

## The War in ex-Yugoslavia and Religion

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### POVZETEK

### VOJNA V BIVŠI JUGOSLAVIJI IN RELIGIJA

1. Ob dogodkih v bivši Jugoslaviji, ki so se sprevrgli v kruto in dolgotrajno vojno, smemo v sodobnih socioloških raziskavah o religiji povsem legitimno izpostaviti žgoče vprašanje odnosa med vojno in religijo. Seveda ga je mogoče že vnaprej razveljaviti s trditvijo, da je vojna v bivši Jugoslaviji zgolj naključen ali kvečjemu nenavaden pojav, brez pomembnejših socioloških simptomov. Vendar ne smemo pozabiti, kakor je nedavno poudaril B. Barber, da je bilo po svetu v zadnjih letih več kot trideset vojn, po večini plemenskega, rasnega, etničnega in/ali verskega značaja. Poleg tega sedanjo vojno in dogodke, ki so do nje privedli, zelo težko označimo kot popolnoma nov pojav, temveč prej kot nekaj, kar je na nek način že obstajalo in se ponavlja v novi obliki.

2. Obstajata vsaj dva argumenta, ki aktualizirata omenjeno vprašanje.

Prvi je neomajno dejstvo, da so se v vojni ubijali, si uničevali cerkve in domove ter se z njih preganjali, pretežno verniki in pripadniki različnih veroizpovedi. Dejstvo je, da je prav religija zarisala sedanje bojne črte, kakor je napovedal J. Coleman. Prav tako je neizpodbitno, da so vojskujoči se na vseh straneh uporabljali verska znamenja kot najbolj zanesljivo sredstvo za lastno identifikacijo, prepoznavanje in določanje domnevnih sovražnikovih ciljev ter za opravičevanje uničevalnih in represivnih vojaških in policijskih ukrepov. Tudi ni dvoma o tem, da je bila vojna ogrnjena v plašč verske simbolike.

Vojna je resno zaznamovala sama verstva na ozemlju nekdanje Jugoslavije. Spremenila je verski zemljevid, ki bo po njej izgledal precej drugače kakor pred njo, položaj posameznih verstev v zakonskih okvirih, v nekaterih področjih pa celo možnosti za njihov obstoj in delovanje.

Nenazadnje je dejstvo tudi, da so z njo zadobile najvišjo versko legitimnost politične strategije, ki so začele prevladovati v osemdesetih letih, in ki v bistvu temeljijo na Mazzinijevem političnem geslu "en narod v eni državi in le ena država za vsak narod".

Drugi argument je specifičen v zgodovinskem in geografskem smislu.

Čeprav je očitno, je vseeno dobro poudariti, da tu ne govorimo o že skoraj običajnih spopadih v oddaljenih predelih Azije, črne Afrike ali tudi sicer nemirne Latinske Amerike, temveč o pravi vojni, ki se odvija takorekoč v srcu stare evropske celine in na pragu enainvajsetega stoletja.

Prav tako moramo poudariti, da v vojno niso vpletene kakšne nenavadne poganke religije ali ponorele sekte, temveč pravoslavno in katoliško krščanstvo ter islam, ki so široko uveljavljena in sicer spoštovanje vzbujajoča svetovna

verstva.

Očitno je tudi, da je vojna v bivši Jugoslaviji že od samega začetka precej nenavadna. Ni namreč samo vojna med sovražnimi državami in njihovimi bolj ali manj rednimi vojskami, temveč med narodi v kolektivnem pomenu besede, kjer posameznik, poleg nacionalne, nima nobene druge identitete, in kjer nasprotnika obravnavajo kot človeško, civilizacijsko in kulturno popolnoma drugačnega. Je torej vojna, ki namesto osebne, uvaja in zagovarja načelo kolektivne odgovornosti, s čimer izenačuje vojake in civiliste, oborožene in neoborožene, moške in ženske ter odrasle in otroke. Poleg tega smatra maščevanje in povračilne ukrepe za legitimen in normalen način bojevanja, vse osebe in predmete, ki nosijo svoja nacionalna znamenja, pa za tarče, na katere je dovoljeno streljati, jih uničevati, zatirati, stradati in mučiti.

Še ena posebnost vojne v bivši Jugoslaviji je, da ne gre za spopad med popolnimi tujci ali napadalci iz daljnih krajev, temveč največkrat med sosedi, nekdanjimi sodelavci, znanci, prijatelji itd. Zaradi tega je v njej treba neprestano podpihovati sovražstvo, ki je postalo glavna duhovna gonilna sila.

In končno, vojna se odvija v evropski regiji, ki bi zgodovinsko gledano lahko bila idealno področje medverskega dialoga in ekumenizma, v širšem smislu pa tudi preizkusni kamen za sožitje treh kultur, veroizpovedi in narodov.

Glede na vse to, se bo sodobna sociologija religije morala soočiti s številnimi žgočimi vprašanji o vlogi religije v vedno hujših socialnih razkolih, spopadih, razločevanju in seveda kruti vojni. Nobenega dvoma ni, da imajo ta vprašanja vsaj določen teoretski pomen. Ne smemo pozabiti, da zgodovina religiji večinoma pripisuje vlogo povezovalca različnih ras, narodov, civilizacij in kultur, in da teorija M. Webra o neizkorenljivem politeizmu in antagonizmu absolutnih vrednot od nedavnega velja za zastarelo.

