Political Myths and Totalitarianism: An Anthropological Analysis of Their Causal Interrelationship

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A B S T R A C T

This paper discusses the key political, anthropological and socio-cultural functions of political myths in the appearance and functioning of totalitarian regimes. A special emphasis is put on structural elements of the myth (mythemes) and the mythic content (narratives) in the processes of artificial construction of a new society (community) based on the myth-inspired ideological postulates. The paper argues that the establishment of totalitarianism marked a certain anthropological devolution. This devolution, in turn, proceeds through the deconstruction of civil society as an organic social sphere and the artificial construction of a new political community based on ideological postulates and political myths. In support of this assertion, it is first shown how the mythical narratives – transformed into political concepts and programs–were the basis of (re)interpretation of the world, society and individual, and essentially determined the nature and functioning of the totalitarian regimes. Then, the specific political myths are analyzed and compared, as well as their content and origin, and particularly their dual function. It in turn is analyzed in the framework of the classical society–community dichotomy, where the (civil) society is founded socio-politically on the social contract, and the (political) community socio-anthropologically on political myth. In a situation of identity and legitimacy crisis, anomie and the weakening of social cohesion – the characteristic conditions of the great economic and political crisis of the early twentieth century that enabled the emergence of totalitarianism – society as a contracting community does not work. A strong need for meaning (at the individual and societal level) affects the citizens' susceptibility to (political) concepts of (re)constitution of (political) community with which they can identify. Right there, totalitarian movements use the cohesive power of the political myth that replaces the rationally based constitution of society, and becomes a means of ideological mystification and political manipulation. Affecting the mind of the citizens, it moves their feelings and motivations and directs their behavior toward the goals of the totalitarian political power. Recent iterations of totalitarianism (Great-Serbian aggression), with the same tragic consequences, were a warning on the actuality of political myths and the danger of a resurgence of totalitarian tendencies.

Key words: political anthropology, political myth, totalitarianism, mythemes, naratives, ideology, society, community, legend

Introduction

Myth, in its classical interpretation, means ancient belief about the origins of the world, natural causes, of gods and heroes, which stems from the inability of comprehension (due to lack of knowledge) and from human need to explain the world. In the mind of the ancient man, the forces of nature appear in the transcendental forms of gods and fantastic beings which rule the world.

The mythic attitude towards reality was, therefore, a religious one. Due to its syncretic character and universality, myth is the dominant form of human spirituality from ancient to modern cultures; a promoter of certain moral values, community, and symbols and rituals in which they're expressed. On the one hand, myth mediates the dimension of the Sacred, declares one hardly

comprehensive truth, but also exposes the dimension of the Profane, gives to the people »the truth« that they can understand. Finally, myth dresses both these truths, both realities, religious and mundane, heavenly and human, into the suit of poetic expression[1].

Since the beginning of anthropological research, myth, along with magic and religion, is among the most persistently explored topics. It is more likely a sign of its complex nature, than an indicator of success of the discipline in explaining it. Inherent in such a long-standing and attentive regard is the deep discomfort that anthropology still experiences about the problem of how best to treat what is, for us, other people's strange and »exotic« statements about reality. The question that has yet to be answered is, which (and whose) reality is it that myth speaks to[2]? Classic anthropological approaches consider the myth as an essential element of oral tradition and folk culture, i.e. the product of the collective consciousness which emerges through the long period of development of a certain culture. However, in the case of political myths, they are not a product of the collective, but the result of (political) activity of individuals or small social groups in a certain political situation, when so created myth is accepted by wide social groups. Political myths thus impose themselves as valid interpretations of state, society, hierarchy, political authorities, leadership, social relations and social roles, and past, present, and the future of the society; they provide explanations and meaning to the political society; they integrate and legitimize. In the context of modern mass societies the power of political myths is particularly manifested, especially their dominantly instrumental and manipulative function, which best became apparent in the emergence of totalitarian ideologies, and establishment and existence of totalitarian regimes which marked the twentieth century. Since the power relations, forms of social control and ways of their achieving, as well as tradition, religion, myths and symbols which determine them and through which they are expressed – are core subjects of study of political anthropology – relationship between political myths and totalitarianism belongs to the very center of its interest. Therefore, this article deals with the interdependence of myths and politics. Given the complexity of this relationship, it limits itself to examining only certain aspects of it, particularly causal relationship between political myths and totalitarianism, i.e. key functions of political myths in the emergence, shaping, and functioning of totalitarian regimes.

The crisis of democracy in the early twentieth century manifested primarily as a crisis of legitimacy, a crisis of political representation, and an economic crisis. These conditions of crisis have marked specific social and political context in which totalitarian ideologies and totalitarian regimes based upon them appear, as an eminently modern phenomenon, different than all previous autocracies. On the other hand, political myths also had an influence on the content and conceptions of totalitarian ideologies and regimes. Specific mythemes and mythic narratives translated into ideological and political con-

cepts provided the foundation for a (re)interpretation of the world, the society, and the individual, significantly determining the character and functioning of totalitarian regimes. Their Manichaean nature, in turn, was in the base of organized violence upon the others and the different, including their termination.

The article, therefore, tries to analyze etymology, structure, and content of characteristic political myths from a political-anthropological aspect, and shows how they affected the ideology and political conceptions of totalitarian regimes. Special attention is paid to structural elements of political myths, which have their reflections, but also iterations with identical consequences, even decades after the downfall of those regimes. For example, after the historical defeat of fascism and Nazism and the downfall of communism, near the end of the last century, very similar political myths shaped the great-Serbian political project which, after an unsuccessful aggression against neighboring nations, failed in a similar way, with long-term and tragic consequences.

In that context, it is argued that the establishment of totalitarian regimes based upon specific political myths has marked a certain social and anthropological devolution. It manifests itself through deconstruction of the organic social sphere (primarily, civil society) and through artificial construction of a new society and a new culture based upon the mythically inspired ideological postulates. On one hand, this thesis seeks confirmation through sociopolitical analysis of specific causes of the emergence of totalitarianism and its consequential effects on the civil sphere. The analysis takes place within the society-community dichotomy of classic modernization theory[3], where society is established socio-politically upon the social contract, and (political) community upon socio-cultural determinants (tradition, origin, ethnic and cultural identity) which necessarily include political myth(s). In a crisis of identity and legitimacy, and value anomie and weakening of social cohesion, the society as a contractual community does not function. A strong need for meaning (on both individual and social level) influences the citizens' susceptibility to (political) concepts of (re)constitution of (political) community, with which they can identify. It is precisely here that totalitarian regimes use the power of political myth, which acts as a cohesive factor, and completely substitutes the rationally based constitution of society.

On the other hand, through the anthropological analysis, the article tries to demonstrate a key influence of political myth(s) on the establishment, functioning, and apology of totalitarian ideology and totalitarian regimes. Special emphasis is put on structural elements of the myth (mythemes) and mythic content (narratives) in the processes of artificial construction of a new society (actually, a community) based upon mythically inspired ideological postulates. Namely, the influence of mythemes as essential and irreducible elements of a myth structure[4], independent of various mythic narratives and mythic symbols, is shown to be crucial in the totalitarian project of political, social, and ideological (re)constitution of society. In the certain sociopolitical situation (social crisis), in different societies and periods (the beginning and the

end of the twentieth century) the archetypal mythic structures are restored through newly-created political myths and political ideologies upon which totalitarian regimes are based. That relationship of mutual causality, not always being transparent, needs to be further clarified. The analytical framework of political anthropology appears to be the most adequate and functional theoretical framework for this analysis.

