

monitoring report

Elections B&H '96

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THE B&H MEDIA WEEK IN REVIEW: 15 - 21 JULY

The high drama surrounding Radovan Karadžić's removal as leader of Republika Srpska's ruling party was the dominant media event in a week that also marked the official opening of Bosnia's election campaign, as set out by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Was Karadžić forever abandoning political and public life, as western negotiators were demanding? Or was the move just another tactical manoeuvre, as suggested in statements by RS politicians, with the cagey psychiatrist and indicted war criminal remaining in the wings for the final act?

The clues presented in the Bosnian media were numerous and contradictory. While there is little doubt that the election campaign can now proceed apace, it is also clear that Karadžić's fate is unresolved and that he will remain a fixture in the electoral process. The OSCE has vowed to ensure that Karadžić will not appear in the Bosnian Serb media but has yet to specify measures it might adopt to force compliance. Early indications suggested that the Bosnia Serb media would grudgingly accept Karadžić's dismissal but that his political martyrdom could become a central campaign plank. Slobodan Bijelic, an SDS vice-president, told **Radio RS** on 20 July: "This is not the end, because the Serbian people will vote for Karadžić by voting for the SDS".

Yet despite diffuse bluster, the telegrams of support and mass rallies that have punctuated RS politics and dominated **RTV Srpska** for the past month appeared to be on hold for now. Threats of boycotts and even retaliation against foreigners stationed in the RS also appeared to vanish following the visit to Pale Mr. Jovica Stanišić, Slobodan Milošević's powerful security chief.

By the week's end even the acting RS president, Biljana Plavšić, struck a conciliatory note, telling **Radio Kragujevac** on 21 July: "We will not take any risks that could endanger the Serb nation. I think that the talks in Belgrade and the agreement we achieved have removed some barriers concerning the future of Republika Srpska, which were placed by the international community". The official RS media stuck closely to the line set out in an SDS statement that supported the electoral process as a means to confirm RS's statehood.

On the other side of the Dayton divide, Bosnian president Alija Izetbegović welcomed Karadžić's discharge as a "capitulation" but opposition groups remained critical of the SDS's continuing participation in the elections. Nevertheless, it appeared that boycott threats by federation-based parties were also being quickly forgotten by both politicians and the media. For its part, **RTV B&H** failed to report the SDS statement explaining Karadžić's action.

The Bosnian media's spotlight on the showdown between Pale and Belgrade tended to obscure other events and controversies with vital bearing on the electoral process. **Radio B&H** was the only news organisation to report in detail on the other half of Richard Holbrooke's mission to the former Yugoslavia. Quoting unnamed officials accompanying the U.S. diplomat, the radio reported on 18 July that Holbrooke had demanded that Croatian president Franjo Tuđman take urgent measures to ensure the dismantling of the government of "Herceg-Bosna." The unnamed diplomat described "Herceg-Bosna" as a sick patient that had to die. Whatever Tudjman's undertakings may have been, they appeared only to strengthen Bosnian Croat truculence in Mostar.

The 31 July deadline for the registration of voters also attracted media attention and served as a vehicle for disinformation and manipulation. State controlled media outlets in the RS appeared determined to convince refugees and displaced people that it was their patriotic duty to vote in their new places of residence rather than in their pre-war districts. Such a move would, of course, help cement ethnic partition.

Despite the ongoing manipulation and obfuscation, many broadcasters offered campaign programs which were professionally balanced and bereft of emotional incitements. The Bosnian press, led by *Oslobođenje* and *Večernje novine* in Sarajevo and *Panorama* in Bijeljina, also continued to offer informative and in-depth election coverage, living up to the media standards outlined two months ago by the OSCE.

Media Coverage in Republika Srpska

The official RS media offered a confused and often contradictory presentation of the week's tumultuous events, perhaps leaving listeners and viewers to ponder other historical epics in which defeats were transformed into victories.

