

Serbs as Victims

Genocide in the Rhetoric of Slobodan Milošević

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Acknowledgements

Every decade a few individuals emerge on top the list of authoritarian leaders who set in motion vicious crimes against their own people. Their brutal regimes bring international condemnation, but they are only rarely forced from power. It is fair to say that a fascination with the behaviour of authoritarian rulers inspired this thesis.

Slobodan Milošević has already found his way into the world's history books as the man most responsible for the worst conflict in Europe since the Second World War. He was also the only communist leader to end up in front of an international court, where he died in 2006. I found Milošević an obvious choice for study, and I enthusiastically embarked on a Serbian language course to make this possible.

There are many miles to cover in order to make a fascination into a master thesis. This project would not have been completed without valuable help, inspiring words and patience from friends and colleagues in Norway and abroad.

The idea of focusing on Slobodan Milošević's speeches dawned on me during a trip to Belgrade. I am grateful to the staff at the *Medija Centar* and the *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung* in Belgrade who steered me in the right direction to literature not available in Oslo. Special thanks to Professor Ljubisa Rajić at the University of Belgrade for his advice in the initial stages of this study.

I am grateful to my supervisors, Professors Åsmund Egge and Svein Mønnesland for their guidance and help over these years. Also, thanks to Amar Čanović for reviewing my translations.

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Cast of characters

Avramov, Smilja	Serbian law professor and special advisor for Slobodan Milošević.
Babić, Milan	President of the Serbian Krajina.
Broz, Josip	Tito – undisputed leader of Yugoslavia until his death in 1980.
Carrington, Lord Peter	The first peace envoy from the EC, served from 1991 to 1992.
Djodan, Šime	Extremist Croatian nationalist.
Dobrica, Ćosić	Serbian author and former head of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences.
Drašković, Vuk	Opposition leader in Serbia. Nationalist, and leader of the Serbian Renewal Party, SPO.
Gutman, Roy	Journalist, <i>Newsday</i> .
Izetbegović, Alija	Devout Muslim led who became leader of the Party for Democratic Action, and president of Bosnia-Herzegovina.
Karadžić, Radovan	Serbian psychiatrist and nationalist. President of Republika Srpska.
Kaufman, Michael	Journalist, <i>New York Times</i> .
Kočović, Bogoljub	Serbian demographer, and author of a controversial study of the number of Yugoslav casualties during the Second World War.
Krajisnik, Momčilo	Vice-president of Republika Srpska.
Kukanja, Milutin	JNA general with responsibility for Sarajevo.
Marković, Ante	Yugoslavia's last Federal Prime Minister. Introduced popular economic reforms, but marginalised by Milošević.
Milošević, Slobodan	Serb politician and banker who rose to become Serbia's undisputed leader. The most powerful figure on the Balkans during the wars in the 1990s. Died in 2006.
Mladić, Ratko	Leader of the Bosnian Serb armed forces.
Okun, Herbert	Former US ambassador to Yugoslavia.
Panić, Milan	Serbian businessman who returned to Serbia to challenge Milošević in 1992.
Plavšić, Biljana	Vice-president of Republika Srpska, and a member of the Bosnian presidency before the outbreak of war.

Rašković, Jovan	Moderate founder of the Serbian Democratic Party in Croatia.
Raznjatović, Željko	Serb paramilitary leader better known as Arkan.
Stoltenberg, Thorvald	Former Norwegian foreign minister who succeeded Cyrus Vance as Co-Chairman of the International Committee for the former Yugoslavia (ICFY). Also head of UN forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina.
Šešelj, Vojislav	Extreme nationalist leader of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS).
Tuđman, Franjo	Former army officer, and the first president of independent Croatia.
Van den Broek, Hans	Dutch foreign minister, and member of an EU team of negotiators.
Vance, Cyrus	UN representative as Co-Chairman of the International Committee for the former Yugoslavia (ICFY).
Žerjavić, Vladimir	Croatian demographer, and author of a controversial study on the number of war deaths in Yugoslavia during the Second World War. ¹

Glossary

DCR	Documentacioni centar Ratovi 1991-1999 (War Documentation Centre).
EC	European Community (European Union after the name change in 1994).
HDZ	Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica (Croatian Democratic Community).
ICFY	International Committee for the Former Yugoslavia.
ICRC	International Committee for the Red Cross/Red Crescent.
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.
JNA	Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija (Yugoslav People's Army).
NBS	Narodna biblioteka Srbije (National Library of Serbia, Belgrade).
NDH	Nezavisna Država Hrvatska (Independent State of Croatia).
RS	Republika Srpska (Self-proclaimed Serbian republic in Bosnia-Herzegovina).
RSK	Republika Srpska Krajina (Republic of Serb Krajina).
RTB	Radio-Televizija Beograd.
RTS	Radio-Televizija Srbija (Serbian Radio-Television, formerly RTB).
SAO	Serbian Autonomous Oblast (District).
SANU	Srpska Akademija Nauka i Umetnosti (Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences).
SDA	Stranka Demokratska Akcije (Party of Democratic Action).
SDS	Srpska Demokratska Stranka (Serb Democratic Party), in RS and RSK.
FRY	Socialistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija (Socialist Federal Republic of

¹ Silber, Laura and Little, Allan *Yugoslavia – Death of a Nation*, Penguin, New York 1997; Burg, Steven L. and Shoup, Paul S. *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina - Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention*. M.E. Sharpe, London, 1999.

	Yugoslavia).
SPO	Srpski Pokret Obnove (Serb renewal movement), leading opposition party in Serbia.
SPS	Socialistička Partija Srbije (Socialist party of Serbia). Slobodan Milošević's party.
SRS	Srpska Radikalna Stranka (Serbian Radical Party), nationalist opposition party in Serbia.
UN	United Nations.
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force. Peace keeping force between 1992 in 1995.
VJ	Vojska Jugoslavije (Army of Yugoslavia). ²

Chronology of events

1991:

March 9	Thousands of demonstrators took to the streets in Belgrade. Milošević warned against “stirring up discord and conflict”. ³
March 25	Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tuđman met in Karadjordjevo to discuss the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina.
July 7	Milošević mobilised the masses to “defend peace” in Croatia. ⁴
December 10	50 years anniversary for the start of the Serbian uprising against fascism during the Second World War. Milošević warned that the “ghost of fascism is knocking on our door”. ⁵
December 20	Bosnian presidency voted to seek independence, against the votes of the Serb representatives.
December	The Vance plan negotiated, ending the war in Croatia. UNPROFOR established.
1992:	
January 9	Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Republika Srpska (RS), declared.
February 27	Milošević defined three aims for his government: Security for Serbian people who live outside Serbia, preservation of Yugoslavia, and a peaceful solution to the Yugoslav crisis.
March 1	Overwhelming support for independence for Bosnia-Herzegovina in a referendum boycotted by most Bosnian Serbs.
March 3	Alija Izetbegović declared independence. Ratified by Parliament in absence of its Serb

² Thompson, Mark *Forging War – The media in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, University of Luton press, 1999, pp 364-365.

³ ‘Speech at the opening of the Serbian national assembly (on the 9 March demonstrations)’, *Dokumentacioni Centar Ratovi 1991-1999, Narodna Biblioteka Srbije, (DCR/NBS)*, <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/eng/arhiv/sm/1991/31991.pdf>, accessed: 29 September 2006.

⁴ ‘Specialna Izjava RTV Beograd’, 7 July 1991, *Politika, (DCR/NBS)*, <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1991/141991.pdf>, accessed: 6 September 2006.

⁵ Author's translation. Serbian text: *Ali, na žalost, avet fašizma kuca i na naša vrata*, ‘Govor na svečanosti povodom obeležavanja pet decenija ustanka naroda Srbije protiv fašizma’, 11 December 1991, *Borba; Politika (DCR,NBS)*, <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1991/431991.pdf>, accessed: 8 May 2007.

	members the same night.
April 2 - 3	The first massacres in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina carried out by Serb paramilitaries in Bijeljina.
April 6 - 7	EC and US granted recognition to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Fighting started in Sarajevo.
May 2	Bosnian Serb forces invaded Eastern Bosnia.
May 27	More than 20 civilians died when a shell hit a Sarajevo bread queue.
May 30	UN Security Council adopted resolution 757, imposing trade sanctions on Yugoslavia.
October 9	Milošević pledged not to cut off aid to the Bosnian Serbs in a TV interview.
1993:	
February 20	Milošević called the UN sanctions “genocidal measures” in an interview with the Russian newspaper Pravda. ⁶
April	Milošević signed the Vance-Owen peace plan.
May 1 - 2	Conference in Thessaloniki, Greece. Radovan Karadžić signed the plan on the condition that the Bosnian Serb assembly in Pale, Bosnia-Herzegovina, ratified it. Days later, the plan was rejected.
May 6	Statement from the Serbian government cutting off shipments of money, fuel and industrial material to Republika Srpska. The boycott only lasted a few days.
November 29	Milošević said that the international community waged a war against three million Serbian children, through “genocidal sanctions”. ⁷
1994:	
Late January 1994	US Senate approves amendment to the State Department Authorization Bill which urged President to lift the arms embargo.
February 5	69 civilians died in Markale shelling.
February 17	Russian President Boris Yeltsin urges Karadžić to pull back their heavy weapons, and promised to send Russian troops to areas from where the Bosnian Serbs had withdrawn. Offer accepted and crisis defused.
July	Bosnian Serbs rejected the Contact Group peace plan. Milošević turned on the Bosnian Serb leaders and calls for a blockade.
1995:	
July	Over 7,000 Bosnian Muslims massacred in Srebrenica.
August	Croatian forces overran Krajina, forcing 200,000 Serbs to flee.
December 14	Dayton peace agreement signed in Paris, ending the Bosnian war.

⁶ ‘Intervju Moskovskom listu Pravda Moskva’, 20 February 1993, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS) <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1993/31993.pdf>, accessed: 5 May 2007.

⁷ ‘Izjava na kraju prvog dana Ženevskih pregovora’, 29 November 1993, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS) <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1993/201993.pdf>, accessed: 10 november 2006.

Introduction

The early 1990s saw the re-emergence of the word genocide on the public arena in Europe. Journalists who covered the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina documented massacres of civilians unseen in Europe since the Second World War. The International Criminal Tribunal (ICTY) brought charges of genocide against several wartime leaders for the Former Yugoslavia. This thesis approaches the wars of independence in the former Yugoslavia from a *Serbian* genocide perspective. A national trauma involving a legacy of suffering and threats against Serbia and the Serbs constituted a *genocide legacy* in Serbia. This thesis looks at how this legacy was lifted from its place in Serbian history, and into a political context. More precisely, it looks at how the use of genocide featured in the speeches and public addresses made by Serbian president, Slobodan Milošević.

As the region approached war in the early 1990s, the legacy of genocide was used to mobilise the Serbian people to the fighting in Croatia. If an enemy's intentions were described as *genocidal*, it also made it crucially important to follow the regime's lead in destroying the chosen adversary. However, mobilisation for war only formed a limited part of Milošević's use of genocide in his rhetoric. The thesis statement concludes that Milošević's references to genocide were not confined to a threat defined by ethnicity. As such, this analysis challenges the view that he concentrated his propaganda on stirring up primordial ethnic hostilities.⁸ It is more accurate to say that genocide was used to promote Milošević's shifting interests.

An analysis of the legacy of genocide in the rhetoric of Milošević can shed new light on the underlying factors in the run-up to the war. Moreover, it can contribute to a wider analysis of Milošević's intentions, which his propaganda served to promote. This thesis argues that Milošević in fact used the term as he saw it fit. By labelling an enemy's motives as *genocidal*, he could mobilise his people to the war in Croatia. Furthermore, he could label his opponents at home as *de facto* accomplices to genocide, by refusing to

⁸ Robert Kaplan coined the term "ancient hatred", and used this to describe the way in which the ethnic mix in itself drove the region to war.

support his chosen path against an enemy with genocidal intentions. Milošević denied any claims that his actions on the ground in Croatia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina were tailored towards creating a *Greater Serbia*. Instead he insisted that his goal was to preserve Yugoslavia. During the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Milošević publicly presented himself as an observer to the conflict, but continued his genocide rhetoric. This time, however, the international community was labelled as perpetrator. As such, this thesis shows how the propaganda appeared disconnected, and in some cases contradictory to, the acts of war carried out by the national group he claimed to represent.

Research questions

This thesis reflects on the following questions:

How was the concept of genocide lifted from its place in Serbian history and into Slobodan Milošević's propaganda during the wars in Croatia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina?

This will be answered by isolating references to genocide in the select speeches, and by analysing the context in which the speeches were given.

To what extent was the legacy of genocide aimed at mobilising the Serbs against an ethnic enemy with genocidal motives in the wars?

This question is particularly relevant to the case of Croatia, where references to the Second World War formed part of the rhetoric aimed at mobilising Serbs to the war in Croatia.

What role did the references to genocide play when Milošević attempted to rebrand himself as a peacemaker during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina?

From 1992, it is possible to detect a shift in Milošević's rhetoric when sanctions took its toll on the Serbian economy and Milošević moved towards full confrontation with the Bosnian Serbs leaders in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Thesis outline

This thesis charts the use of genocide in Milošević's propaganda from the outbreak of war in Croatia, until the end of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The first chapter provides an historical background for the legacy of genocide in Serbian history. It is followed by an analysis of the events that led to the war in Croatia, in Chapter two. It argues that Milošević took active steps to create a war situation on the ground. Chapter three looks at how the legacy of genocide played a prominent part when the Croatian war was *sold* to the Serbian public. Chapter four provides a background for the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and analyses the use of genocide rhetoric among the Bosnian Serbs. Milošević denied any knowledge of the events in the Bosnian war, and this is dealt with in chapter five. Milošević also argued that the international community was carrying out genocide against the Serbs through its trade sanctions. This is explored in chapter six.

Clarification of concepts

The main point of analysis in this thesis is the *legacy of genocide* and its use as a *rhetorical device* in the speeches and public addresses of Slobodan Milošević. As explained, the concept of *genocide* was lifted from its historical context and manipulated into the regime's propaganda. This thesis centres on a *legacy of genocide*, which is defined in more detail in chapter one. In those instances where, for reasons of brevity, the word *genocide* appears by itself, the meaning remains the same. *Rhetorical device* refers to the way in which genocide was used in the speeches analysed.

I have referred to the conflict in the Balkans from 1991 to 1995, as the *wars of independence in the former Yugoslavia*. This is to avoid any discussions of whether the conflict was a civil war, or an act of aggression on the part of Serbia. It can also be argued, of course, that independence was not the motive of all parties in the conflict. However, both the wars in Croatia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina happened as two states sought independence, and as self-proclaimed state-lets rebelled within those states. Further, I refer to *Bosnian forces* as the third fighting force in Bosnia-Herzegovina alongside Serbian and Croatian forces. This clarification is necessary as both Serbian propaganda and Western observers have referred to the *Muslim* forces of Bosnia-

Herzegovina. *Bosnian forces* is more precise, however, as the forces were not uniquely Muslim.

Delimitations

The focus of this thesis is on the use of genocide in the propaganda of Slobodan Milošević during selected periods during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is beyond the scope of this study to provide a full analysis of the concept of genocide in Serbia. In particular, I will not attempt to analyse the *effects* the rhetorical use of genocide have on the target audience. Neither will I attempt a comprehensive analysis of the receiving end. However, I have found it necessary to briefly look at how Milošević controlled much of the Serbian media, through which his rhetoric was channelled.

My study of the rhetoric of Slobodan Milošević is based on interviews and speeches published in Serbian media. Each chapter also gives a background to the events on the ground, relevant to Milošević's rhetoric.

The analysis of rhetoric is based on excerpts of significant speeches and interviews given over a limited time period. The time frame is defined in each chapter.

I have also included information about Serbia's *actual* involvement in the wars in Croatia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This forms a factual basis against which his rhetoric is analysed. Most of the evidence here is from literature on the subject, and from evidence gathered and presented at the ICTY in The Hague.

Previous research

Nationalism has been widely held as the most important explanatory factor behind the descent into war in the former Yugoslavia. In particular, Serb nationalism and the relationship between Serbia and the Serbs living in the neighbouring republics have been a key point of study. Journalists and scholars have drawn lines from the battle at Kosovo Polje in 1389, to the killing fields of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1990s. Returning from the battlefield in the 1990s, reporters documented massacres and ethnic cleansing in both Croatia and Bosnia. Much of the writing about the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina has focused on a united Serbian onslaught on two independent countries.

Such an analysis portrays the Serbs as sharing a set of common interest. Accordingly, war was triggered by the insistence that the national interests of the Serbs could only be protected if they lived in one state. The establishment of the Republika Srpska (RS) in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska Krajina (RSK) in Croatia both contributed to making war inevitable. Or, in the words of journalists and scholars, Yugoslavia, without the strict ethnic balance enforced by the authoritative leader Josip Broz, Tito, was simply ripe for war.⁹ Robert Kaplan coined the term *ancient hatred* and his book *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* published in 1993 gave the impression that the region was historically prone to enter into violence because of its ethnic mix.¹⁰ Consequently, it would be impossible for the world to act to stop the fighting. Although Kaplan's best-selling book is not academically important, it had powerful influence on the former US president Bill Clinton, according to Balkan negotiator Richard Holbrooke.¹¹

Historians have in the recent decade begun scrutinising new evidence and political rhetoric, which has made it possible to analyse the conflict from a wider theoretic framework. In fact, most scholars specialising in the topic have largely abandoned the idea that the bloodshed was an inevitable result of ancient hatred. The wide availability of evidence from the ICTY has documented the direct involvement of the Serbian and Croatian leaders, thus making it non-plausible that the violence was triggered by simply lifting the lid on an ethnic cauldron of hate.

Historian Branimir Anzulović has written extensively on the role that ancient myths have played in the history of Serbia.¹² Similarly, Ivan Čolović's works on the politics of symbol in Serbia is among the most authoritative in its field.¹³

Among the most authority scholars on the wars, Misha Glenny argues that the war was a result of a massive effort to manipulate the masses by fanning the fire of nationalism.¹⁴

⁹ This was a common analysis of particularly the war in Bosnia. Examples can be found in numerous articles in the Western press, most notably the British weekly newspaper *The Economist*.

¹⁰ Kaplan, Robert *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1993.

¹¹ Holbrooke, Richard *To end a war*, Random House, New York, 1998, p 22.

¹² Anzulović, Branimir *Heavenly Serbia - From Myth to Genocide*. Hurst and Company, London, 1999

¹³ Čolović, Ivan *The Politics of Symbol in Serbia -Essays in Political Anthropology*, Hurst & Company, London 2000.

In his book *The Dark side of Democracy: Exploring Ethnic Cleansing*, Michael Mann explores what happens when people see themselves as part of an *ethnos*, rather than *demos*. In other words, what happens when people start identifying themselves according to their *ethnicity* rather than to the masses of the people within the state. He further argues that this is most likely to happen in situations where authoritarian regimes “weaken the multi-ethnic environment”.¹⁵ As such, the conflicts resulting in ethnic cleansing neither stems from ancient hatred nor uniquely from élite manipulation.

To this date, there are few authoritative sources on the rhetoric of war employed by Slobodan Milošević. In Belgrade, however, several organisations like *Argument*, the *War Documentation Centre* and the *Helsinki Watch* have published reports about the war propaganda of Slobodan Milošević. These have been consulted for this thesis.

David Bruce MacDonald has raised the question of whether there exists a particular *Balkan holocaust* in Croatia and Serbia, which emerged through the victim-centred propaganda during the nationalist re-orientation in the two countries. He has argued that the genocide is so important for the Serb national ideology, that it can be compared to the memory of holocaust in Israel.¹⁶ As such, the Serbian holocaust myth has dominated both Serbian history writing and has been widely used in propaganda. MacDonald also explores the memory of the Jasenovac camp, which I return to in the first chapter in this thesis. I will not go into a debate on whether the *genocide legacy* in Serbia constitutes a *Holocaust*. MacDonald has approached the conflict from a perspective of victimisation. As such, his work explores some of the same elements as this thesis. However, the sources surveyed are different, and MacDonald is also far wider in his scope .

As mentioned earlier, this thesis dismisses the idea that the stirring of ethnic hatred between ethnic groups was the main purpose of Milošević’s genocide focus in his speeches. Consequently, my theoretical approach is positioned closer to the thoughts of

¹⁴ His most important books on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia are *The fall of Yugoslavia –the third Balkan war*, Penguin, London 1996 and *The Balkans 1804-1999 Nationalism, War and the Great Powers*, Granta books, London 1999.

¹⁵ Mann, Michael *The Dark side of the Democracy: Exploring Ethnic Cleansing*, Cambridge University Press 2005, p 3.

¹⁶ MacDonald, David Bruce *Balkan holocausts? Serbian and Croatian victim-centred propaganda and the war in Yugoslavia*, Manchester University Press, 2002.

Michael Mann and V.P. Gagnon Jr., particularly in their rejection of focus on *ancient hatred*.¹⁷

Sources

Slobodan Milosevic's speech material is available online from the *Documentacioni centar Ratovi 1991-1999* (War Documentation Centre, DCR) at the Narodna biblioteka Srbije (National Library of Serbia Belgrade, NBS). It has collated articles from the newspapers *Borba* and *Politika*, which contained the full text of the most important public addresses and speeches by Milošević over the period surveyed. Some of this articles contains word-for-word transcripts of interview given to the state controlled *Radio Televizija Srbije (RTS)*. The vast majority of the speeches analysed are written in Serbian, and I have translated them into English.¹⁸ Some of the speeches have been recorded word-for-word, which has made them difficult to translate into workable English. For readers with a command of the Serbian language, the quoted excerpts in the original language are included in the footnotes.

The internet is a volatile medium, however, and since the beginning of my research the internet site www.dcwmemory.org.yu has shut down for maintenance. Fortunately, the files containing the speeches had by then been downloaded. I have added the full URL at the time of access, although it is no longer available. More information on the collection of speeches will be available from the web site of the National Library of Serbia website, www.nbs.bg.ac.yu.

In addition, I have examined interviews given in contemporary newspaper articles and by people on both sides of the border to Serbia proper. Serbian and international news media have been accessed at the vast archive at the *British Library* in London.

¹⁷ Gagnon Jr., V.P. *The myth of ethnic war – Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s*, Cornell University Press, London, 2004, pp 1 – 30.

¹⁸ Professor Svein Mønnesland at the Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages, University of Oslo has proof-read the translations. They have also been ready by a native Bosnian, Croatian Serbian speaker.

Regarding the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), transcripts from witness hearings and cross-examinations are available on the internet. Within the methodological limitations of statements recorded years after the events took place, this material constitute a treasure trove for historians. In this study, the material made available in the trial against Slobodan Milošević is of central importance. Although the death of the accused put the proceedings to an abrupt end in 2006, the indictments and testimonies are of immense value. In this thesis, the documentation forms a base line, against which the rhetorical shifts in Slobodan Milošević's public addresses are analysed.

Other sources that have been consulted are autobiographies of the different actors who were in contact with Milošević during the period surveyed. They include Richard Holbrooke, David Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg. Other literature that I would mention is *Yugoslavia – Death of a Nation* by the journalists Laura Silber and Allan Little. It is widely cited and considered among the best surveys of the wars of independence in Yugoslavia. Mark Thompson's book *Forging War – The media in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina* has been used for a background on the media situation in the former Yugoslavia. My use of oral sources is limited to a two hour long interview with Thorvald Stoltenberg in Oslo, conducted on 12 January 2007.

Theory and methodology

In order to provide a thorough analysis of Milošević speeches, it is necessary to briefly look into the way in which they were presented to the public. As mentioned, the speeches and public addresses have all been taken from cuttings from the two largest newspapers in Serbia. I will come back to the media situation in Serbia in chapter one. The analytical platform of this study is based on the fact that Milošević used the media to present his rhetoric to the public. This is necessary to mention because I have also emphasised rhetorical mechanisms from letters written to various actors during the period surveyed. It could be argued that this is personal correspondence, and not a part of Milošević propaganda apparatus. But as I will point out below, the fact that these letters were published in important national media, suggest not only *approval* by the regime, but also that the regime had an *intention* of letting this be known. As such, given the government's control of the editorial policies of the newspaper *Politika*, I have

considered these letters part of the propaganda machinery in Belgrade.

