

## Chapter 21

# Missed opportunities in post-war Bosnia

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**The post-Dayton media landscape** in the Balkans could not have been more unfavorable for the development of free and pluralistic media. This chapter analyses the short comings and offers a list of recommendations that might contribute to setting priorities and achieving better results in the next stages of “media intervention”, not only in the Balkans but also in countries experiencing a less traumatic transition to democracy<sup>1</sup>.

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The American-brokered Dayton Peace Agreement, initialed on November 21, 1995, in Dayton, Ohio, and signed on December 14 in Paris, ended the three-and-a-half-year war in Bosnia, which left more than 200,000 people dead and more than one and a half million driven from their homes. Focused on the main task at Dayton, “to end a war”—as the main negotiator, American ambassador Richard Holbrooke’s book (1998) is entitled—international mediators almost completely neglected the role of the media in the peace process. The media were mentioned only briefly, in Annex 3 of the agreement, giving the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) a mandate for media issues as part of its role in organizing and supervising elections. The signatories are obliged by that Annex to “ensure that conditions exist for the organization of free and fair elections, in particular a politically neutral environment... [and] shall ensure freedom of expression and of the press”<sup>2</sup>.

1 The chapter is based on the author’s book *Prime Time Crime: Balkan Media in War and Peace* (2003).

2 Dayton Peace Agreement, Annex 3, the Agreement on Elections.

336 | Thus Dayton left the Balkan media in the hands of those who had used them to stir ethnic intolerance in the first place. Yugoslav media remained in Slobodan Milosevic's hands; Croatian in Franjo Tudjman's; and Bosnian in the hands of the three nationalist parties.

The post-Dayton media landscape in the Balkans could not have been more unfavorable for the development of free and pluralistic media. On the one hand, the international institutions fully realized that the media had played an instrumental role in creating and maintaining the war mentality, a fact that had been established in reports, memoirs, and debates on the Balkans in the 1990s. On the other hand, the agreement left the "bad guys" in control not only of their by now "ethnically pure" territories but also of the media in all three states as well as Bosnia's two entities and ten cantons.

There was a built-in obstacle to the stated goal of the international intervention in the post-Dayton years: while supporting the Dayton agreement might have been the price to end the war, leaving control of the area in the hands of those most responsible for the war made it extremely difficult to develop the institutions of a functioning civil society, including the media. Following the Dayton script, most of the international post-war media efforts in Bosnia contributed to the apartheid-like partition of the country. In the process the few independent media voices that supported a multiethnic Bosnia remained not only under attack by the nationalist parties that had an interest in fostering ethnic separation, but also marginalized by many in the international donor community who chose to work with the ethnic separatists in support of Dayton.

The initial results were, predictably, tragic. For example, the president of the council controlling the most influential media organization in Republika Srpska –Serb Radio and Television (SRT)– was Momcilo Krajišnik, the closest associate of war-time Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karadžić. Krajišnik himself was later indicted and arrested for war crimes. Under his direct supervision, Serb TV treated Republika Srpska as a separate state, actively undermining any effort to reintegrate the country. The station reported on events in the Federation only in its "From Abroad" news program. Everything the SRT did following the signing of the Dayton agreement was aimed at proving that there was no possibility of coexistence among the three Bosnian ethnic groups. The international community's first High Representative in Bosnia, Carl Bildt, was quoted as saying: "They put out propaganda that even Stalin would be ashamed of"<sup>3</sup>.

Bosnia's post-war media landscape mirrored the image of that devastated country. In Serb and Croat-controlled territories, all media –newspapers, radio, and television alike– preached ethnic apartheid. In the Bosniak-controlled areas, the pre-war mainstream multiethnic media such as the daily *Oslobodjenje* (Liberation) and Radio and TV of Bosnia Herzegovina, continued to exist under a

<sup>3</sup> International Crisis Group Report: *Media in Bosnia and Herzegovina - How International Support Can be More Effective*, March 17, 1997, page 5.

double burden. They had suffered heavy losses in their struggle to operate under the siege –with their facilities and assets bombed and looted, dozens of the most experienced journalists gone, and millions of German marks in debt– all of which would be difficult to recover under even the most favorable conditions. But there was an additional burden: the international community's acceptance of Bosnia's "new realities" of partition. While internationals still paid lip service to the media that maintained the spirit of inter-ethnic tolerance under the most adverse conditions, they didn't see a role for them in a country organized strictly along Bosniak-Croat-Serb lines.

