

THE Media AND  
Political Change  
CROATIA

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## FOREWORD

In 2001 The Freedom Forum has embarked on a project to examine the news media's coverage of political change in several countries. The foundation organized global media forums on "The Media and Political Change" in Bangkok, Thailand; Zagreb, Croatia; Managua, Nicaragua; and Lusaka, Zambia.

As part of our project, we asked Sherry Ricchiardi, a journalist and journalism professor, to write a monograph on media in the Balkans, where journalists have been on the front lines in reporting the region's struggle for freedom. We examined the media's role as they covered conflicts and detailed the dangers and intimidation they faced in bringing news of political change to their readers, listeners and viewers.

The monograph was directed and edited by Susan Bennett, director of European and Asian programs for The Freedom Forum in Arlington, Va.

Chris Wells  
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## AFTER TITO, THE DELUGE

The death knell for Yugoslavia sounded May 4, 1980, when the charismatic “president for life,” Josip Broz, also known as “Tito,” died after a long illness. Political analysts quickly began speculating on whether a system shaped and guided by a lone, powerful father figure could survive, especially in a region of Europe steeped in bloodshed.

On the first anniversary of Tito’s death, Yugoslav leaders ceremoniously gathered in the federal capital of Belgrade and pledged to follow the path of independent communism in a united Yugoslavia. In a show of solidarity, they joined in the refrain of a World War II song: “Comrade Tito, we swear not to go astray from your way.”

A decade later, the country was on the brink of violent collapse. And local media inherited the grim watchdog role of chronicling what would become the deadliest European war since the Nazi era. Before the conflict subsided, reports of genocide, concentration camps, and other human rights violations would become commonplace.

During these tragic times, many regional journalists performed heroically, braving the deadly crossfire of sniper bullets and artillery attacks to report on brutal battles being waged in cornfields and villages where civilians often were the targets. The reporters also endured a barrage of nationalist propaganda and hate speech, generated as a tool of war by all factions. Truth became the first casualty.

Some journalists employed by state-controlled publications and broadcast outlets became mouthpieces for the government’s official spin on the savagery that was engulfing the former communist state.

During this period, media in the region tended to fall into two categories — patriotic or independent. The difference hinged on those who put national interests first at all costs, going so far as to spread false information, vs. journalists who believed that there were higher human values, such as freedom and justice, to be served.

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begun inching away from Tito's hybrid "self-management" economic system. These two more Westernized republics viewed the Yugoslav federation as a financial drain and a barrier to creating closer ties to Western Europe.

With Slovenia and Croatia's declaration of independence in June 1991, violence quickly flared from a bullying among ethnic factions to all-out combat. Journalists became eyewitnesses to a brutality that was reminiscent of World War II. Villages, abandoned overnight, were left in smoldering ruins. Ditches and fields were strewn with bodies, some horribly mutilated. Columns of terrorized refugees streamed out of the countryside in search of safe havens.

The worst was yet to come in the ethnically complex "land of the South Slavs," historically described as a "tinderbox" in southeastern Europe. Despite years of saber rattling, few expected the kind of savagery that exploded at the end of the 20th century in the heart of Europe, just a short flight from tourist havens such as Rome and Zurich. A war crimes tribunal in The Hague continues to document the hideous details of murder, mass rape and forced exile.

The first phase of the war began at the end of June 1991 in Slovenia, a small alpine region bordering Austria. At the time, the JNA — Yugoslav National Army — did not attack in full force, providing an opportunity for the Slovene local defense forces to repel attacks that lasted 10 days. As fighting ebbed in Slovenia, a more violent phase broke out in neighboring Croatia.

In October 1991, JNA artillery shells pounded Dubrovnik, an ancient walled city known as the "pearl of the Adriatic," and Vukovar, a baroque town on the Danube River. Yugoslav tanks rolled toward the Croatian capital of Zagreb as shrill air-raid sirens sent families fleeing to makeshift bomb shelters. Walls of sandbags protected churches and other national treasures.

Croatia's tranquil countryside quickly became a combat zone. Overnight, villagers traded plows for guns, schoolbooks for grenades, and factory jobs for duty on elusive front lines that snaked through vineyards, valleys and forested hills. Often, the battlefield was in their back yards. The enemy they faced might

be a former neighbor, a mechanic who once repaired their cars or their children's science teacher.

By Christmas 1991, Serb forces, supported financially and militarily by Milosevic, occupied one-third of Croatia, effectively dividing the country and forcing a mass exodus of "displaced persons." In February 1992, the U.N. Security Council voted to send a peacekeeping force of 13,000 to help maintain a cease-fire brokered a month earlier in Croatia by U.N. Special Envoy Cyrus Vance.

That same month, Bosnia-Herzegovina held an election, boycotted by a majority of Bosnian Serbs, on its own independence. By April 1992, the bloodiest phase of the Yugoslav war had begun.

Images of a brutal forced expulsion, euphemistically labeled "ethnic cleansing," became commonplace in daily news reports filed from former Yugoslav territories. Tens of thousands of bedraggled and terrified Bosnians, carrying plastic bags stuffed with meager belongings, fled in the wake of arrests, torture and murder.

Journalists documented the existence of concentration camps where prisoners routinely were tortured, starved and used as forced laborers in combat zones. They also found evidence of systematic killing — genocide.

