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Media Privatization

With New Owners – What Does the Future Hold?

All employees in the newly privatized enterprises “Oslobodjenje” and “Vecernje novine” are asking themselves this question. In the previous system the above headline would probably end with an exalted message: “Into a bright future!” Today, at a time of an anarchic and divided media market, not even the greatest optimists can avoid seriously thinking about what will follow after the final decision that took these two respectable papers from a state of social, formally state-owned, but practically no one’s ownership, to a new ownership status.

Five daily papers are now published in Bosnia-Herzegovina. “Oslobodjenje” and “Vecernje novine” (Sarajevo), and “Glas srpski,” earlier called “Glas” (Banja Luka), have many years of tradition. After the war two new dailies were launched: “Dnevni avaz” (Sarajevo) and “Nezavisne novine” (Banja Luka). Both are private. “Oslobodjenje,” “Vecernje novine” and “Nezavisne novine” in certain periods of post-war development were considerably helped from the international community’s financial funds for development of independent journalism. “Avaz” managed best on the market with financial injections (and privileges) of the political party in power and its sympathizers from local and foreign business. “Glas srpski” is the only daily which officially and transparently carried the attribute of being state owned. “Oslobodjenje” was formally state owned, but the state, since the time of the first multiparty elections in 1990, stopped having any influence on this paper, while it, for its part, stopped having any use of it. “Vecernje novine” tried to carry out a privatization process under a prewar, so-called Markovic Law on Privatization, and its workers acquired a large package of stock in their paper. In the meantime, the new authorities started a new privatization procedure, while the workers’ stock became worthless due to heavy debts incurred by the company. “Avaz” is the only media house that is now investing. An imposing building of this daily is rising in the new part of town.

“Oslobodjenje” Owned By Its Workers

The new owners of the oldest Bosnian-Herzegovinian daily “Oslobodjenje” are 141 employees, General Manager Salko Hasanefendic, and Temin Dedic, a strategic partner from Germany who publishes “Oslobodjenje’s” foreign edition. Instead of the starting 2.8 million marks, the employees, who were the only participants in the tender, offered 4.82 million marks. The employees, thanks to loans, will invest more than one million marks in reconstruction of the paper’s building and launching new editions.

The strategic investor, who paid the ready-money participation and helped the employees take part in the tender, plans to continue investing in the paper, said Hasanefendic following the FBiH Privatization Agency’s announcement of the best bidder’s identity.

Dedic paid, on behalf of the employees, 283,000 marks as deposit for participation in the tender. The partner will take part in reconstruction of the destroyed building which the Sarajevo authorities had once planned to conserve and proclaim a memorial of uricide.

The signatories to the partnership contract committed to invest 1.295 million marks over the next three years in reconstruction of the building and launching new editions. Another condition for buying “Oslobodjenje” was to maintain the employment levels and to employ five more journalists. “Oslobodjenje’s” payroll has 211 names on it, and the only bidder in the tender promised to employ 40 more journalists.

Although the FBiH Privatization Agency before revealing the identity could not give points for the buyer’s credibility, which will be done subsequently, it is clear that this criterion cannot dispute the employees’ purchase of the paper. Among the partners in this acquisition are longtime journalists and workers who won “Oslobodjenje” the title of paper of the year in 1992, and contributed to receiving many international awards during its 57 years of existence.

Despite its long tradition and awards, the tender for the sale of “Oslobodjenje,” which had been owned 100 percent by the state, did not attract other bids. The public invitation for bids was announced early March in “Vecernje novine” and the Vienna “Standard.”

(According to “Oslobodjenje”, April 26)

Alden Print Buys “Vecernje novine”

“Vecernje novine’s” present printer, the Sarajevo enterprise Alden Print, bought this daily newspaper. Privatization was carried out through a new emission of shares worth half a million marks, since losses as of 31.12.1999 amounted to 257,251 KM more than the company’s total capital.



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“Because losses higher than the total capital of the company were incurred by ‘Vecernje novine,’ there was no stock capital to privatize. Therefore, it was decided to sell it through a new emission of stock,” said Zlatan Dedic, assistant director of the Federal Privatization Agency.

