Reporting and Visualising Croatia in Australia (1990–1993)[1]

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The paper deals with the question of the public perception of Croatia in Australia on the eve of its independence from former Yugoslavia. It examines the formation of discourses around the already existing rhetoric of ethnic conflict as the world media readily picked up and manipulated the myths of "age old ethnic hatred". The paper also addresses the discursive practices that have shaped the Australian perception of Croatia between 1990 and 1993, describes the media climate in which the Croatian community in Australia was left to deal with its grief and anger during the war in their homeland, and was forced to look for alternative sources of information outside the established information corridors.

Key words: *CROATIA, AUSTRALIA, DIASPORA, MEDIA, YUGOSLAV WAR*

Australia is one of the last countries in the western world to introduce satellite cable and pay television (Cunningham 1992:104). The reasons behind this can be found not only in the well-established and comprehensive mix of commercial, national and public broadcasting services but also in the fact that the home video industry achieved one of the highest penetration rates in the world (Court and Maddox 1992). However, according to Stuart Cunningham, the reasons for the late introduction of alternatives to broadcast television lie in the fact that "Australia's tardy response to pay TV 'window opportunity' usually belabour what critics regard as Australia's moribund and over-regulated industrial and economic landscape" (1992:106).

Whatever the reasons for the state of the Australian mediascape in late 1980s and early 1990s, Australian audiences were relying on broadcast television and radio, traditional print media and the limited use of emerging Internet services for information. Furthermore, the geographical isolation of the country limited the use of home satellite TV since the "footprints" of the majority of satellites in service at the time of this research did not cover Australia (with exception of Aussat domestic satellites used mainly for telecommunications). It was this media environment that framed the reporting of the democratic revolutions in the former Eastern Europe, and later the war in Croatia and Bosnia.

Pictures of blood and circumstance

At the inception of this research international media attention focussed on grand historical events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall or the velvet revolution in Czechoslovakia. The Australian media, including the Special Broadcasting Services (SBS), suffered from an overload of news from the former Eastern Europe. This was a time of a great change - the demise of communism and the fall of the evil empire (the Soviet Union). The socio-political changes unfolding in the Former Yugoslavia were reported among other world events, and the reports were, as a member of the Croatian viewing public put it: "scant and inadequate."

[1] An earlier version of this article was presented at the 9th International Media Conference "Journalism and Intercultural Communication", Dubrovnik, Croatia, September 22–27, 1997.

Australia is a multicultural country with large fragments of diverse cultures often hostile to each other. The relationship between Serbs and Croats has, for a long time, been a favourite object of Australian "moral panic", generally articulated in terms of wickedness and futility. This perception was fuelled by the assumption that migrants bring the residues of conflicts they should have left behind in the country of origin. In a letter to the Yugoslav community in Perth, Western Australia, Graeme Campbell, MP wrote:

Dear member,

I have long held a view that migrants coming to this country should not bring the problems of their home countries with them and that their attempts to do so will not [my emphasis] be tolerated by the Australian people.[2]

It was this stance of the Australian government that allowed the rhetoric of "age-old ethnic hatred" and stereotyping along the lines of "tribal disputes" to become the official line of the Australian media. This came as no surprise given that most of the international media subscribed to the same or similar discourses. It was also no surprise than that the disturbances staged in Krajina by the Serbian minority population (in Croatia) well before the first democratic elections in Croatia in 1990 caught the world press unprepared. Like the British press, when the war began, (see Magaš 1992:302), the Australian media resorted to simplistic stereotyping in reporting events from the Former Yugoslavia. This type of reporting was supported by the well-organised propaganda machine in Belgrade, one that still enjoyed a good reputation. In addition, the Yugoslav press agency TANJUG was well respected and often quoted by the world media as a reliable, unbiased source. This reputation was strong enough to legitimise the "hate campaigns" first against the Albanians in Kosovo (Magaš 1992:15–48) and later against Croatians and Muslims.

