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Fan Noli, the master of oratory and politics

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Abstract. Fan S. Noli, one of the most distinguished personalities of the Albanian nation, is defined as the best-known figure of literature, politics, religious activity and culture not only in our country, but even elsewhere, in different international areas in which he had the opportunity to represent Albania as a country and as an entity. He is remembered as a person of alternatives, contradictions, inner conflicts and tensions, as a man of state who sacrificed a lot to reach his goals and ambitions, which were endless. Logos and pathos were to be depicted as some crucial elements of his oratory and skillfulness of spoken word. Other stylistic and rhetorical techniques made his speeches convincing and argumentative, by leading his activity to a peak which had to be reached by anybody who uses words to persuade audiences. Nevertheless, analyzing a speech especially a political one without basing it on present historical context would be nonsense. By knowing and analyzing the historical and political context, one may come to the correct and appropriate discourse analysis, which encompasses in itself multidisciplinary elements of several fields of study.

As a result, this article aims an analysis of Noli’s political speeches, especially those speeches given in international areas, where the impact that they want to create in the audience and the evidences and facts provided should be carefully and masterfully chosen and structured. For this reasons, a linguistic analysis of speeches needs a lot of effort and knowledge to be conducted.

Key words: political speech, analysis, techniques, oratory, history.

Fan Noli, evaluated by time and critics.

One of the best and most inspirational speeches in the history of Albanian politics is undisputedly the speech given by Fan Noli in September 1924 in the League of Nations, in Geneva. From one perspective, it is perceived as an extract of the political, economical and social conditions of the Albanian country of that time. On the other side, it may also ironically show “the blindness” of European political elite when believing that peace could be protected by just giving some fruitless and futile speeches in the Assembly. Noli, as a skillful orator, as a master of the spoken word made use of miscellaneous figures of speech to persuade and convince the audience to reach his main aim.

Historically framed, this speech can be considered as a prediction of a political oracle about the role and the failure of the League of Nations in the nearest future. Noli had understood that the League of Nations was to be considered and to act as an organization that would incarnate the aims and goals of a new generation; such organization could and should not utilize methods that might easily adapt with the politic and/or diplomatic concepts of the XIX-th century.

The bulk of political speeches given in the pulpit of the Albanian Parliament are stored in the fund of this institution. However, the oratory of Fan Noli is not limited to that. He manifested such qualitative abilities even in higher rank areas of national and international politics.
According to professor Arben Puto, the speeches Noli gave in front of the League of Nations had a great impact on the audience of the time, and more than that “as an expression of erudition and incredible oratory, which were melted with the political courage and thought independence, with the originality of the way it was treated, with the feeling of a salient dignity which inspire a right cause” (Puto, 1990, p. 264).

The foreign printing press would classify him as a first class speaker and would also declare that “he defeated his opponents masterfully, but always with an ever ending smile.” Noli was described as “romantic” too. He never hesitated to put some mystifying elements in the grounds of Albanian people and language. (Malcolm, 1999, p. 188; Noli F., 1988, pp. 306-308). Even though he was e devoted orthodox priest, he still expressed openly a kind of admiration for a profane as Beethoven used to be (Noli F. S., 1939, pp. 53, 54). He also paid careful tribute to Goethe and Nietzsche (Noli F., 1988, pp. 97, 100). On the other hand, he was strongly engaged in political life and evaluated the Albanian political reality of the late period of Renaissance and early history of the creation of the Albanian state. In this role, he can be better described as pragmatist, he collaborates with Ahmet Zogu – he flirts with some constitutional principles - he does not hesitate to accept the power taken as a result of an armed movement, he talks about deep agrarian reforms – collaborates with representatives of latifundist families.

The Great War had some impact on Noli’s mental and moral development, it established in him the conviction that the political systems until that time were destined to fail. That’s why he as a liberal had to turn his head towards revolutionary concepts (Noli F., 1988, p. 104), but when the described situation was impossible to be justified, he immediately sheltered himself in certain suppositions that had to do with “Christ, who in a hurry threw his whip away.”

