

The background of the cover is a photograph of a newspaper kiosk in the foreground, with a mosque minaret visible in the background against a clear blue sky. The kiosk displays several newspapers with various headlines and images. The minaret is a tall, cylindrical structure with a pointed top, typical of Islamic architecture.

deScripto

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DOSSIER

Media & Religion

COUNTRY FOCUS

Turkey

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Letter from Editor-in-Chief

Dear Readers,

It has always been the idea of deScripto to enhance critical discourse on the media's role in the transition countries of South East Europe in order to be a partner in clarifying the relationship between society culture and media culture, thus also connecting people and institutions across these countries' physical and ethnic borders. deScripto wants to be a media in and of transcultural communication. The time came to examine the topic of the relationship between media and religion, because in South East European countries the transition, by far forced, shaped and interpreted by the media, also intersects the position of religion in these societies. How and why religion becomes a theme in the media - or not - provides orientation to the people about what the public significance and reference of religion and its institutions within this long transition period could be or should be.

Anyway and anyhow, religion is a decisive factor in personal and social life and it is a social network which keeps cultural traditions and spiritual programmes sustainable and alive. Especially in societies that are confronted with a psychologically difficult or contrasting frame of identity (as is the case for example in Turkey, where a laicist system meets a highly religious and traditional mind set) or societies that are confused by a disharmonious history of change, including domination (as is the case in most SEE countries), the construction of the cultural frame for building social identity is somehow weakened, and – in the case of perceived emergency – they fall back into defensive references of identity, usually nation or religion. These are the last bastions of the search for identity. And if people from such a society get offended – as was the case with ironical cartoons of Mohammed – then there is little space for mutual communication, and hate, war, fight and terror become the languages of choice.

The reactions of the Muslim world to the generally reasonable Western mind-set, and especially to those in US politics, on questions of public values in societal development (which turns out in the case of the Bush administration to be more and more a religiously coloured mission of freedom and democracy), often becomes stereotyped as fundamentalism. In the context of questioning the relationship between media and religion, preconceptions must be changed: fundamentalism, as we see it in the Islamic-Western confrontation, is a phenomenon of the media, applied to politically (publicly) motivated demonstrations of religion as the first and last frame of identity. Fundamentalism does not originate from religion; it is a rhetorical category, a dramatic means of argumentation in any ideological system, thus turning communication into persuasion, demonstration or manipulation. The dramatisation of the demonstration of Islamic symbols is an effect of media - of its culture and politics. Analyses of fundamentalism always go in the wrong direction when they are related to the Koran or to the religious traditions of Islam. All religions, including Christian ones, are frames of axiomatic questions, and because of that also frames of legitimacy to defend the axiomatic answers they give. Since the media gives space to that, it becomes a decisive factor in increasing the dramaturgy of fundamentalist rhetoric. And if we find fundamentalism aggressive, then we should understand the message that aggression is always a sign of feeling insufficiently acknowledged.

This issue of deScripto shows that in the SEE countries there are indeed different models of cohabitation for religion and public society represented by the media. It will show that the media indeed has a task in religious discourse and inter-religious dialogue. And last but not least, it will show that there are ways of melioration in mediation between religion and society in a secular ambient. I hope you will take some ideas out of this edition with you.

Thomas A. Bauer, Editor-in-Chief



Letter from Publisher

Dear Readers,

In 2006 SEEMO will be active in supporting the rights of journalists from those countries in South East Europe which require visas for the EU by making it easier for them to get the proper stamp in their passports. It is absurd that the EU is asking all European countries to fight organised crime, but at the same time is making the work of those investigating organised crime, including journalists, impossible or very hard. Crime does not know any borders. And often those behind crime are living free in an EU country.

How can a foreign-policy editor report if he has to ask for a visa every time he needs to travel to the EU? What if he has to travel ad hoc to an EU country to report about an unplanned event? Journalists from all countries must be free to move without being stopped by bureaucracy. If EU countries need a visa system, they must find a way for journalists to get visas easily and within a few hours, and these visas should be valid for at least one year. Of course, SEEMO will ask the EU to find a new way to make travel easier for journalists. As well, all other countries in the world must make

boarders open to foreign journalists. It means that South East European countries which require visas for citizens from other countries must also make changes for journalists.

For SEEMO 2006 is a very active year. Some weeks ago we published the new SEEMO Media Handbook, edition 2005/2006, and our team is starting to work on the 2006/2007 edition. In May we will publish a book about media and minorities in South East Europe. Also different conferences are planned; the first big event will take place in Vienna from 5-7 May.

For me it is also a very sad time, as I have to inform our readers about the death of one of our members. Mehmed Husic, known by everyone as "Memica", a leading journalist in the region, SEEMO founder, and owner of the Sarajevo news agency ONASA, died in February. He was one of the initiators of the SEEMO conference for private news agencies organised in June 2005 in Skopje. He also participated in our SEEMO Dialogue Meeting in Opatija in October last year. He always had one dream: that all media in Bosnia-Herzegovina work to a high professional standard. He died, and his dream is not yet a reality.

Oliver Vujovic, Publisher, SEEMO Secretary General

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The views expressed in deScripto are entirely
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Media-like Reli Religion-like M

In the face of a globalising media society, religions are challenged to search for a new role in relation to the media-mediated culture of life. Media is challenged by the need to reserve attention and space for a meaningful interpretation of life in relation to religious and spiritual issues. In order to find out what can be done to create that balance, constructions of concrete events need to be analysed using theoretical conceptions.

BY THOMAS A. BAUER

The story of a Danish paper's cartoons on prophet Mohammed, designed to be a didactical means to support inter-religious education as it has been delivered in Muslim countries, the reaction of the Muslim world to that and the reaction of Western media, politicians and other experts to the dramatic protest by the Muslims are all full of cultural ignorance, intolerance and indolence, full of auto- and hetero-stereotypy, full of hysterical performance in media and overloaded by the creation of clichés in global and local media.

There is still silence about the not-yet-worked-out relation between societies that are oriented to traditionally communicated cultures and societies that are oriented to media-communicated culture.

What is most shocking is the irresponsibly huge lack of media literacy and communication competence that has become obvious through action and reaction by representatives of the media, politics, and religious communities. Behind such a chain of events and actions, which never is created out of itself, a complex of cultural contradictions is waiting to be resolved. The particular story has to be written on the background of that chain of events; there is still silence about the not-yet-worked-out relation between societies that are oriented to traditionally communicated cultures and societies that are oriented to media-communicated culture. Cultural programmes, structured and established as hybrid systems of religious and political organisations, identifiable by (or as) Eastern and

Western, encounter each other - somehow unprepared for that confrontation – under conditions of media globalisation.

I do not know if Freud could explain that. But I am sure he would clarify the situation by pointing out collectively suppressed feelings of guilt coming from intellectual pride and religious forgetfulness, which accompany the historical process of deliberation and secularisation on one side. And maybe he would recognise a long story about the building of collective feelings of inferiority, which re-mobilises forgotten pride focusing on that criterion of identity which is supposed to be or is accused of being the crucial point of remaining a victim of (religious) culture. That sounds psychologically plausible, and is not new.

This diagnosis has already been given by many Western experts in many intellectual magazines. But it is not more than a result which only satisfies the (Western) logic of psychology. The psychological conceptions of Sigmund Freud and others, let us say those of C.G. Jung, are operating with concepts that try to explain what cannot be observed, or what can only be observed through interpretation. So his and other explications rely on cultural – not natural – phenomenon.

That fact must be taken for what it is; an explanation within the Western context of scientism of socio-psychic aggregations, which is by itself - again - another level of secular order in the history of deliberation and emancipation. It reflects, expressed in terms of cybernetics – a third level of observation, the level of “clarification” and is through that (again following the map of cultures) a contextualised reaction of the West which shows that media mostly see internal conflicts as a crucial point at which achievements in deliberation, media free-

gion or edia?

dom, freedom of opinion and freedom of expression have to be defended until their last and least consequence. This argument peaked in an Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) discussion, in which it was said: “Blasphemy has a right and a legitimacy in media.”

The psychological explanation is Western-built, and explains the Muslim’s situation as a psychological question built on a never-resolved history of victimisation and the media situation as psychological resistance to becoming dependent on any system. The psychological explanation of conflict on the side of Christian secularisation - to my mind - is a fleeing argument which refuses communication, and does not face the reaction of the Muslims as a meaningful message to the Western world of secularisation, but simply as an eruption of their own religious enmeshment, and in the end just leads to superficial ethical cosmetics aimed at calming down behaviour by saying Western media should be more careful and more empathetic to Muslim sensibilities.

What an arrogant gesture! What a self-loving attitude! What a proud reaction refuting one’s own blind window! What a defensive concentration on concepts of identity which neglect that identity is in the end a result of relations to others, of encounters and communication – and not the endless repetition of one’s own or of historical achievements.

The message of this conflict is about – as seen from a communication-theory perspective – the interaction of relations. It is a claim for development and reconstruction of relationships as a carrying measure of (religious and cultural) diversity and as a cultural “habitus” (Baudrillard) of interest in others, in distinction and difference.

That is what communication means at its dialogical and dialectic end: the unification of differences under the challenging condition of participation of identities of others. It is the other in whose face I am able to find the challenges of identifying myself. In a media world media is that mirror, that face of the other. So the question of relationships between systems, cultures or religions theoretically may be turned to the analysis of the relationship between media and religion in general. Theoretically speaking, media is the place in which and the

social practice where the cultural structures of social relationship and the social order of discourses (especially concerning distinguished religious programmes) might be de- and reconstructed.

There is a lot to say about the relationship between religion and media. And when taking the position of religion, one could be tempted to start with a litany of lamentation, in which everyone would start by taking the position of any institution, organisation or group of interest, at the same time supposing that what you get from the media becomes publicly important: First the media should give much more space to religious topics, and if it would do so, it should have an eye towards really important topics and not remain limited by superficial observation of weak representatives or insufficient events, and it should not just research what happens, but look more into the background of a story. Media should be aware of the responsibility it has - especially in relation to religious symbols, rites and cultural or organisational representations,

Religion is a system constructed by communication and is through that a media of beliefs. Media is a system constructed by communication and is through that a frame of reference for constructing reality

since religion represents a spiritual good that touches the first and the last questions and conditions of human life. And a wrong word or a wrong sign delivered by a media that just wants to sell news may very quickly insult the fundamentals of religious identity, which in several cases may also include social, cultural and even political identity.

Identity is the last value any person or any social body wants to lose or wants to have stolen or insulted, especially in the name of becoming a subject of cheap entertainment for others. Insulted identity mobilises forces of fighting for one’s own life. That is, what we think to be taught by the history of the relationship between religion and politics, between politicised religions or between religiously uploaded national bodies.



But if we take a look at the meaning of media and religion from an ethnological, phenomenological point of view and if we discover the mutual relation of both – religion is a system constructed by communication and is through that a media (frame of reference) of beliefs; media is a system constructed

*Secularisation has to do with media.
Fundamentalism also has to do with the media.
It is a phenomenon which only makes
sense in the context of media.*

by communication and is through that a frame of reference for constructing reality - could it then be that this claim of media power for religions is the wrong litany in the wrong church, the wrong claim to a wrong interest?

