

# PROSELYTISM, RELIGION, AND ETHNICIFICATION OF POLITICS

## A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Some preliminary clarifications are needed. They concern primarily the general context which the discourse on proselytizing ought to be meaningfully situated in nowadays. Namely, proselytizing has been a phenomenon present for a long time even in the Eastern Europe alongside with missions and missionary, but emerging as a peculiar attempt to persuade members of a church or believers to a faith and belongs to a religious community to change their religion and their religious affiliation essentially by dishonest and unfair motivation and by illegitimate and repulsive methods (Carillo de Albornor 1960:640). It is the specific motivation and the use of particular methods to be thought as distinguishing consistently proselytes from missionary which has been considered, according to its motivation as well as to its methods, as legal and legitimate. However, our discourse concerns proselytizing as a recent phenomenon in Central and Eastern Europe in the late eighties and the nineties in the aftermath of the fall of communist regimes in this area which ought to be situated in a continuum of doctrine and action going from religious revival through intensified missionary work to proselytizing since rapid and extensive religious changes of different types seem to be on the agenda. Therefore, some specific clarifications regarding the suggested context ought to be made in advance.

### A. Proselytizing and de-privatization of religion

1. There is no doubt that the general context has been characterized by a world-wide contemporary process to be described as a process of "de-privatization" of religion. (Ferrari 1995). Religious experience, considered generally up to the early 1970s to be more or less as a private affair and basically a matter of individual choice, has lately acquired a permanent presence and visible relevance in the public sphere and in community life. Therefore, it is plausible to talk about an important shift from religion as theism with no relevant or minor public function to religion as theism with important public functions. Or, to use Neuhaus' terms, religion has re-entered with force into the naked public square, or, applying J. Casanova's distinction, it has re-appeared as an important factor on all three levels of contemporary social life: at the level of the civil society, at the level of political society, and at the level of the state. (Casanova 1994) This has evidently some important consequences.

First," the return of the sacred" seems to be accompanied at least in some cases by a return to intolerance, and its re-entry into to public square has been followed by an increase of social tensions and conflictuality (Ferrari 1995). Therefore, some of the armed conflicts going on and involving religion to a high degree (from North Ireland to Bosnia and Israel) are not to be considered as an exception or an unpredictable turn in the course of events. Second," de-privatization" of religion represents a challenge to some of the crucial components of the common European model of relation between the state and religious confessions generally to be described as "state laicism" with three crucial features: a) neutrality of the state in regard to possible religious conflicts, b) creation within the public sphere of a religious sub-sphere which is left as a playing field or a protected area within which different religious entities act freely, being basically privileged compared to other collective non-religious entities and actors, c) the right of the state to intervene in this specific sphere only in view of protecting the rules and

confines of the game (Ferrari 1995:804). The first two points have been based implicitly upon the principle of incompetence of the state to distinguish between "good" and "bad" religions or between "beneficial" and potentially "dangerous" religions.

Third, "de-privatization" of religion represents a challenge to some of the crucial points of view in the diagnosis of the dominant trend of world dimensions of contemporary social developments previously described as the development of a complex society. It is a society with no infrastructure nor superstructure, with no center and no periphery, with none of the existing institutional segments having a dominant or hegemonic position in the society, which means with no overarching and protective sacred canopy and without an overarching all-embracing cultural and symbolic system, and with no collective goals and purposes of obligatory nature for all, etc. Instead of it, there are two major aspects involved: first, it is the religious resurgence emerging as a reaction and a response to challenges to individual subjects brought about by radical doubt and growing risks; and, second, it concerns at the theoretical level, a new current controversy about the possible and stable or unique foundations of contemporary society to be described as a controversy between liberalism and communitarism or as a controversy between democracy and pluralism, involving political and ethic relativism, on one side, and the claims for absolute and sacred beliefs, values, and norms, and more particularly involving politics with ultimate reference, on the other side (Michel 1994:38). There is no doubt that at least in some contemporary societies there has been a recent growth of credibility of the idea that "who uses the term religion, talks about a peculiar type of society based upon the authority and superiority of the principle of collective order over the individual wills" (Gauchet 1985:18). Namely, it seems as if there is a growing credibility in conviction that "without a degree of absolutization, a society could not exist at all" (Crespi 1983: 256) or that the meaningful center of a society must be located outside of it which, sociologically means that there are social relations of fundamental importance that *a priori* exclude the possibility of contestation and questioning of their own modalities. Therefore, it is not simply a controversy about the necessity of a social consensus about a minimum of shared values and norms for any society to be viable, but about the very nature of such a consensus. It concerns two ways of conceiving consensus: a) as a consensus primordially given, substantial and not formal, untouchable and absolute, non-negotiated and nonnegotiable, etc. but "fueled with the power of mythic plausibility" to borrow P. Berger's terms and/or b) a consensus which is the result of choice, always open to revision, relative, negotiable and based upon a reflexive discourse, etc.

