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NEOPATRIARCHY AND  
POLITICAL VIOLENCE

UNDERSTANDING ETHNIC CONFLICT IN  
THE BALKANS AND TRANSCAUCASIA

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## NEOPATRIARCHY AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

### Understanding ethnic conflict in the Balkans and Transcaucasia

The developmental disequilibrium in the Transcaucasus and ex-Yugoslavia was described as the consequence of an uneven and contradictory process of transition from traditional agrarian to industrial economy<sup>1</sup>. This process was characteristic of the communist type of modernisation 'from above' and of the related 'Pittsburgh' type of industrialisation, during which rural populations were brutally uprooted and called on to play social roles for which they were not prepared and to which they had difficulties adapting. In our parts the 'Pittsburgh' technological peak was reached in few industrial sectors only, while the economy as a whole lagged behind, with an unresolved 'peasant question' which neither the closed Soviet nor the more open Yugoslav systems have succeeded in putting *ad acta*. It should not be forgotten that only a generation ago both countries still had a predominantly rural population. Indeed, the rural population's proportion in the present conflict zones both in the Balkans and in the former Soviet space remains still very high. Relevantly, some of these restricted rural zones exhibit a relatively higher population density per square kilometre than adjacent ones with higher levels of urbanisation where violent conflicts have been so far avoided. It would be interesting to map up the geographical distribution of 'ethnic' conflicts in Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet space and compare it with the rural-urban ratio, population density and recent demographic changes in zones where the conflicts have been the most violent.

#### *From patriarchy to neopatriarchy*

In Valentine Moghdam words, "[I]n classic patriarchy, the senior man has authority over everyone else in the family, including younger men, and women subject to distinct forms of control and subordination [...] the key to the reproduction of classic patriarchy lies in the operations of the patrilocally extended household, which is also commonly associated with the reproduction of the peasantry in agrarian societies. The subordination of women in kinship-ordered or agrarian societies is linked to the reproduction of the kin group or the peasantry, as well as to the sexual division of labour. Childbearing is the central female labour activity [...] There is the predisposition to male dominance inherent in the relation between the precapitalist peasant household and the world of landlords and the state and the reproduction of kinship-ordered groups wherein women are exchanged and men are the transactors [...] In a patriarchal context, women are considered a form of property. Their honour –

<sup>1</sup> Ivan Ivekovic, *State, development and the political economy of international relations: the asymmetrical client-state in the Balkans and Transcaucasia*, (Paper presented at the Europe and the Balkans Workshop, Bertinoro, Italy, 16-18 February, 1996).

and, by extension, the honour of their family – depends in great measure on their virginity and good conduct”<sup>2</sup>. In such societies men and men only have the monopoly over the means of violence, in the family and in society in general, in the state and its agencies, and in religious institutions. Moghdam speaks of a “belt of classic patriarchy”, which stretches according to her from North Africa, through the Muslim Middle East to South and East Asia, to which I would add a geographically adjacent “belt of neopatriarchy”, including the macho cultural tradition of the modernised Balkans and of a good part of the Northern Mediterranean (the Italian Mezzogiorno and the like) and a number of neopatriarchal niches that accommodated themselves with modernisation elsewhere in Europe. In fact, patriarchy has survived on all the fringes of the First World and its mass industrial society and is reproduced by the internal contradictions of the process of modernisation itself. Neopatriarchy is patriarchy distorted by modernisation; it is neither modern nor authentic. In Western Europe or Northern America, it is not only an imported phenomenon by different immigrant communities originating from the underdeveloped Third World (many of these immigrant communities are indeed patriarchal or neopatriarchal) but is reproduced on the spot by the process of social marginalisation and by the persistence of the ‘familial’ or household mode of production. It is rooted in the surviving peasant or petty merchant economy based on the household, on unpaid or poorly remunerated family labour and its exploitation by the ‘patriarch’ or the ‘family manager’, who may even be a woman, although in typical agrarian societies this was/is the exception. The household may even be rich and well integrated into the capitalist or state-socialist surrounding, but as long as it remains an autonomous group productive unit managed by a patriarch it reproduces a neopatriarchal gender and age social hierarchy and related neopatriarchal values. Added to the list should be the more or less partial survival of the subsistence or natural economy which did not completely disappear with the commodification of production even in the most advanced industrial societies. When the household and not the individual is the basic ‘productive unit’-gender inequalities remain as salient as they have always been in class divided societies. In that sense, and in that sense only, it may be considered as a specific mode of production which may be found in all societies recognising the private appropriation of the surplus value produced by other people’s work. If it is so, then Hisham Sharabi’s assertion that neopatriarchy is a specific social formation characterised by a peculiar mode of production of dependent capitalism<sup>3</sup> is historically and geographically too restrictive and conceptually too broad. In fact, similar neopatriarchal patterns may be found in different past and present social formations and are not related to Arab societies only to which such a mode of production was imposed on, as he asserts, when the neopatriarchal petty bourgeoisie seized political power promoting an obsolete and perverted model of socio-economic development. Patriarchy is certainly older than capitalism and it is reproduced in contemporary Arab and other societies as ‘neopatriarchy’ through the family organisation of work and the patrilineal appropriation of the surplus produced by dependants. As recent political developments in Eastern Europe have shown, neopatriarchal tendencies can be intensified as a result of economic constraints, social crises and political change in already modernised societies and neopatriarchal niches may be found in highly advanced industrial countries as well.

The contradictory articulations of centre-periphery relations, both within a single country, and in-between the core country of immigration and the peripheral country of emigration, should be taken into account as well. Mass immigrations to poles of industrial development from less developed regions and countries have been and are still predominantly male, which in practice splits traditional families into two segments – the stationary one, composed

<sup>2</sup> Valentine M. Moghdam, *Modernizing Women. Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*, Cairo, The American University in Cairo Press, 1993, p. 104-105.

<sup>3</sup> Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society*, New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988.

of the wife (or womenfolk in general), children, elderly people and other dependants that remained at home, and the mobile man, the *Gastarbeiter*, who works for a salary in an alien human surrounding and sends cash to his geographically distant family. Besides sentimental ties which certainly subsist and may be even reinforced because of the frustrations of isolation and separation, the only way of effective communication between the two are the more or less regular remittances of the *Gastarbeiter* and his occasional visits to his family during holiday times. During such rare visits a new child may be conceived, but the father will rarely be present at its birth. More often he will be represented by a male relative, brother or his own father. Of course, nuclear families will tend to reunite in spite of often insurmountable economic and administrative obstacles, which would create tensions with the rest of the kin who count on the same remittances. However, most of the time the nuclear family will settle for 'temporary' separation, which would preserve the extended family back home and the outside form of patriarchal solidarity, but generate additional frustrations on both sides. Then the wife, with the support of dependants, will become the most eager and interested guardian of patriarchal values and the children will be kept as hostages guaranteeing man's loyalty. Viewed from this side, the patriarchal or neopatriarchal family is not a mere 'prison' for the publicly non-employed woman as many feminists claim, but is often and more primarily so the only available social framework which offers to her and her children relative material and psychological security. But there is more, because usually such a neopatriarchal family belongs to a larger kin network in which, in Sharabi's words, "even the lowliest individual can gain a hearing at the centres of wealth and power, through the intercession of relatives or friends, or friends of relatives or friends of friends. Patronage, and the satisfaction of needs that goes with it, makes it easier for the individual to accept his or her condition. Although alienation is not wholly overcome, one has the sense of belonging in a system which affords one protection and bestows upon one occasional favours"<sup>4</sup>.

I used here the expression of 'publicly non-employed' woman in order to underline that to the difference of her proletarianised husband she is not a wage-earner (and to distinguish her position from the economically and psychologically emancipated woman-wage-earner); she continues her reproductive function as child-bearer and, as a producer, she tills the family field (if any). It is not strange therefore that in our parts this segment of womenfolk wholeheartedly embraced nationalism promoting 'family values'. In spite of all the dilemmas, in such conditions she is not only the more psychologically stable member of the split nuclear family, but the fate of the family itself may depend on the strength of her character. She may get the support of the *pater familias* if she is integrated into the extended family, and usually she may count on the solidarity of other kinsmen living in the same area, which altogether creates a family public opinion, emotionally binding the 'temporarily' absent man. This man 'who has seen the world' may become aware of the poverty and decay back home and, striving for a better and more dignified life, become an agent of political change in the region of his origin. The vision of the reunited family then becomes equated with the idea of a reconstituted motherland to which the lost son has to return. As Slovenian sociologist Tanja Rener has written, the irresistible attraction of "homeland/nation as a mother expresses the infantile regression of the return to the mother's breast [... it] gets stronger according to the degree of the suffering/bleeding of the mother", and that is why it is so sincere and violent<sup>5</sup>. His mentality has in the meantime been already affected by the experience and skills he has accumulated separated from his family and he may be tempted to contribute to political change either by his personal activism or with money. Those are the consequences of diffuse and regionally uneven modernisation, when developmental violence that in former Yugoslavia took the form of ethnonationalism sometimes erupted in the most backward regions where

<sup>4</sup> Hisham Sharabi, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> Tanja Rener, *Brothers in Arms*, mimeo, undated.

the emigrant community or the diaspora was the most influential. Of course, there are many different and intermediate situations reproducing similar neopatriarchal reflexes. The above phenomenon is not directly related to the collapse of communism, although it contributed to it, but is primarily the consequence of the social drama of modernisation described previously. The same drama which started long before the decomposition of the two federations gave birth to ethnonationalism which in turn heavily 'borrowed' from patriarchy. This symbiosis was translated into neopatriarchal discourse with which different ethnocrats and warlords legitimate their political projects. The paradox is that such neopatriarchal reflexes re-emerged at a level of socio-economic modernisation when the authentic extended patriarchal family already underwent a process of transformation, or is on the way of disintegration and is being largely replaced by the nuclear family. Then it is the crisis of the nuclear family itself that revives the imaginary extended family, in the same way it contributes to the building-up of the imagined political community we call the nation<sup>6</sup>. Such imagined communities become for the individual substitutes for the effectively lost personal security.

### *The peasant question*

Peasants were always and everywhere the primary victims of the process of modernisation, yet without their impulses the process could not have proceeded. In Barrington Moore's words: "[T]he process of modernisation begins with peasant revolutions that fail. It culminates during the twentieth century with peasant revolutions that succeed. No longer is it possible to take seriously the view that the peasant is an 'object of history', a form of social life over which historical changes pass but which contributes nothing to the impetus of these changes. For those who savour historical irony it is indeed curious that the peasant in the modern era has been as much an agent of revolution as machines, that he has come into his own as an effective historical actor along with the conquests of the machine"<sup>7</sup>. His contribution to the success of the bourgeois revolution in France was quite important, very minor in Japan, insignificant to India to date, trivial in Germany and England after the initial peasant explosion had been defeated. It was decisive for the triumph of the communist project of modernisation 'from above' in Russia and China (and I would add to the list Yugoslavia, Albania and Vietnam). In these countries, as Moore remarked, the pre-communist landed upper classes did not make a successful transition to the world of commerce and industry and did not destroy the traditional peasant society. In turn it was the peasantry, which temporarily allied itself to urban groups – *intelligentsia* and *sans-culottes* – and destroyed the old upper classes and opened the way to communist modernisation. It lent its physical force to small underground communist parties, led by middle class intellectuals, who came forward with the most radical programmes for social and political change. Moore argues on the basis of his historical research that it did not support the communists only out of despair generated by war (First World War in Russia and Japanese invasion of China) and absolute deprivation, but also because of its rising expectations, in a situation when "those who fight, rule and pray" (the old elites) were no more returning peasants' services. Often, as it was the case with Stolypin's reforms in pre-war Russia, the economic situation of the peasantry had improved. Anyway, there was no numerous and real rural proletariat in any one of the countries where authentic revolutions succeeded to overthrow the old order, for the simple reason that extended families took care of their most destitute members. Although the peasantry was the major social force that destroyed the *ancien régime*, it was the prime victim of the communist version of primary state-capitalist accumulation.

<sup>6</sup> The expression "imagined community" was coined by Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London, Verso Press, 1983.

<sup>7</sup> Barrington Moore Jr., *Social origin of dictatorship and democracy. Lords and peasants in the making of the modern world*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1961 and 1981, p. 453.

It was shown elsewhere how the Soviet peasantry survived stalinist collectivisation, and ultimately – thanks to the allowance of family-plots – adapted itself to the conditions which had been imposed. The Soviet *kolkhoz* and *sovkhoz* system, in which three generations of the same families were employed, followed in many cases the boundaries of former peasant *obshchinas* or *amlyaks*<sup>8</sup>, and preserved the extended patriarchal family and often the entire clan. In spite of the onslaught of Soviet modernisation, kin and clan relationships survived in the Caucasus region and are the key for the understanding of more recent political developments. Ronald Suny described the persistence of kin ties during the Soviet era and related them to the ‘second economy’ and politics. In his words: “Since among Armenians, Georgians, and Azerbaijanis primary loyalty is centred on kinship groups or intimate friends, the sense of personal worth stems more from the honour or the shame one brings on one’s circle than from a successful career or great accumulation of wealth. Favours done or received are operative currency of both social and political relations, and the networks built up through favours and personal ties make it possible to circumvent the official state economy and legal forms of political behaviour. So powerful are the relations to one’s relatives and friends that the shame incurred by non-fulfilment is, for most Caucasians much more serious than penalties imposed by law. Since the political and police structures have also been penetrated by such personal networks, protection from punishment was a frequent favour, and non-compliance with the law held fewer risks before the 1970s than breaking family codes. Even after the state came down hard on the ‘second economy’ and the risks involved in circumventing the law increased, the networks persisted as an effective form of national resistance against the ways of doing business imposed by the Soviet polity”<sup>9</sup>. But kin and clan networks were not limited to the countryside only. A Soviet journalist described in 1991 the social structure of the city of Tashkent and the same description may be applied to any of the Transcaucasian urban centres: “People live here in a special kind of micro-climate, within which issues of age, nationality and occupation do not have a decisive significance. The main thing here is blood ties, personal sympathies, trust, and financial partnership. All of this determines how useful you are to the clan and to those who support you”<sup>10</sup>.