I will try to argue why – at least from a media theoretical position: It simply depends on the understanding of media. As long as we think media is a disposition of power, we make media out to be understood as the observer of – whatever. But, understanding media as a (well organised) passage of social practice means media is not the observer of politics, religion, society etc, but that media is the way to create politics, media is the way to realise religion, and media is the way of living with society.

When one turns around the observation and says that media is (just) the public space of observation (of politics, religion, culture etc.), then one might not realise that religion in media is not like religion in churches or in mosques. In churches, mosques or temples religion is a collective mental ambient, a spiritual frame which has the legitimacy of belongingness, participation in a community, togetherness, and even somehow intimacy.

That creates a collective feeling that there is some spirit that makes everyone equal and homogeneous. That desire is symbolised by authorised and hierarchic communication, by a system of different roles and competencies between priests, imams and believers, by the order of session and liturgy, by architecture, by equipment and so on. It is also organised through rites, through mystification, and through symbols for mysteries which demand an according habit and behaviour. What is important for the feeling of being protected and of being a community is to suppose that everyone else in general is thinking in the same direction.

But media is another setting of social (cultural) practice and because of that the reason for an (necessarily) otherwise cultural (social) format for religion: it is public, disperse, extremely secular, personalised in use, not demanding of any special order of behaviour, and with all that following other and own rites of communication, concentration, mutual identification, and distribution of roles or competencies.

Maybe that was (is) the crucial point in the story of the cartoons: mass media is a setting of (for) religion in which media usurp the position of religion. Media religion is still by far an

unknown format for religion, which puts out of order the traditional methods of communicating and interpreting religious programmes. A look to media churches shows a stage in which freedom of religion is combined with media freedom in a format that lives from a syncretistic combination of supposedly church-made symbols (community sitting looking to the altar, liturgical clothing, bible, pastor preaching and ceremonies of prayer) in a (for a TV) show, which is usually recognised as Americanised culture.

Maybe religion in a liturgical setting also has a tendency to become a show, but a media show is a show for anyone, it is trying to reach and to attract masses, while liturgical shows are inscenuations for a community and try to give spiritual reference to all attendees. Religion is a reference of connectedness to a transcendent world; it does not produce fast-changing news, but long-lasting messages for the use of belief, not for the use of information.

Media neglects this distinction, it makes news out of messages and messages out of news. Media neglects borders, better yet, it uses borders as bridging connections between systems, nations, and societies. For trans-cultural societies this effect may be seen as positive; for (religious) communities this effect might be undesirable.

Media contextualises religion through other systems, especially those that are media-like: politics, market, and conversational discourse. So religion becomes a dimension of politics, market or conversation and vice-versa: politics becomes a dimension of religion, market becomes a dimension of religion and conversation becomes a dimension of religion.

At first view it seems there are two different objective universes running into each other. Media stands for a model of casual orientation towards an open and by itself meaningless horizon uploaded with deliberation and the personal decision of reminding or forgetting, for fast-changing news, for never-ending entertainment, and for selling formats of communication thus disposed of for externality, for publicity, for missionless rhetoric and for agreement on participation in systems of power.

Religion often stands as a model for a responsible relationship to a spiritual universe with closed and meaningful orientation, uploaded with personal risk and the chance of being guilty or redeemed, thus being disposed for community building by inclusion or exclusion, for dogmatic formats of communication, for missionary rhetoric and for hierarchic concentrations of power.

Media and religion represent in their special manner cultural complexes with comparable structures of reasonability, of presence and ubiquity, and of orientation in everyday life. Both religion and media provide a connection to one's own life interests, to other personal models of resolving the challenges of life and both set an agenda for conducting personal and social life.

That similarity in reasonability makes them different in cul-

tural context. Media and religion are similar, and maybe somehow mutually exchangeable as discursive universes bridging the gap between one's own and others' lives, but aside from this similarity have obvious differences in meaning and differences of means in achieving their goals.

Both religion and media provide a connection to one's own life interests, to other personal models of resolving the challenges of life and both set an agenda for conducting personal and social life.

This relationship makes them competitors under conditions of social and cultural control; it makes them fight each other for domination of public attention under a condition of lost control with attempts of one to usurp the power of the other: religion amplifies its influence by media presence and media rhetoric, which makes religion partially fundamentalist, and media amplifies its agenda-setting position by uploading its programme with discourses on principle questions of social, cultural and spiritual life, thus usurping the position of messaging the truth.

Media – as it is a technically organised structure of social practice – is always in-between (in the middle), but more: media creates a factor of in-between, a factor of middle-of, which reveals that there is a unity in any difference. If someone claims something to be a lie, then there must be a truth. And then there must be a point of view (media position, found by social interaction) which gives an idea of what the decisive criterion is for differentiation.

So media by definition has to investigate and has to invest interest in the other side of whatever theme – even on the “other side” of religions, especially when they are organised as systems. And maybe media is the only social space that is able to mediate between one and another perspective, one and another observation, one and another opinion, and one and another truth.

But media is not just an instrumental system; it is first and was long-before realised as a technique and social engine practice of negotiating reality between various considerations, such resigning chances and risks of communication. Media is the space in which distinctions are not only possible, but where they become necessary.

Media is the social and cultural practice of differentiation, the cultural challenge of diversity, the cognitive map of variety and a public place of cultural memory. In that sense media is and has to be an active factor in provoking intellectual crises, in order to minimise the effects of social crises; it has to be an open window for confrontation, which means media should be a place to create an open-minded construction of reality.

That open-minded character of socially organised interaction is a quality of communication competence and through that media relates to emancipation, deliberation, and clarification, in a philosophical, in a pragmatic and in a practical sense. n

Powerful Religious Affiliations in
Slovenian and Croatian Media:

The Church's Gatekeepers

While it is obvious that there is a close connection between media and politics, the relationship between media and religion is a topic that receives comparably little attention. Privatisation, however, has also brought players with religious ties into the media game.

BY ELISABETH C. WENDL

The ongoing process of democratisation in South East Europe has led to substantial changes in the media landscape. With the transformation of state-owned media organisations into private enterprises, new problems and challenges have arisen.

For example, media concentration may threaten pluralism and free discourse. Journalistic work is often in danger of indirect censorship due to economic pressures.

Media owners are able to control content and therefore they may manipulate media messages out of self-interest, or for economic or political advantage.

The young democracies of South East Europe are poorly prepared for the challenges of a free, market-driven media. Regulations concerning media concentration are sparse and there is inadequate protection from governments and the industry itself in place to prevent abuse of the media for economic or political gain.

Moreover, incomplete data on media ownership and limited independent sources for circulation figures, readership, and viewing and listening shares limit a full assessment of the situation and complicate the introduction of preventative measures to support the democratisation of the media.

Religious Players – Myth or Corporate Reality?

As will be described, not only players with political or industrial backgrounds are engaging in the developing media market of South East Europe, there are also influential media owners with religious ties.

Not only do these religious forces have significant economic

power and control a broad range of different media, they also have a wide distribution system that may well be used to convey religious interests and ideas in the same way political or economic messages are promoted by other players.

The following analysis shall demonstrate the relation between media and religion, using the example of the Croatian and Slovenian media markets. Especially in Croatia the affiliations of media owners with a religious mission have reached an astonishing level.

The Big One: Styria Medien AG

One transnational player with a broad sphere of influence is Austrian-based company Styria Medien AG. Styria was founded in 1869 and was originally called “Katholischer Presseverein.” Since 1997 Styria has been a joint-stock company. According to information on the Styria website, more than 98% of the company’s shares are now owned by “Katholischer Medien Verein Privatstiftung”, a private Catholic foundation. The remaining shares belong to the “Katholische Medien Verein”, another Catholic media association.

Although Styria is formally independent of interest groups, political parties, institutions, and churches, the group clearly has a long history of strong ties to the Catholic Church. Moreover, according to the company’s website, guidelines are “ideologically based on mature, self-confident and above all autonomous Christianity-influenced Catholicism.”

In addition to its programmes in Austria, Styria is active in Slovenia and especially Croatia. The company either owns or is affiliated with a wide range of different media in South East Europe.

Own

In Croatia, Styria's media spectrum includes two daily papers (24 sata, Vecernji list), online media (Vecernji list online), magazines (Elite, Primadona) and printing and distribution services (Tiskara Zagreb, Distripress).

In Slovenia, Styria is affiliated with Dnevnik, a daily newspaper, as well as with the internet service Dnevnik online. Besides this, the company is also linked to weekly newspapers Zurnal and Nedeljski Dnevnik.

According to information on Styria's homepage, the company became the market leader among daily newspapers in Croatia with the launch of 24 sata. Although 24 sata and Vecernji list make up almost 45% of the newspapers sold daily, Styria Medien AG is longing for more market share.

Currently, the company is considering acquiring a 50% share of the Rijeka-based regional daily newspaper Novi list. Due to Styria's dominant position in the Croatian newspaper market, this deal is under review by authorities in Zagreb, who have yet to approve it.

The Catholic Church – A Media Giant in Croatia

Another influential player in the Croatian media market is the Catholic Church. With Croatia's independence the Church quickly realised what is at stake. Brotherhoods, companies owned by or affiliated with the Church, bishops, and parishes have founded new media outlets.

Today, news agencies with national audiences such as Informativna katolička agencija (IKA), a wide range of news-magazines (for example Glas Koncila, Puls, Mi, Mali Concil), radio stations (Hrvatski Katolički Radio, Radio Marija), and TV and video production organisations (Krscanska Sadasnjost) are among the Church's holdings.

The book on media ownership (Media Ownership and Its Impact on Media Independence and Pluralism) published by the Peace Institute Ljubljana provides insight into the current situation of the Croatian media market. Stjepan Malovic, author of the Croatian report, considers the influence of the Catholic Church to be enormous.

Malovic states that "given that the largest media owners are the Croatian Government and the Church, there can be no doubt about the political affiliation of the leading media in Croatia. This speaks to the main problem of Croatian media:

the lack of independent, balanced and impartial reporting."

The author also emphasises that the Church's influence is not only limited to media ownership. In fact, the Church is also an important centre for media distribution. A number of newspapers related to the church are spread directly through churches all over Croatia. Therefore, "they are understood by readers to be direct messages from the Catholic Church itself."

IKA – A Catholic Press Agency

Among those media directly affiliated with the Catholic Church is the Catholic press agency IKA. The news agency was founded in 1993. The current director is Anton Suljic.

Although IKA is supported by the Croatian Bishop Conference, the agency sells content to other media. Indeed, IKA has contracts with other Catholic press networks all over the world and provides newspapers, religious magazines, and electronic media with journalistic material.

The mission statement on the IKA website is clear: collection and transmission of religious information from a moral and religious point of view. The journalistic style of IKA is not in any way different from other news agencies.

Suzana Peran, deputy editor-in-chief, explains, "We are all professionals in journalism." IKA, however, only covers religious news, including news from the Jewish and Muslim communities in Croatia.

