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## **Media's responsibility for the war in former Yugoslavia**

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# 1. Yugoslavia - the state which destroyed itself

I like examples, ladies and gentlemen and I would like to begin my contribution with three of them:

On June 13, 1997, Bosnian Serbs TV station in the report from NATO summit that took place in Brussels said, I quote: "International Crises Group stated that NATO did its job in Bosnia perfectly in order to make final Bosnian division" - end of the quote. International Crises Group denied that something like was said at all.

The second example is coming from Croatia. The report says that in the last week of the pre-election campaign at Presidential elections in Croatia, Croatian President, Franjo Tudjman got 4.008 seconds of the state TV air time and his opponent 18 seconds!!

The third one is coming from Montenegro. The state TV newscast broadcast an item on the support that came from two local communities to Montenegrin President. 24 hours later appeared that two local communities did not send a support letter at all and that the report was a falsification!!!

Please, allow me to give you some general background closely related with the topic we are talking about.

When Josip Broz Tito died in May 1980 the political power of federal institutions finally lost a race with the republican political centers. In the republics, the communist political leaders organized micro political systems, rules, laws - without respect to federal law and the federal government. The interests of Republics dominated and the federal government have not been able to create a program of common interest. The political pluralism and necessity to create a multi-party parliamentary political system appeared first in Slovenia in the second half of 80-is and lately in Croatia. On the other hand the communist leadership in Serbia and Montenegro was strongly against the multi-party parliamentary system. However nobody could stop the changes and they had to arrange multi-party elections at the end of 1990.

It illustrates a contrast between two political, ideologies and strategies as follows:

- A) A parliamentary democracy with multi-party elections and a high level of Republican independence (Slovenia and Croatia);
- B) A so called parliamentary democracy with no multi-party elections linked with strong federal influence (Serbia and Montenegro). Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia were between those two choices and they sought a common solution through compromise.

This political dichotomy has been visible at four district levels:

- A) At the level of the state -- Slovenia and Croatia wanted more independence for republican institutions, (those two Republics were also the two most developed in the former Yugoslavia), while Serbia and Montenegro preferred

the strong federal government. The result of this conflict has been a blockade of federal institutions, both parliament and government.

- B) At the level of the Communist party - for a long time in Yugoslav history political leaders in the republics have respected the following rule: conflicts between republics shall not become a part of public discussion. At the beginning of 1989 when the differences about democracy, free elections, the role of the Communist Party, the alternative political system, (federation or confederation) arose - this rule was broken.
- C) At the media level - controlled by the communist parties in each of four republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro) media demonised opinions from other republics. In Serbia and Montenegro everything that came from Slovenia and Croatia was declared bad. In Croatia everything that came from Serbia and Montenegro was declared equally bad. The media war started at least ten years before the real war in the former Yugoslavia. Since 1987 when Mr. Slobodan Milosevic took a power in Serbia, the media war within communist party, has been transformed first to the media war between Republican communist parties, than between Republics and at the end to the pure ethnic media war.
- D) At the level of the Army - Slovenia and Croatia insisted on smaller expenses for the Army while Serbia rejected this idea. Under the previous regime the Army played a major political role. Adhering for decades to the dogma that the defense of socialism and the Communist Party was both the necessary condition and the method for defending the state, the JNA (Yugoslav People's Army) found itself in an ideological trap as one of the principal pillars of the moribund regime. This proved fatal: the JNA became a conservative force resisting the process of democratization and the creation of pluralist social and political institutions; and when some of the republics openly threatened to secede and the breakup of the country became imminent, the JNA acted in a grossly unprofessional way. At the end of this process the JNA took a one-sided position, the position of the Serbian nationalists and chauvinists, the position of Greater Serbia.

According to the research<sup>i</sup> in the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb, (capital of Croatia), from June and July 1989, the members of the Yugoslav Communist Party became divided on two clear political platforms that were called "Serbians" and "Slovenians". Thanks to the media editorial policy that was planned and organized in the offices of ruling parties, the political leaders succeeded in creating this ideological conflict as a conflict between the ethnic groups. Instead of the two political platforms, democracy and non-democracy, and the two ideologies, multi-party and one-party political systems people were persuading from media and political representatives above all and through the Church to make choice between Slovenians and Serbs. Of course there have not been choice - people were persuaded and they supported their ethnic political leaders. Later on it was choice between Serbs and Croats, then between Serbs

and Moslems. This process could easily end as a choice between good and bad Serbs, or good or bad Croats, or good or bad Moslems/Bosniacs if you want. When you take ethnicity as a dominated criterion in a society the logic consequence of that ideology is to create a dictatorship. At the beginning it starts with ethnic cleansing continues as a cleansing within the same ethnic group. Just a month ago at the session of Republic of Srpska Parliament a deputy accused another deputy of being a traitor because he had not christened himself before he took the floor. Or another example: The power struggle between the Republika Srpska president Biljana Plavsic and Momcilo Krajisnik spilled onto television when Plavsic publicly attacked the editorial policy of SRT (Bosnian Serbs TV). Plavsic is fighting what she, and international observers feel are Krajisnik's attempts to usurp her authority as elected president of the Serbian entity. She has found just few allies in the media, as Krajisnik, in addition to his other duties, is also head of SRT.

