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**Role of the Media and the Internet as Tools for Creating
Accountability to Poor and Disadvantaged Groups**

Katarina Subasic

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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2002

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REGION: FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

1. EVOLVING OF THE MEDIA AND THE INTERNET IN THE REGION

Media outlets in the former Yugoslavia, although relatively numerous for the country of 22 million people, were almost completely run and controlled by the state institutions in early 1990s, when the break of the ex-communist federation started.

Thus, it was hardly a big surprise that the media, both electronic and written outlets, have become the main tools of the regimes' propaganda in all the former Yugoslav republics during almost a decade of ongoing armed conflicts.

As the communist regime collapsed in 1990, nationalist parties that emerged as the strongest and the most influential forces in republics of former Yugoslavia won power and therefore took over control of the key media, unprepared at the time to transform into independent and free media.

In Serbia, the League of Communist turned into the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) led by communist leader Slobodan Milosevic won vast majority on the parliamentary elections, taking over the control of state-owned Radio-Television of Serbia (RTS), but also of the oldest and the most influential daily newspaper Politika and weekly NIN (the weekly later became independent), the daily Vecernje Novosti with the largest circulation, and state-owned news agency Tanjug.

Editorial leaderships loyal to the ruling party, and particularly to Milosevic himself, were established, imposing new journalism rules based exclusively on a loyalty to the ruling regime. Under such conditions, a number of prominent journalists and editors either quit or were fired from the state-controlled media, establishing new independent media outlets such as daily Borba (later Nasa Borba and Danas), weekly Vreme, Radio B92 and TV Studio B.

Therefore a parallel media system has been established that slowly but inevitably evolved in a strong and influential system of independent media, which eventually led to fall of Milosevic's regime ten years later.

But during his ten-year long authoritarian rule, Milosevic persecuted independent media, permanently trying to close them down or prevent their functioning by all

possible means in a bid to strengthen his grip on power through presenting only his own reality.

The first big attempt by Milosevic's regime to impose full control on the media outlets could be annotated on March 9, 1991, the day of the first major opposition demonstration in the Yugoslav capital Belgrade.

Milosevic used the police and the army to break down a protest of more than 100,000 of his opponents. The appearance of police and its excessive use of force turned the protest into a violence, resulting with deaths of one policeman and one demonstrator.¹

The only outlets that have tried to give an impersonal and objective view of what was happening in the town, were the daily Borba, and two semi-independent radio and TV stations at the time – Studio B and B92. (The B92 turned into independent radio shortly after, while Studio B was taken over by the regime).

Whereas state media either ignored or provided heavily one-sided information about the protests of March 9, 1991 and the following days, Borba reported on the parallel meetings in two parts of the town (of Milosevic's opposition and pro-Milosevic's supporters) with a headline: "Parents at Usce, children on Terazije."²

On the contrary, pro-government Politika, on the same date, reported the opposition rally under the headlines "Paid traitors" and "Serbia's traitors plant the seed of division."

After reporting on excessive use of violence by the police on the demonstrators, both TV station Studio B – which has broadcast unedited footage of the protest – and radio B92 – which has provided 24-hour live program from Belgrade streets – were raided and shut down by the members of notorious Milosevic's special police forces.

However, the protests continued and Milosevic allowed these two outlets back on air, thus unwillingly giving them a chance for more professional reporting. Thus Studio B, B92 and Borba, with their objective and full coverage of the protests, eventually pressured the Serbian parliament to discuss the protest, its consequences and eventually changes in the state media outlets.

The case was a rare example of media's significant role in tackling accountability of the government and police. Thanks to the independent media's strong public pressure, but also the opposition deputies, the interior minister was forced to resign, while the editorial team of the Serbian State television was replaced.

¹ Mark Thompson, Forging War p71

² Eric Gordy, The Culture of Power in Serbia, p 82

However, what seemed to be a victory for free media, did not have a lasting chance to survive. After few months of relatively moderate reporting, the coming conflict in Croatia, at the time still one of six Yugoslav republics, opened a space for Milosevic's propaganda machinery to stir up a nationalistic feelings, desperately needed for his goal to politically dominate the events in the federation.

On the other hand, having learnt a lesson on March 9, the regime has launched a persistent repression against independent media, trying to limit their influence at any price.

State controlled media, therefore turned into propaganda tools of Milosevic's regime, reporting only events favorable to the ruling party and along the line of official policy. Those media were given a role of stirring Serb nationalism and homogenizing public ahead of forthcoming conflicts.

Meanwhile, in Croatia, where pro-independence regime of nationalist Franjo Tudjman – later seen as Milosevic's political look-a-like – came in power in 1990, the media situation was almost the same in the eve of the conflict which was just about to burst.

As it was in Serbia, where the main television and radio station bore the state definition in its name Radio Televizija Srbije (radio television of Serbia RTS), in Croatia, former RTV Zagreb become Hrvatska radio televizija (Croatian radio and television HRT).

In the process of further disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, all the republic's TV centers turned into the national televisions: - Televizija Bosne i Hercegovine - Bosnian Television BHTV, Makedonska televizija – Macedonian television MTV, Televizija Crne Gore -- Montenegrin television RTCG, Televizija Slovenije Slovenian TV – STV.

The same situation was with the national news agencies -- TANJUG in Yugoslavia, HINA in Croatia, STA in Slovenia, BH Press in Bosnia -- each of the republics' leadership formed its main news service, thus taking full control over the flow of information.

All the national television stations were financed by the citizens, through various forms of subscriptions (in Serbia, the amount was added to the electricity bill), but no independent control of the program was established.

Slovenia may be considered as the only exception among former Yugoslav republics, as it has first started transition into democratic society and therefore

the authorities allowed establishing certain civic control – 25-member Council formed by the parliament, but composed of prominent representatives of the society – for its state television. Politicians and parliamentary deputies are not allowed to be members of the Council.³

In other republics, the editorial policy was fully in line with the one of the government, without a possibility for the opponents' opinion to be seen or heard. Financial interventions to the media budgets were away from the public eyes, while the news program was mostly devoted to the regime activities, and its desired presentation of the current political, economic and even cultural situation.

All the national televisions had another thing in common – using their program for strengthening of the national identity of the majority people and homogenization of the state policy faced with fastening disintegration of the former communist federation.

Problems of relations between political power, the media and forming of political will and public opinion have received quite a lot of attention in the territories of the former Yugoslavia, since the beginning of the crisis to its culmination in war.

Especially in the territory of the "reduced" Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro since 1992), two, euphemistically speaking, confronted attitudes have become differentiated: official policy and political elite are accused of using and abusing the media.

But they are also commended for "awaking the nation," while the media themselves are, in mutual references and various analyses, described as "patriotic" or "treacherous", "servants to the regime" or "foreign mercenaries," "war-mongering" or "peace-making," machinery for shaping the consciousness" or "conveyors of the true will of the people" etc.⁴

Although the main media outlets in the former Yugoslavia had a common start, a political development in various republics caused their different evolution. For example, in Slovenia, which has survived the fastest democratization in the past decade, the media followed the development of the society.

At the beginning of disintegration of ex-Yugoslavia, media in Slovenia, like in the other republics, played a significant role in favoring their political leadership's pro-independence policy.

³ Vladimir Babic, *Dosije (File)*, IX, March 2001, page 78

⁴ Djordje Pavicevic, *Media & War*, p 63

However, mainly thanks to the fact that the republic was not ethnically mixed as Croatia and Bosnia, journalists did neither use hate speech nor spread intolerance towards other nations.

The Slovenian media in early 1990s have mainly supported pro-independence movement, publishing biased reports and giving no opportunity to other side (pro-federal forces) to present its arguments. But as soon as the republic reached the status of independent state, the media turned towards more objective and professional journalism.

An important difference from other ex-Yugoslav republics was also a high-level awareness of Slovenian politicians of great benefits from a proper use of media. Unlike other republics' leaderships, Slovenian politicians were more open to media and provided almost all official information needed, being more transparent in their work than ever during the communist era.

Soon after Slovenia gained international recognition in 1992, a space was open for privatization of the existing media, as well as for founding the new ones with either domestic or foreign majority ownership. Media pluralism has been developing ever since, thus creating a sound environment for strengthening their independence from political circles.

Slovenians have in part exercised the privatization by issuing certificates to the citizens. Dailies' journalists, including pensioners, could get a matching number of the paper's shares in exchange for their certificates. Ljubljana's Dnevnik had the internal owners constituting a majority with about 56 percent of the shares. A rise in the value of the shares whose nominal worth at Dnevnik has risen by eleven times so far, has drawn the exterior would-be owners. They in turn bought off the interior owners' shares of which today they wield control packages.