About Myth and the Mythic Structure

As an essential component of oral tradition and folk culture, classic anthropology comprehends myth as an ancient belief about the origins of the world, natural phenomena, gods and heroes. It stems from the man's need to explain the world in conditions of inability of cognition. Therefore, the forces of nature, in the mind of the ancient man, appear in transcendental forms of deities and fantastic beings which rule the world. Therefore, mythical and religious become intertwined.

Etymologically put, Greek μιτος (mythos) means word, speech, and narration (about gods and their attitude towards people). But μιτος also means »an appearance formed entirely inadvertently and unconsciously«, as opposed to λιγος, which means »consciously analyzing and bonding conceptual thinking«[5]. Myths, therefore, rely primarily on the irrational and the power of emotions. Myth (μιτος) is opposed to the rational (λιγος – logos). With the development of the antique (Greek) philosophical thought – just by the confronting –logos gets the meaning of the reason, what is connected with rational, deliberation, and right cognition, while mythos increasingly gain not just the meaning of a story, but the meaning of a false, made up story, something that contradicts reason and true cognition. The meaning of the word »myth« narrows in such a way, but on the other side it extends into a kind of fundamental opposition between the two approaches to cognition. Thus the myth and the mythic are marked by the emotional, magical, and mystical, while logos is marked by the rational, the analytical, and the theoretically intuitive[6].

Myth is an attempt by mankind to comprehend the reason and the purpose of the existence. Through the language of metaphor and symbols, it creates vivid worlds and beings that, although not always related directly to the ordinary world around us, provide answers to our fundamental questions about the true nature of the world around us. Whether or not we believe in the myth, the power of language and the images created by it have determined collective perceptions through the millennia, substantially influenced social formations, and inspired art, music, and poetry[7]. Campbell (1991) distinguishes four main functions of myth: mystical, cosmological, sociological/political and pedagogical. The mystical provides for the realization of wonder and mystery. The cosmological reveals the nature of the mystery. The sociological/political supports and validates the social structure/political order. The pedagogical guides individuals through life crises from childhood, through adulthood, and death.

Myth can also be understood as a completely formed and integral system of belief. As such, it is a standalone and independent complex needing no other foundation except claim, no logic except itself. Since it is founded on the irrational, on a fantasy, it inverts the empiric realities and contradicts the rules of logical reasoning, and can thus be an obstacle for cognition and credible facts. However, myth is an exceptional driving force, having a series of encouraging elements which drive individuals and large social groups in revolutionary movements. A well-composed myth can incite political action, and also serve as a means for »socialization of souls«, by which the individual becomes part of the political community[8].

Myth also functions as a language, not in the sense of spoken language but specific language, i.e. a form of expression that functions in many languages and cultures. Thus the key structural components of a myth (mythemes), expressed in mutually opposed concepts/ values, are recognizable in many cultures, independently of thematic and linguistic differences, through the dichotomy of symbols and meanings (e.g. life and death, heaven and earth, male and female, hunting and agriculture, etc.). Therefore many myths are, despite originating in different cultures and having different content, essentially very much alike. Consequently, myth is a product of those opposed values and meanings. It acts symbolically and creates a framework for explaining and resolving social conflicts. Most mythemes, among other things, possess the characteristic of universality, and for precisely that reason they repeatedly emerge in various social and temporal contexts[9].

Mythology precedes history; it is inevitable, natural and inherently necessary to language (understood as the public discourse). This strong link between myth and language, especially later in the context of modern society, shows dangerous tendencies of turning the language into a tool for producing illusory fiction which legitimizes the most unsavory constellations of power[10].

Mytheme and narrative are both integral parts of the myth. Mytheme also represents the underlying event and/or occurrence which rests on an attractive, but mostly historically and scientifically unconfirmed particularities (ie. someone's supernatural power, strength, wit, beauty...). It is often based on fictionalized events from nation's history or a significant individual (Prince Marko, Musa Kesedžija, Veli Jože, superiority of an Aryan race, etc.). In addition, the underlying construct of mytheme can be found in an unusual natural phenomena, images or occurrences that are characteristic of a certain locality (ie. frequent lightning strikes in the mountain which can become a base for myth, etc.). Sometimes a character or physical (sub)characteristics of a nation can also be the basis for the emergence of mythemes (ie. high and lazy Montenegrins, low and hard-working Pygmies, etc.).

Unlike mytheme, which represents the core of a myth, its second part – the narrative – represents the entire construct which gives a pragmatic, sometimes political context to a myth. In other words, mytheme therefore represents a fundamental fascination with myth settings (ie. lightning strike, large caves, one's height, strength,

beauty…), while the narrative, as a constituent part of the myth, takes over its pragmatic communication with recipients.

It is interesting that, in the interrelationship of mythemes and narratives, the mytheme is mainly narratologically »static«, that is the basic setting of a mytheme (fascination) will harder and less frequently change, while the narrative is »responsible« for cognitive algorithm or designing, shaping and catalyzing the mythemes into an adequate message, taking into account the subjectivity of the time which the myth is »transmitting«.

Consequently, mytheme, as a component of a political myth, gives a topical socio-political definition, while the narrative frames it into a socially acceptable narrative matrix (ie. ideological constructs, motivational talks with a message, theater, movies, etc.).

Myths are therefore extremely popular in the political context because, as demonstrated in the previous lines, they can very effectively be added to a political rhetoric and political narrative eros, moreover – they are often in their basis. History is replete with political pamphlets which have often rested on the insistence of a disctivness of a nation or a race, as well as on any kind of superiority, as a kind of »cyclotron« of political pragmatism, that is – political ideology.

If we try to look at mythic narratives in this particular context, we regularly encounter two vital aspects of their subsistence: folk tradition and art. In the folk tradition, mytheme becomes enriched through the narrative and placed into a utilitarian function of glorifying the power of the people or an individual. In the art, a mytheme gets additional narrative dimension through the Aristotelian unity of action, time and space.

A classic example of myth adaptation is the play »Kanjoš Macedonović«, created by the motives of a short story by Stefan Mitrov Ljubiša. Kanjoš Macedonović is superman from Budva, who is in a constant struggle against evil – the Venetians (a comparison with Veli Jože is apparent). This mythical narrative, placed in an artistic sub-context, becomes a convenient instrument which very skillfully uses the phenomenology of myth (the legend of Kanjoš Macedonović), artistic narration (the play) and the context of time in which is performed. Thus, it can be said that this is, in some extent, a modernized mythical epic story with elements of a musical, tragicomedy and melodrama.

In other words, the cultural shaping of myth and mythic structure gives its persuasive element an added value, because the idea of archaic myth serves as the axis of the plot and mythic narrative, as a complete construct, becomes artistically designed and staged. In this way, by artistic design or staging, the message of the myth and its persuasive effect on the recipients is enhanced further.

Myth and Ideology

Although myth is akin to the ideology, because both mediate values and beliefs, ideology is a more coherent and rather comprehensive belief system, mostly about social relations. Most succinctly, it is a coherent set of ideas and beliefs accepted and promoted by certain social groups that explains and justifies the preferred political order and of social/political actions for its attainment. Without entering into a separate analysis of the term, it is possible to specify several aspects common to all ideologies. They are: cognitive (which determines the understanding of the world), affective (which distinguishes good from bad, i.e. provides right evaluations in a moral sense), political (which determines political goals, programs and political actions) and social (ideas of social organization and its purpose, social solidarity).