Asked about the sphere of influence of IKA, Peran states that, "By the number of journalists we have, we are a small agency but we have contracts and contacts with all newspapers, radio stations and TV stations here in Croatia and most Bosnian newspapers and media houses. So we can say that according to the area we influence, we are a big agency."

Religion – Important Topic or Neglected News

Evidently, Church and religion are indeed important factors in the Croatian media landscape. But to what extent is religion a focus of media? After 40 years of Communism "there was a big lack of religious information," explains Peran. "In the first years of democracy in Croatia there were many religious news items in the papers, on TV and on the radio. " Nowadays, however, "religion is not a very big topic."

If religion is only of minor importance today, then what financial considerations affect the content of religious media? And how far are these religiously-affiliated media players able to overtly disseminate their messages? Does a religious line always take priority over commercial appeal, or does the company's bottom line still matter most?

In a free market, economic success is strongly dependent on advertising and therefore circulation figures. It seems clear that financial considerations remain the dominant factor in determining content priorities.

According to Peran, "When there are some problems or scandals or some big events, in that case all newspapers and media houses cover the news."

Scandals, big news, emotional topics, novelties: these criteria are important for every media house, regardless of ideological affiliation.n

More Than Ter And Paedophi

In Slovenia, Catholics have problems getting representative reports in the media, Muslims want to put up a sanctuary, and atheists prevent the media from reporting more on religion.

BY MARKO IVANISIN, VERONICCA DITRIH AND TANJA KOČMAN

In 1991 71.6 % of the Slovene population, which totals around 2 million, declared itself Roman Catholic, and in the population census of 2002 this percentage declined to 57.8 %. Representatives of the Catholic Church, however, believe that the percentage of Catholics in Slovenia is higher than the numbers show, arguing that people do not dare to publicly declare their belief, as they have suffered unpleasant consequences by doing so in the “old regime”. Statements similar to this one by the former Slovene bishop and other Catholic Church representatives, have caused a vivid public debate on religion, which still has not solved the three most popular media issues related to religion: the introduction of

Sanctuary Scandal

The demand for an Islamic sanctuary in Slovenian capital Ljubljana created a big response in the domestic media. Sensationalism and stereotyping became routine. Pictures and articles exaggerating the size of the project, which has not even been approved yet, filled the pages of the press. Very few media outlets gave space to representatives of Islam to express their needs and expertise, and most reports projected fear that the sanctuary would make Ljubljana look like a Muslim city. The “left-liberal”, broad-sheet political daily Delo also joined the debate on how the sanctuary should/could look by writing under a picture that a small, unnoticeable building without a minaret in the city suburbs could satisfy Muslim needs in Ljubljana just as such a structure does elsewhere.

religious education in elementary schools, the returning of properties back to the Church (denationalisation), and the construction of a Muslim sanctuary in Slovenia. The latter issue has especially gained much media attention because it fans the strongest emotional flames since Islam has grown to become the second biggest religion in Slovenia (the Islamic community claims that there are 65,000 Muslims living in Slovenia and not 47,500 as the 2002 population census states).

Although Catholicism dominates religious content in the media, representatives of the Catholic religion who gave us interviews criticised how media covers religious topics. First, they claim that the media agenda does not correspond to the agenda of the Church, which today predominantly occupies itself with the challenges of globalisation and the post-modern human, the realisation of the gospel in a society of ‘to have’, the introduction of chaplains in the Slovenian army and similar issues of spiritual importance. Second, they believe that the media is very inconsistent when reporting on international events. For example, the coverage of paedophilia in Austria and Belgium may have created the impression that similar “scandals” are present in Slovenia, however when covering the epochal change of the Pope, the Slovenian media was far off from international standards. “There was no reaction and a total absence of reflection. Our media just waited for the Pope to die. Everybody else saw it as a Catholic event,” said Prof. Ivan Stuhec. Similar complaints target reports on the process of denationalisation, as it is mostly seen as pure materialism and never as a gesture of justice. Stuhec explains it as follows: “The role that religion and the Church have in Slovenian media is transitional and driven by political parties and their capital so that social wealth remains on the side of those with left-liberal orientation.” This might also be the reason the Church so rarely identifies with media reports and that the visit of Pope John Paul II in Slovenia was one of rare occasions on which the Church agreed it received appropriate media coverage.

Although journalists and editors of mainstream media do not feel competent at estimating whether there is enough media coverage on religious topics, they reply that “if religious repre-

rorism lia?

representatives feel there is a lack of media coverage they should establish their own media.” An appeal that may have already materialised; Catholic magazine *Ognjisce* (Fireplace) is the most-read monthly in Slovenia, its radio subsidiary the eighth most-listened to radio station nationwide and its Catholic magazine *Druzina* (Family) the seventh most-read weekly (one place ahead of the most-read political weekly). Furthermore, there are a number of religious programmes dedicated exclusively to religious content on national television as well as regular coverage of masses on Sundays. Yet representatives of the Church claim this still does not satisfy the need for productive discussion on religion, as mainstream media on the one hand lack experts (expertise) on religious questions (e.g. there is no expert reporting from the Vatican on national TV) and on the other do not give time and space

There is more to Catholicism than paedophilic priests and Islam goes far beyond terrorism but we do not have resources to report on this.

to those professionals who could front a discussion on religion. “In general,” they say, “there is too much badly covered and not enough well-covered religious topics.”

For journalists this comes as a surprise since they “deal with religion as they do with any other aspect of social life.” And their comments could be summarised by: “It is not the relationship to religion that is a problem for us, but understanding it.” Or one could quote a TV director: “There is more to Catholicism than paedophilic priests, and Islam goes far beyond terrorism, but we do not have resources to report on this.” All in all one gets the impression that “media prefer to cover topics that ‘priests’ do not want to talk about.”

From the perspective of the Catholic Church it is the history of Communism that causes media’s “negative and inappropriate relationship to religion.”

The Islamic community, however, sees the problem as an unelaborated standpoint of the media, since they write about

Islam only when it comes to the topic of constructing a sanctuary for Muslims in Slovenia (see box). Ahmed Pasic, coordinator for the Islamic cultural centre, adds that the cause of the negative attitude lies in atheism (in 2002 10.1% of Slovenians declared themselves atheists) and secularisation in Slovenian society. He believes that the solution does not exist in more reports on religion because “we cannot define the criteria for proper distribution of media attention between religious communities.”

In Slovenia there are 41 registered religious communities and there is an obvious lack of expertise on religious questions. “If there was more religious content in media, atheists could feel uncomfortable and threatened,” he concludes. n

Members of Religions

per cent (Population Census 1991 and 2002)

Religion	1991	2002
Catholic	71.6	57.8
Islam	1.5	2.4
Orthodox	2.4	2.3
Evangelical	0.7	0.8
Atheist	4.4	10.1
Did not want to reply	4.2	15.7

Religious Media

Magazines

Ognjisce, *Druzna*, *Mavrica*, *Misijonarska obzorja*, *Prijatelj*, *Bozje okolje*, *Nasa luc*, *Tretji dan*, *Cerkveni glasbenik*, *Prenova*, *Soncna pesem* (all Catholic), *Bosnjak* (Islamic)

Nationwide radio stations

Radio *Ognjisce* (Catholic)

Local radio programmes

Misel in cas (Catholic), *Podalpski selam* (Islamic)

Programmes on national television

Obzorja duha, *Duhovni utrip*, *Sveto in svet*, *Ozare* (all Catholic) and regular transmissions of masses and holiday addresses of representatives of religious communities (Catholic, Evangelistic, Serbian Orthodox Church and Islamic Community)

A Decision of Sympathy

Several months ago a young nun died after an exorcism in a Romanian monastery. Today the responsible prior is on the loose again. The case caused a discussion about the role of the Orthodox Church in Romania: some people say it was just an isolated case. For others it is symptomatic of the state of religion in Romanian society.

BY JOSEPH GEPP

In June 2005 a tiny Romanian village in the back of beyond catapulted suddenly into the middle of the whole of Europe's attention. The name of the village is Tanacu, situated in north-eastern Romania, close to the Moldavian border.

The media spoke about the “middle-ages practices of the Church in Romania” and the “deep devoutness of Romanian people”, both of which are not compatible with a modern, pluralist, open society.

In Tanacu there is nothing, apart from some farm houses and a small Orthodox monastery. In this monastery a 23-year old nun died after an exorcism, which was not announced at the diocese, conducted by the prior and four other nuns. Her body was found at a wooden extension of the monastery – hanging on a cross, tied up at the hands and feet, and gagged.

However, a second medical report made after the nun's body was exhumed said that she died in the ambulance of heart problems caused by an overdose of adrenaline, which was administered by the doctors in the ambulance. At the same time, the doctors from the ambulance claimed that she was already dead when they took her from the monastery and that they did not administer more adrenaline than the quantity prescribed.

She had been without food and water for days. After the event, newspapers and TV stations from all over Europe turned their heads to Tanacu and wondered how something like this could happen in our times. Romanian media reacted promptly and brought the case to the public's attention. The international media learned about the case from the national media.

Has enlightenment never reached Romania? At first the case seemed like a normal crime: the prior and his four nuns were

imprisoned immediately, and the Bucharest patriarchy spoke about “a misdirected prior and misdirected nuns”, and about a case that is “barbaric and inexcusable”. The incident had nothing to do with the normal practices of the Orthodox Church. A bit later a debate started. Some inhabitants of Tanacu had cheered for the prior as he was brought to the prison at the nearby city of Vaslui. As a consequence, national and international media spoke about the “middle-ages practices of the Church in Romania” and the “deep devoutness of Romanian people”, both of which are not compatible with a modern, pluralist, open society. Public authorities were accused of not being consequent enough in their prosecution of the priests. And finally, the incident was one reason behind a move by the Pope in Rome to introduce a new, advanced training course in exorcism at the Vatican University.

How Symptomatic Is This Case For The State Of The Romanian Church And Society?

Razvan Martin is programme coordinator for the Media Monitoring Agency (MMA) in Bucharest. Because of his position he knows Romanian society from the inside and understands the factors that influence its public opinion. His analysis of the situation is: “There are religious-motivated crimes in other Western countries too – for example, I remember mass suicides committed in the last 30 years by different sects from the US or France.” On the other hand there is “not a real debate about the role of the Church in Romanian society and this exorcism is another proof that important areas of Romanian society still have a middle-ages mentality.”

Therefore, it is partly a universal problem according to Martin – caused by a spiritual lack in Western societies – and partly the specific problem of transforming a society like Romania:

“If people are still following these rituals and if the elites do not challenge the role of the Church in a democratic society, it means that the problem is deeply rooted and lots remains to be done before a real change can take place.” And about the way the media dealt with the crime: “Most of the media treated the case in a ‘liberal’ manner, criticising strongly the priest and the Church for their involvement in this case. Even ‘Romania Mare’ (the right-wing extremist party in Romania) was very critical of the Church, not only because its leader Vadim Tudor is neo-Protestant.”

Today the 29-year old prior who conducted the exorcism is on the loose again, because the appellate court asserted methodological errors took place during the trial. In a letter to the head of the Romanian Orthodox Church the prior wrote that his murder was a “decision of sympathy”: The nun got violent, so it became necessary to “immobilise” her, he said. At the moment it looks like he does not have to expect very severe punishment for the crime he committed. And it seems that Romanian society still accepts that the Tanacu case is not an isolated one.

