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THE MEDIA AND THE WARS IN WESTERN BALKANS IN THE LAST DECADE OF THE XX CENTURY

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Abstract

In a war environment, in an atmosphere of increased national passion, the Western Balkans area obviously sidestepped the wave of wartime propaganda, media preparation and support and justification of the war. However, in Montenegro itself were manifested some characteristics, since on the territory of the republic, except for an occasional incident situation, there was no real armed conflict. The armed conflicts in southern Herzegovina, Bosnia, Dubrovnik, mobilized soldiers, induced psychosis in the public opinion of xenophobia and nationalism of all kinds was accompanied by an adequate and aggressive propaganda.

Key words: Western Balkans; hate speech; media; politics; war; chauvinism.

THE MEDIA AND THE POLITICAL PROPAGANDA

There are many definitions of the political propaganda term in dependence of the authors and attitude towards political persuasion. Organized political persuasion is called political propaganda. Practically there is no human activity which is not affected by propaganda and very different concepts are implied under this name. Because of this, it is not unusual that in the determination of the term propaganda, there appear as many definitions as there are authors who confirm that definition. This term is primarily burdened with ideological, but also with emotional attitude, which in the understanding of its essence have individuals, as well as social groups. Propaganda is primarily a value-neutral term, while a political activity that is not due to any propaganda has a certain target. For this occasion and topic, the following definition seems to be appropriate: "Political propaganda is a planned and organized activity on the creation, presentation, expansion of political content, attracting the people and securing their support for a particular political content and their stakeholders." (Slavujevic 2005, 12).

The propaganda is the creation and dissemination of ideas and attitudes in order to create readiness for a particular course of action. Propaganda represents every aspect of deliberate and organized activities which are carried out with the aim of influence on the views, opinions or feelings of the public, groups or individuals, with intention to obtain ideas, views and program of a social and political organization which conducts this activity. This term originates from the Latin *propagare* (spreading, reproduction, multiplication). Propaganda is therefore the kind of communication that is performed to convince message recipients. The ultimate goal of political propaganda is to directly or indirectly induce individuals to participate in political activities of a certain political party, in the manner and

to the extent determined by the political subject alone. Propaganda primarily affects people's attitudes, emphasizing in this way: that attitudes are kind of predisposition for behavior or a latent structure which directs behavior in situations where the individual is confronted with the object attitude (Šiber 1998, 293). With the propaganda influence, the most common effects are achievements in the field of strengthening positions, the effect of mobilization of the already formed attitudes, as well as crystallization and the formation of a new attitude. Political propaganda is therefore a deliberate and planned (organized) activity that has the task of overturning or, keeping certain political attitudes of individuals, social groups or society as a whole.

The goal of propaganda is to influence the way of thinking and behavior of people. Propaganda produces certain socio-psychological consequences and tends to penetrate to the deepest layers of the human psyche and to act on the segments which most frequently cannot be rationally controlled. In this sense, Bolshevik Rjzanov says: "they say that the English Parliament can do anything except change a man into a woman. Our Central Committee is far more powerful. He changed more than one man indifferent to the revolution into the old woman, whose number is increasing day by day." (Roberts 2002, 469). This paper is based on the analysis of printed and electronic media from the early 90-ies of XX century. In that time, in Montenegro existed only one daily state-run newspaper "Pobjeda".

THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOCIALIST SYSTEM AND THE ENTRANCE IN RAW PLURALISM

One of the causes of conflicts and wars in the former Yugoslavia lies in the fact that nationalists or in most cases communists who manipulated nationalism managed to impose the cult of the past, to lead the peoples to turn to national history, to revive old hostilities and continue the ancient wars. In many cases indeed, what is meant here are the efforts to find and revive ties from the past, to establish the continuity of certain ideas and projects, from today's perspective and modern goals. It may be noted that yesterday's communists, supporters of the idea of Yugoslavia, brotherhood and unity, recognized in the previously repressed nationalism new "power" and the field to win or maintain power. It is evident that for years, "Tito's time, " Tito's paths of freedom," the idea of brotherhood and unity, non-alignment and etc., constituted a kind of political bequeathing and a strong cohesive factor that is induced by daily propaganda in the Yugoslav public. With weakening of Tito's cult and his ideas, clearly was imposed a need for a new 'magnet for the masses ', now in the form of several political centers, which tried to form a critical homogenized mass that is strong enough to preserve or arrive to power by promoting ethno-nationalism. Statement by former high officials from Kosovo Fadil Hoxha (1986):

There are individual cases of rape in Kosovo. I think that the private cafes in Kosovo should be allowed to bring, to recruit women from other parts of Yugoslavia. These individuals who rape women of other nationalities could mistreat to such places. Albanian women do not allow it, but Serb and others would, so why they do not allow it (...) had a negative effect and resonance in the former Yugoslav public. (Popov 2002, 210).

