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**Political Propaganda and the  
Plan to Create a "State for all Serbs"**

**Consequences of Using the Media for Ultra-Nationalist Ends**

Report compiled at the request of the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia by Renaud de la Brosse, senior lecturer at the University of Reims, Champagne, Ardennes, France



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## I. Political propaganda: definitions, fundamental principles and Yugoslav particularities

1. Many reports, studies, articles and first-hand accounts reveal that the ethnic policies observable in the former Yugoslavia from the end of the 1980s until the beginning of the new century shared the common feature of having been supported and made possible by media which became some of the most loyal supporters of the nationalist parties in power in the various republics<sup>1</sup>.

2. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, special Rapporteur appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Commission noticed early on the harmful influence some of the media were having on Yugoslav public opinion. In his *Special Report on the Media* of December 1994, he explained in particular that *since the fighting began, the information put out by the media of the former Yugoslavia has mainly consisted of nationalist discourse and generalised attacks and insults aimed at the other peoples*. He went on to add: *it comes as no surprise that the phenomenon has directly led to the perpetration of horrible atrocities on the fields of battle and throughout the entire territory*<sup>2</sup>.

3. Those that came to power following the implosion of the former Yugoslavia used the media like a weapon which could help them to attain their political goals in the short and long term. To do this, those in power in each republic sought to control the media in their territory, and in particular television, and transform them into the regime's instruments of propaganda responsible for getting the population to subscribe to their political conceptions and actions.

4. With the media acting as go-between, nationalist political propaganda prepared and conditioned public opinion for the war – so fostering the worst atrocities perpetrated in furtherance of the ethnic policies. A few rare media professionals, witnesses at the centre of events, were the first to be unsettled by this. Such was the case with Nenad Pejic,

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<sup>1</sup> In descending order, Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in particular.

<sup>2</sup> *Special Report on the Media* by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Special Rapporteur appointed in resolution 1994/72 of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, E/CN.4/1995/54 of 13 December 1994, p. 35.

former Sarajevo TV programme controller until April 1992, who believes that *“without the media, and especially without television, war in the former Yugoslavia is inconceivable”*<sup>3</sup>.

Slobodan Milosevic knowingly used and controlled the media in Serbia to impose the themes of nationalist propaganda to justify to the citizens the creation of a State – which would be home to all Serbian people – and also to strengthen his authority. For the propaganda disseminated through the press and audio-visual media to be fully effective, Milosevic personally ensured control over the public media, restricted the freedom of speech of the existing independent media by using all measures to prevent them from informing the citizens and made sure that the journalists followed the official line and adhered to the ideas and programme of the government – in short made sure that they bowed to the discipline imposed. The testimony of one of Milosevic’s closest collaborators, Borisav Jovic, demonstrates perfectly the way in which he used the media to establish his nationalist political projects. *“For years”, wrote Borisav Jovic, “he paid the biggest attention to the media, especially television. He personally appointed editors-in-chief of the newspapers and news programs, especially directors-general of the radio and television. Perhaps in no other area but this was he in direct communication with all editors who “fed” the public with the news, comments and generally with information. He was deeply convinced that citizens formed their view of the political situation on the basis of what they were presented and not on the basis of their real material and political position. What is not published has not happened at all – that was Milosevic’s motto”*<sup>4</sup>.

Different methods and types of pressure were used by Milosevic to exercise his strict control<sup>5</sup> over the news organisations and the professionals. Amongst the measures most frequently used by the Milosevic regime were, in particular:

- journalists considered too independent in the public media were demoted and concomitantly those who enthusiastically served the authorities were promoted. Those journalists who most valued their independence were publicly condemned if not simply dismissed;

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<sup>3</sup> See the interview of Nenad Pejic by Anne Brucy, in *La lettre de Reporters sans frontières*, December 1992, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> In *Last Days of the SFRY*, Journal of excerpts translated by David Stephenson for the ICTY, p.15.

<sup>5</sup> *“(…) Milosevic had complete domination over the media (…)”*, idem p.44.

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- heavy taxes and fines were imposed, broadcasting licenses withdrawn, permits for more powerful transmitters were refused, supplies of equipment necessary for newspapers and radio stations were stopped, strong-arm operations were organised to restrict and sometimes wipe out the independent media's capacity to provide the Serbian public with alternative information;
- the independent journalists were attacked, some of whom were arrested, convicted, mistreated and accused of treason on account of their writing;
- the political authorities used their influence over the economic sector and judicial system to put pressure on the media and the independent journalists.

The measures noted above were used throughout his reign by Milosevic and his regime to regulate the dissemination of news and to ensure control over the content of the messages conveyed by the media. We can, for example, illustrate this fact with the particularly aggressive campaign conducted from 1998 onwards against the independent press, preceding the international community's intervention in Kosovo and Serbia, which was to silence every critical voice by banning independent media<sup>6</sup> or, in October 1998, by adopting a new Information law threatening the professionals and press bodies with the most dissuasive<sup>7</sup> economic retaliatory measures should they oppose the regime<sup>8</sup>.

5. However, while the media paved the way for the war which erupted with Slovenia and Croatia's declarations of independence on 25 June 1991, television channels, radio stations and newspapers also knowingly sustained it by devoting themselves to the war effort and waging an intense media battle of hateful propaganda and biased and untrue

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<sup>6</sup> The *International Committee to Protect Independent Media in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia* thus reports that *TV Pirot* (at Pirot) was banned on 21 April, then *Radio Kontakt* (at Pristina) on 2 July, *Radio City* (at Nis) on 18 August, *Radio Senta* (at Senta) on 9 October, *Radio Index* (at Belgrade) on 10 October, *Danas* and *Dnevni Telegraph* on 13 October, *Nasa Borba* on 15 October and on 8 October the broadcasting of the news in Serbian by the international media such as *Voice of America*, *BBC*, *RFI*, etc. was also banned. See <http://www.free2000.opennet.org/bans98.html>.