The background of a political speech

The membership of the Albanian nation in the League of Nations should have been a necessity in the moment that its existence was at risk and so was Noli, who in 1920 praised the noble goal of this organization (Milo, 2013, p. 516). In 1924, when the doors of the League were violently closed in front of him, he was in favor of the other part of the coin, he did not search for other opportunities, but only manifested “its unpleasant truths” (Milo, 2013, p. 647), which were hidden after known and unknown agreements. Words used by Noli in that speech came as a result of an aggressive political context, in the inner plan of Albanian people as well as in the outer international plan. In June, he was to direct a government which came as a product of an armed movement, the implication of high rank military exponents gave the impression of coup d’état (Milo, 2013, pp. 612-613; Akademia e Shkencave, 2007, pp. 224-227). The fall of a legal government, the disablement of the Constitutional Assembly and the complication of the relationship between neighboring states and the super powers of the time, made it possible that in the outer plan, Noli’s government remained in the end of the list of priorities of the Assembly. That’s why it was generally stated that Noli used to be in the wrong place, in the wrong time, surrounded by the wrong people. A new state that would move away the old one was as corrupted and disabled as there used to be the previous attempts of Vienna, Berlin or London. (Kissinger, 1999, p. 244; Hobsbawm, 1997, p. 100).

“The march in Rome” was inspiration for the right extremism, fascism was considered as a shelter for the disillusioned left wings. In the East, a bigger risk for the European identity and liberalism was blooming. In Russia, the October Revolution created the fear that that other similar movements would flourish everywhere in Europe. Sulejman Delvina, minister in Noli’s government, completed some legal acts to send signals to the soviet government for the establishment of bilateral relationships. Was it a not so well thought action? Was it taken in bad conditions?
The soviet government, when communicating with its delegates in Europe stated that in Albania there could be found the proper conditions and personalities to widen their activity (Milo, 2013, pp. 634-635). Such estimations from the soviets and the plan for the Agrarian Reform (following the soviet model), serves as the grounds of a strong amity. In the contrary, Rome and Belgrade seemed not to be interested into intervening in the inner political situation in Albania. Although Great Britain, France, Yugoslavia, Italy and Greece held some refractory attitudes towards Noli’s requests, in front of him made continuous requests and refusals. (Pastorelli, 1965, pp. 349-350; Milo, 2013, pp. 607,627). The most important refusal was to be considered the refusal of a 100 million loan promised to be given from Italy and later, that of another promised loan from the Assembly of Nations. (Milo, 2013, p. 647).

Noli’s oratory and his special use of Logos and Pathos.

Politicians and other people who deal with politics in general use several linguistic tools and techniques to fulfill the requirements and needs of a good political argumentation. Some of these tools and techniques are: repetition of the same words and phrases so as to be better remembered by the audience; antithesis which develops comparative skills of analyzing both sides of the situation and which creates a feeling of emergency and historical analogy. Expect from the above mentioned elements, Fan Noli continuously followed a certain escalation, which is kind of mathematical progression and always, after each sums that was proposed; he immediately led his speech to the leadership of the Assembly, by highlighting the fact that there will come a day when this sum would be granted to the Albanian people. The logics, part of logos as a rhetorical device that he used to follow, was the escalation of a realistic person, of somebody who had the intelligence and the trickery of a real politician, who could study the political and historical situation of the time and reach the conclusion that the request of his state was to be certainly achieved. However, he stresses out the fact that peace cannot be bought and sold; it does not have a price and cannot be evaluated in this respect. Later on, to enforce his logos and pathos, at the same time, he is courageous to reply to the Assembly, by calling the Parliament, as being the beginning of the XX century in Europe, was nothing more or less than just “an autopsy for the living” of the humanity, the place where the social and economical elites produce the warring conditions that could remind us of the Great War.