While their business is well, the current newspaper owners choose not to interfere with the journalists' and editors' work.

As far as electronic media are concerned, Radio-television of Slovenia is the only outlet owned by the state. Once the most influential and important electronic media, the STV has lost such public status as it got competition in commercial POP TV, of foreign ownership.⁵

However, the process of establishing media fully independent from either political or financial structures is yet far away from the end. There are still attempts to control journalists and media outlets in Slovenia, but the level of once reached independence can hardly be reduced.

⁵ Vladimir Babic, Dosije, p 77

Contrary to Slovenia, in the republics affected by wars (Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia and Montenegro), the state control lasted much longer, practically until a downfall of nationalist regimes in power, mostly happening in the year 2000.

During that time, only local TV or radio stations tried to step aside from the general policy (Studio B, radio B92 in Serbia, radio 101 in Croatia, radio Zid in Bosnia), but their audience was limited due to technical and financial reasons.

The situation was almost the same with the written media outlets. The main daily newspapers in all the former republics were until mid1990s, fully controlled, both financially and in terms of editorial policy, by the regimes (Politika in Serbia, Vjesnik in Croatia, Dnevni Avaz in Bosnia).

These newspapers, whose circulation figures were mostly kept away from the public, were allowed access to cheaper production costs or subsidized by the state, while their editorial policy was almost fully focused on the coverage of the regime's figures, their opinions and general propaganda.

The regimes imposed different punishing measures, introducing repressive information rules and regulations.

In Serbia, Milosevic's regime introduced a notorious Information law in 1998, which has imposed a total of 31 million dinars (about 5 million dollars) fines to the independent media outlets for alleged "slander, provoking fear and spreading false information."⁶

In Croatia and Bosnia, the punishing method was slightly different. Authors and publishers of the articles or broadcasts unfavorable for the regime or its policy were often taken before the courts, or the authorities used more secretive measures by taking over their properties due to unclear legislation on ownership, like the case of once prominent daily Slobodna Dalmacija in Croatia.

In time of wars and spread conflicts, the situation allowed various paramilitary groups or shadowy organizations – always close to the regimes -- to impose more violent pressure on media.

In Banja Luka, capital of the Bosnian Serb entity Republika Srpska, editor-in-chief of the only independent daily Nezavisne Novine (Independent paper) Zeljko Kopanja was seriously injured after an assassination attempt in 1999 when a bomb was planted under his car, following paper's reports over the war crimes committed by the Serb forces during the Bosnian war.

⁶ Veran Matic, "Serbian media – Brief analysis"

In Belgrade, members of the paramilitary units of late Zeljko Raznatovic Arkan often threatened media outlets which had reported negatively of their commander, while several reporters were beaten. Also, Milosevic's son Marko burst into the offices of the private daily Glas Javnosti in 1999, raged with paper's report of his allegedly illegal activities.

The Internet although in increase throughout the world, has become more present not before the mid 1990s. In Bosnia and Croatia, due to a large international presence during the armed conflicts, the computers and the Internet have faster gained ground, but the ordinary people or those living in rural areas, have yet to get accustomed to them.

In Serbia, the Internet has become widely used during the massive, three-month long street protests against (former president) Slobodan Milosevic. As the regime tightened its grip on the media, his opponents used the authorities' failure to introduce control on the new media weapon, the Internet, thus allowing Milosevic's rivals to spread messages and news throughout the country and world.

But the worsening economic situation, bad technical conditions and not more than 100,000 computers in the country of almost 10 million, the Internet had less impact than expected, providing information to those who had already been considered as the rivals of the regime.

However, with the beginning of NATO bombing campaign on Serbia and its southern province Kosovo in spring 1999, as Milosevic's regime imposed censorship on the media, even closing down some of them (Radio B92), the Internet has been used as the main information tool.

Shut down just days after the beginning of the bombing campaign, the Radio B92 offered its audience information only on Internet, broadcasting reports that viewers and listeners were not able to find on TV or radio stations in the country. A number of web sites were set to inform both citizens of Serbia and users abroad about the situation, new bombings, victims etc.

The network of independent media outlets, grouped in the ANEM (Association of independent electronic media), headed by B92 editorial team, thanks to the strong international donations, has managed to build a wide database of news, exchanged on the Internet, as they were prevented from doing otherwise.

With its partners from a number of radio and TV stations throughout Serbia, the ANEM network exchanged reports through the Internet, sending even images

and sounds from one place to another, including Kosovo, risking even jail terms for uncensored information delivered out from the regime's eyes.

The most serious example of the censorship introduced by Milosevic's regime was the case of the independent journalist from the Serbian town of Kraljevo, Miroslav Filipovic, who was sentenced to seven years imprisonment for his articles published on the Internet, reporting of war crimes allegedly committed by the Serbian forces in Kosovo.⁷

In the months before Milosevic's ouster in October 2000, the possibilities offered by the Internet were used more than ever before, with almost all the regimes' opponents using it as the main tool for informing the public of the latest political developments.

In Slovenia, the richest and the most developed country in the region, Internet has been widely used by the population, but due to relatively normal and democratic media situation, there was no need for searching additional information through web sites.

Media in Slovenia has still to get used to employ Internet as a tool of their research. It even happens sometimes that prime minister or foreign minister announce some exclusive news on their official web sites, which goes unreported for a while by the media, due to their failure to visit the sites regularly.

2. ROLE OF MEDIA IN PROMOTING HATE AND SPREADING FEAR IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

With the economic downfall in most of the former Yugoslav republics, the public could hardly afford a single newspaper, not to mention two different ones. Thus the television and the radio have become the main tool of the regime's propaganda.

Ahead and during the wars in the former Yugoslavia, the so-called hate speech was widely present in the state-controlled media in Croatia, Bosnia and FRY (Serbia and Montenegro), offering their audience only the black and white picture of the current situation.

Inducing people to hate and fight other nations living in the region and spreading fear of atrocities that may have been done to them by other nations was the main editorial line for this propaganda machinery.

⁷ Filipovic was abolished by Milosevic's successor Vojislav Kostunica in October 2000

There was hardly any space for an independent or at least opposite opinion, while the domestic political and military figures and their activities were the only one deemed as proper and just.

One of the commonplaces of various interpretations of the post-Yugoslav war is that the propaganda, media, journalists or hate speeches substantially contributed to the beginning of the war.⁸

Similar techniques were used in the media on the both (Croatian and Serbian) sides.

A combination of euphemistic rhetoric and the presented visual coverage of the news items produced a number of important effects. First, the audience was actually not given the information on a specific event since the answer to one of the crucial questions, namely who was the actor of the event, went missing.

Second, the war was depersonalized, since the information referred to armed operations without explicitly speaking of the actors, both those who participated in their implementation or their victims.

Third, in this way "the danger" that someone from "our" side was pointed out as responsible and/or guilty was avoided.⁹

As the war in Croatia was raging, the HTV broadcast a very confusing image of the conflict. While the RTS reported on the conflict as "Serb brothers facing genocide in Croatia," the HTV informed its audience of a "Belgrade-fueled Serb rebellion leading to aggression on Croatia."

In the first months of the conflict in 1991, the HTV's audience was deprived of any images from the scene of the fighting.

Instead of offering visual documentation, HTV has become a powerful propaganda machinery creating images of war for the most of the population. The image of war was thus very intensive, emotional and generalized, describing destruction, corpses, suffering, resistance and courage ... in a metaphor, often without any indication of the exact place.¹⁰

There is no visible attempt to establish even the appearance of an impartial approach to war-related events: the reports are decisively and overly biased; they give only 'our side' of the story.

⁸ Zarko Puhovski, *Media & War*, p41

⁹ Nena Skopljanac Brunner, *Ibid*, p 251

¹⁰ Mark Thompson, *Forging war*, p 172

The enemy is always described using attributes or names with strongly negative connotations (Chetniks, Serbian terrorists, occupiers, the aggressor's forces, etc).

There is a marked reduction of images used in support of verbal expositions: stills or freeze-frames are used abundantly as the background for telephone and off-screen reports.¹¹

Both the RTS and the HTV exploited the term and meaning of "victimization" for its respective peoples. The most frequent stylistic tool in referring to Croatia is victimization: Croatia is depicted as a victim of the Serbian enemy ("Croatian people can no longer endure the terror" or simply "Croatia is a victim").

