Chapter 4

INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDEPENDENT MASS MEDIA IN THE CZECH AND SLOVAK REPUBLICS

Karen Ballentine

The development of independent mass media was one of the main pillars of international efforts in the 1990s to assist the democratization of the postcommunist states. Indeed, after 1989 a plethora of international, state, and nongovernmental actors became involved in one or another aspect of media development: training journalists, providing technological improvement, reforming the legal-regulatory framework, enhancing the financial and managerial performance of media outlets, and developing professional associations for journalists, broadcasters, and other media professionals. Virtually all these international actors were motivated by the same underlying idea: that independent and pluralistic media are an essential bulwark of a mature and effective democracy, serving both as a watchdog of potential abuses of power by elected officials and as an inclusive arena of informed debate and discussion of issues affecting the body politic. Democracy assistance to the media sector was also prompted by the realization that, as a result of decades of highly intrusive Communist Party censorship and state subsidization, the newly liberated media lacked the skills, resources, and know-how to perform these democracy-supporting functions in a new and challenging transitional environment.[1]

For their contribution to this research I would like to thank Juraj Alner, international news editor, *Narodna Obroda*; Caroline Barker, second secretary, British Embassy, Bratislava; Ingrid

Most international actors viewed the promotion of independent mass media not as an end in itself but as an intermediate goal within a larger effort to support sustainable democracy.[2] International assistance doubtless had a positive influence in shaping the norms and practices of the postcommunist media, enhancing their professionalism and their viability, and helping to integrate them into a larger transnational media community. This assistance also made a crucial difference to the professional careers of individual journalists and, in some cases, to the survival of particular nonstate media outlets. However, the importance of this support at the aggregate sectorwide level depended in large part on wider progress toward democracy. Where the consolidation of democracy was relatively unproblematic, media assistance is best characterized as facilitating the development of the independent media but not decisive to its very existence. In contrast, where democratic transitions remained partial or were threatened by significant authoritarian reversals, international assistance played a more crucial role in ensuring the material and financial basis necessary for independent media to operate.[3]

Whether media assistance has actually contributed to the larger goal of promoting democracy is more questionable. As elsewhere, whether mass media has a democratizing influence depends on the degree of democratic commitment among prevailing power holders and the prevailing political culture. Without a permissive political and normative framework, the other seeds of international media assistance may not yield the desired democratic fruit. Paradoxically, in the short to medium term international media assistance may be the least effective means of achieving the broader goal of supporting democracy where democracy has yet to be consolidated—that is, precisely where it appears most needed—and most effective where it is least needed. In any case these abiding environmental constraints create attribution and measurement problems that make it extraordinarily difficult to provide a definitive evaluation of the wider influence of international media assistance programs, either individually or together.

Baummanova, grants officer, Foundation for Civil Society, Bratislava; Kathy Sterner, Democracy Programs section head, and Zdeno Cho, media project adviser, USAID Bratislava; Lubomir Fifik, head of the Union of Slovak Television Artists: Olga Holeckova, Prague Center for Independent Journalism; Serge Koperdak, consultant, Pro-Media Slovakia; Martin Lengyel, journalist, Radio Twist, Bratislava; Tanja Rajnakova, media project coordinator, Open Society Foundation, Bratislava; Tatiana Repkova, former editor, *Narodna Obroda*, and consultant, Pro-Media; Andrej Skolkay, media specialist, Department of Political Science, Comenius University: Biljana Tatomir, program director, and Algis Lipstas, project manager, Soros Regional Media Program; Katarina Vajdova, director, Bratislava Centre for Independent Journalism; Jaroslav Veis, press spokesman for Speaker of the Czech Senate who is the former editor of *Lidove Noviny* and former director of the Prague Center for Independent Journalism; Sasa Vucinic, managing director, Media Loan Development Fund, Prague; Marcel Zajac, program officer, Foundation for Civic Activity, Bratislava; Rudolf Zeman, then the director of the Czech Syndicate of Journalists; Irena Zemankova, Foundation for Civil Society, Prague.

The particular strategies of assistance that appear to have been most effective in contributing to the interim goal of media independence and professionalism have displayed some or all of the following features: They are sensitive and responsive to the changing needs of the various local media; they develop strong local partnerships and give local partners and beneficiaries wide leeway in project design and implementation; they target infrastructural needs and build human capacity in a complementary fashion; they provide long-term, specialized, and skills-oriented training using local talent rather than short-term general training by outside advisers; and they strategically limit support to a small number of niche projects sustained for a longer period of time.

Much of the analysis that follows is based on fieldwork that I undertook in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1997 and 1998 and reflects the state of affairs at that time. By 1997 the Czech Republic had largely completed the consolidation of its democratic transformation, and many international assistance agencies were in the process of winding down their activities. By contrast, Slovakia was experiencing significant difficulty in achieving democratic consolidation, with the government of Vladimir Meciar increasingly hostile to political and media pluralism. For this reason more actors were undertaking a greater number of media assistance projects in Slovakia than in the Czech Republic at this time. The weight of my analysis on Slovakia reflects this reality.

Comparing the Czech and Slovak republics permitted an examination of how the same strategies work in different, more or less hospitable, political environments and how international assistance organizations subsequently adapted to increasingly divergent political conditions. These two countries share a common background as constituent republics of the Czechoslovak Federation. They began the postcommunist transition with similar legal and political environments and with comparable (albeit not identical) media cultures and structures. In both countries international democracy assistance, including projects designed to support the development of independent media, began at roughly the same time and with similar strategies.

The contrast between these two political and media environments permits a consideration of the question of where, on the macrolevel, international media assistance priorities and resources are most effective. As Thomas Carothers has argued, there may be a particular methodological advantage to assessing foreign assistance in "gray-area cases," such as Slovakia between 1994 and 1998, "where the democratic transition is neither moving forward nor backward very quickly or clearly." Such indeterminate cases may

> much better illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of democracy assistance than do societies that moved rapidly to a successful democratic consolidation—or those which have lapsed from an initially positive transition back to some form of dictatorship. In gray-area cases, external

> democracy assistance is neither a dispensable supplement to a strongly self-propelled process nor a futile rocket off an impenetrable wall. Instead, the assistance becomes more deeply drawn into the local processes of the attempted political transition, resulting in a more thorough testing of the strengths and weaknesses of the program.[4]

Alexander Motyl shares this view and points to the policy consequences by proposing that "Western aid may be able to make the greatest difference in the intermediate countries, where the future seems relatively open, realistic progress may be great, and outside intervention could therefore be most effective."[5]

My findings attest to the validity of these propositions where the interim goals of fostering media independence and professionalism are concerned. While the Czech independent media sector is more developed, international assistance has been more critical to the continued development and, in some instances, the viability of independent media outlets in Slovakia. Without international assistance the Czech media environment probably would be much the same as it is today, after more than seven years of broad international assistance. In Slovakia, however, the absence of international media assistance between 1994 and 1998 probably would have left the struggling independent media more vulnerable to the Meciar government's legal and economic machinations. At the very least the size and scope of the independent Slovak media would be considerably more circumscribed than it was, while some independent media outlets that would otherwise have been viable in an open economy and polity would likely have been pushed from the scene.

As with other aspects of transitional democracy, indigenous political dynamics, especially the degree of elite commitment to open markets and democratic norms, ultimately determine the development of independent media. For intermediate cases, however, well-timed and well-placed international assistance can provide some interim life support that may yield positive long-term benefits. Moreover, while the cumulative effect of assistance is relevant to macrolevel considerations of international donors that seek to have maximal influence in promoting media independence and professionalism, this finding alone says little about the actual effectiveness of discrete assistance strategies within each country setting. As I will detail in this chapter, some strategies have been more effective than others.

Because U.S.-based NGOs were the largest providers of media assistance in these countries, this analysis focuses on their activities and strategies as they have evolved since 1990.[6] In particular, the strategies that I evaluate here are those that were used at the time by the International Media Fund and its successor, the Pro-Media Program of the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) (both supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development, USAID), the Independent Journalism Foundation's Centers for Indepen-

dent Journalism, and the network of Soros foundations, including the local Open Society foundations in each country, the Media Loan Development Fund, and the Regional (now Network) Media Program. I bring into the analysis the work of other, largely European-based agencies such as the British Know-How Fund and European Union–sponsored programs under Poland and Hungary: Action for the Restructuring of the Economy (PHARE), as well as the direct assistance activities of government agencies such as USAID and the U.S. Information Service, where it provides useful elaboration and contrast.