The difference between myth and ideology lies in the way each arises, and the way each functions in history. Myth is the characteristic form of belief of the antique or primitive man, while ideology is the characteristic form of belief of the modern man[11]. Myths are about the origin of beliefs while ideology, which aims to serve class interests, is about the molding of beliefs. Mythological concepts need to be interpreted symbolically and that »myth is itself a primordial form of human symbolical activity and, like language, it is pre-logical in nature«[12]. Mythical symbols are archetypes which have an irrational quality and constitute »the fundamental forces making for personal integration and, of course, social organization»[13]. Myth supports ideology, and key elements of this support are rituals and symbols. Namely, ideology as a programmatic or rational side of any political movement is not enough to gather a significant group of followers or to encourage political action on the sufficient part of the members of some community[14]. Myths prove the validity of certain political ideas by showing that they can and have to be realized. Mythmaking is therefore indispensable to ideology. It is common to all political communities (such as the nation and the state) that besides rational they also need a mythical foundation. It is because »myth operates not only as a construct in which to view one's environment, but as a driving and motivating force for action. It unifies and creates a national (or state) entity greater than the sum of its political parts. It must serve not only as a result of action, but as a catalyst«[15]. Hence, politics is being dominated by rituals, symbols and myths. They all foster group identity, far more emotional than rational, and they become more pronounced the weaker the understanding of social and political processes is. Best examples of that are the fragile democracies established after World War I, constituted rationally and formally – which by itself wasn't enough to ensure sufficient consensus, and was unable to provide widespread sense of national unity. That is the main reason (additionally fostered by economic crisis) why they failed and were replaced by totalitarian regimes, who well understood and heavily used the power of myth.

Political Myths

The Enlightenment thought of the 18th century carried out a demythologization of the former culture, declaring myths superstitious, and a legacy of the old

world. However, in the new world, which is tried to establish on rational basis, a space for new myths opened up. They, however, had no connection whatsoever with the classical myths; their objects are not transcendental, ideal beings, but specific aspects of social reality. Thus, political myths are actually pseudo-myths. Transcendental meanings are given to certain (political) ideas, people, social groups, and particular aspects of social relations. Such myths become the basis for political ideologies and political communities founded upon them, so precisely there is a birthplace of the political myth. It therefore tells not only of establishment of a certain political community, but clearly indicates of its structural features. On the other hand, political mythmaking is a way of making political events intelligible in the light of political beliefs as well as justify and strengthen certain political ideologies and/or regimes. Production and reproduction of mythic narratives are constant features of political life. Some of them acquire importance over a long span of time, while others have just an ephemeral currency.

Although autocracies and democracies use political myths evenly, they do it for much different purposes. Namely, in democracy, political myth is not a weapon used to destroy the social structure. Since there exists a wide awareness and consent regarding the rules of political action, myths are integrated into the discussion of issues, not into the system. The situation becomes tragically different when a group of political actors starts using myths as a means for destruction of the democratic system. In that context, political myths have the function of perverting and destroying reality, rather than merely increasing the political impact of substantive issues. The supporters of an antidemocratic party willingly accept the group myths as reality, even empirically verifiable reality. They therefore become obedient and effective followers, but never a politically mature electorate. In the case of large masses of such followers, they undermine and finally destroy the system of parliamentary democracy[16].

It is common for all political myths to create generalizations which extremely simplify or distort objective reality, with the purpose of increasing the emotionally based mass support for a certain political party or a party leader. They are believed without asking for arguments, they explain complex political phenomena in a very simple way, and they spread because they satisfy deep social, but also individual socio-psychological needs. Old truths are constantly reinterpreted as political realities change, and new cultural traditions are invented by myth-makers who repair the web and drape emergent groups with the mantle of authority. Because a myth makes hidden connections between disparate ideas based on unspecified premises, public discourse in mythical form is relatively immune from rational criticism that points out its logical contradictions or evidence which disconfirms it. When such a pattern of discourse effectively dominates a polity, it is a powerful force constraining political change. Yet, political myths also play crucial roles in times of crisis and can be used – especially in rituals through which

myths are enacted – to achieve even revolutionary change[17]. Their frequent motif is the return to the roots, the origins from the traditional mythic narratives. However, they are connected to existing social relations or political regime which is considered problematic, and exit is sought precisely in the resurrection of mythic elements and idealized community of the past, i.e. in return to the absolute beginnings or the lost paradise described in the myths. The old world must die in order to give birth to a new, clean one, from the restored elements of the mythic past[18]. In political myths, the original stimulative and cohesive function of the myth is usually transformed in the manipulative one. The idealized, basically archaic image of the world, is gradually turned into a new profane religion and becomes the designated collectivist framework, limiting the freedom of the individual.

In the context of modern societies, mythic consciousness and mythic content always grow stronger in difficult (crisis) social situations. Social crises are regularly marked by economic deprivation (unemployment, existential threats) of large social groups, which results in social insecurity, social anomie, and feelings of fear, weakness, disorientation, and hopelessness. It is exactly these socio-cultural and socio-psychological consequences that make up a breeding ground for (political) manipulation, i.e. uncritical acceptance of messianic and savior ideas promoted by coryphaeus of totalitarian political projects. Manipulation of fear is one of essential instruments of regressive politics, which is why imposition of political myths is always accompanied by abuse of human emotions. Fear caused by the consequences of social crisis is artificially amplified by an »image of the history of false concreteness and conspiracy theory«, whose greatest danger lies in the »grain of truth contained in that false image of history, which has to be there in order to look convincing«[19]. Namely, conspiracy theory is based on the idea of the existence of an enemy which threatens the fundamental values of the system. The enemy figure (its religious counterpart is the devil, manifestation of the evil) is an integral part of political mythology. Hence stem the negative mythic patterns, i.e. anti-symbols which are used to mark all the others (and different) as enemies, a threat to the class, race, nation, state. They are stigmatized as the greatest culprits for all of society's problems (scapegoating) which therefore need to be destroyed (e.g. Jews, Roma, Slavs, bourgeoisie, capitalists, etc.) in order to realize the political project of a clean, new, and perfect society. Thus, a certain institutionalization of fear is introduced, and the necessity of persecution of the regime's enemies is justified[20].

In conditions of fear and alienation, the man will, »feeling powerless towards the giant social apparatus, the political apparatus and absolutism (...) bring God down on earth, deify the statesmen, and devise and supplement his loneliness, social and work partialization and division, exclusion from society, and inability to influence social events – by the imaginary and the irrational«[21]. A religisation of politics occurs, a historical mission is assigned to political parties, and sacral attributes are assigned to political leaders. A lost individual, sur-

rendering to the leader, finds himself again. He completely identifies with the movement/party/leader and their goals, which become his goals as well. By doing that, he desubjectivizes and immerses himself into the collectivist forms (a guided mass) and becomes susceptible to political manipulation. There, political myth functions as a mean for restoring the distracted identity, it becomes an essential cohesive actor which (re)integrates the (previously disintegrated) society, not on an organic basis, but based on irrational mythic elements and ideological concepts.

One of the most visible consequences of political mythology in totalitarian regimes is the creation of new forms of organized communities within the society as a whole, and most often opposed to it. In general terms, it could most clearly be expressed in the context of classic discernment between community and society where the creation and development of (civil) society marks a key heritage of the modernization process, and a prerequisite of modern democracy.