This statement launched an avalanche of protest gatherings in Kosovo, it was the subject of a large number of newspaper articles, and represented "to add fuel to the fire" to

the already boiling and tense atmosphere of interethnic intolerance. After the first parliamentary elections in Montenegro, in 1990, there was a press conference by an opposition party. It was a conference of the National Party, which from the outset established itself as a national party whose priority was to fight for the Serbian's and Orthodoxy, and in the next decade will be a serious factor in the Montenegrin political pluralism. The National Party pointed out request "to declare Christmas as a public holiday, and Savindan (St. Sava) and St. Vitus school holidays." (Andrijašević 1999, 3). A similar note was worn by forward-looking statements and comments on the visit of the delegation of the Order of the Knights of Malta to Montenegro. Receiving representatives of the Knights of Malta by the authorities in Montenegro N. Kilibarda rated very negatively. Kilibarda said that the organization of the Order of Malta is the right hand of Vatican and his predecessor: "Acceptance of the representatives of the Maltese knights coincides with the initiative to introduce Italian in the Montenegrin schools. Recalls that the Italian was not taught in Montenegro even in the time of King Nikola, who had friendly ties with Italy." (Kilibarda 1994, 2). These and similar ideas and statements were in the function of acquiring certain target groups and segmentation of messages according to ethnic and religious affiliation. Also, during the first years of the multiparty system, an opposition newspaper in Montenegro was accused of spreading anti-Semitism. In the article "Dance of the Vampires" published in the "Information Bulletin" of the Municipal Board of the Serbian National Renewal of Bijelo Polje, set out accusations against the Jews:

The Jews are the cause and perpetrators of all the evils of this world - all the evil comes from them. These murderers, thieves, fraudsters, vagrants - Jewish spawn in Europe today is the biggest ally of the Mohammedan stinking pigs and Protestant sick dogs (which is reflected in the spread of religious hatred). This will not end their crimes. Today, they are next to Turkey and Iran, the main supplier of the Green Berets paramilitary groups in the former Bosnia and Herzegovina... For Jews there is not enough crude punishment, sacred Spanish Inquisition was too lenient for them. (Serbian National Renewal 1994, 2).

In an atmosphere of a decline of previous social values, when all options were open and everything is allowed, the newly-formed political entities had to learn the multiparty system and political dialogue. Vice-President of the Parliament of Montenegro S. Bozovic sharply reacted to the words of A. Visnjic, representatives of the Serbian Radical Party, warned him that in the Parliament he cannot offend and present severe and harsh words at the expense of colleagues. Visnjic was namely, replicating, said that R. Rotković (deputy Liberal Alliance) is not Montenegrin, but shores man and cannot defend Montenegro. He added also that "Rotković with its appearance more reminds to Muslim old man and is not suitable to tell lies". (Parliament of Montenegro, 13). In March 1991, members of the Serbian police station in Pakrac took the station and proclaimed it as Serbian station, but they withdrew in front of Croatian anti-terrorist police unit of about 200 members. Belgrade journalist M. Milosevic gives media fabrication of that event: "special reporters of RTV Montenegro reported that at least 40 people were killed in the town of Pakrac in Croatia. Unofficially, it is learned that there are 40 dead and dozens wounded. Fear of stray bullets. Serb population seeking refuge in refugee camps. JNA engaged." (Special reporters of RTV Montenegro 1991, 1). Radio Belgrade accepted the report, but

noted the number of six dead. TV Novi Sad reported eight dead; a Belgrade TV recorded an Orthodox priest among the dead. Presidency of Yugoslavia finally appeared with official notice announcing that no one was killed in Pakrac. (Kurspahić 2003, 63). The statement of the Federal Secretariat of Internal Affairs of Yugoslavia said that until then there were no human casualties, but one seriously wounded, along with, two members of the Ministry of Internal Affairs slightly wounded. In October 1991, after a media preparation and incident on the Montenegrin-Croatian border, the Yugoslav People's army, according to official media, "passed from passive defense into offensive action." As then specified by "Pobjeda", "it started to beat Ustasha positions with artillery". The old rule says that in a war, the first to starve is the truth. Thus, immediately after the beginning of the occupation of Dubrovnik, its mayor P. Poljanić told on 12 October 1991 in front of TV cameras that around 15.000 shells hit the city. That news went around and alarmed the world. The shelling of Dubrovnik attracted much of the world public, especially since the city was under protection. It turns out that Adolph Hitler would have been under the protection of UNESCO if he had hidden in Dubrovnik". (Matija Beckovic 1991, 1). The only daily newspaper in the republic and state gazette, the "Pobjeda", encouraged patriotism in a negative context and in animosity wrote about those who did not support the war for Dubrovnik. In December 1991, "Pobjeda" quoted a statement by Zeljko Raznatovic Arkan, who enthusiastically talked about the heroic feats of Montenegrins on the Dubrovnik front, incidentally threatening internal traitors in Montenegro:

Give my regards to the heroic brothers Montenegrins, saying that Dubrovnik has to be ours or godly! In the summer I am coming to Dubrovnik to hear the fiddle, and afterwards, me and my army are going to take back Skadar! And say to those Ustasha Jevrem Brkovic and Slavko Perovic that I will, when I finish the outside enemy, I will finish their father and mother - said Arkan.

The members of other religions and nationalities have contributed to the exacerbation of the complex political situation, primarily induced with Serbo-Croatian tensions and conflicts. They held cultural and religious events in Montenegro to spread hate speech and thereby contributed to the deepening of the atmosphere of mistrust, extremely suitable for various forms of manipulation and propaganda:

Clumsy Prince Lazar in 1389 ran with his counterparts in front of a powerful empire, which had smashed him. Then, from that was created fake epic upon which generations have built their inferior culture. And now they are complaining how is supposedly good to the entire Yugoslav people, except to them. How will be good to them when they have chosen heavenly kingdom between earthly and heavenly kingdom. (Rasim Muminović, 9).

No single political leadership of Montenegro was immune to the events at the Dubrovnik battlefield. In this context, Milo Djukanovic said: "I have already hated chess because of them and their submissiveness to the chessboard (Croatian flag has chessboard in the middle) and the young democracy "such as type of 'Kalashnikov'". Twelve years later (in 2003), Milo Djukanovic called his statement: "absolutely benign" compared to the statements that have come from Zagreb and clarified the pretensions towards the Bay of Kotor (Pavlovic 2004).

THE HOT ENVIRONMENT – THE OVERFLOW OF MEDIA HATE SPEECH

Regarding the war on the borders of Montenegro and its neighboring area, and the fact that it represented small political and economic system for the former Yugoslav conditions which is impossible to observe isolated outside the context of economic, and political circumstances in the wider area of Yugoslavia, it is necessary to underline the propaganda activity in an environment that was overflowing and the territory of Montenegro. Political propaganda in the war differed from those of pre-war. The media highlighted the stories of victims and culprits at that time, of “them” and “us”, and the images were becoming bloodier and crueler. The language itself and the images become more emotional in order to wake up the reaction. In these tragic events of the civil war, the media of all involved parties raced in hate speech and rising tensions. Propagandists implement stereotypes, manipulate emotions, and through myths connect the events from the past and the present, in order to convince people that created stories are part of their history.

The best example remains the Battle of Kosovo, manner in which Slobodan Milosevic and the emperor Lazar and his fight for the Serbs are combined into one symbol. Another myth that marked the 90s is one of the “millennial dream of Croatia”, which once again all those who received the message were recalled to the past as well, the struggle for independence and vulnerability of one side to the other side. Comments were broadcasted with plenty of outrage, and the ruling circles of one or the other side proclaimed even entire nations, without exceptions as chetniks, ustasha or jihadists, genocidal etc. There were various other extremist publications, such as “Dragon of Bosnia” in Tuzla and the weekly newspaper “Bosnjak” which called for revenge against the Serbs and to a lesser measure against Croats. “Every Muslim should have a Serb to kill him” - wrote Zilhad Ključanin. Zenica Board of the Islamic Religious Community printed own instructions to Islamic fighters, which was signed by Halil Mehic and Hasan Makić, concluding that the military command has to decide what is more useful and of greater interest to do with enemy prisoners: to release them, exchange them or liquidate them. Mentioned Ključanin in the introduction of “Ljiljan”, published on 23 February 1994, wrote: “a Serb is approaching to mankind only when he is dead”. (Kurspahic 2003, 109). And here the opinion of Biljana Plavsic about the members of other religions: “Muslims are genetically rotten material transferred to Islam. And now, of course, from generation to generation, this gene simply condenses. It's getting worse and worse, expressing simplicity, dictates a way of thinking and behavior. It is already imbedded in the genes.” (Biljana Plavsic 1993, 1).