One of the worst cases of genocide occurred in a region that the United Nations had declared a "safe haven." After the fall of the Bosnian town of Srebrenica in July 1995, Serb military commander Gen. Ratko Mladic announced a "feast" of blood and personally attended much of the butchery that followed, according to reports by U.S. journalist Roy Gutman, who won the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting for his stories in *Newsday*. In the final accounting, most of the town's male population, around 8,000, was executed, and women and children forcibly expelled.

Mladic remains the highest-profile indicted war criminal yet to be arrested, along with Radovan Karadzic, a former psychiatrist who became president of Srpska Republic, the independent state that Serbian leaders had declared on Bosnian territory. Karadzic ruled with an iron hand from his mountain headquarters in Pale, just outside Sarajevo.

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house fighting and indiscriminate shelling of neighborhoods became routine. Even hospitals packed with wounded became favorite targets for mortar attacks.

## SOCIETY AND HISTORY

For Balkan scholars, the brutality that has rocked the region over the past decade is a repeat of history. The roots of conflict in Yugoslavia date back at least 1,500 years.

By the 6th century, the first Slav tribes began arriving in the Balkans from the northeast, many of them warriors who raided the crumbling Roman Empire. By this time, Rome had embraced Christianity and was a divided power. The Eastern section became known as the Byzantine Empire. As a result of the division, the Christian Church also split into the Orthodox Christian and the Roman Catholic Church.

In the Balkans, the dividing line between the two halves of the Roman Empire followed the River Drina, which, during the recent war, marked Serbia's western frontier with Bosnia-Herzegovina. Over the centuries, foreign rule created a religious split among Serbs, Croats and Bosnians that remains intact today. Croats tend to be Roman Catholics and Serbs Christian Orthodox, and many Bosnians of either Serbian or Croatian ancestry have embraced Islam.

The Ottoman and Hapsburg empires ruled the Balkan region for centuries, with the dividing line marked by the Sava and Danube Rivers. To the north, Slovenia and Croatia were under European and largely Catholic influence. To the south, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia were under Eastern influence, Muslim or Orthodox. The region continued to be a tinderbox throughout the late 19th century.

In June 1914, the Balkan region exploded onto the world map. That month, during a visit to Sarajevo, Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated by a young Bosnian Serb nationalist, Gavrilo Princip. The incident ignited a series of events that led to World War I and signaled the end of Ottoman and Hapsburg rule in the region.

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In the postwar era, European powers redefined borders in an attempt to quell the boiling caldron in the Balkans. One solution: a large, national state that eventually would become known as Yugoslavia, or the land of the South Slavs.

But any hope for lasting stability was dashed with the onset of World War II.

By 1941, the Yugoslavs were fighting Germany and Italy, and turning their guns on each other. During this time, two major units of resistance gained notoriety. One group, the Chetniks, was led by Draza Mihailovic, a Serb nationalist seeking to restore the Serbian monarchy and Serb rule in the region. The other faction, the Partisans, was led by Marshal Tito and included troops of all nationalities united in a single goal — to defeat the invaders and free Yugoslavia.

Born in 1892 in Kumrovec, Croatia — then part of the Austrian-Hungarian empire — Josip Broz fought in World War I, was wounded and was taken to a POW camp in Russia in 1915. Two years later, he witnessed the 1917 revolution. After returning to Croatia, he entered politics and was appointed secretary of the Zagreb central committee of the Communist Party. During this time, communism fell in and out of favor, as did Broz. He lost his job and was sentenced to prison after police found bombs in his apartment, but his rise in Communist political ranks continued. While working underground for the party, he employed several pseudonyms, including “Tito,” his most enduring.

The onset of World War II provided a golden political opportunity for Tito. When the fighting ended, Tito's Partisans controlled much of the country and eventually won support of the United States, Great Britain and the other Allies. It was then that Tito made his boldest move, ordering the execution of Mihailovic and quelling all other opposition. He placed himself at the head of the new Yugoslav government and set into motion a hybrid political structure — the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia — that lasted until 1991.

Under the master plan, there would be six republics: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. Each would have its own government and participate in the federal

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parliament in Belgrade. Yugoslavia embarked on a brand of communism that tolerated more Western influence, less central planning, and open borders. Tito, half Slovene and half Croat, garnered greater favor with the West in 1948 by making a final break with Stalin and continuing a policy of non-alignment with the Communist East Bloc. Those moves paved the way for assistance from the International Monetary Fund and the U.S. military.

Trying to guarantee a life for Yugoslavia after his death, Tito created a complicated collective state presidency composed of representatives from each of the six republics and two autonomous provinces. When he died in 1980, just three days short of his 88th birthday, his elaborate funeral drew a “who’s who” of world leaders to Belgrade. But Tito’s complex notion of power-sharing in Yugoslavia soon developed fatal cracks.

When historians attempt to explain the demise of the Yugoslav republic, they point often to an erosion of federal authority in the post-Tito era; to soaring inflation that reached a staggering 80% in 1984; and to a series of failed political reforms. They speculate that the fall of communism reignited old political and ethnic feuds and unleashed new waves of nationalism.

There was another factor: Two of the nation’s wealthiest and most Westernized republics wanted independence from what they viewed as a repressive regime in Belgrade.