In its initial reports following Karadžić's discharge as SDS leader on 19 July, **Radio Srpska** meekly reported that he had stepped down as the RS president. The fact that Karadžić had caved in to Western pressure and agreed to bow out of public and political life emerged later in the broadcast and only indirectly, in comments by Vojislav Šešelj, the Belgrade-based, ultra-nationalist leader. Richard Holbrooke's return to the Balkan fray also received no mention at all on **Radio Srpska**. Media throughout the RS drew heavily on an SDS communiqué, which accused the international community of plotting to destroy the RS by preventing the SDS from contesting the elections. Karadžić had sacrificed his own political position for the future prosperity of the Serbian nation and the RS, the communiqué said. **RTV Srpska** read the statement in its entirety alongside comments from top RS officials.

One segment read: "Dr Karadžić considers it our duty to go to the elections and give our votes to the SDS so that the marionettes (opposition parties in the RS) and Muslim parties will not capture the third of the electorate they need to merge the RS into B&H."

By the end of the week adulation for Karadžić from RS politicians was riding atop all the **RTV Srpska** news bulletins, though the tone was vaguely funereal. At a celebration on 21 July marking the founding of a Bosnian Serb army unit known as the "wolves from Vučijak," Momčilo Krajsnik greeted the gathering "in my own name and in the name of the man who much more than myself deserves your support". Two days earlier **Radio Srpska** quoted an "anonymous diplomat" in London as saying that Karadžić would survive because he was the "hero of all Serbs".

Despite its devotion to angry editorials, **RTV Srpska** declined to comment directly on the Karadžić saga, nor did any RTV broadcaster draw on any source other than RS officials. **Radio Krajina**, the army station in Banja Luka, was again the lone broadcaster in the RS that acted as something other than a government transmission belt.

Radio Krajina was also the only broadcaster to report on the third congress of the Serbian Civic Council in Sarajevo. **Radio Krajina** said the council's aim was to act as "a bridge that will assist in reconciliation between citizens of B&H of different nationalities." The station noted that among the 400 delegates and guests at the congress were representatives from parties and associations from Republika Srpska.

The acrimony that threatened to derail Bosnia's elections did little to stifle the election campaign in the RS media. Daily party broadcasts continued to hold the evening slot on **TV Srpska**. The Social-Liberal Party leader, Miodrag Živanović, made a belated appearance to present his platform on 17 July. Though the callers' responses were uniformly hostile, the moderator remained neutral. The previous day found representatives from the federation-based Civic Democratic Party for B&H (GDS) fielding often abusive questions. Nevertheless, GDS president, Ibrahim Spahić, commended **TV Srpska** for adopting a democratic code in inviting parties from the federation to participate.

There is some irony in the fact that **RTV Srpska** is currently the only government-controlled television station in Bosnia broadcasting discussions with political parties from both entities. Though **RTV B&H** had announced it would offer political parties 10-minute slots beginning 15 July, it appears such broadcasts will not begin before 29 July. In

addition, **RTV B&H's** 18 July "Dnevnik" explained that it had received no requests from RS-based parties to participate in televised debates.

The approaching deadline for the registration of voters presented the RS media with another opportunity to deepen the lines of ethnic separation in Bosnia. **RTV Srpska** carried numerous reports focusing on refugees who had chosen to register to vote in their new homes. The implicit message throughout the reports was that it would be impossible to vote in one's original place of residence.

Radio Prijedor took a more direct approach in a commentary on its 17 July "Dnevnik." The context for the commentary was a protest by refugees from Drvar who were resisting pressure to register in the Prijedor municipality and were demanding to vote in their pre-war district. **Prijedor Radio's** refusal to report on this incident did not prevent the station from accusing the protesters of treason. It said: "Those people who push the option of voting in absentia are directly attacking the Serbian nation."

No Connection

At the moment when he was supposed to introduce representatives of the Croatian Pure Party of Rights on 18 July, the moderator of **Radio Srpska** "Direct Line" program announced that the guests had not shown up in the studio. The moderator told listeners he would give the party representatives fifteen minutes to show up--the same amount of time that students were required to wait for a tardy professor. Then he added:

"We are not going to make any assumptions about why the gentlemen from the Croat Pure Party of Rights did not show up on time at the studio of **Radio Srpska**. But mustn't we ask ourselves if the political activity of soldiers from that party during the past war isn't an unbearable burden and a dark and indelible stain that allows them no peace?"

The next 15 minutes were filled with "The March on the Drina," "There, Far Away," and other Serbian hymns popular with nationalists. The invited guests never arrived.

