



Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe
Mission to Montenegro

**Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, Ambassador Janina Hrebickova
Interview with Portal Analitika,**

- 1. ANALITIKA: At a recent meeting organized by the Union of Journalists, you said the media, in order to be performing their dual role - informing the public and being the watchdogs of implementation of public policies should be independent and free. Indeed, how do you see the position of journalists and journalism in Montenegro?**

HREBIČKOVA: For the Mission, the freedom of media is a priority. It should be fully respected and guarded by the state institutions. Equally, responsible reporting respecting fundamental rights is also among our priorities too. We need to explain to people, through the media, why it is important also to value public opinion. . Striving to reach independent and professional journalism standards should be alpha and omega of every democratically functioning country. Journalism's first obligation is to the truth and its loyalty is to citizen's interests, it must exercise discipline in verifying facts, serve as an independent monitor of power and have a personal sense of ethics and responsibility—a kind of moral compass. To have a professional and independent journalism is indeed a challenge for every country that has undergone transition. There is a pressing need to call on state institutions and all other relevant stakeholders to ensure that necessary preconditions for proper functioning of the media are in place, without any pressures. The OSCE Mission will continue to urge the authorities to address this matter, as it has done in the past. Through our activities, we assist the Government, state institutions, and media to better co-ordinate their work and daily communications with each other. Our programmatic approach is a holistic one that aims to unite the government, state institutions, civil society and the media. Media have a major social responsibility, and play a key role in shaping public opinion. The Mission is now in the process of meeting senior public officials and media representatives to hear from them what kind of assistance support they expect from us in 2016 and beyond.

- 2. ANALITIKA: During the meeting with the Minister of Justice Zoran Pazin, you said that the OSCE Office in the coming period would be: "guided by the idea that the host country should realize optimal benefits from the operation of the Mission, in cooperation with the institutions of the system, paying a special attention to supporting the reform processes, the protection and promotion of fundamental rights and further strengthening transparency, accountability and effectiveness of institutions..."What does it mean concretely?**

HREBIČKOVA: Since I came to Montenegro some 18 months ago, I have been working very closely with the Government, parliament, judiciary, police and media. When the OSCE Chairperson in Office, Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić visiting Montenegro, in February this year, we agreed that in our activities we need to reflect both the strategic priorities of participating states and national priorities. My meeting with Minister Pazin was, of course, not my only meeting. Indeed, we have already started a series of meetings with other ministers who are co-operating with the Mission. From what we have heard, they all understand that further efforts are now needed on the reform process, fundamental freedoms and human rights. They rightly acknowledge that the key responsibility lies with the state authorities as well as with the media and civil society – who need do to their best too. However, ultimately, it has to be up to the state authorities primarily to find the right way on how to move forward.

We need to understand where this country is today – politically, institutionally, economically and socially. Where the country stands in 2015 or will be in 2016 is different from where it was in 2008. We in the Mission are taking that into consideration and also we are in the process of revising our programming based on the OSCE expertise of our activities so far. Each of our activities is evaluated; we would like to bring together all interested parties. For example, if we allocate funds to combat cybercrime, our project cannot include only police but needs to include police, prosecutors, judges and media. If we want to raise awareness of respecting human rights, presumption of innocence, and need to communicate to each other, we need to work on rule of law, with law enforcement institutions, media, and civil society together. We need to adapt our programmes to make them even more relevant for the present and to pass the message that all stakeholders have a role to play in shaping the democratic process in the country. At this point, some of the building capacities' assistance projects might not be needed or might not be enough anymore for Montenegrin partners. Instead, we will turn our attention to the field of mentoring, education, coaching or coordination among institutions. In this way, we will make ourselves more relevant to the people of this country and be able to provide even greater for value for money in the eyes of the 57 OSCE participating States. I am very excited about what we might be able to do next year in partnership with the Montenegro authorities. I plan to announce my plans in October and I will be delighted to speak with you/your readers then.

3. ANALITIKA: As the leader of the Czech delegation, you spent eight months in Baghdad, even during the famous attack on the local UN base and the Rashid Hotel. You were in Sarajevo during the war years. What was the path of your professional career, so that we more easily understand who is at the head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro?

HREBIČKOVA: I led a team of 22 Czech technical experts in Iraq in 2003. Together with the coalition of many countries and the UN, we were all providing assistance to the Iraqi interim authorities in capacity building projects relating to human rights, development, security and politics. I have worked for IOM and UN and lived in the former Yugoslavia for a decade during the war in the 1990s. When the war started at the start of 1992, I established the first UN television station, staffed by internationals and local staff from each side in the war. Before that, I worked as an investigative journalist and film producer with the renowned BBC Panorama and for the BBC World Service. I also worked as a young journalist in the Middle East.

4. ANALITIKA: But you were lucky that in in the bureaucratic structures of the United Nations they recognized the concept.

HREBIČKOVA: At that time, the Head of Department of Peacekeeping Operations at the UN was Kofi Annan and the Special Representative of UNPROFOR Mission was Yasushi Akashi. Both individuals were credible and experienced diplomats who understood the political and public affairs needs the UN Peacekeeping operations had at that time and were also both devoted to finding peace in the best possible way, not only through providing humanitarian aid, an area in which the UN is traditionally very strong. They realized early on that the political aspect of the UN mandate could not be achieved without an equally robust public affairs strategy too. I valued the way in which both the political and public affairs co-operation was conducted, the way we worked with experts from every country of the former Yugoslavia. We had a local multinational perspective, while the rest of the colleagues we worked with were from different countries. I continued in a similar vein in the UNMIK Mission and that was the time when CNN came to make a story about how we managed to get national and international staff to work together.

