# The Media in Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Case Study of International Intervention in Media Democratization

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March 2002

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Master of Arts

# ABSTRACT

The thesis examines the work of the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the post-war period and efforts to restructure its institutions and change journalistic practices. The main focus is placed the effort of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe to facilitate "free and fair elections" in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the creation of the Media Experts Commission, which was to regulate the work of the media during this period. The difficulty that this Commission met during its work pointed to inadequacy of its mandate, as well as complexity of the issue of media transformation.

The case of restructuring the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina is compared to Poland, which was successful in success in creating more democratic media system, more adequate for a new political environment.

# Résumé

La thèse examine le fonctionnement des média en Bosnie-Herzégovine dans le période après la guerre, ainsi que les efforts de réstructurer les institutions médiatiques et changement de la pratique journalistique. La concentration principale de la thèse est placé sur l'Organisation pour la sécurité et co-operation en Europe (*Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*), qui a du faciliter les élections << libres et équitables >> en Bosnie-Herzégovine et son organisme la Commission des experts en média (*Media Experts Commission*) qui a du réguler la conduite des média pendant cette période. La difficulté que cette commission a rencontré indique la complexité de problematique de transformation des médias.

Ces efforts de réstructuration des média en Bosnie-Herzégovine seront comparés a ceux qui avait eu lieu en Pologne, parceque ce pays était un succès dans la création des systèmes médiatiques plus adéquats pour le nouveau environnement politique.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my gratitude to my advisor, Professor Gertrude J. Robinson. Without her guidance and motivation, this thesis would not have been possible. Working with her was a great and memorable learning experience, which extends well beyond this thesis.

I would like to thank my parents. My late father was one of the most remarkable people I ever met, and my mother supported me in all my educational endeavors.

Last but not the least, I wish to thank my friend Alex who read my thesis, and my roommate Jessica who provided technical support when it was most needed.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# CHAPTER I -- INTRODUCTION

The former Yugoslavia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in particular, have been the focus of much study by political scientists and communications scholars in the last decade. A tidal wave of political change prompted by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the secession of Slovenia in 1990, led to the collapse of the Yugoslavian state which its Eastern Block neighbors had envied for its freedoms and tolerance. Soon after the Slovenia secession from the federation of six republics, Croatia too proclaimed its independence. As a result, multi-ethnic Bosnia's political situation became increasingly precarious, because two of its three constituent ethnic groups, the Croats and Serbs, now faced divided loyalties. The Muslim nationalist government which came into power in Bosnia's first democratic election in 1991, consequently decided to secede as well from the crumbling federation. This was to be achieved through a referendum where assurances were given that the future country would provide equal rights to all its ethnic groups. Fearful of Muslim nationalism, Serbs boycotted the referendum and declared areas where the Serbian population predominated, as autonomous from the Bosnian government. In contrast, Muslims and Croats voted overwhelmingly in favor of secession since independence seemed the only way to evade the aggressive Serbian nationalism and centralization of economic resources embarked on by the Milosevic government in Belgrade. Soon after the referendum, the first guns were fired in Bosnia.

The collapse of ex-Yugoslavia's federated political system, which had comprised six republics, completely changed the region's political future. The rump state now comprised only three republics: Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia, plus the two autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo. The fragmentation of the Yugoslav state implied a realignment of its media structures which had been unified since the Tito regime. As a result, former republican centers now became national broadcasters for their own secessionist republics. Yet because of Bosnia's ethnic diversity the republican media infrastructure was divided into three separate information markets rather than one, as in the past. This posed both regulatory and political problems for the country which is not much larger than the Netherlands. Information was seen as a crucial political asset in the armed conflict that was looming over Bosnia and fragmented the country between 1992 and 1995. Its thrusts and counter thrusts are known as the "transmitter war" (Thompson, 1994, p.207). Transmitters and relay stations seized by Croatian paramilitaries or the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), were redirected towards either Zagreb or Belgrade. A few private media outlets had emerged, but they worked in an unregulated legal setting which made them targets for pressures on the part of the neighboring Serbian or Croatian governments or, if they decided to collaborate, dangerous war-mongering propagandists. In the process, these transmitters carried opposing propaganda and incited hatred in Bosnia during the war, as Chapter 2 will demonstrate.

Only after the Dayton Peace Accord, signed in 1995, did the situation stabilize itself sufficiently to focus on the introduction of new media structures for Bosnia and Herzegovina, where a new government was to be elected. The impetus for media

democratization came from the international community and was supervised by the High Representative, who was appointed administrator of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He was aided by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) which was charged with election supervision. Making sure that "free and fair" elections were conducted permitted this organization to interfere with many aspects of Bosnia's public life. This thesis will discuss what was arguably the most sustained, but not the most successful effort: the creation of the OSCE Media Experts Commission, which was to develop a unified perspective from which the Bosnian media landscape would be changed. Until that point, development strategies were unsystematic. They mainly consisted of random fund allocation and a few educational efforts. The OSCE's Media Experts Commission imposed regulations covering media conduct during the elections and significantly changed the information flow in the country. Though the Commission's mandate was limited in time, it was broad in punitive powers and it was thus able to affect political change and introduce less authoritarian media oversight.

The setting in which the Media Experts Commission worked is unique in Eastern Europe in the sense that it became both a partner and a supervisor for the creation of new economic, political and legal structures. Its initiatives led to substantial friction between Western European development efforts and the local community's inability to abandon their familiar Communist tradition (Splichal, 1995; Jakubowicz, 1995). "Communism as an economic system may have collapsed, but the cultural habits that had sustained the Communist system were not and could not be eradicated completely, thereby leaving

open the possibility that a new form of authoritarianism could take the place of the former system" (Mestrovic, 1994, p.152).

The Bosnian example demonstrates that internationally conceived media reorganization efforts do not always lead to success. The regulatory framework imposed by the Media Experts Commission suggests that diversified media outlooks do not necessarily result from a change in regulation as Denis McQuail has argued (1992, p.99). The ways in which the media operate, influence and interact with their own society depends on more than the legal framework. It also depends on the activities of the citizens, whose media consumption is heavily influenced by the nature of their state, the regulatory regime, and its perception of citizens' right to know (Schramm, Peterson & Siebert, 1956). I will use the writings of Eastern European thinkers like Karol Jakubowicz (1990), who have developed novel ways of conceptualizing this transformation and defining the crucial criteria of these transitional media systems based on experiences in Poland, the Baltic republics and elsewhere.

**Origins of Personal Interest**

My interest in these issues results from an intricate web of circumstances; I was born and raised in Sarajevo, which was at the time part of Yugoslavia. The city was the perfect example of "brotherhood and unity", an idea that was designed by Tito to overarch the residual nationalist hatreds or political convictions of ethnic groups which made up the country after the World War II. The Sarajevo where I grew up was multi-

ethnic and tolerant. In the late eighties, it also became the center of a very vibrant youth culture, which gave my generation (those born in the early seventies) a unique experience. This emergent culture hardly ever raised issues of ethnicity as they were by and large considered irrelevant by the urban youth.

But our harmonious co-existence in a tolerant urban setting made the disbanding of the Yugoslav federation all the more shocking. The power of the nationalist message widened the gap that has, as I would soon learn, always existed between the country's ethnic groups. This became most evident during my involvement with the United Nations Protection Force between 1993 and 1995. Working as an interpreter alongside officers negotiating the ceasefire between the Serbs, Croats and Muslims, gave me an opportunity to travel to many places in central Bosnia. I found out that nationalist undercurrents always boiled under the surface of "brotherhood and unity". For that reason, it did not seem that difficult for different sides of one street to become different realities, and neighboring villages to become outposts of different countries.

In 1995, the political situation began to stabilize itself and a political consensus seemed to be in sight. The awaited peace also brought concerns about how to pursue my university education. The University of Sarajevo was in ruins and the idea of continuing my studies abroad seemed like the most sensible choice and a thrilling opportunity. The same year, I got the opportunity to do so and I began my studies in Communications at Concordia University in Montreal. Having the opportunity to be in the North American educational setting has helped me to acquire not only a different kind of knowledge and

methods of research, but has also taught me how to reinvestigate what I had learned before. What used to be taken for granted now has a different significance, and the change of physical environment helped me begin to understand the cultural context that I come from and that has formed who I am.

I completed my studies in 1998 and returned to Sarajevo, a city that was now undergoing a huge reconstruction and was a host to many international agencies and non-governmental organizations facilitating this process. Almost immediately upon my return, I started to work for the OSCE's Media Experts Commission as an investigator and an interpreter. Although never a media professional, this gave me the opportunity to observe how journalists work, and how they perceive their new roles in Bosnian society. I was also able to asses how they cope with the new political situation, as well as how their work was perceived by their international counterparts. The majority of cases the Commission had on its agenda involved flagrant violations of freedom of expression and movement, cases of slander and defamation, as well as unlawful detention of journalists etc. This exposure, which lasted from August to November 1998, was a most valuable experience for trying to understand the stresses and issues faced by transitional journalists on a daily basis, and introduced new sets of questions and dilemmas.

## In Search of an Adequate Theoretical Approach: The Most Important Literature

Transitional democracy is a term commonly used to describe socio-political transformations taking place in Eastern Block countries after 1989. Yugoslavia's former

republics which subscribed to Marxist-Leninist doctrines are now engaged in the same process. Democratic transitions were first isolated as a phenomenon in political science by Dankwart Rustow in his 1970 article "*Transitions to Democracy: Towards a Dynamic Model*" (Krieger, 1993, p.224) which discussed a predominant trend toward military dictatorship in Latin America and one-party states with socialist rhetoric and a leaning toward highly authoritarian rules. This term came to be adopted and is now used almost exclusively as a reference to the countries of Eastern Europe including Yugoslavia.

Many books have documented the events in former Yugoslavia. Often, these works are written by journalists who witnessed the political turmoil in the last days of Yugoslavia and the wars that followed (Silber & Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, 1995; Glenny *The Fall of Yugoslavia: the Third Balkan War*, 1992, et al.). They trace historical and political developments in the Yugoslav region back to earlier conflicts and the idiosyncrasies of Tito's politics, the country's boundaries and the ethnic predominance in different republics. The involvement of the United Nations in the conflict, their peacekeeping role and the efforts of other international bodies in building democratic mechanisms, have opened a whole new filed of study for political scientists (Rieff *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West,* 1995). Other works provide more insight into the country's culture, its institutions and production, as well as social conditions in the country before the outset of the conflict (Ramet *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia form the Death of Tito to Ethnic War*, 1996). A book that has been most useful to my research was Mark Thompson's *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina*, (1994) an invaluable account of media

developments before and during the war in the former Yugoslav republics. These writings offer varying degrees of quality, analyses and approaches, but as a whole provide insights into the multitude of aspects that shaped the present, post-conflict media landscape in former Yugoslavia, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina in particular. They are of invaluable importance in studying the contemporary media set-up, as they provide the political context in which these media institutions were created and their journalistic practices forged.

As for communication studies, it is vital to start from the classic study dealing with media traditions that developed in the East and the West, *Four Theories of the Press* written by Schramm, Peterson and Siebert in 1956. Their thesis that the role of the press is dependent on both social and political as well as different philosophical assumptions enabled them for the first time to distinguish between four different press systems and to define the assumptions of a totalitarian press regime. This classic is still relevant today, though it has been amended and expanded by scholars such as Raymond Williams, *Communication* (1962), Peter Golding and Philip Eliot (1979), Herbert Alschull in his *Agents of Power* (1984, second edition 1995); and Denis McQuail in his *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction* (1983).

With the collapse of communism in the late 80s and early 90s new paradigms needed to be established to explain the media changes occurring in Poland, Czeckoslovakia, as well as the Soviet Union. In his book *Last Rights*, John Nerone revisited *Four Theories* almost forty years later and provided a new outlook which argues

that the liberal perspective prevented Schramm, Peterson and Siebert from adequately assessing other media systems (Nerone, 1995). Karol Jakubowicz, a Polish scholar, argues in a similar vein; he criticizes Schramm, Peterson and Siebert's models for being "too general and restrictive" and challenges the idea that the media are different only by virtue of belonging to different social systems. Instead, he suggests the creation of new media typologies in which levels of autonomy and subordination are contrasted to levels of pluralism and dominance (Jakubowicz 1990). Such a typology, I argue, is most helpful in discussing the transitional media and in assessing the accomplishments of the Media Experts Commission, since it transcends the limitations of typologies based on ideological criteria such as capitalist vs. communist or liberal vs. authoritarian. Transitional media manifest aspects from both of these dichotomies. Also, by studying the media in such manner, one avoids using other countries' media systems as implicit goals, an important consideration since Eastern and Central European media regulators are attempting to make their media systems similar to those of the United States. Jakubowicz's parameters of *autonomy/subordination* and *pluralism/dominance* represent processes to be considered in providing more diversified outlooks, and thus offer various approaches to a slow and meaningful transition.

Jakubowics's thinking furthermore offers propositions and goals which national policies might strive for, while gradually incorporating the new into the old, and thus creating a system that can adequately respond to the emerging social needs and expectations of varied citizen groups. He recognizes the close relationship between the media and social change (Jakubowicz, 1995), but also takes into account varying degrees

of technological development, social and institutional structures, beliefs, values and practices (Jakubowicz, 1995). Karol Jakubowicz argues in favor of a variety of Eastern European media models and solutions negotiated with respect to both the old and the new (Jakubowicz, 2000).

Another important figure is Slavko Splichal, a Slovene scholar who began considering the restructuring of Yugoslavia's media systems in the late eighties (Splichal, 1990) who continues to capture their transformation. He uses Slovenia's example to study how media need to be transformed to respond to the demands of an emerging multi-party democratic system, where commercial interests have a place. His writing points to the fact that restructuring, commercialization and so-called liberalization do not always encourage higher participation in the social decision making process (Splichal, 1992). This agrees with Jakubowicz's observations since both have pointed to the danger of a new co-location of media with the political top, thus creating another form of state-controlled situation, yet cloaked in the banner of democracy.

There is another important reason why these two writers' works are valuable. They are authors who have personally witnessed Slovenia and Poland's media transitions, which are generally considered to have been successful. Although still in transition, these countries have made significant progress and laid the groundwork for more pluralistic media systems. These two scholars have had the opportunity to observe the processes that shaped their countries' media in the last ten years. Their knowledge, insights and critiques are of great value in the study of the media in transition.

Other contemporary scholars share similar views, but write in more depth about concepts such as "civil society" and the fundamental changes that need to be made in a transition process. In their article *Regulating Television After Communism: A Comparative Analysis of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic* (1995), Sparks and Reading find ambiguities in the Hegelian idea of civil society and argue that it may be an impediment to progress. Hann and Buchowski extend this critique by arguing that some forms of civil society existed before the fall of Communism and they were the forces which brought the system down (Hann, 1992; Buchowski, 1996). According to them, liberal and bourgeois philosophies may not be entirely applicable in studying post-communist societies and warn that the rejection of Marxism, which is presently a predominant trend, may undermine attempts to re-conceptualize the notion of "civil society". Splichal also points out that the process of civil society building and media democratization has been conceived as anti-communistic, rather than as post socialistic, thus making another useful distinction (*Media Beyond Socialism: Theory and Practice in East-Central Europe,* 1994 and *From State Control to Commodification: Media Democratization in East and Central Europe,* 1995).

