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# Monitoring Report

*A review of the B&H media published by Media Plan and the Institute for War & Peace Reporting*  
Volume 3 • Issue 6  
September 21 1997

## THE 'UNDIGNIFIED' ELECTIONS

*(Comment by Senad Hadzifezovic, TV BiH, September 13).*

### SRT - WAR FOR THE WAVES

**At midnight, on the night of September 11, Republika Srpska Television broadcast live a historic meeting. Representatives of the Pale-run Srpska Radio-Television (SRT), and representatives of OSCE, SFOR, and the Office of the High Representative (OHR), met in a discussion that verged on the amicable. Miroslav Toholj, director-general of SRT, was present, openly cooperating with those whom less than a week beforehand (September 8) he condemned for their 'black repertoire of violence' inflicted upon SRT. Now he was publicly agreeing to allow them their own prime-time slots. What was the background to this astonishing - and rapid - change of heart? And why did the arrival on the scene of three NATO planes carrying jamming equipment pass unmentioned?**

*Monitoring Report* described last fortnight how the Udrigovo transmitter was handed back to the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) representatives on September 2 by the SFOR troops who were guarding

it, and how it returned to transmitting the Pale-run version of SRT. (While under SFOR guardianship the transmitter had spent a brief period relaying SRT Banja Luka, sympathetic to beleaguered RS president Biljana Plavsic.)

In return for resuming control of the transmitter, the SDS (which rules from Pale) and SRT - both represented in Momcilo Krajisnik, who leads the former and sits on the board of the latter - signed an agreement. This guaranteed half an hour's presence daily on prime-time viewing to international representatives, together with an hour for opposition parties. It also guaranteed that SRT would refrain in the future from 'inflammatory reporting' against the international community (though specifying nothing about the local community).

However, neither international officials nor opposition parties appeared on Pale SRT during the next few days. On September 6 the RS Minister of Information, Svetlana Slijegovic, issued an announcement on radio and television: 'We must do absolutely everything, within the frame of our profession (meaning journalism) to safeguard the Republika Srpska'.

OHR and SFOR, which had jointly signed the Udrigovo agreement over the

transmitter, sent a letter to Pale SRT to demand that its terms be put into force. Miroslav Toholj's reply was read out repeatedly, at hourly intervals, on Pale SRT on the night of September 8. He called their letter 'an eternal document of attempts to choke freedom and human rights.' The requests contained in it 'fell within the blackest repertoire of violence against the freedom of the press and freedom of expression'. He asked what had become of the West's ostensible respect for democracy and professional journalism. He concluded with a refusal to negotiate further.

### Challenge to 'Granny' Plavsic

Viewing that night was further spiced by the main news item - audiences learned that 'the world is waiting with great attention for the Pan-Serb (SDS) rally' which was to take place in Banja Luka. The camera showed busloads of SDS followers setting off from Pale, waving flags and pictures of Radovan Karadzic. The occupants were shouting 'We are going to see what kind of Serbs they are there, and then we will know what to do'. Biljana Plavsic was referred to as 'Granny', the Bosniaks as 'Turks', SFOR as 'the occupiers'.

## MONITORING REPORT

Published by the  
Institute for War & Peace Reporting and  
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IWPR is an independent conflict-monitoring and media-support charity working to inform the international debate on conflict and provide a platform and other support for voices of moderation caught in conflict.



Media Plan is an independent organisation monitoring, training and developing the Bosnian media.



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Monitoring Report is free of charge, and reprinting with credit is encouraged. IWPR and Media Plan gratefully acknowledge the support of the Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency (SIDA) for support for this project. Other media training, development and research projects carried out by Media Plan and IWPR in Bosnia are supported by the European Union, US Information Agency, National Endowment for Democracy and Winston Foundation for World Peace.

