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## THE ROLE OF RELIGIONS AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE WARS IN EX-YUGOSLAVIA 1991-1999

**Dr. Mitja Velikonja with  
Željko Mardešić (alias Jakov Jukić), Paul Mojzes, Radmila Radić and Esad Zgodić**

*Dr. Mitja Velikonja is Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. He has published articles previously in REE. This series of written interviews with his introduction was published in Balcanis, Vol. 2, No. 2, (2002), pp. 68-83 in the Slovenian language, while the original responses were written in the Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian languages.*

More than twelve years have passed since the beginning of the dramatic events in ex-Yugoslavia. Although the memories of these tragic processes are still very alive, it is today possible to observe them with much less burden than some years ago. Lately, social sciences offered much more complete and complex images than some years ago, which more accurately answer the questions of the causes, course, results, and consequences of the wars. Undoubtedly one of the most important dimensions of these events was religion in close connections with political, national and military ambitions and goals of certain groups, parties, and countries.

In a search for answers as to why and how this happened, who were the protagonists, and what were their interests, it seemed to me intriguing to pose seven questions to four experts who during the wars promptly and critically wrote about these issues. Their names – as well as their responses to my questions – follow in alphabetical order.

1. Dr. Željko Mardešić (pseudonym Jakov Jukić) from Split, author of the studies *Budućnost religije: sveto u vremenu svjetovnosti* [The Future of Religion: The Holy in a Time of Secularity] (1991), *Lica i maske svetog: ogledi iz društvene religiologije* [Faces and Masks of the Holy: Explorations in Social Religiology](1997) and *Povratak svetog: rasprava o pučkoj religiji* [The Return of the Holy: Discussion about Public Theology] (1998). Among other texts, he contributed to the anthologies "Konfesije i rat" [Confessions and War](1995) and "Međureligijski dijalog u Europi: izazovi za kršćane i muslimane u Republici Hrvatskoj i BiH" [ Interreligious Dialogue in Europe: Challenge for Christians and Muslims in the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina](2000).

2. Prof. Dr. Paul Mojzes, professor of religious studies and former Academic Dean and Provost of Rosemont College near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is a Yugoslavian born American expert on religious changes in eastern and central Europe. Among others, he is the author of the studies *Church and State in Postwar Eastern Europe* (1987), *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR: Before and After the Great Transformation* (1992) and *Yugoslavian Inferno: Ethnoreligious Warfare in the Balkans* (1994). He was the editor of the anthology *Religion and the War in Bosnia* (1998).
3. Dr. Radmila Radić, Serbian historian, researcher in the “Institute for Modern Serbian History” in Belgrade, author of the book *Verom protiv vere: Država i verske zajednice u Srbiji 1945-1953* [Faith Against Faith: The state and religious communities in Serbia 1945-1953] and – among others – chapters in the anthologies *Srpska strana rata. Trauma i katarza u istorijskom pamćenju* [Serbian View of the War: Trauma and Catharsis in Historical Memory] (1996), "Religion and the War in Bosnia" (1998) and "Dijalog povjesničara-istoričara 2" [Dialogue of historians 2](2000);
4. Prof. Dr. Esad Zgodić, Bosnian political scientist, lectures at the Sarajevo University School of Social Sciences, is the author of the studies "Građanska Bosna" [Civic Bosnia],(1996), "Kult suvereniteta" [Cult of Sovereignty] (1997), "Studije o politici" [Political Studies] (1997), "Država, nacija, demokratija" [State, Nation, and Democracy] (1998), "Bošnjačko iskustvo politike" [Bosnian Experience of Politics](1998) and "Ideologija nacionalnog mesijanstva" [The Ideology of National Messianism] (1999).

I followed their opinions, analyses and polemics about these events during and about this time by reading their books and texts, but also by means of personal contacts with all four of them. With this short inquiry, accomplished in the summer of 2001, I tried to present their views to the broader scholarly public in a very concrete, direct way. It was completely clear to me that these questions are extremely complex and that any of them would deserve an entire study. But yet, I asked them – for the sake of easier and more efficient comparison of their opinions – for short answers which would include only the most important features, phenomena, comparisons and eventually some examples. Their answers to my questions – which vary in their extent and style – are arranged in alphabetical order throughout this text. I deliberately did not draw any of my own conclusions or summary to this tetralogue, because my intention was to leave all the interpretations to the authors.

This tetralogue was first published under the title “Verstva in zverstva: Vloga religij in religijskih skupnosti v vojnah na tleh nekdanje Jugoslavije 1991-1999” [Beliefs and Bestialities: The Role of Religion and Religious Communities in the Wars on the

Territory of Former Yugoslavia, 1991-1999] in the Slovenian language in the journal "Bal Canis", Ljubljana-Belgrade, 2002, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 68-83. It is available also in Serbian/Croatian/Bosniak language on the web-page <http://www.balcanis.com/revija/stevilka2/shb/8.htm> . I am thankful to the four authors for their kind cooperation.

**Question:**

*What are your views about religious tradition in the Balkans? What are its main characteristics?*

**Mardešić:**

If we look back into the past, it seems that the long process of deconstruction of medieval feudalism and creating conditions for development of civil society in all of Europe is coming to an end. Therefore, we can say that the Balkans was, at least we hope so, the last refuge and buttress of pre-modernity. By saying that, I don't mean that there were no brief penetrations and visits of civil ideas and positions in the Balkans in the last century. To the contrary, there were a lot of those experiences during periods of stability. However, those ideas and opinions did not develop gradually as a result of internal development, but through external influences, and that is why they remained at the level of barren ideology. Moreover, it is important to stress that political freedom of the individual as the inalienable essence of modernity was never present in all components of civil society in the Balkans. That was surely fateful and tragic for the people who lived there. Neither religious tradition, nor monarchist rule nor communist ideology allowed modernism to take roots. The process of modernism had been blocked until the most recent bloody conflict in the region. That is the first characteristic of religion in the Balkans.

The second characteristic is related to the influence of faith and is linked to the reasons described above for the lack of political freedom. Wherever there is no political freedom issues of nationality are being solved by religion. The best example is Macedonia where the church has been, for centuries, the only guardian of national consciousness. Everything else was hidden or erased. Therefore, compared to other western societies, there is a different path to national liberation in the Balkans. While in

most European countries, civil society was responsible for promotion of national freedom, in the Balkans, that role was taken by premodern religious communities and churches in the Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and later in the Muslim part of the Balkans. For Eastern Orthodoxy, that was not surprising since it is nationalist in its nature and orientation. It is surprising, however, for Catholicism, which is explicitly universal and supra-national not only in its core and teaching, but also historically. It was created in this special way during the Middle Ages within the Austro – Hungarian Monarchy where religion was often linked to different nations. Therefore Catholicism sometimes plays the role of universal religion but in other cases the role of a national religion. This shows to what degree religion is functionally adaptable to the demands of the time and place in which it exists. That is the means by which it departs from its own holy beginnings.

I would also like to point out that since Christianity, as any other religion, is a precisely defined and closed worldview, we cannot solve national problems with its help. That is possible only by politics which is the art of rational negotiation and pragmatic discussion, and that is why politics is in complete opposition to any worldview that does not condone changes. In distinction from politics for them there cannot and must not be concessions. Therefore disputes are mostly solved by the defeat or victory of one of the confronting forces, but never by agreement. There is no other solution. People in the Balkans, despite strong ties to religious tradition, have been trying for centuries to get to national freedom through severe and exclusivist conflict of worldview espoused by different religions. The same was the case with socialism, which was also shaped as a worldview and continued with the same inefficiency. That is the reason why confrontational religions and later ideological communism were not able to do anything regarding the arrangement and reconciliation of national contradictions. That can be done only by political modernism. And because it did not exist in the Balkans, its role was taken by religion with bad and unsuccessful results. That is why, until the fall of the Berlin Wall, we remained social prisoners of the unhappy fate of premodernity which was forced to live and exist alongside modernity and postmodernity.

**Mojzes:**

My answers to the question are applicable to the Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Muslim religion and not the Jewish and Protestant. Generally speaking, religion in the Balkans is collectivist, traditional, hierarchical/priestly and protective.

By collectivist, I mean that the main relationship is not of the individual with God but the collective [in some cases regarded as “the people of God”] with God. The role of the individual is small compared to the interest of the whole religious community (I use this phrase since the word “church” does not apply to Islam.)

The reason for the term “traditional” is that these three religious communities underwent minimal or no reformation. All three communities have a doctrine that obligates them to take early periods of their history not only as source of inspiration, but as also doctrinally and canonically mandatory for their followers. All three religious communities consider that God’s will was received in the early centuries and that they are being protected by God from making errors regarding that revelation. Therefore, the best is to follow tradition since new ideas can lead away from the right path.

At first it may seem that the third characteristic, the hierarchical/priestly, is not relevant to Islam, but when approached from the functional point of view, I think that all three religious traditions have leaders who speak authoritatively in the name of all followers. This characteristic was emphasized even more by the fact that most followers were not highly educated and did not have deep knowledge of their theology and religious (canon) law and therefore a small group of leaders had to take that role. Under priestly, I mean the situation in which the goal of religious leaders is the maintenance of their institution and not the prophetic role of self- criticism.

