from Banjaluka), these are, for the time being, the only two weeklies in the Republika Srpska.

Moving to a weekly publishing rhythm for the Banjaluka *Reporter* was accompanied by slight sloppiness of a technical and graphic nature, which even we missed in the beginning. Namely, on April 1 this year (issue no. 49) *Reporter* became a weekly, but it continued to print the word “bi-weekly” on the front page as well as on the paper's impressum. From issue no. 54 the word “bi-weekly” was removed from the front page, but it remained in the paper's impressum, until in the 56th issue the paper started using a new syntagm: “WEEKLY ‘REPORTER’” The new front page does not contain any other indication of the new publishing dynamics.

In the “The Monitor's Eye” (*Media News*, issue no. 32 of May 17 this year), we wrote that *Reporter* was “refreshing at the perfect moment,” while in the same issue, in an analytical article on *Dani* moving to a weekly rhythm of publishing, at the very start we expressed our doubt in the effectiveness of the decision, bearing in mind the overall unfavourable economic situation in the country, which directly affects the underdeveloped media market.

All these troubles are particularly pronounced in the case of *Reporter*, because the decision to shift to weekly publishing almost coincided in time with the start of air strikes on Yugoslavia. Out of the average circulation of 12,000 copies, the largest number was sold on the other side of the Drina River, mostly in Belgrade. The number of unsold copies ranged from seven to 20 percent. According to marketing data, *Reporter* was practically sold out in Yugoslavia. Now all that has stopped, including advertisements, and the future is uncertain, both concerning sales of the paper and advertising.

The Republika Srpska does not have a large enough media market and it is exhausted in several larger centers – Banja Luka, Prijedor, Brcko, Bijeljina, Zvornik, Visegrad and Trebinje. Sales in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina are still symbolic. In short, *Reporter*'s market perspectives are depressing, which is sad because it really is a good paper.

***Reporter* is Something In-Between**

The very name of the publication – *Reporter* – is a good solution. It is a simple word, but with multiple meaning.

In an effectively designed Cyrillic vignette with fixed colours (black italic letters outlined in white), a white Latin ® dominates on a red background, the rounded ¾ white and the remaining ¼ red. The “R” designed in this way has multiple meaning, but first of all it suggests “recommendation,” perhaps recommendation for reading. Next to the issue, the year of publishing and the date is the price of the paper in YU dinars (“price 10 din.”), while the currency of the paper's own country is given on the side of the front page, together with the Slovenian tolar, Macedonian denar and Western European currencies.

Both variants of the Serbian language are equal (ekavian and ijekavian). The (Bosnian) language and style of authors from the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina is also respected. The alphabet that is used is Cyrillic.

Although the vignette does not have any attribute or syntagm such as – “political”, “independent,” or “Bosnian-Herzegovinian”, “Serb”, etc., *Reporter* is not a classical newsmagazine, and even less a magazine. *Reporter* is actually difficult to define using the

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usual journalistic-communicological terminology. *Reporter* is also not something like the pre-war *Ilustrovana Politika*. *Reporter* is something in-between. Still, political issues are dominant because that is dictated by these difficult times that we live in.

If we use the language of the usual journalistic terms, genres and so on, the paper is dominated by articles that go into the background of news. They are not pregnant examinations, but they do have elements of analysis, and sometimes even of synthesis. Except for the regular short editorial by the editor-in-chief, signed with initials (P. V. / Perica Vucinic), there are no classical commentaries, columns, and so on. *Reporter's* most noticeable quality is timeliness, regardless of whether it is shown through analytical articles, reportages or interviews.

Thematic Diversity

Reporter, since the time when it was a bi-weekly, has considerably dealt with issues from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Now its coverage of the neighbour, understandably, is even more pronounced and the focus is even sharper. There is no “false diopter,” there is no inflammatory or inciting language, and there is also no stretched or artificial balance, symmetry, etc. When it comes to territorial coverage within Bosnia-Herzegovina, then the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina are equally presented.

With regard to the volume of cultural topics, *Reporter* could with full right bear the attribute of a cultural magazine, because it features regular items on literature, theatre, art, film, music, comics, etc. The regular “Short story,” with basic information about the author, also deserves attention. We have almost forgotten what a short newspaper story is. With its latest issue (59), the paper started an interesting series with the superscript headline “Kontrakultura” (meaning counter-culture).

