

THE ROLE OF RHETORIC IN THE POLITICIZATION OF ETHNICITY: MILOŠEVIĆ AND THE YUGOSLAV ETHNOPOLITICAL CONFLICT

Slobodan Milošević was the first acting Head of State to be charged and tried by an International Tribunal with the commission of serious violations of international humanitarian law, including genocide. He was the Serbian leader and then president of rump Yugoslavia in the 1990s, during the bloodiest wars in post-Second World War Europe, when hundreds of thousands of people were being killed and misplaced by the wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. Although Milošević is subject of many analyses because of his political and war crimes, it should not be forgotten that Milošević established himself as a populist Serbian leader through his rhetoric and spoke his way to power. Analysis of Milošević's speeches should help us to understand the power of his rhetoric to influence and shape the events that contributed to the beginning of ethnopolitical conflicts on the Yugoslav territory.

The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, it provides a theoretical framework for the analysis of rhetoric within the political arena, with an emphasis on the process of the politicization of ethnicity. Second, in a case study, I examine three of Milošević's speeches that represent an important part of the larger Kosovo campaign.

This study will analyze three of Milošević's key speeches. The first public speech of April 24, 1987 in Kosovo Polje, was delivered to the Serbs in Kosovo, the Albanian-populated province of Republic of Serbia. This event marked the public beginning of Milošević's populist leadership strategy. The second is the speech of November 19, 1988, delivered at the Meeting of the Brotherhood and Unity in Belgrade. In this speech Milošević openly invited the Serbs to fight for the establishment of the Serbian state. The third is the speech of June 28, 1989, in Gazimestan, delivered as part of the commemoration of the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo and Serbia's defeat by the Turks. This speech was the most obvious evocation of the Kosovo myth in celebrating the unity of the Serbs and Milošević's greatest threat to the Yugoslav federation.

Keywords: coercion, ethnopolitical conflict, ethnic entrepreneurs, political rhetoric, politicization of ethnicity.

VLOGA RETORIKE V POLITIZACIJI ETNIČNOSTI: MILOŠEVIĆ IN JUGOSLOVANSKI ETNO-POLITIČNI KONFLIKT

Slobodan Milošević je bil prvi aktualni predsednik neke države, ki so ga obtožili in mu sodili na Mednarodnem sodišču zaradi resnih kršitev mednarodnega humanitarnega prava ter genocida. Bil je srbski voditelj in potem predsednik ostanka Jugoslavije v devetdesetih letih, med najbolj krvavimi vojnami v Evropi po drugi svetovni vojni, ko so bili stotisoči ljudi ubiti in razseljeni zaradi vojn na Hrvaškem, v Bosni in na Kosovu. Čeprav je bil Milošević predmet mnogih analiz zaradi svojih političnih in vojnih zločinov, ne smemo pozabiti, da se je uveljavil kot populistični srbski vodja zaradi svojih govornih sposobnosti, s katerimi si je pridobil oblast. Analiza njegovih govorov bi nam morala pomagati razumeti moč njegove retorike, ki je vplivala na in oblikovala dogodke, ki so prispevali k začetku etno-političnih konfliktov na jugoslovanskem ozemlju.

Namen tega članka je dvojen. Prvič postavlja teoretični okvir za analizo retorike v politični areni, s poudarkom na procesu politizacije etničnosti. Drugič pa na primeru (case study) raziščem tri od Miloševićevih govorov, ki predstavljajo pomemben del širše kampanje za Kosovo.

Ta raziskava bo analizirala tri od Miloševićevih glavnih govorov. Prvi javni govor z dne 24.4. 1987 na Kosovem polju je bil namenjen Srbom na Kosovu, z Albanci naseljeni pokrajini v Republiki Srbiji. Ta dogodek je zaznamoval javni začetek Miloševićeve populistične vodstvene strategije. Drugi je govor z dne 19.11.1988, ki ga je imel na Mitingu bratstva in enotnosti v Beogradu. V tem govoru je odkrito pozval Srbe k borbi za ustanovitev srbske države. Tretji je govor z dne 28.6.1989 na Gazimestanu, ki je bil del spominske slovesnosti ob šeststoti obletnici Bitke na Kosovu in srbskega poraza od Turkov. Ta govor je bil najbolj očitno obujanje kosovskega mita in čaščenje srbske enotnosti in je predstavljal največjo Miloševićevo grožnjo jugoslovanski federaciji.

