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Challenges in 2007-08**

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Vojvodina's Multiethnic Identity: Challenges in 2007-08

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AQUARELLE VOJVODINA

The emphasis on Vojvodina ethnic pluralism marks the rhetoric of provincial politicians, media and civil society organizations. Their rhetoric interprets the fact that members of a number of national minorities live in the territory of Vojvodina as an advantage and the value of the province. Such emphasis placed on multi-ethnicity is far from being coincidental.

The multiethnic character of Vojvodina's society was often targeted at the time of ex-Yugoslavia's disintegration. Confronted with the society's heterogeneous nature, a new political ideal – the nation-state – promptly released its destructive potential. Nationalistic hysteria, violence, reduction of minority rights and humiliation to which they were exposed led to minorities' marginalization, self-isolation within the bounds of ethnic communities, withdrawal from the public sphere, and migration to mother countries or the third countries.

After October 5, 2000, significant steps were taken to alleviate the consequences of the Milosevic regime. Those steps, however, were and remained half-finished. For instance, the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities was passed but a law on the election and competencies of national councils has not been adopted since. Councils for national minorities were set up at provincial and republican levels in the aftermath of the outburst of ethnically motivated violence in Vojvodina. But, not invested with any actual powers, those councils have been vegetating as façade institutions only. More often than not, the state was not willing to decisively counteract the hate speech and ethnically motivated violence. It was only logical, therefore, that minorities were left under the impression that penal provisions are applied selectively. The tolerance campaign staged by the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights ended up in failure. The ongoing project by the Provincial Secretariat for Administration, Regulations and National Minorities will also be doomed to failure unless major social subsystems fail to decisively support its advocacy for tolerance and multiculturalism.

Dramatic developments in the territory of ex-Yugoslavia not only breathed life into 'old' stereotypes but also brought about new ones. Formally proclaimed citizens' equality has hardly removed predominant suspiciousness about members of minority communities. Not even a landmark event such as declaration of a new constitution has been used to include minority representatives as well in its drafting. The opportunity to strengthen minorities' feeling that the larger community rests on their consent was thus missed. True, adoption of a new constitution did not manifest only distrust in minorities but also contempt for democratic public and democratic procedures.

Almost the entire Serbian political society has been preoccupied with the Kosovo issue in the past period. In such political ambiance – utterly adverse to minorities – minority representatives endeavored to keep the minority issue open and get international institutions interested in its solution. The authorities responded nervously – they interpreted any attempt to get the international community involved as unnecessary, inappropriate, harmful and dangerous. The Serbian political establishment criticized not only minority political representatives and civil society activists but also actions taken by some international institutions. So, for instance, Serbia's politicians called the Resolution on the Protection of Multi-ethnicity in Vojvodina – the European Parliament adopted in September 2005 – too strong, unfair, malicious, the outcome of lobbying and tendentious reports by non-governmental organizations, etc. They were the more so nervous since the Resolution called upon the Serbian authorities to restore Vojvodina's autonomy.

The 1990 Constitution had turned Serbia into a rigid, centralistic state, boiled down Vojvodina's autonomy to façade autonomy and reduced minority rights. However, despite nationalistic euphoria¹ the demands for maintenance of Vojvodina's autonomy had not vanished into thin air. Individuals, non-governmental organizations and political parties voicing those demands were

¹ There is a number of rightist and ultranationalist organizations in Vojvodina advocating a unified Serb state. Their activism includes assaults against and brutal disqualification of autonomists. Following the incident of November 9 when they attacked the participants in the round table marking the International Day against Fascism, Anti-Semitism and Racism at the Novi Sad Faculty of Philosophy the Assembly of Vojvodina requested the republican government to ban all neo-Nazi organizations. However, the then cabinet, headed by Vojislav Kostunica, turned a deaf ear to this request. Moreover, in the aftermath of physical attack by members of the so-called National Guard /Nacionalni stroj/ against participants in the anti-Fascist protest in October 2007, some MPs publicly equalized the League of Vojvodina Social Democrats and members of extremist organizations.

often accused of secessionism. According to nationalists, autonomy made sense only at the time Vojvodina was a part of a foreign country. The moment it was integrated into Serbia any request for a higher degree of (legal, political, judicial or economic) autonomy turned senseless and unjustified, claim nationalists.

Their criticism targeted not only the requests for a higher degree of autonomy but also the efforts to strengthen Vojvodina's identity as a specific region – in Serbia and in Europe alike. Moreover, the efforts for Vojvodina's identity-building were labeled nation-building, i.e. the building of a new, Vojvodina nation.

Obviously, for those interpreting the rhetoric about Vojvodina's identity as an attempt to build a new nation an identity is acceptable only if nationally defined. When compared with national identity any other form of identity is either insignificant or veils bad intention. The intention in this specific case, claim nationalists, is to further fragmentize the ethnic majority. Only the Serbs would identify themselves as Vojvodinians, whereas Croats, Slovaks and Hungarians would remain what they are – Croats, Slovaks and Hungarians, argue nationalists.