Promotion of institutional interests leads to the last characteristic, namely protective. The task of religious leaders from the top to the bottom is to play the role of pastor or shepherd who alertly takes care of the welfare of the flock. They are responsible for the flock’s survival. This is even more prominent in times of crisis, when the flock is endangered by “wolves”. Among “wolves” are, of course, rival religious communities. Therefore, when one religious community was trying to limit the influence of the other or even convert or proselytize, religious leaders became key protectors of their religion, which typically overlapped the boundaries of the nation. That led to circling of the compound with the intent to make the flock homogenous and obedient.

Since the Balkans is in a permanently critical condition, the idea of danger from others is very present in the minds of people as well as leaders.

**Radić:**

Religious tradition in the Balkans is characterized by constant tensions and mistrust between the main religious communities, especially the Roman Catholic and Serbian Orthodox Church. When there was an attempt to bring together in the 19<sup>th</sup> century these religious communities by joining into one state it actually seems as if the process of distancing started at the same time. The historical foundation for the last struggle for uniting the Yugoslav peoples was the aspiration to form a single ethnic community. The basis for that belief was the same as the one that began at the end of the 18th century according to which it is a common language that makes a nation and that the Yugoslavian territory was made such an entity in Europe. The role of religion was overlooked and there was an assumption that secularization was deeply rooted in the society and that it will proceed. The promoters of Yugoslavism believed that the Yugoslav idea was in the minds of Serbs and Croats and in minds of other south Slavic people. Contrary to that belief, it seems that religious identification was strong in most of the population. Promoters of ethnic unity of Serbs and Croats - Yugoslavs - were convinced in their historical mission and they did not accept warnings that a centralized state, which they wanted to create, was threatened by religious and cultural differences, different historical traditions, and so on.

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes did not accept ethnic differences but did accept religious differences among Yugoslav people. In the Yugoslav state after 1918, however, there was no significant current which, as Josip Juraj Strossmayer [Catholic bishop] in an earlier period, would have propagated spiritual unity. Besides that, the idea of Yugoslavism was actually thinking of uniting Christians, while in regard to Muslims it was always believed that they will gradually return to their “real national identity,” Serb or Croat.

Disagreements among religious communities started early, at the time of the Vidovdan [St. Vitus Day] Constitution [1921], and culminated at the time of the Concordat Crisis [1929]. In the background was a deep dissatisfaction that both the Serbian Orthodox Church (hereafter SOC) as well as the Roman Catholic Church

(hereafter RCC) experienced in the newly established state. SOC had the position of a state church in the Kingdom of Serbia, and the RCC had a similar status in the Hapsburg Monarchy. From those positions, they were theoretically equal, but neither had the intention to renounce any rights nor influences it had previously held in society. The pressure they underwent after the Second World War did not bring them closer together because of the bloody experience in World War II. The relations between SOC and RCC were almost frozen until the beginning of the 1960s, when parallel with the temporary process of rapprochement (meetings of religious leaders, dialogues, visits by students, etc), more explicit requests began for the revision of the positions held by religious communities, along with the first signs of nationalism and new conflicts. The process that began at that time culminated in the 1990s.

**Zgodić:**

It is almost mysterious, it is also part of mythology, that the religious composition, the internal relations between their confessional sub-identities, history and even trans-history of its rivalries and conflicts are contemporaneous in their intentionality and implication. Still functioning, mysteriously, are consequences of the epochal schism of the two churches, Eastern and Western. In historiography, there are cultural and customary reminiscences that the schism was not only religious but that through history it produced also geographical, conventional, spiritual, cultural, legal, political and above all antagonistic mentalities.

However, the history of war crimes on these territories shows that in this regard there are no differences. Among idolatrous claims and narcissistic nationalist claims belong the conventional notions of Western-Catholic cultural-civilizational superiority and Eastern Byzantine-Orthodox barbarism. On the one hand these war crimes range from Papal-Hungarian crusades in Bosnia to *ustasha* genocides over Serbs and Jews in World War II, to the war crimes on Bosnyaks and culturecide in Bosnia after 1993. On the other hand, they range from the persecution of heretics in Dushan's empire to *chetnik* genocidal war crimes on Muslims in 1941-1945, to the state-sponsored war crime and genocide arranged by the Serbian-Montenegrin regime and its paralegal and paramilitary formations after 1992. In the history of these war crimes a contributing role was played by the hierarchies of both Churches.

By looking at Serbian authors who analyzed the history of Orthodox Christianity in the Balkans, it seems that the schism (especially in the Serbian version) resulted in the fact that Serbian Orthodoxy was never freed from pagan content, in other words, it was never completely Christianized and emancipated from the pre-Slavic and Slavic paganism.<sup>1</sup> Many Serbian critical intellectuals see in the pagan dimension of Serbian Orthodoxy the trans-historical source of Orthodox affection for state nationalism, worldly epic, irrational heroism, mythology, profane cults and ethno-idolatrous legitimation of genocidal crimes. The worldly, aggressive, ethno-statist character of Orthodoxy is also derived from this paganism.

But the thesis of the wider implications of the schism, no matter how controversial, has some productive aspects. In discussions about the Bogumil, Catholic, and Orthodox character of medieval Bosnia, I presented the unconventional position that medieval Bosnia was more pagan than Christian, which cannot be proven in detail here. However, that position challenges and irritates those who offer Croato-centric and Serbo-centric pseudo-legitimacy of their hegemonistic aspirations in B&H. I'll give a couple of illustrations. The medieval Bosnians--that is how they called themselves rather than Serbs and Croats--did not accept the Christian sacramentalization of marriage, but practiced it liberally and paganistically, as a matter of the will, a female-male promise and pledge to faithfulness. An example of Bosnian paganism was their tentative and unstable religious identification so that conversions from Orthodoxy to Bogumilism or Catholicism were very common, conventional, mostly motivated by pragmatism, through arranged marriages, political utilitarianism, war or peace, and other agreements. Secular pragmatism rather than holiness of the Christian religious identifications were dominant during those times. In any case, contemporary historical insight into this region's religious history must reflect the relation between pagan and Christian less dogmatically and without the projections of modern notions about the past.

However, the arrival and expansion of Islam was the major influence upon the Balkan religious mosaic. There are theses that Islam arrived in this region even before the Ottoman conquest, but unfortunately they are not at the center of critical reexamination.

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<sup>1</sup>For an extensive version of Serb elaboration of pagan dimensions see Fuad Saltaga, *The Anatomy of Serbian Destruction*, (Sarajevo, 1995).

The discussion about whether Islam expanded voluntarily in the region of current B&H or with the aid of force continues. Those who are anti-Islamic and especially the Serbian-oriented insist on the predominance of oppression as the reason for Islamic expansion. Those who are pro-Ottoman or Turkophile, with idyllic orientation toward the Ottomans prefer the other explanation, that Islam was accepted voluntarily beginning with the Qur'anic revelation that faith is impossible under coercion. Those in Bosnia who hold a critical Ottoman view consider that the expansion of Islam, in different periods of Ottoman rule in Bosnia, was voluntary but that different forms of coercion were used by the conquering character of the Ottoman state. When force was not explicit it was replaced by economical and psychological coercion by the new occupying government. Most recently, this view has been espoused by the Academician Enver Redžić. Considering the expansionist character of the Ottoman Turkish state and the contradictory, non-linear historical processes, he defends the view that the expansion of Islam in B&H was characterized by moments of external pressure, especially in the first periods of Ottoman stabilization in Bosnia. In that sense, by accepting and elaborating the views of Nedim Filipović, who writes, for example, "The direct use of force was replaced by economic pressure. In fact, the process of Islamization was influenced by the presence of the real force of the occupying state, and parallel with it's shadow by tolerance."<sup>2</sup>

Independently from these controversies, the religious history was determined by the following: For the occupied people, Islam was both a reality and metaphor of slavery, domination, and non-freedom, so that the anti-Ottoman defensive wars were experienced in the conscience of the masses as wars against Islam rather than as wars for emancipation from the rule of the occupying government. This identification of B&H Muslims with the Ottoman state authorities determined all of the relations in B&H, especially after the Austro-Hungarians took over. The result was a policy of Croatization and Serbization of Muslims or Muslim self-Croatization or self-Serbization in B&H which certainly caused severe antagonistic conflicts between the religio-nationalist sub-identities in B&H. This was reflected in the ideology of aggression on B&H. The paradigm of this view was stated after the war crime of genocide in Srebrenica by the Serbian pseudo-general Mladić: "After the rebellion against the *dahije* [local Turkish

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<sup>2</sup> *Hundred Years of Muslim Politics in Theses and Controversies of the Science of History*, 2000., p. 29.

overlords] there came a time to avenge ourselves against the Turks.” The original idea of emancipation from the Ottoman state was experienced in ethnocentric nationalist and genocidal notions such as a total anti-Islamic, i.e. anti-Muslim politics and practice. Norman Cigar showed concisely what was the content of the irrational anti-Islamism for ideologically legitimizing the genocide against the Boshnyaks in Bosnia.<sup>3</sup>

These relations of divergence, which were mostly imported into Bosnia, was just one side of historical reality. Along with it was also the other side, the side of tolerance, the ethos of “*komšilik*” [neighborliness], the ideas and practices of convergence, the custom of a sense of balance, religious co-existence, and similar. Between Ivo Andrić’s picture about B&H as a dark *villayet* and the [picture of an idyllic harmony as the paradigm of Bosnian tolerance, even during Ottoman rule there were those who offered a critical, non-disjunctive picture of Bosnia reflected in the works of Boshnyak intelligentsia of that time, for instance, Mula Mustafa Basheskiya, M. I. Isević, M. Prozorac, and others. Over the period of several centuries these intellectuals maintained a critical attitude toward Ottoman rule in Bosnia, containing a spirit of intra-Bosnian convergence and an apology on behalf of the socially inferior Boshnyaks, Catholics, and Orthodox.<sup>4</sup>

