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# Media News

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• **Journalism and Democracy**

• **Media in Transition**

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## Monitoring

### Commentaries in the Daily Newspapers

The Media Plan Institute has monitored the commentaries published in the five BiH daily newspapers: “Oslobodjenje”, “Dnevni Avaz”, “Vecernje Novine” (Sarajevo), “Glas Srpski” and “Dnevne Nezavisne Novine” (Banja Luka). The monitoring was done in the course of ten days during a period of ten weeks, according to the structured principle: Monday of one week, Tuesday of the second week, Wednesday of the fourth week etc. Thus, one comment was monitored each day. It was only working days of the week that were monitored – from Monday to Friday inclusive. The first day of such a structured period was Monday, 6 March, and the last day was Friday, 12 May.

The monitoring included only the so-called classical commentaries which were most frequently published in the regular Commentaries. Any other newspaper articles carrying partly the features of analysis, comments and feuilletons were not monitored. During the monitoring period the total of 45 commentaries were published in the five daily newspapers. “Oslobodjenje” newspaper leads with the total of 20 commentaries, which makes an average of 2 per issue. A commentary, as a journalistic genre, at least during the reviewing period, was least fostered by “Vecernje Novine” (3 commentaries) and “Dnevne Nezavisne Novine” (only 2).

For the purpose of a better insight into the monitoring, below is the statistical review whose parameters are the specific topics of the commentaries, the orientation of the text towards a specific territory and a characteristic of the contents.

	Oslobodjenje	Dnevni Avaz	Vecernje Novine	Glas Srpski	Nezavisne Novine	Total
<b>No. of commentaries:</b>	20	10	3	10	2	45
<b>Topic:</b>						
politics	12	7	3	7	2	31
economy				1		1
social issues	2	1		2		5
destructive events	1	2		1		4
other	5					5
<b>Orientation:</b>						
'own' entity	4	2	1	5		12
other entity	6	6	2	1	1	16
neighbours	1			1	1	3
BiH as a whole	4	2		1		7
other	5			2		7
<b>Characteristics of the contents:</b>						
a positive tone of the journalist	5	2		2		9
a negative tone of the journalist	14	8	2	8	1	33
a combination of both	1		1		1	3

A number of conclusions may be drawn. Firstly, the overriding interest of all monitored newspapers is politics. Of 45 commentaries, 31 dealt with politics. Economy, as an important segment of the public interest, was covered by only one commentary. The social welfare policy issues in which we included the returns, without any noticeable political connotations, did not attract a significant attention – only five texts treated this area. This is a proof that newspaper commentaries continue to bear evidence to the fact that any political event is the be-all and end-all of the overall social life and of the media as well. The orientation of the contents shows that the newspapers are nearly identically orientated towards their own entity (12), and towards the other entity (16). Please note that the entity did not imply only an official Dayton territorial division of BiH, but we took into account an unofficial, but visible territorial division of the BiH Federation into the so-called Bosniak and Croat parts. The commentator's orientation towards Bosnia and Herzegovina as a single construct was the least – 7 times.

In the end, when we come to the characteristics of the contents of the commentaries, the conclusion is that the commentaries have above all a negative tendency on the part of the journalists (33). A positive trend on the part of the journalists was noticed on nine occasions only, while a synergy attitude – positive and negative – was maintained on three occasions only. In these cases, the tendency means the substance of the commentary. If a journalist is critical about an event and tries to get even with some political positions, that is a negative tendency. A positive tendency is when a commentary promotes the values of a described event, phenomenon or policy, while a combination is a commentary which contains both attitudes. Although perhaps from a logical point of view a praise of one thing on the one hand and criticism of another, on the other hand, seems to be the most objective option, it is clear, at

least in the present period, that a unilateral attitude has prevailed. There is yet another thing which is worth noting: the phenomenon in one's own entity is given both a negative and a positive trend, while the other entity is given mainly a negative trend.

An outlined description of the commentaries and the main characteristics noticed in each monitored newspaper are given in the text below.

### **“Oslobodjenje”: The Newspaper Which Fosters Commentaries**

Its standard section “In focus” which until recently had the role of an editorial, is no longer on the front page, but on the second page and is rather unobservable, which most certainly ill-affects its overall effect. In addition, the newspaper contains another, somewhat longer, commentator's column, on the sixth page. “In focus” represents the reaction to the most topical political developments and reflects unequivocally and succinctly – 1.5 double-spaced journalistic pages - the attitude of the journalist, or rather, of the newspaper, towards the current problems. On the other hand, the column on the inner pages is mainly reduced to the personal thoughts of the journalist – about three double-spaced journalistic pages – ranging from analytical texts to the sheer making the space on the page full by a myriad of sentences.