Ključne besede: prepričevanje, etnopolitični konflikt, etnični pobudniki, politična retorika, politizacija etničnosti

INTRODUCTION

Slobodan Milošević was the first acting Head of State to be charged and tried by an International Tribunal with the commission of serious violations of international humanitarian law, including genocide (Klarin & Bogadi 1999, Amanpour 2006). He was the Serbian leader and then president of rump Yugoslavia in the 1990s, during the bloodiest wars in post-Second World War Europe, when hundreds of thousands of people were being killed and misplaced by the wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. Although Milošević is the subject of many analyses because of his political and war crimes, it should not be forgotten that Milošević established himself as a populist Serbian leader through his rhetoric and spoke his way to power (Bozic 1992, 2001). Analysis of Milošević's speeches should help us to understand the power of his rhetoric to influence and shape the events that contributed to the beginning of ethnopolitical conflicts on the Yugoslav territory.

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This study looks at political rhetoric as a powerful strategic tool by which leaders can influence public knowledge, beliefs and action on political matters. We are interested in finding the meaning of political messages and how this meaning leads to political consequences, in this case, violent inter-ethnic conflict. Through the analysis of Milošević's rhetorical tactics, we are looking for the following uses of political language in his rhetoric: Are the messages of his public speeches used (intended) to promote unification of one ethnic group, the Serbs? Is the unification of the Serbs promoted at the expense of other ethnic group(s)? How does

Milošević treat members of other ethnic groups, their role in history and their leadership? How is the affirmation of unity and identity of the Serbs as promoted in Milošević's rhetoric perceived by other nations and ethnic groups of the former Yugoslavia?

POLITICAL POWER OF RHETORIC

The effect of public speaking on politics cannot be emphasized enough. Throughout history, important issues have been and are argued publicly. With acceptable arguments, people can be convinced to accept changes of all kinds, social, political, and technological (McGee 1977). Rhetoric is the art of using language as a symbolic means, so as to persuade or influence humans who by nature respond to symbols in order to induce some sort of social control, that is, desirable political outcomes (Bitzer 1981, Burke 1969). Public persons have always used the power of words to influence the people of their times and to stir up certain emotions, sometimes violent passions (Cassier 1946).

This study defines the rhetorical act as a public speech where one major political authority addresses a large audience about political issues. Each rhetorical act is a complex, interrelated whole that consists of four major parts: context and audience, speaker, message/speech, and consequences (Andrews 1991, Brock & Scott 1980). As a political phenomenon, rhetoric facilitates the interaction between the political leaders and their audiences. Each political message has a meaning which leads to political consequences. These consequences may affect not only the political communities but individual lives as well. Accordingly, political language can be used to produce both conflict and consensus; it can cause both empowerment and marginalization (Graber 1981).

Sensitive to the power which rhetoric lends to their agenda, politicians have always used rhetoric to manipulate people's beliefs in order to achieve their own political ends (Cassier 1946). Modern ethnic entrepreneurs also see rhetoric as a powerful strategic tool by which they can realize their own political agendas. They can accomplish their task through the process of politicization of ethnicity.

Politicization of ethnicity is a process by which ethnic differences are emphasized and then utilized by ethnic leaders to achieve political ends (Rothschild 1981: 2). Through the process of politicization, the psycho-cultural power of ethnicity can be turned into a source of hatred and stereotyping that can be ultimately mobilized into a confrontational form of nationalism. In these cases, the politicization of ethnicity can result in violent outcomes, i.e., ethnopolitical conflict. The mechanics of politicization and the institutionalization of ethnicity

may involve the use of different kinds of tools available to ethnic entrepreneurs. Political rhetoric can become an especially effective tool, and this analysis focuses on the role of rhetoric in this particular type of politicization.