As the Croatian Democratic Party's (HDZ: Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica) popularity grew in Croatia and in the Croatian Diaspora worldwide, so did the Belgrade-inspired paranoia and media campaigns. The Australian media, like the rest of the world press, readily accepted the labels of "fascist" and "Ustaše" or in the best cases "extremist" and "terrorist" for Croatians seeking independence from Yugoslavia. One of the reasons for this was the perspective taken by journalists (turned authors) like Misha Glenny (1992:142) who all

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[2] Ivan Erceg, the President of the Yugoslav Clubs and Community Associations in WA, wrote to Graeme Campbell, MP on September 3, 1991 appealing to the government to deal severely "with any nation trying to run their politics in Australia" and expressing loyalty to Australia in the following words:

By becoming Australian citizens we have sworn allegiance to Australia, our new, adoptive homeland which we love, respect and are loyal to as well. This means that we DO NOT WANT TO TRANSFER to Australia political differences which in our old country – Yugoslavia – have led to the tragic events in recent months.

I quote in full the response from Graeme Campbell, MP:

Dear Member,

I have long held a view that migrants coming to this country should not bring the problems of their home countries with them and that their attempts to do so will not be tolerated by the Australian people.

I have a high regard for the Yugoslav community in W.A. as I've always felt they adapt well to Australian culture and have a genuine commitment to this country. For this reason I have taken the liberty of circulating to you a copy of a letter from the president of the Yugoslav Clubs and Community Associations of W.A. and I know that the views expressed in this letter to be overwhelmingly the majority views of the communities.

Yours sincerely,
Graeme Campbell, MP
Member for Kalgoorlie
11 October 1991

too readily explained to their readers that "Ustaše" equals "Croatian fascist". Thus negative semantic markers inherent in the word "fascist" had an impact on the meaning of "Croatian". In contrast to this the word "četnik" lost its initial meaning and has, through repeated media use, acquired the meaning of "Serbian guerrilla fighter" or later "Serbian irregular", having both positive and negative connotations. This left open the opportunity for the public to negotiate the culturally recorded connotations.

The Serbian population in Yugoslavia and in the Diaspora was told by the Serbian media, day in and day out, that its neighbours (and the rest of the world for that matter) harboured the worst intentions toward them and that the Croatian government was essentially fascist and bent on the extermination of Serbs in Croatia. The international media picked up the manipulations of myths of "age-old ethnic hatred" such as in the well-staged celebration of the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo in 1989 (Magaš 1992:241), overlooking and ignoring the warning signs present in that televised event. Other rituals of exorcising past demons of betrayal such as the opening of the mass graves from World War II, at first led to world-wide acceptance of the staged paramilitary provocations of Serbian extremist groups (armed by the Yugoslav Army – JNA) in Croatia. Soon all the reporting from Former Yugoslavia was based on formulas and narrative stereotypes which were easily accepted and have been called upon every time the "conflict on Balkans" is mentioned.

Textual associations, both visual and verbal, were produced through media narratives consisting of repeated selected images to the exclusion of others, such as the visual images tied to the opening of the mass graves from World War II (see Meeuwis, 1993). These became iconographic references that through the endless repetition in the Australian (and world) media come to be received as an explanation for civil unrest and later, war in Croatia and Bosnia.

As visual juxtapositions created associational subtexts, associations of Croats as "Nazis", and the above-mentioned "age-old ethnic hatred" became the major points of reference for what was happening in Former Yugoslavia. Thus it was this powerful symbolic rubric that framed the public perception of Croatia on the eve of its independence from Yugoslavia. The formation of everyday discourses around that perception served to reinforce the existing rhetoric of ethnic conflict and civil unrest, and thus failed to address the real reason behind the fall of Yugoslavia.

These discursive practices shaped Australian mainstream perceptions of Croatia between 1990 and 1993, successfully deflecting discussions of "what was happening in Former Yugoslavia" away from global transformation and democratic change in former communist and socialist countries, and the essentially anti-democratic nature of the Serbian hegemonic desires.

