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Media News

Prepared by the
SAFAX News Agency Sarajevo

<http://www.mediaplan.ba>

◆ *Journalism and Democracy* • *Media in Tra*

No 66, Vol I

Sarajevo, 31. August 2000.

Dossier

Public Broadcasting Service of BiH – From an Idea to Radical Solutions

In the last issue of Media News we warned that transformation of existing national broadcasters, based in Sarajevo and Banjaluka, into public broadcasting service has been running too slowly. To quote: ‘What is now happening in these quasi-national broadcasters is only a tip of the iceberg that is made of obstructive policy of local authorities in this important area, pragmatic and inconsistent strategy of international community and decline of professional ambitions among the employees of these broadcasters.’

Radical Solutions in View

Today we can foresee a possible resolution of this ‘circus’, frequently referred to as ‘reconstruction of radio-diffusion system in Bosnia and Herzegovina’. Within the following two weeks at the earliest, John Shearer, a Transfer Agent appointed by the High Representative of international community, will announce his final decision in this respect. According to his decision, expected to be met with unanimous support of international organisations, RTV BiH will be transformed into a number of independent public organizations. Those would include the following: a public broadcasting service covering the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina; RTV of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a company managing technical capacities for programming production in Sarajevo. In addition, the transmitter network presently run by RTV BiH and RT of the Republic of Srpska should be integrated into one single organization that would provide services to producers of public radio and TV programming all over BiH. According to this idea, the existing company building of RTVBiH in Sarajevo will be transformed into a separate organisation, called Media Centre. Even at the very first sight, it is clear that such solution is radical as it radically modifies previous, above all political, perceptions of transformation of broadcasters, absolutely abandoning a traditionalist conception of organization and business management of this gigantic system. In the future, Public Broadcasting Service of

BiH, RTVFBiH and most probably RTRS as well will primarily act as programming producers, focused on their own production of news and other forms of programming. Independent technical capacities for programming production and transmission, as well as the building of RTV BiH, will enter a sort of business partnership with producers of public programming. Technical and other capacities, including premises, will be available for rental or sale to other organisations on a strictly commercial basis.

It is obvious that Mr Shearer is determined to apply what may be regarded as a shock therapy in the current circumstances: in the place of abortive attempts to create something new with the least possible degree of turbulence and changes, he introduces sweeping reforms meant to effectively abolish everything old and set up a completely new system. Shearer believes that such new arrangement will prove to be a more effective stimulus of programming production – which is ultimately an elementary function of public broadcasters – while making the utilization of technical capacities more flexible and economical and rationalizing the use of vast capacities of the building currently occupied by RTVBiH.

This final decision is awaited with great anxiety, particularly among the RTVBiH employees. Given the interest of the public, we have decided to review this turbulent and inhibited process that finally generated an idea of modern and professional public broadcaster in BiH. This file has been compiled on the basis of documentation archived by Media Plan Institute.

Legacy of the War

In 1995 Bosnia and Herzegovina comes out of war with three ethnically divided national - or rather, party broadcasting services. They were constituted as such at the very outset of the war. RTV of Bosnia and Herzegovina – i.e. RTV Sarajevo prior to the outbreak of war – endeavoured to maintain its status of official national BiH broadcaster but it effectively covered only a part of the FBiH territory predominantly populated by Bosniaks. The territory held by the self-proclaimed Croat Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia was covered by a system heavily leaning on the Croatian RTV from Zagreb, whereas the Serb RTV - that also broadcast programming of RTV Serbia - was established in the area controlled by the Serb armed forces. Media legislation in effect was mainly designed during the war whereas some effective media regulations were inherited even from the former federal state. The absence of legislation or anachronistic existing legislation served to deteriorate already chaotic situation in the sphere of radio-diffusion.

Back in 1996, international community tacitly recognized the wartime legacy in organisation of broadcasters. Its efforts – maximally obstructed by nationalist parties and further impeded by political dependency and self-censorship on the part of journalists – were aimed at purification of the programming of the rhetoric of hatred and creation of a political environment suitable for the first post-war elections. Two hardcore and irreconcilable views – i.e. resistance of



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

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

Published by **Media Plan - Safax**

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Media News service is supported by French Government

Serb and Croat nationalist parties to any joint broadcasting project as they already had their own national televisions on the one hand and the conviction of the Bosniak parties that Bosnia did have its own RTV BiH where there was no room for improvement on the other – continuously obstructed even the sheer idea of a joint broadcaster in the spirit of the Dayton Agreement. What contributed to this was the interpretation of Dayton Constitution as failing to incorporate broadcasting and information services into the list of state responsibilities (Article 3) while stipulating only the ‘construction and operation of joint and international communications facilities and links’. Prior to the Dayton Accord, the Washington Agreement, establishing the Federation of BiH in 1993, specifically deprived the Federation of any powers in this aspect and transferred them to Cantonal institutions.

However, the peace implementing agencies in BiH soon realized that no major effects in the creation of overall democratic environment in BiH could be achieved without radical reorganisation of broadcasting system in BiH. In December 1996, at the meeting of Peace Implementation Council in London, a requirement was stated to design a new legal framework for broadcasters and form a joint inter-entity broadcasting network. In May 1997, a conference was held at Sintra where the High Representative was empowered to suspend or ban programming of any network that would be in contradiction with the letter and spirit of the Dayton Agreement. On 01 October 1997, the High Representative tasked SFOR with the ceasure of Serb TV’s transmitters and banned its programming on the ground that the programming of this broadcaster had been undermining the Dayton Agreement and contributing to the spread of hatred. Shortly afterwards, the headquarters of this broadcaster was moved to Banjaluka what had been facilitated by concurrent political changes, i.e. distancing of the RS President at the time from the political leadership at Pale. At the same time, international community however invested most of its efforts to development of TVOBN and Radio Fern as international BiH-wide broadcasters in the belief that these would be much more effective than so-called national broadcasters, which were troubled by external political pressures and internal obstruction and were destined to fall prey to subsequent lethargy. A more thorough analysis could prove – or possibly disprove – the impression that international community was occasionally running out of either breath or time in the course of necessary reform of public broadcasters in BiH due to its pursuit of long-term prospective arrangements for the international broadcasting projects. Whatever the case, OHR media strategy for 1998 came to light at the end of 1997, resting on three pillars: media restructuring and new legislation, stimulation of independent and alternative sources of information and formation of public service. Media Institute from Dusseldorf was tasked with drafting a Bill on Public and Commercial Broadcasting in the Federation of BiH, with the prospect of implementing the same legislation in the Republic of Srpska once suitable political conditions were created there. The draft however ended up being trapped in a fruitless political debate with the ruling political parties and it soon became evident that it was modelled on the existing European legislation while failing to accommodate the specifics of the situation in BiH.