Since Yugoslavia was a multiethnic state, leaders who would assume the role of the spokesperson of their nation or ethnic group could choose to respect the ethnic balance in order to preserve the multiethnic community, or ignore the balance by appealing only to the members of their own ethnic groups. (Burke 1969: 46) refers to this function of rhetoric as “identification-with and division-from”. Rhetoric can be especially dangerous if the speaker chooses to instigate the fear of other ethnic groups who share the resources of the state. Since ethnic problems often exist in the context of economic and political crises, the leader has a choice of whether to deal with the problems in a productive or non-confrontational manner or to present problems as ethnic issues by creating fear and hate and directing major frustrations of his people against specific groups. When rhetors chose to use public argument to deceive and threaten violence, their political rhetoric ceases to be persuasion and becomes coercion (Burke 1982: 49).

Because of the power of political rhetoric, public speakers should ideally use the style of speaking which Graber (1981) refers to as “statesman’s oratory.” The essence of this style is to appeal to reasoned argument and intellectual explanation of the issues at hand, in moderate language without emotionally charged distractions, appeals to emotions and simplistic explanations and slogans (Graber 1981: 211).

In modern times traditional statesmen’s oratory has become rare. In its place is a mixture of charismatic and demagogic rhetoric. The images in the rhetoric are meant to please the crowd and frequently to avoid the truth (Katope & Zolbord, 1970). This is especially true for individuals who speak out in a time of crisis. For these individuals, crises represent opportunities to be seized. They impose themselves as leaders through their rhetoric. They interpret and express the problems of their followers by using other ethnic groups as scapegoats for all of their problems. In situations in which speakers want to guide their audience to action, they take advantage of myths and other symbols whose power in creating and reinforcing social identity and sense of belonging cannot be stressed enough. Myths can serve as preparation for political action by unifying individuals into communities which share perceptions of a common heritage and common destiny (Cassier 1946, Smith 1991).

“Charismatic oratory” appeals to deeply held emotions and ideas shared by large numbers of people. Charismatic leaders and speakers derive their legitimacy from the fact that the public perceives them as people endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or exceptional powers or qualities (Weber 1968). The charismatic speaker seizes upon diffuse, and intense, but unarticulated sentiments and

articulates ideas and emotions in ways that make their audience feel they have a spokesperson who is expressing their most deeply felt needs. The audience identifies with such speakers and has faith in whatever they plead for (Graber 1981: 211).

“Demagogic” rhetoric also appeals to emotions, but on a baser level, with clear intent to stir prejudice, hatred, and bigotry. The appeals used by demagogues are opportunistic; their main goal is to make people believe what they want them to believe, thus leaving little room for truth and fairness. Overall, a demagogue is an unethical speaker who uses available social problems to advance his or her own personal position or goals (Graber 1981: 212).

The major concern of this study is the effects of Milošević’s political rhetoric on the politicization of ethnicity. Great emphasis was put on the historical context of the selected speeches, because in order to understand the meaning of the political message, we must understand the situation in which the speeches took place. The following section, analysis of the speeches, is intended to help us understand the power of Milošević’s rhetoric to influence and shape the events that contributed to the beginning of ethnopolitical conflicts on the Yugoslav territory.

ANALYSIS OF THE SPEECHES

THE CONTEXT

At the beginning of the 1980s, Yugoslavia was experiencing complex political, social and economic crises which resulted in frustration, anger, and apathy among many people. In large sections of the public, especially in Serbia and Montenegro, there was a belief that disintegrative processes had destroyed the “former political, economic, cultural and spiritual unity and co-operation and brought Yugoslavia to the brink of decay” (Bilandžić 1985: 506). In Serbia, the conviction that only the Serbian people in Yugoslavia did not have their own state reawakened and became widespread. This time there was no Tito to suppress thoughts of what was historically seen as Serbia striving for hegemony and a centralist state. The drive to reform the political system toward some sort of recentralization came from the Serbian League of Communists (Ramet 1985).