My analysis of rhetoric is approached in the same way as V.P. Gagnon Jr., who confronts the criticism that a study of speeches given by authoritarian leaders is meaningless in the following way: “The rhetoric of politicians is meaningful. It varies over time, and these variations correlate to different outcomes”.¹⁹ As such, rhetorical shifts are given a meaning in its own right, and in this study they highlight the message that Milošević aimed to present to his audience. Regarding opinion polls, it could be said that polls taken in an authoritarian regime are of limited value. However, regarding the situation in Yugoslavia, I have chosen to rely on Gagnon Jr.’s evaluation that the scientific polling data are as relevant and valid as any social science data in the West.²⁰ I have chosen to use polling data presented in independent media in Serbia, notably the news magazine *Vreme*, or those published in international literature on Yugoslavia.

One of the key elements in this thesis is the nature of the relationship between the Serbs outside of Serbia, and those who lived in Serbia proper. It was the Serbs in Croatia who according to Milošević was in danger of genocide, and in his speeches Milošević linked their fate to the fate of the people in Serbia proper. Similarly, this thesis will show that the threat of genocide was also directed against the whole of the Serbian nation. But what was the nature of this sense of collective identity between the Serbs in Serbia and those outside the country? I will argue that this relationship was fluid, and shifted according to Milošević interests. Thus, it is not sufficient to use a traditional framework of nationalism to explain the evolution of this shared identity in Milošević’s propaganda.

In a nationalist framework the warring parties were identified according to their ethnic or religious belonging. As Benedict Andersen has argued, nations have a “need for a narrative of ‘identity’”, much like individuals.²¹ Nationalistic theory is traditionally, and roughly, divided in two camps: According to the primordial approach, a sense of a shared

¹⁹ Gagnon: 2006, p XX.

²⁰ Gagnon: 2006, p XX.

²¹ Anderson, Benedict 1994. *Imagined Communities*. London-New York: Verso, p. 205.

identity has always been present based on religion or language.²² The other camp, represented by Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and others, has argued that nationalism is a modern day phenomenon and based on institutions such as compulsory education and codification of a written language. Bogdan Denitch is among those who have applied nationalism theory to the former Yugoslavia, arguing that a particular *ethnic nationalism* drove the country to war. He argues that the nationalism which emerged in both Serbia and Croatia were anchored in myth, tradition, and religious exclusivity, and thus mythopoetic and antirational.²³ After all, religion and myth were among the few things that the Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs did *not* share. The government institutions had indeed been multi-national, and under Tito also prohibited expressions of nationalism. The nationalist re-orientation was therefore very different from the nationalism that emerged in Europe in the late 19th century, based upon the consolidation of a nation state. It has also been argued that Serbia's Ottoman past was an obstacle to the development of a modern state based on enlightenment ideas in Napoleonic Europe.²⁴

As the first chapter will show, a nationalist re-orientation did indeed take place both in Croatia and in Serbia at the time of war. In both Slovenia and Croatia it was a nationalist awakening that brought the country towards independence. In Serbia, nationalist sentiments laid the ground for the visions of uniting all Serbs in one state. It was indeed this ideology that Milošević had exploited in his rise to power in the 1980s.

The case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, however, was different. As I will return to, the multi-cultural tradition in Bosnia-Herzegovina did not easily square with the concept of a primordial nationalism based on religious belonging. Among Croatian and Serbian nationalists it was common to label the Bosnian Muslims "converts" who had left Christianity under Ottoman rule. A consequence of this was also that it became

²² Anthony D. Smith developed a theory based upon *ethno-symbolism*, in reaction to a modernist approach. Smith argues that a sense of common identity has existed since pre-modern times. His thoughts on nationalism can be found in: Smith, Anthony D. *Myths and memories of the Nation*, Oxford University press, Oxford 1999.

²³ Denitch, Bogdan *Ethnic Nationalism – The tragic death of Yugoslavia*, University of Minnesota Press, London 1994, p 73.

²⁴ Among those who share this view is the Serbian scholar Aleksa Djilas, son of exiled Yugoslav leader Milovan Djilas. From lecture held at the *Norwegian Institute of International Affairs* (NUPI), Oslo, Norway, 12 May 2004.

impossible to envisage a multi-cultural nationalism in the former Yugoslavia, when the new nationalism was so rooted in the emphasis on religion. The theory of nationalism comes short of providing an explanation to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, as it overlooks several dynamics inherent within the groups that went to war.

This thesis will identify nationalist currents among both Serbs and Croats, but largely dismiss nationalism as a concept of shared identity in the period surveyed. Rather, I have found it far more useful to approach the conflict from an élite perspective. The argument of purposeful action by political elites has been used by Gagnon, among others. He has argued that the political leadership chose war in order to deflect calls for democratic change at home. As such, the idea that the mobilisation was a *response* to prevailing nationalism in the population is considered false. On the contrary, Gagnon argues that the wars were a result of an attempt to *demobilise* the population at home, by creating a *de facto* war situation.²⁵

Anthropologist Martijn van Beck at the University of Århus in Denmark has criticized what he calls an *identity fetishism*, in which the identification of a group, culture or community offers the greatest guarantees for peace and prosperity for all.²⁶ This constitutes “misrecognition”, he argues, of identification and also reproduces the logic of discrimination that it seeks to resolve.²⁷ He thus calls for a more fluid articulation of identity.

Both van Beck and Gagnon offer an alternative approach to conflict analysis in their approach. My study also rejects nationalism as a framework for understanding Milošević’s rhetoric, although it does not deal directly with the causes of the conflict. It is clear, however, that a shared sense identity falls short of providing a framework for analysis of the relationship between the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and those in Serbia proper. As such, the works of Van Beck and Gagnon provides guiding

²⁵ Gagnon Jr. 2004: pp 1 – 30.

²⁶ Van Beck, Martijn ‘Beyond Identity Fetishism: ‘Communal’ Conflict in Ladakh and the Limits of Autonomy’, *Cultural Anthropology*, Volume 14, issue 4, 2000, p 526- 569.

²⁷ Van Beck 2000: p 529.

lines, which have been consulted but not closely followed in this thesis.

Group identity among Serbs is a fundamental part of Milošević rhetoric. In this thesis the feeling of shared identity is approached from the common memory trauma rooted in a genocidal experience of a victimised group. Of course, it is a fact that Milošević addressed the Serbs outside of Serbia as fellow nationals, but that is only a small part of the picture. Nationalism theory does not square with Milošević focus on multi-nationality. During the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina he continued to express support for *yugoslavism*, thereby arguing that in fact all the warring parties had an interest in following Milošević line to peace. This contrasts sharply with an analysis based on the exclusivity of one particular group, which forms a basis for the theory of nationalism.

This thesis will argue that what Milošević wished to *sell* to the Serbian people in his speeches was not nationalism. He had used nationalism as a tool to achieve power, but the real message was *shared victimhood*. In the speeches analysed, this was directed at different actors as Milošević saw it fit. The re-emergence of an independent Croatia was presented as a threat of genocide against the Serbs based upon a perceived and manipulated fear of historical genocide against the Serbs. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the image of genocide is more abstract, and directed against *foreign forces* that had imposed *genocidal* sanctions against Serbia.

The speech analysis does not go into any details when it comes to language structure. The methodology of this thesis rests upon the premise that the *message* of his speeches can be analysed without going into details about the semantics of the text.

1: Genocide à la Serbia – historical background

Dr. Karadžić, if you keep talking about the genocide of the Serbs so much, you will commit a pre-emptive genocide.²⁸

Any modern nation that goes to war will lay claim to a moral superiority over its chosen enemy. The Second World War was fought against the evil of Nazism that was fast spreading across the globe. The first Gulf War in 1991 was *necessary* because of the dictator Saddam Hussein's evil onslaught over an independent country, Kuwait. As such, a war only becomes just in the eyes of the population if the enemy can successfully be portrayed as having evil intentions. The leaders will warn against the alternative of restraint, and war is thus presented as the only option. War further demands huge human resources, which in a non-totalitarian state is only available if a section of the population is willing to take up arms and die for the cause argued by the nation's leaders.

Accordingly, it becomes of paramount importance for a nation at war to convince its soldiers that they can contribute to a larger collective good. If war is not chosen, the dangers confronting the population will outweigh the risk of going to war. Each soldier facing the prospect of death in the trenches, should feel convinced that his sacrifice contributes to securing the lives of his family and the future of his nation. The political leaders who prepare for war must lay out the stakes involved with non-action, preferably before the first shot is fired. The wars of independence in the former Yugoslavia were no exception.

This chapter will give a background to the genocide legacy, which was used in the propaganda of Slobodan Milošević. While Bosnia and Herzegovina will forever be remembered for the first scene of genocide in Europe since the Second World War, the word genocide had a familiar rung to the Serbian people long before fighting broke out in

²⁸ Comment made by former American ambassador Herbert Okun to Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić in December, 1991. From Okun's witness statement at ICTY, p 4165, <http://www.un.org/icty/transe39/040622ED.htm>, accessed: 3 September 2007.

Croatia in 1991. In many ways the threat of genocide against Serbs formed the backbone of the Belgrade regime's propaganda.

It has been argued that communist Yugoslavia had simply not allowed an alternative to the enforced ideology of brotherhood and unity, and with the death of Tito, the glue that kept the nation together dissolved and the federation erupted into bloodshed. I will not attempt to judge the validity of this commonly used argument. Rather the aim is to isolate the concept of *genocide* both as an element in the national mobilisation and as a rhetorical tool as the war progressed. In order to do so, it is necessary to look back to the much-analysed origins of the myth of the Serbia nation, and Milošević's rise to power.

The myth of Kosovo

It was on Kosovo that I was born. I was on Kosovo before my birth.²⁹

The legacy of genocide in Serbian history dates back to pre-modern times, and in particular the myths of Kosovo. The province to the south of today's Serbia is home to legends of Serbian battles, migrations and religious wars against the Ottoman Empire. In Serbian national consciousness, Kosovo is considered *Holy Ground*.³⁰ As examined, it became an aim of the Serbian government to evoke the pseudo-religious myth of the Serbian nation. Central to this myth is the memory of the battle on Kosovo Polje in 1389. Historians disagree on who actually won the battle, but the version that figures in the Serbian national myth remains unambiguous. Prince Lazar, an elected prince of Serbia, was according to legend given an ultimatum: He could pay homage to the Turkish Sultan Murad I, and give up control of Serbian lands and taxation, or fight the Turks. In a dream he was approached by a grey falcon that flew in from Jerusalem, and given a new choice. One was an earthly kingdom, meaning victory against the Turks, the other was a heavenly kingdom in which Serbs would be defeated and "lay down their lives

²⁹ Dr Jovan Striković, in a traditional Serbian decasyllabic verse, quoted in *Politika*, 9 May 1992, Čolović 2000: p 65.

³⁰ Dragnich, Alex N. and Todorovich, Slavko *The Saga of Kosovo. Focus on Serbian-Albanian Relations*, East European Monographs, Boulder, Colorado, distributed by Columbia University Press, New York, 1984, p 5.

courageously in Christ, and obtain the crown of suffering (martyrdom), so that they might all become partakers of the glory on high”.³¹ Branimir Anzulović describes the legacy of this battle as a “choice of moral purity over military victory” – after which the Serbs could lay claims to a historical “heavenly kingdom”.³² According to the legend, Prince Lazar was imprisoned and decapitated.

This battle was elevated to far more than a military defeat for the Serbs. Prince Lazar and his men were considered defenders of no less than Christian civilization against the expanding Ottoman Empire.³³ To this day, it is considered a symbol of steadfast courage and sacrifice for honour.³⁴ Every year, Serbs celebrate Vidovdan on the 28 June, as a commemoration of the battle. Todorovich and Dragnich describe vividly the impact of the battle for the Serbs. “As Vidovdan 1389 came to a close, and the sun went down behind the mountains of Zeta (Montenegro) in the west, the night that would last five centuries began.”³⁵

Under Ottoman rule, the Serbian state disappeared, but the national identity was carried on by the autocephalous Serbian Orthodox Church that was re-established as a patriarchate with the seat in the Kosovo town of Peć in 1557.³⁶ Under these arrangements the Serbian church enjoyed a considerable degree of religious and cultural autonomy and also collected taxes. The patriarchate in Peć came to an end after one of the legendary migrations, which later have gained a prominent place in Serbian history. In what has become known as *Velika Seoba* (Great migration) of 1690, Patriarch Arsenius III led tens of thousands of Serbs from Kosovo.³⁷ Their march northwards to today’s Vojvodina, by then a part of the Austrian Empire, happened as a result of an Austrian defeat against the Ottomans. The scene has been immortalised in a painting by Paja Jovanović from 1896.³⁸

³¹ Velimirovich, Nikolai and Popovic, Justin ‘The mystery and Meaning of the Battle of Kosovo’, Grayslake, IL: The Serbian Orthodox New Gracanica Metropolitanate Diocese of America and Canada, 1996, <http://members.aol.com/gracanica/index.html>, MacDonald 2002: p 93.

³² Anzulović 1999: p 4.

³³ Todorovich and Dragnich 1984: p 20.

³⁴ Todorovich and Dragnich 1984: p 27.

³⁵ Todorovich and Dragnich 1984: p 26.

³⁶ Anzulović 1999: p 25.

³⁷ The exact number is not known.

³⁸ Todorovich and Dragnich 1984: p 66.

As such, the Serbian church embodied and expressed the ethos of the Serbian people to such a degree that religion and ethnicity fused into a distinctive *Serbian faith*.³⁹ It was this national religion, which was mobilised in times of crisis. The battle of Kosovo was only one out of many defeats against the Ottomans, and only rose to become a national myth with the rise of Serbian nationalism in the 19th century. In fact, it was not until 1892 that the Orthodox Church elevated the date to a national commemoration.⁴⁰ As we shall see later, the word genocide against Serbs emerged in the 1980s, and thus gained its place in the Serbian national consciousness.

Croatia in the Second World War

The myth of Kosovo was only one of the legacies exploited in the efforts to unite the Serbs behind one national goal. The more tangible rallying point was the sufferings of the Serbs during the Second World War. The collective memory of the crimes, and alleged genocide, against the Serb civilian population during the war emerged into the public sphere as the cultural re-orientation took place in Belgrade. It became an area of interest for writers, historians and demographers. As the following chapter will show, it also spilled onto the political sphere as soon as the Belgrade regime realised its propaganda value.

The history of the Second World War in Yugoslavia remains highly politicised. Tito's partisans had a near monopoly on history writing after he took power, and the suffering inflicted upon one national group by another was a taboo subject. In the 1990s, especially Serbia and Croatia created their own national histories, often with conflicting accounts of the war. It is an indisputable fact, however, that the war was extremely traumatic for the Yugoslav federation.

In April 1941, Yugoslavia was overrun by Adolf Hitler's troops, and bombing levelled Belgrade. The fascist Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was set up and covered areas

³⁹ Petrovich, Michael 'A history of modern Serbia', p 10, Anzulović 1999: p 25.

⁴⁰ Bieber, Florian 'Nationalist Mobilization and Stories of Serb Suffering - The Kosovo myth from 600th anniversary to the present', *Rethinking History*, European Centre for Minority Issues, Belgrade, Volume 6, issue 1, 2002, pp 95–110.

that make up today's Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Its administration was split between Germany and Italy. The NDH developed into a terror state, which carried out massacres by the notorious fascist Ustaša forces. From May 1941, mass arrests began of Jews but soon also of Serbs. For many of the 1.9 million Serbs living within the borders of NDH, the mix between the Hitler's genocidal anti-Semitism and the Ustaša's deeply rooted hatred of Serbs became deadly. Noel Malcolm argues in his history of Bosnia-Herzegovina that priority number one was to *solve* the problem of the large Serb minority of 1.9 million out of a population of 6.3 million. Even the Germans are said to have been shocked by the brutality of the Ustaša terror.⁴¹ The Serbs would have to convert to Catholicism, be expelled or killed.⁴² According to Croatian historian Ivo Bernstein, the Ustaša regime had different approaches to *dealing* with the Serbs in Croatia.

The unwritten Ustaša plan, often mentioned and implemented in practice, was to kill one-third of the Serbs, banish another third to Serbia, and force the remainder to convert to Catholicism. The more moderate Ustaša leaders were for mass deportations into Serbia and conversion. The 'hard core', headed by Pavelić and his émigré followers, advocated the 'use of all means, even the most terrible' (from a 1932 editorial by Pavehć in the paper *Ustaga*), i.e. death.⁴³

To expedite their goal, the Ustaša set up a network of concentration camps, of which the *Jasenovac camp* became the most notorious.

The number of people killed in the NDH has been widely debated. A precise figure is not known, partly for political reasons. The war was put to an end with the victory of Tito's partisans, whose multinational platform had helped a broad recruitment against the Nazi enemy. After the war, expressions of national sentiments became officially outlawed. This included using the sufferings of a particular national group to promote nationalist sentiments. Tito also realised the potential devastating effect demographic studies from the Second World War could have on his imposed multi-national harmony, if academics were to compare and contrast the numbers of deaths inflicted on one nation upon another.

⁴¹ Malcolm, Noel *A short history of Bosnia-Herzegovina*, Papermac, London, 1996, p 176.

⁴² Pavlowitch, Stevan K. *Serbia – the history behind the name*, Hurst and company, London 2002, p 141.

⁴³ Bernstein, Ivo *Croatia: A history*, McGill-Queens University Press, Montreal, 1999, p 137.

Therefore, any thorough analysis was treated in Belgrade as a state secret.⁴⁴ One survey, conducted in 1964 concluded that almost 600,000 people had been killed in all of Yugoslavia, but figure is uncertain.⁴⁵ This was much lower than the official 1.7 million based on which Yugoslavia had claimed war damages, and the survey became an official embarrassment and hence kept secret.⁴⁶

As the national mobilisation drive in Belgrade gathered pace, so did the attempts to politicise the casualty figures. The Jasenovac camp became in Serbia the symbol of the Croatian Ustaša's attempts to eradicate the Serb population of Croatia. As the Ustaša was driven from power in 1945, the camp buildings were blown up, and the archives burnt. This has made it more difficult to establish a precise death toll, but arguably the lack of firm scientific evidence has only fuelled speculation.

In Belgrade, it is generally claimed that as many as 700,000 people lost their lives in the Jasenovac camp, despite the fact that the 1964 survey concluded that the figure was almost as many as the total number of Yugoslavs killed in the war.⁴⁷ At the time war broke out in Croatia, Milošević argued that more than 700,000 "Serbs, Jews and Gypsies" lost their lives in Jasenovac alone.⁴⁸

The two most reliable sources for Serbian losses during the Second World War are the demographers Bogoljub Kočović and Vladimir Žerjavić. Kočović, himself a Serb, estimated that a total of 125,000 Serbs lost their lives in Croatia during the Second World War.⁴⁹ Žerjavić, who was a Croat and worked in Zagreb, estimated that in total 137,000 Serbs lost their lives in Croatia.⁵⁰ They both concluded that the total losses in the war was around one million, thus significantly lower than the official death toll. Their work is still

⁴⁴ Bogosavljević, Srđan 'Nerasvetljeni genocid', Popov, Nebojša (ed.) *Srpska strana rata, trauma i katarza u istorijskom pamćenju* (1 deo). Samisdat B92, 2002, p 198.

⁴⁵ Bogosavljević 2002: p 198.

⁴⁶ Magaš, Branka 'Obituary of Franjo Tuđman', *The Independent*, London, 13 December, 1999.

⁴⁷ The Serb figure is, to some extent, supported by the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, which estimates that some 600,000 people were murdered in the camp, *Agence France Press*, 27 November, 2006.

⁴⁸ He did not distinguish between the national groups, but it is clear from his argument that the majority were Serbs. See note 115.

⁴⁹ Kočović, Bogoljub *Žrtve drugog svetskog rata u Jugoslaviji*, Svetlost Sarajevo, 1990, p 163.

⁵⁰ Žerjavić, Vladimir *Gubici stanovništva Jugoslavije u drugom svjetskom ratu*, Zagreb, 1989, p 63.

considered controversial, and Žerjavić has been labelled a holocaust denier because of his studies.

Cultural re-orientation in Serbia

After the Second World War, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was set up.⁵¹ Its 1946 constitution stipulated that Yugoslavia consisted of six socialist republics, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia. In addition Kosovo and Vojvodina had a status of autonomous districts within Serbia. The leader of the communist resistance Partisans, Josip Broz Tito, was considered the “father” of the nation and supreme ruler. He outlawed any expressions of nationalism in the multi-national Yugoslavia. Tito had preserved the unity of the country through a forced multi-national and socialist ideology, but also through acts of repression and persecution of political objectors. Those that thread too far in the direction of democratic reforms, soon realised the slogan of *brotherhood and unity* could mean imprisonment and years in prison on the notorious Goli Otok, Yugoslavia’s own gulag.

But the forces of repression could not stop the seed of reform. Persecution was indeed the only tool at the regimes disposal. The Croatian spring in 1971 lit the hope of democratic reforms, but was ruthlessly crushed by the regime. In Belgrade, dissent grew among the cultural intelligentsia. Tito’s death in 1980 left Yugoslavia in a power vacuum, and was followed by years of economic stagnation and political gridlock. A rotating presidency meant to guarantee against the rise of a dictator, also left the country without an effective leadership.

At the time, it became evident that any attempts that there had been of common cultural Yugoslav identity was under threat. Andrew Baruch Wachtel argues that the political and cultural elites in Yugoslavia abandoned efforts of cultural nation building and thus created the conditions for the collapse of the Yugoslav state.⁵² Belgrade was in the 1980s centre for a cultural and intellectual re-orientation.

⁵¹ It succeeded what is known as the first Yugoslavia, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes set up in the ruins of First World War in 1918.

⁵² Baruch Wachtel, Andrew *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation. Literature and cultural politics in*

Myth making and the cultivation of symbols now re-surfaced among cultural elites in Belgrade. Once again, Kosovo occupied centred ground. The defeat in the battle of Kosovo in 1389 was feted as one of the world's most important military battles. It is still a symbol of the strength of the Serbian nation, and Kosovo hosts several of the most holy shrines in the Serbian Orthodox Church. But Kosovo also had contemporary urgency in the 1980s. Kosovo's autonomy, granted by Tito in the constitution of 1974, was considered shameful, and dangerous for the Serb minority in Kosovo. In spring 1981, riots broke out in Kosovo, and unrest spread throughout the province.⁵³ A demand rose for the repeal of Kosovo's autonomous status. As early as 1984, Todorovich and Dragnich reflected on what was to come in Kosovo.

The reluctance of the central government, as well as that of Serbia, to intervene directly in Kosovo affairs, does not satisfy Yugoslavs who are eager and impatient to see a resolution of the problem.⁵⁴

In 1986, the highly regarded *Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences* (SANU) published the *Memorandum* that opened the lid to sentiments that earlier had been forbidden in Serbia. It was a powerful document calling for a re-awakening of no less than the spiritual being of Serbia, as this excerpt shows:

In less than fifty years, over two successive generations, the Serbian nation has been exposed to such severe trials - twice exposed to physical extermination, to forced assimilation, to religious conversion, to cultural genocide, to ideological indoctrination, and to the denigration and renunciation of their own traditions beneath an imposed guilt complex, and thereby disarmed intellectually and politically, that they could not but leave deep spiritual wounds that cannot be ignored as this century of the great technological takeoff draws to a close. In order to have a future in the international family of cultured and civilized nations, the Serbian nation must have an opportunity to find itself again and become a historical agent, must re-acquire an awareness of its historical and spiritual being, must look its economic and cultural interests square in the eyes, and must find a modern social and national program that will inspire this generation and generations to come.⁵⁵

Yugoslavia, Stanford University Press, 1998, pp 1-18.

⁵³ Dragnich and Todorovich 1984: p 1.

⁵⁴ Dragnich and Todorovich 1984: p 184.