I have divided this chapter into five main sections. The first sets the context by briefly describing the Czech and Slovak media as they were constituted when international assistance agencies first arrived. I then discuss the analytical framework of the study, define basic concepts, and introduce a typology of media assistance strategies that categorizes the targets of assistance and the terms of involvement. The three main categories that I examine are human capital development and two types of infrastructural development: media outlets and regulatory framework. After situating specific NGO projects within this typology, I discuss the influence and limitations of different strategies in these three target areas. Then I discuss how local NGO administrators and media beneficiaries evaluated the assistance programs. In conclusion I consider the lessons these cases may offer to future efforts to aid independent media in transitional societies.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: MEDIA DEVELOPMENTS AFTER THE VELVET REVOLUTION

THE CZECH REPUBLIC

In the Czech Republic, where observers concluded by the mid-1990s that democracy and pluralism were "consolidated," the mass media made rapid progress on a number of dimensions. After 1989 the media quickly provided a broad range of perspectives, tapped diverse sources, and staked out a large degree of editorial independence from political elites. The Czechs' historical experience with democracy, their relatively strong dissident movement, and the abrupt and complete transfer of power to an elite strongly committed to democratic norms were key factors. While in the early years of postcommunism many of the new, privately owned newspapers were openly allied with political parties, by the late 1990s this was rarely the case. Freedom of the press and freedom of expression were enshrined in the Basic Charter of Rights and Freedoms and were generally observed in the courts. Until September 1997 a law remained on the books that proscribed the defamation of the president and the republic; although the law was widely condemned as an infringement of press freedom,

there were few convictions, and most of those found guilty under this provision received suspended sentences or presidential pardons.[7]

In the mid-1990s scores of private newspapers and periodicals, at both the national and local levels, reflected a wide range of interests and opinions. By March 1996 more than half the Czech print media were under foreign ownership, but most were run by Czech editors and journalists and had a high level of Czech content.[8] Reflecting a regionwide trend of popular apathy and a global trend toward sensationalism, the most popular newspapers have been tabloids. In addition to the state news agency, a private news service established in 1994 was by 1997 providing regular feeds both domestically and abroad. As with the print media, publishing and distribution companies had considerable foreign investment.

The government formally reconstituted Czech State Radio and Television as public service broadcasters, governed by a democratically accountable state broadcasting council. Competing with Czech Public Radio were more than sixty private radio stations, making for a very crowded marketplace. Many of these outlets were heavily in debt and had a small market share, conditions that made for a fiercely competitive market.

The two state-owned television channels competed with two major private networks, Prima (formerly Premiera) and Nova TV. In 1997 the latter had more than a 70 percent audience share (compared to the two public channels' combined share of 25 percent). Central Europe Media Enterprises (CME), at the time a growing international media giant active in the region, owned 80 percent of Nova TV.

Since 1997 CME's activities have become controversial following reports that it has disregarded the ownership, advertising, and content provisions of Nova TV's license (staples of its programming are reruns of U.S. television shows and and chatty news shows) and because CME has been busy consolidating a veritable mini-empire extending through the Czech Republic and beyond; CME holdings include other private television networks, radio stations, and newspapers.[9]

The development of professional associations for journalists, publishers, and broadcasters proceeded rapidly, and they have become well integrated into European and international professional associations. On several occasions journalists and broadcasters demonstrated some capacity to defend their corporate interests against political intrusion; in particular, in 1996 they succeeded in preventing the adoption of a restrictive press law.

Until 1997 Prime Minister Václav Klaus's uncompromising embrace of laissez-faire democratic capitalism dominated the Czech Republic's political environment. His ideology and policy framework led to minimal state regulation of the media sector. This antiregulation ethos was powerfully reinforced by both the corporate quest for profits and, perhaps unexpectedly, by a dissident political

culture that regards even democratic forms of media regulation, including self-regulation, with abiding suspicion.[10] Observers have cited the lax regulatory environment and relatively passive regulatory bodies as principal reasons why CME has been able to violate the terms of its broadcast license with apparent impunity.[11]

While the Czech mass media displayed many of the characteristics of a robust and independent media, the forces of laissez-faire had their own deleterious effect on journalistic professionalism and on the capacity of the media to act as the fourth estate, that is, to be the public's watchdog and to convey accurate information. Some editors protested that owners' preoccupation with revenues has compromised their independence.[12] Another much noted problem was the threat of commercial corruption of individual journalists, some of whom took up selling coverage for cash and presented as "news" what was really commissioned advertising.[13] While this practice was not widespread, it was prevalent enough to provoke professional concern about journalistic ethics and media credibility. Nonetheless, Czech journalists resisted efforts to adopt a voluntary press code. According to Rudolf Zeman, then the director of the Czech Syndicate of Journalists, the vast majority of journalists were highly averse to the formal adoption of professional standards. In principle the syndicate—a professional association—supported a common ethical standard, but it opposed both a West European–style press council and a system of accreditation for syndicate members that would permit effective enforcement of self-regulating standards.[14]

The print media remained governed by an obsolete and inconsistent press law, instituted in 1966 and amended in 1990. New legislation has gone through a number of drafts but has been held up by disputes about the lack of provisions to protect journalists' sources and to require state bodies to disclose public information to the press.

In 1997 the *Economist* claimed that the Czech media rank fourth among the world's freest presses, ahead of both Germany and the United Kingdom. This ranking, however, may more accurately have reflected the Czech media's passion for the free market than the intrinsic attributes of the media in Germany and England. While the Czech media have acquired many features of a robust pluralistic media, and while their independence has been secured, both market dynamics and residual political, legal, and cultural practices present obstacles to the media's capacity to act as a consistent and effective supporter of democratic accountability and an informed citizenry.

SLOVAKIA

Between 1994 and 1998 Slovakia underwent a period of neoauthoritarian retrenchment. In contrast to the 1989–1994 period, when the media made major strides in casting off state control, a high degree of political intrusiveness char-

acterized the media environment during the mid-1990s. Former prime minister Vladimir Meciar's ruling coalition made efforts to establish various forms of de jure censorship, most notably in 1995–1996 with this unsuccessful effort to enact the Law on the Protection of the Republic, which would have criminalized the dissemination of "false information that damages Slovakia." More common were the Meciar government's de facto efforts to manipulate the financial, regulatory, and material prerequisites for the operate of the nonstate media. These included punitive tax increases; selling printing and distribution facilities to Meciar allies, who subsequently denied these resources to selected outlets critical of Meciar; selective denial of broadcast licenses; an unofficial ban that prevented state-owned companies from advertising in the "opposition press"; and periodic shutdowns of the broadcast transmissions of independent radio stations on flimsy financial pretexts.[15] More ominously, individual journalists suffered legal, verbal, and sometimes physical attacks, and in June 1997 someone vandalized the facilities of the newly established independent Slovak News Agency in what many observers concluded was a government-inspired action.

While these political and economic pressures were undoubtedly serious, Western advocates and monitors of press freedom tended to exaggerate the threat posed by Meciar's actions and to discount the significant achievements of the private Slovak media, as well as their evident resilience in the face of government efforts to undermine them. For two successive years, for example, the Committee to Protect Journalists ranked Meciar among the "top ten worst enemies of the free press worldwide"—a distinction usually reserved for the most egregious dictators—even though the most serious charge against him was his unsuccessful attempt to pass the Law on the Protection of the Republic.[16] Even more inaccurately, the European Fund for Freedom of Expression ranked Slovakia as "a country where the media have little freedom," even claiming that state censorship, though more subtle, was "just as effective as in previous times," that "the written press is largely controlled by the state," and that "control over radio and television is practically complete."[17] Freedom House's annual survey of press freedom ranked Slovakia as "partly free" in 1997. While this standing accurately reflected Freedom House's exclusive preoccupation with measuring state policies toward the media, some thoughtful Slovak observers protested that such categorical claims perpetuated a distorted picture that obscured positive developments.

In fact, as in the Czech Republic, Slovakia had a significant degree of media pluralism, with a half-dozen nationwide dailies for a population of five million, as well as numerous regional papers, monthlies, and weeklies that offered a range of political views and diverse sources of information. The quality of news reporting also showed significant improvement since 1990, especially in the area of economic and financial news, where the weekly *Trend* and the daily *Narodna Obroda* were recognized as standard-setters for the region. Slovakia also had twenty-four privately owned regional and local radio stations, six privately owned

regional and local television stations, a burgeoning cable industry (by 1997 seventy-three independent cable operators held licenses), and a newly established independent news agency, which rapidly became a regular news provider to many private media outlets. CME-backed Markiza TV, launched in late 1996, was the second major private network, alongside VTV and the two government-controlled channels, STV1 and STV2. The arrival of Markiza, which offered more popular programming and more balanced and diverse news coverage than state television, effectively thwarted Meciar's domination of the Slovak television scene for the two-thirds of the country that received its signal.[18] After 1997 Markiza enjoyed an audience share well ahead of STV1's and STV2's.[19]

Throughout the Meciar era the Slovak media displayed a dogged capacity to defend its constitutionally enshrined rights to operate free of state interference. Although still weakly developed, several professional associations for radio broadcasters, print journalists, and television producers helped to defeat the government's attempts to pass restrictive media legislation. Most notably, in 1997 independent media associations forced the government to abandon its efforts to criminalize the "false spread of information" deemed damaging to Slovakia. The Slovak independent media also assisted one another in securing access to printing and distribution facilities when the government interfered with their regular sources.

In comparison to its Czech equivalent, the Slovak Syndicate of Journalists was relatively more open to the creation of a nationwide, European-style press council, with a self-administered code of ethics and a system of accreditation to promote and enforce professional journalistic standards, although it had yet to be implemented. In part, the motive may have been preemptive, as the government may have been seeking to exploit the weakness of journalistic ethics as a pretext for renewed censorship. Given the profound polarization that beset Slovak politics at the time, it was no surprise that the independent syndicate had a state-supported rival, the Association of Slovak Journalists, essentially a communist-style organization that supported the policies of the ruling coalition while seeking to undermine support for the syndicate. In 1997 relations between these rival associations were generally poor; nevertheless, they did cooperate in efforts to develop a common press code.