“Oslobodjenje” has a balanced orientation of its texts. Four texts refer to its “own entity”, six to the other entity, and four to BiH as a whole. A negative tendency of the journalists towards both their own and the other entity is dominant. In his own entity the journalist mainly criticise the authority, or the SDA: “SDA once more confirms that it is not capable of making any radical decisions, that it can not keep abreast of the ongoing times and social needs, that the SDA top leadership is unable to come to an agreement about the required changes, and that it lacks the potential necessary for its growing from a social movement to a modern political party ....” (“Focus” 4 May). As far as the other entity is concerned, the newspaper covers on several occasions the Serb suspects of war crimes. Thus, on 7 April it wrote: “Serbs launched to the top two characters: Karadzic, a Dinara Mt. Highlander type, and Krajisnik who takes lead in the mentality of the semi-urban peasant – the one who lost a tradition-dominated moral of the village without acquiring the new, city moral.” Or, 18 May: “Their penalties, (Milosevic, Karadzic), of today and of tomorrow, will never become proportionate to the plight they caused to hundreds of thousands of people, by the fact that it is not possible to murder half a million times and then revive.”

“Oslobodjenje” demonstrates a positive trend of journalists in commentaries on five occasions. On one occasion it refers to the privatisation of that newspaper (it was purchased by the employees), and on two occasions through commentaries treating Josip Broz Tito (4 May – the anniversary of Tito's death). “Tito's ideology of brotherhood and unity of men, religious freedoms which do not threaten the others, protection of workers, care for the socially vulnerable categories of the population etc. is an ideological framework on which the projection of the BiH future destiny should draw on” – writes “Oslobodjenje”.



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### **“Dnevni Avaz”: Critical towards Others**

This newspaper has on its third page a column under an unequivocal title “Commentary of the day”. It serves the purpose of reacting on current events and directly suggesting the attitude of the journalist or the paper to the readers. Of eight negative trends on the part of the journalists, one refers to its “own entity”, or more specifically, to the pre-election campaign speech of the President of the BiH Federation, Ejup Ganic. “By a political distinction between the fighters and safe basement dwellers, Ganic at the very beginning distracts dozens of thousands of potential voters from its (SDA) ballots. This is the problem of the SDA and its poorly structured election campaign,” wrote Dnevni avaz on 6 March. The negative trend is mainly directed against the other entity. Thus, for example on 30 March it criticised the request by the RS to join the “Partnership for Peace: “ BiH as any other country may not join the NATO programme with two armies, but this obviously does not prevent the RS officials from coming out with the ideas which are provocation rather than politics.”

“Dnevni Avaz” – 10 April – in the text “Rivalry in the interest of the citizens” gives a positive tone about the local elections results: “To date, SDA had a sovereign rule within the CD Coalition. It had such a powerful authority that it did not have any major need to pay attention to the objections of the opposition parties. The retaliation, the elections proved, was like a boomerang in a number of municipalities... On the other hand, in the municipalities where it won the elections, the SDP will have to replace its criticism it has abundantly spared to date, by a quality authority”.

### **“Vecernje Novine”: Only One Author**

During the reviewing period, we have noticed only three commentaries, all by one and the same author (Sasa Rukavina). On 6 March the newspaper dealt with the verdict pronounced by the Hague-based ICTY in the General Blaskic case. The major tone of the text conveys that there is a possibility that the HVO general was not most directly involved in war crimes, but he most certainly has a commanding responsibility. The journalists concluded in the end: “The verdict in the Blaskic case was not made by the ICTY panel of judges headed by Claude Jorda. It was made by Franjo Tudjman and there is no dispute about it.” A similar topic is covered by the newspaper on 22 March in reference to Mladen Naletelic Tuta. “Tuta could explain the real position of all to date HDZ representatives in the state and entity authorities. From Jadranko Prlic, once the president of Herzeg Bosnia to, for example, Kresimir Zubak, the then Minister of Justice in that and such government.” In the text, the journalists refer to the Croat officials as “Herzegovinian secretaries of SKOJ (The young generations of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia during the initial years of authority, remark by the author of the text), which clearly points to the negative trend and additional cynicism.

