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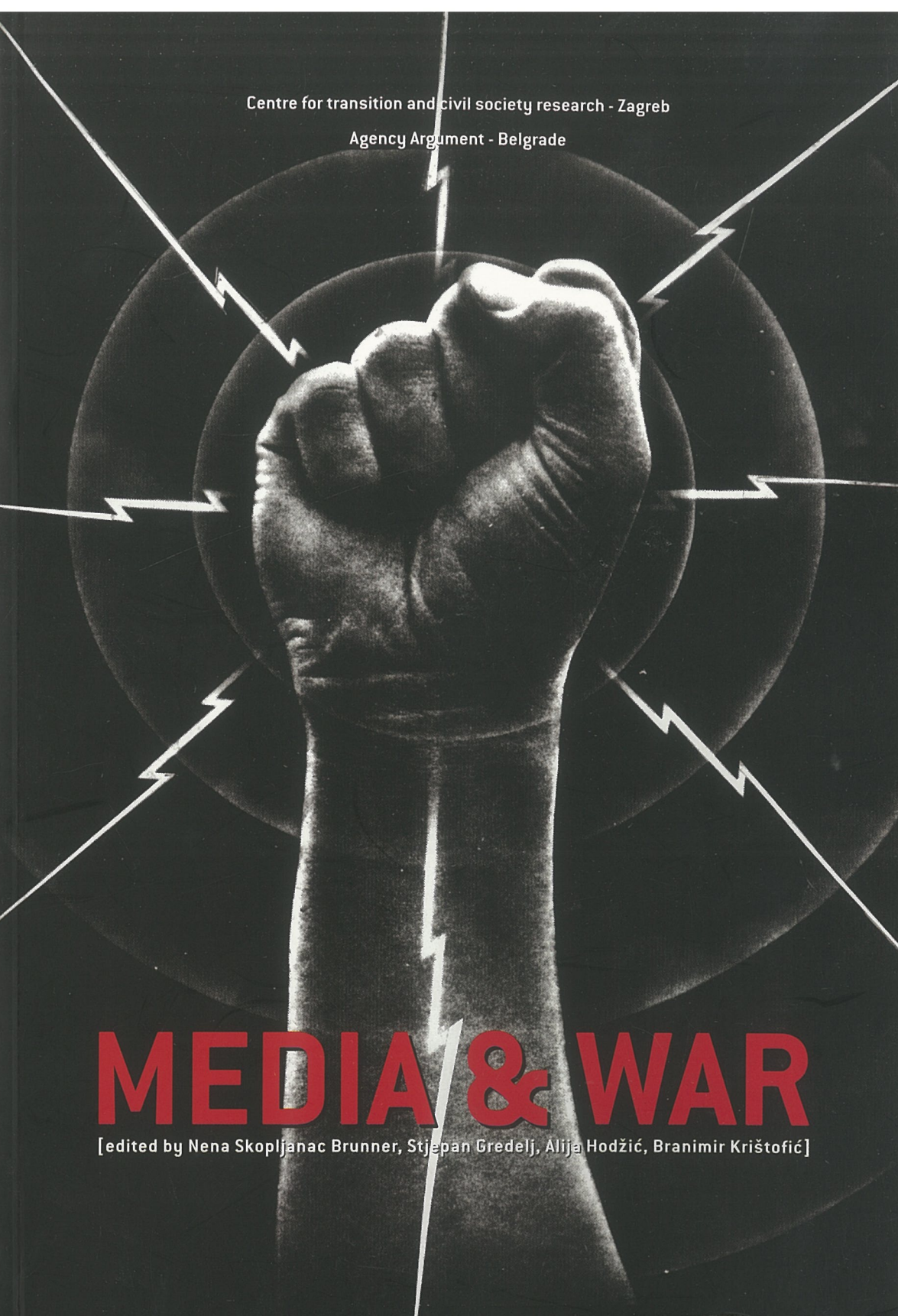
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MEDIA & WAR

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[edited by Nena Skopljanac Brunner, Stjepan Gredelj, Alija Hodžić, Branimir Krištofić]



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sacrifice for the far-off anticipated happiness of future generations. Instead, they requested personal freedoms and the right to decide on their life and happiness “here and now”. The tradition of dissidence in Serbia, unbroken even at the time of the greatest stability of the communist regime, presented the serious threat of the reintroduction into the political life of the country of issues of concrete human interests, freedoms and rights, also involving requests for responsible and democratic rule. However, these requests were an unpleasant obstacle to the ambitions of the ruling elite which therefore deemed it necessary to come up with a new utopia with a seductive illusion of power and a new historical mission to successfully replace the old one.

The realistic, newly proclaimed request of “here and now” was to be presented as part of an unconscious, transitory and selfish existence, as a worthless tiny spot in the face of the monumental, metaphysical “always and everywhere”.

The fact that this pathetic flirting with history and eternity had a mostly prosaic function in preserving the rule is perhaps best illustrated by the tragic predicament of Serbs outside Serbia, whose interests were, allegedly, the reason for the ruling elite to “place history on the agenda”. Once any further insistence on previously-formulated national requirements started to threaten the regime itself, it found it incredibly easy, and without unnecessary moral dilemmas, to disown these people, leaving them to the terror of a similar regime.

All this shows that the primary objective of the above-mentioned interpretation of pre-war and war events provided by the regime media was to homogenise the Serbian nation around the ruling elite and, in this way, to overcome the crisis of the legitimacy of its rule.

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THE USE OF MYTHS FOR CREATING AND DESTROYING A SOCIETY



From the point of view of a rationalist paradigm, the idea of *myth* contains an inferior form of human attitude towards the world. Historians, anthropologists and sociologists keep trying to establish the difference between ‘true’ and ‘false’ stories and to find the ‘data’ by means of which they would bring rational order into the chaotic universe of myths. Long ago Homer had already “imposed unity to diffuse stories” which tells us about the “escape of the subject outside the reach of mythical power” (Horkheimer, 1974:58). Sophist rebellion against traditional myths and customs became a model for confronting individual reason with the collective bewilderment of a mass culture’s mythical stories. With reasoning and rhetoric, sophists made “man the measure of the reality”, thus overcoming collective popular belief. While in the universe of the myth all things were given directly or through tradition, according to individual rationality nothing should be considered as given. Thanks to the Sophists, individual reason becomes the measure and creator of all things. Thus, however, the conclusion is drawn, which anticipated the philosophy of Machiavelli, Hobbes, the proponents of 18th century Enlightenment, and Nietzsche, that, since all things were created by man, there is nothing sacred under the sun.

By questioning the truthfulness of the myth, the impression is created of reason’s superiority. But, without external support, reason itself cannot enable the criterion of truth, nor can it guarantee the truthfulness of assertions. That is why reason cannot negate the internal rationality of the mythical discourse which is inherent in the myth and enables its survival as such. On one side, when decrepit forms of actual myths continue to impose themselves as the absolute model individuals should submit to, it takes individual reason to question it and, thus, enable it to be overcome. On the other side, the Sophists’ rebellion against actual myths has demonstrated that the rejection of the traditional structure of the mythical universe does not also mean liberation from the myth itself. The mere opposition of reason would have appeared hollow and fruitless had the sophists not come up with a *myth* of their own – that of the *logos* of individual rationality (Hegy, 1991), e.g. of man as the measure of all things. Although this myth

already existed in the form of the ancient myth of Prometheus, the Sophists instilled into it new life, providing the re-establishment of the balance between myth and rationality.

Thus we can see how, through history, theses of individualism occasionally come to the surface as an expression of the need to liberate individual rationality from the tyranny of obsolete myths which are imposed on society as the matrix or the frame of values. In much the same way as the Sophists, the proponents of 18th century Enlightenment enabled the wrecking of the traditional Christian myth in the name of Reason and individual freedom. Likewise, Marx's rebellion against the dominating bourgeois myths, Nietzsche's rejection of customs and laws, and the struggle of counter-culture against the Establishment are also forms of the non-acceptance of the ossified norms and laws of society in favour of the freedom of the individual. These rebellions against traditional myths, which are manifested through antinomy between the individual and the community, are a fundamental pattern faced by nearly every generation.

The purpose of myths in a society is to describe the order where everything has its proper place and to provide individuals with the possibility to uncover the internal sources of strength, helping them to overcome their particularity. However, a society where individual talents are sacrificed to the tyranny of the majority cannot last long. Consequently, a well-arranged society should strike a balance between myth and rationality. The failure to use the creative potential of this balance for social integration, and the prevalence of one of these principles, usually become highly destructive and lead either to the tyranny of collective myths, or to the chaos of absolute individualism. Hence, it remains unclear why the theoreticians of society do not recognise the significance of a balanced relation between an individual and society, while the 'liberals' suggest an individualist philosophy, and the 'conservatives' regret the disappearance of the traditional community.

The similarity in the ideology of every social system with myths (and the rituals which accompany it) is due to the fact that myth is the crucial form for the social and cultural presentation of ideas. All systems of ideas, irrespective of their purpose, have certain, actually mythical, features in common. By forming the consciousness of a collective heritage, the myths enable the integration of society. By repeating collective stories, the society celebrates its identity. From this perspective, just as any religious celebration is simultaneously the social celebration of a group, tribe or nation, so the celebration of a collective identity, for example after some victory, is usually performed in a ritual that recalls a sacral ceremony. Even today national celebrations have a ritual dimension since society finds its identity through the actual forms of myth.