Coming back to the reasons of the conflict in ex Yugoslavia I want to point out that from the beginning of 1988 the communist leaders in the Republics of the former Yugoslavia, needed allies in the conflict I was talking above. (Just to remind you we are talking again about the conflict within leaders of YU communist party.) They were looking for them among the opposition. The Communist Party in Serbia found common interests with the chauvinistic opposition, right wing movement and the same process happened in Slovenia and Croatia. It arose that a republican Communist Party came to have better relationship with the anti-communist opposition within the respective Republic, than with the Communist Parties from other republics in the former Yugoslavia. It was alliance of a communist and anti-communist within a Republic against the same alliance from other republic.

This process of forcing common interests between official Communist parties and the chauvinistic opposition in the republics in the rest of Yugoslavia exposed a new basis of conflict: "Instead of global conflict between governmental Communist Party and society, as happened in East and Central Europe, in the former Yugoslavia conflict arose between some elements of the Communist Party and some sections of society"!<sup>ii</sup>

In the same time an another kind of conflict also arose. The federal government led by Prime Minister, Mr. Ante Markovic, adopted in 1990 laws that created new rules for the economy, an open market, competition and private investment. With such economic reforms republican communist leaders would lose their economic power, money and support from public enterprises. The very economic reform in the former Yugoslavia had popular support. Prime Minister became the most popular politicians at the federal level. His prosperous at the federal multi-party elections offered the greatest potential for real change.

Even at the opposite sides in the Yugoslav conflict, Slovenia and Croatia on one side, and Serbia and Montenegro on the other, the political leaders of those states had the same interest - to stop economic reform created by the Federal Prime Minister. (In Slovenia it was declared as an "anti-Slovene reform", in

Croatia as "anti-Croatian reform", in Serbia as "anti-Serbian reform", and in Montenegro as "anti-Montenegrin reform"). The former communist leaders who were elected at the multi-party elections and who had declared themselves as democrats prevented the economic reforms as far as they had prevented it thirty years ago. The communist hard-liners did it then in the name of "social justice" now in the name of "ethnic interest." The leaders were the same, the reasons were the same (to remain in power) and the consequences were the same - the disaster of the Yugoslav economy. Thirty years ago the very economic problems were changed into ideological peace justified by the Communist Party propaganda and in 1990 the very economic problems in the former Yugoslavia were changed into the ethnic problems, justified by the same party's propaganda. Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, for different reasons of course, refused multi-party parliamentary elections at the federal level. At these elections the chauvinistic political movement should not have serious chance. The door for increasing of ethnic tensions and chauvinistic parties and leaders was definitely opened.

So, at the federal level in the former Yugoslavia there have not been multi-party parliamentary elections. It is, I think, very unusual example in the world's politics - to have elections only in the parts of the society not at the common level of the same society.

Referring to their political positions Slovenia and Croatia did not want to wait for democratic changes in Serbia and Montenegro and they had decided to organize multi party elections at their territory only.

These two elections in the former Yugoslavia established a dual political system: Slovenia and Croatia established a parliamentary democracy and the other four republics - Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia - represented the old communist political system.

These two systems could not exist in the common state of course. In the Yugoslav situation it meant a potentially higher level of ethnic tensions and higher level of de-construction of Yugoslav society. The political leaders were expecting conflict and war and they were generating it.

Chauvinism is the last phase of communism in the former Yugoslavia. Chauvinism and hatred in the former Yugoslavia have been created by the governmental political parties, in Serbia since 1987 - according to the plan of creation of Greater Serbia that is prepared by The Serbian Academy for Science, and in Croatia since 1990, as a consequence of Serbian chauvinism and idea of creation Independent Croatia.

## **2. Religion - who was exploited by whom?**

The communist regime in ex YU allowed freedom of expression for religion and for believers. About 600 churches or mosques were built in the former Yugoslavia after the Second World War. People who were going to church did

not openly declare it. It was rather a point of private life. On the other hand none wanted to deny it in public. Official opinion was controlled by communists, and for people who are believers it usually was also not commendable to make a great show of belief.