As it was said, Yugoslav peasants, drawn from all ethnic groups, were the ‘dynamite’ behind the communist success story during the anti-fascist liberation war. The majority were small holders, not proletarians, displaced by the terror of the occupiers and their local proxies. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia that provided the leadership for the insurrection, had no more than 6,000 members, most of them of urban origin and most of them killed during the first year of the war<sup>11</sup>. It regenerated itself and beefed up its ranks during the war by recruiting peasants, a fact which perhaps may explain why the Yugoslavs, after a short and inconclusive experiment with collectivisation, returned to small holdings. It was a departure from the Soviet ownership model, but had the same social effect among populations still partly linked by kin solidarity. The Yugoslav peasantry was certainly freer and better-off than the Soviet one, yet as shown later, in the first pluralist elections it also massively voted

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Gennadij E. Markov, «Les sociétés traditionnelles d’Asie Central», in *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique*, vol. XXXI, no. 2-3, April-September 1990, pp. 397-401; Bertrand Bouchet, «Tribus d’autrefois, kolkhozes d’aujourd’hui», in *Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée*, no. 1-2, 1991, pp. 55-69; Sergei P. Polyakov, «Modern Soviet Central Asian countryside: traditional forms of property in a quasi-industrial system», in V. Naumkin (ed.), *State, Religion and Society in Central Asia*, Reading, Ithaca Press, 1993, pp. 124-143.

<sup>9</sup> Ronald Grigor Suny, *Transcaucasia: cultural cohesion and ethnic revival in a multinational society*, in L. Hajda and M. Beissinger (eds.), *The nationalities factor in Soviet politics and society*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1990, p. 231.

<sup>10</sup> *Literaturnaja Gazeta*, January 16, 1991, quoted by Mark R. Ressler, *Elites and ethnic identities in Soviet and post-Soviet politics*, in A.J. Motyl, *The post-Soviet nations. Perspectives on the demise of the USSR*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1992, p. 154.

<sup>11</sup> There were allegedly also 12,000 members of the Communist Youth Organisation, the *Savez Komunističke Omladine Jugoslavije* (SKOJ), which was the equivalent of the Soviet *KOMSOMOL*.

for nationalist programmes of radical change. In the most underdeveloped territories with ethnically mixed population, such as the Krajina region in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, or Kosovo, group cohesion is still largely maintained by the extended family and supporting mutually exclusive nationalist projects had to lead to conflict. If today's geography of ethnic conflicts is analysed, one should conclude that they are the most violent precisely in places where such traditional segments of the population, the peasantry, feel the most threatened by the modernisation process. Those are in principle contact-zones between relatively underdeveloped rural territories and poles of industrial development, with a highly mobile social element which used to commute, often on a daily base, between village and town.

Communist modernisation had not produced a new 'proletarian' ethic as has been assumed by the theory. Instead, its consequences included that of the erosion of patriarchal morality and solidarity. The militant atheism of communist regimes accelerated the process. The Soviet 'socialist man' and the Yugoslav 'self-manager' (both males!) were hybrids enduring all the hardships of the state-sponsored industrialisation effort. These half-workers/half-peasants were commuting between town and countryside, between the cash and natural economy, between their work-places in industry and the family plot, between extended family loyalties and primary obligations towards immediate kin, between folk culture and the new urban subculture. The patriarchal family was in disarray: the extended one was threatened in its very existence and the restricted one has been in deep crisis. Couples often lived separated, the rate of divorces grew and one-parent families proliferated, as did extra-marital births. Alcoholism, venereal diseases, criminality and prostitution were rising, although nothing compared to their present explosion. So did political violence. It is not surprising that in such a situation such frustrated people longed to recreate the lost bonds of group solidarity. Ethnonational projects conceived and propagated by middle-class urban people seemed to offer such a possibility. Using a simple neopatriarchal discourse and selected symbols from the past, and appealing to the very values of the peasant society, pasted together with rosy visions of the future, these ethnocrats succeeded in mobilising large followings among the rural and suburban masses.

But the peasantry, if through nothing else than the electoral number games, was once again to play a decisive role in political change. Both in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, peasant perceived the intrusion of the party-state in their everyday life as alien. The state was personified by Moore's 'small lord', a reactionary and corrupt local potentate: in the USSR it was the chairman of the *kolkhoz*, or the manager of the motor-tractor station or of the factory; in Yugoslavia it was local tax-collector, the inspector and the manager of the factory, who all squeezed the peasants in the name of the community, but also for their own benefit. The state was indeed extortionist and in the most underdeveloped regions, where there was little more than agriculture, the peasant became its main victim. The rules of extortion did not derive from law, but depended on the whims of local officials. The *kolkhoznik* wanted at the minimum to extend his family-plot and at the maximum to get 'his' land back and the Yugoslav small holder stubbornly struggled to breach the land-maximum imposed on him. The latter had enormous difficulties to cope with industrial agricultural competition and cheap imports. Both came to the conclusion that the state was the main obstacle between them and prosperity and that it should be, to use a neo-liberal term, 'rolled back', which is also the ideal of all stationary agrarian communities. In Yugoslavia at least, many small-holders and petty-commodity producers naively believed that after the communist party-state was defeated, all taxes would be abolished or become symbolic. In short, for many peasants who voted for change, it was a 'revolution of rising expectations'.

Peasants uprooted by ethnic cleansing and urban *déclassé* elements constitute today the majority of our regular armies and militias in combat zones. For many of them, military service and war became an alternative or complementary 'mode of production'. On the other hand, the very fact that important segments of the rural population, both in the Caucasus and in the Yugoslav space, rely on small-holdings for their physical and social reproduction,

which at any time may return to self-sufficient natural economy, explains how these populations endure the deprivations and hardships of present wars. In other words, if Serbia has succeeded in sustaining a three-year long campaign of conquest in Croatia and Bosnia as well as the protracted occupation of Kosovo, supplying and financing a huge mass of armed non-producers, it is largely due to the relative stability of its 'peasant' economy. Such an economy, even if unable to export to outside cash markets, because of internationally imposed sanctions, is to a great degree immune to outside pressures. Milosevic's popularity has considerably decreased in most urban centres in Serbia, but he may still count on the steady political support of the Serbian peasantry. In the same way, the Karadzic regime in Bosnia is presiding over a predominantly rural Serbian population (Muslims are predominantly urban), which in spite of war disruptions and of the total collapse of the local economy, can still, at least partly, feed itself. The persistence of Albanian political resistance to Serbian rule in Kosovo, in spite of the fact that local Albanians have been systematically ethnically cleansed from the modern sector of economy and administration, may also be explained by the endurance of the local peasant economy. The Albanian civil society which confronts the Serbian state, and has successfully organised its parallel power structure, relies first on such internal reserves, and then on the remittances of expatriate Albanians, strongly bound to their extended patriarchal families. I could proceed in the same way from one to another conflict zone in the Balkans and Caucasus and repeat the same description.

*Patriarchal residues and values: authoritarianism and egalitarianism*

A poll of Soviet citizens taken in February 1990 showed that many of them, in spite of their disenchantment with communism, shared an authoritarian syndrome. The overwhelming majority still believed that the government should take basic responsibility for their welfare, and not leave this to be determined by individual efforts and fortunes. 46% of all questioned answered that it should be a government duty, only 9% agreed that it is the individual's responsibility, while 45% did not answer. The percentage charging the government with such a duty tended to increase with the age of polled persons. A curious polarisation occurred among the Georgians, where only 1% abstained, but as much as 75% thought that it is the government's duty and 23% the individual's responsibility<sup>12</sup>. The latter, confirmed by other analyses, may be explained by the fact that patriarchal residues, linked to the extended family and kin structures, were and are still incomparably stronger in the southern republics than in the north or north-west. They are also stronger among Russian peripheral rural populations, especially the *Cossacks*. Perhaps the contemporary '*Cossack revival*' is paradigmatic for the point I want to underline. Although many local variations appeared, their most interesting elements include the renewal of tsarist military traditions, the pronounced nostalgia for a strong central state that would use their services (sometimes combined with the veneration of the Romanovs), for a thorough religionisation of public life, and the renewal of the pre-communist and pre-capitalist *obshchina*. The refusal of de-collectivisation and the renewal of extended family property, in place of the disbanded or decaying *kolkhoz*, is a recent and under-studied phenomenon characteristic more generally for the southern successor states than for the rest of the former Soviet Union.

A recent poll over the value orientations of Serbian post-communist political elites conducted by the Belgrade Institute for Political Studies<sup>13</sup> found out that as much as 40.5% of those questioned gave preference to a mixed economy "with more state ownership", while only 17% gave preference to private ownership with the role of the state restricted to mon-

<sup>12</sup> Based on an Emory University survey of 2,485 Soviet citizens interviewed at their homes in November and December 1989, in *The New York Times*, March 29, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> The research was based on a sample of 200 of the most outstanding members of the Serbian and federal parliaments and top party leaders, reflecting in percentage the political structure of the two bodies. See Vinko Djuric, «*Turbo elites*» (The turbo elites), in *Duga*, No. 1622, 19 August – 1 September, 1995, pp. 30-31.



etary regulation and fiscal policies only. In the same poll, 38.5% gave preference to a mixed economy with “more private ownership”, but the latter should be read together with the statement that “too much freedom brings more harm than benefits” (67% of elites’ members agreed with this statement, shared also by the population at large) and that “socialism is the best form of democracy” (35% agree).

Yugoslav sociologist Josip Zupanov described in 1977 the “egalitarian syndrome” as a specific behavioural pattern stemming from tradition, rather than as merely being a phenomenon imposed by communist ideology, though it does combine well with it. He viewed it as a major obstacle to modernisation<sup>14</sup>. “Egalitarianism implies the idea of a limited pool of goods (without envisaging the possibility of its enlargement) which are to be distributed (and further re-distributed) by a just and authoritarian governor in an even manner. This in turn presupposes the distributive function of the state, which can lead to an obsession about dispossessing private owners, thereby impeding entrepreneurship, professionalism and innovation”<sup>15</sup>. Independent polls confirmed that egalitarianism was not evenly distributed among Yugoslav regions and ethnic groups. It was much higher in less developed republics and in the province of Kosovo. It also tended to augment with lower educational levels and with the age of questioned persons.

It seems that the ‘egalitarian syndrome’ was even re-enforced when living standards started to decline rapidly because of the general collapse of state-command economies, the disruption of trade circuits and the eruption of conflicts. It seems also that our post-communist societies still need “an authoritative and just allocator of resources”, which on the macro-level may only be the new state, which means that the state is coming back into the picture. On the level of the extended family or kin group that is the *pater familias*, and on other micro-levels it may be the manager or the owner of the factory, the mayor, the militia chief, or the mafia boss as well. A new group solidarity may complement or supplant the extended family. The allocator, who may have his own preferences and special obligations to his inner circle, is usually accepted or at least tolerated as long as he takes care of all the members of the community or group. A good officer is the one who takes care of all his soldiers and treats them with equity, although he may be surrounded by his peers who constitute a group apart, and because of their special role they may be privileged. Severe but just officers were always the most respected ‘leaders of men’, who act as ‘fathers’ to their soldiers. The military organisation itself is per definition a male establishment and its subdivisions, platoons, battalions and so on resemble kin groups. In the past ages, war-plunder was often hierarchically distributed and it was known in advance who gets what and how much, a phenomena which reappeared in our ethnic wars. Wars are anyway male enterprises, but they have always been ‘social equalisers’ as well. People who for three years live in the same underground shelter in Sarajevo, or those who bombard Sarajevo from the same mountain trench for three years, tend to begin to resemble each other (each group separately of course) regardless of their former social status, profession or current bank account. Soldiers are linked not only by a common command system but also by an *esprit de corps*, which gradually also develops among shelter-people, sharing over a longer period certain essentials-same dangers, limited habitat, scarce facilities, water and food. In situations when even physical privacy disappears, people develop solidarity ties, and concerns about private property tend to be diluted. In such a way a shelter-group may become a substitute for the extended family. In Sarajevo underground shelters, all observers agree, ‘ethnic differences’ which are believed to be the main cause of the war raging above, tend to disappear. Ultimately any such group would need some system of organisation and decide who will sleep where, who will risk his or her life to provide water and food, who will take care of the children and disabled, who will

<sup>14</sup> Josip Zupanov, «Socijalizam i tradicionalizam» (Socialism and traditionalism), in *Politicka Misao*, Zagreb, No. 1, 1977).

<sup>15</sup> Sergej Flere, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

cook, who will clean the shelter and so many other things, that some kind of internal leadership will have to emerge, whether elected or self-imposed. Ideally, that would be a commonly agreed upon skilled 'organiser' or 'committee' that justly divides the tasks and allocates what is available to the group. In communities with strong patriarchal residues, and Sarajevo is one of them, preference would usually be given to men, who would be called to play the role of trench officers, or of a *pater familias*. Both the shelter and the trench groups illustrate how wars and violent political conflicts, act as social equalisers, reinforce the already existing "egalitarian syndrome" and re-create patriarchal-like solidarity ties.

More recently Zupanov tried to identify the 'dominant values' of the Croatian post-communist society<sup>16</sup>. Values are broad, abstract, explicit or implicit, shared standards of what is right, desirable and worthy of respect. They set the general tone for cultural and social life and for behavioural norms. Norms are general rules about what people should or should not do, say, or think in a given situation. By themselves they provide only guidelines for human activity, but they are also socially sanctioned, formally or informally. Sanctions are the socially imposed rewards and punishments by which people are encouraged to conform to norms<sup>17</sup>. Zupanov, described the articulation of 'dominant values' of the Croatian society at three main levels of centredness: (1) at the individual, (2) national, and (3) societal (global) level. His conclusions are relevant and I believe that they may be applied to emergent neo-patriarchal societies in the former Yugoslav space:

- At the individual level the dominant value is 'individual utilitarianism': material and other social gains, self-seeking interest. The acquisition of riches existed also in state socialism, but was an implicit value and was publicly muted down. Now it became an explicit, legitimate and socially desirable value, as long as it remains in the framework of new law and business ethics.
- At the national level the dominant value is heroism, self-abnegation and self-sacrifice for the fatherland. It belongs to the traditional 'heroic codex' which was earlier linked to mountainous regions of the country (the most underdeveloped), but which now seems evenly spread. That is the codex on which we have to rely, concludes Zupanov, not only in war, but also in peace, because the 'puritan ethic and hard working' are not in our tradition.
- At the societal level there are at least three dominant values: radical egalitarianism, solidarity and authoritarianism. Egalitarianism refers to the distribution of social positions (equal chances) and to the allocation of 'social rewards'. The main idea of radical egalitarianism is "that nobody can get more than the one who has the least" and its historical roots may be found in traditional agrarian society, but were reproduced through the socialist-collectivist socio-economic system. Its socio-psychological roots are in situations of absolute deprivation, when the individual has no means at all to improve his or her condition (my example with shelter-people illustrates such a situation). Contrary to the 'protestant ethic', it is a redistributive ethic, demanding that we share with others what we have. The levelling of salaries (in state socialism), but also enduring anti-intellectualism and anti-professionalism are some of the manifestations of such a stand. Solidarity on the other hand exists in all societies, but our solidarity is of the traditional type, or in Durkheim's term – mechanical. Finally, authoritarianism as a societal value shapes authoritarian political culture.

