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**Belgrade**

## Report of the Monitoring and Analysis Service

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### Ex officio procedure

**MSP:** Preduzeće za proizvodnju televizijskog programa MINACORD MEDIA d.o.o., Beograd – K1, Dečanska 12, 7<sup>th</sup> floor, Belgrade

**Subject of oversight:** The programme Zlo doba (Evil Times). from 05 April 2025, from 21:45 to 22:29

**Summary:** The programme about the ownership relations and editorial policy of the United Media company and television stations N1 and Nova S

**Report:** The programme lasted about 45 minutes. Overall, it dealt with the current events concerning the ownership of the United Media company, its business, political and other ties and consequently with the ongoing protests of students and citizens. Thus, the show belongs to the news and current affairs programme, the subgenre of current affairs, while the specific journalistic type of the content cannot be determined, the closest would be the pamphlet, although this type is not typical of the television medium.

Overall, the theme of the show is the labelling of United Media and its related media and persons as a system focused against the state of Serbia, connected with foreign intelligence services that act subversively in this area, with the basic motivation of personal enrichment of its former owner Dragan Šolak. To that end, a huge number of unverifiable claims were presented, which were not adequately substantiated, except by the statement that it was the data “obtained by the Centre for Social Stability”, which was also credited as the producer of the show concerned. The nature of the information broadcast was such that it was mostly inaccessible to the public and, if true, could be considered confidential.

### Transcript

Narration: *In the first 5 years alone, by using non-transparent, speculative and even criminal acquisition methods, SBB acquired a large number of local operators.*

Narration: *Based on the data obtained by the Centre for Social Stability, from 1999 to date, Šolak has maintained intense contacts*

*with British intelligence services.*

*Narration: In the given context, in October 2014, the N1 news media platform was launched in the market of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia as a British project aimed at countering Russian media influence in the Balkans.*

*Narration: Dragica Filipović Chaffey also plays an important role in the United Group; together with Zeković and Aleksandra Subotić, she participated in the previously mentioned meeting at the British Embassy (photographs with the caption 'British spies' shown on the screen), again mentioning contacts with the Croatian intelligence service.*

For the purpose of discreditation in the media, contacts with Albanian businessmen were mentioned (without a clear indication of how this is harmful to someone), and persons who are only charged with being business associates of Dragan Šolak were named. The names and surnames of a number of persons said to be unknown to the general public were listed, referring, as explained, to the principle from the X network "Let's make them famous": Ivan Simić ("there are suspicions that he and Šolak participated in malfeasance"), Milija Zeković and Tomislav Čizmić, who were linked to the Croatian intelligence service. Other persons, less publicly known, were also listed, whose activities were explained through a network of unsubstantiated and provisional information whose links were difficult to follow, with each of the persons mentioned presented in an unfavourable or even criminal light. The lack of credible information was replaced by value judgements, which were, without exception, unfavourable to the objects of this media presentation.

### **Transcript**

*Narration: Yet, the partnership with the British was short-lived, and the reason for the termination of cooperation was the megalomaniacal greed of Dragan Šolak...*

*Narration: These two platforms are currently the pillar of political activity with clearly pronounced anti-regime and anti-government elements.*

*Narration: When this was shown during two previously mentioned events (the blockade of *Informer* and *RTS*) in the news broadcast of this television station, all the hypocrisy and bias of this television company was displayed in the most vividly.*

Journalists and presenters of the N1 and Nova S television stations were exposed to professional denigration and political discreditation. In the course of this extremely unfavourable presentation, some of them were used only as an illustration ("B-roll"),

with their faces shown, without any other explanation of their possible harmful role, except that they were employees of the said television station.

### **Transcript**

*Narration: Among the most prominent representatives of the first group (who are directly in the media spotlight), the following stand out: Željko Veljković, this oikophobic journalist and former spokesperson of the Free Citizens' Movement... seeking to prove himself to foreign diplomats and financiers in order to gain a reputation as being more Catholic than the Pope.*

*Narration /7:30:25/: The daughter of much better-known father who holds completely opposite views from her, Matija Bećković, she left her name permanently engraved in the cult show "Uticak nedelje (Impression of the Week)". This talk show is a political propaganda programme... It is telling that Bećković has always chosen television stations with a globalist agenda as the place for execution of her project. Her eternally one-sided selection of guests on the topic marking the week behind us testifies best to the value system Mrs. Bećković is attempting to impose on the citizens of Serbia.*

*Narration /7:39:06/: Until recently a Democratic Party stalwart and a star of this controversial local media, Aleksandar Dikić, remained in the shadow of Nemanja Šarović, until recently a member of the Serbian Radical Party, whose dream was and remains to be the closest associate of Aleksandar Vučić. That is why today this disappointed puppy seeks to attract attention to himself through the daily dehumanisation of citizens and the ordinary people who, unfortunately for this country, elected him as an MP in several convocations of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia.*

In a similar tone, Jelena Obućina and Goran Dimitrijević, as well as Žaklina Tatalović, were mentioned. (**Transcript:** *She does not hold a university degree in journalism; she had to settle for completing a BK journalism school.*)

In parallel, investigative groups BIRN and KRIK were also mentioned as socially harmful, because, as stated, they criminalise the government.