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But on September 9, came the news that Toholj would take part in the September 11 meeting. On September 10 High Representative Carlos Westendorp appeared at prime time - although promptly followed by the jingle 'Don't weaken the Serb nation - vote for the SDS.' And, during the historic midnight meeting, Toholj conceded that he would discuss future programming with the OSCE and OHR, would carry SFOR spots about the elections, would no longer carry spots derogatory to the international community, would ensure that the Pale SRT of the future would be a model of non-inflammatory reporting. (Toholj was last quoted by *Monitoring Report* warning of future 'blood and destruction, in which the RS becomes a cheap, bagatelle, gift to its enemies.' See Volume 3, issue 5.)

Only those viewers who sat up after the meeting ended at a quarter past one a.m. could have learned what was presumably the motive for this abrupt change of attitude - that three NATO planes carrying equipment for jamming electronic signals had arrived in Italy. The presenter mentioned them very briefly, before finishing the night's programming. They had not emerged in the newscasts earlier in the evening of September 11.

The main newscast itself had featured very different topics that night - the increasing agricultural and industrial prosperity of the Republika Srpska, the opening of new roads, the building of new houses, improvements in telecommunications, the water system, the post office. It featured the glad news that pensioners were about to receive their May pensions; that teachers and other social-sector employees (usually the latest and the worst paid) were that very day receiving their salaries. It was bright and positive.

'Banja Luka crowds worse than Croats or Muslims' - Krajisnik

It was followed by the most dramatic of Pale Srpska Television's clips from the stirring events in Banja Luka and Bijelina a few days before (already shown on the newscasts of September 8 and 9). Momcilo Krajisnik and his bodyguard were shown besieged in the Hotel Bosna in Banja Luka, having their baggage searched and various weapons removed by members of SFOR and the International Police Task Force (IPTF). The camera then showed them exiting the hotel, surrounded by a hostile crowd of locals shouting 'Monkeys!' The picture moved to Bijelina, and showed Krajisnik speaking at a huge SDS rally, telling his

audience that he had never seen such hatred as he had in the eyes of the Banja Luka crowds - 'not even in the eyes of Croats and Muslims.' It then moved to the confrontation between the SDS members and SFOR members in Armoured Personnel Carriers who were preventing busloads of SDS members armed with sticks and stones from entering Bijelina. The Serbs were beating the APCs with sticks and hurling stones at their occupants, who were forced to fall back (the clip stopped before the point at which SFOR reinforcements successfully blocked the road, and the buses were forced to turn home.)

Thus Pale Srpska Television managed, in spite of all, to issue a message of triumph over foreign power, and at the same time promoted the SDS - although September 11 was the first day of electoral silence.

But, though hardly subtle, the methods Pale-run SRT has been using since September 11 to convey its messages are a far cry from the diatribes and heroics formerly produced by its commentators. The current methods include leaving pauses of several minutes during which the audience can see nothing but a logo, before international officials are shown, and the use of extremely hostile presenters (and sometimes inept translators) to mediate between the officials and their audience. But the patches of violent commentary have thinned out considerably, and what remains is comparatively mild - at least, as far as items on the international community are concerned.

There are exceptions - they include commentary on the voting in Brcko. "There will be as many votes as the international community planned" as one of the humiliated and insulted Serbs in Brcko told us', said reporter Gajo Mitrovic on the eve of the elections. Presenter Dusko Oljaca concluded 'the international community wants to reconstruct the pre-war ethnic distribution.' But this was the limit of hostility openly expressed. (12/9, Srpska Television)

That hostility is continuing to express itself against targets other than the international community is clear from the number of times President Plavsic appeared in a negative context on Pale-run television and radio during the monitored period (25 altogether). Also, in spite of the terms of the Udrigovo transmitter agreement, not a single opposition party appeared on Pale SRT, prior to or after the elections. (A rally by the Serb Radical Party, attended by

members of the Cetnik movement, was covered (10/9), but both organisations are strongly affiliated to the SDS.) The appearance of Momcilo Krajisnik, on the morning of the first day of elections (13/9), and his statement that 'the people will give its voice for a united RS', violated the spirit, if not the letter, of the electoral media silence.

The threat of jamming, therefore, has only been effective as far as the international community is concerned. But will the international community's latest demonstration of superior strength and technology be either lasting or positive in its effect?

