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Media News

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Closure of EROTEL

Technical and Political Prerequisites Created for Federation Television

The Independent Media Commission (IMC), supported by SFOR units, on February 17 took action to close the Croat television station in Bosnia-Herzegovina “EROTEL.” The action, which cut off EROTEL’s signal from its Mostar studio, took place at Mikuljaca, several kilometers north of Mostar, which prevented all program transmission from this station. Also, in several locations in the so-called Croat part of Bosnia technical operations were carried out to put EROTEL’s former transmitters in the function of Federal Television (FTV). According to SFOR officials, the operation was completed successfully without the use of force as security staff at the transmitters did not offer any resistance.

The Independent Media Commission, founded by the international community, which has a regulatory role in the work of electronic media in both Bosnian-Herzegovinian entities, banned the work of EROTEL on November 15 of last year due to illegal transmission of Croatian Television programming in Bosnia-Herzegovina and non-acceptance of a temporary operating license. However, due to the vacillation of SFOR which was supposed to enforce the decision, hope that something will be accomplished through negotiations, but also due to political disagreements within the international community, EROTEL continued to work unhindered.

The High Representative on July 31, 1999 became involved in settling the EROTEL issue when he passed a special decision requesting that the problem of illegal re-broadcasting of foreign programming in Bosnia-Herzegovina’s territory be resolved. Following the decision, the IMC allocated a temporary license to EROTEL which allowed it to use 11 transmitters and obliged it to hand over the remaining transmitters to the Federal Television, whose establishment had been

started. How much of an obstacle EROTEL posed for the establishment of the Federal TV can be seen already from the fact that it was occupying an unbelievable 150 transmitters.

Closure of EROTEL has created conditions for providing technical prerequisites to complete the broadcasting system in the Federation and finally establish the federal television. However, both processes are also backed by strong political prerequisites for finally resolving the media-political problem in the Federation. The new authorities in Croatia do not have even remotely such a hard-line position as the HDZ concerning the broadcasting of Croatian state TV in this country, nor are they giving unreserved political support to the Croat authorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina in their quest for status quo in Bosnia's media space. During Croatian Foreign Minister Tonino Picula's recent visit to Sarajevo, High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch used the opportunity to get strong support from the minister for the process of creating the federal television, which would reflect Croat interests among others. Picula was informed about the "obstacle" called EROTEL, and it is possible that the OHR received a green light for the action of its closure. Deputy High Representative for Media Simon Haselock stated right after the action that now both political and technical prerequisites exist for the start of broadcasting of the federal television. "Both the Croatian government and Mr. Ante Jelavic have given support to the federal television," said Haselock. He announced that the federal television will start broadcasting its own program in May on two interactive channels, as envisioned, in Bosnian and Croatian. In response to our question on whether the OHR is negotiating with Croatian journalists to participate in the work of the federal television, Haselock said "there have been lots of negotiations, but few results." However, he said that a number of experienced journalists from Zagreb and young Croat journalists from Bosnia-Herzegovina would work at the federal TV in the first stage, to make up for the lack of Croats in the present TVBiH. The IMC's Dieter Lorain said the "doors of the federal television are open to all journalists, including, without any prejudice, EROTEL's journalists."

However, so that the Croat population in Bosnia-Herzegovina, traditionally turned towards Croatian TV, would not be deprived of "their own" medium until the establishment of the federal TV's own production, HRT 1 and HRT 2 will be transmitted on the federal television's frequencies. Practically, the broadcasting of the neighboring country's television in Bosnia-Herzegovina has now been placed in a legal framework. Also, the same day that EROTEL was closed an FTV test channel started broadcasting at 8 p.m., featuring a four-hour program composed of movies and music. With the growth of this television's own production, there will be less and less HRT in it.

At the same time when EROTEL was closed, the founding board of the Public Service RTV BiH passed a decision to introduce interim management for the present RTV BiH. It will start operating when the OHR appoints a property division agent, what is expected to happen during March. Practically, this ends the mandate of TVBiH's present director Miro Purivatra and the managing bodies of this station. The interim management will run all business until the phasing out of RTVBiH and its transformation into a public service of BiH and the Federal TV.



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The anchor of TVBiH's primetime news program *Dnevnik* on that day, February 17, which was very important from a media point of view, commented in the following way on the introduction of compulsory management: "Coincidentally or not, with the closure of EROTEL, compulsory management was introduced for TVBiH." Right after that the station aired an interview with Fatima Leho, member of the founding board of the Public Service RTV BiH, nominated into the body by Alija Izetbegovic, who voted against this decision. She called the decision on compulsory management bad and in violation of all agreements with the OHR.