3. Zaradi vpletenosti omenjenih verstev v vladajoče politične strategije, ki so sprožile vojno, so te zadobile religiozno legitimnost in mobilizirale skoraj vsa verska sredstva v politične namene. Ta pojav, ki ima po mnenju R. Robertsona svetovne razsežnosti, po eni strani temelji na kompleksnem in istočasnem politiziranju religije in religiziranju politike, po drugi pa na usodnih, zgodovinsko izraženih verskih in kulturnih značilnostih treh velikih verstev: srbskega pravoslavja, hrvaškega katolištva in bosanskega islama.

Tako pridemo do zaključka, da vojna v bivši Jugoslaviji ni tipično verskega značaja, kakor so tiste, ki jih poznamo iz zgodovine, temveč je vojna, v kateri je religija močno prisotna in jo zavestno poudarjajo vse sprte strani. Res pa je, da kaže tudi nekatere značilnosti medverskega spopada, v katerem se mešajo verski in posvetni elementi, in da so se v jugoslovanski krizi, ki se je sprevergla v vojno, omenjena verstva izkazala prej za ločevalna in hujškaška kot pa združevalna in spravljava.

## I.

It is legitimate, as well as very intriguing, in the contemporary sociological research on religion to raise the burning question of the role of religion in the recent developments of the Yugoslav crisis, which have exploded in a cruel and prolonged war. Such a question involves more than the pure relationship between religion and war: it

involves the wider and preceding question of the role of religion in the deepening of social divisions and cleavages, brought to the point of fracture, as well as in increasing social conflict, carried to the point of maximal incandescency, which stay in the immediate background of the war, that has been going on for almost three years. However, it also involves the question of the relationship of concrete religious confessions with others and to the otherness of the others in an area with mixed populations, i.e. characterized by pluriconfessionality, plurinationality and pluriculturality.

It is, of course, possible to dismiss such a question in advance on three accounts.

First, by pointing out that the qualification of the war as religious one has been launched by the propaganda apparatus of a party in conflict with a purely propagandistic aim of hiding the real nature of war and to create at least a confusion in international public opinion, by pretending that the war has been an essentially religious war. It is more or less obvious, that the war going on in ex-Yugoslavia has not been a religious war. It is evidently a political war, caused by political strategies, moving, essentially since the beginning of the Yugoslav crisis, along collision courses, leading, by necessity, to frontal impacts. In this respect, it is a war, which fully confirms the well-known von Clausewitz's formula, that the war is but a continuation of politics only by other means. However, this does not mean, that religion has anything to do with the ongoing war. It is also more or less obvious, that the religion, present in the area in three major confessions: Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Islam, has been involved, implicated and engaged in some way and to some degree in the war. There is in this sense a kind of analogy with the prolonged civil war in Lebanon, as well as with the never-ending, creeping war in Ulster or Northern Ireland. In both cases, the wars have not been religious ones in classical terms, but at the same time it has been obvious, that religion has not been a purely passive on-looker of the war, but it has been actively involved and engaged in it. Consequently, F. Vreg's assertions sound convincing at an impressionistic level: "Demons of destruction of the processes of cultural approachments in the European area have not only been the growing ethnicism, which turns frequently into a malignant tumor of nation(al)ism, but moreover the religious mysticism. There appears not only a brutal eruption of national feelings, political icons, but also of religious icons too, which has been wrongly understood as a rebirth of religious feelings. Croatian warriors do not carry the HDZ signs, but also Catholic crosses, the Serbian not Milosević's photos, but Orthodox crosses. Moslem fundamentalists and mujahedins kill under the slogan of Allah. Consequently, in the ex-Yugoslav area 'new' frontiers are being established between Catholics, Orthodox and Moslems".<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt, that at least religious symbolism has been so far, for some obviously relevant reasons, widely and deliberately used in armed conflicts in the ex-Yugoslav area.

Second, it is possible to dismiss the initial question by pretending, that the war in ex-Yugoslavia has been a purely accidental one and, therefore, not deserving any kind of sociological exploration at all. It seems, that there is no need to produce an extensive argumentation, that the war in ex-Yugoslavia has not been a purely accidental or casual one, just fallen from the clouds, nobody knows why and how as a consequence of a purely casual convergence of random social, political and cultural circumstances. It is more plausible to maintain, that the war has been the final and expected result of a dominant political logic in operation for some time. There is, of course, something contingent in events in ex-Yugoslavia resulting in a war, but their matrix is evidently not casual. In this sense, it may be claimed, that the substance of this logic can be de-

1 Vreg, F., *Iluzije o evropskem multikulturalizmu, Teorija in praksa*, 30 (1993) 7-8, p. 664.

tected in an unbiased analysis, for instance, just of the events in Mostar and around Mostar as the paradigmatic case. In addition, it ought to be remembered, that the recent developments in ex-Yugoslavia, including the war ongoing, may be hardly interpreted in a plausible way as a radical novelty in modern history in this area, but rather as something at least partially already seen - *deja vu* - and as a contemporary repetition of something, having partially happened before, although in new forms.