Despite its resourcefulness and vigor, the Slovak independent media faced a number of daunting challenges. The most immediate was their economic viability. As in the Czech Republic, the media market was saturated and increasingly competitive. Production costs and indebtedness were rising, and the size of the market was limited. In Slovakia the media had the additional disadvantage of reduced investment resources. They had fewer foreign investors to rely on, while indigenous investors tended to be owners of newly privatized companies, many of whom had close connections to the Meciar government or were otherwise dependent on it for political favors.

Although state radio and television were formally reconstituted in 1992 as public service broadcasters, which meant they were to be subjected to democratic control by nonpartisan radio and television councils established by the Slovak parliament, the Meciar government reasserted an effective monopoly over their programming and personnel decisions. Indeed, one of Meciar's first moves on being elected prime minister in 1994 was to pack the boards of the Radio and Television Councils with party loyalists. As a result, Slovak opposition parties lost all representation on these bodies as well as routine access to state television and radio in general. The program content of STV1 and STV2 became limited largely to biased political broadcasts and soporific shows celebrating the cultural and other achievements of the Slovak nation, a genre that could be described as "nationalist realism." Progovernment state radio and television had a comparative advantage against their privately owned competitors in terms of subsidies and as the only radio and television networks broadcasting nationwide.

The government repeatedly sought to make examples of independence-minded journalists and outlets that boldly criticized Meciar's policies or attacked him personally. A number of lawsuits charged journalists with defaming state officials or slandering the premier. In 1996 the opposition Bratislava daily, *SME*, was suddenly denied access to its customary printing and distribution network and forced to rely on a printer at the other end of the country, at great expense. In the fall of 1997, among several other incidents of official harassment, the government temporarily denied Radio Twist its broadcasting frequency, allegedly for failure to pay arrears on licensing fees owed to the state telecommunications company.[20] Finally, in a failed bid to cripple the independent media, in 1997 the Meciar government attempted to impose a fourfold increase in the value-added tax on newspapers.

Meciar's hostile behavior, as well as the highly polarized social and political environment that his government has engendered, threatened the well-being of the independent media. Perhaps inescapably, the media tended to replicate the profound and antagonistic society-wide split between those for and against Meciar. Thus many independent papers and some radio stations displayed a partisan bias, routinely giving favorable coverage to opposition views. This rigid polarization was a major impediment to the further consolidation of a nonpartisan professional media.[21] As in wartime, accurate and balanced reporting was the first casualty in what many see as nothing less than a definitive battle about the future political identity of Slovakia.

ASSISTANCE STRATEGIES OF INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

Regardless of their varying roles and mandates, international, state, and nongovernmental assistance agencies shared the same overarching rationale for as-

sisting independent media: that it is an indispensable component of a functioning democracy and that the media in postcommunist countries lacked the requisite skills and capacity to function as professional—nonpartisan, objective, and balanced—sources of information and as viable commercial enterprises. These outside agencies also tended to share a repertoire of assistance tools: most commonly, conducting in-country training sessions and sponsoring placements abroad; offering technical, legal, professional, and managerial consultancies; provisioning media outlets with equipment, either through loans or in-kind grants; and, more rarely, providing direct financial support. At the sector level the majority of assistance organizations ran similar projects at similar times.

For the purposes of this analysis *strategy* refers to the conceptual and practical modalities that link particular activities to the fulfillment of desired goals. In the area of media assistance discrete strategies were not always evident, not even to those involved in assistance activities. This appears to have been particularly true during the initial stages of assistance (1990–1993), when—as with other forms of democracy support—designing coherent strategies of assistance took second place to providing as much visible aid as quickly as possible, both in order to satisfy donors that their money was being put to work and to enhance the palpable benefits of democracy to newly enfranchised citizens.[22] This early neglect of *strategic* assistance may also have been shaped by an assumption that the transition to democracy in what was then a unified Czechoslovakia would be comparatively rapid and unproblematic, and that the scattershot provision of training seminars and equipment drops would be sufficient to sustain an independent media.[23] Finally, as Thomas Carothers has elaborated elsewhere, while early U.S. assistance efforts had a relatively clear idea of which model of democracy they were using (essentially a replication of U.S. institutions), they were less sure of practical approaches models or discrete ways of replicating these institutions in new and diverse environments.[24]

As with other forms of democracy assistance, the agencies modified their assumptions once the complexities of the situation in the Czech Republic and Slovakia became evident. Media assistance efforts can be divided into three general phases: an initially heavy emphasis on journalist training and equipment drops, followed by programs aimed at the wider legal and organizational infrastructure (reflecting a shift from supplying armies of foreign consultants to building indigenous capacity), and, later, a greater emphasis on enhancing the media's economic viability and developing the regional media. Journalist training was still the mainstay of this activity, particularly in the Czech Republic, but evolved from general and abstract lessons on the fundamentals of Western journalism to the development of technical skills and specialized practical knowledge. Gradually, programs and projects became more diversified, as individual agencies recognized the comparative advantage in devoting their energies and resources to certain niche areas. Even among those with a greater concern for developing

explicit strategies with clear goals and measurable results, however, some people whom I interviewed had difficulty articulating the strategy or strategies that they used. They often tended to fall back on descriptions of generic program goals and activities rather than articulate the criteria or methods by which specific activities were supposed to lead to the attainment of those goals.

This said, differences in strategies of media assistance were apparent, if only implicitly. Any attempt to categorize these different assistance strategies is rendered problematic by the fact that most assistance agencies—whether consciously or not—are likely to pursue many different strategies at the same time, and these strategies at best approximate, rather than exactly reflect, any pure type. For heuristic purposes I have adapted the following schema, which are set forth in table 4.1.

Terms of involvement refers to the dominant modalities by which international actors—implicitly or explicitly—provide assistance to the media sector. A proactive approach is one in which the international NGO (or the funder[s] to which it is beholden) has well-developed goals, priorities, and strategies for assistance. It may therefore also be associated with a higher degree of outside (as opposed to local) initiative, with imported ideas rather than domestic ones, and with generic models of media assistance, rather than locally specific ones.[25] Conversely, a responsive strategy describes assistance efforts that are designed to be highly responsive to the changing needs of the local partners and beneficiaries, as well as to their initiatives, concerns, and ideas. Assistance strategies are seldom purely proactive or responsive; even the most proactive strategies tended, over time, to shed preconceived notions and incorporate a significant level of domestic ideas and initiative in the process of implementation. There seldom has been an exclusively responsive strategy, which would mean leaving all decisions to local partners and beneficiaries.[26] For this reason I have qualified each with the term *interactive* to reflect the existence of varying degrees of international-local synergy while keeping intact the distinction between the overall thrust of each dominant strategy.[27]

The terms of involvement also reflect variation on a number of other dimensions. Assistance efforts may be multidimensional, in that several distinct activities are undertaken in parallel under a more-or-less coherent, longer-term, local program, or unidimensional, with a focus on a single project, usually to be conducted within a comparatively limited time frame. Unidimensional projects are typically implemented by visiting consultants in collaboration with local partners selected for the purpose, with responsibility for management and oversight remaining at the home base of the international assistance agency.

Both program-based and project-based activities may be either process oriented or product oriented. That is, they may involve activities that focus on the long-range incremental development of media skills and infrastructure (process oriented) or on those aimed at delivering a specific product for a specific need,

TABLE 4.1 Typology of Media Assistance Strategies in the Czech and Slovak Republics

Target of Assistance	
Individual journalists, editors, managers, etc. (human capital development)	
Media outlets (infrastructural development)	
Regulatory and associational framework (infrastructural development)	
Terms of Involvement	
Proactive/ interactive	Responsive/ interactive
Multidimensional (program-based)	Unidimensional (project-based)
Process oriented	Product oriented
Imported ideas	Domestic generated ideas
Selective	Nondiscriminatory

such as providing consultation on a proposed media law, holding a one-time conference on journalistic ethics, or publishing handbooks and subsidizing professional journals (product oriented).

Finally, assistance strategies may be described as either selective or nondiscriminatory in terms of the identities of the beneficiaries. Selective strategies are those that restrict assistance to beneficiaries that meet specified criteria of eligibility. A common example of this strategy was to limit assistance benefits to the nonstate media. Another was to restrict assistance to a subcategory of the nonstate media that met certain requirements, such as commercial viability. Nondiscriminatory strategies, by contrast, are those that aim to spread the benefits of assistance to the media sector at large, without demanding any "fitness" tests.

Targets of assistance designates the main types of beneficiaries. In general, international actors seek either to promote human capital development by targeting individual media professionals or to develop the infrastructural underpinnings of media independence. Infrastructural support can be divided into two types: supporting the managerial, technical, and commercial capacities of individual media outlets or assisting the development of professional associations and the legal-regulatory framework. International actors may be engaged in a mix of activities that support infrastructural as well as human capital development, supporting media outlets, associational bodies, and the regulatory framework as well as individuals.

Perhaps more than any other single factor, the identity and mandate of assistance organizations (both the international NGOs and their funders) influenced the strategies that were used. For example, PHARE-supported activities in media assistance reflected the European Union's concerns with both promoting democracy and assisting these countries to meet the institutional and

regulatory requirements for eventual membership in the European Union. Therefore the activities that they promoted tended to be proactive, were more focused on reforming the legal, normative, and regulatory infrastructure of the media sector, were generally nondiscriminatory toward all state and nonstate media rather than selective, and were often more product oriented, funding specific projects, such as draft legislation on broadcast and press laws and publications on European standards for press councils and journalistic ethics.