The closure of EROTEL and introduction of interim management did not coincide by chance. This was obviously a well-planned operation with a balanced approach, which takes into account national sensitivity, to create a public information system in the BiH Federation and remove both technical and political obstacles on all sides in the process. (R. Udovičić.)

Media Plan Monitoring

Her Majesty, the Press Conference!

The Dominance of Press Conferences and Press Releases in TV Programs

Young journalists that study in the Media Plan School of Journalism have been exhausted while covering variety of press conferences. In the same time, another significant problem they encountered while working at the desk is the processing of large number of press releases received. We have tested their observations in a short monitoring project that analyses the position and frequency of press releases and press conferences in Bosnian broadcasting media. The goal is to see how prominent is the role of such news items within prime-time newscasts and why is that so? To what extent are those 'items' or 'sources' treated as specific forms of news events and why? Are there indices that journalists in Bosnia treat press releases and press conferences as types of journalistic genres rather than mere sources of information? How does such practice influences general quality of news programs in respect to the diversity of items, relevance of sources and topics and other obligations of the Public Service Broadcasters toward the public (for example, obligation to provide interesting information and the so-called 'watchdog' function of the media in modern democracies). And finally, are there differences between broadcasters in this respect?

The basic assumption is that dominance of such types of reports or news items radically decreases quality of offered programming and has rather negative effect by producing rather passive type of journalism. Additionally, the political relevance of such programs will be reduced since the media are taking the role of mere transmitters of statements provided by established political actors. Therefore, it is rather an important issue which deserves our attention.

The method of the research is quantitative content analysis. The research focuses on the most important broadcasting media in contemporary Bosnia, thus encompassing RTRS, BHT, EROTEL and OBN. The sample was made by the principle of constructed week, encompassing the period from November 29, 1999, to January 21, 2000. Five days have been taken from five different weeks from this period, thus constructing a sample week. The period from December 20, 1999 to January 12, 2000 has been intentionally skipped since that is the period of holidays that could significantly influence the results of analysis. The analysis focuses on domestic affairs within prime-time news program regularly broadcast by all of these companies in early evening, i.e. sometimes between 19:00 and 20:00 hours. The unit of analysis are those news item that feature press release or press conferences. Such items are coded along the following dimensions: presence of other genres within item, topics, actors, and their duration. Finally, we have made the comparison of such items with other items within particular news program and we also compared news programs of different broadcasters.

Differences Between OBN and Other Broadcasters

The analysis has shown general domination of press releases and press conferences within domestic affairs program. The only exemptions are the OBN newscasts.

In the analyzed sample, the EROTEL has broadcast total of 77 items on domestic affairs in duration of 91,09 minutes. Out of that number, there were 26 items on press conferences and press releases what makes 28,63% of time that was dedicated to domestic affairs. Such significant percentage confirms that EROTEL has rather transitive character in its approach to news programming, with low level of selectivity of issues and actors according to the criteria of relevance. For example, on January 13, 2000, it broadcast a press release by Croats' Demo-Christians of Mostar (Hrvatski Demokrišćani Mostara) that expressed the importance of return to the land, and was completely irrelevant for that particular moment and totally placed out of the context of issues treated in the program. Additionally, with general lack of film materials and predominance of photos posted as a background for stories, such news programs are certainly not interesting. Within such editorial policy not much space remains for significant issues and actors. There is also an overall lack of news items dedicated to culture, education, science and human rights.

In the case of the RTRS network the situation is even worse. In the analyzed sample, the RTRS broadcast total of 94 items on domestic affairs in duration of 97,48 minutes. Out of that number, there were 53 items on press conferences and press releases occupying some 51,38 minutes of available space or 56,38%. The overall impression is that RTRS puts into program anyone who wants to say something about anything. There are no criteria of relevance of broadcast topics and actors. As in the case of EROTEL, the RTRS almost totally ignored such topics as culture, education, science and human rights, and has shown general disregard for actors other than political parties or politicians, thus broadcasting only one item on NGOs and on artists. The consequence of such editorial policy is extremely monotone program, with dozens of political actors mechanically changing on screen. This practice has in effect reduced available space for more thorough reports and items, making larger parts of the program losing their essence and relevance in continuous repetitions of statements, releases and proclamations.