### **B. Proselytizing and a turn from euphoria to sobering ideas about transition**

2. The second clarification concerns an evident turn in the framework referring to the approach and interpretation of the process of transition. There is no doubt that the time of the late 1980s, characterized generally by an over-optimistic approach to transitional processes has elapsed, and that a process of sobering has been underway. An initial and highly euphoric dream about transition has been now dreamed off (Michnik 1993:17) and a discourse about emerging democracy has been substituted by a recent discourse about so-called "sustainable" democracy.

Crucial changes in the approach ought be underlined.

First, transition is not conceived any more as a rather short process or as a jump from the darkness of communism to the splendor of democracy and affluence of capitalism just around the corner and within the reach but rather as a long process.

Second, transition is not expected to be an almost necessary, linear process with the final outcome to be reached well-known in advance and unequivocally defined and secured with no feasible alternatives, but it seems rather to be an open and tortuous process with different possible outcomes to be realistically reckoned with.

Third, transition was envisioned and promoted as a triumphal march to a new Canaan but now it

seems that it would be more similar to a passage through a valley of tears. Previously the non-problematic idea of a radical change in the balance between the required social costs and social benefits in favor of decreasing costs and increasing benefits for almost all has now lost its previous credibility.

Fourth, the prevailing conviction was that transition after the initial exacerbation of social conflicts would lead to a decrease of social conflicts and to their diversification as well as to a radical change in the methods of conflict solution according to formula "by ballots and not by bullets." This conviction has experienced erosion.

Fifth, the dominant initial belief that crucial problems and difficulties in transitional processes are to be found almost exclusively in the resistance of the remaining institutions of the old regime and in its organizational remnants and cultural survivals as well as in hardly controllable circumstances extrinsic to the transitional strategies has been lately substituted by a conviction that the sources of major difficulties are to be located in the adopted and practiced transitional strategies themselves. Transitional strategies appear to be contradictory, tension producing, and conflict generating. And more particularly the origin of such tensions and contradictions are located between fundamental transitional requirements: a) for building a new nation state; b) for radical economic reforms and introduction of a market economy, c) radical democratization of the society conceived of as its coherent political pluralization and polyarchization, d) securing at least a minimal of standard of life alongside with a lowering of expectations on mass scale, and e) guaranteeing at least a degree of social stability and social peace, internal as well as external. Therefore, there is no wonder, for instance, that some very recent political developments such as the repeated electoral victory of ex-communist party in the Catholic Poland, described now as "a velvet counterrevolution" (Smolar 1994) has come as a surprising and an unpredicted overture.

### **C) Proselytizing and the vicissitudes of religious reawakening**

3. Another clarification refers to some peculiarities of what has been described as the specificity of religious revival and re-awakening in at least some of the Central and Eastern European countries and/or what has been called God's victory in the East or a revenge of God compared to what has been going on in Western Europe.

It is evident that for a long time, for instance, even in the Pope's statements, the vitality of the Polish Church was opposed to 'the crisis of Western Churches' (Michel 1994:135). Therefore, there were high expectations that Polish Catholicism would basically offer "an universal model as the alternative one to the model of the secularized and indifferent West", and that a tidal wave of religious revival would start in the East to spread to the West and to give an impulse to revitalization Western Churches." Poland seems to serve as the model or source for inspiration for 'the second evangelization of Europe." G. Kepel described such expectations (Kepel 1991:66). It is clear now that, as P. Michel stresses, "there is no general religious re-awakening simply by the fact that the main point in such a dispositive does not participate: Poland and Eastern Europe" (Michel 1994:21).

Furthermore, there is an evident distinction between religious change in the West and the East. Namely, recent religious change has been going on in West European countries in such a way "that all religious institutions are forced to play in their own way upon the card of memory in favor of confessional identification hoping to derive from it profits from the standpoint of their own social authority" (Hervieu-Leger 1994:2). There is, of course, no relevant difference in this respect with what has been going on in Eastern European countries. Religious revival has been going on there as a sign of memory and primarily as an emotional mobilization of memory (Hervieu-Leger) and more particularly in the form of the salient memory of evil (Jukic). At the same time, a revival of religiosity has been going on in West Europe parallel to a growing de-regulation of beliefs, their de-traditionalization, de-totalization, and de-collectivization of decisions, and expansion of religious bricolage (Voye, Dobbealere, 1994) without re-enforcing the rigid links with the dominant religious institutions and, therefore, in terms of a

religion more or less "a la carte" so that the "meaning is now being constructed piecemeal of individual and collective experiences" (Hervieu-Leger 1993:76). In Eastern European countries generally, the revival, where it is in operation, has been going on thus far in the opposite direction, that is in terms of a religious revival with a rigid regulation of religious beliefs and with a religious re-aggregation focused on religious institutions as well as in a context of dominant re-totalization, re-traditionalization and re-collectivization.