Usually, establishing a new social structure after a collective catastrophe, be it occupation, internal disintegration, or revolution, should ensure a new balance between an individual and the community. The new structure of society will be organised around myths symbolised by the new meanings of concepts such as 'freedom', 'equality', 'communism', 'independence', 'self-determination' etc. This should establish a balance between the individual and society, harmonising myths with rationality. However, this harmony cannot last long since the institutionalisation of myths interferes with their necessary adjustment and change. In the beginning of their creation, myths are but the essential metaphors and patterns of society which, as a part of the oral culture, easily remain concealed in everyday life. Through continuous repetition, myths create the awareness of a collective heritage which becomes ultimately formed and legitimised

in the process of the institutionalisation of common beliefs, metaphors and values. This brings about a rationalisation of metaphors, archetypes and symbols which gradually restrains creativity, turning symbols into clichés, reducing archetypes to stereotypes and petrifying collective myths into laws. Once this process reaches an end, when all possibilities of the model hitherto are exhausted, the creative powers have to find a new myth which will enable a new integration of society.

THE YUGOSLAV ROAD TO NATIONALISM: RENEWAL OF THE MYTH OF NATION-STATE

The communist ideology of the former Yugoslavia also legitimised its social system, mostly by means of mythical structures. Mythical topics, in the form of heroic legends of sacral history, undisputedly ruled political and social life for nearly half a century. But, once the antinomy of ideals and reality became too obvious, and the collective myth of Communism was eventually confronted with rationality and reality, the ideological-mythical structure, active until then, started to lose its meaning. Although it formally continued to exist, it grew less capable of influencing the behaviour and attitudes of individuals and groups. Yugoslavia entered the '90s with a spent social myth that could no longer provide a horizon of purpose and values to society. Nevertheless, once the myths of Titoism had exhausted all their possibilities, the epic problems of the national issue in the form of the 'happening of the people' became the easiest means to fill the vacant mythical frame and to offer to a disintegrating society an identification which would be easiest to control.

It is interesting to note that the myths created in the media and in political discourse after the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia hinged on the lasting continuity of mythical topics originating from folk tradition, but were also well integrated into the communist ideology. All these chronologically different ideological-mythical periods were always legitimised as the authentic expression of 'the will of the Nation'. We should also bear in mind that this is not a primitive invention of the Balkans, but that the use of the will of the Nation in sustaining the myth of unity of the Nation-State is the symbol of the entire epoch of Modernity. Although it had already been known in the Renaissance, the idea of a unified Nation-State was not turned into a collective myth, with great influence on the boundaries of both our individual and collective existence, before the end of the 19th century. "Nationalist fever in the 19th century resulted in the use of oral epics for the purposes of nationalist propaganda. Poems glorified heroes from the national past; they described the battles the nation had led against the external enemy" (A. Lord, 1990:27, Čolović, 1994:87).

Nationalist movements of the 19th century legitimised popular support which has, since that time, been used by all the ideologies and political regimes of modern times (Čolović, *Ibid.*). At the time of World War I, *nation* became an absolute value for which ten million lives were sacrificed. Modernity and colonial expansion exported the ideal of the Nation-State to all primitive and undeveloped societies. The myth of the nation has, during the past centuries, integrated all aspects of social life - ethics, politics and culture - as the collective participation in the common destiny of the nation. Since Durkheim, who identified society with the nation and, through it, with the ideals of collectivity, national identity has become the cult of social sciences. This explains the fear that the disappearance of the myth of society as a nation would deprive society itself of its national identity.

Therefore, the use of the myth of the nation in the war propaganda of the latest Yugoslavia is, in fact, a "continuity of a modern idea of national identity based on the

actual or psychological link to the ancestral soil..." (Čolović, 1994: 91). The defence of this ancestral soil has traditionally denoted the patriotism of brave heroes as described in old Serbian folk poems. Traditional epic literature has, therefore, since ancient times, had the concept of bravery which was afterwards merely incorporated into the mythical symbolism of the communist ideology. Its main support was the memory of the national liberation war and the courage of the partisans that the media celebrated on the occasion of all state holidays, thereby continuously renewing their legitimacy.

The traditional Serbian epic poems were translated into legends of partisans and their heroic sacrifices for freedom, into poems which celebrated the struggle for national liberation and its ultimate hero - Tito. Tito, himself, was aware of this fact and acted in accordance with it, sustaining it as the "need of the people to have a hero" (Dedijer, 1981). The later messages of attachment to the next Serbian political leader, Slobodan Milošević, were collected from this full treasury and afterwards adjusted in details to "Tito's image and deed", which strengthened the impact of the latent structures of collective sub-consciousness. When the messages of attachment to the political leader were read in "the code of popular mythology and collective beliefs" (Čolović, 1994: 1), it becomes obvious that they represented a form of the archetypal cult of the father. In this way, the mythical pattern taken over from the folk tradition and placed into the repertoire of communists expressing loyalty outgrows the purely political domain, since the cult practice embodies a whole pleiad of ancestral personalities of traditional mythology (Prince Marko, emperor Dušan, Prince Lazar, Obilić and others). Thus, the traditional model of mythical stories complements and reinforces the political sphere by presenting personalities and values through archetypal symbols of life and death, so enabling, as Čolović (1994:7) says, politics to turn into a myth, and history into tradition.

However, the process of the demythologisation of the communist ideology and the practice of Yugoslav socialism deriving from it, which spread throughout Yugoslavia after Tito's death, was not the same in all republics. This is not very surprising if we bear in mind that even until then various nuances of communist ideology prevailed in different Yugoslav republics (Magnusson, 1987). These differences simultaneously existed in the media, although in some of them (mostly in Slovenia and Croatia) western influences prevailed, as opposed to the mixture of the epic tradition and Titoism elsewhere. The demythologisation of the glorious past, the personality of the great leader, the ideological monopoly of the party, the social system, as well as the media development of public opinion on the dichotomy of practice and proclaimed principles, differed subject to the republics. The Yugoslav myth (which consisted of stories on revolutionary history, brotherhood and unity, and the system of self-management) was questioned, more in the western republics and substantially less in others. Hence, when the media, primarily through the conflict in Kosovo, started to reveal the outstanding national issue, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), weakened, internally divided in inter-republican disputes, was no longer capable of a sound affirmation of the Yugoslav myth as before. Nevertheless, after the LCY had lost its credibility, even among its membership, the official Serbian policy stubbornly stuck to numerous aspects of communist symbols. These symbols represented appropriate means for manipulation in view of the depth of their traditional roots in the collective consciousness of society.

This was particularly visible in the media at the beginning of the Yugoslav war, for example in the prominent daily newspaper, *Politika*. Analyses of what it published indicate numerous forms of social retardation in the prevalent myths. Here I will try

to give a synthesis of current Yugoslav myths derived from articles in *Politika* during 1991.

Firstly, to replace Tito, a new Serbian leader was appointed. The key actor of the inflamed national epopee, Slobodan Milošević, became "the essential factor of the Yugoslav case" (TANJUG, 11 December). As he was characterised in *Politika*, he might have been seen, as a response to political needs, either as a symbol of continuity or discontinuity with Titoism. While, with the self-assurance of a statesman, he claimed that Yugoslavia "cannot be erased from the map of the world" (Slobodan Milošević, 6 November), he needed no arguments. His will acted as a sufficient guarantee, appearing as *vox populi* or even Justice itself. Rationalisation of this "will of the people" was left to others who sought to explain that Yugoslavia "must survive, because it would be stupid to turn one state into six failures" (Manojlo Lazić, 11 November). But this will was more often confirmed simply with unsubstantiated emotional efforts to convince oneself and others that the Serbian nation "can preserve Yugoslavia" (Momčilo Krajišnik, 11 November), or that "there is no alternative for (Yugoslavia)" (Milka Petrović, 11 November). Even if a down-to-earth thought, that this will is not omnipotent in itself, did appear, it was nevertheless emphasised that Yugoslavia "will survive even if splintered" (Danilo Danilović, 11 November).

When, by the end of the '80s, deepened economic crisis went hand-in-hand with the dissatisfaction and concern of the people, leading to numerous strikes, the Serbian authority was not stimulated to act productively for a solution. Instead, Serbian authority acted the only way it could after having been exposed to ideological trickery and to long-term communist selection for the holding of power. It started to question publicly the practice of the ideology of equality, which is also deeply rooted in the tradition of the Serbian patriarchal village. The dissatisfaction of the people was channelled against the injustice which was reflected in the uneven development of different republics.

It was increasingly emphasised that the enriching of the western republics (especially Slovenia) was at the expense of the eastern ones, primarily Serbia, whose market, as well as raw material and energy resources, were exploited without yielding appropriate returns. In 1991 one could find the following statements on this issue in *Politika*: "...how (Croatia) and Slovenia prepared the economic background for the disintegration of Yugoslavia" (Radovan Lazarević, 1 November). Likewise, Ante Marković was "but the last great 'speculator', called on to finalise what a number of the political leadership in Croatia and Slovenia had earnestly worked to achieve. He enabled them... in this time of war chaos, to put their hands deep into the pocket of Serbia" (Konstantin Pušara, 1 November). "This big swindler (Ante Marković) has recently left behind the prime minister's mantle and gone back with a lucid smile on his face to his Zagreb, after successfully completing - like Stjepan Mesić - his job" (Blagoje Komljenović, 1 December). While the market-oriented citizens were almost starting to feel "European", national authority was exclusively underlining the "colonial submission of (Ante Marković's) programme to international capital" (Milenko Predragović, 10 May).