⁵⁵ Memorandum from the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1986,

<http://www.haverford.edu/reig/sells/reports/memorandumSANU.htm>, accessed 15 September 2007.

As Baruch Wachtel argues, the failure to nurture a strong unitarist Yugoslav culture set the scene for the gradual demise of the federation's federal institutions.⁵⁶ This surfaced in the frequent debates about the school curricula in the different republics, in which language and literature evoked strong nationalist sentiments.⁵⁷

Ivan Čolović argues that the myth of the Serbian national identity had a special focus on uniqueness, which separated the Serbs from the rest of the world.

Its special character is not relative, but absolute. It is more special than any other, because that original existence, which cannot be compared to anything known, is in fact today the only existence of one nation in the world. Serbia is the only country which is consistently true to its self, capable of shaping that self as original and unique.⁵⁸

As such, a particular Serbian national myth filled a void that the lack of a common Yugoslav culture had created. It was in this political environment that Slobodan Milošević stepped onto the political arena in Belgrade.

Milošević's "revolution"

The Serbian communist banker had cunningly manipulated the feeling of insecurity among Serbs in Kosovo, and made his way to the very top of the Serb communist party. Perhaps the most cited episode in the political re-orientation towards nationalism took place during Milošević's visit to Kosovo Polje in April 1987. Outside the House of Culture a crowd of Serbian demonstrators had gathered, and soon scuffles broke out with the local police. Milošević then addressed the crowd with the words "no one should dare to beat you". It was the most important speech of his career, and is regarded as a rallying cry for Serbian nationalism.⁵⁹

Milošević then rose to power within the communist establishment on the back of what he called an *anti-bureaucratic revolution*. In fact, his so-called revolution was less a popular

⁵⁶ Baruch Wachtel 2008: p 188.

⁵⁷ One particular debate triggered by the school curriculum came in Slovenia in 1983. Baruch Wachtel 2008: p 188.

⁵⁸ Čolović, Ivan *The Politics of Symbol in Serbia - Essays in Political Anthropology*, Hurst & Company, London, 2000, p 66.

⁵⁹ This event is described in Silber and Little 1997: p. 37

uprising and more an attempt to manifest his own hold of power. The strategy was simple: By paying unemployed youths from Serbia to travel to the provinces and participate in violent anti-bureaucratic demonstrations, Milošević argued that there was massive popular call to end the regional autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina.⁶⁰ Rather than reflecting popular sentiments, it can be argued that the anti-bureaucratic revolution was a response to a cultural re-orientation in Serbia, in which the autonomy of Kosovo became an acute issue that had to be dealt with. It also provided Milošević with a platform to attack reformists within the Serbian party, who were the main challengers to his rise to power.⁶¹ The much-cited biographer, Slavoljub Djukić, argues that Milošević saw himself as Tito's heir, and aspired to rule over a centralised Yugoslav state.⁶² Multi-party democracy was, by its very definition, bound to pose a real threat to such an ambition. The violent nationalism expressed in the anti-bureaucratic revolution, had been effective in forcing out reformists from the party leadership. This initial resurgence of nationalist political struggle that had helped Milošević to power had taken place *within* the communist parties.⁶³

As opposed to the new generation of Eastern European leaders who had overthrown Communism in the 1990s, Milošević had no wide popular mandate for his hold on power. However, he realised the political potency of the sense of victimisation held by the Serbs, something he had exploited in Kosovo. A similar perception of a threat was created in Croatia, and also in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

What happens now?

It can be argued that the Milošević attempts to spread fear was aided by a former officer in the Yugoslav army, named Franjo Tuđman. He had himself fought against the Ustaša

⁶⁰ Markotich, Stan 'Serbia', Research report from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, No. 16, 22 April 1994, p 97.

⁶¹ V.P. Gagnon Jr. argues that the *anti-bureaucratic revolution* was part of a strategy to shift the focus from reforms to a radical solution to the problem of genocide in Kosovo. The staged demonstrations were targeting the party leadership and called for Milošević loyalists to take power. Gagnon 2006: pp 74-76.

³² Djukić, Slavoljub *Milošević and Marković - A lust for power*, McGill-Queen's University Press, London, 2001.

⁶³ Hayden, Robert M 'Recounting the Dead – The Rediscovery and Redefinition of Wartime Massacres in Late- and Post-Communist Yugoslavia in Watson', Rubie S (ed.), *Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism*, School of American Research Press, Santa Fe, New Mexico, p 168.

forces in NDH, but gradually realised the political potentials of nationalism. During Tuđman's stay in Belgrade, he became frustrated by efforts to belittle the Croatian participation in the partisan struggle against the Germans.⁶⁴ In 1961, he was appointed leader of the newly established Institute for the History of the Working-Class Movement in Zagreb, a position he exploited for his own political gain. Tuđman's nationalism put him in jail, as Tito purged Croatian leaders following the crackdown on the Croatian spring in 1971.⁶⁵

Realising the momentous events in Belgrade, where Slobodan Milošević had promoted himself on an aggressive policy line, Tuđman returned to politics in Zagreb on a nationalist platform. He had travelled widely abroad in the 80s, and fostered ties with Croatia's exiled ex-patriots, several of them former Ustaša supporters who had fled Socialist Yugoslavia as Tito took over.⁶⁶ The political line was nationalist, and the creation of an independent state of Croatia became Tuđman's main goal. At the Lipinski Concert hall in Zagreb, 2500 delegates cheered as Tuđman laid out his visions for the party, and its revisionist take on history.

Our opponents see nothing in our program but the claim for the restoration of the independent Croatian ustaša state. These people fail to see that the state was not the creation of fascist criminals; it also stood for the historic aspirations of the Croatian people as an independent state. They knew that Hitler planned to build a new European order.⁶⁷

The proclamation of this ideology, secured Tuđman's notoriety among international leaders and moderate Croats, despite the fact that the leaders of the HDZ said they only praised the *good parts* of the Ustaša state. It openly called for the dismantling of the federal state of Yugoslavia, which would have guaranteed the leaders a jail sentence under Tito.

⁶⁴ Magaš: *Independent*, December 13, 1999.

⁶⁵ Magaš: *Independent*, December 13, 1999.

⁶⁶ Silber and Little 1997: p 84.

⁶⁷ Silber and Little 1997: p 86.

As the HDZ secured a major victory in the April 1990 election, Tuđman became the country's undisputed leader. In position, he was free to pursue a policy which publicly involved securing Croatia's border. Secretly, however, he laid plans to annex part of Bosnia, in agreement with the Serbian leader, Slobodan Milošević.⁶⁸

The developments in Croatia gave the Serb minority population reasons to worry. This nationalist re-orientation made it necessary, according to the HDZ, to redress the perceived historical imbalances in Croatia. This involved stripping the Serbs in Croatia of positions in the police, media and local government. In the words of an extremist HDZ leader Šime Djodan: "There won't be any improvement for Croatia until a Croatian rifle is on a Croatian shoulder and a Croatian wallet in a Croatian pocket."⁶⁹ In December 1990, Croatia changed its constitution, relegating the Serbs from "constituent nation" to "national minority".⁷⁰ Soon, the checkerboard Šahovnica flags were flying from Croatian flag posts across the country.⁷¹ It had been the symbol of the fascist regime of the Ustaša, and unsurprisingly the Serb population reacted negatively as it became a symbol of an independent Croatia.

It can be argued that the nationalist re-orientation in Croatia and Serbia fed off each other. At the same time as Tuđman focused his efforts on restoring an independent Croatian state, Serbian writers published works that dealt directly with the situation for the Serbs in the Second World War. One of the leading academics who wrote about the genocide against the Serbs in the war, later became a key advisor to president Slobodan Milošević. Professor Smilja Avramov published the book *Genocide in Yugoslavia in the Light of International Law* in 1992. She argued that the Serbs had been subjected to genocide in the Second World War, and that Tito had failed to protect the Serbs from a

⁶⁸ Magaš: *Independent*, December 13, 1999.

⁶⁹ Silber and Little: 1997, p 87.

⁷⁰ Šitkovic, Ejub 'Croatia: The First War', Udovički, Jasminka and Ridgeway, James (eds.), *Burn this house, the making and unmaking of Yugoslavia*, Duke University Press, London, 1997, p 157.

⁷¹ The Šahovnica was a symbol used by Croatian kings, but also adopted as part of the Ustaša national symbol during the Second World War.

renewed genocide in Kosovo. During the trial against Milošević, she appeared as defence witness.⁷² It was one of many books that were published on the subject in 1992.⁷³

For the local Serb population, the HDZ take-over in Croatia created mass consternation. There was only one generation between them and the atrocities carried out against the Serbs in fascist NDH. With a revisionist party in power, and a massive campaign in Belgrade, local Serbs were confronted with one uncomfortable question: What happens now?

Summary

Years before the first shots were fired in the war in Croatia, nationalist politicians had lifted historical legacies onto a political level as they saw it fit. In Serbia, the myth of Kosovo was evoked in the 1980s and constituted an important part of the definition of genocide around which this thesis is built. As examined, genocide came to mean forced expulsion of the Serbian people from Kosovo. This legacy was strengthened by the re-emergence of hitherto suppressed literature about the alleged genocide against the Serbs in the fascist NDH.⁷⁴ As such, genocide could be perpetrated by forcing the Serbs to migrate, or by exterminating the whole or parts of the Serbian nation. This constitutes the definition of the *genocide legacy* used in this thesis. This chapter has analysed how it emerged on the political agenda, as a nationalist re-orientation took place in both Serbia and Croatia. In many ways, these developments went hand in hand. As we shall return to, Milošević exploited the legacy of genocide in his speeches. Arguably, Tuđman accommodated this by appearing to evoking symbols from the Second World War, and arguing that the number of war deaths was far lower than estimated. The next chapter will look at the developments which forced the newly state of Croatia into war.

⁷² Avramov recommended her book to the judges in the ICTY in her witness statement during the Milošević trial, p 32480, www.un.org/icty/transf54/040907IT.htm, p 32480, accessed: 5 august 2007.

⁷³ One of many bibliographies dealing with this issue can be accessed at: www.preventgenocide.org/yu/edu/biblio/.

⁷⁴ Štirkovac, Ejub 'Croatia: The First War', Udovički and Ridgeway 1997: p 158.

2: Let the wars begin

By spring 1991, Yugoslavia as a federation was about to fade into history. The key question facing the region was how to merge the new demands of an emerging national consciousness, with the region's multi-national tradition. Croatia and Slovenia were both on the path to independence, and for the Serbs in Croatia the relationship with Serbia became an acute issue.

This chapter charts the drift into war in Croatia, and the pivotal role played by Milošević in this process. It argues that Milošević, through a government controlled press, stoked a fear of genocide in the Serbian population, and that this imagery of fear served several purposes. The genocide legacy was used to silence the opposition at home at a time when his regime was deeply unpopular. Also, an image of imminent threat portrayed the war in Croatia as inevitable, despite Milošević's involvement in creating a war situation. In order to understand how the genocide legacy was disseminated to the Serbian public, it is necessary to briefly look at Milošević's control of the media.

In control of the press

The media in Serbia was government controlled, and the restrictions on the editorial freedom increased during the course of the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. As a result, the facts from the war as presented to the Serbian people were distorted. The author Mark Thompson has documented how acts of aggression carried out by the Serbs were played down in the Serbian media. Therefore, Milošević could also use the media to disseminate a view that the Serbs were the victims in the wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia.

The main news provider in Serbia was *Radio-Televizija Srbije (RTS)*. It was the only television network that could be reached throughout the country, and one third of the population of Serbia only received the RTS news.⁷⁵ It had traditionally been close to the

⁷⁵ 'Media in Serbia. Monitoring the coverage of the parliamentary and presidential elections', 1997, *European Institute for the Media (EIM)*, Düsseldorf, 1998, Thompson, Mark *Forging War – The media in*

government, and under Milošević it was regarded as a state resource like the police and the army. As a subsidiary of RTS, *Belgrade Television* played prominent role during the demonstrations in March 1991. Opposition leader Vuk Drašković was accused of plotting to destabilise Serbia. Milošević used Belgrade television as his propaganda tool, and refused to give air time to the opposition.⁷⁶

The variety of print media in Serbia has always been rich, with a total of 300 publications at the time war broke out. Print media was dominated by the *Politika* group. The daily newspaper *Politika* is the most authoritative national newspaper. The publishing group was never officially owned by the government, but during the 1980s the government influenced its editorial policy.⁷⁷ From 1987 the government's control over *Politika* gradually strengthened, and the editor-in-chief Živorad Minović endorsed Milošević's rise to power.⁷⁸ Minović was later forced out by the journalist union, but *Politika* remained a supporter of the nationalist re-orientation under Milošević. Former editor Aleksandar Nenadović lamented the paper's new role.

The explosion of nationalism was something so authentic, so Serbian. Communism was relatively thin, imported, new. And *Politika* was at the heart of this thing. The regime took out everything that was good about us, and made the paper a launching pad for the nationalist offensive. They killed its liberal soul.⁷⁹

The daily newspaper *Borba* had traditionally been the official mouth piece of the communist party, but in the late 1980s and 1990s it distanced itself from the government. According to Mark Thompson, *Borba* made efforts to balance their coverage, at least during the war in Croatia.⁸⁰ In 1994, the government later clamped down on its independent role, triggering a protest from its editorial staff. It led to the creation of *Naša Borba*, an independent newspaper set up by many of the former staff of *Borba*, which rejected any political attempts to control its editorial policy.

Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, University of Luton press, 1999, p 118.

⁷⁶ Silber and Little: 1997, p 120.

⁷⁷ Thompson 1999: p 63.

⁷⁸ Thompson 1999: p 64.

⁷⁹ Thompson 1999: p 64.

⁸⁰ Thompson 1999: p 30.

Opposition channels like *B92* and *Studio B* provided independent reporting throughout the war, but could only reach the people in the larger cities in Serbia. They were also targeted by the government, especially in times of national crisis. The weekly *Vreme* also proved to be a head ache for the government, as it refused to budge when pressured. It stayed independent, and provided a trusted news sources throughout the war.

The government's attempts to control the media, naturally affected the coverage. Journalists covering demonstrations against the regime in June 1993 were arrested.⁸¹ Other unofficial measures to restrict coverage was shutting off electricity supply, and limiting news print.

The government-controlled media in Serbia became a powerful tool, both as a channel for Milošević's rhetoric and as a provider of a distorted coverage of the war. The rise of nationalism in Croatia, analysed in the previous chapter, fed Milošević's propaganda machinery. The following passage from the Milan Babić's witness statement to the ICTY indicates how the regime actively engaged in disseminating the plight of the Krajina Serbs:

Prosecution: Were the Serbs in Croatia in an unfavourable position in Croatia at that time?

Babić: It is a fact that the municipalities with the majority Serb population in Croatia fell within the category of underdeveloped, economically underdeveloped regions. On the other hand, many Serbs realised that the former communist regime displayed a certain discrimination and suppressed the Serbs' linguistic identity in those 14 areas of Croatia. Furthermore, at that time there was a media campaign to shed light on the position of the Serb people in Croatia which depicted their status as inferior as and worse than the position of the majority Croat population.

Prosecution: This media campaign, who conducted this campaign? Can you tell us?

Babić: That campaign was conducted by the state-owned media from Serbia, especially from Belgrade.⁸²

Through his control of the media, Slobodan Milošević had a unique tool for dissemination what lay at the core of his propaganda machinery, namely the threat of genocide facing the Serbs.

⁸¹ Thompson 1999: p 60.

⁸² Testimony of Milan Babić in the trial against Slobodan Milošević at the ICTY, p 12880, <http://www.un.org/icty/transe54/021118IT.htm>, accessed: 6 August, 2007.

Belgrade's friends in Croatia.

Despite Milošević's insistence that the war was forced upon Serbia, much evidence has since surfaced about his involvement in arming and supporting the violent Serb uprising. In 1990, the Krajina Serbs gradually become more and more isolated from the Tuđman regime in Zagreb. The *Serbian Democratic Party in Krajina* (RSK) was initially set up to protect the interest of the Serb minority. The electoral success of that party, however, cannot exclusively be interpreted as a support for hard-line nationalist line. In fact, only 27 percent said that they voted for the Serb nationalist party because the communist party "does not sufficiently represent the interest of my nation".⁸³ Zagreb University showed that 80 per cent of Serbs and Croats did not agree that members of the other group were privileged.⁸⁴

During the summer of 1990, a Croatian constitution was pushed through without mentioning the Serbs. This was part of Tuđman's grand design for a Croatian national state. The reactions from the Serbs were radicalization, and moderates like Jovan Rašković were sidelined.⁸⁵ The police force in Serb regions of the Krajina established their own de facto police jurisdiction after they refused to wear the Croatian police uniform, which carried the checkerboard Šahovnica also used by the fascist Ustaša. When the Croats failed to stamp out the rebellion with force, the Serb regions in Krajina became a nascent state-let, with the support of Belgrade. Following a referendum in 1990, in which 99.7 percent supported sovereignty and autonomy in Croatia, the Serbian autonomous district (SAO) was created. The slide into full-scale war seemed inevitable, as isolated violence triggered violent reactions from both sides. According to Milan Babić, the Serb side operated according to planned tactics. Militia groups provoked Croatian settlements and villages. When the response came, the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) crushed the Croat defences and forced non-Serbs to flee.⁸⁶

⁸³ Gagnon Jr.: 2006, p 138.

⁸⁴ Figures from Siber, 'Nacionalna', p 108-109, Gagnon Jr.: 2006, p 37.

⁸⁵ Jovan Rašković was the first victim of the radicalization on both sides of the national divide in Croatia. His influence ebbed gradually after Tuđman ignored his calls for Serb autonomy, and the death knell was given by Zagreb when they leaked a parts of a private conversation in which Rašković said the Serbs were crazy. Silber and Little 1997: p 96.

⁸⁶ Testimony of Milan Babić in the trial against Slobodan Milošević at the International tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, p 13063, <http://www.un.org/icty/trans54/021120ED.htm>, accessed: 6 August, 2007.

The clashes in the Krajina, however, were not a local phenomenon. The militia police were controlled by Belgrade, according to Milan Babić, the hard-line SDS leader. Its constructors were from Serbia proper, and took its order from the Serb Ministry of the Interior.⁸⁷

In his witness statement in the trial against Milošević at the ICTY, financial expert Morten Torkildsen testified that the Serbian Republic in Krajina, as well as the Republika Srpska (RS), was reliant on Serbia for funding through well-organised financial arrangements.⁸⁸ In the Serbian Croat capital of Knin, Milošević was known as the boss.⁸⁹

It can consequently be argued that Milošević was heavily involved in the drive towards war in Croatia. But as will be shown below, the people of Serbia were not ready for a bloody war in Croatia.

The threat from the streets

The regime in Belgrade was heavily involved in preparing the ground for war in Croatia. But on the home front, Milošević was challenged in the streets. The orchestrated slide into war did not enjoy popular support. In order to analyse Milošević propaganda during the war, it is necessary to look at the situation in Belgrade in 1991.

As shown in the first chapter, Milošević rose to power on the back of an anti-bureaucratic revolution. But his rule came far short of answering a popular call for democratic reform. He belonged to the *ancien régime*, and realised the threat from democratic reformists.

This testimony is one of many which highlights the involvement of the Belgrade regime in arming the Serbs in Croatia. For a summary see Human Rights Watch report 'Weighing the evidence – Lessons from the Slobodan Milošević trial', December 2006, Volume 18, No. 10 (D), <http://hrw.org/reports/2006/milosevic1206/>, accessed: 29 August, 2007.

⁸⁷ After he was indicted by the ICTY, Milan Babić became of few Serb leaders to express regret at what he had been involved with in Croatia. At the trial against Slobodan Milošević he testified at length about the relationship between the Serbs in Croatia and in Belgrade. This testimony is available at the International tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, p 12932, <http://www.un.org/icty/transe54/021118IT.htm>, accessed: 6 August 2007.

⁸⁸ More about this can be read on the ICTY website transcripts of the Milošević trial, pp 19910-19011, www.un.org/icty/transe54/030410ED.htm, accessed: 12 September 2007.

⁸⁹ Mann 2005: p 387.

In 1990, Milošević prepared for the first multi-party elections since 1945. Despite the fact that he had risen to power on a nationalist platform, his party refrained from any sign of extremism during the elections. The Milošević-led League of Communists of Serbia changed its name to the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS). It opted for not playing the hatred card in the election campaign, and focused instead on moderate change and addressing economic insecurity.⁹⁰ Milošević's SPS won the elections comfortably.⁹¹ A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that the hard-line nationalist stance taken by Milošević during the late 1980s was most effective *within* the old establishment of the League of Communists Serbia (later SPS). Faced with the opposition *outside* the party system, his aggressive nationalism was downplayed. We shall return to how this also happened during the elections in 1992, when a moderate candidate challenged Milošević.

The Serb population did not see the multi-party elections in 1990 as a satisfactory answer to their call for democracy. This was particularly the case in Belgrade where only 15 per cent had supported the ruling SPS party.⁹² In March 1991, hundreds of thousands of protesters poured onto the streets of Belgrade, with massive calls for democratic reforms. The protests had begun against the government's domination of the media in the election. As the riot police attempted to break up the protests, one student and one police man was killed.⁹³ Later, the army was called in, opposition leader Vuk Drašković arrested, and independent media shut down. But protesters refused to give up, and thousands of students took to the streets in the city centre for ten days.

There are many examples of regime retaliation against those who refused to take part in Milošević's war efforts. These were covered in the independent weekly news magazine, *Vreme*. State-owned industries laid off workers who refused to go to war, and others were

⁹⁰ Robert Thomas writes that nationalism played only a subsidiary role in the SPS campaign, causing some observers to regard, mistakenly of course, Serbian nationalism as a waning force. See *Serbia under Milošević – Politics in the 1990s*, Hurst and Company, London, 1999, pp 75 - 76.

⁹¹ In July, the SPS had pushed through a referendum on changing the constitution ahead of the elections. This gave the president increasing power over parliament, and the first-past-the-post system ensured the SPS a comfortable majority.

⁹² Mann 2005: p 373.

⁹³ Thomas 2000: pp 81 – 84.

conscripted forcefully into the army. This happened to the dissident president of the Social Democratic Party of Vojvodina, who was labelled an ally of the fascist bandits in Croatia, arrested and forced into the army.⁹⁴ As such, Milošević made sure that there was no room for dissent.

Summary

The war that broke out in Croatia in the summer of 1991, was not a result of spontaneous outbursts of violence which the Belgrade regime later got involved in.⁹⁵ On the contrary, evidence suggests that the war was orchestrated by the Milošević regime. This indicates that Milošević *actively* created a war situation into which his genocide rhetoric would fit. At the same time, the regime took steps to control the Serbian media, and thus secured a channel to disseminate their propaganda to a war-sceptical audience in Serbia. The war in Croatia was as such forced on the Serbian people, and the fear of genocide became an instrument to legitimise the fighting. The next chapter will show how Milošević for this purpose used and exploited a sense of threat in his efforts to *sell the war* to the public in Serbia.

⁹⁴ *Vreme*, Belgrade, 11 November, 9 December, 12 December, 1991, Mann 2005: p 373.

⁹⁵ Gagnon 2006: p 107.

3: Selling the war on the home front

The Serbian involvement in arming Serbs in Croatia is undisputed, most notably according to evidence gathered and judgments passed by the ICTY. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss the motives for starting a rush toward war, but as we will return to, desertion rates and street protests indicate that this was not a popular war in Serbia.⁹⁶ Consequently, it can be argued that the war in Croatia could not be used as a propaganda tool in a country which was not ready for war.⁹⁷ Vuk Karadžić, of the Serbian Renewal Movement, called for an amnesty for deserters, and accused Slobodan Milošević of war crimes.⁹⁸ A poll published in the independent newsmagazine *Vreme* on 18 November 1991, showed that 78 per cent of Serbs favoured keeping the peace at all costs.⁹⁹

Slobodan Milošević's response to the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the pressure from the opposition at home was inter-linked. It is well proven, through evidence given and judgments passed at the ICTY, that Serbia played a fundamental role in arming Serbs in the Krajina. As the war grew in intensity, the Croatian Serbs were able to expand territorially in Croatia. The Belgrade regime had thus laid the foundations for an expanded Serbian state, in which all Serbs were to be united. This had been an important aim formulated in the cultural re-orientation of the country in the late 1980s, and also part of the platform that made it possible for Slobodan Milošević to exploit nationalism in his rise to power.