Political Obstruction and the Lack of Understanding

The first local convention to discuss openly and comprehensively the reconstruction of radio-diffusion system in BiH and transformation of national broadcasters into public ones was arranged by MAIC Association and MIT Centre and held on 13 December 1997 in Sarajevo. On that occasion, Media Plan Institute presented its analysis of BiH media situation and questioned the interpretation of the Dayton Agreement, its letter and spirit, as absolutely precluding any joint programming in BiH. Media Plan also suggested the transformation of RTVBiH into the Federation RTV, advising the international community to exercise its powers and invite two entity broadcasters to develop mutual cooperation. Joint Broadcasting Corporation that would produce at least a minimum of joint radio and TV programming was also advocated. The idea was for this corporation to provide services required by both broadcasters such as exchange, purchase and sale of programming, technical standards, international representation etc. Serb and Croat representatives did not attend this convention but the suggestion was anyhow refused by the representatives of RTVBiH. Namely, RTVBiH management at the time found the suggestion to

form the Federation RTV as a new broadcaster agreeable but only on the condition that RTVBiH remained the central nation-wide broadcaster. They considered any interference with internal organization of RTVBiH sure to lead to the death of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a state since RTVBiH symbolized defence and survival of the state itself. Such stance of the management and a considerable number of journalists employed by this broadcaster - evidently either generated or supported by the ruling political party – hindered the system reconstruction as much as the reluctance of the Serb and Croat sides to agree to any ‘common ground’ in the field of broadcasting.

Throughout the spring of 1998, misunderstandings over the overall development strategy of public broadcasting in BiH continued to multiply. Political parties froze every possibility of raising this issue in the state or entity Parliaments whereas the tide of internal dissatisfaction within the broadcasters rose as a result of undefined status and irreversible financial collapse caused by a rapid decrease in the number of subscribers.

The first significant watershed occurred in relation to the Memorandum of Understanding on RTVBiH restructuring, dated 19 May 1998. The Memorandum was signed by Carlos Westendorp, the High Representative at the time, Alija Izetbegovic and Kresimir Zubak, the then members of the Presidency of BiH, whereas the Serb member of the Presidency, Momcilo Krajisnik, refused to do so. Despite his refusal, international community declared the Memorandum valid. The main points of the Memorandum were the following: provision of public broadcasting service for all BiH citizens, i.e. a public corporation for programming production and broadcast; appointment of RTVBiH Provisional Executive Board that would run the company until the corporation was established and would also appoint a new Manager General; obligation of the Croatian RTV, i.e. Erotel, to request legitimate allocation of frequencies from IMC (Independent Media Commission) and to return transmitters owned by RTVBiH. Signing of the Memorandum removed at least temporarily certain political concerns and, even more importantly, lifted a major psychological barrier in the minds of RTVBiH employees who had perceived any reform as a ‘step forward towards the death of Bosnia’.

But various misinterpretations and interpretations of the Memorandum in the aftermath clearly indicated that the Memorandum failed to resolve the situation. Firstly, there was a debate between Albert Scharff, President of EBU, and Carlos Westendorp, the High Representative. Namely, EBU perceived the Memorandum as a document effectively reducing the existing RTVBiH to the level of the Federation broadcaster while TVOBN - that was fed of enormous international aid - was to evolve into a nation-wide commercial broadcaster. OHR retorted that they never cherished any intention of undermining public broadcasting systems in the entities and the state as a whole – nor had it been contrived to promote any commercial alternative, TV OBN included, as a surrogat.

The Provisional Executive Board of RTVBiH was appointed on 09 July 1998. One half of its members, recommended by three members of the Presidency, was rejected by the High Representative, who replaced them with independent professionals. The Executive Board appointed the new Manager General Mirsad Purivatra while the High Representative decided to appoint Tomaz Perovic as international advisor in the further reconstruction of RTVBiH. Within its one year mandate, the Executive Board produced a draft Bill on the Federation BiH RTV (dated December 1998), the Concept of Public Broadcaster in BiH (dated December 1998) and a study titled ‘Optional Modes for Transformation of Public Broadcasting in BiH’. Although many of the solutions suggested could serve as a solid foundation for further process of RTV transformation, the transformation was expectedly obstructed by ruling political parties whereas the draft Bill on the Federation RTV was even specifically rejected by the Parliament. At the same time, professional reconstruction of radio and TV programming advanced extremely slowly, particularly so since there was not much done in favour of better coverage of the entire Federation territory and production of programming that would present a better balanced response to interests of all nations populating the Federation of BiH and BiH as a whole.

As the complex issues of RTVBiH were being dealt with, there was a mistaken general belief that a similar process in Serb RTV would be much simpler since this broadcaster had already been organized as an entity broadcaster. On 13 February 1998, the RS Government signed an agreement with the High Representative on interim arrangements for transformation of national into public broadcaster; the Agreement additionally directed adoption of a new Bill on Public Broadcasting which would be harmonized with relevant European standards. A Provisional Executive Board was appointed that in turn appointed Andjelko Kozomara the Manager General. The Agreement was supplemented with a Memorandum of Understanding on 17 August 1998. But the process did not run smoothly here either. The RTV was torn by conflicts in the political arena of RS whereas the Government attempted to remove the Manager General from office but was prevented from doing so by OHR on the ground that only the Executive Board was empowered to remove the Manager under the standing arrangements. At the same time, the Government was consistently failing to draft a new Bill on Broadcasters whereas its Minister of Information Rajko Vasic never really embraced the idea of a nation-wide public service. In order to facilitate the reconstruction of RTRS, the High Representative even appointed Dragan Gasic the International Supervisor/Administrator for RTRS.

Another significant event in the media arena was formation of IMC (Independent Media Commission) on 11 June 1998. This organisation, established by the High Representative, is composed of international experts and it also comprises a council of prominent local professionals. IMC adopted an obligatory Codex of Radio and TV Programme Editing, establishing the standards of programme editing; in addition, the Commission started working on frequency spectrum management and temporary allocation of frequencies. On the basis of its own monitoring, IMC penalises any violations of the Codex and breaches of frequency allocation procedure.

Memorandum of Understanding

At its conference in Madrid on 16 December 1998 the Peace Implementation Council urged local authorities to comply with the requirements under the Memorandum of Understanding in addition to its other resolutions agreed upon at the previous PIC conferences in London, Sintra, Bonn and Luxembourg. Even back then it was evident that deadlines for overall reconstruction were being breached. One could rightly ask why OHR failed to intervene any earlier. However, at the very end of his mandate – more specifically, on 31 July 1999 - High Representative Carlos Westendorp takes a set of decisions that could be considered a foundation of new public broadcasting service in BiH. Exercising his powers, the High Representative thus establishes a BiH-wide Public Broadcasting Service and RTV FBiH. At the same time, he promulgates the Law on RTV FBiH while directing the National Assembly of RS to adopt a new law on public broadcasting in accord with European standards within the following two weeks. He also ordered the Croatian RTV to cease all its broadcasting in BiH by 01 October. Namely, the Law on Federation RTV governs broadcasting by this Federation network on two complementary channels where one of the two would favour Bosnian language and Croat language would be predominantly spoken on the other. At the initial stage, the public service should broadcast the minimum of 1-hour programming of common interest to the state as a whole.

The High Representative estimated that the most complex issue would be the property allotment among newly formed units and hence he appointed an International Transfer Agent. The deadline set for implementation of all aspects of the decision was 01 January 2000. The Executive Board of the Federation RTV was appointed and the Board subsequently appointed Manager General Vladimir Bilic and his Deputy Fahrudin Balvanovic, the Founding Board, Executive Commission and Public Service Supervising Board whereas Tadej Labernik was appointed International Supervisor.