### **“Glas Srpski”: From the Government’s Trend**

Similar to what “Focus” used to be in “Oslobodjenje”, this paper contains an editorial on the first page, under the title of “Seal” in which it presents an authorial attitude towards some topical events. Unlike the papers from the Federation, “Glas” primarily deals with the inter-entity topics. The paper commends the secondment of the BiH police officers to the peace mission in East Timor. “No one doubts that the police officers from the RS and the BiH Federation will perform their duties properly. For, nearly no one is able to appreciate the meaning of peace as they do”, writes the paper, adding “that the mission is also the result of the Republika Srpska which grasped the meaning of its opening up towards the external world on time.” On two occasions the paper writes with a negative tone about the events within the RS. Namely, subject to criticism is the Socialist Party (SP). For the first time, on 6 March, this Party is claimed to be guilty for the dissolution of the Sloga coalition and flattering with the “nationalists”, and on the second occasion on 22 March when the Speaker of the RS Assembly Petar Djokic, a socialist, is accused for obstructions within the Assembly. Admittedly, “Glas Srpski” is the government-controlled paper, while the RS Socialist Party has withdrawn from the Sloga Coalition which gives legitimacy to the incumbent government.

“Glas srpski”, on one occasion, writes with a negative tone about the BiH Federation, analysing the problem concerning the returns of refugees and attributes all the guilt to the Bosniak leadership: “The Mujahedins are considerably a cause to fear and mistrust felt by returnees to the the BiH Federation where in the village of Bocinja, Maglaj Municipality, there are about one hundred of Mujahedins. They have been waiting for years now to hear the decision from their leader Alija Izetbegovic on whom, as they claim, it entirely depends whether they will remain there or leave.” (14 March)

On two different occasions “Glas” criticises the international community. On 10 April the paper accused the OSCE to have caused a situation where many citizens were left without their voting right. The reason for this is the organisation for elections by the OSCE. On 4 May the OHR was targeted on the grounds of its shocking statements, as the commentary writes, in relation to the refugees and their right to purchase of apartments. Besides the sting against the OHR, the text does not have any informative value as it does not arise clear what the author wanted to convey. A multitude of contradictory statements and semi-information may only be confusing for a reader.

### **“Dnevne Nezavisne Novine”: No Comment**

The only exception is 22 March when a weekly issue was published and came out, which sublimated a daily issue as well. On that date we note two commentaries - the first refers to the former leader of the BiH Reformists’ Union Nenad Kecmanovic, who currently lives in Belgrade, and the other concerns Vuk Draganic whose name accidentally happened to be in the regular columns of famous Serbian journalist Aleksandar Tijanic who has been prevented this time from writing a column by his illness (this was at least a news from the paper). The origin of the main commentators of this paper and their topics clearly demonstrate that this Banja Luka paper is strongly interested in the Serbian problems, particularly those which spill over to and affect the developments in BiH. Namely, Kecmanovic deals with the attitude of Bosniak policy towards NATO bombing of FRY, while Draganic analyses the situation in the Serbian opposition. Kecmanovic’s line of thinking is interesting in trying to explain why the Bosniak leader Izetbegovic unreservedly supported the NATO action. According to this author, he hoped that the withdrawal of the Serbian forces from Kosovo would have led to a decreased self-confidence of the Serbs in the Republika Srpska, which would have allowed an easier creation of unitary Bosnia. Thereafter, the bombardment should have led to the confederation of the FRY and secession of Sandzak with the dominant Muslim population. And the third reason, in the eyes of Kecmanovic, is the “green line” which is now slowly falling in oblivion, which was to link Muslims from Middle East via Turkey, Macedonia, Kosovo to BiH.

(Media Plan Monitoring Centre – Radenko Udovicic).

## **O m b u d s p e r s o n s**

### **Unequal Treatment of the Obligations on the Part of the Media and State**

The Ombudspersons of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vera Jovanovic, Esad Muhibic and Branka Raguz, published a report on 16 May 2000, on the freedom of the media provided for in the legislation applicable in the BiH Federation Cantons. The Dayton Constitution of BiH and even earlier, the Washington Agreement on the establishment of the BiH Federation, devolved the issue of the media to the canton level within the Federation. The Report draws the reader’s attention primarily to the laws which set an obligation for the media to be licensed by the Cantonal Ministries of Education, which, under the opinion of the ombudspersons, creates the room for political pressures on the media. This aspect of the media issue has not been raised publicly, so that the “Media News” entirely publishes the report substantiated by the facts, drawing a parallel with the experiences in some other countries, and provides an informed and substantiated proposal towards amending the legislation. The headlines are the responsibility of the editorial staff.