## "Daytonized" media

By early 1996, on the heels of a 60,000-strong NATO-led peacekeeping force, dozens of international NGOs and hundreds of mostly well-intentioned enthusiasts –journalists, media practitioners, and trainers– converged on Bosnia with a mission and, in some cases, a respectable amount of money to help establish free media in the country. Unfortunately, they made some strategic misjudgments as well as some regrettable mistakes. Strategically, they were instructed to operate within the Dayton framework, making the Bosnian media a party to all compromises with the ultranationalists instead of encouraging and supporting them to break free and become independent observers and critics of nationalist manipulation of the past and present.

Why was it necessary to "daytonize" the Bosnian media, making them a part of the "deal with the devil", when that issue had not been regulated by the peace agreement? Carl Bildt told me that when he came to Bosnia he found the media as divided as the country. There was never any decision on the part of the international community to "daytonize" the media, Bildt said. He explained that

there was great international reluctance to do anything that could be seen as interference in the media. SDA had a very strong constituency in Washington, and I remember that any slight move that might be interpreted as undermining BH TV had to be handled very carefully in light of this. With [the Serb] Pale TV the problem was different. I argued for us to use our military instruments to force it to behave less virulently, but this came up against the fears of "mission creep" in NATO, and it was not until General Wesley Clark took over European command that NATO agreed to take direct action against the Pale transmitters. Although I had argued vigorously for that action, it happened only after I had left<sup>4</sup>.

Regardless of their intentions, the international organizations legitimized the nationalists' control over the media by accepting that they had to deal exclusively with the ultranationalists. The newly-established OSCE's Media Experts Commission, for example, in addition to international representatives, included

<sup>4</sup> Carl Bildt: e-mail to the author, March 16, 2002.

- 338 | the designated representatives of the three Bosnian governments (Joint, Federal, and Serb) as well as “qualified media specialists appointed by each of the parties”. Of course, these “parties”, the same ones that presided over the war, were not likely to appoint independent-minded, tolerant, anti-nationalist individuals to the body controlling the media. This need among international mediators always to have clear ethnic representation with people appointed by the “the parties” or “acceptable to all three sides” favored either solid nationalists or mediocre journalists with no name or reputation. It was a criterium that sidelined, in media rebuilding efforts, those who belonged to “the fourth party”: the party of professional journalism.

One notable exception in supporting early efforts to establish free media in Bosnia was George Soros’s Open Society Fund. Open Society had, after all, two distinct advantages over all other media donors: first, the organization had extended its helping hand to the struggling Bosnian media even during the siege of Sarajevo, well aware of what Bosnia used to be; and second, it relied on Bosnian media professionals with a deep understanding of local values and priorities.

The country’s media scene presented both Bosnian journalism and international “media interventionists” with a variety of challenges. For example, Bosnian Radio and TV, which compromised its pre-war reputation for independence by accepting Muslim SDA-led government control during the war, was still the best equipped, most professional and to some extent multiethnic broadcast outlet, with the best prospect of being rebuilt as a state-wide public broadcasting station. But instead of cutting off the instruments of SDA control and restoring its country-wide outreach, complemented by the development of regional electronic media, the international community practically legalized the war-time looting of its assets, transmitters, and equipment, leaving them in the hands of “Serb TV” and “Croat TV”, and accepting hard-line Serbs’ and Croats’ claim that anything coming from Sarajevo was “unacceptable”. No wonder then that, in the months leading up to the first post-war elections held in September 1996, nationalist Serb and Croat TV continued to insist on war-time partition, treating the territories under the control of nationalist parties as states completely separate from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