The flames of independence were fanned in May 1991 when Serbs blocked Croatian Stjepan Mesic from taking his turn in the revolving presidency. A month later, Croatia and Slovenia declared independence. Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia were not far behind.

In the end, all that was left of the Yugoslav federation was Serbia — the largest and most powerful of the republics — and tiny Montenegro, with its all-important entry to the Adriatic Sea.

For many, the political shifts triggered instant and dramatic changes in national identity. Instead of being classified uniformly as Yugoslavs, Serbs living in Croatia became Croatian Serbs. Croatians residing in Bosnia became Bosnian Croats. Those who had embraced Islam in Bosnia became known as

Muslims, or Bosniaks. There also was a flurry of legal changes — new passports, automobile license plates, and border checkpoints quickly appeared.

Despite a long history of mixed marriages in the region and decades of social intermingling among religious and ethnic groups, tensions quickly reached a boiling point in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

During this period, two key personalities — Franjo Tudjman, a former general in the Yugoslav army who led the independence movement in Croatia, and Slobodan Milosevic, the architect of Greater Serbia who later would be charged with war crimes — exploded onto the international scene, leaving a trail of violence and corruption in their wake.

Journalistic accounts often trace Milosevic’s dramatic rise from bureaucrat to demagogue to a public demonstration in Kosovo on April 24, 1987, where his belligerent speech, championing Serbs against the Albanians, drew cheers and fanatical support. In an article for *The Atlantic Monthly* two years later, author Robert Kaplan noted that a photograph of Milosevic “adorns a wall in many a Serbian household. Milosevic, a plump, baby-faced man in his mid-40s, is the first charismatic figure to emerge in post-Tito Yugoslavia. Like Tito, he is considered by many in Belgrade to be a ruthless strongman.”

Kaplan’s description proved to be prophetic. A decade later, Milosevic had presided over three major conflicts — in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. Each time, he came away a loser. And today he sits in a prison cell in Belgrade, charged with corruption and facing possible extradition to The Hague to answer charges that atrocities, including mass killings, systematic rape and torture, were carried out under his command.

When Croatian President Franjo Tudjman died in December 1999, he left what many Croatia watchers describe as a “mixed legacy.” To many Croats, he is a revered leader who engineered the independence movement and became the “father of the country” he helped liberate. At the same time, Tudjman is widely criticized for his hard-line nationalist views that prevented Croatia from being fully

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accepted into Europe and NATO.

On his watch, Croatia’s economy continued to falter, and there have been charges of widespread corruption in his Croatian Democratic Union party (HDZ). At one point, HDZ provided financial and military aid to hard-line Bosnian Croats who have resisted becoming integrated into a multiethnic Bosnia. Critics describe Tudjman, who died at 77, as having harbored a disregard for democracy and a strong dislike of Muslims and Serbs.

Still, journalists tend to portray the first president of independent Croatia as a lesser evil than Milosevic, whose Serbian forces and paramilitaries attempted to wipe out Croats and Bosniaks, or Muslims, in territories being claimed as part of “Greater Serbia.” In the early 1990s, an editorial in *The New York Times* labeled Milosevic the “butcher of the Balkans.”

Almost immediately after the fighting started in Croatia in the summer of 1991, ethnic cleansing — or forced expulsion — began tearing the region apart. The term is defined as the ruthless attempt by one ethnic group to “purify” the region by driving out the others. Serbian officials had used the term “ethnic cleansing” to describe the mass migrations they forced from territories that they conquered in Croatia and Bosnia. As the war continued to rage, the Muslims and Croats struck back with some “ethnic cleansing” of their own.

Four years later, on Nov. 1, 1995, the three warring parties gathered at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, to hammer out a peace agreement. Part of the Dayton accord formalized the split of Bosnia-Herzegovina into two entities, the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Serbian Republika Srpska. At that time, the number of dead was estimated at more than 200,000, with another 1.5 million left homeless by “ethnic cleansing.”

Conflict reignited, and those numbers swelled in 1998-99 when Serb forces began a purging of Kosovo, drawing NATO and the United States into the fray. Today, estimates place the number of those killed, missing and presumed dead at around 250,000, with more than 2.5 million being routed from their homes since fighting flared in the region during the summer of 1991.

Throughout the many phases of the conflict,

regional journalists remained in the forefront, filing stories to their local media outlets and stringing for international news agencies such as Reuters and The Associated Press. Some of them also served as “fixers” or guides for foreign correspondents on assignment in former Yugoslavia. In some quarters, freedom of expression was taking hold despite repressive governments that declared it “disloyal” or “unpatriotic” for journalists to produce critical reports.

## FRONT LINE JOURNALISM: ETHICAL DILEMMAS

Historically, journalism in Yugoslavia was considered to be freer than in neighboring Eastern Bloc countries or the Soviet Union. As early as the 1960s, some Yugoslav newspapers were only partially subsidized by the state, prompting them to vie for advertising revenue in a competitive marketplace just as their western counterparts in Europe.

Foreign newspapers and magazines were legally imported across Yugoslav borders rather than forbidden as in the U.S.S.R. The country also benefited from a constant flow of tourists and from friendly relations with the United States.

In 1991, as rockets exploded in the hills of Slovenia and Croatia and tanks thundered into sleepy farm villages, journalists throughout the region quickly began reassessing their loyalties. For many, it was a time of painful soul-searching about how to fulfill their journalists’ role in chronicling death and destruction in their homeland.