Conflicts among nations became manifest initially through the disagreements of the national party leadership. Since a typically ideological discourse was dispersed in parallel courses of historical and current problems, endless party discussions on the problems of the federation or the economy went on, but to no avail. The Party, weakened by republican breaches, was powerless to conduct any joint action. The politicians were not only incapable of changing the institutional system, but they themselves demythologised it by publicly admitting that the dominance of ideology

over the economy was to blame for economic problems and that nationalism was the result of a faulty policy (Mirić, 1984). The inspirers of nationalism were imposing on their people not only the conviction that the nation was being exploited by other peoples, but that they would also destroy it (Popov, 1993: 16). Mass “meetings of the truth” in Serbia and Montenegro began using folk myths and employing their style, starting from street demonstrations, political meetings, parliamentary sessions all the way to the sphere of the economy. In a society where discussions outside the ideological framework had not been allowed for such a long time, but where the only legitimate area for conflict was seen along the lines of the supposedly national borders of the republics, all questions became national, especially due to the thus far suppressed national differences and animosities.¹

The eruption of national ideas had started with their being put into operation in war propaganda. National myths, with their everyday influence on public opinion, became a decisive factor in the formation of the collective mind. This would also be illustrated through the usage of national myths in the articles published in *Politika* during 1991. George Niva, who addressed the difficult situation of Serbia in early 1991, revealed a powerful image of vulnerable points, from the depths of which the bloodstained years of non-denouement² were to ensue: “Benumbed by Titoism, eroded by the smouldering civil war, (Serbia) did not dare to look into the mirror of the bloodshed of the latest war and the emerging of communism”.... It was a “smouldering civil (war) which will, no doubt, break out again” (George Niva, 9 February). The war was then interpreted as a “victorious awakening” of Serbia (Laffite, 11 November).

Yugoslavia, naturally, could not remain isolated from what was brought up by the “new problems and challenges emerging in the period after the cold war and the peaceful democratic revolution in Eastern Europe” (Muhamet Kaplani, 11 November). From a country where brotherhood and unity had stood for fundamental social values for almost half a century, Yugoslavia turned into a model for “how nationalism can lead a country into a bloody civil war” (George Bush, 11 November). But, the awareness that the country was threatened by the “agony of civil war” (Aleksandra Mijalković, 11 December), and that “everything, armed (conflicts) carry along are but a part of the gloomy reality which is yet to be faced” (Mirjana Aksentijević, 1 November), could not be sustained or imprinted on the collective consciousness since the rationale or war-creating myths started to renew themselves unbridled. The comment that Bush “wanted the decision on the introduction of economic sanctions against our country to ensure a wider strategic platform for condemnation” (Dušan Pešić, 11 November) was the beginning of the spinning of the myth of a worldwide conspiracy for the unjust condemnation of the Serbian nation.

1 However, the privatisation of finances proved the supra-national nature of capital, through the use for promotional slogans of a whole series of myths, which would, in addition to folk legends (“If you are a Serb, of Serbian stock, put your money in the bank”), also attract the stratum of a civic-oriented population. Our target is the restoration of the civil world and bourgeois values but also an increasingly more numerous proletariat (“Deal, oh you by the world rejected, there’s no money as enacted”), although even the probably negligible strata of the sophisticated were not disregarded, to whom they appealed with Kant’s credo (“Starry sky above, savings book in front”) (Čolović, 1994: 48).

2 These years were contrary to the title of Slobodan Milošević’s book *The Years of Denouement* (1989, BIGZ); published at the height of his popularity.

In parallel with the inflaming of a language of war which destroyed any possibility of establishing international communication, Yugoslavia as a myth, even if no longer a reality, did not stop beating in the hearts of many of its inhabitants who wanted to preserve their homeland there. “(Yugoslavia) does exist and will not disappear from the world under external pressures”, but “... whether (Yugoslavia) will disappear due to our own hot-headedness, depends on how much longer we are going to look upon the digging of our own graves as the most profitable of occupations” (Petar Ilić, 1 November). However, “the years of crisis and destruction of Yugoslavia” (Slobodan Kljakić, 11 November) revealed the extent to which the Serbian nation actually considered “graveyards sacred” (Darko Ribnikar, 11 November).

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN THE DISSEMINATION OF MYTHS

The influence of the media in modern society cannot be denied, in addition to their significance in the creation of social consciousness through which society finds its own identity. The media are the prism of social self-awareness, since by presenting events they bring to the surface the archetypes and values which latently exist in the collective subconsciousness. By mediating in the shaping of social myths, which become increasingly important to the extent that they imbue the overall culture, the media transform the chaotic course of life and oral mythical stories, introducing into their discourse rationality which is latently imbedded in them. This explains the social power of the media to rationalise the myths and form social consciousness through the interpretation of events taken from the course of life.

By rationalising collective beliefs, metaphors and values, the media shape the consciousness of the collective heritage. Those who work for the media are witnesses to their times, just like other members of their society, community or nation, in the same way as artists or politicians. By absorbing the archetypes and collective stories of their generation, they become immersed in the broad myths which frame the horizon of their culture, internalising, like other members of society, an abundance of values, mythical indeed, where their socialisation has taken place. The nature of their profession makes them plunge into the collective unconscious of their culture where they uncover the metaphors and archetypes hidden in the depths of collective sub-consciousness.

However, transmitting the stories of events through the media, the makers of public opinion still cannot avoid interpreting them, since the substance of the media is the production of images of the world. The selection of these images inevitably determines the structure of the possibilities which will be brought into reality. On the one hand, by rationalising the circulating myths, metaphors and symbols, they contribute to establishing, sustaining and expanding the myths, which includes the integration of society. On the other hand, the media easily become the means for indoctrination in the service of institutional powers, hiding the antagonism between myth and reality.

During 1991, while the state-controlled media concentrated on consolidating the latent traditional myths within the nation, the external image of the “Serbian case” was the complete contrary. Local propaganda could not find support for its version of events anywhere in the world, but this did not make it hesitate to direct its interpretations to the internal environment. It is hard to explain how the power of foreign propaganda in the current world of media globalisation was so easily underestimated and rejected exclusively as a form of hostile action, as though the only goal of that propaganda was to create a negative myth about Serbs.

The tacit symbiosis of politicians and journalists, whose mutual support ensured both of them importance and publicity, is a means to reinforce one policy by strengthening and diffusing the underlying myth, regardless of how much it diverges from reality. While the delirium of war gained momentum, the official (state) media insisted on presenting the situation as “a highly lucid diplomatic move (of Serbia) which starts from the knowledge of reality in the organisation of the world” (Slobodan Aleksandrić, 11 November). Responding to that loyalty, Radio-Television (RTV) Novi Sad and *Politika* were praised as media which “opened the eyes of Serbian citizens to the events in Knin and Slavonia”. Moreover, RTV Novi Sad was described as “an example of informing which confirms the truth” (Dr. Radoman Božović, 11 December).

Meanwhile, every person who pointed out the mistakes and the delusions of Serbian policies, or who tried to criticise the unreasonable and detrimental aspects of these policies, was labelled by the media as an anti-Serbian traitor, which, according to the traditionally cherished myth of the enemy, contributed to “the Croatian war propaganda”. “Preparations for this war had lasted for years, at least a decade”, i.e. “long before the armed conflict and the formation of paramilitary units”. The scenario of the Croatian propaganda war, from the viewpoint of the official Serbian media, was the presentation to the world of a war drama where a large culture was about to perish. It was “based on trickery, misinformation, exaggeration of the values of their own cultural monuments, and a disregard for the monuments of the Serbian culture” (Danica Đurević, 16 December). Equally useless were warnings that journalists “reporting from the West Slavonia battlefield were ‘obedient’ and that their reports were ‘strictly controlled’, that they worked contrary to the rules of journalistic ethics, or that (the *Politika Express* correspondent) was the head of a strong censorship group” (Group of Journalists, 16 November).

The editorial board of *Politika* made accusations of “political blows” that “use any occasion to cover with mud and hatred everything that is Yugoslav and, even more, everything that is of Serbian origin” (11 November). This was addressed to journalists who were ‘not on the side of Serbia and Justice’. Those “sowers of pamphlets from Vienna”, “are doing a dirty job”, something which is, naturally, disconnected from professional journalism. This is mostly apparent in the articles of some Vienna newspapers which do not seem “to be close to the founder of the journalists’ profession, Ulrich von Husser” (ibid). Hence, the writings of the Vienna press were dismissed with the scornful assessment that they were “aggressive and anti-Yugoslav” (Svetislav Maksović, 11 November). “Forgetting its neutrality, (Vienna) now suggests to the UN the imposing of a petrol embargo on Serbia”. Austrian policy is “weighed down by anything that brings to mind Yugoslavia”. Austria will be “the first who, taking off the mask of neutrality, will try to ‘strangle Serbia economically’”. Austria “openly classifies itself on one side, mainly behaving as a true attorney of Slovenia and Croatia”. Vienna “follows the politics which is far from its proclaimed neutrality”. “Thus neutrality, according to (Vienna’s) interpretation, is selective: it applies to some countries and not to others”. “Such (Austrian) behaviour, unfortunately, is not something new: flattering to ‘The Group of Twelve’, (Vienna) tried to obtain forgiveness for the old sins and to recommend itself for membership...”. “The Press spreads the fear of Great Serbia...”. “The impression emerging from reading the (Vienna) press, listening to the radio and watching TV is – criticism, accusations and hatred” (Žarko Rakić, 11 November). “Such journalism (of *Kleine Zeitung*) has remained on the level of the magazine’s name (‘Small Magazine’)” (Žarko Rakić, 11 December).