The Romanian Orthodox Church does not have a significant presence in the Romanian media. It does not own any national newspapers or TV stations, but it has some religious magazines of low circulation, and in 2004 it acquired a network of local radio stations. Still, it would be wrong to state the Orthodox Church is an actor on the media market. The national TV station has a weekly religious magazine, most of it dedicated to Christianity, especially to Orthodox issues.

At the same time, a few national newspapers have a weekly page dedicated to religious issues and most of them mainly

“The main problem is a lack of debate about the role of the Orthodox Church in a democratic society.” (Razvan Martin)

cover the Orthodox Church. “The main problem I see in Romanian society and in the media is a lack of debate about the role of the Orthodox Church in a democratic society,” adds Martin. “Naturally, the Orthodox Church does not want to give up its status offered by the Constitution as “the national Church” and tries to impose its point of view on many issues using its credibility among the public as the main argument for its legitimacy.”

According to all opinion polls, the Romanian Orthodox Church is the institution most-trusted by Romanians (around 80%, followed by the army and the media).

Most probably the media is a little afraid to tackle sensitive issues about the Orthodox Church because of this high credibility from which the Church benefits. At the same time, few journalists are familiar with religious issues and are able to approach the topic with professionalism. “This is why I consider that a huge responsibility lies also with the intellectual elite and the political class who have the duty to debate this issue from a secular, democratic perspective. Unfortunately, both categories show reluctance in doing this, either for fear of the ‘people’s voice’ or for political and electoral reasons,” says Martin. n

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Slowly Catching Up

Hungary's Catholic Church Starts to Recognise the Mass Media's Importance for Spreading Their Messages

BY CHRISTOPH SOMMERAUER

Currently there is a lively discussion on Hungarian religious internet forums about atheists trying to establish an atheist church. They claim that since communism ended, religion is dropping from everywhere, even out of the water tap. They feel molested by the sheer amount of religious content aired by TV stations. Reason enough to take a deeper look behind religion's current situation in the Hungarian media, though it seems a little un-hip to talk about religion and corresponding topics in today's fast-moving and materialistic Western societies.

In Western societies maybe - you might argue - but we are talking about Hungary here. Taking a glance at Hungary will irrevocably change the views one might still hold regarding East European countries. Since the regime change in 1990, the last whiff of Moscow has vanished and capitalism has fought its way into everyday life with its dazzling array of goods and services.

When arguing about religion's current situation in the Hungarian media, atheistic and religious participants of the discussion soon find one common point: while under communism people were better off not thinking too much about reli-

gion and it was a hazardous activity to teach religion and even more perilous to be a popular priest, the situation has fundamentally changed.

While in those times it was recommendable to avoid the media at any cost, today freedom of opinion, worship and action have taken over. This situation is well-documented by research data from communications theory research group "MTA-ELTE Kommunikációelméleti Kutatócsoport". While in March 1986 there was no religious content whatsoever (0 minutes of all air time - of 1,004 possible minutes of air time), in 1992, shortly after the regime change, 35 of 1,401 minutes or 2.5% of air time were dedicated to religion, and in 2004, 148 of 4,126, or 3.5%. This shows the complete eradication of religious content under the communist regime in concrete numbers.

It is an interesting fact that, while absolute numbers show a significant increase in air time between 1992 and 2004, the percentage of religious coverage grew only marginally. This is mainly due to the launch of commercial TV stations such as RTL Klub, TV2, and Duna TV, between '93 and '98, featuring mainly entertainment content. Even when keeping the increase of air time in mind, religious content is far from excessive, refuting statements by atheistic disputants.

Attendees of an academic conference entitled "Media in church, church in media," which took place on 1 October 2005 in Budapest, made every attempt to find out how this misconception of religious content could emerge in the public. They soon agreed that it was unlikely the broader public would complain about religious coverage, but rather a minority of atheistic defeatists who cannot be pleased whatsoever. Still, there is an obvious gap between the Church and secularised media, which was also to be discussed at the conference. Soon the following anecdote was circulating at the event: "Will you visit one of our city's night clubs?" the Swiss bishop was asked by a yellow press writer at a New York airport. "Why? Does New York have night clubs?" asked the bishop, answering the question glibly.

Religious content in Hungarian TV stations

March exemplarily used; data in absolute numbers and percentage

March 1986		March 1992		March 2004	
Num.	%	Num.	%	Num.	%
0	0	35	2.5	148	3.5

Data: MTA-ELTE Kommunikációelméleti Kutatócsoport

First thing next morning he reads a headline in the yellow press: "At his very arrival Swiss bishop asks about New York night clubs!"

This anecdote aptly describes clerical problems on the unstable field of secularised media. Even if something is decisive news for the church, it is not automatically newsworthy for the media and vice-versa. "We have to bear in mind the different aspects and approaches of the church and the media. While the church is talking about the whole thing, from the beginning (of the world) to its very end, the media is talking about the current situation, and a juicy catastrophe is still the best news," says Ulrich Kiss, Jesuit father and media expert.

He continues: "We still believe that if a parson celebrates his 75th birthday or the parish celebrates its 100th birthday it is news. It is not! Who would care? Why would anybody care? We have to learn what's news!" The problem nowadays seems to be to find the right balance between seclusion from the media and an approach to the public.

Miklos Blankenstein, rector of the theological academy of Esztergom, believes he knows the way out of the dilemma. In order to keep in touch with the public in years to come and to find a mutual basis with non-religious people, "it's now essential to increase the training of clerical communicators in special seminars and to boost the education of media professionals."

According to Kiss, the strategy of the Munich episcopacy could be adopted in Hungary. It established an institution in the early 1960s which was equipped with a TV and radio studio. Ever since, the institution has been training people as media professionals without asking them if they were ministrants or if they have ever attended mass. Needless to say, these graduates have high-ranking jobs in almost every TV station and editorial office. Thus the episcopacy has directly affected the number of opinion-makers.

It looks like the Hungarian church's self-confidence suffered under communism. "The media lives on news!" Kiss argues heatedly, and continues "How come we have not realised until

While the church is talking about the whole thing, from the beginning to its very end, the media is talking about the current situation, and a juicy catastrophe is still the best news." (Ulrich Kiss)

today that the church has the best parish network and thus the best news network on the globe? Especially in times of the internet. Believe it or not, the tsunami was just about to start its way of devastation when I got the first messages from Jesuit parishes in Sri Lanka. I turned on the TV - nothing. Not a single station mentioned anything. We have to finally understand that we had a fully developed information network long before there were news networks. Now it is time to make use of it!"

When addressing clerical passivity in terms of usage of modern media, Csongor Szerdahelyi, head of the episcopates' public relations office, states: "It would be too easy to say the Church missed the trend of mass media. It had to start catch-

ing up in 1990. Between 1950 and 1990 it was not possible to operate religious media of any kind. In fact communication was suppressed. The left hand could not know what the right hand was doing in order to save people's lives."

Asked about the Church's future plans for cooperation with the secularised media, Szerdahelyi mentions Cardinal König, former head of the archdiocese of Vienna, who marked a pastoral era in Austria in his role as precursor of ecumenism, and says: "We could learn from Cardinal König, who affirmed the importance of media for the Church by announcing that all the sources of funds for the Church ought to be split into three equal parts: the first part should be used for the sustenance of religious institutions, the second part for payment of the clergy and the third part on the media."

He continues: "Also we could develop a cooperation between Church and media modelled on the Italian journalists' festival, a convention of representatives of the Church and authors as well as journalists which takes place on the feast day of Saint Francis of Sales, who is the patron saint of writers and authors." In summary, it can be ascertained that the Hungarian Church has quite a way to go, and it is aware of that fact. Plans are being made to find a way into everyday life, and religious structures that were paralysed in communist times are being revived. Assuming the Church is successful, it does not look good for the future of atheists in Hungary. n

Cartoon drawn for deScripto by Daniela Weiß, Austria





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Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

A man in a green jacket and blue jeans is walking down a set of stairs. He has sunglasses on his head, a laptop in his hand, and a blue wristband. Yellow arrows point to these items and other people on the stairs. In the background, a woman in a red jacket and a man in a red sweater are also on the stairs. The man in the red sweater is talking on a mobile phone.

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Oil is everywhere,
whether it is your iPod, laptop,
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Forty per cent of the world's oil is supplied by OPEC, an intergovernmental organization composing 11 developing, oil exporting countries – Algeria, Indonesia, IR Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, SP Libyan AJ, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Venezuela – and one which recognizes the value of and appreciates the global reach of oil and its associated products. Its position as an organization of developing countries allows it to champion growth and co-operation with other developing countries and peoples – who make up the great majority of the world's population – in their efforts to emerge from poverty and make social and economic progress.

To fulfill this commitment, in 1976 OPEC Member Countries created the OPEC Fund for International Development, an intergovernmental financial institution that provides assistance to developing countries. A unique feature of the Fund stipulates that OPEC Member Countries themselves are not eligible for its aid.

Since its founding, the OPEC Fund has provided around \$8 billion in development assistance to non-OPEC countries, helping to create a better quality of life for people in some 120 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East and Europe. The OPEC Fund's resources come exclusively from OPEC Member Country contributions and support is broad-based covering food aid, health projects, humanitarian relief, technical assistance and research programmes.

OPEC Member Countries are conscious of this enormous responsibility to other developing countries and it is a powerful driving force in the Organization's unswerving commitment to market order and stability. OPEC's oil market goal is to pursue a stable global oil supply at fair prices through co-ordinated energy policies and co-operation and dialogue with both oil producers and consumers.

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A Journalist

Freedom Of Expression: Turkey's Long Road Towards Europe

Known as the country with the highest number of journalists imprisoned in the 1990s, Turkey's record on freedom of the media has improved dramatically in the last years. Is this an outcome of the prospect of accession to the European Union intensifying efforts of the country's government, or does it reflect a real societal change? An analysis.

BY AXEL MAIREDER

In 1995, Reporters Sans Frontiere's (RSF) blacklist counted among others 19 imprisoned journalists in China, 15 in Ethiopia, eight in Kuwait and Syria and five in both Vietnam and Nigeria. But one country beat them all: Turkey, in which the RSF stated 108 media professionals were imprisoned. In 1998, the International Press Institute (IPI) complained again that, "Turkey continues to imprison more journalists than any other country in the world."

Turkey's ability to go from one of the worst-rated countries in respect to free expression in the 90s to the opening of accession talks with the EU today is remarkable. So, what has happened?

Ten years later, on 3 October 2005, the Republic of Turkey was officially recognised as a candidate country for European Union membership.

Although the decision was a formally unanimous one in the end, the preceding discussions were highly controversial and emotional. Arguments from both the pro and contra-accession sides ranged from those based on economic and strategic considerations to very affective religious and cultural ('clash of civilizations'-style) ones.

Additionally, the issue of human rights and their implementation, especially those related to freedom of expression, was addressed by both opponents and supporters of Turkey's EU accession.