The opposite pole of the "symbolic universe" is constituted by Serbs and Serbia who are delineated as the main threat to Croatia and, in cultural/civilization terms, are foreign, opposed to Croatia.¹²

As the war progressed, Serbia was increasingly characterized as the main source of the conflict. The Yugoslav army, at the time still the defense force of the Yugoslav federation has become the second enemy, later more and more identified with Serbs and Serbia, which is expressed through the creation of new terms ("Serb-army", "Serb-communist army", "Great-Serbian-army", Serb-communist strategy etc.).

The RTS did almost the same, just the roles were different. The main message broadcast to its viewers was simple for them to understand: the Serbs in Croatia fought for a "just cause."

All the actions by the Serbs in Croatia were described as a "justified uprising" since "they did not wish to accept the position of second-rate citizens"; because they were "deprived of the rights they had had for centuries."

This inculpability undoubtedly matched the image of Serbs as victims: "burnt Serbian villages", "Serbian churches leveled to the ground", "endless columns of desperate Serbian refugees", pictures of massacred bodies of "innocent Serbian civilians."

The victims of the "other side" were never mentioned. The "others", even when civilians, were not victims, but enemies who wanted to "eradicate everything Serbian". In creating the image of the victim, a whole series of metaphorical stereotypical phrases with special semantic meanings was used: "hearths",

¹¹ Hrvoje Turkovic, *Media & War*, p 264

¹² Nenad Zakosek, *Ibid*, p 113-115

"infants", "sufferers", "martyrs", etc. (always with the obligatory designation Serbian).¹³

Sometimes, both TV stations broadcast the same images, but with a different roles. The HTV showed a compilation of foreign TV news of the day of transmission, presented usually with comments. Sometimes, it showed reports presented on the RTS.

Often, the RTS presented the same facts as Croatian TV, but with opposite ascription" -- the destruction of buildings were ascribed to the Croatian side, and dead people lying on the streets and the slaughtered civilians that were presented by Croatian TV earlier that night as Serb crimes, on Belgrade TV were presented as Croatian crimes.¹⁴

The situation was similar with the printed media outlets. The leaders of the national campaign were the main dailies: Politika in Serbia and Vijesnik in Croatia, both followed with other, usually high-circulation tabloid-type daily newspapers.

Sometimes, the media even used direct lies for spreading fear and hate. One of the most extreme example in Serbia was the news reported by a number of media outlets that in the hospital in the Croatian town Vukovar "40 Serbian babies were slaughtered."

The Reuters news agency, which disseminated the news without authorization, later on, when the 'news' was denied, confirmed that they were lies.

However, the effect of the propaganda was achieved: no matter if the 'news' was negated, its contents remained part of the myth of the 'criminal and genocidal' enemy which is evidently monstrous, thus deserving no mercy.¹⁵

The Croatian war was soon to be outrun by the reports of the coming conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A year after the first armed incidents in Croatia, Bosnia has become a scene of the bloodiest conflict in the post-war Europe.

Not only that the three peoples in Bosnia crossed their swords on the battlefield, the two of them – Serbs and Croats living in this former Yugoslav republic were strongly backed by their mother countries, now fully independent states of Croatia and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (comprising Serbia and Montenegro).

¹³ Nena Skopljanac Brunner, *Media & War*, p 140-143

¹⁴ Hrvoje Turkovic, *Ibid*, p 273

¹⁵ Jelena Djuric, *Ibid*, p175

Until the very beginning of the war in Bosnia, most of the media operating there was trying to give the most balanced view of the events happening in the other, war-torn regions.

Bosnia and its capital Sarajevo were a safe haven for the last remain of the former Yugoslavia – the JUTEL (YUTEL) TV station, produced and edited by a group of prominent reporters from all the former Yugoslav republics, who had tried to meet the basic professional demands, consulting independent sources and opposing divisions along the national lines.

But from April 1992, even JUTEL had to give up this goal. As the former Yugoslavia ceased to exist, the TV station – once established to preserve the common Yugoslav information space – lost the main reason for its existence.

Instead, the RTS and HTV grabbed the role of the main informant of their respective nations, while former TV Sarajevo became the Bosnian TV, which for months tried to avoid to be involved into divisions.

However, since the Bosnian Muslims were the only people who did not have the powerful backer in the neighboring state, the BHTV became the main promoter of the country's unity, which was the main goal of its Muslim-led leadership, but not of its two other peoples – the Serbs and the Croats.

The RTS and the HTV firmed their positions of the defenders of their national communities in Bosnia, presenting only information describing them as victims of the other ones, with no sympathy or any interest for Bosnia as a whole state.

The RTS again forced a defensive nature of the Serb activities in this conflict. The Serbs fought "for freedom, defending themselves and protecting their homeland from the Muslims who were waging a religious war in order to force the Serbs to join Islamic state and from Croats who wanted to unite with Croatia and whose anti-Serbian stance was already known" from the war in Croatia.

The RTS reporters used many expressions for listed enemies were numerous. (Two media researchers) Snjezana Milivojevic and Jovanka Matic noted the following: "villains, slaughterers, Ustashis, Islamic Ustashis, mujahedins, Jihad warriors, terrorist groups and Muslim extremists."

One of the RTS journalists, reporting from Herzegovina region, said: "Croat and Muslim forces want to destroy everything Serbian in this region. Terror, fanatic hate and physical and spiritual genocide against the Serbs in Herzegovina are a

basis for their political and military activities, as well as permanent aggression against the Serb territories.”¹⁶

The HTV used a similar approach, this time sharing the joint enemy with the RTS – the Bosnian Muslims. The Serbs were seen as enemies only occasionally or when the level of atrocities or inhuman military activities was too high and disturbing to be put aside.

Bosnian Croats were implicitly treated as ‘our side’ by the HTV while Bosnian Muslims were ‘enemies’, only referred to in negative terms: ‘Muslim snipers looking for inattentive victims,’ ‘the Muslim crime,’ ‘horrible Muslim crimes,’ while Bosnian Croats are described in a way that implies their status as victims.

Only Bosnian-Croat civilians and army people were shown and interviewed, mostly as witnesses. There was no attempt to present the Muslim side. Only Bosnian Muslims are reported ‘to have attacked’ Croats, thereby implying that they are the aggressors. If a Croatian victory or advance is mentioned, it is described as a ‘counterattack’, thereby implying it is the result of a defensive action.¹⁷

As the war went further, the media in Bosnia itself slowly took the grounds. In the government-controlled territory, beside the above-mentioned BHTV, only the daily *Oslobodjenje*¹⁸ and weekly *Dani*¹⁹ braved the ongoing fighting and provided mostly balanced reports of daily and major political events.

In the Bosnian capital Sarajevo, several radio stations, beside the government-run Bosnian radio – like Radio Zid from March 1993 – tried to compete with other media, but their audience was limited to power cuts, lack of batteries and the town itself.

The territory controlled by the Bosnian Serbs – self-proclaimed Republika Srpska -- was almost immediately covered with the signal of the Srpska Radio Televizija (Serbian radio and television)²⁰ which was under the full control of the Bosnian Serb leadership.

¹⁶ Thompson, *Forging war*, p 94-95

¹⁷ Hrvoje Turkovic, *Media & War*, p 265/6

¹⁸ From 1992 to 1995, *Oslobodjenje* won five major journalistic awards for independent reporting, fight against xenophobia, human rights and freedom of press. In 1992, it was awarded as “The world’s best newspaper”

¹⁹ *Dani* was awarded in 1993 as the best Bosnian media, while its editor-in-chief won Olof Palme award in 1998

²⁰ After the end of the Bosnian war in 1995, SRT became RTRS: radio television of Republika Srpska

While the RTS was sometimes trying to mingle their propaganda with journalistic elements, the SRT was openly promoting hate and intolerance, fully neglecting all the existing rules of reporting, offering their audience only the view marred with lies and insults to the other side.

When all the world media was reporting of Bosnian Serb-run detention camps for Muslims in summer 1992, the SRT described them as "collective centers for prisoners of war," showing the images only of men of fighting age or in some sort of uniforms.

Images of women and children, who were bussed out or just bluntly expelled from their villages, as well as of number of proven atrocities against civilians, were never shown to the audience.

During the siege of Sarajevo, one of the main SRT figures, late presenter and editor Risto Djogo has permanently repeated that the Muslims there were "bombing themselves."