According to Petar Popović, spreading the truth is also prevented by the British veil of the propaganda war against Serbia. Since even “some British media have realised what comes from pushing (Yugoslavia) into a cleft” the question arises: “what do (Western governments) expect from us, what do they expect from Serbs, if they realise that all their vested clichés are based on planned lies? What is (the Western interest) in the Balkans – the termination of our small nations which, in this state, whatever it was like, had the highest degree of national rights known in European history, or is it the butchering of the Serbian national being? (...) (Western propaganda mechanisms) are continuing the recipe of the Cold War, ...tragically for Slovenians, Croats, Albanians and Macedonians as well as for Serbs – thus feeding the false conviction that after the mutual massacre things will get better” (Petar Popović, 4 July).

From another angle, the Western media, labelled as anti-Serbian propaganda, had suggested that “warmongering (Serbs) will harm the whole of Eastern Europe...” (Dragoslav Rančić, 1 November). Because of that “the West should make a radical about-turn (...) cliché pictures from Versailles and Jalta should be abandoned” since Serbia has declared itself “against the rest of the world...” (Strem, 1 November). The Croatian nation, “attacked by Serbs, crushed by war and exhausted by bestial horrors”, should answer: “how in future could (Croats) believe their neighbours, the Serbs...”. “Who could seriously imagine that (the Croat nation) will join Serbia in a South Slav state union”. “(The war) destroyed the last possible chance for Croats and Serbs to live within a common constitutional unit”. “In the country of the aggressor (Serbia), it is – completely peaceful” (Reissmieller, 1 November).

These were the arguments for Western Europe to “clash with the Yugoslav army and Serbia” (Alois Mock, 11 November). From that point of view, Germany’s imposing of sanctions was an opportunity to make “Serbian people understand that Serbia does not have support in Europe, which will strengthen the resistance of Serbs and others against the excesses of the federal army”. “The process of self-questioning (in Serbia), including in the army, is in the ascent”. “This is obvious from numerous officers and soldiers leaving the army – not only Slovenes and Serbs but others also...” (Hans Dietrich Gencher, 16 December).

However, the bias of the world press was soon something that went without saying. One should be persuaded in this by the sarcastic tones suggesting that the “objectivity of (the world press) cannot discover massacres against Serbian people, burned down villages, demolished Orthodox churches, but rather describes in detail convoys of humanitarian aid to Dubrovnik and is disgusted with the destiny of this town. And even world reporters should have seen that its old core was not hit by a single shell” (Rodoljub Gerić, 1 December). European mediators were also an “extended arm of Croatian propaganda” (R. Savičević, 6 November), since they calmly leave to one side that Croatian authorities are “claiming clean hands in the exodus of unprotected Serbian people from Western Slavonia”. These authorities gave a “polite explanation” for the impudent robberies of Serbian villages which were labelled as being terrorist bases with full stocks of food” (Radoje Arsenić, 6 November). While Croatian propaganda is “sowing insolent lies” and “passes its own crimes onto others” (ibid), at the same time “massacre was committed on helpless elderly people, women and children” (Dragoljub Stevanović, 6 November). “Now, in November 1991, Croatian warriors under the Ustashi flag, burned to the ground 18 Serbian villages”. ... “Evacuated villages in the same region, which were also devastated in 1942, have been burned to ashes again by Ustashi warriors, 18 of them, that is, four times more than before”... “The only spot

in Europe where nazism-fascism is in revival and is armed, fanning a new war campaign, is nowadays Tudman's (Croatia)". (...) "Today, free and strong Europe has no morality to stop this renewed threat in Croatia" (Božidar Dikić, 6 November).

The characteristic untruthfulness of foreign propaganda was confirmed in an example of incredible and horrible slander about the "massive crime against Serbian Jews" (Aleksandar Demajo, 1 November). Knowing the Serbian inclination to equate Ustashi genocide against them with nazi genocide committed against the Jews, in as much as the slander that Serbia "was the first country which had proudly declared (...) that it was *Judenfrei* - meaning cleansed of Jews" (Lea Bauman, 1 November) could seem as an unexpected and unjust blow, it simply proved the unmistakably hostile attitudes of the foreign media against innocently sacrificed Serbian people.

THE MYTH OF THE SACRIFICED HEAVENLY PEOPLE

This myth of Serbian people, which has mainly remained in the vague spheres of oral culture, was addressed in *Politika* by Dr. Milenković who tried to recount it in concise terms. He stated five stereotypes related to the Serbs. The first one is: "We must forgive, but not forget"; the second: "Defeats are Serbian victories"; the third, that "the heavenly kingdom belongs" to the Serbs; the fourth that the Serbs are "peaceful, and engage only in defensive wars"; and the fifth, that for a Serb "Yugoslavia is destiny". According to him, Serbs should not behave any more "as if they have nothing else left but to repeat the worn-out phrase of "forgiving without forgetting", but that they should "... either remain consistent to the message of the New Testament to return good for bad, or else adopt another formula of the Old Testament: "An eye for an eye - a tooth for a tooth" (Dr. Aleksandar Milenković, 11 December). Without questioning the myth of the Heavenly people, which is "imbued with the ethics of the Kosovo defeat and well-intentioned Christianity", the Serbs were much too often "lambs for slaughter" although they "set out to war only when they were driven to the wall" (ibid.). Thoroughly identifying himself with his nation, Milenković indicates the paradox which, nevertheless, does not shake his confidence, but on the contrary, confirms his acceptance of the myth of the sacrifice of Serbs: "Although we are 'peaceful' and find it hard to accept the need for a preventive assault, we have a reputation for being Greater Serbs, hegemonists, bullies of the Balkans" (ibid.).

Bearing in mind that suffering is a faithful companion to war, it is necessary to accept its inevitability, which is achieved through a story of chivalrous sacrifice as the main element of the Serbian identity and destiny. A particular contribution to this has been made by the touching evidence of the Serbian people which indicates that the "good Serbian nation... suffers a lot" (Amanda Brook, 11 November), but owing to the fact that it is "used to suffering it will overcome all its misfortunes" (Laffite, 11 November). The ritual cheering of Serbian patriotism revolves around "indestructible" Serbia which has "made it clear to the world that it will go on existing united with its brothers (Žarko Petrović, 11 November). "Only if we are in accord with each other will we restore the old glory and international reputation", while the world should remember "the heroic deeds of a small (nation), always persecuted by oppressors and conquerors..." (Radojko Đoković, 11 November), which "found the strength and courage to revert to its freedom-loving and state-creating chivalrous tradition" (Predrag Milojević, 11 December).

Sacrifice, which is, nevertheless, understood in the myth as the incarnation of chivalry and in this meaning should be addressed to the people to mobilise their war

potential, in everyday reality cannot be accepted as something to be wished for, but is felt as a misfortune and injustice. Therefore, in this way, the interpreted sufferings of sacrifice were used as a firm basis for the struggle for rights, "not only the right to self-determination" of the Serbian nation in Croatia, "but also for the right to life and elementary security, in view of the repeated genocide against it" (Dr. Mihajlo Marković, 1 November).

The status of the Serbian nation in Yugoslavia which "in its existence has experienced its ups and downs, has been glorified and vilified" (Dr. Aleksandar Milenković, 11 November), has not been favoured, but it has looked upon the state it created, by the suffering of numerous victims, as its own "... while on the Croatian side there have been those who have experienced this state as something alien, and imposed on them (Predrag Milojević, 11 December). This point of view should probably be explained by understanding that Serbs "brought democracy to Yugoslavia on their bayonets" (Stjepan Radić, 11 December). However, the irony in this understanding of imposed democracy remained hidden, so it was not surprising that statements were made that "among the Serbian people, unfortunately, there are still those who do not accept (the war) as a reality" (Olivera Popović, 11 December), while (the Croatian nation is "manipulated to the extent that it fails to see any reality" (wife of a Yugoslav People's Army - JNA officer, 26 December).

Comments were made in sarcastic headings such as "No Serbs Alive in Jasenovac" (Radivoje Petrović, 1 November) while Milošević claimed that he could "guarantee the freedom and security of (Serbian regions)", since the "ultimatum and the threat of sanctions and blockade were ... without precedent..." (Slobodan Milošević, 1 November) and it did not seem likely that they would come true. Besides, there was still the memory of a category of self-determination, invented in socialism, which the Presidency of the SFRY (26 December) attempted to apply, through the concept that Serbs in Croatia "as a constituent nation of the Yugoslav community are entitled to self-determination, as well as to secession", while Milošević formulated the "option of the continuity of (Yugoslavia) as the common state of equal republics and nations who wish to remain in it" (26 December).

The archetypal linking of the people to an ancestral soil, which is latent in the collective consciousness, was made to erupt in the Serbian people outside Serbia. The centuries-old Serbian homes which bore witness to the "centuries-old existence (of Serbs) in this area" (Editorial Board, 1 December) and which had proved the inviolable right of Serbian people to its territory, impregnated with the blood of previous generations. "Why would (Serbia) want to 'grab for itself' that piece of barren soil and rocks, as it is accused of doing by the Croatian leadership?" ... The Serbs "will not be under the 'checked flag'", since "they were slaughtered under the 'checked flag' in World War II" (Vjekoslav Radović, 16 December). "The struggle against (the Serbian nation) in World Wars I and II continues today in Croatia" (Dragan Dragojlović, 16 December). While, on the one hand, "unpunished (criminals) are now given 'orders' to repeat the genocide", the Serbs are, on the other hand, "nationally and politically shaken due to the half-century long minimising of the Ustashi genocide" (Dr. Aleksandar Milenković, 11 December).