The universal ideas of tolerance and humanity, common to all religions, have had little airing in the former Yugoslavia. Ethnic conflicts have crystallized along the Serb-Moslem, Serb-Croat, Serb-Slovene, Serb-Albanian and Serb-Macedonian divisions. Within each of these ethnic group religions has played a central role in socially integrating the communities. This process has in turn helped make sacred the ideal of nationhood. So religion has drawn people together into distinct groups. According to research in 1987 the religious identification within Moslem, Serb and Croat groups is almost complete. The study shows that 82 per cent of Moslems belong to the Islamic faith, 73 per cent of Serbs belong to the Serbian Orthodox Church and 89 per cent of Croats belong to the Catholic Church.<sup>iii</sup> Because of natural, cultural, historical and to an extent linguistic differences, religious identification is high even among those who do not practice. According to the same research the level of confessional self-identification is four times higher than the level of those who say they are believers. Religious identification has also increased as a search for security amid growing social tensions. This high level of identification gave a great chance for ethnic political parties to manipulate people and believers.

Nationalist communities have been quick to benefit from religious identification and to exploit it to further the cause of national integration. Slogans about the religiously based differences among the three communities are preached like gospel truth. These maneuvers have culminated in the growing fear of religious fundamentalism with each religion fearing the dogmatism of the other two. Common slogans proclaim: God and the Croats or God is with Serbs! The official Serb propaganda issued a statement that Serbs are a God's chosen people! In this way, God usurps the national and folk customs that threaten to overwhelm their religion base. Indeed, religion takes on the character of a political ideology. Faith or religious affiliation, in turn, becomes proof of nationality. In Republic Srpska, what is an entity of Bosnia-Herzegovina is not possible to find a job if the applicant is not christened for instance. At the end of 1991 in one of the Catholic churches in Zagreb the President of Croatia, Mr. Franjo Tudjman, attended the process of affiliation of one Moslem family that had accepted the Catholic religion. Of course there is a right of any person to accept or not to accept any kind of religion. However, when the President of the state attends such a ceremony it is regarded more seriously and more dangerous.<sup>iv</sup> Of course both television stations, Serbian and Croats broadcast their own stories about this event. Serbian television used it as proof that the Croatian regime is the same as the "ustascha" movement in the Second World War. Croatian TV pointed out that Moslems accept Christian religion and Catholic church.

Sarajevo Institute's Research also confirmed that greater participation in religious activities in a region, links with a greater tendency towards ethnic homogenization. The political institutionalization of religion can thus be a route towards totalitarian ideology and the end of free religion.

However, the religious authorities accepted this kind of influence and everything that happened was with their acceptance. "The religion penetrates the national and vice versa. The mystique of religion becomes the mystique of the nation."<sup>v</sup>

In these cases such is the case in the former Yugoslavia religion was politically abused by the politicians. Fr. Marko Orsolich a Catholic Priest from Sarajevo in his contribution to the dialogue of Christians, Marxists and others, which was held in New York in 1991 writes that "religion and the Church will be politically abused as long as the Church does not think that the Bible is an inspiration rather than a norm in the political sphere. It is religious book rather than a political program. Religion can be abused for political purposes both by believers and, playing a perfidious game by various ideologies and political bureaucracies."<sup>vi</sup>

In order to be objective I need to point out that within three dominate religions there are lot of differences. Catholic Church in Bosnia for instance played a high positive rule during the Bosnian war. They have never been partisan toward non-catholic people, they pray for reconciliation and they are truly for the multi-ethnic life in Bosnia. Catholic Church in Croatia became part of a state effort to reach ethnically clean state and Islamic religion in Bosnia became a place and a method of Moslem unification. Recently, just a month ago Catholic Church in Croatia argued for division between the state and religion holidays. However, the Orthodox Church in Serbia became a main supporter of leader indicted as war criminals, they were present at all the political session of ruling party in Republic Srsпка, they supported and they still support politic made by Bosnian Serbs leadership. They are against Mr. Milosevic not because he has been leading country on the wrong way than because he lost the war.

Talking about the pre-election time in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1990 I want to stress that there was not a rare situation for priests to suggest to their believers a day or two before elections, or just at the election-day on how to vote, and which voting number it is necessary to choose "if we want to help our people". So, voters in the villages voted on the suggestion from their church. (The leader of the Serbian Democratic Party told me at the beginning of 1991: "Do you know why we lost the elections in Nevesinje?" (It is a small town in Herzegovina.) "Because priests of the local church gave to voters the wrong number!" In Yugoslavia ballot papers always have numbers and names for all political parties."<sup>vii</sup>

In the pre-election time all religions were working together, just as ethnic political parties. Their main aim was to crush communism and for this aim political parties and religions found common interests. One of the consequences has been that religions became to be part of the political strategies of ethnic

political parties - Catholic church as a part of Croatian efforts - led by the Croatian Democratic Community (Croatian political party), and the Orthodox church as a part of Serbian efforts led by The Serbian Democratic party, and the Islamic community as a part of Muslim efforts led by the Party of Democratic Action (Muslim political party).