By the mid-eighties, Kosovo was in almost constant crisis, and a factor of instability in Yugoslavia. The seriousness of the Kosovo crisis involved questioning the relationship between Serbia and the federation, and the destiny of Yugoslavia as a unified state. The Serbs and Montenegrins of Kosovo felt that their nation was in danger of extinction by Albanians who allegedly had pretensions to the sacred birthplace of the Serbian nation, where its greatest historical battles had

been fought. Kosovo was the region central to Serbian history and mythology, a source of Serbian heroic pride (Tijanić 1987). In April 1987, the Kosovo Serbs, led by the radical Šolević's "Kosovo Polje Committee," signed a petition denouncing their situation as an oppressed minority; they demanded action and warned the authorities that they would no longer tolerate what they termed "genocide" being carried out against their community (Jajčinović 1988a).

THE RHETOR—SLOBODAN MILOŠEVIĆ

Prior to his speech of April 24, 1987 when Milošević found his "populist voice," his career was not different from any other careerist who joined the Communist party. His political position could be described as that of a hard-line communist, a "true believer" in the cause of Communism. On the other side, people who worked close to him said that this "true believer" behavior was a pose, and that he used Communism, as did everybody else in Yugoslavia, primarily to gain power (Thurow 1991).

In November 1984, Slobodan Milošević, who just recently entered the political arena, became associated with the Serbian cause, and won the approval of the conservative faction in the League of Communists of Serbia. Milošević openly insisted on greater jurisdiction over the provinces, and called for more decision-making powers for federal organs, but he refused to call his stand on the issue a plea for centralism or unitarism. Milošević talked as a representative of all Serbs who were tired of being labeled "unitarists" whenever they actually strove for "unity" (Hopken 1985: 41).

Many analysts argued that Milošević did not have a program of his own, but that he had actually taken over the basic assumptions of the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences (SANU), the document that provided the first definition of the Serbian national program which argued that Yugoslavia represented an inadequate solution to the Serbian nation. Serbian dissatisfaction originated from the division of Serbia which granted Vojvodina and Kosovo the status of autonomous provinces, while no other republic has been split in such a fashion. Soon after the Kosovo Polje speech, Milošević openly accepted Memorandum SANU as his program of action, striving to correct the mistreatment of Serbs (Thurow 1991, Djukić 1992).

The radical Kosovar Serbs who launched their campaign against Kosovo Albanian leadership in 1986, became useful to Milošević as organizers of meetings of solidarity. They invited Milošević to speak in Kosovo Polje in April 1987. Milošević willingly accepted the call of the Kosovo Serbs, and prepared well for the occasion—Television Belgrade was there, even though such events were usually covered by local television. Dušan Mitević, Deputy Director of TV Belgrade

described how he introduced Milošević as the leader of the Serbs: “We showed Milošević’s promise over and over again on TV. And this is what launched him” (Silber & Little 1997: 39). In Kosovo Polje, Milošević spoke the words that transformed his image “from faceless bureaucrat to charismatic Serb leader” (Engelberg 1991: 32).

THE SPEECH OF KOSOVO POLJE, APRIL 24, 1987¹

At the meeting before his address, Milošević ordered the police to stop beating the people, “No one has the right to beat the people!” That gesture appeared as an encouragement to a Serbian crowd to assail an official structure, which in Kosovo was mostly Albanian. That sentence alone was very significant because the Yugoslav leaders of Milošević’s rank did not encourage demonstrations of one ethnic group against another in such obvious terms.

Milošević delivered a speech that would later be characterized as legendary (Jajčinović 1988a). He was able to identify and express emotions that his public was feeling at the time. By saying, “Comrades, it is clear to all the people all over Yugoslavia that Kosovo is a great problem in our land and that it is being slowly solved,” Milošević uttered aloud the words that were until then only whispered. He criticized the leadership of the Federation and the League of Communists as being indifferent to the Serbian issue. “In solving all these problems the League of Communists unfortunately has not always been united and, therefore also could not be sufficiently effective.” His party vocabulary was interwoven with emotionally charged statements which were aimed at assuring people that he was aware and understood the seriousness of the problems affecting the Serbs of Kosovo:

The spirit of separatism and often of counterrevolution is still present in the process of education and training, and in cadre policy. The emigration of Serbs and Montenegrins under economic and political and simple physical pressure constitutes probably the last tragic exodus of a European population. The last time such processions of desperate people moved was in the Middle Ages.