The European Community "which so strongly invokes democracy and the rights of nations and citizens cannot at the same time allow genocide against the Serbian nation in Croatia" (Branko Kitanovski, 6 November). This was repeated over and over again, while fear and the desire for revenge grew: "The ICS (Independent Croatia State) takes

organs off living Serbs and sells them to European medical clinics for profit" (Borivoje Petrović, 6 November). The guards "cut their skin and then extinguish cigarettes on the wounds (...) They took out Miloš Živković's eyes and kidneys and then brutally murdered him (...) They made us sign statements that we are Chetniks, terrorists, war criminals, that we were wrong" (N. Bogavac, 16 December).

Accounts of atrocities became a justification for creating an atmosphere of revenge. This started with the story that "the limit which, when it is crossed, demands a strong advance (by Serbia), has long passed ..." and that we "must not lose a single moment (...). Unless we are organised, body dumps will become deeper and more bloody than in World War II (Borivoje Petrović, 6 November). The Serbian population "is not only unprotected, but is indeed the largest victim" (Branislav Radivojša, 11 December). "The predicament of (Serbs in Croatia) is that they have no protection against the Ustashi knife". Therefore, the war "objectives are very clear and concrete - the protection of the Serbian nation from slaughter" (Radovan Pavlović, 11 December). The Serbian nation "rose up against the strongest among the powerful of its time - the Third Reich". Following this example, the message is: "We have no choice but to stop the largest violence and madness of the 20th century (...) Instead of celebrating a heroic victory it is with wrath and pain that we warn of the danger of reviving fascism" (TANJUG, 11 December).

However, while the "policy of peace", which "has no alternative", was elaborated, the refugees and exiles escaped "with their bare lives, fleeing the Croatian mob of soldiers which set Serbian villages on fire, destroying everything in sight" (Mirjana Kuburović, 6 November). The Government of Serbia then generously announced that in Serbia "there is sufficient place for all refugees from Croatia, irrespective of how many of them arrive" (Serbian Government, 6 November). Though, all those "banished by the Ustashi authorities, as well as those who were left without their homes due to war-related destruction", should be "temporarily settled in the area of the Serbian region of Slavonia" (Goran Hadžić, 6 November). Since the beginning, the "forced moving of (Serbs) from the territories where the war was waged presented a serious threat of changing the ethnic map of Croatia" (Radovan Kovačević; Radoje Arsenić, 6 November). "In kilometre-long columns, thousands (of people), for days, came down this mountain towards Bosnia" (Editorial Office, 6 November).

At that time combat readiness for the home defence rapidly increased, as indicated by the passionate statements of Krajina citizens: "We will not withdraw and will use all our force and our lives to remain a part of Krajina (representatives of Territorial Defence Units, Okučani, 16 December). It was widely believed that "this powerful (Serbian minority) in the heart of their lands was capable of preventing the consolidation of a state like this, even if it was created as a result of events on the international scene (Vasa Čubrilović, 21 December). Self-assured threats that Croatia "must hear it loud and clear that if it wants full sovereignty outside Yugoslavia its territories will not remain intact" (Dr. Ratko Marković, 11 November). They stirred up hostile public opinion, especially when dealing with the concealed history of how the Serbian people "made the greatest contribution and had the largest number of victims in the creation of the first and second Yugoslavia" (M. Jovičić, 11 November), while "Croatia took out more than it brought into Yugoslavia" (John Kennedy, 21 December). Assertions like this undoubtedly contributed to the fanning of righteous fury, the bolstering of collective pride and a growth of hatred against a horrible enemy.

THE MYTH OF THE ENEMY

Besides deeply pervading the traditional folk culture, the myth of the enemy was one of the most significant aspects of communist ideology (K. Čavoški, 1986). Just like the folk proverb of the "wolf changing its appearance, but never its character", during the socialist "transition to communism" enemies were presented as potentially omnipresent, appearing in all seemingly impossible dialectic combinations, continuously watchful for an opportunity to obstruct the "independent Yugoslav advance to Communism". Being endangered by an enemy bestowed on the Party an importance which incarnated the values of the past war. Once it had become a thing of the past to contend that the failure of socialism was exclusively due to the result of enemy activity, it seemed that the time had arrived to end the myth of the enemy, but unfortunately, it was soon revitalised by power holders now in nationalist robes, who gave it new strength and used it as an already-elaborated mobilising principle. The beginning of the disintegration of Yugoslavia coincides with the return of this myth after a short period of *anabiosis* and its re-channelling in the inflaming of nationalism. The result, as is known, was that those who until yesterday were 'brothers', members of different nations, became bitter enemies.

Inter-ethnic political conflicts were translated into the mythical language of antagonism between good and evil which, on the one hand, led towards the designation of the leader as the archetypal father, and, on the other, the designation of the enemy, the members of other nations, as evil personified. In addition to other forms of activating the myth of the enemy, which had otherwise been deeply implanted in the collective consciousness, the media gave it new, increasingly aggressive strength. These texts in *Politika* allow us to distinguish analytically between 1) the enemy in the narrow sense of the word, and 2) the enemy in the wider sense.

1) The notion of the *enemy in the narrow sense* could be applied to direct adversaries, as on the battlefield, but also to perfidious internal traitors based on traditional epics such as the one about the traitor Vuk Branković, as well as the socialist ideology's constant 'threat' from 'quislings' of every possible hue.

The direct enemies in the war, the demonised Croatian soldiers, were often called Ustashi, in order to evoke the suppressed memories of their cruelty and malice. It has been said that the war they waged was "dirty and cruel and conducted by using all means", explaining the lack of humanity and absence of moral worthiness of the Croatian soldiers in their "use of synthetic drugs." "Stuffing oneself with drugs is obligatory in certain units of the Guards (Marko Nicović, 11 November), which "so drugged, at dusk, leave in their black clothes for the front line." Croatian soldiers, in their "struggle against the liberators, make use of the most perfidious frauds" (Petar Kočić, 6 November). However, in order to really achieve the psychological and moral advantage over them, a certain dose of pity was called for; namely, they did that out of fear, because they were weak and impotent, because the Croatian forces were, "practically defeated in this part of the Vukovar front, as shown by the attempts of certain groups to break out of the encirclement, through the corn fields, dressed in Yugoslav National Army uniforms and civilian clothes" (Petar Kočić, 6 November).

The betrayal of the JNA (Yugoslav People's Army) by Croatian officers was understood as the logical consequence of the treason of the Croatian leader, Dr. Franjo Tuđman, since he "shamefully betrayed the JNA himself" (Nikola Hercigonja, 6 November). However, the move by the Croatian leadership, which, "dissatisfied with

the incompetent management of operations, appoints to commanding positions people who had been properly trained by the JNA” (Snežana Berić, 6 November), was taken as evidence of the quality and moral superiority of the JNA.

The fact that the situation in the JNA was chaotic can be seen in the text by R. Pavlović who spoke of the “beheaded army” and the “wave of protests” by soldiers of the reserve “which once again hit the army”. He also wrote of the army ranks having been “cleansed of waverers and traitors”, ...”who left their houses to the protection of peasants from Šumadija and Vojvodina” ... while soldiers “on the battlefields sometimes do not even have decent uniforms and are issued with arms which go silent”... . While some reservists “stay at the front longer than three months, others find salvation in the arms of their mothers”. Moreover, this embarrassing situation which harmed the reputation of the JNA was much aggravated by the fact that “after the offensive and the success of (the JNA), the local hunters go there for war trophies...” (Radovan Pavlović, 11 December).

The coming “architecture of peace” (the Vance plan) created the first fissures in the hitherto alliance of Serbian politicians, despite assurances to the contrary. Dr. Milan Babić claimed that there was no “serious political breach” in the Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina and that it was “merely a case of different views on defence...”, as well as that he was convinced that the Serbian nation in Serbia “will never betray the interests of the Serbian nation in the Krajina” ...which has been “affected most by the opinion from the highest ranks (of Serbian authorities) that they should accept the status offered by the EC...” (Milan Babić, 1 November).

Furthermore, the intolerant Tudman’s appeal to “Croatian people and to the Serbian population” was found as proof of “racist connotations” (Dr. Petar Džadžić, 9 June) which was the basis for the horrible conclusion that his mission was the “final termination of everything that is Serbian in Croatia” (Džadžić, 16 November), since Serbs were denoted as a “disturbing factor” in “establishing the Croatian Nation–State and Croatian national identity” (Džadžić, 9 June). Such reasoning was, nevertheless, also supported by the frightening attitudes of the Croatian leadership which decided to “grant citizenship even to criminals if they committed crimes in Serbia” (M. Šašić, 6 November).

The foreign agency news that Croatian armed forces had committed an attack on the territory of the Republic of Serbia at the very moment when peace negotiations in the Hague had started (REUTERS, 6 November) helped the given image to become firmly accepted and also supported the trustworthy revival of the myth of the enemy, because the “fears (of Serbs in Croatia) and Serbs in Bosnia – appeared justified”. (*Washington Post*, 16 December)

2) The *enemy in the wider sense* is analytically different from the direct enemy. Although united with the latter, it could complete and intensify the story of the enemy, contributing to its melting into the neomythological sphere. This category covers:

a) the interests of religions traditionally antagonistic towards Orthodoxy, namely Islam and Catholicism, from whose evil impacts, according to the famous Orthodox Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović³, Orthodoxy is supposed to save the world;

b) in modern times, the more dangerous secular interests of “external powers” which, in the collective sub-conscious, culminated in German domination. (On this

³ Noticeable is the firm peacemaking “role of Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović in public opinion formation in Serbia, which began before World War I, but which has never ended so far...” [Jerotić, 1995, p. 185].

threat, Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović had also warned in one of his numerous writings, whose title *The Serbian Soul*, indicates the essence of the Serbian–Orthodox mythological tradition.)

a) *The renewal of the influence of churches* after the destruction of the myth of the communist paradise on earth also encouraged nationalism. In view of the fact that three different religions differentiated the Yugoslav nations, they were more or less suppressed during the period of dominance of the communist ideology. But once its authority weakened, due to corruption and internal conflicts, the return to the discontinued religious traditions could act as an alternative, and the faithful really started to group in denominationally (= nationally) separated flocks. Although it did not seem that there was a major chance for religion to substitute secular ideology, since the young, for the most part, were not religiously inclined, the space for the manipulation of religious-national feelings was extended. Initially, in a situation of crisis, the possibility was tested for confrontation between the traditionally religious peasantry, the proletariat and the lower urban strata and the atheistic middle class as the representative of the official ideology. This idea was, in Serbia, manipulated under the slogan of an “anti-bureaucratic revolution” which enabled the communist authorities in Serbia to reinforce themselves by disguising themselves *quid pro quo* into their own alternative. The middle class was, instead, drawn towards national identification, whereby the conflict was finally focused on the war lever of nationalism.

