Conflict, identity and the role of the Internet:

The use of the Internet by Serbian intelligentsia during the 1999 Kosovo conflict

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Abstract

It was Edward Said who once defined an intellectual as someone who can speak truth to power (1993)[1]. Writing from a French perspective, Régis Debray, in his book *Pouvoir intellectuel* (1979) proposed the existence of three historical stages for the dissemination of ideas by intellectuals in modernity. These were: the period of the university; the period of the printed journal and that of television. This article advocates that we have now entered a fourth period of intellectual representation, that of the Internet. This came into being in the late 1990s and the conflict over Kosovo would serve as the first time the Internet would be used as a vehicle for the dissemination of ideas between individuals in states that were in conflict with each other, in what has also been described as the first Internet war (Ignatieff, 1999). Clearly the role of the Internet in time of conflict has moved on since then, with the term Cyberwarfare emerging as a modern day phenomenon of the information society. What this paper sets out to do is provide an historical illustration of how the Internet was used by the Serbian intelligentsia in the period that Mary Kaldor has since designated as that of the new wars (2000).

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The Internet is an instrument of globalisation, which employs English as its major medium for communication and expression.[2] Above all the Internet is an instrument of empowerment in a world in which *Wissenschaft ist alles*. By applying this tool to the conflict over Kosovo, that took place a decade ago, we find that the young, educated élites of the western Balkans had been using the Internet for some time and that they had been operating in the English language when they communicated with the outside world. It is my belief that this young élite was able to reaffirm Serbian cultural identity during a time of crisis, when they felt that they had been betrayed by the West. This élite was therefore fulfilling one of the classic roles attributed to an intelligentsia, as defined by Anthony Smith (1991) and the late Ernest Gellner (1983), which is to play a major part in the creation, development and affirmation of national identity, whether this be, from a European perspective, in the period of nation-state building in the mid-to-late 19th century or more recently in the last decade of the 20th century and at the dawn of a new millennium.[3]

A model of the different platforms used by the intellectuals in expressing their ideas was provided by the French writer and Marxist intellectual, Régis Debray (1979), in his *Le Pouvoir Intellectuel*[4], in which he described three ages in the historical development of intellectuals in France. According to Debray, in the 1880s, the powerhouse of intellectual activity had been the University. This lasted until the 1930s and 1940s, when intellectual reviews and journals, such as Emmanuel Mounier's *Esprit* and Jean-Paul Sartre's *Les Temps Modernes*, both still publishing, took the centre stage until the 1960s; this was then followed by the period of television, when intellectuals became effective media stars, disseminating their ideas on programmes such as *Apostrophes* and more recently *Bouillon de Culture* broadcast on a weekly basis on French television to large audiences, numbering in their thousands. What went for France, has been reflected elsewhere. For example, a similar format could be applied to the United States, with emphasis being placed upon the Ivy League universities and upon journals such as *Partisan Review*. The British experience, whilst falling back upon its academic traditions, differs only in that

more emphasis has been placed upon the role of the wireless or radio, especially the BBC Home Service, renamed BBC Radio 3 and Radio 4, in the 1960s. But essentially, the pattern remains the same.

Smith (1991) and Gellner (1983) have both analysed the particular role of the intellectual as a national awakener. Smith has described a longer process, than Debray's model of the three ages of the intellectual, situating the rise of the secular intelligentsia within the context of Modernity. According to Smith, the declining authority of the Church at the time of the Reformation wars, led to a concomitant growth of secular society, the Enlightenment and with it, the rise of a civil society, alongside the rise of capitalism, the development of science and technology, and, in particular, the establishment of a secular intelligentsia, with the emphasis shifting from the Church to the university, whilst novels, plays and journals served as the main platforms for the dissemination of ideas. Above all, it was the printing presses of Early Modern and Modern Europe that laboured as the main technological means for their expression and dissemination.

The intellectuals, as a small circle of creative talents, (Smith, 1991: 94), were assisted in their project of generating cultural nationalism by the intelligentsia, which Smith has defined as 'the professionals', an educated middle class, who worked both within and outside the administrations of court and state. For example, in the case of the French Enlightenment, the university would have a major impact on the national community, especially by reinforcing revolutionary Jacobin and patriotic regimes with a language which became the main symbol of nationalism. For Smith: 'Nationalism, as an ideology and symbolism, legitimates every cultural configuration, summoning intellectuals everywhere to transform 'low' into 'high' cultures, oral into written, literary traditions, in order to preserve for posterity its fund of irreplaceable cultural values.' (Smith, 1991: 84). Ultimately, 'Nationalism as a form of culture' was transformed into a form of politics (94) in a process which may be interpreted as the colonisation of the political by the cultural. Gellner transfers this process to an eastern European setting, by presenting a scenario of the cultural and political mobilisation of intellectuals (poets, musicians, painters and historians *inter alia*) as the national awakeners of the people of Ruritania in their struggle against the

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Empire of Megalomania. (Gellner, 1983: 58-62).

Now, if Debray's and Smith's paradigms are to be applied to the contemporary world, it would seem that we are entering a fourth age, whereby the Internet is replacing the university, the review and the television as the new platform for intellectual debate. The power of the Internet is based upon its ability to escape censorship; that it is unregulated and allows for anonymity and that it crosses frontiers, reaching a global audience and provides access to millions. The global increase in human communication has fundamentally changed both the nature of land conflicts as well as the potentialities for peace (Chris Hables Gray, 1997: 5).[5] Furthermore, it has become far more difficult for tyrants to control people, especially dissidents.[6] As a means of communication and an instrument for the propagation of ideas, this author believes that the Internet triad, made up of telephone network, computer and modem, is as important to communicating ideas now as printing was to the Reformation and the Enlightenment, a theme explored by Steinberg, (1955), Dickens (1974) and Eisenstein (1983).