In Bosnian cultural-religious and ethnic polyphony one can see from these pictures that politics has simply transformed the religious sentiment into an energy or the simple matter of worldly conflicts. One should recognize that the Catholic Church up to Vatican II preached an anti-Islamic view with the conviction that Islam cannot be a revealed religion, and was striving at the same time for Islamic conversions to Catholicism. The politics of this proselytism is especially well known in Bosnia during the episcopacy of Josip Štadler. In relation to Islam its interpreters stated, “One should remember that Štadler in this respect followed the classical theology of his time, and it spoke about Muhammad and Islam mostly negatively.”<sup>5</sup> Topić uses the subtitle of one of

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<sup>3</sup> *Uloga srpskih orijentalista u opravdavanju genocida na Muslimanima Balkana* [The Role of Serbian Orientalists in Defending Genocide over Muslims of the Balkans] (Sarajevo, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> About this see more in Esad Zgodić, *Bošnjačko iskustvo politike, osmansko doba* [Boshnyak experience of politics in Ottoman Times], (Sarajevo, 1999)

<sup>5</sup> Franjo Topić, “Štadler i politika, predavanje održano na znanstvenom skupu u Zagrebu u organizaciji Katoličkog bogoslovnog fakulteta i Družbe sestara Služavki Malog Isusa, Novembar 12, 1998”. in *Josip Štadler, Život i djelo* (Sarajevo: Katolička teologija, 1999), p. 288.

his works on theology, to claim that “Muhammedan Faith Cannot be God’s Revelation.”<sup>6</sup> The goal of such views was “. . . to prove that only the Christian faith is of divine origin.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore, he represented contemporary “Catholic integrism.”<sup>8</sup> “Nowadays we frequently forget that the theology of that time looked at other religions, including Islam, differently from today. The Second Vatican Council introduced into theology and then into Catholic practice a friendly and dialogical position toward other religions. Earlier they looked exclusively from the viewpoint that Catholicism is the true faith and the others are wrong.”<sup>9</sup> But, regardless of these explanations, it is clear that the Vatican with its dogmatics, during one period of Bosnian-Herzegovinian history was the source of inter-religious antagonisms that were then reflected in the secular sphere. In the reconstruction of the history of the religious reality on these territories, which, of course, I do not aim to do here, one should start in my view, from the theoretical and conceptual position which differentiates the historical from dogmatic Christianity and the historical from revealed Islam. This differentiation leads to differentiation of concrete historical communities from their original theological identities. History of religion is not identical to the historical religious communities, which one can illustrate from the example of Russian Orthodoxy as viewed by Nicholas Berdyaev.<sup>10</sup>

**Question:**

What, in your opinion, was the religious dimension of the last fifteen dramatic years in the former Yugoslavia? In other words, how much was the religious factor involved?

**Mardešić:**

In the former Yugoslavia, five years after the fall of the socialist system, the religions, although very present in society, did not have any significant political influence. How did this happen? Right after WWII, the Communists openly persecuted religious communities, but did not succeed in acquiring the central role in regard to the national aspirations of common people. They did quite the opposite. They brought the nationalist and religious closer together. This period in the former Yugoslavia lasted for

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Franjo Topić, “Štadler i muslimani” in *Jopis Štadler: Život i djelo*, p. 376.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> *Ruska ideja* [Russian Idea] (Belgrade, 1987).

about twenty years. The increase in the standard of living, opening of borders, joining with and leading the countries of the Third World, as well as the availability of Western culture later played its role. The social system lost a lot of its seriousness and ideological severity. Systematically and permanently, the Communists prevented only political freedom. Even though they tried to replace it [political freedom] they substituted it by economic self-management. The hatred toward the church and religious communities ended, and they even established a rich dialogue that may be found in many, today completely forgotten books.

**Mojzes:**

The role of religion in the dramatic events at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Balkans is very controversial. Some argue that they were religious wars, and others believe that religion played no role at all. I think that religion played an important but not crucial role. In any case we cannot compare them with crusades nor with *jihad*. In most cases I see political manipulation of religious factors and considerably less conscious religious initiative that led to deteriorating relations. The thesis I developed in the article “Camouflaged Role of Religion in the War in B&H” was based on my assessment of the characteristics of religion in the Balkans. Religion in the Balkans is pre-Enlightenment. This means that religion is not a separate form of theory and practice which influences other human activities, but that the religion is an inseparable part of human consciousness which permeates human identity, including nationality. Therefore, when conflict arises between different nationalities, (especially when nationalism rises to the level of national chauvinism) and those nationalities are similar to each other, then religious differences play the role of the separator (therefore in the Albanian-Slavic conflicts religion plays a minor role whereas in B&H it’s role was much larger).

**Radić:**

Although some authors think that the religious factor was one of the key elements of Yugoslav disintegration,<sup>11</sup> most researchers whose subject was the role of religion in the recent conflicts in the Balkans, consider that it was not of primary importance. They think that the religious communities were manipulated at the time of the fall of Communism by former communists turned nationalists. The religious conflicts,

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<sup>11</sup> Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War*, (London, Penguin, 1993).

according to them, served primarily as substitutes for the national ones. The conflict therefore arose as a result of the failure of the Yugoslav idea for which many factors, such as cultural, political, and economic, were more important than religious (Gerard F. Powers, Paul Mojzes, Xavier Bougarel, Mitja Velikonja, et.). I completely agree with their opinion, but think that time needs to pass to arrive at the right answer. I don't think that the picture we have now will change entirely, but some details will need correction. As a historian, I think that we need to wait for some other sources to come forward to show what really was the role of the religious factor. We drew our conclusions by following the situation from the distance. The one thing that showed clearly is how fatal was the connection of religion and ethnos in the Balkan region not only in the case of the Serbian Orthodox community, but also, paradoxically, in the Catholic and Muslim communities.

The disintegration of Yugoslavia may be considered a result of the unsuccessful creation of a multicultural community that had a chance to integrate constitutive nations of different historical and cultural heritage. The nationalistic and separatist euphoria by which the republic and political oligarchy with the help of external factors destroyed the second Yugoslavia, took over all leading Yugoslav religious communities with its radical requests for national and ethnic homogenization. The identification of religion and nation cannot make peace with the universal religious principles and the need for church to remain a supra-national institution. Yugoslavia as a multiethnic and multinational state was especially sensitive to every attempt of identification between church and nation, but this process of identification was, indeed, a constant occurrence in the history of the Yugoslav state. As a result of specific Yugoslav religious pluralism, none of the religious communities could establish a dominant position in Yugoslavia. Therefore, they turned to "their" nations within which they expected to hold the dominant position and, most often, it ended in nationalism.

Religion in Yugoslavia never presented itself as a cohesive factor, but the fight of the church for national and cultural identity turned into intolerance and even open enmity. That was especially noticeable during the decomposition of Yugoslavia.

**Zgodić:**

I don't see any cause-and effect connection, as apparently perceived by one part of the public opinion, of how on the ground of post-socialism an earnest "return to religious identity" among the people of ex-Yugoslavia and "the emergence of intolerance," and especially of the aggression upon B&H could take place. That aggression *par excellence* is an extra-religious manifestation, namely that it is eminently the result of politics. True, the actors of aggression on Bihać skillfully used religiosity but they did it in order to foster an "energy" of manipulating the consciousness, petrifying the xenophobia, and extending ethnic distancing. The aggression on B&H should be viewed as an act of state politics *sui generis*. But we should always distinguish authentic religiosity, as it is presented in the holy sources of religion, from religious communities as social institutions. As stated above, we distinguish original Islam, original Orthodoxy, original Catholicism from historical Islam, historical Orthodoxy, and historical Catholicism. This difference can undoubtedly be seen in the different behavior of religious communities during the aggression on B&H. Taking into account this difference and by the logic of polydeterminism it is useful to think about and explain the events during the last decade of the 20th Century in ex-Yugoslavia.

**Question:**

*What is, in your opinion, the relationship between religious communities/churches and the main political orientations/parties, indeed between religion and politics?*

**Mardešić:**

From all I wrote earlier it follows that from a sociological perspective for me there is ideological politics or politics as ideology that is the first and unbridgeable barrier to establishing truthful or non-ideological politics in the former Yugoslavia, regardless whether it is of religious or communist heredity. We always deal with distorted politics--irrational, emotional, unreasonable, fanatic, exclusive, closed, extremist, suspicious--which tends to constantly cause conflicts and long bloody wars. The one, who changes his ideology even a little bit, loses it. After the break up of the former Yugoslavia, and the creation of new states, most politicians came from one of two circles: religious and communist, which is the worst possible case. No part of society (neither the economy, art, science, law, nor the family) was so much inoculated with ideology as was politics.

