

SLOBODAN MILOSEVIC, THE LEADER OF THE SERBS

SLOBODÁN MILOSEVICS, A SZERBEK VEZÉRE

This article is about Slobodan Milosevic, the ex-Yugoslavian president, and his regime. One of the main important aspects of the study is the geographical location of Yugoslavia. Since it is a neighbouring country with Hungary, all its challenges, changes and effects had great economic, social and political impacts on it. Furthermore, it is always wise for present and future military scientists to study the rise and fall of “great” leaders in order to see the internal and external future threats of a country, in order to prevent such tragical events as those unfolded in the Great South Slavic War.

A tudományos cikk a volt Jugoszláv elnökről, Szlobodán Milosevicsről és rezsimjéről szól. A tanulmány aktualitását – egyebek mellett – az egykori Jugoszláviának Magyarországhoz való földrajzi közelsége adja. A geopolitikai helyzetéből adódóan, nehézségei, kihívásai és hatásai egyaránt kihatottak Magyarország nemzetgazdaságára, szociális helyzetére és politikájára. Ugyanakkor különösen jelentős, a jelenlegi és jövőbeli hadtudományi tudósok számára, tanulmányozni a „nagy” vezetők felemelkedését és bukásait, hogy jobban megértsék az államok kül-, illetve belbiztonságát és azok veszélyeit, hogy elkerüljék az egykori délszláv háborúk tragikus eseményeit.

PROLOGUE

Slobodan Milosevic is the figure in history we could never forget. Some say he was a murderer; some say he was a saint; some believe he was a man just like any of us – a man with great beliefs, faithful to his country and eager to do whatever it takes for his nation to prosper.

Till present day, the study and debate on the Slobodan Milosevic regime is going on. Historians are still exploring the dictatorship era and especially, what it has done to Yugoslavia and its people and how it has changed both forever. Professors all over the world are talking about the phenomena of one single person being capable of affecting the destiny of a huge country, of making a nation believe it is unbreakable and unique. Yugoslavia lived glorious days, and many believe it was so thanks to only one man, Tito.* Yet, the decisions and the methods of this man has surely left a dark shadow that is still lying on today's Serbia and ex-Yugoslavian countries. All these aspects without a doubt lead to the following conclusion – Slobodan Milosevic will always be remembered and mentioned in history. Moreover, the debates surrounding his name will never become boring, which means there are aspects worth exploring even today.

It is known that behind every regime there is structure, tactic and careful consideration before any move is made. Therefore, this paper will particularly be focusing on examining the tactics and psychological aspects behind it that were used by Slobodan Milosevic during his years in office. It is particularly interesting to investigate how one person was able to stay on top for so long with the help of his own nation while going to war and creating new confrontations and conflicts. People usually don't favour wars, but in the case of the Milosevic era, it seems that it was war that actually made him so powerful and earned him credit among simple people – he made them believe that going to war is for good, for the better future, for the glorious country, and they followed him along.

BECOMING THE PRESIDENT OF YUGOSLAVIA

Slobodan Milosevic was born during World War II on 20 August 1941, in Pozarevac, Serbia (Sell, 2002). Both of his parents as well as the whole family were members of the Communist Party, which had a major effect on his childhood, studies and on his future vision.

On 15 January 1959, he became a member of the Communist Party. His colleagues had a good opinion about the young man, and they considered him a true communist as well as a good nationalist (Gyukics 2000, 20–21). Although he was a sharp-minded person who always had good grades and great ambitions, without his one and only true follower, believer, love and a mastermind in political campaigns planning — wife Mirjana Markovic (Gyukics 2000, 47) — he wouldn't have been able to achieve all what he did.