During a May 1993 conference in Zagreb titled “Role of the Media in Democracy,” Croatian journalists talked openly of the ethical dilemmas they faced. The discussion among the veteran editors, reporters and photojournalists focused on a pivotal question: Is it possible to be a good patriot and a good journalist at the same time?

Many in the room told of agonizing over how to serve their country and their profession with equal fervor and commitment. The questions pondered during that session were common to media

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professionals in all the former Yugoslav republics.

How far should a reporter go in relating the truth when the survival — and the freedom — of one's country is at stake? When does national security take precedence over information gathering? Where should they draw the line on advocating for their own fighting forces? They also wondered what journalists in the West would do under the same circumstances.

## PRESS FREEDOM IN CONFLICT

Although there were exceptions, it is generally agreed that the momentum for press freedom in the wake of communism's collapse in Yugoslavia took a step backward during wartime.

Governments in the former republics kept tight control of national TV and radio networks, ensuring that the majority of the population would receive a steady diet of sanitized and often hate-filled messages.

Independent voices, such as Croatia's *Feral Tribune* or Serbia's Radio B92, were plagued by lawsuits and crippling fines for "insulting" state officials. It was not uncommon for staffers to be harassed, beaten and arrested. Sometimes, they even were assassinated.

On April 11, 1999, Slavko Curuvija, owner and editor of the Belgrade daily *Dnevni Telegraph*, was shot in the head by two masked assailants in front of his home. Curuvija, one of the harshest critics of the Milosevic regime, had chosen to continue publishing even though he knew he was under surveillance and had been warned by insiders that his life was in danger.

Serbian state television did not carry news of his murder, and a regime-controlled newspaper, *Ekspres Politika*, accused Curuvija of "inviting the NATO attacks on Yugoslavia." In April a Belgrade prosecutor began probing links between Mira Markovic, Milosevic's wife, and Curuvija's death.

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## REAL NEWS VS. PROPAGANDA

Besides physical danger, the media faced obstacles to newsgathering on other fronts. Soon after the first rockets exploded in 1991, a thick smokescreen of misinformation settled over the region. Journalists, local and foreign, were bombarded with faxes, press releases, and government statements from all sides, accusing the others of systematic atrocities and other wrongdoing.

In 1992, a British war correspondent, Ian Traynor, wrote of his frustration at seeing a constant parade of "twisted corpses, mutilated children or elderly peasants, charred limbs and faces with bloody holes where the eyes used to be" parading across the television screens in Croatia and Serbia. The reporter noted that the constant showing of massacre victims served to "stoke up fear, hatred, hysteria and blood lust on both sides of the ethnic divide."

A few days after the fall of Vukovar in November 1991, the first major city destroyed by the Yugoslav army and its supporters, Serb victors bused dozens of reporters into the smoldering ruins for a tour. They were presented with notebooks and pens and taken to a military barracks to interview "the heroic soldiers who liberated the town" from the Croats who stubbornly held out during months of bitter fighting.

Free-lance journalist Anna Husarska, whose work often appears in *The New Yorker*, was among the group given the tour. The Yugoslav war was particularly difficult to cover, she later wrote, because fighting in the field was accompanied by a ferocious media war.

In a story headlined "In the Crossfire of Spoon-fed Lies," Husarska described the obstacles to covering a war where there was no clearly defined front line and where fighting erupted in every nook and cranny. "This makes fact-checking an especially hazardous enterprise, and explains the unusually high number of journalists who have been killed or wounded when caught in the crossfire between the Serbian-dominated Yugoslav Federal Army and Croatian fighters," she wrote.

## WHOSE VOICE IS IT?

Local journalists in the region faced the same impenetrable wall of misinformation. The end result was a further blurring of the lines between propaganda and real news in conflict zones where the military or police often prevented journalists from doing their own detective work. Often, as in Vukovar, the press was shepherded and monitored.

At state-controlled media, attempts at fairness and balance were shunted aside in favor of promoting the government viewpoint. Some publications and broadcast outlets labeled “independent” were owned by political entities or businessmen close to the ruling party who dictated editorial content. The terminology itself became questionable.

What, for instance, differentiated a public TV network from one that was state controlled? When could a newspaper be considered truly “independent”? It became clear that the description of a media outlet as “privately owned” — that is, not controlled by the state — did not guarantee fair and unbiased reporting.

Media acquisition commonly followed two patterns. One was open seizure by the government; the other was a takeover by a group of entrepreneurs who served special interests. These takeovers often occurred through close ties to the ruling party and dubious financial transactions that fell under the category of “bandit capitalism.”

Press Now, a Dutch organization working with journalists in the region, defined criteria for media that were the closest to being independent. At the top of the list was having a self-sustaining economic base, accepting no political contributions, and having no state-mandated editorial restrictions. Press Now added that the staff would have to consider the most important criterion of fact-based journalism to be professionalism, not self-censorship.

During wartime, the fledgling Fourth Estate became endangered on several fronts.

In Kosovo, the media were targeted by Serb forces and the Kosovo Liberation Army, making it virtually impossible for local press to report on a war that would, in the end, decide the future of their

homeland. NATO bombings that began in March 1999 brought a systematic crackdown by the Serbs on all media, sending journalists, local and foreign, scrambling for their lives.