⁹⁶ Gagnon Jr. argues that the slide into war gave Milošević an opportunity to use the war in an attempt to *demobilise* the opposition, as long as he managed to present himself as a man of peace.

⁹⁷ Robert Thomas provides a thorough analysis of how the opposition parties embarked on an anti-war campaign against the regime when the war broke out in Croatia until spring 1991. See Thomas 2000: pp 107 – 118.

⁹⁸ Thomas 2000: pp 107 – 118.

⁹⁹ Mann 2005: p 390.

Confronting critics at home

The March demonstrations in 1991 were perhaps the most serious challenge to Slobodan Milošević's rule before he was ousted from power in 2000. The regime's reaction was two-fold – violence and a ferocious verbal attack on his opponent through government-controlled press. On 11 March, Slobodan Milošević addressed the deputies at the Serbian national assembly in Belgrade. The following day, the speech was published in full text in the major national dailies *Borba* and *Politika*:

Respected people's deputies,
Serbia and the Serbian people are confronted with one of the greatest evil in their history, with the stirring up of discord and conflict. This evil, which has so many times in the past brought out people damage, casualties and suffering, weakened our strength and shattered our unity, has always and only been to the benefit of those who want to take away our freedom and dignity, to subjugate us and submit us to their interests. This profound difficult historical memory and the warnings we carry from the past are today more important than ever before to the Serbian people and the citizens of Serbia. Because the sowing of discord among our people has always been and has remained the easiest way to attack the values that have always been sacred to the Serbian people, to attack its freedom and independence, the peaceful, decent and dignified life of every one of its members. Everyone who cares about Serbia, its citizens, the entire Serbian nation, the values that are most important to every man, should not disregard these facts, especially at a time when we are tirelessly struggling to stand in the way of revamped fascist Ustaša forces, Albanian secessionists and all other forces of anti-Serb coalition that threaten the freedom and the rights of men.¹⁰⁰

The speech identifies a set of *rhetorical devices* that re-emerges in most of his public addresses during the war in Croatia.

1. The alternatives to his rule are *anarchy and terror*, and critics of his regime are *traitors*.
2. Foreign pressures are *destroying Yugoslavia*.
3. The Tuđman government is *secessionist, and pro-fascist*.
4. The *genocide against Serbs* could repeat itself if the Serbs are not allowed to defend

¹⁰⁰ 'Speech at the opening of the Serbian national assembly (on the 9 March demonstrations)', Dokumentacioni Centar Ratovi 1991-1999, 12 March 1991, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/eng/arhiv/sm/1991/31991.pdf>, accessed: 29 September 2006

themselves.

The message in Milosevic's speech to the assembly on 9 March 1991 is clear: The protesters threaten the democratic institutions of Serbia. Outside forces have “sowed dissent” in Serbia and the very same forces are threatening to bring back the “warnings we carry from the past”.¹⁰¹ In fact, these “warnings from the past” was evoked several times over the next years, as Milošević responded to a war he himself played an important part in starting.

Yugoslavia – not Greater Serbia

At the same time as Milošević was shoring up extremist Serb leaders in Croatia, negotiations were taking place to find a lasting solution for the survival of Yugoslavia. This was not a new debate, but had been an issue since Tito died in 1980. The Serbs asked for a more centralised federal leadership, while Croatia and Slovenia initially called for a status quo. After 1986, however, the two western republics opted for a confederal Yugoslavia, which in effect meant independence.¹⁰² As shown earlier the electorate in Serbia and Croatia had voted for nationalist parties. However, this does not show that radical nationalism was the most popular way forward. One indication of the limited support for nationalism is the popularity of federal Prime Minister Ante Marković and his government, the Federal Executive Council (SIV). Marković called for peaceful reforms and economic progress in Yugoslavia, and warned against nationalism. In June 1990, 81 per cent in Serbia (not Kosovo) replied positively to a question if they would give Marković a vote of confidence. 64 per cent saw Marković's reforms as the right solution to get out of the crisis.¹⁰³

Finding a lasting solution to the Yugoslav problem was also a challenge for the international community. In 1991, the European Community (EC) saw a settlement to this crisis in Yugoslavia as a priority in its nascent common foreign policy. The line

¹⁰¹ 12 March 1991, *Politika (DCR/NRS)*.

¹⁰² Burg and Shoup 1999: p 70.

¹⁰³ The study was carried out by Štefica Bahtijarević at the Institute for Social Research, Zagreb. Gagnon Jr. 2006: p 45.

from Brussels was clear: The EC would not support any moves towards dissolution of Yugoslavia. It was up to the Yugoslav republics to decide whether that would be a federal or confederal solution.

It can be argued that the focus on keeping Yugoslavia together played straight into the hands of Slobodan Milošević in Belgrade. It gave him an opportunity to merge two visions of the future of Serbia. He could argue that Serbs could best be protected against genocide if they lived in one state, and dismissed out of hand the suggestion that Yugoslavia could be a confederation of independent states. At the same time, he could present himself as a man of peace by arguing for a federal Yugoslav solution, which at the time held a strong position in the Serb population. By the time the drive towards independence had reached Croatia, he could pull the independence card, and argue that it also applied for the Serbs in Croatia.

As will be shown later, the aim of the Serbian political factions in both Croatia and later Bosnia was to make it possible for all Serbs to live in one state. Milošević also mentions this ideal in his speech to the assembly. However, there are important nuances in how this aim could be achieved. While Milošević evoked the national myth of Serbia by mentioning the *sacred* values of the Serbian people, the ideal solution that can secure safety for all Serbs could be found within Yugoslavia – not a vision of Greater Serbia. He said:

In this way, Serbia would finally be forced to abandon the political ideal with which it entered into the creation of Yugoslavia – the inclusion of the entire Serbian nation in one state.

It can be argued that Milošević's future visions of Yugoslavia were little different from a Greater Serbia under his control. That, however, does not refute the fact that, in the face of an opposition, he chose to use words that held a strong resonance with the Serbian people. Simply put, the rhetoric of Greater Serbia implies war. Yugoslavia evokes stability and harmony for the people. Even though his *support* for the war in Croatia had been going on for months, the *rhetoric* of war is downplayed.

Slobodan Milošević presented himself as a saviour of Yugoslavia:

Serbia, as is well known, has opted to remain in Yugoslavia and defend it together with all those who share our belief. And each of the Yugoslav nations who wish to leave Yugoslavia can do so in a legal way, without violence.¹⁰⁴

In the same statement, he directly dismissed claims that his aim is a Greater Serbian state.

In recent months we have been hearing a lot of slogans about Serbia up to Rijeka and Croatia up to Zemun.¹⁰⁵ I am sure that there isn't a Serbian or a Croatian mother who would agree to have her children go to war for a Serbia up to Rijeka or a Croatia up to Zemun.¹⁰⁶

Ironically, the desertion rates in the war that followed a few months later showed that Milošević had a point. The problem for him was that the Serbian mothers turned against a war that he himself had launched, although he insisted that Serbia up to Rijeka was way beyond his territorial ambitions.

During a press conference in Paris late August, 1991, Milošević was confronted directly with the alleged aspirations of a Greater Serbia:

I have already said many times that Serbia has no territorial aspirations. But, Serbs who live in regions outside of Serbia wish to remain in Yugoslavia, while there are one-sided attempts to drive them out of Yugoslavia. No one has a right to deny them the right to stay in Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁷

He told the Serbian assembly that only a federal Yugoslavia could protect and uphold the ethnic mix in his country.

Therefore, all those holding a scissors above the map of Yugoslavia should keep in mind that different nations in nationally mixed countries can preserve their identity and

¹⁰⁴ 'Statement to Belgrade Television after the session of the SFRY presidency', 9 May 1991, *Politika* <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/eng/arhiv/sm/1991/101991.pdf>, accessed: 8 August 2007.

¹⁰⁵ Rijeka is a Croatian town north on the Croatian Adriatic coast line. Zemun is a Serbian village just west of the capital Belgrade.

¹⁰⁶ 9 May 1991, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS).

¹⁰⁷ Authors translation. Serbian text: *Već nekoliko puta sam rekao da Srbija nema nikakve teritorijalne pretenzije. Ali, Srbi koji žive u oblastima van Srbije hoće da ostanu u Jugoslaviji, dok se jednostranim aktima nastoji da se oni odvoje od Jugoslavije. Niko nema pravo da im onemogućava da ostanu u Jugoslaviji.* 'Odgovori novinarima na konferenciji za štampu u parizu,' 29 August 1991, *Borba*, (DCR/NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1991/451991.pdf>, accessed: 19 August 2006.

integrity only if that country ensures national equality. This is why efforts to abolish one country in order to create several nationalist state-lets are in contrast with modern tendencies in the world and convey non-historical and conservative ideas. Efforts to turn the borders of the Yugoslav republics into states borders are an absurd idea, especially in Europe where boundaries between thousand-year-old countries are quickly disappearing.¹⁰⁸

Milošević's insistence on Yugoslavia is particularly interesting in light of the fact that he and Franjo Tuđman had in practice written off Yugoslavia's future in their meeting at Karadjordjevo 15 March 1991.¹⁰⁹

The ghost of genocide

The following excerpts will show how Milošević's referred to the genocide legacy during autumn 1991. This happened at the same time as the JNA was heavily involved in the fighting in Croatia. As mentioned earlier, recruitment into the army was difficult, and this was particularly the case over the exceptionally brutal battle over Vukovar, where the JNA struggled to win over a supposedly far weaker enemy.¹¹⁰

According to Milošević, conflict had erupted out of Croatia's nationalism and rehabilitation of its pro-fascist past. It constituted an acute danger to the Serbs living in Croatia, who shared nationhood with Serbia proper. Independence for Croatia could only be accepted if the Serbs in Croatia were granted some sort of self-determination. But above all, the Serbs wanted peace, Milošević said. Contrary to what was written in the international press, the Serb struggle was *against* nationalism, and preserving Yugoslavia was the only thinkable bulwark for further spread of nationalism. As will be shown below, these were the elements in Milošević's propaganda drive in 1991.

In May 1991, the clock was ticking fast for a permanent and non-violent settlement to Yugoslavia's problems. In a statement to the Serb parliament on 30 May, Milošević refuted any suggestions that the formation of an armed rebellion in Krajina and Western Slavonia was anything but just. The conflict was forced upon the Serbs, as a result of a

¹⁰⁸ 'Report in the Serbian assembly (on Kosovo and disintegration of Yugoslavia),' 30 May 1991, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/eng/arhiv/sm/1991/111991.pdf>, accessed: 19 May 2006.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas 2000: p 86.

¹¹⁰ More can be read about the battle of Vukovar in Silber and Little 1999: pp 175-177.

secessionist policy driven by Slovenia and Croatia.

In such conditions, natural and legitimate self-defence comes into play, peculiar to the historical dignity of a people. Efforts to qualify this as banditry and outlawry by a large and well-organized propaganda racket is the best sign of a lack of constructiveness or ability on the part of a chauvinist and pro-fascist concept, to the cost of interests and dignity of a people and their just struggle for civil and national equality. Furthermore, protagonists of the banditry and outlawry epithet overlook the fact that one cannot be a bandit or an outlaw in the garden of one's own house, on the door-step of one's home.¹¹¹

In July 1991, Milošević issued a special statement on government controlled RTV Belgrade. At this time, efforts were still going on to negotiate a solution to the future of Yugoslavia. It was clear, however, that the conflict was on its way. For Milošević, it was time to mobilise the masses.

Therefore all those who have in mind the violence against Serb people should in their own interest support our commitment to peace. Therefore we now, despite the outbreak of war, engage in restoring peace and freedom. Nobody wants their children to die. We do not wish that ours or those of others will perish and that is why we engage in peace in both Serbia and outside Serbia. That effort is more important than every other effort. That is our strongest and oldest destiny. But, in order to preserve peace for tomorrow, and today, it is necessary that we are ready to defend it wherever Serbia, its citizens and Serbian people are endangered.¹¹²

At the time this special statement was made on RTV Belgrade, Milošević was under fire from home. Not only was the war in Croatia unpopular with the Serb electorate, also various opposition parties had jumped on the nationalist train to gain voters. Arguably, it became important for Milošević to warn against *alternative* views on history, as can be seen in this excerpt. Keeping in mind the strong reluctance that the Serbs had for entering into war, it is interesting to note that Milošević used this occasion to issue a stark warning to people whose loyalties he believed was questionable.

¹¹¹ 30 May 1991, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS).

¹¹² Author's translation. Serbian text: *Zato svi oni kojima je na umu nasilje nad srpskim narodom treba u vlastitom interesu da poštuju naše opredeljenje za mir. Zato se i sada, uprkos započetom ratu, zalažemo za uspostavljanje mira i slobode. Niko ne želi da mu deca ginu. Ne želimo da ginu ni naša ni tuđa i zato se zalažemo za mir i u Srbiji i izvan Srbije. To naše zalaganje je iznad svakog drugog zalaganja. Ono je naše najjače i najstarije opredeljenje. Ali, da bismo sačuvali mir za sutrašnji, pa i za današnji dan, neophodno je da budemo spremni za njegovu odbranu gde su i od koga god da su ugroženi interesi i miran život Srbije, njenih građana i srpskog naroda, 'Specijalna Izjava RTV', Beograd, 7 July 1991, *Politika* (DCR/NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1991/141991.pdf>, accessed: 10 May, 2007.*

I appeal to all citizens of Serbia to be ready to defend peace. In particular, to avoid misuse of different interpretations of the interest of Serbian and Serbian people by those who use this difficult situation, and even the sorrow and pain of families, to win points for their political affirmation and the prestige of political parties. When it comes to defence, organisations and decisions concerning defence, the decisions are taken only by the state, and not by groups or parties. That must be the strict rule which all citizens must obey.¹¹³

By August, it was clear that all efforts to bring about a negotiated settlement had failed. The EC had sent four missions, none had succeeded. On the ground, the JNA had made troop movements to suggest that they would attack areas in Croatia which Belgrade regarded as part of the Serbian *homeland*.¹¹⁴ As has been shown, the Belgrade regime was heavily involved in supporting the armed militia groups, led by the Serb military leader in Krajina, Milan Martić. A few weeks later the first village was ethnically cleansed by Serbian forces.

At the same time, the international press took a stronger interest in the events in Croatia. The first Gulf War was over and the international press increasingly turned their attention to the events in the Balkans. The EC negotiator Hans Van den Broek had laid the blame for the breakdown in negotiations on Serbia. In an interview with the journalist Arnout Van Linden from the British TV Channel Sky News, Slobodan Milošević denied any blame for the failure. The interview was subsequently published in the national newspaper *Borba*.¹¹⁵

He also drew direct parallels to the events of August 1991 with the Second World War. Quizzed about the assertions from Van den Broek that politicians in the Balkans were more interested in the past than the present, Milošević gave an interesting answer.

¹¹³ Author's translation. Serbian text: "Apelujem na sve građane Srbije da budu spremni za odbranu mira. A naročito da se dobro čuvaju zloupotreba različitih tumačenja interesa Srbije i srpskog naroda od strane onih koji žele da na teškom stanju, pa čak i na bolu i brizi porodica i roditelja, sakupe poene za svoju političku afirmaciju i stranački prestiž. O odbrani, o organizaciji i svim odlukama koje se tiču odbrane, odlučivaće isključivo država, a ne bilo kakve grupe ili stranke. To mora biti čvrsto pravilo koje će poštovati svi građani. Država neće tolerisati bilo kakve izuzetke kada je u pitanju odbrana Srbije i srpskog naroda, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS), 7 July 1991.

¹¹⁴ For more on this, see Silber and Little 1997: pp 171-172

¹¹⁵ 'Intervju britanskoj tv kompaniji skaj njuz', 7 august 1992, *Borba*, (DCR/NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1991/171991.pdf>; English version on <http://www.slobodan-milosevic.org/news/milosevic080791.htm>, accessed: 7 September 1992.

Van Linden: Is this your answer to what Mr van den Broek said in Belgrade, that politicians here are more tuned to the past than to the future? How would you reply to the remarks he made here in Belgrade?

Milošević: It is not good if politicians think more about the past than about the future. I think that we all have to turn to the future in order to solve the crisis, but we have to respect experiences from the past because of the future. We must not repeat the tragic experiences that we had in this country 50 years ago. I think that people around the world are not aware of the fact that we are facing a kind of restoration of fascism in this country. This is the first example since the Second World War that someone armed his own party. It was in Croatia that someone started organising paramilitary formations and demonstrating his sovereignty by attacking all Serbian villages and towns in the republic. This is something that happened in this country 50 years ago as well. You know that in the so-called Independent State of Croatia, during the Second World War, genocide was committed against Serbs. In one concentration camp alone, in Jasenovac, more than 700,000 Serbs, Jews, Gypsies and others were killed. We are now facing a very similar situation.

Van Linden: But that is past. You were just talking about the past.

Milošević: Yes, but this exists in some aspects of the present. There lies the problem. We must be aware of that experience from the past in order to be able to do everything in our power to prevent that tragic experience from reoccurring. We can be a happy, good and successful country if we overcome this crisis of nationalism and nationalist confrontations. Everything in Yugoslavia started when nationalists in Croatia and Slovenia came to power, and the simple result of that was the decision on secession. Everything else followed.

As can be seen from these excerpts, Milošević offered a version of history that fitted neatly in with his propaganda as a peacemaker. This “awareness” of the past compelled the Serbs to take up arms. It is also interesting to see how he refuted any claims that he is operating from a nationalist platform.

Van Linden: They say, however, that everything began in 1987 when you became President of Serbia on the basis of a nationalist policy.

Milošević: That was never a nationalist platform. Why do you not face the truth? Now as a journalist, you can see for yourself that here in Serbia we have more than 40,000 refugees Croatia and there is not a single refugee from Serbia in Croatia. There is no pressure here, no broken windows. You can see that peace reigns on every inch of Serbian territory. We are not in conflict with Croatia. This is not a conflict between the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Croatia. This is a conflict between the Croatian authorities and the Serbian people. This is a kind of state terrorism against the Serbian population in Croatia. They are incessantly attacking villages, shelling them with 120 mm grenades. They have started slaughtering people. They have slaughtered a peasant in the village of Mirkovci. I suppose you have been informed that a woman has been

slaughtered in Krajina. Can you imagine something like that at the end of the 20th century?

In the same interview, Milošević argued that the Serbs throughout history have only been engaged in defensive battles. As such, he claimed the moral high ground as leader of people whose only concern is to defend their own homes.

Milošević: They [the Serbs] have never committed any aggression on the territory of Croatia. By the way, throughout our history, the Serbian people have never waged an aggressive, occupational war. We have always defended ourselves and have done so very successfully. We have always won. I think that no one can defeat people who are defending their homes.

Van Linden: Are you controlling the Serbian militia in Croatia?

Milošević: No.

Van Linden: Do you have any connections with them?

Milošević: We are helping them in terms of food, medical equipment, medicines, money and the like. We are doing a lot for them, but they are defending their own homes and no one has organised groups on these territories.

It is interesting to note how Milošević defended himself against the charges that he was controlling the Serb military forces in the Krajina. He admitted helping them with non-military equipment, and argued that their task was to defend their own homes.

At the time, it was clear that the Serbian military effort in Croatia had taken on an offensive nature, with the brutal siege of Vukovar. International negotiations were under way under the leadership of the British politician Lord Carrington. Milošević insisted that Croatia should only be granted independence if Serbia could control the parts of Croatia with a Serb population. In practical terms, this meant annexation of those parts of Croatia, something Tuđman could not accept. In November the same year, the American diplomat Cyrus Vance entered the negotiations, appointed by the UN Secretary General. Towards the end of November nearly one-third of Croatia was under Serb control. At this time, the negotiations centred around allowing UN peace keepers on the ground. Publicly, Milošević promised to fight for a just and lasting solution. The alternative would be genocide. Every attack on a Serbian village in Croatia was evidence that

genocide was returning to Yugoslavia, according to Milošević.¹¹⁶

In a speech during a peace conference in The Hague, Milošević said that the international community has a duty to prevent genocide from re-occurring on Yugoslav soil. That is the fundamental claim which must be met before Serbia can sign a peace treaty for Yugoslavia.

Finally, it is necessary to again stress that Serbs are held back in two regions under the sovereignty of the Croatia government which has no thought and accepts no responsibility for finding a solution which does not lead to continued genocide. I want to stress that there is a need for special protection for the remaining people who have been subjected to genocide, and that this is a moral duty to the international community who have adopted in the United Nations the Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. No other national, religious or ethnic minority on Yugoslav soil have been subjected to genocide or genocidal pogroms, except for Serbs, Jews and the Roma people. Therefore, from our deep convictions, the solution which this conference needs to find, can only be one which all people who live there will agree to. Only then can the solution be very fair and lasting. In order to resolve this, it is necessary to get a guarantee from the international community. It is not, therefore, a question of any aspirations of a 'Greater Serbia', but exclusively about securing basic freedom and security for the Serb people.¹¹⁷

As shown here, Milošević was appealing to the international community for help and support against what he calls the genocidal forces of the Croatian state. It is interesting to note that Milošević at the time was warming up to the idea of allowing UN peacekeepers onto the soil that the Serbian forces held at the time. Arguably, by giving his strong focus on Serb victimhood, it was not possible for him to allow Croatian forces to take over the

¹¹⁶ On 6 November 1991, the *Politika* newspaper carried a brief article titled "Genocide returning" in which Milošević said that an attack on a Serb village was an indication of a the new genocide against the Serbs. 'Izjava "politici" po povratku iz Ženeve', 24 November 1991, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1991/341991.pdf>, accessed: 10 April, 2007.

¹¹⁷ Author's translation. Serbian text: *Mora se konačno shvatiti da je insistiranje da se Srbi u dve srpske oblasti zadrže pod suverenitetom hrvatskih vlasti, lišeno svakog smisla za realnost i osećanja odgovornosti za posledice takvog rešavanja koje ne vodi računa o kontinuiranom genocidu. Želim da naglasim da je posebna zaštita za ostatke naroda nad kojima je izvršen genocid moralna obaveza međunarodne zajednice, kako je to istaknuto u Ujedinjenim nacijama, prilikom usvajanja Konvencije o sprečavanju i kažnjavanju zločina genocida. A ni jedna nacionalna, verski ili etnička manjina na tlu Jugoslavije nije doživela genocid niti genocidne pogrome osim Srba, Jevreja i Roma. Zato, po našem dubokom uverenju, rešenje koje ova konferencija treba da usvoji, može da bude samo ono sa čime će se narod koji tamo živi saglasiti. Onda ono može da bude zaista pravično i trajno. A to rešenje čini nužnim kontrolu i garancije međunarodne zajednice. Nije, dakle, reč o aspiracijama "velike Srbije", već isključivo o zaštiti elementarnih sloboda i bezbednosti srpskog naroda.* 'Izjava za rtv beograd nakon plenarne sednice međunarodne konferencije o Jugoslaviji u Hagu', 18 october 1991, *Politika*, <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1991/261991.pdf>, accessed: 10 May, 2007.

areas held by the Serbs. This would be the case if Croatia was granted independence on its existing borders. The alternative was allowing UN peacekeepers forces onto Yugoslav soil. From the above excerpt, it seems clear that this was a scenario which he was now preparing his people for.

A few weeks after the Hague speech was held, Serbia marked the 50th anniversary of the start of the uprising against the German occupiers in autumn 1941. In his speech, Slobodan Milošević emphasised the role played by Serbia in fighting the Nazi occupiers. It was the memory of that bloody struggle which haunted the Serbs, and threatened to again throw the country back into a similar struggle, this time against the Croatian forces.