Reporter also includes a regular foreign policy page, and items on car racing, sports, “Letters from readers,” and even the horoscope and a crossword puzzle.

Of course, *Reporter* is not without faults. It even sometimes features articles written by associates who show complete ignorance of what they are writing about. For example, in issue no. 58 of June 2 this year, the paper featured an article by its Sarajevo associate (Rubina Imamovic), with the editors’ headline “Almost a press police,” and sub-headline “The proposal made by IMC was, to put it in the simplest way – a journalistic internal police,” which suggests that the editors stand behind the views presented in the article. The article was about a recent get-together of Bosnian-Herzegovinian journalists, organized by OSCE/IMC, who chiefly discussed the establishment of the institution of a Press Council, in the context of the recently passed Press Code. Press councils and press ombudsmen (although these two institutions in their meaning are not synonyms, nor counter-parts), as proven democratic western traditions, have the primary task of protecting the public from unprofessional (irresponsible) journalism, while journalists protect their own rights primarily through their associations.

Although it has a modest graphic design (except for the front page), *Reporter* is still a paper with a modern layout. Its items are attractively arranged and have good headlines. However, the usage of the usual one-dimensional visual and graphic means – photographs, illustrations, drawings, vignettes, caricatures, etc., is not *Reporter's* strong point, particularly in the case of journalistic photograph. Articles are *Reporter's* strongest point, despite the fact that they are not written by prominent journalistic names (except for regular journalists and occasional outside contributors).

(Media Plan Institute – Monitoring Center, D. Babic)

The Albanian Media: Freedom and Paradoxes

Media News is publishing a series of articles on the media situation in neighbouring countries and countries in post-communist transition. In this issue we publish an article by our associate from Tirana Mr. Remzi Lani, on the media situation in the Albania.

A "Revolver" Journalism

Eleven daily newspapers are published in Tirana every day, a figure that overcomes some of the capitals of former communist countries that count the double and triple of population of Tirana. During the evening one would follow news or movies in 10 private TV channels or listen music and, of course, news in 10 radio stations.

The Albanians apparently have not quenched the thirst for free word yet that they lacked for so long. 116 newspapers and magazines have been published in Albania since the fall of the communist regime in 1990, but only 34 have resisted and continue to be published (these figures exclude the innumerable erotic, quiz publications.)

Among the newspapers is the daily *Koha Jone* which became known for the critical positions it assumed against the regime of Berisha, but now is passing through a period of disorientation in its editorial policy. The daily *Gazeta Shqiptare* which began to be published in 1993 as an Albanian branch of *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* of Bari, is the most politically neutral but has not resisted to the sensational sense of the Albanian press. The newest daily *Shekulli* is today the biggest newspaper of the country with almost 30 thousand copies, and may be considered as a presidential newspaper in the sense that it is supporting the president Mejdani. It is very critical towards the former President Berisha and the former Prime Minister Nano, independently of the fact that these two are bitter enemies of each other. The daily *Albania* enjoys popularity among the Albanian right wing and supports the position of the former President Berisha. Among the magazines, the most popular are the weekly *Klan* and *Spekter*, which stay away from the political life of the country.

The first stages of the free press in Albania the party press used to dominate. As the time went by the party newspapers lost their importance and the independent press gained ground. Today, in the country, there are only three party newspapers with limited circulation: *Zeri i Popullit* (Socialist Party), *Rilindja Demokratike* (Democratic Party), and *Republika* (Republican Party). From a political point of view the press spectrum in Albania may be considered complete from the left to the right.

The press produces today around 110.000 copies a day, the lowest circulation per capita in Europe. The low circulation is related with some reasons. First, the limited distribution of the press in territory, only 40% of it. This is due to the destroyed infrastructure and the lack of a national distribution network after the disappearance of the once existing state owned network. Second, the high price of the newspapers compared with the low salaries of Albanians (if a retired man buys every day a newspaper he should spend for this one fourth of his earnings). Third, the lack of a subscription system obligates the press to be sold on the road, rarely in kiosks and susceptible of the weather: when there is, more newspapers are sold than when it is raining. Fourth, and the most important, the credibility of the press which seems to be at the lowest quotations.