The former emphasised the still bad situation of Turkey's media in its relation to the state, the latter pointed out positive developments of the last years that in their view raise hope for

the future. What both sides agreed upon was that things had changed.

The question was and is how much things have changed and whether they will be durable. How should we rate the recent political and social changes in Turkey, and what is the substance of those changes with regard to freedom of the media? After all, Turkey's ability to go from one of the worst-rated countries in respect to free expression in the 90s to the opening of accession talks with the EU today (for which the implementation of human rights remains a substantial matter) is remarkable indeed. So, what has happened?

Permanent Revolutionism

In trying to explain Turkey's situation today, we need to take a short step back in time: Founded in 1923, the Republic of Turkey was formed from the leftover torso of the Osman Empire. Planned by General Kemal Mustafa, later named Atatürk ('Father of Turks'), and his fellows, the new state was designed as a modern, secular nation of the Turkish people, bound together by culture, ethnicity and language.

But - and here we find the very point of the problem - there was no common culture, ethnicity or language at that point in time.

There was no united 'nation', no Turkish identity. Atatürk and his successors had foremost to form this national identity - artificially and through extensive political and cultural reforms.

'Turkishness' became an official ideology, and strong state machinery was set up to secure the sovereignty of the nation and its legal bodies. An information policy was aligned to push

c Spring

the official story of a strong Turkish nation and its people. To realise Ataturk's vision of a modern Turkey, the state had to secure a 'permanent revolution', pushing the people in the 'right' direction and consequently fighting those not in line with official ideology.

Often called 'deflet baba' ('father state') the Turkish state's self-conception as well as its widespread perception by the Turkish people is that of a severe but caring head of the family. He enforces the 'family will' - defined by state elites themselves and written down in the constitution - which is the will the people ought to have in their own interest.

But - as it is not necessarily the will all people actually have - the conception was and is under attack. A strong but vulnerable father state must defend the family's interests against external and internal enemies.

The Media's Twofold Role

Thus the diffusion of ideas contrary to the official ideology was restrained and dissidents were prosecuted. The State's actions against different-minded people and organisations in the name of the nation and the protection of its values were often appreciated by the majority of people.

The mass-media representation of leftists as communist conspirators, of religion-influenced activists as Islamists and of minority-rights activists as terrorist-oriented separatists contributed to these beliefs.

It does not mean there were no violent left-wing, Islamic or separatist groups in Turkey. Contrariwise, Turkish society was quite often afflicted by political violence.

But the media's reconstruction helped to lump moderate and violent political action together, thus preparing the ground for the prosecution of beliefs and expression.

On the other hand, it was the media that particularly suffered from limitations on free expression. While mainstream media tended to support the state's official ideology and its activities to secure it, alternative print and broadcasting media had to face consequent suppression by the establishment. The publication of objectionable opinions often led to the oppressive closure of editorial offices, licence revocation or broadcasting

bans for media companies and/or imprisonment of the journalists in question.

The state's suppression of free expression was not limited to the publication of unloved opinions. It went to such lengths as to prohibit the usage of local languages other than Turkish, in particular that of the country's biggest minority, Kurdish.



From 1983 on, the spoken language of millions of Turkish citizens in the south-east part of the country was prohibited in the media as well as at public events. The state's official reasoning for this step was the protection of the indivisibility of the Turkish nation, which was in the government's view threatened by the existence of an ethnic and/or linguistic minority. When the armed separatist group PKK began action against the Turkish state in the early 80s, the word 'Kurd' rapidly became a synonym for 'terrorist' – an idea pushed by the state and consistently diffused by the media.

Those journalists who questioned the official interpretation of the conflict in the country's south-east ran the risk of being prosecuted by authorities – and of being verbally and physical-

ly attacked by dissenters or replaced by editors. Addressing the 'Kurdish problem' was a taboo, not only in the eyes of the government, but of society as well.

Changing Times

"Today you can talk about PKK and terrorism and you can talk about the villages in the south-east quite frankly. Ten years ago, you could not," radio journalist Omer* states. "Sure," he continues, "you should avoid some slogans like, 'Long live the free and independent Kurdistan!' If you use phrases like that, it would get you fucked."

Things have changed since the 1990s. Today, the prosecution of media companies and professionals has dropped appreciably. The Turkish constitution has been rewritten and a set of new laws have been put into practice, markedly improving the situation regarding freedom of expression. A majority of journalists feel quite free in today's Turkey, although some problems still remain.

Two interconnected developments serve to explain the change. The first is the intensifying of the relationship between Turkey and the European Union since the late 90s. Pushed by the prospect of accession, which has been endorsed by an overwhelming majority of Turks for a long time, the Turkish government started to significantly change the country's legisla-

*"If some words are in terms of criticism, it is not a crime. But if they are written with other intentions, it is a crime. Very weak wording of law creates crimes of conscience."
(Ertogul Kurkcu)*

tion in order to fit European law and human rights standards. Second, at a societal level the relationship between state and people has changed.

Triggered by political scandals, economic breakdown and the devastating earthquake in 2001 (when government help turned out to be nearly non-existent), the Turkish people increasingly lost their trust in the state and its institutions.

Suddenly, the state was not seen any more as the severe but caring father of the nation, but rather as a piece of rigid political and administrative machinery incapable of meeting the needs of a modern society.

This societal change is in progress and it will certainly take time for a majority of Turkish people to think in this new way. Journalists, however, tend to feel the change. Oguz Haksever, anchorman with Turkish news channel NTV: "People, little by little, are ready to listen to everything. You can talk about everything and people will respond. Not in an aggressive way as it was before, but in a civilised manner."

Eyup Can, editor-in-chief of the Istanbul-based economy daily Referans describes the change as a shift towards self-determination of the people vis-a-vis the state: "Turkey is becoming a very modern country. People start to ask for their rights. In the past, people were so oppressed, they did not even know their rights."

Picture: Window of the Bank Europa, Istanbul



Problems remaining

Although Turkey's development in the last years has been very positive regarding freedom of the media, a lot of problems still remain.

One of these problems is the enforcement of new laws and regulations. While the (hierarchical) centre of politics, administration and judiciary has adopted new laws and regulations, and applies them in the spirit of free expression, the periphery remains adherent to old thoughts and ways.

"What we call 'crime of conscience' is still existing in Turkish legislation," says Ertoğul Kurkcu of the media network Bianet, an organisation engaged in rural media development. He sees the reason for a lot of problems in inexact definitions in the law.

"If some words are in terms of criticism, it is not a crime. But if they are written with other intentions, it is a crime. Very weak wording of law creates crimes of conscience." Thus, a lot of judges, especially in rural areas, interpret the laws in an old manner which serves to protect the state rather than addressing the freedom of its citizens.

Although the situation in Kurdish media, as well as minority representation in the national media, has improved observably, it is still one of the most problematic issues. Kurdish newspapers are officially legal, but Kurdish journalists and editors still report harassment by local administrations.

Additionally, while private newspapers written in Kurdish are legal, private broadcasting is not. The only Kurdish-language TV programme is produced by state-owned station TRT and

is known to be pretty boring.

New problems faced by journalists in Turkey are connected to the increasing commercialisation and economic concentration of media companies. But restrictions within companies, underpaid jobs and the prevention of effective union-building are worldwide rather than specifically Turkish problems.

A Foresight

Turkey is changing. While some problems remain and new ones appear, the country's improvements regarding media and free expression are unquestionable. The prospect of EU accession triggered a lot of legislative changes, and the changes seem to be deep.

A lot of Turkish journalists feel a "journalistic spring", as Oğus Haksever calls it. He does not only mean legal improvements, but also an overall change in attitude of both the administration and citizens. The former is trying to give Turkey a modern face as a country respecting the rights of the individual, the latter is becoming more tolerant towards alternative interpretations.

Last but not least, journalists themselves seem to have changed as well, recognising their role in improving society, and in moving it towards openness and a democratic attitude.

Even though the change can not be seen as complete, the future exudes confidence.ⁿ

* Full name known to the editor

** The interviews used in this article were held in June 2005

Turkey - Media Facts

Taken from the South East Europe Media Handbook 2005/06 published by SEEMO

Around 3,450 periodicals (newspapers, magazines, etc.), nearly half of which are weeklies, are published in Turkey at present. The average daily circulation of local papers varies between 1,000 and 15,000. The local press has been trying to update itself technologically in recent years. Meanwhile, the number of magazines published on various subjects has been rapidly increasing. As a matter of fact, the total number of news magazines, which was only 20 in 1990, increased to 247 in 2004.

The total circulation of magazines, generally published weekly or monthly, is around 2.3 million copies. Besides news magazines, people also fancy periodicals concerning economy, radio and television programmes, automobiles, arts, literature, women, men, youth and music. Other periodicals, which draw the attention of readers, include magazines on travel, cuisine, decoration, health, computer science and humour. Turkey, with a very long tradition of humour and cartoon magazines, is one of the leading countries in the world in this regard.

By the mid-1990s, 16 privately owned, five state-operated and one cable channel were competing for an audience of approximately 56 million viewers. Currently, there are 20 national channels - of which 16 are privately owned - 230 local and 15 regional channels. At the moment, Turkey is home to 365 national and hundreds of local radio stations. Upon the inauguration of private radio and television companies in the 1990s, a duality developed between the TRT, which was established in 1964, and the new television stations which had just started broadcasting. The TRT remained

in a distinct position, both because of its broadcasting concept and its legal structure. TRT Law No. 2954 defines the unique position of TRT; it is a broadcasting institution, which enjoys constitutional autonomy and performs a public service. Research studies show that television has penetrated nearly every household in Turkey, with 97% of Turks over the age of 15 watching television on a regular basis. Television is by far the most influential medium for news in Turkey, with each individual watching on average 262 minutes a day.



The Turkish Penal Code:

Mussolini's re Erdogan's cha

After a long period of stagnation, a process of development has started relating to the Turkish Penal Code.

BY LUKAS SUSTALA

The Turkish Penal Code (Turk Ceca Kanunu, TCK) was one of the most-discussed topics before the beginning of the accession process in October 2005. Press Freedom 'Watchdogs' are still complaining about a lack of press free-

dom in Turkey, where journalists are still prosecuted for 'defamation of the state and its institutions' and the like. The TCK, including its corresponding regulations, is at the core of international criticism aimed at Turkey.

When we are talking about the TCK, we are talking about a penal code from 1926. Kemal Ataturk removed Islamic laws and replaced them with Swiss law in the civil sector and Mussolini's Italian law in the penal sector. In 2004 the TCK was more or less the same as before and discussions about essential changes became more and more intense.

The New Penal Code in Original Terms

Article 299 on Insulting the President of the Republic states:

- (1) A person who defames the President of the Republic shall be imprisoned for a term of one to four years.
- (2) The penalty to be imposed shall be increased by one sixth if the offence is committed publicly; and by one third if it is committed by way of press and media.