Politics should have developed into a healthy political life without any stiffness and claims to infallibility. Therefore all our post-war political parties had the specific mark of ideological seriousness and ideological inflexibility instead of political shrewdness and laid-back negotiations. It turns out that this unbearable seriousness of politics of a certain type of human metaphysics, was its greatest negation. Ideology and politics are actually extremely different. Nobody was greatly surprised by the fact that all the larger new political parties resembled mass political movements or collectivistic religious meetings more than they resembled modern political organizations. The most surprising for the uninformed was that idyllic and enthusiastic cooperation of former communists with the religious elite within certain parties by which they unintentionally combined the stiffness of both these world ideologies. In Croatia, Tudjman's HDZ [Croatian Democratic Union] was certainly such an example and not surprisingly it completely destroyed the remnants of healthy politics within itself and its vicinity. In that way nationalism became the only important ideology. Nevertheless, those big parties, some earlier and some later, experienced an expected crisis since they did not exercise real politics. They lived solely from ideological inspiration and enthusiasm. Those who played a double ideological game, hiding interest behind noble political rhetoric were obsessively getting rich, hidden from the public eye. Not many things were put on the agenda since the social mechanism remained undemocratic and autocratic. What else could be expected from people who had lead politics to become a fateful defense of the greatness of their ideology. Therefore, they hid everything dishonest since they were afraid to get dirty. New parties that came to power later faced a double task of secularizing politics from ideological weaknesses and cleaning-up abuse. The situation is such that it is surely not going to be easy and painless, since it is a pretty tough heritage.

**Mojzes:**

While the Communist Party had an aversion towards religion during Communism, in the post-communist era some parties stayed secular while others searched for closer relations with the main religious community. The more nationalist the party, the greater its desire to get close to the religious community. The politicians such as Tudjman, Izetbegović, and Karadžić used photo-opportunities to attract believers to support their political solution. It was interesting to see pictures of the Parliament of the

Republika Srpska [Bosnian Serb Republic] where priests sit in the front row. Karadžić claimed that he consulted God and religious leaders for everything he did. However, I don't believe him. He listened to neither God nor bishops.

**Radić:**

From the perspective of my professional interest I think it is still too early to correctly answer this question. The research shows close ties of religion and politics in both the First and in Second Yugoslavia. The relation between politics and religion went through different phases and was different in many ways in separate parts of various religious communities. If we talk about the time after WWII, we have to take into account that the relation of religious communities with state authorities greatly depended on their power, historical heritage, financial strength, etc. Some religious communities such as SOC or the Islamic Religious Community were, after the initial period of state pressure (1945-1954), basically kept under control and they cooperated without much resistance with the state, although they always opposed it internally, acting in secrecy. RCC had more opportunities to give stronger opposition and that opposition often created great concern among government leaders. There were some differences in the way RCC acted in the fifties and later. Also the RCC acted differently in Croatia than in Slovenia or Macedonia. At the beginning of the sixties, with the sudden increase in the number of religious publications, massive religious meetings, and the number of churches being built, the religious communities became more present in daily life, and their demands were more open and extensive. At that time, the government still held control over religious communities by different means (e.g. the selection of high religious officials, certain decisions at religious conferences, etc.). This control took place in different ways. During the eighties there was a more noticeable closeness of republican, federal, and party structures to certain groups within religious communities. It is early to talk about what really happened internally, but it seems to me that the religious communities turned toward those whom they considered able to meet their requests, some of which were not specifically religious.

**Zgodić:**

I think that the religious identification among Boshnyaks, Bosnian Croats, and Bosnian Serbs are stable and unquestionable, and there is nothing dangerous about it.

There is no religious community which expands its membership by conversions and that does not represent any danger, so that voluntary conversions to Islam in Europe is not scandalous; there is even talk about a new phenomenon of Euroislam. On the other hand, everything else is in upheaval in terms of movement and uncertainty. On the other hand no one in Europe's West is upset about the symbiotic relationship between political parties and religions. Only in our historical context is it upsetting, irritating, scandalous, creating panic, excited polemics, and controversial reflections about the actual relationship between certain ruling national parties and religious communities.

What is actually the issue? Are we not still prisoners, even unconsciously, of anachronistic pseudo-socialist conceptions about the relationship between the state, society, and religion? Or is it that in practice there are so many anomalies, antinomies, anachronisms, pathological deformations, that a rightly oriented thinker must more decisively begin with the demystification of the above-mentioned deformities? Firstly, we don't see anything problematic with some of the political parties in B&H that take the dogmas of Islam, Orthodoxy, or Catholicism as essential or as one of the more important dimensions of their moral-political identity. That is the right that emanates from a pluralistic essence of democracy.

Problems begin when out of such dogmatics one wants to project governmental and political programs, namely, when from the sphere of ethics one wants to go into the secular world of society and state. Of course, no one dares to openly and explicitly show up with a constitutional-legal project based on theocratic principles. In practice, however, one can foresee certain elements of a theocratization of the state's domain at least in its symbolically manifested expressions. Installation of religious content into state festivals, and festive obligations or vows, the religious sacralization of military and political personalities from national histories, or the current ritual dedication of state or military objects and even places where war crimes and genocides were carried out, the popular deification of state holidays, the integration of religious elites into secular or governmental rituals, curiously non-transparent, are actually informal and thereby a poorly discernible symbiosis of religious and state-party power. All of these are expressions of a certain form of theocratization of the state domain, each of which deserves a critical analysis. Although one should not exaggerate the strength of these

manifestations, they nevertheless signify that some of the national parties base their relationship toward religion on politics, which is different from the Western European practice of preserving the secularism of the state.

But the theocratization of the state does not have a realistic chance because in B&H it is impossible to promote any one of the religions into the official religion and then proclaim its dogmas as the basis of the state ideology or its legal structure. Therefore it is impossible to even think that B&H could be based on the promotion of the *shari'a* or Christian canon law as the source and basis of the Bosnian legal system, because in that case the state would be destroyed from within due to the expected and understandable rebellion and subversion by the other, non-official religions.

Here I speak from the perspective of a Bosnian integrist. Of course, from the perspective of those political powers which would completely destroy B&H as a state or want to reconstruct it as a pseudo-state community of three separate and hence a discriminatory system of religiously established national mini-states, things look entirely different.

**Question:**

*What was in your opinion the role of religious communities/churches and religious hierarchies in the promotion of nationalistic and chauvinistic demonstrations and actions which consequently lead to wars?*

**Mardešić:**

The opinions are very different and contradictory. I have already addressed some of this and don't want to repeat myself. I think we have to be careful not to oversimplify things. There are always several factors in play. There are no signs that churches and religious communities are doing something different in recent times from what they did through their long history. For those who know history it is nothing new. It could be that the circumstances were worse and that therefore one had to respond with the help of strengthened action but always from the same starting points. In pre-modern times that was the customary position of the churches and religious communities. Unifying reactions and functions of religion are not only the matter of human striving - don't mind

my use of this expression - but also the biological base of any socialization. It exists and should be taken into consideration.

**Mojzes:**

The members of all three hierarchies contributed in certain ways to the inciting of nationalistic feelings. Sending students to very conservative Islamic countries contributed to the identification of Boshnyak people (who were at that time called “Muslims”) with Islam and to their increased identification with the Islamic world (especially the more militant one). This increased the fear of Christians that more significant changes will affect the status quo and perhaps return to the *shari'ate* law and other restrictions which would become mandatory for all.

The Orthodox hierarchs were gradually gaining independence from the domination by the Yugoslav regime and identified closer with the Serbian government specially over the issue of Kosovo. They were leaders in opposing anything that they considered to be a threat of Albanian domination in Kosovo. This was accompanied with the awakening of memories of being victims of the *ustashas* during WWII. As Croats and Slovenes (Catholics) distanced themselves from Yugoslavia, the more the Serbian hierarchy became afraid of repeated persecutions of Orthodox Christians, not to mention their concern over the likely break-up of the territory populated by Serbs into several states. That would have difficult consequences in regard to the question of the diocesan jurisdictional system of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Catholic bishops regarded the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) not only as a party that represents Croat interests, but as an all-Croat anticommunist movement that would provide much more freedom to the Catholic Church among Croats. By supporting the independence of Croatia and by creating a Croat political party in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Franjo Kuharić and other bishops *de facto* supported the option which was leading toward the break up of Yugoslavia. By being against the official use of the Serbian language, and by supporting Croatian language as the only official language of the Republic of Croatia, as well as being reluctant to apologize for the abuses by the Catholic Church in the Independent State of Croatia during WWII, the Catholic Church gave signals to Serbs that they are endangered if they stay unprotected in Croatian areas.

**Radić:**

We can not talk about religious communities as a compact entity. Every community had representatives who thought differently, but during certain time periods a more radical trend dominated, often affecting the behavior of others. All religious communities had representatives who promoted inflammatory nationalistic and chauvinistic positions and actions, but I think one should take into account the possibility of their influence which was not always the same. Up until now no comparative analysis was made of the influence of various religious communities in the area of former Yugoslavia, but only such an analysis would truly show what really happened and who was to what extent responsible for the actions of the religious communities. The main focus was on the activities of the Serbian Orthodox Church that was often blamed as the main guilty party, which I don't think is true. At the beginning of the 1980s, as the result of the Kosovo crisis and the general crisis of society, the anti-western wing in the SOC started getting stronger, showing undisguised support for monarchism, anti-westernism, and a denial of the achievements of the modern world. Priests and part of the episcopate were nationally and patriotically oriented, though more and more in terms of medieval and isolationistic categories. Concepts such as democracy, liberalism, freedom of conscience, and western culture were simply treated as negative and anti-Orthodox.