The Albanian press appears today as a "shooting journalism." The press is more an extension of politics than a representation of the public opinion. It can be said that the press in Albania is a conflict press, as it is the Albanian politics.

This is the reason, according a survey of the Albanian Media Institute, which question what are the effects of media on the actual Albanian society, 60% of the questioned answered that it causes troubles and only 23% of them said that they contribute positively. Only 12.5% of the questioned were happy with the newspapers and the rest expressed unhappiness of indifference.

It seems a paradox: one of the most important achievements of the new Albanian democracy, if not the most important, is the free press, but according to its readers, this press actually has problems with the life of community.

A New Era: the Private Electronic Media

Until two years before, in Albania there were no private radio and TV. Simply because it was not permitted. After the green light of the Albanian Parliament on May 1997, today, after two years, there are some 30 private radios and 30 TV. Their birth put an end to the era when Albanians for knowing what was happening in their country were forced to listen to the BBC and see CNN. Not occasionally, but simply as a result of the state control on the Radio Television, in the eve of the crisis of March 1997, the Albanian service of BBC reached an audience of 52%, the highest in the history of the British radio. If the survey was to be repeated today, the figures would be different, not because the BBC programs are less interesting but simply because the Albanian private media have attracted the listeners.

It can be said that the private electronic media have won the battle against the printed press and the sleeping giant, the Albanian Radio Television. The Albanian RTV, the only national media, is in the process of transformation from state media in public service. Although some positive changing, the Albanian Television still remains an old fashioned "Red Carpet" TV. Radio Tirana seems more flexible, but still backwards if compared with the private radios. Habituated to be commanded through telephone from above, the journalists of RTV are able to exercise a perfect self-censure even when telephones do not ring. According to a survey of the Albanian Institute of Media, 65% of Albanians prefer to follow news from private electronic media and only 35% from state media. Around 58% of the questioned think that although the improvement TVSH remains a spokesman of the Government.

Among the private TVs the most popular are TV Arberia, which actually is considered as No. 1 as a result of a every night popular program on Kosovo and TV Klan, which has the widest stretch covering almost 60% of the territory. TV Arberia and TV Klan consist, from the point of view of the

Ownership, in joint ventures between the Albanian capital and the foreign ones, the first Italian and the other French. A good coverage and audience have also TV Shijak, TV Koha, and TV Teuta. According a survey a citizen of Tirana spends in front of the TV 3.42 hours.

Radio Koha (part of the publishing company of "Koha Jone"), Radio Kontakt, Radio Stinet, Radio Top Albania, and Radio Ime are among the most popular private radios. Generally, their programs are dominated by music, news, and long live telephone programs. According to the above mentioned survey a citizen of Tirana listens 1.8 hours of radio per day.

Differently from the press, which is concentrated in Tirana, the electronic media has known a harmonious throughout the country. Private radios and televisions are being opened every month in all the cities.

Differently from the press, which from the point of view of ownership is dominated from the domestic capital, the electronic media, especially TVs consist in joint ventures among the Albanian capitals and foreign ones, mostly Italian.

The principal press agency in Albania is ATA, a state agency that during the recent years has been modernised and has broadened its market. Beside ATA develop their activity also the private agencies ENTER, which is very active in the Internet and TIR- FAX with a limited distribution.

Meanwhile, the last months the Albanian journalists have just entered the era of Internet.

Unfinished Paragraph On Freedom of the Press

Journalists in Albania have the right to say everything, but they do not have the right to be heard. The new government of Tirana seems to have learned something from the past. The Albanian press is a "watch dog" of the Government and appears not to be scared from it. The Government permits them to speak but it does not mean that it listens to.

The Law on the Press of 1993, criticised from the organisation of journalists and those of human rights and it got abolished immediately after the left coalition got in power. A single article, as the American model, substituted it: "The press is free". The new Law on Media, which regulates the activity of private electronic media and public RTV, fulfils all the international standards.

Albania has come out of the list of countries that menace the freedom of press, but however being a journalist in Albania is not a dangerous-free profession. In a country with half-million Kalashnikovs in circulation, where the authority of the state is weak, where there is no order and the activity of armed gangs is in open air, the freedom of press is the same menaced. Anyway, actually in Albania there is freedom of expression but no freedom of movement.