### THE ETHICS OF JAMMING

*Monitoring Report* spoke to Chris Bennett of the International Crisis Group (ICG), and OHR spokesman Duncan Bullivant, both of whom are viewed in the Pale studios of SRT as being directly responsible for the current course of events. Neither likes the policy of jamming: 'it should be a policy of last resort' says Bennett. But Bullivant adds 'if the international community is serious about dealing with the failures of the civil aspects of Dayton, then the misconduct of SRT must be dealt with in a decisive manner. We cannot afford to discard any options, regardless of how distasteful they may seem.'

But although international officials find this option distasteful, Pale SRT has so far failed, since the NATO planes and their jamming equipment arrived, to play in public its normally treasured role as victim of foreign tyranny. The near-silence maintained by SRT on the topic of jamming is echoed in SDS-approved RS daily *Glas Srpski*, which normally reflects SRT editorial positions. The paper carried a one-line report on the presence of the planes on September 12, stating that their future movements were as yet unknown. Nothing has been said subsequently.

Nor are independent media in Banja Luka publicly displaying any glee over the concessions that SRT Pale has been forced to make to the international community. Perica Vucinic, Editor in Chief of independent Banja Luka based bi-monthly magazine *Reporter*, told *Monitoring Report* that he thinks the NATO action is 'naïve'. 'It will simply increase xenophobia; people will feel that what they are hearing is SFOR's version of the truth, rather than the real truth.'

As to why SRT's public reaction to the threats has been so low-key, when Toholj's initial response - to the letter which requested implementation of the Udrigovo agreement - was so fiery, nobody has any answers. The only local journalist *Monitoring Report* approached who was prepared to speculate, was Hamza Baksic, columnist of Sarajevo daily *Oslobodjenje*. 'SRT is in an unfamiliar situation. They have lost much of their control of the RS audience, to SRT Banja Luka, and to the internationals. It is possible that they are just trying to be careful, or that they don't want to admit how bad their situation is, or even that they are planning a new strategy.'

### NATO Rules the Airwaves

SRT Pale representatives do not yet appear to have challenged the legality of the jamming threat. Were they to do so, however, they might be on difficult ground.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) obliges governments to 'prohibit by law ..advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence'. (Article 20, item 2). This includes media output. International law permits the international community to intervene, either if the government of the country whose media are in contravention of the ICCPR so requests, or if there is clear evidence that the broadcasts could incite crimes against humanity. (Although the government of the RS has not requested any such intervention, as a non-sovereign body its wishes give precedent to the State of BiH.)

Under article 70 of the Sintra Declaration (August 30 1997) OHR became entitled to 'curtail or suspend any media network or programme whose output is in persistent contravention of either the spirit or the letter of the Dayton Peace Agreement.' Under Annex One of the Dayton Peace Agreement, NATO is granted ultimate control of the airwaves.

Thus far therefore, the jamming threat seems justifiable under law. However, the circumstances under which the international community's representatives chose to exercise the threat are more dubious. If SRT's refusal to cooperate with the terms of the Udrigovo agreement was the motivation, it can be noted that the implementation of the agreement specifically concerns media treatment of internationals, not of locals. If the call to violence against SFOR troops issued on August 28 by radios

Brcko and Bijelina, was the motive, this too concerns violence against foreigners rather than locals. If free and fair election coverage was hoped for, those hopes must have been dashed. SRT Pale is still not granting opposition views the hour's airing stipulated by the Udrigovo agreement.

If the jamming threat has any ultimate benefit to offer the people of BiH, this can only be an indirect result of the foothold the international community has gained on the airwaves of SRT. It remains to be seen what steps will be taken from this point.