It was more and more obvious that the Church not only wanted to free itself from tutorship by the state, but also to obtain some indirect role in the guidance of society, and eventually the role of the dominant state religion. Increasingly present were theses about the need to reorganize the Yugoslav state in a manner that was most advantageous to Serb national interests and the interests of SOC. The open support of the Vatican to the secession of some Yugoslav republics was received as proof of the thesis of a "Vatican Conspiracy" against Serbs and also against the Yugoslav state. Some recent research, (e.g. that of Vjekoslav Perić), shows that the RCC did play a very important role in the preparation for the conflict, but in distinction from SOC it did it more cautiously, without direct and public advocacy by the highest hierarchy. Concerning the Islamic Religious Community, one should pay attention to the works of Xavier Bougarel who covers the internal genesis of relations in this religious community and about their phases during the most recent years.

**Zgodić:**

There is no basis for a unifying view. But it is interesting that one can discern their role out of the traditional relationship of religious communities toward the ruling and even aggressive state policies. It is surprising, mystical, unfathomable. Without *a priori* apologetics, one must say that since the Boshnyak people were at the center of Serbian/Montenegrin and later Croat genocidal aggression, it is understandable that the leaders of the Islamic community involved themselves in the sphere of public politics. Thereby some of them occasionally became extremist. We are not saying that it was their only reaction, namely, that they did not have their own original, authentic conceptions. But it was nevertheless a response to the geopolitical concepts of Milošević and Tudjman about the creation - in case they could not divide Bosnia and annex its parts - of a Muslim mini-state that will end up under Europe's patronage; the messianic task of Croatia should be to Europeanize the Muslims. It is understandable, on the other hand, that the defenders of B&H also activated the emancipatory potentialities in the religious identity of the Boshnyaks. But under conditions of peace, such activation, especially within Islamic fractions, or in Bosnia the non-traditional *mesheba*, which work outside the official Islamic community of B&H, these take on controversial implications into which we cannot delve here.

Its true, that at the time, the elite of the Boshnyak power acceded to the option of the internal ethnic division of B&H. But later, under the pressure of the multinational powers of Bosnia-Herzegovinian integration, they had to give it up. In addition, with the radicalization of a part of the Islamic establishment also came into play the complex of prejudices toward Islamic public activity. In that respect what was allowed as the traditional form of address to the Zagreb or Bosnian Catholic cardinal was inhibited or proscribed to the Bosnian-Herzegovinian *reis*. Simply, in the mentalities there was and still exists a relationship of discrimination, of *a priori* aversion, and xenophobic anathemazation. But naturally one cannot deny the fact that leaders of the Islamic community, on their part, temporarily by their political statements, assisted in the artificial production of the view of advancing Islamic fundamentalism, which really, in our perception, did not have, nor does it have a basis in the mass mentality and historical aspirations of the Boshnyak people. But on the other hand, each self-apology of Boshnyaks (there are several relevant studies, mostly by foreign observers and authors)

show, augmenting our Bosnian-Herzegovinian experiences, that SOC directly and explicitly participated in motivating, legitimizing, and religiously sanctioning Serbian-Montenegrin aggression upon B&H. There are untold number of examples which demonstrate how the SOC, even with the assistance of other Orthodox Churches, participated in the destruction of the state individuality of B&H, sacralizing the places of greatest war crimes, sanctifying fields, buildings, towns, villages, and with their religious authority legitimated the terrifying crimes thereby supporting the illegitimate pseudo-legal installation of Serbian rule on the territory of B&H and its para-military formations. SOC did, on this or that way, undoubtedly stand behind the wars of conquest which the Belgrade regime engaged in after 1992 on the territory of ex-Yugoslavia.

It is not simple to uncover the relationship of the Catholic Church in Croatia and even more so in B&H, with the aggression by Tudjman's regime toward B&H. This difficulty is due to the hypocrisy, doubled in public and internal rhetorical discourse: formally supporting a unified B&H but in reality pleading for a separatist great-Croat political conception. One can say with certainty that during the aggression, after the Dayton agreement, and especially after the elections of the year 2000, parts of the Catholic hierarchy, especially in Herzegovina, participated without disguise in proliferating and legitimating the politics of the Croatian Democratic Union. Here, we should especially emphasize this, the Bosnian Franciscans are to be exempt, because politically and factually they stood in defense of Bosnian statehood, unity, sovereignty, and ethnical indivisibility.

Regardless of all these controversies and the assistance of religious communities in the legitimization of the aggression upon B&H from abroad, one can say that basically the politics on the territory of ex-Yugoslavia is non-religious, secular, state-nationalist, and hegemonistic aspirations of the neighbor states of B&H. The hierarchies of religious communities, we have to admit, used the old religious prejudices, ancient religious dogmas, traditional epic and national mythology, as the energy of instigating the conflict, even those that had genocidal results. But their participation in aggression was not authentic: the motives and goals were extra-religious, worldly, state-hegemonistic. That is, they are reduced to the territorial nationalism of Serbian-Montenegrin and Croatian establishment which, in the context of the dissolution of ex-Yugoslavia, wanted to

achieve old Serbian and Croatian aspirations toward B&H, calling upon the invented historical, ethnic and state rights to the territory of B&H. One should take into account that such aspirations have their historical basis, e.g. the theology of the Serbian cultural circle and *chetnik* movement of Draža Mihailović, on one hand, and the ideology of the right of Ante Starčevića, Stjepan Radić, Josip Frank, Maček, and Ante Pavelić and others, on the other hand.

The artificial character of such aggressive, war-conquering politics was shown also in the defense of the territorial integrity of B&H, now with the assistance of the international community. We believe that the *logos* of the historical existence of B&H, being concentrated around the ethos of convergence of the Bosnia-Herzegovinian national sub-identities, will eventually triumph.

Of special importance in this context is the understanding of what we call the *logos* of Bosnian history. From this understanding one can deduce historically based substantial principles of a Bosnian-Herzegovinian future. Among those principle we include the principles of cohesion, balance, tolerance, equality, and convergence between Bosnian-Herzegovinian religio-national subidentities. It will exclude the theory or political doctrine about a leading nation, a nation which would be “the spine of Bosnia,” a nation which wants to be the single integrative factor of Bosnia, etc. These critiques, based on valid historical insights into the catastrophic consequences of the domination of Serbian and Croatian politics in Bosnia, are here related to the contemporary Boshnyac politics. The Bosnian-Herzegovinian state can historically exist only on the basis of balance, tolerance, and equal worth of all its peoples. Therefore, Bosnian identity, as we understand it, is not unificatory, nihilist, and destructive. Therefore we speak of different but authentic, not imported Bosnian sub-identities. Even now the political mind, which values B&H as a state individuality, will concentrate its strategic activity upon that which is threatened, which is also that which is salvatory: the idea of convergence as an idea which will be the “metaphysical” and real foundation of the reintegration of B&H, both as a society and as a state. The source for a dynamic ethos and political convergence, for the establishment of a new balance and process of all inclusive reintegration Bosnia can be found in the idea of a modern democracy, derived from a civil constitution of Bosnian society and the building of a pluralistic understanding of a democratic state.

**Question:**

*In the scholarly community we often see simplistic explanations of the conflict in former Yugoslavia. For some, it was (also) a religious conflict, in which all religious communities played an active role. For others, it was the consequence of several decades of “Godlessness”, of the domination by an atheist/secularist ideology. What is your opinion about it?*

**Mardešić:**

We shouldn't forget that dualism is of an exclusively ideological character. We can say today that the war in the former Yugoslavia was not a religious conflict but political score-settling which was mostly fueled by the memories of evil acts from distant and recent memories. However, it doesn't mean that religions—each in its own way and with a different role--were not deeply and in a complex manner, involved in the tragic conflict. If for no other reason, at least because they were not loud enough protesting against hatred which had been fanned prior to the war and during the war, causing the death of many. If there was abuse of religion - and there was a lot of it - it was necessary for the religious communities to distance themselves decisively from the misuse of religion. But, regretfully, that didn't happen.

It seems there are at least two reasons that support the thesis that the conflict was of worldly rather than religious character. The first one was the complete absence of proselytism during the war. In contrast to previous conflicts, which arose mainly for the purpose of religious conversion, there were no such attempts now. At least I am unaware of such an example, and even if any happened, we would surely have knowledge of them by now. The other reason is the realization that wars were not led by religious fanatics, but by well-organized soldiers. The wars were dominated by indifferent and poorly educated Christians and Muslims. The situation among the officers was even worse. Ten years before the war, the psychologist, D. Pantić, studied the presence of religion among residents of Belgrade and proved their almost total secularism. The results of other religious studies by other sociologists were not much different. Why would one posit that such secularized individuals at once start fanatical religious wars and on top of it in a recently socialist country? I think these conclusions are exaggerated and too quick. Of

course, this does not exclude the possibility of the influence of religious communities on the inflammation and continuation of nationalist passions in the society before and after beginning of the wars in the former Yugoslavia.

The assumption that the cause of the war was solely due to the Communist heritage is even less likely, since Communists created the strongest state consisting of various nations. We can rather say the opposite, that it happened because Communists betrayed and warped the Communist heritage. But even that is not the complete truth. No matter how we look at the war we will always be confronted with more than one cause. It is hard to determine correctly which was the most important. It depends on the type of scholarly discipline and the methodology used. A sociologist, political scientist, religiologist and historian would select different reasons as the most important ones, in spite of looking at the same facts. Therefore interdisciplinary science is necessary in every methodology. It is important to avoid an ideological approach when analyzing causes of the war since ideology was the most influential factor in the recent happenings. We need to pay attention to the permanent absence of personal political freedom which is just another manifestation of ideological pressure. The lack of freedom is also linked to the transformation of religion to ideology under the mask of ideology itself. There is a certain unlucky and sickly relationship between freedom and religion that can't be overcome without taking responsibility. Even among religions there is a noticeable movement toward freedom, but that is a topic of postmodernism.