Directory Of The Albanian Dailies

ALBANIA

Director: Ylli Rakipi
Tel: 00 355 42 292 43
Fax: 00 355 42 231 98

ALBANIAN DAILY NEWS (in English)

Editor-in Chief: Arben Leskaj
Tel: 00 355 42 698 68
Fax: 00 355 42 276 39

GAZETA SHQIPTARE

Editor-in Chief: Arian Cani Tel/
Fax 00 355 42 626 46 / 638 85/ 63855

KOHA JONE

Publisher: Nikolle Lesi
Tel/ Fax: 00 355 42 470 04

REPUBLIKA

Editor-in-Chief: Dalip Greca
Tel\ Fax: 00 355 42 259 88

RILINDJA DEMOKRATIKE

Editor-in Chief: Astrit Patozi
Tel: 00 355 42 323 55
Fax: 00 355 42 303 29

RILINDJA

Editor-in-Chief: Ramadan Musliu
Tel: 00 355 42 301 71
Fax: 00 355 42 238 67

SHEKULLI

Editor-in-Chief: Zamir Allushi
Tel: 00 355 42 335 72
Fax: 00 355 42 335 26

ZERI i POPULLIT

Editor-in-Chief: Erion Brace
Tel/Fax: 00 355 42 233 87

55 (FIFTY FIVE)

Editor-in Chief: Fahri Balliu Tel\
Fax: 00 355 42 623 72

EKONOMIA

Editor-in Chief: Emin Barci
Tel\Fax: 00 355 42 50 766

Directory Of Albanian Weeklies**DRITA**

Director: Bardhyl Londo
Tel\Fax: 00 355 42 302 03

KLAN (magazine)

Editor-in-Chief: Andi Bushati
Tel: 00 355 42 51923
Fax: 00 355 42 334 17

AKS

Editor-in Chief: Mimoza Dervishi
Tel/ Fax 00 355 42 470 04

SPEKTER

Editor: Henri Cili
Tel: 00 355 42 514 21

Directory Of Albanian News-Agencies**ALBANIAN TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY
(ATSH)**

Director: Frrok Cupi
Tel: 00 355 42 343 93
Fax: 00 355 42 343 86

ENTER NEWS AGENCY

Director: Mero Baze
Tel: 00 355 42 359 16

**Directory Of The Main Albanian
Radios****RADIO TIRANA**

Tel: 00 355 42 224 81 News Department;
258 17 Evening Program;
58 38 Social Cultural Program

RADIO STINET

Owner: Arqile Ndini
Tel: 00 355 42 252 60

RADIO IME

Owner: Eno Alimerko
Tel: 00 355 42 279 55

RADIO KONTAKT

Owner: Agron Bala
Executive Director: Alfons Zeneli
Tel: 00 355 42 494 74

RADIO KOHA

Owner: Nikolle Lesi
Executive Director: Amalia Dharmo
Tel: 00 355 42 287 81
Fax: 00 355 42 287 96

TOP ALBANIA RADIO

Owner: Dritan Hoxha
Tel: 00 355 42 474 92, 474 93

Directory Of The Main Tv Stations**ALBANIAN RADIOTELEVISION**

Tel: 00 355 42 263 32; 232 39;430 07
Fax: 275 12

TV ARBERIA

Director Perikli Karavella
Tel: 00 355 42 275 75

ALBA TV

Owner: Investment Group,
Administrator: Amerigo di Dominicantonio
Tel: 00 355 42 341 42; 341 44

TV KLAN

Owner: Aleksander Frangaj
Tel: 00 355 42 403 04

NESER TV TV

Owner: Teknotrade Ltd.
Phone: 00 355 42 40655

TEUTA TV (Durrës)

Owner: Bashkim Hoxha, Gezim Domi
Phone: 00 355 42 500 40; 236 99
Fax: 00 355 52 241 13

SHIJAK TV

Owner & Director: Gezim Ismaili
Tel: 00 355 42 47135; 00 355 52 247 23
Fax: 00 355 52 721 93

TV AMANTIA (Vlore)

Owner: Jashar Lamaj
Tel: 00 355 63 221 90

TV ROZAFI (Shkoder)