There are many deficiencies in the old Communist media model, as well as those of the United States and some other Western European countries. In their search for a new model, which would be functional in post-Communist countries, Jakubowicz and Splichal recognize that neither communist nor liberal models are entirely applicable in a

transitional period. After forty years of media governance as propaganda mouthpieces of state elites, it is difficult to change what has already become a long standing tradition. Development and democratization initiatives must steer this tradition in a different direction and scholars like Jakubowicz and Splichal recognize both problems and opportunities in such development effort.

**Evidence and Theoretical Position**

The major evidence for this thesis will be drawn from five different sources. They include the report of the Media Experts Commission; decisions of its successor Independent Media Commission; non-governmental organizations analyses; journalists' reports and my own participant observations of the activities of the Commission, while I worked there between August 1998 and February 1999.

The most important document to be considered will be the Media Experts Commission's Final Report. It is an account of cases that were on the Commission's agenda in 1998, the *Rules and Regulations* concerning the media and evidence used in the arbitration of some of their most prominent cases. The recommendations the Commission made which are included in this report will also provide valuable insight into the strategies and goals they envisaged in their media democratization efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Among the reports produced by non-governmental organizations there is documentation from the Office of the Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, an independent body established to monitor and assess the performance of democratic mechanisms in post-communist countries during the 1998 election. The International Crisis Group, consisting of a group of scholars produced reports on political issues in countries around the world. Publications of the European Institute for the Media and its Article 19 describe how non-governmental organizations are to "monitor, research, publish, campaign and litigate for freedom of expression" (Article 19, 2001, p.1). All of these publications shed light on the approaches and methods employed to increase media democratization in Bosnia.

A third source of information is provided by the mandate which its successor, Independent Media Commission, received from the Media Experts Commission. There is furthermore the Office of the Ombudsman set-up to monitor initiatives in civil society building, which established a portfolio on freedom of expression as a direct result of the Commission's work. My own observations while working as an investigator/interpreter for the Media Experts Commission provided me with the behind-the-scenes insight into the arbitration and decision making processes. It also gave me an understanding of how a large international organization in which decisions are sometimes reached with great difficulty works. More importantly, I was made aware of the conflicts between the international and local community, normally manifested in heated debates, which took place at almost every weekly meeting of the Commission.

All of this documentation provides a detailed picture of the media landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina and indicates the difficulties arising, when there is a transition from authoritarian to more democratic practices. In the subsequent chapters, the thesis will provide both a historical and a political account of how the media functioned in ex-Yugoslavia, in order to contextualize the role of the Media Experts Commission in laying the groundwork for the new media patterns which will hopefully lay the foundation for the emergence of civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Chapter Outlines**

The second thesis chapter will provide a brief overview of the organization and functioning of the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1990 and 1998. This period saw the collapse of the federated system and the ideology upon which it rested. Multiplying political discourses resulted in the mushrooming of both print and electronic outlets, but no greater improvement in overall media independence. The media were still seen as tools for propaganda and the three national groups continued to spawn various newspapers, magazines, television and radio stations, which could not assume an independent stance because they lacked the necessary financial means. Apart from a few notable exceptions, the situation did not improve significantly. Journalistic practices began to adjust to a new political context, but the traditional approaches were still prevalent. The new institutional frameworks did not seem to help this transition, as changes were neither timely nor helpful to emergent practices.

The chapter will be divided into three sections each focusing on a period characterized by a specific socio-political situation. The first will cover the period between 1990 and 1992, the collapse of the Communist system, the change of the political arena and the organizing of the first multiparty elections. This entailed the creation of many new media outlets, but not necessarily a change in journalistic practices. Old attitudes were recognizable in the manner in which the new political elite gave a paternalistic treatment to certain outlets, and how it dealt with those who opposed their political agenda. There were also some commendable efforts to establish truly independent journalism. All these efforts, however, have been arrested by the outbreak of the war.

The following period, which lasted from 1993 to 1995, represented a step back for the media development in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During this time, many outlets ceased to exist, and the work of those who continued to operate came under close government scrutiny. The reassertion of party control and the virtual loss of the autonomy which the local media had before the war, was the main feature of this period. Perhaps even more than ever, propaganda was seen as a purposeful tool in achieving political goals and building ethnic identities.

The third section will look into the post-war efforts of media development which took place between 1995 and 1998. The new political framework laid the foundation for legal and administrative structures, but did not specifically deal with the media institutions. It was necessary that the media appropriately respond to these changes and OSCE created the Media Experts Commission, to regulate the work of the media during

the upcoming democratic elections. They imposed regulations which, from the local media point of view, were difficult to meet as the traditional media practices were created in a totalitarian system and solidified in a war, where the goal was not to inform, but to persuade.

The third chapter introduces the OSCE's Media Experts Commission, its legal foundations and its mandate. Its roots lie in the Dayton Peace Accord, which only briefly mentions the media in Annex Three, regarding elections. However, the Dayton Accord gave the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe the responsibility to administer the elections. In accordance with its electoral mandate, the OSCE created the Commission with the mandate to oversee media neutrality during the 1998 elections in multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The focus of discussion will be on the Commission's last year of operation, between August and November of 1998, at which time its responsibilities were transferred to a new regulator, the Independent Media Commission, which was established by the High Representative, an international administrator for Bosnia. This period included the elections in the month of September 1998, when the Commission used its mandate to the fullest and made visible changes in the political arena. In order to accomplish this, the Commission often used its punitive powers and restrained operation of a number of electronic media outlets. Its most prominent case dealt with Croatian Television's broadcasts in Bosnia during the elections. Forcing this outlet to comply, emphasized the issue of sovereignty of Bosnia, but its subsequent recommendations

presented a confused understanding of the role of the future public broadcasters in this multi-ethnic state, as well as the fragility of the political agreement existing in Bosnia at the time. Among the Commission's most prominent print cases were those of two Sarajevo publications, *Ljiljan* and *Dani* magazines, which exemplified different perceptions of the relationship between the power and media. A new type of journalism began to develop in Bosnia between 1990 and 1992, and continued to co-exist with the old Communist format from then onward. These frictions were best demonstrated during the elections when some journalists gave uncritical support, while others received threats from various political groups if they failed to do the same.

The last chapter will use the case of media transformations in Poland in order to argue that changes at the levels of institutions, as well as those undertaken at the grassroots level of professional practices, are necessary in order to improve the Bosnian information landscape. The Polish experiences are a particularly useful example for transitional media, because they encompass proposals for both authoritarian as well as more liberal media outlets. Only such proposals can help relocate Bosnia's varied media outlets. The benefits of such efforts need to be seen in a larger picture, as the media are a necessary component of any democracy in which civil society is a realm distinct from the state and beyond the reach of its power.

# CHAPTER II – INADEQUATE PRACTICES IN TURBULENT TIMES: PRINT AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA 1990 – 1998

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief historical overview of events, which took place in former Yugoslavia between the years of 1990 and 1998 and how they affected the media and journalistic practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The overview will begin with the political events and the rise to power of Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia and the disintegrative effects of his pan-Serbian policies. The first democratic elections were held in 1990 which resulted in the uprising of nationalist parties in all republics, and the subsequent secessions of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This period is crucial for the study of the development of journalism and the media in the region, because the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation required republics like Bosnia and Herzegovina to adapt and make its media system responsive to a totally new political situation. The chapter will attempt to map the development of these changes in the media climate including the1996 establishment of the Media Experts Commission by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and its role in the 1998 elections.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is often described as a meeting place between the East and the West. It is populated by three ethnic groups. There are the Croat Slavs, who adopted Catholicism and were settled mainly in its Western areas. The Christian Orthodox population of Serbs mainly lived in its Eastern regions, whereas the Muslim population predominated in the central and the North-Eastern parts. Bosnia's political traditions were thus shaped by various religions, legal and political frameworks which

were precariously balanced against each other. Throughout its history, it enjoyed varying levels of autonomy under foreign rule and these conquests left Bosnia open to ethnic tension and territorial disputes up to our day.

The 1990 census recorded a population of 4,364,574 of which 43.7% were Muslim, 31.4% were Serb, 17.3% Croat. Only 5.5% identified themselves as Yugoslav (Rogel, 1998, p.29). All three ethnic groups were constituent peoples and national quotas were widely observed in all aspects of political life. The republic prided itself on its diverse ethnic make-up, a living proof of Tito's concept of "brotherhood and unity". But in the late 80s and early 90s this became an obstacle, as Bosnia found itself in the nationalist backlash of post-Communism. Although it was evident that the country was too fragmented and economically poor to exist as an independent nation-state, the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation brought groups to power, which favored this outcome by carving up Bosnia and Herzegovina into ethnically dominated autonomous regions. This was soon materialized in war. The country was torn by nationalist politics and divided into three mini-republics: that controlled by the official Bosnia and Herzegovina government, the self-proclaimed Serb republic of Bosnia and the Croat province of Herzeg-Bosnia.

The chapter will be divided into three sections; the first will discuss the period from 1990 to 1992, tracing the emergence of the need for a different kind of journalism as demanded by the new political context. The second part will cover the period of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, from its start on April 6, 1992 to the signing of the Dayton

Peace Accord in November 1995. During this period, the media returned to a centralized propaganda model of operations, supporting the three governing groups and their political agendas. The third section covering the period between 1995 and 1998, discusses the Dayton Accord, which changed these practices and laid the groundwork for international control over the Bosnian government and its media. Unfortunately, the cessation of the war did not halt the ethnic hatreds, which the international community wanted the media to combat. Yet without a new legal media framework and political accommodation, the media alone could not single-handedly overcome ethnic strife.

**The Media Before the Break-up of the Yugoslav Federation**

The information space of former Yugoslavia was divided along six republican lines and overseen by their respective republican Communist parties. Each of the republics and two autonomous provinces had a local broadcasting system (e.g. Radio-Television Bosnia and Herzegovina, Radio-Television Macedonia, Slovenia etc.). The stations were "equal and organizationally independent, deciding autonomously what kinds of programmes their audience want to watch and listen to" (Robinson, 1977, p.50). Each republican or provincial capital had a television center from which the programming was relayed to other parts of the republic. Some republics had more television centers, but republican broadcasting was more or less homogenous, as their programming differed mainly in the local newscast portion. All media were owned and financed by the government.

The electronic media, and television in particular, were the main agents in forming public opinion. "State television was not just the means of propaganda. For most people it was a basic fact of life" (Matic & Silber 1997, p.67). The UNESCO statistics from 1990 demonstrate that there were 4, 720 000 receivers or 198 receivers per 1000 inhabitants (UNESCO, 1992, p.9.1). These statistics indicate that Yugoslavia had less receivers per population than such other European states as Poland and Hungary (293 and 410 per 1000) respectively, and was way behind Western European countries, where the Netherlands (459) and Great Britain (435) had double the number of receivers per 1000 inhabitants (UNESCO, 1992, p.9.2). It is, however, safe to assume that the figures on receivers in Yugoslavia are not very accurate and that the number was probably much larger given that licensing of television receivers was poorly established which resulted in much license fee evasion.

The print media landscape was more diversified. Each republican capital had a few dailies, one of which was usually the semi-official mouthpiece of the republican Communist government (e.g. *Vjesnik* in Croatia, *Politika* in Serbia, *Delo* in Slovenia and *Oslobodjenje* in Bosnia and Herzegovina). These always had the largest republican circulation and they often functioned as printing plants for other publications. These newspapers or magazines had varying degrees of connectedness to the government in power. In 1990, statistics counted 34 daily newspapers in Yugoslavia with a total estimated circulation of 2,281 million or 96 issues per 1000 inhabitants (UNESCO, 1992, p.7-16). The same survey recorded a total of 2,229 non-daily newspapers and 1,361

periodicals. These figures were similar or higher than those in Poland and Hungary, but lower than those in Western European countries.

Both the print and broadcast media were financed by the Communist party, which supplied staff ideologically suitable for the management positions. Journalists as a profession had no power over these appointments, a situation which did not change until 1989. Such a centralized appointment system guaranteed ideological control over information in all republics. In Yugoslavia, these practices also made formal censorship as in Poland or Hungary unnecessary. This was one of the two very important features of media control in Yugoslavia, described as "informal censorship" (Dennis & Vanden Heuvel, 1990, p.63).

The "informal censorship" style, which allowed quite a bit of freedom to its republican media, was a result of the Yugoslav government's attempt to satisfy the linguistic and ethnic differences of the people living in its territory. Ideologically all six republican Communist parties were equal partners in the multi-ethnic mosaic, which was connected into a larger structure through the concept of "brotherhood and unity". Despite the omnipresence of this motto on airwaves, print and in daily life, the Yugoslav media failed to create a feeling of connectedness, because much of the power and authority was in the hands of the six republican Communist elites, who interpreted the federal rules independently from each other and thus created different levels of media freedom (Luthar, 1990, p.15). The implications of these ideological differences among the republican media systems for Yugoslav unity were already mentioned in the seventies

when Gertrude Robinson pointed out that Tanjug, Yugoslavia's news and press agency would be insufficient to create a uniform information space and thus de-stabilize the country in a crisis (1977, p.199). This is exactly what happened in 1990.

The second unique feature of the Yugoslav media situation was its legislation on freedom of the press. Article 166 of the Yugoslav constitution re-drafted in 1974 guaranteed "freedom of the press and other media of information and public expression, freedom of association, freedom of speech and public expression" (Thompson, 1994, p.8). Yet, though this article seemingly guarantees large freedoms it is counter-balanced and limited by two other pieces of legislation - Article 203 of the Constitution and article 133 of the Criminal Code which states: "(1) Whoever, by means of an article, leaflet, drawing, speech or in some other way advocates or incites the overthrow of the power of the working class and the working people, the unconstitutional change of the socialist social system...or whoever maliciously and untruthfully portrays socio-political conditions in the country – shall be sentenced to a term of imprisonment ranging from one to ten years". This means that journalists who were considered "socio-political workers" were viewed as legitimators and guarantors of the legacies of the socialist revolution and the mental health of the nation. A very strong emphasis was placed on the educational role of journalism, which outweighed all concepts of professional independence (Splichal, 1994, p.69).