Tuzla TV

Television news in Tuzla continues to be marred by the cantonal station's clear preference for the SDA (Party for Democratic Action). The SDA wants badly to capture Tuzla, Bosnia's second largest city and a stronghold of the opposition. **TV TPK**, one of two stations in Tuzla, has obliged the party with ample and approving coverage.

Hardly anything the SDA does in Tuzla escapes the notice of **TV TPK's** daily news program, *Dnevnik*. Party statements, press conferences, promotional events, announcements of meetings - *Dnevnik* assiduously reports them all, sometimes at length. During the week of July 15-21, *Dnevnik* gave the SDA twice as much coverage as all the other parties combined. Opposition parties are mentioned rarely, usually later in the show and never with the same enthusiasm.

Dnevnik takes notice of opposition parties only when they call a press conference. With the SDA *Dnevnik* marks the fall of a sparrow. On July 19 it announced an SDA rally the next day and quoted one of the SDA's slogans: "We were with you when it was most difficult, we have the opportunity now to give you the best". The next day it devoted a quarter of its broadcast to an adoring report about the rally. The report showed not only the candidates and crowded hall but also police and army officials who came to show their support. Party symbols, posters and slogans filled the screen. Just so viewers didn't miss the message, the camera focused conspicuously on SDA badges, particularly one on the collar of a young girl.

TV TPK neglects other events in Tuzla, whose mayor is Selim Bešliagić of the rival UBSD (Union of Bosnian Social Democrats). When officials from Tuzla and the Croatian city of Osijek signed a charter of friendship on 16 July, *Dnevnik* gave it only brief mention at the end of the show. An expression of good will across ethnic lines might have interested people in Tuzla, especially Croats, but the event clashed with the SDA's nationalist message and might have helped the mayor. Although the event took place in Tuzla, *Dnevnik* simply took information from the Municipality press center and neglected to mention that the mayor was involved.

TV TPK's showed its tilt toward the SDA well before the official campaign began last week. Its preference was already clear last month, when the SDA and the UBSD quarrelled over a commemoration of an artillery attack that killed 71 people in Tuzla in June 1995. **TV Tuzla**, a municipal station, joined the fray on the side of the UBSD and Mayor Bešlić. **TV TPK** took the side of the SDA.

Little seems to have changed at **TV TPK**. The good news is that **TV Tuzla**, although bound to the city government, has proven itself capable of fair and balanced coverage. Lately it has been reporting on the rallies of all parties, including the SDA. Some broadcasts have been critical of the SDA, but the station has given the SDA opportunities to state its own views. A notable example occurred July 16, when an SDA spokesman accused the mayor of abusing his position for political gain.

Croatian Television

Last week's **Croatian Television** news underscored Croat displeasure with the European Union for accepting the Mostar elections despite a voting irregularity in Germany. On July 16's "Dnevnik", Mijo Brajković, the mayor of West Mostar and recently the most familiar face on the show, said again that E.U. administrator, Ricardo Peres Kasado, had broken the law and that the Croats could not accept his decision.

Looking toward the wider Bosnian elections, the station broadcast daily appeals to Bosnian Croats in Bosnia and abroad that they should vote. These were mixed with repeated assertions that the Croat people were imperilled by an election rule that allows refugees to vote where they live now rather than where they came from. In a show called "Cross-roads of the Federation" on July 19, an official of the HDZ (Croat Democratic Party) warned that Neum, Stolac, Čapljina, in Herzegovina, and Croat towns in central Bosnia were in special danger. "The parties can direct and manipulate the electorate," he explained darkly. "The Serbs will vote only in the Republika Srpska, and Bosniaks will go the other way."

Other reports worked to cast doubt on the trustworthiness of the Bosnian Croats' Federation partner. On July 19, Dnevnik reported the arrest of Croat officers in Jablanica, a Muslim majority town, and said the arrest was ordered by Bosnian

President Alija Izetbegović. ("The officers were released only after a serious threat by the Americans", it said). It ignored the inconvenient news that Croats in Mostar had arrested the head of the Jablanica police. The next day Dnevnik told of perils facing Croats in Bugojno, a mainly Muslim town in central Bosnia. A reporter said they faced continual harassment and physical threats (including threats by hand grenade).