The buyer of “Vecernje novine” committed, in addition to purchasing the new stock emission of half a million marks, that he will cover the 257,251 KM losses, and invest another 550,000 KM in computer infrastructure, expansion of the correspondent network, and professional training of employees (the condition was 250,000 KM). In addition, his obligation is to keep the present 89 employees and to maintain the principles of the present editorial policy. Under the tender conditions, all of these investments must be made in money and they belong to the company.

An additional condition was related to business reputation and experience in the editorial and printing business. (According to “Vecernje novine”, April 26)

No Change in the Editorial Policy

The first question asked by journalists and the public is whether the new bosses will seek a change in the editorial policy. This question is asked more seriously in the case of “Vecernje novine,” whose 100 percent owner is outside the present company. The following people told “Media News” what the new owners’ strategies will be:

Emir Hrustanovic, “Oslobodjenje” Managing Board President

“Privatization of the paper by its employees has a huge psychological significance. We had considered ‘Oslobodjenje’ to be ‘our own’ even before this. However, now that we have also formally become its owners, the feeling of personal responsibility at work will become stronger. Each mark must be earned and cannot be spent too easily. We have taken our fate into our own hands and we must not gamble away this chance,” says Hrustanovic.

“Oslobodjenje’s” priority task is to reschedule huge debts. The company is already negotiating with certain banks and expects to get a long-term loan, which will provide resources to return existing debts and to develop. The paper’s management is not expecting significant international donations and “Oslobodjenje” is not thinking about them, but is oriented towards market-driven business.

“The time of foreign donations has passed. We expect foreign assistance in education of staff and modernization of computer equipment, but we do not expect any cash to boost our business,” says Hrustanovic.

“Oslobodjenje” hopes that its privatization will have a positive impact on clinching business deals with foreign and domestic partners.

“Many people, in particularly foreigners, have told us that if we were in private hands, everything would be easy. Now we have solved that problem. We are hoping to have healthy partnership relations with related firms. The worst thing is when you belong to no one, because people are afraid to do business with you,” says the president of “Oslobodjenje’s” Managing Board.

Zlatko Vukmirovic, “Vecernje novine” Deputy Editor-in-Chief:

Journalists of “Vecernje novine” do not expect the new owner to be able to influence the paper’s editorial policy. According to deputy editor-in-chief Zlatko Vukmirovic, a condition for the paper to be sold is that the Mission Statement made by the “Vecernje novine” staff is respected. This document, which presents the principles of media operation, underlines that the new owner cannot undertake acts that may jeopardize the paper’s independent editorial policy. The new owner, the Alden Print company, has fully accepted this stand.

Although the new owner committed to keep the present number of employees, “Vecernje novine” expects some staffing changes.

“The new owner is expected to bring in fresh money, which he obliged to do under the tender when he made the acquisition. With fresh money and a more normal business situation, conditions will be created to bring in professional individuals, quality journalists and editors who will deal with the situation. Therefore, there will certainly be changes,” says Vukmirovic.

Edo Numic, Alden Print Director:

According to the director of Alden Print, the company that bought “Vecernje novine,” the main motivation to buy the paper was an economic one. “We are primarily interested in profits and we enter any deal from that viewpoint. We completely support the attempts of the paper’s journalists to have an independent Bosnian-Herzegovinian paper. We do not want ‘Vecernje novine’ to fall under anyone’s national, partisan or religious influence,” Numic explains.

To our question of whether Alden Print has made a development plan for the paper, Numic says his firm will leave nothing to chance and has given itself the task of boosting circulation and professionalism of the paper. “In order to return ‘Vecernje novine’ to the pre-war level, it is necessary to refresh the paper’s staffing structure with new professional forces. The primary task is to build a strong correspondent network. At least eight pages in the paper will be dedicated to events from different parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. For example, when a reader from the Tuzla Canton buys the paper, he will be able to find, along with general information, also everything he might want to know about life in his canton. In the future we will have editions which will contain special supplements on several pages for each region the paper is distributed in. We are also planning a new conquest of the Republika Srpska market and opening of a bureau in Banja Luka,” says Numic.