Moreover, the mainstream Australian audiences were being warned in articles by journalists such as Glenda Sluga (1993:3) (for example, "Making multicultural mayhem" published in the Independent), in which the conflict in Former Yugoslavia was used to raise alarm and to warn of the danger posed by this conflict to Australian multicultural policy. What was happening in Yugoslavia, the disintegration of a multicultural multiethnic society, was cause for much fear in Australia because these events "could be used by opportunists in Australia to represent all that is politically and culturally dangerous, not in politically contrived nationalism, but in a multicultural state" (Sluga 1993:91). Perhaps because of this fear the political stance of the Australian Government towards the changes that were taking place in the Former Yugoslav Community in Australia was not always clear. It could be argued here that the Australian Government reacted to the visible restructuring of the Yugoslav Community in Australia with what could be seen as calculated ambivalence, allowing for the free circulation of propaganda video tapes and other information outside established information corridors. Together with the balanced and seemingly uncommitted and often distinct

approach by the Australian mainstream media towards reporting the events from Croatia, this created a media climate in which the Croatian community in Australia was left to deal with its grief and anger and was forced to look for alternative sources of information.

These strategies prevented the possible explosive polarisation of ethnic groups from Former Yugoslavia in Australia (beyond isolated violent incidents). Furthermore a strategically acceptable and useful outlet for ethnic tensions was tolerated on the radio waves, radio stations broadcasting in the Croatian, Serbian and Macedonian languages. Coming under the pan-ethnic umbrella of Australian multicultural broadcasting policies, these could be easily policed.

Tensions could also be kept at bay by endless civil law suits filed constantly against each other. It is also important to point out that the most feverish hunt for information by Croatian audiences in Australia took place at a time when official state relationships on institutional levels were absent. This was the stage when Australia had not yet officially recognised the Croatian state, and had largely given up on the existing relations with the disintegrating and corrupt institutions of the Yugoslav State. All this time the Australian media had the uneasy task of presenting the official British, US and EU official line, depending on which news services (CNN, BBC, WTN, ITN) they were using. These practices rested uneasily with Croatian audiences, and they turned towards an almost total substitution of broadcast programming with video tapes and telephone news supplied by Croatian news agencies. I will discuss alternative sources of information later in this paper, but it is first necessary to understand that this kind of behaviour by the Australian media only mirrored the stance of the Australian government.

This incidental or calculated ambivalence of the Australian institutions towards the restructuring of one of their largest ethnic migrant groups has revealed the sometimes submerged side of the Australian multicultural policy: that this was a policy just as much aimed at managing inter-ethnic conflict as it was at smoothing the connections between the ethnic migrant culture and the host Australian culture.

The policy of non-reaction left the members of the respective communities to negotiate what was happening in their homeland the best way they could. To a certain extent this effectively contained open ethnic conflict between Croats and Serbs in Australia. However the tendency of the Australian media to equalise the responsibility for the war in Croatia and Bosnia infantilised the communities as "being at it again". It also benefited the Australian State and the Australian general public, in that they did not have to choose between either Croats or Serbs, or to declare one the victim and the other aggressor. In the meantime, as a direct consequence of the disintegration of the Former Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav community in Australia dissolved and the newly established Croatian Community was faced with the task of rebuilding its image from the ruins of years of negative stereotyping. This was an enormously difficult task since by now the cultural segments inside former Yugoslav Community in Australia had very little to do with each other and were not willing to listen to each other's points of view. It is well known that in general there is little common ground and no incentive for communication between hostile cultures . Thus the total hostility between the fragments of the former Yugoslav community was not only a result of polarisation of the diasporic fragments along the lines of their respective homelands, but it was also a result of a cessation of all communications except of course occasional hostile outbursts such as in sports violence.[3] These outbursts were readily picked up by the Australian media adding to

[3] The sports violence, especially at soccer matches between Croatian and Serbian Clubs, was negligible in Perth where I concentrated my research amounting to an occasional burning of a flag or a fist fight. However, in Melbourne it was of such ferocity that at one stage in late 1991 spectators were forbidden and the soccer matches between some ethnic clubs were played without an audience. It is interesting

the already negative political rhetoric and served to further poison the well of sentiment towards intercultural communication on any level.