The first deadline that was not met was the deadline for adoption of the Law on RTRS. Hence the High Representative promulgated necessary amendments and supplements to the Law in effect on 31 August 1999: one of these amendments renamed Serb RTV into Radio and

Television of Republic of Srpska thus identifying it with the entity rather than the Serb people as an exclusive user of this broadcaster. The new deadline set was 29 February 2000 but the requirement has not been complied with yet. The situation in RTVBiH was identical. It seemed as if the zeal of the High Representative to compensate for the time wasted by tight deadlines vanished in the face of recurring resistance by local political factors and various controversial situations that officials tasked with the reconstruction encountered. On top of all this, OHR could not find a donor to pay the Transfer Agent and hence he was employed as late as 11 April 2000, that is - 7 months upon the decision of the High Representative concerning this office. As the members of PBS management had not yet been appointed at the time, the Founding Board decided that the provisional management, i.e. the Manager General of the Federation RTV and his Deputy, would stand in for them.

Pending some new steps that were constantly being delayed, the work atmosphere within the existing RTVBiH has further aggravated and tensions have risen. Clans of journalists have been formed, mutual incriminations have multiplied and no internal expert activities on programming production by the Federation RTV and public broadcaster have been witnessed. What is awaited is the decision by the Transfer Agent on organisational arrangements in order to start gathering the key-people who would edit programming. At the same time, the first announcement of PBS Manager General vacancy has failed and hence all activities are frozen until more radical moves have been made by the Transfer Agent.

Public Service Admitted to EBU

However, two important and positive steps forward characterize this otherwise insufficiently productive RTV reconstruction period. On 17 February 2000 IMC definitely banned EROTEL, a network of Croat broadcasters – in fact an outward post of Croatian RTV from Zagreb – and thanks to this ban as well as political changes in Croatia, the return of transmitters to RTVBiH was finally initiated. Another significant improvement is admission of PBS BiH to European Broadcasting Union as a representative of public RTV from BiH even before the corporation was officially registered as such. Thus the new PBS sign now appears on all international sport programming broadcast by public broadcasters from both Sarajevo and Banjaluka.

The latest intervention by international community occurred this August. Wolfgang Petritsch, the High representative, terminated the mandate of the then RTRS Executive Board and appointed a new Board. The new Board imminently removed the Manager General from office and appointed Jelena Davidovic the Acting Manager General. These changes were a consequence of dissatisfaction on the part of international community with the failure of this broadcaster to fulfil its obligations in the course of its transformation into a public service. A segment of political public attempted to interpret this decision as a concession to Milorad Dodik, incumbent Prime Minister, who once earlier on tried to remove the same Manager General from office. Dragan Gasic, International Supervisor, and Rajko Vasic, the Minister of Information, resigned at the same time. Gasic resigned due to his ‘disagreement’ with the High Representative whereas Vasic’s resignation was caused by his ‘inability to exercise legitimate powers of the Ministry of Information’, *de facto* – due to the criticism of this Minister by international community for the delay in drafting the Bill on Broadcasters.

A radical intervention into broadcasting system raises the issue of TVOBN and Radio FERN status. A long-term development strategy of these media - that are officially considered commercial although they by and large operate as a public service with support of international community – remains blurred. As interest in sponsoring these broadcasters diminishes, donation of their programming and technical capacities to the newly emerging service is lately under consideration as a form of contribution by international community to the development of public broadcasting service in BiH.

According to the officials of international community in charge of this process, the latest news coming out of RTVBiH and RTRS raise hopes in relation to intensification of efforts

invested in the public broadcasting service in BiH. However, experts familiar with programming production warn that immense time and efforts are required to set up a system and ensure both a reasonable quantity and a reasonable standard of programming normally expected of a public service. New teams of editors would firstly have to contemplate how they would ensure the production of at least 40 % of programming as directed by IMC regulations. In comparison, an analysis done in May suggests that TV BiH produced only 32.25 % of the overall programming broadcast by this service over a week whereas TVRS did only some 29.93 %. (Media Plan Institute Research Centre).

A View of a Monitor

Unbearable Lightness of Writing

- A Textual Analysis of Editorials in Leading BiH Weekly Magazines -

The Webster's Encyclopaedic Dictionary defines editorial as 'an article in a newspaper or other periodical presenting the opinion of the publisher, editor, or editors'. This definition appears rather general and not too rigid. However, although it leaves considerable 'breathing space' to authors of editorials, it should not be taken for absolute *licentia poetica* since editorial is after all a text and, as such, it must observe at least those elementary and general principles of good writing and argumentation: clear subject and thesis, logical flow of argument, tightly argued thesis, relevant evidence. However, this analysis reveals that authors often disregard these principles and believe their freedom of creation to be absolute. What suffers the consequences is the text itself and its contents because absolute freedom of creation amplifies the potential of entropy and undermines the communication dimension of journalism.

Purpose of this analysis is not a comprehensive overview of all logical problems that can be encountered in editorials brought about by BiH newspapers. Nor is it my intention to suggest that these deficiencies invariably occur in all editorials: the objective is to point to only some of the deficiencies that threaten to evolve into a chronic disease of BiH journalism. Therefore the number of samples is very limited and the analysis is based on random sample model while covering only negative examples: this however is not to suggest that selected editorials are absolutely deprived of any positive aspects but simply that those were not of concern to me.

All editorials selected were published between 28th July and 9th August 2000 – the time frame was determined by purely pragmatic concerns, i.e. the *Media News* issue deadline. Editorial as a form has been chosen precisely because it does not necessarily subscribe to all specific laws of journalistic writing but enjoy enormous creative freedom and approximates the form of argumentative essay that follows not so specific principles but must observe the universal principles of logic.

Samples:

- Senad Avdić, 'What Zlatko is!' in *Slobodna Bosna*, Sarajevo, No. 194, 03 August 2000, p. 4
- Igor Gajić, 'The Purgatory' in *Reporter*, Banjaluka, No. 115, 19 July 2000, p. 5
- Sejo Omeragić, *Ljiljan*, Sarajevo, No. 394, 07 August 2000, p. 5
- Senad Pećanin, *Dani*, Sarajevo, No. 165, 28 July 2000, p. 3
- Editors, "Shameful Ivo Komšić!" in *Hrvatska riječ*, Sarajevo, No. 312, 29 July 2000, p. 3

Poetic Obscurity

In terms of form, editorials – particularly those brief ones – rarely employ the classical scheme of text structure divided into three main segments: introduction, main body of the argument, conclusion. This however should not imply that a text presenting, and at the same time defending, a certain stance can fail to formulate its thesis clearly and argue it well. Therefore introductory remarks should at least outline the main thesis so that readers could easily follow the flow of argument in the text. If an author however wishes to take his readers aback and decides to write a descriptive narrative to be ended with a very effective conclusion, the conclusion must be based on a solid ground, built by the text as a whole and closely related to it, in order to be justifiable. Unfortunately, neither clarity nor justifiability of conclusions invariably characterise selected editorials.