Director: Paulin Selimi
Tel: 00 355 224 33 31;
00 355 38 290 21 370

SHKODRA TV 1

Owner: Fatmir Koci
Director: Skender Drini
Tel: 00 355 224 3335

TV ANTENA JUG (Gjirokaster)

Owner: Edmond Andoni, Ilirian Lluri
Director: Ilirian Lluri
Tel: 00 355 726 3422

The Monitor's Eye**OBN on the Kosovo Crisis – Professional**

If we disregard the initial disorientation, in particular with regard to simultaneous interpreting, OBN's coverage of the Kosovo crisis has been the most professional of all local TV stations. Its approach has been comprehensive, but without artificial balance, or what is even more important – without artificial symmetry. A lot of credit for the more than favourable impression of OBN's special program "Kosovo Crisis" belongs to the youthful Bakir Hadziomerovic, today without doubt one of the best male TV moderators. Good looking, with a slightly husky but pleasant voice, with a minimum of facial grimaces, although with a bit of an act, this fellow radiates self-assuredness, which is one of the preconditions for success on TV.

**SRT – Ignoring the Work of the Common Bodies**

Since the split in Pale, Serb Radio Television (SRT) Banja Luka has in its media coverage been ignoring the work of the common state bodies of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This practice became even more conspicuous with the start of air strikes on Yugoslavia, which understandably had priority, not only for SRT, but also for other radio and TV stations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The NATO air campaign was a good excuse to completely push into the background the work of the common state bodies. Despite the fact that the common bodies have been meeting rarely and that their work has usually been inefficient, or that news on their activities sometimes has only the character of protocol, in informational hierarchy they cannot be pushed to the very end of programs. Such news, true, is announced briefly at the beginning and end of the primetime TV programs, but more extensive reports are aired towards the end of the programs. Perhaps not by motive, but certainly by effect, this practice reminds of the ugly (anti-Dayton) intentions.

News**Seventeen Young Journalists Promoted**

Seventeen young journalists from a number of media organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina received joint diplomas given by the High School of Journalism from Lille and

Media Plan Institute Sarajevo. The diplomas were handed over to the young colleagues who successfully completed their education by Yves Gaudeul, ambassador of the Republic of France. The following journalists received diplomas: Omar Filipovic (*Nova Bosna*), Sanja Hodzic (*Svijet*), Alma Kunic (RTV Visoko), Nadja Omerovic (RTV Visoko), Oleg Lokmic (*Oslobodjenje*), Admira Isic (RTV Maglaj), Nihada Alajbegovic (RTV BiH), Nudzejma Ducic (RTV Gorazde), Darko Omeragic (*Oslobodjenje*), Mustafa Radoncic (RTV Visoko), Damir Kaletovic (TV Tuzla), Leila Kurbegovic (NTV Hayat), Ehlimana Poturak (RTV Gorazde), Senad Mahmutbegovic (Radio Banovici), Anila Gajevic (RTV Vogosca), Alma Mahmutbegovic (Radio Zivinice), and Altijana Maric (*Oslobodjenje*).

Media Plan Institute President Zoran Udovicic, congratulating the students for successful completion of education, underlined that this school, together with the BBC School of Journalism, is the backbone of advanced practical training for journalists. The president of the Independent Media Commission, Christer Thelin, pointing out the problems that media and journalists are faced with, particularly praised this kind of training for young journalists in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

This school of journalism in Sarajevo is financed by the European Commission, Government of France and Media Plan. Support in technical equipment was given by Winston Foundation from Washington, Westminster Foundation for Democracy London, High School of Journalism from Lille, TF 1, Open Society Fund Bosnia-Herzegovina and Internews.

(E. M.)

Association of Electronic Media of the Republika Srpska

A number of television and radio stations in the Republika Srpska on May 26 in Banja Luka held the founding session of the Association of Electronic Media of the Republika Srpska (AEM).

About 30 media organizations joined the Association. Zoran Kalinic from Independent RTV Banja Luka was elected president and the Association adopted program documents and the statute. The main tasks of the newly founded organization are to stand for the interests and rights of electronic media before institutions of the Republika Srpska and Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as international institutions, and to call for comprehensive legal regulation of this field in line with international standards.