Community (Gemeinschaft) is based on affective and personal relationships of its members. In regulating social relations in the community, primordial and assigned attributes (origin, status, social position, family) takes precedence over the real value and contribution of a community member. Social roles are specific and mutually consonant. Social stratification is determined in advance and social roles rarely change, loyalty to the community is considered a virtue. Religion, culture, and ethos of the community are relatively homogenous and strongly internalized. In that way, the community encourages immobility and impedes achieving social status via abilities and merits. The community strengthens and protects the moral code by raising moral tension, and proscribes and/or ostracizes all who fail to conform. In the process of modernization which gave birth to industrial mass societies and democracy, traditional communities dissolve and grow into modern societies. That transition of the community into a society is also marked as the transition from the state of so-called mechanical solidarity into organic solidarity. In that sense, society (Gesellschaft) signifies a continuum of impersonal and contractual relationships. It is a contractual community (based on political consensus), a legal-political entity composed of free and equal members (abstract citizens) having equal rights and obligations (equality before the law, equality of chances for everyone) independently of their real differences which are considered secondary and fall under the sphere of privacy (age, sex, race, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, origin, etc.). Society is established as a free and autonomous civil sphere, as opposed to the political sphere (state). Dichotomy of the state and society manifests itself through pattern variables: affectivity versus affective neutrality, particularism versus universalism, ascription versus achievement, diffuseness versus specificity, collectivity-orientation versus self-orientation[22]. The disintegration of the existing organic society and its substitution by newly created political society (new political community, actually) signifies, not only an antidemocra-

tic revolution, but an antimodernist act *par excellence*. Namely, totalitarian political projects don't rebuild society (as a legal-political entity) but community (fellowship and solidarity on the basis of cultural and ethnic affiliation and affective closeness). In doing so they use specially composed political myths with the purpose of completely disintegrating the civil structure of society and bringing it under the total control of the political sphere. A new, artificial national community is created here, based on mythic elements and postulates of the political ideology.

Depth of social fear that shook contemporary Western societies usually was not proportionate to the cause of that fear. The birth of political myth comes in the moment when social traumas transform into psychological ones (when an individual feels them as an existential, orienteering problem or a threat). It is created in the hidden rise of anxiety or uncertainty, thwarted aspirations and futile expectations. On the ruins of extinguished beliefs, it builds new certainty and beliefs, restores the disturbed balance into the lives of individuals and society, and gives new meaning. Only thus, it is possible to understand the essence and the most obvious function of the myth: a mental reorganization of human consciousness.[23] European societies after the First World War, particularly the German and Italian ones, were extremely suitable for development of political myths. Full of materially deprived and sociopsychologically disoriented and unsatisfied citizens, incapable of organizing their lives in accordance with fragile democratic systems – they were very suitable for projections of idealistic social reality founded on myths, tradition, and folklore. These newly created (political) myths and idealized visions of making a new society enabled escape from a burdensome reality and the illusion of participating in a collective national action for the achievement of a better future. »Siegfried, Kriemhild, Brunhild and Hagen – those are ancient heroes and heroines with whom many modern Germans wished to identify. With them, and with the world of the barbaric, heathen Nibelungs – an irrational, heroic, mystic world, full of betrayal and violence, drowned in blood, and culminating in the Twilight of the gods (*Götterdämmerung*), as Valhalla, set on fire by Wotan after all the blows of destiny, goes up in flames in an orgy of self-destruction which has always fascinated the German mind and answered some terrible longing in the German soul. These heroes, this primitive, demonic world, had always existed »in the people's soul«. In that German soul could be felt the struggle between the spirit of civilization and the spirit of the Nibelungs, and in the time with which this history is concerned the latter seemed to gain the upper hand. It is not at all surprising that Hitler tried to surpass Wotan when in 1945 he ordered the destruction of Germany so that it could disappear in flames along with him«[24] In a similar way, Italian fascism, on the basis of myth of the state as a new society and a new Roman empire, created a system of beliefs, rituals, and symbols; a new profane religion to mobilize large social strata for the achievement of a totalitarian regime[25].

Along with the image of the future, they also offered a scapegoat for the existing social problems, which served as an object for expressing individual and collective anger and frustration. In that Manichaean projection of good and evil, harsh reality and a bright future, the solution to many problems, both on individual and societal level, seemed within reach. The new totalitarian regime – which established itself on the ruins of a fragile and nonfunctional democracy which it tore down – guaranteed it with its decisiveness and persuasiveness. Only in that way is it possible to understand the relative ease with which the totalitarian political concept gained the support of a considerable number of citizens in those societies.

Myth and Totalitarianism

In its intention of seizing power, and later the subsistence of the regime, the totalitarian political government proclaims an establishment of a new society, an ideal national community. In doing so, it assigns to itself the historic mission of a leader in the realization of that project, imposing it as a collective goal. In achieving that goal, it introduces a complete (total) control over society. However, the subsistence of the totalitarian regime is based not only on the means of coercion, but also on the popular support such a regime has. Namely, totalitarian regimes heavily violated basic human and civil rights, but at the same time created an impression that they can realize human's true mission and a perfect welfare state better and far more efficiently that all previous state and social forms. It was possible to implement that more efficiently than ever before, due to availability of modern instruments of technology, propaganda, and communication. Precisely in that sense, totalitarianism is a political phenomenon exclusive to twentieth century.

The communist myth of classless society and class struggle, the fascist myth of state as a restored Roman empire and Risorgimento as an unfinished national revolution, and the nationalsocialist myth of the superiority of the Arian race and a thousand-year Reich – were the basis for ideologies justifying all acts of the totalitarian regimes, including mass crimes, since they were presented as necessary and in the name of people, party, or the leader. Political myths, mythic and ideological symbols, and rituals of mass gatherings had the function of mediating the irrational perception of national unity, and expressing support and justification of acts of the political government. Mythic symbols of death and resurrection (of class, state, nation), loyalty and followership, mysticism of blood and soil, cults of sacrifice and heroism, mass political gatherings with rituals of expressing the collective strength and unity, the »communion« of camaraderie – strengthened the perception of unity and the belief that the totalitarian government is the one to create the new, ideal society. Without that support, totalitarian regimes, regardless of their extremely repressive character, wouldn't manage to establish themselves, nor could they sustain themselves any longer.

Technical resources of the modern age (especially the means of mass communication, propaganda) and specific social conditions (socioeconomic crisis, social entropy, social anomie, dissatisfaction and fear) were undoubtedly the driving forces and/or catalysts for the rise and the consolidation of totalitarian regimes. However, the manipulative power of totalitarian ideologies comes mostly from the structure of the political myth, above all from its two-value matrix. Namely, it's about a manichaean perception of real world based on a two-valued orientation. There are only two value poles: absolute good (the pole containing us, our group, community, nation and/or state) and absolute evil (the pole containing the others). Between those two poles there is nothing – *tertium non datur*. In the Third Reich these poles are Aryanism – non-Aryanism. On the first one are courage, heroism, self-discipline, honor, beauty, glory, health, joy. On the other one are Jews, degeneration, rottenness, democracy, internationalism. In Stalin's Russia we also have two poles. One contains the determinants: socialist, heroic, progressive, democratic, scientific, and materialistic. The other one: bourgeois, imperialist, capitalist, fascist, decadent, idealistic, nonscientific[26]. Socio-cultural roots of this two-valued orientation lie in primitive tribal rituals. Their life was filled by constant struggle against natural elements, enemies, wild beasts, and hostile spirits, so such an orientation was natural. There was no freedom in the acts of the individual; every act is in essence »good« or »evil«, depending on whether it helps to survive or not, i.e. on the prevalent opinions and knowledge of that subject. Therefore, in those primitive communities, each act is controlled by ritual duties or taboos, and deviation from experience is not allowed, so these societies are static, closed up, and don't advance because they refuse to give a chance to the new[27]. That primaeval, but essentially primitive value matrix is, in the totalitarian context, converted into an ideological construct, i.e. in a Manichaean political myth that (re)interprets actual political reality through the struggle of good against evil. In a similar way, society is divided on us and them, good and evil, and on that basis a struggle against evil and its bearers is established as a prerequisite for the survival of society. Precisely this aspect of the totalitarian political mythology was the basis, firstly of ideological dehumanization, and then institutionalized persecution and annihilation of all those marked as enemies.