#### **D) Proselytizing--a radically new phenomenon or a "deja vu" phenomenon?**

4. The phenomenon of proselytizing and proselytism may be seen as a presumably radically new phenomenon, that is as a unique contemporary phenomenon having to do primarily or exclusively with the Central and Eastern European countries previously under communist regimes and emerging as a phenomenon in transition from communism to post-communism. In this case the problem of proselytizing appears to be a problem with some of the following major aspects.

First, it is a problem, having become relevant owing to the fall of communist regime, to be seen also as the opening an immense and previously impenetrable or quasi space for the free hunt for souls, now disillusioned, disoriented and confused in their world views and in the grip of very difficult existential problems, generated by a grave and protracted global transitional social crisis bringing about almost permanent and unpredictable changes, but also a drastic degradation in many aspects of social life on mass scale. However, the free hunt for souls has not been so far limited to a hunt on former non-believers and religiously non-committed but also on believers and adherents of traditional and conventional faiths and churches in the area.

Second, the free hunt for souls has been exploiting the weaknesses and deficiencies of the traditional religion and churches sometimes tainted in some countries by accommodation to the communist regime and its traditional connections with powers that were and powers that are.

Third, the free hunt for souls was initiated not primarily as an internal affair and carried out by the initiative and activity of the local people and local religious organizations, but as an action from abroad, initiated, programmed, directed, and carried out mostly by foreigners with considerable means at their disposal. Therefore, it may be experienced, as it has been experienced, as an action aiming not only at a change in the religious situation created by the communist regime but also the situation existing before the advent of communism. To use different words, it is aiming not only and not primarily at a reconstruction of the traditional religious situation, but also at a radical reconstruction of it with new religious actors in action and ending in a new re-drawing of the religious map of region.

Fourth, it seems to be a problem concerning mostly countries with traditionally dominant Eastern Christianity and with different national Orthodox Churches and to a lesser degree the ones with traditionally dominant Catholicism, and almost with no relevance to countries with a dominant Muslim tradition. Consequently, it is the traditional and conventional Eastern Christianity that has experienced major pressures and challenges and/ or to be the major probable loser of such activities. Therefore, the hunt for souls appears to be primarily a challenge to Eastern Christianity since the fall of communist regime has not meant simply a sure restoration of traditional rights and position of the Orthodox Churches nor simply a revival of Eastern Christianity, but also an opening of a kind of a new supermarket of religious "goods" including the foreign ones, not available previously.

Fifth, it has to do primarily with organized actions of some, for those countries, non-conventional religious groups and communities, some of them of Oriental and other of Protestant origin or background, generally not showing any shortage of financial means as well as personnel willing to engage personally and more skillful to act on a religious free market.

Sixth, there are two different general strategies used so far in this free hunt for souls: one is based primarily on preaching their gospels frequently in non conventional ways and the other one includes also

the ability to secure a permanent presence and visibility in the region by establishing new schools, hospitals, and charities and by offering different kind of social services and/or of their combination.

Seventh, most of such activities are carried out at the level of emerging civic society and the world of everyday experience and to a lesser degree at the level of the political society but obviously having some effects upon the political society as well.

Finally, it is located in a situation characterized generally at the state level and legal context by elimination of almost all institutional and systemic pressures and restrictions introduced by the communist regime, aiming at a marginalization and ghettoization of religion through its radical privatization as well as by constitutional proclamations of the freedom of religion but also by evident needs of a further, more precise definition of the legal status of religion and religious organizations felt in many countries.

5. However, not denying the present-day historical specificity, it may be argued plausibly that there are some aspects as well as some emerging problems that ought to be experienced as something of a "deja vu," at least to a degree. History shows, for instance, that proclamations of religious freedom has had sometimes some strange consequences and that there has been an irony of history at work behind their backs.

First, such proclamations frequently had a strange follow up. One ought to remember the series of repressive edicts (Litinius and Theodosius) which had followed the formal proclamation of the religious freedom in the well-known Edict of Milan, which, according to Emile Poulat, sounded so modern or similar to later proclamations (Poulat 1987:69). Furthermore, it is evident that some of these proclamations and practices had basically nothing to do with promoting individual freedom of conscience and opinion as well as freedom of religion but with what may be plausibly called "*raison d'etat*." It is evident in the wording of the Edict of Milan: "It convenes to tranquillity which is enjoyed by the empire that freedom ought to be complete for everyone of our subjects to have God whom they have chosen and that no worship has to be deprived of honors which it deserves." (Poulat 1987:69). Another outstanding example had been the system of *millet* and *zimni* within the Ottoman empire, securing a degree of religious pluralism and tolerance in a hierarchically structured pluralistic setting favoring Islam.

Second, such proclamations included frequently a strange logic of inclusion and exclusion. Poulat mentioned as an example the Declaration of Rights (Virginia 1776) proclaiming freedom of religion but under some crucial conditions: "freedom to all individuals but supposedly Christians and freedom to all worship but assumed to be Christian" (Poulat 1987:81).

