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## THE MEDIA AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN KOSOVO

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### BACKGROUND

1. Rarely has a region experienced as many fundamental and jarring changes in so short a time as Kosovo: from limited autonomy within Yugoslavia before 1989 to the repression of the Milosevic regime in the 1990s to the brutal expulsion of much its populace last spring to the international protectorate under United Nations auspices of today. Following the conclusion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's military campaign, Serbian military forces left Kosovo in June 1999 leaving the province under international control in the form of the United Nations Interim Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Supported by the NATO-led, multinational KFOR military force, UNMIK is charged with overseeing civil administration and fulfilling UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which is to "*promote the establishment of substantial autonomy and self-government in Kosovo, while upholding the sovereign and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.*"
2. Most Kosovar Albanians want independence from Yugoslavia. Most Kosovar Serbs vehemently oppose independence. This clash over Kosovo's political status, combined with inter-ethnic tensions and a desire for revenge among many ethnic Albanians, has compelled thousands of ethnic Serbs to flee the province and has spawned continued violence that calls into question the ability of the international community to control the province. Many analysts have concluded that a reduction in violence may lead to a more secure environment, but that political reconciliation among the two major ethnic groups in Kosovo and autonomy based on multi-ethnic co-operation, are long-term prospects.
3. For more than a decade there has been a cold war in Kosovo the Serbs who constitute less than 10 per cent of the total population and the Kosovo Albanians (known as Kosovars) who make up 90 per cent of the population. The difference between the two groups is cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious (Serbs are mostly Orthodox, Albanians mostly Muslim).
4. The Serbian authorities in Belgrade, and most of the Serbian opposition have little if any respect for Kosovars' minority rights while the Kosovars dispute the term "minority", pointing out that

in the Kosovo province they are an overwhelming majority. The record of human rights violations in Kosovo is appalling.

## **ROLE OF THE SERBIAN STATE MEDIA PRIOR TO THE NATO STRIKES**

5. Whenever reporting on violence in Kosovo, the state media went to great lengths to avoid ascribing any responsibility to the federal or Serbian authorities. Absent from coverage of Kosovo developments was any reference to the revocation of Kosovo's autonomy in 1989 which was followed by Belgrade's resolve to govern the province through brute force and a systematic suppression of basic human rights. Also missing was any balanced comment about Kosovar leader Ibrahim Rugova who checked Belgrade's aggression by becoming the main proponent of peaceful resistance and the head of a parallel state structure, the so-called Kosovar 'shadow state.' In Serbia's state media, Rugova was held among those most accountable for unleashing 'terrorism.'
6. At its least inflammatory, coverage of Kosovo events began and ended with demands for so-called terrorists to be brought to justice. The call to justice was frequently repeated, with the state media at all times avoiding even the suggestion that the Belgrade authorities may be accountable for any incidents or for creating a political environment in which violence could be perpetrated. A key purpose of official coverage had been to prepare psychologically the Serbian public to regard ethnic Albanians as enemies of the state.
7. An even more sinister aspect of the media's coverage of the Kosovo situation had been the periodic resorting to aggressive hate propaganda, portraying ethnic Albanians as sub-human and congenitally bent on violence. Radmila Visic, deputy minister of information in Serbia's government, had gone on record saying that among the offences for which a media outlet may be fined was "*breaching of the guaranteed freedoms and rights of a man and citizen, i.e., that invokes national, race or religious hatred.*"<sup>1</sup> Thus far, state dailies and electronic media have not been called to task for "*breaching*" or slandering Albanians' "*racial*" identity.
8. A survey of the Serbian state media informs an observer of Balkan affairs that Belgrade was opposed to accepting responsibility and for treating the Kosovo crisis as a matter for an impartial judiciary observing of human rights. Official media accounts had emphasised the likely resort to force.

## **THE PROPAGANDA WAR IN SERBIA**

9. In early 1999, international media reported an escalation of violence in Kosovo. According to numerous accounts, Serbian forces massacred 45 people, including women and children, in the central Kosovo village of Racak on January 15<sup>th</sup>. Western news agencies said many of the victims were slain "*execution-style*" and a number of bodies were severely mutilated. For its part, the Belgrade state-controlled media opted to give credence only to select and perverse aspects of the story. Firstly, a statement by Serbian President Milan Milutinovic in which he denounced international coverage and reaction to developments was given wide play. He argued that the deaths in Racak were the result of "*combat*" between security forces and "*terrorists*". In addition, the state media featured remarks by Seselj, in which he alleged that mutilated corpses and the bodies of children were part of a conspiracy and thrown into the field of battle by the KLA in an attempt to discredit Serbia.