In this context, certain political myths that are common to all totalitarianisms have played particular roles. The myth of the predestined party is incarnated through the (one and only) leading party as the revolutionary avantgarde in a historical mission to awake and lead the otherwise lethargic masses, whether into the Communist's classless society as a realm of freedom (from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs), Fascist's state as an unique and organic community (Il nuovo Impero Romano), or Nazi Blut und Boden unity of the nation, i.e. the Aryan race (Deutsches Reich). The party is the one who knows the laws of historical develop-

ment, and therefore has legitimacy as an absolute interpreter and router of state/society development.

The leader myth establishes unquestionable and absolute authority of the charismatic (party, movement, revolution) leader who has exceptional (prophetic, divine) capabilities and who is an act of historical providence. Obedience, loyalty and followership come from devotion (even admiration) that subordinates feel towards their leader with whom they want to identify. Thus – because the leader represents an incarnation of the community (people, nation, state, movement, party) – they identify themselves with the community (e.g. Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer). This way, the followers feel not only protected (by the power of the leader), but also as a part of a community (rediscovered identity and strengthened confidence).

The enemy myth is undoubtedly one of the foremost political myths of totalitarianism. All totalitarianisms believed in the ubiquity of maleficent adversaries. Officially, enemies were defined on the basis of their potential for blocking the realization of the perfect community. Actually, they were defined in accordance with the interests of a self-appointed revolutionary avantgarde and the leader's fixations. Their policies and acting were highly inwrought with obsession of fight against conspiracies and eliminating all the enemies on the road to the promised land. Utopian ideals, taken over from myths, were used to legitimize the worst abuses against »objective« enemies. Millions of human lives were destroyed as a result of the conviction that the sorry state of mankind could be corrected if only the ideologically designated »vermin« were eliminated. This ideological drive to purify humanity was rooted in the scientist cult of technology and the firm belief that History had endowed the revolutionary elites with the mission to get rid of the »superfluous populations«[28].

Although similar in many ways, it is not possible to put an equal sign between communism, fascism, and Nazism. Individual scrutiny of each of those totalitarian regimes would considerably surpass the limits of this analysis. Still, considering the fatal consequences, it is necessary to consider at least the key aspects of the use of political myth as a basis for dehumanization, where Nazism went furthest based on the myth of the superiority of the Aryan race.

Besides the latent racism and anti-Semitism, which always grew stronger in certain periods of crisis through European history, the myth of the Aryan race also has its (quasi)philosophical-anthropological roots. A. de Gobineau considers the »Aryan« race above all others, and that it's being threatened by »racial mixing« with »non-Aryan« races, which are less worthy and evolutionally lower positioned. Inspired by Darwin's theory of natural selection and the survival of the fittest[29], he mechanically applies his biological ideas on human society (social Darwinism) and develops a theory about the right of the »strong« to rule the »weak«.[30] H.S. Chamberlain, in his racial theory, puts forward a vision in which the »Aryan race«, led by the Germans, saves the Christianic European civilization from its main enemy – »Judaism«[31]. A. Rosenberg, one of the main ideologists of nazism, developed a quasi-philosophical theory of racism. Unlike his predecessors, for him, race was a spiritual, not a biological concept: individuals of a certain race belonged to a unique entity, had a common spirit, while individuals are merely its expressions. He introduces ancient pagan myths (Nordic oral tradition, ancient Germanic beliefs and cults) which he uses to push out Christian ideas and religion, and on a manichaean basis he postulates the ideas of white (Aryan) superiority, extreme (German) nationalism and anti-Semitism. On those assumptions he concludes that the best and cleanest German-Aryan race is destined to rule, while less important, culturally inferior races exist in order to serve them. The so-called people's state (VolksStaat) was supposed to serve to achieve the superiority of the German nation and to preserve the purity of the race. It meant the realization of a racial regime in which the Aryan race, i.e. the German nation, establishes itself as the absolute ruler and master that demands the subordination of the inferior and the weak[32]. On that foundation, A. Hitler in Mein Kampf promotes the thesis of a »Jewish danger«, i.e. a Jewish conspiracy with the goal of acquiring world dominance, which becomes a basis for their later persecution and extermination (the Holocaust) and the conquest of other »non-Aryan« peoples. The affiliation of the German people with the Aryan race gives them the right to extend their living space (Lebensraum), at the expense of other (mainly eastward) countries, justifying the war aggression.

After the collapse of totalitarian regimes (firstly fascism and Nazism, and their condemnation in Nürnberg), and later the USSR (before that, by abandoning and condemning Stalinism), and the processes of democratization from the end of the twentieth century (democratic transition of postauthoritarian societies), their revival seemed no longer possible. However, it still happened, and with striking similarity. Of course, is about the great-Serbian ideology and war aggression against the neighbouring nations/states emerging from the dissolution of the Yugoslavian federation. Without getting into the details of that complex process, here has to be pointed out the great power of regressive political activity based on political myth. The tragic experience caused by the totalitarian regimes of the past century did not act inhibitory, not even sufficiently warning.

National political myth could be defined as the phenomenon of high-level persuasive ideological eros, which serves as an emotional starting point of revolutionary activities in a socio-political moment. In this context, it is interesting to observe the myth as a starting point for socio-political action. A good example of this is, for example, the attitude towards Serbianism in Montenegro. The phrase that the Serbian and Montenegrin people are »two eyes in one head« is well-known. This phrase, based on a myth, has even got its lyrical version in a song: »Who says so, who is lying that Serbia is small, it's not small, it wasn't small when it was fighting three times in

a war, who says so, who is lying that Serbian does not have the sea, we have the sea, we have the sea as long as there is Montenegro«.

The affirmation of Serbianism in Montenegro, as a political myth, is first mentioned at the beginning of the 18th century. Then, for everyday political purposes, bishops of the Petrović Njegoš dynasty begin to invoke the heroic tales and myths based on retrieved mythical heritage of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The church has had a noticeable impact in Montenegro after the arrival of Nemanjići and was considered a social authority of the time. Since the ethnical identification was not clear then and vast majority of the citizens of Montenegro illiterate, the idea of »borrowing« Serbian myth did not provoke resistance. Supporting the extent to which it is possible to affect the consciousness of the people and »national code« is the fact that many Montenegrins to this day, on the basis of »borrowed« Serbian myths, believe that the age-old ties bind them with the Serbian people. We can conclude that in this particular case the power of the mythical narratives outweighed the credibility and veracity of the mythemes, so it gradually, in a roundabout way, defined the Montenegrin national consciousness, based on the synergy of their own identity and assumed Serbian myths. Montenegrin national ideological starting points, which grew out of a myth, eventually became accepted as a fundamental national beliefs. From this it can be concluded that the doctrine of the myth definitely affects the consciousness of the nation and shapes its political-ideological cognitive matrix.