<sup>7</sup> The *Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia* thus calculated that between the adoption of the law in October 1998 and 1 November 1999, thirty press organs had to pay fines totaling 18 million dinars equivalent to 1.125 million \$US. See *Report on the Escalation of Repression in Serbia*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>8</sup> Here again the testimony of Borisav Jovic is one of the most explicit accounts of the real intentions of the authorities: "As political and social problems in the country increased, the release of information for the public came under tighter control, until a law was passed stipulating that anyone could be deprived of all their property, without a trial and only through minor-offence procedure, if they published something which the government considered untrue, in other words something that did not suit it". In *Last Days of the SFRY*, Journal of excerpts translated by David Stephenson for the ICTY, p.18.

information. By way of example, one might cite the false information passed on by the Serbian media regarding the supposed massacres of (Serbian) babies and/or children by Croats and Muslims.

On 20 November 1991, as the siege of Vukovar by the Federal Army and Serbian troops drew to a close and at a time when the number of anti-war demonstrations in Belgrade was growing, a *Reuters* correspondent, Vjekoslav Radovic, obtained information that 41 Serbian children, aged between five and seven years old, had been massacred in an elementary school in the village of Borovo Naselje<sup>9</sup>. *Belgrade Television* would devote hours of viewing time to the unconfirmed news. Described for the first time in a war report, the story would later make the front page of the newspapers and be the lead story of the television news<sup>10</sup> that evening. In a news programme specially devoted to the events in Vukovar and Western Slavonia, the guest speaker was the freelance photographer, Goran Mikic, the first person to have reported the news. Photos of massacred adults were shown during the interview<sup>11</sup> but none of the massacred children. The next day, 21 November, a denial from the Federal Army, followed by one from

<sup>9</sup> "41 Children Found Dead in School after Croats Flee", *Reuters*, 20 November 1991.

<sup>10</sup> On the early evening news, the presenter reported: "The news of the massacre of 41 children in the elementary school in Borovo Settlement has made local and international headline news. Independent British ITV carried the testimony of photo-reporter Goran Mikic, according to whom retreating Croatian guardsmen perpetrated a real bloodbath of entire Serb families. He says that all of Borovo Settlement is full of the dead bodies of people murdered with knives and axes. ITV says this photojournalist has transmitted statements of Yugoslav People's Army soldiers who say that 41 Serb children had been slaughtered. This news has been labelled on ITV Teletext as urgent. It's the first time that someone has reported on crimes committed by Croatian guardsmen. Reuters says that Croatian soldiers have been accused of butchering 41 children during their retreat from advancing Yugoslav People's Army forces. Reporters from Television Belgrade and, according to the latest information, all television stations worldwide are making huge efforts to provide public evidence and photographs of this hideous carnage".

<sup>11</sup> Interview:

- Goran Mikic: "We saw plastic bags full of little dead bodies. I managed to creep up to about twenty meters distance. It was plain to see that they were children between five and seven years of age. Their throats were slit. There was a lot of blood around their heads. It was so sickening, even the soldiers wept, and so even at the cost of our lives we wanted to..."
- Editor: "Do you have an estimate for the number of dead bodies that could be called children's?"
- Goran Mikic: "It was all a big pile. They were putting heads and bodies together. It was all so horrible. There must have been around forty according to their count, but it was impossible to be more accurate."
- Editor: "You had a camera. Did you try to take pictures?"
- Goran Mikic: "I did. I got up. However, bullets were whistling all around me. A soldier pointed his rifle at me and ordered me to lie down because otherwise I would have been killed."
- Editor: "You were explicitly forbidden to take pictures? Do you have any idea whether anyone took some pictures?"
- Goran Mikic: "Well, I don't know. I assume the Army did. That could be reasonable and those pictures needed to be taken".

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*Reuters*,<sup>12</sup> was made public as the follow-up to the news programme looking at the massacre was being shown - forcing the presenter to provide justification and apologise<sup>13</sup>. Although quickly denied by *Reuters*, the story was given widespread coverage by the media controlled by the Belgrade regime<sup>14</sup>, while the *Reuters* employee behind the story was fired but purportedly later appointed New York correspondent for *Tanjug*. None of the journalists from these media questioned the authenticity of the information even though the children from the village, which had been besieged for several months, had been evacuated and no elementary schools within the combat zone had been open for a long time. The substantial media coverage given to the "death" of the 41 children "*who had had their throats slit by blood-thirsty Croats*" would serve to reinforce the image nurtured by the Serbian media of a "*criminal and genocidal*" Croatian people just as it would undermine those who opposed the war and lead to a flood of fresh volunteers departing for the front<sup>15</sup>.

- Another lie meant to feed the hatred of the enemy that was bandied around by the Serbian media concerned the allegation that the besieged Muslims of Sarajevo were feeding Serbian children to the municipal zoo's starving animals. This fictitious piece of

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<sup>12</sup> "Photographer Retracts Key Elements in Account of Massacre". The article reads: "A Yugoslav photographer who reported that 41 children had been massacred near Vukovar, allegedly by Croatian troops, retracted key elements of his story on Thursday, admitting he had not seen or counted any bodies. *Reuters*, which issued the story headlined '41 Children Found Dead in School after Croats Flee' on Wednesday, has withdrawn the story on the grounds that it contained incorrect information and has apologised to subscribers..."

<sup>13</sup> Presenter of the special programme: "It's easy to admit a reporter's blunder now. The young man, that photojournalist from *Reuters*, was very convincing. First of all he had several dozen close-up photographs which were drastic in what they showed. He's young, he seemed appropriately excited all the time, and if he had managed to convince *Reuters*... We received the news from the Italian ANSA network via *Tanjug*, and we traced the news story and found a man. We were really happy, as reporters, that we finally found someone whose account had been cited by news agencies worldwide. Assuming the news story was not authentic, now we can't say whether it is or is not, because we have no convincing proof, and it's always easy to apologise when a wrong piece of information slips though under normal circumstances, not to mention this atmosphere of war, where people sometimes hallucinate in such terrible circumstances".

For the different interviews, see *Images and Words of Hate: Vukovar 1991*, produced by Lazar Lalic, ARHITEL, *The Right to Pictures and Words against Censorship and Abuse of Media*, 1995.

<sup>14</sup> In its 22 November issue, *Politika* published an article on the front page entitled "A Crime Committed Openly" setting out basically that journalists worldwide were reporting on the murder of Serbs and that Croatian fascism had taken hundreds of lives. The massacre of the 41 Serbian children was reported on page two. In the 23 November issue, a retraction - in the form of an announcement that was as terse as it was low-key - was published in the back of the paper.