The identification between them and political parties had the following principles:

- one people - one goal;
- one goal - one political party;
- one political party - one church;
- one church - one people;

These principles and this strategy produced results at the multi-party elections. It was more effective than the political parties expected. It was really a victory of a common party and religious strategy.

However -- who was exploited by whom -- political party by the church or church by the political party?

The identification between religion and political parties often leads to a religious state and fanaticism. In societies with different ethnic groups it is particularly dangerous especially in the former Yugoslavia. In Croatia the Catholic church has accepted all the political aims of their state as their own aims. But 13% of the people there were Orthodox, and they could not accept it. The Serbian Orthodox church has accepted Greater Serbia as their goal. However, there were only 65% Serbs in Serbia. Albanians, Moslems, Hungarians, Croats and other minorities could not accept that. These two examples illustrate very clearly: how the state and the church exploit this fact of established state-religion as a potential cause of conflict.

At the beginning of April 1992 the Bosnian police arrested two Orthodox priests who had arms, bombs and bullets in their church's apartments. It was the first public proof that the role of the Orthodox church in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the former Yugoslavia had not been as peaceful as their declarations. So far no public proof about the similar role of other religions has appeared.

### **3. Media - a fiction of reality becomes a "reality of fiction"**

When Mr. Slobodan Milosevic came to power in 1987 he moved to take control of the state TV station by appointing people from the police and military, and journalists from the magazine "Communist" "From that moment on - said Mr. Vlado Mares a former editor at Serbian Television - journalism collapsed in Serbia."<sup>viii</sup>

In September 1993 the soldiers and officer of the Serbian Army in Banjaluka, town in Bosnia controlled by Serbian Democratic Party, organized a mutiny

against the corruption in Serbian party and government., Serbian television broadcast news 40 hours after the mutiny appeared that the mutiny is over. The fact is that the mutiny has finished four days later. During he recent opposition demonstrations in Belgrade Serbian state TV had broadcast the first news about the protest rallies TEN DAYS AFTER THE PROTEST BEGUN. Croatian state TV is strongly in favor of current Croatian President. At the elections Tudjman got 40 times more time air time than his competitor!!

I wanted, with these examples, to illustrate that the idea that media in the former Yugoslavia share responsibility for the war. They broadcast lie and they do not care about the truth. "I have to serve Mr. Milosevic because that is the main interest of Serbs!" - stated Director General of Serbian TV to the monitoring team of the European Institute for the Media in December 1992. One of the very famous TV journalist in Croatia said publicly two years ago: "Of course I have to lie if it is an interest of my country!" So called "the patriotic journalism" has a leading position in Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian journalism today. As you know, ladies and gentlemen, where is too much patriotism there is no professionalism.

The war in the former Yugoslavia started 10 years ago - within the media. There have not been any federal Radio or TV stations in my country. There were only six republicans TV stations - all of them controlled by the republican communist parties. In tandem with increasing political conflict the republican oriented news departments, controlled by political leaders - started to produce republican oriented, one sided news.

The political leaders preferred conflict to discussion and compromise, and under their influence the news departments started only to broadcast programs in favor of the attitudes of republican political leaders. Instead of explaining the conflict TV stations started to reinforce the conflict. The conflicts were reproducing. The free flow of information has stopped - and closed societies have been created in some of the republics. The first step of this strategy has been to establish control over media organizations, above all over TV stations. New TV authorities, who were appointed by the governmental political parties started to produce programs "in the name of ethnic interest". They supported political leaders and governmental political parties as organizations who protect ethnic interest. With this principle, media organizations stopped to be professional, they started to exist only as a part of the state political strategy. Without media, above all television, the process of increasing ethnic tensions, conflict and war was not possible. Conflict has become a way of governing, and ethnicity the method and the most important point of media manipulation. Instead of presentation of this conflict as a conflict between democracy and dictatorship media presented it as a conflict between ethnic groups.

This strategy is and was planned, led and organized by the political leaders, above all in Serbia. The point is that divisions in the former Yugoslavia started from the top of political parties not from the people. (At the end of 1991 I was

watching the news in Belgrade with some of my friends. Serbian Television reported the two following sentences:

"HERE ARE DEAD SERBS WHO HAVE BEEN KILLED BY CROATIAN FORCES. AN IDENTIFICATION COMMISSION STARTS TO WORK TOMORROW!"

My friend asked me:

"Can you see what they are doing to us?"

I asked him:

"How can a reporter know these victims are Serbs if the identification commission starts to work tomorrow?"

Both of them were surprised. They had not thought of it. Both of them are educated, but they are prepared to believe in lies. They cannot see lies and above all most of them do not want to see the truth).