**Mojzes:**

There is a little bit of truth in both of those simplistic explanations. The consequences of "atheization" and militant Communist antireligious ideology certainly played a big role in influencing social opinions that there can be only one real answer. They also caused the deterioration of religious communities that couldn't afford to produce religious leaders who would be able to deal with the changes that took place. Had the awakening of religion in post-communism taken place within a stable or single culture environment, the consequences would not have been so fatal (for that reason Slovenia was in a better situation). But in multinational and multi-confessional Yugoslavia, which was also under the strong influence of extremist emigrant circles, religious awakening was linked to the awakening of such a type of nationalism which

was being suppressed by the “international proletarian movement.” Therefore, I think that it is not an “either-or” but a “both-and” issue, i.e. I see a combination of factors.

**Radić:**

I think that the war was not a religious conflict, but I also think it was not the consequence of the long rule of atheist/secularist ideology. The story of a religious conflict was launched by those who defended the thesis of a “border on the Drina River” and the irreconcilable differences between a “cultural West” and a “barbarian East.” The second source emanates from the religious communities themselves which tried to remove from themselves any vestige of responsibility for participation in the tragic developments, and simultaneously, on the other hand, to impose the idea of their return, because “had they been present such a thing would not have happened.” In my opinion, it was neither a conflict of believers who belonged to different religions nor a conflict caused by unbelief. It was a conflict about division of the realm and the maintenance of control.

**Zgodić:**

Those who speak about a “civil war” or “religious war” in B&H actually want to give reprieve of responsibility; such as “well, this was a civil war” or even “religious war” in which, by its own nature, everything is permissible, even all crimes - and in such a situation there is no responsibility, etc. Of course, this is total nonsense.

The goal of such an answer is to assure amnesty for neighboring countries, i.e. their regimes, as well as for the inner Bosnian para-legal and paramilitary formations which were an “internal support” of aggression upon our state. Those who committed the crime of genocide use this view because they want to depersonalize the responsibility for the crimes and transfer it upon abstract national collectives. But I expect that the development of international law will regard that even states, when they are planners and executors of the crimes of genocide must be held responsible before international courts. Also I see their “aim” in the annulment of the difference between the victim and perpetrator, which is, at least in some international circles, a presupposition for internal all-Bosnia reconciliation. They say, “you fought amongst yourselves, now make up.”

Naturally, all these “aims” reflect the falsification which hurts the victims while the perpetrators are not given the possibility to emerge out of moral unconsciousness and

experience a catharsis as a precondition to mental healing and prevention of possible new crimes.

**Question:** *In your opinion, what was more (mis)used: religion of the faith communities in the service of nationalistic politics and/or parties or the latter in the service of the religion of faith communities? Which was more evident, the misuse of religion for nationalist aims or of nationalism for religious purposes?*

**Mardešić:**

Even if we are among those who are most critical toward the standpoints of the representatives of churches and religious communities it would be difficult to say that they wanted and desired the wars. That would be absurd. All of us who still remember well the last years of Communism on the territory of the former Yugoslavia can recall that the war of words began before the war of weapons, hatred, and bloody human sacrifices. In this war before the war many participated thinking that they were expanding the narrow frame of liberty rather than preparing an actual war. No one anticipated this because one always believed in the permanence of Communism in the world. Although nationalism during this period was already an equal rival to Communism, the destruction of Communism did not appear to be an option. Many used nationalism in order to settle old scores within Communism itself. Therefore the play of these two opposing ideologies was quite underestimated. I have already noted earlier that a war can be started only by those who were in power and had weapons in their hands. Others could only defend themselves. Religious officials arrived on the scene only later: each in its own way and by its own traditional path. Differences in behavior did exist between the religions as well as between believers and officials within the same church and community. In so far as there was no political liberty, there was surely moral freedom to choose between good and evil, to sacrifice for others and have hatred toward others. But sociological analysis cannot deal with this issue.

**Mojzes:**

I think that the instrumentalization of religious communities had the priority, because political movements had far more energy and strength. Esad Ćimić wrote a book entitled, *Politika kao sudbina* [Politics as Fate] - this seems to me to be a self-evident

truth not only for Bosnia but for the entire Balkans. The slogans were “God protects Croatia” or “God protects Serbs,” which are more political than religious slogans (a religious slogan would be something like “Serbs or Croats rely on God and glorify God.”) Politics was more dynamic and religious communities adapted themselves to politics. Only later, when they saw how much damage was caused to them by some political actions did they begin to distance themselves from politics (one of the better examples was the initial support of the Catholic Church for Herzeg-Bosnia [the name of the Croatian enclave in Bosnia that proclaimed itself a state during the war]. But seeing that this may bring about the disappearance of Catholicism in Bosnia proper, they began to support the idea of an indivisible state of B&H.

**Radić:**

Yugoslav sociologists of religion have concluded in the beginning of the 1980s that a revitalization of religion was taking place. The non-existence of opposition in the previous phase of the development of society attracted to the church all those who thought differently because in its wings they could find some sort of legal opposition. The church thereby became the haven for one part of the political and cultural opposition and offered integrity to a part of the nationally oriented intelligentsia. Within the church, national continuity was nurtured, and so was the cult of grand national and religious leaders, of national history in general, and of traditional customs and values. With the deepening of the general crisis and with the disintegration of the system of values credibility to the traditional way of solving existential problems returned. Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Islam received increasing significance for the cultural characteristics of Serbs, Croats, and Muslims and for their homogenization and identification toward other national and confessional attachments. This process did not happen simultaneously among all, nor under identical conditions, but everywhere the circumstances under which religion became revitalized was useful to nationalist and other types of instrumentalizers of the churches. There were many examples of this in SOC as well as RCC, but maybe the most noticeable are the ones related to individual priests and monks who were photographed on tanks with weapons, held interviews with children’s skulls in hand, or made fiery speeches calling for settling of scores with believers of other faiths.

**Zgodić:**

This question can be reflected in various discourses. Here it is taking place in the context of the understanding of secularism. Great mistakes and deceptions play a big role among us, not only in public but also in scholarly circles about the notion of the secularism of the state. Most often under secularism of the state, is meant among us the atheism of the state. That is a wrong notion because it proclaims a single worldview, in this case the atheist one, proclaiming it as the ideology of the state and the foundation of its constitutional-legal structure. Secularism of the state in the modern world merely means that the state is permissive toward all ideological systems, whichever philosophical pictures of the world, whichever worldview, including religious ones are present. The state, insofar as it is democratic, a state of law and pluralist, is indifferent toward any picture of the world, and it does not take any of them as the basis of its own constitutional-legal basis, as a source of its inner-political identification, as the basis of human rights, etc. Modern states in terms of values are pluralist while in regard to government pragmatic. Therefore worldview fundamentalism, i.e. an ethos and politics that subjects an entire society to the absolutism of one truth, whatever it may be, whether in religion, ideology, or eschatology, is something alien to modern states.

Such a notion of the secularism of the state implies several essential experiences. It does not imply secularism of society, neither does it imply theocratization of society, namely theomonocentric disciplining of civil society. Second, such a notion of state secularism does not imply the reduction of religion to autarchic private subjectivity but the opposite. Within the autonomy of civil society, it recognizes its relevance in public engagement for the general public good and the moral fashioning of citizens. Third, secularism of that state implies that no one, not even the state or the party, can take upon itself specific authentic tasks of the church, just as the church cannot be the extended arm of the party. We are talking about mutual autonomy, so that the party cannot be placed into the role and function of any religious community as its political extension or exponent, just as religious communities will not be instrumentalized into the functions of any political party. Western Europe did not reach an absolute break-up of the relationship between religion and the state, a fact which is noticeable especially in education, for instance in catechism classes.

Within such an understanding of secularism one can open a space for identifying the use/misuse of the relationship between the political parties and the church. From the experiences of Bosnia-Herzegovina one can make the following generalization: those relationships were established on the pattern of parasitical symbiosis. A political party which in its political identity incorporates religious beliefs, being of a single nation and single religion, factually perform many tasks for religious communities. Not only do they popularize with their own authority a religious worldview in public life among their followers, and among religiously indifferent citizens, but also by means of party-state policies they directly or indirectly present and implement the corporate interests of religious communities.

As a result of the symbiosis, the opposite process is also taking place. If in some cases political parties become the extended arm of religious communities, whereby such religious communities do not fit into the conceptual frame state secularism and pluralism of values within civil society, then one can say that religious communities often become the extended arm of political parties. It is a symbiosis of the parasitical kind. The party, using the logic of parasitical advantage-taking, calls on the authority of religious communities, and they selflessly participate in the establishment or restoration of their might, when it is threatened. Both the religious community and party are losers in such cases. The party lives with the illusion of its own authority, and delays its own real renewal or confrontation with its own anachronism. The religious community loses in so far as it places itself in the function of a political particularity, and thereby loses its universal potential and wastes its internal energies on profane issues. The political party living with the appearance of citizen support is pushing society into pseudocratism with all its anti-democratic consequences.