The general public and the journalist alike could no longer separate mythic constructions from the facts. The mythic construction of Croats as fascist and later Serbs as "bloodthirsty creatures of dark" (Morrow 1993) represent the most difficult challenge not only to the eventual reconciliation of the two migrant communities in Australia, but are the main obstacles to establishing an intercultural dialogue between the two nations world-wide. Moreover all this reinforces discourses of otherness and the dangerous perception of the "other" as essentially evil. For a large segment of the Australian population this validates their stance of racial and ethnic intolerance which is becoming visible through increased incidences of racism, Pauline Hanson style.[4]

As the majority of the existing discourses of otherness appeal to prejudice, bias and fear of those who are different, all of this has allowed a large part of the Australian public to devalue and distance themselves from the horrors of the war in Croatia and Bosnia.

The tenacity of such discourses is one of the reasons why the Croatian community in Australia still has a long way to go before it can be free of the negative connotations stemming from the negative blueprints created by the propaganda machinery of the Former Yugoslav State and that perpetuated by the Australian media.[5] They have a long way to go before they will be free of their image as "Nazi" and "fascist" and before they can claim their rightful space as a legitimate national fragment, or an ethnic minority of a nation that the Australian State has recognised, and the media can either help or make this task more difficult. As I have shown in some of my earlier work (Kolar-Panov and Miller, 1991) a even a single journalist does make difference.

Making the difference

In Australia, such a difference was made by Pierre Vickary, the Eastern European correspondent of ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation). His reports on the ABC National radio provided a "voice of reason" that acted as a counter-balance to the otherwise sensationalistic and generalised reporting of Croatia in Australia.

While the dehumanised narratives of "ethnic cleansing" symbolically annihilated Croats and Muslims (and Serbs) as the flawed victims for whom all hope was lost, Pierre Vickary's reports avoided the basic elements of narrative closure. For example, in response to a request for an interpretation of the reason behind a bomb attack he stated: "I wouldn't go so far, because I have not got any proof of it." Thus it was the manifest uncertainty of modalities like this one that compelled the Australian public to listen. But it was his dispirited messages that Australia Tonight[6] listeners related to the most, such as the one about the relative

to note that the worst incident in Perth took place at a soccer match between "Spearwood Dalmatinac" and "North Perth Croatia" and not between Serbian and Croatian Clubs (Spearwood Dalmatinac is still considered a Yugoslav Club, but has been registered as a Croatian Club since 1991).

[4] Pauline Hanson is the controversial PM that is responsible for much of the recent revival of racist sentiment in Australia.

[5] For example: A long time after Croatian independence the audience still used "back home" or "the homeland" instead of Croatia, not being used to referring freely to home as Croatia. This was the result of the negative connotations of the word Croatian (described in some detail in Kolar-Panov 1997). However, they gradually started to correct each other, and when one said "homeland", one would be corrected with: "You mean Croatia". This showed a conscious effort on the part of the community to accept Croatian independence as reality.

[6] Daybreak and Australia Tonight were current affairs and news programmes on the ABC's Radio National at the time of this research.

inactivity of the European Community (now EU): "By the time they finally get it right, there will be no one left alive in Yugoslavia." There was an urgency to his tone in his current affairs programmes that marks his role in attracting the attention of otherwise largely ambivalent Australian audiences indicating the strong commitment to the political and ethical responsibility that all journalists should demonstrate.