The BHTV 'Dnevnik' has the same problems as RTRS and EROTEL but to somewhat lesser extent. In the analyzed sample it broadcast 85 items on domestic affairs in duration of 121,38 minutes. Out of that total there were 28 items on press releases and press conferences in duration of 23,20 minutes. Hence, some 19,11% of time dedicated to domestic affairs has been made of these non-journalistic 'genres'. Although the duration of such items is lower than in the case of EROTEL and RTRS, if we analyze the numbers of items, than it is visible that 32,94% of all items are dedicated to press conferences and press releases. Hence, although BHT was able to reduce the time awarded to press conferences and press releases, it still broadcasts rather high number of such items. In respect to the selection of topics and actors, BHTV also largely ignored topics such as science, crime and human rights and it also broadcast no items featuring NGO actors.

The only news program that is immune to such negative practices is that of the OBN. The OBN broadcast only one item that literally transmitted a press conference. If used, press releases and conferences are accompanied by background comment or report and never stand as independent news items. Thus, out of total of 50 items on domestic affairs, only 2% are press conferences. Such editorial policy has provided more space for detailed reports on current issues and even for interviews in studio with relevant actors from politics but also from other spheres of life such as culture. This has, in effect, made OBN program far more interesting and relevant than that of other three networks.

All in all, we may say that our assumption has been confirmed: There is clear dominance of press releases and press reports in news items on domestic affairs in Bosnian broadcasting media. The EROTEL, RTRS and BHT are treating press releases and press conference as specific types of events. Additionally, they treat press release as some kind of journalistic genre by broadcasting it as individual news items, frequently placed out of context and largely irrelevant.

Press Releases Make Journalists Passive

It is clear that above described practices make journalists passive, attributing mere transmissive character to those media. Instead of being the arena where different opinions are presented, contested, evaluated, rejected or accepted, these media simply promote positions of variety of political actors. They have perhaps contributed to the plurality of political landscapes, but have in effect sterilized and made their own programs extremely boring. Consequently, the space available for important issues and acute problems is radically reduced, and these media actually fail to provide adequate and relevant information to their audiences. Additionally, such flood of irrelevant information actually marginalizes other important issues that have been published. In other words, public discourse is overpoliticized and over crowded. In final instance, this can lead to the lack of interest for politics on the side of audiences what could be interesting question for some future research.

One might ask oneself what could be the reasons for such unprofessional conduct? It is clear that answer on this question would need more thorough and detailed research including interviews with journalists and news editors, but we would at least try to provide some possible proposals if not answers: First of all, one may assume that such attitude toward political actors is direct consequence or a legacy of previous communist practices when media were used as mere transmitters of top-down information flows from government and ruling party to audiences. It is possible that journalists and editors still fell obliged to publish anything political actors say. The second possibility is that journalists and editors are simply too lazy to engage in more thorough investigation and selection of sources. The third possible reason is the lack of information sources and lack of transparency in state institutions and party organizations. Since journalists are mostly deprived of their right to access the information they need, in many cases they have no choice but to turn to press conferences and press releases. This is particularly so in respect to state institutions, agencies and leading political parties. Another aspect of this problem is ignorance of leading political actors toward legitimate journalists' requests for interviews and information. The fourth and final reason is probably the general lack of media regulation in Bosnia, which makes that news editors and journalists are lacking basic guidelines for selection of actors that are to be allowed to access the medium. In other words, any political party or actor can claim the right to access the media and to express its opinions, while news editors lack basic regulation (or self-regulation) on how to select among variety of actors with different levels of relevance. The situation has to be understood as particularly difficult if one takes into account extremely fragmented and complex political landscapes in contemporary Bosnia. The lack of such guidelines provides political actors with additional forms of pressures they can exercise upon the media: if misused by political actors, freedom of expression can be turned into its opposite by exercising negative pressure on the media, reducing media's right to communicate freely.

The *Media News* Team will contact journalists, editors and political actors and will ask for their comments on the problems and proposals presented in this monitoring report. (T. Jusić)

Media Scene in Croatia Following Elections

Changing guise

In Croatian Television's primetime news program on March 13, 1993, when there was not too much good news that day, journalist Damir Matkovic announced with a smile: "*Slobodna Dalmacija* has fallen!"