The parasitical reliance of the party on the authority of the religious community comes to special expression during the period of elections. Religious structures of power in elections place themselves at the disposal of political parties, and in the form of mimicry or even explicitly they function as a medium for the winning over of the electorate for national, i.e. populist parties.

Further, from this symbiotic relationship political parties, whether they wanted it or not, came to resolve eminently internal-religious problems, and thereby they take over

tasks which as worldly subject they do not possess. Thereby the autonomy of religious communities is threatened and their sovereignty in religious matters. In this context the religious community loses in its authenticity, while the party perversely claims a merit which inherently does not belong to it.

One of the consequences of these symbiotic relations between parties and religious communities is the simplification of national identities. The national party becomes identical with the nation. The religious community identifies itself with the nation as the entirety of the believing people. A new form of dangerous totalitarianism is being produced in which the essence of the nation and of faith is being falsified. Political parties based on religious dogmas agree with religious communities that allow themselves to be used by political parties in their joint wish to rule a nation. The victim is the nation; as its victim the nation is suffocated in its natural plurality. The party became totalitarian, while the religious community became theocratic. All have lost their authenticity and their original freedom.

**Question:**

*What can religious communities/churches do for the peaceful development of the Balkans and for the coexistence of its peoples? What can one expect from them? Which of their activities and moves so far do you assess as positive?*

**Mardešić:**

First of all a certain exploring of their conscience should take place. If they don't respond, they'll be forced to it by modernity which will penetrate into our territories and promoted the construction of completely secular states. When such states get established they will take over the concern about national questions that will then no longer be the domain of the churches and religious communities as it had been for centuries. That can't happen without changing attitudes toward tradition and termination of the alliance with the state, which will certainly be most difficult to achieve for the SOC, which was originally founded as a national church. On the other hand, the churches themselves with the separation of faith from politics can gain in purity, attractiveness, esteem, values, and persuasiveness. What will remain is the original vocation of the religion, and it is always and unavoidably peaceful. This is happening slowly in all religions of the world. The

less political they are the more religious they are. The essence of every religion is in peace and reconciliation with God and with people. Therefore the establishment of a culture of peace on the territories of the former Yugoslavia depends primarily on the return of religion to its own sources and the rejection of political aspirations. Religions must become ideologies and worldviews distinct from politics but not within it, which means that their aim is for goodness and mercy toward people. In that way the national will becomes something different, different from what it has been, because it will lose the dangerous characteristics of ideology, and will turn into common, natural, tranquil patriotism.

Let me return to Catholicism, since I know it better. With reference to our themes it is evident that one should distinguish between the pre-Conciliar and Conciliar Church. The Church, since Constantine onward, was historically built on the model of the state, which in the long run determined its characteristics. As the secular state of Enlightenment and subsequently took over those characteristics – of ideology, law, rule, and sovereignty - the church started to lose out on further equal cooperation in dealings with the state. This withering of the old regime continued for centuries until the church had been irrevocably moved into the realm of society and there got equal rights with every other voluntary organization. Nowadays the state no longer bargains with the church, it only guarantees its existence in society. In conversation with the church are now the people and the state government, definitely an unusual change if we compare it with the circumstances that existed in pre-modern times. Those who fail to understand this will waste their time with fantasies.

In Catholic pre-Conciliar circles we can notice this obsession with the state, which we have failed to overcome in our Church. It is wrong to think if the relationships with the state are good that everything else will also be good. The opposite is the case. Too great a faith in the positive intentions and aid from the state is the reason why the church is impotent and confused in pluralist societies as if negotiating between equal organizations. In other words, our Church is in a crisis, because it has a hard time to get used to the fact that it must remain alone with its believers without iron clad state privileges even though it survived without them under communism.

Because such expectations could not be attained on the basis of experiences which the church gained under communism, its source should be sought in a pre-Conciliar mentality which was laced with nostalgia for a church state or an alliance with Catholic states in the old regime. This pre-Conciliar mentality made it impossible for the church to rely upon itself and its faithful, instead it hopelessly seeks to return to the past. A pre-Conciliar church mentality is the greatest obstacle to the establishment of political liberties and simultaneously the reason for the halting of the return to its own peaceful sources.

Therefore it is urgent and necessary for the Church in Croatian society to reflect upon its past loyalty to the spirit of the Second Vatican Council and to struggle toward its appreciation. Only in this way will it be ready and able without conditions and limitations to intercede for peace and the culture of peace. In short, only the Conciliar church can be a peaceful church. For this there are good conditions because the Conciliar documents undoubtedly lead toward the possibility of interpreting politics and nationality in a modern and contemporary manner, which we also support. It is enough to look at two texts: "*De Libertate Religiosa*" on religious freedom and "*Gaudium et Spes*" from the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council. In the first document we can find the acceptance of the right to religious liberty and thereby one inadvertently weakens any integrational and integrative role of religions in society because its mutual co-existence and encounter is being presupposed, which means that the role of Catholicism as an integrative factor is impossible and superfluous. Simultaneously the peaceful role of the church increases. The second document defends and promotes the autonomy, whereby politics is also granted autonomy and the possibility of raising it to the level of an ideology has been rejected. In so far as faith is ideology then politics cannot be. At the end we can emphasize that the Conciliar understanding of religious liberty and autonomy actually destroys the former foundation of Christianity as the integrational religion and ideological omnipresence. Thereby the doors are opened wide to the peaceful activity of the Church in society.

**Mojzes:**

It should be the easiest and most extensive question to answer but actually it is fairly difficult. Religious communities must return, first of all, to the theological center,

to their universal religious claim: God as the Creator and Redeemer of all people regardless of nation, gender, race, language, etc. and to distance themselves from “tribal gods.” We can perhaps organize religiously according to group characteristics but never with the conviction that this categorization is especially dear to God, or that God specially keeps them and defends them. When the Catholic Church in Slovenia starts to be equally concerned about Italians, Hungarians, Croatians, Germans as with Slovenes, when the Islamic religious community starts to be equally concerned for Albanian and Montenegrin Muslims as with Boshnyaks, when the Orthodox Church starts to be equally concerned for non-Serbian Orthodox people, and then on top of them, when they all together start being concerned for all human beings regardless of religious (and other) affiliation, then there will be a real precondition for peace. But prior to the arrival of such an eschatological time one could, let us say, excommunicate or at least issue a public condemnation of those Orthodox in Banja Luka who physically attack those Muslims who wish to rebuild the Ferhadiya Mosque, to condemn and discipline those Herzegovinian Franciscans who make declarations against the co-existence of Croats with non-Croats in Mostar and Herzegovina. Religious leaders both locally and wider can begin to cooperate for mutual respect and acquaintance, ecumenism be again supported and to expand into interreligious dialogue, and so forth. It is not enough to sign nice proclamations. It would be better that at theological schools there are lecturers from other faith communities. It would be better that in religious publication one could find positive writings about others. It would be better if historians from all three groups would work carefully and write jointly a history that could be studied in all schools, so that there would not be completely opposite versions which will leave a permanent parochialism of younger generalizations.

Now when more peaceful, stable and democratic times have come to almost all former Yugoslav successor states, maybe one can expect that religious communities will also succeed to restore balance and to direct not only their words for supporting peace, but their actions as well. It is of great importance that in the south of the former Yugoslavia, especially in Macedonia, there emerges interreligious support of the aims to limit the conflicts from becoming a general civil war between Macedonians and Albanians and that in Kosovo “ethnic cleansing” is ended.

**Radić:**

Religious communities should, first of all, begin to cooperate with each other and to show much more good will toward each other. Their basic goal should certainly be the spreading of the faith, but with respect for the differences and with maximal mutual tolerance. When looking only at the 20<sup>th</sup> century, then the one period which I can single out would be the 1960s when something real was accomplished in the field of mutual rapprochement, dialogue, and ecumenism.

One can raise the question what can one expect from the religious communities. I think they will try, first of all, to recover their positions and influence in society which they think belongs to them. That will at first happen through attempts to return the expropriated assets. Religious communities would seek to have a more significant presence in education and the media, etc. The process of their rapprochement and possible cooperation and work for peaceful developments of the Balkans, I think, does not depend so much on themselves as on how the political, cultural, and economic relations will develop in this territory. There are few activities that I could evaluate as positive but I would single out those activities related to humanitarian assistance which certain religious communities collected for refugees and for war-affected areas. Also I could mention occasional meetings of representatives of religious communities and their common declarations to the public. This picture is hampered by the impression of a certain formality and external pomp without a real, internal content. At present, I do not see a sincere desire by any of the religious communities for cooperation and rapprochement, but I think there will be some improvements only in the future.

**Zgodić:**

This question can be treated by the pleading axiology of civil society. Basically, only with the acceptance of the concept of civil society and participation in its affirmation can religious communities usefully participate in the unfinished processes of stabilization of peace and the building and affirmation of civilizational co-existence in the relationships between people and nations on these territories. I can single out here only two basic determinants of civil society.