The most blatant example of unclear editorial is the Reporter's editorial by Igor Gajic, 'The Purgatory', closely followed by Ljiljan's editorial by Sejo Omeragic. 'The Purgatory', as well as Ljiljan's editorial to an extent, is characterised by allegorical expression but the key to deciphering of the allegory is to be found only on the following pages of the magazine since the editorial is composed as a summary of the issue. Thus mere understanding of one single, relatively short, article requires the reading of the entire issue of the Reporter. As much as this author's idea to write his editorial as an introduction may be interesting, a rather awkward realisation of the idea made the editorial purposeless. Namely, it remains unclear all throughout the editorial what stance the editor has taken and what he deals with at the end of the day. Thus this introductory editorial fails to prepare a reader for what follows and *introduce* to him/her the contents of the magazine, even confusing the reader, and requires of him/her to continue reading, not because the magazine would intrigue him/her but in order to decipher the editorial. Such an effect is contradictory to the effect that introduction normally seeks to produce, i.e. introducing what follows and making it interesting for its contents - not by any infantile puzzles.

Similarly, in the case of Sejo Omeragic's editorial in Ljiljan, it is obscure what the author's guiding intention was – whether to inform on the dinner at the residency of Thomas Miller, the US Ambassador to BiH, to interpret the dinner from a certain angle or to provide a critical review of the event. If the intention was to inform, a reader has all the right in the world to complain because this reduces editorial, a prestigious journalistic form reserved primarily for editors or experienced journalists, to a bare press release. However, the text exceeds the limits of a bare news item and it does not fully and explicitly meet the so-called '5W' requirements of journalistic news. If, however, the objective was to interpret the event or provide a critical insight into it, then the reader is compelled to fold up his newspapers with even a stronger sense of frustration: namely, upon the reading, it is still unclear what the dinner was about, what consequences or effects it may produce in the future, what the author's view is and what he is trying to say to his reader. It is indeed true that certain allusions are there in the text but unfortunately the author chose this rather poetic expression, burdened with gastronomic metaphors and allegories, at the expense of an explicit and well-argued stance that would suit an editorial.

Gigantic Claims and Lilliputian Argumentation

In contrast, Senad Pecanin's editorial in Dani does not fall short of explicating a clear stance – thus it ends with the following line: 'One can evidently expect anything from a leader who uses the personal pronoun of respect when talking to his favourite interlocutor, the mirror.' But solid argumentation of this thesis is however a different story – and a long one as well. Firstly, the statement brings about a new piece of information in the very conclusion by alluding to narcissism of Zlatko Lagumdžija and thus raises a new series of unanswered questions. This is a mistake in itself because conclusion is there to round up the text as a whole, not to leave readers with their mouth open. Let alone the fact that readers are left in dark as to the specific consequences the author is warning his reader of or, rather, what exactly 'anything' refers to. To end the text with this obscure 'anything' means to take readers into the realm of guessing and leave

them there to themselves and their potential mind-reading skills. However, reading newspapers is about reading *texts* – not *minds* where thoughts are still convoluted and inarticulate as that is a matter of foretelling and intuition, not of intellect.

Furthermore, origin or nature of the new information is rather intricate – readers must ask themselves when one stands before mirror. The answer is that it is mainly in the moments of privacy – particularly so if one intends to converse with one's own reflection in the mirror. Therefore, either the author had an insight into these moments of privacy - with or without the permission of the person in concern – or this is about a sheer psychological or psychoanalytical speculation on the person's *private* life or psychological profile generating conclusions on the person's *public*, that is - political, activities. As the author does not imply that he has learnt about this private conversation with mirrors from any primary or secondary source, one must assume that the author's speculation generated his conclusions. But such conclusions are absolutely unfounded since there is no scientific axiom confirming the direct connection between one's communication with one's own reflection in the mirror on the one hand and one's political action on the other – unless the informative tale of Snowwhite, her mean stepmother and already incriminated mirror is taken for such an axiom. Even if such a conversation indicates a certain narcissism, there is still a link missing: can one generalise so much as to claim that narcissism or ego absolutely prevent a person from being a good politician? I fear that such a generalisation would undermine even Periclo's reputation among others.

An analogous case is the claim stated in the editorial of Slobodna Bosna by Senad Avdic that a line of Taras Bulba must have dawned on Nijaz Durakovic before the meeting of the SDP Main Board, the line being the following: 'I created you and I shall kill you.' Let alone the origin of this information – extremely suggestive of mind-reading skills that journalists now boast - what must be of concern to readers is how relevant the information is for the editorial and the analysis of certain events that the editorial contains. The link established by the author – i.e. identity of situation since Nijaz Durakovic seems to be in a position similar to the position of Taras Bulba when confronted with his own son – builds on a sheer psychological speculation: that Nijaz Durakovic is 'most anxious' about the fact that he himself created Lagumdžija as a politician. It is obscure how the author learned about this as he himself does not allude to any anonymous source of information – nor does he suggest that he obtained it in the personal communication with Nijaz Durakovic. It is also unclear why the introduction of the editorial had to be burdened with information on Durakovic's literary affinities and his doctoral dissertation that – according to the author – inevitably makes Durakovic a fan of Lenin (despite the fact that a reader can very well assume that Durakovic did not necessarily praise Lenin but criticised him in his dissertation - what the author fails to clarify to his reader and thus draws his conclusions requiring of the reader to trust him on his word). A slightly more attentive reader must be on guard here and ask oneself whether this is not meant to suggest the profile of Nijaz Durakovic's character that should tacitly prepare the reader to adopt the view advocated by the author readily and *a priori*, thus taking side in a debate or a dispute without even learning much about the debate itself. If, however, there is no hidden agenda, it becomes even more evident how superfluous this information is and one could contemplate why the author could not begin with simply stating the identity of Taras Bulba's situation and the situation discussed in the editorial.

But the list of unfounded claims in this editorial does not conclude with this example. When discussing the problem of political succession in this region, the author of the editorial expresses his anxiety over TV coverage of the 27th of July, the Day of (National Liberating) Uprising in Bosnia and Herzegovina (a holiday related to the initiation of national resistance in the World War II) and the failure to mention the death of Enver Sehic (a Commander in the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina who got killed back in 1992). This remark, as an illustration of absurdities inherent to certain regimes in the region, may well be justifiable. However, the illustration of absurdities inherent, according to Senad Avdic, to Tito's regime cannot boast the same degree of justifiability. The text reads that Tito's regime built factories but at the same time raised generals who would subsequently blow up the very same factories. But the author fails to explain how those that triggered off the uprising in the World War II – and to whom the

celebration of the Day of Uprising is after all dedicated – can be equated with those who started the last war, when the former had by and large passed away before the war broke out. And while an indirect connection – through certain historical developments and processes - can possibly be established on the basis of historical analysis, any direct connection is physically or, rather, medically is absolutely impossible. Finally, if the author believes that there is any either indirect or direct link, his reader is not to be concerned with investigating it as the author is there to *prove* whatever he claims.

Just as the reader is not to be concerned with the height of a person in focus of an editorial and how this height effects the psychological, ethical and political profile of the person, unless the reader is presented with evidence beyond reasonable doubt that physical features, certain psychological characteristics and ethical and political views stand in some conjunction and unless this is highly relevant for the guiding thread and subject of the text. Yet, without any such evidence, the editorial of Hrvatska rijec – dedicated to the character, seemingly even the look, and the *opus* of Ivo Komsic – insists on deducing claims on political incompetence and moral impropriety of I. Komsic.