<sup>15</sup> On this episode, see Katarina Subasic, "Role of the Media and the Internet as Tools for Creating Accountability to Poor and Disadvantaged Groups: Former Yugoslavia", in Human Development Report Office, Occasional Paper, Background for HDR 2002, 2002/18, United Nations Development Programme,



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news carried by *TV Pale* and its presenter Risto Djogo, the voice of Radovan Karadzic's regime<sup>16</sup>, and also the *SRNA* press agency would be used by *Tanjug* and the media controlled by the Milosevic regime without any checks being made. In its 19:30 news watched by several million viewers, TV Belgrade broke the news via a radio link with its correspondent on location in Sarajevo: "*The Muslim extremists have come up with the world's most horrible way of torturing people. Last night, they threw Serb children to the lions in the local zoo. So says the Serb patrol.*"<sup>17</sup>

As such, with the collusion of media "professionals", certain individuals on the political scene deliberately diverted the media from their primary purpose of informing and entertaining to turn them into mere propaganda tools serving their cause.

6. On all sides, the feelings and resentment of the peoples making up the Federation were indisputably manipulated and used – with everything orchestrated by true propaganda specialists - in order to stigmatise differences in identity and make it quite impossible for these peoples to live together within the Yugoslav region. The systematic undertaking by the Serbian media of Bosnia and Herzegovina to denigrate the Bosnian Muslim community, picked up by the Serbian media, constitutes a good example. Risto Djogo, *TV Pale's* star presenter, proclaimed the superiority of the Serbs and the degeneration of the Bosnian Muslims, while his repeated attacks sought to wound the Muslims as a community deeply and to make the Serbian public wonder whether the Muslims belonged to the human race. The journalist, Katarina Subasic, reported: "*One of the most notorious examples of Djogo's presentations was when the sound of (Bosnian President) Alija Izetbegovic's speech was followed by the images of a monkey*"<sup>18</sup>.

### **Use of propaganda: background and definitions**

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p. 13; and Lazar Lalic, *Three Years in TV Serbia*, Independent Media Union, Belgrade, 1995, pp. 106-107 and 111-112.

<sup>16</sup> Zlatko Dizdarevic, "Macedonian Media War", Institute for War and Peace Reporting's Balkan Crisis Report, no. 284, Friday, 28 September 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Source: "*Images and Words of Hate: TV News at 7:30 P.M.*", B92 video & film production and *Right to Pictures and Words Foundation*, produced by Lazar Lalic, ARHITEL, 1998.

<sup>18</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

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7. The use of propaganda by the belligerents in the Yugoslav conflict was not new. In the event, they did nothing but reuse certain techniques and methods tried and tested in other contexts, especially, Nazi Germany of the thirties where the techniques of manipulating crowds using propaganda and disinformation<sup>19</sup> had prepared and conditioned German public opinion for the Second World War and the genocide that came with it.

### What propaganda is

8. It is difficult to explain what political propaganda is with a single definition as this would be overly simplistic and for this reason people have chosen to explain the “propaganda” phenomenon using all the existing definitions – each of which may stress one particular aspect or point.

9. Originally, the term propaganda had a religious meaning – more specifically the *congregatio de propaganda fide* (Congregation for Propagating the Faith) established by the Church during the Counter-Reformation – and did not assume its current (secular) meaning until the end of the C18<sup>th</sup> century with the advent of the French Revolution. It was during this period, in a Europe fundamentally unsympathetic towards the new republican regime, that ideology would band together with weapons to conduct modern warfare and that propaganda would become the aide of strategy<sup>20</sup>. At issue was not only spreading the revolutionary ideas among the population and armies – which would be done by “propaganda” associations – and to build and bolster national republican cohesion, but also to create fear and disorder among the enemy. Historically, political propaganda is closely linked to war and may certainly be viewed as war prosecuted by other means.

10. Generally, people talk of propaganda when dealing with “*activities designed to shape opinion so that people share certain political and social ideas or support a policy, government or representative*”<sup>21</sup>. Using specific techniques, propaganda seeks to

<sup>19</sup> On this point, see Serge Tchakhotine, *The Rape of the Crowds by Political Propaganda*, 1939.

<sup>20</sup> Jean-Marie Domenach, *La propagande politique*, “*Que sais-je?*”, P.U.F., 1973, p. 18.

<sup>21</sup> Definition taken from the *Nouveau Petit Le Robert*, Dictionnaire de la langue Française 1, Paris, 1993.

influence the fundamental attitude of the individual and in this sense *"is an attempt to influence the opinion and behaviour of society in such a way that people adopt an opinion and specific behaviour"*<sup>22</sup>.

11. The techniques for establishing such influence have considerably evolved with the scientific progress made since then. From this viewpoint, the 20th century led to a quantitative and qualitative break with the past. Photography, the cinema, wide-circulation press, especially radio, and subsequently television, replaced the traditional means of spreading political propaganda such as music, oratory, poetry and sculpture. The new vehicles or means of political propaganda are now aimed at and reach out to many more individuals – helped by the urbanisation phenomenon – with new techniques (instantaneous sound and especially images) promoting emotion more than demonstration and tending more towards suggestion rather than explanation. This change which also occurred in advertising - from which propaganda borrows its techniques - leads us to a third, more exhaustive definition which explains propaganda as the *"language for the masses (which) employs words or other symbols conveyed by the radio, press and film"*<sup>23</sup>. *The propagandist's aim is to influence the attitude of the masses on points which are subjected to propaganda or are matters of opinion*<sup>24</sup>.

#### Lawful and unlawful propaganda

12. All politicians and governments naturally seek to establish their legitimacy, gain support for their ideas and obtain the backing of the greatest number of people possible. The use of political propaganda, as means to achieve this, is therefore employed everywhere, irrespective of the political regime under consideration. Propaganda becomes harmful and reprehensible when it is used in a totalitarian manner to promote

<sup>22</sup> Barlett, *Political Propaganda*, quoted by Jean Marie Domenach, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> List of media to which the television and internet must now be added for the definition to be fully up-to-date.