The conclusions of Professor Zupanov, (who focused only on Croatia), coincide with my own analysis. The same values are reproduced in most underdeveloped countries and they are even more emphasised in Bosnia and Herzegovina, southern Serbia, Kosovo, Montene-

<sup>16</sup> Josip Zupanov, «Dominantne vrijednosti hrvatskoga društva» (Dominant values of the Croatian society), in *Erasmus*, Zagreb, No.2, June 1993.

<sup>17</sup> To simplify, but following Professor Zupanov's logic, I took all these definitions from M.S. Bassis, R.J. Gells and A. Levine, *Sociology. An introduction* (4th edition), New York, Mc Graw-Hill, 1991, pp. 67-70.

gro and Macedonia. In Slovenia and Croatia itself, with the exception of few remote regions, the traditional extended family has practically disappeared, while kin relationships still play a central social role in other parts of the former Yugoslav space. Proceeding further eastwards, it even seems that such stands are re-enforced by the prevailing clan structure, characteristic not only for the Caucasus, but for Turkey, Iran and the broader Middle Eastern region as well. They must be the strongest in backward tribal societies which never really managed to overcome the threshold of absolute deprivation, which is not the case of the countries on which my analysis is focused. Afghanistan is the example of such a tribal society and by some relevant coincidence it may be found that it shares the same dominant values and is torn by similar ethnic conflicts as we are. So much for those in my own country who pretend that with Afghan-like values we 'belong' to Europe.

I would add to the list of dominant values in our societies a pronounced anti-urbanism, characteristic of the peasant mentality. I will describe this in more detail later.

### *Gender problems and women's social roles*

When we speak of extended family and kin relationships, which are the products of a traditional society that reproduces patriarchal values, we must also speak of gender. "In all aspects of social activity, including access to resources for production, rewards or remuneration for work, distribution of consumption, income or goods, exercise of authority and power, and participation in cultural and religious activity, gender is important in establishing people's behaviour and the outcome of any social interaction. As well as interactions between individual men and women, gender relations describe the social meaning of male and female, and thus what is considered appropriate behaviour or activity for men and women"<sup>18</sup>. "What is considered appropriate" depends again on the dominant or imposed value system and therefore belongs to the realm of ideology and practical politics, which means also that gender identity has a strong ideological content. Social norms prescribing "what is considered appropriate" are sanctioned by public opinion, ruling elites, churches and state agencies. Sanctions may be enforced by law and be very severe. For example, the absolute prohibition of incest is the only social taboo which survived time and is respected in all societies. Other sanctions are not necessarily prescribed by the state but may be equally or even more severe. However, the state may act as a corrector and influence for the better or the worse on gender relations, through its legislation, social policy and the institutions it controls. But of course, values, norms and sanctions regulating gender relations are different in different societies and evolve. What is considered as male or female attributes, or male and female work, varies considerably between different societies and different historical periods.

The social status and role of women are always a relevant barometer for society itself, its level of advancement and modernisation. Better than anything else they show the persistence or retreat of patriarchal and authoritarian attitudes. It is indicative that women in general are far less geographically mobile than the male population, which also means that they have fewer opportunities to be emancipated from working conditions in stationary agriculture. Contrary to commuting men, who may establish new networks in urban centres and even marry there, the whole work and life of these immobile women remain limited to their community of origin. Being closer to it, they are often the guardians of 'traditional values', although all such values are centred on the man and patriarchy. On the average they also remain less educated which means that the wage-earners among them had lower incomes. Typically certain industrial sectors, for example textile factories, employ low-skilled labour, where women are overrepresented. Employed women in general have remained doubly exploited: at their workplace and by their families. Forced to combine the two obligations,

<sup>18</sup> Ruth Pearson, «Gender matters in development», in T. Allen and A. Thomas (eds.), *Poverty and development in the 1990s*, Oxford, Oxford University Press (in association with The Open University), 1992, p. 292.

little time was left for their further education or for the promotion of their professional careers. In spite of their formal and legal 'emancipation', the unwritten moral code of communist-controlled societies, supported by dominant *macho* political structures, remained essentially patriarchal. Alexandra Kolontai and similar female 'comrades' were rather the exception than the rule and the more recent 'western-imported' feminist trend was perceived as a direct threat to socialist authorities. I have an example in my own family: my sister, who belonged to an informal and rather benign intellectual feminist group, was harassed by the previous communist regime and is ostracised by contemporary Croatian ethnocrats<sup>19</sup>. Political regimes changed but the patriarchal mentality did not disappear with the passing away of the traditional society. All over Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, we currently witness an aggressive patriarchal *reconquista* whose primary victims are women, a group whose social status has been systematically downgraded and legal rights revised. They were, together with their children, the main victims of wars against civilians and of policies of ethnic cleansing. All church hierarchies press for the abrogation of the liberal abortion legislation inherited from the former Yugoslav state and women massively lose their jobs as first victims of market-rationalisation. For the ethnocrats our 'noble mothers and virgin sisters' have only one 'sacred national duty', that is to reverse the process of 'national decay', to stop the 'white plague' and produce as many future soldiers as possible. The Draft Programme for the Demographic Development of Croatia planned an increase of family allowances in order to stimulate birthrates, but was severely criticised in the official press because allowances 'undermine the authority of men' who are 'heads and supporters of the family'. Instead, one of the critics proposed tax deductions for these 'heads of the family'<sup>20</sup>.

In fact, in our societies, women who represent the numerical majority may be described as a discriminated minority, although many of them are not aware of it. They do not fit into Wirth's classical definition, which says that a minority group is "a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination"<sup>21</sup>. Women in traditional societies, and in many aspects we are still living in such societies with strong patriarchal residues, are less likely to be aware of their subordinated social status and the sexist exploitation of their labour, than educated women in modern industrial societies. However, in both cases the discrimination objectively exists and there is no contemporary society in which gender inequalities are not present.

On the other hand, minorities as a whole are very much aware of the discrimination to which they are daily subjected by our ethnonational states and they fit ideally into Wirth's definition, which may be used to link their inferior status to the objective discrimination of women in our societies. Again, it may be said that women from an ethnic minority are doubly discriminated against: first, by their own patriarchal community, and second, they are discriminated as members of the minority group. Helen Hacker offered a useful comparison of stereotypes of women and blacks in the American society<sup>22</sup>. Her thesis, slightly adapted, may explain how our male chauvinists ascribe similar attributes and attitudes to both women and members of discriminated ethnic minorities. As a result, because both women and minorities

<sup>19</sup> Dr. Rada Ivekovic was lecturer at the Department of Philosophy of Zagreb University and a specialist in Indian philosophy. She was among the seven "witches from Rio" against whom the high-circulation Zagreb weekly, *Globus*, launched a defamatory campaign calling for their political lynching. She currently lives and works in Paris. Recent publications: R. Ivekovic, *Orients: critique de la raison postmoderne*, Paris, Noël Blandin, 1992; R. Ivekovic (ed.), *La Croatie depuis l'effondrement de la Yougoslavie*, Paris, l'Harmattan, 1994; R. Ivekovic, *La balcanizzazione della ragione*, Rome, Manifestolibri, 1995.

<sup>20</sup> Darko Oracic, «A uloga muskarca?» (What about the role of men?), in *Vecernji list*, 17 June, 1995.

<sup>21</sup> L. Wirth, *The problem of minority groups*, in *The science of man in the world crisis*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1945, p. 347.

<sup>22</sup> Helen Mayer Hacker, «Women as a minority group», in *Social Forces*, 30 October 1951, Cart. 1, p. 65.

are allegedly inferior in intelligence and skills, chauvinists attempt to rationalise their status with such rules as "everybody should know his or her place in our society", "women's place is at home to take care of the family and children", and "minorities have their own homeland where they should go; here they are only our guests, but they should behave according to our rules". The resulting recipe for discrimination is the same: limitations on employment and education; confinement to traditional jobs, barred from supervisory positions; social and professional segregation. While 'alien' minority groups may be simply expelled and forced to emigrate, women belonging to the ethnonational majority are systematically pushed outside of public life. With few exceptions which prove the rule, women who were the heads of different governmental institutions – schools, hospitals, social services and similar agencies – are rapidly losing their positions. Often they are replaced by less competent but aggressive men. Insecure and half-skilled male chauvinists fear the competition of a growing number of educated women, the same way as poor white racists in the U.S. fear the competition of blacks on the labour market. That is how the inferiority complex is transformed into a *macho* supremacy complex. Once again patriarchal residues resurface.

In war-torn and conquered zones, minority women and their children were and still are the major victims of ethnic-cleansing policies. They are targeted as double minorities, but in the eyes of the conqueror they are the ones who assure the physical reproduction of the 'enemy nation' and they should be stopped from giving birth to future manpower. In traditional societies centuries ago, male war-prisoners were massacred, disabled or castrated and women and children were taken as slaves, usually 'fairly' divided among the victors. In some places all male children were either massacred or castrated. Women were regularly raped, not only for the personal pleasure of the rapists, but by political design encouraged by warlords and their officers. The not clearly articulated idea was to implant one's own seed into the 'enemy camp' and to cripple physically and symbolically future 'enemy' generations, so that they cannot become a threat once again. By humiliating women and polluting one of the highest values of traditional society, all the 'enemy' community is humiliated and its collective identity is spoiled. Unfortunately, the price is paid primarily by women themselves, who were the first victims of hideous violence and then usually ostracised by their own patriarchal communities. In wars, a tortured man is a hero, but a raped woman is pitied at best. Women themselves know it and often conceal their ordeal. If they succeed, it remains their own physical and psychological problem, but not the problem of the community or the society whose 'honour is saved' as long as the truth is not discovered. At the end of the 20th century the same tactic is used once again in order to terrorise civilian populations and force them to leave their habitat<sup>23</sup>. For the same reason children were killed daily in Bosnia by precise sniper fire. Women and their children are the primary victims of contemporary civil wars: according to the UNHCR they represent 84% of all refugees.

#### *Patriarchal convulsions and ethnicity*

As the migrations from the countryside to urban centres accelerated, a marginalised population of non-producers amassed in the industrial suburbs. They survived in large measure thanks to the solidarity of their employed kinsmen or to the links they kept with their villages. This family parasitism tended to dilute group solidarity and became a widespread problem. Typically these general migratory trends tended to be ethnocentric: Croats from Bosnia migrated toward Croatia, Serbs toward Serbia, while Slav Muslims from Serbia and

<sup>23</sup> Tadeusz Mazowiecki's 1992 Report on the State of Human Rights in the Former Yugoslavia mentions 119 pregnancies that were caused by rape and reported by six hospitals only. According to medical studies, one pregnancy occurs out of every 100 cases of rape, which suggests that the 119 reported pregnancies were the result of some 12,000 rapes. As most of the rapes are not reported because of the related social stigma and as the war continued for two more years, the figure of 20,000-30,000 rapes which is most frequently referred to in the press is quite probable (*War Report*, No. 36, September 1995, p. 34.).

Montenegro usually chose Bosnia as their destination. Local migratory and commuting patterns were on the other hand channelled towards the nearest regional pole of development, and then, if the ethnic composition of the hinterland population was different from that of the urban centre, new sources of social and political tensions were created. Migrations broke down many of the attachments and norms associated with village society, and it had, on balance, two effects: individualism increased and large scale, impersonal associations grew. Psychologically, urbanisation awakens individual and group aspirations, expectations, and identities that in the aggregate can have enormous political power. At the same time, cities resisted this 'peasantisation'. In Sarajevo these newcomers, irrespective of ethnicity, were contemptibly called by the natives 'hoofs', while the original town-dwellers labelled themselves 'folks' (using the Turkish term '*rayya*'). People from same villages, same ethnic affiliations and regions tended to band together in attempts to recreate the shattered solidarity bonds. Often they would settle in the same streets or blocks crowding the modest living space they could afford. They would frequent the same public places, listen to the same folk music and attend the same public spectacles. Football matches were often transformed into arenas where they could demonstrate their force and use muscles against a similar mob supporting the "enemy" team. Typical fan rivalries were originally based on regional, not on ethnic loyalties, although in the final stage of the crisis Yugoslav stadiums witnessed some major outburst of ethnic hatred. Similar examples are found in the USSR as well. In Tashkent in 1969, following a football match with a Russian team at the Pakhtator stadium, the Uzbek crowd rioted shouting anti-Russian slogans. Although the details were never clarified, it seems that the rioters were manipulated by mutually antagonistic cliques struggling for supremacy in the local party-state apparatus. The outcome was a massive purge which politically eliminated one of the cliques<sup>24</sup>.

The ranks of the urban sub-proletariat were constantly beefed up with the maturing of new generations which could not find work, which in practice meant that some ethnonational groups with higher birthrates, namely the Albanians and Muslim Bosnians in former Yugoslavia were overrepresented in this category. The situation was additionally complicated with the growing army of those who lost their jobs because of the economic crisis. This category included primarily workers without permanent contracts, who were not protected by law, and again with this physical and semi-skilled labour certain regions or ethnic groups were overrepresented. In similar moments family and ethnic solidarity is activated and competition for work intensifies, acting usually on the micro-level against minorities. Of course, once hostilities broke out, minorities were the first targeted: they were publicly denounced as 'enemies', 'spies' and 'fifth column', and were expelled from work, and from their apartments and houses. Parallel developments in rural zones, where social tensions and then ethnic competition augmented with the return wave of those who were rejected from urban centres. They were not happily received by their relatives as they had no cash-reserves and were out of work. These returnees, essentially a sub-urban element, became the catalysts of unrest in rural zones. Organised in small informal groups and commuting with the nearby city, they became a destabilising ferment both in their village and in the city. In such a way 'real' socialism produced its own *déclassé* social element, both urban and rural, that had nothing to lose and, hoping for the better, was ready to support any change. This element was available for social and political mobilisation.