In all of these regions, the language of news reports, especially those of state media, tended to be sensationalistic and inflammatory. Negative images of “the other,” stereotypes and hate speech became fine-tuned and powerful weapons during the war years.

## JOURNALISTS FUEL FLAMES OF NATIONALISM

A report by the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) speculated that even before the fighting began, mass media in the regions of the former Yugoslavia had begun conditioning the civilian population to remember what they had been taught to forget under Tito — the atrocities committed by various factions during World War II.

Nightly news reports began hinting that such actions could be repeated, thus setting the stage for what the IHF referred to as “the first hot war in post-World War II Europe.” Derogatory labels and negative images of certain ethnic groups became common elements in stories. The IHF cited specific examples from all six of the former Yugoslav republics. Serbian media, for instance, routinely used terms such as “bloodthirsty terrorists” or “separatists” and referred to “Croat neofascism.”

Viewers were told that “the slaughter of humans” was a trademark of the “Ustashi,” a reference to pro-Nazi collaborators in Croatia during World War II. “Islamic fundamentalists” became a common label for Bosniaks, along with “Islamic terrorist forces” or “Mujahedins.” State TV anchors routinely referred to NATO pilots as aggressors or criminals.

In the Croatian media, Serbs tended to receive the harshest coverage, routinely being referred to as terrorists or Chetniks, a reference to a national, monarchist group that fought against Tito’s Partisans.

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Often, President Tudjman's comments fueled the stereotypes. He once was quoted in the Croatian press as comparing Serbs to a "cancer destroying the Croatian national being at the very heart of Croatia" and concluded that "there is no return to the past" where the two groups could live together.

In some regions, the media used hate language to spark violence. The Kosovapress, a news agency linked to the Kosovo Liberation Army, launched an attack against two prominent ethnic Albanian journalists, accusing them of spying for Slobodan Milosevic. Veton Surroi, publisher of the daily *Koha Ditore*, and Aton Haxhiu, the newspaper's editor, were labeled "bastard ragtags" and "pro-Serbian vampires" in an editorial.

Surroi viewed the attack as "an invitation to kill both me and Haxhiu." Their crime: speaking out against the systematic intimidation of Serbs who remained in Kosovo after NATO took control.

Some Albanian-language newspapers began running names, addresses and photos of unindicted Serb civilians they believed to be war criminals. In one case, such a story might have led to the stabbing death of a U.N. interpreter who had been accused of involvement in a Serb paramilitary unit.

A steady diet of hate language and misinformation also led to the controversial NATO bombing of Serbia's state-run television station in April 1999. In the aftermath, the Yugoslav news agency Tanjug put the number of dead civilians who were inside the building at 10 with up to 18 wounded during the attack.

NATO supporters, like Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair, quickly went on the record saying that the bombing was justified since the station was part of the "apparatus of dictatorship and power of Milosevic." NATO's military spokesperson described the station as a legitimate target that filled the airwaves with hate and with lies over the years. During the war, U.N. peacekeepers often attempted to bring balance to the news emanating out of southeast Europe. The United Nations issued press credentials that allowed the media to move through protected areas where they were more likely to hear both sides of the story and witness events for themselves. The United Nations orchestrated regular press briefings,

and, at times, took journalists into danger zones such as the besieged city of Sarajevo or the Serb-occupied town of Vukovar in Croatia. The International Committee of the Red Cross also played a balancing role, delivering information from a more neutral viewpoint.

## MEDIA HEROICS

Throughout the conflicts, local media mounted heroic resistance to functioning as mouthpieces for the various warring factions. A documentary film, titled "Truth Under Siege," explored the personal experiences of journalists at five feisty independent media outlets: *Dani* magazine and Studio 99 in Bosnia-Herzegovina; *Vreme* and Radio B92 in Serbia; and *Feral Tribune* in Croatia. All suffered constant attacks by governments who sought to silence them through draconian "insult laws," intimidation and jail time. All have survived and continue cutting-edge reporting on official corruption, human rights violations and organized crime.

In Sarajevo, a daily newspaper, *Oslobodenje*, started in 1943 by anti-Nazi partisans, became a beacon of press freedom during the siege, continuing to publish despite relentless attacks on its buildings and employees by Serb gunners.

For three years, journalists at *Oslobodenje* covered the torturous, methodical destruction of their 600-year-old city, which had showcased its multicultural, multiethnic cooperation during the 1984 Winter Olympics. From the first shelling of the city in April 1992, the battle cry for *Oslobodenje's* staff centered on a single notion: As long as the newspaper was alive, Sarajevo was alive.

The toll was high. Five of *Oslobodenje's* reporters and photographers were killed and 25 wounded in the line of duty. The newspaper's editors proudly boasted of not missing a day of publication during the assault. Gordana Knezevic, deputy editor at the time, noted, "When Sarajevans couldn't find bread, they could find our newspaper."

In Republika Srpska, another courageous stand for press freedom has become legendary. Zeljko Kopanja, co-founder and editor of *Nezavisne*

From the first shelling of the city in April 1992, the battle cry for *Oslobodenje's* staff centered on a single notion: As long as the newspaper was alive, Sarajevo was alive.

Radio B92('s) owner and staff thumbed their noses at Milosevic's thugs who, for years, had been raiding the newsroom, intimidating journalists and who had arrested Veran Matic, the chief editor.