After the massacre on the Markale market in Sarajevo²¹, Djogo brought an artificial leg to the studio, claiming that the Muslims had faked the incident in order to blame the Serbs for the incident, and proving such a hideous report by showing this leg to the audience.

One of the most notorious examples of Djogo's presentations was when the sound of (Bosnian President) Alija Izetbegovic's speech was followed by the images of a monkey.

When in 1993 the whole international community, but also Slobodan Milosevic and than Yugoslav president Dobrica Cosic²² tried to persuade the Bosnian Serb leadership to accept the so-called Vance-Owen peace plan for Bosnia, Djogo started the main news program with a gun pressed on his forehead.

Amazed audience heard a bang, and the screen went blank. Only seconds later, Djogo reappeared, saying: "This will happen to the Serb people and our state if our leaders accept the plan."

Another important source of information in the Bosnian Serb entity was SRNA news agency, run from their stronghold in Pale, and under the full control of their leader Radovan Karadzic.

²¹ a single grenade killed dozens of people on the main Sarajevo market

²² Many Serbs considered Cosic as the 'father of their nation' for his extensive analysis of the Serb people and their history.

SRNA was also providing various reports of military advances of the Bosnian Serb army, with "inside elements" for all the offensives and attacks, glorifying the soldiers and using verbal abuses for the enemies.

As many Bosnian Serbs were impoverished due to non-existing economy, the SRT radio was also an important provider of information. The radio, combining SRNA reports with extremely nationalist lyrics of folk music hits, also gave more attention to the Orthodox religion for the people who, at the time, returned en masse to the churches.

Perhaps one of the most extreme examples of propaganda and reporting whose only goal was to serve national and military interests was the case of Srebrenica in July 1995, less than six months before the end of the Bosnian war.

Following the principle that what was not seen or reported by the media did not really exist or happen, a huge part of the audience in Serbia which considered RTS the only "window to the world" did not have a clue of what happened in this Muslim-populated eastern Bosnian town.

As the world attention was fully focused on the mass deportation of Muslim civilians and still unclear number of victims estimated at between 6 and 8,000, both the Bosnian Serb media and Milosevic-controlled outlets in Serbia described it as a "liberation of the town run by Islamic fundamentalists," not mentioning at all any of wide atrocities committed during the weeks of Serb offensive.

Only six years later, the RTS viewers were shown what appeared to be one of the worst atrocities in Europe since the World War II, committed by the Serb forces they have believed were defenders of their nation.

Milosevic's propaganda used the same system for the Croatia's offensive on rebel-held Krajina in August 1995, when after a brief military actions, more than 150,000 Serbs fled their homes towards Bosnia and Serbia.

The RTS reported of the offensive in the 22nd minute of its half of hour long news program, while the mass exodus of the "brother Serbs" did not exist at all. At the same time the citizens of Serbia could see the convoys of refugees just looking through their windows.

One of the best proves of the impact of the propaganda masterminded by Milosevic was a survey done during more than three-year long Serb siege of Sarajevo.

The audience of the RTS was surveyed with a single question: "Who is bombing Sarajevo?" The answers were not surprising for those knowing the ways of

propaganda: 45% named Muslim and Croat forces, 14% Serbian forces, 24% said they did not know and 17% said they were not informed.²³

The wide-spread promotion of hate and intolerance and a syndrome of “closed eyes” for unfavorable news, culminated, in the case of RTS and other state-controlled media in Serbia, with the 1998-99 Kosovo war.

For the first time in almost a decade, the war was in Serbia’s yard. Kosovo, a southern Serbian province with majority ethnic Albanian population, has for years been promoted in the “cradle of the Serbian nation” and the “sacred land of the Serbs.”

But these high spirited terms were often only verbal, rare were those in Serbia who knew of repression by Milosevic’s regime on the Albanian population. The only incidents reported by the state media were those on the Serbs, widely presented both with images and in official statements.

Thus, the propaganda machinery has managed to create what was later described as a “turned over reality” – this reporting was aimed at convincing the Serbs that they were menaced and in danger by Albanian pro-independence “terrorists,” while the repression and crimes committed on the ethnic Albanian civilians were almost never mentioned in the state media.

The ethnic Albanians were mostly – and in some cases still are – called “Shiptars,” a term considered as a pejorative by the Albanians themselves. The ethnic Albanian guerrillas of the Kosovo Liberation army (KLA) were known as “terrorists” and “Shiptar fundamentalists,” while the reports of underground plans for terrorist actions, discovered in “successful raids of our police” were widely present in all the media.

One of the first major incidents in the Kosovo war – the murder of whole Jashari family in Drenica village – was presented by the state media as a “destruction of a terrorist nest of Adem Jashari.”²⁴

Those in Serbia who were watching only the RTS or reading the state-run papers, have rarely seen a village destroyed or burnt in a police action, hearing almost nothing about thousands of displaced civilians who had been fleeing their homes faced looking for a shelter.

Although several independent media outlets did try to report from Kosovo conflict with more balanced approach, hiring also local ethnic Albanian journalists

²³ Nena Skopljanac Brunner, *Media & War*, p 251

²⁴ Adem Jashari was considered as one of the founders of the KLA, but in the action, other members of his family, including women and children, were executed.

to inform their audience of the events in the province, their work was hindered with restrictive Information law, causing financial punishments for "spreading false reports."

Often, journalists and editors of independent media were interrogated by the police or even detained for a while in order to be frightened and to stop unbiased reporting in their outlets.

The increased police and army presence in Kosovo was seen by most of Serbia's population and state-controlled media as necessary while Albanian-language publications, the main source of information for the province's Albanian community, described it as growing repression aimed at rooting out their human rights and freedom.

It must also be noted that, for the Albanian-language media, incidents and attacks on the Serbs were almost non-existent, while the KLA members were described as "freedom fighters" and "martyrs for freedom of Kosovo."

Since the only official media outlet in Albanian language was also controlled by Milosevic's allies – the part of the TV program prepared and produced in the Kosovo capital Pristina by ethnic Albanians loyal to Belgrade regime – most of the population turned to neighboring Albania and its TV and radio stations as the main source for information.

Lacking other possibilities, the information service of Kosovo Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova's party has become Kosovo Information Center (KIC), which, besides reporting of various incidents in the province, has also turned into strong propaganda machinery of the Albanian side.

In the absence of independent confirmation of a number of victims or their identities, the KIC, sometimes exaggerating and fuelling a toll for various incidents, has also stirred the atmosphere of fear among civilian population.

The two conflicting propaganda have crossed their swords in the notorious Racak case, which led to the international community's firm will to end the Serbian repression in Kosovo.

For the Serbs, the 42 dead in Racak were terrorists, preparing attacks on the police, army and civilians, who were killed in fighting, while for the ethnic Albanians, but also for most of the international community at the time, the victims were mostly civilians.

The Racak case served as a direct cause for the start of NATO bombing campaign on Yugoslavia that was launched in March 1999. For Milosevic and his

regime, it was the start of the real war: state of emergency was introduced, the effective censorship was in power, and almost all the information was fully controlled by the government representatives.

The RTS has now openly, and without any limits, began to promote anti-Western propaganda, broadcasting edited images of then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright as a witch, US president Bill Clinton as Adolph Hitler and British Prime Minister Tony Blair as his puppet.

All the media, including those rare independent ones that were still functioning, was ordered to use a government-written manual:

"Instead of: 'NATO forces, international forces, use: The aggressor's soldiery which follows the example of its Nazi and fascist predecessors.'

Instead of 'Deployment of NATO forces in Kosovo,' use: 'Occupation.'

NATO does not miss military targets; NATO targets and hits civilian buildings (apartment buildings, private homes, refugee camps, hospitals, schools, and others).

Instead of 'Damaged buildings and other facilities, use Barbaric destruction, murderous aggression.'

Our forces (in Kosovo) are not 'active in the region of...', but 'are defending citizens and liberating the region from terrorists.'

In reports from Kosovo, NATO is not bombing our positions, but ethnically mixed towns and villages, causing a great number of civilian casualties."²⁵

A manual for journalists instructed them to report on fleeing of civilians in Kosovo as running away from the bombs. When thousands of ethnic Albanian civilians were stripped of their identity cards or passports at the borders with Albania in late April 1999, media reports said they had thrown their documents away, in order to present themselves as refugees.

Even foreign media outlets that were allowed to work in the country were a subject of control and surveillance. Reporters were escorted by the government or military officials to the bombing sites, with almost no possibility to confirm the given tolls.