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<sup>1</sup> See ICG *Yugoslavia Briefing*, January 26, 1999, pp.1-4.

10. On March 24, NATO began an air campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. International observers, such as the International Crisis Group (ICG), believe that hindsight now suggests that the Belgrade regime was well prepared for the air strikes. Indeed, Milosevic used the strikes as a pretext for unleashing a ground war within the once-autonomous province of Kosovo. Coinciding with the NATO action, Yugoslav forces, including paramilitaries, embarked on the worst wave of ethnic cleansing to date that has left an estimated 88% of the Kosovo population displaced, with the bulk forced to seek refuge outside of Yugoslavia.
11. President Milosevic laid the ground for the propaganda aspect of the war back in October 1998 by introducing the Law on Public Information. The highly restrictive law forbids the retransmission of foreign broadcasts, applies exorbitant fines for publications considered to be promoting defeatism, and so on. Publications critical of the state were banned or fined huge sums of money. The judiciary handed down several verdicts clearly designed to drive independent media outlets to the wall.<sup>2</sup>
12. As NATO dropped their first bombs, Serb authorities countered immediately against the foreign correspondents. They trapped a group of them on the roof of the Hyatt Hotel – where most Western journalists were staying – while the bombs started to rain down. Within 24 hours of the air strikes, the authorities had expelled over 30 journalists. The expulsions were seemingly arbitrary, with very little logic applied to who could stay and who not. Similarly, there was no apparent logic explaining why some foreign journalists were arrested and accused of spying and others left to report relatively freely.
13. ICG analysts observe that the propaganda war for the hearts and minds of the average Serbian citizen began with the premise that stalwart and brave Serbs did not stand alone in the world. Popular sports figures living abroad were featured widely in Serbian media, condemning the bombing of their homeland and expressing solidarity with friends and family in Serbia. More importantly, propaganda featured the message that many foreigners empathised with the plight of the Yugoslavian public. Reports of Russia bearing alongside Serbia dominated headlines during the first three weeks.
14. Press coverage also highlighted anti-war demonstrations around the world, when they featured pro-Serbian sentiments or solidarity with the people of Yugoslavia. As for Albanians who were the targets of Milosevic's ethnic cleansing campaign, their condition was left unmentioned. Only those ethnic Albanians willing to, or coerced into, declaring that their suffering was due to NATO bombs appeared on state television or had their stories covered in dailies. Unintended civilian casualties became the sought-after targets of NATO bombs. Media efforts at war coverage focussed principally on Serb civilian casualties invariably described as the intended targets of 'barbarian' or 'Nazi' NATO bombing raids.

## **REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE**

15. The media's interest in the ten-week military conflict was particularly intense and diverse in the countries neighbouring the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Naturally, above all in the country involved to the greatest extent, Albania, and in the Republic of Macedonia. (The largest part of

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<sup>2</sup> In the months preceding the war, the authorities revoked the frequency licences of many independent broadcasters and set unreasonably high rates for others to continue broadcasting. Just as the strikes began the Milosevic regime took over the private radio station B92 – an emblem of independent journalism in Yugoslavia – sacking all the staff, arresting the editor-in-chief, and replacing them with cadres of the regime. The hijacking of B92 was orchestrated through the courts on false accusations that the radio station was using more megawatts than its licence permitted. (It was, in fact, using 190 of the 300 watts allotted.) See Peter Goff, *From the Kosovo Cradle to the Information Grave*, pp.11-12.

Kosovo refugees went to these two states during the conflict.) This military conflict also had a strong presence in the media in Bulgaria, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Romania and Hungary as well as in other South East European states which were not directly on the border to Yugoslavia but were directly connected to the conflict through their NATO membership – Greece and Turkey. The reaction of journalists and the media in the Balkans to the events was different from country to country on the whole but also within the countries themselves and was not always covered by the official state policy in the respective country.<sup>3</sup>