One of crucial reasons why nationalists so fiercely assault Vojvodina's identity is its potential use for successful mobilization of political support to the province's autonomy – and that is what nationalists try to interpret as senseless and to relativize. That's why they claim that Vojvodina's autonomy within Serbia makes no sense whatsoever on the one hand, and appropriate Vojvodina as an exclusively Serb province and incite nationalists among minorities as well to insist on territorial autonomies of their ethnic communities rather than on Vojvodina's autonomy on the other.²

Having posited that Vojvodina's multiethnic identity could considerably weaken and slow down the processes of ethnization³ on the one hand, and

² In this context, pointing a finger at the Hungarian minority as the largest and the only community in Vojvodina putting forth territorial autonomy indicates the attempt to weaken the autonomist bloc on the one hand and to spur assimilation of minorities on the other. It should be noted that the Hungarian community is not only the largest and best organized minority in Vojvodina but also that it has powerful political and cultural elites and is perceived, more than any other minority community in Vojvodina, as an autonomous political factor capable of influencing both inter-ethnic relations and instruments regulating minority rights.

³ Today Vojvodina is habitually claimed Serb, Hungarian, Slovak... Interestingly, no one has ever claimed it Romany. And what about the people who have declared themselves Vojvodinians at the last census, let alone those calling themselves Yugoslavs and who are fifth by size community in Vojvodina? The question is whether anyone else

advance ethnic tolerance of the other, the Helsinki Committee – with the assistance of the European Union – organized four brainstorming sessions assembling public figures from different ethnic communities, and with different professional and political profiles to discuss the ways to safeguard that multiethnic identity.

Acknowledging the contributions by all the participants in the aforementioned sessions and presenting to the public eye the contents of discussions, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia reiterates its strong belief that Vojvodina – ethnically the most plural part of Serbia – needs the institutions capable of keeping together everything that aspires to ethno-cultural diversity. In this context, the Helsinki Committee recommends that

- All authorized institutions, the Vojvodina Assembly and the Provincial Executive Council in the first place, as well as civil society organizations and activists should dedicate themselves to fostering Vojvodina's identity;

As for political factors in the Province and in the Republic of Serbia, the Helsinki Committee suggests that they should start working on a constitutional reform that would

- Redefine Serbia's constitutional identity, i.e. define the Republic of Serbia as a state of equal citizens rather than as the state of the Serbian people and other citizens that live in it;

- Shape Vojvodina's autonomy in accordance with latest European experience, and, in this regard, provide constitutional guarantees for the province's legislative powers in the domain of its basic competencies;

- Include minority communities in the process of constitutional reform, develop a coherent minority policy and continually endeavor to change the general discourse about minorities; instead of insisting of minorities' 'loyalty,' they should keep stressing that members of minority communities are equal citizens of Serbia, who, for the sake of the safeguard of their identities, need to be protected by special measures ranging from education to the election of their representational bodies.

Bearing in mind that the issue of political representation has twofold significance for members of minority communities – as it relates not only to constitution of their representational bodies at local, provincial and republican

except for ethnic collectives has the right to Vojvodina. And indeed, what is it that keeps members of different ethnicities together? What is it that all those specific and mutually different ethnic entities have in common? Insistence on differences is characteristic of primitive political cultures. Apparently, Vojvodina's autonomy exists because of ethnic communities only and as such even turns superfluous once some of them start insisting of their special, territorial autonomy.

levels but also to the relations within minority communities themselves – the Helsinki Committee indicates a notable absence of systematic and well-thought-out measures in the sphere of minorities' representation. Reminding that minorities' political representation is usually discussed under the pressure of crucial political events such as elections, and that the issue itself is often simplified and reduced to political bargains among party officials, the Helsinki Committee suggests that huge discrepancies in size and levels of political organization between the province's minorities should be taken into consideration in the search for an optimal model and instruments of positive discrimination.⁴

Speaking of minorities' representation via national councils, the Helsinki Committee's recommends the following:

- National councils should be elected in direct elections and their competencies, as well as modes of financing, should be clearly defined;

Convinced that consequent implementation of the decision of the privatization of local broadcasters should negatively affect the safeguard of Vojvodina's multiethnic identity as it would both weaken its institutional foundation and frustrate minorities, the Helsinki Committee puts forth the following:

- Legal provisions should pay heed to minorities' acquired rights;
- Apart from governmental institutions and agencies, non-governmental organizations, expert circles and the interested public should be included in the development of minority information policy;
- Media outlets in minority languages should be professionally strengthened, technically upgraded and secured stable sources of financing;

The safeguard of Vojvodina's multiethnic identity more than ever before necessitates:

- Promotion of inter-ethnic tolerance and multiculturalism in the programs in Serb and minority languages alike;
- Subtitling of programs in minority languages for Serb-speaking and other minority audiences;
- Program exchanges and mutual shows; instead of the existing ethno-cultural segmentation the audiences should be given a coherent picture that interlinks different segments and secures cohesion to Vojvodina's plural community.

⁴ It is disputable whether the system of guaranteed mandates should be applied to all minorities in Vojvodina (and in Serbia) or just to the parliamentary representation of which is constantly disadvantaged by their small electorates.

The type of the policy of multiculturalism implemented in a heterogeneous community such as Vojvodina is of major importance. Since culture in itself is open, hybrid and inclusive, the Helsinki Committee takes that the network of multicultural ties and fruitful interactions that have influenced each and every culture in Vojvodina should be in the focus of the process of developing a policy of multiculturalism. Culture is not a static, self-isolated universe. It cannot develop against the backdrop of strict demarcation lines but only through communication with other cultures. The more so does the presence of the elements of other cultures in our own reflect its receptiveness, dynamics, capability for change, advance and improve.

Convinced that the safeguard and advancement of Vojvodina's identity contributes to Serbia's European prospects, the Helsinki Committee insists on the progress in the negotiations with the European Union, on Vojvodina's inclusion in European integration processes and on productive utilization on the province's geographical position, resources, civilizational heritage, tradition and culture.

