

# CCPJ reporter

Newsletter of the Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists

1997 – Issue 1

## War and the media: bloodless crime

by Gordana Knezevic

After four years of intense fighting, a fragile peace was established in Bosnia a year ago. But the first anniversary of the Dayton Agreement wasn't celebrated in Sarajevo. A year was not long enough to dig up all the war graves, to clear the minefields, to replace the plastic wartime windows with real glass, to heal all the wounds.

Bosnia's three major ethnic groups, Muslim, Serb and Croat, are still deadlocked in a postwar power struggle over the remaining territorial and border issues in the ruined country. The guns are silent but another war goes on uninterrupted – a war waged by the media.

"If television had existed in Hitler's era, the outcome of the Second World War could have been different." This was an oft-repeated assertion in the former Yugoslavia, as television became a powerful weapon in spreading eth-

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SENAD GUBELIC / OSLOBODJENJE

**BOMBED OUT:** A reporter tries to salvage what's left of the *Oslobodjenje* newsroom in Sarajevo, which was destroyed during the war in the former Yugoslavia.

## Une presse libre en Bosnie?

par Marc Gilbert

Quand un reporter débarque à l'étranger, son premier souci bien souvent est d'obtenir des reçus pour ses taxis. Sarajevo, la capitale de la Bosnie, se relève de quatre ans de guerre. Les immeubles sont dévastés, les rues sont dévastées et les gens sont dévastés. Les taxis, ce sont des vieilles Lada ou des vieilles Volks. Et il y a peut-être encore des trous de balles dans le pare-brise, mais le chauffeur sor-

tira toujours sans hésiter son carnet de reçus officiels. Il placera délicatement un carbone entre la copie du client et la sienne. Avec application, il indiquera la date, le prix de la course, la destination et il signera le précieux document. Puis, il produira même un petit tampon de caoutchouc rouge et un encrier, et il apposera au reçu son sceau final. Il y a des choses qui n'ont pas eu le temps de changer à Sarajevo.

La Bosnie n'est pas un pays en

voie de développement. C'est un état moderne, détruit par la guerre, mais toujours socialiste et bureaucratique. Juste avant le conflit, la privatisation commençait à toucher les organes de presse. Par exemple, le journal le plus connu de Sarajevo, *Oslobodjenje*, était en train d'être vendu par l'État, avec le résultat que, cinq ans et une guerre plus tard, il est impossible de savoir aujourd'hui à qui il appartient vraiment. Et pendant la

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# Attacks against journalists increase globally in 1996

By Wayne Sharpe

Journalists around the world found themselves under increasing threats of both violent and legislative assault in 1996, says the Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists' annual report.

At least 53 journalists were reported murdered in 1996 for practising their profession, according to reports received by the International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX) Clearing House, a project of the CCPJ. Another 323 journalists were assaulted or beaten while covering news events or because of their reports.

While scores of journalists are murdered every year for their work, the more common threat for journalists is the courtroom, and the enemy, more often than not, is their own government. In 1996 alone, 166 journalists were charged and brought to trial for their work, 80 were sentenced, and eight were handed suspended sentences. These numbers show a marked increase over 1995.

## Legal weapon

The favourite weapon used against journalists in the courtroom is "criminal libel," a charge that carries not only a fine, but prison time as well. Criminal charges for the printed or broadcast word are unconscionable by international standards of law and human rights, but in Cameroon, Croatia and numerous other countries, journalists fight for basic freedom of expression rights we in Canada take for granted.

In Cameroon, one of the few countries where pre-publication censorship still officially exists, Pius Njawé, editor-in-chief of the weekly newspaper *Le Messenger* and the cartoon supplement *Le Messenger Popoli*, was arrested and detained in October for publishing an editorial and two cartoons critical of President Paul Biya. He was later released from prison but is

still under threat of imprisonment pending appeal of his charges.