Concerning the establishment of the Association, the Republika Srpska Ministry of Information issued a press release which says, according to *Nezavisne novine* of June 4, 1999, that the Government and the Ministry were not involved in the Association's founding. Minister Rajko Vasic underlined that "media should not enter into suspicious, semi-private arrangements which will give birth to associations that are in this moment not in the interest of the Republika Srpska." The reason for the press release is an alleged conflict within the Association itself, because a number of founders wanted the name of the organization to have the word Banja Luka, instead of Republika Srpska, in it, and they called for joining the earlier-established Association of RTV Organizations in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Senad Avdic Punished

The editor-in-chief of the Sarajevo weekly *Slobodna Bosna*, Senad Avdic, was sentenced to three months in prison and a suspended sentence of one year for committing the criminal act of slander.

The sentence was pronounced by the Sarajevo Municipal Court, chaired by Aida Zahiragic, on the basis of criminal charges filed by the minister of the interior of the Zenica-Doboj Canton, Semsudin Mehmedovic.

The charges were filed after Senad Avdic's allegation that Mehmedovic had been helping persons accused of terrorism, and the court decided that it was slander.

Independent media organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina have said that the number of criminal suits and court verdicts against journalists' articles has been increasing rapidly. Under the Bosnian Penal Code, slander is considered a criminal act.

SRT Cameraman Arrested

A cameraman working for Serb Radio-Television from Pale, Rade Popovic, was arrested in Sarajevo on June 6 by the Sarajevo Stari Grad police administration (BiH Federation).

The grounds that he was arrested on was a verdict by Municipal Court II sentencing Popovic to seven months in prison and ordering for him to be taken in.

Popovic was employed as a driver for RTV Sarajevo until 1992, when he drove off to Pale in a company car and gave it to Serb authorities there, that is to say to the newly formed Serb RTV. RTV BiH filed criminal charges and three years ago Popovic was tried in absentia for misappropriation. The verdict went into effect on December 6, 1997 and, in view that Rade Popovic was not available to judicial organs, an arrest warrant and an order for his detention were issued.

Popovic used his legal right to ask for a retrial, and to be tried in absentia. After that he was released from detention. The main hearing is scheduled for later this month, and he will not be in detention during the trial.

The Association of Journalists of the Republika Srpska issued a press release concerning Popovic's arrest and said that this act violates in the gravest manner the professional freedom and right of journalists to do their job, and in particular violates the right and principle of free movement proclaimed by the Dayton Agreement and other acts related to human rights and freedoms.

Similar problems may affect other former employees of RTV Sarajevo (today RTV BiH), who left the organization on the eve of or during the first days of the war in 1992 and who have not returned the equipment they were using or who have taken it to areas controlled by the Serb authorities. RTV BiH has filed criminal charges against them and most of them have been sentenced in absentia.

OBN – 1,000th TV IN/TV INFO

For television as a medium, 1,000 editions of a program, even if it is a primetime news program, is nothing spectacular. However, bearing in mind all the specific characteristics of the post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina, this is significant news.

Initially envisioned as an alternative network which was supposed to enable the first post-war elections (1996) to be conducted in a free and fair environment, the Network (Open Broadcast Network – OBN) started operating on September 7, 1996. Its primetime program was first called TV IN, and then TV INFO. According to all public opinion surveys, TV INFO is the most popular program of the Network, which today covers close to 80 percent of Bosnia-Herzegovina's population.

According to survey results, out of all the potential viewers, 79.5 percent watch OBN, of which 82 percent in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and 75.1 percent in the Republika Srpska.

Despite some flaws (lack of staffing, thematic and spatial balance between the two entities, but also within the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina itself, since issues from the Bosniak-majority parts of the Federation still dominate), OBN/TV INFO is the first pan-Bosnian TV station in the real (positive) meaning of the word, although it operates under the auspices of the international community.

Human Rights Manual

Bosnia-Herzegovina is to receive its first journalistic manual for reporting on human rights. This useful publication is being prepared by associates from Media Plan Institute Sarajevo. The manual will contain five chapters: human rights in a wider context, humanitarian law, freedom of expression, freedom of the press and human rights glossary.

The book is expected to be printed at the beginning of September. After that, three journalistic workshops will be organized in Sarajevo, Banjaluka and Neum to promote the book and to discuss ways of journalistic reporting on human rights. The project is organized with the help of the Canadian non-governmental organization Alternatives and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

On the Threshold of a New Century



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