FOSTERING VOJVODINA'S MULTIETHNIC IDENTITY

Bojan KOSTRES

VOJVODINA: THE STATE OF MIND

Speaking of Vojvodina's identity, I take we should firstly ask ourselves, "Actually, what is Vojvodina's identity about?" Does it really exist or is it something we would like Vojvodina to have?

I do believe Vojvodina's identity exists in the same as Vojvodinians. However, for me the term Vojvodinians does not refer to a nation or a national entity but, above all, to a state of mind. In my view, a Vojvodinian is any person endorsing multi-ethnicity, religious diversity and multilingualism as values, as something one can live with that not only enriches us as people but also makes us worthier human beings. It is, therefore, the most important to maintain Vojvodina as such concept. Because, not all Vojvodinians are prone to accept those ideas, not all of them are tolerant people or oriented towards Europe. And yet, the people believing in European values and upholding that value system are mostly concentrated in the territory of our Province. This is why we, Vojvodinians, have the duty to pass on the ideas we believe in to the entire Serbia and thus help all the citizens of the Republic of Serbia speed up their movement towards the goal we should all attain – the European Union.

In order to safeguard Vojvodina's identity we must, first of all, give it a shape and make it recognizable to as many as possible citizens so that they can identify themselves with the value system it implies. Only then we could pass on this value system to the rest of Serbia. This is why I am very glad that the Helsinki Committee organized this session and plans to stage a series of similar meetings dealing with the safeguard of Vojvodina's identity. It is on us, who live in Vojvodina and care about Vojvodina's identity, to tackle this issue. Otherwise, no one else would.

Sonja BISERKO
FUNDAMENTAL VALUES SHOULD BE PROTECTED

Vojvodina is the most pro-European region of Serbia and the one closest to Europe. When Rumania and Bulgaria accessed the European Union Vojvodina actually became its central part without officially being in the membership. Firstly, this indicates that Serbia lags behind its neighbors. And secondly, that if it really wants to become an EU member-state, Serbia should put to good use Vojvodina's potential for modernization.

Despite its pro-European rhetoric and advocacy for European principles and values, Belgrade's political class has been lately promoting the concept of Serbia's so-called neutrality. In reality, this concept stands against the European Union and NATO. It implies stronger reliance on Russia, which was more than evident in the last couple of months when it came to the issue of Kosovo. Belgrade expects Russia to postpone the settlement of the Kosovo status and thus impose Kosovo's partition. Kosovo's partition is actually the only strategy the official Belgrade has. And for that strategy the official Belgrade obtained support even from Vojvodina's resisters, from those, say, in Subotica, Zrenjanin, Senta, Backi Petrovac, Pancevo or Vrsac. Vojvodina's autonomy is the litmus test for any government claiming its pro-European orientation. For, Vojvodina's autonomy testifies not only of a wish to join the EU but also of capacity and wisdom to create Europe from within, to think and act in the manner Europe thinks and acts.

The settlement of the Kosovo status influences developments in Vojvodina as well. Namely, as an excuse for Kosovo's unavoidable independence official Belgrade tries to "trample down" Vojvodina's autonomy and keeps treating it as its protectorate. This is why any discussion of Vojvodina's true autonomy is seen as secessionism in Belgrade.

Vojvodina is vitally interested in the continuation of SAA negotiations with the European Union. Vojvodina has proved this interest by a series of actions and measures testifying its pro-European option. Having recognized Vojvodina's readiness, Europe has opened many channels for its speedier integration into European processes. On the other hand, Serbia's new Constitution targeted Vojvodina's interests and its pro-European orientation the most by reaffirming centralism that stands in the way of local initiative. By casting their vote against the Constitution in the referendum, citizens of Vojvodina clearly messaged the political class in Belgrade that they would not accept the role of passive subjects acting against their own identity and specificity. With the failed referendum in Vojvodina, Serbia's political community faces the problem of legitimacy. The fact that the Constitution was demonstratively turned down in Vojvodina might

revitalize the autonomist movement. Under present circumstances, that's something the province should profit on to create a European model of autonomy.

Bearing in mind their experience in the past two decades, minorities are justifiably anxious about the outbursts of nationalism. Ever when it demands some authority over the police Vojvodina does not have in mind to become "a state within the state" – as critics in Belgrade put it – but only wants to function as a modern region capable of protecting the values that make it a factor of modernization – multiethnic peace, safety for all citizens without exception and their right to safely exercise constitutionally guaranteed rights and freedoms.

Vojvodina is not only Serbia's the most "European" part but also ethnically the most plural one. Vojvodina has always been specific for its multiculturalism and, as such, unprecedented in the territory of ex-Yugoslavia. However, in the past 20 years ethno-nationalism has been assaulting its biggest value the most. Those assaults have been and still are meant to annul Vojvodina's identity. With this session the Helsinki Committee wanted to initiate a debate on the safeguard of Vojvodina's multiethnic identity and the minority-majority relationship sustaining Vojvodina's – and Serbia's – European prospects.

To conclude with, let me underline that this is about a hot topic troubling the entire region and, of course, the EU member-states. Public debates going on in, say, France, Denmark or the Netherlands, seek to find a formula for integrating Muslim communities into larger political and cultural communities. People are discussing models of multiculturalism and outstanding thinkers and public figures take active part in those debates. Among them are the figures such as Pascal Bruckner, Ian Buruma or Timothy Ash Gordon.

Today's session could be a small step forward in that direction.