In a really elegant way, Noli cites Hamlet “Words, words, words” so as to identify and analyze the strange situation different states, especially “the so called liberal democratic one” were experiencing. One of the examples he brings into discussion is the situation of criminality in the United States of America, which after Prohibitionism, only knew progression. He attributes all this increase in power to the fact that the Parliament and the Government passed an Act that enabled contrabandists to have the absolute and sole role in the trade of alcohol. All the bureaucratic system that societies were experiencing produced just some bureaucratic mechanisms with the final product: “hot air”, meaning nonsense. In his opinion, the League of Nations, instead of promoting and helping peaceful nations to improve their political, social and economical situation, chose to use non efficient diplomatic mechanisms to impede them from reaching their goals. One of them was the case of Albania, which being represented by Noli, wanted to ensure a certain loan from the League of Nations. Noli stated that this mission would be completed by what he used to call “bubbles of arbitration, bubbles of disarmament, bubbles of security and bubbles of reward”. Even though, he knew that the economical empowerment of Albania might be just an illusion, he argued that a strong idea, not a bubble of words would guarantee peace in the Balkans and would maybe create the opportunity for a Balkan Confederation in the future. Such a loan would enable Albania to be recovered in different aspects and feel equal to any other country. Stylistically and rhetorically speaking, Fan Noli as a master of oratory made use of syllogism. The premise that he took into consideration was the fact that
extremism finds itself just in poverty and ignorance. As a result of this premise there comes his logical argumentation that what he, as a man of state believed was the aim of the League of Nations to achieve peace by considering states as being partners to one another, not as rivals. As such, achieving peace in a further level would be the ultimate focus of the League and its Assembly.

The above mentioned syllogism, leads to another system of logics, which remains a crucial element of his speech. He went on by argumenting that the so far activity of the League of Nations was not just to create the necessary conditions so as to solve appropriately all the duties that the League had. By the use of sorites, he made a list of the attempts made by the League to maintain peace by putting in the same logic Dawes plan, the disarmament treaty, the concept of the seats, which in the need were meant to fail. Let’s refer to the actual ideas he used for this argument: “Peace is not meant to result from treaties, which sooner or later are destined to fail”.

The Enthymeme used by Noli by his argument that the system created by the League of Nations contradicted the initial ambition of Wilson, who strongly believed in free trade, disarmament, sea liberty, the elimination of hidden agreements, the guarantee for the independence of all Balkan states etc. These elements combined with the activity of the League of Nations would be the core of maintaining peace in the future.

Ethos inn Noli`s speech is to be analyzed together with logos. By carefully choosing words, phrases and sentences and better organizing them, by showing how erudite he is, by citing other important personalities he prefers to mention, he not only enriches his speaking ability, but also aims to persuade his listeners, and make them believe he feels and should be treated equal with the other participants.

Through his broad erudition, he gave expression to phronesis, (Hughes, 2013, p. 224) as a philosophical figure of ancient Greece which is focused in a high scale type of intelligence that shows some practical importance and smartness of the person talking. A lot of passages taken from Noli`s speech, make evident the use of this figure.

Even though we could not be present the moment of this speech, from the written material we have today in our hands, we can easily identify some feelings and emotions, elements of Pathos, as being described by him.

“hence, take into account my request for a loan and put it in your dead files of Secretariat and lock it tight, but be sure to drown it before you bury it in your necropolis as it can be revived from the dead”

This use of words, especially of certain verbs from the speaker was made to directly express his resentment and continuous disappointment towards the way that the League had neglected the requests and the immediate necessities Albania made to them. By using the lexeme necropolis he refers to the Secretariat of the League, whereas to refer to himself he chose the phrase “the begging priest”, who was and felt so modest compared with the “gentlemen” he had in front. Another interesting point of Pathos is the way he describes modus operandi, followed by the League until that moment. By using a series of questions, which he replies himself, he constantly uses sarcasm, when referring to the terrible bureaucracy of the League.