As for the Croatian audience, disenchanted with television (even with SBS after the station showed a French documentary by a Serbian producer about Jasenovac), they heroised Pierre Vickary to the degree that they taped his broadcasts and listened to them in groups, often hanging on his every word. So we have here two significant things – time shifting of a radio broadcast and a significant migrant presence placing infinitely greater faith in the ABC National radio than in SBS – considered "the ethnic television" (see: O'Regan and Kolar-Panov 1993a; 1993b). Above all we have a single journalist granted a mantle of oracular authority and we have a return of the radio to a position of prominence in audience regimes of truth. The fact that Vickary lived in Zagreb, Croatia, from the mid '80s, and reported, live, the Serbian attack on villages just 20 kilometres away while sitting on his high-rise apartment balcony (Kolar-Panov and Miller 1991:75), only added to his image as the most reliable source of information at a time when the world media were still deciding how to approach Serbian aggression in Croatia.

However, in contemporary culture where truth is closely associated with the visual, it was another reporter, Miro Vidović from Opuzen Television, who took in hand the responsibility for providing the Croatian audience in Australia with true images of what was going on in Croatia.

War, Truth and videotapes

Croatian audiences in Australia were naturally concerned with the news from the homeland in ways that the Australian viewing public was not, thus seeking timely information the mainstream Australian media could not provide. The limited information provided by the mainstream media and on ethnic radio stations was supplemented by long-distance telephone calls and tuning into BBC World Service radio. The relentless search for information bordered on obsession as the information, entertainment and family album videos circulating in the community were supplemented by new types of video-news giving up-to-date images of the destruction and war in Croatia. I have described elsewhere the impact those video tapes had on the audience as they came face to face with brutal images of death. Images largely kept out of the mainstream media, images translated from many realities and fragments of destinies, portraits of men, women and children along the long path to exile and death (Kolar-Panov, 1994). Such images in their anonymity (in the absence of any commentary or written text) showed the disposability of the bodies of thousands of civilians and were often followed by stories told directly into the camera in broken shattered voices, voices of those raped, victimised or incarcerated in detention camps. All of this was woven into a strange textual logic of still burning houses, distant artillery fire in the background and the faces of survivors weeping over the bodies of their loved ones. The absence of commentary, with the exception of the identification of the village or town and occasional identification of the dead bodies, made these video accounts even more powerful. It could be argued that these video tapes utilised to its maximum the visual over the verbal creating a special semiotic relationship in which the "realism of the visual code corresponds to the truth in the verbal code" (Hodge and Kress 1998:130–131)[7].

[7] Bob Hodge and Gunther Kress (1988:130) argue the correspondence of verbal and visual codes as showing "the higher status of television news coverage over that of newspapers". See also Kress and Hodge (1993:167).