Feeling that Kosovo’s political problems reflected the feeling of abandonment fostered by Serbs and Montenegrins and that these problems had become psychological problems, Milošević touched something that was a taboo topic for many years: Serbian national pride (Tijanić 1989). Milošević said that “it has never been in the spirit of the Serbian and Montenegrin peoples to give up before obstacles, to demobilize when they should fight, to become demoralized when the going is



1 This speech is published in Milošević’s *Godine Raspleta*, (Beograd: BIGZ 1989), pp. 140-147. All the subsequent quotations are from this speech, unless noted otherwise.

difficult.” These words provoked in his countrymen remembrance of their traditions of statehood and military prowess, particularly on the Allied side in both world wars. This entitled them, the majority of Serbs believe, to a position of at least “first among equals” in Yugoslavia (Moore 1988).

Milošević called on the Serbs to remain on their land, where their fields, their gardens, and their memories were. By saying, “Surely you will not leave your land because it is difficult to live there and you are oppressed by injustice and humiliation,” Milošević reminded Serbs of their historical duties because with their departure they would “disgrace [their] ancestors and disappoint [their] descendants.” And by leaving, they would implicitly validate Albanian claims to Kosovo as an Albanian land. Milošević expressed the emotions and grievances of his fellow Serbs at this time, and for that reason he was declared “the leader of all Serbs” (Jajčinović 1988b).

SPEECH EFFECTS AND THE CONTEXT FOR THE NOVEMBER 19, 1988 SPEECH

One of the most important consequences of this rhetorical event was the meteoric rise of Milošević as a proponent of the “Serbian initiative.” The Serbs had finally found their long-desired political leader who promised to deal with their problems. The myth of Kosovo and Serbian unity established and maintained by Milošević (Tijanić 1989) served him well since the Kosovo Polje speech. He became the most popular and celebrated Serbian politician, recognized as a truly charismatic leader (Lovrić 1988a). The power his audiences granted to Milošević was one of the necessary prerequisites for the changes in the political and social system he wanted to inaugurate.

Upon returning to Belgrade, he began to carry out the promises made in Kosovo Polje. He fired the Kosovo chief of police, an Albanian. He took control of the Serbian media and reduced the once respected mass media into bellicose pieces of propaganda (Thomson 1994). This media tactic was in service of the most important political solution to the Serbian problem— the revision of the 1974 Serbian constitution and a sharp reduction in the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina.

Although Milošević promised to solve the problems of his people, the period between April 1987 and November 19, 1988, was a period of deepening crisis for the Yugoslav federation. Conditions in Kosovo worsened—the tension between the majority ethnic Albanians and the minority Serbs and Montenegrins could scarcely improve under the strong one-sided propaganda of the Serbian media which promoted stereotypes of Albanians as separatists and irredentists. Kosovo became a paradigm for the unsolved problems and decay of the Yugoslav legal, political, and economic system.

For the first time in modern Yugoslav history, the masses on the streets were dominating the political landscape of the country. The so called “solidarity meetings,” orchestrated by Milošević’s supporters, presented Yugoslav leadership with the most serious threat because they proved the leadership’s inability to deal with the inflammatory political situation. Hundreds of thousands of people waving flags and shouting slogans, such as “As long as Slobodan walks the earth the people will not be slaves to anyone,” represented the “will of the people,” as Milošević labeled them, and no one could oppose that will (Andrejevich 1988a). The height of mass rallies was in the summer of 1988. They were organized throughout Serbia proper, Kosovo, Vojvodina, and Serbian-populated Montenegro. In the fall of 1988, the organizers of meetings of solidarity staged *coup d’etat* in Vojvodina and Montenegro. One of the organizers of the meeting of solidarity in Novi Sad, Šćepanović, reveals that the removal of the Vojvodina government was not spontaneous event, but planned and “programmed....[i]t took only somebody to...direct the events” (Šćepanović 1988: 8).