## **Six Cantonal Laws**

The freedom of the media in the BiH Federation is not only exposed to restrictions in practice – it is exposed to various forms of immediate and indirect political pressures on the journalists by almost all levels of authority - but also by undemocratic laws which were enacted at the cantonal level or are pending adoption at the time when the report was being made. The restrictions on the freedom of the media may be found in the laws even when the restrictions are not openly public (“evidence of the media” some penalty provisions etc.) even when they are, for the time being, not implemented.

According to the information available to the Ombudspersons, the laws pertaining to this specific area have been adopted by six cantons, while the four remaining cantons have not enacted the laws yet. The law is still pending in the Bosnia-Podrinje and Tuzla Cantons (the proposed laws have been made). The draft law has not yet been made in the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, although this obligation is envisaged by the programme of the cantonal government for this year. The law is not even in the process of preparation in the Central Bosnia Canton only. The majority of the adopted laws came into force on May – July 1998.

The laws regulating the relations in this area are called in three cases as the Law on Public Information (Tuzla, Zenica-Doboj and Una-Sana Cantons), the Law on Public Communication (West-Herzegovina, Posavina and Herzeg-Bosnia Cantons) and the Law on the Media in two Cantons (the Sarajevo and Bosnia-Podrinje Cantons).

The majority of the adopted laws and pending laws are characteristic as they were made under a similar pattern, although there are some differences between the Bosniak and Croat administered cantons. The copying was revealed in taking over both the good and bad solutions in these laws.

Another characteristic is that in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina there is no specific law that would define the general principles on the freedom of information and free access to the information which would be applicable to all on an equal basis – to all citizens and all organisations – and which would be binding for the authorities in terms of their full openness and transparency of their work.

### **A Questionable Obligation to Register in the Ministry’s Registry**

The major shortcomings noticed in the laws which are already in force and in those which are being prepared, are common to all cantons in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This particularly refers to the provisions on keeping the registry of the media, which practically developed from a technical measure (registry) into the measure of substantial importance. For, failing the registration in the registry or of the change of the data necessary for the registry, the law prohibits the publication of the press, in other words, it threatens with the appropriate fines.

The registry of the media is a questionable category, since those provisions, with the legal restrictions though, provide to some degree or other the powers to the executive authority over the media. “Registration in the registry” is under this law, done in the cantonal ministries (those ministries are called in some cantons as the Ministry for Information, in others as Ministry for information affairs).

That this measure is not of the formal nature of “keeping the registry” ensues from the following characteristic: these ministries are authorities to “supervise the legality of the work of the media in the canton”. What “the supervision over the legality” exactly implies is not detailed in either of these laws, which may constitute an additional possibility of abusing this. We shall assume that it refers to the legality of the work of the formal legal nature (as all laws separately treats supervision over the editorial policy of the media which is “left over” to the editorial boards and professional associations) but the supervision over the formal legal aspects of the work of the media may be a basis for the restrictions of the freedom of the media, in the hands of the executive authority.

The substantial question is who needs this form of registry of the media, especially in the “ministries responsible for information” when the media, as any other company, are obliged to register at court first, including the process of registration in the Statistical Offices (which is a requirement for

the establishment of any company). In practical terms, the media need to be registered twice – once in the statistical offices, which is the proper place if this is the procedure of the sheer registration, and on the other occasion, in the Ministries “responsible for information”, i.e. in the bodies of the executive authority.

Once registered under the law, in a prescribed court procedure, the press is subject to another procedure of “registration” and licensing by the executive authorities (understandably, electronic media must obtain also the approval from the appropriate agency responsible for the allocation of frequencies. True, the laws prescribe the responsibility on the part of the competent ministries to “issue a certificate proving the registration” within a defined time line (for three, seven, or fifteen days, depending on the canton and that the ministries may not refuse “the registration in the registry” (unless “incomplete requests” which may be rejected or their completion may be requested instead). If the Ministry fails to do so within a legally set deadline, the medium is considered to have been registered in the registry.

All legal restrictions may not modify the fact that this measure of “registration in the registry” was taken over from the system of socialist authority in which it served the purpose of being the basis of additional, at least, formal, control over the media. The existing executive authorities are not willing to give up the possibility of that “supervision” over the media, at least by virtue of the measure which is only seemingly harmless, and which provides the authority with a hidden manner of exercising control over the media.

### **Strict Attitude Toward the Media – Favourable Attitude toward the Authority**

The true nature of the attitude of the authority toward the media arises clear from the penalty provisions which are contained in those laws, under which a failure on the part of the publisher and editor of the medium to “register” or “complete the registry” in a timely fashion is punished more strictly than, for example, a “failure” of the authority who denies requested information to the journalists. This attitude is a logical consequence of the non-transparent work of the authorities which in this way too, protect their restrictedness and the right to promote only certain media demonstrating a favourable attitude to the given authority. This practice exists at almost all levels of authority in the BiH Federation and constitutes one of the major forms of restricting the freedom of the media.