The ethnicity has become a major criteria in editorial policy. Everything is allowed in the name of our ethnic interest. The patriotic journalism has become a duty of the state controlled media. The following is my favorite example of the lies:

(At the beginning of July 1992 Serbian TV reported about Serbs who were killed in town Visoko (Bosnia). Serbian TV reported two following sentences:

"The "ustascha" forces threw the bodies of Serbs in the Drina river from the bridge in Visoko (town in Bosnia). The bodies of Serbs are flowing all the way to Ilijas (town in Bosnia)."

Two points of this report are impossible:

- First, there is no Drina river in Visoko, only the Bosna river.
- Second, the Bosna river flows from Ilijas to Visoko, not from Visoko to Ilijas. (It is therefore impossible for anything to flow - upstream.)

Zagreb Radio presenter resigned in February 1992 in protest at the restrictions imposed by president Tudjman's Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ). "There have never been more bans" - he said - It was easier for me to work under the Communists than now!!" Recently internationally awarded Croatian weekly Feral Tribune was declared by Croatian officials as an instrument of foreign policy.

One of the best journalist from the former Yugoslavia, Slavenka DRAKULIC writes in an article:

"This is what the war is doing to us - reducing us to one dimension. Before, I thought I was defined by my education, my job, my ideas, my character and - yes - my nationality too. Now I feel stripped of all of that. I am nobody, because I am not an individual any more. I am only one of the 4,5 million Croats".

The electronic media produce half of the truth, to explain what they want and when they want it. Brain washing has started and a brain-washed person starts to react in exact accordance with the wishes of the political parties and their leaders. They believe only their ethnic TV stations, event though they are stations that have lied to them. With the passage of time, they feed on more and more lies, and they do not recognize truth. In order to illustrate you the idea I am

talking about please allow me to quote a Serbian and a Croatian official. The former Croatian deputy Information Minister, Mr. Milovan Baletic said: "970 journalists have come through my office of which I estimate 300 were spies, or somehow working for their national intelligence services."<sup>ix</sup> Mr. Budimir Kosutic, at that time Deputy Prime Minister said on television that some of the independent media in Serbia work for secret services.<sup>x</sup>

This somewhat closed society all the time demands new proof of obedience, new victims for "our interest". Chauvinist politicians are exchanged for even more chauvinist ones, and obedient people are replaced by more obedient ones. The economic and social climate might be getting much worse but the discovery of new enemies is testifies to the success of our struggle. The world is against Serbs! Croatia will resist to the pressure made by foreign powers. Those two sentences are very often quoted in Serbian and Croatian press. Serbian President recently said that Serbian development will be twice higher than in the most developed country in Europe!!!!. So, a closed society became more closed. Director of the Croatian Press Agency HINA, Mr. Milovan Sibl, referring to an independent weekly NOVI DANAS (which does not exists today) said: "Many of these journalists at the independent magazine NOVI DANAS are of mixed origin - one Croat one Serb parent. How can such people provide an objective picture of Croatia?"<sup>xi</sup>

I would like to stress here a following dilemma that I had at the beginning of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. A that time I was Program Director of Sarajevo TV as the first elected not appointed person in this position. With few examples as follow I hope it will be easier for you to understand the idea of media responsibility for the war. Please excuse me if I am taking to much personal point of view.

The viewers in Bosnia could watch in 1990/1991 and 1992 the Croatian TV and Serbian TV News. Both of them insisted on the ethnic criteria of the editorial policy and both of them broadcast ethnically pure TV news. These TV programs have persuaded viewers to take sides in the ethnic conflicts. I had the following possibilities:

- a) should I try to create a closed society and to serve politicians as well;
- b) or, should I try to create open society, and give to the viewers a possibility to make a choice between different TV news;

The dilemma was: can I win against ethnically pure TV stations using multiethnicity as an argument? Can I win against one sided and restricted newscast being open to all information and attitudes? Can I win against closed society and controlled television using the methods of open society and free flow of information. As the program director, and thus the most responsible person I decided to take alternative "B". So people could watch each day four types of news coverage: Sarajevo TV News, Croatian TV News, Serbian TV News and YUTEL TV news - that was the private TV station - which I had

decided to broadcast as well. My idea was that viewers will distinguish between truth and lie, professionalism and non-professionalism.

This decision was not welcome:

- A) By Serbian and Croatian TV and their political leaders. They started to attack us in their programs;
- B) by politicians in Bosnia who preferred to divide Sarajevo RTV along ethnic lines;
- C) By the viewers (From five letters that I have had at the my table four of them criticized us from the different ethnic point of view. Only one of them supported us, only. So, the viewers have already taken side in the conflict.