That was the beginning of an item on a failed strike of *Slobodna Dalmacija's* journalists seven years ago and it was the initial point of a seven-year history, and also the future in the forthcoming period, of Croatian media.

Miroslav Kutle, Croatia's *neues riches*, who got this Split daily (together with 175 other companies!) by political decision, is at the beginning of his prison journey. As one of the first victims of the new authorities, he was arrested for pumping out more than 10 million marks from the largest Croatian distributor "Tisak" and jeopardizing the entire Croatian news business. His evil deeds at *Slobodna Dalmacija*, where he disowned journalists who had become owners of the paper under Ante Markovic's pre-war privatization laws – and elsewhere, which he did under high HDZ sponsorship, are yet waiting to be tried.

Anti-Mesic Propaganda

Slobodna Dalmacija itself, from 1993 when most professionals who had brought the paper to top journalism left it, was faithful in serving wartime, primarily anti-Bosniak propaganda, and after that certain political circles and intelligence services. It remained "faithful" to itself even in the first month of new Croatian democracy when using shaky evidence it viciously attacked today's Croatian President Stipe Mesic as a collaborator with the Yugoslav secret service UDBA. Editor-in-Chief Josip Jovic wrote a sketch about the then presidential candidate, UDBA's man Mesic. He admitted his sources were certain "state services." *Slobodna* even announced that Mesic's spokeswoman would soon be arrested and it published police data on her – height, hair color, etc. For defaming Mesic's wife they disgustingly resorted to counting her blood cells by writing that she was a Serb, which Mesic has never hidden, and that, on top of that, she does not have a Croatian I.D. card.

It is hard to believe that the anti-Mesic harangue was initiated by the ruling SDP and HSLs which had an interest in removing Mesic politically in the presidential race, but what raises doubt in the future of Croatian journalism is the fact that these two parties have not clearly defined their stand towards these attacks on Mesic. Will state-owned media, which is exactly what *Slobodna Dalmacija* is today – after Kutle was disowned – in the future continue to be used for "exposing" political opponents?

When *Slobodna Dalmacija* fell apart in 1993, a weekly called *Feral Tribune* appeared. It, together with some other papers – primarily the Rijeka-based daily *Novi list* and the weekly *Nacional* – and certain circles in culture, have done more for the final defeat of Tudjman's authorities than the entire Croatian opposition which has triumphantly risen to power. After all, new Croatian Prime Minister Ivica Racan has for months been refusing to give an interview to the "subversive" and always critical *Feral*, but to the new journalistic "democratic" elite who have found their meal ticket in *Europapres* holding editions (*Jutarnji list*, *Globus*), he personally gave an Edo Martic graphic "3.1.2000," intended for one hundred people "most deserving for Croatian democracy." Of course, no one from *Feral* was among the guests and winners, but Damir Matkovic, the character from the beginning of this story, was there.

Matkovic is today president of "Forum 21," an association of electronic media journalists who advocate for transformation of Croatian television from a state, or party television, into a public station. A number of HTV, that is to say, HDZ propagandists a little more than a year ago, when the wave of potential changes started to be felt in the air, suddenly remembered professionalism, their democratic task, and strongly launched this campaign. They resembled those former members of the Croatian Communist Party who, with HDZ membership cards in their hands, claimed that they had been undermining, successfully, the old Party. "Forum 21" has asserted itself as a mouthpiece of democratic changes, and Damir Matkovic is already figuring as the new director of HTV. The fact that he received recognition for being a proven democrat from the hands of Prime Minister Racan will not hurt him. On the contrary. Authorities do change, but that still does not mean that Croatian Television will change.

Changes at HTV Awaited

Not even cosmetic personnel changes are taking place at HTV. Director General Ivica Vrkic has offered his resignation, but no one is touching him yet. Obrad Kosovac, HTV editor-in-chief, has publicly thrown the gauntlet in Racan's face by telling him that he will not give him his resignation because it was not Racan who appointed him in the first place – but Tudjman. This was a rare, nostalgic mentioning of Tudjman in the Croatian public after the change of authorities. Kosovac used to be a member of the HDZ main board. His female colleague and an HTV editor, Hloverka Novak-Srzic, was also a member. Some years ago, she had given her own immeasurable contribution in the “leaden” Croatian years by spreading nationalistic hysteria. Unlike the consistent Kosovac, Hloverka Novak-Srzic is today washing her hands, probably sad that the new Croatian president is not Drazen Budisa. He, namely, has said recently that he greatly admires Hloverka Novak-Srzic. Those in power admire obedient journalists. This love is mutual – TV journalist Ivan Loncar has entered the parliament nominated by the opposition foursome, TV journalist Tihomir Ladisic was a spokesman for SDP and HSLS. They had been removed from the screen by the HDZ for being disobedient. Today they will probably return to HTV, but the question remains whether people will believe that they are still “disobedient.”