In contrast, U.S.-based agencies were largely concerned with selectively promoting the independent (nonstate) media, largely reflecting the distinctly American bias against state-owned or public sector media. Partly for this reason, and partly in response to local needs—especially in Slovakia where investment was more restricted—U.S. assistance efforts were also more likely to focus on the process of developing a viable commercial infrastructure for media outlets. Several NGO efforts, such as the Centers for Independent Journalism (Independent Journalism Foundation), the Knight-Ridder Fellowship Program, Article 19, PressNow, and Freedom Forum reflect their identity as organizations founded by journalists for journalists. On the whole these tended to be focused on promoting media professionalism by providing human capital development through training, fellowships, and consultancies; were more process oriented; and were more receptive to collaboration and domestically generated ideas.

The next section examines in greater detail and with specific examples the media assistance strategies for each target of media assistance by international actors since 1990.

HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

Human capital development was by far the largest single category of assistance efforts. The reasons for this are both principled and practical. The principled reason is that the norms, skills, and practices of working journalists, editors, producers, and managers are critical variables in determining the overall performance of credible, professional, and independent media. The practical rationale is that individual training—in the form of seminars, workshops, consultations, or placements abroad—is a relatively low-cost way to promote new norms, practices, production techniques, and management models to a relatively wide number of beneficiaries and with results that are quick and quantifiable, if not always meaningfully so.

In the initial phase of media assistance, the vast majority of initiatives were aimed at human capital development and, in the case of the more consolidated Czech Republic, continued in this vein. Between 1992 and 1995 a main vehicle of U.S. government assistance was the International Media Fund, a USAID grantee that was created explicitly for this purpose. According to an official of USAID in Bratislava, the International Media Fund initially pursued a generic

multidimensional approach (including technology drops) that was designed at USAID headquarters in Washington, D.C., with little initial concern for tailoring aid to specific local conditions.[28] In collaboration with direct U.S. Information Service (USIS) training programs, the International Media Fund conducted a global program of media training on a generally scattershot and nondiscriminatory basis, its aim being to sow the seeds of training assistance as flexibly and broadly as possible. Training was largely aimed at midcareer professionals and consisted mostly of in-country workshops and seminars run by foreign media consultants but also included some short-term internships and long-term university-based placements in the United States for promising local journalists.

Human capital development was also the primary thrust of the Independent Journalism Foundation, founded in 1991 and largely supported by private U.S. funding, to help journalists to upgrade their professional skills. The Independent Journalism Foundation founded a Center for Independent Journalism in Prague in 1991 and another in Bratislava in 1993. These quickly became major local NGO partners for other international agencies as well as a primary institutional base for a series of in-country training seminars and workshops. In addition, the centers took on the functions of press center, media advocate, and informal professional development network. Except during the start-up phase of the flagship center in Prague, the Centers for Independent Journalism were staffed and managed by local media professionals and overseen by an American acting as regional coordinator.

The initial reliance of the Independent Journalism Foundation on foreign trainers shifted to using journalists from the region to conduct local training; foreign consultants came primarily to provide supplementary, specialized technical training. The staffs of the Prague and Bratislava centers sponsored and administered both training programs and projects that were predominately responsive in nature. These programs reflected a synthesis of internationally and domestically generated ideas and a responsiveness to beneficiaries' needs and initiatives. The centers worked closely with media outlets, with nascent professional associations, and with other Western agencies. They ran the Freedom Forum Library resource centers; they were a main partner for the Soros foundations' "Medianet" project, which supplied access to the Internet to a network of local press and radio outlets; and they administered competitions for a number of foreign fellowships for journalism training abroad, including those sponsored by the U.S.-German Marshall Fund, the Guardian Foundation, the Knight-Ridder Foundation, the British Know How Fund, and other donor agencies.

The Soros foundations' network has acted largely as a funder and coordinator rather than as a direct administrator of media assistance programs. Reflecting the distinctive Soros ethos, the local Open Society foundations in Prague and Bratislava and the wider Regional (Network) Media Program were run exclusively by

experienced locals and established flexible and close relationships with local partners, including the Centers for Independent Journalism and professional associations for journalists and broadcasters. According to a director of the Regional Media Program, it did not seek to implement any standard global approach to its assistance activities but to remain highly responsive to the needs and developments of the media in the different countries in which it was involved.[29]

Training was just one of several planks in a multidimensional program. As with other international agencies, upgrading regional media has been a major priority. On the whole, the Soros foundations were more directly involved in infrastructural development activities, including both financial support and technical and capital provision to individual media outlets and to the sector at large. Soros staff members consciously coordinated their training efforts to accompany and reinforce the provision of technical equipment. For example, the Medianet program not only supplied computers and Internet access to local media outlets but provided training on how to use them. Likewise, in the process of fulfilling its main objective of providing direct capital loans to select media outlets, the Media Loan Development Fund provided extensive consultation in the development of business plans (marketing, programming, advertising) so that even executives whose outlets failed to qualify for loans gained improved professional skills.[30]

The IREX Pro-Media Program, established in 1995 as a successor to the International Media Fund to implement USAID's media assistance programs, focused its efforts on infrastructural development, working predominately with individual media outlets but also with the sector as a whole. However, because most of its support was public money from USAID (under a cooperative agreement with IREX), there were political constraints on Pro-Media's ability to provide direct grants of financial and technical resources.[31] Instead, Pro-Media pursued its goal of infrastructural sustainability indirectly, in part by providing training seminars and workshops in finance, management, and advertising as well as on-site consultations and short-term U.S. study tours for media managers. These activities sought to expose media professionals to Western advertising and marketing ideas and techniques in a process-oriented effort to enhance the practical business skills of media executives.

Initially, Pro-Media sought to conduct training in collaboration with local partners, such as the Center for Independent Journalism, but by 1997 had discontinued this practice in favor of providing direct training to media outlets.[32] Pro-Media activities were managed by in-country resident advisers, most of whom have been Americans, but Pro-Media increasingly has brought in local journalists in a consulting capacity. Overall, however, its strategy has tended to be proactive—it had a relatively fixed set of goals and methods aimed at a niche need—and was inspired by imported marketing and management ideas.

MEDIA OUTLETS (INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT)

Infrastructural assistance to individual media outlets consisted of programs designed to strengthen media outlets' overall technical endowment, financial profile, and managerial skills, with the latter focused on developing the particular skills, especially marketing and advertising, needed to become profitable. Although upgrading the media outlets' technology—both equipment and skills—had been under way since the early phase of assistance, activities aimed at commercial viability began later (in 1995 or 1996) and were developed in response to the expressed needs of media outlets whose commercial development was too slow and whose sustainability looked questionable, both to local media and to foreign funders. One impediment to profitability derived from a media culture in which everyone wanted to be a journalist and no one wanted to be a manager, as well as a culture in which "selling news"—or even having the skills to do so—had not been a high priority.[33] By far the larger and more serious impediments to commercial viability, however, lay in the broader economy, including the slow pace of market reforms, the lack of local and foreign investment, and politically inspired attempts to control access to investors.

For these reasons this type of assistance was targeted at "gray-area countries" such as Slovakia and was not undertaken where outside investment or access to investors was relatively unproblematic, as in the Czech Republic. For example, the Media Loan Development Fund did not provide loans to media outlets in Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, or Slovenia, because the investment situation in these countries was relatively good, nor did the fund work in countries where the political and legal environment was too crippling, such as Belarus. Pro-Media considered as potential candidates media outlets operating in countries with a nascent pluralism and a permissive legal framework and that needed cash but could get it nowhere else.

Similarly, Pro-Media focused its efforts in countries that were, for either political or economic reasons, still in the early or intermediate phases of transition.[34] Like the Soros Regional Media Program, Pro-Media targeted the independent regional media, mostly local radio and some local television stations; it provided little support to national television or radio, whether state run or privately owned. The reasons for these exclusions varied but included a lack of suitable partners in the case of state-run outlets, the high cost of giving meaningful assistance to national television, and independent national broadcast and print media that had better access to regular investment resources than did local media.

In the early phase the International Media Fund and USIS, among others, provided direct technical assistance through a series of equipment drops to local print and broadcasting outlets. Typically, these involved recording, editing, fax,

and computer equipment donated by Western media outlets or purchased directly. By 1996 such direct technical provisioning was less common, although the Soros Regional Media Fund, working closely with the local Soros foundations, continued to arrange for small-scale technical aid grants (less than $50,000 per outlet) on a case-by-case basis. In order to enable local Slovak television stations to upgrade their technology, Pro-Media negotiated a discount for purchasing digital production equipment for a group of stations and subsidized as much as 20 percent of the cost to each outlet. The Soros Foundation's network, meanwhile, provided the innovative Medianet program, which supplied computers and Internet access to local radio outlets in Slovakia. The outlets were permitted to keep the equipment at no cost if they used it in demonstrable ways, such to set up home pages, use the Internet as a supplementary news and information source, and exchange information with other journalists.[35] In a similar effort to forge technical links to new information sources, Pro-Media negotiated an arrangement whereby local Slovak radio stations would increase their use of the Independent Slovak News Agency and it would provide the stations with training on information access.