²⁵ Manual for media issued by Serbia's Information ministry: TERMS THAT SHOULD BE MORE FREQUENTLY USED IN CONNECTION WITH NATO AGGRESSION

State media widely reported of a number of shot down drones, planes and missiles belonging to NATO. The losses among the Yugoslav forces were restrictively reported, while the number of civilian victims was sometimes conflicting.

When NATO announced that the RTS was a legitimate military target as a propaganda tool of Milosevic's military machine²⁶, Tatjana Lenard, one of the editors of the RTS informative department, went on air, challenging NATO officials to "do their job, as we here, will stay on ours."

Two weeks later, the RTS building in central Belgrade was bombed, in a controversial attack in which 16 employees – none of them journalists – had been killed.

Not only the RTS reported of the event in the 23rd minute of its prime news program, hiding from its own public the severe incident, but they used it as a strong argument abroad that the journalists had been targeted in the campaign.

The most obvious, but also the most oblivious propaganda campaign came on the last day of the bombing campaign, when an excited presenter told the audience: "I congratulate you the peace."

As Belgrade forces began to pull out from Kosovo, the audience was told that "our brave and smart leadership has brought us to the victory and we have won! NATO was forced to stop the bombings."²⁷

Milosevic himself appeared on the state television to address the nation, giving a speech that was re-broadcast every hour, in order to fully convince the exhausted population that the defeat should, in their eyes become the victory.

"We have helped the United Nations to gain back their role in the world peace by allowing its troops to come to Kosovo," Milosevic explained to the audience the fact that actually NATO troops would replace his notorious security forces in the province.

His explanation was used by the state media later on as an indubitable fact, which should not ever be questioned.

Again, a new exodus of the Serb population, this time from Kosovo, fearing reprisals from the ethnic Albanians for years of repression, was less than covered by Milosevic's media.

²⁶ NATO spokesman Jamie Shea

²⁷ RTS prime time news program on June 10th 1999

The refugees were coming to Serbia in thousands, getting no attention from those who were now in charge of promoting Milosevic's role as a peacemaker.

In the latest conflict in the Balkans, the ethnic Albanian rebellion in Macedonia, that erupted in February 2001, the media outlets in this former Yugoslav republic which has been spared from the conflicts in the past decade, tried for a while to keep a balanced approach.

But after the first victims, media from the both sides "gave up their professional standards for ethnic loyalty." In such cases, the primary professional principle was to be with "our own kin and for us."

One of the first clear examples of different reports by Macedonian and ethnic Albanian media was the police action in August on a suburb in the capital Skopje in which five people - ethnic Albanians -- were killed and five detained.

The incident, as reported by various media, had only one thing in common: the number of victims and detainees. Macedonian-language media, both those close to the government and private ones, headlined their reports: "Five terrorists liquidated in Skopje" or "Police killed five Albanian terrorists," while the articles said that the Macedonian security forces had killed five men in cross fire, as their units had been shot at during a search of a suspected house.

The Macedonian-language media also insisted that a large amount of arms and explosives had been found in the house, which, according to the police statement, should have been used in "terrorist actions" in Skopje.

However, the Albanian language media reported on the "execution of innocent Albanians in a brutal action by the Macedonian police on the Halimi family." One of the witnesses was quoted as saying that the police units had "taken money and gold," with no reports of stashed arms found.

In its Albanian-language program, Macedonian state television MTV 2, reported that the guerrillas of the National Liberation Army (NLA) had been seen in the area "to protect civilian population from Macedonian paramilitaries."

The Albanian-language TV station Koha reported that the police "used extreme brutality," while one ethnic Albanian deputy, Mevqan Tahiri, was quoted as saying that the action "was a massacre, as the five had been killed in sleep, with no possibilities to surrender."

Another clear example of ethnically-biased reporting was the case of the attack on the Macedonian army convoy on August 8, when 10 soldiers were killed.

Macedonian-language media reported of "criminal and perfidious attack, hideous murder by the NLA terrorists."

The media widely quoted condemnation by the Macedonian political parties and international organizations, with TV SITEL strongly criticizing the Albanian political parties' silence over the incident.

They also noted that the incident, which came only five days before the signing of the internationally-brokered peace accord for Macedonia, would be a serious threat for the agreement to come to life.

Nova Makedonija daily described the attack as a "bloody feast by demons of evil," committed by the "Albanian butchers thirsty for blood, who do not want peace and cease fire, but understand only a language of hate."

Private daily Dnevnik went further with criticizing the authorities in the editorial headlined "Macedonians chose between freedom and death," building up anti-Western propaganda, whose officials it accused of "supporting Albanian terrorists who should not be trusted."

At the same time, the Albanian-language media gave almost no publicity to the incident. TV ART, just briefly reported of the incident, showing archive images of the highway where the attack had happened.

But all the media widely quoted the NLA guerrillas who had denied their involvement in the attack, claiming that the "soldiers were killed in panic, since the site was attacked by Macedonian army helicopters."

Compared to similar examples in Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia, the case of Macedonia seemed to be even more complicated, since the media scene has been carefully built, under the supervision of the international organizations.

But apparently, the ethnic conflict has managed to seriously hurt all the achievements that have been reached so far. Even now, as the shaky cease-fire survived three months, the media on both sides seemed not to be eager to calm down their language.

3. MEDIA AND INTERNET ROLE IN THE DECLINE OF MILOSEVIC'S POWER AND EVENTUAL ARREST

Although constantly threatened with the pressure by Milosevic's regime, which has increased even more after the end of the bombing campaign in June 1999, several independent media outlets, embraced by the public interested in some

other presentation of the daily events, have fought for survival, using all possible resources to obtain financial and technical support for their work.

Both printed and electronic media outlets faced constant threats and punishing measures, being prevented from an easy access to the market, with the production costs for the newspapers and magazines even ten times higher than for the state-controlled ones.

Those who have survived had to turn mostly to the international donations, thus being an easy target for the state propaganda that accused them frequently of being Western puppets and favoring the false truths.

Thanks to the repressive information law, a number of media introduced what analysts later described as "self-censorship," – avoiding to directly link the regime's officials with information that could be seen as "insulting, inflammatory or libel."²⁸

In the months ahead of the September 2000 elections, the opposition parties, independent media and all Milosevic's rival have found another possibility to communicate with public: the Internet.

For thousands of Yugoslavs, the Internet has become the only place they could find all the necessary election data, where they could listen to banned radio stations, check voter registers or examine candidates' programs and promises.

Providers estimated that – at the time -- some 400,000 people were using the Internet, but experts said that the number of those with the access to the web could be twice as high.²⁹

The first to discover the opportunities of the web were media outlets: as the pressure increased, the independent radio B92, seized by the government three times in its 11-year long history, broadcast its program only on the Internet, providing also daily news bulletins in Serbian and English, as well as interviews, video footage and reports from the country and abroad.

Than Bosnian Serb weekly Reporter, writing extensively of Milosevic's regime misdealing, was banned by the Serbian Information Ministry from being sold in Serbia proper.

The weekly then reappeared in the mailboxes of its electronic readers, who were receiving it in an electronic format.

²⁸ Serbia's Information law

²⁹ AFP article on September 20, 2000

Trying to enable access to sometimes vital information that cannot be heard on the state-controlled media, groups of young enthusiasts have set up their own web pages to compete with the professionals.³⁰

Also, a number of non-government organizations campaigning for "democratic and fair elections," offered analysis and pre-election prognosis, as well as listing the "rights and duties of a real voter."

The student-led opposition movement Otpor (Resistance) offered reports of frequent raids of its premises and of the detention of its members by the regime, which refuses to register the group as a political movement, branding it instead a "fascist and terrorist" group of "pro-NATO mercenaries."³¹

The Center for Free and Democratic elections (CESID) provides rules and regulations regarding the vote, and offered preliminary results of the vote at its site.³²

The opposition parties fighting against Milosevic also launched several Internet sites, aimed at boosting turnout at the polls.³³

Milosevic's Socialist Party, as well as its allies also discovered the Internet, but their presentations were conservative, slowly updated, while many young opponents used email addresses to send insulting messages to the leadership.

Faced with growing support for the opposition and its candidate Vojislav Kostunica, Milosevic and his regime reached for a measure proven in times of other major crisis in the country.

Foreign reporters were not given visas to enter the country, while a number of those already in it were expelled.

But after the September 24 vote, when it has become clear that Milosevic's regime would fall, even journalists loyal to him begun rebelling in the aftermath of the opposition election victory.