One bright note among the scores of questionable legal battles in 1996 was the case of the *Feral Tribune* newspaper in Croatia. After adding "crimes of the media" to the country's penal code in March, the government of President Franjo Tudjman brought criminal charges against *Feral Tribune* editor-in-chief Viktor Ivancic and reporter Marinko Culic for "rudely and falsely slandering" the president. The offending article was titled "Bones in the Mixer" and was critical of Tudjman's plan to turn a World War II concentration camp, where thousands of Serbs



**GUNNED DOWN:** Irish reporter Veronica Guerin was shot dead after writing about the mafia.

were killed by Croatian Fascists, into a memorial that would also honour Croats killed under Communist rule in the former Yugoslavia.

The journalists, who faced three-year prison terms for the article, were acquitted. The presiding judge ruled the offending material was "obviously absurd and merely intended to pass judgement on political activity." The acquittal, a significant victory for press freedom in Croatia, has since been appealed by the state prosecutor.

## Journalists killed

The killing of journalists continued at an alarming rate in 1996. In Algeria, nine journalists were murdered in a nation where at least 58 journalists have been assassinated since May 1993. Journalists are the prime targets of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in a campaign

to assassinate secular intellectuals and professionals in its conflict with the ruling military government.

The Chechnya war was finally conceded by Moscow, but not before another five journalists lost their lives last year. By conservative estimates, 11 journalists were killed in the line of duty in

Chechnya after Russian troops invaded Grozny in December 1994. Eight others, including U.S. photo-journalist Andrew Shumack, are missing and presumed dead.

The most high-profile killing among journalists in 1996 was the gangland murder in Dublin of *The Independent* reporter

Veronica Guerin, renowned for her investigative reporting on organized crime in Ireland, was shot dead in June by two men on a motorcycle as she stood outside a hotel. Guerin had recently obtained an exclusive interview with "Mad Dog," the leading mafia chief in Dublin. One person has been charged in connection with her murder.

Thun Bun Ly of Cambodia was the unfortunate victim of both legislative and physical attacks. Ly was convicted twice in 1995 on "disinformation" and "defamation" charges for publishing articles and cartoons in his newspaper that were critical of the two ruling prime ministers. While Ly was awaiting his chance to take his appeal of the convictions to court, he was gunned down in the street in broad daylight last May.

Clearly someone was determined to silence Thun Bun Ly, one way or another.

# Bosnia: Channel S won the war

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nic hatred. For the first time electronic media were used in support of a Nazi-type war project – the process of “ethnic cleansing.”

Long before it began laying siege to Bosnian cities, the Yugoslav Peoples Army, defending the nationalist Serb cause, occupied all the television stations in the spring of 1992. Its aim was to monopolize the airwaves with the newly introduced Channel S. Like any other propaganda machine worthy of the name, Channel S was free of accurate reporting, news or analyses. Even a United Nations spokesperson’s balanced statement would be deprived of sound. Although he or she would be seen talking, the words would be a dubbed “translation” to suit the channel’s daily front-line report.

Channel S was designed to target the emotions, beliefs, and prejudices of the rural Serb population. Daily, only a single message was being impressed upon the viewers: that it is impossible for Serbs to live with other ethnic groups. Serbian language and history, Serbian graves, and the entire Serbian existence in the multi-ethnic society were declared as threatened.

In a crude attempt at popularizing the notion of partition, Channel S propagandists used excerpts from the U.S. soap opera *Dynasty* to convince viewers that they would enjoy all the wealth of an oil magnate if they would only separate from the Muslims and Croats. That promise of “paradise” would be followed by a few shots of the starvation from southern Sudan – with the blunt message that devotion to a multi-ethnic society would inevitably bring hunger and misery to Serbian homes.

This “advertisement” was repeated endlessly, and only during power cuts in Sarajevo were we spared this ugly image-manipulation selling us partition.