Among the raft of changes that have confronted the international community in the decade which followed the events of 1989, there exists an apparent dichotomy between, on the one hand, the collapse of the nation state (at least in some countries) and the reassertion of national identity elsewhere. Clearly the intensification of globalisation is beginning to weaken the nation state, and has broken its power over the economy, defence, the media and culture (Guibernau, 1999: 174). The Internet, as an instrument of globalisation serves to intensify this condition even further, by weakening the power of the nation state over the control of information, in terms of use, access and dissemination. Yet, by contrast, the Internet has assisted the reassertion and reaffirmation of national identity elsewhere.

The role of the Internet as a means for intellectual comment, criticism and influence, can be applied directly to the role of the intelligentsia in Serbia, during the Kosovo conflict. For in the Serbian context of the late 1990s, the Internet served a double purpose, both as a tool for national and cultural reaffirmation, during a period of crisis and conflict, and also as a means of attacking the Milošević régime. Witness

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the activities of OTPOR[7], and the various anti-war circles, such as Za Mir[8], ANEM[9], and the Belgrade Radio Station B92[10], which were all to fulfil Sartre's existentialist dictum that: 'L'écrivain doît s'engager', written in the aftermath of the Second World War, in his *Qu'est ce que la littérature?* (1948), and in the first editorial of the intellectual journal *Les Temps modernes* (1945). 'On a raison de se révolter' and how better than to revolt on the Internet?[11]

Where to situate the Kosovo conflict:

The conflict over Kosovo was unlike any other war. At the time it was described by some as a war in the defence of humanity, a point which would be heavily criticised thinkers such as Noam Chomsky (1999), Tariq Ali (2000) and others. However, with the benefit of hindsight, I do not see NATO's war against Yugoslavia, which had been referred to as a conflict of humanitarian intent (Chomsky 1999) as the last stage of the Wars of Yugoslav secession, but rather as the first stage of the new world order that would be fully voiced after the events of 11 September 2001.[12] Of course, in a chronological sense, the conflict over Kosovo predates 11 September 2001, but in terms of the response, by the United States-led international community, it was the first stage in a new kind of war and international response which some have described as post-modern.

Speaking in teleological terms, the conflict over Kosovo in 1999 did not mark the end of the Yugoslav wars of secession; in fact, it was the Dayton Peace Settlement of the conflicts in Bosnia and Hercegovina, in November 1995, leading to the implementation of the IFOR/SFOR/UN post-conflict protectorate, which should be recognised as having ended the Yugoslav wars of secession. I believe that the conflict over Kosovo marked the opening of a new phase in International Politics which we are still experiencing at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century and in the aftermath of the conflict and post-conflict reconstruction over Iraq and the current quagmire in Afghanistan[13]. In terms of the the United States-led international response, the conflict over Kosovo marks the first stage in the War against Terrorism, before the eponymous "Terrorism" had even come into existence. How do we explain this, which at first sight would appear to be a contradiction in

terms? It can only be explained by the changing nature of US foreign policy towards the end of the Clinton administration. Here we witness a process that was developing, in the second half of the 1990s, in which the United States State Department had re-asserted its leadership of the international order, under the guidance of Secretary of State Madeleine Allbright and Richard Holbrooke *inter alia*. Gone were failed notions of "Yugoslavia" being part of Europe's "back yard", whose inappropriateness had already been fully recognised long before the summer of 1995. For it was in August 1995, following the Markale market place massacre in Sarajevo, that the Rapid Reaction Force came into being. This entailed the swift shift from peace keeping to peace enforcement and the NATO bombings of the Bosnian Serb Army positions and the strategic infrastructure, including television transmitters, of the *Republika Srpska* (Bosnian Serb Republic). Indeed, in many ways the situation in Bosnia and Hercegovina, in the late summer of 1995, was very much the forerunner to Kosovo in 1999. Writing prophetically in 2001, Tariq Ali (2000: 351) has commented that: "The bombs that fell on Belgrade and other cities may well come to be seen as the first shots of a new Cold War."

One has to consider how, in the build-up to the Kosovo conflict, NATO was being strengthened and enlarged at the time of its fiftieth anniversary, with the accession of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, whilst the United States had clearly emerged as the single global power in a uni-polar world order. The Kosovo crisis was certainly not confined to Europe's back yard.

The Internet in time of war:

The Kosovo conflict has also been described as a virtual War, a postmodern war and especially, within the context of this article, as the first Internet war (Ignatieff, 1999). According to Ignatieff, it was a war in which one could communicate with the enemy for the first time, whilst one's state was engaged in military operations against the enemy state. Ignatieff takes this point further, contrasting cross-frontier Internet communications, during the conflict over Kosovo, with the complete disruption of communications in previous wars, in which the mail and telephones normally had been cut, so that friendships effectively had been broken as friends

were transmogrified into enemies, as the state literally imposed its control over all communications. In the conflict over Kosovo links with the 'enemy' were maintained through the use of the Internet.

During the Kosovo conflict, the state was no longer able to control the way we communicated. Although one can be sure that the various intelligence services monitored what was being said, they were not able to, or did not wish to stop, being said, that which was said. And, it might well be, that the power of the state to control our access to information was to some extent weakened by the Internet. So, the Internet allowed us to continue to communicate with our state's enemies throughout the conflict. Ignatieff provides the example of the wife of a State Department official who was able to communicate with a Serbian friend in Novi Sad, with the request that she 'stay off the bridges'.[14] Similarly, this writer was able to communicate with a friend on the afternoon before the bombing started. His family live in Batajnica, north of Belgrade and Zemun. Their house was literally within one kilometre of the biggest Yugoslav air base, a likely bombing target in the event of hostilities![15] However, a friend would remain a friend, even though our two countries were at war with each other. We stayed in touch – through the auspices of the Internet.