The Slovene officials publicly blamed Milošević for open encouragement of the nationalist-inspired rallies and pressure tactics which “reminded many people of central Europe in the 1930s” when Hitler was rising to power (Andrejevich 1988b). Croatian media described these meetings as a pragmatic use of discontented masses for political ends (e.g.. *Danas* 1988, October 11).

Regarding constitutional changes in Serbia, the leadership asked that state security, national defense, foreign policy, and the planning and development systems of Kosovo and Vojvodina be constitutionally incorporated into Serbia’s direct sphere of control. These changes were perceived in Serbia as indispensable in order for Serbia to become “one unified state” and as such to establish elementary law and order in Kosovo (Djindjić 1988).

The meeting of the Brotherhood and Unity at the confluence of the Sava and the Danube rivers in Belgrade was conceived to be “the meeting of all meetings,” the crown of all the protest rallies and the meetings of solidarity with the Kosovo Serbs and Montenegrins that had taken place since the summer of 1988. The organizer, the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Serbia, prided itself on organizing the biggest meeting in the history of Yugoslavia. Milošević’s address was the most important item on the agenda for the meeting (Marinković 1988b).

THE SPEECH OF NOVEMBER 19, 1988²

The beginning, as well as the rest of the speech, was laden with appeals to emotions, especially with appeals to a glorious past of the Serbs. The appeals were utilized by Milošević to distract the audience from remembering his inability to keep up with his promises of resolving the Kosovo problem and of establishing a rich and just society for everyone.

Milošević's claim that the members of all Yugoslav peoples and nationalities gathered "in togetherness" was ethically questionable because the majority of the people at the meeting came from Serbia and Serbian-populated Montenegro. Their transportation was part of the

arrangement by the organizer of "the meeting of all meetings." He did not even mention that the date on which the meeting was held was the anniversary of the liberation of Priština from fascist occupiers (Marinković 1988). Having ignored the facts of importance for one nationality of Yugoslavia, Milošević's announced pro-Yugoslav policy became critically dubious.

Milošević's charisma was already established through his ability to articulate the needs and ideals of his fellow Serbs. To achieve the identification with the Serbian audience he only needed to play on the myth of Kosovo, which Milošević did in this speech as well, "The most important thing that we must resolve at this time is to establish peace and order in Kosovo."

The talk about Kosovo at this meeting was much fiercer than in Milošević's previous speeches. After accusing the rest of the Yugoslav peoples for not extending their solidarity "with the boundless suffering of the Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo... [which] represents an incurable wound to their hearts and to the heart of all of Serbia," Milošević quickly switched to another political tactic that Graber (1981) defines as "the use of language to spur or guide action" (Graber 1981: 207). Milošević asserted,

But this is not time for sorrow: it is time for struggle. This awareness captured Serbia last summer and this awareness has turned into a material force that will stop the terror in Kosovo and unite Serbia... We shall win the battle for Kosovo regardless of the obstacles facing us inside and outside the country.

These militant words uttered in front of 1.3 million people were feeding the emotions and egos of the Serbs. However, the "awareness [that] has turned into a material force," that is, meetings of solidarity, were perceived by non-Serbian parts of the country as Milošević's tactic to increase his political power, and as such



2 This speech is published in Milošević's *Godine Raspleta*, pp. 274-277. All the quotations below are from this speech unless otherwise noted.

did not bring forward a peaceful solution for Kosovo (Krušelj 1988). Therefore, Milošević's rhetoric did not correspond with the actions he was initiating as Serbian party leader.