Catholicism became once again the symbol of antagonism towards Orthodoxy, here equated with Serbs who, “because of their Orthodox confession and their name, innocently perished in the pits, concentration camps or in front of the criminal firing squads” (Serbian Archbishop Paul, 5 May). Considering Catholicism as the prime mover of the “anti-Serbian conspiracy”, *Politika* published that the Pope “demands an advance justification for (himself) and the Catholic Church to ‘be rid of the past’, i.e. demands that the fact that unprecedented crimes were incited and even committed by their “spiritual shepherds” – members of the Catholic clergy – be forgotten” (Nikola Hercigonja, 6 November).

“Despite the open and still unhealed wounds due to the overt Catholic–Orthodox conflict, (the Pope) goes even further in an attempt at “new evangelisation” (Slobodan Aleksandrić, 16 December). Later, when the antagonisms became sharp and when the Catholic Croatia decided to secede from Yugoslavia, the statement by the Pope “(we) suffer together with our brothers on the other side of the Adriatic” (Pope John Paul II, 16 December) could be read exclusively as a confirmation of the hostile attitude towards Orthodox Serbdom, since, while referring to “brothers”, he naturally meant the Catholic, i.e. Croatian, population (Slobodan Aleksandrić, 16 November).

b) *The impact of ‘external powers’*, meaning the European Union, was accepted with great suspicion, which was justified by the attitude that the EU consists of countries which “geographically and historically are not distant enough from Yugoslavia to be objective” (Dr. Ratko Marković, 11 November). The European Union was understood as a tool for the realisation of odious German influence, and its appeal to democracy and human rights was found hypocritical when compared with the “contemporary permission for genocide over Serbian people in Croatia” (Branko Kitanovski, 6 November).

The myth of itself which Europe fosters underlines the superior values of its civilisation. Nevertheless, one cannot disregard the awareness in Europe nowadays that noble ideals are accompanied by the parallel existence of an entirely different and very

crude reality. An awareness of this reverse side of the European myth is held by numerous modern scholars, and Edgar Maurine expresses it in the following way: "If Europe stands for law, it also stands for power, if it means democracy it is also submission; the material, just like the spiritual; if it is a symbol of moderation it is also irrationality; this means that the mind is also a myth, including the idea of the mind" (E. Maurine, 1989:25).

The events in the Balkans at the beginning of the 90s, which had caused the dissolution of the Yugoslav community, were primarily the result of internal controversies, although not autonomous from external impacts. From the point of view of the Yugoslav media, i.e. the interests which ruled over them from behind, these external impacts were explained exclusively as malicious: "(EU countries), influenced by Germany and its satellites Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria, as well as, unfortunately, Italy, had transformed their right to good assistance into compulsion and threats, supporting only the advocates of those who say that there is no Yugoslavia any more and doing everything to break it down. (...) Relationships with Hungary are in crisis as a consequence of its involvement in the 'Kalashnikov' affair, because of its interfering in some internal matters of Yugoslavia and because of its direct support to secessionist republics" (Vladislav Jovanović, 1 December). In this context, for the majority of the Serbian nation, not only was the view credible that Europe "was late in starting to listen, and then impatient and clumsy in feeling the pulse of the Balkans..." (Petar Ilić, 1 November), but also Karadžić's intolerant messages that Europe "should tend to its own business, and leave us to do our job ourselves", for only "if (Europe) understands this and gives up the ultimatum, will its assistance be valuable" (Dr. Radovan Karadžić, 1 November).

When the European Union imposed sanctions against the FR of Yugoslavia it appeared "quite clear that the measures (of the EU) were political and without any economic sense" (Milenko Pešić, 11 December). "Sanctions (of the EU) should not last long, since they are not legally founded". "Measures (of the EU) are unilateral..." (TANJUG, 11 December), they are "deliberate consequences of hasty steps" (Information Service of the Federal Executive Council, 26 December). The "Declaration (of the EU) leaves no room for negotiations..." (Muharem Durić, 1 November). "It is a case of a political verdict (of the European Arbitration Committee) backed by sheer power". "Yugoslavia is again threatened by armed intervention if it does not accept the Hague verdict" (TANJUG, 11 December). "...External pressures grow increasingly stronger, especially on the part of Germany..." (Blagoje Komljenović, 11 December). Germany "and its block wish to break up the economic, political and cultural space of Yugoslavia" (Dr. Milorad Unković, 11 December).

The "structure of the opinion (of the Arbitration Committee) reveals a scenario which compromises the legal profession" (Dr. Vladan Kutlešić, 11 December). "The opinion (of Badintair's committee) was the greatest of a series of scandals in the Hague last week". "If the representative of the French Constitutional Council does not know what a second-year student of law should know, then it is clear what the whole thing is about" (Đorđe Martić, 11 December). The European Community "dealing with the Yugoslav crisis, often blunders" (Miroslav Stojanović, 16 December).

At the beginning of the Yugoslav break-up it seemed that it was actually impossible to obtain global recognition of the secession of the Yugoslav republics of Croatia and Slovenia. The argument to fend off this possibility was that these republics were "but guinea pigs to test Germany's power" (Dušan Pešić, 16 December), since "recognition

would create a precedent in the entire European space and encourage various secessionist processes which would endanger the security of the Balkans and even Europe (Dušan Pešić, 16 December). An appeal was sent to Germany "to give up the deadline ... for the proclamation of independence of Slovenia and Croatia". (...) It was explained that: "Germany believes that the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia would deal a hard moral and, in view of the armament of Croatia, also a physical blow (to Serbia)". (...) With its policy, Germany "repaid (the peoples of the Balkans) who have never neglected their affiliation to them or forgotten the fact that they belong to what is called "the German spirit".

However, a scenario for the future course of events was made: "Croatia will, immediately following recognition, demand external military assistance and even intervention". (...) In the situation of the recognition of Croatia, (the Croatian Serbs) will continue their fight still more resolutely", while Serbia "will use the recognition of Croatia as a pretext to accelerate the gathering of all Serbs in Yugoslavia under its wing" (Petar Popović, 16 December).

Alongside doubt in the possibility of secession, there was still some suspicion or inkling that the Germans "cannot be averted from what they intended to do when they promised the Croatian leader that they would make him the gift of recognition of state sovereignty and agreement to secession". Bearing in mind that the mention of Germany recalls World War II, it seemed quite rational that the "stopping of a destructive (war) on our territory could mean the prevention of a war of larger proportions and more tragic consequences" (Miroslav Stojanović, 16 December).

In order not to make the image of the sacrificed Serbian nation too hopeless and thus endanger the mobilising function of the neo-myth of the victim, support from anyone at all was very much welcome. Just as world public opinion against Serbian politics and propaganda became increasingly evident, so more significant became the publicity in the domestic media given to traditional Serbian friends who, no matter how weak, could still be called this. Such friends were, naturally, Orthodox Greeks, which was proved by the efforts of the head of Greek diplomacy, since he "waged a seven-hour battle to convince his colleagues of the counter-productivity of the embargo", while the Greek media found "that the Hague peace process on the destiny of Yugoslavia had turned into a proper farce" (TANJUG, 6 November). Russia was another Orthodox mythical friend which elicited great expectations but, due to its position at that time, could only, through President Gorbachev, indicate that the war in Yugoslavia "should be a lesson for all, because of the potential consequences of state disintegration in Europe" (Mikhail Gorbachev, 1 November).

Thus, the people were offered hope that awareness would be raised that this "was the most serious war waged in Europe so far" (L. Hamilton, 1 November), and that the "question of Yugoslavia concerns practically all the countries in the world" (Giulio Andreotti, 26 December) which would provoke more rational solutions to the complicated Balkan conflicts. This hope was supported by the different interests of the world powers. *Politika* reported that "London looked upon the incredible persistence of Germany in unilaterally recognising the independence of Slovenia and Croatia with major displeasure" and the French president stated that "recognition of (Croatia) and Slovenia is risky" (François Mitterrand, 15 December). Lord Carrington, who was subsequently ousted due to biased support of the Serbs, as it was interpreted at that time, believed that "selective recognition of (Croatia) and Slovenia would lead to the collapse of the Hague Conference" (Lord Carrington, 16 December). He also stated

that the Hague proposals “have already exceeded the limits of good services and turned into commanders and judges” (6 November).