According to the new owner, the paper’s sale into private hands will also reflect on responsibility of employees. “There have been cases of an employee being given a task and not carrying it out responsibly, because he took his obligation carelessly. Now that will be different. A private company creates a higher level of responsibility. Such a worker in a private company knows that his existence depends on the job being done, which will certainly promote business,” Numic opines.

Edo Numic proudly stresses that Alden Print received a one million mark credit from the U.S. government development agency USAID, which it had invested correctly, paid back and made profit. “That is reference and proof that we plan our business carefully and leave nothing to chance. We will pay back ‘Vecernje novine’s’ debts, and than start to improve the paper on the market and professionally,” Numic concludes.

Expectation Instead of Despair

There are at least three important characteristics of this first big media privatization in Bosnia-Herzegovina. First, these papers were bought by local buyers and no foreigners were interested in the tenders. Second, both papers entered privatization with large debts. Third, all actors in this processes emphasize that they will maintain or even reinforce the papers’ independent editorial policies.

Both buyers were led primarily by an economic interest, but instead of an immediately strong development injection, which would have the chance of opening the door to profits, the buyers will first have to overcome dubiousness. They are appearing first of all as saviors, who will not allow these media to close because it is primarily to them that these media are big financial debtors. It yet remains to be seen how much money will be left available to invest in the papers’ strategic development, quality, circulation and distribution, which is the foundation of market positioning.

It is obvious that privatization, at least from a psychological point of view, has ended the agony that both papers had found themselves in. The situation of despair is now replaced by a state of expectation. A jump has been made over the psychological barrier that appeared lately before any productive and innovative ideas among journalists and other employees. This is particularly important for the workers of “Oslobodjenje,” who have now become co-owners of their paper.

As far as independence is concerned, after big promises comes a big task to make an independent, quality, well read and profitable paper. It seems to us that it is still not time for the international community to completely withdraw from this field, but the time is definitely over for relying on it without grappling with the market, whatever it may be like. (Z.Udovicic)

Liberalization of the Media Sphere in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Media and the Struggle for Power

The recent local elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina pointed to positive changes in the political, as well as the media sphere in this country, confirming the slow, but certain liberalization processes. Compared to the character of media operation during the series of earlier elections, there was a noticeable decline in complaints regarding the work of media, as well as complaints regarding political party conduct towards media, which is certainly a positive general indicator that the standard of functioning of these actors during the election period was raised.

This development is an ideal indicator of the overall socio-economic and political situation in the country. Development of the media sphere from 1996 to 2000, and in particular the conduct of media and political actors during elections, shows that a fierce battle is being fought along two key lines representing the power distribution in the present situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina:

- the transition from an authoritarian system of rule towards democratic society is one of the key processes that determines overall events in the country,
- the multi-ethnic reconciliation process is a pre-condition of stability in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in the entire region (ESI, 1999).

The character of Bosnia-Herzegovina's present organization may best be described as an illiberal democracy (Zakaria, 1997) – a system in which the government is chosen in free elections, but there are no mechanisms of power distribution, and therefore institutions for protecting the individual from this, homogenous government do not function. In such conditions, a government chosen in elections and concentrated in a single (national) party penetrates all segments of life, completely neglecting the rights of individuals, which are constitutionally guaranteed in liberal western democracies.

As an excellent study made by the European Stability Initiative (ESI, 1999) has shown, this government system in Bosnia-Herzegovina has led to almost feudal principles of power distribution, in which the whole system of governing ethnically homogenous territory is concentrated in the hands of a narrow circle of officials from ruling parties. As a consequence of such relations, even media themselves were subject to almost complete control of the ruling structures, which was particularly noticeable during and immediately after the war. The media scene in Bosnia-Herzegovina in that period was characterized by a non-existent public sphere and public opinion, prevented media access for opposition actors and members of "other" peoples (particularly in the case of official state media), violations of the fundamental rights to information and freedom of expression, including physical deterrence of journalists through imprisonment, attacks, destruction of equipment, and so on.

