

monitoring report

Elections B&H '96

bulletin of the institute for war & peace reporting & media plan

17 July 1996

number 7

THE B&H MEDIA WEEK IN REVIEW: 8 - 14 JULY

In the week that saw the first anniversary of the fall of Srebrenica, the murder of thousands of the town's menfolk and the start of journeys which would lead their wives, mothers, sisters and children into exile, it was to be expected that the commemorations would dominate the news in Sarajevo, Tuzla and other *Armija*-held parts of the Federation.

The anniversary provided international media as well with opportunities both to reapportion the widely shared responsibility for what happened in and around Srebrenica and to reassess the movement towards NATO air strikes, shuttle diplomacy, the Dayton conference and the current election campaign that was thereby set in motion. With an eye on the enhanced impact its pronouncements would and did have, The Hague Tribunal also chose last week to issue new and binding arrest warrants for Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić.

Striking an uncharacteristically strong and appropriate note, the OSCE's chief of mission, Robert Frowick, declared that the SDS would not be allowed to compete in the September elections if Karadžić were still in charge of the party. High Representative Carl Bildt made contrary noises, and Frowick himself seemed to backtrack when he visited Biljana Plavšić in Pale; but the OSCE announcement over the week-end that the official start of the campaign would be deferred until 19 July appeared to constitute an ultimatum to the SDS. The French defence minister, meanwhile, suggested amending IFOR's mandate so as to require it to apprehend putative war criminals. While hints emerging from the US that a snatch operation might be in the works - followed by the sudden despatch of Dayton's architect, Richard

Holbrooke, to Belgrade - heightened what was obviously intended to be intolerable pressure on Pale.

These manoeuvres by the international community excited less interest on the part of the nation's broadcast media than did the Srebrenica anniversary, the problems of refugees seeking to return home, the warrants issued by the The Hague Tribunal and various economic and social issues, including a looming strike by health service workers. Such news values may accurately represent popular interest. But they may also reflect the low credibility of the international community's representatives in B&H.

So far as election news was concerned, arguments over the delay in publishing the official returns from Mostar and the OSCE's disqualification of seven SDA candidates in Cazin (on account of their part in the attack on Haris Silajdžić) received top billing in the Sarajevo media. On the other hand, election broadcasts proliferated both in the Federation and in Republika Srpska, regardless of the postponement of the start of the official campaign.

Commemorations of Srebrenica

The public meetings and pronouncements occasioned by the Srebrenica anniversary provided fewer opportunities for spreading hate or inciting revenge than might have been expected. They did, however, lend themselves to the making of party political propaganda. Several Federation broadcasters either capitalised on the opportunity or allowed themselves to be used in this way.

TV B&H's "Dnevnik" led on 11 July with an account of the wreath-laying ceremony in Sarajevo's Ferhadija street at which President Izetbegović spoke tearfully of the fact that "we are all, save for the dead, guilty in our own way for the events in Srebrenica." **Bosanskomuslimansi Radio Hayat** in Sarajevo did not see fit to broadcast this part of Izetbegović's speech in its evening news. While **NTV Studio 99's** "Oko 22" portrayed the event as a party political occasion.

RTV Zenica permitted its overly pathetic coverage of the Srebrenica tragedy on 11 July (on both radio and TV) to be used by Zenica's SDA mayor as an opportunity for self-promotion. These reports did not, however, seek to incite anti-Serb hatred. **Zetel** pursued a different angle two days later. It rebroadcast a foreign news clip showing Biljana Plavšić, surrounded by priests, candles and icons, attending a service of thanksgiving for Srebrenica's "liberation". (According to **TV Tuzla** on 12 July, SDP Vice-President Sead Avdić was the only party leader to protest against Pale's intention to organise such a celebration.)

HTV Mostar, introducing on 11 July a report originating with big brother **HRT** about the day's proceedings in Sarajevo, remarked as follows: "Today marks the passage of exactly one year since - for the Muslims, naturally - the fall and - for the Serbs - the liberation of Srebrenica. On this occasion there was held in Sarajevo, as one might say, a singularly sad commemorative gathering." Federal feeling was also singularly absent.

Media coverage of the big international gathering in Tuzla on 12 July was even more diverse - and more interesting. "Dnevnik" on **TV B&H** reported blandly that the speeches of Izet Hadžić, governor of the Tuzla-Podrinje canton, and of Fahrudin Selimović, former mayor of Srebrenica, had been interrupted by boos and hisses. It carried, though, an extract from Ejup Ganić's speech in which he promised the assembled refugees that the search for their missing relatives would go on. The accompanying pictures of the throng showed masses of fluttering Bosnian flags.