Third, it is not the first time that organized attempts at conversion either in terms of mission or of proselytizing have been connected with the idea of a crisis and decline of previously existing religions. Let us not forget that there was a time not so long ago when, for instance, it was widely believed in the West that Islam had been in a crisis with very slight prospects to overcome it as a vital force, and that Buddhism and Hinduism had come to the end in their hopes to oppose the intellectual and spiritual followers of "modern" man (Goodall 1960:990). Such beliefs were taken as an additional argument for legitimizing Western missionary activity and proselytizing.

Fourth, there have been some governments, mostly in Asia that regard the activities of foreign missionaries, considered by them to be proselytizing, to jeopardize the national unity and cultural integrity of their countries, and that loyalty to traditional religions and an interest in their re-awakenings ought to be treated as a national duty, and, therefore, not to be compatible with campaigns of religious conversions on mass scale organized from outside. Finally, there are today problems in the West similar to those in contemporary Eastern Europe. They are focused on the activities of the so-called sects and cults, and they stimulated the well-known dispute pro-cult and anti-cult at least in sociology. (The

most recent case is France with a parliamentary commission investigating the activities of some sects and preparing the Guyard report). The crucial consequence seems to be that a very peculiar intervention of the state is being considered legitimate involving even an intervention into the very definition of religion and of religious activity. Basically such an intervention turns a definition of religion into a political definition giving and/or withdrawing legitimacy and legality to some groups and some actors. Consequently, the very definition of religion has been in some way dissociated from the personal experience and feelings, and a crucial distinction has been introduced between religions considered by the state to be beneficial and religion considered at least potentially harmful. This seems to confirm the necessity expressed by G. Guizzardi some years ago of a need to pass from a sociology of religion of individuals and values to a political sociology of religion.

(Guizzardi 1979:133).

#### **F) The crucial dilemma: human rights versus social constraints and compulsion**

6. However, there is an important shift to be emphasized. Originally the problem of religious freedom has appeared in Europe primarily as a problem of individual freedom. Basically it was regarded as a problem of freedom of conscience and thought to be protected from constraints and coercion upon individual choices imposed by the state, acting either on behalf of a state religion and/or behaving as a confessional state, i.e. having explicit or implicit religious connotations, religious preferences, and serving directly religious purposes. It had been initially a problem of the rights of religious minorities within such a state but later it became a problem of the rights of so-called free-thinking and free-thinkers, basically contested by argumentation that truth could not be put on the same level as fallacy but ought to be protected by law. Nowadays, the same problem has emerged in a new context as a problem having primarily to do with what could be described as some collective historical rights, community rights, and cultural rights, conceived of as having priority compared to individual rights and freedom.

Therefore, it is now the problem of freedom of religion in a social context basically determined by dominant ethnicification of politics and politicization of culture, required by the prevailing politics of identity. Moreover, it refers in the final analysis to the problem of the contemporary viability or non-viability of a society articulated as a multicultural or intercultural one.

7. Let us describe some of the crucial characteristics of ethnicification to make it clear how this term is being used.

The ethnicification of politics as a contemporary trend relevant for at least some East European countries has been so far best described and defined by C. Offe with an implicit shift of emphasis from political organizations, political leaders and elites, political ideologies and political actions, emerging at the polity and penetrating into and colonizing the world of everyday experience, to a diffuse and spontaneous social current, a tidal wave and movement, emerging at the level of the civic society, and penetrating into politics. Namely, ethnicification, according to Offe, means:

a) "A set of strategies of individual and collective, social and political actors" which are embedded "in a cognitive and normative frame of reference according to which ethnic identities of persons and groups are the most important quality, 'primordially' obtained, that is by birth, and inaccessible and un-reachable to those who belong to other ethnic identities. They are exclusive in their respect while they function in internal relations as a source of solidarity bonds and social integration" (Offe 1994:136). Therefore, it is the ethnic identities which are more durable, more important and more normatively relevant than all other differences that exist among individuals. Ethnicification operates necessarily with a specific logic of inclusion and exclusion.

b) The immediate and necessary political consequences of it are: 1) that "citizen rights and socioeconomic status of citizens are given or denied according to their ethnic belonging" and 2) that the

state politics as well as a party system "promote the prosperity of one ethnic community even at the cost of internal or external division of the population whom the ethnic belonging has been denied to (Offe 1994:137). Therefore, ethnicification of politics involves a degree of legal and legitimate inequality, all-embracing asymmetry, and discrimination.

c) Therefore, two background consequences are: 3) that "the ethnic categories are cogent as the last source of meaningful social relations, rights, obligations and solidarities" and 4) that "they mark dominant lines of cleavages in social life and are seen and function as the most efficient levers for political mobilization and collective actions"( Offe 1994:137) involving at least a degree of intolerance.