Unfortunately the ghost of fascism is knocking on our doors. It is difficult to acknowledge that fascism has a chance of returning to life in this country which was among the first to heroically rise up against it [.....]. Therefore, the absurd fascism and its announcements in our country are hard to explain.¹¹⁸

He lamented the “historical absurdities” that a new generation had to face up to a rise of fascism:

Therefore, in 1991, instead of celebrating a half century of uprising and fighting against fascism, and admire the heroic fight against it, we, unfortunately, have to warn with anger and pain against the dangers of its rehabilitation. Those are the historical absurdities and historical injustices that only with difficulty can be accepted. And despite this, we cannot celebrate a generation that has fought against fascism, and today, instead of celebrating – we have to fear and again mobilise their children and grandchildren [of this generation] to a fight which has been fought before.¹¹⁹

At the time this speech was held, the Croatian war was coming to an end. Cyrus Vance had just before New Year 1991 secured an agreement, in which a United Nations

¹¹⁸ Author’s translation. Serbian text: *Ali, na žalost, avet fašizma kuca i na naša vrata. Teško je danas priznati da fašizam ima šanse da ponovo oživi u ovoj zemlji koja je protiv njega među prvima herojski ustala [, koja ga je pobedila, koja ga je 50 godina s gnušanjem pamtila, za koji smo verovali da mu nikada ni jednu žrtvu nije oprostila]. Zato je taj apsurd fašizma i njegov nagoveštaj u našoj zemlji teško objasniti, ‘Govor na svečanosti povodom obeležavanja pet decenija ustanka naroda Srbije protiv fašizma’, 11 December 1991, *Borba; Politika (DCR,NBS)*, <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1991/431991.pdf>, accessed: 8 May 2007.*

¹¹⁹ Author’s translation. Serbian text: *Zato, umesto da ove 1991. godine slavimo pola veka ustanka u borbi protiv fašizma i divimo se heroizmu prvih i najvećih boraca protiv njega, mi, na žalost, moramo da sa gnevom i bolom upozoravamo na opasnost od njegove rehabilitacije. To su istorijski apsurdni i istorijska nepravda koji se teško mogu prihvatiti, a koje uopšte ne može da shvati pokolenje koje je ratovalo protiv fašizma i koje danas umesto da slavi – treba da se plaši i ponovo mobilise svoju decu i unuke za borbu koju su nekada vodili, 11 December 1991, *Borba; Politika (DCR,NBS)*.*

Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was established. It formed a line between the Serb-held areas from the rest of the republic.¹²⁰

The peace agreement provoked a crisis within the leadership of the Krajina Serbs. The leaders which had armed themselves against the Croats with support from Belgrade, now had to agree to lay down their arms, see the JNA leave their areas and a UN force take over. For the leader Milan Babić, this was too much. He argued that if Bosnia also seceded, there would be no link between the Serbs in Krajina, and Serbia proper.¹²¹

But Slobodan Milošević had no plans to change his mind. In a public storm battle against Babić, he made sure there was no doubt about who was the supreme leader of the Serbian people. Again, the genocide scenario is used. At this stage, UNPROFOR was the guarantor against genocide and Milan Babić has no right to intervene in order to secure the privileges of keeping the armed forces of Serbian Krajina. In an open letter published in *Borba* and *Politika*, Milošević delivered a crushing blow to Babić, arguing that the presence of the UN has as its “exclusive aim to secure peace”.¹²²

You have to know that the people have taken sacrifices in order to secure itself against genocide and to secure their freedom and security – but the people do not need to sacrifice anything because of the selfishness of a politician.¹²³

His former ally Babić had been left out into the cold. Continued armed struggle by the Serbian Krajina forces would only lead to more bloodshed, argued Milošević.

Tens of thousands of citizens of Serbia (not only Serbs, but all nationalities) have mobilised into the JNA that has defended and, which you have seen, succeeded in defending the Serbian people in the Krajinas and secure a lasting peace. But, at the moment peace is secured, and the people protected from a repetition of genocide, any continuation of armed conflict would represent an irresponsible disregard for human lives

¹²⁰ More on this can be found in Silber and Litte 1997: pp 200-202.

¹²¹ Silber and Litte: 1997, pp 200-202.

¹²² ‘Otvoreno pismo Milanu Babiću povodom Babićevog odbijanja da prihvati zaštitu snaga UN u Krajini’, 8 January, 1992, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1992/11992.pdf>, accessed: 10 May 2007.

¹²³ Author’s translation. Serbian text: *Vi treba da znate da narod podnose žrtve da bi se zaštitio od genocida; da podnosi žrtve da bi zaštitio svoju slobodu i sigurnost – ali da narod ne treba da podnosi žrtve bog samoljublju nijednog političara*, 8 January, 1992, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS).

and people's destiny.¹²⁴

Milošević also strongly dismissed any suggestion that the armed struggle carried out by the Krajina leaders represented the wishes of the Serbian nation. He said: "The citizens of Serbia are not your hostages, nor will they be."¹²⁵

In many ways, the war was brought full circle as the leader of the Croatian Serbs was armed and supported by Belgrade, and then finally cut off politically once the hostilities were over.

Summary

The war in Croatia became a platform for Milošević's genocide rhetoric. He was himself responsible for instigating the fighting, and as such created an environment where his genocide rhetoric thrived. The use of genocide in his rhetoric against dissent at home also shows that the rhetoric was not limited to stirring up ethnic hatred. In fact, his focus on preserving Yugoslavia indicates that Milošević knew that dismissal of nationalism struck a chord, both with his population at home and the international community. The next chapter will analyse the slide into war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where his rhetoric of moderation continued.

¹²⁴ Author's translation. Serbian text: *Desetine hiljada građana Srbije (ne same Srba već svih nacionalnosti) odazvalo se na mobilizaciju u JNA koja je stala da brani i, kao što vidimo, uspela da odbrani srpski narod u krajinama do osiguranja trajnog mira. Ali, onog trenutka kada je mir osiguran i narod zaštićen od ponovljenog genocida, bezbedan, svako produžavanje oružanih sukoba predstavlja neodgovorno izigravanje ljudskim životima i sudbinom naroda,* , 8 January 1992, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS).

¹²⁵ Author's translation. Serbian text: *Niti su građani Srbije Vaši taoci, niti će to biti,* 8 January 1992, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS).

4: Bosnia - *en route* to genocide

You want to take Bosnia-Herzegovina down the same highway of hell and suffering that Slovenia and Croatia are travelling. Do not think that you will not lead Bosnia-Herzegovina into hell, and do not think that you will not perhaps make the Muslim people disappear, because the Muslims cannot defend themselves if there is war - how will you prevent everyone from being killed in Bosnia-Herzegovina?¹²⁶

This stark warning from Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić in October 1991, gives an indication of just how far the nationalist groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina stood from each other at the time war raged in Croatia. In the Vance plan had received a lukewarm welcome from local Serbs in Croatia, who expressed fear that they would be geographically cut off and isolated from Serbia if the neighbouring republic Bosnia-Herzegovina declared independence from rump Yugoslavia. It soon became clear that the Serbs in Croatia had no reason to worry, as the Serb in Bosnia-Herzegovina set their sight on occupying large swathes of Bosnian territory providing a *corridor* between the Croatian Serbs and Serbia proper. That meant that war would come to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Already in March 1991, Milošević and Tuđman met on Marshal Tito's old hunting lodge in Karadjordjevo. Here the leaders, who a few months later technically would be at war with each other, discussed their territorial ambitions in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the multi-cultural republic no ethnic group formed the majority, and its cities were thriving examples of the Yugoslav ideal of brotherhood and unity.¹²⁷ The nationalist re-orientation in Croatia and Serbia had by 1991 changed this dramatically. Openly Milošević had stated his goals of having all Serbs in one state, and Tuđman dreamed of a Croatian

¹²⁶ Statement by Radovan Karadžić directed at the Muslim leader of SDA, Alija Izetbegović on 14 - 15 October 1991. Quoted in Silber and Little 1997: p 215.

¹²⁷ As of 1991, some 44 per cent of the Bosnians described themselves as Muslims, 31 per cent as Serbs, and 17 per cent as Croats. ICTY facts in judgment against Momčilo Krajišnik, <http://www.un.org/icty/krajsnik/trialc/judgement/kra-jud060927e.pdf>, accessed: 7 September 2007.

homeland.¹²⁸ It was only natural, according to the prevailing ideology, that they also had ambitions for the Croatian and Serb minorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In fact, Serb and Croat nationalist leaders both expressed the view that the Muslims were Croats or Serbs who had succumbed to pressure and converted to Islam during Ottoman rule.¹²⁹

During the Karadjordjevo talks, the two leaders both formulated an agreement to carve up Bosnia-Herzegovina, with no regard to the republic's Muslim population and the people who supported the republic's multi-ethnic tradition.

In 1990 the three largest groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina had established political parties along ethnic lines. Alija Izetbegović, who had been jailed by the Yugoslav authorities for his support for an expanded role of Islam, founded the Party for Democratic Action (SDA). He called for a continuation of Yugoslavia, but only as a confederal state with sovereign nations and republics with the current borders.¹³⁰ In other words, a confederal solution which Slobodan Milošević had opposed in the negotiations prior to the Croatian war.

The Serbs followed suit and founded the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) in July 1990, as a branch of the Serbian Croat party in Knin, Croatia. The psychiatrist Radovan Karadžić from Montenegro was elected its leader. The political platform had an emphasis on protection of the Serb nation. It was said to be disadvantaged by the purported lower birth rate of Serbs and by the way Bosnia-Herzegovina had been divided into municipalities, effectively making Serbs an ethnic minority in areas where they might otherwise have dominated.¹³¹ As we shall return to, this became an important part of the Serb propaganda machinery during the war. The Croats followed up, and created a Bosnian wing of the ruling HDZ party in Croatia.

¹²⁸ As we have seen previously, Milošević refrained from using the word "Greater Serbia" and instead focused on the "preservation of Yugoslavia".

¹²⁹ Silber and Little 1997: p 208.

¹³⁰ For more on the political platform of the SDA see Burg, Steven L and Shoup, Paul S *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina – Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention*, M.E. Sharpe, London, 1999, p 47.

¹³¹ Judgment against Momčilo Krajisnik, <http://www.un.org/icty/krajisnik/trialc/judgement/krajud060927e.pdf>, accessed: 7 September 2007.

In the 1990 elections the Bosnian population voted for the party which represented their ethnic group. At this stage, however, the parties were more intent on keeping the communists out, than fighting each other. Consequently, the parties formed an uneasy alliance in the Bosnian government.

But the three election winning parties had conflicting ideas of what Bosnia-Herzegovina should do in the event of Slovenia and Croatia leaving the federation. The Croat HDZ party wanted essentially to take what it could of Bosnia-Herzegovina with a Croat population and make it a part of an independent Croatia. The SDS wanted to remain in Yugoslavia, knowing that it had the backing of Belgrade. Ironically, the party called for a confederation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the same arrangement it had opposed as a solution for Yugoslavia. The Muslim SDA, led by Alija Izetbegović opted for a sovereign but multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina. In a speech to the Bosnian Parliament in February 1991, Izetbegović said that he was ready to fight: 'I would sacrifice peace for a sovereign Bosnia-Herzegovina, but for that peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina I would not sacrifice sovereignty.'¹³²

The war in Croatia brought the political alliance in Bosnia-Herzegovina to an end. The HDZ and SDS threw their support behind the Croats and Serb respectively, and Alija Izetbegović came down on the side of both Slovenia and Croatia. Hence, the political crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina escalated, and the question of Bosnian sovereignty became acute. The Serbs established so-called Serbian autonomous regions (SAO) with armed checkpoints.¹³³ In small plebiscites, the SDS asked Serbs in Bosnia to back the party's policy on keeping Bosnia-Herzegovina in Yugoslavia. But Izetbegović did not waver in his call for independence. As leader of the Bosnian presidency he was left with the choice of staying in a rump Yugoslavia, and face the same situation as the Albanians in Kosovo who had lost their autonomy under Slobodan Milošević's first years in power, or risk war by declaring independence. On 20 December, 1991, the Bosnian presidency voted to seek independence, with the Serb representatives voting against.¹³⁴ What the Serbs had

¹³² Silber and Little 1997: p 211.

¹³³ Burg and Shoup 1999: p 73.

¹³⁴ Silber and Little 1997: p 217.

regarded as a war cry, had become a reality. The slide into war seemed inevitable.

At the same time, the old system of strict balance between the different national groups crumbled in municipalities across Bosnia-Herzegovina, and people from minority ethnic groups were excluded.¹³⁵ In essence, this was a bureaucratic ethnic cleansing and a precursor to the horrors of war.

The political crisis triggered preparations for an armed escalation. The Bosnian presidency that had voted for independence knew that the JNA would side with the Serbs, as it had done in Croatia. After the cease-fire in Croatia, weapons had poured into Bosnia-Herzegovina. Croatian units, who had taken part in the war in Croatia, returned home where they anticipated war to break out. Alija Izetbegović started to organise the Muslim Green Berets in autumn 1991, and the Patriotic League became the Bosnian government's army.¹³⁶ The Serb initially relied on the JNA for their defence. Milošević secretly moved all JNA officers born in Bosnia back to their native republic.¹³⁷ This was in violation of the JNA's strict instructions. The JNA had traditionally had a strong proportion of Serbs among its officers, and by the time war erupted in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the federal army had been transferred into a Serb fighting force.¹³⁸ This made it possible for Milošević to argue that he had done his share to prevent the fighting, by pulling out the JNA.

A report by JNA General Milutin Kukanjac stated that the "leadership of Serbian people and all Serbs are ready for the war, in the case that the confederation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not accepted". It went on to describe how the JNA had distributed 17298 weapons to so-called "volunteer units" in the 2nd Military District. In total, evidence from the ICTY show that the Serbs armed themselves in 28 municipalities in Bosnia-

¹³⁵ Burg and Shoup call this a "revolution from above" in Burg and Shoup 1999: pp 64 - 70

¹³⁶ More on the arming of the different groups in Burg and Shoup 1999: pp 74 -76.

¹³⁷ Silber and Little 1997: p 218.

¹³⁸ From 1991 to early 1992 the Serb component of JNA conscripts rose from just over 35 per cent to around 90 per cent. From Judgment against Momčilo Krajišnik available at <http://www.un.org/icty/krajsnik/trialc/judgement/kra-jud060927e.pdf>. Accessed 12 September 2007.

Herzegovina.¹³⁹ Consequently, it can be argued that Slobodan Milošević pulled strings which would lead to war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

A national referendum on the future of the republic was held on 29 February to 1 March, and boycotted by Serbs. The official result showed that 63 per cent voted in favour of independence, but for the Serbs the referendum was seen as another step toward war.¹⁴⁰ The following day road blocks were set up by Serb irregulars in Sarajevo. Large peace rallies were held in both Sarajevo and Mostar, but by the end of the first week of March, it was clear that the slide into war could not be stopped. Izetbegović ordered full mobilisation of all police forces and reservists in Sarajevo, and the SDS called for Serbs to leave the city.¹⁴¹

By April, fighting had erupted in almost all of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Croatian and Muslim units tried to block the advance of the far stronger JNA, which by now was a Serb fighting force. The first massacre happened in Bijeljina on 2 – 3 April, and was carried out by the feared Serb paramilitary leader, Željko Raznjatović, also known as Arkan.¹⁴² Days after the European Community (EC) and the USA recognised Bosnia-Herzegovina, a full-scale invasion of eastern Bosnia was carried out by JNA and Serb irregular forces. The invasion was followed by waves of ethnic cleansing.¹⁴³

General Ratko Mladić was made head of the army of the Serb republic in May. The shelling of Sarajevo started and Serb forces tried, and failed, to divide Sarajevo in early May. When a bread queue in Sarajevo was shelled on 27 May, the UN Security Council passed resolution 757, imposing sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro, the two republics left in Yugoslavia. As we will return to later, this event created a siege mentality in

¹³⁹ Judgment against Momčilo Krajišnik, paragraph 42,

<http://www.un.org/icty/krajisnik/trialc/judgement/kra-jud060927e.pdf>, accessed, 5 September 2007.

¹⁴⁰ Burg and Shoup 1999: p 117.

¹⁴¹ Burg and Shoup 1999: p 129.

¹⁴² A report prepared by the prosecution at the ICTY states that the share of non-Serbs in the Republika Srpska in Bosnia fell by 82 per cent from 1991 to 1997. Burg and Shoup 1999: p 119.

¹⁴³ The Report on Ethnic Composition and Displaced Persons and Refugees also show that the share of non-Serbs in the Federation in Bosnia-Herzegovina increased by 41 per cent. Accessed on 5 September, 2007 from the judgment in the case against Biljana Plavšić, paragraph 36, <http://www.un.org/icty/plavsic/trialc/judgement/pla-tj030227e.pdf>, accessed: 12 September 2007.

Serbia that Slobodan Milošević exploited in his political campaign.

The Croat defence council HVO were led by Mate Boban and in the initial stages it was allied with the Bosnian Muslims against the Serb onslaught. This alliance lasted until 1993, when fighting between them broke out. The attack on Mostar that year, caused outrage at the UN, and was followed by ethnic cleansing of villages with a Muslim population in the Neretva valley.¹⁴⁴

Genocide in Bosnia

The previous chapter showed the important role played by genocide in the propaganda machinery of Slobodan Milošević in Belgrade during the war in Croatia. The Bosnian Serbs followed up on this rhetoric, and argued that genocide was the only alternative to the policy goals of the SDS. As we shall return to, the Bosnian Serb genocide rhetoric was very different from that of Milošević, who distanced himself from the fighting in Bosnia.

The ICTY has identified four factors involved in creating a fear among Bosnian Serbs that Muslims and Croats would use violence against them.¹⁴⁵

1. The memory of crimes committed during The Second World War, when Bosnia-Herzegovina also was part of the Ustaša NDH state.
2. Muslims and Croats expressed extreme messages and hinted at the annihilation of Serbs in Bosnia.
3. Armed gangs perpetrated crimes against Serbs based on ethnic motives.
4. The leadership of the SDS encouraged the fears and made them public.

The armed actions perpetrated against the Serbs did contribute to the fear, and served to confirm already held convictions among Serbs that there was a conspiracy against them. A statement signed by Bosnian Serb leader Momčilo Krajišnik about the Bosnian Serb's

¹⁴⁴ Burg and Shoup 1999: p 135.

¹⁴⁵ Judgment against Momčilo Krajišnik, paragraph 43.

<http://www.un.org/icty/plavsic/trialc/judgement/pla-tj030227e.pdf>, accessed 12 September 2007.

right to self-determination is one example of how the Bosnian Serb leaders spelled out the horrors of genocide as an alternative to their political strategy.

Any other viewpoint would bring into question the national and physical survival of the Serbian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, who in recent history have been exposed to one of the worst genocides and policies of forced resettlement in Europe.¹⁴⁶

There were in particular two elements involved in the creation of a fear of genocide: Demographic change in favour of the Muslims which would gradually force out the Serb population, and suggestions that the Bosnian Muslim leader, Alija Izetbegović would create an Islamic state out of an independent Bosnia.

Bosnian Serb leaders spelt out these fears in discussions with international mediators, which can be seen in a conversation between SDS leader Radovan Karadžić, US ambassador Herbart Okun and mediator Cyrus Vance.

He continued by saying that the genocide during the Second World War had reduced the Serb numbers, the Serb population in Bosnia. He asserted that before The Second World War that Serbs constituted 44 per cent of the population of Bosnia, whereas in the 1981 and 1991 census, they had about 31 or 32 per cent. He continued by saying that he wanted -- that the Muslims wanted all of Bosnia and that they expected to achieve it via their high birth rate, by a demographic means, because there were more Bosnian Muslims than there were Bosnian Serbs.¹⁴⁷

The demographic argument was put into an Ottoman context. The uprising against the Ottoman rulers had provided the backbone of the creation of a Serb nationalism in the 19th century. Bosnia-Herzegovina had undergone an islamization under Ottoman rule.¹⁴⁸ As we have seen earlier, the period of Ottoman occupation is in Serb history referred to as a dark age and an obstacle to the natural development of Serbia as a nation state.¹⁴⁹

This thesis will refer to use of a demographic factor as a largely fabricated “demography myth”. This myth was embraced by Slobodan Milošević, but also by the leadership in

¹⁴⁶ Quoted document is from 19 December 1991. Excerpt found in witness statement from Patrick Treanor in the trial against Momčilo Krajišnik at ICTY, p 1504, <http://www.un.org/icty/trans39/040224IT.html>, accessed: 4 september, 2007.

¹⁴⁷ Transcript from the Krajišnik trial, pp 4163-4164, ICTY.

¹⁴⁸ For more on this islamization see Malcolm 1996: pp 51- 69.

¹⁴⁹ Lecture given by Aleksa Djilas at the *Norwegian Institute of International Affairs* (NUPI), Oslo, Norway, 12 May 2004.

Croatia. In the trial against Slobodan Milošević at the ICTY, the statement of the current Croatian president, Stjepan Mesić, provides an interesting insight into the dissemination of this myth. Mesić was in the years preceding the war the Croatian member of the Yugoslav presidency, and an ally of Franjo Tuđman.¹⁵⁰ In a meeting in Milošević's office, the Serbian president laid out the demographic consequences if Yugoslavia would disappear, backed up by evidence from "demographic experts". They argued that if Yugoslavia disappeared, the national and ethnic composition of the country would be radically changed as one could expect the return of 500,000 Muslims who had left the country. Mesić's testimony provides a unique insight into how these demographic myths were shared by both the Serbian and Croatian leaderships.

Mesić: To support this view, he provided a document, documents and reports, which were elaborated and compiled by the greatest demographic experts. I took a look at those documents, but my only comment to them was that I think that Turkey – I said that Turkey has a sufficiently high growth rate, and it seemed to me improbable that 500,000 Turks and Muslims would return. But President Tudjman took all these documents with him and took them back to Zagreb.

Prosecution: Did President Tudjman appear to have approve of the contents of these reports or not?

Mesić: He didn't comment much. He read some passages out loud, read through some others and took the documents to Zagreb. And when we met in Zagreb, when the leaders met in Zagreb, he took out all these documents and all he said was, "Here you have world experts and their views, and they stress that if Yugoslavia were to disappear, 500.000 Muslims who had previously left Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, et cetera, and Sandzak, the Sandzak area, the part of the Sandzak which is in Serbia, that they would return." He did not give the document to anybody else to read. He did not say that this was compiled by the people who lived in Belgrade or, rather, that they were Serb experts. He said that they were 10 world experts. So he lent that material a bit more importance by doing so.¹⁵¹

The fact that Tuđman brought these documents to Croatia is perhaps not relevant to its use in Serbia. It is, however, an indication how the leadership dealt with so-called scientific facts in Belgrade, although as the next chapter will show, a fundamentally different picture was presented to the public.

¹⁵⁰ They fell out in 1994 over the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina

¹⁵¹ Testimony of Stjepan Mesić to the ICTY tribunal in the trial against Slobodan Milošević. <http://www.un.org/icty/transe54/021001IT.htm>, pp 10521 - 10522, accessed: 16 May, 2007.

The Islamist threat

Bosnia's Ottoman past became a major focus point for the Serb propaganda machine during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As mentioned, nationalist Croats and Serbs viewed the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina as either Croats or Serbs who had succumbed to pressure from the Ottoman over-lordship and converted to Islam. They had abandoned their *true faith*, and adopted an alien culture.¹⁵² The Muslims in Bosnia de-emphasised ethnicity, and were therefore considered as weaker, with a constructed identity, while the Serbian and Croatian nationalisms were perceived as primordial.¹⁵³

This contempt, which arguably bordered on racism, was used as a rationale for the Serbian expansion in the republic.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, the Bosnian Serb leadership disseminated a view that the Muslims constituted a religious threat. The Bosnian Serb propaganda machinery widely used references to the region's Ottoman past. In 1992, journalist Roy Gutman visited the Bosnian Serb stronghold of Banja Luka, to investigate Bosnian Serb propaganda. One example is this Bosnian Serb text:

“By order of the Islamic fundamentalists from Sarajevo, healthy Serbian women from 17 to 40 years of age are being separated out and subjected to special treatment. According to their sick plans going back many years, these women have to be impregnated by orthodox Islamic seeds in order to raise a generation of janissaries on the territories they surely consider to be theirs, the Islamic republic.¹⁵⁵ In other words, a fourfold crime is to be committed against the Serbian woman: to remove her from her own family, to impregnate her by undesirable seeds, to make her bear a stranger and then to take him even away from her.”¹⁵⁶

There were suggestions that the dissemination of such propaganda contributed to some of the most horrific war crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina, namely the use of mass rape. The focus on the demographic threat allegedly created, and justified, among some Bosnian Serbs soldiers a collective feeling of revenge which resulted in the rape of Muslim

¹⁵² Silber and Little 1997: p 208.