Forms of Representation:

Given the theoretical and methodological contextualisation, at the heart of this paper lies the desire to consider the way in which members of the Serbian intelligentsia were able to re-affirm their cultural and national identity during the Kosovo conflict through their use of the Internet, by focussing upon the types of electronic images/illustrations which were conveyed. Often these involved humour, usually of the black variety, yet, one wonders what else was there to do, given that the 'Masters of the Universe' (Tariq Ali, 2000) had unleashed a crusade against Serbia. The references and images, used in this paper, are taken from a wide variety of popular cultural sources, such as comic post-cards, graffiti, T shirts and computer game images. Also the techniques of photo-montage were often employed, reminding one of an earlier period and the work of John Heartfield, the Communist designer of the Weimar Republic, who attacked the Nazi Party prior to Hitler's

accession to power in 1933, with a series of posters and review covers, using photomontage techniques.

An example of the use of photomontage on the Internet was provided by reference to the F-117 Stealth Fighter that was shot down in the first week of the war. There were several versions on this theme. One shows an F-117 flying over the faded background of a sleeping child and across it is sprawled the legend 'Soory [sic] we did not know it was invisible...' referenced to a graffiti in Belgrade.

There is a rich graffiti culture in Serbia, usually made up of black humoured comments on the current political situation. Graffiti and the Internet proved to be a mutually re-enforcing means of communicating ideas from the mid-1990s, with lists of Serbian graffiti being published on the Internet. Reference has already been made to the conflict over Kosovo having been a postmodern war, a virtual war and an Internet war; it was also a graffiti war. Examples of this graffiti culture are taken as follows from the streets of Belgrade in the summer of 1998, one year before the conflict:

■   First there is this rather premonitory and black-humoured:

Govori srpski da te ceo svet bombarduje[16]

Speak Serbian so that the whole world can bomb you.

■   Then the self-critical irony:

Jugosloven - to nije nacionalnost. To je dijagnoza.

Yugoslav - that's not a nationality. It's a diagnosis.

■   and then the almost obligatory reference to the ubiquitous Kosovo as the 'cradle of Serbian civilisation' myth:

Svi smo mi deca dezertera iz 1389

We are all the children of the deserters of 1389.

Also in this representation, much play is made of the actual information technology employed in communicating with the global community. Again on the theme of the Stealth Fighter there is a photograph of a Stealth Fighter flying along what looks to be the Adriatic coastline. Superimposed upon this image is an adapted Windows 95 error box, bearing the following message:

This Airplane has performed an illegal operation
and will be shut down.[17]
If the problem persists, contact the plane vendor.

Bombing, clearly lay at the heart of the technological discourse, and this theme is returned to regularly in the forms of representation used during the conflict on Internet graphics.

Apart from the humour, the illustrations also served to re-enforce Serbian identity and pride by harnessing the tools of globalisation to empower Serbian identity, *Srbstvo* and culture under conditions of duress. Yet, as in practically every other aspect of cultural life, the Serbs had turned in upon themselves. They had been forced into isolation, into a collective Serbian solipsism, or a Serbian *Sonderweg*. These were themes that had frequently featured in the Serbian sense of self, identity, and community in the past.

One can in fact identify four main types of representation. They are, the use of: cartoon imagery; advertising brand slogans; the use of traditional cultural references taken from the fine arts, and a bitter irony directed against either NATO or President Milošević

1.   **Cartoons**

There seem to be two main sources. The first is the home-grown variety, reproductions of post cards and very much with emphasis upon the *balkanac* rather than the *Balkanac* stereotype (Todorova, 1997, 4)[18] with the accent upon isolationism, primitivism, pride in oneself, especially if the rest of the world is 'against us'. And if we are denounced as primitives, or 'monkeys' as was demonstrated in cartoons published by the *Independent* newspaper in Britain, demonising the Serbs, in May 1992 (Burgess, 1997: 41) then so be it[19]. The latter being a reference to the dangers of bad journalism and the responsibility of the journalist to get it right.[20] There is a need to emphasise Burgess' concerns, as he demonstrates western journalists in a poor light, adding that 'When it comes to Serbia, the ideological shortcomings of opposition forces are subject to a scrutiny that would appear peculiar in other circumstances.' Here is the nub of his concern:

> It is the Serbs of the former Yugoslavia for whom the most vitriolic attacks are reserved, particularly the Bosnian Serbs. The presentation of the Serbs, particularly in Britain and the United States, has been frequently little short of hysterical. According to a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, the Serbs are the '...new barbarians... motivated by nothing more complicated than primitive ethnic fanaticism.' Nothing more, just fanaticism. In British newspapers like the *Independent*, the Serbs were portrayed as monkeys in cartoons reminiscent of the crudest racial propaganda.[21]

We will return to this simian theme later, suffice it to say, for the time being that the Serbian reaction in the face of this vitriolic criticism was to produce cartoons and other images which served to reinforce Serbian uniqueness and Serbian identity in the face of world- wide hostility. As Serbian Cabinet Minister, Djura Lažić commented, on the opening of the Fifth Folk Art Festival in Istok:

> ...the preservation of the Serbian culture and tradition helped us keep the Serbian spirit alive in the recent dire times and similar manifestations will help us be what we are and to remain masters of

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our future. We are faced with many threats that our borders will be redrawn, but they forget that the Serbian roots in Kosovo and Metohija[22] are very deep and that they go back many centuries. That's why these roots cannot be eradicated easily.'[23]

He is reported to have added that: 'the borders of Serbia have been drawn in blood in the honourable struggle for survival that mark the history of the Serbian people' and that: 'These borders can not be re-drawn with ink or by the will of some prompted individuals. We will survive on this land!'

Despite the essentialist and primordialist 'blood-drenched earth' rhetoric, this kind of approach has been recognised and identified by members of the Serbian academy. Serb ethnologist, Ivan Čolović (1994: 23), in his seminal *Bordel Ratnika* (Warrior's Brothel), commented that Serbian politics is full of folklore (*Naša politika puna je folklora...*) and that from the late 1980s every political leader and every political battle in Serbia was based upon folkloric texts. Similarly it was Serbian academician Antonije Isaković who once commented that:

> Our myths give us greater strength and we must live with them. Each time that we have been faced with difficulties, we have returned to Kosovo, to Karadjordje and to popular poetry.[24]

The late and celebrated Serbian poet, Desanka Maksimović referred to much the same sort of thing in her poem *Balkanac* (Man from the Balkans), which is a celebration of difference and of something essentially barbaric:

> I am not ashamed of being,
> as you would say,
> a barbarian from the Balkans,
> home of all that's unclean and stormy....