Creation of Regulatory Mechanisms: 1996-1998

As a consequence of the general socio-economic and political conditions, the conduct of most media during the national 1996 elections and local 1997 elections was very problematic. Media seriously compromised these elections, continuing the inflammatory practice from the wartime period, while the media space remained divided along ethnic lines. This self-containment and exclusiveness of media resulted in that the elections had the character of an ethnic census of the population or even a secession referendum, rather than being a democratic election of Bosnia-Herzegovina's future authorities. Media were used primarily as generators of fear among ethnic groups, not as a tool for producing and distributing relevant information. In this situation, the very principle of voting was reduced to an irrational act of self-isolation and distancing from "other" ethnic groups, and by no means had the character of a democratic voting of citizens on future forms of government in the country. Numerous cases of election blackout violations were registered since the OSCE did not have, or was

unable to use mechanisms for punishing perpetrators (Wheeler, 1996; Media Plan Institute, 1997; Domi, 1998:12).

Still, in 1997 initial significant progress was made towards establishing certain principles and mechanisms of regulating media conduct in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Certainly the most important action was the seizure of SRT transmitters by SFOR due to inflammatory language and language of hatred regarding the 1997 local elections. In addition to this, that year for the first time candidates were removed from election lists: three HDZ candidates were removed after HTV Mostar refused to follow directives of the Media Commission. A political party was punished, not a media organization which acted as an extended arm of political power. During the 1997 elections, there was noticeable progress in professionalization of several independent media, in particular OBN, the Sarajevo dailies "Oslobodjenje" and "Vecernje novine", and the Banja Luka daily "Dnevne nezavisne novine", which promoted political pluralism by giving considerable coverage to opposition parties. However, even these media gave priority to parties based in the entities that they themselves are from.

It was only during the 1998 election period that an efficient regulation mechanism started to be created. The Media Experts Commission operating within the OSCE used its mandate to resolve 201 allegations of inappropriate media conduct during the election period. It was found that media organizations mostly adhered to the Provisional Election Commission Rules and Regulations, and that the influence of hard-liners on media in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a whole had declined. Different parties were given access even to government-controlled media, which had not earlier been the case in this country. Candidates from 83 political parties and independent candidates had access to some 207 radio stations and more than 70 television stations. During the election campaign, presidential and other debates for candidacy to senior positions were held for the first time. It may be said that the well-argued presentation of candidates and relevance of information became very important campaign aspects, and voters were regularly informed for the first time about all aspects of the election process (Domi, 1998: 7-9). However, despite considerable progress in media conduct during the 1998 elections, cases of harassment of journalists on the part of the police and authorities continued to be reported throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina. The ruling structures continued to obstruct freedom of expression in media and often violated journalists' rights to seek and collect information. It was also noticed that immediately following the elections, media returned to their old principles of biased reporting and discrimination against opposition parties (Domi, 1999:8).

According to Media Plan Institute analysis, citizens were informed about the election procedure much more than they were able to find out what the nominated candidates or parties running in the elections were offering in their platforms. Namely, most parties actually did not develop their platforms, and instead addressed voters with general proclamations and goals. That is why media reproduced an anemic promotional picture of political parties based more or less on global national or partisan platforms and goals. This problem was also noticed in the 2000 local elections. In a debate aired on OBN program in March 2000, most of the prominent participants agreed that election programs on television and radio were "boring," "uninventive", and "sloganeering."

Liberalization of the Media Sphere: The 2000 Elections

Despite objective difficulties, the processes of systematizing regulatory mechanisms, and the accompanying media liberalization, are continuing. According to general impressions and assessments of the IMC, during the election campaign for the local elections held in April of 2000, broadcasters generally adhered to the Code for Elections, and print media paid a lot of attention to the rules effective in election periods, particularly those related to election blackout. Pursuant to this, the number of complaints regarding media conduct and political party activities towards media declined by 50 percent in comparison to the 1998 elections. Namely, the IMC received a total of 86 complaints by April 7, of which 35 were filed by broadcasters and 51 by political subjects. The change in the character of the lodged complaints is very significant: more and more journalists were reporting incidents that resulted from political pressure (OSCE BiH Press Release, April 7, 2000).