¹⁵³ MacDonald, David Bruce *Balkan Holocausts? Serbian and Croatian Victim-Centred Propaganda and the War in Yugoslavia*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2002, p 224.

¹⁵⁴ Silber and Little 1997: p 208.

¹⁵⁵ Infantry regiments under the Ottoman sultan. The recruits wore uniforms and were paid. The janissaries were made up of soldiers who had been forcefully recruited into the Ottoman forces when they were children, as part of the *Deushirme* system.

¹⁵⁶ Gutman Roy *A witness to genocide*, Element Books Ltd, 1993, p 78; Volkan, Vamik *Blood lines – From ethnic pride to ethnic terrorism*, Westview press, Colorado, 1998, pp 76-77.

women.¹⁵⁷

The Islamophobic nature of Bosnian Serb propaganda also characterised the description of the Bosnian president Alija Izetbegović. He was the only Bosnian leader who had never been a communist. Rather he was a deeply religious Muslim, who spent his career working as a lawyer in Sarajevo. During the war, he had been a member of *Mladi Muslimani*, young Muslims, who nurtured ties with the youth movement of the Nazi puppet Ustaša regime in the Independent state of Croatia (NDH).¹⁵⁸ In 1973 he wrote the *Islamic Declaration*, which argued for a stronger role of Islam in public and political life. Nationalists in Croatia and Serbia took this as a sign that he planned to create a Muslim state in Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁵⁹ Izetbović, however, dismissed any suggestion that this was his goal. In fact, the *Islamic Declaration* excluded the use of violence in the creation of a Muslim state, and was a work of scholarship than politics.¹⁶⁰ He argued that Bosnia-Herzegovina was a multicultural secular society, and that Muslims could not lay claim to the role of titular nationality in Bosnia.¹⁶¹ In 1983 he was arrested again for distributing the *Islamic Declaration*, and sentenced once again to three years in prison.

Izetbegović religious platform was controversial also within his own party, which was divided into conservative and liberal wings. The conservatives meant that a Bosnian state was bound up with the affirmation of the Muslims as a nation. Partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina could be discussed, but they never excluded the reconquest of part of Serb-occupied Bosnia at a later date. The smaller liberal wing saw Bosnian statehood as a way of preserving the republic's multi-cultural traditions.¹⁶² In other words, the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina were divided on the subject of which role religion should play in a future state.

¹⁵⁷ Volkan 1998: p 76.

¹⁵⁸ Burg and Shoup 1999: p 67.

¹⁵⁹ Silber and Little 1997: p 208.

¹⁶⁰ Silber and Little 1997: p 208.

¹⁶¹ Silber and Little 1997: p 208.

¹⁶² Burg and Shoup 1999: p 67.

Trouble at home

In Serbia, Milošević was facing dissent on the streets.¹⁶³ Demonstrators were calling for his resignation, and peace activists mourned publicly the siege of Sarajevo.¹⁶⁴ With the discontent spreading, Milošević appointed the moderates Dobrica Ćosić and Milan Panić to the federal presidency. Ćosić had been a well-respected member of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences (SANU), and played an important part in the nationalist re-orientation in Serbia in the late 1980s. He had supported Milošević but opposed his autocratic rule. Panić was an industrialist who had made big money in the United States.¹⁶⁵ These appointments were welcomed by the Serbian opposition, but did little to change the political landscape in Serbia. Panić was considered politically naive and dismissed by Milošević by the end of that year. Ćosić was considered to be one of few people who could pose a challenge to Milošević, and had rejected aggressive nationalism. He was, however, not willing to challenge him for the presidency in 1992, despite his broad support at home and abroad.¹⁶⁶

Milošević knew that the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was not popular in Serbia, and this was reflected in his speeches directed at the opposition. Confronted with his critics, Milošević chose the same approach as he had while the war was raging in Croatia; only unity can save the Serbs.

In June 1992, Milošević met a delegation of University students and professors who called for him to step down. The president's defence was simple: Those who sided against the government took the side of the West who had exerted unjust pressure on Serbia.

Against that pressure, the answer to the solution can only be a unification of all forces in Serbia, to treat Serbia well, and not, unfortunately, that somebody stand on the side of this foreign pressure. It is absolutely clear that nobody can destabilise Serbia by foreign pressure.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Djukić 2001: pp 52-53.

¹⁶⁴ Djukić 2001: pp 52-53.

¹⁶⁵ Thomas 2000: pp 122-123.

¹⁶⁶ Djukic 2001: pp 55-57.

¹⁶⁷ Author's translation. Serbian text: *Na taj pritisak odgovor za izlaz može biti samo ujedinjavanje svih snaga u Srbiji, da učine Srbiji dobro, a ne, na žalost, da neke od njih staju na stranu tog spoljnog pritiska.*

This call for unity was repeated in a speech to a democratic opposition group a few weeks later.¹⁶⁸

The response to domestic criticism is important for the argument of this thesis because it shows the way Milošević raised the stakes involved in the conflict. Commenting on the war directly, he denied any involvement and stated that propaganda machinery was targeting Serbia. He thereby used the role of Serbs as victims of “foreign pressure” to clamp down on opposition at home.

Summary

Late 1991 and early 1992 saw the failure of international efforts to prevent war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As in Croatia, the Serb population had created their own self-proclaimed state-let within a state on the road to independence. This was partly based on a disseminated fear of genocide, which was used particularly by the Bosnian Serb leadership. Also, strong anti-Islamic sentiments were present in what became known as the *Republika Srpska* (RS). In Serbia, however, people protested in the streets against the war. Slobodan Milošević responded by urging unity among all Serbs, against “foreign enemies”. Milošević defined his enemies not by opposing national or religious groups, but rather anti-Serbian forces from abroad. As such, it was already clear in the first months of the Bosnian War that Milošević chose a different profile in his public propaganda than the Bosnian Serbs. However, his focus on the victimisation of the Serbs continued. The next chapter will show how Milošević publicly presented himself as a peacemaker. His rhetoric on genocide continued however, but increasingly the international community was seen as the perpetrators through *genocidal* sanctions. This feeling of an international threat grew stronger as sanctions were imposed on Serbia. In Milošević’s propaganda, it was the sanctions regime that was genocidal in its nature.

Potpuno je jasno da spoljnim pritiscima Srbiju ne može niko destabilizovati, ‘Razgovor sa predstavnicima demokratskog pokreta Srbije i organizatorima vidovdanskog sabora’, 29 June 1992, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1992/211992.pdf>, accessed: 10 May 2007.

¹⁶⁸ 29 June 1992, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS).

5: Milošević in denial

In Belgrade, Slobodan Milošević had played the role of a peacemaker throughout the Croatian war, despite massive evidence that he was indeed controlling the warring parties on the Serb side in Croatia. The mobilisation drive, he argued, was driven by a desire to save the Serbs from the so-called genocidal forces in Croatia. As shown previously, he in fact admitted supporting the Croatian Serbs, although not militarily.¹⁶⁹ In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Milošević denied accusations that the Serbs were carrying out any acts of aggression. As the shelling of Sarajevo brought the horrors of war into the focus of the international community, Milošević claimed that Serbia was a victim of a formidable propaganda machinery aimed at weakening the Serbs.

With war looming in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Serbian president refuted any claims that he was in control of the Bosnian Serbian forces that was carrying out the violence. This chapter will look at how Milošević denied any involvement in the conflict in Bosnia in the first months of the war, and how his portrayal of Serbs as victims gradually solidified as the international community increased its pressure against Serbs over the atrocities carried out in Bosnia. When he addressed the nation, Milošević emphasised the Serb's historical struggle against genocide in both Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. But the imagery was different from Croatia, in that he largely refrained from depicting the Bosnian Croats and the Bosnian army as forces ready to commit genocide. Instead, he stressed Serbia's efforts to bring a negotiated end.

Whereas the war in Croatia had been triggered by the threat facing the Serbs, the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was presented as a more *irrational* struggle. During spring and summer 1992, Milošević argued that the war itself was absurd, not only the allegations that Serbia was in control. In fact, Milošević speeches suggest that he fought against a rationale presented by the Western media, that the Serbs were the aggressors in the war.

¹⁶⁹ 'Intervju britanskoj tv kompaniji skaj njuz', 7 august 1992, *Borba*, (DCR/NBS).

Arguably, this allowed Milošević to distance himself from the fighting on the ground, and that the conflict was a *civil war*, detrimental to all three nationalities. At the same time, Milošević could maintain his focus on victimhood, which in Croatia took the form of imminent genocide. The UN sanctions of May 30 1992, however, made it necessary for Milošević to explain why he could not cut off relations with the Bosnian Serbs. Pressed on this issue in a long interview with Serbian TV in October, Milošević returned to the issue of genocide and pledged never to cut off, or reduce, the aid to the Bosnian Serbs.

The peacemaker

By April 1992, Milošević had to explain the violence carried out by Serbs outside of Serbia, both to the Serbs at home and the international community. Again, the preferred subject of his speeches was the victimisation of the Serbs. In order to analyse the way the message was sold, I have identified three traits:

1. The foreign media is conducting a campaign against Serbia.
2. UN sanctions against Yugoslavia are deeply unfair.
3. Those who opposed Milošević at home sided with the “foreign pressure”.

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina cast a shadow on the political scene in Belgrade. As we have looked at before, Serbian president Slobodan Milošević aimed to present himself as a peacemaker during the war in Croatia. The argument from Belgrade was that the conflict had been caused by the rehabilitation of a fascist past, and the only option open for the Croatian Serbs was to defend themselves from a coming genocide. When the war reached its conclusion with the Vance plan, Slobodan Milošević argued that the UNPROFOR forces could do the job of protecting the Serbs from genocide, and publicly humiliated the Croatian Serb leaders who wished to keep their arms. Milošević had secured peace for the entire Serb nation, he said.

In spring 1992, with war looming in Bosnia-Herzegovina, his peace rhetoric continued. The federal army JNA began to withdraw from Bosnia in late April, but as we examined,

this happened only after military personnel had been transferred to Bosnia. They numbered around 80 000 personnel, and formed the backbone of a new Bosnian Serb army.¹⁷⁰ At the same time, senior officers who had refused to support Radovan Karadžić in the initial stages of the war were purged.¹⁷¹ But the preparations for war that the Milošević government were carrying out, was clandestine business for the ruling regime.¹⁷² Publicly, Belgrade pursued peace.

In a speech to the Serbian parliament at the end of February 1992, Slobodan Milošević laid out his political aims in advance of the outbreak of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He praised the international community for contributing UN troops to Croatia, but at the same warned that the pressure from some European countries upon Yugoslavia was strengthening. He defined three aims for his government:

Security and safety for the political and physical integrity of the Serbia people who live outside of Serbia; preservation of Yugoslavia as a joint state; efforts to bring a peaceful solution to the Yugoslav crisis, in accordance with our known attitude that the Yugoslav crisis should be solved peacefully and not by war.¹⁷³

By April, full-scale war had engulfed Eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina. The international press started broadcasting on the plight of the people of Bosnia, and in Sarajevo in particular. Milošević had to face up to criticism that his government supported those elements that were driving Bosnia into civil war. In a press conference after a meeting with international mediator Lord Carrington, Milošević refuted any suggestions that the Serbs were carrying out an invasion of Eastern Bosnia. He further stated that “we cannot understand the great pressure and accusations that Serbia has invaded Bosnia-

¹⁷⁰ Thomas 2000: p 121

¹⁷¹ Thomas 2000: p 121

¹⁷² A summary of evidence presented against Slobodan Milošević in the ICTY trial against him can be found in the report “Weighing the evidence – Lessons from the Slobodan Milošević” trial, December 2006, Volume 18, No. 10 (D). <http://hrw.org/reports/2006/milosevic1206/>, accessed: 12 September 2006.

¹⁷³ Author’s translation. Serbian text: *Obezbeđenju i zaštiti političkog i fizičkog integriteta srpskog naroda koji živi izvan Republike Srbije; kontinuitetu Jugoslavije kao zajedničke države; zalaganju za miran način rešavanja jugoslovenske krize, odnosno našem poznatom stavu da jugoslovensku krizu treba rešiti mirom a ne ratom*, ‘Govor o politici Srbije i međunarodni aspektu krize, održan u Narodnoj Skupštini Srbij’, 27 February 1992, *Borba; Politika*, (DCR,NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1992/41992.pdf>, accessed: 19 May 2007.

Herzegovina”.¹⁷⁴

He explained that the fighting in Bosnia is a result of “mutual killings” which is hurting all three nationalities in the region. This fighting had to end, he said, and this was also an attitude that is known to the international community.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Serb irregular forces were at the time carrying out atrocities against the Bosnian population. Again, Milošević denied the reports:

What concerns the possibility that there are irregular forces, groups, individuals coming from Serbia, I can say openly that the institutions of the Serbian government alone control the entire territory of Serbia and that there are no possibilities that any groups or individuals, whom they might be, is causing any damage in this regard.¹⁷⁵

Victims of foreign propaganda

As opposed to the first months of warfare in Croatia, Milošević did not issue a public declaration of support for the Serbs in Bosnia.¹⁷⁶ Neither did he claim categorically that the Serbs were victims of genocide in Bosnia, as the Bosnian Serb leader insisted. But it became more difficult to play the role of peacemaker as the evidence grew of Serbian involvement in the war. Milošević responded by claiming that the mounting accusations against Serbia were not evidence of Serbian involvement, but proof that a massive media campaign is targeting Serbia. In other words, Milošević seized upon the criticism against Serbia as an opportunity to portray the Serbs as victims, this time of an international media campaign. This can be seen in a statement he made to journalists in April, 2004:

These untruths are disseminated through a very well organized media war, a propaganda war which is very well organised and very well paid. You have seen how even the crimes

¹⁷⁴ Author’s translation: Serbian text: [...]mi ne možemo razumeti veliki pritisak i optužbe da je Srbija izvršila invaziju na Bosnu i Hercegovinu, 27 February 1992, *Borba; Politika*, (DCR,NBS).

¹⁷⁵ Author’s translation: Serbian text: Što se tiče mogućnosti da bilo kakve neregularne formacije, grupe, pojedinci idu iz Srbije, mogu da kažem ovde javno da organi vlasti Srbije u potpunosti kontrolišu teritoriju Srbije i da nema nikakvih mogućnosti da bilo kakve grupe ili pojedinci, kakvih uvek može biti, nanesu neku štetu u tom pogledu, 27 February 1992, *Borba; Politika*, (DCR,NBS).

¹⁷⁶ In the same speech, he expressed hope that the Serb leadership in Bosnia would hold their word and participate in the peace talks in Lisboa. By doing so, he also states that his interests and those of the Serbian leadership are not necessarily identical, 27 February 1992, *Borba; Politika*, (DCR,NBS).

committed and casualties taken in Croatia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina, according to many sources of information, were carried out by some Serbian irregular forces and the blame laid on Serbia and the Serbs.¹⁷⁷

In mid-May Milošević is interviewed by the Italian newspaper *Corriera della Sierra*. The interview is also published in *Borba* and *Politika*. This time, Milošević was asked directly about his territorial ambitions.

At no moment have I supported a Greater Serbia and I emphasise always that Serbia has no territorial ambitions against others.¹⁷⁸

Milošević is also questioned about the meeting with Croat leader Franjo Tuđman regarding a carve up of Bosnia, which he called a “naked lie”.¹⁷⁹

With horrors of the shelling of Sarajevo unfolding, the UN Security Council in late May convened to debate possible stronger economic sanctions against Serbia. Milošević stepped up his rhetoric, and elaborated on what he called the defensive nature of the Serbian national liberation struggle. Also he re-iterated Serbia’s right to self-determination saying that Serbia has “no masters abroad and wish to secure its independence”.¹⁸⁰

Regarding this matter, it is known that throughout history, Serbs and the Serbian nation has not fought any aggressive wars, but only defensive ones and has succeeded to keep its freedom and independence.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ Author’s translation. Serbian text: Te neistine su emitovane kroz jedan veoma dobro organizovani medijski rat, propagandni rat koji je veoma dobro organizovan i koji je veoma dobro plaćen, propagandni rat, i vi ste videli kako se čak i nedela i žrtve koje su se događale i u Hrvatskoj i u Bosni i Hercegovini pripisuju, po mnogim sredstvima informisanja, nekakvim srpskih neregularnim formacijama i upisuju u nedela Srbije i Srbima, ‘Odgovori na pitanja novinara nakon susreta sa lordom karingtonom i de pinjeirom’, 23 April 1992, *Borba; Politika*, (DCR/NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1992/41992.pdf>, accessed: 10 May 2007

¹⁷⁸ Author’s translation. Serbian text: *Ni jednog trenutka se nisam zalagao za veliku Srbiju i podvlačim stalno da Srbija nema nikakvih teritorijalnih zahteva prema drugima*, ‘Izvodi iz intervjuja italijanskom listu korriere dela sera’ 13 May 1992, *Borba*, (DCR/NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1992/101992.pdf>, accessed: 10 May 2007.

¹⁷⁹ 13 May 1992, *Borba*, (DCR/NBS),

¹⁸⁰ Author’s translation. Serbian text: *Ovaj narod nema gazde u inostranstvu i želi da sačuva svoju nezavisnost*, ‘Intervju Radio Televiziji Srbije’, 29 May 1992, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1992/101992.pdf>, accessed: 10 May, 2007.

¹⁸¹ Author’s translation. Serbian text: *U tom smislu u čitavoj našoj istoriji, poznato je da Srbi i srpski narod nikada nisu vodili osvajačke ratove, već samo odbrambene i da su uspeli da ostvare svoju slobodu i*

Interestingly, Milošević not only denied Serbian involvement in the crisis. He also blames the whole conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina on a “misunderstanding”:

The situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina shows that many of those who exert pressure regarding the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, simply do not understand neither Yugoslavia’s problems, nor those of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This misunderstanding is pushing the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina to this bloody conflict which represents a tragedy for all the inhabitants, regardless of nationality.¹⁸²

In August 1992, the ghosts of the Second World War again haunted Serbia. This time, however, the Serbs were the ones who had to face accusations of using methods previously only employed by the Nazi forces in Europe. During the two first weeks of August, media attention was directed towards the discovery of Bosnian Serb run detention centres in Bosnian. The footage of emaciated prisoners behind barbed wire drew comparisons to the holocaust. Although an Amnesty International report in October proved that all three sides operated detention camps, the majority were Serbs.¹⁸³ The international condemnation of Serbia increased. Slobodan Milošević, however, regarded also these reports as naked lies, concocted by the West. In an article headlined “false news to the world”, Milošević argued called the report “slanderous”, and a new chapter in the vilification of the Serbs in the Western press.¹⁸⁴

The UN against Serbia

By the end of May 1992, violence had escalated in the whole region. Ratko Mladić had been made commander of the Bosnian Serb republic army on 20 May, and the following days both a Red Cross and a UN convoy were attacked. The same week inhabitants of the

nezavisnost, 29 May, 1992, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS).

¹⁸² Author’s translation. Serbian text: *Situacija u Bosni i Hercegovini pokazuje da mnogi koji vrše pritiske u vezi sa ukupnim stanjem u Bosni i Hercegovini jednostavno ne razumeju ni probleme Jugoslavije ni probleme Bosne i Hercegovine. To nerazumevanje je gurnulo narode u Bosni i Hercegovini u ovakav krvavi sukob koji predstavlja tragediju za sve njene stanovnike, bez ozira na nacionalnost*, 29 May, 1992, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS).

¹⁸³ ‘Bosnia-Herzegovina: Gross abuses of basic human rights’, Amnesty International Index, EUR 63/01/92, October 1992.

¹⁸⁴ ‘Slobodan Milošević primio Dr Jevgenija Ambrocunova, predsednika spoljnopolitičkog odbora ruskog Parlamenta’, 11 August 1992, *Borba*, (DCR/NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1992/161992.pdf>, Accessed: 10 September 2007.

Kozarac village near Banja Luka were massacred. The UN attributed the attacks on Mladić.¹⁸⁵ On May 27, scores of civilians were killed in the bread queue massacre.

These events triggered mass condemnation across the world. An effective image was portrayed of innocent civilians in Sarajevo, shelled from Serbian position in the hills around the city. On 30 May, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 757 imposing sanctions against the former Yugoslavia.¹⁸⁶ Serbia was regarded as a main aggressor.¹⁸⁷

Unsurprisingly, this strengthened Milošević claim that an international propaganda machinery was directed against Serbia. A week after the sanctions were imposed, Milošević gave an interview with journalist Michael Kaufman of the *New York Times*, also published in *Politika*. In the interview he re-iterated the position that there was a media campaign against Serbia. He also said that the international media ignored the fact that he had deplored the mortar attack on a bread queue in Sarajevo, which triggered the sanctions. In plain words, he left no doubt about how the Serbs were vilified in Western media: "We are just criminals, we are wild aggressive people, we are black devils, I don't know what."¹⁸⁸

Reaching out to Muslims

As shown in the previous chapter, the Bosnian Serb leadership regarded the ambition of the Bosnian government with deep suspicion, bordering on racism. The Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina were seen as Serbs who had converted to Islam during the Ottoman age, and did not fulfil the criteria of a nation. A logical consequence of this is that their national aims could not be considered legitimate.

¹⁸⁵ Burg and Shoup 1999: P 131-132.

¹⁸⁶ Resolutions available from the U.N Security council resolution archives at <http://www.un.org/documents/sc/res/1992/scres92.htm>, accessed: 1 October 2007.

¹⁸⁷ The resolution was passed only ten days after the Security Council had voted to accept Bosnia-Herzegovina as a new member of the United Nations. Resolution 757 was one out of 14 adopted about the situation in Bosnia rump Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

¹⁸⁸ Kaufman, Michael *Yugoslav Denies Involvement Of Belgrade in Was in Bosnia*, New York Times, 6 June 1992, accessed at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E0CE7D81039F935A35755C0A964958260>, Accessed: September 10 2007.

Milošević publicly chose a very different approach. In his reference to the Serb nationhood, he rarely mentioned any demographic threat from the Muslims, although evidence shows that this was a topic of discussion with the Bosnian Serb leaders. On the contrary, in his speeches Milošević aimed to portray himself as a moderate, reaching out to Muslims. This is evident in a letter to the Conference of Islamic countries in Istanbul from 18 June 1992. The letter opened by Milošević which stated, “Serbs and Muslims are brothers”.¹⁸⁹ He further repeated the denials that Serbs were guilty of any aggression in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In Bosnia there is a civil war, and no aggression from Serbia. In that war no one side are innocent. Innocent are only the civilian population, Muslims, Serbs and Croats. Wars like these have no winners, only victims.¹⁹⁰

As opposed to his rhetoric in Croatia, Milošević to some extent acknowledged the sufferings of the other side, namely Bosnian Muslims, in Bosnia. This is done through acknowledging that Serbia has received “tens of thousands of Muslim refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina - men, women, children, old people who in Serbia were accepted like brothers in need.”¹⁹¹

This letter, published in *Politika* on 19 June, 1992, was sent amid strong international criticism of Serbia, especially for the shelling of Sarajevo. It provides an interesting insight into how Milošević aimed to portray himself as a bridge builder between the different nationalities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. His emphasis on brotherhood between the Serbs and Muslims echoed Tito’s ethos of Brotherhood and unity among the national groups which constituted Yugoslavia. It also provides a striking contrast to the warfare in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the anti-Muslim rhetoric of the Bosnian Serb leaders.