And a later verse continues:

In your country, certainly, everything is prescribed exactly,

how one should eat, speak, and dress;

but we shout when we speak

and wave our hands

and sip our soup noisily

and when we wear gloves

we are simply in torment.[25]

Returning to the Internet, I have included three examples of the primitivist typology. The first example depicts a moustachiod Serbian peasant, wearing his *šubara* (a traditional type of headgear) from the Šumadija region of Serbia, drinking his leather-wrapped bottle of *šljivovica* (plum brandy) - in all likelihood a bottle of *Manastirka*. Actually, the reference to the *šubara* is quite important, as this was the traditional headgear of Draža Mihailović's *Četnici*, or royalist soldiers, during the Second World War. The term *šubara* implies a *šubara sa kokadom* (hat with the *kokada* – the Serbian double headed eagle badge) which reinforces the Četnik image in the climate of the 1990s, with all its connotations of Serbian nationalism[26]. This is an image which would not go unnoticed within a western Balkan context. According to the picture, the alcoholic strength of the plum brandy is reputed to be 40% proof and a litre bottle – connoting a 'man's' drink, not for effeminate westerners, as the image implies, who drink Coca Cola. The masculine, sexual message is strong. He looks to be a man of proud bearing, a hardy son of the soil, full of testosterone, beneath a branch of three plums, which somehow, seem to represent the male reproductive organs, if not another variant of the Serbian three fingered salute. The print bears the legend:

F*** the Coca
F*** the pizza
All we need
Is Shljivovitza

Clearly this text signifies Serbian masculinity and anti-western sentiment, particularly of an American variety, as is shown by the use of the Coca-Cola logo and reference

to *pizza*. The use of the strong, coarse, aggressive language seeks further to reinforce the message that the West is effete, by comparison to a strong Serbia

This illustration originated as a post-card, printed in Belgrade, as did the second example. Here we have two Serbian children, male and female, dressed as stereotypical 'cavemen', although the boy wears a *šajkaca* (another traditional example of Serbian headgear) upon his head, whilst wearing a furry bib across his chest, which bears the Serbian cross, surrounded by four cyrillic 'S', representing the legend, *samo sloga Srbina spasava* (only unity will save the Serb) - The motto of the Serbian state which harks back to the Battle of Kosovo (1389). The girl, by contrast has a bone in her hair, reinforcing the neolithic image, and she holds an onion in her right hand, another Serbian symbol of plenty, and a club in her left hand, which has a string and an acorn, but seems to represent both a weapon and a *gusle* (the traditional one-stringed Serbian musical instrument). The boy, meantime, holds a bottle of *šljivovica* in his right hand, which bares the legend *domaća brlja*, which, at 102% proof, is the very worst and strongest brand of home-made plum brandy again connoting the hard-drinking, male virility symbol. He makes the Serbian salute with his left hand, representing the Holy Trinity as celebrated in the Serbian Orthodox Church; the much-used victory symbol of the past ten years, rather redolent of Churchill's two-fingered salute, signifying 'victory' during the Blitz, during the Second World War. Beneath them the line 'Born in Serbia'. This image celebrates Serbia and Serbian primitiveness in the hell-fire spirit of *zašto ne?* (Why not?) a defiant oft-quoted gesture used by Serbs, during the period of sanctions in the 1990s, and once again, during its own Blitz, in the spring of 1999.

My last example of the cartoon-culture variety of illustration is a Serbian re-written hijack of the globalised, or at least Europeanised reference to Asterix the Gaul, that doughty little fighter and cartoon character from a Gallic France defiantly beset against Roman invasion, which was itself a symbol of French individualism, pride and defiance in the 1950s and 1960s. The original image is normally found on the first page of any Asterix *bande dessignée* album.

This one carries the text:

The year is 1999 A.C.

Europe is entirely occupied

by the Americans.

Well, not entirely...

One small country of indomitable Serbs

still holds out against the invaders...

The usual magnifying glass image of the village in Gaul, shifted from the Channel coast to the South East of Europe, shows that the 'Roman' banner has been struck between Zagreb, Rome and Tirana, represented by tents, guarded by Roman legionaries, decked out in the *Šahovnica* (checkered flag of Croatia) and the flags of Italy and Albania. Meanwhile, Belgrade, reverting to its Roman name of Singidunum, stands defiant against the 'invaders'. A 'Roman' standard has been pitched into the ground. The standard is surmounted by an American eagle, bearing the dollar sign on its chest, and below that there is the 'Stars and Stripes' flag and a second eagle, bedecked with a swastika and and the legend NATO instead of SPQR. Meanwhile Obelix and Asterix, both wear *šajkać* (the traditional Serbian hats, featured in the previous cartoon) and are to be found in the bottom left-hand corner of the picture, falling about laughing over what is presumably a barrel of 'magic potion', though it would surprise this writer, if it were not actually a barrel of *šljivovica*.

Compare the Serbian textual variant with the normal English translation of the first page:

The year is 50 BC. Gaul is entirely occupied by the Romans. Well, not entirely... One small village of indomitable Gauls still holds out against the invaders. And life is not easy for the Roman legionaries who garrison the fortified camps of Totorum, Aquarium, Laudanum and Compendium...

Obviously the humour of the second sentence, didn't quite transliterate into Serbian humour! But, then again, it had to be adapted in the English-language variant. Read

the original French:

> Nous sommes en 50 avant Jésus-Christ. Toute la Gaule est occupée par les Romains... Toute? Non! Un village peuplé d'irréductibles Gaulois résiste encore et toujours à l'envahisseur. Et la vie n'est pas facile pour les garnisons de légionnaires romains des camps retranchés de Babaorum, Aquarium, Laudanum et Petitbonum...