While Channel S was spreading that panic, I was working at the daily newspaper *Oslobodjenje* in the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo. We were still publishing in both

alphabets at the time, Cyrillic (considered Serbian) and Latin (Croat). More than half of our staff were Serbs and they did not lose their jobs, but stayed on to resist

Eventually, partition was achieved, and today more than half of Bosnia’s four million inhabitants do not live at their pre-war addresses. The warlords live in a *Dynasty*-style world of luxury built on their black-market gains, while the rest of the population is coping with problems not much different from those of the underdeveloped parts of Africa.

The oft-repeated lie – that a multi-ethnic society was impossible – seems to have taken root. The spine of the multi-ethnic society has been broken.

Channel S was an example of a bloodless crime, committed publicly, with the entire Bosnian nation as a witness.

The people involved in Nazi German propaganda before and during the Second World War at the very least had to hide, or answer for their actions once the war was over. The people involved in creating ethno-fascist propaganda for Channel S during the Bosnian war just had to change the script – they are talking peace now.

In reality, Channel S won the war for its leaders. The whole country looks like the second part of its pre-war advertisement: miserable and hungry.

*Gordana Knezevic, former editor of Oslobodjenje, now lives in Canada.*



KRISTINA STOCKWOOD / CCPJ

GORDANA KNEZEVIC

the aggression of the separatist Serbs.

In Sarajevo, people knew of no other way of life but being part of a mixed, multi-ethnic community. As far as most were concerned, the messages appearing daily on Channel S were just fiction. But after four years of war, that fiction triumphed, and the common life is no more.

**HATE MEDIA:**  
*For the first time electronic media were used in support of a Nazi-type war project – the process of “ethnic cleansing.”*



REPORTERS SANS FRONTIÈRES

*Thanks to Our Supporters*

With 400 individual, corporate, and foundation donors, there are so many people to thank for supporting the CCPJ in 1996. On behalf of the staff, volunteers and the Board of Directors, thank you to everyone who helped us out last year, including:

<p><b>Brockville Recorder and Times</b> <b>Chris Brookes</b> <b>The Calgary Herald</b> <b>Canadian Media Guild</b> <b>CHUM Charitable Foundation</b> <b>CTV Television Network</b> <b>Dascon Investments Limited</b> <b>The Edmonton Journal</b> <b>Global Television Network</b> <b>The Globe and Mail</b></p>	<p><b>INCO Limited</b> <b>Kitchener Waterloo-Record</b> <b>The Montreal Gazette</b> <b>The Newspaper Guild</b> <b>Ottawa Newspaper Guild</b> <b>Pacific Press Limited</b> <b>Power Broadcasting Inc.</b> <b>Southam Inc.</b> <b>Southern Ontario Newspaper Guild</b> <b>The Toronto Star</b> <b>The Toronto Sun</b> <b>Ursuline Sisters of Bruno</b> <b>Douglas Ward</b> <b>Westcom TV Group Inc.</b> <b>YTV Canada Inc.</b></p>
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## Hate media exploit tensions, promote warfare

# Broadcasting racism from Africa to Y

by David Cozac

The events witnessed in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia revealed not only the savage capability of humanity to carry out a plan of human extermination based on ethnicity and religion but also the use of the media in realizing such horrors.

The phenomenon of so-called "hate media" has arisen in many countries, most notoriously in Rwanda, where malicious propaganda, abetted by the media, transformed many people into killers. Almost 500,000 of the Tutsi minority were killed by the majority Hutu in 1994.

This genocide was well planned. From 1990, after years of sporadic persecution of the Tutsi, the Hutu regime began carefully orchestrating its growth, accompanied by a large-scale arms build-up. Key to the plan's "success" were media outlets that stoked the flames of ethnic rivalry and perceived injustices.

These media were essentially adjuncts of the armed forces. Most infamous was Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM),

created in mid-1993. RTLM, whose shareholders had strong ties to the ruling regime and its security forces, never viewed itself as a disseminator of balanced information but rather as a willing combatant, especially during the genocide.

RTLM announcers denigrated the Tutsi, calling them "cockroaches," and fear-mongered by raising the spectre of Tutsi economic and political domination. RTLM also claimed that the Tutsi had dismembered Hutu bodies like "cannibals."