¹⁸⁹ Author’s translation. Serbian text: *Srbi i Muslimani su braća*, ‘Pismo konferenciji islamskih zemalja u istambulju’, 18 June 1992, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS).

<http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1992/181992.pdf>, accessed: 5 May 2006.

¹⁹⁰ Author’s translation: Serbian text: *U bosni je građanski rad, a ne agresija Srbije. U tom ratu nijedna strana nije nevinna. Nevino je samo civilno stanovništvo, i muslimansko, i srpsko, i hrvatsko. Takvi ratovi nemaju pobednike, već samo žrtve*, 18 June 1992, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS).

¹⁹¹ Author’s translation: Serbian text: *Dođite da obiđete desetine hiljada Muslimana izbeglica iz Bosne i Hercegovine - muškaraca, žena, dece, staraca, koji su u Srbiji primljeni kao braća u nevolji*, 18. June 1992, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS).

On several occasions, Milošević dismissed any suggestion that he was pursuing a nationalist agenda. It could be argued that this applied only to Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and not to the region of Kosovo. After all, Milošević had risen to power on a nationalist platform, and it had been his number one priority to end the plight of the Kosovo Serbs by withdrawing Kosovo's autonomy. However, during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina he referred to the situation in Kosovo from a political and not ethnic perspective. During his rise to power, one of his key arguments had been that the Albanian majority in Kosovo aimed to break away from Yugoslavia and that the Serbs living in the region would be at the risk of genocide. In an interview with Greek TV, published in *Politika* 30 August 1992, Milošević repeated the concern of an independent Kosovo, but re-iterated that this had nothing to do with any nationalist platform. "All Muslims in Kosovo are against the break-away of Kosovo", he said.¹⁹² As such, the secessionist forces in Kosovo could not be isolated to one national or ethnic group. Rather, he defined the enemy as more abstract forces of secession, and not an ethnic group. The theme of this thesis chapter is Bosnia-Herzegovina and not Kosovo. Yet, the fact that he mentioned this in an interview during the Bosnian war shows the extent to which he went to distance himself from charges of nationalism. More importantly, it shows that Milošević went beyond national identity when defining friends and foes. This was the case when Milan Babić was reprimanded and publicly humiliated for not supporting Milošević. As the next chapter will show, the same also applied to the Bosnian Serb leadership after the Belgrade-Pale split.

In the same interview, Milošević also returned to the issue of genocide against the Serbs in Croatia. They had "never fought a war over borders, but only for their security. And nothing else," he emphasised.¹⁹³ The article which carried the Greek interview in the Serb newspaper *Politika* was headlined "Serbs do not fight over borders, only against genocide".¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Author's translation. Serbian text: *Svi muslimani na Kosovu su protiv izdvajanja Kosova*, 'Intervju Grčkoj TV stanici 'Meta'', 30 August 1992, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1992/271992.pdf>, accessed: 14 November 2006.

¹⁹³ Author's translation. Serbian text: *Nisu se borili za granice, već za svoju bezbednost. I, ništa drugo*, 30 August 1992, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS).

¹⁹⁴ Author's translation. Serbian text: *Srbi se ne bore za granice, već protiv genocida*, 30 August 1992,

Addressing the nation

As shown earlier, Slobodan Milošević insisted that the warfare in Bosnia-Herzegovina was beyond his control. However, that did not explain why it was impossible for Serbia to abide by the conditions for the lifting of UN sanctions, which was a cessation of all aid to the warring parties.¹⁹⁵

In October 1992, Milošević gave a 80 minute long interview to the government controlled Radio-televizija Srbije (RTS). It was one of Milošević most important addresses that year, and was published over two pages in *Politika* the following day. Also the newspaper *Borba* printed transcripts of the interview.

Asked about the “great pressure” which the international community had put on Serbia, Milošević explained why the country must stay the course.

I believe we can surmount the difficulties only if we insist on the political lines which we have followed. [These lines] have succeeded, despite an enormous pressure from abroad and despite the interior effort there have been against the existence of Yugoslavia, to preserve Yugoslavia and its continuity. Also you talked about the Serbian Krajina and or Bosnia-Herzegovina, and here our goal is to aid both the Serbian people in the Krajina and in Bosnia to enter into fair negotiations by asking that their legitimate representatives participate in finding a solution to their future which is secure, safe, on the basic level which the United Nations have laid out.¹⁹⁶

This excerpt shows that Milošević urged the political leaders in Bosnia-Herzegovina to enter into discussions about the future of the region, which would result in a secure future for the Serbs outside of Serbia.

Politika, (DCR/NBS).

¹⁹⁵ The conditions which had to be met before the sanctions would be lifted are spelt out in UN resolution 727, and can be accessed at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/011/16/IMG/NR001116.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed: 12 September 2007.

¹⁹⁶ Author's translation. Serbian text: *Mislim da teškoće možemo prebroditi isključivo ako insistiramo na politici koju smo vodili i kojoj smo uspjeli, uprkos ogromnih spolnij pritiska i uprkos veoma snažnih unutrašnjih nastojanja koja su bila protiv opstanka Jugoslavije, da Jugoslaviju sačuvamo, da sačuvamo njen kontinuitet i, vi govorite o srpskim krajinama i o Bosni i Hercegovini, da paralelno pomognemo srpskom narodu u krajinama I u Bosni da danas može da bude jedan ravnopravan pregovarač, da njegovi legitimi predstavnici učestvuju u rešavanju njegove budućnosti, da bude sigurna, zaštićen, na osnovnu plana koji su napravile Ujedinjene nacije,* Intervju Radio-Televiziji Srbije, 9 October 1992, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1992/291992.pdf>, accessed: 10 May, 2007.

Safety again became a paramount issue, and again Milošević mentioned the word genocide. As we have seen in this chapter, this is a frequent reference during the war in Croatia. The following excerpt shows a pattern familiar with the speeches during the Croatian war.

Not only does Serbia want a political peace, but it should be evident that Serbia did not want a destruction of Yugoslavia, that Serbia was fighting for its protection. We stress that when crisis arise, the Serbian people and Serbia never have conducted aggressive wars, only defensive wars, and that we will know how to defend ourselves, which we in the end did show.¹⁹⁷

As such, Milošević elevated the conflict to a grander scale, which was the continuous struggle that the Serbs were fighting for their own protection. He also talked about the need for sacrifice to prevent a second genocide this century. This time, however, he did mention who would perpetrate the genocide against the Serbs.

To put it simple, in this country, which someone wishes to leave and secede in order to create their small nationalistic state-lets, Serbia was in favour of continuity and peace. Only where they again were exposed to genocide, for the second time during this century, was it not possible for them to die in order to restore peace.¹⁹⁸

This Serb struggle is thus paramount to the survival of the Serbian people. As such, the struggle itself is destined to come, but the means with which it will be fought should be peaceful.

Accordingly, there are fundamental rights that belong to everyone. The right to self-defence, to protect one's country, one's nation, and at all of this we insist that we are directed against finding a peaceful solution to the Yugoslav crisis.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Author's translation. Serbian text: *Ne same da je Srbia bila za politiku mira, nego je valjda evidentno da Srbije nije bila za raspoločavanje Jugoslaviji, da se Srbija borila za njeno očuvanje i da smo i sami govorili i isticali kada je kriza nastajala da srpski narod i Srbija nikada nisu vodili agresivne ratove, ali da su vodili odbrambene i da će umeti da se brani, što su, uostalom, I pokazali*, 9 October, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS).

¹⁹⁸ Author's translation. Serbian text: *Jednostavno, u ovoj zemlji u kojoj su neki želeli da iz nje odu, da se otcepe, da stvore te svoje male nacionalističke državice, praktično su Srbi bili za kontinuitet i za mir. Jedino što tamo gde su ponovo bili izloženo genocidu, po drugi put u ovom veku, nisu mogli da pristanu da budu mrtvi da bi bio mi.*, 9 October, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS),

¹⁹⁹ Author's translation. Serbian text: *Prema tome, osnovno pravo koje svakome pripada, pravo da se brani, da štiti svoju zemlju, svoj narod, a sve na čemu smo insistirali isključivo je bile usmereno da na miran način rešimo jugoslovensku krizu*, 9 October, *Politika*, (DCW/NBS),

In 1992, Milošević called it a duty to help the Bosnian Serbs. In his TV address, he made it clear that cutting off, or reducing aid, help was out of the question.

They have no support apart from us. If we were to stop or only reduce help, they would find themselves in a very difficult situation. We have no right to do that. This is a part of our nation which we absolutely have a duty to help.²⁰⁰

The long RTS interview shows that Milošević stayed committed to the support of the Bosnian Serbs. Furthermore, he described the support of the Serbian people of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia as vital. As we shall return to in the next chapter, the Serbian people were split in spring of 1993, over the question of the Vance-Owen peace plan (VOPP). But only months before this became an issue, Milošević said that a support for Serbs outside Serbia was “logical”.²⁰¹

In an interview with the Russian newspaper *Pravda*, also published in the Serbian papers *Politika* and *Borba*, Milošević provided an interesting explanation of this “logic”.

First of all, he argued that the international community was responsible for carrying out an *evil deed* by destroying the Yugoslav state, which had been one of the founders of the United Nations. Furthermore, he referred to the Second World War to explain this “logic”.

The press in that country has with German pedantry divided the world between good and bad. ‘Good’ are those who during the Second World War sided with the fascists and lost the war. ‘Bad’ are those who were not with them and who won the war. Therefore, Yugoslavia, by that logic, needed to be destroyed, and has become the first victim of political vengeance.²⁰²

Milošević laid the blame on the war on an historical enemy, Germany, despite the fact that the country was not a permanent member of the UN Security Council who had

²⁰⁰ Author’s translation. Serbian text: *Oni nemaju drugi oslonac osim nas. Ako bismo im mi ne zaustavili nego samo umanjili pomoć, oni bi se našli u veoma teškoj situaciji. Nemamo pravo da to učinimo. To je deo našeg naroda koji som mi apsolutno dužni da pomognem*, 9 October, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS),.

²⁰¹ ‘Interjvu Moskovskom listu “Pravda”’, Moskva, 20 February, 1993, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1993/31993.pdf>, accessed: 15 March 2007.

²⁰² Author’s translation. Serbian text: *Štampa te zemlje je sa nemačkom pedantnošću podelila svet na dobre i loše. “Dobri” su oni koji su u Drugom svetskom ratu bili sa fašisima i izgubili rat, a “loši” – to su oni koji nisu bili sa njima i koji su dobili rat. Zato je Jugoslaviju, po tog logici, trebalo razrušiti, pa je ona postala prva žrtva politike revanšizma*, 20 February, 1993, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS).

imposed the sanctions on Serbia. Russia, however, had the powers to veto the sanctions, but decided to go with the majority. Milošević did not waste an opportunity to express his anger of Russia's failure to stop the "genocidal" sanctions.

This is not just about our historical relations and centuries-old friendship. This is about elementary objectivity. We could not in any case expect that Russia would take part in genocidal measures against the Serbian nation.²⁰³

The sanctions against Serbia were, according to Milošević, the price to pay for the "solidarity" with the Serbian people.

It is believed to be logical that the Germans help Croats. Why then, is it not logical for Serbs to help Serbs?²⁰⁴

This "logic" that Milošević presented in Russia, did not last long on the home front however. Three months later the "logic" of the aid to the Serbs seemed abandoned, as Milošević temporarily cut off relations with Republika Srpska.

Elections at home

The long interview was given a few months before the parliamentary and presidential elections in December 1992. Milošević was challenged for the presidency by the moderate Milan Panić. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Panić was an unorthodox politician who had returned to Serbia from the United States to challenge Milošević for the presidency. His political message was one of peace, and finding a peaceful settlement to the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was top of the list in his political programme. This brief excerpt indicates that Slobodan Milošević was keen to avoid a nationalist label, especially when confronted with moderate politicians at home.²⁰⁵ Regarding the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, he said that hoped that the war would soon end.

²⁰³ Author's translation. Serbian text: *Stvar nije samo u našim istorijskim vezama, u vekovnom prijateljstvu. Stvar je u elementarnoj objektivnosti. Mi ni u kom slučaju ne možemo očekivati da bi Rusija mogla učestvovati u genocidnim merama protiv srpskog naroda*, 20 February, 1993, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS).

²⁰⁴ Author's translation. Serbian text: *Smatra se logičnim kada Nemci pomažu Hrvatima. Zašto onda ne bi bilo logično kada Srbi pomažu Srbima*, 20 February 1993, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS).

²⁰⁵ Read more about the challenge from Panić and Čosić in the previous chapter.

I hope that this is the beginning of the end of this war. I hope, and can say, that the Republic of Serbia would cordially keep up all efforts that could help bring peace. This is really in the interest of all those who live there, and of course, Serbs who live there. Everyone suffers from war. In this war there are no innocent sides. Only innocent victims.²⁰⁶

This quotation indicates Milošević's commitment to peace, which he repeated several times during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It also suggests that Milošević aimed to portray himself as not in the position to end the fighting in Bosnia. In this way, he restricted his role to one of an *observer*, horrified by the war. By doing so, he not only repeats that he is innocent against all charges of involvement. He also distanced himself from the aggression of the Bosnian Serbs.

It is interesting to note that Milošević emphasised a peaceful solution to the conflict, in particular challenged by the moderate Panić. Despite the obvious disadvantage in the fact that Panić spoke Serbian with an American accent, he was a real threat to Milošević in the elections. In fact, at the start of the campaign in October, Panić had a favourable rating of 76 per cent, compared to 49 per cent for Milošević.²⁰⁷

Milošević won the elections with 53 per cent of the vote, against 32 for Panić. The results are disputed, however, and it is considered likely that fraud influenced the result.²⁰⁸

Among other restrictions, Milošević denied Panić air time on national TV.²⁰⁹

As we shall return to, this gap between the rhetoric of Milošević and the actions carried out on the ground only became larger as the war progressed.

²⁰⁶ Author's translation. Serbian text: *Nadam se da je to početak kraja rata. Nadam se i mogu reći Republika Srbija će svesredno podržavati sve mere koje mogu potpomoći mir. To je, u stvari, u interesu svih koji žive tamo, i naravno, Srba koji tamo žive. Svi pate od rata. U tom ratu nema nevine strane. Same su žrtve nevine*, 'Intervju Grčkoj TV stanici 'Meta'', 30 August 1992, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1992/271992.pdf>, accessed: 14 November 2006.

²⁰⁷ Poll by the Institute of Social Sciences, cited in *Nin*, November 27, 1992, Bogdan Ivanisević, 'Our topic: Opposition against Itself: Running for the Arrow,' pp 10-12, Gagnon 2006: 115.

²⁰⁸ Thomas 2000: p 131-132.

²⁰⁹ Panić was labelled a traitor and a CIA agent on national TV. For more on the irregularities of the 1992 elections, see New York Times article written by Panić's advisor Douglas E. Schoen, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F0CE7D9143BF937A25751C0A965958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=2>, accessed: November 1, 2007.

Summary

As this chapter has shown, portraying the Serbs as victims vulnerable to genocide continued to figure as a main theme for Milošević during 1992. This time, however, the portrayal of the perpetrators was different. During the first months of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Milošević aimed to depict himself as a peacemaker, and chose a strategy of denial. Pressed on the mounting evidence that Serbia was behind the war, Milošević argued that the fighting served no purpose and had to end. Also the efforts to label Serbia an aggressor state was absurd, given Serbia's historical records at fighting defensive wars in which national survival was the prime goal. As such, the focus on Serbian victimhood continued to figure as a theme in Milošević speeches. But the imagery of the enemy had changed. Serbia was now the victims of a grand propaganda machinery from Western countries. Whereas "revamped ustaša" forces were threatening the Serbs in Croatia, Milošević did not publicly single an enemy which could perpetrate genocide against the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina.²¹⁰ Neither did he go public with the so-called islamist threat which the Bosnian Serb leaders had formulated. In fact, Milošević let it be publicly known that the Serbs and Muslims were friends, striving for peace against an undefined force that had led Bosnia into bloodshed.

Also, UN trade sanctions against Serbia gradually began to take its toll on the Serbian economy. Only by severing ties with the Bosnian Serbs, could Milošević hope to have the sanctions lifted. Pressed on this issue, he ruled out any reduction or cut-off in the aid to Bosnian Serbs. As the next chapter will show, this pledge was rendered valueless as the confrontations between the Bosnian Serbs and Belgrade ended in a complete break.

²¹⁰ See p 43.

6: Breaking with the Bosnian Serbs

The relationship between Slobodan Milošević and the Serbs living outside Serbia was a key issue in the war in Croatia and the conflict which followed in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As examined, the *unity* and *common interests* of all Serbs were frequent references points in Milošević speeches. The threat of genocide was directed against *all* Serbs. From spring 1993, the relationship between the Bosnian Serbs and Belgrade deteriorated and moved into open confrontation.

What effects did the breakdown of Serbian unity have on the genocide rhetoric of Milošević? This chapter will approach this question by looking at Milošević's rhetoric from the rejection of the Vance-Owen peace plan (VOPP) in May 1993, to the failure of the Contact Group plan in August 1994.

The refusal of the Bosnian Serbs to support a peace plan accepted by Milošević was seen as a challenge to his authority. Serbia's interests were to re-establish peace, and to have the sanctions lifted, Milošević argued. This does not mean that Milošević was incapable of stopping the war, but in public he insisted that the fighting was carried out in defiance of his wishes. As we shall see, Milošević continued to talk about unity between the Serbs. However, he directed his wrath at those leaders who refused to accept what Milošević defined as the true interest of all Serbian people. In other words, those who disobeyed the Serbian president acted against the interests of Serbia.²¹¹ Furthermore, a key objective in accepting the Vance-Owen plan, was to have the sanctions against Serbia lifted. When the Bosnian Serbs refused to play along to this plan, they were blamed of perpetuating the sanctions regime. At the same time, Milošević could bolster his status as the leader of the Serbian struggle against sanctions, which he labelled genocidal.

²¹¹ In many ways, this was similar to the treatment of Milan Babić who was publicly humiliated after he opposed the terms stipulated in the Vance plan in early 1992. See note 122.

Ditching Milošević's peace

In order to understand the shift in Milošević rhetoric, it is necessary to look at the events which brought about the split between the Bosnian Serbs and those in Serbia.

As examined previously, suggestions of division of the Serbian people into different states had triggered frequent references to genocide in the public addresses of Serbian leaders. With the Vance-Owen peace plan in 1993, Milošević was faced with the choice of continuing the war in Serbia, or bow to a newly brokered peace plan which could lift the crippling sanctions on the Serbian economy. The first implied *status quo*, supporting the aims of the Bosnian Serbs, while the sanctions continued and even strengthened. The second meant attempting to force the Bosnian Serbs to agree to give up one-third of their occupied territory. Milošević chose the second option.

The VOPP had been created by co-chairmen of the International Committee on the former Yugoslavia (ICFY), David Owen and Cyrus Vance, and was seen as the most comprehensive plan for a future Bosnia. The plan entailed one central Bosnian state, and ten provinces with substantial devolved powers. Three of these would have a Serb majority, three would have Muslim majority, two a Croatian majority and one would be mixed between Croats and Muslims. The tenth province, Sarajevo, would be a demilitarised zone.²¹² Crucially for the Muslims, it ended all Serbian and Croatian hopes of forming their own constituent state within Bosnia's borders, and thus made the plan acceptable.²¹³ The Croats accepted the plan out of hand, as the Croat provinces all bordered on Croatia. For the Serbs, accepting the plan was more controversial. Bosnian Serb forces controlled 70 per cent of Bosnian territory, and had to give up one-third of occupied land. The Serbian majority provinces in Bosnia would be cut off both from Serbia itself and from other provinces.²¹⁴

By April 1993, Milošević accepted the plan after he had received clarifications that a

²¹² Silber and Little 2007: p 276.

²¹³ Burg and Shoup 1999: p 214-215.

²¹⁴ Thomas 2000: p 147.

corridor between the Serbian lands would be controlled by Russian UN troops, and that decisions in the Bosnian presidency would be taken by consensus.²¹⁵ That effectively meant that the Serbs could veto any decision.

Milošević then faced the huge task of persuading the Bosnian Serbs to sign the peace plan, and reduce their control of the Bosnian territory from 70 to 40 per cent. Privately, Milošević argued the case that the plan would be impossible to implement, and that the Serbian provinces could be made into a *de facto* Serbian mini-state.²¹⁶ Radovan Karadžić's reservations were based on a fear that the plan would put the Bosnian Serbs in a risky position, being surrounded by international troops.²¹⁷

In May, the stage was set for a dramatic showdown in Greece between the Bosnian Serb leaders and Milošević. The international community expected Milošević to get Radovan Karadžić to sign. By the end of a very long summit, Karadžić was practically forced by Milošević to put his signature on the paper.²¹⁸ But before he would sign, Karadžić insisted on referring the plan back to the Bosnian Serb assembly in the capital of the Serbian Republic, Pale, knowing the opposition there would be formidable.

The signature gave the international community reason to believe that peace was coming to Bosnia-Herzegovina. This optimism was only to last a few days, however. In Republika Srpska, the leadership decided to fight the plan, calling it national suicide for Serbs.²¹⁹ Slobodan Milošević put down a considerable effort to sway the delegates to accept the plan. "You have to understand that I can't help you anymore," Slobodan Milošević said before the delegates voted to reject the Vance-Owen plan.²²⁰

²¹⁵ Thomas 2000: p 147.

²¹⁶ Silber and Little 2007: p 279.

²¹⁷ Silber and Little 2007: p 279.

²¹⁸ Author's interview with co-chairman of the International Committee for the former Yugoslavia, Thorvald Stoltenberg. He replaced Cyrus Vance in spring 1993.

²¹⁹ This was dramatically highlighted by a Bosnian Serb TV presenter during the prime time news broadcast. After signing a copy of the plan he put a fake gun to his head and pulled the trigger. Wiping theatrical blood off his face, he dramatically stated that signing the document would mean national suicide for the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Silber and Little 2007: p 284.

²²⁰ *New York Times*, 6 May 1993.

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F0CE3DA173DF935A35756C0A965958260>, accessed: 4 October 2007.

Milošević's efforts were to no avail. The death knell to any hopes of ratification of the VOPP came as commander Ratko Mladić entered the building. He pulled up a map and pointed out all areas that the Bosnian Serb army would have to give up in the plan.²²¹ The assembly overwhelmingly threw out the plan. Slobodan Milošević was furious.²²² In a referendum a week later, the Bosnian Serbs rejected the plan.

The rejection of the peace plan was a humiliation for Milošević in Serbia.²²³ He had shown weakness by not getting the Bosnian Serbs to sign, and was criticised for gambling with the safety of the Serbian people. The leader of the hard-line nationalist party, Vojislav Šešelj, called the plan a "time-bomb under Serbdom".²²⁴

The international community had failed to bring the parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina to peace. What they had achieved, however, was a split within the strongest side in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Protector of national interests

Before the crucial vote in the Bosnian Serb assembly on 5 May 1993, Milošević argued that the Vance-Owen peace plan would secure the interests of the Serbian people.²²⁵ In an interview on state controlled RTS TV channel, he gave three reasons why they should accept the plan. Firstly, he argued that the fact that Bosnian Serbs had to give up territory did not mean that relations between the Serb provinces would be cut off. Secondly, he argued that the Serbs had been given a constitutional state and that decision had to be made by consensus, thereby giving the Serbs a veto. Finally, he argued that the plan would give the Serbs security, and that the Bosnian Serbs would not have to come into

²²¹ Silber and Little 2007: p 285.

²²² Author's interview with Thorvald Stoltenberg who followed Milošević closely at the time.

²²³ Djukić 2001: p 70.

²²⁴ Author's translation. Serbian text: *Tempirana bomba pod srbijom*, Vojislav Šešelj interview by Ivan Radovanović in *Vreme*, 10 May 1993, Thomas 2000: p 154. The Radical party and Milošević's Socialist party were at the time in alliance that fractured over the VOPP. The opposition parties were divided.

