

MEDIA BY MILOSEVIC

Slobodan Milosevic (SM) and his manipulation of television and radio to retain a grip on loyalty of Serbians.

"Wide Angle" Television Episode #109, by WNET Channel 13 in New York, for PBS.

9/12/2002, 56:46 minutes long.

Teacher's Guide: see <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/shows/yugoslavia/>

Outline of Scenes

All the opinions and comments here are taken from the interviewed sources and the commentary:

- April 1987: Serbs in Kosovo protest conflict with Albanians; SM gains many Serbian supporters by telling Serbs "You will not be beaten again."
- Some interviewed sources attribute some of his dictatorial nature to the personality of his wife Mira Malkovic, and his constant anxiety to "look good to his wife and to please her."
- Footage of Malkovic chanting her husband's praises. There are no interviews with SM.
- Several scenes of political cartoonist Mr. Koraksic, describing the discovery that his caricatures of SM are most successful when drawn with no eyes, to convey the "autism that oozes from him," concluding that SM looks only into himself, and does not really look around at other people. Later, Koraksic explains that despite harassment he drew these cartoons "to save my honor and my soul."
- 12/90 landslide victory for SM in Serbia's first multi-party election. One source suggests that while Europeans will choose a leader who promotes a policy which serves them, Balkans will follow a leader who promotes huge slogans. SM's new regime had multi-party system, elections, Parliament; but, he still controlled police, money, and media.
- SM & wife and their pleasant walled residence; how he avoided appearing at any scenes of trouble or suffering, and rarely appeared on television at all. A supporter enthuses about SM's private personality, his fondness for Sinatra songs, comic strips, and Disney cartoons.
- Avoiding meetings with subordinates; one recounts that when SM spoke to him, he first required this aide to remove batteries from his mobile phone. (To prevent being taped?) SM gave only verbal instructions, nothing on paper.
- Indep. radio "Boom 93," saying that hearing the shock of listeners was like broadcasting from Mars. Many phone calls of support, some secret police calls as well ("Ok, guys, you're dead.")
- "Flirting" with Western diplomats, Dayton OH meeting to end war in Bosnia 1995, some talk of nominating him for Nobel Prize. Footage returning home in triumph (Why as he emerges from a plane are they playing the national anthem of Poland? Was there a stopover there?)
- Food shortages and 40% unemployment for Serbs; SM's policy's of impoverishing 9 million Serbs to make wealth for 10,000 supporters, giving them a standard of living higher than that of Europeans.
- Footage of Belgrade gangsters flourishing with smuggling trade, allied with politicians and police. Their signature music "turbo-folk" sung by pop model Tsetsa, making videos with her tiger cubs.
- 3 months of nightly opposition protests in the streets, people of all ages meeting at 7:30 to drown out evening news and throw eggs at national TV station.
- 12/24/96 SM summoned own supporters to a rally, but was upset that his own group was so much smaller than the opposition protest around them. (See Teacher's Guide for discussion of photo editing to enhance size of crowd.)
- 3/99 NATO bombs Serbia. SM cracks down further on media, broadcasting scenes of prosperity and general happiness and announcing victories in the war in Kosovo.

- 10/2000 SM loses election, Serbs take over Parliament, SM announces on television that with great relief after such heavy responsibility he is going to rest and spend time with his family, especially his grandson Marko.
- 4/1/01, SM arrested, taken to the Hague. The war crimes tribunal is not shown today on Serbian television; his supporters must turn to independent programming to see the proceedings.
- As one source concludes, SM gave Serbs the appeal of historic revenge, of seizing weapons to express their grievances, of a "holiday from reality." Concluding warning, that if the West doesn't investigate underlying reasons for SM's power, his stature in Serbia will actually grow.

Ends with an interview of Ambassador Prosper, stating official view of reasons for complex US relations with International Criminal Court.

Classroom Notes:

Since the broadcast tackles its subject right away, teachers will need to present background on the country and its ethnic tensions, using maps and time lines and so on.

I'm all in favor of letting our students hear English English, but the British touch might sound intimidating to some American students, as when listening to host Ms. Daljit Dhaliwal. For interviews with eyewitnesses, English voiceovers are used, but accents in a few interviews in English might pose a problem. One helpful touch in the sound track is that the background music, a very mild reflective techno-instrumental, was quite unobtrusive and didn't interfere with the broadcast.

Eye-catching highlights include rock videos of Tsetsa and those tigers, and SM-era samples of frolicking bucolic TV coverage of happy life. It was impressive to see Serbs taking such risks to speak out, both in the nightly demonstrations against the news, and the all-too-brief glimpse of Radio Boom 93.

It was good to hear so many thoughtful comments from interviewed sources, reinforcing for students the fact that not all Serbs supported SM. It could have been interesting to hear views from other ethnic groups as well.

Graphic Scenes: An opening warning alerts teachers to graphic scenes of war and war crimes. Teachers definitely need to screen this (like all videos) before showing it in class. For teachers' information, these scenes include: skulls in snow, a body in very advanced decay being lifted out of a mass grave, coffins of skulls and bones from WW2, and a slow dimly-lighted camera showing heads in boxes, one of a woman shot in the face.

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