<sup>24</sup> *Propaganda, Communication and Public Opinion* (Princeton), quoted by Jean-Marie Domenach, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

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political objectives flying in the face of the respect of human rights and international law<sup>25</sup>.

### Effectiveness proved in the past

13. The historical precedents exist to demonstrate the effectiveness of political propaganda and the ravages that it can cause. Stalinist propaganda, especially under the strict control of a man like Andreï Jdanov, would pervade every sector of society (politics, science, cinema, sports, painting, literature, music etc.) with a view to the coming about of a “New Man”: “a being” to be created to which ultimately any form of opposition would be sacrificed – through political purges, deportation of population groups and murders of opponents. Obsessive and focused on the cult of the leader (Stalin) and the repetition of dogma and slogans, Stalinist propaganda – to which Maoist propaganda could be likened – included censorship, centralised control of broadcasting

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<sup>25</sup> In this regard, it should be recalled that there are some partial definitions in international law. Such is the case in Article 20 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 2200 A (XXI) of 16 December 1966 and which entered into force on 3 January 1976. It stipulates that “any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law” and that “any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law”. (Yugoslavia was one of the States which signed and ratified the Covenant). Article 4 of the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 2106 A (XX) of 21 December 1965 and which entered into force on 4 January 1969 invites the States party thereto to condemn “all propaganda and all organisations [...] which attempt to justify or promote racial hatred and discrimination in any form” and “declare an offence punishable by law all dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, incitement to racial discrimination, as well as all acts of violence or incitement to such acts against any race [...]”.

It may also be noted that the far-reaching effect of radio propaganda was widely recognised in international circles very early on. The States sought to guard themselves against it by attempting to establish a convention prohibiting propaganda programs from being broadcast on the territory of foreign States within the framework of the League of Nations. Signed in Geneva on 23 September 1936 and effective as of 2 April 1938, the “International Convention Concerning the Use of Broadcasting in the Cause of Peace” provided in particular:

Article 1: “The High Contracting Parties mutually undertake to prohibit and, if occasion arises, to stop without delay the broadcasting within their respective territories of any transmission which to the detriment of good international understanding is of such a character as to incite the population of any territory to acts incompatible with the internal order or the security of a territory of a High Contracting Party”.

Article 2: “The High Contracting Parties mutually undertake to ensure that transmissions from stations within their respective territories shall not constitute an incitement either to war against another High Contracting Party or to acts likely to lead thereto”.

See *Treaty Series* (1938), League of Nations, Geneva, p. 302.

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means (media), and the use of news or staged events. Any other form of critical expression was excluded<sup>26</sup>.

14. It was however the Nazi regime, under the guiding influence of Hitler and Goebbels, which would break the most ground in using propaganda as a weapon in and of itself<sup>27</sup> to mobilise the German masses around slogans such as the conquest of *lebensraum* and the defence of the German people (supposed to be the pure and superior component of the white race, the Aryan) – prelude to the establishment of a thousand-year Aryan empire. Unlike communist propaganda which generally sought to mobilise people around tangible objectives, Nazi propaganda did not assign itself any specific goals but instead looked to cause emotional shock and played greatly on the irrational feelings of the masses. It sought to stimulate the hatred and hunger for power lying dormant in them. What makes it possible to characterise it is that the idea counted for less than the psychological shock it sought to produce on the masses by using techniques and procedures exploiting the psychic, physiological and unconscious mechanisms of crowds.

15. We have seen that Stalinist and Nazi propaganda was wholly directed at achieving totalitarian objectives, the coming about of a “New Man” and a thousand-year Aryan empire. The totalitarian dimension and the particularity of the propaganda used by Slobodan Milosevic’s regime from 1987 onwards reside in the desire to bring together the Serbian ethnic group within a single State<sup>28</sup> and therefore implicitly to drive the non-

<sup>26</sup> See Louis Bodin, Jean Touchard, Pierre and Irène Sorlin, *Lénine, Trotski, Staline: la presse et l'évolution du pouvoir en Russie soviétique, 1921-1927*, Librairie Armand Colin, Collection Kiosque; and Georges Mond, *Le système d'information et de propagande en URSS et dans les Pays de l'Est*, Polycopiés, Institut Français de Presse, Université Paris II.

<sup>27</sup> See Alfred Grosser, *Hitler, la presse et la naissance d'une dictature*, Librairie Armand Colin, Collection U2, 1972.

<sup>28</sup> A great many threatening declarations by the main Serb leaders implicitly or explicitly conveying the idea that the non-Serb populations must leave the territory where the Serbs are living or else submit.. were systematically broadcast by the media.

Slobodan Milosevic:

*"The Kosovo myth unified the entire Serbian people scattered throughout Yugoslavia(...) Today it still plays a considerable role as regards the position of the Serbian people in Kosovo and also in all of Yugoslavia(...) Today, six hundred years later, we find ourselves at battle and facing battle once again. This is not a battle with weapons although weapons may yet be used."* (Politika, 29 June 1989).

*"Those who here in Yugoslavia support the terror in Kosovo are dealing a serious blow to Serbia and Yugoslavia (...) The Serbs and Montenegrins have not remained alone these past few days. Each home in Serbia is by their side. And each home in Serbia is ready to leave tomorrow for Kosovo (...) because they*

know (i.e. the "Albanian chauvinists") and must know also in the future that they will not nor will never occupy a single inch of Serbian territory. And, in particular, they will not have or occupy Kosovo and Metohija" (Politika, 6 February 1990).

"Only the peoples of this Yugoslavia have the right to decide its destiny because it was not the republics which created Yugoslavia but the peoples (...) The Serbian people want to live in a single State. For this reason, any division into several States which would separate the various parts of the Serbian people by placing them in different sovereign States cannot, in our opinion, be accepted, that is - and I will be more specific still - cannot even be considered" (Danas, 15 January 1991).

Vojislav Seselj, President of the Serbian Radical Party:

"Our point is perfectly clear. We are in favour of the renewal of the Serbian State in the Balkans, a state that would unite all Serbian territories: the present-day Serbian federal unit, Serbian Macedonia, Serbian Montenegro, Serbian Bosnia and Serbian Herzegovina, Serbian Dubrovnik, Serbian Dalmatia, Serbian Lika, Serbian Kordun, Serbian Slavonija and Serbian Baranja", interview by Branko Akarmic, in Tribuna, 1 October 1990.