Thirdly, it may be claimed that the war in ex-Yugoslavia has been a totally anomalous phenomenon with no symptomatic value at all, which could be and should be disregarded in a sociological discourse on religion in the contemporary world. However, one should take into consideration the fact, that the war in ex-Yugoslavia has not been the only war, going on ultimately. B. Barber has lately pointed out, that there have been more than thirty wars, being waged around the world, mostly of tribal, racial, ethnic and/or religious type.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is very difficult to dismiss in advance the initial question by claiming, that the war, going on in ex-Yugoslavia is a totally anomalous phenomenon. Just the contrary, it may be reasonably claimed, that it is a war with high symptomatic value, as it seems to be very plausible to connect the events in ex-Yugoslavia, having lead to a war with religion playing a visible part in it, with some developments and changes in a wider context. It seems plausible primarily to connect it, for instance, with the tendency of the world dimension, individuated and described by N. Kokosalakis, in such terms: "As the world becomes increasingly interdependent, and as the utopianism of modernity becomes explicit, ethnic struggles and the assertion of identities become a prominent feature of the contemporary world. Religion at large is inextricably involved in this process almost everywhere and exemplifies the very tensions which are inherent in the matrix of universalism and localism".<sup>3</sup> In this case, the developments in ex-Yugoslavia, having led to a war, may be interpreted essentially as an extreme case of tensions, existing elsewhere and described by N. Kokosalakis. The same applies to very stimulating analyses of P. Michel, who insists, that "all the contemporary societies are post-communist societies in the sense that all have to manage the end of a polarity of ultimate references, which have been structuring not only the behaviour, but also the mentalities", and that the problems of relationship between particular and universal are today of a crucial urgency.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, it may be claimed that the war ought to be projected on a problematic background concerning the affirmation of identities, but also of their relations to others and otherness. In this respect, the war in ex-Yugoslavia may be taken as the extreme case in which the affirmation of identities have turned into practical denial of the possibility to live together peacefully and on an equal basis with others and their otherness as well as the extreme case in which, as O. Kalscheuer has recently underlined, religious memories and identities have become motives for their bloody self-affirmation.<sup>5</sup>

2 Barber, B., *Džihad proti McWorld, Teorija in praksa*, 29 (1992) 9-10, p. 843.

3 Kokosalakis, N., *The Historical Continuity and Cultural Specificity of Eastern Christianity*, in: *Conferenza Internazionale su "Religions sans Frontiers? Tendenze presenti e future di migrazione, cultura e comunicazione"*, Roma, Università degli studi di Roma "La Sapienza", 1993, p. 94.

4 Michel, P., *Pour une sociologie des itinéraires de sens: une lecture politique du rapprochement entre croire et institution*, *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, (1993) 82, p. 225.

5 Kalscheuer, O., *Do All European Roads Lead to (West) Rome?* Newsletter, Wien, Institut für Wissenschaften vom Menschen, 1993, p. 8.



## II.

There are at least three major lines of arguing, which may be used to legitimize the initial question, emphasizing the specific traits of the war going on in ex-Yugoslavia.

Let us described them more particularly.

The first one is purely factual.

It is a hard and undeniable fact, that it is mostly the believers and belongers to different confessions who have been killing one another, who have been destroying other's people homes and churches, who have been driving the respective others from their homes etc. Without them being engaged on a mass scale, there would be no war, or no war of persisting dimensions and duration.

It is a hard fact too, that, as J. Coleman has predicted long ago, that, when religion is important to men, then it is the religion which draws down the actual lines of battles if the circumstances are favourable.<sup>6</sup> This to some degree has been confirmed by events in ex-Yugoslavia.

It is an irrefutable fact also, that the respective religious symbolism has been so far widely used by the combatants on all the sides. And it has been used: a) as best symbols in order to indicate their identities and b) as appropriate signs to demonstrate the war aims, they have been engaged fighting for, c) as the best means to detect the presumably legitimate targets for their own destructive and oppressive war and police actions. There could be hardly any doubt, that the war has been waged so far in an envelope of respective religious symbolism. And there is no doubt, that the usage of the envelope of religious symbolism has functioned essentially to increase, and not to decrease, the conflictual potentials of the existing conflicts. J. Coleman correctly noticed many years ago, that conflicts between religious and national groups frequently obtain extraordinary vehemence and are the most difficult to abate.<sup>7</sup>

It is further an evident fact, that the war has had so far some very important consequences for the religious confessions existing in the ex-Yugoslav area. First of all, there is no doubt, that the war has changed, has been changing and is going to change in an important way the previously existing map of the whole area. It is very naive to believe, that the course of recent events in ex-Yugoslavia would lead, in the final analysis, only to a change of the statal and political map of the area, redrawing the borders of the new states. In fact, the course of events has been changing, owing to totalization and radicalization of the conflicts, all kind of maps: social, political, demographic, economic, cultural and confessional ones, but also the map of the so called vital and everyday worlds. Therefore, one may predict with certainty, that the confessional map of the area, which would come out of the present course of events and ultimately of the war, would be certainly very different from the pre-existing one. Secondly, there have been very important changes in the actual social positions of different confessions within different institutional frameworks in the area. Such changes may be described as a turn from an essentially extra-systemic and counter-systemic position of the churches and religion to a systemic or suprasystemic position of the ecclesial institutions with the religion as the overarching systemic cultural and symbolic aggregate. Thirdly, there have been important changes in the content itself of the