5. ANALITIKA: And then Iraq happened...

HREBIČKOVA: After my jobs in the Middle East and the Balkans, I took a position with the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After a while, I was sent to Iraq as Ambassador-at-Large. Together with representatives from more than 40 countries that were part of the coalition, we worked with the first post Saddam Iraqi national government and with the 18 governorates in the country. Despite the many challenges that existed at that time, Iraqi Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds were all interested in building up a new country and new democratic institutions. In 2003, we tried to assist in establishing the new government, new institutions, we opened new hospitals, three new universities in Bagdad, we assisted in repatriation of half a million exiled people. In that first year, we received a lot of support all across the country and despite many challenges the prospect of achieving positive results looked promising at that moment.

6. ANALITIKA: But, then it all went wrong...

HREBIČKOVA: I left in December 2003. In 2004 and afterwards, things became very difficult. The first sign was, of course, the attacks against international organizations including the one against the UN in August 2003. Sadly, I lost many dear friends and colleagues there for whom I worked with closely during bloody wars in the former Yugoslavia.

7. ANALITIKA: Did you then escape death by accident?

HREBIČKOVA: The attack happened in the UN base just after 2pm. On that day, I was to have a lunch with the UN Chief of Staff. I often went to the UN base for lunch, as the base was considered safe. The heat that day was quite unbearable. Halfway there for some reason I changed my mind, and told the driver to turn back to the Embassy. The UN Head, Sergio De Mello, was among those who died. He was one of the most successful senior UN leaders over the past 60 years. He managed to communicate and to achieve results in all of the places that he served - be it in Africa, Asia, Iraq, or other

parts of the world. He was greatly respected, not only by diplomats and local institutions, but also by citizens, regardless of who they were. There was something special about him. He had a special sort of ‘cosmopolitan spirit’. Apart from Mr. De Mello two more friends with whom I have worked for so many years were killed together with 22 UN staff in that tragic summer day. For me, that event became a pivotal moment in my life. Until then, I had seen thousands of people die in Croatia, B&H, Kosovo or Gaza. However, after that attack in Baghdad, I realized that I had had enough of working in war zones. Therefore, in January 2004, I returned to Prague and, after that, I was invited to become the Deputy Permanent representative of the Czech Republic Delegation to the UN in New York.

8. ANALITIKA: Was the situation in Iraq assessed wrongly?

HREBIČKOVA: That of course is not for me to say. Let us say that it was a very difficult time at the very start. The new democratic interim government was established with the full participation of all political, ethnic and religious partners, under the leadership of Coalition Provisional Authority and the UN. Demilitarization was taking place. However, in the process of so called ‘de-baathification’ almost 5,000 soldiers were left without a job. Maybe this caused a lot of local anger. In hindsight, if we wanted to carry out full demilitarization, you first needed the ‘debaathification’. It was from among these unemployed soldiers and members of their families that extremism began to grow and possibly gave root to the creation of the Islamic State and Al Qaeda later on. It is possible that we did not know enough at this time

9. ANALITIKA: Considering your experience in extremely difficult and challenging area, and that you spent many years working as a journalist, I have to ask you a difficult question. Where, in your opinion, is contemporary world heading?

HREBIČKOVA: In my view, it is crucial to jointly engage with all relevant international organizations and other partners to discuss and address the new security threats. Violent extremism and foreign fighters is one of the most specific threats to stability and security. It certainly requires a comprehensive approach in addressing it. The more I think about what has happened in the past 20 years of transformation in central Europe, the Balkans, Eastern Europe and the Middle East, one has to understand that we are now sailing in completely different waters and that we are challenged by new types of threats

10. ANALITIKA: Can you be more specific?

HREBIČKOVA: The European Union as a key regional organization has a significant role to play in all international and regional processes. EU as such has transformed a lot; it has many more members as a consequence of its enlargement policy. We live in peace in Europe for more than 65 years. During that period, strong democratic institutions were formed as well as systems for the fight for human rights. EU has created and cemented many economic and other links within and out of Europe. Today we are facing entirely new threats that cannot be fought by classical means. In the so-called old times, we had armies of states to fight each other. However, the 1990s and later period demonstrate all too well the need to address the interstate conflicts where individual human rights were and are being violated by their own authorities. That is

why the concept of responsibility to protect was developed and signed at the UN in 2005. In order for us all to be able to fight the new challenges – be they extremism, fanaticism, radicalism or any similar threats - and in order to survive and preserve the peace, we need to be able to adapt and to prepare new mechanism to fight such new threats. We need to continue to cooperate closely with partners who share the same values. The conflicts we are witnessing in Ukraine or anywhere else in the world bring to us new tasks, new challenges, and the EU need to know how to respond in order to preserve its democratic values. We all have to search for new partnerships. This is required not only because of economic co-operation but also because of the need to preserve the democratic structures when it comes to political, human and fundamental rights. These rights are universal values and we need to protect them at all costs.

11. ANALITIKA: How can it be possible with the rise of the rightist and extremisms of all kinds?

HREBIČKOVA: Governments, media and civil society all need to fight extremism together regardless if they are from the right or from the left. Only in this way can we become stronger and fight all types of hate, fanaticism and extremism or nationalism. However, we have often let ourselves focus too much on economic issues and benefits, as if all the other issues can somehow be taken for granted. Of course, most people are absolutely against such tendencies. They hate it. They do not want it. They are deeply scared of these tendencies too. We are all threatened by the strength of new types of crime, violence and threats. That is why we all have to find a way to connect with those who share the same universal values as we do.

Gordana BOROVIĆ