### **“Carl Bildt TV”**

Looking for alternatives, the international community opted for a TV and radio program of its own. Just before the elections, it launched TV-IN, later renamed OBN (Open Broadcast Network), and FERN (Free Elections Radio Network) Radio. OBN started on September 7, 1996, with a credibility problem. It was called “Carl Bildt TV”, suggesting it was under the control of the Office of the High Representative (OHR), and was dismissed by all three nationalist parties. SDS and HDZ dismissed it for being established in Sarajevo and being carried predominantly through the Bosniak TV network; the SDA labeled it “unpatriotic”, a competition to “our Bosnian TV”.

OBN faced both technological and professional limitations. Technologically, it needed a network of local TV stations to carry its signal to the Bosnian audience. Initially, there were five stations: NTV 99 and Hayat in Sarajevo, TV Mostar, the Zenica-based Zetel, and TV Tuzla, with NTV 99 withdrawing from the project as soon as it received its share of the internationally-supplied equipment. OBN was largely understaffed in its central studio, while member-stations were not able to contribute news programming at a level expected in the country-wide network. Affiliation with local partners, some of which were clearly Muslim-only, hurt credibility. For example, throughout the month of Ramadan, Hayat TV broadcast long hours of religious programming produced in Iran, playing into the hands of both Serb and Croat nationalists who wanted to undermine anything all-Bosnian.

The international community proved, once again, that it had the ability to raise money for its Bosnian democratic experiment –investing some \$20 million over a period of five years in this new network– but not a clear understanding of the best ways to achieve its stated goals. A fraction of the money invested in the project would have been enough to bring together some of the best Bosnian journalists to produce a high-quality prime time news journal and an issue-oriented weekly political magazine instead of relying heavily on imported foreign programming. With all of its generous investment, OBN was never given the most precious asset: an “A” team of editors who would shape a program focused on priorities in the peace process. After all, that focus was missing in international policy toward Bosnia as well.

Post-war Bosnia saw an explosion of new media outlets. According to a study by Zoran Udovicic, president of the Media Plan Institute, in mid-1991 there were 377 newspapers and other publications in Bosnia, 54 local radio stations, 4 TV stations, one wire service, and state Radio-Television with 3 channels. At the end of the war in 1995 there were 272 active media outlets: 203 in the Federation and 69 in Republika Srpska. In March 1997, there were 490: 270 in the Federation and 220 in Republika Srpska<sup>5</sup>. The problem was that –with the war-time exodus of hundreds of journalists, the absence of educated young professionals in both newsrooms and management, and the lack of a functional economy– most of the newly-started media depended either on international donors or on local war profiteers with dubious political agendas. In the absence of a strategy, which could have included the creation of a high-quality national public broadcast system and support for the establishment of a respectable daily, much of the donors’ money was wasted on media projects of no relevance. “A cost-benefit analysis of media investment in 1996 indicates a poor return. The problem is lack of overall strategy and absence of expertise”, an International Crisis Group report of March 18, 1997, stated.

<sup>5</sup> Zoran Udovicic: taped interview by the author in Sarajevo, February 2, 2000.

### 340 | The fate of *Oslobodjenje*

In a country deeply divided into three nationalist-controlled territories, there was little room left for media still advocating inter-ethnic tolerance. A case in point was the fate of *Oslobodjenje*. Internationally praised as “the paper that refused to die”, and awarded all of the most prestigious prizes in world journalism –Paper of the Year, The Consciousness and Integrity in Journalism Award, The Sakharov Award for Freedom of Thought, The Freedom Award, and The Golden Pen of Freedom, to mention just a few –*Oslobodjenje* faced the challenge of surviving the peace. With almost all pre-war assets destroyed and looted, with a huge wartime debt, and more and more senior journalists leaving after years of heroic unpaid work, the paper was also exposed to constant attacks in the newly-established nationalist Bosniak media. The Muslim SDA, unable to control *Oslobodjenje*, backed a new daily –*Dnevni avaz* (Daily Avaz)– giving it generous financial support, exclusive access to information, and even police and army support in distribution.