One part of the indoctrination with the myth stems from the influence of King Nikola I, whose mission was to restore »Dushan's empire« (the idea of creating a common state in the territories of Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia, Herzegovina, southern Dalmatia, »Old Serbia« and Macedonia). This idea was based on a strong belief of alliances and ancient ties between Serbia and Montenegro.

As a »historical successor of Nemanjić dynasty«, king Nikola I was given Dushan's cross and the sword of king Milutin (which later turned out to be false) by the russian emperor Alexander II. It is assumed that the false sword was made by the order of Karlovac metropolitanate, around which were created myths and all the songs related to the loss of the Battle of Kosovo. Metropolitanate later, as a sign of good relations, gave the sword to the Russian Orthodox Church. Nikola's keenness by the false sword, as a symbol of Serbian pride, as well as with himself as a chosen restorer of »Dushan's empire« (by the edict of Serbia and Russia), had shaped his political views and thus directly affected the alliance and the immediacy of relations between Montenegro and Serbia. A nice detail that illustrates the level of identification with the myth and belief in him being »chosen« to implement it is the fact that in September of 1921, near his death in exile, he asked that his sword lay on his chest before he exhaled[33].

It is quite clear that the elements of mythemes, transmitted by the narratives, are being long-term implanted in the consciousness of the people and collective identity. For example, the myth of Kosovo Battle begins to occupy an important ideological and socio-political space in Montenegro in the first half of the 19th century. Petrovic dynasty, with a big help from the church and bishops, skillfully created the then »PR campaign« in order to emphasize its importance and to gain certain »political points«, arguing that the national state-building alliance between Montenegro and Serbia was already present since the Middle Ages. This hypothesis, of course, was based on Serbian myths, through the assumed mythemes and conceived, pragmatically oriented narratives. From today's historical point of view, it is quite clear that this thesis is entirely untenable, because during the Middle Ages, according to the historians, the Serbian nation was formed exclusively as a religious community (millet) and not a defined state entity.

Serbian myths are very present in the Balkans and mythologization has infiltrated not only the political, but also the social-cultural domain. The famous saying of the founder of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Saint Sava, is »The Serbian people are predestined by fate to be the East to the West and West to the East«, and that the only force stronger than the Serbian power is »Heavenly Jerusalem, and nothing on Earth«. In addition, he called the Serbian people »Israel« and his father Nemanja »Abraham«.[34]

There is yet another myth of St. Sava – »Svetosavlje« – according to Metropolitan Nikolaj Velimirović the most authentic form of faith, which fundamental postulate is the fact that the West has separated away from the originality of Christ's teachings and that the Balkans is »the last bastion of true Christianity, which has managed to make a synthesis of the active, practical approach to Christianity of the West on the one hand and a meditative, mystical approach to religion that is present in the East on the other«.

For the needs of everyday political agitation, today there is present the reduction of St. Sava to the right inclined political ideology called »St. Sava nationalism«, with its origin in Serbian myths. By Velimirović, Serbia has its apostolic mission »to inveigle the East to baptism and the West to repentance«. The faith in Serbia, according to Velimirović, is in crisis because Serbia is engulfed in the »European disease«: intellectualism has developed and there has been a dissolution from the healthy, peasant way of life and thinking, which are ideal. Deeming the nation as a religious category, Velimirović believes that the suffering of Serbian people throughout the history are the same as »Christ's suffering on the cross«. It is interesting that these claims by Velimirović, cum grano salis, can be understood as a creation of a modern myth, which will (if repeated sufficiently) eventually become part of the Serbian social habitus[35].

Thus, the myths of Kosovo and St. Sava are the foundation of Serbian mythology through which runs a crucial mytheme of invincibility (sic!) of the Serbian army and the Serbs as »heavenly people«. The main reasons why the Kosovo myth turned into myth poetics and na-

tional symbolism, among other, is hidden in the epic scope of the battle, which, according to legend, counted around 70,000 Serbian soldiers and 140,000 Ottomans. However, this number has been significantly reduced by contemporary historians to 30,000 Ottomans and 20,000 Serbian soldiers. Also, heroic poems emerged after the battle that depicted moments from the battlefield, where it was particularly attractive to emphasize and express domestic prowess and numerical superiority of the enemy army.

Ljubinka Trgovčević, an expert and analyst of Kosovo myth, identifies its key elements[36].

1. The motive of glory and eternal memory, as a promise to all who follow the legendary examples: heroes who accept the sacrifice and heroism (like prince Lazar and Miloš Obilić), mothers who raise their sons to war (as the mother of the Jugović brothers), girlfriends and sisters who are treat heroic wounds (as Kosovka does), etc.

Here is evident the so-called »mythical stereotype« – the heroism and sacrifice to reach higher goals. Interestingly, it is precisely this motif that is usually staged in the culturology of a myth and the most common motif in folk songs, art (vases, carpets, paintings...), etc.

2. The motif of sacrifice and martyrdom for faith and freedom, which implies a complete sacrifice, even unto death, and in return offers the promise of »heavenly kingdom«, eternal glory and memory. The death on the battlefield is encouraged, as opposed to life with enemies.

Here the motive of »kingdom of heaven« is present, which the Serbian heroes superimpose to that of the »earthly realm«. That is the motive of »induced heroism«, whereby the defeat on the battle field, through the folk tradition, is trying to turn into the antithesis and be perceived as the metaperception of the final victory at a higher level of consciousness.

3. The motive of revenge, or »revenge for Kosovo«, which implies the restoration of the Serbian state in the territories where once was the expulsion of »infidels« – Turks and Muslims.

Motive of heretics and true believers is one of the oldest motives in myths or mythemes. Heretics are usually aggressive newcomers who are trying to baptize indigenous people, which is a very potent motive in folk tradition because it is abundant in conventional stereotypes – believers/non-believers, from which it then follows a series of emotionally colored narratives.

4. The motive of betrayal, which serves as an excuse for the defeat, because it suggests that the enemy is not better or more brave, but the cause of the defeat is betrayal. Vuk Branković was named the traitor, which has no historical basis. This motive is a warning to contemporaries that they should belong to the majority, otherwise anathema and permanent exclusion from the community will occur.

The desire for homogenization and praisal of unity for better or worse is also a very common mythical motive. According to some authors, it was derived from the battle of Kosovo and found its place in the national anthem of the former Yugoslavia in the verse: »Damned be the traitor of his homeland...«. In this specific example, the dialectical message of dishonesty and betrayal mytheme abolishes the defeat of Serbs (because they would have never been beaten if not betrayed by Vuk Branković), while creating an additional mythological »aura« around Kosovo battle with the above mentioned motives.

The historian Aleksandar Ćirić believes that the key three elements are very useful for the political use of the Kosovo myth[37]: a commitment to martyrdom (»kingdom of heaven«), suicide feat (Miloš Obilić kills Murat by fraud), and treason (despite the actual historical role of Vuk Branković). Very similar to the previous motive analysis, Ćirić pursues mythic motives of martyrdom, suicide ventures for the good of the people and betrayals as foundations of Kosovo myth.