Most repulsive was RTLM's broadcast of lists of names of targeted Tutsi as well as their likely hiding spots. RTLM claimed that this was done so that these "Antichrists" (the Tutsi) would perish in a final slaughter. On July 2, 1994, RTLM announcers congratulated listeners for the massacres, calling it cause for "celebration" and declaring that "God is just."

The recent history of neighbouring Burundi, with a similar ethnic make-up, is equally ignoble. More than 100,000 people have died in ethnically motivated killings in the 1990s. As in Rwanda, segments of the Tutsi and Hutu media – with support from political elements – have acted as catalysts in the killings. The media reinforce prejudices and rumours rather than trade in investigation and facts.

After a Hutu-led regime assumed control in Burundi in 1993, the minority Tutsi used acquiescent media outlets to malign both the regime and all Hutu, and to summon up collective fear of the Hutu. One Tutsi newspaper, *Le Carrefour des idées*, titled some of its articles "They [the Hutu] want to roast us on skewers," and "Does the Hutu have a soul?" It called the Hutu "the most savage people on Earth."

The print media are particularly persuasive, since extracting such lies from the public domain and printing them legitimizes them to readers – a legitimacy augmented by using common street parlance.



PERSUASIVE PAPERS: Rwandans peruse p

### Niger: exploiting tensions

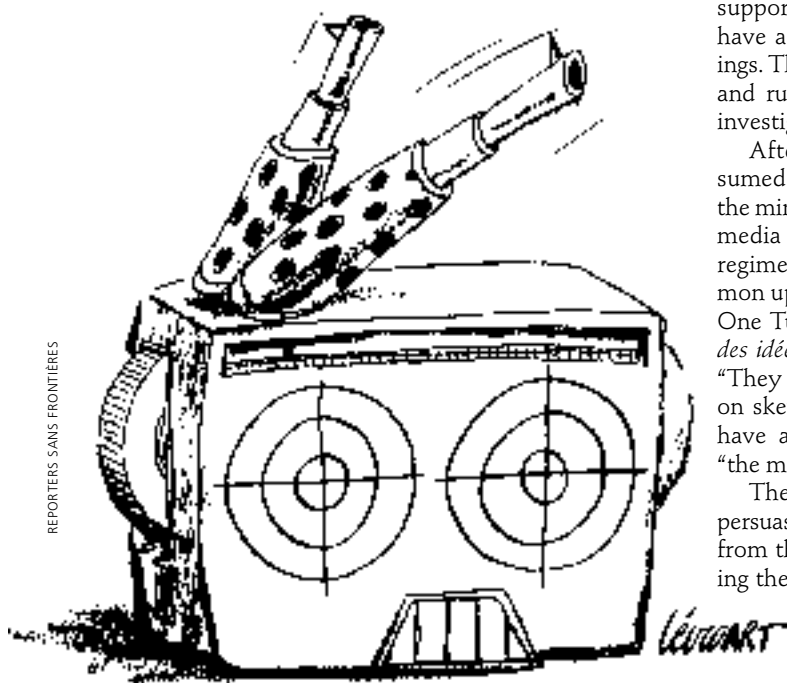
In Niger, much of the media assist competing political factions to exploit ethnic tensions and organize political activity around ethnicity. Niger has essentially two rival ethnic groups, the Zarma and the Haoussa, and the independent media incite hostilities between them.

For example, after Niger elected its first Haoussa president in 1993, Zarma-backed newspapers reproached the government for not fairly doling out senior posts to Zarma. Such allusions to ethnicity make it possible to rally citizens around ethnically oriented political formations, which in turn become manipulable bases of support.

A second reason for using the media is to divert attention from socio-economic problems destabilizing Niger. Specifically, the rebellion by the predominantly white Tuareg minority reveals how the media vilify them and avoid analysis of the rebellion's roots, namely the government's deliberate destruction of the Tuareg nomadic lifestyle.