Hate speech used the names and false pretext of naming an opponent or giving names which members of other nations consider abusive or ineligible (such as “Shiptars” for the Albanians, “Bali”, “mujahedin”, “Turk converts” or “Turks” for Bosnian Muslims, “Viennese horseman” for Slovenes, “Serbo-Chetniks”, “Chetniks”, “Byzantines” for the Serbs etc.) Broadcasted comments were full of outrage, and the ruling circles of one or another side proclaimed even entire nations, without gaps, as chetniks, ustasha or jihadists, genocidal, and similar. In the primetime news program TV news broadcasted in 1992 on Bosnian Serb television, the editor compared former Muslim territory and read the fate of the population of that entity by coffee tasseography. It is unethical behavior of editors who began Daily News with the film where they washed the feet in a basin, alluding to the backwardness of the Muslim nation, which further deepened the antagonism and hatred

toward members of this nation. (Zuber 2005, 35). And in the political discourse in Slovenia and Croatia, the effort to justify the political and military actions that were undertaken there was noticeable, as well as the effort to legitimize them as. Supposedly, it is in the interest of Europe to withdraw and establish a new border in the former Yugoslavia between “western and eastern part, between modest and working west-Catholic tradition and violet, Oriental-Byzantine heritage”, as Slovenian Minister of Science Peter Tancig quoted. Prejudices such as: “Croats are cunning Latin’s, the Serbs are cunning Byzantines, Albanians are aggressive, brash, brutal and insidious, are some of the widely used in everyday discourse.” (Trebjesanin 1995, 94).

In the western media, Milosevic was characterized as butcher of the Balkans, the Balkan Hitler, European Saddam Hussein. During the Croatian-Muslim conflict in Bosnia, Tudjman was described as an apprentice of the Balkans butcher, overt racists and anti-Semitic, despicable villain. Tudjman wrote the following in his book, among other things: “Genocide is a natural phenomenon (...) God not only allows genocide..,” what looked like a continuation to the policy of the Independent Independent State of Croatia (NDH) in the Second World War. (Gruden 2004, 27). Broadcast of the secret TV footage about import of weapons from Hungary and shot of Martin Spegelj, Croatian Minister of Defense, shocked the Yugoslav public and then in response clearly shows how chauvinism feeds the other in an atmosphere of growing nationalism and evoking memories from previous wars. Martin Spegelj, in a secret recording, among other things said: “We will solve Knin in a manner that we will massacre everyone. We have the international recognition and therefore we will massacre them ... It will not be a war, but it will be a civil war where there would not be mercy to anyone, not even to wife or the children. In the apartment just bombs (...)” (Popov 2002, 225). During a break within a session of the Presidency of the Yugoslav Alliance of Communist (SKJ), state “Daily news” played footage about the illegal import of weapons and arming the police in Croatia. That needed to work propagandistic on the present members of the Presidency.

CONCLUSION

So, in such a war environment, in an atmosphere of growing national passion, the area of Western Balkans, including Montenegro, did not pass over the wave of war propaganda, media preparation and support and justification for the war. However, the requisite specificity was demonstrated in Montenegro, because on the territory of the republic, except for occasional incidental situations, there was no real armed conflict. Specificity is also a certain percentage of proponents of the Montenegrin independence who gave a special tone to the atmosphere caused by the surrounding wars, with their ideas and appearances in the media and political life. Armed conflicts in southern Herzegovina, Dubrovnik, Bania area where where soldiers were deployed, induced in public psychosis of xenophobia and nationalisms of all kinds, and this been accompanied by an adequate propaganda of aggressive war propaganda. The new governments formed after the collapse of the former Yugoslavia actually used the media as a weapon that can contribute to achieving their short-term and long-term political goals. The interpretation of events, their linking with immediate and distant past, creating a unique mythic image of the eternal sacrifice of own people, the genocidal character and fickleness and depravity of other people - it was a task that is equally valuable carried out not only by many journalists, but also by many intellectuals. To do so, each government in the republics tried to dominate the

media in their territory, especially television, turning them into instruments of the regime's propaganda with the task to "obtain" population for its political ideas and actions. So, in such a war environment, in an atmosphere of growing national passion, this area did not skip the wave of war propaganda, media preparation and support and justification for the war. From a number of reports, studies, articles and testimonies follows that the common trait of national political programs in the former Yugoslavia presented from the late eighties to the first years of the third millennium, follows that the trait was supported and allowed by the media, which became the most loyal servants of the nationalist parties in power in the republics.

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