According to *Večernje novine*, the scene was rather different. Hadžić and Selimović had not just been howled down, they had been pelted with stones and rotten fruit. Nor were Bosnian flags the only ones present. In fact, they were outnumbered by SDA and Muslim banners and placards. Other eyewitnesses reported that the reaction of the crowd to the musicians, actors,

choirs and SDA luminaries from Sarajevo was to shout, "Stuff your music and hymns, give us arms and we'll solve the problem of Srebrenica ourselves!" What had obviously been planned as a giant if dignified pre-election rally on behalf of the **SDA had turned into something else.**

Television TPK, which had promoted the ceremonies for days, found itself embarrassed. Its reaction was to ignore the untoward incidents and to show, instead, excerpts from the fiery speeches of Naser Orić (one-time bodyguard to Slobodan Milošević and latterly commander of Srebrenica's defenders) and Ejup Ganić. These two seem to have given the crowd what it wanted. Unlike the parts of Ganić's speech broadcast by **TV B&H's** "Dnevnik", **TV TPK's** extracts made clear Ganić's message that voting for the SDA was the surest way to win back Srebrenica.

The next day, **TV TPK's** "Dnevnik" carried part of a press conference given by Hadžić and the local police chief in which they claimed that the incident (which remained undescribed) was the well-prepared work of some 20 trouble-makers who had long been known to the police. According to **TV Tuzla's** report of the same press conference, Hadžić asked journalists to emphasise this point.

Curiosity of the Week

SRT had its own embarrassments last week. While "Novosti u 8" on **TV Srpska** made no mention whatsoever of The Hague Tribunal's renewed arrest warrants against Karadžić and Mladić, **Radio Srpska's** afternoon "Dnevnik" carried the news, virtually straight, on 8 July.

Accusations of Media Malpractice

Political parties habitually bemoan their treatment by the press, no matter how good it may actually be. There was, however, an unusual example of this last week in Republika Srpska. **TV Srpska's** "Novosti u 8" reported on 11 July that it had been the object of sharp criticism at a joint news conference called by the Serb Party of Krajina, the People's Party of RS, the Serb Patriotic Party and the Serb Peasant Party. The four fellow-travelling parties were annoyed that the parties in the opposition blocs were being allowed individual time on air. This, the four parties alleged, placed them at a disadvantage. Could Carl Bildt have had this gem in mind when, according to Reuters, he accused **TV Srpska** the next day of putting out

propaganda that "even Stalin would be ashamed of"?

A more bizarre protest was reported by **Radio Srpska's** "Dnevnik" on 14 July. The president of the Party of Serb Unity, Željko Ražnatović-Arkan, was quoted as denying in Bijeljina rumours supposedly spread by **RTV Serbia** that he had been wounded in an attempt to arrest RS President Karadžić. This, according to Arkan, was absolutely false "because I stand firmly alongside our Serb leader."

Less fanciful protests were aired last week by Banja Luka's **Radio Krajina**. It carried the complaint of the Social-Liberal Party that its president, although invited, was excluded from the first of **TV Srpska's** election forums on 8 July. On 11 July **Radio Krajina** noted that the Serb Radical Party had also protested at the unfair treatment it received both from **SRT** and *Glas srpski*. These protests were not, however, featured very prominently.

Alleged Army Malpractice

Although NTV Zetel differs from RTV Zenica in the lesser prominence it accords to the doings of the SDA figures who govern the city, canton and military region, it does not generally analyse or criticise their activities and pronouncements. An exception occurred on the 13 July "Info-Blok". Reporting a meeting of the commander of the Third Corps of the Armija RB&H with bearers of the "Golden Lily" medal, the journalist opined that this was really a campaign rally. He quoted the commander as warning of the danger that the "upcoming elections will divide Bošnjaks", whose buttress is their "faith, state and Armija". This was the first occasion since monitoring began in Zenica that a broadcaster has both observed and reported an officer engaging in direct political marketing.

Terminological Innovations

Radio Krajina has ceased referring to the "Muslim-Croat Federation", "Muslim Television" and so forth. It is, rather, using their proper names. Moreover, its newscasts are now divided into two geopolitical blocks: "news from RS and Serbia" and "news from the Federation B&H and Croatia".