d) Ethnicification of politics changes the nature of social conflicts by turning social conflicts into ethnic conflicts which are basically of "all or nothing" and " either/ or" type and convert politics to a zero-sum-game with no easy mediation.

e) Ultimately, ethnicification or nationalism define the role of the state in a rather specific way. The state has to be defined as having some crucial role and function in the field of culture: it ought to operate as a protector and promoter of the specific national culture and national identity. Therefore, the state is not standing above possible cultural pluralism and value polymorphism as a neutral complex of institutional arrangements, and as the political expression of an association of free and equal citizens regardless of other their characteristics, but, as an expression of a primordial community's *Wesenswille*(Tonnies), it intervenes legitimately and authoritatively in the field of culture, too. This has been underlined by E. Gellner who speaks, in his analysis of nationalism, of a need of national culture to have a political protecting roof of the national state and of a state promotion, and, consequently, it is the nation state to monopolize the legitimate culture almost in the same way as the legitimate violence, and sometimes even more. Therefore, it is hard to tolerate a different public high culture in the same political unit.

8. It is necessary to add that there is no doubt that ethnicification operates with a specific notion of culture. This has been stressed particularly by E. Gellner in his analysis of nationalism: "Culture is no longer merely adornment, confirmation and legitimization of a social order which was also sustained by harsher and coercive constraints; culture is now the necessary shared medium, the life-blood or perhaps rather the minimal shared atmosphere, within which alone the members of the society can breathe and survive and produce. For a given society it must be one in which can breathe and speak and produce; so it must be the same culture" (Gellner 1986: 37-38) with the exclusion of real cultural pluralism so that "a high culture pervades the whole society, defines it, and needs to be sustained by the polity" (Gellner 1986:18). Therefore, "genuine cultural pluralism ceases to be viable under current conditions" (Gellner 1986:55). One ought to emphasize that this is functional in a threefold manner.

Firstly, it seems to be highly functional, from the standpoint of a society, in a situation when the non-negotiable cultural homogeneity becomes the primary and crucial source of political legitimacy and stability of a mass society or in a society in a grave crisis.

Secondly, it seems highly functional, from the standpoint of construction and persistence of a religious group, in a situation where there are two competing "regimes of the truth--the one which derives from the autonomy of the subject and the other insisting upon the objective authority of a tradition" (Hervieu-Leger 1997:141). And more particularly when there is operating the modern trend of leaving to the capacity of individual subjects to decide what makes sense or norm to them, even against the code of meaning or normative system imposed on behalf of the heteronomous authority of a tradition thus making the traditional religious adherence basically precarious.

Thirdly, it seems highly functional from the standpoint of individual actors, in a situation characterized by rising ontological insecurity and homelessness. Therefore, some kind of cultural mixing and multicultural inter-penetration may easily be experienced as a kind of dangerous cultural

contamination with important consequences to stability of a society in general.

9. There is no doubt that such ideas when motivating and legitimizing political practice have important consequences. Alain Touraine has indicated some of the consequences of such a politicization of culture, warning, that, when conflicts become conflicts between cultures, there is no possible mediation, no possible common beliefs and practices, and social conflicts are replaced by affirmations of absolute differences and the total rejections of the others. (Touraine 1992: 372).

10. It may be argued that all this might appear to be rather marginal, not concerning most of the contemporary countries. However, one ought to underline that what has been described as ethnicification of politics in regard at least to some contemporary East European countries has not been basically very different from what has been described otherwise as politics of identity, politicization of culture and communitarism in general. Common is the general idea that endeavors aiming at ethnic homogeneity, community, purity, identity, etc. are fundamental, everywhere existing, and legitimate facts of politics as crucial as the pursuing of material interests or struggle for freedom. Consequently, nationalism may be defined as politicization of culture of a community which involves *volens nolens* religion to a crucial degree. Therefore, protection and defense of such an identity involves normally the mobilization of emotional and expressive forces of community life with a priority compared to abstract liberal citizens rights with no quintessence of their own since thinking and feeling in ethnic categories means nothing else in the ultimate sense but a commitment of individuals and groups to their own history, culture, and identity which is a permanent feature of human social life (Walzer 1992:171). The same idea has been hinted at by Grant who insists that what people require of politics is something more than mere toleration of their personal preferences (though they usually, and not unreasonably, want that too). What they want is the kind of freedom for their cultural values which can come only from those values' being recognized as authoritative, i.e. as continuous with, and recognized by, the political order which demands their allegiance. That continuity, in fact, is the source of obedience and hence of civil peace.

The conclusion is clear:

Multicultural societies are perfectly viable, even entertaining, so long as the main fabric of each subordinate culture consists, and is admitted by its members to consist, of mere collective options, tastes, and idiosyncrasies--of preferences, in short--such as exist even within a single culture. But when such differences are imbued with value, when they are the coordinates of a person's identity, and especially of his religion--above all when, as cultural values proper, they not merely differ, but actually conflict--then the overall consensus necessary for peaceable government becomes hard to find". (Grant 1992:24,25)

Ethnicification and nationalism become usually very virulent in a situation of a grave and global social crisis and more particularly in a social breakdown.