²²⁵ 'Intervju za Radio-televiziju Srbije povodom atinske mirovne konferencije uoči zasedanje skupštine Republike Srpske', 02 May 1993, *Borba (DCR/NBS)*, <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1993/61993.pdf>, accessed 15 March 2007.

contact with Bosnian or Croatian troops, as only UN soldiers would guard the borders. These provisions would secure the interest and the future of the Serbian nation, he said.

I am confident that the assembly and the Serbian people in Bosnia-Herzegovina can recognise what is in its rightful interest, and what is not, namely demonstrations of patriotism in a way which goes contrary to our true and historical, national interest of our people.²²⁶

The article was published in *Borba* on 3 May 1993, with the headline “The parliament of Republika Srpska can and must accept this plan”.²²⁷

The rejection prompted a quick response from Milošević government in the form a governments statement: “The Government believes there is no reason to provide further help in the form of money, fuel, industrial materials and other goods that have been sent until now,” it said.²²⁸ It is doubtful whether the restrictions were ever put out in practice, however, as Milošević in 1993 refused any attempts to put monitors on the border.²²⁹

Milošević saw the rejection of the plan as an act of disloyalty from the Bosnian Serbs. The Serbian president was “not capable of hiding his autocratic nature. Diplomatic etiquette was not his trait”.²³⁰ “You cannot hold Serbia as your hostage,” Milošević told the Bosnian Serb leadership.²³¹ The leadership in Pale had acted in defiance of all of Serbia, which had carried the burden of sanctions because of the Bosnian Serb fighting in Bosnia. In a statement to the national news agency one week after the plan was rejected, Milošević appealed to the Bosnian Serbs to help ease the burden of sanctions.

²²⁶ Author’s translation: Serbian text: *Ja sam siguran da i Skupština i srpski narod u BiH može da prepozna šta mu je pravi interes a šta ne, i šta je ispoljavanje patriotizma na način suprotan stvarnim i istorijskim, nacionalnim interesima svoga naroda*, 02 May, 1993, *Borba* (DCR/NBS).

²²⁷ Author’s translation. Serbian text: *Skupština RS taj plan može i mora da prihvati*, 02 May, 1993, *Borba* (DCR/NBS).

²²⁸ This statement was clearly made to persuade the UN to lift the sanctions which were crippling the Serbian economy, *New York Times*, 7 May, 1992, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F0CE7DB133EF934A35756C0A965958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=1>, accessed: 12 September 2007.

²²⁹ *New York Times*, 26 May 1993, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F0CEFDE173BF935A15756C0A965958260>, accessed: 12 September 2007.

²³⁰ Djukić, Slavoljub *Između slave i anateme - Politička biografija Slobodana Miloševića*, Filip Višnjić, Beograd, 1994, p 270.

²³¹ Djukić 1994: p 270.

The burden of the huge help which has gone to Bosnia, and the sanctions which has been imposed on Serbia because of its solidarity with Serbs outside of Serbia, is difficult for Serbia to carry, and there is no reason to carry it if the war stops in Bosnia. Of course, we will not stop humanitarian aid to the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but in peacetime they would be able to restore the economy and take charge of their own lives.²³²

He further urged the Bosnian Serbs to remember that the “interest of ten million citizens of Serbia must come first.”²³³ As such, securing the lifting of the sanctions became a matter of highest national interest. Consequently, those who rejected his solution to this lifting of the sanctions, also acted against the interest of all Serbs. Not only were the Bosnian Serbs disloyal to Milošević, they also refused to support the Serb national interests. Milošević issued a threat of cutting off aid to those who believed that “the interests of Serbia and its citizens are second-class”.

Now, Serbia must start to take care of itself, above all restore and develop its economic life, to lift the living standard of our citizens, and ensure that we are safe from the violence and criminals who are a result of the war and the large and uncontrolled circulation of people between the two republics. For that reason I believe that support for the peace plan is a genuine support for peace which is of the largest possible existential importance for Serbia, for its citizens, for all citizens of Serbia. Those who do not see and accept this, are not motivated by the interest of Serbia and the people who live there, but of some other personal or group interest. Therefore, nobody who, based on his own interests, believes that the interests of Serbia and its citizens are second-class can count on our understanding and our support.²³⁴

²³² Author’s translation. Serbian text: *Teret ogromne pomoći koja odlazi u Bosnu I sankcija kojima je zbog svoje solidarnosti sa Srbima izvan Srbije izložena, Srbija teško podnosi, a nema razloga da podnosi ako se u Bosni obustavi rat. Naravno, mi ne isključujemo dalju pomoć humanitarne prirode stanovništvu Bosne i Hercegovine, ali u miru ono će postajati I samo sposobno da obnove svoju ekonomiju, da preuzmu brigu o sopstvenom životu, ‘Izjava Tanjugu povodom mirovnog plana za Bosnu’, 11 May 1993, Politika, (DCR/NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1993/91993.pdf>, accessed: 3 March, 2007.*

²³³ Author’s translation. Serbian text: *Interes deset miliona građana Srbije sada mora doći u prvi plan, , 11 May 1993, Politika, (DCR/NBS).*

²³⁴ Author’s translation. Serbian text: *“Sada Srbija mora da počne da se bavi sobom – pre svega obnavljanjem i razvojem svoje privrede i ekonomije, podizanjem standarda svojih građana, i brigom da budu zaštićeni od nasilja i kriminala koji su, takođe, posledica rata i velike i nekontrolisane cirkulacije stanovništva između dve republike. Zato smatram da je podrška mirovnom planu stvarna podrška miru koji je od najvećeg mogućeg egzistencijalnog značaja za Srbiju, za njene građane, za svakog građanina u Srbiji. To može da ne vidi i da ne prihvati samo onaj ko nije motivisan interesima Srbije i ljudi koji u njoj žive, već nekim drugim ličnim i grupnim interesima. Zato niko ko interes Srbije i njenih građana smatra drugorazrednum interesima, u odnosnu na svoje interes, ne može računati na naše razumevanje i našu podršku, , 11 May 1993, Politika, (DCR/NBS).*

The above excerpt also makes it clear that the rejection of the VOPP made it possible for Milošević to continue his peace rhetoric, examined in the previous chapters. Also, he could present himself as the undisputed leader of a *common struggle* facing all Serbs, namely the genocidal sanctions against Serbia.

Genocidal sanctions

Shortly after Milošević had failed to get the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Vance-Owen peace plan, Mladić's forces overran the Muslim city of Srebrenica. Almost simultaneously, fighting broke out between the Croats and Bosnian forces. While the ICFY had succeeded in bringing Slobodan Milošević into favouring the peace plan, it had little effect on the fighting on the ground. Consequently, it was unlikely that the international community would lift the sanctions over Milošević's support for a peace plan, when this had failed to bring peace.

On the diplomatic arena, there was a notable change in the approach to a diplomatic end to the war. Steven L. Burg and Paul S. Shoup writes that after the Bosnian Serb rejection of the Vance-Owen plan, the co-chairmen of the ICFY, David Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg, prepared for a plan which was closer to partition than the failed Vance-Owen plan.²³⁵ This happened at the same time as Croatian and Serbian forces appeared to be creating a situation on the ground in which partition could be presented as a *fait accompli*, as Bosnian government forces were attacked from two sides. At the same time, the U.S. was warming up for the idea of a lift-and-strike policy, involving an end to the arms embargo on the Bosnian government forces and military strikes against Serb military positions. The international community appeared to have lost patient with Milošević's failed diplomatic manoeuvring.

By autumn 1993, Milošević stepped up his rhetorical attacks on the sanctions regime. In an emotional speech at the ICFY in Geneva, Milošević said that the sanctions were killing Serbian children and repeated claims that this constituted genocide against the Serbian people. The following excerpt is from a speech Milošević gave to the ICFY, on

²³⁵ Burg and Shoup 1999: p 266.

29 November 1993:

I don't know how you think that sanctions against Serbia can stop the war between Muslims and Croats. And I don't know how you will be able to explain to your children, when the truth reaches them, why you have waged a war against three million of our children, and with what right you have threatened 12 million citizens of Europe victims of the last, I hope, genocide in this century.²³⁶

As such, Milošević directed his anger at the international community, for their refusal to lift the sanctions against Serbia. Arguably, his strong words used in this excerpt were not only aimed at the international community. Milošević's comments were published in full text in both *Politika* and *Borba*, and reached a wide Serbian audience. As such, it can be argued that Milošević's tough talk against sanctions also bolstered his image as the leader of the fight against *genocidal* international sanctions.

The final break

The Bosnian Serb ditching of the VOPP was only precursor to what came in the summer of 1994.²³⁷ At the time, the international community presented new plan by the five nation Contact Group.²³⁸ It entailed a division of Bosnia-Herzegovina between a Bosnian-Croat federation and the Bosnian Serbs.²³⁹ According to the plan, the Bosnian Serbs would keep 49 per cent of the territory, with the Bosnian-Croat federation controlling the rest. Bosnian Serb president Radovan Karadžić left little doubt about how he regarded the plan. "I thought the maps would be a problem. But there is no problem. There won't be a single Serb who would accept this," he said.²⁴⁰ As it turned out, Karadžić was wrong. Milošević was intent having the sanctions lifted, and did not regard

²³⁶ *Ne znam kako mislite sankcijama protiv Srba da zaustavite rat između muslimana i Hrvata, a ne znam ni kako ćete svojoj deci, kad istina dopre do njih, uspeti da objasnite zašto ste ubijali našu decu, zašto ste vodili rat protiv tri miliona naše dece I sa kojim pravom ste dvanaest miliona građana Evrope učinili poligonom za sprovođenje, nadam se, poslednjeg genocida u ovom veku, 'Govor na međunarodnoj konferenciji o Bivšoj Jugoslaviji u Ženevi', 29 November 1993, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1993/191993.pdf>, accessed: 10 May, 2007.*

²³⁷ According to Silber and Little, Milošević had been preparing for a final showdown with Karadžić ever since he ditched the Vance-Owen plan. Silber and Little 1997: p 334.

²³⁸ The members of the Contact Group were: United Kingdom, Russia, France, Germany and the United States.

²³⁹ It followed up on the Washington agreement from February 1994, which had ended the fighting between the Croats and Bosnian forces.

²⁴⁰ Silber and Little 1997: p 337.

opposition from the Bosnian Serbs as an obstacle. In a statement after the initial Bosnian Serb parliament vote, Milošević urged the delegates to consider that their “heroic struggle of the Serbian people” had met its goal, and that the plan was not “anti-Serb”. Neither could the “Muslim-Croatian federation be qualified as anti-Serb”, Milošević continued.²⁴¹ The article appeared in *Politika* on 1 August, headlined “Nobody has in the name of the Serbian people the right to reject peace.”²⁴²

One day after the Bosnian Serb assembly rejected the plan for the third time, a blockade was set up along the river Drina, which separated Serbia from Republika Srpska. This came at the same time as Milošević launched a public showdown with the Bosnian Serbs, and a war of words fought in the media. In a stark warning of what was to come, Milošević told Bosnian Serb vice-president Nikola Koljević, upon their refusal to accept the plan: “Well, if you don’t want to talk this way, we’ll talk through the newspaper.”²⁴³ Milošević issued statements and gave interviews suggesting Radovan Karadžić was a war profiteer and a criminal:

Their decision to reject peace cannot be made according to any real criteria in the interest of the people, but only for the benefit of war profiteers and those people who have guilty consciences. Those who fear the time when peace will come and all the crimes will be revealed.²⁴⁴

The Bosnian Serb leadership were also blamed for the *genocidal* sanctions against Serbia. Interestingly, acting under instructions from Milošević, the Yugoslav president, Zoran Lilić, accused the Bosnian Serbs of being responsible for the shelling of Sarajevo. As shown in the previous chapters, Milošević had denied any knowledge of this taking place. Now, however, Lilić appeared to contradict Milošević earlier position of denial.

How many times have they promised that they would not shell Sarajevo, and perpetuate

²⁴¹ ‘Izjava ‘Politici’ povodom ministarskog sastanka u Ženevi’, 31 July 1994, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS), <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1994/41994.pdf>, accessed: 10 May, 2007.

²⁴² 31 July 1994, *Politika*, (DCR/NBS).

²⁴³ Silber and Little 1997: p 339.

²⁴⁴ Author’s translation. Serbian text: *Njihova odluka da odbiju mir nije o jednom kriterijumu istine i pravde ne može biti u interesu naroda već samo može biti u interesu ratnih profitera i u interesu onih ljudi čija ja savest nečista, koji se boje dolaska mira, u kome će sva nedela isplivati na površinu*, ‘Izjava povodom odluke skuptine republike srpske da odbaci mirovni plan Kontakt Grupe’, *Politika* (DCR/NBS), 4 August 1994, <http://www.dcwmemory.org.yu/ser/arhiv/sm/1994/51994.pdf>, accessed: 15 March 2007.

the agony of civilians in this city? How many times have they promised to arrest bands and paramilitary units which are terrorizing civilians and besmirching the honour of the Serbs? – They went back on their word of honour that they would halt the insane attack on Gorazde, which led to many people being killed and resulted in the NATO ultimatum and the [Serbs'] withdrawal to a distance of 20 kilometres.²⁴⁵

End game

By the end of 1995, the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was coming to an end. The alliance of Bosnian and Croatian forces, with international support, had dramatically changed the situation on the ground.²⁴⁶ The brutal massacre of more than 7000 Muslims at Srebrenica had changed the position of the United States into full-scale support of the Croats.²⁴⁷ The objective was to redress the military balance in advance of peace negotiations, and Franjo Tuđman consulted the US on how far the Croatian forces should go in the offensive.²⁴⁸ For the Serbs in Croatia, the consequences were grave. Milošević had used the *Politika* newspaper to try to force the Krajina leaders into agreeing to a deal with Tuđman, but had failed.²⁴⁹ In the summer of 1995, Tuđman forces overran the self-proclaimed Serbian republic of Krajina in *Operation Storm*. The offensive lasted only a few days, and 200,000 Serbs were forced to flee to Serbia. It was the final battle of a war which had started in Croatia in 1991. The operation effectively brought a more than 300 year-long Serbian presence in Croatia to an end, and the refugees accused Slobodan Milošević of betraying the Croatian Serbs.²⁵⁰ Arguably, this proved that the war in Croatia had come full circle, ending where it had started.

A few months later, the warring parties were brought to the negotiation table on a US military base in Dayton, Ohio. In November, a final agreement was brokered, and hostilities in Bosnia-Herzegovina ended.²⁵¹

²⁴⁵ Silber and Little 1997: p 342.

²⁴⁶ Thorvald Stoltenberg said that he observed transfers of military aid to the Bosnian forces from both Iran and the United States, despite the arms embargo. Author's interview.

²⁴⁷ Silber and Little 1997: p 360.

²⁴⁸ Holbrooke 1998: p 159.

²⁴⁹ Silber and Little 1997: p 357.

²⁵⁰ *Vreme*, 28 August 1995.

²⁵¹ The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, better known as the Dayton agreement, divided Bosnia between a Muslim federation, the Republika Srpska and a de-militarised zone in Sarajevo. It was signed in Paris on 14 December 1995.

Summary

Spring 1993 saw a shift in Slobodan Milošević public approach to the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. From denying Serb involvement in the war, he now publicly cut off relations with the Bosnian Serbs over their refusal to accept the Vance-Owen peace plan. His rhetoric suggests that the issue was just as much about personal loyalty as about his commitment to peace. Publicly, Milošević thus contributed to portrayal of Republika Srpska as a pariah state, and said that he was willing to cut supply lines to the Bosnian Serbs.²⁵² The war did not end, however, and the international community consequently did not lift the sanctions. Milošević was not able to reap the economic benefits of his break with the Bosnian Serbs. Instead, he used the break as an opportunity to bolster his own image as the protector of the Serbia's national interests. As examined, the Bosnian Serb leadership was sidelined and accused of letting their personal interest interfere with the interests of the Serbian nation. Milošević even regarded the Bosnian Serbs as culprits, as they had refused to sign up to the peace plans which would end the sanctions against Serbia.

The interest of the Serbian nation, Milošević argued, was peace.²⁵³ Further, “genocidal sanctions” against the Serbs could be ended if a peaceful settlement was accepted. Despite the fact that Milošević failed to bring about peace, he could merge his position as a peacemaker, with the role as the undisputed leader of the Serbian fight against sanctions.

²⁵² Paradoxically, Milošević spoke of cutting off supplies to Republika Srpska at the same time as he argued that international sanctions against Serbia proper constituted genocide against its population.

²⁵³ See Chapter 5.

Conclusion

The dynamic relationship between the Serbs in Serbia and those living in the neighbouring republics is of key importance to any study of the wars of independence in the former Yugoslavia. As I have argued in chapter one, a shared sense of threat against all Serbs re-emerged in the speeches of Serbian president Slobodan Milošević in 1991. This was a *legacy of genocide*, which formed an important part of the Belgrade regime's propaganda machinery.

I have analysed this legacy as a *rhetorical device* in president Slobodan Milošević's most important speeches and public addresses from 1991 to 1995. One of the key factors in my study has been to look at the purpose it served for the Milošević regime. It seems obvious that the spectre of genocide was a powerful tool for a regime that mobilised its people to war on a nationalist platform. But this thesis has shown that its use was not confined to a setting of war and expansionism.

The genocide legacy was deeply rooted in the Serbian nation's historical memory from the Middle Ages, and particularly myths emerging from the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. Together with the memories of the slaughter of Serbs during the Second World War, it constitutes a legacy of genocide. This legacy was suppressed in Tito's Yugoslavia, and was considered an expression of unacceptable nationalism. With the death of Tito, however, a nationalist re-orientation gradually supplanted an enforced multi-national identity. The Serbs Academy of Arts and Sciences (SANU) in 1986 published the *Memorandum*, which lamented a return of genocide facing the Serbian nation in Kosovo. Although the *Memorandum* was meant to be a secret document, it was leaked and dramatically brought the subject of genocide onto the Serbian public domain.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁴ Udovički, Jasminka and Torov, Ivan 'The Interlude: 1980-1990', Udovički and Ridgeway (eds.) 1997: p 89.

The re-emergence of national myths in Serbia gave the legacy of genocide a new political meaning. Slobodan Milošević realised its value as a propaganda tool which could rally the people in his quest for power. Perhaps unwittingly, his words “no one shall dare to beat you” to a group of Serbian demonstrators in Kosovo Polje in 1987 struck a chord with the Serbian population.²⁵⁵ It also became a central ingredient in his so-called “anti-bureaucratic revolution”.²⁵⁶

It is perhaps unsurprising that the legacy of genocide gained a prominent place in Milošević’s propaganda machinery as the republics in the former Yugoslavia slid into brutal wars of independence. In a non-totalitarian state a government at war would need to convince its people that the war is just, and worth fighting.²⁵⁷ As this thesis has shown, Milošević exploited the genocide legacy in Croatia. He referred to the concrete memories of the Ustaša-led massacres against the Serbs during the Second World War, and warned dramatically that the “ghost of fascism was knocking on the door”.²⁵⁸

Still, the legacy of genocide in Milošević’s propaganda was not limited to a mobilisation drive for a war against an enemy nation. Milošević rather used this rhetorical tool as he saw it fit. Moreover, he could denounce nationalism when this was politically expedient, and pledge to preserve Yugoslavia that still held a strong support with the electorate in Serbia. Simultaneously, he was deeply involved with creating conditions for war. Evidence from the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia has shown that Milošević had a firm hand in arming and providing military support for the Serbs in both Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ Silber and Little 1997, p 37.

²⁵⁶ Markotich, Stan ‘Serbia’, Research report from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty’, No. 16, 22. April 1994, p 97.

²⁵⁷ I have previously shown how Milošević struck down on the opposition and the media pp. 34 / 37, effectively making him an autocratic leader. It is my belief, however, that his rule fell short of achieving totalitarian power over the Serbian people. Also see Mann 2006: p 391.

²⁵⁸ Quote from speech held at the 50 year anniversary for the Serb rising against fascism during the Second World War, ‘Govor na svečanosti povodom obeležavanja pet decenija ustanka naroda Srbije protiv fašizma’, 11 December 1991, *Borba; Politika (DCR,NBS)*.

²⁵⁹ For more evidence, see testimony of financial experts Morten Torkildsen available on the ICTY website transcripts of the Milošević trial, www.un.org/icty/transe54/030410ED.htm, pp 19910-19011, accessed: 12 September 2007.

But the war was never put to a vote in Serbia. Although he had undoubtedly come to power on a nationalist platform, he did not aim to portray himself as a warmonger. In fact, in August 1991, 78 per cent of Serbs said in a survey that they favoured keeping peace at all costs.²⁶⁰ Undoubtedly aware of this, Milošević responded by embarking on a rhetoric of peace. This became a central part of his propaganda during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

He argued that the Serbian leadership was doing its utmost to restore peace, which would preserve Yugoslavia. At the same time, he denied links with the armed forces in Republika Srpska, and even described the war as absurd. This happened at the same time that the Bosnian Serb leadership used the legacy of genocide to stir up hatred against the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Reportedly, they used the higher birth rate of Bosnian Muslims, which they believed constituted genocide against the Bosnian Serbs, as a *justification* for the use of mass rapes.²⁶¹ Slobodan Milošević on the other hand chose a very different approach. In his public addresses, he preached tolerance and actively promoted himself as a man who could reach out to Muslims. A possible explanation for this could simply be that Milošević attempted to strike a chord with the population, aware that war mongering was not popular in Serbia.

This did not mean, however, that he abandoned the legacy of genocide. It was only the image of the perpetrators of genocide that shifted. Arguably, it was impossible to argue that military adversaries in Bosnia-Herzegovina were perpetrating genocide against Serbs, when Milošević at the same time denied any knowledge of the concrete actions on the ground. In contrast to the war in Croatia, the Bosnian war was not legitimised through Milošević's genocide rhetoric. Neither was the military enemy on the ground in the Bosnian War demonised as perpetrators of genocide against the Serbs. Milošević's public focus was on achieving peace. It was arguably not in Milošević interest to use the legacy of genocide *in concert* with the Bosnian Serbs.

²⁶⁰ Mann 2005: p 390.

²⁶¹ Volkan 1998: p 76.

From 1993, Serbia publicly broke off its relationship with the Bosnian Serbs, starting with the rejection of the Vance-Owen peace plan. After the split, Milošević lashed out against the Bosnian Serb leaders, and accused them of disloyalty and of ignoring the interests of Serbia. At the same time, he accused the international community of genocidal sanctions against the civilian population in Serbia.²⁶² This shift shows the flexibility of sanctions as a propaganda tool for Milošević. It is also an indication of the highly political charge which this legacy carried in Serbia. By linking national interests to his attempts to have the sanctions lifted, he could argue that the disloyal acts of the Bosnian Serbs effectively went against the interests of the Serbian people. By interests, he arguably meant the lifting of genocidal sanctions.

As such, the references to genocide in Milošević's propaganda transcended a traditional nationalist framework in which myths were lifted onto the political platform in order to fuel ethnic hostilities. Its purpose was not uniquely to rally the population to war against an outside threat. Genocide also formed part of Milošević's attempts to rally the Serbs behind a peace deal that would end the *genocidal* UN sanctions against Serbia.

This thesis has approached conflict analysis through a focus on historical events used in a modern propaganda setting. It has shown the political charge within the concept of genocide, and how its flexible use made it possible to adapt it to the current interest of a leader at war. Further reflections can be made on the steps leading to war, and Milošević's motives for provoking conflict in Croatia. Similarly, it is my belief that the gap between Milošević actions on the ground and his peace rhetoric in the war Bosnia-Herzegovina will be a key field of analysis in the years to come.

It is my hope that this study can be a small contribution to the study of the propaganda machinery of Slobodan Milošević. At the time of writing, Europe is confronted with the challenge of finding a solution to Kosovo's future status. Serbia, supported by Russia, is sharply opposed to granting independence to the province. At the same time, the Serbs of Kosovo are threatening to form their own state if Kosovo seeks recognition. That will

²⁶² See Chapter 5.

undoubtedly bring the legacy of genocide against the Serbs back to the front pages. After all, it was in Kosovo, which Serbs call their historic homeland, that the genocide myth was born. It is also here that it is likely to once again re-emerge.

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