Although one could justifiably debate the overall ethical profile of journalistic texts that deal with physical features of public persons, this analysis is concerned exclusively with logical justifiability and logical validity of editorials: what connection can there possibly be between the height of Ivo Komsic and his dispute with Hrvatska rijec, if there is no scientific evidence to prove the link between one's height and one's mental outlook? And even if the dispute is generated by Komsic's (im)morality – although this is not explicated in the editorial – how can it be attested that Komsic's (im)morality is a consequence of Komsic's frustrations caused by his 'lilliputian' height? Similarly to the case of Dani's editorial, this is merely a journalists' – a speculation as there is no trace of evidence – based on pseudopschoanalysis that is not contributing to the quality of the editorial in terms of either informative or stylistic value.

Nor do the text and its main thesis benefit from information on musical affinities of the guests at the wedding of Komsic's son and the deduction that such affinities, reflected in singing of the partisans' songs, are identical to musical affinities of the partisans who committed atrocities at Bleiburgu in 1945. It is of importance to note that authors omitted to prove that these affinities of the perpetrators of crimes in the WW II are indeed a historical fact, but it is of even greater importance to point out the authors' failure to explicate that this is a matter of correlation. This is to say that, unless there is a direct relation between Komsic and his family with atrocities at Bleiburg, unless the Komsics are proven incriminated in the case of Bleiburg, identical choice of music is simply a matter of coincidence. If however the authors believe different – that this choice of music compromises Komsic as a *political* official above all - the readers must be provided with something more sustainable than a mere insinuation - for example, an analysis of the songs' contents - before anyone is publically condemned since there were various songs and singers in the historical framework of the World War II.

Eloquence without Borders

What could possibly cast a different light on my claim that certain remarks in this editorial are unjustifiable is the intention of the authors themselves. Namely, the authors point out that their intention is to *denounce* Komsic since that is their primary role as journalists. But such an intention or a role is always a twin-blade sword because denunciation is a word of wide spectrum of connotations indeed. Thus it even resonates a note of Soviet and other purges under totalitarian regimes; in other words, to denounce echoes the phrase 'to denounce to the authorities' in the sense of informing where the informer is always a person shielded with anonymity of his/her own insignificance, never a hero of the freedom of expression or action. In this sense, it is justifiable to gather any information on so-called incriminating deeds and characteristics of the 'suspect' and in such a context, any deeds and any characteristics are always incriminating and mutually related. And this is how the partisans' song, a person's height, business activities and political profile ended up in the same lot – or the same file.

But let us assume that such an intention would indeed be too embarrassing for any respectable journalist of a magazine – what is then the problem? The problem lies in the choice of words that can be depicted as next to awkward. One single word suffices to lead a reader to doubt moral credibility of the journalist in concern. Hence the journalist must be precautious not only with logical construction of the text but also when setting his/her lexical sensors: words, after all, are not robots and a list of their meanings is always for at least a iota longer than the list included in the most exhaustive dictionary. This iota is related to the usage and associative value of the word. As much as its meaning appears fluid in this light, it is often much more powerful than the standard meaning found in dictionaries since effect of the former is momentous, uncontrolled, almost instinctive – but suggestive enough to determine the tone of the entire text. Thus in the case of the editorial in Hrvatska Rijec, one single word – *denunciation* – sheds upon the whole text a light of an official decree that does away with the unloyal or condemns publicly without trial. And to a reader, this light becomes the light of an investigator's reflector once he/she realises that the text does not provide a single piece of evidence for accusations listed. It is of no relevance that some of the accusations are more thoroughly covered in the following issue of Hrvatska Rijec – because the reader may have decided that there would not be any following issue for him. For this very reason, an author or authors must bear in mind that every single text ultimately stands for itself as if there were nothing before or after it since every single text is completed and rounded up whole followed only by its author's signature. Whatever may follow afterwards is some other text or texts by some other authors.

Pro et contra – An Inseparable Couple

But editorials do not suffer only from irrelevant or unsubstantiated claims, obscurity or hasty conclusions – although even this would be a rather monumental collection of deficiencies. Another noticeable and dangerous disease is a weak defence of the stance presented, tied to the lack of sensitivity to possible remarks or criticism.

Not one single of these editorials even hints at the possibility of a view different to theirs. It is impossible to justify this on the basis of the definition that editorial is an expression of a personal view or editorial policy since the claim that personal opinion is not to be subjected to any tests is simply a twisted understanding of tolerance. 'De gustibus disputandum non est.' is not a principle valid in assessment of any logical argumentation or an opinion as a result of intellectual deliberation – not intuition or sensibility – and thus it is out of place in journalism as well. Opinion of an editor or the entire bureau, as much as it is personal(ised), must be based on either evidence or the laws of logic. When it is impossible to test the validity of evidence, correctness of a view can be tested only through its confrontation with its opposition.

Therefore, for example, if it is the stance of Dani that intra-party policy of Zlatko Lagumdžija is wrong or even dangerous, then this stance has to be defended – simply listing Lagumdžija's actions is not enough since their meaning and their implications are merely a matter of interpretation and a reader must be convinced that the interpretation given is the right one even before he/she starts doubting or asking questions. The 'shield' thus must be in-built into the argument itself by preempting the opponent – this is why it is important to address counter-arguments and shatter them. It is only then that a personal view can outgrow the limits of private speculation, that after all is not meant for public, and claim its right and credibility to shape public opinion.

What all authors, journalists included, should bear in mind when constructing and presenting argument is that the strongest argument is forged in the confrontation with its strongest opposition – not the weakest one: hence the confronted evidence and argumentation must be the strongest. If not, the bulwark is built on the part of fortification which enemies do not even attack. And the author is never to rely on the understanding of a sympathetic reader. As the English say, no point in preaching to the converted, that is – no point in persuading those already persuaded. The best test of accuracy and viability of an opinion is the opinion of an opponent and the ability to read one's own text with the opponent's eyes is the basis of any good writing. In addition, a

journalist must bear in mind diverse receptive capabilities of the readership and set the parameters on the basis of the lowest common denominator – not the ideal, well-informed and astute reader. Therefore, any poetic inspiration should be left to the sphere where it originally belongs and one should not attempt to express it in the newspapers that are seldom bought for the sake of literary enjoyment. In conclusion, these rules ought not to be taken as valid for editorials and journalistic writing alone but also for various written and oral debates that any public is inevitably exposed to. (Svjetlana Nedimović, an MPI Research Centre Analyst)

A T V News Monitoring

Impartial in the Case of BiH, Partial in the Case of Serbia

Headlines – A Reflection of Professional and Political Stance of the Media

Media Plan Institute Monitoring Centre was doing monitoring of Alternative Television (hereinafter: ATV) from Banjaluka over three whole weeks from 08 May until 25 May 2000. For the first seven days from 08 May till 25 May, monitoring of the overall programming was being invariably done 24 hours a day whereas only the prime time informative programming – i.e. the News at 1900 hrs - was monitored over the remainder of 14 days. This monitoring was ordered by Press Now, an organisation from Netherlands. In this issue, *Media News* release a segment of the analysis concerning ATV News programming.