To illuminate this point, let us turn to the part of Milošević's address which could be identified as "an appeal to Albanians." Milošević said, "I can tell Albanians in Kosovo that nobody has ever found it difficult to live in Serbia because he is not Serbian." The words Milošević uttered were very much contradictory to the reality for the Albanians in Kosovo. Since the middle of 1987, the Serbs were given special status, in order to prevent their emigration, while the Albanians were denied basic human rights. The Serbian media exaggerated violence in Kosovo, they projected an image of Albanians as chauvinists who wanted to take Kosovo from Serbia and attach it to Albania (Moore 1988). Since Milošević's ascent to power, Albanians were treated like second-rate citizens.

Moore (1988) charges that in this address Milošević used "vague, illogical, intolerant and aggressive" formulations that seem reminiscent of the rise of fascism in Central and Eastern Europe of the 1930s. Krušelj (1988) observed that in this address, Milošević used the word "struggle" 13 times and the word "freedom" seven times (Krušelj 1988: 10). His intention was to make the Serbs feel that they are victims and therefore should fight. Against whom and why Milošević explained in equally obscure language, "Serbia's enemies outside the country are plotting against it, along with those in the country."

THE EFFECTS OF THE SPEECH AND CONTEXT FOR THE GAZIMESTAN SPEECH

In the Croatian media, this speech was characterized as a "warrior's address." The violent words uttered in Belgrade stirred emotions in the Yugoslav public. Milošević's rhetoric was perceived in Croatia and Slovenia as an open threat to Yugoslavia (Lovric 1989). Soon after this speech, the rest of Yugoslavia watched Milošević force out the last Albanian leader and take complete control of Kosovo. For six months after these changes Albanians protested, but their protests, unlike those of the Serbs, were treated as "counter-revolution" (Silber & Little 1997: 63).

The next Milošević's victory was a new constitution for Serbia that removed autonomy from the provinces. In March 1989, a new Serbian Constitution "that united Serbia" was proclaimed. The proclamation took place amid bloodshed after the Yugoslav federal Presidential body enacted a state of emergency in Kosovo. With the new constitution, Serbia was far more powerful than the other republics. By taking control over the provinces and Montenegro, it now had four votes in the eight-member federal Presidency. The Slovene leader Kučan especially feared the new powers of Serbia which meant turning Yugoslavia into "Serbo-slavia" (Zimmerman 1997: 49).

GAZIMESTAN SPEECH, JUNE 28 1989³

This speech is the celebration of many things, but mainly of the new Serbian constitution, which was the most important step in the creation of united Serbia. The celebration of the Six hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo Polje played a crucial role in releasing the nationalist passions of the Serbs. TV Belgrade, controlled by Milošević, devoted much time to the event, broadcasting it live and repeating Milošević's speech several times. The speech delivered in Gazimestan was the most obvious evocation of the Kosovo myth in building the unity of the Serbs and the celebration of Serbdom. The most cited sections of the long speech sent a disturbing message to other parts of Yugoslavia. This speech reflects his usual mixture of charismatic and dogmatic styles and is filled with emotional statements and little respect for historical truths.

The occasion of the speech gave Milošević the opportunity to yet again revive the myth of Kosovo, but this time, since his charisma was so complete, to criticize the disunity of the Serb leadership in 1389, and to use it as an allegory for contemporary problems.

If we lost the battle, it was due not only to the Turkish military superiority, but also to the tragic discord of the Serbian state. The discord, the evil fate, followed the people throughout its history . . . and later, in socialist Yugoslavia, when the Serbian leaders remained divided, prone to compromises at the expense of their people.

This message can be understood as a justification for the removal of the many officials from the Serbian leadership who did not agree with his hard-line policies in the creation of a unified Serbia: . . . "today we are in Kosovo to say . . . that such disunity does not exist."

These emotional messages that pictured Serbs as victims of their past, had a purging effect on the Serbian conscience burdened with the myth of the lost battle. In Milošević, they now found a leader who would restore their identity and remove the sense of guilt (*Politika*, June 28 & 29, 1989).