Media such as *Tribune du peuple* falsely characterized the Tuareg as

**RADIO OF RUIN:**  
On July 2, 1994, RTLM announcers congratulated listeners for the massacres, calling it cause for celebration and declaring "God is just."



REPORTERS SANS FRONTIÈRES

# Yugoslavia



Publications on the street.

bloodthirsty and “driven by racism and hatred.” This newspaper also claimed that Tuareg rebels had endangered several “Hitlers and Mussolinis” who kill their fellow citizens merely for having black skin.

Why abandon professionalism in favour of fomenting ethnic hatred? Because most people are illiterate and do not purchase newspapers, the Niger print media must turn to financial “benefactors,” usually political factions, in order to survive. And to demonstrate their gratitude, the papers essentially become organs of those factions.

## Yugoslavia: nationalism

Like these African nations, the former Yugoslavia was never a homogeneous entity. The war that broke out heightened cultural and religious differences, and the media, by promoting ethnic tensions and nationalism, helped lay the psychological groundwork for the war and encourage its continuation.

In Serbia, professionally minded staff of state broadcasters were replaced by those sympathetic to the regime’s nationalistic agenda, and those who sacrificed the truth

for patriotic goals. A similar crackdown occurred in Croatia, where non-Croatians and journalists with a sense of fair play were dismissed.

During the Serbia-Croatia war, with each side demonizing the other, the Serb media termed Croats “Ustasi fascists” – evoking the memory of Croat World War II collaborators who sent many Serbs to their death. Their counterparts in Croatia countered by labelling Serbs “tchetnik (extremist Serb) terrorists.”

The reporting was heavily biased. The Croat media reported only Serb atrocities, while the Serb media described Croat forces as “cowards” but “courageous” Serb soldiers as “freedom fighters.” Often, Serb state media were ordered to distort coverage by, for example, saying not that “Croat forces” had attacked a village but rather that “Fascist-Vatican barbaric hordes” were responsible.

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina also showed how the media was manipulated for cruel ends. The Bosnian media used pejorative language to denounce Bosnian Serbs and Croats, while the Bosnian Muslim newspaper *Zmaj od Bosne* stated that, during this war, “... every Muslim must identify a Serb and vow to kill him.” According to the Croat media, Bosnian Croats were merely defending themselves against “expansionist and aggressive” Muslims and Serb forces who “practise genocide.”

For their part, the Bosnian Serbs created the Serb Republic News Agency (SRNA), ostensibly to promote the “truth.” In fact, SRNA became a tool for disinformation, saying that Bosnian Muslims in Sarajevo tossed Serbs from windows as food to the hungry masses, or portrayed them as “hordes from the East, menacing the Christian West with a new crusade.” Informed opinion on the war by the public was virtually impossible.

Seeing how words can further the cause of evil presents a troubling dilemma for the freedom of expression community. How can hate media be confronted?

Some have called for banishment. Last March, Reporters sans frontières (RSF) called on the Burundi government to suspend six

extremist newspapers, including *Le Carrefour des Idées*. (The newspapers were suspended in March 1996.) Others, however, oppose any infringement of the right to free expression, and instead argue for the promotion of pluralism in the privately owned media and greater independence for publicly funded broadcasters.

## Other options

Other options are available. ARTICLE 19, the International Centre Against Censorship, suggests applying international laws, such as the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, which provides for punishment of those responsible for such atrocities. The International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which requires governments to take action on violence and the incitement to it, is another possibility.

Action could even be modelled on that of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, which recently ordered unprecedented hearings into complaints that Holocaust denier Ernst Zundel was promoting hatred on the Internet.

Proactive measures could include journalists training, emphasizing professionalism and ethics. The international community could also provide technical expertise and money, the latter of which would help ensure the media’s independence and financial viability.

Above all, economic, political and social conditions in the country must be stable. Inclusive civil institutions are needed, as is an educated and well-informed public. As well, social classes must cut across all ethnic lines, rather than having ethnicity as the only source of identity and the only channel for political and economic power.