16. In the majority of neighbouring countries, the media's dividing line between a pro-Milosevic attitude and a pro-NATO ran along the traditional lines of domestic political oppositions. Electronic and print media close to left-wing liberals, former Communist parties, or affiliated business sectors gauged NATO's mistakes and their propaganda policy and elevated the collateral damage to civilian targets in Serbia and Montenegro to a central issue. The focus of attention for the more conservative or liberal-conservative oriented media or, especially, the media associated with US capital investments, like Pro TV in Romania, was on the tragedy of the Kosovo Albanian refugees. In one form or another, they showed their sympathy with Western politics over the regime in Belgrade. A few tried to maintain an equidistant position to the two poles. They attempted to print or broadcast opposing journalistic commentaries, and were determined to have an objective picture.<sup>4</sup>
17. In South Eastern Europe, the media in Croatia and Albania supported the NATO policy and harshly criticised the Milosevic regime. The most obvious advocate of the Serb position in the media was, surprisingly, to be found in the Greek media world. Despite the country's membership in NATO and the EU, Greek public opinion stood on the Serb side as a result of old political friendships.<sup>5</sup>
18. The authorities in Belgrade had one big ally in Greece. The notion that the United States launched the war to destabilise South Eastern Europe was expressed in the majority of Greek newspapers, not only the left-wing ones, and in that way it had a pretext for a protectorate in Kosovo to intervene in now and thereby preventing a united Europe.<sup>6</sup> The Greek television stations could report very accurately from Belgrade on the collateral damage caused by the bombing in comparison to other Balkan states. The number of Greek correspondents was

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<sup>3</sup> Numerous media in Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Macedonia oscillated between pro and contra positions or expressed divergent opinions to their audiences. Some forms of media, especially the print media, in these four neighbouring countries – which unlike Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina have been spared of wars in the 1990s – created an atmosphere of panic amongst the public. The war was going to protract endlessly, spread over to the neighbouring countries, lead to an economic and ecological catastrophe – this was the underlying trend which came forth in the media that were sympathetic with Belgrade in one way or another. Sympathy in predominantly Orthodox countries like Bulgaria, Romania and Macedonia would only be stirred up for one of the afflicted parties, namely the Serbs, especially also through some of the media close to the former communist parties. See Rossen Milev, *SouthEast Europe*, pp.4-10.

<sup>4</sup> Examples of such a position are groups partly or completely owned by the German WAZ in Bulgaria, the high circulation daily *Trud* and *24 Hours*. The development of such mediating voices and nuances in the various electronic and print media in the Balkan states show that the media culture and journalistic professionalism in this crisis-wracked region has broadened its horizons in less than ten years since the fall of the totalitarian regime and despite all sorts of difficulties. Unfortunately, these media do not represent the majority in the Balkans. *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> In hardly any other European country were there so many protests against the NATO airstrikes, on such a scale, lasting so long and organised by the most varied of political camps as there were in Greece.

<sup>6</sup> The Swiss newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* analysed the position of the Greek media as follows: "The media disseminated a picture of the conflict with a one-sidedness that can hardly be surpassed. The Serbs were depicted as the innocent victims of a barbaric war led by NATO. The expulsion of the Kosovo Albanians that was difficult to silence in the face of floods of refugees, was presented as consequence of the NATO air strikes despite the refugee's statements....In the representation and perception of events in Yugoslavia a stubborn basic pattern came to light: the inexterminable belief which came up in all political and ideological camps was that all political events formed the basis of a secret, conspiratorial screenplay. For that reason, the almost pathological anti-American sentiment cannot be overlooked."

second only to the Russian and they enjoyed, although unofficially, special attention in the form of concessions from the Serb authorities responsible for international media.