With their great ambitions, in 1984 Milosevic became the leader of the Belgrade Communist Party, which, of course, was just the first step towards becoming the president and the leader of Yugoslavia. Since the couple had higher education and a brilliant thinking, they both realized that for Milosevic, in order to become the president of Yugoslavia, they had to influence and gain control of the Media and the Academy of Belgrade. As the first step of their plan, they successfully influenced the political newspaper named Politika, the Academy of Belgrade and last but not least Ivan Stambolic. Through Media and with the help of Stambolic, on 26 January 1986, Milosevic became the President of the Serbian Communist Party (Gyukics 2000, 47).

Not so much after, the document named Memorandum — a document created for a debate in the Serbian Academy — was published¹ and successfully planted the very first seeds of nationalism in the Serbian nation. But not only the Serbians were the nation that started to recognize their national identity, there were Kosovar Albanians, too. Kosovo was once again unstable as political turmoil upraised. On 24 April 1987 (Gyukics 2000, 51), Milosevic was sent to negotiate peace talks with the Albanian opposition, but peace talks were not exactly on his mind as he realized how powerful nationalism could be (Gyukics 2000, 49). After his return from Kosovo to Belgrade, he used nationalism, the newly discovered tool, to influence not only his Party but also the Serbian population. With the help of the Media and by political doge, at the 8th session on 23 September 1987, Milosevic successfully defeated his political enemies (Ivan Stambolic and Dragisa Pavlovic) and became the number one political leader of the Serbians.

Since Milosevic or the rest of the Serbian politicians, had no interest in solving the Kosovar Albanians' problems in the province of Kosovo, towards the end of the 80's, the Kosovar Albanian ethnic conflicts raised to the point, where Serbia could not control the situation and had to call together the 14th Extraordinary Congress on 22 January 1990. The very first nation in Yugoslavia, that realised the true purpose of the upcoming Congress (where Milosevic wanted to extend his powers to all Yugoslavia), were the Slovenians. They knew that Yugoslavia and its political regime will never be the same without Tito and that Serbia by the lead of Milosevic would like to overtake the place of the once famous and beloved president. Unfortunately for them, as well for the rest of the nations in Yugoslavia, it was unacceptable that one nationalistic leader (in this case Milosevic) would take over control of the whole country and put the Serbs above everyone else. Knowing the intentions of Milosevic, as soon as the Congress started with Milan Kucan at the lead, the Slovenian congressmen stood up and left the meeting. This was the first visible sign of the end of the Alliance.

CONCLUSION

From childhood Milosevic was raised in a politically orientated environment, which had a great effect on his career. As a young politician, he realised the importance of the Media and of the Academy of Belgrade in politics. By controlling the

¹ It was never officially stated, that the document was published by the order of Milosevic and its party to light up the Serbian nation, but some historians believe so.

above-mentioned communication channels and with Stambolic's help he became the leader of the Serbian Communist Party. The first time he realised the deadly force of nationalism was in Kosovo after he implemented the newly gained knowledge into his political complains. Being a man of opportunity and geocentricism, when the time came, he had no problem leaving behind his friend and supporter Ivan Stambolic, in order to become the number one political leader in Serbia. By taking the Kosovo conflict as the great opportunity, he tended to become the leader of Yugoslavia. Slovenians, as one of the first nations in the former Yugoslavia who recognised these false political intentions of Slobodan Milosevic, sabotaged the last Congress by leaving the meeting before it started. As for the former Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic, who was ultra-ambitious and cold-minded, especially when it came to achieving his goals, he accomplished a lot, but he also fell hard.

THE EFFECTS OF WAR ON THE LEADERSHIP

Soon after the meeting, the first rioting started in Belgrade against Milosevic's politics. On 9 March 1991, so many rioters went on the streets of Belgrade that it threw the Serbian leader into panic. Then, for the first time while in office, he called the Yugoslavian People Army to defend himself from his own people (Dedeic, 2011). Yugoslavia was living its last moments: in June 1991, Slovenia declared its independence (Repe, 2014); the same was done by the Croats on 5 December 1991. The political wind and a short war with Slovenia in June 1991 distracted attention from Milosevic's bad politics in Serbia. However, in the international news, Yugoslavia still lost its popularity (Gyukics 2000, 105–110).