11. There is no doubt that ethnicification of politics or nationalism operate with a very specific notion of culture. Culture is envisioned as a homogenous entity to be distinguished easily and coherently from other cultures, and to be protected in the clash of mutually irreconcilable and noncommunicable cultures by the respective national state. F. Ferrarotti has described this notion of culture in these terms: "Different cultures are conceived of as realities closed in themselves and self-sufficient, supplied by a high degree of coherence so that they do not back any kind of 'loans' from outside, as genuine 'no shopping wholes', therefore as crystallized realities mutually absolutely incommunicable, irreconcilable, least of all able to integrate" (Ferrarotti 1993:187). Consequently, national identity is perceived as primordial, exclusive, immutable, irreconcilable, pre-given. The notion of identity as a dynamic entity which gives and accepts contributions of other identities and is changing, being redefined and reformulated through time and in communication with other cultures and other socio-economic and historic-institutional arrangements is rejected.

At the same time such a notion of culture has direct consequences for functioning democracy. A. Touraine warns that "when the state is defined as the expression of a collective, political, social and cultural being--Nation or People--or, worse, of a God or a principle whom this People, this Nation and the state itself are the privileged agents with a calling to defend it, there is no democracy even when the economic context permits some public liberties to persist." (Touraine 1993:100) The same idea has been expressed by Daniele Ungaro,

Democracy of the Western type to function can not follow the good at the expense of the justice. As a functional procedure democratic political formula contains only the following limitations in regard to specific values. It must respect human rights (there is no democracy with violations of human rights). It must secure the pluralism of forms of cultural life included into the political order, it regulates. Democracy which does not do that becomes totalitarianism, but democracy which is linked in an inseparable way to one form of cultural life turns into fundamentalist integralism" (Ungaro 1993:112).

O. Karllscheuer goes a step further: " When ethnicity, (*staatsbürgerlich*) nationality and religion do not coincide but cross over the state frontiers, the respective society is more open than when two or all three of the mentioned subdivisions coincide. The collective identities are then more open, multiple and *eo ipso* less coercive; the option of one's nation or religion or ethnic group to understand itself as one among the others, will be for individuals and groups more probable as the diverse partial identities are less threatened, they can co-exist in a more in a non-problematic way" (Kallscheuer 1994:105).

12. The ethnicification of politics and politicization of culture have direct consequences for individual identity. It is the ideology of nationality (not in classical Western meaning but the Eastern one, derived from German romanticism) to emerge as the first and fundamental value, and, therefore, no other belonging has a similar determining impact. It does not permit individuals to be non-nationalist. There is no alternative for the individual since the alternative is described in terms of a kind pathology, of invalidity, of the erosion of mental health (Buèar 1997:6-7) or in terms of anomy, egoistic individualism, and consumerism (Sunic). Therefore, a kind of state monopoly even on culture appears to be necessary and legitimate.

#### **F) New challenges to religious freedom**

13. Now the stage is set for an analysis of the fundamental problem of our discourse from a particular angle. It is clear that the problem is not to be reduced to elaboration of valid distinctions between mission and proselytism and to turn such distinctions into some kind of legal norms and practical steps in order to guarantee and protect the freedom of religion as an individual right in some of the East European countries in the process of transition. It does not concern simply the right of individuals to believe or not to believe nor their rights to change their faith and their religious belonging to be primarily protected from any un-due intervention by the state or exposure to some outside institutional pressures. Now it concerns something that is presented as being relevant for the very existence and survival of a specific national or ethnic community and more particularly its identity. Therefore, what may appear as proselytism is no longer reduced to a kind of religious action only when conducted by illegitimate motivation and by use of non-acceptable means to persuade people to change their religious faith and religious affiliation. Proselytism in the strict sense then becomes a minor aspect of a wider and more important problem including mission and missionary activity which may be experienced as having to do primarily with the integrity and purity of a community's culture and identity and its very survival. Therefore, it has to do also with reactions motivated by the need to defend a community's culture in peril or in crisis and a collective identity threatened from outside and by outsiders, but thought to be representing in the final analysis the very foundations of a given society and a given state.

To illustrate this point it is plausible to quote some symptomatic opinions referring to Russia as

well as lately expressed in the context of the crisis of former Yugoslavia. A. Podberyuskin explains the Orthodox re-awakening in Russia in the following terms: "The Russian Orthodox Church has not been a religion among others but it has been the creator of our culture." At the very beginning of the crisis a Serbian Orthodox author stressed the nexus existing between Serbian Orthodoxy and Serbian nationhood. R. Bogdanovic wrote that "for Serbs Orthodoxy was basically and primarily the faith in identity, it may be said the faith of the national identity" (Bogdanovic 1991:36). He argues that historical experience convincingly demonstrated that, when some Serbs during the Ottoman rule had abandoned the Orthodox faith and turned their backs to Serbian Orthodox Church, they generally abandoned at the same time or at a later phase their Serbian nationality. Consequently, their religious conversion led almost by necessity to their national conversion. Recently a welcome and hoped for Orthodox religious revival has been directly depicted as involving "a return to true sources of the Serbian nationhood" since "to be Orthodox, it is to be Serb." Therefore, the slogan: "There is no strong state without a strong Church."