19. At the other end of the spectrum was the media's reflection of the conflict in Yugoslavia by another NATO member in the Balkans: Turkey. The liberal Turkish newspaper *Milliyet* announced "*we are NATO's most loyal member*" and another commentator wrote in the same newspaper that Turkey could not watch the tragedy in Kosovo without doing anything because as an old hegemonic power in the Balkans they were close to the Kosovar Muslims. The public radio and the dozens of local radio stations commented on the events in Kosovo with undisguised and emotional support for NATO. In general, the Turkish media did not rely upon their own correspondents in the crisis area but on news from international news agencies and on reports by Western correspondents, which, however, were supplemented abundantly with comments.
20. In all other Balkan states – Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Slovenia – one speaks of a middle stance that was between the polarised media fronts: there were clear pro-Serb and equally NATO-friendly media. But there were also many newspapers, radio and television stations that tried to include a neutral and diverse position and to educate their audience as objectively as possible. For the most part in these media, one could also always read criticism against the NATO air strikes and against the military conflict with a simultaneous negative judgement of Milosevic's policy. Overall, such a journalistic stance was often to be witnessed in many European countries.
21. In Albania, the media became involved actors through the use of almost all elements of electronic media, public as well as private. They beamed out programmes in which family members reunited and got in contact with relatives that were fighters in the Kosovo Liberation Army. Many foreign and especially Western correspondents came to Albania, which created good conditions for presenting the Albanian issue in the international news flow. The news was received directly through the foreign journalists and media teams sent there and imparted and less through the state news agency ATA. Significantly, the ATA and the Albanian media normally did not react to statements by Milosevic's regime and hardly ever initiated polemics with them. Instead, they were treated as a propagandist mortal enemy of a group of Western media and above all CNN and *Sky News*. They simply took over the acting role of multiplier of not only their own Western position but also of news from Tirana and the Kosovo Albanian leadership.
22. In Croatia, the public television and other important local print and electronic media were not sparing in any criticism or derision directed at the leadership in Belgrade. A leitmotif in reporting was that this conflict was no exceptional occurrence. Rather, it was depicted as but one of many wars instigated by Milosevic in the former Republic of Yugoslavia's territory. There were a few critical or at least sceptical or ironic voices in some left-wing opposition publications. A certain amount of glee at Serbia finally getting the NATO bombing it deserved could not be overlooked in many commentaries and especially in the print media.
23. In the Republic of Macedonia, media opinions on the NATO strikes were relatively mixed. The unexpected flood of Kosovo Albanian refugees into the Republic, a main topic in most media, released a wave of indignation, also expressed in the media. On the other hand, there was also a relatively active Serb minority and a strong pro-Serb lobby composed of the former Communist party, the social democrats, some smaller parties and the media associated with them. One particular defender of the pro-Serb position was the newspaper *Dnevnik*. The public television and radio stations – and their equivalent institutions in Bulgaria and Romania – tried to provide balanced and objective reporting, but seemed irritated time and again with the West's lack of speed in helping to manage the refugee crisis. In general, the picture painted by the media in relation to events in neighbouring Yugoslavia was multifaceted.

24. The reactions in Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary were equally multifaceted. In the Hungarian press a tough polemic between supporters and adversaries of the air strikes appeared. All domestic political topics took second place. The Hungarian media followed the events with added interest also because of the fate of the large number of minority Hungarians in the Serbian province, Vojvodina. Here, too, the media close to the conservative government were supportive of the NATO activities, while the media close to the socialist opposition, which were against the war, often argued with greater intensity. In comparison with the Czech Republic, which like Hungary is also a new NATO member, the tone and criticism towards the Western hard-line, as opposed to Milosevic, was much more cautious. Nevertheless, the powerful media adopted the pro-NATO position – as was the case in the third new NATO member state, Poland – perhaps out of consideration for the fate of the Hungarian minority in Serbia. In comparison, therefore, with the other new NATO members in Eastern Europe, the Hungarian media took a middle-of-the-road position.
25. The media reaction to the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was doubly controversial: On the one hand the various, often opposing positions, held by the individual media in the capital Sarajevo and on the other the obvious and in general understandable pro-Serb stance of the media in the Serb part of the republic – the Republika Srpska – which again was an opposing counterpart to the stance taken by the majority of the media in the Croatian-Muslim part of the laboriously held together state.
26. In the capital Sarajevo one could see the contradictory positions to the events in Yugoslavia reflected in the daily newspapers *Oslobodjenje*, *Dnevni Avaz* and *Vecernje Novine*. The public radio and television programmes tried to give balanced reporting on a federal level but here too there were divergent opinions present. The private radio stations in Sarajevo and the Croatian-Muslim part of the country as well as the greater part of other private media expressed their support for NATO although more restrained than expected given the recent past. The media in Republika Srpska, on the other hand, showed an undisguised bias for the Belgrade position. Most radio and television stations even changed their programme schedules to include extra information segments from the national television in Belgrade RTS and other Yugoslav media. Some television stations actually began by taking over RTS programmes 24-hours a day, a practice which was later stopped by the intervention of the Office of the High Representative of the International Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina's media office.