Jovan KOMSIC
VOJVODINA BETWEEN DEMOCRATIC TOLERANCE
AND POLITICAL RADICALISM

- Theses -

1/ If there was no Vojvodina it should be made up for the sake of Serbia's European future. Unlike a considerable number of extreme nationalists, who regret it, I would say we are fortunate that history bestowed on this portion of the Pannonian Plains the valuable identity of unity of differences that need to be maintained in good will and for the benefit of true interests of all its citizens, the

state and the entire regions of Middle and South Eastern Europe. Be it as it may, Vojvodina – by its very being and historical outputs – is an European project and an European region in the true sense of these terms.

2/ Speaking of European Modernism, it should be noted that in these areas it begun with the enlightened absolutism of the Hapsburg family and in the manner of Emperor Joseph II slogan, “*All for people and nothing with people!*” On the other hand, in later, brief and discontinuous periods of democratic “rule of people, by people and for people” it was also not easy to form the policy pattern of sustainable and institutional unity of differences founded on the consensus between citizens and political representatives from all national communities. On the contrary – for three centuries of its modern history Vojvodina has been permanently in the focus of confronting state-building policies of old and big, and young and small nations alike. Arms, rhetoric and a plethora of symbols have made an unavoidable arsenal of the attempts to appropriate this small part of Europe.

3/ It goes without saying that here – the same as in other places – heritage bears different meanings. And criteria for assessing the past and the present alike are different. Even in the worst episodes of history – when big crises and conflicts produced ethnically motivated paranoia and fanned the flames of collective consciousness about “others denying our identity and preventing us from being what we really are” /Konrad/ - the best people in these areas, coming from different ethnic communities, have been risking their lives to consequently promote the idea of a social order guaranteeing equality to all people regardless of their ethnic origin, religion, gender and political affiliations. In this context, the first outstanding, pro-European Serb and the founding father of Serb enlightenment, Dositej Obradovic, advocated a new, “rational and all-inclusive, humanitarian patriotism,” while condemning “national arrogance, intolerance and hatred for other nations” /Skerlic/. His followers and supporters were expressing their rational patriotism by calling Vojvodina “New Switzerland in Eastern Europe” /Miletic/ or “Europe in a nutshell” /Stajic/.

4/ More importantly, by following the rule “live and let live,” ordinary citizens were developing and affirming the custom identical to Voltaire’s earliest definition of tolerance as a remedy for human imperfect nature – *Discord is a big evil of humankind, and tolerance is the only remedy for it*, messaged the French enlightener. Periods of peace and economic prosperity in these regions handed down the same precious message. Those were the periods when “new” and “old” residents of the valley were reviving good-neighborly traditions, learning lessons of civilizations and convincingly proving that *diversity was richness, coexistence inspiration and mutual respect – civic virtue*.

5/ Unfortunately, the years of nationalistic homogenization, dissolution of the former Yugoslavia and of warring-nationalistic transition considerably dispelled the preconditions for sustainable multiculturalism and equality we inherited from the period of the so-called socialist autonomy. And those were most vulnerable preconditions. As Tibor Varadi put it, “sustainable adjustment of ethnic identities” was based on “mixture of cultures and party discipline – in some cases more on culture, and in other more on discipline.” This mixture is now replaced by “some democratic procedures with uncertain outcomes,” including a rather changed cultural context.

“War is bad because it spoils more people than destroys those rotten,” said an ancient Greek historian. True, in parallel with winning the freedom of expression and political association, many evils and mutual distrust negatively affecting interethnic relations in Vojvodina have been released over the past years in the ambiance of war and the big change crisis.

6/ At *political level*, a new problem and big challenge that can be labeled a *paradox of early democracy* emerged thanks to ethnic, political entrepreneurs prone to fan the flames of mass passions and profit from – justifiable and unjustifiable – anxieties of numerous transition losers. This is about a hybrid between intolerant liberalisms and ethnic semi-democracy on one hand, and partially consolidated liberal democracy by European standards on the other.

7/ No wonder, therefore, that sociological researches conducted in the past decade registered a raise in more or less intolerant nationalisms in all ethnic communities, and particularly among the members of bigger ethnic collectives – Serbs and Hungarians. Segmentation and ever bigger ethnic distance became a trait of Vojvodinians’ consciousness. Citizens’ responses to the questions about the state’s major strategies, institutional models of decentralizations and the settlement of the so-called Vojvodina issue in Serbia’s new Constitution also testify of political splits that coincide with ethno-national and regional divisions.

Fortunately, there are empirical reasons for moderate optimism. Almost all recent sociological findings demonstrate the presence of the so-called alternative syndrome in Vojvodinians’ consciousness (absence of authoritarianism, modernism, liberalism, well-balanced attitude towards nations, etc.). And this gives rise to the hope that Serbia – and Vojvodina within it – could overcome considerable obstacles in the process of building a new project of autonomy and ethno-cultural justice, and thus deny the old and widespread doubts about the possibility of having a stable democracy in ethnically mixed societies.

8/ Recognizing the high price we had to pay for all unlearned lessons – that boil down to the fact that postponement of unavoidable has never been a good ally – could uphold the above-mentioned hope. And speaking of rational coping

with modern times demands, and those of the future in particular, the most rational assumption is that the road would be by far less thorny should political players in Vojvodina and in the entire Serbia *genuinely* opt for integration into the European Union as a prestigious alliance of nations, association of regions, a warrant of minority freedom and a frame for multicultural civil society.

9/ Unfortunately, rationalism, enlightenment and properly perceived interests of individuals, social groups and the majority of population have not been a predominant constant in these areas both in recent and far past. Not even today are they the most powerful driving forces and mechanisms of the society's mindset and actions. Under present circumstances it is hard to expect that the policy's rational component would overcome its irrational one.