After a long inquiry about the source of these video tapes I had a chance to meet and interview Miro Vidović (M.V.) who filmed and produced most of them. It was during this interview that the complete picture of the origins – the production and distribution – of the video tapes emerged. Opuzen Television (OTV) started out as Video Klub Informatika, in Opuzen (Croatia) renting videos and providing video services for regular ceremonies like weddings, christenings and funerals. As the equipment for narrowcasting from satellite television became available, the Video Club started to operate as a local TV station for audiences that could be reached by a 10-watt transmitter. At first they transmitted their own programming only after 9.00 p.m. twice a week, showing a programme entitled Magazine which was a mixture of music and human interest stories, while at other times the programme was re-transmitted from satellite television channels like Eurosport or MTV. Later, in late 1990, the increased politicisation of everyday life saw OTV broadcasting locally produced programmes concerning the election campaigns, and talk shows concerned with the processes of the Croatian quest for democracy and the disintegration of Yugoslavia. With the ethnic unrest and finally the war, OTV turned towards war reporting, producing some of the most compelling and disturbing images that have emerged from this war. In addition, as a service to HTV (Croatian Television – Hrvatska Televizija), OTV served as a transmitter for the area, transmitting HTV's satellite programme, but also continued to broadcast their own productions after 9.00 p.m. every day. The first images of Dubrovnik in flames seen world--wide were the product of OTV and M.V. They proudly stated that it was their footage that was seen for months on ITN, CNN, and all European TV stations. I asked him if they sold the footage to those stations and he was surprised by my question answering "Surely not. We were guides to foreign correspondents and often did most of the on-spot filming, supplying them with footage without sound. We wanted the world to see what was happening." M.V. indicated that a number of local cameramen were killed in their desire to "show the truth" with the comment "they just went too close, too close". OTV's crew was usually the first to enter every liberated village or town and as such was asked by the civil defence to do some intelligence work in reporting enemy positions. As the story slowly unfolded, it turned out that at the start of the war M.V. and his chief cameraman were recruited (employed) by Croatian government agencies to tape all the places liberated by the Croatian Army and produce footage and accurate reports for archive purposes and perhaps future war crime trials. Some of the footage was allowed to be shown on OTV as information for refugees and the rest of the population, or as information about the state of the war, but M.V. stated: "I am sure that the Americans aboard their aircraft carriers in the Adriatic sea monitored our programmes very carefully." OTV operated continuously, illegally transmitting from a make-shift studio in a one-bedroom fifth floor apartment in Opuzen which served as an office, editing suite, newsroom and, often, lodging place for the crew. The headquarters of OTV also served as an oasis for radio-amateurs working night and day to keep in touch by short wave radio (as the only available means of communication) with the Croatian and Bosnian territory occupied by Serbs. This fifth floor makeshift studio was the source of the tapes that had such an impact on audiences in Australia. The OTV crew frequently travelled to other parts of Croatia (then divided in two by Krajina) and M.V. told the story of how they hid their video equipment under mandarins in the back of the trucks, when posing as aid workers while crossing to Slavonia (in the fall of 1991) to capture on tape the battle for Vukovar. He said: It was so strange, we were waiting to cross the bridge between Bosnia and Croatia. Life on the Bosnian side was still normal. The soldiers of the JNA [Yugoslav army] were checking every vehicle for arms. We could hear the thunder of the battle from the other side. I was very nervous trying to hide it ... when we crossed to the other side, there were only ordinary police, you know in the old blue uniforms. We couldn't distinguish whether they were Croats or Serbs. My driver, fooled by the appearance of normality, said out loud "I am sure glad that those bastards let us pass" talking to the policeman coming to check our documents. That

was very close, but nothing happened. We unloaded the mandarins to people who needed medications, food and arms, but mandarins were the only thing we had to offer. It was a good harvest. We spent over a week in Slavonia and filmed such horrors that I would not like to show any of that on television. As a matter of fact not much of what we filmed could be shown on television. At this point I interrupted, asking him if he was aware that some of the tapes showing video footage which he classified as "not for television" were circulating in Perth. He sighed and added thoughtfully: "I know. But our people have a right to know ... they do have a right to know." I asked him how the distribution of tapes started in Australia and he told me that it started before the war, when people visiting Croatia brought back video tapes of the local OTV Magazine programmes. With the inception of the war he was approached to contribute to the Croatian radio programme in Australia on a weekly basis, and later he was approached to provide some video information, and he started to send tapes. M.V. was very cautious with the information about those tapes, hiding the fact that he was most probably supplying footage never intended to be seen by a general audience, and was doing so either without the knowledge of his superiors or acting on some silent agreement. I asked him again, if he realised the effects of those tapes, to which he answered quietly: "I know. I have seen the fear and frozen expressions on the faces of the most seasoned soldiers who accompanied us on those missions when we recorded massacres. And I experienced all the grief and pain when, on one of those missions, I found the dismembered parts of my younger brother whom I saw off to a patrol only that very morning. He complained to me again that morning that he did not have a uniform, but it was good that he did not have a uniform. That way I could recognise which parts of the bodies lying around us were his. By his shoes, his jumper, and his jeans... The only thought I had then was to collect all the parts of his body to be able to give him a decent Christian burial. I never did find all of one of his legs. You see, he stepped on a mine that those bastards [the Serbs] left behind when withdrawing from their positions." There was a long period of silence, another cigarette, and I felt that I had intruded on something very private, not certain any more that I had any moral right to ask this man more about the OTV or production of video tapes, let alone to make any judgements, conclusions or even to present this interview as part of my research. I questioned my position as a researcher and asked myself how should I know when to stop, when not to proceed and when to continue? Who sets the limits?[8]

Conclusion

Critics of contemporary journalism frequently argue that few journalists today live up to the high standards of professional ethics. The latest sad example is the all-consuming and world-wide debate about the role of the media in the untimely death of Diana, Princess of Wales.