The officially sponsored behavioural models were undermined by the widespread corruption, the consumerism of privileged groups and by the moral duplicity of the party-state leadership. The communist model of development underwent a gradual but steady process of social, political and economic delegitimation, and an alternative model had to be articulated. In such situations the lonely and frightened individual often tries to find comfort in

<sup>24</sup> Donald S. Carlisle, *Power and politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: from Stalin to Gorbachev*, in W. Fierman (ed.), *Soviet Central Asia: the failed transformation*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1991, pp. 111-112.

myths and symbols of the past and/or in a rediscovered spirituality. In situations of social crisis and general anxiety religions and religious sects prosper. The previously deserted churches and mosques were suddenly overcrowded and the reduced number of clerics overwhelmed. Here and there, like in Medjugorje in Herzegovina, miracles appeared and religious public rituals attracted crowds. In societies which just started to liberalise and which were not yet purged of official atheism the participation in such ceremonies became a kind of protest against communist authorities. For many religion and nationality became synonymous.

Criticising unfounded assumptions of the liberals and socialists that the process of modernisation will ultimately lead to the dissolution of ethnicity and to the transcendence of nationalism, Anthony Smith affirmed that “[T]he very economic and industrial trends that they assumed would undermine tribalism and nationalism, have instead tended to reinforce ethnic and national divisions and loyalties. The creation of vast factories and plants, massive urbanisation and slum conditions, fierce competition for jobs and housing, the rise of mass literacy and the impact of radio and television, have all tended to bring new insecurities, anxieties and frustrations which unscrupulous demagogues could manipulate by appealing to the comforting warmth of old ethnic bonds. To be restored to one’s cultural family, to be an equal in one’s own closed circle, to receive the protection of one’s brethren, seems the only route to sanity and dignity in the computer age”<sup>25</sup>. Smith argues that increased communications have accentuated ethnic antagonisms and heightened the visibility of national differences. Far from creating a single universal culture, mass media have been manipulated by political elites and state authorities, who have used them to mould separated ‘national cultures’.

Social changes were probably too rapid and uneven, involving few generations only, all of them still carrying the psychological burden of their pre-industrial past, and not yet fully adapted to their new social roles. Communist development is greatly responsible for the configuration of social and political forces which proved to be conducive to conflict and violence. Indeed, our societies underwent dramatic demographic, economic, technological, social, cultural and political changes, which we have not succeeded in internalising four years after the collapse of state socialism.

In former Yugoslavia and Transcaucasia the program for a radical departure from the communist present was offered by ethnonationalism, apparently the only available ideology which could reconstitute a semblance of social solidarity. The activists and ideologues of change were intellectuals of peasant origin, they had joined the middle class people recruited among free professions or dissatisfied and *apparatchiks* working for the party-state and their arguments were essentially political. They did not care much for the economy as such – they could not understand anyway – and they did not have any interest for sociological analysis, which was too complicated, but the shortcomings of the communist regime offered such an abundance of political themes that they had only the *embarras du choix* to pick up the most convincing arguments. In order to mobilise the populace, themes related to national self-determination, unity, values, culture, tradition, revival, liberation, statehood and independence, were pasted together with slogans about democracy, freedom, the rule of law, popular participation and authentic political representation, and with a utopian and fluid vision of capitalism. In the following chapter, favourite nationalistic themes will be reviewed in more detail. Such themes initiated the mutual polarisation and internal homogenisation of different ethnonational groups. As ethnonational ideologues had to give their projects of change some kind of social legitimacy, they found it by reviving myths and symbols of the past. Re-establishing such an imaginary connection with the pre-communist past presupposes the reconstruction of this past and the rewriting of history. It is essentially an

<sup>25</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *The ethnic revival in the modern world*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 3.

intellectual exercise, known as historicism, through which a new historical legitimacy is built up. The pre-communist past, unfortunately, was not so glorious as our nationalists pretend. Our economies were backward, traditional and agrarian, our societies and values were patriarchal and authoritarian, and our political systems autocratic. Insisting on traditional national values, culture and history, meant the return to such a type of past, which cannot provide any guidance for the solution of the accumulated developmental problems. It is also not the best introduction for democracy.

### *Hybrid intellectuals*

In predominantly agrarian societies, such as the ones we had in the Balkans and Transcaucasia some four decades ago, from which former upper classes and elites had been systematically eliminated as 'enemies of the people', the largest recruiting pool was provided by the peasantry, the dislocated element described above. Through education and indoctrination the mentality of these individuals was supposed to have been changed. In order to secure their upward professional or social promotion, most of them embraced – in earnest or not – the dominant 'Marxist-Leninist' (USSR) or 'workers' socialist self-management' (Yugoslavia) ideology, but were still carrying the 'original sin' of their peasant ancestry. In fact large numbers of state-employed bureaucrats and technocrats were of peasant origin. Some of them learned well the new Marxist lessons and became outspoken advocates of collectivisation which will change the 'idiocy of peasant life', but others had mixed feelings. Khrushchev was probably one of the most confused: he could not and would not hide his peasant roots, but had at the same time the most extravagant projects for radical quantitative and qualitative changes in agriculture. In a distorted way, the "peasant mentality", survived communist modernisation and proved to be one of the most enduring characteristics of the observed societies. In the final result, our two regional laboratories possessed a working class with a peasant mentality, a primitive and parasitic bureaucracy and a special hybrid of 'peasant' intellectuals whose most distinguished specimen is probably Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Many of the harbingers of nationalist ideologies which will fill the vacuum created by the delegitimation of the communist project were recruited among the latter.

The personal itinerary of the intellectual father of Serbian nationalism, Dobrica Cosic, is in many respects typical. He was nicknamed *Gedja* (the peasant), when as a young but trustworthy party cadre, fresh from the partisan war, he was appointed editor-in-chief of a communist youth newspaper. Later he became an official of the *Agitprop*, the political propaganda section, and even a member of the Central Committee of the Serbian CP, but was expelled for an anti-Albanian nationalist outburst. A strange turn indeed for a literati who has written some of the most critical and penetrating pages on the *Chetnik* movement (Second World War Serbian royalists). Probably trying to justify himself, he became for a while a self-appointed advocate of unitary 'Yugoslavian-ness'. He then, however, slipped into the waters of open Serbian nationalism. He was the shadowy mentor of the famous *Memorandum* of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts which became the platform for Milosevic's Great Serbian project. When the war in Bosnia erupted, he was co-opted by the regime and for a short time even served as formal President of the rump-Yugoslavia.

Croatian President Tudjman has another type of 'peasant' family burden. His father belonged to the small left-wing of the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS) which at the end of the Second World War co-operated with Tito's partisans, but the party was later disbanded. His father and mother were killed in obscure circumstances after the liberation and Tudjman, the communist historian, invested a lot of efforts to rehabilitate the HSS. In the 1970s he emerged as one of the protagonists of the 'Croatian Spring' and ended up in jail for Croatian nationalism. In his further writings he attempted to reconcile the *ustasha* puppet-state installed by the German and Italian occupiers, and the partisan's anti-fascist liberation movement in Croatia, as the two symmetrical aspects of the '1000-year-long Croatian struggle for statehood'.



I did not enter into these details to prove the peasant roots of past or present political leaders, but to explain (a) how the patriarchal mentality survived one-sided communist modernisation in perverted form, (b) how neo-patriarchal reflexes contributed to the shaping of confronted nationalist projects and (c) how it in this case generated conflict and violence, which by-passed other countries which had and have comparable ethnic problems. Why, for example, could the Czechs and the Slovaks separate peacefully and why did the ethnic diversity and tensions in the three Baltic states not lead to the same type of bloody confrontations we are presently witnessing in former Yugoslavia or the Caucasus? Or, why have similar ethnic conflicts erupted in Moldova, Tajikistan, Pakistan or in Bombay? In the latter cases the absence of democratic traditions and weakness of civil society may be invoked, but I would also add the perseverance and the constant reproduction of patriarchal values. It seems indeed that the greater the distance between the patriarchal 'peasant' past and modern-family 'industrial' present, the lesser the danger of pervasive violence and *vice versa*.

The electoral campaigns of ethnonational movements and coalitions were financed by the small entrepreneurial class whose legal economic activities were characterised by a struggle for breathing space. We are speaking of a petty commodity production, most of the time based on extended family work, which generated a special type of mentality, similar to the peasant small-holder's consciousness. In the case of Armenia, Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia wealthier members of the diaspora contributed a substantial share. The diaspora, even its second or third generation, at least the segment which wanted to keep its original identity alive and remained politically active, stuck to romanticised memories and national myths frozen somewhere in the past. The Armenian irredentists invested in their Great Armenia, a project which was thwarted by the Turkish genocide at the beginning of this century and the subsequent national misfortunes. Serb monarchists dreamed of bringing together all the Serbs in one powerful state which would recover past glories and affirm traditional Serbian values. Croat fascists wanted to resuscitate the *ustasha* state from the Second World War, whose borders with Serbia were on the Drina river. Slavo-Macedonian expatriates, many of them ethnically cleansed from Greek Macedonia after the end of the Civil War, invested money into their project of Greater Macedonia. Many Albanians from Kosovo and Western Macedonia still think that a Greater Albania would solve their problems. After the collapse of communism many of those benefactors returned 'home' with the strong determination 'to restore historical justice' and cash the interests on their investments. In a radical departure from Kemalist policies, extreme nationalist groups in Turkey have more recently revived the pan-Turanian idea, which encountered favourable but limited echoes in Azerbaijan and Central Asia, inhabited by Turkic-speaking populations, and among Muslim minorities in neighbouring Georgia. But other nationalist groups with looser contacts with their diasporas nurture also similar dreams. In the Caucasus alone we may enumerate: the Greater Cherkessian project; Greater Chechnya aiming to the annexation of Dagestani districts and to the complete separation from Russia; the idea of Greater Abkhazia and of Greater Ossetia, both at the expense of Georgia; the idea of Greater Azerbaijan aiming at the unification with Iranian Azerbaijan, popularised in the era of president Elchebey. Such megalomaniac projects are more often than not nurtured by small tribal leaders.

It may be appropriate here to describe another species of intellectual who by their cosmopolitanism and elitism appear to be the antithesis to peasant intellectuals of the Solzhenitsyn type, but who through their public and political engagement secured for themselves privileged and highly profitable niches in our primitive intellectual and social surroundings. They are also typical of developing countries. In the words of a pertinent observer, "[T]he high degree of political involvement of the intellectual in underdeveloped countries is a complex phenomenon. It has a threefold root. The primary source is a deep preoccupation with authority. Even though he seeks and seems actually to break away from the authority of the powerful tradition in which he was brought up, the intellectual of under-

developed countries, still more than his confrere in more advanced countries, retain the need for incorporation into some self-transcending, authoritative entity. Indeed, the greater his struggle for emancipation from the traditional collectivity, the greater his need for incorporation into a new, alternative collectivity. Intense politicisation meets this need. The second source of political involvement is the scarcity of opportunities to acquire an even temporary sense of vocational achievement; there have been few counterattractions to the appeal of charismatic politics. Finally, there has been a deficient tradition of civility in the underdeveloped countries which affects the intellectuals as much as it does the non-intellectuals<sup>26</sup>. It is in the search for such a "self-transcending, authoritative entity" that some highly talented and even professionally successful intellectuals dived into "charismatic politics". I may point to the famous composer and *enfant terrible* of Greek politics, Mikis Theodorakis, or to the Yugoslav *avant-garde* theatre director, Ljubisa Ristic, who are rather the exception than the rule, who with their non-conformist ideas found a personal place in the present political establishment of the two countries to whom they serve as intellectual alibis. Although Theodorakis is better known and his public involvement in the struggle against the Greek neo-fascist dictatorship much more important, the professional career and political itinerary of Ristic, who recently became the chairman of the so-called Yugoslav United Left (JUL) in Belgrade, is very similar. Both made out of their 'dissidentship' a highly profitable profession, monopolising an important segment of the public scene in the two countries which are both too small for their political ambitions and perhaps also for their talents. Both are so influential that they have the possibility of transforming whole cities into stages for their public performances. They are as I said the antithesis to our populist intellectuals, but they have managed to cut out a public space of their own and become important pillars of actual establishments, precisely because we are still cultural provinces. Nowhere in the more developed world could they secure such mass audiences and publicity. They both offer to our primordialist ruling cliques the illusion that through them they communicate with the rest of the world and its high culture.

#### *'Ersatz' civil society*

Let us now turn to the relationship between state and civil society. According to Patricia Mayo, who tried to explain ethnic revival in Western Europe, man's 'natural communities' (another misleading term) are being engulfed and eroded by an 'anonymous society' dominated by the modern 'Jacobin state', with its nineteenth-century coercive apparatus and its lack of sensitivity for the needs of its citizens. The centralised "Jacobin state" tends to plan regional welfare and development from the top downwards and according to an administrative grid, with the result that the historic balance between region and region, town and country, and man and his 'natural environment', is upset. Ethnonational movements try to create the conditions in which local institutions can emerge which can truly express a spontaneous and 'natural identity'. Therefore, the roots of today's ethnic revival stem from the twin pressures of centralising administration and non-participatory government<sup>27</sup>. Of course God-given 'natural communities' are products of political imagination. Nevertheless, the conflictual relationship between the state and civil society to which Mayo points was certainly more acute in Eastern Europe than in the West. Yulian Bromlei, a Soviet author, catalogued in 1989 past errors of the Soviet state, including the damage done by the indifferent bureaucratic approach to national and cultural interests, the promotion of idealised versions of how various nationalities became associated with Russia, and the sheer ignorance of ethnic processes resulting from failure to collect or publish correct statistics. He quoted approvingly the

<sup>26</sup> Edward Shils, *The intellectuals in political development*, in John H. Kautsky (ed.), *Political change in underdeveloped areas*, New York, John Wiley, 1962, p. 205.