#### **INTERNATIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE**

27. The NATO air strikes against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia constituted the central theme in the international media, not only in the countries directly involved but also in most countries around the world, especially in those with influence on the international political landscape such as Russia, China, Japan, India, Australia, Argentina and so on. The media were greatly interested in this war – the last one in Europe in the twentieth century. Public opinion around the world, conveyed through the media, was not divided in two fronts that fought each other by means of propaganda. There were only two strict poles. The first embodied the Serb state-controlled media, especially the Serb state broadcast and satellite television channel RTS on the one hand and CNN, *Sky News* and other Western electronic media on the other.
28. Between these two poles, each employing various means and special forms of propaganda lay a broad and distinctive range of media in the international media landscape. They more or less preserved a distance to the two propaganda centres, were oriented towards nuanced and balanced coverage, did not follow a Manichean scheme of things. Their position towards concrete facts of the military conflict swayed, and they often considered and analysed the actions on both sides quite critically. This variety and differentiation which was generally observed in the

international media during the NATO air strikes is, among other things, a clear indication of the great development in the media culture, media democracy and pluralism in the majority of the countries in the world. Conversely, in countries like Libya and Iraq, President Milosevic's position alone represented the obligatory interpretation in the media and one could ascertain, on account of the sheer significance of the international events, how limited the freedom of expression, how virulent censorship is in undemocratic countries.

29. Rossen Milev of the Balkan Media Association states that the exceptional maturity of democracy in the media was observed in Europe, including even NATO members states, where, especially the print media, took a sceptical position in relation to the military strikes but also against NATO's propaganda from the headquarters in Brussels. Such a distanced attitude on the part of the media towards the official state policy would have been unthinkable in earlier times like for example during the First and Second World Wars. As a result of this event, one sees from a European and international range what the developments in the European media in the course of the last several decades have actually brought about. This was clearly seen on the Lyon-based European television station *Euronews*, which broadcasts their information programmes in several European languages and always tried to cover events objectively. The same applies to the vast majority of public television and radio stations in the Western European NATO member states. Both ZDF and ARD in Germany, the BBC in Great Britain or the French non-private radio and television stations had an emancipated and independent attitude in their judgement of the conflict, although Germany<sup>7</sup>, Great Britain<sup>8</sup> and France<sup>9</sup> were the most important European NATO member states participating in the conflict. The Italian public television station RAI held an impressive position by frequently hammering home a criticising tone on the NATO air strikes. Such independent positions were unthinkable in the electronic media in Yugoslavia, which was controlled by the Belgrade regime.
30. On that alone one can establish the serious asymmetry in the coverage of the conflict on both sides. This phenomenon becomes even more apparent when one takes the print media into

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<sup>7</sup> Germany's air force flew in combat for the first time since the Second World War. Germans were conscious of the historic symbolism of the act – none more so than members of Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's already fragile red-green coalition. The Greens' most senior politician, Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, a former NATO critic, backed air strikes and had narrowly averted a potentially coalition-busting showdown between pragmatists and idealists in his divided party. Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder has proved that the country is ready to shoulder its NATO responsibilities and has pledged to take thousands of refugees. While remaining loyal to the alliance, the government also supported an internationalist solution – mindful of its hopes of some form of permanent presence on the UN Security Council. German newspapers have given cautious support to the attacks. "*The aim of the action is definitely morally justified, but questionable in terms of international law and not backed by the UN,*" declared the tabloid *Bild* newspaper.

<sup>8</sup> Prime Minister Tony Blair has emerged as the most hawkish of NATO's leaders and was widely considered to be backing every move to intensify the campaign. He has espoused a doctrine of justifiable military intervention in internal affairs to prevent genocide. He gave a personal pledge to refugees in Macedonia that they would return home. Writing for BBC News Online, the Prime Minister said: "*There are no half measures to Milosevic's brutality. There can be no half measures about how we deal with it.*" While militarily eclipsed by the USA and France, the UK is the Clinton administration's staunchest ally. However cracks have appeared in the cross-party consensus. Opposition politicians have questioned NATO's strategy and some leading newspapers have predicted Europe could slide into a major conflict. Former Conservative Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, who led EU attempts to bring peace to Bosnia has expressed misgivings while former Labour foreign secretary Lord Owen has argued that NATO cannot wage "*half a war.*"

<sup>9</sup> France has contributed the second largest strike force to the NATO effort after the USA, despite its tradition of independence and occasional anti-Americanism in foreign policy. Both President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Lionel Jospin have given their backing to the NATO operation. President Chirac said that if NATO had failed to act, "*it would have meant accepting barbarism and also taking the risk of a general destabilisation of the Balkans.*" Critically, France was attempting to balance US influence with Russian concerns and used its relationship with Moscow to promote Moscow's peace envoy Viktor Chernomyrdin. Interior Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement – a well-known nationalist who resigned as Defence Minister in 1991 because he opposed the Gulf war – opposed the air strikes and the media too have expressed concerns over the wisdom of NATO strategy.