A Croatian author raises directly the problem of relationship between nation and democracy, including human rights. He underlines with emphasis the priority and precedence of national rights as the rights of a collectivity compared to human rights as individual rights. Declaring multiculturalism a fallacy and a pathology not functioning anywhere and equating *demos* with *ethnos*, he insists that the "very welcome notion of democracy ought to be re-defined in Eastern Europe. If the terms democracy (*demos-krateo*) is taken in its obvious sense, then democracy presupposes primarily freedom of a people to preside over their destiny and not the rights of 'an anomic aggregate' of individuals when veneration of democracy becomes a stenographic sign for rampaging individualism and consumers rights". Therefore, his conclusion is clear: "The liberal quasi religion of human rights has not given due attention to historical rights and to the rights of cultural differentiation" (Sunic 1990:11) and "democracy in a pluriethnic country is a political nonsense." In an interview to the *New Yorker* in March 1991, Croatia's president F. Tudjman stated that "Croats belong to a different culture--a different civilization--from the Serbs;" Croats are a part of Western Europe, part of the Mediterranean tradition. The Serbs belong to the East. Their church belongs to the East. They use the Cyrillic alphabet, which is Eastern. They are an Eastern people, like the Turks and Albanians. They belong to the Byzantine culture. Despite the similarities in language, we cannot be together.

The same problem has been discussed by Bosnian Muslims. Mahmutcehajic wrote that the loss of the Islamic dimension from the focus of Muslim collectivity did mean its being inevitably submerged in secularized milieu (Croatian or Serbian), defined basically by Christianity (Mahmutcehajic 1990:420). This has been stressed more particularly by a trend of Islamic self-rectification, purification, and recovery. There is a growing inclination to distinguish between things impure and things pure in Islamic terms as elsewhere in the Islamic world. And the recent and current uncertainty, adversity and disaster have been interpreted basically as due to a previous departure of so many Muslims from the only correct Islamic message and Islamic way of life. A Muslim author, at the eve of the war, raised the question:

Why are Muslim backward today? Is it because they cling to Qur'an? No, it is because they neglected the Qur'an. That is why they are backward. And it is true that they are backward. So long as they fail to return to the pure principle of Islam, there will never be progress for Muslims (Bougarel 1995:87).

There are statements in stronger words, as for instance that "there can be neither peace nor coexistence between the Islamic religion and non-Islamic social and political institutions" (Izetbegovic 1992:89).

This is, of course, not something accidental or marginal. This is so by necessity if ethnic homogeneity, community, purity, identity, etc. are taken to be the basic facts of political life and of motivating political options as fundamental as is the search for material interests, and material well-being and/or the search for freedom. And also if they are conceived as being the major source for possible mobilization for any type of collective action or collective endeavor of a certain relevance which is not

possible to be obtained on ground of ideas, felt to be too bloodless, too abstract, too lifeless, too rational, too cerebral (terms are used by Gellner), etc. to steer up emotions and generate willingness to sustain hardship, deprivation, and sacrifices if and when needed, and ultimately if the liberal values of freedom and fraternity are not able "to compete with the libidinous and turbulent Dark Gods" ( Gellner). Tolerance in this case seems to be possible but primarily as a modern version of the medieval "*permissio negativa mali*" and permanently to be held under control and particularly never to be given too much free space for un-inhibited activity.

### **G) Freedom of religion basically as the freedom of individuals**

15. It may be argued that the essence of the problem under consideration has been clearly defined. The crucial questions to be raised are: Is it feasible in a social context characterized by an ethnicification of politics and dominant communitarism to secure a genuine freedom of religion regardless of their provenance and their cultural background? Is it possible to welcome ethnicification of politics and to expect coherent recognition of human rights including the freedom of religion and therefore, including the freedom of religious conversion even on mass scale? Is it possible to reject multiculturalism and interculturalism in general and recognize the right to mission and missionary activity in an area traditionally defined by another religion and another religious culture? Is it possible to claim freedom of religion as a universal right, if there is a turn from the Enlightenment idea that it is the universal and abstract qualities that define the very being of the human being as such to the French Restoration idea that it is the historically contingent and accidental qualities that define humans as really human?