From the beginning, Croatian Television has treated the Bosnian elections not as a contest between political parties or as a democratic struggle among political alternatives, but as a threat to the Croat people. The national question eclipses all others. The frequent disputes with the Bosniak side are used to encourage and enforce political homogeneity. For, in the world of **Croatian Television**, the HDZ is the indisputable representative of the Croat people. Croatian TV ignores the opposition parties; it pretends there is no political disagreement whatsoever. To admit otherwise would be inconvenient to the cause.

FERN

The OSCE finally found its voice last week, just in time for the official start of campaigning. On July 15 it launched the **Free Election Radio Network**, a Swiss-financed station that is broadcasting election news to both the Bosnian Federation and the Republika Srpska. **FERN** fulfils half of the international community's ambition to assist media pluralism in Bosnia and to cross the divide that separates most media in the two entities. The second half, an independent television network, lags in the planning.

Of the two, radio is arguably the more important medium: more Bosnians listen to radio than watch television. And with eight transmitters, **FERN** has a wide reach. Broadcasting on FM (101.3 in Sarajevo), **FERN** claims to cover 81 percent of the Bosnian Federation and 66 percent of Republika Srpska.

The station is based in Sarajevo and employs a staff of 20 Bosnians, including correspondents in the main Bosnian cities. At a press conference last week, **FERN's** Swiss organisers insisted that Bosnian journalists would be given a free hand.

Much of **FERN's** day is filled with pop music designed to attract young and middle-aged listeners. But its scheme for election coverage is

ambitious: hourly news reports, interviews with candidates and other guests, talk shows, broadcasts of election events and presentations by political parties. In addition to its own correspondents, the station is gathering news from the Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian press and from foreign and domestic wire services. Once a day it reviews the domestic and international press.

FERN also has started or is planning longer programs. A half-hour talk show at 5:30 features a well-known political figure. Twice a day the station broadcasts 20 minutes of voter education from OSCE. The station plans listener-participation programs; these are proven favourites in Bosnia. It also intends to profile the political parties, at the rate of two a day, although these had not yet started last week.

Will anyone listen? OSCE's success at influencing the election depends not just on **FERN's** performance but on its ability to attract an audience in the weeks between now and the election. This is nowhere more true than in Republika Srpska and Herceg-Bosna, where the media situation is bleak. The second big international media project, the **TVIN** television network, will have even less time. Its organisers say they do not expect it to be working until the middle of next month.

The Election Campaign in the Sarajevo Press

Following a brief dip, the print media was again offering significant amounts of space for the election campaign. The uncertainties and peregrinations over the official starting date of the campaign mustered only minor interest among the Sarajevo press. Several newspapers, however, used the opportunity to again criticise OSCE officials for failing to establish conditions for a free and fair vote. Yet despite such criticism, all the newspapers and magazines accept the reality of the campaign.

In addition to offering more space to opposition groups, the Bosnian press has also in recent weeks opened its pages to political events across the two entities. This is in part the result of excellent coverage provided by the news service AIM but also reflects the gradual opening of television broadcasts to parties from the opposite entity. This is a modest but heartening beginning for the free flow of information across the former battlelines.

Press Articles Relating Directly or Indirectly to the 1996 Elections

Period of coverage 15 - 21 July 1996

Dailies: *Oslobođenje*, *Večernje novine*, *Dnevni Avaz*.

Weeklies, fortnightlies and monthlies: *Svijet*, *Ljiljan*.

title	issues	number of articles	number of articles per issue	most common formats
Oslobođenje	7	68	4-17 articles	brief news items, reports,
Večernje novine	6	58	5-17 articles	brief news items, reports and interview
Dnevni Avaz	6	61	7-12 articles	brief news items, reports,
Svijet	1	1		commentaries,
Ljiljan	1	2		commentaries,

She loves me, she loves me not...

The table below shows the presence of political parties, their leaders and multi-party coalitions on the state-run broadcast media of both the Federation and Republika Srpska in the week 8-14 July. The column headed "total" indicates how many times each party or its leader appeared (directly or indirectly) or was mentioned in the central daily newscasts on both radio and television of **RTV B&H** and **SRT**.