Article 301:

- (1) A person who explicitly insults being a Turk, the Republic or Turkish Grand National Assembly, shall be imposed a penalty of imprisonment for a term of six months to three years.
- (2) A person who explicitly insults the Government of the Republic of Turkey, the judicial bodies of the State, the military or security organisation shall be imposed a penalty of imprisonment for a term of six months to two years.
- (3) Where insulting being a Turk is committed by a Turkish citizen in a foreign country, the penalty to be imposed shall be increased by one third.
- (4) Expression of opinions with the purpose of criticism does not require penalties.

Europe motivates

Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Erdogan himself has set a focus on reforms to the penal code, but critics accuse him of realising reforms half-heartedly, due to influence by conservative powers. Only phrases and terms have been modified; instead of "insult the state", it now says "humiliate the state".

Other critics even argue that reform of the penal code has only started because of pressure from the European Union. To find out more about these charges we have to look at the development of the penal code in last years.

The above-mentioned penal code of Turkey is mostly based on the Italian penal code of 1926 and was not changed significantly until now. On 26 September 2005 the new penal code was passed by Parliament.

According to the Turkish Press Review, an official newspaper of the Turkish Prime Minister, "the amendment [...] was designed according to the needs and requirements of the day and it is qualified as being the last step in Turkey's European Union membership bid."

The consequences

The TCK went into effect on 1 June 2005. But since then, discussions about it have not become less intensive.

lic — llenge

The reason for this lies in the many articles threatening the freedom of journalists and authors. Both politicians and journalists are arguing quite heavily about article 301.

Journalists who have been charged or convicted under article 301 include Hrant Dink, convicted on 7 October, and Ragip Zarakolu, publisher and journalist. The most prominent case is that of famous author Orhan Pamuk, who's proceedings stopped in March.

These examples show that demands have not been met to reduce charges against journalists and authors, or to guarantee press freedom and freedom of expression, the main reasons the European Union pushed Turkey to amend the code.

Time will tell

On 28 September 2005, Olli Rehn, EU commissioner for enlargement, made a speech in the European Parliament about the Turkish accession process. One of the major topics was the TCK. His speech detailed both what has developed positively, and what has to be changed in the near future.

From his point of view Turkey has made steps in the right direction, but Rehn is concerned about charges like the one against Orhan Pamuk.

Therefore he stated the TCK "will have to be amended in such a way that freedom of expression is not subject to the very particular beliefs of some district judge anymore[...]."

At the moment, the TCK does not follow European standards. For just that reason Turkey has to move on in this process of development. Erdogan's challenge is to guarantee freedom of expression and to approximate the TCK to European standards. n

Application Details for the

Dr. Erhard Busek - SEEMO Award for Better Understanding in South East Europe 2006

The application deadline for the Dr. Erhard Busek - SEEMO Award for Better Understanding in South East Europe 2006 is: 1 May 2006

Sponsored by Dr. Erhard Busek, special coordinator for the Stability Pact, the 2,000 Euro award will be given to a journalist, editor, media executive or person educating journalists in South Eastern Europe, thus using the media to promote a climate of better understanding among people in the region and to work towards ending minority problems, ethnic divisions, racism, xenophobia etc.

In 2002, the South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO) and its international jury chose Croatian journalist Denis Latin as its recipient of the Dr. Erhard Busek - SEEMO 2002 Award for Better Understanding in South East Europe, in recognition of his outstanding efforts in journalism, which contributed toward better understanding in South Eastern Europe. In 2003, the award was presented to Kemal Kurspahic, former editor-in-chief of the Sarajevo daily *Oslobodjenje*. The 2005 Award was given to Brankica Petkovic, Head of the Center for Media Policy at the Peace Institute in Ljubljana, Slovenia, and editor-in-chief of the book versions of *Media Watch* and *Media Watch Journal*. She is also the author of a number of articles on media representations of minorities, with a special focus on the Roma minority in Slovenia.

If you know of anyone who would be a worthy recipient of the Dr. Erhard Busek - SEEMO Award for Better Understanding in South East Europe, please send a letter to SEEMO with basic details about the person (along with a professional CV, describing why she / he should receive the award), as well as the contacts of the person (media organisation, address, phone, fax, email). In case you would like to nominate a media outlet or an organisation / institution, please always provide details of its representative, because this award can be presented only to individuals.

If your nomination is supported by an organisation / media outlet, please send us the name of the contact person supporting your nomination, as well as basic information about the organisation / media outlet. If your nomination is supported by another individual or individuals, please send us their details and contact information. We would also need your own details and contact information (address, phone, fax, email, mobile phone).

These are the members of the Dr. Erhard Busek – SEEMO Award jury: Mircea Toma, Media Monitoring Agency, Bucharest, Ognian Zlatev, Media Development Center, Sofia, Remzi Lani, Albanian Media Institute, Tirana, Saso Ordanoski, Forum magazine, Skopje, Christian Wehrschutz, ORF, Vienna, Radomir Licina, Danas daily, Belgrade, Roland Bless, OSCE, Vienna, Dragan Barbutovski, Stability Pact, Brussels, Stjepan Malovic, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Johann Fritz, IPI, Vienna, and Oliver Vujovic, SEEMO, Vienna

Please note that members of the jury cannot be nominated for the award. Any additional material about the nominated person (such as TV reports on video or DVD, audio reports on cassette or CD, or articles in newspapers), if possible with a short English translation, are welcomed.

Please send your nomination and supporting documents to:

SEEMO/IPI
"Busek Award"
Spiegelgasse 2/29
1010 Vienna, Austria
Tel: +43 1 513 39 40
Fax: +43 1 512 90 15
E-mail: info@seemo.org

Advanced Concentration

Although Turkey's media landscape is a quite varied one with a pluralism in newspaper titles, magazines and broadcasting stations, the capital running the media is highly concentrated - An Overview on Turkey's media groups and their influence taken from SEEMOs South East Europe Media Handbook

Dogan Media Group (DMG)

Aydın Dogan, (owner of the Dogan Media Group) is active in six main areas: energy-retail, finance, media, telecom, tourism and industry and commerce. Each sector is managed by an executive team providing guidance and vision for that particular industry. As a diversified holding company, the group has a presence all around Turkey with operations in almost every city and with a very wide retail and distribution chain: Disbank, Yaysat and POAS, with 10,500 employees, and five international partnerships, namely with AOL - Time Warner, the Bertelsmann Group, Burda GmbH, Rizzoli Corriera della Sera, and Egmont Publications. There are in total 22 companies operating under the Dogan Media Group (DMG) umbrella. These companies are active in newspaper, magazine and book publishing; distribution and printing; new media and broadcasting; music and film production; multimedia retail products; commercial and thematic television channel management and they own three radio channels.

DMG has eight newspapers, as well as three national, one international and two cable TV channels. It owns also three radio stations, 24 magazines and two agencies. Its share in Turkish media is nearly 60%. DMG is also a strong contender in the newly developing radio sector in Turkey with three separate stations, each targeted to different segments of Turkey's population. Turkey's leading printing company, Dogan Ofset is under the DMG banner. Yaysat (also of DMG) is the largest distribution network in Turkey with over 22,000 sales points. Attracting increasing attention is the company's internet service provider, Dogan-Online, as well as the group's music production company, the Dogan Music Company. Dogan Music recently signed a licensing agreement with the Bertelsmann Music Group. Also, on its list of accomplishments are DMG's latest ventures into music and film production. Through its D&R multimedia store chain, DMG has been active in retailing multimedia products.

Ciner Group

Laying its foundation on 7 March 1978, and known as Park Group until December 2004, Ciner Group commenced its commercial activities with the manufacture, sale and import of automotive spare parts. During the second half of the 1980s, the group expanded its field of operations with domestic and foreign agricultural motor production projects, turnkey integrated facility enterprises, as well as the establishment and operation of textile industrial plants. Since the

beginning of the 1990s, investing in the "Energy and Mining" sector in accordance with privatisation projects and achieving immense investments in Turkey.

In 1995, Ciner Group had the experience of privatising Havas - which was exemplified as Turkey's most-productive privatisation project - as well as transferring operating rights in the energy and mining field at Cayirhan.

The group succeeded in transforming the Lignite Coal Mine find in Beypazari/Cayirhan into one of the most productive subterranean enterprises in Europe and subsequently started the Cayirhan Thermic Power Plant, the first thermal plant to be transferred to the private sector in Turkey, and the country's "most productive power plant."

In 2002, the group took a step into the media sector and continues to develop in this field.

Today, Ciner Group operates in: Energy and Mining, Commerce and Service, Tourism and Aviation and Media. Sectors with three holdings and companies belong to the Group. At the beginning of 2005, Ciner Group employed approximately 13,600 people. Titles owned by this group include the newspapers Sabah, Takvim and Pas Fotomac and various magazines.

Merkez ATV

Merkez ATV Television and Production Inc. was established by Merkez Publication Holding Inc. in the year 2002, with the goal of becoming active in the visual media sector. The company's whole capital is appertained to the establisher.

With the consent of the Savings Deposits Insurance Fund, Merkez ATV signed the Complete License Contract with Satel Sabah Television Inc. on 1 October 2002, thus giving Merkez ATV the right to carry out the activities of broadcasting the ATV television channel under its own name and account for a period of 15 years.

Merkez Television reaches 70% of the Turkish population via ground transmitters, satellite and digital transmitters and with the support of direct satellite transmission and aerials, Merkez Television also reaches the whole of Europe, North Africa and the Turkish Republics.

Cukurova Group

Mehmet Emin Karamehmet is chairman of the Cukurova group. The group has companies in these sectors: banking and financial services, insurance, investment, industry and construction, trade and media, as well as communications and information technology, tourism and general services. There

are several media companies within the Cukurova Group. Eksen Yayıncılık (Eksen Publishing) is engaged in providing technical broadcast infrastructure services for Show TV, Lig TV, Skyturk, Alem FM and Radyo Madyo. It is also the main authority for the planning and execution of all technical investments. Eksen provides live and post-production facilities, utilising two OB-vans, five fully redundant SNG vehicles and three studios in Istanbul and Ankara, serving Show TV, Lig TV and Skyturk.

The scope of the Aksam Media Group continues to be multi-faceted and broad-based. It includes the daily newspapers Aksam, Günes and Tercuman; the weekly celebrity news and entertainment magazine Alem; the monthly economics and business magazine Platin, as well as Alem FM, which provides nationwide radio broadcasts. Akflam Media employs a total of 921 staffers averaging 36 years of age, the majority of whom hold bachelor or advanced academic degrees. Akflam Media's editorial and managerial personnel are highly experienced and professional. The organisational structure - including administration, marketing and sales, human resources, advertising and public relations departments - advocates a broad-minded and innovative perspective. All Akflam Media Group companies operate in synergy with other Cukurova Group companies.

Media Regulation

The state does not control or intervene in the activities of the press in Turkey. TV and radio transmissions are under the supervision of the Radio and Television Supreme Board (RTUK). Although the government does not have open control over state-owned media, it determines the members of its administrative bodies. State-owned media usually reflect state opinion.

Neither the state nor the government support or subsidise any media organ. However, some media groups polarise into two camps: for or against the current government. This polarisation is not manifested openly, but can be spotted by careful observation through the opposite opinions of media organs on the same issues.