For both political and economic reasons direct financial subsidies to the Slovak media were rare, although some agencies had undertaken this kind of support in other countries. More common were either direct loans or indirect support through management consultant and training programs. The largely Soros-funded Media Loan Development Fund was the first in the region to undertake a media loan program, acting essentially as a development bank to provide direct loans to eligible media outlets, to assist them in developing their own broadcast or print facilities and sustainable business practices. Precisely because it was in the business of making loans, the Media Loan Development Fund had a highly selective strategy of picking winners, that is, of providing financing only to those outlets that were independent of the state and of political parties, met strict market-based criteria, and had developed a rigorous and viable business plan. In practice this meant helping those independent outlets that demonstrated good financial prospects but that were at risk of going under because they did not have access to regular sources of investment and distribution. The Media Loan Development Fund worked closely with applicants for three to fifteen months to help them restructure their operations and devise competitive business plans.

The Pro-Media program sought to promote commercial viability indirectly, by addressing the demand as well as the supply side; for example, Pro-Media conducted workshops for local businesses to show them the benefits of advertising their products in the local media. Pro-Media also undertook the first sector-wide market research study of Slovak radio, so that both the outlets and potential advertisers would have a firm grasp of audience demographics. Unlike the Media Loan Development Fund, Pro-Media consciously avoided a strategy of

picking winners among the independent media, instead seeking to sow the benefits of its assistance as widely as possible. Given the saturated nature of the Slovak media market, it was widely believed that by 2002 only half these outlets would survive. Therefore Pro-Media sought to give all comers as much business acumen as possible to meet the challenges of this competitive environment.

REGULATORY AND ASSOCIATIONAL FRAMEWORK (INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT)

International efforts to help reform the legal and regulatory framework and strengthen the development of indigenous professional organizations form the third major category of assistance. In general, European-based organizations such as PHARE, the British Know How Fund, the International Federation of Journalists, Article 19, and Press Now were well ahead of U.S. actors in providing support for the development of the regulatory structure, although the U.S. organizations increased their attention to this area after 1996. The primary strategy consisted of instituting individual projects that were highly product oriented, such as holding conferences or workshops that sought to acquaint local journalists with the role of Western press associations. More sustained efforts to effect a broader, long-term restructuring of professional associations emerged only in the late 1990s, as NGOs and funders alike became increasingly concerned with ensuring the sustainability of professional journalism.

Assisting the reform of the legal and regulatory framework involved direct advocacy by international press-monitoring groups, such as Article 19 and the Committee to Protect Journalists, which sought to use public censure to pressure governments to alter offending practices. It also involved indirect efforts to strengthen the capacity of local media professionals to participate effectively in the design and implementation of democratic media legislation. To this end international agencies provided legal consultation in the drafting of media and broadcast legislation, offered legal opinions targeting the deficiencies of existing legislation, and sponsored a variety of conferences and publications on relevant international legal instruments.[36] Typically, both European and U.S. actors relied on the expertise of foreign media law experts. Pro-Media, for example, employed the U.S. law firm of Covington and Burling to analyze controversial Slovak media legislation and constitutional statutes, such as the May 1998 amendment to the Slovak election act that severely circumscribed political advertising and campaigning in the independent media.

International efforts to promote the development of professional media associations typically went hand in hand with the promotion of overall regulatory reform. In part, this was because the establishment and enforcement of sectorwide professional standards, while an important end in itself, was also seen as a way to ensure that the media are both more responsible and more capable of

defending their corporate interests while removing a pretext for politically motivated forms of government regulation. Here, assistance efforts were of two main types: those aimed at the organizational development of accredited professional associations and those aimed at the creation of a common code of professional conduct that these associations could implement and enforce. One strategy for achieving these goals was to sponsor conferences and publications through which local media professionals and state officials could become better acquainted with international norms and practices regarding press councils, journalistic standards, and associational models.[37] Another was to offer direct institution-building support to indigenous media associations, primarily the Czech Syndicate of Journalists and the Slovak Syndicate of Journalists but later also professional trade unions such as the Association of Regional Broadcasters, the Union of Television Authors, and publishers' associations in each country. In the Czech Republic, for example, PressNow provided money so that the Czech Syndicate of Journalists could put out a monthly newsletter for its members, while the U.S.-German Marshall Fund subsidized the publication of *KMIT*, a wide-ranging monthly magazine aimed at media professionals that discussed recent media developments, press ethics, and new media technologies.

Most international assistance for organizational development took the form of periodic consultations. For example, PHARE sponsored a comprehensive survey of journalists in Slovakia by a local media analyst to get a picture of working conditions, career profiles, and professional needs, so that the Slovak Syndicate of Journalists would have a firmer base for its own restructuring plans. After 1996 Pro-Media also created a long-term program to help transform the nascent Slovak Syndicate of Journalists and the Slovak Association of Regional Broadcasters into full-fledged professional organizations. One of Pro-Media's main goals was to help make these into national organizations, with fully equipped regional offices that would bring regional professionals from all eight territorial districts into the larger professional community and would promote the norm of decentralized self-organization.

INFLUENCE ON CZECH AND SLOVAK MEDIA

International support had a positive influence on the norms and practices of the postcommunist Czech and Slovak media, enhancing their professionalism and their long-term viability and helping to integrate them in a larger transnational media community. This assistance made a crucial difference to the professional careers of individual journalists and, in the Slovak case, to the continued viability of particular privately owned media outlets.

The relative importance of this support at the aggregate sectorwide level depends in large part on wider progress toward democracy. In both countries, but especially in the Czech Republic, strong indigenous impulses to reform the

media sector in accordance with Western norms and practices already existed and were reinforced and accelerated by international support. In Slovakia international assistance agencies were compelled to negotiate the dilemmas posed by the profound division that high politics had created between the state and privately owned media. In this case international assistance often went beyond "facilitation" to provide resources that were otherwise scarce or lacking.

Whether media assistance actually contributed to the larger goal of supporting democracy is more questionable. Because so much of what constitutes media independence lies in the wider economic, political, and cultural environment, international donors and NGOs can do only so much in attempting to fulfill their self-described task of promoting not just an independent media but one that plays a supporting role in developing democracy. International actors often treated these two goals as one, assuming that the mere existence of independent media is, ipso facto, proof of its democratic performance. They have been somewhat reluctant to recognize that much of any media's democratic influence depends on the prevailing political culture and the degree to which power holders are committed to democracy. Affecting this larger political and societal framework is largely beyond the control of international assistance agencies.[38] The analysis that follows therefore seeks to assess the effects of media assistance on the interim goal of promoting viable and professional independent media.

HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

International training efforts clearly helped to speed the development of professional and technical skills of working media professionals. Particularly in the Czech Republic, and to a lesser extent in Slovakia, media outlets no longer acted as the mouthpieces of particular political parties as they did in the early years of the transition; by the mid-1990s few evinced strong partisan affiliations with specific political parties. Journalists increasingly displayed reporting skills in line with Western norms of accurate and balanced reporting of different viewpoints. Indeed, some graduates of international training programs became so accomplished that Western media outlets offered them jobs. Their reporting displayed a greater separation of fact from opinion and greater effort to get the facts straight. Some newspapers adopted the U.S. practice of having separate editorial pages. Again, just how much these improvements can be attributed to international training is difficult to determine. One area that appeared to have benefited directly from international training efforts was investigative reporting.

The relative effects of different strategies of training is always a controversial topic. Most funders and some NGO administrators maintained that in-country training efforts were the most effective, because they reached the greatest number of people with the most economical use of resources while enabling better

coordination between human capital and infrastructural development. In contrast, journalists who participated in both in-country training and in foreign internships or university placements said that they gained much more professional expertise from the placements abroad—that nothing is more useful than actually being in the newsroom or editing suite of a Western media outlet and getting hands-on experience.

From the point of view of local journalists, the early training programs were the least effective, primarily because they emphasized abstract and academic lessons about the fundamentals of reporting. Given that training was the mainstay of international media assistance, it is not surprising that many media professionals throughout the region complained of "training fatigue" or of "being overtrained." They also evinced some resentment, again especially during the early phases of support, about strategies that relied on—and were seen disproportionately to benefit—quick visits by foreign trainers who lacked adequate local knowledge. This perception had the unintended consequence of making the putative beneficiaries less enthusiastic and receptive to the efforts of Western trainers. With time, most international agencies altered their training profiles to offer more workshops and consultations on specialized practical topics such as television news reporting, radio editing, and media management, and to use more local trainers.

Moreover, especially in the earlier phases, what might have been appropriate kinds of training were sometimes offered at inappropriate times or under inappropriate conditions such as training broadcasters to use new recording technology to which they did not have access; offering training in English when most journalists did not speak it well; offering workshops on television production in areas that had no suitable local stations; or offering lessons on respecting international copyright laws, when other problems, such as coping with the threat of financial collapse, were far more pressing.[39]

The main beneficiaries of media training programs were midcareer professionals, and increasingly those from regions outside the capital cities, where the professional level had been lower to begin with. Although training the next generation of media professionals received less support and attention at the outset, the teaching of journalism at the university level also improved noticeably. The teaching of journalism was once the preserve of academics with little practical experience, but practical instruction by working professionals now receives greater emphasis. As a whole, however, university-level training in this period remained underdeveloped, lacking adequate equipment, textbooks, and instructors. The quality of training improved over time, as assistance agencies shifted their focus from general (and reportedly often dry) seminars on the basics of reporting or radio broadcasting to more specialized technical and managerial topics, such as television news production or radio station marketing. At the same time indigenous training capacities increasingly developed a solid in-

stitutional base, although they remained highly dependent upon Western funders for financial support.