10/ In the atmosphere of widespread deregulation, confusion and fears, flooding sense of helplessness and transition defeat, and in the midst of the crisis of failed expectations and distrust in public institutions and actors, and in the so-called international community, plus un-readiness to cope with the shocks of the reality and face up the causes of troubles, regression, historical blind alleys and delusions, it is only logical to expect a pattern of behavior that rests on escapism, escape from freedom /Fromm/ and simulation of life /Baudrillard/. By this pattern people take that the areas of irrational and black-and-white picture of the world are their best ally in making more or less supportable sense of the utterly harsh and complex daily life.

Material poverty combined with the feeling of post-war deprivation, with historical, cultural, ideological and political splits and controversies marking key political players and the general public, as well as the absence of a clear-cut vision and hope in the nation's and the state's prosperity bring about mass need for simple and appeasing answers, for some political-ideological Valium of some surrogate for this sedative that is in demand the most in domestic pharmacies. It is common knowledge that such answers, in crisis societies, became "the property" of political extremists – social and nationalistic. The worst scenario is when a more or less consistently articulated state and national project – the one that rests on extremist combination of "social" and "national" question - takes root at the political scene.

11/ The *ideological fiber* of such radicalism fully corresponds to individual and collective psycho-dynamics of the *nationalistic syndrome* of consciousness Rudi Supek had illustrated with the following predominant topics: 1) nation's deprivation; 2) complot against nation and state; 3) biologically jeopardized nation; 4) ideological alarm to finally "awaken" people from lethargy and motivate them for "renewal;" 5) ethno-centric superiority; 6) authoritarianism and sadomasochism of the masses that show "respect" for force and power only; 7)

revenge and retaliation for tragedies and the crimes committed against one's compatriots, and the like. Some other authors warn about the following characteristics of the rightist extremism: 1) racism, nationalism and clericalism; 2) anti-Semitism; 3) anti-Islamism; 4) anti-liberalism; 5) anti-socialism, anti-anarchism and anti-communism; 6) homophobia; 7) sexism and anti-feminism; 8) xenophobia; 9) anti-Americanism; 10) anti-Masonry; 11) anti-globalism and Euro-skepticism; 12) rehabilitation of fascist ideas; 13) authoritarianism; 14) racial, ethnic and national "purity" /Bakic/.

12/ As it seems the above-mentioned paradox of Serbia's early democracy and unfinished state will be reflected in boosted extremists policies and anti-European options that will stand for a nominal response to the settlement of the Kosovo status outside the UN Security Council, and for a nominal response to the US' and the EU member-states' unilateral recognition of Kosovo's independence. In the event such a scenario takes place and Serbia responds to it by breaking diplomatic relations with the states that have recognized independent Kosovo, Vojvodina's anyway ambivalent society will become the most vulnerable point at Serbia's sociopolitical map. The inherited splits will grow deeper and deeper along ethnic, ideological and political lines. To all appearances, the stale "national-patriotic" food sold at socialist-radical "flea markets" will become again the most profitable merchandise at domestic political market. But now the radical "prefix" will definitely overshadow not only the government's socialist partner but also some other overt and covert associates tasked with turning Serbia towards Euro-Asia.

13/ So, under most unfavorable circumstances for liberal democracy and tolerance, citizens of Serbia and citizens of the Province will find themselves, for the umpteenth time, in the situation when they are expected to cope with an epochal state, constitutional and political question. Let's call it "an agreement on a citizen's capacity" and foundations of the state and democracy, supposed, as a great theoretician of freedom (John Stuart Mill) put it, "to make virtue out of necessity" and enable different ethnic communities "to accept living side by side with equal rights and under same laws."

Therefore, instead of mythologizing the past with such unbearable ease and belligerently politicizing the present we need to renovate our "roots" – and look towards the future. Generally speaking, that boils down to responsible search for the solutions that bring us together as people who are self-assured, autonomous and free to choose their life maps; the people who are institutionally guaranteed the rights to difference and similarity, to information and communication, to property and solidarity, to peace and tolerance; and to the people who are duty-bound not to tolerate intolerance and entitled to rational, constitutional patriotism

and loyalty to the state – which is the place we have been born in - and in which we feel good.

14/ The crucial fact in the context of the new Constitution (2006) and Vojvodina's pro-European potential and political circumstances that would foster and revitalize that potential is that *Vojvodina has been deprived the right to its own legislation in the domains of its constitutionally guaranteed authorities – the legislation that would correspond to its needs and those of the entire republic, as well as to European experience and regionalization standards.*

No wonder that against so perceived “façade” autonomy – i.e. a permanently supervised self-governance – the province's actual autonomy – implying not only the right to independence from the overwhelming control by the “centre,” but also a relevant scope of responsibilities, self-initiative by provincial political actors and institutions, and participation in lawmaking as a precondition for efficient interaction with citizens – depends, in the first place, of the changeable good-will of the national parliament's majority. In other words, *Vojvodina's autonomy is a variable totally dependent on the almighty republican legislation.*

15/ So, to what extent will everything referred to in the paragraphs above help Vojvodina to maintain and advance the most prestigious part of its social being? Here I refer to Vojvodina as an European project, and to Vojvodina's capacity and experience as proper “measures” for Serbia's movement towards the EU. Vojvodina's most realistic chances are in its still preserved potential to safeguard its half-and-half subjectivity and European identity.