Each party is awarded a score which represents the sum of every positive mention (+1), every neutral mention (0) and every negative mention (-1). The column headed " $\Sigma (+,-,0)$ " shows the results. The higher the number, the greater is that broadcaster's sympathy for or devotion to the party or politician. The lower the number, on the other hand, the more can the broadcaster be said to regard that party or its leader with disrespect or antipathy. The closer the total to zero, the more likely it is that the party receives equitable treatment by the broadcaster.

name of party / coalition	RTV BiH		RTV Srpska	
	total	$\Sigma (+,-,0)$	total	$\Sigma (+,-,0)$
<i>partye</i>				
Stranka demokratske akcije	20	+3	7	-7
Srpska demokratska stranka (SZ)	19	-5	45	+43
Hrvatska demokratska zajednica BiH	6	-1	4	-4
Srpska radikalna stranka RS	-	-	2	+1
Stranka za BiH	4	0	-	-
Srpska patriotska stranka SPAS	-	-	3	0
Narodna stranka RS	-	-	5	0
Srpska stranka Krajine	-	-	2	+1
Liberalna Stranka BiH	2	0	-	-
Liberalno bošnjačka organizacija	2	0	-	-
Bosanska stranka	2	30	-	-
Građanska demokratska stranka BiH	6	-1	-	-
Muslimansko bošnjačka organizacija (1) (2)	4	-1	-	-
Hrvatska seljačka stranka BiH (1) (2)	1	0	-	-
Unija bosanskohercegovačkih socijaldemokrata (1) (2)	4	0	-	-
Socijal demokratska partija BiH (1) (2)	4	0	-	-
Socijalistička partija RS (4)	-	-	1	0
Jugoslovenska levica RS (JUL) (4)	-	-	1	0
Socijalno-liberalna stranka RS (4)	-	-	1	0
Stranka nezavisnih socijal-demokrata RS (4)	-	-	1	0
Nova radnička partija	-	-	1	0
Stranka demokratskog centra Trebinje (3)	-	-	2	0
Seljačka radnička stranka Kozarska Dubice (3)	-	-	2	0
Demokratska stranka Bijeljina (3)	-	-	3	0
Nova radikalna stranka "Nikola Pašić" (3)	-	-	2	0
Otađbinska stranka Banja Luka (3)	-	-	2	0
Radikalni otađbinski front "Nikola Pašić"	-	-	4	+2
Saborna narodna stranka	-	-	2	+2
<i>coalitions</i>				
Demokratski patriotski blok RS	-	-	3	0
Savez za mir i progres RS	-	-	1	0
Združena lista za Bosnu i Hercegovinu (F BiH)	1	0	-	-

(1) Parties that belong to the coalition Zajednička lista za BiH (Federation BiH)

(2) Parties that belong to the coalition Zajednička listu za BiH (RS)

(3) Parties that belong to the coalition Demokratski partijski blok RS

(4) Parties that belong to the coalition Savez za mir i progres RS

Bosnia's media scene

BIH	
Printed	145
Radio	92
TV	29
Agencies	6
total	272

Federation BiH		Republika Srpska	
Printed	120	Printed	25
Radio	56	Radio	36
TV	22	TV	7
Agencies	5	Agencies	1
total	203	total	69

Bosnian majority		Croatian majority	
Printed	110	Printed	10
Radio	41	Radio	15
TV	17	TV	5
Agencies	4	Agencies	1
total	172	total	31

The information above was gathered by Media Plan in July 1996.

The number of radio and television stations include all production units regardless of their legal status or formal links to a broader network.

Local conditions require that the media in the Federation are treated as separate units.

The following media were monitored for this week's report: Radio&TV Srpska, Radio&TV BiH, Radio Studio 99, NTV 99, NTV Hayat, Radio FERN, TV Zenica, NTV Zetel, Radio Zenica, Radio Tuzla, TV TPK Tuzla, TV Tuzla, Radio Prijedor, Radio Bihać, Radio&TV Mostar, Hrvatska TV Mostar, Radio Herceg Bosna Mostar, Radi Krajina Banja Luka, TV Srbije, Hrvatska televizija, Oslobođenje, Večernje Novine, Dnevni Avaz, Svijet, Ljiljan, Glas Srpski.

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MEDIA PLAN is Bosnia's first private company specialising in media research and analysis. Its central aim is to promote the renewal and development of the B&H media. The company has at its disposal an extensive data-base on the Bosnian media scene.

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