6 Coleman, J., *Social Cleavages and Religious Conflicts*, *Journal of Social Issues*, 12 (1956), p. 46.

7 Coleman, J., *po. cit.*, p. 46.

operative religious confessions. It is more than obvious, that dialogal and ecumenic orientations have been declining everywhere, or that they have actually disappeared, and that the balance between universalism and particularism within the different confessional cultures has been lately radically changed, or that some religious traits, existing before as traits of marginal or secondary relevance, have become more prominent as, for instance, the sacrificial trait, becoming so visible in the current confessional interpretations of history as a martyrology in the Serbian Orthodoxy and as some kind of a Calvary in the Croatian Catholicism, or in terms of a past holocaust of Moslems in the contemporary Bosnian Islam. Fourthly, there have been deep changes in the previously existing relations between different confessions. One has to be very naive or very shortsighted to claim, that the interconfessional relations in the area have been improving lately and the Christian confessions and Christian believers, or Christians and Moslems, for instance, have been today so close to each other as never before. Fifthly, there is no doubt, that there have been important changes in the external - political, cultural and ideological - conditions for operation of different confessions at the everyday level of social life in many regions of ex-Yugoslavia. In substance, the affirmation of religious freedom on an abstract level, owing to a fall of all previously existing systemic limitations and restrictions, has been followed by concrete restrictions and oppressive pressures against some confessions in different parts of the country. Consequently, the well-known history, best described by E. Poulat, has been repeated, i.e. the proclamation of religious freedom has been frequently not universal, but very selective, increasing the freedom of some and practically restricting the freedom of others.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, it is a fact, that political strategies, having become dominant since mideighthies and essentially oriented by the political formula, best expressed by Mazzini in the XIXth century, in terms of "One nation one state. Only one state for each nation", have obtained the legitimacy in superior religious terms with the initial exception of Bosnian Islam, with the latest rethinking of a part of Croatian Catholicism in Bosnia and, finally, with first indications of some rethinking in the Serbian Orthodoxy in terms of a too high price to be paid for it. It is a fact, that the Mazzinian political formula has been very close to the vetero-testamentarian formula of : One God, One nation and One land.<sup>9</sup>

The second line of arguing in favour of an unbiased discourse on the war and religion is historico-situationally specific.

First, it is obvious, but it ought to be stressed more emphatically, that the war, going on in ex-Yugoslavia, has been a very peculiar contemporary war. It is not a war, being waged in some distant regions of Asia, or in some remote parts of dark Africa, or in some angle of otherwise permanently troublesome Latin America, as many wars have been fought lately. It is a war, which is being fought on European soil, close to its very heart, at an hour of flight from major European metropolises. And it is a war, fought on the eve of the twentyfirst century at that.

Second, it is evident, but it ought to be underlined, that confessions involved, implicated and engaged in the war in this or that way, have not been some strange pagan religions, or some queer religious sects, obsessed by wild sacred word missing and gone mad, but they are well-established and otherwise inspiring respect, major

8 Poulat, E., *Liberte, laicite*, Paris, du Cerf, Cujas, 1987. As a credible witness of such a development in Croatia Ševko Omeragić may be called. See his interview to "Feral Tribune", 23rd. September 1993, p. 3.

9 See: J.L. Piveteau, *L'Ancien Testament a-t-il contribue a la territorialisation de la Suisse?* Social Compass, 40 (1993), 2, p. 169.

world religions: Christianity in its Catholic and Orthodox versions and Islam, existing on European soil for centuries. Involved, implicated and engaged are religions, which have been important parts of the history of European Christianity in general. Consequently, the killings and destructions which are going on in an increasingly brutal way, have not been caused by some native wild pagans, mostly coloured, or by some godless tribe, made of the sinister sons of the Dark and Satan, but mostly by believers to respected confessions and by believers in God in general, and in God and Christ in particular.

Third, it ought to be claimed, that the war, going on in ex-Yugoslavia, has been since the beginning a war of a rather particular nature in another sense. Namely, it is not just an ordinary war between opposed states with more or less delineated frontiers and more or less regular armies, but it is war, waged and presented as a war between peoples, between nations as collective entities, involving all belonging individuals in a total manner and cancelling or disregarding all other traits and identities of theirs. It is a war which has been depicted and legitimated publicly as a confrontation between presumably inconciliable human, cultural and civilizational types and, in the final analysis, as a legitimate confrontation of totally incompatible worlds. Therefore, it is a war in which the principle of collective responsibility, regardless of personal responsibility, has been introduced as legitimate, legitimating in that way the practical elimination of all distinctions between military and civilians, between armed and unarmed, between men and women, between adults and children etc. Moreover, in that way, it has become legitimate to resort to retaliations and retorsions on a mass scale as a normal way of waging the war, and to treat all persons and objects bearing a specific national sign which is considered to be hostile, as legitimate targets to shoot at, to destroy if possible, to repress, to drive off, to starve, to torture etc. With such a qualification of the war, being almost daily underlined by the mass media and politicians, there is no wonder, that thousands of people have so far been murdered, or have disappeared in the darkness of the night in zones distant from the frontlines, that thousands of houses have been demolished or plundered in regions where no cannon has ever been fired, that numerous churches and other objects of cult have been destroyed in places almost untouched directly by war operations, that hundred thousands of people have been driven away by force from their homes, that thousands and thousands of unarmed civilians have been arrested as potential enemies and sent to concentration camps here and there.