Despite all of these curtailments, the Yugoslav press was generally considered to be more critical than the media in other Eastern European countries. Ramet (1996)

distinguishes between two kinds of criticism which were practiced. The first is what she calls "outward criticism", which is aimed at the non-party segments of society and at public figures that operate outside of the party domain (Ramet 1996, p.96). Information channels were always open for this kind of debate and criticism, as evidenced by a number of high-profile trials in the late seventies and early eighties, decrying nationalistic deviations in the intellectual circles of Zagreb and Sarajevo. Ramet's second type of criticism which she calls "inward criticism" was, however lacking in all Communist regimes (Ramet 1996, p.96). It entails criticism of the government, the party, its policies and officials. As democratic theory shows, this type of criticism is however essential for the creation and protection of civil society. Unfortunately, these critical processes existed neither in Yugoslavia's post World War II history, nor in that of its constituent republics. Consequently, "objectivity" was generally described as a bourgeois notion and only began to be rediscovered as a core journalistic value in the late 1980s, when the social climate began to be liberalized (Splichal, 1994, p.66). This is best exemplified in a remark made in an article published in 1987 in *Ekonomska politika*: "Democracy can loosely be defined as the right to ask – Why are we living so poorly?" (in Dyker & Vejvoda 1996, p.171). A number of newspapers and magazines assumed a "more liberal and democratic outlook" (Kuzmanovic, 1995, p.84). Among them were the weeklies *Danas* in Zagreb, *Nin* in Belgrade, the bi-monthly *Start* in Zagreb and the alternative/youth weeklies *Mladina* in Ljubljana and *Nasi Dani* in Sarajevo, to name a few. These were the publications which began to create a forum in which criticism of the government and dissenting views began to be voiced.

In spite of the fact that article 133 became obsolete as the political system changed, its spirit was so deeply embedded in journalistic practice that it continued to linger. The lack of "inward criticism" and control of the media and their exclusive use as vehicle for "outward criticism", are clearly visible in the propaganda techniques used by Slobodan Milosevic, the president of Serbia, who wrecked the federation.

## Period I - 1990-1992: The Collapse of Yugoslavia's Political System and the Emergence of New Journalistic Practices

In November 1990, Bosnians held their first multi-party elections. The fall of Communism was imminent. Six months earlier, the Communist party suffered a great loss in Slovenia and Croatia and the same happened one month later in Serbia. As a result, three newly formed nationalist parties came to power in Bosnia and Herzegovina, all of them winning seats proportionate to the size of the ethnic groups they represented. They were the Muslim nationalist Party of Democratic Action (SDA), the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) and the Croatian Democratic Union BIH (HDZ), which was the Bosnian branch of the governing party of Croatia. The Muslim SDA received the electoral majority, but the three parties were represented in the Presidency, and Alija Izetbegovic was chosen to head the republic.

Holding Bosnia and Herzegovina together, which was the plan of the new government, soon proved to be an impossible task. The regional distribution of votes indicated that each of the parties dominated different parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and would continue to fan ethnic strife in their region. The division of the country into

administrative units and the levels of autonomy of these units immediately became a bone of contention and a mutually agreeable solution could not be worked out. What became clearer, however, was that none of the parties was willing to make concessions in favor of the whole. In particular, the Serbian SDS and Croatian HDZ increasingly became less committed to Bosnian unity. Their leadership groups had close ties with the sister nationalist parties of the republics of Serbia and Croatia proper. The idea of a sort of semi-dependent relationship with those countries became more attractive than remaining a constituent part of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnian Croats were being drawn to Croatia and Bosnian Serbs were being swayed by the rhetoric of Radovan Karadzic, who would ultimately lead them into war.

The period between 1990 and 1992 is perhaps the most interesting period in the history of the Yugoslav media. Concerns with the role of the media in civil society and issues of control, ownership and financing began to emerge during this period. New forms of journalism began to be created as a result of a necessity to respond to a more flexible political system, in which parties from all sides of the political spectrum were represented. The primary concern of this chapter will be to examine the development of these events in Bosnia and Herzegovina, so the focus will be placed on its electronic and print media, all of them located in Sarajevo, Bosnia's capital city.

The Communist party's loss of authority in the late eighties resulted in a higher degree of autonomy for the republican Union of Journalists and Radio-Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the largest and most influential media outlet in the state. In June

1989, the Bosnian parliament enacted a law allowing the republican broadcaster to elect its executives by secret ballot, but those appointments were to be approved by the parliament. This change in legislation was the first in the history of Yugoslavia and "its enactment was a measure of anxiety, which was driving the league to muster some reformist credibility" (Thompson, 1994, p.220). However, the main test of the Bosnian media and their more independent role in the political arena came with the 1990 elections. For the first time, the election coverage was to be regulated by a voluntary code, which was drafted by the staff-appointed editor-in-chief and agreed upon by the major political parties running in the elections. Despite publicly declared satisfaction with the manner in which the elections were covered, the Muslim Party of Democratic Action (SDA), the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) as well as the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), tried to exert old-style political influence on media outlets. The first election campaign was covered by *Oslobodjenje, Vecernje Novine* and *Svijet*, and the weeklies *Svijet, Valter* and *Voks,* two of the latter considered alternative weeklies. The campaign was "all carried on according to the new standards won during the election campaign" but pressures from the government began immediately after (Kuzmanovic, 1995, p.88). *Oslobodjenje* was accused of having a disproportionate number of Serbs working as staff members (34%) and the Muslim Party of Democratic Action (SDA) considered asking its supporters to boycott the daily.

Additional forms of control became available after the election – in March 1991, when the Bosnian government proposed to the Parliament to amend the existing Information Act, by returning to more strict party control. Though media legislation

indeed needed to be amended, the controversy should not have been about reducing editorial power, but rather about strengthening it. Yet, sadly, this was not the case and politicians tried to regain control, by proposing that managers and editors of the state media be appointed by the parliament, rather than elected by media employees. In spite of protests, Parliament adopted the amended Information Act in April 1991, but failed to deal with the most pressing issue, namely equitable ethnic representation. This led the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) to fan the flames by claiming that the Croats and the Croatian language were still insufficiently represented in the media and the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) leader Radovan Karadzic to float the idea of three separate television channels in Sarajevo in three separate languages.

Over the next six months, with the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation the Bosnian leadership was faced with two alternatives; it could either remain a part of rump Yugoslavia, which the Bosnian Serbs favored, or it too could declare independence, an alternative favored by both the Croat and Muslim populations. A referendum on February 29/March 1, 1992 selected the second alternative. The international community came to be involved in the shaping of the new Bosnia through a number of envoys mediating between local ethnic groups' concerns and the European Union. After one such negotiation, President Izetbegovic finally rejected a plan calling for the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina into cantons, smaller administrative units with a high degree of autonomy for its predominant ethnic group. In response to this decision, in September 1991, the Bosnian Serb sub-group took matters into their own hands and declared their geographical region to be autonomous.

The Bosnian situation was precarious. The government was walking on thin ice and even one wrong move could drive the country into a fratricidal war. As the experience had demonstrated in Slovenia and Croatia's fight for independence, the support of the media was more than necessary to quickly and adequately redefine people's nationalisms. But this proved to be a more difficult task, than had been faced by the secessionist republics, which had ethnically homogenous populations.

In response to this, a broadcasting law calling for splitting the service of Radio-Television Bosnia and Herzegovina into three national services was proposed. Aware of the technical, staffing and organizational difficulties in implementing this plan, the staff of the broadcaster presented its case against the draft law to the Federal Constitutional Court, "arguing that the law would contravene recent federal legislation on the control of public companies and on employees' rights, which took precedence over republican law" (Thompson, 1994, p.222). Although federal legislation would not be applicable for much longer, the Muslim Party of Democratic Action (SDA) recognized that the division of the broadcasting service into three parts, would speed up the fragmentation of the republic along ethnic lines, a plan that was still being rejected as an option on the political level.

In addition to control issues, the financing of the republic's main broadcaster also became an increasing problem. Prior to 1990, 91 percent of the broadcast income had come from license fees and only the remaining 9 percent needed to be raised through advertising. This state of affairs was used as an excuse for all three nationalist parties to

call on their supporters to boycott the broadcaster by not paying the license fee. As a result, the license fee income dropped to 74 percent in 1991, and created a deficit that Radio-Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina was never able to make up (Thompson, 1994, p.223). Ultimately, this deficit forced the journalists to trade in their editorial autonomy for government subsidies.

Political change throughout the country also affected the media and their organization. Federated Yugoslavia was breaking apart and the media, which were already divided along republican lines, followed the political independence efforts. In June 1991 when Slovenia and Croatia declared independence even though the federal army tried to intervene, the break-up of the old Yugoslavia was presaged on the front pages of the different republican newspapers. The so-called "paper war" pitted *Politika* in Serbia and *Vjesnik* in Croatia against each other, by supporting new groups of nationalist leaders. Editorial independence was sacrificed on the altar of necessity and respected liberal fora that had opened their pages to diverse views and opinions, were censored or shut down. Among them were Serbia's *Nin* and Croatia's *Danas* and *Slobodna Dalmacija.*

What was perhaps one of the last efforts to save the integrity of the federation was decades overdue. A transnational television channel YUTEL (Yugoslav Television) was founded by the Federal government in 1990, in the Sarajevo-melting pot, Yugoslav style. YUTEL recruited a journalistic elite from different parts of the country and adopted an 'independent approach' to news reporting. It broadcast its news once a day, not on

separate frequencies, but as a guest on the republican television stations. This came as a direct response to attempts to deal with conflicting views on increasing tensions between Croatia and rump Yugoslavia and the eventual conflicts in the bordering areas. The federal government was however losing its battle, because secessionist new leaders had already taken control of their republican media outlets. YUTEL's reports avoided any judgment, which pleased neither side, because they were accustomed to media under their own not somebody else's control. Slowly, YUTEL became a target for nationalist critique on the part of all three ethnic groups and it went off the air in May 1992, when Sarajevo came under siege.

*Oslobodjenje,* Sarajevo's main daily, also underwent changes and was exposed to political pressure, but the trajectory of its relationship with the government is somewhat different from that of Bosnia's major broadcaster. The newspaper was founded in 1943 as an underground newspaper of the Communist partisan movement. It maintained the communist tradition of tolerance and distaste for nationalisms much longer than its counterparts in Serbia or Croatia, even though their staffs were better educated and they had more resources at their disposal. *Oslobodjenje*, which means "liberation" was often described as "one of the best examples of a Sarajevo institution practicing interethnic harmony" (Gjelten, 1995, p.7). Its circulation before the war was about 80,000 copies, of which 70,000 were distributed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 10,000 in the other republics (Thompson, 1995, p.249). By 1990, the Oslobodjenje publishing house produced two dailies *Oslobodjenje* and *Vecernje novine,* as well as 15 weeklies and four journals.

Though Bosnia and Herzegovina was well served with 377 publications before the war, few of these attracted young journalists or tried to adopt Western-style journalistic techniques. On the broadcasting side, there were 54 radio stations, four television stations and one officially registered news agency. This was about to change when the Serb, Croat and Muslim nationalist political parties were formed before the 1990 election, *Oslobodjenje* criticized them all and granted its support to parties with pan-national programs. In early 1992, however, when Serb nationalists tried to block Bosnia's independence and demanded that the republic be partitioned along ethnic lines, *Oslobodjenje* aligned itself with the Muslim and Croat majority, in opposing the Serb campaign.

Two magazines provided the only fora where young journalists with new outlooks could find work. They were *Dani,* which started as a youth magazine and *Slobodna Bosna*, a general publication. Both were produced by teams of young journalists who rejected the reporting styles of their elders and were searching for new journalistic practices. They came to adopt "inward criticism" scrutinizing government practices which, according to Ramet (1996, p. 96), was lacking from Bosnia's public fora. Most of them embraced Western-style reporting and sent shockwaves through Sarajevo, when they exposed political scandal and slowly attempted to assume the role of the public watchdog.

War in Bosnia became more imminent with every new day. It is around this time that what is known as the "transmitter war" started. Radio-television Bosnia and Herzegovina, the republic's main electronic media outlet, broadcast its signal through eleven main transmitters and 186 relay stations. Throughout March 1992 more and more Yugoslav army vehicles surrounded the transmitters and by the end of the month, five out of eleven transmitters were seized and the Bosnian broadcast personnel were denied access. As a result of these interventions, when Bosnia gained its independence, up to half of its territory was covered by a Serbian Radio-television network. Of the three remaining transmitters, one was seized by the Croatian Defense Council (HVO) and a second one destroyed. Radio-television of Bosnia and Herzegovina engineers improvised and set up a network of portable transmitters, to distribute the Bosnian program to 20-25 percent of the territory of the republic.

The main characteristic of the period between 1990 and 1992 was the creation of new political circumstances in which some publications attempted to change their practices in order to investigate opposing information, which no longer came from one source, as it had been the case for decades before, but to approach the issue while examining all sources, attempting to treat it in a balanced and objective manner. These attempts were made possible only in a setting that generated opposing political views. Despite the fact that many publications were not successful in accomplishing this goal because they did not know how to do it, these attempts represent a manifestation of a tendency to replace the inadequate communist-style reporting and to adopt Western journalistic practices. Similar practices have been noted in other former Yugoslav

regions, as well as other countries of the Eastern Block (Jakubowicz, 1995, p.28; Veljanovski, 1996, p.593). The second tendency held views of the media and their role as they were during the Communist period. Condemnations of YUTEL and attempts to subvert (and the eventual subversion) of Radio-television Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as setting up of parallel media (television and radio stations, magazines, news agencies and press centers) in the regions with self-proclaimed autonomy, all point to perceptions of the media as extensions of state power.

**Period II: 1992 –1995 Ethnic War and the Return to Media Control**

The war in Bosnia officially started on April 6, 1992. For some weeks afterwards communication between the warring factions was still possible and this brief period represented an interesting case study of both of journalistic confusion as well as the drawbacks of "managed" information. Two television networks based in Sarajevo, Radio-Television Bosnia and Herzegovina, and YUTEL " turned a new page in the history of the contemporary media both professionally and ethically" (Kuzmanovic, 1995, p.90). They took an active role in the fast-paced political developments and almost became partners in the crises unfolding in and around the city. While Sarajevo was under fire, YUTEL's editor-in-chief Goran Milic established a live telephone contact in the studio with Alija Izetbegovic, elected president of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Radovan Karadzic, the Serbian leader, engaging them in negotiation and acting more like a political mediator, than an observer. When the Yugoslav federal army kidnapped Izetbegovic in April 1992 and held him for one day, television Bosnia and Herzegovina's

anchor initiated a live telephone contact from the studio with the president and his army general keeper and other members of the Bosnian presidency.

These live coverages of the political leaders' disagreements raised much controversy and interest, but since it consisted mainly of exchanges of accusations and denials, it did not provide sufficient insight into the core causes of the unfolding crisis. Beyond that the print and broadcast media in Sarajevo also failed to cover what was going on in the city. Thompson quotes the *Slobodna Bosna* editor-in-chief as wondering about the purpose of such a strategy which left citizens without sources of information except rumor. Even though the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) had mounted roadblocks and sniper nests near the parliament building, *Slobodna Bosna*'s editor noted "On Sunday evening, one could not learn from your programme that Sarajevo was sealed off" (Thompson, 1994, p.227). Even though journalists took the initiative and overstepped their responsibilities in a desperate attempt to bring the different party leaders to the negotiating table, they disregarded the citizens who needed to know: who was shelling the city, which of its parts were under Bosnian government control and, most importantly, whether Sarajevo was under siege.