Both English and French variants have added *jeux de mots*, naming the Roman camps after 'Aquarium' and 'Laudanum', whilst the English version adds the name 'Compendium', a substitution for the French 'Petitbonum' a pseudo-Latin reappraisal of the ubiquitous expression *petit bonhomme*, as in 'chaque petit bonhomme fait son chemin'![27]

2. Advertising brand slogans

The second theme is that of the application of advertising brand slogans to the climate of events in 1999. Here, particular reference is made to the Yugoslav marketing company, known as Hammer Propaganda. Directed by Miloš Jovanović, this Novi Sad-based marketing company set out to create an anti-war project, in 1999, as a means of coping with the conflict and communicating with the West, by using the 'unreality of advertising to communicate the reality of the situation'[28]. This was a process which allowed those who stand outside the 'news' media to represent their reality to a wider circle.[29]

They sought to criticise the war by turning the marketing images and globalised brand names and slogans against their originators in the west. In the words of Alexandra Jovanović:

> When we first put Windows 99 on the Internet we targeted 'western' consumers audience. The people who had just one opportunity: to watch war live. We wanted to show them other side, not just images you received on your computer (three fingers etc.)[30] We used ads

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because the audience was like that and images were well known all over the world. We want to show the people who want to see that there are some different people in Serbia, not just those faces on TV screen. To show that war affected ordinary people like they are.[31]

Originally distributed as an anti-war project through the auspices of the Internet, then exhibiting their work in a number of exhibitions, Hammer Propaganda produced nine posters under the project title *Windows 99* (a pun on Microsoft Windows). According to a recent Email to this writer, from Hammer, about 100,000 people saw 'Windows 99' during the war, after which they lost count.[32] Interestingly, it turns out that the idea of the new version of the Windows 95 logo, of gaffer taped windows in Novi Sad was born out of the humour and graffiti, that was then current in Novi Sad, that had been spread about by an 'anonymous protector of the peoples' who had created a 'good joke that hurts.'[33] Their aim was to 'present the war, suffering and hardships of the civilians in Novi Sad during the NATO bombardments of Yugoslavia in 1999'[34], and to promote a '...political attitude implying that every political act is a matter of culture,'[35] by using 'advertising as anti-advertising' [36] in a process whereby 'visual and graphic art comment upon military intervention.'[37] Hammer was subverting international brands to capture people's despair and yet giving all the brands a new meaning. The exhibition catalogue of *Windows 99* claims that Hammer's aim was not to mock a brand name but to maintain sanity and broadcast to the world what was really happening in Yugoslavia. This had to be done in a coded way in a world where it was dangerous to criticise Milošević. As Jovanović commented: 'When the bombing started and we could not work, this became a way of dealing with the situation'.[38]

Hammer Propaganda was bringing to people the reality of the war, through direct, punchy images, in what they considered to be a 'smarter way of communicating with people'[39] than having people wear target badges and stroll along the bridges over the Danube, against the background of folk music, which has been one of the most effective vehicles of forging and reasserting ethnic Serb identity over this last decade. To quote the black humour of the Belgrade grafitti of the summer of 1998:

Ne slušaj narodnjake
Umri prirodnom smrcu !

Don't listen to the Folk music
Die a natural death!

Serbian folk music, as an instrument of national affirmation and cultural politics, was in the foreground of the protests against NATO in 1999 and also in the Serb demonstrations of Kosovska Mitrovica in 2001. In a quotation from *Glas*: 'Hammer's designers have shown that the urban spirit of modern Serbia is still alive and strong, despite the neo-folk aestheticism which dominated antiwar meetings and concerts.[40]

Returning to the Coca-Cola image and icon of the United States there is a pun on the 'Always' advert. Here one is presented with a 'sawn-off' Coca-Cola bottle being used as a funnel to pour petrol into the fuel tank off a car. Beneath the Coca-Cola logo, written in Serbian and English is the statement: *U vreme NATO bombardovanja građani Jugoslavije su gorivo točili na razne naćine.* This is translated as: 'During NATO bombing the citizens of Yugoslavia filled their gas tanks in many different ways.'[41] This is a reflection on a road-side scene that had become familiar throughout Serbia during the period of Sanctions and then later, during the Kosovo conflict.

A second example shows the control panel and logo of a Sony play station, the missile sights of a NATO bomber locked on to an industrial complex and the legend 'It's not a game'. This is a powerful message. This is not virtual war, fought at a distance. It is not a computer game, but the real thing in which people get killed. One thinks of Jean Baudrillard's 1991 trilogy on the Gulf War. 'The Gulf War will not take place', 'The Gulf War is not taking place', the Gulf War did not take place'.[42] Similarly, in a comparative survey of the experience of bomber pilots in the Second World War with those in the Gulf War and discovered that while the dominant emotion of the Second World War pilots was one of terror, that of the Gulf War pilots was the excitement of playing games in an arcade (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 107). This is to say nothing of the language used at the time, such as 'collateral damage',

referring to hitting objects instead of people, as though they were targets in an arcade game.

The last example shows the container of a Ballentine's whiskey bottle, holding a lit candle in an air-raid shelter, with the statement: 'Inspiration' and in English and Serbian, the comment: 'NATO planes bombed the electrical power system of Yugoslavia.

3.   Use of traditional cultural images

Another representational variant was a visual play upon traditional cultural images based upon the fine arts. The two examples chosen, would both sound a deep resonance upon the mood of Serbian cultural identity and national feeling. The first is based upon Paja Jovanović's *The Great Migration under Arsenije III Carnojević in 1690*, painted in 1900 and referring to the Great Migration of the Serbian people from the Serbian heartland in Kosovo to the Vojvodina, where the Serbs were settled as frontier troops under the Austrian Emperor. The reference is to being led out of a 'Babylonian captivity' by Metropolitan/ patriarch Arsenija. Described as 'a large format, pompous picture of the past'[43], it nevertheless strikes a chord in the nationalist soul.