The Croatia-Bosnian-Serbian war was much more tragical than the Slovenian one. Therefore, at the beginning of the war, the Serbian politicians did not want to make headlines regarding the situation, since they thought that they would lose the support of the Serbian nation. Although the Serbian regime kept the war in secret, in less than a year's time, in 1992, Milosevic once again lost the support, not only in the eyes of his own people, but also in the international Media. As the South Slavic War was becoming more and more deadly, the news about its tragical outcomes were soon published in the international Media. Unfortunately for Milosevic and for the Serbs, the international Media granted the role of aggressors to the Serbs. The bad news once again created political uncertainty in Serbia. The internal political turmoil and the bad international reputation once again caused a hard time for the Serbian leader — his opponents, Cosic and Panic, because of their liberal and peaceful thinking, gained political popularity not only within the Serbs, but also internationally (Gyukics 2000, 128-131).

Once again, the war seemed the only hope for the Serbian leader. In order to gain back his reputation in Serbia, he turned the role of being aggressor into a protector. Before the elections, more and more news was shown in the Serbian national TV about the Croatian-Bosnian-Serbian conflict, where Milosevic was positioned as the protector of Serbs. The political propaganda met its goals yet again, and Milosevic won the elections (Gyukics 2000, 132–135). Although the political war in Serbia created a winning situation, the Serbian politician realised that in order to stay in power, he had to regain his popularity on the international level, and the only good way to do it, was to start peace talks between Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia. The Bosnian Serbs had no desire to end the war, so therefore, Milosevic stopped supporting the Bosnian Serbs by putting all the blame and the sins of war crimes on them. By betraying his own nation, he quickly repositioned himself in the international Media — he became a peacemaker instead of a massacre. Without the support of Serbia, the Bosnian Serbs lost Knin on 5 August 1995. With the loss of Knin and the lack of military and economic support that was previously provided by Serbia, the Bosnian Serbs were forced to sign the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995 (Gyukics 2000, 194). With the agreement being signed, Milosevic was again in favours of the foreign media and politics, but he lost the support of his own people. Although Milosevic tried to show his support towards the Bosnian Serbs by helping them in the creation of the Srpska Republika (at the Dayton agreement), it was way too little for the price they had to pay for it (Plavsic 2005, 152).

THE FALL

The war was officially over, Milosevic and his Party was once again in front of the upcoming elections. In 1996, the elections were not too promising for Milosevic and his Party. Almost ten years in power, having most of the government, the armed forces and the police under him, as an alternative “good” solution, they decided to gerrymander the elections. Although the fraud went relatively smooth, not long after, the people of small Yugoslavia (which was Serbia and Montenegro) started to protest against the regime and the leader himself (Horowitz 2005, 187). It was a hard and desperate time for Milosevic and his Party, the internal and external pressure was so high, that they had to admit the fraud. War seemed the only good solution to stay in power. The very suitable place for another war was Kosovo — after all, it was the place where it had all started. Kosovar Albanians had all the intentions to separate from Yugoslavia, but their political concerns were still unsolved. Since 1997 rioting in the province of Kosovo was rather frequent and the UCK² activities grew. With the rioting escalating, Yugoslavia decided that it was time to officially implement military force to stabilize Kosovo. The war in Kosovo was finally introduced to the Media. The introduction came with false propaganda from Milosevic and his Party, where the situation was described in much brighter colours and not as it truly was (Lazanski 2004, Rat za Kosovu).

The war with Kosovo soon caught the attention of the West, which led to NATO's attack of Serbia in 1999. Although for a short period of time the NATO bombing made Milosevic very popular, soon after, he lost the war not only against NATO, but also against Kosovo (however, this fact was never admitted by the Milosevic regime). He and his Party lost all the political power and the support of Serbians. Finally, rioting against the leader started in Belgrade, which led to the end of the Milosevic regime in 2000 (Gyukics 2000, 267–274).