In the weeks to follow, the ability to establish contact between the ethnic parties was destroyed by frequent shelling, sniper fire and the shortage of power. YUTEL was closed down and already evasive news reporting of Radio-Television Bosnia and Herzegovina's slipped into pleading. This was undoubtedly well intentioned, but it also created the foundation for a "victim strategy", namely the constant emphasis on the

country, the government and its people as innocent victims and a complete failure to report events as they were unfolding (Gow & Tilsey, 1995, p.107). This continued throughout the war. Calls for international aid or military intervention became an inevitable part of every broadcast. Reports about other parts of the country and even Sarajevo itself, came from international networks such as CNN, ITN, BBC etc. For the most part, such pleas where completely out of touch with reality, creating illusions that the conflict was being resolved and that there would be NATO intervention. This intervention did happen eventually, but much later than anticipated. This phase of the war brought about the complete break-up of information space into ethnic components and led to the outcome that no exchange of information took place between the warring factions. Instead, heavy-handed propaganda took over.

In spring 1992, the Bosnian government took formal control of Radio-Television Bosnia and Herzegovina and appointed an interim executive committee comprised of chosen journalists already employed at the station. One of the first steps taken was to ban the Bosnian Serb News Agency SRNA, which was producing counter-propaganda. Two reasons were offered for this decision, one that the country was in a state of war and the control of information was therefore necessary. Second, there was a need to unify the territory under Bosnian government control by providing a link between the capital which was completely sealed off, and the other regions of the republic. Three months later, on July 1992 a "state of war" was declared and the Presidency took charge of all executive media appointments. This coincided with the broadcaster's change of perspective: a pro-Muslim approach would become increasingly evident in the coming months. But it

appears that the control was almost identical to that of the previous regime and "informal censorship" was applied once again: a journalist told Article 19 that "there were no clear guidelines on the conduct and the coverage of war given, but there was tangible pressure from the top" (Thompson, 1994, p.234).

The days of trying to wage the 'impartial' information war against the unpredictable political outcome were over. It had become clear that Bosnia was in the midst of an ethnic war. Information came to be controlled and each party created their own news agencies and press centers. BH Press, the news agency of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was founded by the government in 1992 "to report of the activities of the Presidency, the government, and Ministry of the Interior, and to publish their statements" (Thompson, 1995, p.218). The Republic of Srpska government had their own news agency SRNA, whose function was the same as that of the BH Press and the Croatian Defense Council (HVO) and the territories under their control relied primarily on the HINA, the news agency from Croatia.

There was also the Bosnian Army Press Center, which first started doing statistical analyses of war coverage, and later began issuing bulletins with content varying from information pertaining to the Bosnian Army, to warning people not to trust some "journalist-agents [who] are active in the city" (Thompson, 1994, p.219). Their director was even more autocratic than the regular Bosnian media managers. He believed that the government did not sufficiently control the media: "we have not yet grasped the importance of information in the state of war, and we have more democracy here than we

should have" leading to frequent crossing of the line into propaganda. This was most evident within the army's reports, which revived the World War II rhetoric and referred to members of the Croatian forces in Bosnia as *ustashas* (fascist allies in World War II) and to the Serbs as *chetniks* (royalists) (Thompson, 1994, p.220).

The electronic media too allied themselves with the main political parties; Radio-Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina was scrutinized by the Bosnian government, Serbian Radio-Television broadcasting did not differ in any way from the political stance of Belgrade, and the Croat controlled areas received their information from Zagreb where the Tudjman government held sway.

The loss of television transmitters, the closure of the postal system, the cutting off of road and rail links, all changed the information flows of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Most areas controlled by the Bosnian government, Sarajevo in particular, were almost completely isolated from other areas. Communication between the capital and other cities and towns depended on ham radio operators or local radio stations, which offered assistance by providing telephone connections and establishing contacts between lost family members. Television studios began to operate like urban radio stations, limited in airtime, content and outreach. Curiously their number increased; local television became a Bosnian phenomenon during the war. Some 15 to 20 local stations started broadcasting in Bosnian government held territories outside of Sarajevo.

Television continued to be the dominant medium while the influence of print decreased, because all major publications were produced in Sarajevo, where conditions were so difficult that their work had to be suspended. The only daily that continued to operate throughout the war was *Oslobodjenje*. Despite frequent bombing of its headquarters, staff members fleeing, shortages of power and newsprint, the newspaper was printed, sometimes even on advertising flyers. It size and content shrank: it contained only a couple of pages mainly filled with death notices. Circulation also dropped from 70,000 copies sold throughout Bosnia to approximately 3,500 per day in Sarajevo only.

Between 1992 and March 1993, *Oslobodjenje,* succeeded in maintaining its reputation as a rather liberal paper refusing to take the side of either of the warring factions and not engaging in the "paper war" with the Serb and Croat ethnic factions. This continued only until March 1993, when the newspaper started reverting to propagandistic and uncritical reporting. These attitudes, however, were solidified by the spring of 1994, because a huge demographic shift had occurred. In these twelve months about half of Sarajevo's prewar population had managed to leave the city, including a majority of the Serbs and Jews and many Muslims and Croats. A slightly smaller number of people, almost all of them Muslim, had meanwhile fled from small towns and villages in Eastern Bosnia, where the Serb nationalists had been undertaking their ethnic cleansing. This demographic shift strengthened the position of the Muslim political party, which now dominated the Bosnian government. Membership in the ruling party, as a result, became a prerequisite for appointment to the newspaper's management, as it had

been in Communist times. With respect to this demographic shift, the alternative for *Oslobodjenje* was to risk being marginalized by other newspapers, even magazines, already founded or temporarily shut down, ready to start coming out as soon as the circumstances allowed (Gjelten, 1995, p.16). The most serious contenders were *Ljiljan*, a Bosnian Muslim nationalist weekly, launched in 1992, first from Zagreb and later located in Ljubljana, and the daily *Dnevni Avaz,* both of which were financed by a Saudi Arabia grant. The political agenda of both of these publications was to support a Bosnian Muslim identity with a strong Islamic dimension.

Between 1992 and the end of 1995, an estimated 7 million dollars were given to the existing Bosniak media by various international organizations or Western governments (International Crisis Group, 1997, p.3). *Vecernje novine*, the second largest Sarajevo daily, which operated on an entirely random basis throughout the war, was re-opened. An independent magazine *Dani*, (formerly the youth publication *Nasi dani*) resumed its work in the beginning of 1994, and only months later, as conditions in Sarajevo improved slightly, a number of other, mainly tabloid-like newspapers and magazines were spawned or rehabilitated: *Oglasi, Narodne novine, Sarp, Slobodna Bosna, Sarajevo Times* and *Behar,* a few of which exist to this day.

As the print media landscape became more diversified, another important player stepped into the scene. The OKO printing plant, formerly owned by the Oslobodjenje group, was converted into a joint stock venture, with the state as the main stockholder. It

was the only plant that provided printing services in Sarajevo, thus guaranteeing the Muslim government effective control over newsprint.

**Period III: 1995-1998 Many Media and No Alternative Voices**

The Dayton Peace Accord signed in November 1995 recognized the crucial role of the media in the Bosnian and Yugoslav conflicts. Television was perceived to be more powerful than military weapons and the Dayton accord emphasized the need to reshape its role as part of the peace initiatives. However, influencing the information output with the aim of politically stabilizing the area would prove to be a difficult task, as the Bosnian warlords did not want to surrender what was indispensable to their rise to power.

The country was officially divided into three entities: the Republic of Srpska and the Bosnian- Croat Federation. Three separate media markets continued to exist as each entity had their own media networks. Different signals could be received and television and radio programs from different regions could be watched, but very few journalists dared to cross the lines and establish contact between the different ethnic groups. Moreover, telephone links did not exist between the Federation and the Republic of Srpska and were poor between the Croatian and Bosnian Muslim-controlled territories.

During this period television was more influential in creating public opinion than ever before. A report of the International Crisis Group quotes a 1996 *Dani* magazine poll which found that 46.6 per cent of those living in Bosnian Muslim controlled Federation

territory, where the poll was conducted, declared television to be their main source of information (International Crisis Group, 1997, p.6). The second most influential medium, the new daily *Dnevni avaz*, according to the same poll, was the principal source of information for a small 7.54 percent of the population. This finding is not surprising, considering the newsprint shortages of the war years and the difficulty of reaching those outside of the Sarajevo city limits (Rogel, 1998, p.51), as well as the traditional preference for television over print as the main source of information (Matic & Silber 1997, p.670). It is safe to assume that the influence of television was even more pervasive in the Republic of Srpska and in the Croat-controlled territory, because they lacked alternative media voices.

In the Bosnian context, this meant that there were once again no dissenting views published to those of the government of the day. Even though there were large numbers of electronic and print media in the three districts, they lacked information variety. In 1997, the Republic of Srpska had 25 newspapers and other periodicals, 36 radio stations, seven television stations, and one official state news agency, SRNA. Most of these media relied primarily on the SRNA wire. The Croat-controlled part of Bosnia had the most uniform media market as none of its ten newspapers and magazines, 15 radio stations, five television studios and the news agency, Habena, including the privately owned outlets, followed the official party line of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) in Zagreb. The Muslim-controlled federation territory had the most diversified media scene. There were 110 publications, 41 radio stations and four news agencies, almost all of which were supported by donations from abroad. Yet all of these media excluded the Croatian and Serbian points of view. Instead, the Muslim media reflected the same ethnic

preoccupations and perpetuated negative stereotypes about the other minorities, which had become an indispensable fact throughout the war years. In spite of this, Radio-Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the most influential medium, attempted to portray itself as the broadcaster for all citizens, a claim which was rightfully denied by the Serbian and Croatian minorities. All of this demonstrates that even after the cessation of hostilities there was no contact between the three media markets in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the three ethnically controlled governments had no interest in breaking down the information barriers, which marked the former frontlines.

In such a situation more objective journalistic practices could not possibly be developed, even though the international community considered them an essential first step in the reconciliation process. To change the status-quo the European community therefore decided to create two large and overarching new broadcast outlets: the Free Elections Radio Network (FERN) and the Open Broadcast Network television station (OBN). These nation-wide networks were to provide a neutral information foundation for the ethnically divided population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The OBN went on the air two weeks before the elections in 1996 and was funded by $10.5 million of the European Economic Community fund. FERN, in contrast, was heavily reliant on Swiss donors and it began to operate only two days before the elections. Both stations had a very small impact on the outcome of the elections, but they continue to operate to this day. FERN radio grew into a responsible media outlet, even though the station is still not self-sufficient. OBN in contrast, became financially insolvent in 1996, because the

international community reduced its funding and alternative finances could not be created through private sources.

There are three discernible stages in the development of the Bosnian media during the three years of the war. First there was a state of total confusion, when the media were either unwilling or unprepared to report the dismembering of the republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this period journals were likely influenced by the mythologies of the "paper war", emanating from Serbia and Croatia. Second, there was the tightening of control over the media towards the end of 1992 and during 1993, when the Muslim majority government held sway. During this time TV Dobre vibracije, a private TV channel broadcasting for Sarajevo, was seized by Party of Democratic Action [Muslim] hard-liners and the station had to close down. Several news magazines also ceased operations, among them the satirical monthly *Voks*, *Nasi dani, Walter* and *Bosanski pogledi.* Meanwhile, the governance and control of other media was also tightened in 1993 following the case of an independent radio station announcing that it would carry an interview with the renegade leader of Cazinska Krajina. The station was shut down from July 17 to September 15 1993. The government prioritized the electronic media control because of their superior ability to influence public opinion. In Bosnia, literacy rates, Rogel argues, were low, which may be the foremost reason why the government focused on gaining control over television, the most dominant medium "used to spread lies and fear about the enemy " (Rogel, 1998, p.51). The period in which there were indications of 'objective reporting' and 'impartiality' in Bosnia's main broadcaster in fact resulted from the failure to adequately deal with the political situation. When it became evident that the

secession process was triggered, the outcome of Bosnia's future was even less predictable. No ethnic group had an overwhelming population advantage and radio-television of Bosnia and Herzegovina's evasive coverage disarmed its viewers by failing to inform them of the unfolding disintegration of their society. This was contrary to the strategies used by the Belgrade and Zagreb broadcasters, who from the start played their ethnic cards and reported events from their own point of view. By the time the government took decisive action against *Oslobodjenje*, the newspaper had already gained its almost mythical status in the eyes of Sarajevans and, more importantly, the international community. The newspaper eventually "surrendered" to the government.

Once the secession process began, the political views became more homogenized, as the opposition was unable to voice its opinions and was often accused of lack of patriotism. Many media outlets that had sought independent approaches fell back into the old reporting patterns or, were publicly discredited by propaganda and then pounded by artillery. Meanwhile, the national parties set up parallel media networks loosely conjoined with the adjacent states of Serbia and Croatia.

The characteristic of the third phase is diversification. A sudden increase in the number of electronic and, to a lesser extent, print media. Many of these outlets were funded by external sources (*Ljiljan* magazine funded by Saudi Arabia, radio *Vrhbosna* by Croatian government etc.) and had an outright nationalist agenda. Diversification existed only in the number of outlets and the number of nationalist agendas, but there was no information exchange or discussion distinguishing the three republican media groups.

The print media landscape had also changed; their numbers dropped from 377 publications before the war to 145 in 1996 (International Crisis Group, 1997, p.7; Udovicic, 1996, p.2). As newspapers and publications only played a relatively small role in public opinion formation, their relationship with the government and their coverage of the political situation was somewhat different. Although most of the print outlets eventually came under the control of the different nationalist parties, their efforts were more hopeful. For example, *Oslobodjenje*'s critiques of nationalist agenda's and their support of pan-national parties may have been largely influenced by their remaining communist ideology and the notion of 'brotherhood and unity'. Yet, implicit in their approach was the idea of a civilian state, where the rights of citizenship extended automatically to anyone born in the country, without regard to ethnic or religious background. This was also advocated by the Bosnian government, but only in theory and never in practice. Independent outlets that did not have the support of local authorities were threatened or shut down. The situation did not significantly change until 1996 when the first serious attempts to change the media landscape were undertaken by the international community, a watchdog poised to steer the local media on a new course.

As already pointed out, there have been many factors and many players involved in creating the present media landscape. In 1996, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe joined other international efforts, and created the Media Experts Commission, a body designed to regulate and monitor the work of the media during the new elections.

## CHAPTER III -- THE MEDIA EXPERTS COMMISSION: ITS FOUNDATIONS, MANDATE AND WORK

In light of the critical role that the media played in fragmenting Yugoslavia and in continuing to fan ethnic hatreds between the three ethnicities in Bosnia, the international community decided that peace efforts would have to include oversight and retraining of journalists. The Media Experts Commission, part of the European OSCE mission to Bosnia was charged with this task. The upcoming election for a multi-ethnic government in Bosnia and Herzegovina offered the first opportunity for developing a plan which would bring some opinion variety to all stations and to encourage them to program not only for one ethnic group, but for the Bosnian population as a whole.