The version in this writer's possession, originated in the satyrical Belgrade paper, *Naša Krmaća* (our sow), in which the heads of well-known historical figures have been morphed onto the bodies of the key protagonists of the Serbian *grand récit*, such as Petar Njegoš, 19th century bishop, man of letters and play-wright who produced *Gorski Vijenac* (The Mountain Wreath); educationalist Dositej Obitelj; King Alexander Karadjordjević, and writer, academician and one-time Yugoslav president, Dobrica Ćosić, who allegedly had been one of the key members of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences behind the 1986 Memorandum. This photo-montage carries the title 'Refreshment for a long journey' (*Osvećenje za duga putovanja*) and the message becomes more clear when one's eye is drawn to the ubiquitous red Coca-Cola cans and spent condoms scattered across the foreground against an otherwise black and white image. This is a despairing example of photomontage at

its most cynical, self-destructive and self-abusive, given that this is a postmodern revisit to one of the most 'glorious moments' of the Serbian historico-mythological metanarrative.

If Paja Jovanović's classical realist painting of the 1690 Migration strikes a chord in Serbian cultural identity, then Uroš Predić's *Kosovka Devojka* (The Kosovo Girl) has become an iconic focal point of Serbdom. Two key themes running through the mythology of Serbian identity are: the 'warrior hero' and the 'mother/sister' paradigm. The 'warrior-hero' can be traced back to the Kosovo epics, with Prince Lazar, Miloš Obilić and the fallen heroes on the field of Kosovo, through to the myths and tales of Marko Kraljević, the brave soldiers of *Vojvoda* General Mišić in their agonising retreat through Serbia in the First World War, the *Četniks* of the Second World War and more recently Arkan's Tigers or the mythical Kapitan Dragan in the so-called wars of Yugoslav secession (Čolović, 1994: 61-70)..

The theme of *majka/sestra* (mother/sister) is a dominant theme in the poetry and literature of Serbia and this has resurfaced many times in the patriotic nationalist songs that emerged into the popular culture domain during the 1990s, with titles such as *Srbija naša majka mila....* (Serbia our darling mother...). But, perhaps the greatest icon of Serbian womanhood is the Kosovo Girl who went to give succour to the fallen warriors on the morning following the battle of Kosovo Polje.

The best known depiction of this great mythological event was painted by Uroš Predić in 1919; *The Kosovo Girl* has been used and re-used, morphed and reproduced in photo-montage many times in a variety of mediatic forms. For example by representing the septuagenarian, former-president of the Republika Srpska, Biljana Plavšić as the Kosovo Girl, by morphing her head onto a copy of Predić's painting. Similarly Ceca the 'Queen of Turbofolk' and widow of former para-military, Željko Raznatović (a.k.a. Arkan) has been described as playing the part of the Kosovo Girl to Arkan's wounded hero.[44]

The image and veneration of the mother/sister who either gives birth to the nation, through her sons, who will become the future soldiers who will defend the national

community, or of the sister-figure who gives succour to the wounded warrior-hero is a primordial image in the Serbian nationalist discourse and common to many other European discourses. Witness Marianne for the French or Britannia to an older, and now discredited sense of British identity. But, in the Serbian case there is also something of the sacred, with reference to the Marian image of the *Pièta* or, indeed the nativity.

One of the most compelling images sent across the Internet during the Kosovo conflict, was the recruiting of Lara Croft to the Serbian cause. Lara Croft is the feisty, internationally-renowned, computer game girl-fighter who features in Sony's Tomb Raider computer games, and who, according to one fan, 'walks like a woman and shoots like a man.'[45] In the Serbian image of Lara Croft, she is clearly the new, postmodern Kosovo Girl. She is kitted out in para-military gear. And, as in the aforementioned primitivist cartoon illustrations, she makes the Serb three-fingered salute, against the background image of a Serbian *kokarda*.

Yet, the use of the image of the woman as the symbolic embodiment of the national identity is not new. According to Nira Yuval-Davis (1997: 45) women are often constructed culturally as the symbolic bearers of the collectivity's identity and honour. This 'burden of representation' often requires women to breed and multiply for the benefit of the nation, whilst they serve to symbolise something of the spirit and purity of the community. This symbol has frequently been exploited for both nationalistic and propagandistic purposes, in the images of Britannia, Marianne and their sisters, as mentioned above, if not, in some cultures, the image of the very Virgin Mother herself? This writer is reminded of the application of the female burden of representation to the plight of Belgium in 1914. Here, a postcard was produced in the aftermath of a national disaster, of a women dressed in rags and armed with a *Lebel* rifle in her right hand, standing amid the ruins of hard-fought and lost battles, by the Belgian army in the face of the German onslaught: Louvain, Termonde and Malines. She stands defiantly, waving a tattered Belgian tricolour flag in her left hand. This desperate scene is entitled: 'Debout quand même! Pour le Droit et la Liberté.' This is national pride, in the face of a desperate conflict and a national disaster, embodied in the symbol of a proud woman. Is this not a First

World War forerunner of the Lara Croft imagery distributed on the Internet in 1999?

But with the Lara Croft version, some interesting transformations have taken place in terms of representation. Lara is the new Kosovo girl, the new icon of a reaffirmed nationalism and cultural identity. Yet, in the process there has been a gender change and a change in role. Because, Lara has become the embodiment of both the warrior and the mother in this new discourse. Lara Croft has been portrayed in one of the classical roles as the warrior hero, defending 'womenandchildren'[46] The enlarged bosom, not uncommon to the female comic strip heroes upon which she was no doubt modelled, has empowered her.[47] The image can still be that of the empowered mother/sister of the nation, but this time the fantasy of a feisty, active, fighting woman has been created. She may well be capable of giving succour to the warrior in the male imagination, but she is also a formidable fighter. Images of women soldiers have often been threatening unless they have been controlled and distinguished from male soldiers by emphasising their femininity, *ergo* 'castrating' their roles to the male imagination. (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 101)

4.   Bitter irony directed against either NATO or Milošević

Finally, let us consider the images of bitter irony directed against either NATO or Milošević. These images could almost be presented *bez riječi* (without comment). I have chosen just four examples of images over the Internet which employed bitter irony. They all come from the Serbian diaspora, via the Serbian community living in Canada, especially Vancouver. Witness first, the image of the bomb-damaged RTS studios in Belgrade, with the somewhat ironic slogan: 'NATO bombs against the freedom of information.' This would seem to be a somewhat bitter irony, given the ferocious behaviour of Serb authorities against the electronic media in the second half of the 1990s, especially in its actions against the two private radio stations in Belgrade: Studio B and B92. In a similar vein, there follows a a photograph of a placard, bearing the slogan: 'Bombs kill people. Lies do kill too. CNN -Mean Company.'