The penalty provisions are devised for the purpose of rendering protection to the authority, rather than the public and public interests. That attitude is best illustrated by the example of the already enacted laws and the pending draft laws.

The Law applicable in the Zenica-Doboj Canton provides for the fine in the amount of up to 5000 KM if the publisher or the founder of one paper fails to register its newspaper in the registry, and the fine in the amount of up to 4000 KM “if the publisher fails to inform the responsible administrative body of the change of the data for the purpose of registration”, while “the authorised person in the authority who denies information to the journalist from within the scope of that body will be punished by the fine in the amount of up to 1500 KM”.

That difference is even more drastic in the Sarajevo Canton: the publisher is penalised by the fine ranging from 1000 to 10.000 KM, while the “failure” on the part of the responsible person who denies information is not penalised. True, a public institution may be penalised by the fine in the amount from 500 to 2.500 KM, and the responsible person in the public institution “if he or she fails to adopt the regulation on the manner of the realisation of the transparency of the work and if he or she fails to appoint the authorised persons who may release information” by the fine in the amount of 1000 KM”. The same provisions exist in the Proposed Law of the Bosnia-Podrinje Canton.

The ration in the Posavina Canton is 1 to 5. Namely, a responsible person in the authority is penalised by the fine in the amount from 300 to 1000 KM, and the publishers by the fine ranging from 2000 to 5000 KM.

The Tuzla Canton is a characteristic case as it had refused on two different occasions the recommendations of the Ombudspersons Institution seeking the amendment of that ratio (the failure on the part of the publisher is penalised by the fine of 5000 and 4000 KM, while the failure of the responsible person in a body of authority by a fine of up to 1500 KM). The proponent allowed some minor changes only after the second recommendation, in an additional explanation for the Cantonal

Assembly, in the part called “Explanation of the proposal and remarks which have not been accepted”. The Cantonal Government wrote the following: “In revising the text of the law the same amount of the fines was maintained, provided that the fines of 5000 and 4000 KM may be reduced to 4000 and 3000 KM respectively if deemed appropriate.”

The Tuzla canton Government is not even considering different fines for the responsible persons in the authority (that they are brought to the same or higher level), but instead “allows” only a minimal reduction of the fines for the media. It arises clear from this what an attitude it maintains toward the transparency of its own work and its obligations towards the public, when we come to the responsible persons, or what an attitude it maintains towards the media.

It is only in the Una-Sana, West-Herzegovina and Herzeg-Bosnia Cantons that the fines are in principle equalised. In the Una-Sana Canton – the fine ranges from 2000 to 6000 KM; in West Herzegovina Canton – from 2000 to 5000 KM; and in Herzeg-Bosnia Canton – from 3000 to 5000 KM. In this Canton the penalty for the authorised person in the body of authority, at least formally, comes first, while in all other cantons it regularly comes last, even when it exists.

### **Without Relying on the Practice of Others**

In democratic countries there is no legally set obligation on the part of the press to seek approval from any body of authority. Even in Austria, where the publishers of books and owners of printing houses must apply for such an approval, that obligation does not exist for the press.

It is only the laws in France, Spain and the UK that contain some provisions under which the newspapers are under obligation to register, although such provisions have not been implemented in practice in Spain and the UK for several decades already - according to “Article 19” (“Press Law and Practice”, A Comparative Study of Press Freedom in European and Other Democracies). In Great Britain, the newspapers are as any other company obliged to respect the procedure of its establishment and the newspaper is under obligation to address the Post office every year in order to be granted postal benefits.

Only in France the publishers are obliged to send the data on publication to the State Prosecutor’s Office, and in Sweden – only the name of the publisher, although no penalty is envisaged for a possible failure to fulfil that obligation. In the majority of the countries the press is under obligation to publicise the name and address of the publisher and the owner of the printing house. In Great Britain they are obliged to do so either on the front page or on the last page of the publication.

### **Recommendations: a Framework Law on Free Access to Information**

1. In view of the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have a framework law on free access to information, which would equally treat all the citizens and ensure their rights to any information in the possession of the state bodies and other authorities, we believe that it would be advisable and useful that such a framework law be prepared at the level of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and/or at the level of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. All citizens including journalists, are entitled to receive information from the authorities, except for those which are considered as confidential for some special reasons, provided for by law. This right is enshrined in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The obligation and responsibility of the authorities and authorities persons in the authority to provide the requested information – without any restrictions or arbitrary actions – must be given a primary importance in this law and meet the level of the requirements of a democratic society.