Furthermore, there is another peculiarity of the war going on. Namely, it is a war not being waged between total strangers and unknown intruders from far away. It is the war being fought today between yesterday's co-inhabitants, acquaintances, neighbours, co-workers, friends and so on. Further, the war has not been a war waged by contemporary high-technology that kills and destroys at a distance with no need for the warriors to face their victims directly and to have a personalized vision of the effects of their murderous and destructive war actions, and, consequently, many war actions may be carried out with no repetition of overheated emotional personal commitment from the part of the warriors themselves. At the same time, it is not a war being fought as a strictly professional war in which the killing and destroying have become a part of purely and simply carrying out a professional job, defined strictly in "know-how" terms, requiring only professional knowledge and dedication to a profession, but no repetition of overheated, emotional, personal engagements. The war has been more similar to traditional wars which require an emotional commitment from the part of warriors and their supporters. Therefore, it is a war, which feeds on repetition of overheated hatred, and it needs a permanent production and reproduction

of hatred on mass as its main spiritual fuel. In this sense, it is a war in the manner of jihad, as B. Barber has spoken lately about some current wars, that is a war which is not simply an instrument of politics, but a sign of identity, an expression of community and an end in itself.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, there is no way to avoid the tormenting question of the role of religion in production and reproduction of hatred on mass scale.

Finally, it is more than evident, that the actual war has been waged in a European area, that may reasonably be considered as the historically and culturally articulated, almost ideal field for practicing the proclaimed interconfessional dialogue and ecumenism, as well as the ideal testing ground for practicing multiculturalism, pluriconfessionality and plurinationality as a viable way of life in present-day Europe and in the Europe of tomorrow. However, it is a fact that publicly proclaimed willingness for interconfessional dialogue and ecumenism has not been able to resist to the tidal wave of increasing social divisions and cleavages and of progressing social conflictuality. And interconfessional dialogue and ecumenism have not become stranded on the bizarre semantic question of filioque, or on the problem of celibacy, or on the problem of vocations of women, or even on the problem of papal primacy, but on the problem of the very possibility to live together normally and on the basis of functioning equality. Consequently, interconfessional dialogue - not purely in diplomatic terms - as well as ecumenism in everyday practice seem to belong to history. Never before -except for the time of the Second World War in some regions - the idea, expressed by the assertion "To live together with others is impossible", has obtained more support and higher legitimacy.

The third line of arguing in favour of a legitimate exploration of the role of religion in the war in ex-Yugoslavia is predominantly theoretical. It is worthwhile to mention some reasons of this kind.

Firstly, the war in ex-Yugoslavia may be considered as an interesting occasion for the re-examination of some crucial ideas of M. Weber's and more particularly of their contemporary relevance. This refers primarily to M. Weber's ideas regarding an unavoidable polytheism and a consequent and inevitable antagonism as the distinctive feature of the human condition as such. M. Weber has insisted on an irreducible pluralism of gods, or ultimate values, which leads by necessity to their inconciliable antagonism. The present day war in ex-Yugoslavia seems to suggest, that behind the ultimate values remains nothing but the force and clash of inconciliable culture, to be defended and protected by states, operating by necessity in the home of power, as A. Giddens has recently commented on M. Weber's ideas.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, this may be taken as an opportunity to examine anew the interesting question of whether the Weberian ideas have been definitely surpassed by modern history and have become evidently outdated, or have they preserved their theoretical relevance for the contemporary sociology of religion? And more particularly, when one takes in to consideration his warning too, of a possible resurrection of the old gods from their tombs in the modern age and of their engaging again in their old and eternal struggles, leaving men only the possibility to align with one or another.

Secondly, M. Weber has examined the relationship between the religious ethics of human universal brotherliness and politics. He has concluded, that there is an acute tension between religious ethics of human universal brotherliness and politics, which

10 Barber, B., *op. cit.*, p. 843.

11 Giddens, A., *The Nation State and Violence*, Cambridge, The Polity Press, 1992, p. 185.



is always connected to power and violence, either manifest or latent.<sup>12</sup> It seems now, as the recent experience indicates, that this relationship has been more complex and more ambivalent. The acute tension either does not exist, or it is easily circumvented, particularly when integral nationalism<sup>13</sup> enters the scene. At least it seems that the otherness of the others may be easily absolutized in such a way as to exclude the others, with specific traits, from the field, otherwise covered by universal human brotherliness. This, of course, could be best detected in an unbiased analysis of public reactions to by the existing confessions to the war crimes and misdeeds, not committed by others, but committed against others by the side, they side with.

Thirdly, there is an interesting set of problems regarding the process of transition, which has been raised by P. Michel. Starting from the conviction that the discourse on transition is a trap, by presupposing that the points of departure of the transition, as well as the point of arrival have been clearly identified, which is not the case, P. Michel raises the question of the position of communism within the development of modern society. On one side, there is an interpretation in the Catholic Church of the Soviet system as the last incarnation of the modernity, the last caricature of the construction of a world without God and the ultimate offspring, bastard and pervert of the Enlightenment, and, consequently, the fall of communism has been interpreted as a victory of the Church over modernity. On the other side, P. Michel mentions another interpretation of the fall of communism, seen as a tentative to brake a continuous and global modern process of disenchantment of the world through an effort to substitute one modality of belief with another, the political instead of the religious as the main vector of enchantment, and consequently, the fall of communism is considered to exemplify a supplementary stage in the process of the disenchantment of the world, referring to politics, or at least to a kind of sacralized politics. In this sense, the historical role of religion, or the use of it in the exit of communism has been primarily of depervverting politics, in leading it to limit itself and to accept itself in its limits and to desacralize itself. Consequently, there are two distinct logics in operation: one is long term and concerns a threefold phenomenon of individualisation, differentiation and rationalization, and it is inducing the loss of social relevance of religion; the other has been inducing a political reinstrumentalisation of religion, which becomes one of the privileged points of politics, used everywhere for questioning the categories of pluralism and therefore, of democracy. In the final analysis, it is the problem of the ultimate and absolute references on one side and on the other, of democratic politics, which, due to the safeguarding of pluralism, has to be located by definition into the relative. The choice seems, after the failure of politics with ultimate references, sacralized and absolutized, to be between politics with no ultimate references at all and consequently, no sacred and no absolute and with coherent pluralism, and the politics with religious ultimate references, excluding pluralism, at least at the highest level, or, in other words, between politics in a dis-enchanted and disenchanting world and politics in a re-enchanted and re-enchanting world. The consequences of this contradiction are cer-