account: the majority of newspapers and magazines in the Western states showed a greater degree of independence and even tested distance regarding the official policy in their respective countries. Some of them – *Le Monde* in France, *The Guardian* in Great Britain, and *Der Spiegel* in Germany – went far in using their own side’s arguments in the critical discussion. A publication like the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, took an exceptionally hard line against Milosevic, and it published reports critical of NATO now and then. In Italy, almost all newspapers, with the possible exception of Silvio Berlusconi’s *Il Giornale*, were more sceptical or critical of the military conflict in Yugoslavia. That stemmed from the fact that the NATO planes took off from Italy, which disturbed a section of the population and the fear of potential retaliation attacks by the Yugoslav air force.<sup>10</sup>

31. The media in China stood monolithically behind the Belgrade regime, as did North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba, but also India. The co-ordination offices for information agencies in these countries, which were earlier considered Third World for the most part, can be found in Belgrade since the mid-seventies and that was an important card up Milosevic’s sleeve in the media contest.
32. The majority of the print and electronic media in Japan held a balanced and cautious but by no means disinterested position. Commentaries were predominantly factual but now and then also controversial. In particular, newspapers such as *Yomi Uri*, *Sankey* and *Maynici* amongst others dedicated special attention to the events in distant Europe in extensive commentaries.
33. The attention paid by the media in Latin America was more diffuse in comparison with the exception of Belgrade’s sympathetic ally, Cuba, although the military conflict in Yugoslavia always stayed amongst the first headlines in the newspapers and topped the news programmes on most radio and television stations. In Argentina, the leading newspapers, *Clarín* and *Nación*, were particularly active and consistent in their reporting. The most important television channels were very balanced in their reporting on the war.
34. In Australia, the media (dominated by the Rupert Murdoch corporation) was supportive of a hard line against Milosevic. This was in unison with the position held by Murdoch’s news outlets elsewhere in the world and especially in Great Britain. Now and then, a few leftist liberal papers expressed their scepticism of NATO’s ways and means of conducting the war.
35. In the Arab media, critical reporting and reservations prevailed regarding NATO’s military policy against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. One must bear in mind that especially electronic media in some of these countries is, at least, under indirect government or state control. Such a pro-Milosevic position is hardly surprising in the more famous cases like Libya, Iran, Iraq and Syria. The television satellite channel *Al Jazira* that broadcasts from Qatar is one exception. It enjoys great popularity throughout the Arab world and authority, internationally too, for its relatively independent and open range of programmes, which often broadcast discussions critical of NATO, involving Arab politicians, political scientists, and journalists from various capitals via television connections. In the Egyptian media – which in the Arab world is considered to have a developed media culture – one could always read critical opinions on the regime in Belgrade.

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<sup>10</sup> Italy has played a key role by providing eleven air bases for NATO strike aircraft – although Prime Minister Massimo D’Alema headed a centre-left coalition including an anti-war faction. The country’s geographical proximity to the conflict has made many Italians nervous and Italy has made major contributions to aid efforts, fearing the impact of massive numbers of refugees on its doorstep. The newspaper *La Repubblica* has called the war between Serbia and NATO a “great leap backwards.” Other commentators backed an UN-approved strategy rather than a predominant role for NATO. Italian pacifists have held protests at the Aviano NATO air base and public opinion was virtually evenly divided into a pro and anti-war camp.