Sarajevo's **Radio Hayat**, on the other hand, has taken to referring to a "Croat entity" alongside the

Serb one. According to the presenter of **Radio Studio 99's** "Hyde Park" (on 11 July), a meeting arranged by OSCE in Mostar on 8 July between journalists from the city's east and west sides was called an "inter-entity" conference and its participation was said to "inter-ethnic".

TV Srpska: Elections' Specials

This channel's series of election broadcasts, "Elections '96", kicked off on 8 July with a two-hour programme which brought together representatives of 15 parties (three of them from the Federation), as well as the two RS members of the Provisional Election Commission. Ten of the party representatives were gathered in **SRT's** Pale studio; and five were in the studio in Banja Luka (from which the SLS leader was excluded: see above). There was no meeting of minds, and one of the presenters showed herself as extremely hostile to the Federation-based parties in attendance: the MBO, HSS and USBD. What was important, however, was that these parties should have gone to Pale. How they got there and under what security conditions was not explained.

The first of the regular, hour-long programmes took place the following evening (9 July) from **SRT** Banja Luka. According to the draw, the honour fell to Amila Omersoftić, president of the party "Žena B&H" (B&H Woman) and managing director of **RTV B&H**. According to OSCE rules, the representative is allowed a fixed time to present both the party's programme and him or herself. The bulk of the airtime is then devoted to a question and answer session in which the presenter both asks questions and relays those of viewers. The questioning, on this occasion, was as unfriendly as the presenter's attitude and the terminology employed. Although sorely provoked, Ms Omersoftić stood her ground.

No broadcasts took place on 10 or 11 July. The USBD had been scheduled to appear on the former date, but did not arrive at the studio, ostensibly because OSCE failed to provide transport. Nor did the SPD B&H appear the following evening: because, according to **SRT**, "they did not meet the conditions for the appearance of parties on TV Srpska."

Media Pluralism in the News

Two significant media developments took place last week. The first was the public launch of the independent television network **TVIN** (previously

reported here as IN TV). A pre-emptive strike against this OHR-sponsored venture was initiated by **RTV B&H** on 8 July, when Amila Omersoftić described it at a press conference as "an attempt to take over the ownership of the telecommunications network and licences of B&H", which "could have catastrophic consequences". **TVIN's** programme council of five participating stations (**NTV Zetel**, **TV Tuzla**, **TV Mostar**, **NTV Studio 99** and **NTV Hayat**) met the next day to issue a statement hailing their new network as an enormous contribution to the development of media pluralism, free speech and election-time access to the media. A press conference followed on 10 July. The network is not expected to go on the air before mid-August.

The second media event of note was *Večernje novine's* loss of two days' editions, ostensibly because of unpaid printing bills. Whether the result of the paper's poverty or - as rumour had it - hostility on the part of people in high places, this was in either case a strike against the very "media pluralism" which **TVIN** aims to promote.

Monitoring Report

This bulletin also featured twice on the air last week. The presenter of **Radio Studio 99's** "Hyde Park" drew attention to previous references in these pages to the phone-in show's recurring problems with its telephone lines when the same thing happened on 11 July. The flattering implication was that malevolent elements should watch their step.

Press Articles Relating Directly or Indirectly to the 1996 Elections

Period of coverage: 8 - 14 July 1996

Dailies: *Oslobođenje*, *Večernje novine*, *Dnevni Avaz*.

Weeklies, fortnightlies and monthlies: *Svijet*, *Ljiljan*, *Slobodna Bosna*, *Dani*, *Hrvatska riječ*.

title	issues	number of articles	number of articles per issue	most common formats
Oslobođenje	7	50	4-12 articles	brief news items, commentaries
Večernje novine	4	28	3-14 articles	reports and brief news items
Dnevni Avaz	6	63	7-13 articles	reports, interviews, news items
Svijet	1	3		commentaries, stories, interview
Ljiljan	1	5		commentaries, interviews
Slobodna Bosna	1	1		interviews, political cartoon
Dani	1	5		commentaries, stories
Hrvatska riječ	1	8		commentaries, brief news items

On 13 July, **TV B&H's** "Dnevnik" carried an item in which a picture of *Monitoring Report* was shown and the bulletin cited to the effect that **TV B&H** shows far greater professionalism than does **TV Srpska**. Although the interpretation was accurate and the publicity welcome, "Dnevnik" erred in ascribing the IWPR / Media Plan monitoring effort to OSCE. The organisations responsible for this bulletin are independent of OSCE and all other official bodies.