Based on this, it can be assumed that regulatory mechanisms have undergone further institutionalization, and that progress has occurred from punishing media for violations to protection of media from outside pressure. This could indicate a gradual distancing of media from political mechanisms of power and control, as well as a process of liberalization of the media sphere as a whole. It is very significant that journalists are increasingly using the existing mechanisms to protect their

freedom, which points to enhanced reputation of the IMC as the fundamental regulatory body. It seems that media in Bosnia-Herzegovina are entering a new development phase, in which they will further distance themselves from political power structures. The IMC will certainly play the key role in these processes, but the process of media privatization will also considerably shape the future character of the media scene in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

However, we should not fool ourselves into thinking that the political actors are willingly accepting this development. Aware that one of the basic tools for maintaining power is slipping away, authoritarian political structures are still trying to put pressure on media in order to prolong their privileged position in the public sphere as much as they can. For example, “dominant political parties tried to influence editorial decisions related to the content of news of election character, as well as promotional program broadcast during the pre-election period” (Regan McCarthy, OSCE Senior Media Advisor, published in OSCE BiH Press Release, 7 April, 2000). The latest pressure on journalists from the independent radio station Studio N in Livno, as well as the symptomatic reaction of the cantonal government, are only an illustration that political power centers, officially or undercover, have not given up their intentions towards journalists. This certainly points to a continuation of the struggle for information domination, which is one of the key factors of maintaining and reproducing power in the present-day Bosnia-Herzegovina. (T. Jusic)

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P r e s s u r e o n J o u r n a l i s t s

Call for Lynch and “Justification” of the Authorities

Pressure on journalists continues. According to the Sarajevo “Dani,” two independent journalists from Livno, owners and editors of the radio station Studio N – Zeljka Mihaljevic and Frano Mioc – are now under surveillance. Anonymous leaflet writers are calling for a lynch, and instead of protection, the local authorities have stated that they do not like the journalists either. Here is what appeared one April morning on leaflets in Livno:

“Croat brothers and sisters, a radio station under the name ‘Studio N’ has been operating in our town for quite some time now, an allegedly independent station. Financed by international backroom dealers, it is led by ‘independent journalists’, Frano Mioc, code name Caesar, former president of the Municipal Conference of the Socialist League of the Working People of Livno (semi-manufactured Chetnik Borko Arnaut), and Zeljka Mihaljevic, also known as Jovanka (sometimes Serb, sometimes Croat, but most often nothing), former leader of the Marxist center in Livno. (...) Not for a handful, but for an abundance of laundered dollars and marks, she and he overnight became ‘independent and democratically committed journalists.’ (...) In anti-Croat activities, the two of them have acquired quite

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a big and long experience. (...) Brothers and sisters, recognize finally amongst yourselves the pathetic mercenaries whose only interest is their own fat wallet and to besmirch as much as they can everything that has a Croat prefix. (...) International officials, do not give money to our local traitors any more (their price has fallen), because their hatred towards everything that is Croat is so big that they will do their homework for you even for free.”

To the request of the Office of the High Representative to Bosnia-Herzegovina for an investigation into this call for lynch of the two journalists, the president of the Cantonal Government, Mirko Mihaljevic, replied:

“We are obliged right at the beginning, for the sake of truth, to tell the public and everyone who is making a connection between this leaflet and the Government, that they are on the wrong track and are greatly mistaken, unless this leaflet was conceived to serve other actions and higher goals. It should be said straight away that the author of this leaflet could be anyone: frustrated losers in the recent elections, certain representatives of the international community for whom nothing here is good, sick individuals, envious colleagues, and even the journalists themselves who are called upon in the leaflet. (...) Finally, we must say that no one has the exclusive right to call themselves independent or dependent if the public has a different opinion about that. They are what the public says, and we will not speak about anyone’s writing, independence, or anything like that – at least for now.”

C o u n c i l o f E u r o p e R e c o m m e n d a t i o n s

Protection of Sources of Information

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on March 8 adopted Recommendation number R (2000) for member states on the right of journalists not to disclose their sources of information. The Council of Europe recommendation is based on earlier established precedents. The latest decision of the Committee of Ministers recalls these precedents and establishes the following principles:

1. Article 10 of the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) confirms the fundamental right to freedom of expression. The recommendation expands and confirms the exercise of Article 10 to protection of confidentiality of a source.
2. Many journalists have expressed in professional codes of conduct their obligation not to disclose their sources of information in case they received the information confidentially.
3. The exercise by journalists of their right not to disclose their sources of information carries with it duties and responsibilities, such as avoiding unauthorized use of confidentiality of a source and excessive use of “anonymous” sources.