HTV was the most powerful tool for keeping the HDZ in power. It, among others, used Goebbels' methods in maintaining Tudjman's empire. It was not a problem for it to record applause over whistling aimed at Tudjman, which is one of the most benign forms of manipulation. With Tudjman's departure, illusions were lost that the situation could continue as it was. The last campaign was carried out more or less correctly, all together and everyone on their own, in an effort to catch the democratic train.

The new Croatian authorities are faced with huge hope of the population that better days are coming. The world's openness to Croatia promises this to some extent. However, promises of a Croatian renaissance cannot be carried out so easily and so fast. Today's favorites of Croatia's voters may already tomorrow be subjected to their rage. HTV with its huge experiences in manipulating facts may appear in the role of a political anesthetic. Perhaps because of that, HTV's transformation from a state into a public television will go a little slower than pre-election promises. The new authorities are faced with a huge task, which they did not really mention in their pre-election appearances, to unwind the ball of allocation of radio and television concessions on the basis of political correctness.

The End of the Zagreb *Vjesnik*?

A sad story of propagandistic pro-HDZ journalism is called *Vjesnik*. Its editor-in-chief until recently, Nenad Ivankovic, an unofficial mouthpiece of the HDZ and secret services in charge of defaming political opponents, human rights fighters and independent media, has resigned. This newspaper is owned by the Croatian government. The new government, judging by a statement given by Deputy Prime Minister Goran Granic, no longer needs the paper. It had touched the very bottom of circulation anyway – it was selling five thousand copies on newsstands. The remainder of the 20,000-strong circulation was being bought by state institutions. A newspaper with a great tradition, which has always been side by side with the authorities but nevertheless in its golden years had a circulation of more than 100,000 with a respectable foreign policy section, is in the danger of being rejected as HDZ media garbage. Last Tuesday Igor Mandic was appointed new editor-in-chief of *Vjesnik*. The arrival of the prominent literary critic in this position is an attempt to save the paper. Not long ago Mandic had been viciously fired upon from media howitzers for making a visit to Belgrade. “I will abolish all language of hatred,” Mandic promised.

Vecernji list is another story, with a much higher circulation and more profitable. This daily has a phantom owner from the Virgin Islands where money from Croatia has been pouring off and being

laundered. The new authorities have promised to solve the mystery of the paper's ownership. This will be – if it ever sees the light of day – a typical story from Croatia about muddy financial-political-media actions and transactions.

The truth that not everything which is laundered is clean is proving to be true in Croatia – especially if it refers to money and brains. (Goran Vezic – STINA/SAFAX)

I n t e r n e t C o n t r o l – Y e s o r N o ? (3)

Media News is publishing articles featuring opinions of journalists, scientific and other public workers, as well as Internet surf fans, on the topic – does the Internet need special regulation. We were inspired by the Conference on the Internet, held early December last year in Paris, in which one of the most important conclusions was that Internet control must not be allowed because it would be a kind of censorship which would particularly suit totalitarian regimes in the world. On the other hand, the gathering called for banning content that instigates people to commit so-called generally accepted criminal acts, such as pimping, violence, theft...

Responsibility of Authors and Providers

(Vladan Radosavljevic, Chief Editor, Media Center Belgrade)

The topic of content control and censorship of the Internet's global supply is not one that attracts a lot of interest in Serbia among regular users, "passionate surfers," providers, lawmakers, and those whose duty it is to uphold the law. Of course, not because content control of what is offered on the Internet is not important or attractive enough, nor because there are no people in this region who could give interesting and competent judgment on the topic. This is not discussed in Serbia because the unregulated situation, which in the normal world is true of cyber space, here extends to all segments of life and society, to everyday lives and everyday reality. In other words, in a country in which literally everything is banned and allowed at the same time, theorizing about the possibilities of Internet abuse and how to prevent it is completely in the background, pushed back in the face of everyday dangers of other illegalities and obvious injustices. When you are "attacked" from almost all Belgrade newsstands by the most perverted pictures in hyper-productive porno literature, in regular daily and weekly press there are simply no articles dealing with Internet control or at least informing readers that this issue is of great importance in the world. Of course, in line with that, there is also no concrete action that would in any way restrict local providers or individual site creators.

