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REGIONAL HERALD FOR PROMOTION OF CULTURE OF MINORITY RIGHTS AND INTERETHNIC TOLERANCE

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No 2

Top story in this issue:

Hate speech

The topic of this issue is the "Hate speech," a term that after the recent Balkan wars practically does not deserve to be placed in quotation marks. Its very mention in this region indicates a belittling of "others," satisfaction of one's own darkest instincts, intolerance and generation of ethnic tension. Ignorance is an important determinant of intolerance. Ignorant people are fed with myths and mythology, half-truths and stereotypes, literary fiction, etc. Primitive and uneducated people are an excellent object of manipulation of all kinds. This characteristic has deep historic roots and offers a relatively reliable interpretation of the ideological and political sources of hate speech. In the newsletter, we deal with different aspects of hate speech in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia, with particular emphasis on the media, which carried out a "lion's share" of work in developing this phenomenon.

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Summary:

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Hate speech in the public sphere: PHENOMENOLOGICAL-TYPOLOGICAL INDICATORS CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS REGION

Written by: Dusan Babic

Ignorance is an important determinant of intolerance. Ignorant people are fed with myths and mythology, half-truths and stereotypes, literary fiction, etc. Primitive and uneducated people are an excellent object of manipulation of all kinds. This characteristic has deep historic roots and offers a relatively reliable interpretation of the ideological and political sources of hate speech.

HATE SPEECH IS DISAPPEARING – ITS MUTANTS ARE THREATENING

Written by: Zoran Udovicic

Hate speech in its original warmongering sense has almost disappeared from the media, which is confirmed by monitoring done by the Regulatory Agency and Press Council. But, its mutants even today find their way to the public, whether through prejudice, intolerance or political showdowns. The founder of Media Plan Institute, an eminent organization dealing with media analysis, in this article looks at the past and provides a chronological overview of the rule of hate in the BiH media.

Interview: Amela Odobasic, Communication Regulatory Agency – WITH A SWORD AGAINST HATE SOWERS

Written by: Radenko Udovicic

The Communication Regulatory Agency (CRA) is given credit for destroying what is called hate speech on broadcasters. The majority of the media outlets, not just during the war, but after it as well, continued to use variants of propagandistic journalism, insulting, belittling, or at the very least ignoring those ethnic groups that do not fit into the social and political landscape that the respective media outlets come from. CRA, thanks to strong support from the international community, and then also from the central government, disposing of the possibility to sanction, has introduced order in this field. We talk to Amela Odobasic, spokesperson for this organization, unique in South East Europe, about the destruction of hate speech in the BiH media.

Ozren Kebo, journalist – WE CANNOT RESIST THE CALL OF HATE SPEECH OFFERED BY THE MEDIA

Written by: Namir Ibrahimovic

“The war was so terrible, so agonizing and painful, and it has left terrible traumas. It seems we cannot resist the call of hate and the power offered by the media. We all sometimes sit at the computer as if we were sitting behind a PAM (anti-aircraft machine gun), as if we have an opportunity to wipe out in a clearing. It is hard to discipline oneself and resist the challenge. We are all frustrated and traumatized and the level of frustration can precisely be read from our intonation,” comments Ozren Kebo, one of BiH's best-known journalists.

CROATIA

CHALLENGES TO SANCTIONING OF HATE SPEECH

By Tena Erceg

Greatest challenge to legal sanctioning of hate speech is respect for freedom of expression as one the basic right of citizen/individual necessary for any democratic society. In other words, United Nations, Council of Europe and democratic countries agree that legal prohibition of hate

speech is necessary, but are also aware that prohibition is in itself already a violation of right for freedom of expression. Tena Erceg writes about the influence of media in spreading hate speech and cites most drastic and variable cases of hate speech in Croatia.

TRANSFORMATION OF HATE SPEECH IN CROATIA

By Davor Gjenero

Hate speech, curbed and wielding less influence than before, is still part of Croatian politics. Basic Croatian problem remains unwillingness to adequately pursue the rule of law, to respect principles of the protection of human rights and facing the past. Davor Gjenero concluded it is necessary to build such society where political pluralism won't be reduced, where society won't be turned into a mass, where neurotic fear won't impede rational capabilities and where hate speech won't be a motivation for practical actions, such as when someone screams "Fire!" among the mass of common people.

HATE SPEECH LEADS TO POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND CRIME

Interview with president of Civil Committee for Human Rights (GOLJP) Zoran Pusic
Interviewed by Sanja Vukcevic

Hate speech leads to political violence, flagrant violations of human rights and, as a final, logical consequence, crime. If, and when justice makes a comeback, all those who caused crimes with their hate speech will be exclaiming in wonder about wrong interpretations of their words, will show signs of advanced amnesia, will appeal to patriotic sentiments and will try to spread their guilt to collective. There is an abundance of examples, from Nuremberg to Hague, says Pusic, warning that freedom of speech also means responsibility for written or spoken word.

"Protocol on inter-ethnic tolerance", he says, is a good example of a new stage in NVO work – calling on politicians to cooperate on projects which will improve the situation in the whole region.

ETHICAL ASPECTS OF REPORTING ON NATIONAL MINORITIES

By Gordana Vilovic

For over a decade there are discussions about media ethics in Croatia. All agree situation is bad. Careful media analysts conclude that situation is still much improved from times of neither war nor peace during 90s. At that time, clear messages promoting national hostilities in media were completely natural and daily occurrence, Gordana Vilovic, a docent at the Faculty of political sciences in Zagreb writes about journalistic ethics and reporting on national minorities, as well as about most common violations of ethical principles in majority media.

SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

Hate speech and ethnic minorities: THE ROLE OF GRAFFITI AND BASEBALL BATS IN INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS IN VOJVODINA

By Radoslav Šeguljev

In Vojvodina, many physical assaults happened in the last few months, especially towards members of Hungarian national minority. The president of the Executive Council of Vojvodina Nenad Čanak accuses the Government in Serbia to be responsible for "atmosphere of intolerance, in which the relations with the Hungarian community are getting worse, but not with the other minorities as well, which is a proof of manipulations with inter-ethnic tensions".

Provincial secretary for management regulations and national minorities rights Tomaš Korhec doesn't agree with this judgement. "This wave of incidents doesn't contribute to stabilization of situation in the country, but it is certainly not the aim of the Government of Serbia to destabilize the situation in Vojvodina. These incidents are our reality and there are more of them than before, but all were initiated by people with a first and a last name, so it's a responsibility of the state to find out who they are and to punish them. From my point of view there is no manipulation in this", says Korhec.

“We mustn’t close our eyes in front of inter-ethnic conflicts, but we also mustn’t claim every quarrel, in which members of different nationalities are involved an inter-ethnic conflict”, this is the conclusion from the meeting of the chief of Public Security of the Ministry of Interior Affairs with chiefs of local police stations in the north of Vojvodina.

HATE SPEECH IN SERBIAN ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN

By Dubravka Valić Nedeljković

No matter how hard the policy makers, journalistic associations, international organizations, Non-Governmental sector, experts, media monitors, try to create rules and mechanisms which will be used in media practice, all multi-party pre-election campaigns in Serbia which have been presented in media so far contained the hate speech- sometimes openly, but more often covered up.