The third example is that of a morphed image of Milošević in dinner jacket having

his hand kissed by President Clinton, with the comment: 'Only this way, Clinton', emphasising the 'moral superiority' felt by some Serbs, embodied in the image of Milošević over that of Clinton, the so-called 'Master of the Universe'. The reference is to the film *Godfather.*

Further criticism of the United States President comes in gradual morphing of a chimpanzee's head into that of President Clinton through a sequence of twelve frames. In the discourse of Exclusion and Identity in time of conflict it would seem that we have returned once again to the theme of monkeys and primitivism; except that in this case, it is the Serbs who are referring to President Clinton as the monkey, and not western cartoonists, who, as demonstrated above, had already depicted the Serbs in a similar simian light.

Conclusion

At first sight, one of the surprising features of the conflict over Kosovo was that although the intelligence operatives on both sides took a close interest in the flow of e-mails, neither side took any steps to directly attack the Internet's infrastructure (Ignatieff, 2000; Collin, 2001). Ignatieff suggests that this reaction from the state security services was due to the fact that the material communicated in both directions over the Internet was actually of use to them, thus negating any desire to muzzle the Internet (p. 139). Collin (p.166)[48], on the other hand, argues that military planners at the Pentagon had prepared a document on the potential of launching cyber assaults on Serbian computer networks to disrupt the operations of Milošević's forces, raid bank accounts, shut down electricity plants and terminate phone connections. But apparently such plans were dropped when US Defence Department lawyers argued that such a policy could lay the US open to war crimes charges.

It has since been alleged that America has already begun to assemble a "cyber arsenal" for use in future wars, including computer viruses or "logic" bombs to disrupt enemy networks, the feeding of false information to sow confusion and the superimposition of video images onto television stations to deceive (Collin, 2001,

p.166). The potential application of computer viruses and "logic" bombs to cause chaos in a states security and financial systems became apparent in the first quarter of 2001, when American and Chines "hackers" tried to spread viruses and clog up the internet systems in each other's countries. Furthermore, if the bombing of television systems, power stations and electricity systems is already considered acceptable in time of war, as was shown during the Kosovo conflict, then why should computer systems themselves not be targeted in future, despite the alleged concerns of Defense Department lawyers over the risks of committing war crimes.

Perhaps the most fascinating thing about the Kosovo conflict in 1999, from the perspective of a decade's hindsight, is that it might prove to be both the first and the last "Internet war". In the aftermath of the events of 11 September 2001, and the subsequent declaration of war against terrorism, state security organs in the West have been considerably empowered. The implications of this might be that, despite the role currently played by 'bloggers' in such states as Iran and Iraq, in the not too distant future the traffic of censorship-free communication across frontiers will come to an end. This would have a major impact upon international networking. More seriously, it could entail the stifling of any attempt to establish international solidarity against oppression in non-democratic states, thereby curtailing the freedom of any intelligentsia to reach beyond the frontiers of the nation state. Yet, inspite of this, the history of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union during the Cold War has consistently demonstrated that the ideas of an intelligentsia will always get out, no matter what level of censorship is imposed by the state.

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End notes:

[1]   Edward Said first employed this term in a Reith Lecture, given on the BBC in 1993, which was later published in 1994 as *Representations of the Intellectual*.

[2].   Although this will eventually be superseded by Mandarin Chinese.

[3]   Obviously, this would also apply to the processes of decolonisation in the Middle East, the Asian sub-continent, South East Asia and Africa. At different times in the 20th century.

[4].   Translated as *Teachers, Writers, Celebrities,* by Verso, London in 1981.

[5].   Hables Gray concentrates on the effects of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), particularly computer technology and the potential of 'cyber war' on the military and particularly the United States Industrial Military Complex. He demonstrates remarkable insights into the role of Internet communications across borders and particularly in time of conflict. His model is that of the Chiapas/Zapatistas in Mexico, of which he comments: 'Theirs is a hybrid movement, with the traditional virtues of peasant rebellions augmented by media-savvy spokespeople who use the internet and the tabloid press with the shamelessness of athletic shoe companies.' (Hables Gray, 1997: 5).

[6].   John Sweeney, writing in the *Daily Telegraph* (29 March 2001) commented on the reactions and views expressed on the Internet against such individuals as President Leonid Kuchma in the Ukraine or President Slobodan Milošević in Yugoslavia.

[7]   OTPOR is the Serbian word for resistance. It was this movement that would eventually bring about the October Revolution of 2000 which led to the downfall of President Slobodan Milosevic, his arrest and extradition to the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague.

[8]   Za Mir is literally translated as 'For Peace'.

[9]   ANEM, the Belgrade-based Association of Independent Electronic Media, is an offshoot of the radio station B92, which used the Internet to communicate with its audience, both at home and abroad, when that station was seized by the police. At the time of writing, July 2010, journalists at both B92 and ANEM still face threats from extremists is Serbia who accuse them of leading an 'anti-Serb' campaign.

[10]   Since it first went on the air, in 1989, B92 has stood for the freedom of expression and it has served as a platform for independent news and information for over two decades in Serbia. During the Kosovo conflict it was forced off the air for a short period by the Serbian authorities and seized by the police in May 2000, but the station continued on the air by broadcasting from secret studies via the auspices of the Internet.