<sup>27</sup> Patricia Mayo, *The roots of identity: three national movements in contemporary European politics*, London, Allen Lane, 1974, p. 1.

then Politburo member Yakovlev's call for an acknowledgement of the validity of the variety that exists in society, rather than trying to standardise everything in bureaucratic fashion. He pointed out the neglect of smaller minority groups within republics and regions which impose cultural standards belonging to their titular nationality only, and suggested that nationality-based district and village soviets, such as existed until the early 1930s, might be revived<sup>28</sup>. The monopolistic communist party-state came into conflict with a civil society which had developed its own parallel structures, autonomous culture, self-help schemes and networks of communications which gradually eroded the totalitarian system from within, reconstructed shattered social bonds from below and finally created a new social space in which oppositional political platforms could be articulated. Describing the revival of civil society in Poland, Leszek Kolakowski affirmed that it was in the logic of totalitarian power to destroy all forms of social life not decreed by the ruling apparatus, and that "the smallest crack in the system of institutionalised violence or the smallest reform which promises its relaxation immediately set in motion huge reserves of hidden hostilities and suppressed demands which threaten to explode and which it then becomes impossible to control"<sup>29</sup>. The problem is that the civil societies which emerged in the Balkans and Transcaucasia included a number of authoritarian and non-democratic trends which prevailed in the moment of the collapse of the communist system.

The concept of civil society is useful because it delimits the sphere of public action which is autonomous and independent from the state (not necessarily in opposition to the state) from the public sphere controlled by the state itself. My thesis is that the specific traits of the civil societies we had in the Balkans and Transcaucasia (patriarchal and authoritarian residues, egalitarian syndrome), influenced the outcome of political transition processes in our two zones to a great extent. Therefore, the optimistic definition suggested by Andrew Arato, which reduces civil society to "one point", uniting the democratic opposition and all different oppositional strategies to the "viewpoint of civil society against the state"<sup>30</sup> appears totally obsolete because of the simple fact that anti-communist opposition movements, at least in our countries, were not democratic, but rather authoritarian and nationalistic, excluding and not including important segments of the civil society itself, which were in advance labelled as 'alien'. In reality, pro-democracy as well as authoritarian traits were and are pretty fairly distributed along the political spectrum. Authoritarianism itself was not the exclusive attribute of ruling communist parties already infiltrated by reformers and social-democrats. In the same way, nationalism was not the exclusive battle-horse of the anti-communist opposition, but was and is still used by different communist parties and groups to enhance their shaky political legitimacy.

It is true, as Arato underlines, that civil societies which confronted the omnipresent party-state offered the initial platform for the legal and illegal gathering of various autonomous oppositional groups, but it is also a fact that the dominant values these groups purported were traditional ones and authoritarian, only superficially wrapped into liberal and democratic outfits. The 'national question' dominated the political agenda of our societies, while democracy was a secondary issue for our 'freedom fighters'. Most of them feared that political pluralism would divide 'national energies' and block the establishment of a 'national state'. Anti-communist political platforms were rejectionist, rejecting not only the communist party-state, but negating everything that was achieved under communist rule, indirectly negating even the civil society which was the by-product of communist development. We witness today a similar political phenomena in a number of Arab and Muslim countries, where civil

<sup>28</sup> Yulian V. Bromlei, «Natsionalnye problemy v usloviyakh perestroiki» (National problems in conditions of perestroika), in *Voprosy istorii* (Moscow), no. 1, 1989, p. 41.

<sup>29</sup> Leszek Kolakowski, «Hope and hopelessness», in *A Journal of East & West Studies* (Survey), vol. 17, no. 3, 1971, p. 41.

<sup>30</sup> Andrew Arato, «Civil society against the state: Poland 1980-91», in *Telos*, no. 47, Spring 1981, p. 24.

societies, which are also the product of the modernisation process, confront authoritarian and dictatorial 'secular regimes' and use a traditional Islamic discourse pasted together with pro-democracy slogans. The issue, however, is not democracy, but the establishment of an 'Islamic state'. I call civil societies which nurture and promote such political projects *ersatz* civil societies, because they are not genuine representatives of the age in which we live. They are neither the representatives or offshoots of pre-communist or middle-age social configurations, as it may seem listening to their neo-patriarchal discourse. That does not mean that they are not deeply immersed in our contemporary social fabric, but they are rather pathological excrescences, the products of perverted modernisation, than a proof of social health. But of course, the society, any society, has the right to defend itself against state-oppression and violence from above, and it can defend itself only with the human material which is at its disposal, and this human material is carrying all the burden of its own history and of its actual frustrations. Because of the characteristics of such *ersatz* civil societies things 'went wrong' in Yugoslavia and the Caucasus.

The weakness of our civil societies may also be explained by the absence of an autonomous economic basis that would sustain them. In this aspect, civil societies in the Arab world are in a more comfortable position, because they grew in a different economic surrounding and have acquired in the last decade or so autonomous and self-generating sources of revenue. In Egypt, for example, the contemporary Islamist movement is no longer dependent on subsidies given by conservative petrol-monarchies, but may sustain itself with the contributions of its wealthy rank-and-file. It was not the case under communist rule. Our civil societies only partly relied on the contributions of economically autonomous individuals and their main 'capital' was intellectual know-how. For the initial stage of alternative and oppositional activities it was sufficient, and it assured the relative autonomy of our emergent civil societies which started to erode the state-controlled public space. The loopholes of the system itself were used for the promotion of dissident ideas and the very facilities created by the party-state were sometimes used to disseminate an oppositional discourse. On many occasions, party reformers would open such facilities to outsiders and dissidents whose support they expected. Things radically changed when political pluralism was introduced and when real political opposition groups and parties started to take shape. Then the individual contributions of dissidents and sympathisers were not sufficient to sustain forthcoming electoral campaigns and nascent party apparatuses. With the exception of the small native entrepreneurial class involved in legal or/and illegal economic activities, the population was practically penniless, which meant that the sources of funding and logistic support should be found outside our countries. And they were found, first among the already mentioned diaspora, and second, among a myriad of foreign organisations and agencies which were ready to support anti-communist projects. Of course, I am not speaking of the then ruling communist parties which had the resources of the state at their disposal, but even that proved to be a relative advantage only. It was for example estimated that the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) managed to amass in a few months about \$10 million for the founding elections, mostly from diaspora sources, while the League of Communists of Croatia (LCC), still officially in control of the republic, frittered away its budget buying out apartments to destitute officials of the old nomenklatura. Reformed communists who have in the meantime taken over the LCC may eventually be proud of their 'humanist stands' toward their destitute hardline comrades, but they smoothly lost the elections to the formative HDZ.

In the moment of the collapse of the old order, an important segment of the civil society, the one which opposed the communist monopoly and the central state, was simply co-opted into the new power structure and integrated into different government agencies. Sure, it was the triumph of "the powerless"<sup>31</sup>, but the previously buoyant civil society ceased to exist. It

<sup>31</sup> I am paraphrasing Vaclav Havel in John Keane (ed.), *The power of the powerless: citizens against the state in Central-Eastern Europe* (transl. by Paul Wilson), London, Hutchison, 1985.

was deserted by almost all of its intellectuals and quasi-intellectuals who supported the emergence of the new state. Those who did not fit into the new power structure were silenced and forced either into internal or external exile. Destitute and intellectually impotent communist *apparatchiks*, who never had ideas of their own, could not fill the gap. Once again, the state became the main re-distributor of scarce resources, and practically bought out the *ersatz* civil society. Only scattered and mutually isolated autonomous groups remained, but reduced again to the modest contributions of their own members. Most of the time they do not represent more than marginalised debate clubs. Here and there non-partisan journals and newspapers survived, often funded by external non-governmental sources, among which George Soros' Open Society Foundation plays a prominent role<sup>32</sup>. All the rest, the so-called free press, scientific, cultural and artistic institutions, political parties, churches and their institutions, even sport competitions, were subordinated to the new ethnonationalistic agenda. In spite of the newly introduced ethnocentric political pluralism, the public space for the articulation of different ideas and autonomous thinking is once again extremely reduced and practically marginalised. The situation is much worse than during the *glasnost* period in the USSR or than during the last years of political *laissez faire* in Yugoslavia. According to Slovenian sociologist Tomaz Mastnak, "[T]hose segments of the civil society that became dominant in the new situation, and began to determine the new political agenda, were precisely the most undemocratic and anti-democratic elements of the civil society: religious fundamentalists; anti-communists; former owners claiming back their property nationalised after World War II; chauvinists; xenophobes; old and new fascists"<sup>33</sup>. Mastnak also described the post-communist "democratic opposition" as a collection of groups which have not done away with male chauvinism, paternalism, homophobia, anti-semitism and which dismiss concerns about minority groups in the name of "more important issues". He furthermore described our current "ethnic conflicts" as conflicts between opposed civil societies in which no law or formally signed agreements are respected and in which wars resemble Middle Age wars to the death (*bellum mortale*), waged both against the enemy civil society and against the institution of the modern state as such. Mastnak illustrates this "anti-state" trend with "new democratic fascism" personified by the Milosevic regime in rump-Yugoslavia, distinct from classical fascism, because it appears that there is no state authority, laws or permanent ruling group, that everything is in flux and that whoever gains some power uses it for his own benefit until met with a greater force. To confirm that the very foundations of new states in our two regions seem shaky, I would illustrate Mastnak's thesis with the examples of Georgia and Azerbaijan, where indeed in the last two years power was often rolling in the streets, with a powerless state, apparently unable or unwilling to stop the anarchy. But, on the other side, all our new states are weak, relying on non-consolidated social legitimation, although the regimes themselves may be strong and are autocratic. By the way, insecurity and lawlessness are often policies designed to terrorise the population, subdue the civil society and to plunder the economy.

### *Clientelism and clique politics*

Maybe the reasons for the weakness of our post-communist *ersatz* civil society, together with the fascist-like traits of our regimes, may be better explained with our patriarchal legacy. Two manifestations of this legacy are, first the perseverance of patron-client relationships,

<sup>32</sup> The Open Society Foundation invests about \$300 million yearly into Eastern European and CIS civil societies. The *Time International* magazine described Soros as "the billionaire who would save the world [...] and can almost afford to" (in *Time International*, July 10, 1995, pp. 32-38).

<sup>33</sup> Transcript of a public lecture held at the American University in Cairo, April 16, 1994. See also T. Mastnak, «The Slovene story», in *Praxis International*, no. 4, January 1994; and *From social movements to political parties*, in J. Simmie and J. Dekleva (eds.), *Yugoslavia in turmoil. after self-management*, London and New York, Pinter Publishers, 1991.

and second the related clique politics. Both date back to tribal communities and were reproduced in various forms until present times. Characteristically, the more civil society is underdeveloped, without strong autonomous socially and politically articulated interest groups, the more the patron-client type of relationships prevails and the more the opportunities for clique politics and manipulation. Both were present under communist rule and were the consequence of a 'tacit contract' between the central party-state and peripheral elites involving political exchange. The terms of the exchange were simple and, in Brezhnev's Soviet Union they meant that as long as the leaders of different republics and *oblasts* were able to provide the centre with planned production outputs and prohibit ideologically deviant behaviours, they were left free to pursue their own local and personal interests<sup>34</sup>. Republican leaders both in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia used such a relative autonomy to build up locally their own personalistic power bases and networks of cronies, often involving members of their families. Nepotism and corruption invariably go together, so we come back to the grey economy, as underlined by Ronald Suny who described the situation in Transcaucasia. It was the same in Yugoslavia. While the centre was still strong, the evident corruption of local party-state barons was always an argument at hand to initiate a political purge and a 'circulation of elites'. But those are the risks of a patron-client relationship in which the patron usually has the upper hand. Essentially, the centre tolerated the flourishing of local patronage networks as long as it did not harm its interests, but ultimately it proved to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it contributed to the denationalisation of local politics, because the local baron was supposed to prevent any manifestation of 'local patriotism', but in the long run it permitted the same baron to strengthen his autonomous power base. A position within which he became a patron himself. "The live-and-let-live practices placated many officials of non-Russian ethnic groups. Lobbies representing native interests became increasingly entrenched"<sup>35</sup>. As long as the centre, acting as the supreme patron and allocator of resources, had sufficient authority and legitimacy to delegate power down the vertical patronage pyramid, the system worked to the advantage of the centre, but at a pace at which the political and distributive power of the centre faded away, the manoeuvring space of republican barons enlarged. Finally, in the decaying years, it became more and more difficult to 'circulate' local elites as Gorbachev learnt in 1968 when the Uzbek elite, accused of 'parasitism' and 'corruption', fiercely resisted attempts at being 'circulated'. As one observer noted, "the drama of the post-Brezhnev period was the clash of wills between the centre on one side, led at the time by Gorbachev himself, and on the other the native elites that occupied leadership positions in the Soviet republican institutions. Goaded into counter-action by Moscow's attacks, the elites were at the cutting edge of Uzbek nationalism. They battled Moscow against daunting odds, playing skilfully on popular dissatisfaction with the ethnic discrimination and economic failures of Soviet rule. When Moscow sought to arouse public opinion against them, the elites turned the tables by mobilising national grievances against the centre. In their struggle, the elites capitalised on their ability to circumvent censorship control and appeal to Uzbek masses through the network of vernacular media"<sup>36</sup>. Of course, the Uzbek elites were not the only ones to react in the manner described here. In post-Tito Yugoslavia, republican barons became so powerful that they openly blackmailed the central party-state with their bureaucratic nationalism. They were the forerunners of today's ethnocrats. Milosevic was the first among them to fully understand the powerful card at his disposal.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Gregory Gleason, *Federalism and nationalism. The struggle for republican rights in the USSR*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1990, p. 97.

<sup>35</sup> Teodar Shahin, «Ethnicity in the Soviet Union: analytical perceptions and political strategies», in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, no. 31, July 1989, pp. 409-424.

<sup>36</sup> James Critchlow, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan. A Soviet republic's road to sovereignty*, Boulder and Oxford, Westview Press, 1991, pp. 39-40.