Negotiations currently aim for a future in which SRT Pale will carry the newscasts of SRT Banja Luka, and vice versa. This would at least ensure that people in all parts of the country have access to politically plural television, regardless of the quality of the television itself. However, Pale SRT and its counterpart in Banja Luka remain obstinately divided. The rift between them has been deepened by Pale perceptions that SRT Banja Luka is favoured by the international community, while SRT Pale is scapegoated. ('When are you going to sort out our studio in Banja Luka?' is a question Pale SRT presenters repeatedly put to the international representatives who now appear in prime-time.) Pale SRT is turning more and more to events in Belgrade, and to quotes from the Russian Press for news. SRT Banja Luka continues, meanwhile, to suggest siege-mentality by its negative outlook on news items which fall outside the Banja Luka sphere.

What is more, both are so absorbed in their internal strife, and their separate versions of reality, that news coverage of events in the 'Muslim-Croat' BiH Federation is growing weaker by the day. It now consists of the barest minimum of late, perpetually negative, agency items, appearing always at the tail-end of the news. The ultimate impact of the war for the waves has been to further split an already fragmented media landscape.

### 'THESE WERE NOT DIGNIFIED ELECTIONS' - TV BiH, 13/9

The elections tried media professionalism in BiH to its limits. Some passed the test superlatively; others succumbed to bias or the temptation to manipulate audiences or readers. Official media in particular - Pale RTV, RTV BiH,

and the media of Western Hercegovina - put on a display that hardly differed in kind from the presidential elections of a year ago. However, the behaviour of the independent media was more encouraging.

The Open Broadcast Network (OBN), Independent Studio 99, Sarajevo dailies *Oslodjenje* and *Vecernje Novine*, and Banja Luka daily *Dnevne Nezavisne Novine* stood out for political plurality. All five gave broad coverage to opposition parties - though they tended to prioritise parties in the entities where these media are themselves principally based.

Here OBN's advantage of a broader base than any other electronic medium made itself felt - it featured the RS Serb Patriotic party, and the Serb Radical Party, as well as the main Federation parties. On the other hand, Independent Studio 99's newscast *Oko 22* carried a wider variety of parties within the Federation, including the recently-founded (multi-ethnic) Party of Natural Law, the Croat Peasant Party, and the Liberal Bosniak organisation. (*Oko 22* has also started to relay film reports from Banja Luka, instead of relying exclusively on the telephone.)

#### Multi-ethnicity on *Oko 22*

*Oko 22* carried an impressive number of interviews with non-Bosniak members of coalitions and parties. These included Stjepan Kljuc (of the Republican Party, one of the less-shown members of the Joint List '97 coalition); Stipe Mesic of the Croatian Independent Democratic party (HND), as a guest from Croatia, and Bogic Bogicevic (Serb) and Gradimir Gojer (Croat) of the Social Democratic Party (SDP). It was also unique in running a detailed item on the League of Women Voters. (9/9)

*Oko 22* carried Alija Izetbegovic less than any other Sarajevo medium (three times) and has reduced the space it normally reserves for Co-president of the Council of Ministers Haris Silajdzic (who appeared five times). *Oko 22* was also unique among Federation media in mentioning Silajdzic's counterpart, Boro Bosic, twice - the same number of times the Serb co-president of the Council appeared on SRT. (TV BiH, OBN, and the Sarajevo daily press mentioned him once only; the Hercegovina-based media not at all.)

But the biggest difference between *Oko 22* and the other Sarajevo-based media emerged in their treatment of the HDZ - the Croatian Democratic Union, Croatia's ruling party and the most

powerful party of the Bosnian Croats. The approaches of all media to this party during the monitored period help explain why, when not appearing on *Oko 22*, HDZ officials generally prefer to speak with Croatia and Hercegovina-based media.

The HDZ was involved in a series of significant events: not only as the main party of the Croat nation, but because it was the target for a number of attacks from several different directions. Its leaders were publicly accused of criminal or near criminal activities (by Sarajevo-based magazine *Dani*, and by president of the Croat Party of Rights 1861, Dobroslav Paraga, who was guest on several BiH media). By the decision of OSCE, it lost candidates or potential voters in Zepce, Capljina, Drvar, and the central district of Mostar. The HDZ decided at one point to boycott the elections, and changed its mind at the very last minute. The BiH media were presented with a number of HDZ-centred stories to cover, and did so with a variety of attitudes.