Citizens would realize that problems are not solved by persecuting certain ethnic groups but rather by targeting genuine factors like bad governance, lack of human rights, or economic mismanagement. The media’s vulnerability to unscrupulous manipulation and distortion would be reduced.

Sources: RSF’s *Les Médias de la haine* and ARTICLE 19’s *Broadcasting Genocide*.

**CANADIAN SOLUTION: One model could be the Canadian Human Rights Commission, which recently ordered unprecedented hearings into complaints that Holocaust denier Ernst Zundel was promoting hatred on the Internet.**



JEAN-FRANÇOIS BÉLANGER

Merceda et Igor, deux nouvelles recrues de la station indépendante Télé-Hayat à Sarajevo.

## La presse bosniaque

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guerre, de nouveaux médias ont fait leur apparition. Selon Media Plan, on compte en Bosnie-Herzégovine 145 journaux et magazines, 92 stations de radio, 29 de télévision et six agences de presse.

Mais tous ces médias, d'état ou privés, indépendants ou affiliés à des partis politiques, ont un problème en commun. Ils ne disposent pour l'instant d'aucun cadre juridique dans lequel exercer leurs activités. Avant la guerre, la loi en vigueur était celle de l'ancienne Yougoslavie, qui faisait malheureusement peu de cas de la liberté de la presse. Goran Milic, autrefois correspondant-vedette de la télévision yougoslave, résume la situation: «En Yougoslavie, les journalistes étaient libres... mais leur

marge de manoeuvre était mince. D'un bilan économique, ils pouvaient dire: "L'économie va très bien", ou "L'économie va très, très bien", ou "L'économie va extrêmement bien". Et selon les nuances, les gens comprenaient le message».

Cette auto-censure marque toujours les médias bosniaques. En l'absence d'une loi, on ne tient pas à prendre trop de risques, ni à se mettre le pouvoir à dos. Plusieurs médias indépendants critiquent ouvertement les autorités mais c'est un jeu qui a ses limites. Par exemple, tous les immeubles appartiennent encore à l'État. Si une entreprise veut déménager dans un autre édifice ou un autre quartier, l'autorisation viendra d'un ministre ou des politiciens locaux. Et

parfois le pouvoir n'hésite pas à ressortir l'ancienne loi yougoslave pour critiquer une direction éditoriale.

Les chefs des rédactions sont souvent des journalistes qui comptaient vingt ans ou plus de métier dans les anciens médias nationaux, la télé d'état yougoslave par exemple, ou l'agence de presse Tanjug. Ces médias existent toujours dans ce qui reste de la Yougoslavie. Ce sont eux qui ne diffusaient cet hiver aucune nouvelle sur les manifestations à Belgrade. Et pour les gens formés dans ce moule, la liberté d'expression, le journalisme basé sur les faits, ça ne va pas de soi.

Pour faire face à son sentiment de culpabilité, la communauté internationale fait encore des dons importants à la Bosnie, en équipements et en formation. La BBC World School offre à Sarajevo un stage de dix semaines en presse électronique, destiné surtout aux jeunes journalistes, embauchés par les médias indépendants. Pragmatiques, nos collègues britanniques consacrent la première semaine à la nécessité de trouver des revenus pour faire vivre une entreprise de presse. Mais le marché publicitaire n'existe pas: la pizzeria Bodyguard ou le salon de coiffure Madonna peuvent acheter quelques spots mais le téléphone, l'électricité ou la poste sont des monopoles étatisés, et même les grandes entreprises de services comme la chaîne d'hôtels Bosnia appartiennent à l'État. Les commanditaires internationaux ne voient pas encore la nécessité de publiciser leurs produits.

Enfin, il ne faut pas oublier que les hostilités pourraient reprendre en Bosnie. Malgré la paix actuelle, chacun reste sur le pied de guerre, une position toujours déplorable pour les médias.

Pour qu'une presse libre voie le jour en Bosnie, il faudra d'abord un cadre juridique démocratique. Il faudra que l'économie soit reconstruite et qu'elle puisse faire vivre des médias. Il faudra former les journalistes et les cadres des entreprises de presse. Ce ne sera ni simple ni facile.