All the ethnic political parties offered to various editors an amount of money in order to serve their interests. The viewers put pressure also because everybody wants to hear her or his version of the truth. Menacing telephone calls, treating letters, and all other sort of pressure has been our everyday life. I will give you here one of my favorite examples that can illustrate the position of professionalism in these days:

(In October 1991 Serbian TV broadcast a story about an Orthodox priest who was beaten by Croatian forces. The same day, Croatian TV broadcast a story about a Catholic priest who was beaten by Serbian forces. The point is that both stories are true. While Serbian TV did not broadcast the story about the Catholic priest, Croatian TV did not broadcast the story about the Orthodox priest. Sarajevo TV broadcast both stories. During the first minutes of broadcasting the story about the Orthodox priest who was beaten by Croatian forces Croat viewers protested and called Sarajevo TV "chethnic" TV! A few minutes later when Sarajevo TV broadcast story about the Catholic priest Serbs viewers protested and called Sarajevo TV "ustacha" TV.)

Supported by HDZ the Serbian Democratic Party officially demanded a division of Sarajevo TV along ethnic lines. We refused it of course. When I asked the leader of Serbian Democratic Party what is the idea of these divisions, and who was going to elect journalists for Serbian TV for instance, he answered me: "Serbian journalists for Serbian TV will be elected by the Serbian Parliament!!!" After the official requirement of the Serbian Democratic Party for division of Sarajevo TV station into three ethnic channels, Sarajevo television carried out a survey among the population and asked them whether they wanted ethnic channels or one service. A total of 330.000 viewers voted against the division of the network into separate ethnic channels, and only 35.000 supported it. The Serbian Democratic Party said afterwards that the station had no right to ask people for their views.

"We know what they want" - they said. It is exactly the technology of dictatorship.

"We know what they want!" The next step is:

"We know what our people want!" . Then:

"I know what our people want!". Then:

"I know what my people want!".  
It is technology of dictatorship.

In the meantime all Bosnian institutions have been divided along ethnic lines. Only Sarajevo Radio-TV has stayed as a united institution. People finally recognized that politicians are leading them to war. In that time, it was at the end of 1991 and at the beginning of 1992 from five letters that I had received on my table four of them supported us and only one criticize us from the different ethnic point of view again.

I will give you another example. In the middle of April 1992 a dramatic situation arose at a dam at Visegrad (town in the East of Bosnia). Some Moslem soldiers occupied it, installed explosives and wanted to destroyed the dam. As a program director of Sarajevo Television I received two telephones calls: The first was from the Moslem political group:

"Mr. Pejic, if you do not broadcast live our telephone conversation with soldiers in the Visegrad dam they are going to destroy it!"

The second one was from the Serbian political party:

"Mr. Pejic, if you broadcast in live telephone discussion with the Moslem paramilitary group in the Visegrad dam we will shell your transmitters!"

So, I had two telephones calls in my hands, two political parties, two war sides, two threats two seconds for decision and finally two consequences. I decided to broadcast this telephone discussion with Moslem soldiers in the dam trying to save the dam and prevent ecological catastrophe. A few minutes later Bosnian Serbs began with shelling Sarajevo TV transmitter).

At the beginning of the April 1992 200 citizens decided to start a demonstration against all political parties. People were calling for peace and new elections. Than I had to make decision: do I want to support it or not. I decided to broadcast it live. After several hours in the front of the Republican parliament more than 100,000 people were calling for peace and new elections. From other Bosnian cities 50,000 people wanted to join the demonstrations but all political parties, policy and army did not allow them to come into the city. They were sent back. The government than accused me of making a coup. A paramilitary group was looking for me in my apartment, then I changed apartment every night. Somebody found me and threw a bomb at the balcony of my friend's apartment. Then I started to sleep in the TV building. Serbian TV broadcast a list of journalist that should be killed and my name was there. I knew what it meant: And of course I decided to leave Sarajevo.

I want to stress that the process of identification between the viewers and their ethnic television stations is increasing as ethnic TV produces programs for ethnic viewers. Instead of professional journalists, TV programs are prepared by ethnic journalists, and viewers watch programs as members of ethnic groups.

When I described to some of my relatives in Belgrade what is going on in Sarajevo they did not believe me. They told me they believe Serbian TV. Even they did not believe me that the Serbs are bombarding Sarajevo. Serbian TV for

instance did not broadcast who is bombarding Sarajevo. They informed viewers that Sarajevo is bombarded but not who are bombarding Sarajevo. After 59 days, Serbian TV broadcast statement of the Serbian government against bombarding of Sarajevo by the Serbian soldiers. It was only two hours before session of the United Nations Security Council that declared sanctions against Serbia.)