"We have nothing against the fact that the new "poglavnik" of the oustachis, Franco Tudjman, is forming his independent State of Croatia but only to the west of the Karlovac-Ogulin-Karlovac-Virovitica line. We will avenge the Serbian blood and present the bill for all the crimes and a million Serbian victims to the new Oustachi movement. All Serbism; Serbism has no price! (...) 100,000 Croats must leave Serbia, otherwise Serbia will quite simply not be able to accommodate the unfortunate Serbs driven out of Croatia. This will just be an exchange of population, carried out under the pressure of the Croatian government's terror." (Politika, 14 May 1991).

"Muslims should know that the best thing for them would be to live in a single state, just like the Serbs. And if they don't want that, let them form their Jamahiriyah in those areas where they are the majority population, and even then they cannot have a compact whole. They will remain scattered: otherwise we would resettle the population. The Serbs from areas with an absolute Muslim majority would be resettled and vice-versa, but not a single Serb is going to live under the Jamahiriyan regime", interview by Olivera Miletovic, in ON, 1 March 1992.

"(...) As for the people of Croatian nationality, all of them, except those who fought with us for the freedom of Serbian Slavonija, i.e. those who went to the frontline as members of the reserve forces, will have to go, following the principle of retaliatory duty. If TUDMAN expelled more than 300,000 Serbs, what are the Croats in Serbia waiting for? We will have to provide those Serbs with accommodation somewhere...", TV Politika with Seselj, interviewed by Vera Radovic on 12 June 1992.

Mirko Jovic, president of the Serbian Renewal Movement:

"If we ever have the right to decide in our State, no one will be able to say that he/she is Macedonian, Muslim or Montenegrin by nationality(...) In the future Serbia we are striving for, they (i.e. the Macedonians) can even consider themselves as extra-terrestrials, but let them keep this feeling to themselves; we know that they are Serbs" (Nedjeljna Dalmacija, 20 May 1990).

"The Serbs must understand that this war (i.e. in Bosnia) cannot end with an agreement. It is a war for territories and where the fighting is taking place at the moment there will be either no more Muslims or no more Serbs" (Politika, 27 May 1992).

Radovan Karadzic, president of the Serbian Democratic Party of Bosnia:

"This is the third or the fourth republic to want out of Yugoslavia.... The path they embarked on is the same highway which led Croatia to hell, but the hell of war in B&H would be even more terrible, for Muslims could perhaps become extinct... Hence don't try to negotiate things in Europe to which you are not entitled" (Vecernje Novosti, 16 October 1991).

Bozidar Vucurevic, president of the Self-Proclaimed Region of Eastern Herzegovina:

"I would like to inform the Serbian people that we are going to correct all the injustices regarding the borders traced by Josip Broz with his dirty finger out of boredom. He sold Serbian territories cheap to the Croats and Muslims. The Muslims are only a negligible minority which must yield to the majority Serbian people. We will not stop, we will chase them all the way to Zagreb if necessary. We have revenge in our blood and in our oath" (Danas, 29 October 1991).

Vuk Draskovic, president for the Serbian Renewal Movement:

"We are in favour of a Serbia which (...) comprises firstly the Serbian territory at the current time including, of course, its two provinces which will no longer have the status of provinces: then Barania, Macedonia, that is southern Serbia and Montenegro. Moreover, the Serbian nationalist revival is

Serbian populations out of all the territories in which Serbs lived whilst re-joining these territories to "historical Serbia". A careful review of media coverage in Serbia at the time demonstrates that the "need" to expel the non-Serbs is a recurrent theme in the media<sup>29</sup> - whether the message is conveyed by politicians, intellectuals, military personnel, journalists etc. The entire press repeated systematically and all together the inflammatory declarations referring to the dangers<sup>30</sup> confronting the Serbian peoples and explicitly or implicitly threatening the non-Serbs with reprisals<sup>31</sup>.

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*demanding the incorporation into Serbia of the historical and ethnic regions of our people in Bosnia, Slavonia, Herzegovina, Lika, Kordun, Banija and Knin, Krajina (...) No Serb killed or injured must remain unavenged. In Croatia those who announce new persecutions must know that these Serbian graves have not yet been avenged. We will have to draw up files on our enemies.*" (Quoted in *Le nettoyage ethnique. Documents historiques sur une idéologie serbe*, collected, translated and commented on by Mirko Grmek, Marc Gjidara and Neven Simac, Fayard, Paris, 1993, p. 316).

<sup>29</sup> A good example is the declaration made by academic and novelist Dobrica Cosic who, by skilful use of rhetoric, begins by saying that he never called for ethnic cleansing while in fact wishing for it: "*We need not aspire to ethnically clean Serbia, but we should liberate those who don't feel free with Serbs and who limit Serb freedom*" (*Promene, Dnevnik*, Novi Sad, 1992, p. 176). Momcilo Selic, an ultra-nationalist historian, calls for the expulsion of the non-Serbs: "*The thing we must do is expel many to their places of origin, close down borders like Enver Hodja did in Albania, make a unitary Serbia, and then they can complain as much as they want*" (*Duga*, 12-26 September 1992). Mirko Kulic, a parliamentary member of Milosevic's socialist party, hesitates between an expulsion taking into account humanitarian criteria and more radical measures: "*In this situation, when Croats are committing genocide against Serbs, the question is whether we should thus react towards Croats...I don't favour the same measures, for it would mean that we would have to kill and slaughter Croats in Serbia, but humane re-settlement of population could be effected voluntarily...*" (*Borba*, 3 April 1992). Commander of the Novi Sad army, General Andreja Biorcevic, opts for the hard-line approach: "*All Serb countries and Serb people must be in one state. And if you cannot provide for that diplomatically, we shall ensure that by war and there shall be rivers of blood...*" (*Vreme*, 30 March 1992). For Radovan Karadzic, leader of the Bosnian Serbs, the existence of a unitarian Serbian State cannot even be called into question: "*No force or power can prevent us from creating a Serb state...only God may, and God shall not do it, because he is on our side*" (*Radio Belgrade II*, 1 March 1993). As regards the union of Serbian territories, metropolitan Amfilohije Radovic states that: "*The backbone of those United Countries is perhaps known and, in the face of all misfortunes, it is taking shape. And that backbone is Serbia and Montenegro, perhaps Eastern Herzegovina, a good part of Bosnian Krajina, Serb Krajina... The outlines of those Serb countries are emerging amid all these developments and it is a pity that we did not respond to the woes and screams from Srpska Krajina on time*" (*Duga*, 20 April 1992).