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe called on all member states to implement in their domestic law and practice the principles contained in this recommendation, to disseminate widely this recommendation, and to bring it to the attention of public authorities, police authorities and the judiciary, as well as to make it available to journalists, the media and their professional organizations.

The OSCE Mission to BiH supported the decision of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Regan McCarthy, OSCE Senior Media Advisor, stated that protection of confidential sources of information is one of the most important steps that any democratic society can take to promote freedom of media and protection of journalist rights, in particular in countries with authoritarian regimes and post-war countries.

Although Bosnia-Herzegovina is still not a member of the Council of Europe, when it applies for membership, it will be reviewed how much the rules and principles of the Committee of Ministers have been respected.

Association of Journalists of the Republika Srpska

The Association of Journalists of the Republika Srpska (UN RS) was founded in June of 1996 and it gathers almost 80 percent of all professional journalists in the Republika Srpska. It is a full-fledged member of the International Federation of Journalists. Its members are employees in private and government media, and there is also an increasing number of freelance journalists. Under the Statute, a membership card of the UN RS may be given to any journalist employed by a media organization for at least two years or a freelance journalist who has lived off journalism for at least three years.

The UN RS has its own Code, whose application is cared for by the Association's Court of Honor. Together with other journalist associations in the country, the UN RS participated in creating the Code for Print Media in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Association's managing board has lately directed its activities towards creating a necessary legal environment for media conduct. Cooperation has been established with the Republika Srpska Government and all political party caucuses in the Parliament. The UN RS maintains that laws should regulate only the most essential issues, while everything else should be left to self-regulation. The standards of developed democratic societies should be fully accepted to avoid broadcasters from being pure mouthpieces, and print media from being bulletins of political options or groups of politicians, says the Association president, Branislav Bozic.

Independent Association of Journalists of the Republika Srpska

The Independent Association of Journalists of the Republika Srpska (NUN) was established with the aim of bringing together journalists not working for state media or those who maintained that the then existing associations in Bosnia-Herzegovina did not fulfill their expectations. However, today NUN RS gathers around 80 journalists from different media, regardless of who owns them. For example, NUN's incumbent president Goran Mihajlovic has moved from "Nezavisne novine" to the state-owned paper "Glas srpski."

We will mention only some activities organized lately by the association. In addition to an initiative to form an independent journalist syndicate of the Republika Srpska, which would gather all journalists regardless of which media they work for or which association they are members of, NUN RS also organized a very successful roundtable on the topic "Safety of journalists in the region," which greatly reverberated among journalists and in the public. Along with practical guidebooks on print and broadcast journalism, which were distributed to journalists for free, another regular activity are professional seminars for beginners and experienced journalists. The latest such seminar was organized on economic reporting. The association is now preparing training for experienced journalists living and working in Brcko District. NUN, together with the Association of Journalists of the Republika Srpska, is involved in the establishment of a Press Council at Bosnian-Herzegovinian level, in which it will have its own representatives.

N e w s

Regional Radio Program Production and Exchange Project

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and 10 radio stations from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Yugoslavia and Croatia launched a project called "Fresta," consisting of production and exchange of radio program related to common burning problems in the region, such as return of refugees and democratization processes.

Project implementation is due to start July 1. Resources were provided by the Government of Denmark. In addition to the media part, the project also includes segmented presentations on human rights, refugees and youth care.

Mehmed Husic Re-Elected Independent Union of Journalists President

The Election Assembly of the Independent Union of Journalists of Bosnia-Herzegovina re-elected Mehmed Husic, director and editor-in-chief of ONASA News Agency, for president. The Union's vice-president is Mile Stojic, an editor in "Dani" magazine.

Since five journalist associations are operating in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Union Assembly decided to start activities on their unification.

Award to Kemal Kurspahic

The International Press Institute (IPI), a Vienna-based organization of world press publishers dealing with promotion and protection of press freedom, proclaimed heroes of the struggle for press freedom in the world in the past 50 years, among whom is Kemal Kurspahic, former editor-in-chief of the Sarajevo daily "Oslobodjenje" (1988-1994).