Anti-fundamentalism is an essential standpoint of civil society. In a wider sense civil society is contrary to the society that gathers around a transhistorical, eschatological

order of values. It is also a society contrary to the monocentric ideological society. That society cannot exist without paternalistic, and sacralized dogma of ideology, elite, charisma, leader, avant-garde, etc. Civil society is essentially an anti-fundamentalist society: “the struggle for civil society means simultaneously the recognition of complexity. Many people tend toward simplification. Even more, the greatest danger for civil society today is fundamentalism. The assertions of religious and pseudo or para-religious groups that say we don’t need the complexities of civil society, which can depend on simple, generally known truths, in both public and private life, are an attack on all traditions of civil society and citizenry.”<sup>12</sup> “Pluralism as a substantial predicate of modern civil society can be differentiated from the paleo-liberal vision of civil society. Pluralisms of modern societies...“<sup>13</sup> means that in their essence there is a common universum which is accepted unquestioningly, and other partial universa coexist in the mode of mutual adjustments. The latter probably have some ideological functions, but explicit conflict between ideologies have been replaced by various levels of tolerance or even cooperation. Ancient monopolistic pretensions to certainty, therefore became anachronistic, although affection for traditionalism did not disappear altogether. Demopolization of truth was promoted as an emancipatory oriented value at the expense of old or new totalitarian aspirations. In any case, “...pluralist society does not change only the social position of the traditional definitions of reality but even the manner of their valuation in the consciousness of individuals.”<sup>14</sup> Norberto Bobio also specified this historical *novum* in the political context, the “ideal model of a democratic society was the model of a centripetal society. Reality which we face is the reality of a centrifugal society which does not have only a single center of power (Rousseau’s “general will”) but has more of them and therefore such a society we call - and those who study politics agree with it - polycentric or polyarchic society (or using the stronger, though not entirely accurate expression, polycratic society).” The model worldview of polyphonic freedom is the luxury that can and must be followed even by religious communities.

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<sup>12</sup> R. Dahrendorf, “Perspektive gradjanskog društva u Evropi” [Perspectives of Civil Society in Europe], *Teorija*, (Belgrade), No. 2 (1989), p. 38.

<sup>13</sup> Peter L. Berger, and Thomas Luckmann, *Socijalna konstrukcija zbilje* [Social Construction of Reality], (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1992), p. 148.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

One should work more on the affirmation of human intra-religious communities. Believers who are subject to internal monocratism cannot be loyal in civil society to the polytheism of worldly values. That, of course, is a substantive presupposition of the transition to civil society and the full autonomy of religious communities.

The respect for the relevant role of religious communities in the formation of worldviews, of the moral world and the preference for the values of civil society does not imply, as I said, the theocratization of society. To the contrary, it implies respect for the this worldly mission of religion, rather than getting mixed up in the chaos and primitivism of daily pragmatism or the restoration of historically transcended models of relationships between religion, society, and the state. No one, no matter how perfect the legal system may be, can prevent the religious communities from deteriorating into political banality, if they do not save themselves from political self-instrumentalization. Theocracy is anachronistic, although every monotheistic religion, and not only Islam will, according to its dogmatics, be not only a subjective matter but also a civil, public system of living, including the construction of society and state. Every religion wants to participate in the regulation of the relationship of one human being to another, the person and politics, formulating and practicing its cosmology, anthropology, social ethics, vision of social justice, etc. But even without old theocratic aspirations, in civil and democratic society religious communities can satisfy their doctrinal aspirations, and freely practice their inner religious and external social role.

In the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina it is important that all religious communities, including the Islamic Community, affirming interreligious dialogue, work more on the emancipation of daily consciousness from prejudices toward Islam and Muslims. Because of old prejudices toward Muslims the public is slow in liberating itself from anachronistic stereotypes. Here is an illustration. No one is bothered by the existence in the Christian world of aesthetic design in the hat industry for women. But there is excitement and one speaks of frustrations and aversions when one pleads for aesthetic design and industry of the veiling of women.

Ideology, the aggression and its effects increased the ethnic distances in the consciousness having installed old but also new destructive religio-ethnic prejudices. Emancipatory consciousness that is being carried by the ethos of civil society is searching

for the possibility of building civil society on the presuppositions of the amortization of the actual impact of ethnic prejudices and their destructive consequences for the development of civil consciousness and the formation of subjectivity of all citizens as the decision-makers of policies and government of their nations. Therefore, it seeks the possible emancipation of main components of programs for the gradual emancipation of national consciousness from imprisonment in the irrational world of ethnic prejudices, in such a way that even religious communities can make a great contribution in the building up of civil society. In it religious communities can engage in defining the program of general enlightenment of the new socialization of consciousness based on civic ethos and main values of democratic society. They seek to be included in everyday activities, in the shaping of public opinion, in programs of education, in the spirit of civil consciousness and democratic values, in innovations in the educational process, and in general cultural activities guided by ideas of tolerance, convergence, mental and value reintegration between various, for now distant and closed national communities. Religious communities should not lag behind in such engagement. In post-socialist territories and after the aggression on B&H, a powerful return of people to religiosity took place. But with it came also the uncontrolled vulgarization of faith. It is as if extreme institutionalization of religion lead to the separation of public rituals and ceremonial practice of religious sensibilities from genuine introspective feelings of religiosity. For the time being the external, quantitative, and ritual aspect is attractive to the religious hierarchy. What is being ignored is that in multi-confessional societies such dazzling external popularization produces social distances, irritates psychologically, creates phobias, and various forms of new intolerance. On the other hand, original religiosity is losing its origins, as Fevzija Mostarac (a Bosnian thinker of the 18<sup>th</sup> century) noted: “If the moon of faith did not show up in the sky (of the heart), what use is prayer (*itikafa*) in the harem of Kaba. Whoever knows God, he is on the path of faith; it is not important what kind of clothing the unbeliever wears.”<sup>15</sup> Real democratic society is pluralist.<sup>16</sup> In polyarchy rather than in monism, in decentralization of life rather than in its centralization under etatist power, in plurality of civil society rather than in the political

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<sup>15</sup> Bulbulistan, Sarajevo, 1973, p. 134.

<sup>16</sup> Norberto Bobio, *Budućnost demokratije* [The future of democracy], (Belgrade: Filip Višnjić.), p. 87.

homogenization of the organic state, we can recognize the epochal mega-trend. Politics which wants to be in harmony with the core of the epoch leaves behind the political metaphysics of a single-issue monist absolute.

Within such conceptualized civil society, religious communities can enjoy complete autonomy. Therefore the transition of B&H society in the direction of its reconstruction as a civil society is also of substantial interest to the religious communities. Within civil society and the religious community one should consistently accept the universal principle of separation of church and state. Within the autonomy of civil society religious communities should enjoy full freedom. It presupposes respect and affirmation of the public function of religious communities in the formation of values in the orientation of citizens. But in the context of the polyphonic autonomy of civil society, social promotion, the arrangement of social roles, participation in political power, and availability of public jobs must be achievable for all citizens regardless of their worldview, or religious affiliation. Civil society further pleads, in my opinion, for a conflict-less convergent relationships with religious communities. But this civil society wants freedom of conscience and religion, freedom of expression of so-called sociological types of believers, which means believers who do not want to practice their religion behind closed shutters, to practice their religion in anonymity, which in public life is illegal, and is therefore forced to be conspiratorial, with a frustrating fear that their religion will prevent their access to public positions. Of course, in B&H society a system of state religions, or the system of recognized religions, or the system of the atheist state cannot function. These are the very systems that people want to practice in some areas of ex-Yugoslavia. The system of state religion is specifically installed in the Serbian entity in B&H. Theoretically, conceptually, and politically the religious communities should appeal to the constitution of the state as a worldly and democratic state based on civil society.

A system of privileged religion cannot exist; before the law and the state all religions must be equal. Emancipatory thinking favors the equality of all religions and religious communities and wholeheartedly supports the establishment of interreligious dialogue in B&H, which is institutionalized and its discussions are regularly publicized in the media and publications. To emphasize, on the path of the of critical demystification of

such parasitical symbiosis, religion is eternal while political parties are temporary; sometimes in power, sometimes not. Religion is universal, while the party is particular, religion is self-less, while the party is the beehive of profane interest, faith is gathered around the Holy, while the party is around the Vulgar, faith is theology while the party is ideology. Therefore religious communities must seek not to contaminate themselves with profane things of temporary passions and political struggles. In this axiological horizon they should recognize the space of new freedoms.

On this path there are several obstacles. We will point out but a few. First of all, not only fanaticized religious hierarchy but even secular intelligentsia strengthens antagonisms imbuing the civil consciousness of every-day religiosity with hatred and fanaticism. An example is B. Jevtić from Belgrade whose books are a textbook case of crazed anti-Islamism. Thus it is not a question of a secular intelligentsia that would promote militant atheism but an intelligentsia that preaches anti-Christianity or anti-Islamism as alleged experts. Therefore this type of expertise must be exposed within a critical circle of emancipatory consciousness and critical democratic political culture.

Further, it is necessary to critique the conventional dogmatic schemas, sometimes aggressively publicized by the religious hierarchy which separates people exclusively into theists and atheists. What, if anything, is there between these two extremes? Can't people be animists or polytheists? Can't they be as Giordano Bruno, pantheists, can't they like Albert Einstein be deists, can't they in a Christian or Islamic sea also be Buddhists, can't they be mystics, agnostics, skeptics or similar? I want to say that if religious communities will not nurture tolerance in the spirit of a civil polytheism of loyalty, and instead of the old totalitarian atheism enforce a monocratic monotheism then they will inhibit the contradictory processes of the building of civil society and the society of interests of religious communities. But this will also have negative implications on interreligious dialogue and interreligious tolerance by which religious communities should have a more substantive and effective engagement in this area..

*Translated by Radmila Obradović-Djurđević, Paul Mojzes, and Elizabeth Mojzes*