More than a year after the Dayton Peace Agreement came into force, the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to be divided into three separate components. These were the media in Republika Srpska, in the Bosniac-controlled Federation territory and in the Croat-controlled Federation territory. The ruling parties used them to maintain their hold on power, allowing no room for political opinions different from the locally predominant party line. The Serb Democratic Party (SDS) ran Serb Radio Television, located in Banja Luka and aired in Republic of Srpska and some other parts of Bosnia where their signal could be received. The Muslim-led Party of Democratic Action (SDA) controlled Radio-Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina and was the main source of information in the Bosnian government controlled areas. The predominately Croat populated areas, finally received their information from Croatian Radio Television in Zagreb by means of transmitters which had been seized by Croatian forces during the

war. As noted in the previous chapter, this influence of the political parties also extended to print (MEC Report, 1998, p.7; International Crisis Group Report, 1997, p.4).

As a result of the party control of the media reaching back to the Communist times, its professionals were not willing to sever ties with the top political echelons, because this would have entailed serious financial problems. Beyond that, few of them had been trained in more neutral and even-handed coverage, as practiced in Western democracies. The Commission's mandate furthermore vacillated between that of a regulator and of a press council, on the one hand trying to harshly punish the existing practices of the media, while on the other criticizing their advocacy stance. It is therefore no surprise that the Commission's work met with overwhelming resistance on the part of the local community. Together, these contradictions in function and biases in outlook on the part of the Bosnian practitioners contributed to the organization's ineffectiveness.

## Setting the Media Framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Impossible Expectations

By the time the Dayton Peace Accord was signed and the Bosnian conflict officially ended on November 15, 1995, experiences from other Eastern European countries suggested that transition processes would be complex and difficult. It had already been widely accepted by political scientists that the lack of democracy was what brought the communist system down. "The converse, unfortunately, could not be taken for granted...collapse of the system was not sufficient to institute democracy" (Waller, 1994, p.135). These experiences, the prominence of the Bosnian conflict and the

international community's determination to put a stop to it, undeniably influenced their approaches to facilitating the transition to a more democratically elected government in this country. As a result, Bosnia soon became a "playground" for a number of international organizations, and the largest one was the mission of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The Dayton Accord was signed by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia in 1995. The document recognized that the main reason of the conflict was not only to be sought in the nationalist rhetoric of Radovan Karadzic and his followers, but in the workings of nationalism at a much greater scale, involving Bosnia and its neighbors, as well as the splinter republics of Serbia and Croatia. The Dayton Accord preserved the old republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a unified state, but separated it into two entities, with borders running along the former frontlines. As a result, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was now home to most Muslims and Croats and the second entity, the Republic of Srpska was where the majority of Serbs had moved after the war. Despite the fact that the republic adopted a democratic system before seeking independence, the Dayton accord decided to reinstate the *status quo ante,* in which all three ethnic groups would have balanced representation and the right to return to the homes they had been driven out of. It set up a new constitution and created a three-person presidency, bicameral Parliamentary Assembly, a constitutional court and a central bank (Economist Intelligence Unit Country Profile, 1994-95, p.12). The agreement also included provisions on bringing human rights up to internationally accepted standards, as well as the reconstruction of the infrastructure and democratic elections. In this reconstruction

effort, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe was to "supervise all aspects of the electoral process" and to ensure "free and fair elections" (MEC Report, 1998, p.7). In order to accomplish this, the OSCE's most powerful rule-making and supervisory body, the Provisional Election Commission (PEC) drew up the so-called *Rules and Regulations*, the document regulating all aspects of public life, to ensure the democratic conduct of the elections. Dayton explicitly refers to the media only in Annex 3 by demanding that "all parties [shall] ensure freedom of expression and the press", but this seemed to have been sufficient grounds for the OSCE to dedicate one chapter to media regulation (MEC Report, 1998, p.7).

The ninth chapter of the *Rules and Regulations* contains instructions on the conduct of the media during elections. It insisted that journalists be free to observe and describe the electoral campaign, and that they operate independently from government oversight. In return, it demanded a neutral and professional approach to news reporting from the journalistic community. This called for a new supervisory role and the OSCE spawned another one of its children - the Media Experts Commission (MEC).

Its primary duty was to investigate violations of Chapter 9 concerning the media and to monitor the media's performance and their compliance with these rules. But its responsibilities were primarily designed to support the OSCE's larger mandate, so its activities focused on the annual elections. Other new aspects of the election game were regulated with equal rigor. They contained the injunction that parties, coalitions or independent candidates could not choose their own platforms, but had to address OSCE

electoral concerns. This meant in practice, that any registered candidate had the right to run and to put forward his or her ideas, and to provide coverage that would be as fair and as objective as possible (MEC Report, 1998, p.8). The subsequent discussion will show that this requirement would soon become a bone of contention between the local media and their international regulator.

The Commission's mandate was two-fold: the first was to ensure that local print and electronic media offer "equitable access" during the election period. Because the Commission had punitive powers it could "require any person or organization connected to a case or complaint under investigation by the Media Experts Commission to provide any information, including financial information and copies of documents, and any materials, including video and audiotapes, requested by the Media Experts Commission" (MEC Report, 1998, p.196). Resources for scrutinizing the work of the media were plentiful. There was a monitoring unit, which recorded all television and radio news programming and produced quantitative analyses. These included detailed accounts of the frequency of mentions of party candidates' names and the number and kinds of words described as inflammatory. If necessary, these reports were then used as grounds for the arbitration of cases. Political candidates running in the election could also submit complaints if they thought they were not treated fairly by the media. If proven that the media provided inadequate treatment, the Commission could force the dissenting outlet to retract an article, make a correction or, as it happened in the case of a Bosnian Serb broadcaster, to entirely shut down their operation.

The Commission assumed that most violations would be committed by the media and that a range of reprimands designed to bring their work in line with Western standards would be sufficient to make the coverage of the election more professional. However, the reporting standards which had to be met were never clearly specified nor were the rules as to what "fair" and "objective" reporting meant. In a situation where each ethnic group had its own preconceptions, later examples will demonstrate, the terms had radically different meanings for the local journalistic community. Even though the *Rules and Regulations* called for both the media and the government to be responsible for the "equitable" treatment of all candidates and for freedom of expression for all, there was no means for establishing the governments' accountability, because the political system was in flux after the war and no control agencies like a press council had yet been set up. As a consequence, the Commission refrained from confronting the local government, although its *Rules and Regulations* gave it the right to defend freedom of the press against interference, intimidation and harassment by authorities (MEC Report, 1998, p.140). Instead, it opted for the advocacy part of its mandate.

In 1998, it dealt with three such cases all of them resulting only in formal letters of complaint to the Ministry of Interior or other authorities deemed to have some connection to the incidents. The first involved Senad Pecanin, Editor-in-Chief of *Dani* magazine who received threats from a well-known mafia leader with government connections. This was followed by a hand-grenade attack at the magazine offices. The second case was similar in nature, journalists working for the satirical magazine from Split, Croatia, *Feral Tribune* were stopped at Capljina, a small border town between

Bosnia and Croatia by the local police, harassed and ordered to return to Split. Lastly, there was the incident in which journalists working for Radio-Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina were detained for hours by the Republic of Srpska police force and their equipment confiscated because they were filming the building where the government was located (MEC Report, 1998, p.71).

Both the local and the international community raised suspicions about the Commission's effectiveness, membership and work from the start (ODIHR Report, 1998, p.25). Ironically, media professionals themselves could neither participate in, nor observe the decision making essential to their work. Instead, only government representatives had voting rights on the Commission. Three of these commissioners came from the Republic of Srpska, three from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and two from the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Unfortunately, these representatives were often employees of the Ministry of the Interior, which dealt with police and security issues and had no information experience. It was not until 1998 that the distribution of seats became more favorable for the media. At this time, media professionals were also invited to become participants. The final report of the Commission issued in this year lists 21 members, 15 or two thirds reserved for local representatives and the other five representing the international community.

The choice of the representatives of the international organizations was no less disconcerting than that of the local members. There was a British colonel who represented the Press and Information Office of SFOR (NATO force deployed in

Bosnia)(MEC Report, 1998, p.49). The second was a United Nations spokesperson, who like her European colleague was in the public relations business. A third, rather symbolic post was reserved for a representative of the Office of the High Representative's Media Development Office, probably the only international candidate who had a justifiable reason for participating in the Commission's work. The OSCE's Democratization Department also had a representative on the board, though this agency was not involved in any media democratization projects. The fifth international representative was the Chair, who had the authority to arbitrate, since all members had equal voting rights. Decisions entailing punitive measures always required a majority vote, because the ethnic divisions among the different local governmental representatives otherwise precluded any decisions from being made.

During 1996 and 1997, three ambassadors, Dimiter Dimitrov, Joseph Kazlas and Richard Ellerkman, all of whom were American, chaired the Commission. They wore many hats, which unfortunately resulted in a decreased focus on the media situation and thus provided no regulatory innovations in this domain. Monthly meetings were insufficient to curtail the flagrant reporting violations which continued to fan ethnic hatred between Muslim, Croat and Serb population groups. During this initial period of the Commission's existence, the rules against voting *in absentia* combined with the cynical attitude of the local representatives and the overall ineffectiveness and the lack of action taken to curtail "ethnic biases", vitiated and unbalanced the decision making process. In the first two years and two elections, the Commission dealt with 30 and 45 complaints respectively, but it took action only in a very few cases requiring nothing but

apologies to the candidates who had been misrepresented. Most frequently, complaints were referred to another body, Election Appeals Sub-Commission, which rarely dealt with any of these cases (MEC Report, 1998, p.10). In 1998, the ambassadors were relieved of these extra duties. The OSCE had just created a media affairs department and appointed a new director, Linwood Todd, who was a West Point Academy graduate, to run the Commission. Although greater discipline was introduced in the Commission's work and meetings were increased, these changes did not seem to bring about higher participation on the part of the local representatives or greater interest. The number of cases dealt with remained low; between January and August 1998, the Commission's final report lists only six cases a very ineffective outcome considering the ongoing propagandistic reporting practiced by the Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian broadcast networks (MEC Report, 1998, p.59).

This situation changed however when the Commission shut down the Serbian Radio-Television (SRT) network located outside of Sarajevo, following its diffusion of a Radovan Karadzic speech, who had by now been indicted as a war criminal in the Hague and was therefore a *persona non-grata* on the Bosnian airwaves, according to the OSCE rules (MEC Report, 1998, p.172). After this high profile act it was recognized that the Commission needed autonomy and strong leadership. It was therefore separated from the Media Affairs department and also got a new, much more competent and knowledgeable chairperson, career driven Tanya Domi. She had a B.A. in Journalism from University of Michigan, extensive experience with the OSCE, National Democratic Institute, and the inevitable military career, which now seemed necessary to bring in line the work of the

Commission, or at least its members. Her poise and authority helped to improve the Commission's work and generated interest among the local representatives, who feared that they might lose an outlet if complaints of ethnic propaganda were raised. The chairperson's ambition also gave those meetings a whole different tone – one in which the chairperson's work on the Clinton –Gore campaign was often used as an example of how the media and the government should conduct themselves in election times (Kebo, 2000, p.5).

In order to increase its presence outside of Sarajevo, Bosnia's capital, the OSCE created six media sub-commissions all of which were located in already existing OSCE offices set up in bigger cities or "politically sensitive areas" with mixed (and hostile) ethnic groups. Among these were Mostar, the hotbed of Croatian propaganda; Banjaluka, its Serb counterpart; Sokolac, a small town near Sarajevo which housed a few radio stations notorious for their war-mongering. Then there were predominantly Muslim Tuzla and Bihac, once controlled by a Muslim renegade, Fikret Abdic, who defied the Izetbegovic government. Finally, there was Brcko, a small town in north eastern Bosnia, which was at the time the bone of contention between the Serbs, Muslims and the international community, concerning control over the town and its surrounding region (Institute for War & Peace Reporting, 2002, p.1). The sub-commissions were mini-replicas of the Commission, and were headed by OSCE press officers stationed in the area and in charge of informing the public, that is the local media, about the work of their local organization. Though this validating function raised the profile of the Commission, it once again contained a contradiction, because the local representatives had to fulfill

two opposing functions: they were both critics and controllers of the local media outlets. The Commission's final report indicates that in three of the six sub-commissions, there was parity and local and international members were equally represented (MEC Report, 1998, p.53). This new pattern of representation for the first time guaranteed that Commission goals were implemented, rather than voted down by the two-third majority of locals. Yet, the structural subordination of the sub-commissions meant that their decision range was considerably smaller than that of the main Commission. They could issue a warning to an outlet regarding its conduct, or refer the case to the main office in Sarajevo, which had the power to order closures.

What may be concluded from the make-up of this Commission, is that its members were not experts. Beyond that, until 1998, its chairmanship was a part-time commitment or a transitory stage in a diplomatic career, which had very different aims. In addition and very important to the Commission's ineffectiveness, was the fact that the local representatives were drawn from the government and not the local media elites. Very few Commission members had relevant experience, although this began to improve after media professionals were invited to participate. It is therefore not surprising that the Commission failed to properly deal with the deep-seated, ethnically based media nationalism, which was a relic of the past. From its beginnings, this meant that the local representatives had no interest in change and practiced what could be called "passive resistance" by not showing up for meetings or by wrangling over details. In addition, they perceived the body to be primarily interested in promoting the international community's goals, rather than dealing with the practical cases of misconduct. It is very unfortunate

that this attempt to set guidelines for a transition to a more democratic functioning of the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina failed to change the Communist tradition of top-down control and to introduce the notion of the media as a critical third pillar of responsible government. It is no surprise that even publications such as *Newsweek* expressed their doubts about the strategies used to bring elections and election-related activities up to acceptable standards: "...the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which ran the recent national election...set a series of campaign rules more draconian than anything known in Western democracies" (Newsweek 1998, Oct.5th, International Edition, p.32). This is an often mentioned paradox in the democratization process where the organization mandated to create conditions for democracy, uses undemocratic means to attain its goal.

A more careful assessment of the Commission's diversification of opinions in politically precarious times, as well as its impact on the future directions of the media democratization process in Bosnia and Herzegovina will have to wait till Chapter 4. It will utilize Jakubowicz's media map schema for assessing the extent to which media democratization has been accomplished (Jakubowicz, 1990, p.52). One of these dimensions is *autonomy* from government control, the other the degree of *subordination* the media system displays in relation to the existing power structure. On this map, the Soviet-communist media model, which most appropriately describes the situation in the ex-Yugoslav republics, is closest to subordination end of the continuum, and thus a historical left-over of the Tito era and it successive regimes. The introduction of more media autonomy, the supposed goal of the Commission and that of many other Eastern

European regulators would be found at the other extreme of the continuum. Unfortunately, as we have seen, the Commission did not achieve this outcome. Instead, in the fratricidal Bosnian situation, it was the Commission, not the local media, which assumed the control functions, indicating that the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina still have a long way to go.