*Marc Gilbert est correspondant de L'Actualité à Washington. Il a passé cinq semaines en Bosnie l'été dernier.*

### PROBLÈME EN COMMUN:

*Les médias ne disposent pour l'instant d'aucun cadre juridique dans lequel exercer leurs activités.*

#### IFEX IN PERU MAY 16-18

The International Freedom of Express eXchange (IFEX) will hold its annual meeting in Lima on May 16-18. The meeting, hosted by the Institute for Press and Society (Instituto Prensa y Sociedad - IPYS), will highlight press freedom abuses in Peru. IFEX now has a record 26 members, including new groups in the Pacific Islands and Egypt.

#### TORONTO FORUM ON HONG KONG

The CCPJ will hold a free forum, at 7:30 p.m. on April 3 at Toronto's Harbourfront Centre, on "Challenges to Freedom of Expression in Hong Kong" to discuss the transition from British to Chinese rule in Hong Kong on July 1. (Call the CCPJ to confirm the date.) CCPJ board member Frank Koller, an Ottawa producer for CBC Radio's *Sunday Morning*, will moderate. Panelists include Jan Wong, former *Globe and Mail* bureau chief in Beijing, and York University Professor Bernard Luk of the Asia-Pacific Association.

## OPINION:

# Reacting to a pressing debate

by Moira MacDonald

The issue of concentration of media ownership in Canada, precipitated by Conrad Black's breathtaking flurry of purchases of newspapers in this country, has been one of the more difficult topics on the table for the CCPJ's board of directors.

The Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (CPBF) was initiated by the Council of Canadians (COC) to take on this issue. However, what motivates this campaign seems to be ideology first – left versus right – and a democratic and free media second. The campaign plans to compile a "Little Black Book of Chairman Black's writings, sayings and beliefs," which speaks to me of a personal attack, rather than a call for protecting a principle. What seems to concern the campaign is that Conrad Black, well-known and in some circles hated for his conservative views, will snuff out the voices of the left by imposing his political will on his papers.

That may very well happen, and I won't be surprised if it does. But we should not take a stand for this reason. Rather we should take a stand because someone has such a massive grip on press power that he is able to keep the voice of anyone who does not agree with him out of most media in this country, no matter what the political persuasion.

Canada doesn't have a great record in ensuring against concentration of media ownership, which has increasingly been placed in fewer hands this century. If anything, the Hollinger purchases raise again the need for Canada to have either regulatory laws, an overseeing body or both, to keep concentration of ownership in check. I support the CPBF's intention to examine this.

But I have a big problem going after one media baron and ignoring the others. What makes Black so much worse than the Irving family, which has had a virtual

monopoly on the New Brunswick press? My own paper, *The Toronto Sun*, was being seriously courted by Pierre Peladeau before a management-organized conglomerate purchased it. Peladeau is a media mogul himself, owning a huge chunk of the francophone media in Quebec. His attempt to purchase the Sun Publishing group was seen as a bid to extend his company and influence into the rest of Canada. No one outside our company seemed concerned.

Further, what has irked me in the endless debates about Conrad Black is their reactive nature. If we are going to preserve what independence we still have in our press, we'd better get proactive. We'd better find out which papers fall into this category and start supporting them, regardless of their political viewpoint.

As suggested by the CPBF, we also need to look at alternatives to traditional ownership. At best, newspapers and journalism as a whole provide a public service by keeping people informed about the events and issues of the day.

The message has to get out to the public that they're in danger of losing this service if they don't start supporting their own media. Two quarters in the box every morning is pretty cheap to find out what government and business leaders like Conrad Black are up to.

It would be hypocritical for us to ignore the ownership issue in our own country, since potential interference with the editorial side of newspapers has been raised as a possible serious consequence of what we have seen in Canada over the last year. However, the CCPJ board of directors decided not to sign on to the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, nor to join the COC's constitutional challenge to Hollinger's takeover of Sifton and Thomson newspapers. We opted instead to monitor Hollinger's newly acquired papers to see how the ownership change affects the papers editorially.