In the biggest revolt at the time, 300 employees at Serbian state television and radio, RTS, reportedly went on strike a day before the huge popular uprising in Belgrade on October 5, demanding an overhaul of the station's editorial policy.

³⁰ www.freebgd.net, www.freeserbia.org

³¹ www.otpor.com

³² www.cesid.org.yu

³³ www.izborise.co.yu

"Radio Belgrade's informative programs offer a one-sided and twisted view of events, and are therefore incorrect, " the statement issued by protesters said.

A week after the elections, 50 journalists from the pro-regime Vecernje novosti demanded their editorial board become more objective. The journalists called for a "return to the elementary ethical and professional principles of journalism."³⁴

They said they were "no longer prepared to fool the public, with a virtual and upside-down Serbia."

The state media revolt came as a surprise given its pre-electoral support for the regime. Pro-government radio and television stations allocated more than 90 per cent of electoral time slots to the ruling coalition.

The independent media have dismissed the unprecedented protests as cynical opportunism by regime journalists who fear opposition retribution if Milosevic is defeated.³⁵

Thus, after Milosevic bowed down to the pressure from the streets and acknowledged his defeat, his main propaganda tools quickly switched sides. As hundreds of thousands were still on the streets, the former opposition leaders and independent reporters took control of the RTS, the main daily Politika and other outlets one by one.

After weeks, or even months of being run by "crisis committees"³⁶, the media set up its own managing boards, elected new editors and began to learn again the lessons of professionalism.

One of the first immediately noticeable results of the political changes of October 5, 2000, was opening up of the state and quasi-state broadcasters and print media in Serbia to the representatives of former opposition bloc and NGO sector.

Thus, in the days leading to Milosevic's arrest, and later extradition to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in June, the public has been slowly, but thoroughly informed first of a number of financial and corruption acts that have marred his rule.

³⁴ Free B92 report October 5, 2000

³⁵ IWPR report October 5, 2000

³⁶ Boards set by reformers and independent reporters to take over from pro-Milosevic's editors and managers

These reports widely outnumbered those of crimes committed against civilians in a series of wars in the former Yugoslavia, but this topic has also begun to be investigated by the media.

The media began closely to follow and criticize new authorities, controlling their each move and pointing out at failures in the most sensitive issues, putting pressure on them to bear responsibility and change their policy or replace those responsible for it. The issues of are the major ones tackled by the media.

More often than before, journalists are nowadays looking for independent experts' opinions and explanations, comparing statements and providing different views to the public.

According to the estimates of experts in criminology, we may assume that investigative journalism delving into crime and corruption will increasingly expose journalists to grave risks.

Namely, during the Milosevic era when top police officials were involved in criminal activities and corruption, criminals were not particularly concerned about articles in the press which might expose them because the judiciary and the police were unable to prosecute them as these institutions were steeped in corruption themselves.

Today, however, a press article may indeed cost some criminal or corrupt public servant his freedom so they would stop at nothing, including physical liquidation of "misbehaving" journalists.

Serbian independent journalists have remained the most consistent critics of corruption, war crimes and the ways in which Serbian *nouveaux riches* have amassed immense wealth during the past decade. Their fierce defence of acquired privileges leads to a conclusion that investigative journalism in Serbia is becoming an increasingly dangerous job.³⁷

After the change of the regime in Serbia and Croatia, the situation in this two former Yugoslav republics has improved, but a number of examples still showed authorities' attempts to control the media outlets.

These pressures could not be compared with the ones during the authoritarian regimes of Milosevic or late Croatian President Franjo Tudjman, but still, in the lack of proper rules and regulations, the media position was still far from being safe.

³⁷ Veran Matic, "Serbian media Brief analysis"

For example, Croatian weekly Nacional initiated the affair of cigarette smuggling in the Balkans, in which both Serbian prime minister Zoran Djindjic and Montenegrin president Milo Djukanovic have reportedly been involved. Only the Montenegrin opposition daily Dan reprinted the series of articles, and just few months after that, the paper's editor Vladislav Asanin came under judicial process for slander and later was sentenced to two-year suspended sentence of five months.

Following this trial, Asanin was sued by Montenegrin President Milo Djukanovic for slander, and was, on December 6, 2001, sentenced by a local court, to three months in prison.

Therefore it should be no surprise that Belgrade media lent next to no publicity to the affair, some of them (Vecernje Novosti) did not even mention Djindjic's involvement.

Serbia has yet to adopt a new Information law, as the repressive one was revoked by the new authorities, while the federal Yugoslav government has still failed to reconsider frequencies given to a number of pro-Milosevic's media during his regime.

The media that used to be under Milosevic's control have nowadays been mostly controlled by the people from the (Serbia's ruling coalition) DOS, but showed not much willingness to get reformed, Director of the Program for the Balkans of the International Crisis Group Mark Thompson said.

Belgrade authorities must speed up the adoption of necessary legislation. Urgent revision of the frequency allocation procedure for the broadcast media was among priorities of the process of the media's democratic transformation.

Comparing situations in the state-run media in the states emerging from the former Yugoslavia, Serbia ranked at the bottom of the list.³⁸

However, despite an obvious improvement, there have still been examples of inflammatory reports or sensational journalism. One of Serbia's dailies with the highest circulation, private Glas Javnosti, still report of "shiptars" in relation to ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, backing this vocabulary with the explanation that the word means Albanian in the Albanian language.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY ISSUES ADDRESSED BY MEDIA IN THE REGION

Considering the situation in which most media in former Yugoslavia were in last 10 years due to the war surrounding, they have had neither conditions nor

³⁸ Report by Danas newspaper, June 2001

strength to help increasing accountability of key institutions in implementing policies that were not discriminatory to the less advantaged groups.

Those rare independent media who have sometimes addressed the accountability of army and police forces for atrocities committed during the conflicts, were threatened and even found themselves in life danger, and therefore forced to cease doing so until "better times."

Media outlets in Slovenia, however, were the only one enjoying more favorable conditions and therefore could be researched for the main task of this study.

Through a decade of democratization, both of society and media, Slovenian politicians and institutions have learned to be afraid of media. Media have become very influential, thus forcing institutions to make public some events and information, in order to avoid accusations of trying to hide something.

Such fear is somehow one of the main motives for politicians to behave accountably.

There is, however, an exception. Police officials, who seem not to have full control over individual actions of policemen, have often been criticized by media following frequent incidents in which they exceed its power or beat those arrested.

The independent weekly Mladina has a regular section dedicated to reports of the police's abuse of power: of citizens who were arrested (sometimes even by mistake) and beaten with no reason before taken to a police station.

The reports often prompted police to launch internal investigations or at least to provide their version of the alleged incident.

Mladina has often reported about living conditions of illegal immigrants arrested in an attempt to enter the country. A number of such reports and following interventions of international organizations, the police was forced to renovate the building in capital Ljubljana where those people are accommodated.

Abuse of power by the police, from individual beating to illegal wiretapping, is one of key issues tackled by media in order to increase accountability. The journalists often address issues of corruption and state-owned banks' wrongdoing.

The most effective method employed by the media in order to rise accountability of key institutions and actors appeared to be a permanent coverage of their work, followed by more detailed investigative reporting.

The weekly Mladina, known as one of the best and most professional weeklies even in the communist Yugoslavia, has remained a leading media outlet in Slovenia in its attempts to increase accountability of key political and financial institutions and individuals.

In July 2001 Mladina reported of an incident when an Amnesty International official in Ljubljana, Inacio Bintchenda, had been beaten by skinheads, while police launched a probe into "ordinary fight." The report provoked wide reactions, including president Kucan and other top state officials' ones.³⁷

Last year, Mladina published a copy of counterfeit passport bought by a weekly's reporter on the black market for 4,000 DEM (2,000 dollars). The magazine accused the Interior ministry officials of being involved in the shadowy business.

Financial independence from the state funds, as well as legislative regulations, enabled media to gain a respective level of autonomy that can hardly be revoked.

Despite huge improvement in comparison with their colleagues in other countries of former Yugoslavia, state officials in Slovenia are still trying from time to time to influence media and to put a pressure on journalists. So far they usually fail in doing so.

In mid October, chairman of the Committee for foreign affairs in Slovenian parliament, Jelko Kacin, tried to pressure manager of state-owned TV to change a part of the program, but eventually became only a target of cartoons in several newspapers.

An opposition leader, Janez Jansa, criticized reports from Washington and Kabul of TV and Radio Slovenia on anti-terrorist campaign, but it only provoked a number of media reactions on Jansa's attempts to influence media policy.