In an extremely interesting paper, Boris Young viewed the Yugoslav system as a rent-based nested hierarchy of patron-client linkages and affirmed that ill-conceived reforms precipitated ethnic conflicts, which ultimately led to the explosion of the country. Criticising primordialist tribalist explanations of the Yugoslav conflict, he underlined that “[I]n such a society the institutional division between state and market, between politics and economics, required for a market-based society, has not taken and cannot take place. Rather than an unfortunate idiosyncrasy which might have been kept under control by faster transitions to a market economy and multiparty politics, ethnic violence in Yugoslavia was brought about exactly by ill-conceived market reforms and political drifts”<sup>37</sup>. According to him, and I think that his analysis is correct, the Yugoslav conflict may be explained in terms of intra-elite conflict about access to, and re-distribution of, rents. Going a step further, I would add that the later decomposition of Yugoslavia may be explained as a radical re-structuring of the rent system. If furthermore the concept of rent is reduced to the income from land, which is of primary importance to all agrarian societies (and our societies are, as I tried to demonstrate, still half-agrarian!), then we may eventually rationalise our wars for territories (land!), in which each square kilometre seems so important to our patriarchs. In fact, the more the general crisis deepens, with the disruption of the modern sector of the economy, the more the land and peasant economy become important for the survival of the society. Income from land is of course only one source of revenue, because industry and services in the modern sector, as well as foreign loans and credits, also played important roles in the rent system that collapsed. Ethnic nationalism and especially ethnic separatism are thus responses to the failure of communist ties of patronage properly to perform the function of authoritatively allocating rents and access to rents<sup>38</sup>. The promulgation of the present ‘market reforms’ in a system which is plagued with such a patronage legacy, does not lead to the sudden appearance of a real market economy, but rather to the restructuring and rejuvenation of the old rent system. This restructuring had a predictable effect: it permitted an important segment of the communist elites, purged now of members of ‘alien’ nations and rejuvenated with newcomers from the same ethnicity, to survive the collapse of the old patronage network and to replace it with a new one, in which they became the unchallenged patrons. The elimination of ‘aliens’ reduced the competition for rents. The patron is dead, long live the new patron! The patronage pyramids of the Yugoslav and Soviet federations have been replaced for the time being by a number of smaller patronage networks, each one corresponding to a new nation-state. Of course, to those who are in command ‘small is beautiful’, and may also be very profitable.

Clique politics is characteristic for all post-communist regimes, in fact for all societies in which the basis of politics and economics has been reduced to small coterie of power-profiters, whose only aim is to amass wealth and in the most rapid way, regardless of the means used, laws or concerns for public welfare. In order to achieve that one has to be in power or have privileged connections with those in authority. Cliques are in fact opportunistic alliances between individuals bound together by instant material and/or political interests. Inter-clique alliances are equally opportunistic and fluctuating as illustrated by temporary and shifting coalitions of interests in Georgia, whose recent political life has been plagued by cliques’ conflicts. The main figures of this rivalry were the former defence minister Tengis Kitovani, whose group has established its monopoly over the supply of the oil-poor republic with petroleum and petroleum products, and Djaba Ioseliani, the leader of the para-military *Mkhedrioni* corps, controlling the extraordinarily profitable tobacco business. Shevardnadze’s

<sup>37</sup> Boris Young, «With axes in their eyes: rentierism and market reform in Yugoslavia», in *Studies in Comparative Communism*, vol. XXV, no. 3, September 1992, p. 274.

<sup>38</sup> A confirmation of such an assertion may be found for example in Ante Cuvalo, «The Croatian Nationalist Movement 1966-1972», in *Eastern European Monographs*, no. CCLXXXII, Columbia University Press, 1990.

attempt in 1993 “to rely on the structures of the reformed interior ministry and state security, and also on new defence minister Karkarashvili in his backstage battle with the all-powerful Kitovani was complicated at the end of the year by bitter disagreements which exploded (and developed into actual shooting!) between Karkarashvili and the new defence minister, Georgadze – disagreements which Shevardnadze had to settle himself. Then, the long-time opponents of strengthening ties with Russia – the leader of the Party of National Independence, Iraklii Tsereteli, and the chairman of the People’s Front, Nodar Natadze – having got their second wind, came back to life”<sup>39</sup>. The Kitovani group was eventually eliminated, and Kitovani himself was forced into exile. The *Mkhedrioni*, who sided with Shevardnadze, were accused in Summer 1995 of having masterminded the failed assassination attempt against his life, and are probably the next to be eliminated.

In the Georgian case, such cliques coincide with clan networks and because of that they show a remarkable level of stability, which is not the case of cliques dominating the political scene and economic life of Serbia where the new political elite is equally “ideologically” disunited. The research by the Belgrade Institute for Political Studies quoted earlier concluded that in 1995 the Serbian political elite is as disunited as it used to be five years ago, with “non-crystallised models of political behaviour”, and that without the “paternalistic leader”, Milosevic, and his mediation force, an open conflict would erupt within the elite itself<sup>40</sup>. However, the research underlined the central role played by the new “turbo-elite”, a mutant category of *nouveaux riches* warlords, whose power stems from the partnership with “many people from the leadership ranks” and whose interests are associated with the continuation of the crisis and war. Actually the main ‘business’ in the rump-Yugoslavia is ‘financial engineering’ (extracting foreign currency reserves of the population) and import-export smuggling (petroleum products are the most profitable), both in the hands of changing and expendable mafia groups closely related to the ruling Socialist Party. In Croatia, the import of armaments is practically monopolised by Tudjman’s family, while other cliques play the go-between role in the transfer of arms to the Bosnian government and still others are given shares in various kinds of imports. Cliques are given free hands over entire regions or towns. It was argued for example that the Croatian city of Gospic is at the mercy of two top politicians in Zagreb, Nikica Valentic, the prime minister, and Hrvoje Sarinic, a close associate of President Tudjman, who have monopolised all profitable operations in the region of Lika. The city itself was apparently terrorised by armed men, especially by a legionary unit made-up of expatriate volunteers. As put by one native who took refuge in a nearby city: “Croatia is divided among clans; each clan has its fiefdom; each fiefdom has a master; each master has his serfs; and the serfs have nothing [...] Gospic is one such fiefdom, owned by one clan; this clan has its nominal owners, and the owners have their *rayya* (subjects, commoners) [...] natural laws have been here always pitiless, even cruel [...] in the past we had some kind of state, bad but it was nevertheless something. What is happening now in Gospic cannot even be called horror. Everywhere in Croatia it is similar, but in our parts it is more visible”<sup>41</sup>.

All our political parties, government and opposition, function on a clique basis, which is giving to our ‘political lives’ the appearance of dynamism. Parties multiply like amoebas in a system of constantly shifting clique alliances, but in order to function, such systems need at least one pivot. Our presidents, who have electoral but not social legitimation, because they have no comprehensive social basis or political constituency, usually act as supreme patrons and arbiters between different cliques, counter-balancing their influence with each other. They act through co-optation, bribery and threats. Those who are co-opted into the ruling

<sup>39</sup> Quoted from Arkadii Popov (ed.), *Nationalities and politics in the post-Soviet world: 1993*, Washington, IREX, 1994, p. 40.

<sup>40</sup> V. Duric, *Turbo elite* cit., p. 31.

<sup>41</sup> Alen Anic, «Grad razuzdanih legionara» (The city of unrestrained legionaries), in *Vreme*, no. 249, 31 July 1995, p. 19.



group may use this opportunity to get rich, but they have to do it fast, because they will be 'circulated' before they acquire too much power and wealth. Circulation may be horizontal or vertical, but the important point is that nobody is allowed to become a potential challenger to the leader himself. Because of that, the leader prefers to deal with corrupted individuals, with a police record if possible, who are forced to be loyal and could be eliminated at any time. Another category are anonymous individuals, whose sudden upward promotion leaves the impression that the political agenda has changed, but who may be fired without damage. Police records, old and new, local or imported, political or criminal, play important roles and everybody tries to collect them in order to blackmail actual or potential rivals. Records of the communist political police are particularly valued and are often bought or exchanged. All our ethnocratic regimes have tremendously expanded their police apparatuses and created new surveillance agencies, also employing veteran communist specialists. In Croatia, Tudjman's own son is presently the paramount co-ordinator of all surveillance and intelligence services.

Bribery is another powerful instrument of power, because entire social and interest groups may be bought and at least temporarily 'pacified'. The easiest way is by printing money which is then channelled into salaries, pensions or 'reviving production' in state enterprises which are already bankrupt or out of work. For example, in 1992 and 1993 inflation ran at 768.7% and 1,294% in Georgia, 1,062% and 920.0% in Azerbaijan, and 729.0% and 2,260.0% in Armenia. During 1993-94, inflation in the rump-Yugoslavia ran as high as 313 million per cent, which is the third highest level ever attained! During these twenty two months the Milosevic government extracted from the population about 6 billion German marks that were only partially used for financing the war in Bosnia and Croatia, while the bulk ended into the pockets of war-profiteers in the regime<sup>42</sup>. Such 'investments' proved to be politically profitable to governing parties especially before elections, when money was suddenly found to 'help' the peasants, appease workers and/or students. Then when money becomes worthless and inflation creates a general chaos, a monetary austerity and discipline campaign re-establishes 'confidence' into the local currency and the leader is applauded by the financially exhausted populace, as happened in Serbia/Montenegro when the *Avram*<sup>43</sup> reform was introduced. Austerity is the best time for a new cycle of 'financial engineering' which would drain once again the foreign cash reserves of the population, but this time with an overpriced local currency. Once they have been extracted, a new cycle of inflation may be initiated as it happened in Serbia already in 1995. Among the countries we focus on, only Croatia for the time being sticks to 'austerity' only, but the overpriced *kuna* also serves to extract foreign currency from the local population and especially from international agencies dealing with the war in Bosnia.

Opposition parties and their leaders may be bribed as well in order to support the government or just to create a case which will compromise them in the eyes of their potential electors. Again Milosevic proved to be the master of the game: he gave the Serb opposition parties a free hand in property and financial deals in the centre of Belgrade, a constituency

<sup>42</sup> According to Belgrade economist Mladjan Dinkic, Milosevic's government uses fictitious 'grey' money to reap out hard-currency private reserves. Out of the DM 6 billion that were extracted through such an intentionally provoked inflation in 1993-94, only 1.3 million went to two private banks (*Jugoskandik* and *Dafiment*), both associated with the state, that were declared bankrupt and could not repay their creditors and private depositors. The rest was appropriated by four state banks and the cash was illegally transferred abroad, mostly to Cyprus, Greece and Israel. Allegedly, such a 'regulated financial chaos' and its channels were also used by different foreign financial and mafia groups, dealing directly with the government, to clean their money and evade taxes. Dinkic's analysis of financial engineering in the FR of Yugoslavia, published in Belgrade [*Ekonomija destrukcije – velika pljacka naroda* (The economy of destruction – The great robbery of the people), Belgrade, VIN, 1995], may serve as a guide for similar policies in the two laboratories under our investigation.

<sup>43</sup> Named after Dragoslav Avramovic, the Governor of the Bank of Yugoslavia, who at the beginning of 1994 reduced inflation overnight.

his SPS lost in the last elections; but when they accumulated enough mistakes and criminal transactions, which were carefully documented, state authorities exposed their misdeeds. Obviously he knows the cynical saying that 'everybody has his price' and he is using it at his advantage! In a similar way, President Tudjman 'bought' the leadership of the already insignificant and transformed Communist Party of Croatia, which was allowed to retain and fructify a part of the property of the former LCC. By doing so he practically blocked any 'left' alternative to his personal regime. But as the Georgian case shows things are not always working out as the leader would wish. In Croatia, the ruling HDZ split along clique fault lines and Tudjman was deserted in 1994 by the "partisans' faction" which thought to be powerful enough to dictate the rules of the game. The *ustashas* and the 'pragmatics' remained with Tudjman. The whole story about this alleged 'ideological confrontation' between the three was a misnomer. Relevantly enough, a number of the leaders of the breakaway clique were associated with the police establishment, both communist and post-communist.

We are speaking of course of manipulation, which would not be possible if the civil society was less vulnerable and more resistant to co-optation and bribery, and if the opposition had an independent economic and social base or alternative sources of funding. Once the communist danger was removed, foreign sources for a 'democratic opposition' dried out. The West suddenly lost interest in dissent. The diaspora contributions went systematically into irredentist projects and were never meant to promote a genuine civil society or democracy. The churches, previously vocal, are currently absorbed with the clericalisation of new states. They have ceased to speak for the surviving segment of civil society. It will take years, perhaps even decades, before a new civil society can mature and undermine the clique system. As the Greek and Turkish cases tend to demonstrate, free market and political pluralism alone are not enough to produce modern civic culture. It seems that Balkan countries where no single party emerged as the sole victor of 'founding elections', Slovenia or Macedonia provide examples, and where coalition governments were formed on the basis of political compromise from the beginning, have a better chance for democratic consolidation. Chances also seem better where parliamentary regimes have been established than in countries where presidential or semi-presidential regimes were introduced, the latter indulging the dictatorial impulses of our patriarchal leaders.

### *Neopatriarchal Discourse*

There is no neutral representation of reality. Events, processes, objects and people are always mediated for us by talk and text. The medium itself is impregnated with existing values; representation is filtered through a sort of grid of signification. And signification is not, of course, 'natural': it is a function of social, economic and institutional structure<sup>44</sup>. Roger Fowler argued that language is a social practice, which not only reflects society but also influences society. In Fowler's words, "[O]ne of its major functions is to exert an influence in maintaining and developing social and institutional relationships. It does so by many different mechanisms, but the main one is [...] the automatic and continuous articulation of ideology"<sup>45</sup>. Therefore changing ideologies may indirectly and sometimes directly mould and transform linguistic structures in order that they justify and serve discriminatory social or/and political practices. The socio-cognitive theory of discourse explains how language is used by dominant groups or elites for mental engineering and manipulation, but it is beyond the scope of this résumé to go into details<sup>46</sup>. The important for our purpose is to identify the

<sup>44</sup> M.A.K. Halliday, *Language and social semiotic*, London, Edward Arnold, 1978.