“Which is the final result of all these clever and deep conversations about the disarmament and arbitrary treaties? All the cases of discussion were reported to a commission or so, or to a subcommission that again will report them in any conference that is may be going to be held sometime of the future. This conference will again make a report to another commission and so on... The conference will pass it unanimously which will refer it to the Council of the League of Nations which will lately make a common pray to the Holy God in the sky.”

Prosopopoeia is also repeatedly expressed in Noli`s speech. He incarnates Moloch within the military tendencies, sarcastically mentioning a pagan God of Middle East, to whom were bestowed in the form of sacrifice some people, even children. He is also mentioned in the sacred Bible as:
“you will tell to the sons of Israel: each of the sons of Israel or the foreigners who inhabit Israel that will sacrifice one of his inheritors for Moloch, will be punished to death, the people of the country will throw stones to him” (Leviticus, 20:2)

Next, referring to Noli, let’s look at the passage which illustrates this particle moment:

“but, before coming at that point, let’s firstly be aware of the fact that we are all savage bajracs as long as we sacrifice innocent people to the tribe of Moloch. Oh! Kill them, hang them! Follow the barbarian and anthropophagi Gods in all corners of the world; they have filled the human history with a lot of sufferings, hatred, destruction, horror, with so much blood and fear”.

Noli’s Pathos goes on when he makes use of cold logics and evaluates that the League of Nations itself might be described as:

“... a dream, a king of Utopia which makes the skeptics smile and warp the lips, this (the League of Nations) should stand there as a challenge against the grotesque military glory. This should stand there as a solemn certification of the world desire for peace. This should remain there as long as its beauty, its nobility, its human spirits, the necessary need of its existence should be comprehended by the world”.

Noli uses Pathos characteristics when he holds a utopist attitude to time. He estimates that the future could not be found in the overall system of the time, but in the education system in particular. As such, he clearly states that there has come the right time when we should direct our heads towards the values of illuminist idealism.

“but the peace cannot be reached from treaties, they are destined to be casted in the rubbish bins sooner or later. It should come from schools. We should teach our children that massive murders are to be considered as criminal as a particular murder. We should teach our children that our Gods of the bajracs are the source of all evils, which all over centuries are disturbing the human society. We should teach them that there exists only one real God, to whom we must serve, the God of humanity, the God of all tribes”.

As a result, in Noli’s speech we may find two different attitudes he tries to hold, one of a dreamer and the other one of an realist. Through this act of speech, real politics and nihilist views are intertwined with one another. The first is to be found the moment when he highlighted the necessity for a change in the manner of organization and the conceptualization of the League of Nations as an institution. The second when he requested the destruction of the structure on which nations and states were founded. In this part, he thinks the same way as Nietzsche, who had a similar way of perceiving politicians. (Nietzsche, 1917, pp. 51-52). In this paragraph, Nietzsche made a concise diffraction of Superman, who by being well educated; there will be a real possibility for his willpower and intellectual space to tear down any obstacles to reach the final destination, which is undoubted liberty.

**Conclusions**

As a conclusion, Fan Noli, this polyvore figure of the Albanian nation and people, is distinguished for a series of undisputable values, contributions and skills. Being multidimensional, sometimes it becomes difficult for critic to properly evaluate and analyze his historical, political, religious and literary character. In his political and literary activity, he is well estimated for his excellent oratory, for his masterful use of words, persuading abilities by even using some irony when referring to the present problematic situation. His oratory reached its peak when he gave the famous speech in front of the Assembly of the League of Nations, on 10 September 1924. The above analysis was just a short and simple attempt to show the linguistic values in the real historical context of the time.

More concretely speaking, we tried to analyze the way he made use of syllogism, argumentation, enthymeme, antithesis, alliteration, metaphors, repetition and a variety of types of sentences being used by the speaker etc. to fulfill his main objective. The new developments in human
sciences are leading to multi and interdisciplinary research methods and techniques. As a result, this linguistic analysis has been enriched by some historical evidences and framework which helps and contributes into making the speech analysis more complete and valuable.

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