Quoting these attitudes which were favourable to Yugoslavia served in fact to strengthen the myth of the enemy through the creation of the tactical illusion that Germany “would, tomorrow, find itself alone with the attitude that Slovenia and Croatia should be recognised immediately” (TANJUG, 16 December). However, in support of the myths of the ruling party, an opinion emerged, which was in the Serbian media already a conviction, that “the Yugoslav crisis served the purpose of a springboard for the affirmation of Germany on the world diplomatic scene”; that Germany “in the Yugoslav case demonstrates its leading role by doing what suits it best, regardless of what others may think”. “Deciding to recognise the independence of two Yugoslav republics, the Government in Bonn, with its policy of an accomplished act, ... had a specific objective in mind: to encourage the Slovenes and Croats” (Slobodan Aleksandrić, 26 December). Even the Croatian troops “were nourished by large countries...” (Miroslav Lazanski, 26 December).

THE MYTH OF WAR AS THE ONLY SOLUTION

The politics of the ruling party continued in the well-learned ideological style of the former Yugoslavia, which should have become obsolete long before. It was represented at that time by Dr. Borislav Jović, the man who submitted his resignation to the SFRY president and then withdrew it. His indecision is clearly revealed in his disharmonious statements. For instance, he said that Serbia and “the Serbian nation in general wanted a peaceful, democratic and legal resolution to the Yugoslav crisis”, because Serbia “could not enter a war for the defence of the Serbian nation and thus be proclaimed an aggressor”, immediately after having stated that the “taking of territories where Serbs account for the majority created the most favourable conditions for talks on a lasting political solution” (Dr. Borislav Jović, 6 November), as if the former and the latter statements were entirely unrelated.⁴

This was followed by talk of “a small country in the Balkans wishing to participate equally in decisions related to its own destiny”. Instead of this, “as political solutions adverse to their interests and will, our people and our Republic have been threatened unscrupulously with force and with economic sanctions,” (Dr. Borislav Jović, 6 November). Jović’s indecisiveness was supposed to be compensated for by his encouragement of belligerency, which would fit into the “national-liberation ideology” of the former Yugoslavia and its ritual celebration of fighting. This time he directed his comments on raising the combatant morale to the Serbian nation, on whom, “if ready to defend its national rights with all its forces, an unacceptable political solution will not be imposed by anyone” (ibid.). This goes hand in hand with the communist myths and rituals on the inevitable enemy, in this case recognised as the world community, which would be scornfully labelled (by yesterdays Marxists) as the (petty)bourgeois of the world who “favour the illegal acts and illegal military power of those who commit secession and crimes against the people” (Dr. Borislav Jović, 6 November).

⁴ Officials of Krajina, with their decision to condemn “political speculations with Serbdom for personal promotion...”, and their “unlimited support to the Government of Serbia and (President Milošević) as the only internationally recognised representative of the Serbian nation as a whole”, “questioned the distancing of the Serbian leadership and their assurances that Serbia was not at war” (Officials of Krajina, 6 November).

When the Constitutional Court of SFRY confirmed that the Croatian policy was “a classic act of unilateral secession and a typical case of the refusal of federal obedience and the negation of the legality and legitimacy of the federal state and its regulations...” (Constitutional Court of SFRY, 26 December), it all sounded like the “good old times” when the Party pulled all the strings. If nothing else, the official attitude was that, regardless of the break-up, Yugoslavia “as an international subject and founder of the UN, has all the conditions to preserve its international-legal personality” (Dr. Branko Kostić, 26 December).

Perhaps this was the reason why official policy, contrary to attitudes on the EU, manifested its confidence in the UN, emphasising that the “sending of Peacekeeping Forces to Croatia creates conditions to end armed conflicts and to stop victims being made, as well as to promote the normal development of negotiations on a political solution” (Dr. Ratko Marković, 11 November), and that the arrival of the UN Peacekeeping Forces was an “urgent (...) substantial and unique measure to avoid new bloodshed” (Information Service of the Federal Executive Council, 26 December).

However, the demands made on the Presidency of SFRY by the Serbian Radical Party and the League of Communists – Movement for Yugoslavia, which had great influence on those holding power, “to proclaim a state of war, announce a general mobilisation and crush the fascist armed formations in Croatia” (6 November) contributed to the spreading of the myth that “the resolution of the Yugoslav crisis is in war alone” (Rade Elez, 6 November). The conviction had to be affirmed in the public that war was the “only solution for the Yugoslav crisis” (Todor Dutina, 6 November), in order to turn the “six torches (in the Yugoslav coat of arms) into the present raging fire of the republic” (Verica Rupar, 6 November).

The idea of the inevitability of war for the renewal of the nation can be found in different authors throughout the history of European nationalism (e.g. Herman von Ceisserling and Erich von Ludendorf). With this idea, the myth was spread on the sacrificing of the nation in war in the name of the survival of the homeland (Čolović, 1994: 125). But in this concrete case, the establishing of the myth of war as the only possible solution was based on the fact that the JNA remained the only “argument” in the hands of the authorities. During 1991 the Army and the Serbian majority in the Krajina had the “same objective – the preservation of Yugoslavia” (Milan Babić, 1 November). Statements by the Croatian Government that the JNA was “obliged to immediately lift the blockade of town areas surrounded by the army...”, and that after the expiry of the deadline, the soldiers of the JNA would be treated “as members of a hostile occupying army in accordance with the rules of the international law on war”, were answered by general Nikola Uzelac who said that “the JNA is not one to violate cease-fires...” justifying his decision by maintaining “that leaving the area was out of question”, in a situation where the Army was “the only guarantor of the Serbian nation”. “We keep repeating that we want a peaceful solution”, emphasised the general in a patronising manner, but “it is obvious that the (other party) which does not want Yugoslavia, does not want a peaceful solution either” (Nikola Uzelac, 11 November). Agency news supported these claims with reports similar to the one which stated that “eleven agreements reached so far have been violated, most often on the part of the Croatian Ustashi forces” (TANJUG, 11 November).

Consequently, the action by the army seemed not only justifiable but also inevitable since, “while the JNA did not act with full force in Croatia, the phenomenon of ‘clay pigeons’ appeared” (Olivera Popović, 11 December). There were also controversial

objections that in the JNA both “biblical naivete and honesty”, and “unreal ethics and collapsed moral norms...” prevailed (Miroslav Lazanski, 26 December). However, the people mostly believed that the Army was “insufficiently determined and excessively tolerant in its operations hitherto” (a citizen of Knin, 26 December). Among other things, the reputation of the JNA was constantly under threat due to the enemy side wanting to use “the well-known scenario” to accuse the JNA of bombing on the Catholic Christmas, “in order to let its own public and the world public know that they are being attacked on their holiday” (Ratko Mladić, 26 December). The fact that the military commander Mladić self-confidently took the initiative is revealed by his statement that the enemy “will not consider repeating the attack on Knin ever again” (Ratko Mladić, 26 December), although a period of a few years proved him wrong.

Unfortunately, the opposition in Serbia continuously contributed to the inflaming of the nationalist atmosphere since, in this historic moment, the myth of the nation appeared as the strongest social model to all. Even if there were more than just a dozen who dared to think and speak differently, they would not have been heard above the noise of the destructive war cries which resounded from the majority following the creation and/or revitalisation of the neomyths described.

The mutual scorn exhibited between the ruling party and the opposition who accused each other of the betrayal of national interests (each of them claiming exclusive rights in their representation) was a successful means of spreading a shroud of mist, skilfully accomplished partly thanks to the untaught moves of the opposition. The effort of the opposition to avoid nationalistic paranoia by offering a different vision and by overcoming the myths of the ruling party is apparent, for example, from the following conviction of one marginal party: “Behind the curtain of support given to the Serbian opposition (from Western Europe and America), there was hidden delight taken in Serbian discord, and an infernal, detailed and long-term plan was being made to destroy the Serbian state and Serbdom” (Party of Social Justice, 9 July).

Vuk Drašković, the leader of the Serbian Movement of Renewal, insisted “on the necessity to declare war on genocide (Croatia), which then could not count on international protection” (Vuk Drašković, 6 November). He dreamt that Serbia “would then have the right to strongly demand from Europe, Russia and the USA to crush the genocide and fascist authorities in Croatia” (Vuk Drašković, 12 September). But, instead of acting so ‘cleverly’, Serbia “was pushed into a war against everyone, into economic and diplomatic isolation at a moment when, by fault of the present regime, it was unprepared in both economic and military terms, and did not have its own army or a reliable ally anywhere in the world” (Vuk Drašković, 6 September). He was aware, at least, of the horror of war sufferings, and warned: “...After this horror, we will, nevertheless, have to negotiate, but I am afraid that we will then get less than we could have obtained today” (Vuk Drašković, 6 September). Yugoslavia “cannot be preserved by force, although it was destroyed by force, which is largely due to the Serbian president” (Vuk Drašković, 6 September).

On behalf of the Democratic Party, Dr. Zoran Đinđić stated that Serbs and Croats “obviously cannot and do not wish to live together, so that it is necessary to find a politically wise model for their delimitation”; that Serbia “without any complexes, must request the separation of the Serbian from the Croatian nation

living in these trouble spots, under full control of international institutions”, instead of the Serbian political leadership engaging “in the structuring of a ‘new Yugoslavia’ “. “The solution – claimed Đinđić – is not in a demagogic insistence on Yugoslavia, the right of nations to self-determination and so on”. “Simple solutions, such as the transformation of (Yugoslav) republics into sovereign states, solve nothing, but only add oil to the fire” (Dr. Zoran Đinđić, 6 November).

Dr. Dragoljub Mićunović was one of the few persons within the opposition who, in this delirium of war, tried, although in vain, to make the voice of sanity heard. He pointed out that the current war “is the expression of the impossibility of finding political solutions”, and that Serbia “carries a big responsibility, no matter if it claims it is not involved in war” (Dr. Dragoljub Mićunović, 1 December). Equally useless were warnings that “we are not prepared, in military, negotiating or propaganda terms. (...) We have found ourselves sitting at somebody else’s table, a part of our sovereignty has passed into alien hands. (...) We have entered a conflict unprepared, either for war, or for negotiations, or any means of propaganda, and have forgotten that wars are today won by the media” (Dr. Dragoljub Mićunović, 1 November).