Only new constitutional-legal reforms could foster this potential by European standards. On the other hand, citizens, the state and the Province alike will have to be really lucky in the months to come to reach even this stage of the stage's stabilization and democratic development.

Dimitrije BOAROV **EUROPEAN INTEGRATIONS AS** **VOJVODINA'S LOGICAL INTEREST**

- General theses -

1. European integration processes are crucial interests of Vojvodina as Serbia's autonomous province. Without those integrations Vojvodina could neither fully valorize its geographic position and natural resources nor its historical tradition and material heritage.

2. All the countries bordering on Vojvodina are either in the EU membership (Hungary and Rumania) or candidates for the full-fledged membership (Croatia). Therefore, Serbia's accession to the EU practically depends on Vojvodina's normal economic communication with neighboring countries;

3. As a province geographically belonging to the Central Europe and to the Danube River basin Vojvodina is not only surrounded by the countries integrated into Europe but also at the crossroads of two major European corridors – E-10 and E-7 – that are sustainable only with Serbia within European processes;

4. With annual GNP amounting to some 3,700 Euros per capita Vojvodina is by far more developed than the rest of Serbia and, in that context, the structure of its needs is much closer to European standards and habits than that of other parts of Serbia. Therefore, any form of Serbia's isolation from Europe would mostly affect Vojvodina;

5. Vojvodina's agricultural production on over 1.6 million hectares of arable land (35 percent of Serbia's total farmland) by far exceeds the needs of its population of 2 million. On the other hand, Serbia's market totaling 7.5 million consumers is too small for Vojvodina's potential. That means that Vojvodina's agriculture must have an access to European markets;

6. Serbia's overall capital is insufficient for an active agrarian policy, the one the farmers in Vojvodina need. On the other hand, one half of the EU's budget is still set aside for premiums and back pays of member-states' agriculture (regardless of the fact that the EU has been discussing reduction of subsidies in this domain over the past years);

7. After the widespread process of primary privatization that included major foreign investors (in the financial sector, in construction materials, beer, milk, oil, chemical industries, etc.) the issue of European integration became the one of bigger profitability of the Province's entire economy and the growth in the value of real estate and farmland. Why shouldn't Vojvodina profit more from the “second round” of privatization than it did from the first?

8. Generally speaking, Vojvodina's economic infrastructure is a logical follow-up to the European Union's economic infrastructure. Therefore, Vojvodina's economic infrastructure would greatly profit from Serbia's membership in the EU, as it would have access to huge funds for further development;

9. Vojvodina's anyway considerable energy potential would become even more profitable should the Province become a transit area for the exchange of energy raw materials and semi-products. In this context, the projects of construction of a big storage for natural gas in Banatski Dvori and of the

Constance-Trieste pipeline would greatly benefit Vojvodina – and those projects considerably depend on Serbia’s accession to the European Union;

10. For the time being, Vojvodina is an underdeveloped tourist region despite its many similarities – i.e. potentials for riverbank, hunting, museum and excursion tourism - with one of Europe’s tourist superpowers, Hungary. In this context, membership in the EU would be a powerful impetus to Vojvodina’s tourism.

11. Regardless of by far bigger competition Vojvodina’s economy would have to cope with in the EU, it would sustain and modernize as it has all prerequisites for success in this domain – it has its “European tradition” and the highest degree of enlightenment in Serbia.

Aleksandar POPOV

THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE PROCESSES OF REGIONAL COOPERATION

Vojvodina’s regional cooperation depends, above all, on Serbia’s decentralization. To be able to develop full cooperation at regional level Vojvodina has to be invested with more authority in the process of making deals with the partners from neighboring regions. However, the case of the famous tender called for the construction of the highway corridor – the one with provisions still kept far from the public eye – testify that Vojvodina has almost no say in the matter. And the same tender is also illustrative of the character of the state we live in and in which Vojvodina endeavors to exercise its autonomy and regional cooperation.

Two categories of regions are the most interesting of all from Vojvodina’s angle: the regions of ex-Yugoslavia such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, and the regions in Rumania and Hungary. Renewal of communication and mutual ties is the alphabet of any normalization of relations in post-conflict societies – and we, from the NGO sector, are well-aware of that. If people do not communicate states in a region can never fully normalize their relations. The example of car plates in Bosnia-Herzegovina probably best illustrates the significance of communication. When the federal authorities introduced car plates unrelated with actual towns people in Bosnia begun to travel from one entity to another, left their vicious circles of hatred and gradually overcome the painful legacy of the war.

When it comes to regional cooperation non-governmental organizations are by far more flexible than states and have more possibilities for establishing and

maintaining regional ties. States are restricted. Firstly, they are restricted by the lack of political will for the renewal of regional cooperation. Secondly, their procedures for realizing ideas are too long – in the meantime the problems that were to be settled through regional cooperation have been already solved or become more complex. Unlike state, NGOs have no strict procedures, all they have are their mission they want to pursue and for that purpose they establish cooperation with other actors. That’s also NGOs’ alphabet – for they are only logically oriented towards cooperation at both national and regional levels.

International cooperation notably contributes to the renewal of broken ties as it influences the overall normalization of relations and reestablishes mutual trust among states and nations that have been at war. More than eleven years after the Dayton Accords we witness a variety of turbulence in our region. Not so long ago, we had turbulence over the verdict the International Court of Justice passed in the Bosnia-Herzegovina vs. FR Yugoslavia case. Last year’s elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Serbia were followed by all sorts of manipulation and speculations over referendums on the union /with Serbia/, secession of the territory, etc. – and such developments do impair regional relations. One thing is certain in these areas: we shall be witnessing for long the policies shaped by the “hot and cold” principle.