12 Gerth, H.H., Mills, C.W., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1958, pp. 333-335.

13 The term integral nationalism is taken here in the sense used by J. Schwarzemantel stating, that 'traditional or 'integral nationalism' has invoked an idea of 'one nation, one state', where the nation has been claimed to be totally culturally united, as having supposedly homogenous character'. J. Schwarzemantel, *Nation versus Class: Nationalism and Socialism in Theory and Practice*, in: Oakley, J./Ed., *The Social Origin of Nationalist Movements*, London, Sage, 1992, p. 57.

tainly very interesting to examine.<sup>14</sup> And the role of religion in the Yugoslav crisis, exploding in a war, may be stimulating in this particular respect.

### III.

There is no need to develop an extensive argumentation in order to show that the major existing confessions have played an important role in sharpening social divisions and social cleavages and in intensifying social conflict, as well as to demonstrate which they have been involved in this, or that way in the war which has broken out. It is more interesting to explore the reasons, that have played a role in their involvement and engagement.<sup>15</sup>

The involvement and engagement of the major existing religious confessions in the ongoing war, has been based on a preexisting confessional legitimacy given to the dominant political strategies, which has been motivated essentially in a twofold way, at least for some confessions and with different consistency: first, as strategies bringing about the demolition of the atheistic state, with the elimination of all kinds of previously existing restrictions and institutional pressures on religion and ecclesial institutions and securing religious freedom without restrictions, and second, as strategies for securing respective independent national states. However, there is a gap between the confessional legitimacy of such political strategies in general and the confessional legitimacy of a war. In substance, the confessional legitimacy of war has been given primarily by invoking the traditional doctrine of a just war.

However, some remarks should be made. Primarily, in the process of invoking this doctrine some traits of it have been evidently emphasized - the "Thou shalt's" side -, but others - the "Thou shalt not's" side - have been neglected. This may be illustrated by mentioning seven crucial requirements of the doctrine: 1) that a war be the last resort to be used only after all other means have been exhausted, 2) that a war be clearly an act of redress of rights actually violated or defence against unjust demands, backed by the threat of force, 3) that the war be openly and legally declared by properly constituted governments, 4) that there be a reasonable prospect for victory, 5) that the means are proportionate to the ends, 6) that the war be waged in such a way as to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, 7) that the victorious nation does not require the utter humiliation of the vanquished. At the same time, it is evident, that the same doctrine has been invoked equally by all the major confessions involved in order to legitimate their options for support to the different and opposed political strategies that have led to the war, and consequently, for supporting the opposed sides in the war. One should also add, that there are no indications that serious considerations have been ever given for instance, to Reinhold Niebuhr's warning, that the Christian faith "ought to persuade us, that political controversies are always conflicts between sinners and not between righteous men and sinners. It ought to mitigate the self-

14 Michel, P., *Pour une sociologie des itinéraires de sens: une lecture politique du rapport entre croire e institution*, Archives de sciences sociales des religions, (1993), 82, pp. 223-238.

15 It is interesting to quote in this respect N. Kokosalakis: "In what was Yugoslavia, of course, the claims for autonomy of the new Republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia etc., and the resultant violent conflicts, are all underpinned by different ethno-religious boundaries between Catholics, Orthodox and Moslems. Now it hardly needs emphasizing that these ethnoreligious identities are immediately connected with the social and political struggles of these people to acquire statehood and a place in a world of scarcity and hard economic realities. Religious conservatism in these circumstances tends to promote political radicalism and violent conflict". N. Kokosalakis, *Religion and the Dynamics of Social Change in Contemporary Europe*, Archives de sciences sociales des religions, (1993) 81, p. 145.

righteousness, which is the inevitable concomitant to all human conflict".<sup>16</sup> Finally, it is also important to take into account the possibility, generally disregarded too, of the well-known irony of history, which may be at work today in the process of transition in this area, as it was before, as well as the possibility of perverse effects of otherwise commendable social actions.<sup>17</sup> This invites additional exploration of the reasons which have motivated and facilitated confessional options for opposed political strategies, providing the religious legitimacy to such strategies and contributing to a quasi total mobilization of confessional resources for political purposes, leading to the war.

First, there is at the background of such options a complex trend of parallel politicization of religion and of religionization of religion, described by R. Robertson, as a trend of world dimensions.<sup>18</sup> The politicization of religion has been going on along the lines of official politics even, if occasionally, with some critical rethinking and partial dissent. It may be detected primarily in a visible political instrumentalization of religion and in a religious instrumentalization of politics. In the first case, there is a visible process of mobilization of all the resources available, including the confessional ones, for political purposes in a situation of increasing social conflict. In fact, not one of the dominant political strategies, which have led to the war, has had a very realistic chance to succeed without an extended mobilization of existing, diverse confessional resources, as well as without obtaining at least some kind of legitimacy in superior religious terms. In the second case, there has been no realistic likelihood of a religious reconquista of society without a direct confessional intervention in politics. It has required, in substance, the affirmation of the respective religion as the legitimating political institution of the first order, which is able to create and recreate stable loyalty to the emerging social systems and functioning political systems on a mass scale.