In this speech, Milošević repeats many of his emotional appeals to "Serbian bravery" and "generosity," again with little respect for historical truth, especially after the removal of Vojvodina, Montenegro and Kosovo leadership:

Serbs in their history have never conquered and exploited others. Their national and historical being throughout history and two world wars has



3 The speech of Gazimestan is published in *Politika* (June 29, 1989, pp. 1-3). All the subsequent quotations are from this speech, unless noted otherwise.

been to liberate. They liberated themselves and when they could, they helped others to liberate themselves.

The largest portion of this speech is devoted to making the audience feel proud of their heritage, turning a defeat from 600 years ago into a source of pride, especially military pride, “the military which was not defeated even when it lost a battle,” that would lead to future victories:

Six centuries later we are in battles again. And facing new ones. They are not armed battles, though such battles should not be excluded yet.

The Serbs in the audience roared with approval. The rest of Yugoslavia was worried.

THE EFFECTS OF THE SPEECH

The TV spectacular at Gazimestan was designed to promote and strengthen the myth of Kosovo as the cradle of Serbian medieval culture and a foundation of Serbian national identity. The TV reporters reminded the Serbs how the territory which belonged to Serbia until 1974, was unjustly taken from Serbia. They commented how Albanians would sooner or later remove Kosovo from Serbia and unite it with Albania. Serbia, therefore, had to reestablish its authority over Kosovo. Once again, Milošević appealed to self-evident, justified and painful grievances of the Serbs, now victims in the heart of their own ancestral land, denied by Albanians their historic right to live where they belonged. By suggesting that he would stand up for the Serbs, Milošević essentially appealed to justice. Thus, when shortly after the Gazimestan celebration, the Serbian army and police were sent to Kosovo to abolish its political and cultural autonomy, many of Milošević’s TV viewers believed that he was doing what had to be done to restore justice. Looking straight into TV cameras, Milošević appeared as a real hero (M. Milošević 1997: 110).

The result of the Gazimestan speech echoed beyond Serbia’s borders. Now that the all Serbs of Serbia were united under one leader, they had to be “activated” in other parts of the former Yugoslavia. Milošević turned his attention to the Serbs of Bosnia and Croatia and to the Slovene “counterrevolution.”

When Croat and Slovene authorities refused to accept Milošević’s policies of domination, Milošević used the media to incite national hatreds and fears. As a strategy to forge and consolidate public support for his aggressive policy, Milošević’s media campaign had no precedent in post-1945 Europe. The Kosovo campaign created a media model which was extended to incorporate other targets of the Serbian leadership. This model identified and stigmatized a national enemy, rallied and homogenized Serbs against this threat, and called for resis-

tance. After the Albanians in Kosovo, the enemies were Slovenes and Slovenia, then Croats and Croatia, then Bosnia and its Muslim population (Thomson 1994: 55-6).

CONCLUSION

For Milošević the politicization of ethnicity was one of the chief ways to achieve and solidify his power. He astutely understood the socio-cultural and political environment and administered his appeals in a way that was appealing to both the working class and to intellectuals. His speeches are a great example of communist orthodoxy, Serbian patriotism and calls to war. Always rich with hidden meanings and connotations, his speeches seemed to seek identification only with the Serbs while alienating other Yugoslav nationalities. Both his speeches and media propaganda encouraged the Serbs to see themselves as the tragic blameless victims in an international conspiracy to destroy the Serb people and their homeland.

A regular use of historical myths and symbols reflected Milošević's ability to harness the frustrations instilled in Serbs in post-World War II Yugoslavia. Working on the realization of his main goal, the establishment of Greater Serbia included the brutal removal of officials and a terror campaign over the Albanian minority in Kosovo, and later war in Croatia and genocide in Bosnia.

In a quest to establish Greater Serbia, and in turn provoke one of the most brutal ethnopolitical conflicts, the rhetoric of Milošević played an important role. The power of rhetoric was supplemented with institutional means. Milošević and his supporters constantly blocked the work of the Yugoslav presidential body by refusing to discuss the critical issues on the future of the Yugoslav federation with Slovenia and Croatia. The fear of Serbian tyranny hastened their moves to secede from Yugoslavia, which from that point existed only with the Serbs and in Milošević's rhetoric.

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