Two main environmental factors limited the overall effects of international assistance to human capital development: the prevailing political climate and the dominant indigenous norms that affect media culture. The political limitations were acute in Slovakia, where the society-wide polarization of pro- and anti-Meciar factions created a volatile, partisan climate that often tested journalistic professionalism. Precisely because the Czech Republic enjoys greater democratic stability, the limiting effects of the prevailing media culture were more evident. Slovakia too, however, shared this constraint, and Western professional codes of conduct were slow to take full root in the media culture of Slovakia. In any society normative transformation is a slow and complex process that is the most difficult to effect by deliberate design—especially where those norms are seen as alien to the local tradition. In these cases the corrupting effects of commercial competitiveness and, within the older generation, a lingering dissident discourse that is highly value laden and resistant to regulation impeded the process.

MEDIA OUTLETS (INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT)

Although the independent media outlets at this time still did not have state-of-the-art technology, they were much better equipped than they had been five or six years earlier, and international technical assistance was a major reason why. Few media outlets, especially local ones, had the resources to secure this technology on their own. The production values of local radio and television programs improved significantly. Likewise, virtually all media gained regular access to the Internet and established their own home pages. On the whole, these programs particularly benefited the regional radio and television media outside Prague and Bratislava and thus helped them to become more competitive with national outlets.

At the same time the provision of technology was not a smooth process in the early phase of assistance. For example, donated Western equipment was often somewhat outdated and incompatible with existing equipment and therefore unusable.[40] Another problem was that some funders put restrictions on which brands of equipment the funders could underwrite. Following a standard USAID requirement, for example, the International Media Fund was obligated to provide equipment that was manufactured in the United States, sometimes at greater expense and often involving additional compatibility problems.

It is still too early to tell how much of an influence international support has had on the commercial viability of media outlets, in part because this type of assistance is still relatively recent and aims for long-term sustainability.[41] This

said, as a result of Pro-Media's market research initiative, the majority of local Slovak radio outlets acquired a firm understanding of their audience share and their expansion potential, as well as the data analysis software to update this information regularly. Pro-Media reports that of the thirteen participating local radio stations, one has used this information to restructure its programming and marketing profile, while another has seen its advertising revenues increase.[42] A Media Loan Development Fund loan played a crucial role in helping the independent Slovak national daily *SME* finance the establishment of its own printing facilities, thereby assuring its long-term survival, after the Meciar government blocked its access to its regular printer.[43]

The major limitation of both strategies lies in their exclusive focus on the privately owned media. Given the Meciar government's tight control of the state-run media, as well as its effort to interfere with the commercial viability of the independent media, this exclusion is understandable, even necessary. One unintended consequence, however, was that it tended to reinforce the commercialization of media content. As elsewhere, the priority of selling squeezes out less popular public interest programming, but in a country with a nascent and highly polarized public sphere, this trend could prove detrimental to the wider goal of developing democracy. Another is that the state media sector was deprived of the benefits of financial and managerial training that could prepare it to compete in a pluralistic media marketplace as a democratically accountable public service media in the post-Meciar era.

Ultimately, the viability of individual media outlets depends on a range of factors that international actors cannot influence directly, such as the vagaries of an oversaturated market and arbitrary political intrusions.[44] In the case of Slovakia, for example, some of the most commercially successful operations were precisely those that the Meciar government tried to shut down through punitive taxes, denial of broadcasting licenses, or frivolous libel suits. International actors had little power to protect individual outlets from such intrusions, but international support for commercial viability did manage to negotiate these limitations well, supplying the kind of support that most local media professionals desired most.

REGULATORY AND ASSOCIATIONAL FRAMEWORK (INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT)

Of all categories of assistance, support for regulatory reform and the development of professional organizations appeared to have the fewest perceptible effects. Given the dependence of regulatory reform on domestic political factors as well as the pervasive cultural bias against common journalistic standards, any international effort to effect change in these areas was likely to encounter major difficulties, regardless of the strategy chosen.

Thus, despite the profusion of Western legal and technical consultations, neither Slovak nor Czech journalists had yet succeeded in achieving new coherent press laws but remained governed by a hybrid of communist and postcommunist legislation. On a number of occasions, however, each group managed to prevent undesirable legislation from being enacted, manifesting some potential for collective action on behalf of their corporate professional interests.[45] Meanwhile, both syndicates, as well as functional associations such as the Czech Union of Publishers, the Slovak Union of Television Authors, and the Slovak Association of Regional Broadcasters, managed to increase their access to and influence on relevant parliamentary commissions and working groups while improving their knowledge of media law in general.

The development of professional associations proceeded slowly. By 1997 most had become members of the relevant international professional bodies and had established working ties across borders. The main problem lay in the persistently low level of their internal consolidation. On the whole, the functional associations, such as the Slovak Association of Regional Broadcasters, the Slovak Union of Television Authors, and their Czech equivalents, made faster progress than the journalists' associations. Perhaps this was because they were able to draw upon tighter and smaller social networks and because it is generally easier to get consensus on the technical and legal issues with which these bodies are concerned than with more the contentious issue of ethical reporting standards. In 1997 the Czech and Slovak Syndicates of Journalists claimed formal memberships of four thousand and twenty-three hundred, respectively. In fact, most were members in name only.[46]

In both countries a stubborn bias against participation in organizations of any kind was an abiding legacy of the communist era and one that even the growing activism of the syndicates in defense of professional interests had difficulty transcending. But there were other reasons why these organizations were slow to develop. In the Czech Republic, where the syndicate in the mid-1990s was still identified with the older "generation of '68-ers," young journalists were highly unwilling to join because they viewed the older generation, whether dissident or conformist, as tainted by their communist past.[47] In the Slovak case the prevailing political polarization, manifested by an organizational rivalry between the independent syndicate and the government-created Association of Slovak Journalists, made many journalists reluctant to join.

The same problems bedeviled efforts to promote journalistic ethics and establish a common code of conduct by which members of the profession would hold accreditation. The Czech Syndicate, for example, steadfastly rejected the idea of a press council. Likewise, it was highly averse to the creation of an association-wide professional code and criteria for membership, preferring instead to keep membership open and to leave ethical issues to individual journalists to work through for themselves. In principle, the Slovak syndicate supported both a

common journalistic code and a European-style press council; in practice, however, it was slow to act on this commitment. Most working journalists did not see much value in establishing an industry-wide professional code, and even those outlets that did adopt their own journalistic standards kept them in the bottom drawer. The prevailing attitude was summed up by the then director of Nova Television, who in 1996 was quoted as saying, "We don't need ethical standards because we are professionals."[48]

EVALUATING INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE STRATEGIES

As with all forms of democracy assistance, developing and implementing reliable methods of evaluation and self-evaluation for media assistance activities has been a constant source of concern, as funders are understandably eager to ensure that their resources are being used effectively. According to several local NGO administrators and media beneficiaries, however, evaluation was often also a source of difficulty. They appreciated the need for financial accountability but often expressed frustration with funders' reporting requirements, which frequently changed from one reporting period to the next as funders' priorities changed. This forced local NGO administrators to engage in the time-consuming task of reevaluating their results according to changed standards.[49]

Another common complaint was that reporting requirements tended to stress quantifiable results: how many journalists had been trained, how many regional media outlets had participated, or how many workshops were held. As a means of measuring the relative success of efforts supporting the economic viability of media outlets, quantitative indicators were considered appropriate. However, where activities were targeted at more intangible goals, such as human capacity development, local NGO administrators and media beneficiaries viewed these quantitative measures as poor proxies at best, existing mostly for donor consumption.

Overall, in evaluating qualitative change, local program administrators tended to be wary of attempts to measure performance strictly according to preconceived Western standards of professional journalism, such as the separation of fact and opinion. Even in the West these standards are not uniformly shared or practiced, and journalistic norms vary from culture to culture without necessarily diminishing the reliability of media reporting or the quality of professional journalism. Typically, local NGO administrators tended to balance ideal measures of media independence with an empirical appraisal of the actual progress that journalists and media outlets had made in adapting to the manifold economic and professional challenges of their newly democratizing societies.

To their credit some Western funders of media assistance programs showed increasing sensitivity to these local concerns and modified their evaluation methods to include qualitative as well as quantitative measures. In 1998, for example, Pro-Media began issuing quarterly reports on the basis of USAID's standard results framework, which supplements quantitative criteria with a more sophisticated appraisal of the cumulative effect of activities on the quality and performance of those media outlets that have received assistance.

In seeking to discover which assistance strategies NGO administrators and aid recipients considered the most effective in promoting independent media, it was necessary to get beyond the obligatory recitation of facts and figures. I asked interviewees a series of open-ended questions, including: "Which of your projects or programs do you feel were most successful, and why?" "Which assistance strategies do you feel were most effective in assisting the development of independent media?" and "What type of training did you find most beneficial to your professional development?" This approach had the advantage of eliciting the respondents' own criteria for success and effectiveness while allowing them to speak at length about the qualitative effect of particular assistance efforts. Reflecting the relatively underdeveloped articulation of overall assistance strategies mentioned earlier, however, respondents generally offered more detailed comments on concrete activities and tasks than on the relationship that these activities had to the broader goals of media assistance that Western donors typically espoused.