A recent event that resembles what we might call control of the Internet's content has caused some concern: the best known Yugoslav provider made it impossible to visit the site of a student anti-governmental organization "Otpor" (*resistance*), which has been active lately in organizing anti-Milosevic and anti-regime campaigns. This action, without doubt, seems to be politically motivated, but it may actually not be. Members of "Otpor," namely, had succeeded in finding out all the addresses of this provider's subscribers (tens of thousands of them) and had started sending them committed messages. This activity was soon discovered and the provider denied "Otpor" further hospitality.

All this general information on the Internet situation in Serbia has not, however, brought us any closer to the posed question and dilemma.

And really, whether and how to control the Internet? Whether and how to act as an editor-in-chief of everything that could via computer appear on the desk of the user?

The answer to the first question is, without doubt – yes!

As to the second, for now, there is no answer. Actually, it cannot be offered easily, unless on a theoretical level. In other words, what else can now be envisioned as the solution except the

principled platitude that the judiciary and police should do their work, as in other fields. A solution viewed in this way would mean that each individual site author is responsible for the content of the site. But providers who sell or rent their space also have a lot of responsibility. The question is, however, to what extent can large providers organize themselves to control content that is distributed via them and to what extent are they willing to accept this responsibility.

Of course, a specific problem is harmonizing legal regulations in all countries of the world, in different cultures and views of what should be banned and what allowed.

But we are now partly entering the field of philosophy, which certainly exceeds the offered space, as well as the understanding of the average everyday user who uses the Internet for reasons of journalism or just plain curiosity.

R e s p o n s i b i l i t y f o r P e a c e

Media, Truth and Reconciliation (2)

Sarajevo hosted a roundtable on February 4 on the topic “Truth and Reconciliation,” which was attended by prominent public figures from across Bosnia-Herzegovina, neighboring Croatia and FR Yugoslavia, as well as representatives of international organizations and diplomatic missions. The aim of the gathering was to launch a general civil initiative in Bosnia-Herzegovina to achieve consensus on acknowledging violence suffered by all victims during the recent war. Establishment of a Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, whose purpose would be to objectively and professionally report on the causes and nature of the suffered violence, would prevent crimes from repeating.

We asked the prominent guests, experts in different areas of society, whether media can influence the process of reconciliation and uncovering of truth, and in what way that can be done.

“A Change in the Political Environment is Needed”

(Miodrag Zivanovic, Alternative Council of Ministers, Banja Luka)

Media are an inevitable factor of our lives with a lot of influence on everyday happenings, which makes their role in the reconciliation process very significant. Unfortunately media, primarily broadcasters which have the biggest influence, are as divided as our entire lives are divided. It would be good if media were to speak more about pleasant issues and coexistence and less about what is brutal, harsh and cruel. I believe in coexistence of all people in this region, but I think that we need a change in the political environment, we need to have people who look forward to come to the center of decision-making, because living divided is, above anything else, uncivilized.

“It’s Important for Truth to Come Out, Even if it Hurts”

(Marko Orsolich, Multi-Religious and Multi-Cultural Center “Zajedno”, Sarajevo)

Media have never in any system, especially in these systems which incline towards totalitarianism, been independent. Journalists should not be accused unjustifiably because there are many individuals among them who have done all they could for the truth to come out. The role of media in the reconciliation process is huge because individuals or groups of people keep putting off this process. I think that media will play their role to enable the truth – even if it is painful – to reach every man.

“Objective and Professional Media – Bearers of Positive Processes”

(Srdjan Dizdarevic, Helsinki Human Rights Committee in BiH, Sarajevo)

Bosnia-Herzegovina is a country without democratic tradition and political culture, without identification of public opinion with fundamental values that make up the values of civilized countries. In that sense the role of media in what has been negative so far has been huge. The vast majority of the population identify themselves with media, in particular with broadcasters, accepting what they hear from them as the truth.

According to some assessments, 85 percent of viewers of primetime news programs on TV believe what is said in the program. Hence, in the same way that media have used inflammatory language and led to the bloody conflict, they can act in the opposite direction and stimulate truth, reconciliation, rehabilitation, tolerance and reconstruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Positive process will have a bigger chance to be carried by media which are objective and professional than by those who are in the service of political tendencies.