It is argued that this is fundamentally relevant if some moments regarding the human rights are to be taken in consideration as they should. The fundamental right in question is the right of individuals to freedom of conscience and opinion as well as of association since it is the individual in the final analysis who has the fundamental right to believe or not to believe, to believe in this or that way, to change beliefs and the faith free from any interventions by the state and state institutional arrangements or any kind of pressure and compulsion of any others public institutions, protecting and promoting a specific culture and belonging basically to the political society. This is the right which has been recently underlined even at the level of sociological terminology to be used in research by a shift, for instance, from talking about religious adherence and religious or confessional belongers or appurtenance to adherence, adhering and adherents. And it is the individual and his choices who will have to suffer ultimately from any kind of institutional limitations and state pressures on the freedom of conscience and opinion in the field of religion, legitimized by an alleged threat to a community's identity .

b) This right is the right equal for all persons according to the principle that "if the freedom has not been equal for all, it does not exist at all" (Poulat 1987:33). A political game with inclusion and exclusion is to be considered illegitimate.

This right ought not to be subjected to any majority/minority argument and to any majority decision, and particularly this right should not be suspended or restricted by any majority decision no matter how large it may be, and, finally, this right does not depend on any pre-established number of persons involved or their traditional background. This right ought to have basically the status of a pre-political right not to be subjected to vicissitudes of politics.

d) If there should be some cultural rights, following the modern development of so-called successive generations of rights beginning with political rights, civic rights, social rights to cultural rights, then the crucial need ought to be that such rights should primarily guarantee and secure the rights of some cultural minorities, particularly non-conventional ones as well as to individuals considered to be nonconventional, and not primarily proclaimed to re-enforce, consolidate, and to protect the right of majority which is generally privileged.

e) The only legal and legitimate restrictions in this field, in view of the tragic experience in Georgetown, Waco, Tokyo, Switzerland, and San Diego ought to be introduced exclusively in terms of protecting life, and mental and physical integrity and health of individuals as in other fields of social life.

#### **F) The crucial dilemma: human rights versus social constraints and compulsion**

16. The crucial dilemma in a socio-structural sense is transparent: if a liberal or democratic society has not been able to generate and to consolidate the necessary prerequisites for its own legitimacy and functioning, but some ancillary forces are necessarily to be introduced in, activated at least from now and then, and relied upon deriving their power from an authority that countenances no alternative, i.e. that is given in advance, in a non-negotiable and not discursive manner, that lies behind and beyond any pluralism, then certainly such a type of freedom seems not to be coherently feasible as it may be conceived as threatening or may be threatening actually or potentially the ultimate foundations of the society as such. If under contemporary circumstances in at least some East European countries a mixture of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* strategies are considered to be necessary and are even welcome for overcoming the situation of a crisis, then also such rights can hardly be secured and can hardly function as they cannot tolerate anything in religious terms, which may challenge what F. Tönnies defined as for a *Gemeinschaft* necessary and primordial *Wesenswille*. If, as E. Poulat has indicated, "we can easily find in our countries a religion of Frenchhood (*francite*), a religion of Germanhood (*germanite*), a religion of Italianhood (*italienite*), and such religions of fatherland reject with force a religion of humanity (*humanite*)" (Poulat 1987:132), and if such national religions involve a fusion with a specific historical religion, and if it is not feasible to have a cultural and respectively confessional neutrality of the Nation State, then there are certainly very strict limits to possible tolerance of freedom of religion for others and particularly for religious others. It is obvious that this does not apply only to some contemporary states with dominant Eastern Orthodox religious tradition but also to some countries with traditionally dominant Roman Catholicism which has been made very clear in Poland. There is no doubt that the Polish ecclesial hierarchy has been evidently inclined to such a vision of the nation, that is of a Poland governed by the imperatives of Catholicism. It is a Polish Cardinal who believed that a nation is an organic community and has a precise way of life, a consciousness and a spirit which the concrete tradition, the common fate and the marker of historic existence have given it a unifying force (Zubricki 1997:43).

Looking from another angle, one may borrow Adam Michnik's statement referring to contemporary Poland but relevant not only for Poland:

The crux of the conflict stays in a contrast between democratization and faith in political absolutes. On one side, you have common people who try to create a system grounded upon common contents and permit that what is for them sacred and intangible is just custom or ritual for those who believe in another sacred. On the other side, there are those who so strongly believe in their own national, religious or ideological truth that they are ready to impose the rules derived from such creeds to the rest of the society (Michnik 1994:13).

P. Michel describes the same problem: "Far from being a place for overcoming possible tensions and conflicts, the religious becomes a place for the exclusion of others." (Michel 1995:164).

17. Consequently, it is our opinion that the contemporary problem or tension could not be solved upon any other basis but upon the basis of multiculturalism and interculturalism as well as deliberative democracy. The crucial argument is to be applied to religious adherence and religious activity in general is the argument that "no reason is a good reason if it requires the power holder to assert: (a) that his conception of the good is better than asserted by any of his fellow citizens, or (b) that, regardless of his conception of the good, he is intrinsically superior to one or more of his fellows citizens" (Habermas 1988: 374).

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