*Oslobodjenje*, while anti-nationalist and independent of the ruling parties, was losing the battle for readers. The paper lost some of its best journalists, partly because it was unable to pay them, partly because of an increasing divide between the management and editorial board over how to survive. In that struggle for day-to-day survival, the paper failed to re-energize and to develop a clear long-term strategy for regaining its central place in Bosnian journalism.

Nevertheless, the lively and somewhat chaotic media scene in Bosniak-majority territories proved to be the most pluralistic in Bosnia with the battle between “the most read” and “the most respected” dailies (*Avaz* and *Oslobodjenje*, respectively), as well as the rivalry between the two independent weeklies (*Dani* and *Slobodna Bosna*), plus the continuous campaign in the nationalist weekly (*Ljiljan*) against all of the independent-minded journalists and media outlets, and a variety of radio and television stations to boot. Bosniak leader Alija Izetbegovic prided his party on “allowing the greatest media freedom in the region”. The fact is that it was not the party that “allowed” the freedom, but Bosnian journalists who won and preserved it in spite of their government. Izetbegovic himself, irritated by the criticism of his party in the independent media, attacked some of the Bosnian magazines as “media prostitutes”, allegedly selling their services for a handful of dollars to the international donors. In that, he was just replaying the same old song used by Milosevic and Tudjman in efforts to silence the opposition in Serbia and Croatia. He thought it was perfectly fine if the donor was, for example, his party but not the international organizations.

Izetbegovic –together with Muslim religious community leader Mustafa Ceric– was instrumental in trying to impose further Islamization of public life in the territories under his control. In 1996, on the occasion of the first post-war New Year celebration, he openly criticized Bosnian TV for projecting images of public drinking, singing, and Santa Claus appearances, “which are not our tradition”. The fact is that Bosniaks not only traditionally celebrated the New

Year but also shared in the religious holidays of their Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish neighbors. Santa Claus bringing gifts to children was part of this in schools, communities, and companies. Ceric also attacked Bosnian TV for using terms such as "the Holy Father" and "his Holiness" in reporting about Pope John Paul II's activities, accusing it of "Catholization of Bosniaks". That was just part of the systematic campaign against secularism, conducted through Dzemaludin Latic's Muslim weekly *Ljiljan*. Latic was a close associate of Izetbegovic, who led *Ljiljan's* attack against mixed marriages, as well as a campaign against prominent Sarajevo poet Marko Vesovic and a number of secular Bosniak intellectuals.

Editors of the two best political weeklies in Bosnia, Senad Pecanin of *Dani* and Senad Avdic of *Slobodna Bosna*, were a constant target of radical Bosnian Islamists' attacks. Pecanin said that:

There is an extremely high price attached to practicing independent journalism here. And very few people are ready to pay it. That includes threatening phone calls at 2 or 3 a.m. with the caller telling me where my car is parked or the exact route my child takes to a day care center. Latic's *Ljiljan* once ran a doctored photo of me with Salman Rushdie depicting me as an 'enemy of Islam'. President Izetbegovic himself, after we ran a dossier on crimes committed against Serb and Croat civilians by renegade commanders of the Bosnian Army, accused us publicly of causing \$200-300 million in damage for international assistance denied to Bosnia. Then Ceric repeats these accusations. And as a consequence, the printing company increases the price of printing us; some distributors refuse to sell us; and some advertisers cancel their contracts. Not to mention one of Sarajevo's notorious warlord's entry into my office pointing, fortunately, only a toy gun to my head, or a bomb exploding in front of *Dani*'s office<sup>6</sup>.