In any case, getting new ideas for preserving and nurturing what we have is proactive and will serve us all better than screaming and yelling over a done deal.

**LOOKING FORWARD:**  
*Getting new ideas for preserving and nurturing what we have is proactive and will serve us all better than screaming and yelling over a done deal.*



# IFEX Community News

## Media pressured during 1996 elections

by Kristina Stockwood

Reports received in 1996 from IFEX members reveal two trends regarding the role of the media during elections: state media follow directions from the ruling party to report in their favour, while independent media – where they exist – are prevented from reporting or threatened for unfavourable election coverage.

### African authorities

Zambia was a case study in media control during elections last year. The Media Institute of Southern Africa reported the suspension of six journalists from state-owned broadcasters on charges that they conspired to discredit the November national elections. The Committee for a Clean Campaign, a local independent monitor, declared the elections “not free and fair by international standards,” citing vote buying and biased media coverage.

Ghana's elections Dec. 7 were generally accepted as free and fair. However, Reporters sans frontières (RSF) reported that on Nov. 25, military police arrested Opiesie Nkansaa-Daadam, a columnist with the critical weekly *The Free Press*. He was accused of publishing a “subversive and treasonable article” for suggesting the possibility of a coup after President Jerry Rawlings's re-election.

In Kenya, hints of trouble to come in 1997 legislative elections were apparent last August, when Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation Minister Kalonzo Musyoka reportedly refused to

grant any more interviews to the print media “because of the role they played in fanning the constitutional reform debate” (which the government opposes), reports the Network for the Defence of Independent Media in Africa.

In Belarus, protests erupted surrounding a controversial referendum Nov. 24 to increase President Alexander Lukashenko's powers. After a summer fact-finding mission, Human Rights Watch warned that the constitutional reforms would harm freedom of ex-

pression. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported that state-owned media were gagged, and local independent press and foreign broadcasters were attacked prior to the vote. Protesters in the streets of Minsk wore white gags to symbolize attacks on press freedom.

pression. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported that prior to June elections, a government minister charged the BBC with favouring the opposition in its campaign coverage. The statements threatened to lead to self-censorship and cancellation of BBC broadcasts on some radio stations.

Foreign media were not immune to attack last year during elections. In Romania,

story, by the husband of Gloria Oqueli de Macoto. She was running for the Liberal Party in upcoming elections.

### Middle East bannings

The Middle East had its share of press freedom violations at election time. According to RSF, Association of Palestinian Broadcasting journalists were banned from entering Israel to cover May 29 legislative elections, even though they were accredited by Israel's press office. In nearby Gaza, RSF says, Palestinian police shut down a picture transmission agency and seized equipment on Jan. 19, the eve of elections for the autonomous Palestinian Council.

During March legislative elections in Iran, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance suspended two papers. The weekly *Bahar* had published articles implying that the spiritual guide of the Islamic Revolution, the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, had interfered in the electoral process, while the daily *Salam* had reportedly violated electoral law by suggesting the ruling party would be defeated.

### Russian twist

In Russia, the Communist challengers were shut out of the media in its fervent desire to see President Boris Yeltsin re-elected. According to the European Institute for the Media, “the regulatory framework for media coverage was detailed and aimed at fairness”; however, high-ranking members of Yeltsin's administration reportedly tried to influence editors, some of whom cooperated.



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### Balkan protests

Authorities in the Republic of Yugoslavia harassed independent Serbian media for their coverage of huge oppo-

pression. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported that state-owned media were gagged, and local independent press and foreign broadcasters were attacked prior to the vote. Protesters in the streets of Minsk wore white gags to symbolize attacks on press freedom.

In Honduras, the Inter American Press Association reported in November, *La Tribuna* journalist Enma Evangelina Calderon Umanzor and reporter Julio Cesar Antunez were assaulted, likely over a

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