## A New Beginning: The Commission's Work during the 1998 Presidential Elections

As mentioned above, during 1996 and 1997 the Media Experts Commission had little impact on the nationalist media. Access to radio and television coverage continued to be controlled by the three nationalist parties because of their geographic dispersal. The vast majority of political parties or candidates in Bosnia and Herzegovina had no access to any media outlets during the campaign periods leading up to the 1996 national elections. The work of the Media Experts Commission was so disappointing in this period that even its final report, the Commission describes that period as an "ineffective response to complaints regarding the work of the media" (MEC Report, 1998, p.10). Local community members also expressed dissatisfaction with its performance. Mirza Hajric, the representative of the Bosnian government on the Commission, resigned citing his frustration with the ineffectiveness of the Commission's work. In his resignation letter to Ambassador Robert Frowick, he wrote: "Though the Media Experts Commission received a mandate from the Provisional Election Commission, the most powerful body within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and has all necessary facilities to do its job, I consider that the results of its work and that of its six regional

commissions is well below an acceptable minimum" (International Crisis Group Report, 1997, p.11).

After two consecutive fiascos, the American Tanya Domi was appointed chair in 1998 and began to turn the Commission into an international watchdog able to respond rapidly to abuses as well as set minimum reporting standards. Under her guidance three of the cases they reviewed received extensive coverage in the local media, raising the Commission's profile and indicating the directions for further media development. For the first time in years, the Commission's decisions significantly changed the media output in an election. It also sent out a clear message concerning the international community's expectations about how media freedom and responsibility was to be defined. In the process, it provided some short-term remedies for the rights of candidates as well those of the public, while at the same time inflicting some long-term damage to Bosnia's media development. Beyond that the Commission's increased effectiveness is signaled by the number of the cases it reviewed. In 1998 alone, the Commission and its sub-commissions reviewed and acted upon around 200 cases of media violations, covering the three week election period (MEC Report, 1998, p.13). One of the reasons for this increased effectiveness was its ability to refer cases to the Election Appeals Sub-Committee, the OSCE's supervisory body chaired by a Swedish judge Mr. Finn Lynghjem, who responded by eliminating candidates from the voter's lists (MEC Report, 1998, p.129). This gave the Commission a whole new importance in the political game.

## Case 1: Croatian State Television's Interference in Bosnian Election Coverage

Apart from being unable to provide any quality programming, the multitude of electronic media outlets in Bosnia and Herzegovina provided their audiences with different, often totally conflicting political messages. This resulted from the fact that the three ethnically based media markets programmed exclusively for their own sub-audience in this audiences' own language, rather than for the multi-ethnic public inhabiting the state. In the Bosnian Muslim part of the federation that was Radio-Television Bosnia and Herzegovina, while Serbian Radio-Television performed the same function in the Republic of Srpska, and Croatia's state broadcaster remained the main source of information for the Croat populated parts of the region. Each of these broadcasters was financially supported by their respective governments, who as a result received favorable coverage in return. In addition, there were media outlets with funding from various non-governmental organizations, such as *Ljiljan* magazine, supporting a nationalist agenda which was indistinguishable from that of Muslim-dominated Bosnian government.

A third group of media were internationally sponsored, such as the Open Broadcast Network, which saw its function as peace-making. It was an internationally run project, launched with a $10 million donation from the European Union, the Soros Open Society and some other Western countries (International Crisis Group 1997, p.6). It was designed to counterbalance the three nationalist networks operating in Bosnia. Attracting an audience for this station was not an easy task, because most viewers had over the years gotten used to following nothing but their local ethnic broadcaster. The Open Broadcast Network's mandate "never to transmit programming which incites hatred or leads into

conflict" seemed too diluted for all these audiences who were accustomed to advocacy reporting (OBN, 2002, p.1). Because of its lack of viewership, the Western-style OBN's alternative format failed to demonstrate what "public broadcasting" was all about in countries other than Bosnia. Assuming that a public broadcaster is defined in terms of the benefits which it is supposed to deliver to society: such as universal access and wide-ranging appeal; services to all regions and all minorities; attention to building a national identity and culture; the provision of information and educational services beyond what the market would require (McQuail, 1992, p.3) only a cross-entity network could fulfill this role. In spite of this, the three local nationalist broadcasters continued to be treated as though they were public broadcasters for one historical reason only, that they were committed to "protect[ing] the national interests" (Udovicic, 1996, p.1). Unfortunately, the international community acceded to this confounding designation.

An example of the detrimental outcome of this tri-ethnic broadcast model was that it could not handle the appearance of new parties competing for new government posts. Among these was the New Croat Initiative (NHI) whose candidate Kresimir Zubak complained that his campaign was underreported by the Broadcasting Corporation of Croatia vis-à-vis that of the Croat Democratic Union (HDZ) candidate. This allegation was substantiated by the Commission's media monitoring reports, which showed that Ante Jelavic of the Croat Democratic Union (HDZ) indeed received nearly four times more news coverage in the weeks leading up to the elections, than Kresimir Zubak of the New Croat Initiative (NHI) (MEC Report, 1998, p.14). Since this constituted not only "biased" reporting, but also an invasion of the Bosnian information space, the

Commission struck four candidates from the Bosnian Croat Democratic Union (HDZ) electoral list. Soon after this decisive action the government broadcaster of Croatia saw the light and accepted political commercials from other parties, including the Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Serb parties. The arbitration of this case was described as one of the "media turning points of the year" (MEC Report, 1998, p.14).

> "The Media Experts Commission's decision against the Croatian broadcaster set the stage for an improved media climate throughout Bosnia...and created the conditions for more equitable coverage of opposition parties and prodded nationalist parties and their media outlets to lessen their outright collusion, exclusion and biased reporting" (MEC Report, 1998, p.15).

Though the final report boasts that its action resulted in "the broadcasting of political spots from some Serb and Muslim parties" and thus on paper seems to have resulted in a diversification of opinions, the report fails to mention the dissatisfaction and anger voiced by the mono-ethnic viewers who were not used to the even-handed coverage represented by these political spots (MEC Report, 1998, p.15). Local journalists and media managers were not surprised at these angry responses, because the two other so-called public broadcasters were also catering to their own Serbian and Muslim viewers, without representing the other two points of view. Although the political alternatives seem to have been enlarged by airing spots for other party political candidates, rational choice was not increased by this requirement, but rather diminished, because all Bosnian viewers understood that the three broadcasters' programming was designed for one ethnic group only.

Unfortunately, the Commission made the mistake of equating the public interest with three separate ethnic interests, rather than one "civic" public interest, as in Western democracies. It thus implicitly created three different versions of the public interest in Bosnia. This laid the foundation for furthering ethnic rivalries in a country where many citizens had been forced to abandon their homes and to live in regional enclaves which had been ethnically cleansed. Although the Commission introduced the possibility that one broadcaster should cater to more than one ethnic group and "strive to serve the full diversity of ethnic communities they represent", it further undermined the "multi-ethnic" programming alternative by splitting up the republic's original Radio-Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina service into two and thus legitimating three official television services in Bosnia, each catering to a specific ethnic sub-group (MEC Report, 1998, p.21).

**Case 2: *Dani* Magazine and the Struggle for a New Form of Journalism**

Even though the Media Experts Commission focused its primary attention on the electronic media, the modernizing efforts undertaken in the print sector must not be forgotten. *Dani* magazine is a case in point. This publication was formerly known as *Nasi Dani,* a youth magazine which became a forum for young journalists and writers in the mid to the late 1980s. These writers were brought up in Tito's Yugoslavia and thus appreciated the ethnic and religious tolerance practiced earlier. Yet, at the same time, they voiced harsh criticism of the top-down authoritarian reporting structure prevalent at the time. In 1989, the magazine became a joint-stock venture and severed ties with the

Socialist Youth Alliance, which provided the funds for its operation (Thompson, 1995, p.249). Its new-found independence gave the magazine an edge which no other publication in Bosnia enjoyed and encouraged its journalists to develop investigative reporting techniques. *Dani* practiced "inward criticism" and began to publish exposes of the government's wrongdoings. It furthermore shed light on the hidden nationalist agendas, which the Bosnian government was pursuing. Beyond that *Dani* covered more than the political agenda and paid attention to the development of the mainstream and alternative arts in the country and abroad, which made it a favorite publication among Sarajevo's urban youth. Even though the magazine struck out on its own, it did not face repression from Bosnian politicians, because it was not considered a threat to the power structure in the 1990 elections. In spite of this, the publication was suspended in 1992, when the war made the procurement of paper impossible (Thompson, 1995, p.250).

With the end of the war in 1995, *Dani* resumed publication, but by this time the Bosnian government was not as lenient as it had been before. In an almost predictable manner, certain issues of *Dani,* containing critiques of the Muslim-led government were delayed at the OKO, the only printing plant in Bosnia. Even though the managing director denied undue interference there was a general understanding that this represented an effort to muzzle an independent media outlet (Thompson, 1995, p.214). Unfortunately, the transfer to a printer in Slovenia, failed to ameliorate the situation and the magazine's staff was the target of frequent intimidation, physical assaults and as well as hand-grenade attacks of their offices (MEC Report, 1998, p.61).

Both the international community, which had praised *Dani* and supported its work with generous donations, and the local community were appalled by these happenings, since they were a painful reminder of the war when gangs ran amok in besieged Sarajevo, making the lives of journalists and other citizens unsafe. In this climate, the Commission felt it needed to do more than its usual "advocacy" procedure of writing a letter of complaint. When the well-known and widely feared perpetrators were finally taken to court following an outcry in Sarajevo diplomatic circles, the Commission's investigators monitored the police investigation as well as the court hearings (MEC Report, 1998, p.61). Yet, as many had expected, the assailants were found guilty of nothing more than disturbing the peace and they were only given a symbolic fine. Instead of confronting the local government and demanding freedom of the press rights for Bosnian journalists, the Commission cowardly shied away from becoming involved and transferred responsibility for dealing with the *Dani* case to the newly created Office of the Ombudsman, thus acknowledging the futility of its punitive mandate. With the pretext that this was an issue which needed the attention of a locally-run civil society mechanism (MEC Report, 1998, p.61). This was an opportunity for the Commission to use all its powers and set a precedent by which the government would also have been made responsible for interfering with the freedom of the press. By failing to do so, the Commission demonstrated that its broad mandate was exercised only in clear-cut cases of violations committed by the media and was otherwise one-sided and inadequate (MEC Report, 1998, p.59-61).

## Case 3: *Ljiljan* Magazine and its Old-Style Party Support

The third case study of *Ljiljan* magazine, offers an example of how some transition media continue to operate under government control, while others like *Dani* attempted to introduce newer, more even-handed reporting methods. *Ljiljan* was funded by a grant from Saudi Arabia and was expected to support the Muslim SDA party. Even though connections between the party and the magazine were repeatedly denied by both the party and the magazine's managing staff (Thompson, 1995, p.248), they were substantiated by the content and criticism of SDA's political opponents. This showed that in this publication the party's interests and policies took precedence over professional concerns and that partisanship was more important than objectivity, particularly in the politically sensitive period on the eve of the 1998 elections. At this time, the magazine ran an article alleging that the main opposition candidate and the leader of the Social Democratic Party "abused his privileges as a political official to illegally obtain access to three apartments in Sarajevo" (MEC Report, 1998, p.17). This would have been a trivial issue in any other country but Bosnia where the government had acceded to the High Representative's request that property seized after World War II had to be returned to the original owners or their legal heirs. Furthermore, if these residences were "publicly owned", their original occupants continued to have so-called "occupancy rights". This provision created anger among half of Sarajevo's population who were displaced and who now faced the prospect of being legally expelled from their shelters, with the government unable to provide alternative solutions (MEC Report, 1998, p.17). Aware of the gravity of the situation and the votes it might cost him, the defamed political candidate filed a complaint with the Commission. He provided documentation, which

convincingly refuted these claims. Following that, the Commission forced the magazine to correct the article in the next issue and to give the candidate the right of reply which the magazine had previously denied.

The Commission's action created a huge public debate in which the aims of media democratization were completely lost sight of. *Ljiljan* itself muddied the waters by running a cover page in which a man wearing Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe insignia is represented as justice, holding two perfectly balanced scales, one signifying the Social Democratic Party and the other the *fleur de lys*, which was the magazine's emblem. Ironically, if these two scales were actually in perfect balance, the magazine could not have claimed wrongful treatment. Instead, the editors disagreed and voiced disapproval about being forced to exercise the basic duties of balanced reporting and the right of reply. If the magazine with the largest circulation in the country fails to meet the requirements of a multiparty democracy, the Bosnian print media situation does not look bright. Inaccurate reporting, failing to distinguish between factual and editorial writing, resorting to slander and defamation continued to flourish in Eastern European counties, including Bosnia, where media were in transition (Dennis & Vanden Heuvel, 1990, p.4). Unfortunately, not even the Commission was able to change the entrenched autocratic media habits, which require time as well as socio-political change to move forward.

## Conclusions: The Pros and Cons of the Commission's Rulemaking

The Commission's rule making impact, breaking-up Bosnia's autocratic journalistic practices, have already indicated that the Commission operated on the assumption that importing foreign experience and supervision would improve the local practices. It is unfortunate, but not unexpected that this assumption proved to be incorrect. The Commission's aims were further compromised by at least three contradictions. The first contradiction was its already discussed mandate to function as both judge and the jury, which meant that it advocated various media freedoms on the one hand, while actively participating in imposing restrictions on the other. In the tri-ethnic Bosnian situation, it could not fulfill either of these tasks very well. Imposing punitive procedures entailed finding a culprit, be it an outlet or a political unit, and assuming that the two constituted separate identities. What the Commission expected was that a party would exert pressure on its media system, which would be remedied by eliminating candidates who had benefited from the coverage. However, in the Bosnian situation the media and political elites still shared the same bed, that is, they were "co-located" in an autocratic set-up, as Schramm, Peterson and Siebert described it in 1956 (p.121). This meant that most of the Bosnian media received financial support from the different parties in exchange for varying degrees of control over their output.

The Commission's failure to concern themselves with media financing was the second important contradiction which contributed to its misperception of the Bosnian information landscape and how to remedy this situation. The media in Bosnia as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, need financial security to operate. Since no new laws on

public broadcasting were being drafted to assure the operative base, most media had to rely on continued party support plus some advertising revenue. Measures such as the elimination of candidates from voting lists or entirely shutting down outlets did not address financial issues and thus pleased neither media professionals nor political parties. It only heightened the split between the international community and the Bosnian media they were attempting to reform.