“The Public Should be Allowed to Form Their Own Stand”

(Vlado Bilic, Editor-in-Chief, Radio Station Vrhbosna)

When war breaks out, you have journalists who clearly take one or the other side. Depending on your personal decision, you almost always take one of the sides. After war, journalism enters another framework. The most important thing is that there are always two sides, that is to say two truths, and that you allow the public to take their own stand, not to impose it on them. Following this war, there have not been any media-related incidents. Proof of that is the IMC, which has pronounced only several penalties for broadcasting of national or chauvinist messages. When young people start working in media, who will adopt European codes of conduct, such violations will not happen at all. The question that is raised is whether truth is – truth? Is your truth my truth? Truth is one.

“Education of Staff is Needed for Media to do Their Work”

(Duska Jurisic, News Program Journalist-Editor, OBN)

Media can facilitate the reconciliation process. What we need is education of journalists to do their work. People should first learn how to do their work so that they can do it professionally. We in Bosnia-Herzegovina have few media which apply so-called objective journalism, which means two sides to each issue. I think the public should be made aware of what sorts of challenges objective and professional journalists encounter.

“It is More Profitable to Speak About Evil”

(Jezdimir Milosevic, Association of Citizens “Protector”, Ilidza)

The organization I work for collects stories about coexistence among all three peoples during the war. These were situations when people summoned enough courage to help one another! Media could also speak fairly about such experiences. However, it is more profitable to speak about evil because it boosts newspaper circulations and increases ratings. I am afraid that media influenced by certain political structures do not want to influence the reconciliation process. There should be more talk of coexistence, tolerance and rehabilitation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

“Changes in Croatia Will Have a Positive Impact on BiH”

(Kresimir Zubak, New Croat Initiative, Sarajevo)

Media can play a very important role in revealing the truth, and some have already done a lot to that effect. I hope that the circle of independent media will be expanded and that a political environment will be created to enable truth and reconciliation to be reached. Changes in Croatia have had a reflection on media in that country. They have been relieved of pressure from the ruling party and this will have a positive impact on Bosnia-Herzegovina, primarily on the BiH Federation. Unfortunately, most media in Bosnia-Herzegovina are politically dependent. In order to become free of this dependence they must, before anything else, become financially independent.

“Truth is Complete Only if Both Victims and Criminals Speak”

(Mirsad Tokaca, President, Commission for Investigating War Crimes, Sarajevo)

The role of media in spreading truth and reconciliation is one of its key roles. With regard of answering the question of whether I think media are responsible for the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, my answer is: absolutely not! They have always been an extended arm of precisely planned actions and they were usually used to carry out these actions. But now the situation is changing. We will always have media which work for someone, even in democratic society, but on the other hand we will have media which are independent and which view things from a different angle. Therefore, we will have a social dialog.

In spreading truth and reconciliation, media have an important role in carrying thousands of stories of innocent victims, but also stories with criminals. Truth will be complete only if both the victims and the criminals speak. If we want to shed light on the whole ambiance in which war happened, the role of the media will be irreplaceable.

I am surprised that activities on hearing the stories of victims have died down. That activity is more important now, in peace, than it was in war. For the sake of collective memory, for the sake of collective warning.

(Survey carried out by students of Media Plan's School of Journalism D. Tankosic and D. Aleksic).

N e w s

New Independent Media Commission Penalties

The Independent Media Commission (IMC) Enforcement Panel passed decisions on February 6 on seven violations of the IMC rules.

For the first time the Panel discussed cases of copyright violations and fined NTV “Patria” from Dobož and TV “Bel” from Banja Luka with 300 KM and 200 KM respectively for showing movies without having legally purchased the right to do so.

HRTV Herceg Bosna, Croat Radio Station Mostar, HTV Mostar and HTV Mostar Oskar-C were warned for failing to apply the principles of impartiality in the election period. By systematically promoting the interests of one political party, the HDZ, at the expense of others, these stations violated the rule of “Fair and Impartial Program Editing.” Sanctions for such violations are much

harsher, but since this was the first time these stations committed the violation, it was decided they would only be warned.

RTV Visegrad was ordered to stop broadcasting because it did not have an IMC license. The station started broadcasting on January 13 although it had not applied for a license, nor had received one.