The availability of the information is not necessary for the needs of the public only; it is necessary also for the identification of a good government. The principle of the maximal openness of the authority is the basic right of each citizen, arising from the concept of the freedom of information. The obstruction of the access to information and purposeful destruction of documentation (minutes, reports, tapes and other) will be considered as criminal offences.

2. The need for special laws pertaining to the public information and the media should be considered during the discussion about the framework law on free access to information. If the choice of having these two laws prevails, we believe that the provisions on registration of the press and any other germane provision discussed in detail in the report, should be deleted from the laws.

The registration of printed media is done at court, and the registration is done in the statistical offices; thus, there is no justified reason for the executive authorities to deal with the same issue. These provisions set restrictions to the freedom of the media even when they are not applied in practice for that purpose.

Some other provisions, which exist in the applicable laws, should not be incorporated in the new laws: these are the provisions prescribing who the journalists should be (also editors and editors in chief), how the newsboys are asked to identify themselves, etc.

3. In a democratic society there are no reasons which would justify the existence of the Ministry of Information. It is necessary to abolish such ministries where they still exist (independently, or performing some other duties from the scope of culture, education, sports, etc.).

## **R e p r e s s i o n   a g a i n s t   t h e   M e d i a**

### **Are the Serbian Media Threatened by a Classical Censorship?**

*(For the "Media News", Djordje Zorkic, journalist of BETA Agency)*

The media darkness in Serbia is becoming ever darker, there is no longer Studio B, Radio B92 stopped broadcasting its programme from its studio, the Students' Radio Index may air the news only every hour, while independent papers "Blic" and "Glas Javnosti" hardly manage to come out with what is now only one half of their previous circulation, since the ruling authority forbade the major printing houses to collaborate with the "anti-patriotic NATO servants and terrorists".

The censorship is just about to be imposed, and once in effect, it will not be formulated as censorship. The red and black coalition of Marjanovic, Bojic and Seselj has started long ago to operate under the principle of the Latino-American juntas from 1970's. Independent journalists are treated by the state electronic media almost openly as terrorists, which was best manifested in the explanation for taking over Studio B which had been closed as it "incited to violent removal of the legal authority".

The regime of Slobodan Milosevic is entering the "ninth round" of the fight against all free and independent media, waving his sword everywhere, in an attempt to "free the country from betrayers" who "make the gigantic efforts of the authority to rehabilitate and boost the country impossible." The hunger for the elementary information in Belgrade exceeds that elsewhere in Serbia where the police thugs, disguised in civilian clothing, have not yet launched their midnight missions of "disciplining" the journalists by arrests, batons and threats.

The ever more numerous members of the National Movement of "Resistance" are being exposed to the most violent persecutions. They keep responding to the blows they receive by more violent, often wise and eloquent actions and by a stoic endurance.

### **Mural Papers in Place of Radio and Tv Programmes**

The students of the Belgrade University immediately reacted against taking over the free media; they organised protests offering resistance or as ordinary students only; they began to publish the mural paper at the Faculty of Philosophy, offering the latest information from the scene on the "midnight missions" of the para-police forces and the number of detained academic citizens. The wave of prohibitions of the work of the media caused violent protests of the students at what used to be the Faculty of Natural Science and Mathematics where sociology is still taught by the "lady with a flower in her hair" Dr. Mira Markovic, undoubtedly deserving credit for numerous public and secret changes in the state ruled by her husband. The first lines of persecution of the free media are occupied by her "fighters" from JUL, in company with the "duke" Vojislav Seselj who is one of the signatories to the decision of the government on taking over Studio B and preventing further work of Radio B92.

The Belgrade regime is now stunned with the resistance of the students whom Belgrade has slightly pushed to oblivion, thus declaring the end of the school year on Thursday, which in reality means the closing down of the University as a possible "trouble spot" of citizens' disobedience spreading over the

Serbian towns. More than three thousand students in Nis protested against closing down the media under the motto “this is the very last moment”, promising more mass demonstrations. The police did not intervene, probably because of its ever lasting preparedness to send its available potential to the capital if the rebellion there spreads out of control.