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South East Europe Media Handbook 2005/2006

...is a publication realised by South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO). Its aim is to enhance better understanding of the media situation in South East Europe and to serve as a source of information concerning press freedom violations in 2005. Next to detailed country reports, the publication contains contacts of selected media in the region. You can order "South East Europe Media Handbook 2005/2006" for EUR 40,- plus postage.

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The South East Europe Media Organisation

The South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), is a regional non-governmental, non-profit network of editors-in-chief, media executives and leading journalists from newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations, news agencies and new media in South East Europe. SEEMO was founded in October 2000 in Zagreb, Croatia.

One of SEEMO's main activities is protecting press freedom. Over 60 per cent of SEEMO's press releases and letters of protest to governmental and other officials have had positive results in the past. Every SEEMO protest is distributed to more than 12,000 addresses: to leading regional and international media, national and international governmental and non-governmental organisations, politicians, and also public persons and institutions.

During the last four years, SEEMO has assembled over 3,000 editors-in-chief, media executives, leading journalists and public persons from the region in various meetings. Helping journalists means also furthering their education. Several workshops and seminars were organised in the field of education, especially for investigative reporters and representatives of minority media.

SEEMO regularly publishes *De Scripto*, a quarterly media magazine for South Eastern Europe, which is committed to the enhancement of a climate of critical reflection on media culture and communication, in and among the South East European countries, and South East Europe Media Handbook (SMH), an annual publication covering media developments, which includes selected media contacts.

SEEMO also gives two annual awards for outstanding achievements in the field of media: "Dr Erhard Busek - SEEMO Award for Better Understanding" and the SEEMO Human Rights Award "SEEMO Award for Mutual Cooperation in South East Europe".

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Dear Excellencies!

Recent SEEMO Protests

PROTEST SERBIA, 15 Sep 2005

SEEMO is alarmed about the recent physical attack on a journalist in Serbia.

According to information before SEEMO, on 12 September, Vladimir Mitric, Loznica correspondent for the Belgrade daily *Vecernje novosti*, was beaten by an unknown assailant at the entrance of the building where he lives. The attacker hit Mitric with a hard object rolled in a cloth and escaped only after Mitric's neighbour appeared. Mitric was taken to hospital for medical treatment.

SEEMO regards this physical attack as a flagrant violation of press freedom. We ask Your Excellencies to ensure an immediate investigation into this case and to take all necessary legal steps to find the perpetrators.

We would like to remind Your Excellencies that only four years ago another local correspondent of *Vecernje novosti*, Milan Pantic from Jagodina, was killed and his murderers have still not been found. Also, the 1999 murder of journalist Slavko Curuvija has not yet been solved.

At present, the press freedom situation in Serbia is alarming. The number of attacks on journalists has increased in the past months, including threats against the staff of the broadcaster RTV B92 and the daily newspaper *Danas*. SEEMO would also like to stress that a safe working environment for journalists, without any pressure, is a fundamental principle in every democratic society.

PRESS RELEASE SERBIA, 16 Sep 2005

SEEMO is deeply concerned about the continuing pressure on journalists from local government in the Serbian town of Vranje.

According to information before SEEMO, Miroljub Stojcic, the mayor of Vranje, constantly refuses to give elementary information on the work of local government to the journalists of the two independent local media outlets, OK Radio and *Vranjske* newspaper. This is despite the fact that, as a public service official, he is obliged to do so. On 6 September, two representatives of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) in the Municipal Assembly made verbal threats to Sasa Stojkovic, a journalist working for *Vranjske*. A few days later, Nenad Stosic, president of the Municipal Assembly, openly threatened to arrest the owner of OK Radio.

Speaking about the incident, Oliver Vujovic, SEEMO Secretary-General, said, "SEEMO regards the behaviour of the local officials to be a direct violation of press freedom and the rights of journalists because all authorities must treat journalists equally and allow them access to information."

"Therefore, we urge the Vranje local authorities to respect

press freedom and to allow journalists to do their work freely and without constraints. SEEMO would also like to emphasise that freedom of expression and a safe working environment for journalists are the fundamental principles of any democratic society."

Vujovic added, "The number of threats on journalists has increased in recent months and SEEMO has been informed of several serious threats in Serbia against journalists and editors from RTV B92, *Danas* daily and *Vecernje novosti* daily. Now we have threats from local politicians against OK Radio and *Vranjske* newspaper. This is very alarming."

PROTEST GREECE, 3 Oct 2005

SEEMO is alarmed about the recent assault on yet another sports journalist in Greece.

According to information before SEEMO, on late Friday evening, 30 September 2005, Periklis Stellas, sports journalist and director of the Thessaloniki branch of the sports daily newspaper, *Goal News*, was attacked by an unknown person as he was leaving his office in the centre of Thessaloniki. The unknown person hit him several times in the head and face, leaving him with concussion, a fractured jawbone and other minor injuries. The journalist was subsequently rushed to hospital. According to the police there were no eyewitnesses to the attack. We would like to remind your Excellencies that this is the third attack on a sports journalist in Greece in the past year. In October 2004, sports journalist and head of the Sports Department of the *Eleftherotypia* daily newspaper, Philippos Syrigos, was attacked in the car park near the Super Sport FM radio station when walking to his car after a radio show. His attackers were two unidentified individuals wearing helmets, who hit him on the head with a metal bar and stabbed him several times in the back. The two perpetrators managed to escape. On 7 May 2005, Kostas Nikolakopoulos, a journalist for the sports daily *Fos ton Sport* and the radio station Super Sport FM, was attacked by four unknown men in front of his wife and two young daughters, only metres away from his home in Ilion, Athens. During the attack, Nikolakopoulos was repeatedly hit on the head and about the body with knuckle-dusters and iron bars. Once Nikolakopoulos had fallen to the ground, the men disappeared. Nikolakopoulos was later taken to a nearby hospital where he was treated for his injuries.

SEEMO regards these attacks as a very serious violation of press freedom and the rights of journalists. We ask Your Excellencies to start an investigation into this case and to take all necessary legal steps. We would like to remind Your Excellencies that a safe working environment for journalists is a fundamental principle in every democratic society.

PROTEST - CASE OF ALBANIAN JOURNALIST, 4 Oct 2005

SEEMO welcomes the decision of the Macedonian Court of Appeals in the case of Rajmonda Malecka.

According to information before SEEMO, on 23 September, the Macedonian Court of Appeal decided to annul the decision of the Skopje Court in the case of the Albanian journalist Malecka and to return her case to the Skopje Court, which had sentenced both her and her father, Bujar Malecka, to five years' imprisonment each. Malecka was arrested, together with her father, in March 2005.

In its decision, the Court of Appeals set out the following important facts:

- A journalist, in this case a foreign journalist, who was on assignment, was tried and imprisoned for practicing her profession. Such a decision is an exception to normal Macedonian court practices;
- Albanian journalist Malecka is the only journalist to be convicted for interviewing and reporting on the paramilitary group leader Agim Krasniqi. For several months, the group kept the village of Kondovo, near Skopje, under a blockade. Malecka was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for her alleged involvement in the preparation of terrorist activities, although other journalists, who also reported on the Kondovo case and undertook interviews with Krasniqi, were not sentenced;
- After the crisis in the village of Kondovo was over, the

Skopje Court withdrew the arrest warrant for Agim Krasniqi, although the charges remain outstanding; and

- In deciding to return the case to the Skopje Court, the Court of Appeals implied that the trial of the journalist was a precedent.

SEEMO believes it is unacceptable to punish a journalist who was merely practicing her profession. SEEMO would also remind Your Excellencies that interviews with controversial figures are not only in the public interest, but also provide a context to delicate and difficult subjects. SEEMO, therefore, asks Your Excellencies to do everything in your power to investigate the case of Malecka and to withdraw the charges and the sentence against her. SEEMO would like to remind Your Excellencies that the free movement and free reporting of journalists is a fundamental principle in any democratic society.

PRESS RELEASE CROATIA, 10 Nov 2005

SEEMO is deeply concerned about the suspended jail sentence given to a Croatian journalist.

According to information before SEEMO, on 2 November, the Municipal Court in Zagreb issued a five-month suspended jail sentence to Croatian journalist and writer Predrag Matvejevic for libel. In his article "Our Talibans", published in Zagreb daily Jutarnji list on 10 November 2001, Matvejevic criticised certain Croatian writers for stirring up ethnic hatred during the presidency of the late Franjo Tudjman. The Court's decision was based on action brought by writer Mile Pesorda. Speaking about the court decision, Oliver Vujovic, SEEMO Secretary-General, said, "Punishing journalists for what they say or write is against international standards. I am surprised that Croatia has chosen to act in a way that is reminiscent of the past. The country will eventually become an EU member and, in the last few years, it has adopted many international standards."

"Therefore, we urge the responsible higher court in Croatia to urgently examine this decision, and call on the Croatian parliament to revise the present law." Vujovic added, "We expect concrete steps and not purely cosmetic changes. One of the basic principles of freedom of speech in any democratic society is that a journalist should not be punished for their writing."

PROTEST CROATIA, 14 Dec 2005

SEEMO is deeply concerned about the recent death threat against the editor of the Croatian weekly, Feral Tribune.

According to information before SEEMO, on 6 December, Drago Hedl, the editor of the Croatian weekly, Feral Tribune, received a death threat in the form of a letter. Hedl said that the letter was directed at him and his source for the series of articles he published in Feral Tribune on the torture and killings of Serbian civilians in Osijek in 1991. This is not the first time that Hedl has received a death threat. SEEMO asks your Excellency to do everything in your power to urgently investigate this threat and to take all necessary steps to protect the life of Drago Hedl. We would like to remind Your Excellencies that a safe working environment for journalists is a fundamental principle in every democratic society.

Reply to SEEMO Letter of Protest by the Serbian Ministry of Interior

Република Србија
МИНИСТАРСТВО УНУТРАШЊИХ ПОСЛОВА
Кабинет министра
01 број 110925/05-2
17.10.2005. године
Београд

SEEMO - I.P.I
Gospodin Oliver Vujović, generalni sekretar

1010 Vienna /Austria/
Spiegelgasse 2/29

Поштовани господине Вујовићу,

Поводом Вашег дописа упућеног Министарству унутрашњих послова Републике Србије, у вези напада на новинара "Вечерњих новости" господина Владимира Митрића из Лознице, обавештавамо Вас следеће:

На основу извршених провера утврђено је да су припадници полиције Секретаријата унутрашњих послова у Шапцу, у конкретном случају доступили у складу са законом, јер су лишили слободе и привели надлежном истражном судији, лице због постојања основане сумње да је дана 12.09.2005. године извршило кривично дело тешка телесна повреда на штету новинара Владимира Митрића из Лознице.

С поштовањем,



PRESS RELEASE ALBANIA, 19 Dec 2005

SEEMO is deeply concerned about the recent attack on a journalist in Albania.

According to information before SEEMO, on 11 December, at around 2 a.m., Engjell Serjani, director of Dita Jug newspaper and correspondent for Gazeta Shqiptare, was attacked and beaten up by two unknown persons in the city of Gjirokastra. Serjani was leaving a bar next to his office, in order to go home, when two persons stopped him and started hitting him until he lost consciousness. Later, Serjani recovered consciousness and was able to go to a hospital to have his injuries treated. The two perpetrators managed to escape.