The monitoring objective was to gain an insight into the quality of the TV station, its political stance and programming scheme, adherence to professional standards of journalism as well as its approach to political phenomena in BiH and neighbouring countries of Yugoslavia and Croatia. Therefore we have decided to monitor the prime time News every single day of the three-week monitoring period as our previous experience with monitoring of broadcasters in BiH indicated that the prime time informative programming normally mirrored professional and political stance of the media towards a majority of social phenomena. In addition, this particular type of programming normally requires a rather significant resort to the broadcaster's own production capacities, thus allowing a good insight into actual professional profile of the broadcaster. The News at 1900 hrs programming was therefore analysed through combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

Public Service: 27.6 % of Total Weekly Broadcasting

ATV Banja Luka initially came into being as a TV OBN correspondent three and a half years ago: two years ago these two stations became partners. In 1997, ATV started off with 2 hours of its own programming whereas nowadays it broadcasts its own programme from 1000 hrs till 0100 hrs. It is supported by USAID, SOROS, the Government of Japan, the Government of Sweden and a group of donors that was involved in the development of OBN.

The programming structure in the first monitoring week - the total of 6,417 minutes - was the following: 27.6% of public service, that is – news, informative and political as well as educative programming; 5.2% of commercials; 60 % of entertainment including sport, music and cartoons, and finally 6.2 % of other programming. ATV is one of the largest providers of programming for the joint programming project within OBN

ATV employs 74 people out of whom one half is composed of journalists, directors, cameramen and realisation staff. These are mainly young people, graduates of the Department of Journalism or Academy of Drama and Theatre of Belgrade, and attendees of BBC School in Sarajevo. Another educative programme was implemented within OBN and with the support of Canadian Government.

ATV covers the areas of Banja Luka, Novi Grad, Sanski Most, Prijedor, and to an extent – Derвента and Doboj. Having put up a TV transmitter on Mt Udrigovo, they now have a better coverage of Teslic and Doboj whereas the population of Srebrenica has been within the reach of ATV telecasting since last May thanks to the IREX donation.

The ATV programming on Slavko Curuvija, an independent publisher murdered in Belgrade in the spring of 1999, was awarded at the TV fest in Bar, held in 1999.

Events from the RS Predominate

The prime time news programming is broadcast every day at 1900 hrs. It lasts for about 25 to 30 minutes. Conceptually, it is a programming designed as a chronicle of daily events in Banja Luka, the Republic of Srpska, Serbia, the world and, to a lesser degree, the Federation of BiH and Croatia. The programming is edited by an editor who acts as an anchor at the same time (invariably a man, at least during the monitoring period) but another anchor – invariably a woman - is equally represented in the programming. Four editors and three anchors were noted during the monitoring period: this indicates a relatively high diversity of personnel even for the standards of much larger national (public) broadcasters in BiH. All anchors of this programming meet the standards of professional journalists, both in terms of their vocal potentials and their look and posture before camera. Dragan Stegic and Zoran Popovic could however be reproached for mixing *e-* and *ije-*versions of Serb language.

Unlike other broadcasters, ATV cameras frequently hold both anchors in focus at the same time, particularly in the beginning of the News. This is not due to the lack of technical resources as it is combined with the classical take-model with only one single anchor in focus: it is obviously a deliberate visual arrangement. Subjectively speaking, the monitor finds this idea agreeable. Also, the background is rather unusual as it applies the so-called 'blue key'. Orange prevails in the background that is designed as an abstract map of the world. Such design is rather exceptional but also very effective as it contrasts darker shades that would otherwise mortify the image and weaken the visual sensation. Another affirmative comment refers to the balance between the screenings of anchor and the frequency of footages broadcast. The number of news read out by anchors in focus is rather limited as the statistics will show. Anchors normally feature as announcers. However, these announcements are very professionally done: they are composed of two to three lines on the reportage to follow. Apart from the main announcement of headlines, the News programming is also characterised by 'inter-announcements' broadcast once or twice in the course of the programming, thus attracting the viewers' attention and contributing to effective programming conception.

During the 21 days of the news monitoring, this programming contained 603 various information. If assorted by subject, the statistics would show the following:

Republic of Srpska:		114
Federation of BiH:		25
BiH as a whole:		25
Political parties:		36
Serbia:		76
Montenegro:		6
Kosovo:		29
Croatia:		16
World:		130
Local information:		46
Social & welfare issues:	39	
Public utility issues:	3	
Politics:	4	
Sport:		20
Weather forecast:		24
Other:		10

The Predominant Journalistic Form: Reportage Combined with Audio-Recordings

In terms of the mode of information presentation, i.e. journalistic genres and technical capacities utilised, the statistics is the following:

News:	127
News combined with video-recordings:	153
Reports combined with video-recordings:	106
Reportage containing audio-recordings:	168
Phone reporting:	49

For the purposes of this analysis, the news item is herein defined as a press agency information read out by anchors and unaccompanied by any video-recording. The 'news combined with video-recordings' is a piece of press agency information accompanied by the video-recording of relevant events or other relevant shots. 'Reports combined with video-recordings' is a broadened news item, composed as a report accompanied by relevant video-recordings. 'Reportage containing audio-recordings' is a report or a reportage containing original statements by the actors.

The following table was produced on the basis of combination of these statistical data:

Subject	P r e s e n t a t i o n M o d e				
	<i>News</i>	<i>News combined with video-recordings</i>	<i>Reports combined with video-recordings</i>	<i>Reportages containing audio-recordings</i>	<i>Phone reports</i>
<i>Republic of Srpska</i>	18	12	21	58	5
<i>Federation of BiH</i>	13	8	3	0	1
<i>BiH as a whole</i>	10	6	5	2	2
<i>Political parties</i>	13	3	10	10	0
<i>Serbia</i>	24	24	8	10	28
<i>Montenegro</i>	6	0	0	0	0
<i>Kosovo</i>	12	11	5	1	0
<i>Croatia</i>	1	0	0	2	13
<i>World</i>	12	100	18	0	0
<i>Local information</i>	5	2	2	37	0
<i>Sport</i>	1	1	12	6	0
<i>Weather forecast</i>	4	2	18	0	0
<i>Other</i>	3	2	2	5	0

The data listed under the category of 'subject' could suggest that the News mainly revolve around international news as 130 items were broadcast within the monitoring period. However, these are by and large agency news accompanied by shots taken over from satellite channels or received from a video-service. These are relatively brief information and thus a news block is not longer than four to five minutes. This is to say that ATV does bring about a large number of such information but their duration is rather limited and presentation is fairly simple.

Alternative television is essentially and primarily focused on events in the Republic of Srpska or in relation to the Republic of Srpska exclusively (114 information). Considering that local information also originate from the RS as well as the news related to activities of political parties – mainly RS political parties – it is clear that a majority of information is associated to the entity of RS.

Reportage containing audio-recordings is the most incessant journalistic form (168 items). This fact calls for praises since this particular journalistic form requires rather rich journalistic experience as well as more active involvement of the staff. Finally, it is also about proper instrumentalisation of audio and video capacities. The form is mostly modelled on the classical TV scheme 'journalist – audio-recording – journalist'. ATV reportages are by and large professionally done both in journalistic and technical terms. They cover mainly events from Banjaluka but also some other parts of the RS. However, it is evident that events from West RS prevail over those from the eastern part. Events covered are mainly press conferences (NOTE: This seems to be an epidemic spreading all over BiH journalism.), various conventions, seminars, the RS Government's meetings and meetings of other public bodies, etc. It is commendable that ATV reports are not composed chronologically but are selective as deemed significant and interesting by journalists or editors. In addition, press conferences are accompanied by relevant footages: this means that reportages are not burdened with monotonous close-ups of spokespersons and journalists in attendance. Thus, for example, the report on the press conference concerning the RS media privatisation, dated 25 May, was accompanied by shots of various TV bureaus, TV equipment and transmitters but also enriched with additional press statements addressing the issue of privatisation: all these are characteristics of a thematic reportage and not a mere report.