To sum up, the Milosevic era is a good example to demonstrate how a politician can use the war and nationalism for propaganda to get and to stay in power. When there are desperate times in politics, war or peace talks can solve the short-term problems. However, in order to obtain power for the long-run, these tools are not advisable to use.

OVERALL CONCLUSION

Slobodan Milosevic played a major role in the Yugoslavian Wars, even though some historians are concerned that he was the main reason why this once-big and glorious country fell apart. Despite my disagreement with their views in some points, I have to admit that the Serbian leader's egoism and ambitions did have a negative effect on Yugoslavia's politics. First, instead of solving the Kosovar Albanians' minority problems, he used nationalism to gain control of power. By brainwashing the Serbians with the help of the Media, he made them believe that they are a superior nation in Yugoslavia, which should take control over the whole country. Unfortunately for him, the Slovenians soon recognised his true intentions and decided to declare independence. The political wind and negative popularity led to rioting in Belgrade. This was the first time when Milosevic used the Yugoslavian Armed Forces against his own people. In the upcoming months, the war broke out on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, mostly by Serbian aggression to stop the “breaking of the country”. By going to war, Milosevic regained his popularity in the eyes of the Serbians. But his political success was rather divided: while he was liked in Serbia, the international media held him responsible for the tragic outcome of the war. By losing the support of Europe, and having an embargo on Yugoslavia, he realised that he had to make changes in order to survive the international political and economic pressure. The only way of ending the war, was to “abandon” his own nation and stop supporting (both economically and militarily) the Bosnian Serbs. Without the support of the “motherland”, the Bosnian Serbs lost Knin (one of their major cities) and were forced to sign the Dayton Treaty. By betraying his own nation, Milosevic was once again in the West's favours. Yet again, his actions were opposed by the

² UCK stands for the Kosovo Liberation Army or in Albanian (original language) Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës

Serbs, which lead to the 1996 elections gerrymander. Desperate to stay in power, he cheated, and once again, Belgrade was under big pressure coming from its bubbling inhabitancy. The only way of staying in power was once again going to war. By not learning from the country's previous mistakes, that war led to a short-term political success as Milosevic led his country to war against Kosovo. The war of Kosovo was soon followed by NATO bombing and military and political defeat (which was never admitted by the Serbian politicians) of the Yugoslavian National Army and Milosevic.

As we can see, for dictators and for "bad" politicians, war can only be a temporary solution for maintaining power. After some time, war and violence will exhaust the nations that are involved and will lead to the fall of a politician.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic, Milosevic, South Slavic War, Fall of Yugoslavia, Leadership, Political Power.

Kulcsszavak: Jugoszlávia, Szlobodán Milosevics, Milosevics, Délszláv háborúk, Jugoszlávia bukása, vezető, politikai hatalom.

REFERENCE LIST

- B. Plavsic. 2005. "Svedocin." Tripoprint press, Banja Luka, ISBN 99938-753-2-5
- B. Repe. 2014. "Independence." www.twenty.si, Entered online [01 Maj 2014]: <http://www.twenty.si/first-20-years/overview/overview-through-time/>
- L. Sell. 2002. "Slobodan Milosevic and the Distruction of Yugoslavia." Duke University Press, Durham, pp.: chronology ix, ISBN-13: 978-0822332237
- M. Lazanski. 2004. "Rat za Kosovu." Entered online [05 Maj 2014]: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCnObKsR7xQ>
- S. A. Horowitz. 2005. "From Ethnical Conflict to Stillborn Reform." Texas A&M University Press, ISBN: 9781603445931
- S. Dedic. 2011. "9. mart – dve decenije (1. deo)." www.istinomer.re, Entered online [05 Maj 2014]: <http://www.istinomer.rs/bonus/9-mart-dve-decenije-1-deo/>
- Sz. Gyukics. 2000. "A Milosevics-klán." Athenaeum Kiadó, Budapest, ISBN 963 9261 56 4