[11].   This is a reference to the series of interviews held between Pierre Victor, Philippe Gavi and Jean-Paul Sartre (a journalist, and activist and a philosopher-writer) and published under the same title *On a raison de se révolter*, by Gallimard, Paris in 1974.

[12]   For a fuller explanation of this idea see my chapter 'Lessons from Kosovo:

Cluster Bombs and their impact upon Post-Conflcit Reconstruction and Rehabilitation' in Ferrándiz, Francisco and Robben, Antonius, *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Peace and Conflict Research: A View from Europe*, HumanitarianNet, University of Deusto Press, Bilbao, 2007, pp.223-252.

[13]   At the time of writing, 25 June 2010, the United Kingdom has suffered the death of its 300th serviceman in a war that has been fought since October 2001.

[14]   .   Throughout the conflict, Serbs were demonstrating on the bridges and wearing target badges in defiance of the NATO bombings.

[15]   Indeed, Batajnica would be bombed on 17 April 1999. During this raid, a three-year-old girl was killed outright and five people were injured when a nearby school was struck by NATO aircraft (ITAT-TASS News Agency, 'NATO bombs continue to bomb civilian facilities', 20 April 1999, cited in Wiebe, 1999, 5.

[16]   .   The original graffiti version of this was: *Govoriti srpski da te ceo svet razume* (Speak Serbian so that the whole of the world will understand you). Once again, this was steeped in black-humoured irony!

[17]   .   How much more effective this would have been if they had replaced 'shut down' with 'shot down'.

[18]   The words *balkanac* and *Balkanac* both refer to a person from the Balkans, but whilst *Balkanac* (with a capital) denotes a sense of place and geographical identity, *balkanac* (lower case) connotes, in a derogatory manner, a person with a primitive manner, attitudes and behaviour. Similar demotic usages to *balkanac* would be the noun *seljak* (peasant) or the adjective *nekulturni* (uncultured).

[19]   .   Also see the section in Burgess' book, entitled 'Civilisation versus the barbarians' on pp.80-84.

[20]   .   On page 41, Burgess draws the reader's attention to how, in May 1992, so-called British 'quality' newspapers like the *Independent* portrayed the Serbs as monkeys in cartoons "reminiscent of the crudest racial propaganda".

[21]   .   Ibid.

[22]   .   The Serbian term for the 'region' of Kosovo.

[23]   .   News- Serbia Today, www.yugoslavia.com, 16 June 1997.

[24]   .   Antonije Isaković, *Srbi u tesnom hodniku*, NIN, Belgrade, 8 May 1992.

[25]   .   Desenka Maksimović, *Vizije/Visions: Selected Poems*, Nolit, Belgrade, 1988, translated by Reginald De Bray, pp.14-19.

[26]   *Četnici* (or Chetniks) – this term originally refers to a member of the Serbian nationalist guerrilla army that was formed and led by Yugoslav army Colonel, later General Draža Mihailović, during the Second World War, to resist the Axis invaders and their Croatian collaborators (the *Ustaše* of Ante Pavelić's NDH – Independent Croatian State). As events would unfold, the Chetniks would be mainly engaged in fighting in a civil war directed against Tito's Yugoslav communist guerrillas, the

Partisans (*Partizani*). In the 1990s, the expression *Četnik* was used pejoratively by non-Serbs in the 'former' Yugoslavia and its successor states to describe Serbian nationalists (and all Serbs in general). For nationalists, the term would become a symbol of national pride.

[27]   The reference here is to the populist French expression sometimes used when following behind a slow, perhaps hesitant and elderly driver on the road.

[28]   .   Miloš Jovanović, quoted in Meg Carter, 'A Window on War's Reality', *The Independent*, 1 August 2000.

[29]

.   Comment made in a letter from Mark Fiddes to this writer on 7 August 2000. Davies Little Cowly Fiddes are the advertising agency in London which organised Hammer's London exhibition in London, in August 2000.

[30]   .   This was a reference to my ongoing work on this paper, with reference to my comments on Lara Croft and the other cartoons that have been mentioned above.

[31]   .   From an Email correspondence between this writer and Hammer, on 28 April 2001.

[32].   Ibid.

[33]   .   Valerija Đurković, *Windows 99 oglašavanje života: izložba plakata*, Hammer Propaganda, Novi Sad, 23 September 1999.

[34]   .   Miloš Jovanović, ibid.

[35].   Zagorka Radović, ibid.

[36].   Boris Kovać, ibid.

[37].   Kevin B. Chen, ibid.

[38].   Meg Carter, op.cit.

[39].   Miloš Jovanović in Meg Carter, op.cit.

[40].   *Glas*, 19 June 1999, cited in *Windows 99 oglašavanje života.*

[41]   .   Of course the verbal phrase, *gorivo toćiti* should be translated as 'poured fuel', or more accurately, 'filled-up.' But the wording hardly counts, it is the image that is far stronger.

[42].   Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War did not take place*, Power, Sydney, 1995.

[43]   .   Dejan Medaković, 'Art in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries' in Pavle Ivić (*et al.), The History of Serbian Culture*, Porthill, Edgeware, 1995, p.215.

[44]   .   Eleanor Pritchard, 'Turbofolk in Serbia: Some Preliminary Notes', *Slovo*, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, London, Vol. 11, 1999, p.147.

[45]   .   Reference to www.cubeit.com/ctimes/lara.htm. Yes, there are some sad people out there!

46 .   Here Yuval-Davis refers to Cynthia Enloe, 1990, and play on the oft repeated cliché, that it is for the sake of the women and the children that men go to war.

47 .   One thinks also of the ongoing television series *Xena the Warrior Princess*.

48   For a good critique of the natures and development of cyber warfare see Kerschischnig Georg, 'Human Security and Cyberwarfare' in Hudson, Robert, Ferrándiz, Francisco & Benedek, Wolfgang (directors), *Peace, Conflict and Identity: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Research*, EDEN Network, Universidad de Deusto Press, Spain, 2009.