

SAMPLE MEDIA MONITORING REPORT—SLOVAKIA*(Included with permission of MEMO'98.)*

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REPORT ON MEDIA COVERAGE OF SLOVAK POLITICS**Week Two: July 20, 1998 through July 26, 1998**

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MEMO'98 is an independent and non-partisan effort -- formed by the Helsinki Citizens Assembly and the Association for Support of Local Democracy -- to systematically monitor the media coverage of the Slovak parliamentary elections scheduled for September 25 and 26, 1998. MEMO'98's findings are offered not to support any one candidate or political party. By following a well-defined and rigorous methodology, MEMO'98 seeks to present information that helps the Slovak public gain information it needs to make the well-informed choices demanded of citizens in a democratic society.

After the second week of monitoring news broadcasts on the two major television stations and the two major radio stations, and after the first week of monitoring five major newspapers, MEMO'98 found a wide difference in the type of news presented by different outlets as well as major differences in the ways that major political entities are portrayed. Following is the second of periodic reports that MEMO'98 will issue through the September elections.

HIGHLIGHTS

The second week of monitoring television and radio produced data that confirm trends revealed during the first week. If anything, differences in the amount of coverage and the portrayal of relevant political subjects appeared more dramatic in the second week.

- **48% of the time given to politically significant stories on STV news last week was devoted to the incumbent government with another 28.6% devoted to HzDS. Coverage of political parties not part of the ruling coalition totaled 13.3% of the relevant news coverage.**

- **STV continued to portray the incumbent government and ruling coalition in a positive light and opposition parties mostly in a negative light. STV also frequently neglected to air contrary views.**
- **TV Markiza offered 26.4% of their relevant news coverage to government activities and an additional 8.5% to HzDS. Parties outside the ruling coalition received a total of 37.6% of total significant news coverage.**
- **TV Markiza offered generally negative portrayals of HzDS and more negative than positive coverage of the government. They aired consistently positive or neutral views of opposition parties, and of SNS.**
- **Of the five newspapers monitored, Slovenska Republika stood alone in devoting the majority of its space to HzDS and the government while consistently portraying both subjects in a positive light.**

TELEVISION

Slovaks who watch Television Markiza news receive a dramatically different view of politically significant events than do viewers of STV. During the week ending July 26, 1998, STV offered significantly more coverage of the government and ruling coalition parties than Markiza. This difference was even more dramatic than in the first week of monitoring. Markiza, in turn, reported much more on the SDK, SDL and SOP than did STV. More important than the amount of coverage, however, was the ways significant political parties and government activities were portrayed.

- STV consistently portrayed the Government and HZDS in a positive light while usually portraying SDK, SOP and SDL in a negative or neutral light. Markiza offered both positive, negative and neutral coverage of the government. Their portrayal of HzDS is more often negative than positive. Positive views of SDK, SDL, SMK and SOP were the norm on Markiza. They also presented SNS in either a positive or neutral manner.

There continued to be differences in the balance within each story on these television stations. Markiza, on at least one occasion, presented a story in a way favorable to itself without giving the complete story.

- 23.7. 1998 19:00 - During a presentation of the MEMO'98 results for the week ending July the 19th 1998, Markiza presented the data as showing that its news cast was the most objective. This was not an accurate portrayal of our conclusions. We suggested only that preliminary data revealed a possible trend that merits additional examination.

STV seems to present stories in a one-sided or unfair manner even more frequently. Following are examples from last week:

- 22.7., 24.7., 26.7. 1998 19:30 - In a series of stories concerning the successes of various Slovak governments in the area of paid debts for privatized companies, for two weeks STV has presented statistical data without citing other economic factors or opposition opinions.
- 23.7. 1998 19:30 - STV dedicated extensive coverage to the presentation of a petition concerning non-privatization of selected companies. The stories appeared to be promoting HzDS. STV returned to the story of this petition on July the 25th and 26th.
- 24.7. 1998 19:30 - In a story on the floods in Eastern Slovakia, STV cited opinions of the government and its expert as “correct”. They then aired file footage and editorial commentaries that made other parties’ opinions sound false.
- 26.7.1998 19:30 - In a story analyzing the involvement of SDK Vice-chairman Volf in a motoring accident, Mr. Volf was presented in an extremely negative light and the story was accompanied by file footage of a wrecked car. Mr. Volf was not given an opportunity to comment on the event.
- 20.7, 25.7.1998 - “Nazory” (Opinions), “Poznamka” (Comment) - In a series of stories, the opposition was presented in a negative light. To support this view, STV used materials gathered from other media outlets, and only negative portrayals were chosen.

RADIO

In the week ending July 26, 1998 Slovak Radio offered slightly more coverage of the government and the ruling coalition than did Radio Twist. Radio Twist offered much more coverage of SDK and SDL. Slovak Radio’s portrayal of the government and HzDS was much more often positive than negative. Radio Twist offered both positive and negative portrayals of the government and HzDS. Both stations aired numerous stories considered by our monitors to be neutral. SDK was often portrayed positively by Radio Twist and both positively and negatively by Slovak Radio.

Our monitors also noticed particular instances when Slovak Radio appeared to seek opportunities to give the government additional favorable news coverage or failed to offer opportunities to opposing views.

- 20.7. 1998 12:00 – Radiozurnal aired a story concerning the visit of a representative of the Croatian Parliament to Slovakia. He was met by members of the Slovak government and HzDS deputies to Parliament. This information was repeated 4 times in the same