The approach of the Croat media can be described first and most easily - Radio and Television Herceg-Bosna were overwhelmingly supportive and entirely uncritical of the HDZ, as were Croat Television Mostar, and *Slobodna Dalmacija*. The first three virtually ignored even the Croat opposition, and mentioned multi-ethnic, Bosniak, or Serb parties in a negative context only, and very rarely.

#### The Least Extreme..

The least extreme of the media available in Hercegovina, *Slobodna Dalmacija*, did publish an article on the Croat Christian Democratic Union (HKDU), and quoted its leader, Anton Kovacevic, calling for stronger ties with the Bosniaks. Also mentioned was the Croat Party of Rights (HSP) whose president Zdravko Hrstic had a similar message (5/9). *Slobodna Dalmacija* also carried the multi-ethnic SDP (Social Democratic Party), quoting their denial that the Sarajevo-based media favour them (5/9). Otherwise, however, *Slobodna Dalmacija* concentrated on the HDZ.

When Sarajevo monthly magazine *Dani* published an alleged OSCE document which implied that key HDZ figures Franjo Tudjman, Croatia Minister of Defence Gojko Susak, and President of the Federation Vladimir Soljic, were involved in mafia activities during the war, *Slobodna Dalmacija* did not bother to investigate any of the allegations. It retaliated by smearing the Bosniak deputy mayor of Mostar, Safet Orucevic, as

being himself a mafioso (5/9). When Dobroslav Paraga, of the Croatian Party of Rights 1861 went public on TV BiH with accusations of Croat President Franjo Tudjman as being heavily responsible for the Bosniak-Croat conflict, *Slobodna Dalmacija* again failed to treat the allegations seriously. Instead it launched a diatribe against the Sarajevo media for covering Paraga, and added that their coverage was valueless, on account of the poor treatment Croats always receive in Sarajevo (5/9).

TV Herceg-Bosna did not even trouble to describe what Paraga's statements were, merely carrying the protest letter the HDZ put out on the occasion (5/9) TV Herceg-Bosna's commentators were unwavering in their identification of HDZ interests with those of the Croat people as a whole. While *Slobodna Dalmacija* contented itself with simply quoting HDZ leaders explaining their reasons, TV Herceg-Bosna presenter Saska Cokovic exclaimed: 'After all pressures.. blame where there is no guilt; condemnation without trial.. the HDZ has taken a decision which shows the international community that they can do as they want with the Croat people, but not to the extent that they want.' (9/9)

Croat TV Mostar precisely mirrored the attitudes of TV Herceg-Bosna. It presented the HDZ decision to boycott as a universal decision supported by every Croat. Vox-pops conducted repeatedly in the streets of West Mostar always produced an unvarying message - that all Croats agreed only the HDZ could protect their interests.

#### 'Miserable Dungbeetles'

Radio Herceg-Bosna showed no deviation from the path traced by its fellow Bosnian Croat media. Presenter Ivan Kristic spoke of 'yet another prejudiced attempt by international bureaucrats and spies to cheat and manipulate the Croats, using subversive-confidential machinations, and make them the losers. That group of 'Miserable Dungbeetles', who come, pass through, and leave, are not important anyway. We, the Croat nation, are the oldest in the state of BiH, dating from the seventh century, and we will hold on to our own for ever'. (12/9) Coming as this statement did, immediately after the HDZ had revoked its decision to boycott, it contributed noticeably to pre-election tensions in Mostar.

The Sarajevo-based media were not particularly sympathetic. Only *Oko 22* showed itself to be open to, and

responsive to, the HDZ, and those of its leaders included in the Federation government. Oko 22 interviewed Vladimir Soljic twice in the monitored period, and carried letters from HDZ BiH president Bozo Rajic (who was shown reading his declaration on screen), Member of the BiH presidency Kresimir Zubak, and Joze Leutar of the HDZ Sarajevo committee. Oko 22 carried all HDZ responses to the *Dani* and Paraga stories, together with detailed coverage of the two bombs which exploded in Sarajevo near Croat institutions (3/9 and 13/9) and further reactions to the August 30 killing of a Croat father and son in Travnik.