Part of the show was devoted to the student protests by analysing the N1 and Nova S reporting, focusing on several incidents that (contrary to the reporting of those television stations) were said to be internal conflicts caused by the protest participants themselves, interpreted in a completely one-sided manner, demonstrated during the entire show. The cases of inconsistent reporting by TV N1 were also described, using the example of the blockade of that television

station, compared with the reporting of the blockade of Informer TV. Also, a significant part of the show was dedicated to the media legislation that favoured the interests of the United Group, the adoption of which had allegedly been facilitated by related persons who were government officials at the time, as well as in all other cases, without any indication of the opportunity for these persons to present some of their arguments.

The guests selected for the show came from a socio-political environment from which a highly critical approach could be expected in relation to the TV stations that have a reputation of being critical towards the current government: Dragoslav Bokan, Miloš Vučević, Ana Brnabić, Ištvan Kaić, Zoran Ćirjaković, Branislav Klanšček. In their statements, they fitted into the tone of subjective value judgments, which was also a feature of the show as a whole (**Transcript**: D. Bokan: *This is pure poison for anyone unfortunate enough to get hooked on N1 or Nova S*).

There were no guests whose statements could influence the pronounced one-dimensional nature of the programme, nor was anything presented in the narration that could relativise the assessment of the United Group and the N1 and Nova S television stations as extremely harmful and destructive to Serbian society.

The political leaning of the show became apparent at some points and bordered on political propaganda:

### **Transcript**

Z. Ćirjaković: *With the bringing down of the Serbian Progressive Party all media here would become N1 and Nova S.*

Narration: *Some fought honourably* (A. Vučić on the screen).

*Some betrayed* (B. Ružić on the screen).

One of the stated goals of the show was to expose the model of media manipulation by which the United Group media create confusion in Serbian society and thus make the entire country vulnerable to various destructive external influences.

### **Transcript**

Narration: *The main objective of media manipulation is to create social conditions through the process of criminalisation and dehumanisation, which are, in the worst-case scenario, aimed at a long-term destabilisation of the country, due to which external factors will be able to achieve their decades-long interests in this area.*

By providing one-sided coverage of current events of public importance related to the social conflict, and by actually descending into the political arena and by siding with one group in that conflict, the media service provider crudely did the exact thing (criminalisation and dehumanisation) of which this film was accusing the United Group and television stations that were covered by it. This is in violation

of the basic principles of professional journalism and contrary to the provisions of the **Rulebook on the Protection of Human Rights in the Area of Media Service Provision**, as well as the **Law on Electronic Media**, in particular Articles 4 and 5 of the **Rulebook**:

- Article 4, Paragraphs 1 and 2 - General obligation

The media service provider shall ensure the provision of free, true, objective, complete and timely information, and in particular that news and current affairs programmes truly and objectively present facts and events and encourage free formation of opinions.

The media service provider shall ensure the diversity of information content for the purpose of ensuring the exercise of the right to free expression, as well as encourage the free formation of political and critical thinking.

- Article 5, Paragraph 2 - Truthfulness, completeness and diversity of information

The media service provider shall provide information to media service users based on facts obtained from a number of different sources, as well as provide a variety of views, opinions and issues discussed in the public within its news and current affairs programme.

Given the large number of persons whose role in public life was pronounced to be problematic in the programme, their interest, as well as the public interest, is clear in responding to the allegations, which was not the case in the stated programme. This constitutes a violation of Article 8 of the Rulebook:

- Article 8, Paragraph 1 – Hear the other side rule

If information in connection with which a particular person has a justified interest in making a statement is aired in the programme, and especially if allegations of incompetence, immoral or unlawful actions are presented or a dispute involving a conflict of opinions or views, the media service provider shall provide an opportunity for such person to respond to the released information, or participate in the discussion in an equal manner.

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Conclusion: Proposal to initiate an examination procedure, due to content contrary to the **Rulebook on the Protection of Human Rights in the Area of Media Service Provision**

- Article 4, Paragraph 1;
- Article 5, Paragraphs 1 and 2;
- Article 8, Paragraph 1

in connection with Article 61, Paragraphs 1 and 4 of the **Law on Electronic Media**.

**Monitoring and Analysis Service**  
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