But certainly, the most serious example of putting pressure on journalists in post-communist Slovenia would be the case of Miro Petek, journalist of Mariborska Vecer daily.

After publishing a number of investigative reports on various affairs and corruption cases, Petek was, in March 2001, beaten in front of his house by two unknown attackers.

³⁷ Mladina, editions 27 and 28, July 9 and 16, 2001

Police has yet to find the attackers, while various human rights and journalist organizations insist that if the case remain unsolved it would strengthen self-censorship among journalists in Slovenia.

The self-censorship has already been marked as the most serious problem of free press in Slovenia in the US State Department's annual report on human rights for year 2000.

The pressure that journalists and international organizations imposed on the authorities related to the case resulted with president Kucan's and prime minister Drnovsek's new public denouncement of the incident in mid-October.

The Slovenian parliament also established a special commission to clear up the case, political circumstances that have led to hushing up the incident and delay of the investigation results.

As far as the media in other republics are concerned, particularly Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia, some progress has been made since political changes in 2000, but they are still very far away from serious outlets that can help increasing accountability of key institutions.

Even in such situation that media throughout former Yugoslavia have shared for 10 years, few of them, mostly independent ones, had made a number of attempts to increase the accountability of key institutions, often risking to be shut down by the regime.

Beside rare investigative reports, as one of the most effective methods to address the issues of accountability, media in Serbia have been trying to increase institutions and politicians' accountability by various actions.

For example, in 1999 all independent media in Serbia have decided to boycott Radical party's activities, than a member of Milosevic's ruling coalition, and its leader ultra-nationalist Vojislav Seselj, due to his intolerant policy, hate speech and threats to all kinds of disadvantaged groups.

For more than a year, Seselj, deputy prime-minister at the time, and non of his party officials, many of them ministers in the government, did not appear in the independent media.

The result of the campaign, though boosted with forthcoming elections, was that the party at least slightly changed its behavior while its officials seemed to take more care of their statements.

Being financially exhausted by former regimes' bids to root out their role and influence, media were forced to neglect investigative journalism, but has begun to change with improvement of their position after political change in the region.

Investigative reporting has become a main method to steer up accountability of powerful actors. A number of reports has appeared in Croatian, Bosnian and Serbian press and electronic media uncovering various affairs in politics, judiciary, economy, police and military fields, supported by a numerous of evidence and pressuring the actors to explain the public the issues they have showed interest in.

Journalists more often than before are looking for independent experts' opinions and explanations, comparing statements and providing a public different views.

However, the situation in state-controlled or financed media has failed to improve yet.

Until Milosevic's ouster, but also the power changes in Croatia and Bosnia, only the independent media were tackling the sensitive issues of ethnic minorities' rights, war crimes and corruption.

The independent weekly Reporter and daily Nezavisne Novine in the Bosnian Serb entity Republika Srpska, as well as Belgrade daily Danas, weekly Vreme and radio B92, were, after the power change, sometimes, but still rarely joined by other media in investigation of issues until recently forbidden or fully neglected during the nationalists' rule.

In Serbia, with the fall of Milosevic's regime a direct political control of media was removed, so the most influential media bowed to a dominant public opinion in favor of changes and supporting new authorities.

Nowadays, there are more similarities among the media, particularly informative ones, than differences. Several reasons are preventing significant media diversity: absence of economic development; media's dependence on authorities that gives no space for its autonomy and general political culture and "professional ideology" of journalists themselves.

In such environment, the media still more naturally function as "state apparatus" aimed at transferring messages from the top to the public, rather than to function as an instrument of public.

Media are still obsessed with politics and political events and so-called big issues of state and national importance (survival of federal state, state sovereignty,

cooperation with the Hague tribunal...), while topics important for citizens' interests are neglected.

In addition, professional knowledge of journalists themselves lacks a concept of diversity reporting.³⁸

There has been no hate speech now as it was typical for the state media functioning in previous regime. But what is more important is a lack of readiness in media to cover the issue of ethnically motivated war crimes.

So far, only B92 and ANEM are active in following this issue, as well as some independent TV productions (VIN, TV network, URBANS). There is no political will to face what has been done in behalf of the nation to other nations.

B92 has launched a weekly TV program "Truth, accountability and reconciliation," broadcasting independent or foreign-produced documentaries of war crimes committed in former Yugoslavia, analyzing a role of the Serbs and responsibility of the authorities.

The program prompted top officials of new administration to, at least verbally, acknowledge that Serbia has to be somehow taken accountable for war crimes and distance itself from the previous regime's nationalistic policy.

Another example of independent media attempts to increase accountability both for what was done by Serb forces and authorities in wars in former Yugoslavia, but also for slowness of new administration in performing crucial reforms in police, judiciary and political system, is weekly Reporter.

It has published a series of investigative reports of war crimes committed in Kosovo and Milosevic regime's attempts to hide them. The magazine uncovered in July that three brothers of Bitiqi family, the US citizens of ethnic Albanian origin, had been killed in June 1999 by Serb police forces and dumped in a mass grave in eastern Serbia.

The report forced interior minister Dusan Mihajlovic to order full investigation and provide all details of the incident for the media.

Reporter has for more than a year been publishing a series of articles under the joint title Catharsis, interviewing victims or perpetrators of the crimes, former officials or foreign and local reporters who had dared to cover these topics.

³⁸ Jovanka Matic, Institute for Social Sciences, Belgrade, "Representing of 'others' in media in Serbia and Montenegro

However, not always media investigative reports came as a result of their own initiative. Although Serbian media uncovered and widely reported on several mass graves of ethnic Albanians, killed in Kosovo and later dumped in Serbia,

they stopped short in forcing the authorities to find and punish those responsible for those crimes.

The discoveries of mass graves are political instrument used to ensure support for cooperation with the ICTY rather than a result of more serious readiness of media to put this topic on their agenda.³⁹

The independent journalists launched two important campaigns even during Milosevic's regime and both have still been underway: "Where is Ivan Stambolic"⁴⁰ and "Who killed Slavko Curuvija"⁴¹. Both campaigns forced the police officials to promise a financial award of 150,000 dollars to those providing any information on perpetrators of those crimes, as well as of dozens of other politically-motivated killings.

But beside those attempts to increase accountability of the police or judiciary, media in Serbia have still failed to reach significant role as a controller of the authorities.

Political "others" are ignored in the Serbian media. Like in previous regime, the opposition, as the most obvious political "other," does not have guaranteed legitimacy. The opposition is presented as a danger for new direction of society's development, but the most often as – unnecessary.

Multiculturalism in media exists mainly because it is a political orientation of the new authorities. It is given publicity and promotion through reporting on political activities of state organs and politicians, while media very rarely separately contribute to promotion of issues of public interest.

There is no analytic approach to the issue of position, rights and life of national minorities. The topic is mainly covered through official stands of state organs. Issue of ethnic Hungarians has been covered the most, but mainly due to their significant political activity at Serbian political scene.

³⁹ Jovanka Matic, Ibid

⁴⁰ Ivan Stambolic, president of Serbia in 1980s, was kidnapped in August 2000 and his fate remained unclear until now. Police investigation both during Milosevic's and post-Milosevic era gave no results

⁴¹ Slavko Curuvija, journalist and publisher of private daily Dnevni Telegraf, a fierce critic of Milosevic and his regime, was killed in April 1999 by unknown men. The investigation has yet not led to the culprits.

Media are closed within their monocultural ghettos – each is turned towards its own ethnic community and there is no communication at all among them.

The minorities are mainly covered through reporting about incidents such are incidents involving Gypsy population, Jewish people etc.⁴²

Even less change was made in a promotion of religious “others.” The Orthodox religion and its church, which had even before had a central position in being promoted as a part of national identity (of the Serbs), were getting the most of publicity nowadays also.

What is new though is a promotion of official affirmation of clericalism coming mainly from the federal president and federal minister of religions. The difference is that incumbent president goes to the church and each his appearance in a religious context gets enormous publicity.⁴³

Other religions and religious choices are completely in the second plan and ignored.

Political switch of power in Croatia brought even less change in Croatian media than it was the case in Serbia.

Regrettably, we have not moved off the starting line even a year and a half after the power takeover. HRT continues to own the ether and system of transmitters unquestionably, as well as Croatian Radio, whose local studios lost all contact with their communities to turn into mere repeaters of the central propaganda.

Naively, people thought that changes were bound to arrive through the mere changeover of power-wielders and that the liars and propagandists totally displaced in journalism would end up in “the lumber room of history” and the HRT become a public service (instead of a party-run one).