Splichal argues that fully commercial media are not an alternative during the transition phase of the Eastern European economies, which are not yet able to raise enough money from advertising (Splichal, 1995, p.52). This has been demonstrated in the case of Open Broadcast Network, which was jumpstarted with a $10 million infusion of money form various European organizations, but began to decline when these funds ran out (Imamovic, 2001, p.2). In a market which is not yet large enough for advertising to flourish, international funds created an artificial situation where: "the viability of a particular publication or radio or television station, depended not on the quality of its product but on the ability of the management to drum up donations" (International Crisis Group Report, 1997, p.6). Once these fail to materialize and the international community withdraws from Bosnia, Open Broadcast Network and many other outlets partially supported by Western organizations will cease to exist. Jakubowicz points out that despite the introduction of new "democratic" political systems, democratic media are not an inevitable consequence. He noted that many countries of the former Eastern Block have replicated their old systems, or in some cases, regressed to harsher forms of authoritarian media (Jakubowicz, 1995, p.53).

The third fundamental contradiction hampering the Media Experts Commission's work was the fact that it failed to distinguish between "ethnicity" and "citizenship", which would have avoided reinstating the three ethnically based broadcasting systems in Bosnia. According to Corcoran and Preston, this oversight is fatal, because it undermines the media's ability to facilitate a dialogue within the country and give adequate representation to all ethnic groups (Corcoran & Preston, 1995, p.6). As we have seen not only the warlords, but the Dayton Accord mandated this return to the pre-war status-quo, rather than searching for new solutions. The Accord was immediately criticized for the fact that it "promised restoration, rather than creation of a multi-ethnic Bosnian state" (Denitch, 1996, p.212). For the media, the effect of restitution meant "fragmentation", because the three existing ethnically based broadcasters continued to produce programming, not for the total community, but uniquely for the designated ethnic sub-group. By doing so, these broadcasters alienated themselves from large portions of the Bosnian audience and set the stage for the creation of three solitudes in a very small geographical region. At worst, the failure to make a distinction between citizenship and ethnicity may cost Bosnia's its political future.

Even though the work of the Commission after 1998 improved over that in the early years and succeeded in creating some short-lived diversity of political views during election periods, its contradictory mandates fundamentally flawed the Media Commission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a result, it is widely felt that opinion diversification only helped the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe fulfill its illusory

mandate, rather than creating a realistic plan for media change. Some of its accomplishments such as advocacy efforts are commendable, but at the same time, it failed in providing a new financial and legal framework for the struggling transition media in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In conclusion, there seemed to be little purpose for a body which interpreted the elections as the event which would begin a more "democratic" approach to all aspects of public life, rather than viewing them in a more realistic manner, as the climax of the workings of many social institutions in a society which is in transition to democracy.

# CHAPTER IV -- WHAT CAN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA LEARN FROM POLAND ABOUT MEDIA DEMOCRATIZATION?

The fourth and concluding chapter of this thesis will look into the case of Poland, and examine the changes and developments the Polish media have undergone over the past ten years. Transitions will be understood as processes which differ with respect to their socio-political context, but at the same time, bear some common features, which allow for parallels to be drawn between the Polish and Bosnian experiences. It will also suggest that the Polish transition may offer useful lessons for Bosnia's media democratization efforts.

There are two reasons Poland has been chosen to serve as a model in this comparison. Firstly, this country is one of the few that has successfully restructured its pre-existing Communist institutions, to create a space for civil society and the proper functioning of the media in a democratic system (Splichal 1994, p.55; Sparks & Reading 1995, p.32). In spite of much advice from Western democracies and the World Bank, transforming centralized authoritarian governmental institutions has proved to be more difficult than most Eastern European countries anticipated in the context of their newly instituted parties and partially liberalized economies. This is partially the result of the fact that it is difficult to replace or rejuvenate the existing ruling elites. Political scientist Charles Gati (1996, p.39) described the different stages of institutional development, which create the conditions for a liberal democracy. According to this widely used classification, based on the flexibility of economic institutions in introducing a market economy, political reforms to institute a functional democratic system and freedom of the

media, Poland is one of the leaders. Failure to reform these institutions impedes economic development which, in a feedback relationship, results in difficulties in developing democracy. In this classification, Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the second category of "laggards", where reorganization and retrenchment of old practices continue to co-exist under a semi-authoritarian regime and leaders reluctantly pursue minor market reforms and tolerate a press that is only partially free while still maintaining control over all the major instruments of power (Gati, 1996, p.39).

The restructuring and reorganization of the media, particularly broadcasting, is a core aspect of the democratization process. Communication scholars who have studied and written on transformations of these particular institutions agree with Gati's classification unanimously. So-called Visegrad group (Poland, Hungary, and the Czech and Slovak Republics) have been successful in introducing market-led electronic outlets, while maintaining equally strong public broadcasting systems, which are no longer under direct state-control as they had been previously. The roles and responsibilities of public and commercial media have been defined by a national regulator, and they in turn, provided for relatively free elections and a decreased political influence over the media plus the beginnings of what has been called the flourishing of civil society (Sparks & Reading 1995, p.32).

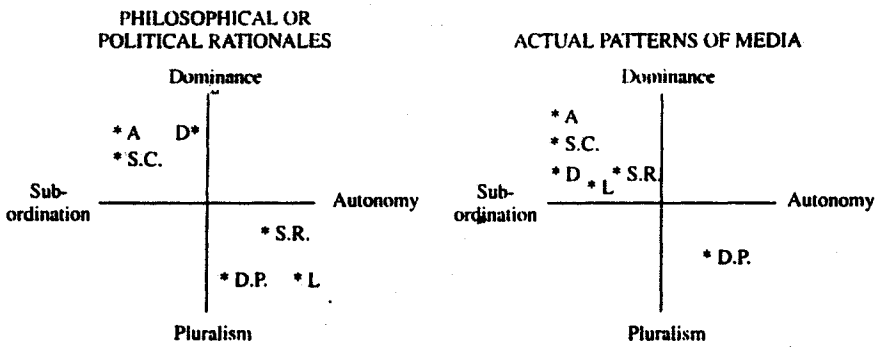
In his seminal article "Between Communism and Post-Communism: How many Varieties of Glasnost" (1990) Karol Jakubowicz criticizes previous theories of the press and media systems and attempts to find a model more adequate in explaining the media

transitions of Eastern Europe. On the one hand, he claims that the fundamental premise of earlier press theories is that the media are different merely by virtue of belonging to different social systems. On the other, he argues that most theories fail to take into account their own biases, giving a more favorable interpretation to certain media systems, although other systems may function much better (Jakubowicz, 1990, p.41). Similar arguments were also expressed in John Nerone's reinvestigation of *Four Theories of the Press* in which he claims that the predominantly "liberal democratic" bias of these writings prevented these theories from adequately explaining media systems other than their own (Nerone, 1995, p.16). For example, this bias is demonstrated in the premise of classical liberalism and the libertarian theory that "freedom exists only when the state stays out of media ownership, operation and regulation" (Nerone, 1995, p.25). This put the libertarian theory in the first place and also fails to account for other very important aspects such as ownership and organization of the media, which according to both Nerone and Jakubowicz are essential to determining their freedom (Nerone 1995, p.23; Jakubowicz, 1990, p.44).

Jakubowicz's media model, however, is able to account for these aspects and therefore able to assess whether they contribute to a more pluralist media climate. Media in Eastern Europe presented itself as an interesting case and previous theories could not adequately explain its operation as it retained many of its characteristics and, at the same time, started to adopt some Western traditions. This happened in Poland when the new law on censorship was adopted in 1981, which restricted previous practices and gave the journalists a right to challenge censor's decisions in court. Allocation of newsprint as

form of control also ended and underground publications were finally invited to publish in 1989, and began to be distributed by a publishing house controlled by the communist party (Jakubowicz, 1990, p.51). All these changes happened within the existing communist media system, and they constituted important preconditions for changing the structure which would later permit the transition media to function differently.

Jakubowicz's "maps" of theories of the press (1990, p.45,46)




A-Authoritarian, D-Development media, D.P.-Democratic participant, L-Libertarian, S.C.-Soviet Communist, S.R.-Social Responsibility

The first continuum of *autonomy* and *subordination* reflects the media's relationship to the power structure. Historically, the Polish and Yugoslav media were located on the subordination end because of similar types of control. The six republican Communist parties in Yugoslavia had parallel control over broadcasting. In contrast to Poland, the Yugoslav media were consequently organizationally more decentralized, but still highly controlled. Both media systems were placed in a subordinate relation to the government. In order to locate it closer to the autonomy end, institutional changes needed to be undertaken to increase their independence and this was to a degree accomplished in Poland through restricting censorship. This continuum is likely to influence the location

of the media on the second continuum of *pluralism* and *dominance*, which reflects the social relation established between groups, such as the journalistic community and the political elites. Lack of pluralism in Yugoslavia was not determined through the existence of a censorship body, but rather through existence of the social practice of "informal censorship". As a result, despite seemingly more liberal laws, Yugoslav media were in the service of dominance, and therefore located closer to the subordination dimension of the typology. In order to move the Bosnian media closer to the freedom and equality dimension of the typology, both social and institutional aspects need to be transformed (Jakubowicz, 1990, p.44). All typologies are pictures of "ideal cases", which means that the Jakubowicz schema registers cases where the system seemingly allows for freedoms that are not available in practice. Jakubowicz's typology will be used to assess the progress Poland has made in democratizing its media and to argue that its initiatives represent a blueprint for media reform in Bosnia.

Apart from it being a transitional democracy, Poland has been chosen as a model because Karol Jakubowicz himself is not only a scholar, but has also been a member of the media commission which oversaw the media's transformation. As a lecturer at the Institute of Journalism at the University of Warsaw, he had the opportunity to become acquainted with the work of the media before 1989, and to continue to study it during the political transformations that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall. Jakubowicz discusses the problems Poland encountered in this period, and his writings reflect his experiences as a scholar and a professional. Beyond that he was involved as chief advisor of an important regulatory body, the National Broadcast Council of Poland, chairman of the

Standing Committee on Transfrontier Television in the Council of Europe, and a head of the Strategic Planning and Development Committee of Polish Television. All these appointments provided him with a well-rounded understanding of media regulatory issues.

The Polish and Yugoslav media systems were variations on the Communist concept of the media, viewed as mouth-pieces of the Party which was legitimized as the most advanced segment of society. State responsibility over broadcasting had been legitimized in terms of the political, educational and cultural importance of radio and television to society and the state. National, regional and local television stations were directly controlled from the center and were financed by both licensing fees and direct state subsidies. Both systems functioned according to the top-down model and because of the similarities in the role, function and organizational structure of the media, they have encountered similar difficulties in their restructuring processes. Because the Yugoslav and Polish media systems were not as rigid as those found in the Soviet Union, they included some forms of civil society participation, such as the *right to publish opinions.* This became a constitutional right in 1963 in Yugoslavia, but did not become widely used until the 1980s. Beyond that the Yugoslav media system functioned on the principle of de-centralization, giving each republican party substantial influence over its own programming output. This made the broadcast media system less centralized, but they were no less controlled because an "informal censorship" system was operative which placed Communist party officials into media managerial positions, thus controlling the media without having to institute an official censorship mechanism. However,

publications such as the Catholic Church funded *Glas Koncila* could not be controlled, since the religious and Communist party affiliations were mutually exclusive. Instead, their work was closely scrutinized but never impeded (e.g. Catholic publication (Ramet, 1996, p.63).

Poland's broadcasting mandate in contrast was always very centralized, changes made to the media landscape in 1956 saw some easing of this control. The number of publications produced by non-state organizations grew, while the broadcast media remained state owned and controlled (Splichal, 1994, p.29). This brought about a transition from what Splichal calls "a *totalitarian* model to the model of *tolerant repression*", and a shift from aggressive ideological propaganda on the state media to the production of "de-ideologized entertainment and mass culture" (Splichal, 1994, p.28).

There has been a substantial debate about the question whether a form of "civil society" existed in Eastern Europe prior to 1989. Doubtlessly, this debate hinges on the definition of the concept of "civil society". Hann, Buchowski et al. claim that civil society space was created through such state organizations as the Youth Association, the Polish Student Association, and various other unofficial groups (Hann, 1992; Buchowski, 1996). The authors argue that although the nature of their work was not political, it was perceived as such by the party which aspired to control every aspect of life. As such, these groups were performing a civil society function by placing themselves into a dialectical tension with the state (Hann, 1992, p.163; Buchowski, 1996, p.83). Splichal describes similar types of associations in Yugoslavia, but calls it a "de-politicized civil

society", thus indicating that these groups were centered around non-political goals by mere virtue of their presence, represented some sort of balance to the political establishment (Splichal, 1994, p.29). Considering that these supposedly non-political organizations ultimately led to the downfall of Milosevic's regime in Serbia, the question whether this form of "civil society" was political or not, seems moot. To avoid this dilemma, another definition will be used to understand "civil society" as "an aggregate of institutions whose members are engaged primarily in a complex of non-state activities, and who in this way preserve and transform their identity by exercising all sorts of pressures or controls upon state institutions" (Keane, 1989, p.14). This definition implies direct political involvement and influence of civil society state institutions. It perceives civil society as the non-state realm with a degree of political influence, rather than an entirely non-political realm, whose influence is negligible.

Another important common feature is that both countries' media systems became agents of social change in the 1990s. They were of vital importance in the wake of the popular uprising which included journalists and broadcasters who played a crucial role in disseminating the weapons for popular discontent. No resistance could have been mounted without them. The popularity of underground newspapers in Poland, the dissenting views of some Bosnian magazines and the reluctance of other publications to engage in the Serbo-Croat paper war, all laid the groundwork for the agenda for change. But this did not mean that their reporting practice measured up to European standards. Most segments of the journalistic community, even those who were at the forefront of social resistance, where reluctant to have their reporting practices questioned and the

perks which state support implied, reduced. Furthermore, they were un-used to being questioned by the other interest groups beginning to constitute the new form of civil society.

There is however one crucial difference which shaped the media development of these two countries and greatly contributed to the manner in which the role of public broadcaster was perceived and constructed. Ethnicity emerged as the defining aspect of the post-communist media in Bosnia where it did not in Poland, where about 90% of the population come from a Catholic background. Even though the representation of minorities' rights needed to be addressed in the new Polish nation state, ethnic and religious diversity was not nearly as salient as in Bosnia. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the issue of ethnic representation came to be one of the catalysts of the conflict and was an equally important principle in the reorganization of political and media institutions. This fundamental difference between these two countries will not be viewed as a barrier in comparing the two countries' media systems, but rather, as an argument in favor of Jakubowicz's typology which tries to show how seemingly unrelated media regulatory and political outcomes can be shown to be interrelated through the *autonomy/pluralism* dimensions.