Avdic was physically attacked and beaten in a downtown Sarajevo hotel on December 24, 1995. After that, he ran an open letter in *Slobodna Bosna* addressed to Izetbegovic, claiming that the police and military intelligence "enable the state to have information on every single politician, officer, or journalist", and concluding that the attack was an attempt "to settle accounts" with him. "I do not know how much of this you can control", Avdic wrote to Izetbegovic. "If you cannot, it is horrible, and one should flee this country. If you can but do not do it, it is no less dangerous and horrible"<sup>7</sup>. Prominent Bosnian writer Miljenko Jergovic, reporting on the Bosnian media in *Nedjeljna Dalmacija*, concluded, "If you judge it by *Slobodna Bosna*, there are Western European standards of freedom of the press in Sarajevo"<sup>8</sup>. But the price tag for Avdic's editorial independence included some fifteen court cases, two suspended sentences, and

6 Senad Pecanin: taped interview by the author in Sarajevo, February 2, 2000.

7 Sanja Despot and Snjezana Pavic, "Wait Until the State Starts Thinking", *Novi list*, Jan 7, 1996.

8 Miljenko Jergovic, *Ljiljan* Carries the SDA Banner, *Nedjeljna Dalmacija*, June 14, 1996.

- 342 | even an arrest at his office to take him to court. His case prompted High Representative Karlos Vestendorp to intervene in Bosnia's judicial system by moving the alleged libel cases from the criminal to the civil courts, thus taking the threat to prosecute away from nationalist authorities, since in civil courts charges can be brought only by individuals.

### **Victims of violence - and silence**

The state of the media was less satisfactory in Republika Srpska and even worse in the Croat-controlled territories of Bosnia. An international presence in the election process forced the ruling SDS to allow the existence of some alternative newspapers. The International Crisis Group reported that

of these, *Nezavisne novine* was by far the most influential, evolving from a fortnightly newspaper into a weekly in June and a daily in August [of 1996] with financial assistance from the UK's Overseas Development Agency, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and George Soros' Open Society Fund. Moreover, the daily boasted a circulation of 4,000 and the weekly a circulation of 9,000, which though objectively low was nevertheless far greater than any other publication in Republika Srpska<sup>9</sup>.

On August 25, 1999, *Nezavisne novine* ran an exclusive, entitled "Renegade group of Prijedor policemen massacred more than 200 Bosniaks; Republika Srpska Army saved survivors, murderers escaped prosecution". That report –on a crime that had happened seven years before, on August 22, 1992– was the first ever in the Republika Srpska media on war crimes perpetrated by Serbs. The paper published a thorough investigative report on how some 200 Bosniaks from the Prijedor area, former inmates of the notorious Omarska concentration camp, were bused to the Koricanji cliffs on Vlasic mountain in Central Bosnia and summarily executed. Seven of them survived the massacre, and *Nezavisne novine* ran their testimony. The report prompted an avalanche of threats to the paper's staff, accusing them of "betraying the nation", but the paper continued to print new revelations of the crimes committed by the Serb paramilitary.

The price of such reporting proved to be high. On October 22, 1999, Reuters reported that a Bosnian Serb editor had lost his legs in blast. Zeljko Kopanja, 45, founder, publisher, and editor of *Nezavisne novine*, was on his way to his office at 7:15 a.m. when an explosive device planted under his car went off. The blast severed one of Kopanja's legs, and he was brought to Banjaluka Clinical Center in critical condition. Surgeons amputated what was left of both of his legs. Two weeks later, fighting both physical and emotional pain, Kopanja asked his friends and family to put him in a wheelchair so he could "take a walk" down Banjaluka's main pedestrian street, he said in an interview. "Seeing people in the

<sup>9</sup> "The Media in Bosnia and Herzegovina: How International Support Can be More Effective", International Crises Group Report, March 18, 1997.

[Gospodska] street, some of them just shaking my hand, some sobbing, I knew I had done the right thing. And I knew I had to persevere (in exposing the war crimes) since I had sacrificed so much. I don't think that any nation is criminal. It's individuals and certain policies, not a whole nation", Kopanja said of his motives to continue publishing<sup>10</sup>. "After all, what would my life be like if I confined myself to a wheelchair and my home only!" He agreed that he was a victim not only of the Serb war criminals, who wanted to silence him, but also indirectly of the silence in other Serb media about the war crimes. "The silence of the others has left us too lonely, exposed to accusations and vulnerable to attack. No one else [in the Republika Srpska media] has joined us. But I don't think it was politically or ideologically motivated silence. It was fear", Kopanja said.