ATV journalists are also practising investigative journalism and summarise the most significant political events. In the field of investigative journalism, ATV mainly produces fairly simple programming, aspiring to illuminate certain issues, primarily social and welfare concerns. For example, why gas stations do not have in-built measurement devices or what the dispute between Prijedor College and RS Minister of Education is really about. However, the quality of programming varies. Thus the reportage on the Prijedor College, dated 08 May, presents only the stance of the College administration whereas the Minister, representing the other side to the dispute, was bypassed. We have also noted a report on the concert of certain Baja, a Serbian folk-singer, in Banjaluka, broadcast on 17 May. The report was intended to answer the question why kitsch prevails nowadays. The singer Baja is depicted as a bearer of kitsch although the report itself does not suggest so since the very shots of the concert are not presented as kitsch whereas the reporter fails to provide any additional information or clarification. A sociologist's commentary is also incorporated in the reportage but it is somewhat lacking in expert authority – consequently his critique of kitsch appears rather unconvincing.

Political or any other excessively sensitive issues are mainly left untouched. But political issues are dealt with through a form of summary or insight, compiling numerous facts and thus presenting a full and comprehensive information to a viewer. This was particularly evident in the coverage of events concerning the Council of Ministers and appointment of its new Chairman: various stances of RS political parties and problems occurring in the process of appointment were presented on several occasions.

Impartiality towards Political Developments in the RS

No bias in favour of any of the RS political options was noted in the course of monitoring. Stances of the parties and politicians are presented impartially. Although no exact statistical record has been produced within the framework of this analysis, our impression is that the Socialist Party of RS and its leader, Zivko Radisic, occurred slightly more frequently in the monitoring period. However, the increase in frequency was a result of the concurrent events. Namely, appointment of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers is closely tied to the activities of Zivko Radisic as a member of the BiH Presidency, also a leader of the SPRS, entitled to

recommend the respective candidate. In addition, the line of deepest cleavage in this affair ran between the Socialist Party and Prime Minister Dodik.

Events in the Federation of BiH are covered selectively, superficially and mainly through agency news. During the monitoring period, these news concerned mainly the tragic traffic accident near Kakanj, causing 44 casualties, and views of the Federation political parties on various issues. Damir Kaletovic, an OBN journalist, acts as an ATV correspondent from Sarajevo. However, his reports during the monitoring period mainly concerned the appointment of the Chairman in the Council of Ministers – again an issue closely linked to the RS affairs. Only one phone report related exclusively to the Federation was noted in this period and it concerned the tragic traffic accident near Kakanj when a correspondent from Zenica, another OBN journalist, went on air over the phone.

BiH as a whole featured in the News 25 times, mostly in the form of agency news. Our analytical category 'BiH as a whole' encompasses activities of common BiH institutions and various conferences, conventions and meetings in relation to the resolution of problems of the state as a whole. A majority of this information is tied to activities of international community in regard to BiH.

Bias in Favour of Serbian Opposition

Events in Serbia are more significantly present in the 1900 News: 76 related information. Those were mostly phone reports by Danijela Segan, their correspondent from Belgrade – the total of 28. All reports related to FRY invariably deal with the relations of its government with the opposition. It can be concluded that ATV thoroughly follows and covers all ongoing events regarding the governmental repression of the opposition, students and independent media and journalists in the FRY. In contrast to impartial approach to political affairs within the RS, there is an evident bias in favour of the opposition forces in Serbia and the Resistance movement in particular: the movement is consistently described by either anchors or Belgrade correspondents as the 'only healthy force', 'organisation initiating changes', etc. Most of the events from Serbia are presented through the prism of opposition views. Statements of the opposition leaders and the Resistance leaders were quoted, the accounts of events were those of the opposition whereas the views of the authorities and police remained unavailable throughout the monitoring period. The only exception was a press release by the Belgrade police, read out on 18 May, describing the behaviour of Red Star football fans during, as reported, a 'peaceful' protest rally, as violent. Apart from reports of Belgrade correspondents, there were also two instances of reports by the Novi Sad correspondent. However, 'on the spot' reports were presented 10 times within programming taken over from partner TV stations or independent TV production from Serbia. The reports mainly addressed instances of regime's repressive actions against media and contained statements by editors in chief of the banned media. However, somewhat stronger wording in respect to the regime in Serbia and to Slobodan Milosevic was used only once and even then only indirectly. Namely, on 26 May, reporting on the French Express's commentary, Milosevic's regime is described as a 'rule of a mafia clan' and 'a regime resembling the one of Ceausescu'.

Montenegro featured in the News merely six times and mostly in agency press releases. Kosovo was in focus much more frequently – 29 times in total but also primarily in agency news. In the monitoring period, ATV did not have any correspondents in Kosovo. The emphasis in the news on Kosovo was placed upon assaults on remaining Serbs by Kosovo Albanians.

ATV followed events in Croatia mainly through phone reports of its correspondent from Zagreb, Boris Raseta. In addition, ATV crew visited Croatia on two occasions and produced two reportages concerning human rights of Serbs in Croatia for the News. The ATV correspondent from Zagreb also frequently reported on this issue. Although this remains a highly sensitive issue, it was addressed impartially and without any prejudice towards Croatian authorities.

Apart from the News at 1900 hrs, ATV broadcasts 5-minute News at 1000, 1500 and 2400 hrs. At 1000 and 1500 hrs, the anchor in focus reads out the news whereas the midnight News

programming is composed of ATV or satellite channel shots accompanied by the news read out in 'off'. Anchors of these short news as well as the News at 1900 hrs appear rather confident and do not make any mistakes when reading.

Press agency sources are normally not referred to. However, some of them – such as Beta from Belgrade, Srna from RS and Onasa from the Federation of BiH – were referred to as sources of information on several occasions. Journalists also quoted newspapers from FBiH on several occasions but we believe that those sources were used only indirectly and information were obtained through a secondary source such as news agencies. (Radenko Udovicic, Media Plan Institute Research Centre)

NEWS

Ex-Minister Attacks a Journalist

(Sarajevo) Ljubisa Lazic, a journalist of *Oslobođenje*, a daily from Republic of Srpska, was physically assaulted by Marko Asanin, Head of the Regional Board of SNSD (Party of Independent Social Democrats) and ex-Minister in the Council of Ministers of BiH, and his two escorts in the offices of Radio Srpsko Sarajevo on Saturday 12 August. Lazic was injured on this occasion and obliged to seek medical help in a nearby hospital.

Lazic reported the incident to OSCE SOS line for journalists, seeking their help. In his statement to the Help Line, Lazic explained that this assault had presented a climax of a series of threats and harassment by Asanin who at one point even attempted to exclude the local media from the meeting of Srpsko Novo Sarajevo Municipal Assembly, demanding of them to present the views of his political party solely. Ljubisa Lazic also informed the OSCE Media Office that the local police raised charges against the perpetrators and expressed his pleasure at the police response to the incident. Lazic added that he himself intended to press charges against Asanin and other two assailants and that he would appreciate support of international community in this instance.