Despite the subsequent historical factography that almost completely rehabilitated the figure of Vuk Branković, he remained the first Serbian »mythical traitor«. Except for the fact that this could justify the inflicted defeat in battle, this motive also had ideologically political function. Specifically, every possible future conversion to Islam could have been anathematised and demonized because it was equated, *pars pro toto*, with treason and personified in the figure of Vuk Branković.

Today it is known that Vuk Branković was a feudal lord who lived at the end of the 14th century and the son-in-law of prince Lazar. He refused to accept vassal relationship, which is why he ended up in the Ottoman slavery, where he finally died. Motive of Vuk Branković as a traitor was not negatively romanced until the 16th century in the Orthodox church circles, as a counterbalance to many pagan myths.

Regarding the example of the interpretation of the Kosovo myth, it can be concluded that the existence of the myth is of great importance to the moral concept of a nation. The myth can be defined as a collective consciousness of a nation and a recording of a nation's mental code, created in a given time under given circumstances. The myth's task is to preserve its underlying mytheme and – through the narrative – survive and resist the time and ideologies, and thereby preserve the idea of national identity and its own uniqueness.

Very similar links, that go in the direction of the glorification of one nation and one race, can be discerned in the ideology of Nazism. With the appointment of Adolf Hitler as a German Chancellor on January 30th 1933 began the making of Nazi Germany, based on the myth of the superior Aryan race. Here is an obvious parallel with the Serbian national mythology, in which the Serbs (on the basis of Kosovo battle) created a tradition of themselves as the chosen, »heavenly« people. Except the fact that the mythem and ideological preferences of nazism and Great Serbia are very similar, their narratives also have an institutional affiliation. Namely, Hitler's »Mein Kampf«, in many ways based on the (re) interpretation of the classic and the creation of new (political) myths, served as an explicated paradigm and justification of the German aspirations for expansion and conquest, based

on particularities of a selected Aryan race for dominance over other nations.

The famous old Serbian folk song »Nobody has what the Serb has« illustrates and suggests a deep incorporation of myths in self-perception of Serbian people. It is enough to analyze song's keywords and used private names and battles (underlined), to get a picture of importance of myth in Serb's folklore. »Niko nema šta Srbin imade. Takav bio takav i ostade. Srbin ima svoju krsnu slavu. Krsnu slavu, svetitelja Savu. Od Kosova pa sve naovamo. Mi junake sve redom imamo. Srbin ima Miloš Obilića. Obilića, devet Jugovića. Srbin ima Toplicu Milana. Srbin ima Kosančić Ivana. Srbin ima kraljevića Marka. Koga prizna turska vojska carska. Srbin ima čet'ri slova prava, samo sloga Srbina spašava. Jedno drugom okrenulo leđa, teško onom ko Srbina vređa.«

On the other hand, the SANU memorandum was actually a legalized conquering pursuit of expansion of the Serbian state, conceived in Serbian myths and encouraged by Garašanin's »Načertanije« from 1844. With his famous speech at Gazimestan, the site of the largest Serbian myth and on the anniversary of the Kosovo battle, Slobodan Milosevic in 1989 announces: »We're in the same place, facing battles and battles, which are not armed, although no such can not be excluded«, which represents the awakening of the demons from the myth of Kosovo battle.

With the coming to power of the National Socialist Party, the fundamental nazi strategic determinations were the implementation of antisemitism, complete stigmatization of judaism and bolshevism, as well as the need to expand the »living space«, especially at the expense of Slavs. At the same time, as an ideological »fuel« for the realization of these goals, thrives the German myth of the Slavs, English and French as obstacles in the way of German progress and causes of German backwardness.

A parallel with the politics of Great Serbia, based on a myth, can also be seen here, with significant ideological similarities between Nazis and Serbians. For instance, in the early nineties, in the media gradually ran the myth of demonic Croatia and Croatians as a genocidal nazi helpers and all non-Serbian peoples of former Yugoslavia were systematically demonized as inferior.

The essential idea of nazism is based on the claim that the German people are under attack and must be united, disciplined and achieve victory in combat against the enemy. In a very similar pattern, the sublimated idea from Serbian myths about »heavenly nation« puts »all Serbs in one state«, while the same in the »Log Revolution« of 1990 finds its *casus belli*: to occupy Croatia under the auspices of the alleged protection of the Serbian people and the overall serbianism.

During Hitler's reign, the Nazis advocated national homogenization, claiming to thus be defending the German people, with special emphasis on the Germans outside of Germany, which later served as a logical and straightforward cause for war actions and conquest of foreign territory. The idea of the Nazis was to make a strong, homogeneous ethnic state under the idea of Pan-Germanism, while the Serbian aggression had characteristics of Pan-Serbianism. The basic motto of Pan-Serbianism was by Karadžić: »Serbs all and everywhere / wherever there is a Serb, there is Serbia« and derivative »all Serbs in one state«. This phrase was later often cited as a justification in the war against Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina[38].

Conclusion

Myths are ancient beliefs about the order of nature and the world, and people and societies in them; they're allegories used to explain the history of a nation. As such, they are an instrument for understanding and interpreting the society, which is framed within tradition. In that way, myth represents order in the chaotic world; it is a template for the establishment of the (traditional) society, because it is beyond right and wrong; it marks enduring values. The myths of a certain nation are an organic element of cultural heritage and its perception of itself and the world around it. Unlike traditional myths, the political myth concerns specific aspects of social (political) reality, to which it attributes special characteristics (transcendental, sacral). Upon the basis of original meaning of the myth (mythemes), it constructs distinctive mythic narratives that directly serve certain political goals. The political myth is therefore a pseudo-myth. That, however, does not diminish its power; indeed, in the conditions of modern mass societies, its strength reaches its peak.

Deeply rooted in social and political activity, myth can serve progressive and regressive politics alike, where the latter stems primarily from its irrational and practical character. So, political ideology – regularly inspired by myth – has a key role in the creation of modern nations and states; the mythic elements it contains have a pronounced cohesive and integrative function there. Myth enables the creation of the fundamental self-image and purpose, and provides a sense of the past as well as a direction for the future. However, myths can reflect and propagate false and misleading ideas. Due to the strength of the tradition, i.e. the implicit rootedness of myth – lies and prejudice, cloaked in mythic form, can be an extremely powerful means of manipulation. Therefore, those who create and control political myths have a real power. Political myths then serve to justify the political power/regime and its actions, i.e. to conceal and blur social reality. They become an instrument of ideological mystification and political manipulation. By influencing the citizens' psyche, they move their emotions and motivation, steering their behavior in the direction of realization of the regimežs pragmatic goals. However, the essential prerequisite of such activity is a particular set of social circumstances that favor the development of irrationality and the wide adoption of the mythic consciousness. Socioeconomic deprivation and value anomie – characteristic features of great social crises – cause socio-psy-

chological insecurity, disorientation, and fear. Precisely such a situation – when the social trauma is converted to psychological problems of the individual – is the ideal space for creation and adoption of political myths. With the promises of a new, better society, and with the integrative power of new collectiveness, it enables the individual and entire social strata to re-realize their identity and meaning.

Precisely this strength of the political myth was used by totalitarian regimes emerging from the great social crisis after World War I. They represent the pinnacle of creation of ideological constructions with origins in ancient myths, scientism, organicism, historicism, and voluntarism. Founded upon immanent utopias rooted in eschatological fervor, totalitarian regimes forged their own versions of modernity based on programs of radical change that advocated homogenization as well as social, economic, and cultural transformation presupposing »the wholesale renovation of the body of the people«[39].