<sup>45</sup> Roger Fowler, *The intervention of the media in the reproduction of power*, in Iris M. Zavala et al. (eds.), *Approaches to discourse, poetics and psychiatry*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, John Benjamin's Publishing Company, 1987, p. 68.

<sup>46</sup> See for example the chapter on *Discourse and power* in *ibid.*, pp. 13-122.

power elite (ethnocracy) and the pattern of its discourse that selects, reconstructs and reproduces ethnonational ideology building up ethnic consensus which is disseminated 'from above' by mass-media, education, administration, military conscription, religious institutions and so forth. Ethnonationalism is also disseminated through everyday conversation and face-to-face encounters which reproduce ethnic attitudes, schematic categories, stereotypes and prejudices that are often only implicitly or indirectly suggested by the official discourse.

Here we are speaking of neopatriarchal discourse which is an integral part of ethnonationalist ideologies. Hisham Sharabi showed how such a discourse is used by various Arab power elites, both conservative and 'progressive', in order to mask the material basis of cultural disparity and social inequalities. "The 'language' of the neopatriarchal discourse is classical Arabic, in which the knowledge (beliefs, concepts, substantive information) and self-knowledge (modes of self-understanding and self-relating) of neopatriarchal culture get formulated and produced in the shape of discourse"<sup>47</sup>. It is a monological and authoritarian mode of discourse professing 'eternal truths', discouraging dialogue and rejecting questioning. As the difference between spoken and colloquial Arabic and classical or literary Arabic is something close to the difference between, say modern French and Medieval Latin, linguistic competence bestows status and power. By the same token, the illiterate and semiliterate are excluded from this knowledge (power), and their consciousness is formed largely outside the culture of the public educational institutions and the media. Differences which exist among various Georgian dialects (Kartvelian which was imposed as the standard language, Mingrelian, Svan and Laz) are perhaps not as important but they are nevertheless meaningful<sup>48</sup>. But the distance between official language and the spoken one may be extremely reduced and still serve the same purpose. Ruling classes have always used language as a means of domination and domination in its turn requires communication. Communication may be established only through speech, text, gestures and symbols. The only way rulers can convey their message to those to whom it is directed is through language-discourse whose form (syntax, script, patterns, catch-words) and ideological contents may vary over time but are means to one end – authoritative discourse remains an instrument of domination. It is less important whether the language is a foreign import, or a language of local 'high culture', or a selected folk-dialect imposed on all others, or an artificial 'neo-language', because it was always manipulated by those in power who used it to assert their authority. While in traditional societies the community was defined by the shrine, in modern societies language and scripturalism define the boundaries of the 'nation'<sup>49</sup>.

In our parts, the neopatriarchal discourse cuts across class, regional and cultural distinction. It glorifies 'national unity' and propagates a kind of recovered ethnonational brotherhood (egalitarian syndrome) which is not extended to women, whose main role is to uphold their husbands, brothers and fathers who sacrifice their lives for the 'nation'. Women are asked to sacrifice too by returning to their families and to their 'natural function' as childbearers. This new/old vision of nationalist womanhood asserts that the very survival of the nation depends on women carrying out their reproductive and nurturing roles. The general tendency is to reduce them to instruments of reproduction of manpower... and soldiers. The 'nation' is feminine, but the 'father of the nation', the patriarch, is of course a man. "This sort of language has a political purpose, it legitimates and domesticates the rather abstract idea of national community by presenting it as a part of the 'natural order' of patriarchal gender and kinship relations (even though these relations, like those of nationhood, are not in fact biologically determined, being neither uniform or static). Linking the sentiments associated with the family to the nation taps into our most intimate emotions (duty,

<sup>47</sup> Hisham Sharabi, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>48</sup> See B.G. Hewitt, «Demographic manipulation in the Caucasus [with special reference to Georgia]», in *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1995.

<sup>49</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and nationalism*, Ithaca and New York, Cornell University Press, 1983, p. 73.

love, honour) to condition our response to the demands of nationalism. Appeals to fight and die for [the motherland ...] rely on such emotions for their power. This sort of language rests on long-lived preconceptions about women and the family – even if actual social conditions may be somewhat different; but in turn such imagery can also reinforce assumptions about ‘proper’ gender roles. Thus the image of the nation as a virtuous mother not only prompts us to love the nation, it also reinforces the view that motherhood is both women’s primary role and her patriotic duty”<sup>50</sup>. As Hannah Arendt has shown, the insistence on “natural laws” (and roles) and the self-coercive force of pseudo-logical thinking built on false premises, made the strength of nazi-fascist ideology. In her words, “[I]deological thinking orders facts into an absolutely logical procedure which starts from an axiomatically accepted premise, deducing everything else from it; that is, it proceeds with a consistency that exists nowhere in the realm of reality”<sup>51</sup>. Our ethnocrats succeeded in imposing such a pseudo-logical thinking on large segments of our societies.

Women, who under communist rule abandoned or forgot their ‘natural role’ in the family, are directly or indirectly accused for the decay of the nation and made responsible for its “rebirth”. The Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Paul, lamented in one of his Christmas messages about the ‘White Plague’ that hit the Serbian nation, and accused women of infanticide, because they choose not to give birth motivated by their ‘contentment’<sup>52</sup>. In a unified echo which resonates from Catholic Rome to Gregorian Erevan, the original sin of Eve is attributed to modern (emancipated) women. Without birth there is no nation, and ‘rebirth’ implies the idea of ethnic purity which is not only ethno-racial but ultimately sexual. ‘Bastards’ are not admitted. Accordingly, women belong to two categories only – either they are noble mothers and virgin sisters, or they are prostitutes. Women, as well as the nation, should be ‘pure’ and their bodies symbolically delimit the nation. It is the duty of the new national state to ‘protect’ them by direct intervention into their privacy, moral and physical integrity, marriage and family. The reappearance of the *hejab* (veil) in Muslim Bosnia, after forty-five years of absence, is just an external and perhaps less important sign of such a recolonisation of women’s identities and bodies. It is also a very convenient device for the establishment of neopatriarchal control over women’s productive and reproductive functions by men who have been marginalised and proletarianised. In war-torn zones, a natural ‘division of labour’ is re-established: women are supposed to be the childbearers (productive function), and men will defend the national community (non-productive and often destructive function). Behind the front lines and in countries plagued with unemployment, actually all over Eastern Europe and the CIS, women are systematically eliminated from the highly competitive labour market.

As Moghadam has underlined, “[...] women frequently become the sign or maker of political goals and of cultural identity during processes of revolution and state-building, and when power is being contested or reproduced. Representation of women assume political significance, and certain images of women define and demarcate political groups, cultural projects, or ethnic communities. Women’s behaviour and appearance – and the acceptable range of their activities – come to be defined by, and are frequently subject to, the political or cultural objectives of political movements, states and leaderships”<sup>53</sup>. This is then translated into discourse and becomes integral part of a political project. Here we are essentially

<sup>50</sup> Wendy Bracewell, «Mothers of the Nation», in *War Report*, no. 36, September 1995, p. 27.

<sup>51</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, Part three of *The Origin of totalitarianism*, New York, A Harvest/HBJ Book, 1968, p. 169.

<sup>52</sup> See Zarana Papic, «How to Become a ‘Real’ Serbian Woman?», in *War Report*, No. 36, September 1995, pp. 40-41.

<sup>53</sup> Valetine M. Moghadam, *Gender dynamics of nationalism, revolution and islamization*, in V. Moghadam, (ed.), *Gender and national identity. Women and politics in Muslim societies*, published for the United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research, Helsinki, by Zed Books, London and New Jersey, 1994, p. 2.

dealing with only two of them: the communist one, which failed in our parts, and the nationalist, which seems to expand. Although at first sight they seem opposed, they have a major common characteristic: they both subordinate individual interests to those of the collective, they carry on the 'egalitarian syndrome' and they are authoritarian. Both the classless society, the declared aim of the communists, and the 'rebirth of the nation', propagated by our ethnocrats, are political projects constructed 'from above' by state coercion.

The nationalist foundation myth, the myth of origin, as I already mentioned, is based on the idea of ethnic purity which goes to immemorial times. Thus the Serbs are declared to be the 'oldest people on earth', the Croats are allegedly Aryans, either of Gothic origin or Medeans, and the Azeris are supposed to have settled on their actual territory 5,000 years before the birth of Christ! Although such historical forgeries have no scientific support, they are reproduced not only by the high circulation press, but also by 'serious' nationalist academicians. 'Purity' and 'ancestry' are supposed to be arguments supporting nationalist territorial claims against other nationalities whose purity and ancestry is denied. Thus for the Croatian nationalists the Serbs are Balkan barbarians or 'Byzantines', which is meant as a curse, while for the Serbian nationalists Croats are Austro-Hungarian and Vatican bastards. Both are ready to venerate their own 'father of the nation', whoever he might be, while the father of the enemy nation is invariably on somebody's pay-list, a 'foreign agent', a bastard himself. But such a discourse is not sufficient to invalidate the same claims of the enemy. In the primitive patriarchal mentality, obsessed with ethnic purity, male pride and the honour of the family, raping an 'enemy woman' is almost a patriotic act, because she will eventually give birth to a bastard, a fact which according to such a logic will undermine the moral and combativeness of the enemy. Women are again used as instruments, but this time for conveying a message to the whole enemy nation, which is perceived as an undistinguished body, and harming its part (individual woman) is supposed to harm the whole.

#### *Demagoguery and Neo-Populism*

While patronage networks and clique rivalries are masked by parliamentary outfits, ethnonational populism is currently the dominant public discourse meant for the consumption of the masses. It is not the exclusive trademark of our ruling parties and coalitions and is repeated in different versions by a number of opposition groups auctioning their own dedication to the national cause. Combined with demagoguery, it was crucial for the ethnonational homogenisation and polarisation that led to the collapse of the two federations and to the establishment of ethnocracy. Riding the populist tide, the All-Armenian National Movement of Ter-Petrosyan and the Free Georgia Round Table of Gamsakhurdia won the 'founding elections' (initiated by Gorbachev's reforms) in these two Soviet republics. The same tide later permitted the Popular Front of Elchebey to seize power in Azerbaijan. Similarly, the Croatian Democratic Union won the founding elections in Croatia, and Milosevic's League of Communists of Serbia transformed itself beyond recognition, and became the main, although not the only, proponent of Great Serbian nationalism.

Populism in our parts has a long history and is associated with various political concepts, but from its very beginnings was combined with the national and peasant questions. Under the influence of Russian Social Revolutionaries (SRs), Armenian *Dashnaks* promoted a populist and nationalist program during the Civil War and established their control over the ephemeral independent Armenian Republic that was later swallowed by the Bolsheviks. Simultaneously, Georgian Social Democrats were ruling a 'peasant republic'<sup>54</sup> and populist pan-Turanian overtones dominated the short-lived Independent Azerbaijani Republic led by the *Musavats*. All political parties in pre-First World War Serbia battled for peasant votes and

<sup>54</sup> Visited by Austrian Social Democrat Karl Kautsky who published his impressions in the book *Georgia, a social democratic peasant republic: impressions and observations*, London, 1921.

the Radical Party of Nikola Pasic<sup>55</sup>, that together with the Karadjordjevic dynasty was instrumental in the creation of the first Yugoslavia, had a large peasant following in Serbia itself. The inter-war period in the Croatian space was dominated by the populist Croatian Peasant Party (HSS)<sup>56</sup>, that after years of opposition to the dynasty, struck a 'compromise' with Belgrade's regime in 1939. This led to the creation of an ephemeral Croatian *banovina* (duchy).

According to Lenin, Russian *narodnichestvo* (populism) "was a protest against capitalism from the point of view of the small immediate producer who, being ruined by capitalist development, saw in it not only a retrogression but, at the same time, demanded the abolition of the old order, feudal forms of exploitation"<sup>57</sup>. Russian populists rejected the unilinear developmental path; by the same token they removed the theoretical foundation for the view that Russia had to follow the general pattern of the capitalist development of the West, a view the Bolsheviks later accepted as their own. Such a type of ideological pattern, appears in different backward societies in periods of transition and reflects the characteristic class position of the peasantry. But, as Walicki underlined, "it does not mean [...] that populism can be regarded as a direct expression of peasant ideology; it is an ideology formulated by a democratic intelligentsia that in backward countries, lacking a strong bourgeois class structure, enjoys as a rule greater social authority and plays a more important part in national life than intellectuals in the economically more developed states"<sup>58</sup>.

As we have seen, communism did not solve the 'peasant question' but rather deformed it in its own way. Contrary to the assumption that communist rulers did their best to destroy the peasantry<sup>59</sup>, more recent studies tend to demonstrate the opposite, and when describing, for example, the Chinese or Vietnamese revolutions, the studies even speak of communist 'peasant nationalism'. Indeed, it seems that Plekhanov's prophetic prevision that a political power trying to organise "from above" socialist production in a backward country would inevitably be forced "to resort to the ideals of patriarchal and authoritative communism" was confirmed in practice. In Plekhanov's words, the only change would consist in the replacement of the "Peruvians sons of the sun" with a socialist caste. He furthermore added "that under such a tutelage the people would not only not become educated for socialism but, on the contrary, would either lose their capacity for further progress or retain this capacity at the cost of the re-emergence of the same economic inequality which the revolutionary government had attempted to liquidate"<sup>60</sup>. It is exactly this that happened in our countries. Not only were our people not educated in socialism, but they were not educated in capitalism either, and after all we are still at the beginning, at the same mental point of departure where the communists have been when they seized power. Of course, in the meantime many things have changed. First of all, our countries are no more backward than they used to be. We probably reached the threshold of a new phase of industrial development. Second, capitalism broke through the dams of autarchic 'national' development and became a global transnational process, eliminating rapidly the still surviving pre-industrial and autarchic niches, one of them being the obsolete 'socialist economies' in our countries.

If nineteenth-century Russian populism was a reaction against primitive capitalist accumulation, the neo-populism of our contemporary ethnocrats is the reaction against the equally

<sup>55</sup> See A.N. Dragnich, *Serbia, Nikola Pasic and Yugoslavia*, New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 1974.

<sup>56</sup> For the ideology of the HSS see Vladko Macek, *In the struggle for freedom* (transl. by E. and S. Gazi), University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1957. Macek was the pre-war leader of the HSS.