CONCLUSION: LESSONS LEARNED

The efforts to assist the mass media in these two transitional countries suggest several practical lessons that may contribute to more effective media assistance elsewhere. All international assistance agencies operate under the donor-driven need to show results quickly. Often this sense of urgency precludes opportunities for proper planning and coordination of assistance activities, let alone a clear understanding of the local political context and media culture to which these activities are addressed. While such constraints are not likely to disappear, the funders can strike a better balance between the desire for quick and visible results and ensuring that assistance is optimally designed. In order to promote a mass media that is both professional and supportive of democratic culture, funders should give special attention to distinguishing opposition media from independent media, integrating media support with other efforts at civil society and democratic development, and ensuring diversity within the mass media. To their credit the more astute NGOs—having confronted realities in these countries—undertook midcourse corrections that incorporated many of these insights to good effect.[50]

STRATEGIC THINKING

NGOs need to engage in more careful, strategic planning before they begin their assistance efforts: Too often, start-up projects scatter resources in all directions, duplicating the work of other agencies and providing generous support at inappropriate times or in inappropriate circumstances. International actors that may have a clear idea of the end goal have given less thought to the process and methods of attaining it. Often they fall back on catchall programs. The tendency for some donors to create new media assistance vehicles ex nihilo (such as USAID's Independent Media Fund), rather than adapting and deploying the skills and knowledge of existing journalism NGOs, wasted time and resources. In both countries that I surveyed, it took nearly six years to establish a coherent division of labor among international media assistance actors.

Donors could avoid these problems by resisting the impulse to do everything themselves. Instead, they might use a clear but flexible division of labor, in which, for example, journalists take the initiative for training journalists through their own national and international NGOs and professional associations; legal and regulatory reforms are left to the appropriate international and local bodies, rather than to consultants flown in on an ad hoc basis; and financial and managerial support is provided by specialized grant and loan funds created for this purpose and staffed with specialized practitioners of media management, production, sales, and marketing.

Of course, any division of labor presumes a high level of communication and coordination among a variety of assistance actors, a condition that is not always met. Over time, nearly all the major media assistance agencies surveyed did manage to establish some informal coordination and sometimes even cooperation. This learning curve could be shortened by expanding central Internet databases (such as those launched by the International Freedom of Expression Exchange, the International Federation of Journalists, and the Soros Network Media Program), which could provide a clearinghouse of concise and comprehensive information for donors, NGO partners, and beneficiaries about who is doing what, how, and where.

The experience of international media assistance in these countries underscores the need to undertake discriminating assessments of recipient needs from the outset. In the early 1990s such assessments typically took second place to the desire of international donors to get as much aid in place as quickly as possible. This logic appears to be a central factor in the early reliance on training courses by outside experts and indiscriminate equipment drops. These cases also highlight the importance of taking into account the prevailing political and economic conditions affecting media development in different countries and designing strategies accordingly. In places where democracy is relatively well established, and where the market generates enough investment resources,

media independence is likely to be a less pressing issue than media professionalism. Here, as many international actors have since learned, assistance may be most profitably directed to specialized training in new technologies, the development of regulatory and associational frameworks that can help establish and enforce codes of professional conduct, and the integration of local media into a larger transnational information and professional community. In places where the political and commercial environment is less secure, these activities should be subordinated to efforts to provide individual media outlets with an adequate technical and financial base.

PROMOTION OF PROFESSIONALISM, NOT POLITICS

International actors must be extremely wary of the trade-off involved in mistaking avowals of democracy for evidence of professionalism and of mistaking opposition media outlets for independent professional media. In virtually any endeavor to promote democratic development in transitional countries, a natural strategy is to seek out and support those indigenous individuals and organizations that most visibly ally with democratic ideals. However, opposition to the state and commitment to democracy are not necessarily the same thing. Moreover, even those journalists and media outlets that embrace democratic norms do not necessarily embrace or practice the norms of professional journalism, and they can be just as prone to biased journalistic practices as any state-run media.[51] While such an approach may help to professionalize opposition media, it risks perpetuating a highly partisan press, thereby compromising the achievement of objective fact-based reporting and undermining the credibility of assistance agencies as nonpartisan actors.

When society is profoundly polarized and governments are actively hostile to the very existence of an independent media, such partisanship may be unavoidable, and international actors may have little choice but to work with the opposition media. If so, they should be careful to pick those individuals or outlets that are, above all else, demonstrably committed to professional journalism. At the same time international assistance should be directed at nurturing an institutional and normative infrastructure, for example, by assisting the development of professional associations, which places an inclusive ethos of journalistic professionalism ahead of partisan politics.[52]

INTEGRATION OF MEDIA SUPPORT AND OTHER FORMS OF DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE

Media support needs to be integrated with other democracy promotion activities, especially those aimed at strengthening civil society organizations and local

government reform. Virtually all the major state and international donors (USAID, PHARE, the British Know How Fund, the Soros network of foundations) treated media assistance as part of their democracy assistance programs, and international NGOs, such as Pro-Media and the Independent Journalism Foundation, also justified their media projects in terms of their putative benefit to democratic development.

Ironically, however, few if any projects explicitly linked the media with other areas of democracy assistance.[53] An effective way to reinforce both the positive influence of the independent media and the capacities of civil society might be to create media watchdog groups or media literacy programs that assist indigenous NGOs, local officials, and the general public in understanding the role of the press in democratic conditions and help citizens to become critical consumers and users of the mass media and the information that they disseminate. By providing additional incentives for responsible and accurate journalism, such projects would also help to overcome the profound lack of popular confidence in the credibility of the mass media that pervades virtually all transitional societies. At the time this study was conducted, however, no such projects existed.

PROMOTION OF DIVERSE FORMS OF MEDIA

There is a need to mitigate the corrosive effects of the commercial media in environments where a democratic public sphere is still nascent. While promoting commercial viability is doubtless a necessary condition for a self-sustaining independent media, the goal of market success is often in conflict with the goal of promoting a well-informed citizenry. The quest for revenues often comes to dictate content, such as imported entertainment and sensational news at the expense of public interest items. In virtually all established democracies, the public service media are a vital component of a pluralistic marketplace of ideas.[54] While most European-based agencies did support efforts to transform the state media into public service media, virtually all U.S.-based agencies, the dominant actors in the media sector, ignored this area. One negative consequence of this neglect is that the norms and practices of the public service media were poorly developed, while the state-run media—which remained dominant in any case—had little exposure to professional production and reporting values, continued to operate with poor management and technology, and were ill equipped to assert managerial and editorial autonomy against political intrusion, to which they remained the most vulnerable.

Finding appropriate partners and devising effective assistance to the state sector can, of course, be problematic in conditions where the state-run media are instruments of ruling governments hostile to press freedom. However, the exclusion of this sector from the benefits of assistance risks perpetuating the politicization of the media and undermining the creation of a coherent profes-

sional identity for the media as the fourth estate. The neglect of the public service media also undermines the human capital and infrastructural capacity for the development of indigenous public interest and cultural programming that can effectively compete with imported and commercial programs.[55] One way to extend the benefits of assistance to the state media sector while limiting the risk of abuse is to support human capacity development. An approach worthy of wider adoption is the British Know How Fund's active, consistent, and assertive efforts to include in journalism and management training programs individual media professionals who worked in the state sector and to support their participation in inclusive professional associations.

NOTES

1. For an overview see Megan Kearns, "U.S. Assistance to the Information Sector in Eastern Europe," working paper, Project on East European Media and Society, University of Texas, 1994, p. 2, available at http://www.utexas.edu/ftp/depts/eems/megan.html (November 12, 2001).

2. The Pro-Media Program of the International Research and Exchanges Board and the International Journalism Foundation (IJF), for example, explicitly ties media support to democracy building: The broad goal of the former is "increased [and] better informed citizen participation in public policy decision-making"; the goal of the IJF is "helping the people of East and Central Europe make informed decisions by supporting a free press." See International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), *Annual Report, 1998*, www.irex.org/publications-resources/annual-report/1998/ (November 13, 2001). See also International Journalism Foundation, Mission Statement, http://www.ijf-cij.org (November 12, 2001).

3. This finding is also corroborated by preliminary evidence from Croatia and Serbia, where the fledgling independent media were extremely circumscribed by hostile governments throughout the 1990s, especially during the wars, and where international assistance has provided surrogate technical and infrastructural support at critical junctures. (Staff of Soros Regional Media Program, interviews by author, Budapest, July 1997; and staff of Media Loan Development Fund, interviews by author, Prague, July 1997).

4. Thomas Carothers, *Assessing Democracy Assistance: The Case of Romania* (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1996), pp. 7–8.

5. Alexander Motyl, "Institutional Legacies and Reform Trajectories," in Adrian Karatnycky, Alexander Motyl, and Boris Shor, eds., *Nations in Transit, 1997* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1997), p. 21.

6. U.S. government and nongovernmental agencies provide an estimated 80 percent of the total international funding for independent media assistance in Slovakia (staff of USAID, interviews by author, Bratislava, June 1997).

7. "Czech Republic," in Karatnycky, Motyl, and Shor, *Nations in Transit, 1997*, p. 122.