The concept of the totalitarian state shows a pronounced revival of mythic characteristics. Indeed, the totalitarian state in many ways founds its legitimacy upon the very political myth it creates. From a functionalistic standpoint, a totalitarian state, since established irrationally, on a myth, instead of a social contract, thus outside of the course of history, can look like a fiction. From a sociopolitical and anthropological standpoint, however, the totalitarian state warns of the danger of the destruction of society and its organic relations in a situation when the relationship between the state and the citizens acquires a mythic character, and loses the rational one. In that way, it depersonalizes its citizens, completely politicizes them, and becomes the real subject and the center of their personality. Precisely in that utter destruction of society as an organic and autonomous civil sphere, and the construction of a new (founded upon mythic and ideological postulates) and completely controlled political community (the communist classless society, the fascist unique and organically articulated state, the Nazi community united by blood and soil and belonging to the Aryan race) – a social and anthropologic devolution is manifested. It marks not only and anti-liberal and anti-modern act *par excellence*, but also a civilizational decline.

Although cohesive and integrative elements of the myth strengthen the community's self-sustainability, they can also serve to create hatred against other communities, up to the point of demands for their annihilation, especially if it is being fostered (the utopian promise of a perfect society, fear of the danger coming from the enemy and the resolve to preemptively destroy him). The ideology and functioning of totalitarian regimes are an outstanding example of such activity. Based on a two-valued matrix, i.e. on a bipolar manichaean myth that reduces the whole of political and social life on a relation between good and evil, us and them, the totalitarian political regime marks as enemy everyone whom it thinks to stand in the way of the realization of the collective (actually, the regime's) goal. Precisely this aspect of totali-

tarian political mythology was a basis for the annihilation of all marked as enemies of the regime (the communist dictatorship of the proletariat and the destruction of the class enemy, the fascist dictatorship and persecution of political opponents, the Nazi racial purity laws and the Holocaust). The class-social, palingenetic-national, social-darwinistic, and racist (quasi)theories served to additionally elaborate and justify the pronounced political repression, dehumanization, and war aggression, whose scale and consequences marked the most tragic era in the modern history.

Structural parallels between totalitarian regimes growing out from political myths of the twentieth century, and primitive cultural forms based on archaic myths, can be seen in the function of the leader, the language (rhetoric, discourse), and the rituals. In both cases, the collective wishes are projected on a prophetic and divinized leader (*homo divinans*). The logic and semantic functions of the language are replaced by magical meanings, while the rituals involve all members of the society and all spheres of life. The cult of tradition and syncretism, irrationalism, the enemy myth and conspiracy theory, the leader myth and the party myth, cult of heroes and cult of death, and populism, are particularly noticeable. Regardless of the type of regime (communism, fascism, nazism), they are all characterized by an overall (total) governing of a single political party and its leadership (the leader) which assign to themselves knowledge and the historic mission of achieving a utopian future, which they use to justify their demand for complete subordination and followership.

It is clear that the totalitarian systems are positively sensitized to the effective impacts of mythical features, moreover, often quite expressively rely on them. Following the Goebbels phrase that the lie repeated a hundred times becomes the truth, totalitarian systems position mythic material as an unequivocal assumption of the superiority of people and nation, thus effectively justifying their ideological aspirations. Paradigmatic role of myth in modern history is certainly evident in the attempt of realization of Great Serbia. Specifically, on the basis of mythem of Kosovo battle Serbs and the narrative of Serbs as a »heavenly people«, an aggression was carried out against other nations of ex-Yugoslavia, all under implicit, but very distinctive idiom in which it is very easy to recognize the influence of a myth. Using similar, almost identical motives of totalitarian regimes o the first half of the 20th century, Serbian aggression called for chosen »heavenly« to lead other nations, correction of ancient injustices done to the Serbian people, Pan-Serbianism, ie. homogenisation of the Serbian people (»All Serbs in one state...«). Fundamental apotheosis of Serbian specialties, bravery and willingness to achieve the aspirations of ancient Serbian people arise from Serbian myths. It is very easy to notice their similarity with the objectives of past totalitarian regimes (especially the Nazi), also created on a myth (superior Aryan race should rule the world, Pan-Germanism, the protection of Germans outside Germany, aggression toward the »lower« nations, etc.). Because of everything mentioned in

this paper, it is clear that the myth is directly or indirectly rooted in the *corpus*, *animus* and *habitus* of almost every nation. However, mythical features especially come to the fore in the ideologies of the totalitarian regime, regardless of the time of their creation. In doing so, totalitarian regimes consider myth to be the historical truth, while the narrative pragmatically spruces up, by adjusting the context of time and set circumstances, in an effort to realize broader ideological political objectives.

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POLITIČKI MITOVI I TOTALITARIZAM: ANTROPOLOŠKA ANALIZA NJIHOVOG UZROČNOG ODNOSA

SAŽETAK

U članku se razmatraju ključne političke, antropološke i sociokulturne funkcije političkih mitova u pojavi i funkcioniranju totalitarnih režima. Pritom se poseban naglasak stavlja na strukturne elemente mita (miteme) i na mitske sadržaje (narative) u procesima artificijelne konstrukcije novog društva (zajednice) temeljene na mitom inspiriranim ideološkim postulatima. U radu se tvrdi da je uspostava totalitarizma označila stanovitu antropološku devoluciju. Ta se devolucija pak odvija kroz dekonstrukciju građanskog društva kao organske društvene sfere i artificijelnu konstrukciju nove političke zajednice temeljene na ideološkim postulatima i političkim mitovima. U argumentaciji te tvrdnje najprije se pokazuje kako su mitski narativi pretočeni u političke koncepte i programe bili osnova (re)interpretacije svijeta, društva i pojedinca, te su bitno odredili prirodu i funkcioniranje totalitarnih režima. Potom se analiziraju i kompariraju specifični politički mitovi, njihov sadržaj i porijeklo, a posebno njihova dvojaka funkcija. Ona se pak analizira u okviru klasične dihotomije društvo – zajednica, gdje se (građansko) društvo socio-politički utemeljuje na društvenom ugovoru, a (politička) zajednica socio-antropološki na političkom mitu. U situaciji krize identiteta i legitimiteta te vrijednosne

anomije i slabljenja društvene kohezije – što su karakteristični uvjeti velike ekonomske i političke krize s početka dvadesetog stoljeća koji su omogućili pojavu totalitarizma – društvo kao ugovorna zajednica ne funkcionira. Snažna potreba za smislom (na individualnoj i društvenoj razini) utječe na prijemčivost građana (političkim) konceptima (re)konstitucije (političke) zajednice s kojom se mogu identificirati. Upravo tu totalitarni pokreti rabe kohezivnu moć političkog mita koji zamjenjuje racionalno utemeljenu konstituciju društva i postaje sredstvo ideološke mistifikacije i političke manipulacije. Djelujući na psihu građana, on pokreće njihove osjećaje i motivacije i usmjerava njihovo ponašanje u smjeru ostvarivanja ciljeva totalitarne političke vlasti. Na aktualnost političkih mitova i opasnost od oživljavanja totalitarnih tendencija upozoravaju i nedavne iteracije totalitarizma (velikosrpska agresija) s jednakim tragičnim posljedicama.