The Election Campaign in the Sarajevo Press

The amount of election coverage in the print media declined significantly last week. No doubt the principal reason was the conclusion of the Mostar campaign and poll.

The campaign has entered the phase in which, on the one hand, technical preparations are being carried out or completed and, on the other, when candidates whom have been entered on party or coalition lists are being presented. The press appears to be more interested in writing about the candidates themselves than about their or their parties' programmes.

The papers have published significantly more articles than heretofore about the election climate, parties and candidates in Republika Srpska, as well as about those Federation-based parties which will enter the poll in RS.

She loves me, she loves me not...

The table below shows the presence of political parties, their leaders and multi-party coalitions on the state-run broadcast media of both the Federation and Republika Srpska in the week 8-14 July. The column headed "total" indicates how many times each party or its leader appeared (directly or indirectly) or was mentioned in the central daily newscasts on both radio and television of **RTV B&H** and **SRT**.

Each party is awarded a score which represents the sum of every positive mention (+1), every neutral mention (0) and every negative mention (-1). The column headed "Σ (+,-,0)" shows the results. The higher the number, the greater is that broadcaster's sympathy for or devotion to the party or politician. The lower the number, on the other hand, the more can the broadcaster be said to regard that party or its leader with disrespect or antipathy. The closer the total to zero, the more likely it is that the party receives equitable treatment by the broadcaster.

name of party	abbrevi- ation	RTV BiH		RTV Srpska	
		total	Σ (+,-,0)	total	Σ (+,-,0)
Stranka demokratske akcije	SDA	28	+ 7	16	- 15
Srpska demokratska stranka (SZ)	SDS	12	- 8	46	+41
Hrvatska demokratska zajednica BiH	HDZ	8	- 2	10	- 8
Srpska radikalna stranka RS	SRS	0	-	1	+1
Stranka za BiH	SzaBiH	3	0	0	-
Srpska patriotska stranka SPAS	SPAS	0	-	2	+ 1
Stranka srpskog jedinstva	SSJ	0	-	2	+ 2
Srpska seljačka stranka RS	SSS	0	-	1	0
Narodna stranka RS	NSRS	0	-	1	0
Srpska stranka Krajine	SSK	0	-	1	0
* Narodni savez za slobodan mir	koalicija	0	-	1	0
** Demokratski patriotski blok	koalicija	0	-	1	0
Stranka žena BiH	SŽBiH	1	0	0	-
Liberalno bošnjačka organizacija	LBO	3	-1	0	-
Stranka privrednog prosperiteta BiH	SPP	1	0	0	-
Građanska demokratska stranka BiH	GDS	1	0	0	-
Muslimansko bošnjačka organizacija	MBO	1	0	0	-
Hrvatska seljačka stranka BiH	HSS	1	0	0	-
Unija bosanskohercegovačkih socijaldemokrata	UBSD	2	0	0	-
Socijal demokratska partija BiH	SDP	1	0	0	-
Republikanska stranka BiH	RS	1	0	0	-

* Narodni savez za slobodni mir: Socijalistička partija RS , Jugoslovenska levica (JUL), Socijalno-liberalna stranka RS, Stranka nezavisnih socijaldemokrata , Nova radnička partija.

**Demokratski patriotski blok: Stranka demokratskog centra Trebinje , Seljačka radnička stranka Kozarska Dubice, Demokratska stranka Bijeljina, Nova radikalna stranka "Nikola Pašić", Otadžbinska stranka Banja Luka

Note: Party names appear as they do most often in the press.

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The Institute for War and Peace Reporting is a British-registered charity established to aid the development of independent media and to support voices of moderation in former Yugoslavia. It also publishes *War Report*, an independent monthly journal, and *Tribunal*, a bimonthly review of The Hague International War Crimes Tribunal. For subscriptions and other information, contact IWPR at 33 Islington High Street, London N1 9LH. Tel +44-171-713-7130 / Fax 713-7140/ E-mail:warreport@gn.apc.org.

MEDIA PLAN is Bosnia's first private company specialising in media research and analysis. Its central aim is to promote the renewal and development of the B&H media. The company has at its disposal an extensive data-base on the Bosnian media scene.

We gratefully acknowledge project support from the Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency, the Open Society Institute, the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung and the Winston Foundation for World Peace.