8. Ibid.

9. See Jan Culik, "Truth, Freedom, and the Pursuit of Profits," *Transitions* 4, no. 3 (August 1997): pp. 88–92.

10. In both countries an aversion to even self-regulation was most pronounced among the "generation of '68-ers," journalists who resumed their careers after the Velvet Revolution and whose ethos was shaped by their participation in the anticommunist struggle (Rudolf Zeman, director, Czech Syndicate of Journalists, interview by author, Prague, June 1997). On the difficulties that the generation of '68-ers encountered in the transition to democracy, see Andrej Skolkay, "Postcommunist Journalism: Problems and Issues" (paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for the Study of Nationalities, Columbia University, New York, April 1998); and Jiri Pehe, "Reshaping Dissident Ideals for the Postcommunist World," *Civnet Journal*, March–April 1998, http://www.civnet.org/journal/journal_frameset.htm (November 12, 2001).

11. Culik, "Truth, Freedom, and Pursuit of Profits" p. 88; and Kevin Done, "Nova TV: European Company Licensed to Print Money," *Financial Times* (London), September 3, 1997.

12. Jaroslav Veis, press spokesman for Speaker of the Czech Senate and former journalist, interview by author, Prague, June 1997.

13. Veis and Zeman interviews.

14. Ibid. In 1999 the Czech syndicate finally adopted an ethics code and established a supervisory ethics committee. This may have been enabled by the appointment of a new, younger leadership. See "Czech Republic," in Adrian Karatnycky, Alexander Motyl, and Aili Piano, eds., *Nations in Transit, 1999–2000*, (Rutgers, N.J.: Transaction, 2001), p. 226.

15. Ron Synovits, "Slovakia: Using Taxes to Inhibit the Press: An Analysis," *RFE-RL*, November 13, 1997, http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/1997/11/F.RU971106133017.htm (November 12, 2001). See also Committee to Protect Journalists, *Attacks on the Press*, annual reports, 1997, 1998 (New York: Committee to Protect Journalists, 1997, 1998).

16. Committee to Protect Journalists, *Attacks on the Press*, 1997.,

17. European Fund for Freedom of Expression, *Democracy's Progress in Central and Eastern Europe: 1997*, third report (Paris: European Fund for Freedom of Expression, 1997), pp. 94–95.

18. Andrej Skolkay, media specialist, Department of Political Science, Comenius University, interview by author, Bratislava, June 1997.

19. In 1996 the audience share of Markiza was already 48 percent ("Slovakia," in Karatnycky, Motyl, and Shor, *Nations in Transit, 1997*, p. 342).

20. The evidence strongly suggests that this was simply a pretext and that the Meciar-led government was punishing Radio Twist for its critical reporting (Martin Lengyel, Radio Twist, interview by author, New York, November 1997). See also Committee to Protect Journalists, *Attacks on the Press*, 1997.

21. Skolkay interview.

22. Staff of Media Loan Development Fund, interviews by author, Prague, July 1997.

23. Staff of USAID Democracy Programs in Slovakia, interviews by author, Bratislava, June 1997.

24. Thomas Carothers, "Democracy Assistance: The Question of Strategy," *Demokratizatsiya* 4, no. 3 (1997): 111.

25. His definition differs slightly from that developed by Kevin Quigley to distinguish between funders' styles "on the bases of where the impetus for grant-making rests." See Kevin F.F. Quigley, "For Democracy's Sake: How Funders Succeed and Fail," *World Policy Journal* 13 (Spring 1996): 111.

26. Soros-supported assistance efforts come the closest to typifying a purely reactive strategy.

27. Again, this usage diverges from that of Quigley, who uses the term *interactive* to describe situations where "it is difficult to locate the impetus [of grant making] precisely and there is a high degree of collaboration between the grant seeker and the funder" (Quigley, "For Democracy's Sake," p. 111).

28. USAID staff interviews.

29. Staff, Regional Media Program, interviews by author, Budapest, July 1997.

30. Media Loan Development Fund staff interviews.

31. As a government agency, USAID avoids direct financing of media outlets.

32. According to Zdeno Cho, coordinator of media programs for USAID, this collaboration was discontinued for "organizational reasons," although other observers alluded to irreconcilable differences concerning the assistance strategies preferred by USAID and Pro-Media and those preferred by local partners (Zdeno Cho, interview by author, Bratislava, June 1997).

33. According to Sasa Vucinic, managing director of the Media Loan Development Fund, in Eastern European media outlets management either fell by default to the worst journalists on staff or was reluctantly taken up by the most active working journalists, who had little time to devote to managerial tasks (Vucinic, interview by author, Prague, July 1997).

34. Vucinic interview; Serge Koperdak, Pro-Media consultant, interview by author, Bratislava, June 1997. Pro-Media had operations in Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine. For descriptions of its activities in these countries, see Pro-Media's semiannual reports.

35. Tatiana Rajnakova, media coordinator, Open Society Institute, interview by author, Bratislava, June 1997; Biljana Tatomir and Algis Lipstas, Regional Media Fund, interviews by author, Budapest, July 1997.

36. Poland and Hungary: Action for the Restructuring of the Economy (PHARE), Article 19, the International Federation of Journalists, and PressNow cosponsored an international conference in Prague in 1996 called "Freedom of Expression and the Media in International Law and Practice."

37. For example, PHARE, the British Know How Fund, the French Institute, the Foundation for Civil Society, and the Hans Seidel Stiftung cosponsored a 1996 international seminar in cooperation with the Slovak Union of Television Authors called "Ethics and the Development of the Communication Sector." The Slovak Syndicate of Journalists, PHARE, and the International Federation of Journalists cosponsored a 1996 conference and publication called "Journalist Ethics and Press Councils."

38. Changing the larger cultural and political climate was the stated objective of a variety of journalism advocacy groups and human rights monitors such as Freedom House, the Committee to Protect Journalists, PressNow, Article 19, and the International Forum

for Freedom of Expression, all of which seek to defend the media by mobilizing international opinion against violations of journalists' rights and media freedoms.

39. Vucinic interview; Martin Lengyel, Radio Twist, interview by author, Bratislava, June 1997; and Katarina Vajdova, director, Center for Independent Journalism, interview by author, Bratislava, June 1997.

40. Olga Holeckova, Center for Independent Journalism, interview by author, Prague, July 1997; Vucinic interview.

41. Pro-Media was established in 1995 and took nearly two years to set up a fully functioning office in Slovakia. The Media Loan Development Fund was also created in 1995. Because of its highly selective and careful vetting and consultation process, the fund had approved only nine loans in all of Eastern Europe by July 1997 (Koperdak and Vucinic interviews).

42. IREX, *Annual Report, 1998*.

43. Vucinic interview.

44. USAID staff interviews.

45. In 1996 lobbying by the Czech syndicate helped to prevent passage of a law that would have obliged journalists to disclose their sources. The repeated blocking of Meciar's attempts to pass the Law on the Protection of the Republic in 1995–1996 may be partly attributed to the lobbying efforts of the Slovak syndicate, although President Mikhal Kovac would likely have vetoed it in any case.

46. Veis, Holeckova, Zeman, Lengyel (Bratislava), and Koperdak interviews.

47. Tellingly, Holeckova cited the rigidity of the Czech Syndicate of Journalism as the main reason that the Czech Center of Independent Journalism conducted so few collaborative projects with it in the mid-1990s (Holeckova interview).

48. Veis interview.

49. Donors and NGO administrators were generally reluctant to provide details about either the methods or the results of their internal evaluations. One consultant to a U.S.-run program attributed this reluctance to frequent changes in personnel, organization, and mission—meaning that it had not yet developed a satisfactory system of evaluation.

50. For example, since launching Pro-Media II in 1999 (which extends assistance to the Balkans and the Caucasus), Pro-Media's program has been committed to "flexible and demand-driven programs . . . designed to meet specific needs on the ground" and "to a 'bottom up' versus 'top down' approach," which is responsive rather than proactive. See IREX, *Annual Report, 1998*.

51. For example, in the early postcommunist years Western observers routinely hailed the Prague daily *Lidove Noviny* as a standardbearer of independent journalism, largely because of its long-established samizdat identity as an anticommunist, dissident publication. In fact, *Lidove Noviny* suffered from low journalistic standards, engaged in some highly dubious reporting, particular in its biased and inflammatory coverage of Czech-Slovak relations before the Velvet Divorce, and ultimately proved unable to establish itself as a credible source of impartial fact-based reporting. It has lost its best journalists and is unprofitable. Ironically, the daily *Pravo*, the successor to the communist organ *Rude Pravo*, has become recognized as one of the best sources of hard

news reporting by any Czech daily (Veis and Holeckova interviews). See also Skolkay, "Postcommunist Journalism."

52. On the importance of promoting an integrated marketplace of ideas in democratizing states, see Jack Snyder and Karen Ballentine, "Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas," *International Security* 21, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 1–36.

53. The only activities that sought to promote some intersectoral democracy assistance were the Foundation for Civil Society's programs in Prague and Bratislava for training NGO leaders to write press releases and conduct press briefings, the Center for Independent Journalism (IJF) workshops for government press representatives, and the EU-funded Foundation for Civil Society support for a weekly radio spot featuring NGO activities (Ingrid Baummanova, program officer, Foundation for Civil Society, interview by author, Bratislava, June 1997; Katarina Vajdova, director, Center for Independent Journalism, interview by author, Bratislava, June 1997; and Irene Zemankova, program officer, Foundation for Civil Society, interview by author, Prague, July 1997).

54. John Keane, "Democracy and the Media: Without Foundations," in David Held, ed., *Prospects for Democracy: North, South, East, West*, pp. 235–53 (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993).

55. Lubomir Fifik, head of the Union of Slovak Television Authors, interview by author, Bratislava, June 1997.