Overcoming barriers in people’s minds is crucial for the renewal of regional cooperation – weighted by wars, atrocities, destruction and crimes – both at governmental and NGO levels. All other barriers will be overcome one fine day at some negotiating table or under the pressure from the international community, but psychological barriers are the hardest nut to crack.

In a way, non-governmental organizations are sweepers of minefields – they sweep all the dirt left behind by politicians, generals and journalists. By sweeping contaminated terrain they prepare the terrain for politicians. To overcome the past the non-governmental organizations represented at this session – and some that are not with us today – are putting forth initiatives and recommendations. A major segment of their activity targets the government and pressurizes it to start facing up the past. As long as the government is unwilling to genuinely confront the recent past we shall be hostages to it.

At the times of war, non-governmental organizations in the region have not broken their relations but continued to act jointly. Some other categories of people such as criminals, war profiteers, etc. have not broken their cooperation as well. But non-governmental organizations are those one can be proud of – in the hard times of wars and nationalistic and chauvinistic madness they were the voice of reason here, in Vojvodina, in Serbia, in Croatia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina. They really had to risk much to arrange meetings during the war. And that’s their

enormous moral capital, the credibility that opens the door to future joint actions. The Igman Initiative – co-founded by the Center of Regionalism – is one of regional networks forged during the war.

The regional cooperation developed by non-governmental organizations is a kind of alternative diplomacy. At the time of Milosevic's regime non-governmental organizations were putting forth various initiatives for the consideration of governmental bodies despite the fact that they hardly had any ties with them. Democratic changes in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina widely opened the door to regional cooperation. Our Igman Initiative then formed expert groups included representatives of different ministries – and that made it easier for us to carry out some initiatives. For instance, together with relevant ministries we have promoted a series of six bilateral agreements between the signatory-states of the Dayton Accords and have acted towards suspension of the visa regime between Croatia and the then FR Yugoslavia. Or, we have cooperated successfully with the Foreign Ministry at the time Mr. Goran Svilanovic held the office of the foreign minister.

The most illustrative example of regional cooperation in these areas is the Tuzla-Osijek-Novi Sad cooperation. The three towns share the same geographic, cultural and economic space and have had exceptional cooperation at the time of ex-Yugoslavia. Vojvodina and Slavonia have cooperated in the domain of stock breeding, Vojvodina has exported quality foodstuff and construction materials to the Tuzla basin and imported from it chemicals, coal, etc. Unfortunately, when the war broke out all ties between the three towns were broken – especially with Tuzla where the canons of the Novi Sad corps have echoed for long. Three non-governmental organizations – the Center for Regionalism, the Tuzla Citizens' Forum and the Osijek Center for Peace, Non-Violence and Human Rights – were fortunate enough because mayors of the three towns had an ear for our joint initiatives and suggestions and were ready to orient city administrations towards renewal of cooperation. In January 2002, the three towns signed the Agreement on Interethnic Cooperation and the respective city administrations took upon themselves to foster mutual cooperation in the domains of culture, economy, education, sports and interethnic tolerance. In five years since then the Agreement produced excellent effects and, in a way, became a model of cooperation. Three regional chambers of commerce have come together as well and signed agreements on cooperation. Cultural institutions and media outlets also started cooperating. We have also organized a Novi Sad–Osijek–Tuzla marathon that symbolically tied the three towns together. When the Serbian Radical Party came to power in Novi Sad we suffered an “engine failure.” So the then and incumbent mayor of Tuzla, Jasmin Imanovic, sent a letter to Mayor of Novi Sad Maja

Gojkovic. Actually, he replied to her letter that expressed the readiness to establish cooperation between the two towns as if there had been no such cooperation at all. He said the Radicals' administration in Novi Sad was unacceptable as a partner to Tuzla, which would, therefore, continue to cooperate with the Center for Regionalism as a partner organization. This testifies of the benefits of partnership between non-governmental organizations and city administrations. For, city administration come and go, while non-governmental organizations remain to safeguard “the flame,” maintain existing relations and develop new ones.

Encouraged by this model of good practice we have campaigned for new “triangles” of cooperation in the region of South Eastern Europe. The two-year campaign gave birth to *FILIA*, the association of multiethnic towns in South Eastern Europe bringing together the towns in the once warring zone. The association thus contributes to overcoming the legacy of the recent past and reestablishing broken ties.

Of course, there are other examples of same or similar cooperation. In Vojvodina, the Green Network and the Open Lyceum are mostly focused on the cooperation with the towns in Croatia and Hungary, and that cooperation produced remarkable effects. The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia and the great majority of NGOs in Serbia can also provide good examples of cooperation with regional NGOs.

Cooperation with Hungary and Rumania – Mita Boarov referred to – is most important to Vojvodina due to the multiethnic composition of its population, historical and other ties. Such cooperation is ongoing within the DKMT Euro-region. At the time of Milosevic's rule Vojvodina was nothing but a dummy in this Euro-region. After his ouster, it became an active player and, as far as I know, realized several educational, infrastructural, etc., projects in partnership with counterparts from Rumania and Hungary.

However, what I simply must underline is that the Schengen regime could easily “kill” Euro-regionalism in this area. Instead of open borders and the possibility to travel with your ID card only, we have to cope with an extremely strict visa regime. Obtaining a Hungarian visa is a real triumph! And this is what the European Union should take into consideration when it comes to these areas.