<sup>30</sup> "*For decades, the Serbs in socialistic Croatia have not had the ethnic rights which they had under the Austria-Hungary Empire. They endure it as the heavenly doom, and we, their compatriots, keep silent out of fear, indifference, greed... Is the Serbian fate in the war in Croatia - genocide and in socialistic peace - discrimination and assimilation*", Dobrica Cosic, *Duga*, n° 406, 16-29 September 1989.

<sup>31</sup> "*Serbs must not renounce their age-old objective to live in one state. That idea is priceless. We must act like other serious peoples in history in similar circumstances (...) Serb people must regain their confidence and dignity. And must defend themselves. Even if it were the only people in the world, or the only one putting up resistance to the whole world*" Gojko Dogo, poet (*Politika Ekspres*, 6 April 1992).

"*The Serbian people do not accept IZETBEOVIC as their President. They don't want him and there is no power that is going to make them accept IZETBEOVIC. The Serbian people had to arm and to organise themselves as military units. And it was our common duty to support them as much as our circumstances would allow us: with material, financially, with arms, and by sending volunteers, etc., for they are our brother Serbs*", Vojislav Seselj, *Studio B*, November 1990.

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### Propaganda and a State for All Serbs

16. The policy of establishing a "State for all Serbs" included ethnic policies that skilful propaganda justified in the eyes of Serbian public opinion. It must be underscored that although the media were one of the lynchpins of the propaganda this was because a particular context also created favourable conditions for the political power to control them. Strictly speaking, there was not at the time any tradition of independent media within the Yugoslav Federation. Within press firms owned by public institutions, journalists were viewed as "political workers"<sup>32</sup> who had to defend the Party's ideas. Any criticism was punished severely. With the implosion of the Federation, the independence of the various republics and the outbreak of the war, professionals turned into nationalist "patriots"<sup>33</sup>. The "traitors" to the nation were systematically pushed aside<sup>34</sup>.

17. The situation in which the media were brought under the power of the Communist Party, which controlled all of the news channels leaving room ultimately for only secret counter-propaganda, was succeeded by one in which the media, in a context of political

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*"We have already deployed several Chetnik groups in Zagreb, and in some other cities in Croatia, which are trained for sabotage and terrorist actions, and, should a massacre of the Serbian civilian population happen, the Chetniks will strike against Zagreb and other Croatian strongholds with all their force. You see, revenge is blind during the process of retaliation. We might have innocent victims: however, nothing can be done about that. Let the Croats think first. We are not going to strike first, but if they strike, we will not pay attention to our target anymore. If the Army does not disarm the Ustashes urgently, a lot of blood is going to be shed,"* interview by Verica Milievic, ON, 24 May 1991.

<sup>32</sup> Milica Pesic, journalist at *Television Belgrade* and *Serbian Radio Television* from 1983 to 1992, said on the matter: "According to the Code of Journalists of Yugoslavia, a journalist was defined as a 'socio-political worker who, conscientiously adhering to the ideas of Marxism-Leninism, [...] participates in the establishment of socialist self-management of society' ". In *Manipulations on Television Belgrade*, A Thesis in International Journalism Presented to the Department of Journalism, City University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree, Department of Journalism, City University, London, September 1994, p. 12.

<sup>33</sup> On this transformation of the concept of journalist, see Dragica Mugosa, "Alternative Information Network", AIM, Alternativna Informativna Mreza (Alternative Information Network). Free speech, free media: rights under threat? Public hearing before the Foreign Affairs, Security and Defence Policy Commission, Human Rights Sub-Commission of the European Parliament, Brussels, 25 April 1996. [http://www.europarl.eu.int/hearings/speech/reseau\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.eu.int/hearings/speech/reseau_en.htm)

<sup>34</sup> Purges were the preferred method for dealing with rebellious journalists. After Milosevic's takeover of *Politika* with Zivorad Minovic's intervention (see paragraph 41 footnote) more than 70 editors were removed from their posts; the audio-visual media journalists were not spared either by the many purges if they demonstrated too much independence. A little book entitled *Purges in Belgrade radio and television*



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transition, fell under the control of the new nationalist powers in each republic<sup>35</sup>. In Serbia, it was Slobodan Milosevic's political formation which would, to its advantage, control the media scene<sup>36</sup>. Although there was no break with communist ideology, it would nonetheless experience as of 1986-1987 a drift towards nationalism in which the media would be closely associated. Under the control of Milosevic and his party, they

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published in April 1993 by the independent radio and television syndicate provides thus a detailed account of the purges with the dates, names and persons concerned, their positions, etc.

<sup>35</sup> The very structure of the media scene in the former Yugoslavia encouraged the nationalist development of the media. The observation of Borisav Jovic, one of Milosevic's closest collaborators and president of the Yugoslav Federation at the time, on 17 October 1990 is revealing: *"The wave of hatred and national prejudice threatens to return us to our bloody past. This has become the greatest danger to the security and integrity of the country. All of this has been furthered by the open information and propaganda war in Yugoslavia's completely divided media market. Relations between the individual federal entities have become so bad that contacts at the level of responsible institutions have been severed or reduced to confrontation through the media"*. His letter of resignation from Yugoslav presidency which he addressed to the citizens via Belgrade Television read similarly: *"(...) The media are completely divided and the media war has assumed such intensity that the opposing sides can be considered belligerents (...)"*. In *Last Days of the SFRY*, Journal of excerpts translated by David Stephenson for the ICTY, pp. 177 and 258.