## The Media in the Post-Communist Period: How to Regulate Ownership and Redefine Journalistic Practices?

Despite initial difficulties, Poland seems to be well under way in creating a media landscape able to provide its citizens with information relevant to governing themselves

and to dealing with the conflicting demands of different parts of the population. Denis McQuail argues that there is a structural pre-condition for freedom of the media, namely the existence of a set of functional institutions, which will provide conditions for their work, independent from both political or commercial interference (McQuail,1992, p.99). This is precisely what Poland did, despite the resistance of both the Communist government and the opposition to restructure the set-up of the national broadcasting system. The initial attempts to re-regulate the media in Poland took place in 1989, when negotiations between the government and *Solidarity* representatives began. *Solidarity*'s original plan was to establish direct social control over broadcasting, by instituting a three-stage plan for democratizing media institutions. The first step was to abolish the state monopoly over broadcasting, the second was to introduce a dual system, in which the public broadcaster would co-exist with commercial channels. The last step was to create a supervisory body, the National Broadcasting Council to lay down the rules and regulations by which the public/private system would work. These plans were dropped when the government legitimized the underground press and eased control over broadcasting. In its initial conversion, the Polish Communist party continued to dominate radio and television, but *Solidarity* was given an autonomous production department with the right to broadcast once a week. In retrospect it is clear that the original power of the party over the media had not changed. Censorship remained in full force, since both the government as well as *Solidarity* used the media in an autocratic manner and perpetuated the tradition of one-way communication from the party to the people. It was no surprise then that *Solidarity*'s entrance into parliament created no opinion plurality but rather, fell

back on the conventional practice of purging all former managers who had been Communist party appointees (Sparks & Reading, 1995, p.41).

However, in 1992, three years later, reforms similar to those proposed by the *Solidarity,* finally began to be introduced. A new Broadcasting Act was passed, and came into force in early 1993. Under this law, the National Broadcasting Council was set-up as a regulatory body with diverse membership from different social and political groups. Of the nine members, four were appointed by Parliament, three by the President and two by the Senate. In order to decrease direct political influences on its members, the Act decreed that during their term in office, the members had to give-up their party memberships and their formal connections with other interests groups, and the church. The state-owned Polish Radio-Television was converted into a public company, with the state as the main shareholder. Although still essentially owned by the state, the Polish broadcasting corporation is today no longer answerable to the government. A state subsidy from the Minster of Finance plus license fees fund the broadcasting system today, while the second channel of the national network was commercialized. In addition to this, foreign ownership was welcomed as long as it remained less than half, because its programming would provide an antidote to the existing media programming, which tends to ignore audience interests.

Though the Council's primary responsibility is the allocation of licenses, its supervision was also extended to programming, to guarantee basic standards of information and to regulate issues like pornography, domestic content (45% not including

news, local sports, and advertisements), and set guidelines for the media during elections. The Council also acts as an advisory body to the government on issues pertinent to broadcasting legislation (National Broadcasting Council, 2002, p.1). The issue of content regulation is very important in the Polish system, which has legitimated commercial stations financed by outsiders. These stations offer not only attractive foreign programming, but compete with the newly introduced cable service. All these private stations have to fulfill linguistic requirements and foster Polish cultural values. Through these regulations the Council succeeded in having European cable channels such as Eurosport, Filmnet et al. broadcast in the Polish language (Jakubowicz, 1996, p.7).

The restructuring of Poland's state broadcasting represented a significant move towards more autonomy for this outlet according to Jakubowicz' map. The history of transition shows that the "hegemony" of the state media apparatus was restricted by the removal of direct control over personnel appointments and the right of commercial media to criticize and scrutinize its programming and operation. There is also the institution of the National Broadcasting Council which sets the legal and program conditions under which both the public and the private system have to operate. The system has also become more pluralist in the sense not only that there are public and private stations vying for listeners, but also in the sense that that there are now several centers of power, that are vying with each other. These include, as they do in other democratic states, the government in power, the opposition parties, the National Broadcasting Council and private station owners, both local and foreign. As in Canada, this mixed public/private broadcasting is circumscribed by the Council's content regulations and language

requirements, which offer a space in which the domestic production of television programming can begin to flourish.

The difficulties of the transitional period do not result only from the complicated institutional changes which have taken place, but also stem from the cultural habits and perceptions of a fifty-year journalistic tradition. The paternalistic journalism practiced during the Communist regime was never challenged because it served the Communist party well, and with the absence of public political dissent, the need for a Western-model media watchdog did not exist. The most perverse effect of this kind of media system (as it has been demonstrated in Bosnia and elsewhere in Eastern Europe) is its propagandist potential, establishing the notion that the ends justify the means. Media received government funding and protection for services rendered, but all of this was delivered by an uncritical journalistic community, who were themselves party members. The safety of this relationship was something both the transition media and the transition government missed and attempted to recreate long after it was either wanted or appropriate. The transformation of journalistic practices, freedom from political influence and the position to serve as "fourth estate", i.e. critically monitoring the activities of the government of the day is what is required in any country moving toward greater transparency (Gibbons, 1991, p.14). The original opposition forces which brought the communist political system down, had not yet learned that "outward" and "inward" criticism is the life blood for the transition media everywhere in Eastern Europe.

Journalists enjoyed a higher social standing in Communist society where they were recognized as civil servants and directly linked to the centers of political and economic power, merely through their party membership (Splichal, 1994, p.69). Many perpetuated these roles after the collapse, by aligning themselves with the new centers of power and expecting benefits similar to those they once enjoyed. At the same time, they believed that they began to practice Western-style watchdog journalism merely because more groups now had the right to speak out, and journalists uncritically reported their activities. Karol Jakubowicz mentions an interesting study in which 90% of Polish journalists believe that their "main mission" is to inform about events and serve as a watchdog, while in reality, their practices are unchanged and still far from critical reporting that they claim to be practicing (Jakubowicz, 1992, p.71). In trying to re-create the old conditions these journalists face another danger, which according to Jakubowicz consists of falling prey to corporate interests (1992, p.71).

All of these experiences convinced two major Polish journalist associations that a new Code of Ethics was needed. It was adopted in September 1991 and it proscribed that basic obligations of journalists are to seek the truth and to publish the facts in a balanced manner. It also mentioned that professional independence is paramount and that any political motive does not justify any manipulation with facts or slanderous practices (EthicNet, 2002, p.1). Even with the new code available, it will however take time until journalistic practices change. In March 1995, another document, the Media Ethics Charter, was introduced (EthicNet, 2002, p.1). This charter provided excellent additional guidelines concerning the principles of truth, full reporting, objectivity and the distinction

between information and commentary, and the idea that all sides of a political issue need to be recorded. Yet, to make these principles a part of everyday Polish reporting practice will require both time and vigilance, as well as support from those who are the managers of the new media outlets, both print and broadcasting. Unfortunately, both the Polish and Bosnian transition experiences have demonstrated that in spite of good will, it is easier to recreate advocacy reporting than to teach and support the new "critical" approaches.

**What Are the Lessons Bosnia and Herzegovina Should Have Learned From the Polish Experience?**

Since, as we have demonstrated above, Poland is a successful case of media transition Bosnia can certainly learn many useful lessons from its experience. First, there is the need to establish an independent regulatory body like the National Broadcasting Council, which would deal with the institutional aspects of change. Such a body already exists and was created after the Media Experts Commission's mandate came to an end. The new regulator, Independent Media Commission, has been asked to provide expertise in drafting legislation on broadcast ownership, licensing procedures and regulation of programming (Office of High Representative, June 11, 1998, p.1). Between 1998 and 2002, only a draft of the Freedom of Information Act has been produced, and it has not yet been adopted by the parliament which may take several more years to accomplish this task (Office of High Representative, 2002, p.1). In the same four year period, the Independent Media Commission attempted a second task: the restructuring of the Radio-Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina and splitting it into two services, one catering to

the Muslim population and the other to the Croat population (Office of High Representative, June 10, 1998, p.1). Yet, whether this is a feasible solution for a population of only 4 million is doubtful because the revenues from license fees will be insufficient. The Polish experience has shown that maintaining even one national channel is difficult without asking in private broadcast interests. Though some forms of alternative funding could come from the government in the form of taxes as in the case of Canada, this relationship which has not yet been legally defined, threatens to continue the authoritarian *status quo,* in which ethnic biases continue to predominate in the broadcasts. The Polish example has shown that the *status quo* is no solution at all, and may further destabilize multi-ethnic Bosnia to the point where it may disintegrate. The only other alternative, according to Splichal and Jakubowicz, is a dual public-private broadcasting system, as in Poland, where private broadcasters would be required to live up to language and content rules (Splichal, 1994, p.128; Jakubowicz, 1995, p.47). One can only hope that a more active Media Commission will ultimately follow such a path. For the present, however, the Bosnian Independent Media Commission is the creature of the state, and its hands are bound.

Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have cable service, and this small country is probably not a very attractive market for investors. Nonetheless, many of its residents receive news and entertainment from a variety of foreign channels, via pirated satellite receivers. So far, there has not been any effort to regulate this practice. Tolerating such a large presence of foreign programming in foreign languages, demonstrates an astounding short-sightedness on the part of a regulator which has been created in an environment

where language is a key identifying mark. There is more hope in print journalism. In April 1999, six journalist associations currently existing in Bosnia adopted a Press Code. It is similar to that existing in Poland, and represents the first document which explicitly outlines the standards for new journalistic practices. It clarifies the notions of neutrality, objectivity and even-handed reporting. Despite this, some journalists continue to practice old-style journalism, although there are notable exceptions. Pluralism which independent journalism can bring about is, as Jakubowicz argues, very related to the institutional arrangements of the media. But it is not the only aspect which reinforces these practices (Jakubowicz, 1990, p.44). Splichal adds that there will be no change in reporting unless the media demand it in concert with the other civil society institutions (Splichal 1994, p.30). As we have seen from the case of *Dani* magazine, inadequate legislation to protect journalists and their sources can seriously endanger not only their integrity, but it can also threaten their lives.

# CONCLUSION

The last decade has brought about much change in former Yugoslavia. The imminent decline of central planning resulted in economic collapse, but the need for restructuring of economic and political systems went hand in hand with nationalisms, which resurfaced upon the introduction of new political parties. The country disintegrated into smaller units, which were formerly its constituent republics. I find it a strange coincidence that only a few days before I was to submit this thesis, Serbia and Montenegro dropped the name Yugoslavia in what they described as a restructuring effort (Vasovic, 2002, p.A10). There is, however, a greater significance in this act. It is the definite end to the Yugoslav era and signals an understanding that the disintegration process is complete and irreversible. Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, and Macedonia are now sovereign, and have been recognized by the United Nations and all Western governments.

The independent existence of these countries is marked by a struggle to find their place in the various European institutions and to participate in some capacity in European integration. In order to benefit from those memberships, the new countries are to bring the work of their institutions up to standards proscribed by their Western counterparts. Ten years later, all of them, except Slovenia, are far from being able to meet the criteria. Their economies are generally weak, their political institutions are not entirely reformed and their government posts are filled with members of the Communist *nomenklatura* who persist in securing their positions by means of political influence, coercion and threat.

Civil society is nascent, and unable to present itself as a dialectical opponent to the government.

The transitions proved to be much longer than the new leaders had promised, and many former Yugoslavs are becoming disillusioned. What they know for certain is that they lost much social security that they took for granted in the previous system, and that they are years apart from their neighbors in the West. The generation who saw Yugoslavia's economic prosperity in 1970s, looks back on it with nostalgia, because the failing economy and volatile political scene ridden with ethnic strife, left them without the retirements they can survive on, and with collapsing heath care system. The Communist experiment did not succeed. I remember reading a journalistic account describing an old poster of Karl Marx, which survived the change of political ideology in East Germany. The mark of a new era was the comment somebody added, which said: "Sorry, it seemed like a good idea!" To me, this captures the tragedy of many people who lived throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union who were caught up in these systems.

I consider myself fortunate to belong to a different generation, able to benefit from some of Yugoslavia's noteworthy accomplishments. I received solid primary and secondary education, which in many Western countries does not come without a high price. I lived through some of the years of "brotherhood and unity", which I and many of my friends understood as an idea which overcame the ethnic strife of Serbs, Croats and Muslims which boiled in earlier regimes, prior and during World War 2, rather than

Communist indoctrination at its best. Although we all recognized the need for political and economic change, we hoped that Yugoslavia would continue to exist, as we knew it. These hopes are now fond memories of the country we used to have, and they live on, mainly outside of former Yugoslav borders, in the hearts and minds of those who refused to succumb to Serb, Croat or Muslim nationalism, but who were young enough to be able create lives for themselves where such divisions do not matter.

Another indicator that one chapter of the history of the former Yugoslav republics is indeed over, lies in the fact that the three most important political players are no longer in power; Slobodan Milosevic is being tried at the International War Crimes Tribunal in the Hague, Franjo Tudjman died, and Alija Izetbegovic stepped down. However, looking back on those years raises a question why and how these autocrats came to power in the first place.

The Dayton Peace Accord signed in November 1995 recognized the media's crucial role in these leaders' rise to power, and the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Television became a tool more powerful than military weapons and the Dayton accord emphasized the need to reshape its role as part of the peace initiatives. Efforts to democratize the media were guided by the idea that an autonomous, pluralist system would not enable a new autocrat to solicit support from people based on control, fear and ignorance.

However, restructuring of the media systems was a difficult task. The leaders did not want to surrender what was indispensable to their rise to power, and many journalists were reluctant to give up their status of interpreters of social reality where they received government support. As much as it was ineffective, the work of the Media Experts Commission in Bosnia and Herzegovina was worth the effort because, at least, it pointed to the complexity and depth of change that needs to be undertaken. The Commission's strategies succeeded in bringing some diversification of opinion during the 1998 elections, but the day their regulations ceased to be in effect, the media fell back into their previous practices. This only argues in favor of Jakubowicz's model, encompassing aspects of institutional and social practices, which are to change under the guidance of a regulator able to provide continuous supervision and advice.

Efforts to restructure Bosnian media are underway, but they do not give much reason for optimism. They strongly resemble the programming autonomy of the republican centers during the Yugoslav experiment and they maintain the divisive notion of ethnic based channels. By failing to institute national broadcasts, the Yugoslav news media did not create a feeling of connectedness between the republics. Similarly in Bosnia, as we have demonstrated, ethnic channels fragment viewer groups and foment political instability. The ethnic denominator is prevalent in other aspects of public life as well. In education, for example, children learn three versions of history with opposing views on World War 2 and the most recent conflict. Ethnic based broadcasters will further deepen these rifts.

This is a serious concern for the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It can undermine the Dayton Accord which designed it as the country with three constituent ethnic groups, rather than three entirely independent solitudes. Current restructuring efforts are more in tune with the proposal put forth by Tudjman and Milosevic in 1990, by which Bosnia was to be carved-up and two of its thirds annexed to Serbia and Croatia. Alija Izetbegovic declined this plan, but the creation of ethnic broadcasters may be accomplishing that goal (Thompson, 1995, p.203).

If Bosnia is to continue to exist within its existing boundaries, these plans need to change. It needs a national broadcaster catering to all its citizens and watchdog journalism. This can only prevent creation of new authoritarian regimes such as existed before, and help create a functional civil society, which Yugoslavia lacked. The history has shown that the Communist experiment failed and its media systems proved to have had many the flaws. It has also been shown that successful media transformations are possible, as in the case of Poland. For those reasons, there is no excuse for repeating the same mistake and simply saying again "Sorry, it seemed like a good idea!"

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