OBN, meanwhile, made its position plain regarding the HDZ on September 4, when it covered an HDZ Zenica committee meeting. The presenter was shocked to hear the participants commence with a rendering of the Croatian National Anthem. 'This is obviously part of a strategy which has as its goal the stirring-up of mistrust, and efforts to prove that multi-ethnic communal living in this country is impossible.. As to the creators of this policy, no one says anything openly. Except those who are in The Hague, or who are potential travellers to The Hague.' On the subject of the proposed boycott, OBN left the commentary mainly to international representatives, rather than inviting HDZ officials to comment.

RTV BiH

Radio BiH frankly gloated over HDZ troubles - the commentator suggested that 'the HDZ aren't going to participate because they are afraid of the cost' and speculated obscurely that 'the HDZ has suffered the fate of the SDS' (10/9). On the day that the boycott was announced (9/9) Radio BiH scheduled the news for the end of their newscast. (It was first item on the Oko 22 and the OBN schedules).

TV BiH gave far less time to the issue than to the protocol functions being performed by President Alija Izetbegovic and Haris Silajdzic, both key figures in the Coalition for a United and Democratic Bosnia. Izetbegovic clocked up 11 protocol appearances, and, on the eve of the electoral silence, an hour and a half interview with TV BiH chief editor, Senad Kamenica. At the end of this interview, Kamenica asked, 'have you got a message for your voters? Izetbegovic replied 'Vote for the Coalition for a United and Democratic Bosnia, for this is where the SDA is. You will find the

Coalition in the last place on your voting list.' (12/9)

*(NOTE - the figures that RTV BiH published last fortnight (4/9) supposedly showed the SDP occupying more airtime than any other party. However, the SDA's total airtime, if added to that of other members of the Coalition for a United and Democratic Bosnia, including Haris Silajdzic and his party, and to the airtime of the Coalition itself, easily outstrips the totals achieved by all other parties and coalitions).*

Silajdzic appeared 19 times on TV BiH, in protocol functions and as commentator. As usual, his appearances far exceeded the entire total of appearances by Croat and Serb members of the Federation government. He had an hour-and-a-half interview on September 9, and the presenter allowed him to spend almost all of this period criticising SDP leader Zlatko Lagumdžija - the Coalition's most serious rival in Federation territory not occupied by the HDZ.

RTV BiH coverage of events in the RS was most notably inadequate on Radio BiH, which consistently gave them poor placing and sketchy, even misleading, coverage. The unsuccessful SDS rally in Banja Luka which ended with Momcilo Krajsnik and his bodyguard being trapped in Banja Luka's Hotel Bosnia (8/9) was virtually ignored, although Oko 22 and OBN gave it peak placing. Instead, a ten hour-old statement by Izetbegovic's spokesman, Mirza Hajric was read out on the newscast of September 9. This stated that the meeting of the BiH presidency, scheduled for that morning, could not be held, as president of the presidency Momcilo Krajsnik had failed 'for unknown reasons' to appear. The confusion continued next day - while other media reported how Krajsnik had finally left the hotel and was speaking at a rally in Bijelina, Radio BiH told listeners that Krajsnik had phoned in 'from who knows where' to explain he was unavoidably detained from the presidency meeting.

Although the Federation state media have never taken the step of placing news from the RS in the foreign news bloc in their schedules, RS events, especially in the SDS controlled regions of the entity are taking on an increasingly remote atmosphere on RTV BiH.

#### ELECTION COVERAGE IN THE RS

The extent to which RS media were politically impartial during the pre-election fortnight, is perhaps most vividly illustrated by statistics:

Independent TV Banja Luka mentioned Momcilo Krajsnik 9 times, always in a negative context, and Biljana Plavsic 27 times, always positively. The SDS got 14 negative appearances, the RS Socialists 14 positive. (The only time Independent TV Banja Luka broke the electoral silence was in order to run a promotive jingle for the Socialist party, 11/9. Criticised by the OSCE, it nevertheless ran the jingle again at seven p.m. on September 12.)