*Novine*, Bosnia's largest Serb daily, continued to publish even after an assassination attempt in 1999 cost him both his legs. The editor has survived threats from organized crime groups controlled by the secret police and a strong-arm government that views him as an enemy. Kopanja remains undaunted. He told an interviewer, "Free press is a precondition for a free society and free life in general. Where you don't have freedom of the media, there is only dictatorship and slavery." On Nov. 21, 2000, a star-studded audience at Manhattan's Waldorf-Astoria burst into thunderous applause when Kopanja appeared on the stage to collect a courage award from the Committee to Protect Journalists.

An independent Belgrade station, Radio B92, was among the high-profile bastions of resistance to government censorship. The station's owner and staff thumbed their noses at Milosevic's thugs who, for years, had been raiding the newsroom, intimidating journalists and who had arrested Veran Matic, the chief editor.

When the first NATO bombs began exploding on March 24, 1999, police burst into B92, confiscated its transmitter and ordered all computers shut down. Matic was detained for eight hours. The FM station was able to resume broadcasting and publishing on the Internet with the help of the B92 Support Group, a consortium of international media organizations based in Amsterdam, and through mirror sites in Europe and North America. At one point, B92's digital signal was channeled by Internet to BBC World Service, which transmitted the signal via satellite.

B92 has earned the reputation as one of the most respected sources of independent news in the Balkans. In 1998, the station won the prestigious "Free Your Mind" award presented by MTV Europe.

During the 1990s, some members of the Western press also distinguished themselves for detailed, meticulous reporting and for investigations into human rights violations. Three Americans, Roy Gutman, at the time with *Newsday*; David Rohde, then with the *Christian Science Monitor*; and John Burns of *The New York Times*, all won Pulitzer Prizes for hard-hitting accounts of the brutality in the

Balkans. Today, Gutman is chief diplomatic correspondent for *Newsweek* and Rohde has moved to *The New York Times*.

## THE MEDIA'S HIGH PRICE

From the beginning of the conflict, some media professionals paid the ultimate price for their reporting.

In December 1991, a journalists' "death roll," rimmed in black, appeared outside the Foreign Press Bureau that served as an information depot for media in the Croatian capital of Zagreb. Listed were the names of 18 who had been killed during the first six months of the fighting.

At least a dozen more journalists lost limbs or were critically wounded by artillery fire, land mines and snipers. Among the dead were correspondents from Austria, Croatia, Germany, Great Britain, Russia, Serbia and Switzerland. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists called the loss the "highest number of journalists killed in the shortest period of time in recent years." CPJ's conclusion: The press was being targeted.

Today, The Freedom Forum's Journalists Memorial in Arlington, Va., lists 56 members of the media who have died on assignment in the Balkan region since 1991. Added to that memorial will be the name of Kerem Lawton, 30. The British producer for Associated Press Television News was killed when his car was hit by mortar fire near the Kosovo border in March. Lawton was covering the latest outbreak of violence, this time between ethnic Albanians and the Macedonian military.

## THE PRESS TODAY

In the aftermath of killing, conflict and ensuing economic challenges in the region, newspapers and magazines, radio and television stations struggled to survive. Some continued on as before; some adapted to new ownership or rules of publishing and broadcasting; others ceased to exist. New publica-

The Freedom Forum's Journalists Memorial in Arlington, Va., lists 56 members of the media who have died on assignment in the Balkan region since 1991.

tions and stations emerged. The following is an overview of an ever-changing media landscape in Croatia and elsewhere in the Balkans.

#### BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

**Studio 99**, founded three months before the conflict broke out in April 1992, has a reputation as one of the best radio stations in Sarajevo. The station has 24-hour programming and boasts an independent editorial policy that caters to listeners of all ethnic and religious backgrounds.  
E-mail: [studio99@ZAMIR-SA.ztn.apc.org](mailto:studio99@ZAMIR-SA.ztn.apc.org)

**Radio ZID** has been heralded as “keeping Sarajevo alive and laughing” during the war years. Founded in 1992, its stated mission is to foster a cultural and intellectual renewal of Sarajevo.  
E-mail: [RADIO\\_ZID@ZAMIR-SA.ztn.apc.org](mailto:RADIO_ZID@ZAMIR-SA.ztn.apc.org).

**Radio-Television Bosnia-Herzegovina**, formerly known as RTV Sarajevo, was founded by the parliament and dominated by officials of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA). The station has been under tight government control.

**Independent TV Tuzla** was formed in 1991 by a group of journalists seeking to “promote democratic values and civil society.” The station has its own transmitter but with limited range.

**ATV Banja Luka**, an alternative TV station in Republika Srpska.  
[www.atvbl.com](http://www.atvbl.com)

**Oslobodenje**, a leading daily newspaper in Sarajevo before and after the war, reprints an edition in Ljubljana, Slovenia. The paper survived constant artillery and sniper attacks during the war.  
[www.oslobodjenje.com.ba](http://www.oslobodjenje.com.ba)

**Nezavisne Novine** is an independent newspaper in *Banja Luka* that has withstood harassment by local officials. It has a reputation for reporting

stories that are free of government or political influence.  
[www.nezavisne.com](http://www.nezavisne.com)

**Dani** was once a pre-war Socialist Youth Union paper for Bosnia-Herzegovina. The magazine has become a much-heralded publication where Muslims, Croats, Serbs and Jews work together on an equal basis. The new version began in August 1992.  
[www.bhdani.com](http://www.bhdani.com)