The fatal Serbian Law on Information on the basis of which almost all independent and free media, since October 1998 up until today, have been punished with a fine in the total amount of around five million DEM (according to the official rate), did not obviously served its purpose – to stifle each voice of politically unlike-minded persons. Thus, the independent media are higher on the agenda, as the last front which needs to be defeated even physically, and their journalists should be declared terrorists, thus disabling their work in its entirety. Thereafter, the elections could be called, the elections which the opposition is stubbornly asking for at their everyday protests. The regime is expecting that the propaganda machinery of the RTS, which was joined, in addition to several tv stations, by the state minded Studio B with the new/old and well practised rts staff, will entirely serve the purpose of successful elections.

### **“White Pages” Instead of Texts**

The most active coalition party in “cleansing” the free media – JUL of Mira Markovic has meanwhile announced the submission to the Assembly a new law on terrorism. The law will most certainly be adopted “unanimously” in an “expressly summary” procedure. That law, as the journalists in Belgrade are assessing, will serve Milosevic for installing the most strict censorship, which will not bare that name eventually. The editor in chief of the Belgrade magazine “Vreme” Dragoljub Zarkovic says that it is quite possible that censors will be employed in the printing houses tasked with editing out certain texts. “If they request us to publish white pages, we shall be publishing the papers, but if they request us to change the tune to their key, then we shall close the shop”, said Zarkovic. His predictions are supported by the case of the journalists of “Blic” magazine who were enthusiastically told by the director of the “Borba” printing house that “they should change their editorial policy and that in that case press will exist”. When asked what they were to do, he was unable to answer. That printing house was the only one that paid its workers thank to the independent papers. At the same time, the authorities closed the “ABC Produkt” printing house which was forced to bankruptcy after its management had refused to cease printing of the opposition bulletin called “Promene” (Changes). Shutting down that printing house seriously jeopardised the publication of “Vreme”, “NIN” and “Glas javnosti”, so that the journalists of those papers are now hardly finding their way in the private printing houses, paying small number of copies with a fortune.

The local boards of the political parties have their leaflets with the most current news printed in small printing houses, while the citizens of Belgrade already know the exact timings of broadcastings on foreign radio stations and they hear “what really happened” in some remote parts of the city, sometimes only several kilometres away from their homes. These stations are listened to as was Radio London favoured during World war II. The regime has not yet announced penalties for the possession of radio sets.

“The Internet remains to us” say the students in the hall of the Faculty of Philosophy who regularly listen to the programmes of the radio B292, the news of BETA News Agency, Belgrade Danas and other independent media which secured “a reserve position” on their sites. But, there are not so many people in Belgrade and Serbia who have personal computers.

### **Abuse of the Law on Terrorism**

By Thursday, 25 May, the Serbian police “detained for an informative interview” (arrested and questioned) at least twenty journalists and photo-reporters of the free media. This all had started in Pozarevac when the bodyguards of the son of Slobodan Milosevic, Marko, the owner of a disco club “Madona”, had beaten three members of the “Resistance” in Pozarevac. The police arrested them and declared the victims guilty of the attack. The Ministry of Internal Affairs in a flash ordered an unprecedented blockade of all roads within Serbia which led to “Serbian Kumrovec” and disabled the opposition parties to hold a protest gathering there against the arrest of the “rebels” and journalists. The correspondent of BETA from Pozarevac, Mile Veljkovic and correspondent of the Belgrade paper

“Danas” and of the France Press Agency in Kraljevo, Miroslav Filipovic, were both arrested in that “package”. The latter was suspected of spying and disseminating false information - he has been ever since in prison in Nis under the investigation by the military authorities.

“Decontamination of the media space” is taking place in Serbia which was requested by JUL last year, and Milosevic immediately approved those actions. Since then, the Ministry for Telecommunications closed many “legally established” radio and tv stations throughout Serbia. In mid February the chief of the radicals but also the Vice Prime Minister of Serbia “promised” to the journalists that they would be liquidated, indirectly accusing them for the murder of the Federal Minister of Defence, Pavle Bulatovic. All independent media have since then boycotted the conferences for journalists in the organisation of that party and their leaders, and the boycott continues.

Milosevic endorsed the requests of his wife Mirjana and her party for “decontamination” as well as Seselj’s aggressive initiative to silence the independent and free media, so that he concluded in his New Year’s speech that the Law on Information had not been “applied to a sufficient degree”.

Obviously, not only is that Law insufficient, but the regime is striving towards the new law on terrorism which may easily be promulgated as early as the end of May. The independent media are preparing an “illegal” operation, while the public opinion in Serbia is demonstrating more and more their general dissatisfaction by voicing it in their reaction against all ongoing actions taken by the government, although, judging by the numbers of the citizens at the protest gatherings of the opposition, they are not pleased with the “tepid” behaviour of the parties towards the ruling regime and demonstrate that the abolishment of the free press and radio and tv stations threatens the regime more than the party leaders are willing to admit.