***Dnevni Avaz* Opens Its Own Printing House**

The newspaper *Dnevni avaz* started publishing in its own printing house on February 15, 2000 under the name “Avaz.” The paper had announced in mid-October that it would open its own printing house. Prior to that, the paper was printed by the “Oko” company.

Supervisory Body for Print Media

With the establishment of a BiH Press Council, a working group for self-regulation of print media (composed of representatives of the IMC and journalist associations in Bosnia-Herzegovina) announced that it would launch a process of protecting media freedoms and the public from press responsibility. Print media, which so far had not had a body to answer to (such as the IMC for broadcasters), now have a “supervisory body.” The Council’s main objectives will be to fight for press freedom and for their own self-regulation.

One of the Council’s functions is to be addressed by citizens if they are not satisfied with a certain newspaper article. If the Council finds the complaint to be true, the publication in question will have to publish an apology.

The body is composed of 11 members and it will be something like an advisory body which will refer criticism to editors and ensure that the Press Code is implemented. It will not have the power to impose fines on anyone.

Zinaida Babovic, IMC spokesperson, resolutely denied that the Council will be some sort of a media censor. She said the “profession will regulate itself and in that way protect itself from what the state would otherwise impose on it.”

It has not been announced when the Council will start working. In the beginning it will be financed by the international community.

IMC Bans Paid Political Marketing

The Independent Media Commission (IMC) on February 10 passed a new restrictive decision banning all paid political advertisements on broadcasters in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The decision was made at the request of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) and High Representative. The draft Permanent Election Law stipulates that political marketing shall be allowed in private media and shall be banned in public media. This provision provoked fiery protests from managers of public media who alleged they were discriminated by this solution.

The Independent Union of Professional Journalists has protested against this latest decision maintaining that “due to such creation of media policy in Bosnia-Herzegovina, only international media and media controlled by national authorities will continue to exist.” According to the Union, the international community is cutting down on assistance to media in this country but is not allowing them to make their own money in the market game.

According to commercial media officials, public media are in a much more favorable position because they receive money from budgets. In addition, they make money from marketing of business enterprises which, through their boards controlled by the ruling political parties, are animated to buy marketing services from public media which are usually in the service of the ruling political options.

On the other hand, directors of many public media in Bosnia-Herzegovina say that the state (municipalities) is not paying its debts to them, which puts them in a very grave economic situation.

When asked about the purpose of the ban, the IMC explained that it had received the request from the PIC which “expressed the wish to have a complete ban imposed on paid political advertising until the local elections,” in order to ensure an equal election race.

Cooperation Between Journalism Faculties and Media Plan

Representatives of the Journalism Departments of the Faculty of Political Sciences in Sarajevo and Philosophical Faculty in Tuzla visited Sarajevo-based Media Plan Institute to discuss cooperation potentials between these schools and the Media Plan School of Journalism. Also participating in the meeting was Marc Capelle, director of the International Department at the High School of Journalism in Lille, France, a partner of Media Plan. General agreement was reached on cooperation among these four institutions on training projects for young journalists.

One of the first steps will be to organize joint seminars for students from these faculties and Media Plan Institute’s School of Journalism. Through these seminars, experienced journalists from Bosnia-Herzegovina and France will convey practical know-how to students on the principles of reporting from crisis situations, investigative journalism, protection of journalist freedoms and other significant areas of journalistic work. In addition, lecturers from the High School of Journalism in Lille, who have been lecturing at the Media Plan School for two years, will expand their activities to the Sarajevo and Tuzla faculties.

Competition for Journalism School in March

Media Plan Institute in the second half of March will announce a competition to enroll students of the third class in its Sarajevo-based School of Journalism, generation 2000/2001. Candidates from Bosnia-Herzegovina and other countries of southeast Europe may apply. For additional information, please call 387 (71) 206 542, 213 078 and 213 251.

**If somebody interfere with your professional, journalistic work call
SOS – open line for journalists - 078 213 442 Media Plan Banja Luka**



Listen with your ears!



Look with your eyes!



Think with your head!

△

Council of Media Plan Institute: Prof. Dr. Muhamed Nuhic, Hamza Baksic (Sarajevo); Perica Vucinic (Banja Luka); M.S. Lenart Setinc (Ljubljana); Prof. Dr. Mario Plenkovic (Zagreb); M.S. Loius de la Ronciere (Paris); M.S. Aleksandar Todorovic (Montreaux); Prof. Dr. Slavo Kukic (Mostar), Prof.Dr. Miroljub Radojkovic (Beograd)