Independent Banja Luka daily *Dnevne Nezavisne Novine* had 15 positive items on Plavsic, and 15 negative items on Krajsnik. It had 22 negative statements to make about the SDS, eight positive on the Socialist party, while a broad variety of RS opposition parties received an average of two positive comments. (This paper offered by far the most comprehensive coverage of RS opposition achieved by any medium monitored.)

SDS-approved daily *Glas Srpski* mentioned Plavsic and Krajsnik 21 times, but his appearances were positive, hers negative. The SDS received a record 28 positive appearances. No one even remotely qualified as a runner-up - the Serb Radical Party came next with three.

*Monitoring Report* has no figures for SRT Banja Luka, but it was observable that the SDS and its leaders were always mentioned in a negative context, particularly after the disastrous rally of September 8. Biljana Plavsic's party, the Serb National Society, was always mentioned in a positive context.

SRT Pale mentioned the SDS in a positive context a total of 25 times, while Plavsic was mentioned 25 times in a negative context. The Serb Radical Party was again the closest contender for promotion, being mentioned positively three times

None of these media at any point promoted a multi-ethnic political party, or any Federation-based political party. All politicians promoted were Serbs. All parties were RS-based. Federation-based parties and non-Serb politicians were never mentioned in a positive context.

**'STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL'**  
- *Dani* Stirs It Up

'DANI IS IN POSSESSION OF STRICTLY GUARDED OSCE DOCUMENTS, WHICH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WILL USE FOR WAR ON THE

## MAFIA OF THE HDZ AND HERCEG-BOSNA.

These words march across the cover of the 59<sup>th</sup> (September 1997) number of this independent Sarajevo-based magazine. They are superimposed on what looks like a document with an authentic OSCE heading. This heading, however, turns out to be superimposed in its turn on an unheaded page, written in English, which offers tantalising glimpses of phrases such as 'Intelligence Structures in "Herceg-Bosna"'.

This cover has contributed largely to OSCE rage over the actual article inside the magazine. The rage has been carried to considerable lengths. The seriousness of OSCE reactions escalated sharply during the pre-election week. Initially, David Foley, spokesman for OSCE, told his audience at a September 4 press conference that the article is 'fraudulent' - *Dani* have 'embarrassed themselves by being fooled by this fraud and done their readers a disservice by misinforming them.' But in a statement issued on September 11 OSCE not only rejected the article once more, but also added that it is considering legal action against the magazine.

What had happened in the intervening period? The HDZ claimed the article - and its implications - were a contributing factor to their September 9 decision to boycott the BiH elections. And on September 12 David Foley told journalists that OSCE's denouncement of the article as a total fraud had helped the HDZ to revoke this decision

What are the implications of the article? It purports to be a condensed version of a 70-page internal document used by OSCE's Mostar mission, describing the criminal and political networks of the short-lived Herceg-Bosna Republic. The article takes the form of a dossier: pictures and short biographies of persons who apparently played key roles in the life of the Republic and the war against the Bosniaks. Some of the persons are now in Croat prisons, but some are currently influential members of the HDZ - the latter include top HDZ leaders. Mentioned are President of Croatia Franjo Tudjman; President of the Federation Vladimir Soljic, Croatia defence minister Gojko Susak, and B&H foreign minister Jadranko Prlic.

The text hints - though does not explicitly state - that all four were deeply involved in criminal activities. Some of the facts are ancient history, others are preceded by qualifying statements such as 'it is alleged that'... 'it is thought that'. (Generally speaking, verifiable statements

are given as fact; non-verifiable statements are qualified.)

None of the non-verifiable allegations are particularly grave. For example, 'there are unproved reports that X recently spent around 1 000 000 DM on buying a yacht'; 'X is thought to have been involved in black market business, selling fuel to the Bosnian Serb army.'