## Future priorities and recommendations

The experience of the 1990s offers lessons for "media intervention" in the Balkans and in other countries and regions undergoing transitions to democracy. Most important among these, international peace agreements and international institutions that newly independent countries wish to join should lay out clear, explicit guidelines and criteria concerning the independence of the media. The Dayton agreement omitted this critical piece, leaving the media in all three states –Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia– in the hands of those most responsible for the wars in the first place. No wonder the media continued to promote nationalist agendas and images, supporting their own leaders' and ruling parties' wartime goals, condemning neighbors, and resisting international efforts to bring about democratic reform and reconciliation.

What could or should have been done better? Following is a list of recommendations that might contribute to setting priorities and achieving better results in the next stages of "media intervention", not only in the Balkans but also in countries experiencing a less traumatic transition to democracy.

## Ownership of the media

Ownership proved to be the single most decisive tool in the decade of nationalist media manipulation throughout the former Yugoslavia. The tragedy of the Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian media –and this is equally true for the whole public sector in those countries– was that their transition in the 1990s was not a real step from one-party monopoly to multiparty democracy. In all three cases, the Communist Party monopoly was replaced by a nationalist party monopoly, using the same totalitarian instruments of control. Milosevic in Serbia and Tudjman in Croatia –both products of hard-line communist ideology– established immediate and absolute control over all state media. They took over state radio and television stations and the national dailies, *Politika* and *Vjesnik* respectively, and they

10 Zeljko Kopanja: interview by the author in Washington, D.C., November 16, 2000.

- 344 | expanded their parties' media empires by taking control of a number of independent and regional media outlets. The method was the same: the Milosevic and Tudjman governments took over almost all Serbian and Croatian newspapers, declaring that their privatization during the late 1980s under Yugoslav reformist Ante Markovic was illegal, and making them a part of their propaganda machinery. This was the fate of *Borba*, *Vecernje novosti*, and *Ekonomска политика* in Serbia, and of *Slobodna Dalmacija* and *Danas* in Croatia, among others.

The winning coalition of nationalist parties in Bosnia after the first multiparty elections in 1990 tried to use the Milosevic–Tudjman recipe to subjugate the media in the republic, but Bosnian journalists challenged the law adopted in the nationalist-controlled parliament in spring 1991. They rejected the nationalist claim of "the right of the democratically elected parliament to appoint media editors and managers". By the end of that year, journalists had won a Constitutional Court case, arguing that even if the Bosnian media, as elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia, enjoyed some state support, the money belonged to the Bosnian public and not to the ruling parties. At *Oslobodjenje*, we went so far as to reject publicly any further state subsidy if it would be used as blackmail over our editorial policy. The Bosnian media victory was soon overshadowed, however, by the media war drums over the rivers separating Bosnia from Serbia and Croatia. Milosevic's radio and television signals were imposed over all the Serb-occupied territories of Bosnia, and Tudjman's over the Croat-controlled territories. The Bosnian voices of tolerance were replaced by voices of hate. Their dominance in all three states continued long after the Dayton Peace Agreement was initialed on November 21, 1995. Until the year 2000, the media remained in the hands of warmongers, creating obstacles to reconciliation.

Lesson learned: make the independence of the media an important part of future peace agreements and one of the must-do requirements for international acceptance of states in transition. These requirements must include the overhaul of laws regulating the media and the acceptance of international standards of freedom of expression. In Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia, the still-prevailing concept of state media needs to be replaced with the concept of truly public media.

### Representative managing and advisory boards

While state and regional government support of public media may still have a role until there is a functioning economy, it is necessary to develop a legal framework to protect independent media from political, party, and parliamentary control. One way to do this in postwar and transitional societies is through the internationally supervised establishment of representative managing and advisory boards comprising a broad civil society spectrum. These boards might include representatives of independent associations of journalists and their labor unions; scholars and writers; artists and athletes; human rights and other NGO activists; prominent public figures and religious community leaders; international organizations

concerned with press freedom; and other international institutions engaged in democracy building. Their role should be to oversee and assist in the development of internationally acceptable standards and practices, providing protection for, rather than control of, the newly independent media.