36. A majority of the Russian media along with the Belarus and almost without exception the Greek media, which constituted Belgrade's most loyal media allies in Europe, led a real rhetorical battle against the North Atlantic Pact. It was a form of compensation for the fact that Russia could not allow itself to get directly involved in the war and therefore was unable to save its only ally in the Balkans from NATO bombing.<sup>11</sup> Yet even this uniform media front in favour of Milosevic in Moscow fell apart, though not in its entirety, after reports about Serb military atrocities against Kosovar Albanians trickled through and after a team from the independent private television station NTV, along with numerous Western teams, was sent out of Belgrade. Following the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade by NATO warplanes, a veritable explosion of anti-American sentiment erupted. It was partly stirred up by Chinese media tirades and led to an attack on the American embassy by demonstrators.
37. The Indian media mainly used the events in Yugoslavia to justify their own nuclear weapons experiments and make it accepted that it could impose a regional claim to power over its neighbouring countries as, in the opinion of many Indian commentators, the USA and NATO states had imposed theirs in the Balkans. The Indian media's overriding pro-Serb attitude can be explained in inter-ethnic problems in multinational India: with a separation in Kosovo one fears a similar chain reaction in one's own country.
38. Various international organisations as well as the Vatican took a balanced position from the humanitarian point of view and out of concern for a swift solution to the problem. The Secretary General of UNESCO, Federico Mayor, criticised the anti-democratic media policy of the leadership in Belgrade but also the bombing of the Serb TV station RTS in Belgrade in which many people were killed. The bombing was criticised by most important international journalist and media culture organisation like the International Federation of Journalists and IPI, amongst others. The decision by EUTELSAT to technically stop the Serb television station RTS from broadcasting on its satellite link also caused controversy.
39. For the first time, the Internet played an important role in an international conflict, as all sides filled websites with up-to-the-minute information. The Internet proved to have more of an official communiqué function, which enriched the instruments of traditional propaganda in this military conflict. What was much more important, but regrettably quite modest in a quantitative way, was the establishment of virtual information communities like discussion forums and pacifist groups in the West via the World Wide Web. The Internet also provided an efficient and safe transfer of information to and from anti-regime groups in Serbia. Yet despite great expectations and promises, the war did not lead to a boom in the new medium. Television remained the news format *par excellence*, also at the time of the military conflict.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

40. Education in human rights is itself a fundamental human right and a responsibility. The role of media in promoting the observance of human rights is becoming increasingly more important

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<sup>11</sup> Russia has walked a fine line between criticising NATO and condemning ethnic cleansing. Russia felt snubbed by NATO's decision to act without UN Security Council authorisation – where it is one of the five Permanent members. While vehemently opposed to air strikes, President Yeltsin has refused to arm Serbia, a traditional ally. Moscow has led moves to shift the diplomatic emphasis away from NATO and towards an international solution, through its special Kosovo peace envoy, Viktor Chenuyrdin. The West has recognised that Russia is in a unique position to influence Belgrade and Russia's initiative and the positive western response have prompted hopes of a possible diplomatic solution. Nationalists and communists have criticised the president for standing back and the West feared that Mr Yeltsin's impeachment crisis could damage peace efforts. While Mr Yeltsin could not ignore domestic opinion, he was reluctant to damage Russia's relations with Western governments, with which Moscow was involved in credit talks.

and evident. A positive development produced by the onslaught of communications and media technology is the ease with which human rights violations can be publicised. Indeed, increased surveillance and global publicity of violations should lead to reformed state behaviour.

41. By expanding the freedom of how, when, and what individuals can share with one another through communications and media technology, one promotes the pace of democratic transitions. It also seems that the proliferation of new media encourages greater accountability of the government to the governed, thus the intimate relationship between information and democracy. While the relationship between information and democratisation is not self-evident, one could argue that as citizens become more sophisticated in their understanding of human rights and norms of humane and just governance, so too do the societies that govern them.
42. Media help the possibilities of constructive social change by providing links between democratic movements worldwide. The notion that knowledge leads to progress is at the heart of the faith that media and informational technologies will promote better government and sustainable development.
43. Media and the Internet with global information flows help locally produced human rights campaign reach across. Human rights abuses can be made a part of global awareness (and local discourse) from any location along the information super highway. Those who believe that the Internet and international media promote the observation of human rights, believe that the likelihood of increasing the quality of life for the world's oppressed is directly linked to increasing world awareness of their abuses. This is only true, however, if one accepts the principle that exposure is a negative incentive enough to encourage reform.
44. In the case of Kosovo, we see how the proliferation of informational systems increases the ease with which knowledge of human rights issues accumulates through the channels of the Internet and the global media. However, the conflict in Kosovo was a difficult war to cover in many ways. From the moment the air strikes began, most foreign journalists were driven out of Kosovo. The few that remained or slipped in during the war had to side step Serb security forces, who did not always welcome independent witnesses, and NATO bombers, who could not draw the distinction between friend or foe from 15,000 feet above.
45. At least twenty-five journalists and media workers lost their lives covering this conflict during the NATO air strikes. Sixteen Serb media workers died when NATO bombed the RTS offices, and three Chinese journalists were killed when NATO bombs fell on the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.
46. Journalists around the world grappled with the news angle of this conflict to make it relevant to their market. Nitzan Horowitz of the *Ha'aretz* daily wrote that the Israeli media "*found it difficult to determine who were the good guys and who the bad guys – a division they often make, almost automatically assuming that such a clear-cut rendition of black and white will make the material's presentation to reader or viewer easier and will spark interest in what is perceived as a foreign and strange issue.*"
47. The approach of 'how does a story affect us?' is becoming more prevalent as media outlets battle for market share. "*It is especially true in countries saturated by news, absorbed in their own difficult diplomatic and military disputes,*" writes Horowitz. "*Far-reaching comparisons appeared in the Indian, Irish or Egyptian media: Kosovo is Kashmir, Kosovo is Ulster, Kosovo is Palestine.*"
48. Although there were some detailed media reports of violence and mass expulsion of Kosovo Albanians during the conflict, there seemed to be less sufficient media analysis of the attacks on Kosovar Serbs by returning refugees. The Independent International Commission on Kosovo believes that to this day, almost entirely missing from media coverage are the issues of missing