But the existence of such a document, if it is not a fake, implies what the HDZ may have felt to be far more serious - that OSCE policy includes keeping what virtually amount to dossiers - even criminal dossiers - on politicians involved in "Herceg-Bosna". (Nevertheless, the OSCE states that its 'Regional Stabilisation' department in Mostar has no investigative aspect).

A huge media furore surrounds the case. State and independent media throughout Croatia and the Federation have covered it, some sympathising with *Dani*, and hinting the article is indeed authentic; others suggesting that the OSCE repudiation has hardly been fierce enough. *Monitoring Report* interviewed two key persons involved in the case - *Dani's* editor-in-chief Senad Pecanin, and OSCE spokesman David Foley.

To begin, one of the hottest issues can be resolved straight away: Senad Pecanin admits without hesitation that the OSCE heading superimposed on the unheaded cover page was designed by his art department. 'It was interesting for our readers' he says. David Foley is therefore justified when he demonstrates to inquirers, with the help of the headed paper that he himself uses, that the heading is not even a good imitation of the OSCE Mostar mission's official format.

The issue is clouded, however, by Foley's remark that documents for internal use only are not always headed. The fact that the heading is fake, therefore, advances the question of the document's authenticity no further.

About the origins of the 70-page document the article is allegedly drawn from, Senad Pecanin is adamant. 'I waited and waited until I had absolute confirmation that the document was genuine', he says, adding that the document dates from May 1997, and he has known of it since June. Former journalist David Foley's retort is, 'Why didn't he contact us before he went public with this thing? We could have proved to him that it was a fake. And it would have been good journalistic practice to let us know in advance.' Senad Pecanin shrugs. 'I don't ask Alija

Izetbegovic, or the AID (the Bosniak-run Agency of Research and Documentation, also targeted in the September *Dani*) before I publish confidential material on them. Why should I make an exception for the OSCE?'

Both sides fiercely maintain their positions; neither can produce evidence. Senad Pecanin can dignify his position with the alleged need to protect his source. Foley is in the tougher position of having to prove a negative, and does so with the help of the oft-repeated word 'fraudulent'. Pecanin claims that certain Western diplomats have told him that to their certain knowledge the original document was indeed a genuine OSCE product. Foley dismisses this as 'a smokescreen of lies'.

Pecanin's last word on the subject is that he is able and willing to go to court to prove his case. David Foley's final word is that 'any decision to prosecute will depend on the findings of the Media Experts Commission' (MEC).

This body met at the time of writing (19/9), but *Dani* was not on its agenda. Nor had the MEC's investigative commission yet received notification of what the actual contents of the article were. However, 'we are investigating it' says MEC chairman Lynwood Todd, 'and I assure you that we shall do so very thoroughly.'

### NOTE TO OUR READERS

*Monitoring Report* would like to bid its leaders farewell, at least for the present. IWPR and Media Plan have been monitoring the Bosnian Media, and providing uninterrupted analysis of it since June 1996. *Monitoring Report* began coverage of the BiH media in the context of last year's general elections, which formed the context of the first series. Following the September elections, *Monitoring Report* shifted to observing how well the media were fulfilling the obligations demanded by the Dayton Agreement. This last series was intended to focus on media treatment of the local election campaigns. Our focus altered slightly over the summer in response to developments in the Republika Srpska, and the internal media war that broke out as a result.

With the story far from complete, and the media far from settled, it is an unfortunate time to have to end the

monitoring, but we would like to express our sincere thanks to the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) which has supported the project this past year and previously. It has done so in association with the Open Society Institute, the Winston Foundation for World Peace, and the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung (association). The Monitoring Project was established, not as an academic exercise, but as a reliable information source and guide to the professional behaviour of the Bosnian media after Dayton. Since its launch, the report has been freely available in both English and Bosnian, with the intention of being relevant and useful to colleagues in the Bosnian media.

As an industry, the Bosnian media is still a long way from being either fair or free. Nevertheless, we do see many hopeful signs for the future. Most importantly of all, we hope that the essential value of monitoring has been proved locally, and that monitoring will continue informally, throughout Bosnia, in cafes as well as newsrooms.

## **IWPR & MEDIA PLAN**