The political mobilization of the confessional resources has been brought about in two different ways, both indicated by R. Robertson,<sup>19</sup> that is, one side, options in favour of a peculiar religious confession, motivated essentially by ideological motives and political purposes, in itself of non-religious and extra-religious nature, and on the other side, upon options for a peculiar political programme, based upon strictly religious commitments and motivated by purely religious motives.

The parallel process of religionization of politics has been going on in different ways. The religionization of politics could be individuated in a trend to present some crucial political ideas and some crucial political subjects as meriting a total adherence and unconditional and overheated veneration, in substance religious or parareligious.

The most important aspects of this process have been the following ones:

a) a systematic and durable inclination to give, in substance, religious attributes and connotations to some key political ideas in everyday usage, even if of mundane origin, with the visible intention to increase their non-negotiable attraction and to intensify their emotional charge, as well as to protect them, by explicit sacralization, from possible political critique and to immunize them from public dissent, giving them in that way an ultimate political legitimacy of essentially numinous nature (as in the political discourse about "the sacred Croatia", "the sacred Serbia", "the celestial Serbia", "the sacred land of the fatherland", "the sacred untouchable frontiers", "sacred will of the nation", "the sacred history of the fatherland" and so on);

b) a factual ontologization of the existing social, political and cultural differ-

16 Quoted from J.B. Elshant, *Women and War*, Boston, Basic Books, 1987, p. 187.

17 Boudon, R., *Il posto del disordine*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1985, p. 258.

18 Robertson, R., *Globalization, Politics, and Religion*, in: J. Beckford, Th. Luckmann /Eds./, *The Changing Face of Religion*, London, Sage, 1989, p. 12.

19 Robertson, R., *op. cit.*, p. 13.

ences or othernesses, with their projection on to overstanding and overarching metaphysical horizon or so, transforming, primarily in such a way, the actual political conflicts in conflicts quasi sub specie aeternitatis, or of the so called Grand History, and describing them ultimately as conflicts between different and opposed human types, between irreconcilable types of culture, between antagonistic types of civilization etc. and thereby reducing the possibility of their normal and peaceful coexistence and elevating the level of the acceptable price to be paid for conflicts and war;

c) a pervading and systematic manicheism, applied to current conflicts, portraying the opposed parties, on the one side, as the angelic or quasi angelic personification of Good and on the other, the diabolic or quasi diabolic incarnation of Evil, or depicting one side as the God's and stigmatizing the other as Satan's side. In that way going against M. Weber's expectations, presuming that the introduction of God's name in violent political conflicts ought to be experienced by believers as a blasphemy;<sup>20</sup>

d) a visible usage of the current interpretations of national history, on one side, in terms of a genuine and sacred martyrology or Calvary, but glorious in terms of the quality and quantity of sufferings and victims which have to be recompensed or revenged now, and on the other side, in terms of a privileged historic mission, quasi salvational, within the eternal plans of Providence, or in terms of a national historic dedication, chosen in advance and in a non-negotiable manner, all turned to Heaven and committed to the celestial cause and spiritual values;

e) an eternization of nations involved in terms of some kind of Urvolk and in terms of their fundamental, allegedly suprahistoric immutable qualities;

f) an almost permanent resort to a theory of diabolic conspiracy (from allegedly masonic, through Comintern to Vatican ones) against this or that nation in official interpretations of the recent, crucial political events.

The final result of such a religionization of politics may be reasonably described as a kind of absolutization of some, otherwise controversial, political goals, as well as their efficacious sacralization, or, using P. Michel's terminology, reintroducing politics with ultimate references and re-enchantment.

It is difficult to pretend in a context of a critical sociological analysis, that such a process has nothing to do with religion. Anyhow, something is evident: the above described process has been of a structural nature and it has easily detectable social functions. Primarily, it serves as a radical reinforcement of the existing conflicts bringing them to a point of irreparable incandescency and presenting them as life or death conflicts, or conflicts involving the survival of national identity, or a definitive loss of such identity. Furthermore, it contributes to a direct strengthening of a total and non-negotiable political mobilization of all diverse resources, with a parallel and collateral mobilization of almost all kinds of existing prejudices. Finally, it gives an additional intensity to a dichotomic political alignments in exclusive terms of "friend or foe", as well as to the otherness of the others.

Second, there is at the background a very specific concept of the nation, which is prevailing in the contemporary confessional cultures, both Orthodox and Catholic and lately, of Islamic too. One has to be aware that as D. Schnapper has underlined recently, there are at least two different histories of the nation and two different ideas of the nation, which have been permanently opposed, and that the histories of the construction of nation and the national ideologies have been different in the European East and the European West. "In different languages, the thinkers of the nation have

20 Gerth, H.H., Mills, C.W., From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, New York, Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 334.