<sup>36</sup> The Serbian media were conceived principally by the members of Milosevic's party and his nationalist radical allies as political instruments to support the régime, responsible for contributing to the achievement of his ultra-nationalist objectives. The quotations from politicians and/or journalists below show the strength of their belief in the power of the media and, consequently, the importance they placed on their control over it:

*"(...) as editor-in-chief I have certain obligations and certain authorisations, and my priority is to conduct and implement the policy of the communists' association...I am saying that I am obliged to prevent anything that is not in line with the Communists' association and its program policy from being published in Politika"*, Zivorad Minovic, editor-in-chief of *Politika*, in Miodrag Marovic, *"Politika" and Politics*, Helsinki Committee for Yugoslavia, not yet published.

- *"On 9 March Serb people were swindled. 9 March was organised in Belgrade by Ante Markovic and the foreign intelligence services!... The one who raids the TV station, intends to topple the authorities. The one who takes the TV station, has taken over power! And nowhere in the world would any regime let it happen without much blood being shed. Hence Draškovic is the main culprit for the bloodshed"*, Dr. Vojislav Šešelj, "the Chetnik duke", in *Duga*, 13 April 1992.

- *"Serb people know well who should receive the most credit for the establishment of a unified Serbia, and Ekspres spearheaded that fight. Hence we shall not allow that master-minds of such a policy, leading to the current democracy, be groundlessly persecuted"*, Tomica Raičević, member of the SPS Executive Committee, in *Politika Ekspres*, 22 April 1992.

- *"The spirit of democracy has taken root in our Public Information Law and information houses. We initiated personnel changes in RT Belgrade"*, Radoslav Zlatanovic, SPS deputy at the Serbian People's Assembly.

- *"I am displeased with the smear-campaign against our house. It is spearheaded by those who work in our house, and don't want to leave it. Gentlemen, follow your convictions, that is only fair enough. Don't daydream, be rid of any illusion of your staging a coup in TV (...) What do they want? They get their salaries, have incentives, enjoy all elements of social standard, including a holiday resort in Zlatibor (...) I am pleased that RTV Serbia stepped into the world, and became world TV, liberated from the protectorate of Croat TV. We have our international channel, which is also used by Macedonia, Montenegro and B&H. I am pleased with the help we gave to Serb people in Croatia. We prevented both their mental and physical deaths at the hands of Ustashi. Our TV and radio programs can be followed in the whole of Croatia. I am glad that we have helped the Serb people in Croatia, notably in Krajina, to launch their own radio and TV program"*, Dobrosav Bjeletic, former executive Secretary of the central committee of the Serbian League of Communists and director of RTS, interview in *Večernje Novosti*, 30 March 1992.

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would be given the responsibility of distilling the venom of hatred and fear in the Serbian population whose very existence, according to the propaganda, was directly threatened by the presence of the other minority ethnic groups<sup>37</sup>. To do this, the Milosevic regime would use classic propaganda techniques and principles tried and tested in other places at other times.

### **Fundamental principles of all propaganda**

18. The history of political propaganda shows that there are a certain number of fundamental techniques which were again used in the former Yugoslavia by the print media, radio, television, images, cinema and staged spectacles.

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<sup>37</sup> As demonstrated by the inflammatory declarations of Vojislav Seselj systematically broadcast by the media:

- *"If barricades or a Muslim revolt emerge in Sandžak we shall immediately send in our war-hardened voluntary units. So Muslims had better be more cautious. And our war veterans shall continue their campaign, if necessary up to Anadolia. Many Islam fanatics from Novi Pazar, Sjenica and Tutin have already perished in their capacity of Croatian mercenaries and soldiers of Izetbegovic in Bosnia", in Borba, 17 May 1992.*

- *"I think that all Croats should be expelled, barring those who responded to the call-up. Also exempt should be Serb Catholics (Šokci and Bunjevci) who enjoy full equality. We shall give the addresses of exiled Serbs from Zagreb and Varaždin to the Croats", in Vecernje Novosti, 17 April 1992.*

- *"I would expel Croats on several grounds. Firstly because they are utterly disloyal inhabitants of Serbia, the vast majority of them are members of the HDZ, or collaborate with that party, and they do their utmost to internally destabilise Serbia. They are close collaborators of Ustashi. We shall have to retaliate because Tuđman expelled 160,000 Serbs. In view of the latter, what are Croats in Serbia waiting for? Thirdly, the largest number of Croats living today in Serbia were settled by Ante Pavelic in Zemun, Slankamen and other places....at work is the principle of the state reason in the situation when the state is at risk. We must foil those fifth-columnists. We would do that in an utterly humane way. We would give them addresses of Serbs driven out of Croatia. Those are clear-cut, simple and utterly humane solutions. We cannot treat Croats in a human way, and our own people in an inhumane way", in Osmica, 22 April 1992.*

- *"Members of all national minorities shall have the same rights as citizens of Serbia.... We appeal to Hungarians not to back adventurers like Andras Agoston, for they might not fare well.... And they should remember that Serbs can be extremely spiteful and revengeful, and that we shall use arms if necessary (...) the expulsion of Croats from Vojvodina and Serbia and the repatriation of Serb refugees to Serb territories ensured by the presence of Blue Helmets who would also make it possible to hold a referendum on the issue of the Serbian border, which was not in Karlovac, but rather in a Karlovac suburb, not in Virovitica, but in Pakrac (...) Once the Serb Republic of Krajina and Republika Srpska join B&H the newly-emerged Yugoslavia shall easily proclaim itself the federal state of Serbia and thus finally get its Serb army (...) We fight for the state whose name shall be Serbia, but we have accepted the concept of this rump Yugoslavia because of international circumstances", in Borba, 3 May 1992.*

Another example: instead of interviewing the authorities and local people, an RTS reporter dispatched to Vojvodina to report on the calls for autonomy allegedly made by the Hungarians peremptorily announced "They [the Hungarians] have never stopped dreaming of once again becoming a part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. They even want to change the names of the streets in this town and call the old square by the name the Germans called it during the Second World War - Hitler Square!" Quoted by Milica Pesic, *op. cit.* p. 35.