#### **4. MEDIA TODAY- servants of current regimes**

##### **CROATIA:**

There are very few examples of independent media in Croatia today. The most famous ones are weekly Feral Tribune, Radio 101 in Zagreb, daily Novi List in Rijeka. There are lot of private weeklies, almost all of them are controlled by ruling party members. New weekly TJEDNIK is independent one. Electronic media are strongly controlled by ruling party. At the recent pre-election campaign in Croatia, the person who is The Head of Croatian TV Controll Committee spoke at the ruling party rally. Recently, weekly Feral Tribune was charged with 15.000 DEM because of published title in March 1997. 120.000 Zagreb citizens protested in October 1996 against the attempt to take control over local radio stations Radio 101.

##### **SERBIA:**

The most influential media are strongly controlled by the ruling party. At the recent local elections opposition won in 13 Serbian cities and took control over editorial policy. In some cases we are faced now with professional media policy. Unfortunately, in some other cases, such as Studio B in Belgrade, opposition behaves at the very same wave as ruling party. Instead of making professional control body they appointed members of their parties who became executives of opposition parties' politics. There was an idea that one news coverage should be edited by one coalition partner and other two by other two coalition partners!!! However, there are lot of independent media in Serbia, unfortunately, with very small influence such as Radio B 92, weekly Vreme, daily Nasa Borba etc.

##### **BOSNIA:**

Electronic media in Bosnia are divided today along ethnic lines. Both entities control its own media and in the part controlled by Bosnian Croats leadership the situation is the same. To be objective we need to point out that according to all international reports there are lot of independent media in Bosnian Federation, the part controlled by Bosniacs. In Western Herzegovina and RS situation is much , much worse. So, compared with Republic Srsпка and Western Hercegovina there is a media paradise at Bosnian territory controlled by Bosniacs . Compared to the western standards and criteria the judgment on media freedom is different of course.

Let me use an example of media coverage in Bosnia. That will, I hope, lead to the main conclusion, that media still behave non-professionally.

The event I am going to analyze here is the recent Pope's Visit to Sarajevo:

Bosnian RTV, controlled by Moslems directed all its energies towards preparing for the Pope's visit. In the fortnight before his arrival, numerous special programs devoted to the coming visit of the Pope appeared during prime-time viewing. For the first time in several months, TV BiH reminded viewers that there are at least some Croats in the Federation who are not radically opposed to the multiethnic state, like BiH Cardinal Vinko Puljic, whose messages of reconciliation got extensive coverage. BiH television provided nearly eight hours of live coverage.

Few words about RTV Hercegbosna coverage. That is media controlled by Bosnian Croats leadership. In the weeks before the Pope's arrival Radio Hercegbosna maintained he was coming only to visit Croats. However, as the date grew closer their reports from Sarajevo began to include more information about the joint preparations of Croats and Bosniaks. In one round table on titled "Why the Pope is coming to Sarajevo" (broadcast on April 7, 1997) the words of Fra Pero Sudar: "Bosnia should be a mother to all it's peoples" were given prominence. Divisive comments continued to appear, but rarely, as for example, on the nightly news broadcast "Kronika" (April 11, 1997) "In Vitez Muslim extremists have burned around 50 Croatian homes. This burning should not be understood just as a bonfire of hatred; they also wish to light up the road for the Pope's coming". It is interesting that Television Hercegbosna, for the first time ever, carried a program direct from TV BiH (April 10,1997). It was a special program to mark the Pope's visit, in which the highest state and religious representatives of Bosniak and Croat communities participated. The fact that Pope refused Croat invitations to visit Hercegovina, was not broadcast all.

Few words now about the coverage of media in Republic of Srpska.

The Pope's arrival in Sarajevo was presented by SRT as a second-class event. On the eve of the visit news were occasionally broadcast, which had less to do with the visit itself, than with actual or supposed obstacles to it. SRT did not regard the Pope's visit as much of a story. In the nightly newscast Novosti (April 12,1997) reported "in Muslim Sarajevo many explosive devices was found that had been prepared for the Pope's reception". This was the first the viewers heard of the Pope's arrival. Ten minutes into its broadcast, Novosti ran a brief report, without pictures, on the Pope's arrival, announcing that he would meet the next day with Serb civil and religious leaders. All emphasis was on the meeting with the Serb representatives. The following day, SRT broadcast a three-minute report on the meeting of the Pope with the Serb member of the joint presidency,

Momcilo Krajisnik. Half of the report consisted of Krajisnik's statement in which he described what he had said to the Pope. The pictures accompanying the report were strictly focused on the encounter, without a single picture of the Pope's other pastoral and state activities. SRT also neglected the Pope's historic meeting with the Serbian Orthodox Metropolitan Nikola. Absence of information considered politically unpleasant has become characteristic of Srpska TV.

May I ladies and gentlemen remind you to some explanations I had at the very beginning of my lecture. If you are not tired, you should remember situation before the war in ex Yugoslavia when media backed their republican communist leaderships during the political conflict between them. In Bosnia today, and examples above witness about that, three leaderships are 100% backed by their media as well. The voice of independent media does not exist at all in RS and Herceg Bosnia and it is weak in part controlled by Moslems.