## Professional associations of journalists

Throughout the region, professional associations of journalists have an important role to play in efforts to restore the credibility and raise the standards of journalism. Except for the Croatian Society of Journalists (HND), which remained active in its efforts to protect and educate its members throughout a decade of oppressive HDZ rule, most other regional associations have disintegrated along ideological or ethnic lines. In Bosnia, there was not only a divide between associations of professional and not-so-professional journalists, but also between associations based on ethnic exclusivity. In the highly politicized, nationalistic environment of the 1990s, supposedly professional associations of journalists rallied behind "patriotic causes". They neglected their primary responsibilities: to establish, uphold, and develop standards and ethics of journalism; to organize and represent journalists in their search for decent pay, job security, benefits, and better work conditions; to protect their membership –regardless of ethnic backgrounds–against political and economic pressures from governments and political parties. If they were to shift their focus away from the nationalist policies of the past toward real-life issues and challenges, Balkan journalists would soon find that their common interests and concerns are more numerous and more vital than their differences.

## Watchdog journalism

A crucial missing link in rebuilding media credibility in the postwar Balkans is the absence of a tradition of watchdog journalism. In post-communist societies, the media did not have experience in critically examining and reporting on the work of state and party institutions, and no institutions were responsive to public interests. The nationalist parties of the 1990s –like the communists in the post-World War II period– did not have to answer questions about what they were doing or why. It took almost five years after Dayton for the first major breakthrough in this area, when the international High Representative in Bosnia introduced the Freedom of Information Act providing citizens' access to most information possessed by the government and other public institutions. While the Act creates a legal framework for greater media access to the secretive world of power, there is a need to develop a wide public information network: public affairs offices within major governmental and public institutions; a communications culture in which individuals and institutions are more responsive and available for legitimate public concerns, interviews, and press conferences; and access to records and databases of government and other public institutions. To help create that culture of

- 346 | transparency and public accountability, much more needs to be done to oblige public institutions to have their own public relations officers, to train communications specialists for these positions, and, more than anything else, to train journalists to ask questions of the greatest public relevance.

### Education for journalism

Postwar Balkan journalism has a desperate need for creative educational initiatives. While there are some positive experiences –including the BBC School of Journalism within the Media Center and the High College of Journalism within the Media Plan Institute, both in Sarajevo, the region needs a thorough overhaul of its formal schools of journalism. For the most part, these schools are based in former socialist schools of political science that have no tradition of educating modern media professionals. During the decade of war and propagandist manipulation, the newsrooms in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia were devastated. Some of the best professionals have left or been forced to leave; they have been replaced with young, often uneducated and inexperienced reporters and editors who have practiced more party propaganda than real journalism ever since. To meet both the short-term demand for qualified journalists and long-term development needs, the postwar Balkan media must pursue innovative educational approaches. These could include on-the-job training within the newsrooms of major media outlets such as national radio, TV, and dailies, conducted by experienced regional and international “editors-in-residence”. Working with journalists on their major daily assignments, leading them through story development –from the initial idea, to finding proper sources and documents, to shaping the story and providing adequate photos and graphs– would help establish some basic standards in regional journalism. Even some simple rules, such as consulting multiple sources for each story and always looking for “the other side” of an argument, would greatly improve the quality and credibility of the media.

Another innovative approach might include cooperative efforts in developing and executing coverage of major ongoing issues and events, such as election campaigns, truth and reconciliation processes, economic reforms, and international integration processes. A local–regional–international team of editors and journalists working together to shape major media coverage of critical issues would provide valuable learning experience for working journalists and help set standards for future coverage of these issues. For example, media development institutions operating in the Balkans could sponsor election campaign coverage by selected media outlets –statewide radio and TV and leading dailies and weeklies– including hands-on participation by competent regional and international advisers. Since Balkan media are more preoccupied with day-to-day survival than with long-term educational or development concerns, international donors could help by offering comprehensive educational projects, soliciting applications, and offering professional and material support to those who qualify. Working on such projects, with the full participation of regional and internation-

al advisers, would provide local editors and journalists with the skills for future coverage of political campaigns in their countries.