Oliver Vujovic, SEEMO Secretary General, condemned this attack on the journalist, "Physical attacks on journalists are both unacceptable and alarming. Journalists must be able to report without fear of harassment and intimidation. This case is very worrying because this is not the first time that a journalist in Albania was physically attacked. This and other acts of violence against journalists are obviously aimed at intimidating the work of journalists." Vujovic added, "SEEMO takes every physical attack on a journalist in a country of transition very seriously. Particularly because in previous years in South East Europe several journalists have been killed due to their professional work."

SEEMO believes that a safe working environment for journalists is a fundamental principle of any democratic society. We urge the Albanian authorities to investigate this case immediately and to take all necessary action against the responsible persons.

PRESS RELEASE GREECE, 19 Dec 2005

SEEMO is alarmed about the recent assault on two journalists in Greece.

According to information before SEEMO, on Tuesday, 13 December, the reporter of Mega Channel TV, Christos Michalopoulos and his cameraman, Alfonso Ponse, were attacked by unknown men wearing masks and helmets, while covering a demonstration in downtown Athens. The demonstration was organised by trade unions in protest at a new law introducing significant changes to working practices in the public sector. Two journalists were sent to cover the demonstration after some 30 masked men burnt down a police car. Later, the two were also attacked and beaten around the head and upper body by the same men. They were both taken to a hospital, where their injuries were treated. None of the perpetrators could be identified.

Speaking about this attack, Oliver Vujovic, SEEMO Secretary General said, "It is important, that during a demonstration all sides respect the right of journalists to report on important news events."

Vujovic also referred to previous attacks on journalists in Greece, "In October 2004 sports journalist Philippos Syrigos was attacked in the car park near Super Sport FM radio station, while walking to his car after a radio show. On 7 May, Kostas Nikolakopoulos, a journalist for the sports daily Fos ton Sport and the radio station Super Sport FM was attacked by four unknown men in front of his home in Athens. On 30

September 2005, Periklis Stellas, sports journalist and director of the Thessaloniki branch of the sports daily newspaper, Goal News, was attacked by an unknown person as he was leaving his office in the centre of Thessaloniki. In both cases, the perpetrators have not been identified yet."

With the above in mind, SEEMO calls upon the authorities in Greece to find and bring to justice those responsible for these attacks. SEEMO would also like to remind the Greek authorities that freedom of expression and a safe working environment for journalists are the basic principles of any democratic society.

PRESS RELEASE ALBANIA, 21 Dec 2005

SEEMO is alarmed about the recent attack on a media house in Albania.

According to information before SEEMO, on the night of 18 December, unknown persons threw explosives into an area close to the building in which three newspapers, Shekulli, Sporti Shqiptar and Biznesi, and one magazine, Spekter, have their offices. Although the journalists were still working in the building, nobody was injured, but there was damage to property.

Oliver Vujovic, SEEMO Secretary General, condemned this incident, "We are especially worried because only a few days ago there was a brutal physical attack on a journalist in the city of Gjirokastra. Once again, we would like to emphasise that journalists must be able to report without fear of harassment or

Reply to SEEMO Letter of Protest by the Serbian Ministry of Interior

Република Србија
МИНИСТАРСТВО УНУТРАШЊИХ ПОСЛОВА
КАБИНЕТ МИНИСТРА
Биро за притужбе и представке грађана
01 број 1104/05-2
Датум: 29.11.2005. године
Београд

«С.Е.Е.М.О.»
За господина Оливера Вујовића

Б Е Ч

Поштовани господине Вујовићу,

Радници Министарства унутрашњих послова Републике Србије предузели су интензивне мере и радње на основу којих је утврђен идентитет непознатог лица које је дана 12.09.2005. године извршило кривично дело телпака телесна повреда на штету Владимира Митрића. Ради се о Љубинку Тодоровићу из Београда, који је лишен слободе и уз кривичну пријаву приведен истражном судији Општинског суда у Лоцици.

Предузимају се и друге мере у циљу заштите личне и имовинске сигурности господина Владимира Митрића.

С поштовањем,

ШЕФ БИРОА
ПОТЛУКОВНИК
Радан Јевтић



intimidation. It is obvious that such acts of violence against journalists are attempts to scare them and obstruct their work."

SEEMO believes that a safe working environment for journalists is a fundamental principle of any democratic society. We urge the Albanian authorities to investigate this case immediately and to take all necessary action against those responsible.

PROTEST CROATIA, 21 Dec 2005

SEEMO is alarmed about recent death threats received by Croatian journalists.

According to information before SEEMO, on 12 December, after the Croatian Radio Television (HRT)'s edition of the popular political show "Latinica", titled "Tudjman's Legacy", the editor of the show, Denis Latin, together with his staff members, started receiving numerous death threats. During the show, guests discussed the late Croatian president Franjo Tudjman and his role, as well as his legacy.

SEEMO has also been informed that Zrinka Vrabc-Mojzes, editor at Radio 101 from Zagreb, who herself was a guest in the same show, has also started receiving death threats, as well as other editors and journalists working for the radio station. SEEMO would like to emphasise that open discussions and critical views are a part of every democratic society and are especially important for nascent democracies. Therefore, it is extremely alarming that a TV show could cause such reactions, including a call by certain individuals to lynch journalists in Croatia. SEEMO is extremely worried about several Croatian members of the Parliament, who may have started this campaign and who, by doing so, have violated the laws on freedom of expression.

SEEMO asks Your Excellencies to do everything in your power to protect the lives of threatened journalists, as also to secure the independence of the Croatian Radio Television (HRT). We would also like to remind Your Excellencies that a safe working environment for journalists is a fundamental principle of any democratic.

Preview

Upcoming Events

SEEMO Dialogue Meeting

between media executives, editors-in-chief and leading journalists from South East Europe, 5 - 7 May 2006, Vienna, Austria

SEEMO Investigative Reporting

Seminar Croatia, 22 - 24 June 2006, Opatija, Croatia

SEEMO Dialogue Meeting

between media executives, editors-in-chief and leading journalists from Kosovo and Serbia, 26 - 28 October 2006, Kosovo / Macedonia

Central European University - Studies Program, Budapest

The Central European University (CEU, www.ceu.hu) invites applications from graduate students and young professionals to spend the Fall 2006 semester or the academic year 2006 * 2007 in Budapest, Hungary. The program is sponsored by the Center for Media and Communication Studies (CMCS) at CEU.

In the semester program offered only in fall, students ordinarily remain enrolled at their home institution but spend an exciting semester in Budapest, engaging in the MPP Media Stream and taking selected courses (including courses on EU law) from the gifted CEU faculty. Students can remain for the academic year and receive a Master's in Public Policy (<http://www.ceu.hu/mpp/>). CMCS launched the MA Program in "Media, Information and Telecommunication Policy" as part of CEU's Public Policy Program.

Duration for the semester program: September 2006 through December 2006; For the 1-year MA-program: September 2006 through July 2007.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Project Manager, Ms. Nanne Priebes by email at vispriebes@ceu.hu.

www.cmcs.ceu.hu

FEJS Course: Human Rights Reporting

The Forum of European Journalism Students-Macedonia (FEJS Macedonia) is organising the regional training course "HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTING" for journalism students/young journalists from 7 Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro and Macedonia).

The training course is a part of the Balkan Human Rights News Service, in the frame of the FACE Human Rights Online Journal (<http://www.cgisd.rutgers.edu/face.shtml>). The Balkan Human Rights News Service is a collective of student journalists from seven Balkan countries trained in human rights reporting, organised in "newsrooms-node" and

publishing via the FACE Human Rights online journal by and for young people.

The training course will take place in Skopje, May 19-22, 2006 where 28 student journalists will be trained in human rights reporting. These 'Human Rights Junior Fellows', four from each country, and a professional journalist will constitute a national FACE Human Rights "node." Each newsroom will be responsible for reporting on national human rights issues and for contributing to stories on regional issues.

More info and application form could be found at:

<http://www.fejs.org/?q=node/5775/>

Alternative Media and New Public Settings Call for Paper

International conference, Ljubljana, Slovenia, October 13–14, 2006

The Peace Institute, Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies, Ljubljana, together with the Slovenian Communication Association, Ljubljana, and Masaryk University, Brno will hold an international conference to discuss how new media development has influenced the terrain for alternative media use in its relation to citizens' empowerment.

Activisms that have mobilized citizens in new, post-Westphalian settings can nowadays hardly be imagined without the potential of new media communication, i.e. digital coordination and practice. Alternative and counter-active engagement brings forward both alternative media use and transformed public spaces. While new media praxis is seen as an empowerment of citizens' potential for public action and an arena to offer alternative media-making as compared to mass mediated frameworks, alternative media power to create or trigger engagement is also criticized as limited. What are alternative media potentials/limits and how are they related to citizenship? What are their practices in comparison to mass media news repertoire? Can global issues (environmentalism, migration, wars etc.) mobilize vital energies in various local and transnational public settings? Original papers locating and tracing theoretical claims and/or practical, empirical application of alternative media in relation to new public settings are welcome to be submitted.

Selected papers will be considered for publication.

Deadline for abstracts: April 25, 2006

Deadline for papers: September 5, 2006

Please send inquiries to:

Dr. Mojca Pajnik

mojca.pajnik@mirovni-institut.si, mpajnik@yahoo.com

Dr. Andrej Pinter

E.mail: andrej.pinter@guest.arnes.si

Journalistic travel grants for exploring popular and youth cultures

The European Cultural Foundation (ECF) supports the travel costs of young European journalists who wish to report on popular and youth cultures in the neighbouring countries of the European Union. The ECF gives priority to those topics which highlight aspects of cultural diversity and intercultural competence.

European journalists under 35 who are interested in popular and youth cultures and are working in the print media, television or radio are eligible for support. The eligible destinations are: Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro, Turkey and Ukraine.

The Amsterdam-based ECF is an independent foundation which supports cultural cooperation as an important element of the European integration process. By supporting the mobility of journalists of popular and youth culture, it hopes to bring deeper understanding and emotional commitment to the idea of further EU enlargement.

Source: <http://www.eurocult.org>

European Culture Foundation

Ten TV journalists to get training in Belgrade

A German media company is organizing a six-month program for 10 young TV journalists from Southeast Europe. The course is scheduled for May 15 to November 15.

The Bremen-based company Sudost-Medienagentur is organizing the course. Participants will spend the first 10 weeks in Belgrade, Serbia, studying the journalistic and technical aspects of TV news. Then each journalist will complete a one-month internship at a TV outlet in his or her home country. The participants then will produce short TV stories to be presented in October at a two-day follow-up seminar in Belgrade.

The participants should be younger than 30 and have a college degree, good command of English (with German knowledge preferred), and a journalism background. The Stability Pact for South East Europe funds the course and fully covers scholarships, lodging and travel for the participants.

The application deadline has passed, but for more information

Contact:

info@suedost-medienagentur.de or

suedost3@eunet.yu,

or visit <http://www.suedost-medienagentur.de>.

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