## N e w s

### **OSCE and Radio FERN Support Serbian Independent Media**

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Radio FERN have supported the Serbian Independent Media and have condemned the government’s attacks on the free media. As a sign of solidarity, the OSCE Mission has linked its web-page [www.oscebih.org](http://www.oscebih.org) with B2-92 <http://www.freeB92.com> and the web page of the Index Radio <http://www.indexradio.com> namely the two radio stations persecuted by the ruling authority. The visitors of the OSCE web page will have a possibility of opening links with B2-92 and Radio Index, of visiting their pages and listening to the Audio transmission of B2-92. In order to inform the public on these events, Radio FERN will be informing on Serbian free media and the developments, in the course of its regular programming.

“The Government or the regime which stifle the freedom of media may perhaps make the media silent, but the message will be conveyed quite loudly and clearly: such regimes may remain in power by use of force only”, said Regan McCarthy, Senior Advisor for the Media at the OSCE. “Linking of your web site with B2-92 and Index Radio is just a small step, but we do hope that it will convey the message to the people in Serbia that we are monitoring what is happening and that it is of our concern”, added McCarthy. The mission will be linked also with other independent Serbian media, depending on each separate case. The media wishing to help this action may contact the General Manager of the Radio FERN, Shawn Dearn, on 387 71 667 933 or the OSCE Spokesperson Tanya Domi, on 387 71 292 222.

### **Relatively Unbiased Conduct of the Media in the Pre-election Campaign**

Based on the monitoring of 58 key radio and tv stations and several leading papers, the Independent Media Commission, IMC, has assessed that the electronic media, with a few exceptions, have adhered to the IMC Code and the Rules of the Provisional Election Commission on the fair access of the political parties to the media during the pre-election campaign. However, the IMC has warned that many stations continue to be consistent to the political promotion of the issues which are related to

the ethnic group or nationality from a particular medium originates. IMC has also noticed that many political actors have failed to use their right to represent themselves at some media, although this has not been denied to them.

The IMC has established for 10 radio and tv situations that they all violated the rules and regulations pertaining to elections. These are Croat Radio station in Mostar (two violations), Serb Sarajevo Radio, NRTV Studio 99, HRTV Herzeg Bosnia, ATV Banja Luka, TV Bel, RTV BiH, HTV Mostar and RTV USK.

## **Advertised Vacancies for the Management of the BiH Public Broadcasting Service**

The Founding Board of the BiH PBS issued a decision on 23 May to announce the vacancies for the business director, TV programme director and the director of the radio programmes of the PBS.

The Founding Board has decided that pursuant to the High Representative's decision, the BiH PBS should begin to realise its international role and accordingly submit to the European Broadcasting Union, EBU, a request for its admission in the EBU full membership.

The PBS started its experimental programme at the beginning of May, transmitting all important international sports and entertainment programmes. For the time being, the broadcasting is envisaged at the defined timings on TV of Republika Srpska and TV BiH, or the Federation television once established. Following the selection of the managerial staff, the more serious creation of the information programming is planned.

## **Threats to Radio Hayat in Tuzla**

A threatening letter was sent to Radio Hayat in Tuzla on 20 May. It was a vulgar threat to the staff of this radio station. It further warns that the radio will be blown up, and some staff will be man-slaughtered. The letter also carried the four S's written with the felt pen (a Serb symbol) and the letter "U" (a symbol of Croatian fascists from the World War II) which in the letter merged together making the crossed crescent and a star (Muslim symbol) a result of their unification.

This nationalistic threat, in the opinion of the journalists from Tuzla, shows that the forces which are prepared to settle scores with the media and journalists are still present within the BiH.

## **In Sierra Leone Two Journalists-Reporters from Bosnia During the War-Killed**

The cameraman of the Associated Press TV Miguel Gil Moreno and the Reuters correspondent Kurt Schork were killed while on duty in Sierra Leone. The rebellious forces are being accused by the Western world to have opened fire onto the vehicle of those two men. In the same attack the Reuters cameraman Mark Chisholm and the photographer Yannis Behrakis were slightly injured.

Kurt Schork and Miguel Gil Moreno reported from the besieged Sarajevo during the war. The colleagues who co-operated with Schork during the war say that he was their model reporter who professionally carried out his duties, always checking the facts and presenting them succinctly and directly.

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