This relationship between professional journalists and ethnic journalists, between professional media organizations and governmental political parties in fact is struggle between:

- profession and politics
- civic and ethnic community
- freedom and control
- open and closed society
- democracy and dictatorship

At the end of my contribution I want to stress following a general point of my contribution: If the war in the former Yugoslavia started 10 years ago in media - as I mentioned at the beginning it is a true - than if you want to stop the war you has to do it in the media first.

What does West have to do within the media level?

1. Five years ago I suggested some of the western participants to make a contract with Sarajevo TV Station and improve a better technical facility for two Sarajevo TV transmitters. With these two transmitters we could cover almost all part of Croatia and the biggest part of Serbia. Viewers in these countries would watch at least three different types of news coverage - and they could make a choice. I am sure that they would realize that their TV stations are manipulating them. Total investment would have been 700 000 USD. My proposal was not accepted. Now West has to organize free flow of information and invest hundred millions USD.

I want to stress here that West has to change some of their principles. One of the principle is that West does not want to help so called state owned or public TV stations in East and Central Europe.

AS a principle maybe it is O.K. However, let me know, how you can create influential private TV stations there: The state is not going to give you frequencies, the viewers are poor and they cannot buy satellite dishes, and finally even if you have money, even if you have a license, you need years to build up transmitters. So, principles are o.k. but in practice they do not work.

2. There are two directions of Western help at the media field:

- a) Try to provide a free flow of information using media out of the former Yugoslavia like BBC World Service, Radio Free Europe, Deutsche Welle, RFI etc.
- b) West has to provide, free of charge, transmitting of Western satellite TV channels through the independent televisions in the former Yugoslavia and make them more competitive than they are.
- c) It is necessary to provide, free of charge, a TV program (movies, dramas, sport events) for the independent TV stations trying to make them more competitive of course;
- d) They need video recorders, TV sets, computers, and other kind technical equipment.

Media professional there are very lonely. They cannot expect a help from the local authorities because they want to control them; they are often under pressure from their families and their children, who sometimes point out that nobody can live from the principles only; they are under pressure even from the listeners, viewers and readers who have been poisoned by politicians and state controlled media.

They can expect a help only from West.

Do not leave them alone please.

NENAD PEJIC  
Radio Free Europe  
South Slavic Language Service  
Director

The former Program director  
of Sarajevo Television

## Anmerkungen

- <sup>1</sup> Grdesic, Kasapovic, Siber: "Interesi i ideje u Jugoslovenskoj komunistickoj partiji", Faculty of political science, Zagreb, Croatia, 1989.
- <sup>1</sup> Krulic: "La crise politique dans la Yougoslavie des annes 1990", Revue francaise de Sciences politique, Paris, No.3, 1989.
- <sup>1</sup> Institute for the Study of National Relations, Sarajevo, 1987.
- <sup>1</sup> The same situation was practised in the Second World War and it is not acceptable for other ethnic groups in the former Yugoslavia
- <sup>1</sup> Nikola Dugandzija, Yugoslav sociologist of religion.
- <sup>1</sup> Human Rights, Christian, Marxists and others in dialogue, Marko Orsolc: Religious Freedom as a Civil Right, New York, 1991, page 214.
- <sup>1</sup> From the Diary of Editor-in-chief of Sarajevo Television
- <sup>1</sup> Index on Censorship, London, September 1992
- <sup>1</sup> Reporters et Medias en Yougoslavie, Paris 1992, page 13
- <sup>1</sup> Ibidem
- <sup>1</sup> Ibidem

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<sup>i</sup> Grdesic, Kasapovic, Siber: "Interesi i ideje u Jugoslovenskoj komunistickoj partiji", Faculty of political science, Zagreb, Croatia, 1989.

<sup>ii</sup> Krulic: "La crise politique dans la Yougoslavie des années 1990", Revue française de Sciences politiques, Paris, No.3, 1989.

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<sup>iv</sup> The same situation was practised in the Second World War and it is not acceptable for other ethnic groups in the former Yugoslavia

<sup>v</sup> Nikola Dugandzija, Yugoslav sociologist of religion.

<sup>vi</sup> Human Rights, Christian, Marxists and others in dialogue, Marko Orsolc: Religious Freedom as a Civil Right, New York, 1991, page 214.

<sup>vii</sup> From the Diary of Editor-in-chief of Sarajevo Television

<sup>viii</sup> Index on Censorship, London, September 1992

<sup>ix</sup> Reporters et Medias en Yougoslavie, Paris 1992, page 13

<sup>x</sup> Ibidem

<sup>xi</sup> Ibidem