THE INEVITABILITY OF MYTHS

The influence of the myth on our lives is not easy to appreciate. Thus, it would be necessary to distance ourselves from the mythical influences working within us and outside us. Yet, it is very difficult to step outside ourselves and outside the various pressures of the time we live in. There is a continuing tension between those who are concerned with the limitations of the ruling myths, and those who believe that they will be secure within the existing ones. Although the limitations which have become customary can rarely be changed, only in the exceptional times of revolutionary upturns has the misfortune of Yugoslav society had the predicament of continuously testing the illusory change of ideologies, the substitution of myths, and the replacement of values subject to those in power.

In periods when the ruling myths limit other horizons, only individual attempts are left to recognise and comprehend the principles by which the mythical patterns influence individuals and society. So we can, at least to some extent, proceed intellectually from personal involvement in the mythical plots which are present in society and in ourselves. From these attempts, certain features become clear which ensure the effect of the mythical heritage on individuals and society.

The secular understanding of the myth implies that it is not a definitely determined category which has the same characteristics in all cultures, but that it represents a framework which encompasses social life (Kirk, 1970). The original meaning of myth is *story*, a story which is not intended to present the external, factual manifestation of events, but rather to discover the meaning of the internal experience of individuals and society. The myth is primarily related to the uncovering of meaning (Larue, 1975). Therefore, there is almost no aspect of individual or collective life which has not been inspired by myth (Hegy, 1991). As an archetype of collective thinking (Levy-Strauss, 1978), of the individual and collective unconscious (Jung, Freud), the myth represents a model, not only for all forms of social life (Malinowski, 1926) – political, economic, religious, educational, familial – but also a model for individual creation and personal quests, for dreams, stories, art, music, an understanding of the place of the human being in the cosmos etc.

However, individual discussion of tradition is regularly considered undesirable, because it questions the crucial purpose of the myth: to enable the integration of a society while spreading the feeling of common belonging and forming collective consciousness. There is an almost instinctive collective conviction that rational argumentation can hardly form a community. Hence, if the collective mind should face the judgement of individual reason, then the individual should be left alone without the comfort of collective belief. Anyway, if individuals refuse to participate in the collective myth, it does not indicate complete emancipation from myth as such. They are, instead, forced to create their own myths, in their families, among friends or like-minded persons. It is difficult to avoid myths because they return over and over again. Beginning with children's questions on the secrets of life and death, good and evil, the position of man in the universe. The inevitability of myths already appears in the family upbringing, continues through socialisation and afterwards through functioning in the community. When the family, or the community, are not capable of adapting the myth to reality, individuals are left to an anomie of confronted myths abundant in the mass media and in various groups. Somehow the universe of myth is an irreplaceable source of meaning which enables the person to link metaphorically, not only with the world around him, but also with himself and with the final purpose of his existence.

There is, however, a big difference between the use of myths and their misuse. We must take care of the latter when we notice the mythical matrix applied in the articles published in *Politika*, a prestige daily in Serbia which, in media propaganda during the first year of 'the third Balkan war', was twofold. Besides the genuine role of the myth in the revelation of the sense of, and in the creation of the model for, the integration of society, the mythological matrix should also play a hidden (but dominant) function which orientates the integration of society towards the preparation for, and justification of, an evidently senseless war. Since the meaning of the war as a solution to the problems could not possibly be justified by solely rational argumentation, the image of the inevitability of war as a denouement to the Yugoslav crisis was obtained through the production of neomythical mist. The applied myths, no matter how archaic in their origins, were dressed in a very 'modern' connotation by using a mythological discourse in the sanctifying of the goals of war. The posterior 'rationalisation' of reality through myths (from 'biblical predestination' to the 'holy history of heroes') allowed the course of destiny to be presented as a linear continuity in the self-development of the collective being (people, nation) leading towards its self-realisation and ending in the unique and indivisible *Nation-State*.

This interpretation of Hegel is more actually directed than historically directed: the historical (*Geschichte*) production of a limited type of social integration - reduced to national collectivity - in a situation where modern, polycentric but convergent patterns of integration are inaccessible or missing. The archeology of a national mythology - from the perverse digging up of old graves and bones, to 'mining' imagined traditions, i.e. *stories* (= myths) about them - should produce all these empirically unreachable connections between particular individuals which were not present in their minds and everyday lives (Gredelj, 1993:08).

The fundamental feature of modern mythology is its spreading through the media, which facilitates its prompt but superficial consummation. Thus, by means of *Politika*, the ruling team could influence public opinion through information which could be modified and/or even changed, in accordance with actual

'common' interest. Instead of traditional oral narrators, current myth producers are literate 'engineers of human souls'⁵ - 'national intellectuals' and journalists.

It is possible to distinguish at least three hidden functions of this neo-mythology:

1. The reinforcement of collective integration up to the level of full cohesion, i.e. the *monolith*, expressed in a one-mind form (through the formula: no alternative). The myth of 'enemy' serves this role, which, besides the negative identification of the 'other', grounds the fixation of blood and soil, and xenophobia.

2. The creation and maintenance of 'new believing' - a foundation of new ideology.⁶

Mobilisation, as a call for action, which will make the myth real and thus justify the action.

For this function, the myth of heavenly people is employed, which, besides the pathos of the victims, also presents an excuse for revenge and crime, with this explained as the realisation of 'higher justice'. But if these myths fail (as they frequently did, which is evident from the massive refusal of the call to arms, the desertion of military units and emigration from Serbia), then the reserve traditional myth is put into operation, which reminds us of the epic of the betrayal of Vuk Branković.

The difference between the role of the traditional myth and the production of new myths could be compared with the difference between *imagination* (characteristic of the tale) and foolishness.⁷ Bizarre inventions such as 'the happening of the people' (Milovan Vitezović), or 'heavenly people' (Enriko Josif), were raised to the level of axioms, which did not need to be proved, and thus were easily turned into myth, if only for a one-issue purpose. Because of that, the function of neomyths is adjusted to a 'one day' purpose, no matter what the insistence on their 'historical' nature.

Finally, it is well known that history is written by winners, but losers also live it.

5 The role of the 'new' myth is to *convince*. Due to the 'word games' in the Serbian language this could take a twofold etymological meaning. The first is 'initiation in faith' (such as *credo quia absurdum*). The other is - pushing into misery, reduction of the meaning into triviality, counter-culture and the tribal individual and collective mind. This engineering is always hidden behind the authority of 'national' science. An analysis of the observed annual publishing production in *Politika* reveals a surplus of essays on history, aimed at disclosing the 'truth' in a popular science mode. The spread of lies is another possible approach. Its paradigm was news reported by *Večernje novosti* [Evening News] that "in Vukovar hospital 40 Serbian (!?) babies were slaughtered". The *Reuters* news agency, which disseminated the news without authorisation, later on, when the 'news' was denied, confirmed that they were lies. However, the effect of the propaganda was achieved: no matter if the 'news' was negated, its contents *remained* part of the myth of the 'criminal and genocidal' enemy which is evidently monstrous, thus deserving no mercy.


6 The 'new' myths have the role to convince and their etymology bears witness not only to persuasion but also to the imposition of misery, and the triviality of both the individual and collective mind. The bizarre nature of the 'new' myths does not arise merely from their vulgar transparency, which is targeted to provoke both horror (e.g. "the reminder of slaughtered people" - M. Bečković, *Književne novine*, 15 September, 1989), to alert and to inspire 'justified revenge fury'; neither are they devoted to verbal masochism, expressed by the "Father of the nation". Dobrica Ćosić writes that "Serbs are winners in wars and losers in peace". The 'new' myths should evoke credibility and thus unconditional acceptance of the banal motivation which lies in their origin: "if we do not know how to work and to produce, we know how to fight."

7 In the Serbian language there is a word play between: *mašta* (imagination), and *ma-šta* (anything).

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SEMANTICS OF WAR

 The war which lasted, although with different intensity, for several years in the area of former Yugoslavia, is obviously – as wars usually are – a multidimensional phenomenon. One of these dimensions was determined by the intense presence of the media, not only in reporting the war campaigns but also in producing the reality of war: the active role of the media in provoking a predisposition to fight and in the formation not only of public opinion but of collective feelings in this war is still to be described, and the aim of the project “Media and War” is to make – at least partially – an outline of such a description.

As the media are *the media of communication* which use for the most part language as a symbolic system of signs, the linguistic approach to their messages (beside sociological, psychological, communicative, and other approaches) is quite justified, and we can expect that it will contribute somewhat to a general understanding of the role that the media played in the war in former Yugoslavia. Linguistic analysis of the language and the messages in the media can be conceived by many means, and in this paper some type of semantic analysis established on the semantic field theory is proposed. This analysis will be defined by the general content of the whole project “Media and War”¹ and by the specific limitations that the method of quoting a corpus imposes on the possibilities of linguistic research.

The present analysis will concentrate only on the semantic area of the word *rat* (“war”), as it can be described by means of its linguistic qualifiers.² Inasmuch as the corpus of the whole project is ultimately made up of the messages exclusively from two newspapers, *Vjesnik* from Zagreb and *Politika* from Belgrade, that were published in the first period of the war, our linguistic research had to accept these general limitations as its own boundaries. The choice of these messages and their preliminary

¹ As they are described in the preamble of the project.

² The notion of *linguistic qualifier* is defined in the next section of this article.