All the promises were failed: the propaganda continues to pour from the screen, delivered by the same figures which have been piling up untruths on the public over the past years.⁴⁴

The independent media in Croatia, as their counterparts in Serbia and Bosnia, have remained the only critics of key political, financial and social institutions, but with limited influence since the authorities, as in Serbia, failed to create fair conditions that would enable all the outlets to compete from the same starting point.

⁴² Jovanka Matic, Ibid

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Dosije, X, p. 78

In Bosnia, the situation is slightly different, but not more encouraging. The two entities: Bosnian Serb republic Republika Srpska and the Muslim-Croat Federation have for almost five years shared a joint media space, but almost no outlets function jointly. Both the entities have their own state TV stations, and only due to the international control of the media space, the images and news from the other side could appear on the programs.

The permanent working permits for the BiH electronic media are issued by the Regulative Commission for Telecommunications and Media (CRA) which is operating under the patronage of the Office of High Representative (OHR).

In addition to issuing permits, it has the right to fine the media and ban their broadcast. The measure could influence issuing of permanent permits and editorial policies.

If someone disobeys its decision, the agency is enabled to prompt through the OHR the troops of the Stabilization Force (SFOR) to come in and switch the station transmitters off or confiscate the equipment over a short term.

By contrast, print media in Bosnia are more liberal than the electronic ones since they do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Regulatory Agency.

Research journalism has mainly been carried out by the four influential weeklies, two based in Sarajevo: Slobodna Bosna and Dani, and the other two in Banja Luka: Reporter and Nezavisne Novine. Boasting similar circulation and being sold in both entities, these newsmagazines have to compete mutually for quality and readers alike.⁴⁵

The four weeklies are practically the only ones in Bosnia that really try to increase accountability of both war-time and incumbent leaderships in both entities.

Investigating smuggling and corruption affairs that have involved war-time leaders at all sides, the magazines uncovered reasons to wage or continue conflicts that are quite different from officially proclaimed goals of "protecting national interest" and "defending the homeland."

However, still violent post-war environment represents a permanent threat to those media that have been trying to increase accountability, thus creating atmosphere of fear among reporters in order to prevent such media

⁴⁵ Dosije X, p75

development. The main threats come from still strong extreme groups on all sides that are not openly active only due to strong international presence.

The independent media in all former Yugoslav republics have persistently promoted anti-war policy and tolerance, insisting on accurate information, non-biased news and looking for all-sides opinion. Those media have started uncovering stories about war crimes at the time when it was extremely dangerous, calling to accountability of those responsible.

5. CONDITIONS IN WHICH ACCOUNTABILITY CAN BE STRENGTHENED

Painful experience of media in former Yugoslavia may serve as a classic example of undemocratic regime's methods to destroy freedom of press, establish control over flow of information and therefore establish unlimited rule in the country, manipulating the public and avoiding any accountability.

Important lessons should be drawn from grave consequences left in all fields following such politics and media and society failure to successfully resist it. Thus, process of democratization and transition should firstly set a task to recover the media.

A clear and democratic-oriented legislative in information and media field should be created to protect media from politicians' and institutions' obstinacy and any further attempt to endanger media's independent position. Those regulations would protect free press and rights of media and journalists.

A financial independence has to be established for all media through fair and transparent privatization but also with creation of a market where all media outlets would have equal starting position.

Only then the media would be able to earn and survive depending on quality of their work and not political affiliations, and that should be the most important condition that would enable them working in favor of democratic public.

Ongoing investment in professional education of journalists must be a priority goal for all the media.

Working for a more than a decade in unbearable conditions, the media in the former Yugoslavia are yet to define effective approaches that would bring accountability as the first and foremost task for them.

However, they have become aware of the conditions necessary for such an important role and are making first steps in that direction, putting pressure on new authorities to create those conditions.

After several years of international training for local journalists, numerous workshops and finally, opening of the markets in all former Yugoslav republics for the goods and products from their ex-state partners, it could be expected that the media and those working for them, would increase their governments' accountability to implement non-discriminatory policies.

Also, it could be expected that, following a decade of armed conflicts, the general situation, and thus, the media attention, would turn to the elements more important to the public economy, life and culture.

All the effects that media's approaches have produced could not be seen yet, but the most important one, which led to political change thanks to an enormously huge role of independent media, is the evidence that basic, world-wide journalism rules eventually could be extremely powerful.

A number of issues that media in Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and other Yugoslav republics have risen, seeking for accountability of those responsible, resulted in favor of those disadvantaged and poor groups, directly hit by such issues.

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A NOTE TO ANSWER QUERIES FOR THE PAPER ON

Role of the media and the Internet as tools for creating accountability to poor and disadvantaged groups in the former Yugoslavia:

1. Officially, there are no mechanisms to ensure accountability on the part of the media, as most of the former Yugoslav republics still have quite old-fashioned legal regulations in regard to the media. Also, the journalists' associations, except in Slovenia, have yet to establish a thorough and detailed code for media work, which could address these issues.

In spite of democratic changes and slow and sometimes painful process of transition, journalists throughout the regions have still often come under the pressure by the authorities, whenever they try to address the issue which is not "favourable" for the actual regime.

On December 6, 2001, Montenegrin journalist Vladislav Asanin was sentenced to three months in prison, upon libel charges filed by Montenegrin President Milo Djukanovic, for reprinting a series of articles from the Croatian magazine Nacional, that challenged Djukanovic and his government's accountability for alleged cigarette smuggling in the Balkans.

In Serbia, Reporter magazine came in November under fire of the new Belgrade authorities after publishing a list of Serbian policemen, which the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia has allegedly wanted to be informed of their activities during the 1998-99 Kosovo war.

By publishing the list, the magazine's editors said they have tried to address the accountability of the new Belgrade authorities to investigate war crimes that had been committed during the repression by former president

Slobodan Milosevic's regime in Kosovo, as well as to step up their cooperation with the UN tribunal.

2. The answer to this question is a bit sensitive in the Balkans, where the term "independent" in regard to the economic and political position of the media could sometimes be judged.

Most of those media, considered to be the main source of information that was independent from the regimes in the former Yugoslavia, were on the other hand, dependent of the financial assistance from international donators. Some of those that were privately owned, were usually facing either money-shortage or political influence of the owner, no matter of his political background.

However, few of those financially-supported by international donors, such as Belgrade radio B92, daily Danas and weekly Vreme, Zagreb radio 101, Croatian daily Novi List and the Feral Tribune weekly, Bosnia's daily Nezavisne Novine and Oslobodjenje, weekly Reporter and Slobodna Bosna or radio Zid, have managed to push forward with its own editorial policy, accountable only to what they believed was a professional reporting.

That is why it could be suggested that any assistance or development of the media in future should be primarily focused on training journalists in accordance with the highest possible professional standards, by prominent Western professionals. Also, a legal regulation, in accordance with the internationally approved standards should be created, which would disable any political or economic influence or pressure on media. The last but not the least, and probably the most difficult task would be to create the economic surroundings in all the former

Yugoslavia, with Slovenia as exception, that could enable an open market and equal working conditions for everyone.

Unfortunately, new authorities in the region have so far failed to show an interest to regulate this sensitive matter and to give up a possibility to influence and control the media.

3. In the still fragile political situation in Yugoslavia, as well as in the other countries, there are still rare reports on the so-called human issues.

For example, on December 1, the International AIDS day, almost no newspaper in Belgrade has reported or interviewed any of the HIV-infected patients, or their doctors, not to mention an article covering how such person could afford medical treatment, estimated at about 10,000 dollars per month in the country where the average salary is around 70 dollars.

Articles on sexual abuse of women and children have begun to appear in the newspapers, but only with a presentation of the story, and not advices how to react and who to ask for help and assistance.

Only rarely one can find articles covering problems that minor communities are facing, despite the slow democratization process.

For example, Roma community in Belgrade has only one kindergarten to accommodate the their children who in other nurseries, often come under insults by children.

However, at least in Serbia, thing are slowly moving ahead, so recently, one of the radio stations under the state wing, Belgrade radio 202, started a program dedicated to "marginal groups," like "disabled people, cured alcoholics or drug users, HIV-infected, representatives of gay community

and those with psychological and psychic problems," its editor-in-chief Nebojsa Spajic said on December 1.

Spajic said the aim was to "overcome social differences and those groups to be fully included into the society." But it would hardly be the case, as this program would be aired in the late night hours, from 1:00 am to 4:00 am.