<sup>57</sup> Andrzej Walicki, *The controversy over capitalism*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1969, p. 6.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>59</sup> A view advocated by D. Mitrany, *Marx against the peasants: a study in social dogmatism*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1951.

<sup>60</sup> Walicki, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-156.

primitive variety of communist accumulation. In both cases the starting point is the ethical rejection of the social and human costs for such types of modernisation that outweigh possible economic benefits. Both used/use demagoguery appealing to the emotions of the populace traumatised by the process of modernisation. Both are anti-urban and anti-intellectual, publicly negating the role of the elites and extolling the 'sovereignty of the people' (or of the nation) as the absolute source of historical wisdom and human creativity. In both cases the movement of 'returning to the people' allowed the socially alienated and isolated middle classes and their intellectuals, caught up in no-man's-land between the absolutist tsarist state (or the monopolistic communist party-state) and the frustrated masses, to recover an identity. The recovery of ethnonational identity is a relatively simple intellectual operation that will be described in the next two chapters. The same transformation happened in Africa, where the most westernised and alienated members of modern native elites, after trying to be assimilated into the culture of the coloniser and after being rejected, discovered their own roots and found out that the masses may be politically mobilised (national liberation movements) in a way which will assure the upward social and political promotion of the same uprooted elites, now completely converted and dedicated to the 'national cause'. These elites, of course gained 'national' respectability and identity, but the masses that were instrumental to their promotion were soon forgotten. However, the nationalist discourse, whose main leitmotiv became 'national unity', was carried on as the main legitimising formula for the new 'national' leadership and as mask covering internal social inequalities and the ugly reality of new power. In Africa, Latin America or in our parts, the populist intellectual or politician was always a self-conscious demagogue; he knows perfectly well that he is manipulating people, shamelessly exploiting their fears, frustrations and egotism, with the aim to transform the amorphous crowd into organised phalanxes that will be use in his struggle for power. His precursors are to be found among nationalist and nazi-fascist demagogues and their ideologies of *Blut und Boden*<sup>61</sup>. In that respect, we in the Balkans have a deeply rooted tradition which did not exist in Transcaucasia, where it is a very recent creation. Our local fascists whether they called themselves *ustashas*<sup>62</sup>, *chetniks* or something similar and their sinister ideologies of national hatred are still inspirations for a number of our neo-populist demagogues and their political parties.

Vladimir Dvornikovic, a Yugoslav anthropologist, wrote back in 1926 that the attention of the demagogue focuses on the average individual and the obscure instincts that motivate him, such as envy, selfishness, greed and hatred. I would add that in our contemporary cases, his most enthusiastic and belligerent followers are recruited among the *sans-culottes*, the *déclassé* suburban element that has nothing to lose and expects everything from promised social and political changes. Our populist demagogue "knows all about his conscious and unconscious needs (the needs of the average man), his suppressed desires and irritations, particularly the deepest ones, common to all and stemming from man's insatiable egotism. These frustrations and thwarted emotions constitute the strongest and most profound spiritual chain uniting the amorphous masses. They are the most vital and, being purely biological, most antisocial and anti-ethical instincts whereby the members of a homogeneous mass become as undifferentiated as ants. This is where the demagogue concentrates all his forces. First of all, he identifies himself with this psychological underworld, and never shrinks from debasing himself and sinking to its level. Though the masses can – briefly! – be inspired to highly ethical and heroic acts, he prefers to have permanent control over them, on the basis of those deeper and more organic selfish instincts [...] The demagogue is shameless. He

<sup>61</sup> For an overview of right-wing nationalism and fascism in Europe see John Weiss, *The fascist tradition: radical right-wing extremism in modern Europe*, New York, Harper & Row, 1967; and Gino Germani, *Authoritarianism, fascism and national populism*, New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1978.

<sup>62</sup> For the Second World War "performances" of the *Ustasha* movement, see Edmond Paris, *Genocide in satellite Croatia, 1941-1945: a record of racial persecution and massacres* (transl. by L. Perkins), Chicago, American Institute for Balkan Affairs, 1961.

represents what is most profoundly irrational and amoral, and therefore most powerful in man; this is a source of all his strength and he pays no attention to the rest. He panders the selfishness and vanity of the rabble, assiduously and tirelessly fans the flames of its class hatred and envy, makes virtues out of defects and superiority out of inferiority, and is careful not to elevate, educate or rebuke the rabble"<sup>63</sup>. An integral part of such a demagoguery is the systematic denigration of the targeted ethnic minority or 'enemy nation', whose very right to existence is denied and which is reduced to a sub-human level, to dangerous species that should be expelled, ethnically cleansed, exterminated.

Russian *narodniki* were overtly anti-capitalist, while our ethnocrats use a utopian vision of capitalism as the antithesis to state socialism. However, both the romantic version of 19th-century populism and post-communist neo-populism are obsessed with the past and different traditions they want to revive or they construct from the available social and cultural material. In both cases this idealised past, whether the references used is the Russian peasant *obshchina* or the southern Slav *zadruga*, the Georgian 'peasant' republic, the Croatian quisling state of the Second World War or Karadjordjevic's Yugoslavia, some real or mythical 'ancestor' state is pre-industrial. Neither can provide any guidance for industrial development and modernisation in the era of globalisation and transnationalisation of economy.

Contemporary ethnonational projects in the Balkans and Transcaucasia have been of course purged of the early populist and later communist utopia of the shortcut formula to socialism. Our ethnocrats are not concerned about the human and social cost of the process they have initiated. Instead, they all in practice propose another type of historical shortcut to utopian capitalism, but this shortcut has to pass through the past, through the neo-traditionalisation of society. Both are concepts of development 'from above' in which the state – 'socialist' or 'ethnonational' – plays a key role. In the first case, it is for the construction of a 'socialist society' and in the second case, it is for the construction of a 'nation'. Similarly to the communists who once in power forgot the working class whose interests they claimed to represent, the neo-populists forgot their own nation in the name of a supreme *raison d'état*. Although most of our ethnocrats have never heard of Friedrich List, all of them would agree with the statement he wrote back in 1841: "Between each individual and the entire humanity [...] stands the nation, with its special language and literature, with its peculiar origin and history, with its special manners and customs, laws and institutions, with the claims of all these for existence, independence, perfection and continuance for the future, and with separate territory; a society which, united by thousand ties of mind and of interests, combines itself into an independent whole [...] and [...] is still opposed to other societies of a similar kind in their national liberty, and consequently can only under the existing conditions of the world maintain self-existence and independence by its own power and resources. As the individual chiefly obtains by means of the nation and in the nation, mental culture, power of production, security and prosperity, so is the civilisation of human race only conceivable and possible by means of the civilisation and development of individual nations"<sup>64</sup>. That is the general formula for economic nationalism to which both our conservative right and left could subscribe. Our governments hesitate, and the wars in which they have been directly or indirectly involved always offer a good excuse to postpone necessary economic reforms. With the exception of Armenia, financially upheld by the rich Armenian diaspora, all our regimes are dragging well behind other East European countries in the privatisation process of state industries.

The point here is that our ethnonational elites compete not over markets but for the control of the state and territories. This is what gives the whole thing such a pre-modern outlook

<sup>63</sup> Written in 1926 by Yugoslav anthropologist Vladimir Dvornikovic. Quoted from V. Dvornikovic, «Psychopathic demagoguery, in *Erewhon*, no. 1, 1994, p. 173.

<sup>64</sup> Friedrich List, *The national system of political economy* (transl. by S. Lloyd), London, Longman, 1902, p. 174.



although the ethnic states which came into existence are a contemporary phenomena. In the context of one-dimensional modernisation described previously, the state was and remains the primary field of social and economic competition. Through its control over the economy and by limiting the options available to individual and groups alike, it has also limited and determined the nature and number of identities available to the individual. In such a context, it is perhaps not difficult to see how the connection between social and identity crisis on one side, and state and scarce economic resources on the other side, led to social differentiation and polarisation that took finally the form of ethnic self-isolation and once violence broke out, different elites saw ethnicity as the most exploitable and identifiable factor capable of legitimising their neo-populist project.

Recapitulating, I would say that the unresolved 'peasant question' and the perseverance of patriarchal residues, combined with the communist type of one-dimensional modernisation 'from above' and the resultant developmental disequilibrium, produced a deficient civil society. Such an *ersatz* civil society, reproducing authoritarian values and egalitarian stands characteristic for such traditional stationary economies, started to crack along ethnic lines the moment the communist system was blocked and remained unable to solve accumulated economic, technological, social and political problems. Along with the developmental crisis and systemic blockade, the patron-client relationships that were established within the party-state pyramids of the two multiethnic federations collapsed. An exit from the closed political situation had to be found and it was offered by mutually exclusive neo-populist nationalist projects which homogenised and polarised ethnonational communities and which opened the way to the establishment of separate nation-states instead of the two federations. The already ethnically divided *ersatz* civil societies played a crucial role in this process and their most important elements were integrated into new power-structures, leading to the restructuring of patronage networks and to clique politics and competition. It offered the alienated middle classes, who were the by-product of communist modernisation, an unprecedented channel for upward social mobility. Many of the specialists and professionals it included were immediately called to play leadership roles in the newly established ethnocracies. Nationalistic, traditionalist and fundamentalist themes that politically mobilised the populace became the more or less clearly formulated ideology of our new regimes disseminated by the everyday neo-populist discourse and mass media. According to Jadwiga Staniszkis, and perhaps she is right, such a neo-traditionalisation of Eastern Europe was the pre-condition for its transition to modernity<sup>65</sup>. The result is that our ethnocracies, with their non-consolidated social legitimacy, resemble for the time being more the Balkan autocracies of the late 19th century than modern states.

Is patriarchy coming back? The answer is no, although neo-patriarchal and neo-populist reflexes are evident. In fact, we are witnessing the violent convulsions of a traumatised agrarian society, condemned to wither away, and the equally painful labour contractions of a nascent industrial order. Individuals, social groups and whole segments of the population are caught in between, desperately struggling to define and re-define their social identities in a physical and human environment they cannot recognise. It is a spasmodic and cyclical social process of contraction and de-contraction. We are actually living in the contraction phase, when it appears that neo-patriarchy is in full swing. In the laboratories of the Balkans and Caucasus three such general cycles may be identified in this century: (1) the pre-communist one, reflecting relatively stable social relations characteristic for backward stationary agrarian economies in which only a few and isolated poles of modern development have appeared; (2) one-dimensional communist modernisation, during which these industrial poles expanded tre-

<sup>65</sup> Jadwiga Staniszkis described the transition process in Poland in *The dynamics of the breakthrough in Eastern Europe: the Polish experience*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1991, p. 189.

mendously, the 'peasant question', however, was left unresolved creating a developmental disequilibrium which the communist socio-economic system was unable to overcome; (3) in the post-communist cycle, initiated few years back and still inconclusive, where all the dilemmas of the past, present and future seem hopelessly entangled. The passage from one cycle to another was always marked by social unrest and political violence. This time the exacerbated social tensions took the form of ethnic conflicts masking more fundamental social contradictions. The starting point of the last cycle is the primitive accumulation of capital which was dirty everywhere. Our problem is that natives had no initial capital of their own, unless coming from local 'grey' or 'black' economy or from outside. The legalisation of an important segment of the former informal economy may explain, at least partly, why mafia and criminal practices suddenly came to the open. Production for individual profit, which is the simplest and most widely accepted definition for capitalism, is not automatically solving accumulated developmental problems. More likely, many of them will be aggravated at the pace the individual is losing the relative security guaranteed by the communist welfare system which is being dismantled.

Another major problem is that the peasant matrix of our societies is reproducing a *clientura*<sup>66</sup> instead of the previous *nomenklatura* and the related petty-commodity mode of production which is fundamentally anti-mass production and anti-capitalist. Our new political elites and their cliques are essentially the representatives of petty-commodity producers, the only ones who gained some legal or illegal manoeuvring space under the auspices of the *ancien régime*. Although many of them have in the meantime amassed millions of dollars, their mentality remained that of the *bazaar*. The neo-traditional conservatism made up of dogmatic-moralistic ideas 'deep-frozen' in the past, together with the general lack of information and professional skills, do not allow them to understand the reality which is beyond their own backyard. For whatever is beyond they have to rely either on the know-how of the inherited managerial class of communist origin or on foreign expertise. The result for the time being is a developmental imbroglio. But maybe Staniszkis is right when she affirms that it should be worse before it starts to get better.

Paradoxical as it may appear, post-communist development will have to complete what the communists have initiated but have not succeeded in achieving, in the same way as the Bolsheviks took over from the Russian bourgeoisie the task of dismantling the feudal order. It seems that modernisation cannot proceed smoothly unless all psychological, cultural, social, structural and legal obstacles for the free development of productive forces have been removed. In one way or another the 'peasant question' has to be finally settled and this settlement has to pass not only through the dismantling of state ownership over the means of production, but also through the transcendence of the *bazaar* mentality and the related petty-commodity production. Once again, it cannot be done without the state which has to create the actually non-existent "theoretical economic interests". In Staniszkis words, these interests "have to be created by the new state, which has to decide which capital is legitimised and which not, how property rights will be distributed and who has to conduct the process of privatisation. Contrary to wishful thinking, the role of the state will not be reduced, but becomes crucial in the transition process which may be interpreted as another 'revolution from above'. The central question now is how to control and check this unavoidable role of the state during transition"<sup>67</sup>. Quite ironically the state came back!<sup>68</sup>

Fascinated by the political side of the story and the 'historical defeat of communism', few analysts noticed that what is observed at the surface is only the visible part of the ep-

<sup>66</sup> Attila Agh, «From nomenklatura to clientura: the emergence of new political elites in East Central Europe», in *Labour Focus Eastern Europe. A Review of European Affairs*, no. 47, 1994, pp. 58-77.

<sup>67</sup> J. Staniszkis, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

<sup>68</sup> Theda Skocpol, *Bringing the state back in*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985.

ochal developmental drama which is not restricted to Eastern Europe or Soviet successor states only. This is the real 'revenge of the past'<sup>69</sup>.

*Cairo, 3 August, 1995*

<sup>69</sup> Ronald Grigor Suny, *The revenge of the past. Nationalism, revolution and the collapse of the Soviet Union*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1993.