Marko Asanin stated for the press absolutely contradictory information, explaining that he was attacked by Lazic who cherished open animosities towards Asanin. Asanin adds that the involvement of his two escorts in this incident was merely an intervention of his security guards aimed at protecting him from Lazic's violent attack. However, Srpsko Sarajevo police who investigated the case did not confirm Asanin's explanation and pressed charges against Asanin.

The OSCE Help Line for journalists, established in November 1999, is intended to help journalists who are threatened, disturbed or assailed when performing tasks in their official capacity. For more details on the Help Line, contact OSCE Mission: phone 033 292-228 or email freemedia@oscebih.org

An 'Explosive' Commercial Removed

(Sarajevo) Independent Media Commission (IMC) requested the TV stations in the RS to cease the broadcast of Stimorol chewing gum commercial as it relativises the hazard of explosive devices in BiH that injure and even kill citizens of this country on a daily basis.

In its letter to Vikom, Bel and ATV broadcasters, IMC presents the opinion of Working Mine Action Group that expressed its concern over this particular commercial. Namely, the Stimorol commercial shows a chewing gum shaped as a hand grenade, which explodes leaving the screen dotted with pieces of the gum burst. The hand grenade in the commercial is a faithful replica of a real hand grenade. IMC therefore believes that there is a serious risk of

young children, if encountering a real hand grenade, pulling the safety pin as seen in the commercial in order to get a chewing gum.

Respective TV stations complied with this IMC's request.

Financial Controls and Phone Threats: the Most Frequent Forms of Pressurisation upon Broadcasters

(Sarajevo) Internews Research Team did a poll of 116 broadcasters, all members of BiH Association of Broadcasters, in order to establish what forms of pressurisation were most frequently encountered by the media in BiH. According to this research, the most frequent form of pressurisation is a phone threat mainly by anonymous persons who threaten journalists for their reporting or overall programming policy of their media. 30 media were exposed to this form of pressures and the total of 733 phone threats were recorded. Two broadcasters were exposed to as many as 200 threats, one of them to 56 and two 50 each whereas other media experienced fewer than 20 threatening calls each.

Another form of indirect pressurisation upon the media is financial control by state authorities. 31 media were exposed to it.

As to so-called physical violation of the rights of journalists, 20 broadcasters reported instances of physical attacks on their employees whereas 16 broadcasters experienced demolition of their equipment. One of the latter reported as many as 7 cases of violent demolition of equipment in the last five months. 6 broadcasters were subjected to confiscation of recorded material whereas 24 of them were prevented in exercising their freedom of movement or they were denied access in order to obstruct professional reporting.

The number of broadcasters whose journalists were charged with offence and slander is 16, out of which 2 broadcasters reported 12 such instances. 18 broadcasters polled encountered pressurisation in the form of withdrawal of their advertisers from mutual business cooperation due to the programmatic conception of these broadcasters.

"Reporters without Borders" Lodging a Protest with Montenegrin Government

(Paris/Podgorica) Beta reports that 'Reporters without Borders', a non-governmental organisation for protection of journalists from Paris, wrote a letter to Milo Djukanovic, President of Montenegro, protesting the decision of Montenegrin authorities to ban any coverage of preelections campaign by the national media.

'This is a partial and arbitrary decision that compels the national media to support the boycott of elections on 24 September proclaimed by the authorities.', argues RWB. 'We ask of you to abolish this decision and allow journalists to do their work and cover the preelections campaign in the most adequate conditions possible.', writes the RWB NGO, asking the Government to remain consistent with their liberal policy.

The organisation believes that, ever since the election of Djukanovic for President of the Republic in October 1997, Montenegro has served as an oasis of freedom within the Yugoslav Federation that is constantly aspiring to suffocate all independent media.

Montenegrin Ministry of Information banned any involvement of the Montenegrin public broadcasters and local municipal press in Yugoslav preelections campaign on 25 August. On this occasion, the Ministry warned that 'rights of political parties to representation in the public media in the course of preelections campaign for illegitimate Federal elections cannot be exercised in the media founded by either the Republic or local units of political organisation.'

Necessary legal measures will be taken against the public media that breach the Resolution of the Montegrin Assembly on the protection of its interests and Montenegrin Law on Public Information by their involvement in the prelections campaign.

Bosniak Television Banned

(Sarajevo) Independent Media Commission (IMC) rejected the application of Bosniak RTV International (BRT) for long-term broadcasting licence and directed BRT to cease broadcasting.

This decision is founded on the claim that BRT was deliberately misrepresenting certain facts, aspiring to present itself as a private broadcaster although the breakdown of its income suggests that BRT is effectively a public broadcaster. IMC points out that status of certain media is far from irrelevant in the present circumstances in BiH.

BRT management denounced the decision on the ban as political, describing IMC's explanation as 'ridiculous'. Namely, BRT has for a while been under impression that international community, a founder of IMC, has been troubled by a Bosniak broadcaster that cherishes Islamic tradition and that this is what actually motivated the ban.

The IMC's decision has not yet come into effect. A complaint by BRT is expected and it will be discussed on 25 September. BRT has already pointed out that it would be willing to re-register as a public broadcaster. However, if the decision is additionally reaffirmed, BRT will have to cease its broadcasting.

Radio Yugoslavia Does Not Broadcast from BiH Any Longer

(Banjaluka/Sarajevo) A SW transmitter of Radio Yugoslavia, a national station of former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, that is situated in the vicinity of Bijeljina terminated transmission on 19 August. According to the operators of the transmitter, they were directed by SFOR to leave the transmitter and terminate the transmission within 48 hours. However, SFOR denied any connection with this case only a day later.

According to the information originating from Independent Media Commission (IMC), that is in charge of frequency spectrum in BiH, this case been unnecessarily dramatised. IMC confirms that SFOR did not urge the operators to leave the transmitter but IMC wrote a letter requiring 'a reply that would either confirm or deny IMC's findings that broadcasting from this transmitter is illegal' in 48 hours at the latest. 'Therefore we simply endeavoured to clarify the situation since we have not issued any licence to any BiH broadcaster to broadcast from this location – but we have not urged them to terminate broadcasting instantly.', explains Zinaida Babovic, the IMC spokesman.

The transmitter of Radio Yugoslavia was built on this location 16 years ago. The headquarters of this radio station is situated in Belgrade. It broadcasts programming in 14 different languages. Serbian authorities harshly protested suspension of this broadcaster, accusing Wolfgang Petritsch, the High Representative, and Milorad Dodik, the RS Prime Minister, of this decision.

◆ Council of Media Plan Institute: Prof. Dr. Muhamed Nuhic, Hamza Bakšić (Sarajevo); Perica Vučinić (Banja Luka); M.S. Lenart Šetinc (Ljubljana); Prof. Dr. Mario Plenković (Zagreb); M.S. Loius de la Ronciere (Paris); M.S. Aleksandar Todorović (Montreaux); Prof. Dr. Slavo Kukić (Mostar), Prof.Dr. Miroљjub Radojković (Beograd)