Sad to say, it took the tragic death of a media mega-star to raise the dormant questions of journalistic ethics and standards. All the academic concern, the endless round tables, conferences, discussion groups, and publications (see Gow, J., Paterson, R. & Preston, A., eds., 1996) about the role of the media in fuelling, perpetuating and producing conflict in Former Yugoslavia could not do it. As I write this (September 1997) American and NATO forces are

[8] Kevin Robins in "Haunted Screen" (1994) asks about screen violence: "The screen is a powerful metaphor for our times: it symbolises how we exist in the world, our contradictory condition of engagement and disengagement. Increasingly, we confront moral issues through the screen, and the screen confronts us with increasing numbers of moral dilemmas. At the same time, however, it screens us from those dilemmas: it is through the screen that we disavow or deny our human implication in moral realities.... But, how do we learn to live with this violence? To ask this question is to consider the mechanisms through which we manage to screen ourselves from evil" (ibid.: 309).

attempting to silence the voices of hatred and intolerance coming from Serbian TV and radio stations in Bosnia (Newsweek, September 15, 1997:7), in the rest of the Former Yugoslavia and a large portion of the free world it is still left to individual journalists to decide the moral basis of his/her reporting. What I hoped to show in this paper is that media portrayals of ethnic hatred assiduously associated with migrant groups such as Croats and Serbs or Muslims in Australia have established a social cosmology that effectively divides the world between "us" and "them" (Galtung, 1986) providing legitimacy once more for ignorance, marginalization or vilification of those individuals or groups that do not fit into the social cosmology of the dominant, in this case white, Anglo-Saxon Australian culture.

I also wanted to point out the need for closer analysis of the general tendency of the global media representations of otherness, as a large portion of media products today still project the existing power structure that is based on gender, class, ethnicity, age, disability and other differences, with often tacit implications that certain people should not exist.

And knowing all that I was still surprised to hear the comment of a colleague regarding the fall of Vukovar: "If they are so stupid, let them kill each other".

I would like to finish with a short quote from Joseph Pulitzer who 93 years ago in 1904 wrote: "We need a class feeling among journalists... Based not upon money but upon morals, education and character" (quoted in Weaver and Wilhoit 1986:1). We should also always remember that institutions such as Reuters, BBC or CNN, all of which bear attributes of quality journalism, cannot be a substitute for the ethical comment of each and every individual journalist.

The examples of Pierre Vickary and Miro Vidović, each of them in his own way perceived as a locus of authenticity in reporting Croatia in Australia, clearly show that the authority of journalism still derives ultimately from the observation, professional commitment and responsibility of the individual reporter (Lambeth 1986).

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IZVJEŠTAVANJE O HRVATSKOJ I VIZUALIZACIJA HRVATSKE U AUSTRALIJI (1990–1999)

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Članak se bavi pitanjem javne percepcije Hrvatske u Australiji uoči hrvatske nezavisnosti od bivše Jugoslavije. Članak istražuje formiranje diskursa oko već postojeće retorike etničkog konflikta, koje su svjetski mediji lako pozicionirali i koristili kroz mit "vjekovne etničke mržnje". Članak se također bavi diskurzivnim praksama koje su oblikovale australsku percepciju Hrvatske između 1990 i 1993. godine, te opisuje medijsku klimu u kojoj se hrvatska zajednica u Australiji suočila sa svojom tugom i ljutnjom za trajanja rata u domovini, i bila prisiljena potražiti alternativne izvore informiranja izvan ustaljenih informacijskih puteva.