Kurspahic was awarded for affirming "Oslobodjenje" as the best daily in the former Yugoslavia in 1989, for preserving the paper's independence from nationalistic parties' attempts to divide it in 1991, and for maintaining the paper as a voice of tolerance in the most difficult conditions during the first two years of the siege of Sarajevo.

Of journalists from the former Yugoslavia, this recognition was also given to Veran Matic, editor-in-chief of the independent Belgrade radio B92 and founder of the Association of Independent Electronic Media ANEM. (ONASA)

OSCE "Journalist Help Line" Campaign

On World Press Freedom Day on May 3, 2000, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina is starting a campaign called "Journalist Help Line," with the aim of protecting the rights of journalists. The campaign will be promoted in meetings with journalists in Sarajevo, Mostar, Banja Luka and Tuzla.

Journalist Guide on Human Rights

Sarajevo-based Media Plan Institute published a Guide for writing on human rights intended for journalists and journalism students. The book contains a historic genesis and review of international instruments for human rights and humanitarian law, local and foreign legislation on freedom of expression and press freedom, and an overview of the state of human rights in Bosnia-Herzegovina. A special section is dedicated to useful suggestions for journalists on how to write on human rights and investigate their violations.

The authors and editors of the guide are Dusan Babic and Zoran Udovicic. Other contributors are Zija Dizdarevic and Nedjo Milicevic. The book's publishing was helped by the Canadian organizations CIDA and Alternatives. The book has already been delivered to journalist associations, university libraries, journalism departments, and the offices of Media Plan and Soros Media Center in Sarajevo and Banja Luka.

Investigative Journalism

With support of the National Endowment for Democracy, Media Plan Institute has launched a series of journalism workshops on investigative journalism. The Sarajevo School of Journalism hosted Zlatko Dizdarevic, freelance journalist, Asim Metiljevic of "Slobodna Bosna", and Zoran Udovicic of Media Plan, who spoke and presented their projects. After that, the school's students worked on four Media News, No57, Vol I

research topics: dual school curricula, possible candidacy for winter Olympic games, restriction on imports of old cars, and students in the streets. At the workshop in Banja Luka, which was attended in addition to local journalists also by students of the BBC School for young journalists from Serbia, projects were presented by Milan Cvjetinovic of the Bijeljina "Panorama" and Perica Vucinic of "Reporter".

"Hercegovina Online"

Local until recently, the radio station Studio 88 from Mostar, with support of USAID, is starting to broadcast 24-hour programming for the areas of the Herzegovina-Neretva and Western Herzegovina cantons. It is interesting that the station's program "Hercegovina online" will air live reports from towns in Herzegovina located in both entities of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which is a unique attempt in the area. This radio stations is seen as a strong critic of the local authorities. It will also engage the journalists Frano Mioc and Zeljka Mihaljevic from Livno who have recently been under strong pressure in their town. ("Dani")

Media Innovations

Virtual Newscaster To Make Debut

She has green hair, big eyes, slightly jerky movements and a vaguely American accent. She says she is "the face of the future." Her developers hope she is a gold mine.

Ananova – billed as the world's first virtual newscaster – made her debut April 19 on the Internet. With a click of a mouse, computer users around the world can have breaking news bulletins read to them by the glamorous cyber-anchor, programmed to exude a range of human emotions.

Her creators promise that is just the beginning.

"She's a lot more than a talking head that reads the news," Mark Hird, publishing director at Ananova Ltd., said in launching the creation to the media. "She's a computer with a face in front of it, not a face with nothing much behind it. It's a phenomenal information resource."

In addition to the virtual newscasts – which are delivered TV-style by a head-and-shoulders Ananova and come complete with a commercial break – users can arrange to receive tailored e-mail bulletins on subjects that interest them, from sports scores to stock alerts.

Ananova has a definite glamour factor: She bears more than a passing resemblance to Posh Spice, a.k.a. Victoria Beckham, of the British pop band Spice Girls, and several designers reportedly have expressed interest in fashioning her wardrobe.

(Source:<http://infobeat.com/stories/cgi/story.cgi?id=2565810457-c5e-Infobeat/AP>)

To Our Colleagues:

We Cordially Congratulating on May 3rd – the World Press Freedom Day!

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)