#### CROATIA

**Feral Tribune**, an award-winning weekly with a mix of political satire and serious news, was the first private publication in Croatia to gain international attention. The newspaper also provoked ire from former President Franjo Tudjman’s regime. *Feral’s* editors were arrested under a press law that protects state dignitaries from public criticism. In 1997, the Committee to Project Journalists presented editor Viktor Ivancic with a courage award.  
[www.feral-tribune.com](http://www.feral-tribune.com)

**Vecernji List, Vjesnik and Slobodna Dalmacija** are three daily newspapers that have been associated, either directly or indirectly, with the government. *Vecernji List* once was the largest daily paper in Croatia and published regional editions. It has made a comeback as an influential publication.  
[www.vecernji-list.hr](http://www.vecernji-list.hr)

**Vjesnik**, once considered the most influential daily newspaper in Croatia, fell on hard times during the war. It remains under government control.  
[www.vjesnik.com](http://www.vjesnik.com)

**Slobodna Dalmacija**, located in Split, was known for its open editorial policy and attacks against the ruling Croatian Democratic Union before the war. It was taken over by the gov-

ernment, then “sold” to parties close to Tudjman.  
www.dalmacija.com

*Novi List*, owned mostly by small shareholders, is a well-respected regional daily operating out of the coastal city of Rijeka. It moved to privatize soon after independence.  
E-mail: nlistri@as411.tel.hr

*Globus* started as a successful, privately owned weekly to become the nucleus of the biggest private media company in Croatia, Europapress Holding, which publishes the daily newspaper *Jutarnji List* among others.  
E-mail: globus@eph.hr

**Radio 101** has been widely credited with pioneering media independence in Croatia. The station was harassed by the Tudjman government and often was denied an operating license, sparking public protests. The station continues to face serious financial problems.  
E-mail: radio101@radio101.hr

## KOSOVO

*Koha Ditore*, first published in 1990, is widely considered to be the most prominent independent newspaper in the Albanian language. The Pristina daily tends to attract the best journalists, especially among the younger generation. Media experts call it the most critical, objective and professional newspaper in the Albanian language in Kosovo. The newspaper survived constant attacks by the two main political groups in Kosovo — the Serbian regime and the Democratic Union of Kosovo (DSK), the strongest Albanian party.  
www.kohaditore.com

*Zeri* is an independent political weekly in Albania founded in 1945 as the organ of the Socialist Youth. It was transformed into a political weekly in 1990 and, at times, has published articles that favor the DSK.  
E-mail: blerimsh@EUnet.yu

**Radio 21** has been described as a full-fledged radio and TV station respected for its independence. The staff is young and mostly female. “We are the future, the 21st century. That’s why we call ourselves Radio 21,” says station director Aferdita Kelmendi.  
www.radio21.net

**RTV**, with six regional studios, has been under the full control of the Serbian authorities. Its editorial policy was pro-regime and anti-Albanian.

## MACEDONIA

**Macedonia Radio and TV**, state-owned outlets, continue to be the two main sources of information for the region.

*Nova Makedonija* is the print counterpart, publishing three of the four Macedonian dailies.  
www.novamakedonija.com.mk

*Dnevnik*, an independent daily newspaper, cut its prices in the hope of boosting circulation and advertising revenue. So far, it has had some success in competing with state-subsidized publications.  
www.dnevnik.com.mk

**Kanal 77**, believed to be the first private radio station, began broadcasting in 1991.

## MONTENEGRO

*Monitor*, a privately owned weekly in Podgorica, is one of the most popular newspapers in the small country that remains a part of Yugoslavia.  
www.monitor.cg.yu

**Radio Antena M** is the largest and oldest independent radio station that has regular news broadcasts.  
www.antenam.org

*Vijesti* is the largest independent daily newspaper.  
www.vijesti.net

## SERBIA

**Radio B92** became internationally heralded as an “alternative voice” of Belgrade and a reliable source of information on the political and social scene in Serbia. This station suffered constant harassment and intimidation from the Milosevic regime. Radio B92 was shut down the day before NATO attacks began in March 1999. The journalists resorted to broadcasting via satellite outside Serbia’s border and on the Internet. They wore the official label of being “anti-Serb.”  
www.free92.net

**Radio Television Serbia (RTS)** was a faithful mouthpiece of government propaganda. The new government has said it will be transformed into a public TV station.

*Vreme*, an independent weekly in Belgrade, drew attention and praise from the international journalism community as it continued to publish articles critical of Slobodan Milosevic and the wars he incited.

*Nasa Borba* is a privately owned newspaper that once was shut down under Milosevic’s rule.  
www.nasa-borba.org

## SLOVENIA

**Kanal A** is considered one of the best privately owned TV stations, but it has had chronic financial difficulties.

**Radio Television Slovenija** has been slowly moving through the privatization process and continues to receive some government support.

*Delo*, like most of the other newspapers in Slovenia, is privately owned and considered to be a highly respected daily.  
www.delo.si

Adding to the media morass, in Bosnia-Herzegovina national, political and territorial divisions during the fighting led to three distinct press systems: one in Republika Srpska and the other two in the Bosnian and Croat Federation. Before the guns were silenced, there would be further splintering in places like the embattled city of Mostar.

## OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE MEDIA

The recent defeat and imprisonment of Yugoslav strongman Slobodan Milosevic, the death of President Franjo Tudjman, and a series of other political changes sweeping the region have sparked guarded optimism for the further development of free-press systems in the former communist territory. There are some positive indicators.

In Republika Srpska, totalitarian media have been challenged by several alternative newspapers that regularly criticize authorities and investigate corruption. These gains for freedom of expression have been attributed to pressure by the international community and the persistence and courage of journalists such as Zeljko Kopanja.

A new Croatian government under President Stjepan Mesic, elected in February 2000, has promised to end the attacks against the media and to transform the powerful national HRT radio and television network into a public broadcasting outlet. Croatian Radio and Television, known as HRT, had become the ultimate symbol of government control under the Tudjman regime.

Critics complain that the complicated transformation process has slowed to a crawl, with the fate of more than 3,000 employees hanging in the balance. Others credit the lack of progress to a plethora of political, social and economic problems that need to be sorted out after 10 years of rule by Tudjman’s HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union), which was fraught with corruption.

Television viewers in Croatia now have access to the small, independent Croatian Commercial Network (CCN) that was established 18 months ago.

A series of other political changes sweeping the region have sparked guarded optimism for the further development of free-press systems in the former communist territory.

CCN includes seven stations located in the cities of Zagreb, Pula, Rijeka, Varazdin, Cakovec, Osijek and Split, covering about 75% of the country.

In Montenegro, alternative and privately owned publications appear to be flourishing despite a depressed economy that remains linked to neighboring Serbia. With the creation of a multiparty government and the passage of a new information law in 1998, the Montenegrin government has adopted a more lenient attitude toward independent and private media. Of the three daily newspapers, one is pro-government, one is private, and the other is owned by the Socialist People's Party.

In Kosovo, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), charged with regulating the press and controlling hate speech in the aftermath of the war, formed a seven-member Media Policy Board that includes the leader of the Serb movement of Resistance; a former member of the Yugoslav Communist Party; and an Albanian contingent of journalists, intellectuals and human-rights activists. A law regulating "hatred speech" was passed in October.

International monitoring officials gave high marks to Kosovo Albanian dailies such as *Koba Ditore*, *Zeri* and *Dita* for their unbiased coverage of the elections that were held after the fighting ended in 1999. RadioTelevision Kosovo, once the only station operating in the province, now is a public service station.

The media in Macedonia have been boosted by a cut in the prices of newspapers and magazines, rising circulation and new publications. Private radio and TV stations finally have begun to operate under a broadcasting law that passed the parliament in 1997 after years of deliberation. However, the faltering economy continues to be an albatross, limiting advertising revenue and readership.

Since 1996, Slovenia's media have been labeled "free" in a Freedom House survey. Of the six former republics, it historically had been the closest to Western Europe and is known for its more liberal brand of journalism even during the communist years.

There also are hopeful signs of cooperation. In Bosnia, where the media have been fractured along

ethnic lines, Serbian, Muslim and Croat journalists met to discuss the safety and role of the working press on July 27-28, 2000. The participants called for professional solidarity, a press-freedom monitoring system in Bosnia-Herzegovina, legal support and more professional standards.

A reporter from Banja Luka noted that "we will have professional solidarity only when we understand that an attack on one of us is an attack on all of us."

For Serbian journalists, the fall of Slobodan Milosevic, widely viewed as the architect of the wars in former Yugoslavia, has sparked hope for a media renaissance. Under Milosevic, declared one of the top 10 enemies of the press by the Committee to Protect Journalists, the Ministry of Telecommunication routinely denied frequencies to independent media. The Ministry of Justice fined news organizations, and the Ministry of Interior confiscated newsroom equipment. The favored "independent" media were those that backed government policies.

Those who worked at opposition media commonly were labeled "traitors of Serbian national interests." With the end of Milosevic's rule and the election last fall of Vojislav Kostunica as the new president, these repressive state-sponsored attacks have greatly diminished, offering new hope for media practitioners in Serbia.

Few journalists in former Yugoslav territories would dispute the notion that they have a daunting path ahead of them to achieve press freedom. In most of these new countries, legal reforms, such as the elimination of outdated insult and defamation laws, remain incomplete. Major broadcast outlets remain in the hands of the authorities. There is a constant struggle for financial survival and a great need for skills training in the basic tenets of fact-based journalism — how to produce fair, balanced and well-documented stories and photographs.

On the positive side, the media in this region of Europe have a unique opportunity to recreate themselves and launch a new era of free expression in a land once dominated by dictators and nationalists who used professional communicators as a tool of war.

In a recent report, former journalist and media

Serbian, Muslim and Croat journalists called for professional solidarity, a press-freedom monitoring system in Bosnia-Herzegovina, legal support and more professional standards.

scholar Stjepan Malovic of Croatia predicted that it would take at least one generation to move beyond the roots of communism and the stranglehold that authoritarianism had on the media. Malovic believes the most important part of the process is to educate the region's young journalists and encourage greater professionalism and fresh approaches to newsgathering.

"Democracy should be carefully built day by day and journalists should become promoters of pluralism, liberty and progress," wrote Malovic, who has been a driving force behind educational reforms for journalists in the region. Without that, says Malovic, "We will not have real freedom for a long time in Southeastern Europe."