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Keep it simple

19. The first fundamental principle is to "keep it simple". That is to say, in order to be sure that the public remembers what the propagandist wants them to remember, it is more effective to broadcast a short and concise message which summarises or, where need be, distorts a program, policy or idea. The message is conveyed by various brief but striking phrases in keeping with advertising principles: issue a marching order which summarises the goal to be attained and has the weight of a command common to the members of a party, group or community; put out a slogan, which is more like a war cry and whose contents are imbued with much more passion (which plays on hatred, exaltation, etc.); or provide a symbol (an image, drawing, tune) which has magical or mystical connotations for a given social group (community, ethnic group or people). Ultimately, it is a question of finding the short and clear phrases which make it possible to condense a programme or political doctrine in a way easy for the masses to remember.

20. The rule of simplification holds all the more true when the adversary or enemy has to be stigmatised using the most derogatory terms possible<sup>38</sup>. For example, by choosing to

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<sup>38</sup> Many simplistic, caricatured and pejorative nationalist political declarations were thus relayed by the media controlled by the Belgrade authorities to discredit Albanians, Croats and Muslims. In its edition of 5 July 1991, *Duga* magazine published the words of a campaign of the ultra-nationalist radical Vojislav Seselj who stated that "the Croats had to have their throats cut, not with a knife but with a rusty spoon". The day before, on 4 July, he informed *ON* of his intentions were he were leader of Serbia: "*I would first order the army to pull out its troops and weapons from the area of what today is Slovenia and thus enable the secession of Slovenia. Then I would order Croatia to be cut off and the army withdrawn, and weapons to be placed along the line Karlobag-Ogulin-Karlovac-Virovitica. I would suspend all federal bodies and set up a committee of the Serbian National Saving with sweeping powers until the end of year elections for the Constitution-Making Assembly. It would be painless since the Croats would hide immediately. They are cowards. Cowardice is in their genes. In Western Srem 22 Serbs defeated over 300 Ustashi special forces. Bosnia is indisputably Serbian, and all those Muslim fundamentalists who disagree with that idea, may pack up and leave in a timely manner. I think that by virtue of the genetic make-up of Serbian people, they are always ready for warfare. Every Serb is a born soldier, and Europe knows that well. Many Balkan nations who underrated Serbs paid dearly for it. I don't believe that anyone would dare to impose on us solutions which are contrary to our national interests*".

"*The Croats are a rotten nation. I have never yet met a decent Croat*", he again stated on 6 August 1991 in an interview with *Der Spiegel* (reported by the Belgrade *Tanjug Press* agency in its bulletin of 8 August, pp.14-15). Still in the same vein, he stated to *Iskra* (Birmingham) on 1 December 1991: "*The Croats are a decadent people. I have never met an honest Croat*" (pp.4-6).

Another example, the declaration of Biljana Plavsic, quoted by *Borba* on 8 February 1993: "*Rape unfortunately belongs to the war strategy of Muslims and some Croats towards Serbs. For Islam rape is normal, for that religion tolerates polygamy. Throughout 500 years of Turkish occupation both begs and*

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demonise the enemy soldiers in the eyes of one's own people or community, it is the image of the entire opposing community that the propagandist seeks to tarnish and on which disrepute is cast. In this way, propaganda is the enemy of nuance and always seeks to exaggerate the trait to make an impression on people's minds.

21. It is also common to use an incisive phrase to summarise to extremes the evils with which the authorities are faced and which it means to ascribe to its many enemies. In this case, the conspiracy theory is put forward, a very convenient procedure which makes it possible to cast all enemies in the same light<sup>39</sup> – as did Hitler's propaganda which dwelt at great length on the pseudo-conspiracy of the democrats, plutocrats and Bolsheviks against Europe.

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*agas were entitled to spend the first night with a recently married woman from the 'mob'. Also under the Islamic religious tenets nation of a child is the one of his father..."*

<sup>39</sup> See for example Dobrica Cosic's declaration in *Nada* in July 1994: "*The break-up of Yugoslavia by dint of national secessions in which Germany, together with the EC, America and later Islamic powers played a major role was tantamount to a declaration of WW3 with the same goals as WW1 and WW2. Serb people responded by a war of defence, a war for their survival and their democratic state. Despite that war and its goals, Serbs shall survive and attain their fundamental national objectives. Serbs shall create a new state, whose character shall deny and prevail over national and ideological goals of all sides and participants in the Serb civil war, waged under occupation in 1941-1945 period. This current war and its objective – a single, unified state of Serb people – should suspend our ideological antagonisms and divisions originating in the civil war and WW2. ....Hence the national reconciliation was set in place by history itself*".

See also the following articles which appeared in *Politika*:

- "*I hate all things Serbia, and Serb people*". This motto is still the rallying cry of unprincipled coalition. It is obvious that anti-Serbism is still fashionable in the "West" in certain circles. It has been present in the political scene since the end of WW2, but now its aggressive and destructive manifestations are in full swing. Western politicians and theoreticians can no longer tolerate the Serbian syndrome of liberator, and thus they try their best to prevent and thwart Serbia's further development and prosperity". Randjel Janicijevic, in *Politika*, 26 May 1989.

- "*Anti-Serb hysteria in Croatia, Slovenia and B&H had a major impact on foreign public opinion, the one traditionally under the influence of Catholic circles, hostile towards Serbs, considered schismatic, and under the influence of Muslim fundamentalist centres working full-throttle on the islamisation of the planet. Many anti-Serb articles who maintain that Serbia stripped the Kosovar Albanians of their "fundamental autonomous rights" are written by people bankrolled by the powerful Albanian drug-peddling mafia and financed by the state coffers of Albania*" Batric Jovanovic, in *Politika*, 31 May 1990.

- "*In Yugoslavia there is a long-running political war....but few know its causes, political goals and plans or the character of any possible armed conflict. And that war should bring about the disintegration of Yugoslavia, that is, the recovery of Austro-Hungary and the formation of a Greater Albania. Hence, underway is the organisation of a political war against Yugoslavia on anti-Serb grounds. The US, NATO and Vatican are engaged in carrying out that division. They took on the roles of Germany, Italy and Great Britain from WW2. The post-war anti-Serb policy of those countries envisaged a more far-reaching genocide than WW2 against the Serb people. The initial phase of that war should unfold in Kosovo and Metohija and elsewhere. And that war would not be feasible without the obvious and decisive backing of external factors*". Radivoje Jovanovic-Bradonja, in *Politika*, 4 December 1990.