persons and war prisoners. In its recent Kosovo Report, the Commission also states that an opportunity to educate the public through media on the work of the Hague Tribunal (ICTY) and international human rights norms was sadly missed.<sup>12</sup>

49. The volume of Kosovo-related information and comment that was available on the Internet was astounding and many people used it to fill the information gaps. For the first time in history, the civilian populations involved in the war were able to speak to each other directly, via electronic mail.
50. The Kosovo conflict illustrated again how the propaganda machine of a semi-authoritarian government is considerably more effective than the propaganda efforts of democratic states, where plurality of published opinion divides the public view.
51. ICG analysts believe that Milosevic's tight grip on the media, especially the electronic media, has made it possible for many Serbians to persist in denying the extent of the slaughter and devastation in Kosovo perpetrated by Serbian and Yugoslav forces. In the year leading up to and during the Kosovo war, as during Milosevic's earlier wars in Croatia and Bosnia, the media served as a critical weapon – propagating incendiary lies about the enemy; rationalising violence in the name of ethnic purity, sovereignty or counter-terrorism; suppressing reports of casualties and atrocities; and rewriting humiliating defeats as glorious victories. The degree to which the Belgrade regime has relied on its media to fuel its self-generated wars was evident when, within a week of NATO's strike on a key Belgrade transmitter, a fully equipped, alternative military network had been mobilised to fill in the gap.
52. Although there is an impressive international presence in Kosovo (NATO, UN, OSCE, NGOs), one of the areas seemed to be overlooked by the international community is the immediate media reform in Kosovo. The Independent International Commission on Kosovo in its recent extensive report addressing media issues after the war notes:

UNMIK was thus clearly mandated to exercise media control. At a very early stage, however, bureaucratic misunderstandings and infighting characterised management of emerging media by the International Mission. A particularly messy debate developed over how much temporary international control and content regulation would be necessary to ensure fair access and standards of fair reporting, and whether any content regulation or development of standards amount to censorship. . . . Efforts to promote self-regulation among journalists have been inhibited by conflicts between the SRSG and the OSCE, and by the unwillingness of Serb journalists to participate.
53. There is an obvious need to encourage the balanced development of public and private broadcasting and the growth of a strong domestic media market serving all the citizens of Kosovo, especially the Serb minority.
54. Efforts should be made in shaping media legislation in Serbia and Kosovo with the aim of upholding and protecting media freedom and the public's right to know. The region needs a free, pluralistic, multi-ethnic, professional and viable media with strong public and commercial sectors.
55. Protection of journalists' initiatives should be a focal point of the media community in the region, as reporters were frequent targets of political abuse, ranging from subtle pressure to extreme physical violence. The aim should be to strengthen media by protecting and defending the professional rights and privileges of journalists.

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<sup>12</sup> See Independent International Commission on Kosovo, *The Kosovo Report*, pp. 222-223.

56. The international community should help establish an independent international agency, in accordance with internationally recognised practice with monitoring, regulatory and other powers. It is important to note that this international body would not set media development, nor would it seek to become involved in such practices. Indeed, it must not be a censorship board. It would provide a legal framework for broadcasters' conduct. A similar international body (Independent Media Commission) in Bosnia and Herzegovina proved to be most useful for improving the media landscape.
57. The Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe (RFE), Deutsche Welle, Agence France Presse, and the BBC are already broadcasting into Serbia. This practice should continue as well as transmission of independent news and cultural programs in Serbian language by broadcasting systems in willing third countries.
58. Independent media in Kosovo and Serbia should be put in contact with their counterparts from other emerging democracies, such as Bulgaria or Poland, to exchange ideas and techniques for reporting in post-Communist countries.