opposed the civic, voluntary, contractual nation, of the West, to the populist, organic, nationalist or ethnic nation, of the European East. To the people of citizens of the West, it is opposed the people of ancestors of the East".<sup>21</sup> The first one goes back to the French revolution, and "it defines the nation in non-ethnic terms. This concept of nation has been called the idea of nation-citoyenne, as opposed to an ethnically based definition of what nation is". The crucial moment in this definition has been "the idea of the nation as an association of citizens, each possessing certain rights which should be guaranteed and safeguarded by the state". In this case this means that the nation is defined on the basis "of the idea of citizenship and of the commitment to pluralism", which signifies that the nation is not to be understood in terms of a community which is ethnically and culturally homogenous<sup>22</sup> and it has been, at least in principle, open to all who participate in common political life. The other concept of the nation is more ethnic than political, and it has been based upon the idea of an exclusive adherence to a collective entity, characterized by cultural homogeneity, which tends to be closed. Consequently, the political organization has been deemed to be based upon the ethnic, the *Urvolk*, the preexisting historico-biological community, and the state has been considered to be the supreme, almost sacred, political incarnation of such a community and its *Wesenswille* in F. Tönnies' words, and not necessarily a state of law, based upon a democratically articulated political will of equal citizens, by definition negotiable and open to criticism and contest as well as to rational and competent public discourse. The second concept introduces necessarily a discriminatory distinction between citizens of the first order and citizens of the second order, according to their nationality, or between citizens and subjects, the first one enjoying all the citizenship rights and the second being excluded from some elementary citizenship rights.<sup>23</sup>

It is the first concept which is more congenial to the traditions and culture of the operative confessions in this area.

Third, there are in the so called conventional religion in this area some traditions and cultural aggregates that may be used and have been used to stimulate and to legitimate confessional options in support to political strategies, pursuing the political ideal of "one nation, one state, and only one state for each nation", which could hardly be realized in the area without resort to violence and arms and a risky game of war and peace.

Let us review in shorthand at least some fundamental points in these confessional traditions and cultural aggregates.

a) There is a traditional conviction referring to an allegedly insoluble synthesis between the respective nationality and confession, insisting that a respective confession has not been just one of the important historical and cultural components of the nationality in question, but the constituent and constitutive nucleus of the very national being as such. In such a way an element of transcendence and sacredness has been implanted into the national being itself.

b) There is a traditional belief in the presumed convergence between the national

21 Schnapper, D., *Les sens de l'ethnico-religieux*, Archives des sciences sociales de religions, (1993), 81, p. 155.

22 Schwarzemantel, J., *Nation versus Class: Nationalism and Socialism in Theory and Practice*, in: Oakley, J./Ed., *The Social Origin of Nationalist Movements*, London, Sage, p. 57.

23 J. Habermas has underlined tensions existing between generalization of human rights and nationalism, asserting, that "the abstract idea of generalization of democracy and of human rights represents a point of reference which makes up a solid material upon which break down traditional national emanations - the language, literature and history of own nation". J. Habermas, *Per una idea razionale di patria*, *Micromega*, (1987) 3, p. 131.

state and the respective confession and church, which ends in a veneration of the national state as such, regardless of the way it has been established, and the historical context in which it has been formed, but above all regardless of the way it is organized and is functioning. There is no wonder in this case, that to stay resolutely with its people has meant for the respective ecclesial institution to stay persistently with its national state and state polity. A touch of sacredness and of transcendence of the state has been built into the very idea of national state.

c) There is a traditional interpretation of national history as a kind of the sacred or quasi sacred matryology (in Serbian Orthodoxy), or Calvary (in Croatian Catholicism) of the respective nation, resulting primarily from a deliberate historical dedication of the respective nation to religious beliefs and celestial values. In this way national history becomes desecularized.

d) There is a traditional conviction of the specific historical role of the respective nation in the history of a respective confession, described primarily in terms of a nation on the religious frontier and in terms of the nation, historically acting essentially as the guardian of the western or eastern religious frontiers, constantly exposed to external threats.

e) Consequently, there is a traditionally elaborated and cherished conviction of the existence and persistence of a fundamental historical convergence of what has been described, on one side, as "the national cause" (Serbian or Croatian) and, on the other, as "the religious cause" (Catholic or Orthodox) in the wider area. Consequently, there is a mutual reinforcement of two parallel absolutizations: national and confessional.

f) Finally, there is a traditional belief of the confessionally others in religious terms as schismatics, heretics and/or infidels, which easily leads to a negative absolutization of the otherness of confessional and national others, giving some kind of superior legitimacy to political ideas proclaiming the impossibility of living together in a peaceful, democratic and durable way with nationally and confessionally others.

Consequently, it has to be concluded at least in a tentative way, that the war in ex-Yugoslavia has not been a classical religious war, well-known from history, but it is a war with religion deeply involved and consciously engaged in it. At the same time, the war, which is going on, has some characteristics of a war of faiths, if the war of faiths means a conflict between believing and believing (*croire contre croire*), as P. Michel has underlined it.<sup>24</sup> But the faiths involved represent a mixture of confessional and mundane components, including absolutizations, sacralizations and re-enchantments. Finally, the course of events in the Yugoslav crisis since its beginning, later exploding in a war, has shown that confessions, operating in the area, have been more able to divide than to unite, more to oppose than to conciliate, more to inflame than to placate.<sup>25</sup>

24 Michel, P., *op. cit.*, p. 228.

25 One has to take into account very critical views, expressed in this respect by Barber, B. (*op. cit.*, p. 844.), stating, that how much the forms of the enlightened universalism used to glorify in the past such forms of monotheism as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, in reality many of them, in their modern incarnations, are paroxysmal and not cosmopolitan, full of hatred and not of love, proselytic and not ecumenical, fanatic and not rational, sectarian and not deistic, ethnocentric and not universalistic with the result that they are, as new forms of hypemationalism, schismatic and secessionistic, never integrative.