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## **International exchange**

Expanded international exchange should be an integral part of journalism education. There should be a more systematic effort to provide talented Balkan journalists who work for relevant national media with an opportunity to spend some time –three months, a semester, or an academic year– in an international newsroom environment interacting and working with scholars and practitioners. The combination of research, newsroom exposure, and internships at major international media organizations would offer a valuable learning experience for work in the region.

## **Education of media managers**

Of equal importance for a long-term media development strategy is education for media management. Training managers to develop a sound business strategy –with the proper balance of news and advertising; the optimum balance between full-time staff and freelancers; and the best methods for increasing circulation, classified advertisement, subscriptions, and other income-generating initiatives– is key to the gradual move from media dependency on donors to self-sustainability.

## **Refocusing donor strategies**

International media donors still have a valuable role to play in the development of independent Balkan media, but they, too, need to refocus their strategies. Instead of sometimes indiscriminate spending on projects of dubious quality or relevance, they might identify –on the basis of their performance in the 1990s and their creative and business potential– media outlets deserving support in their search for higher professional standards and profitability. These outlets should be offered a comprehensive aid package including financial support, investment, and lines of credit to achieve their goals.

## **Developing the media market**

A competitive media market is needed to reduce media dependence on public funds. In the Balkan experience of the 1990s, even internationally supervised privatization left nationalist governments in charge of the instruments of economic harassment against independent media. The governments could silence the media at will by controlling –through networks of their cronies– printing presses, distribution networks, newsprint supply, discriminative taxes, allocation of radio frequencies, and manipulation of advertising. Prospects for the development of independent media would be substantially improved through lower taxes, equal access to basic supplies and frequencies, nondiscriminatory sales networks and advertising,

- 348 | and the development of smaller, less expensive, and more competitive printing facilities. Once a competitive media market exists in conjunction with long-term support for the most relevant media outlets, the market will decide, for example, which of the approximately 80 television and 200 radio stations currently operating in Bosnia Herzegovina should continue as economically viable businesses.

### Truth and reconciliation

Just as the Balkan media participated in the ultranationalist crusades of the 1990s, preparing the ground for war and justifying the worst atrocities in Europe since the end of World War II, they now have a crucial role to play in truth and reconciliation efforts. Five years after Dayton, the public in Serbia and Croatia still has not been told the truth about the Bosnian war of 1992-1995. As long as this is so, not only the history but also the future of the region will be vulnerable to nationalist distortions and the accumulation of hatreds for new tensions and conflicts. Experience tells us that acknowledging and honoring the victims on all sides, examining the record of atrocities, and neither denying crimes nor blaming everyone equally, provide the best bases for reconciliation and coexistence in the Balkans. Documenting and making public the atrocities and sufferings on all sides would help the people of the region understand the complexities of the conflict and the pain of the innocent: presenting to the Serbs the full extent of the siege and killings of Vukovar and Sarajevo, the concentration camps in the Prijedor area, and the Srebrenica massacre; educating the Croats about atrocities committed in their name against Bosniaks in Herzegovina and Central Bosnia and against Serbs in Operation Storm in Croatia; and telling Bosniaks about the crimes committed against the Serbs during the siege of Sarajevo and against the Croats in the Konjic and Bugojno areas.

Once confronted with documents and pictures of these crimes, presented to them during the previous decade as part of a heroic and even sacred fight for survival, people will be better able to understand and support bringing war criminals to trial. Such efforts to uncover the truth and mete out justice are a precondition for the children of this tragic region, in which every generation of the twentieth century has experienced war –my grandparents' generation in 1914, my parents' in 1941, my children's and mine in the 1990s– to finally join a peaceful and prosperous Europe.