Alpár LOSONCZ
EUROPEAN TRAITS OF VOJVODINA'S IDENTITY

Had it not been hinted that this session should broach European aspects of Vojvodina's identity too, I would have rather addressed institutional aspects of Vojvodina's joining European integration processes. Be it as it may, I will just mark out some major issues.

In my view we should not perceive European identity and tradition on the one hand and the European Union on the other as one and the same thing. The European Union is, in the first place, an economic superpower, a kind of geo-economic and geopolitical entity. This geo-economic entity can compete with other similar geo-economic entities in the world such as the United States, particularly in terms of economic potential. In spite of that many Europeans lament over Europe's lagging behind globalization processes. But when it comes to "European identity" things become by far more complex. Piles of books have been written about European identity, and libraries are brimming with such titles. Therefore, we can only touch on the subject at this session. The problem is that we are all aware that the search for Vojvodina's European identity exceeds mere insistence on integration into Europe.

I'll tackle just some aspects I take important as some normative criteria for Vojvodina's European identity. Regardless of its history – which is, of course, contradictory, complex and has its dark sides – Europe does have an extraordinary tradition of criticism and self-criticism. An answer to the somewhat pathetic question "What a good European implies?" would be that we are, above all, ready to accept criticism and self-criticism. So, what could be European about Vojvodina? It is its loyalty to criticism and self-criticism, of course. The next aspect I take most significant when it comes to European identity is something Umberto Eco calls "translation or translating." He refers not to literal translation of some signs from one language into another but to a much "stronger" notion. Simply, to understand someone who shows up in your life you must "translate" that someone into your terrain. That happens in everyday life but at other levels as well. For Eco, translation in this sense is Europe's common language. So, this is about translation in a practical but extremely important sense: that's the reality of certain social practices of translating and a level on which all other levels depend. Once you understand this you can understand other meanings too – you can understand that Europe is a kind of geopolitics of translation.

Someone might say – and would be right to a certain extent – that there is no gap between the European Union and European tradition, which are rather intertwined. Indeed, today the European Union is the key interpreter of the

European tradition. However, the European Union cannot appropriate the European identity as a whole, since individual, collective, national, transnational and even regional identities are not, so to speak, metaphysically stable. They are not made once forever, but are changeable and permanently call for new interpretations. Our lives are, therefore, determined by changeable identities that certainly do not imply a chaos. And we would miss the point should we dream of some stable, predetermined identity. We would thus either reify identity patterns or slip in the terrain of politicians and intellectuals – both in Serbia and Vojvodina – eager to dumb down identity so as to be able to appropriate, control and manipulate it. Vojvodina's identity has to be constantly reinterpreted since the reality we live in constantly changes.

It is common knowledge that Serbia's movement towards Europe is snail-paced. However, the benefit of such movement is that it can learn from the mistakes the others have made. Of course, to be able to discern the mistakes other countries have made in their movement towards the European Union you must firstly engage in a serious, comprehensive and comparative analysis. As far as I know, no one in Serbia is engaged in such an endeavor. And there is another important aspect, too. And as far as I know, there has been no consequent and relevant debate on why one should join the European Union in any post-socialist country. This has been taken for granted everywhere, more or less. Of course, every country has had different interpretation and dreamed about the European Union in a different way.

Take, for instance, Hungary. The fact that it has not had an all-inclusive debate on the European Union now gives rise to certain problems. Why is that so? When you are not certain about the whys of joining something, the reasons for integrating into a superpower such as the European Union but rather treat it as sailing into a blueprinted harbor, you will be coping with democratic deficits later on. No doubt that some countries such as Hungary, Rumania, etc., have made significant economic progress. But their overall economic order is not exactly well-arranged. And in terms of democratic potential they are faced with some misunderstandings, ambiguities, disappointment with unmet expectations, return of old and unsettled problems, and, so to speak, with a kind of revenge from the past. The European Union's potential provides a frame for a different life but does not provide it automatically.

When people over here speak of the European Union they usually refer to a materialistic Eden, which it is not. All the European Union offers are strict rules that make correction of the existing situation possible. Disappointments are usual in social sphere but some failed realizations might cost dear.

European identity and European values cannot be mechanically implanted or transmitted. You can take over some rules automatically or forge some other – and that’s what Serbia does when it comes to its movement towards the European Union. However, there are things we can now simply label culture or cultural patterns. The processes of mondialization and adoption of Euro-Atlantic values have begun back in early 1990s and all international organizations involved in those processes faced the same problem. The World Bank, say, believed till 1996 and 1997 that some ideological patterns could be simply transmitted regardless of context and actual state of affairs. It believed that appropriate political will and readiness to adopt the same principles suffice. However, analyses showed that things cannot function that way. For, unless there is, so to speak, a social capital for accepting something you cannot adjust the realities to some desirable readiness. In my opinion, this is crucial for the manner in which we are adopting European values. Adoption of some guidelines necessitates clear-cut measures by politicians, bureaucracy, integration technicians, etc. But chances to succeed are meager without self-transformation and transformation of top administration. Domestic politicians are prone to spreading delusion that we can adopt the said guidelines without undergoing any transformation whatsoever – or, probably, they naively believe that’s possible.

In my theses about Vojvodina I wrote down a most critical remark. I wrote that there is a tendency of reducing Vojvodina to a consociation of ethnic elites that would generate ethnic agreements.

I believe there is such a tendency and that is had to do with the rule of political parties. The great bulk of Serbia’s political elite, this way or other, lives on the state. The fact itself generates the phenomenon I’ve been referring to – the phenomenon of reducing Vojvodina’s identity to pragmatic deals between ethnic elites. To be more precise, I have nothing against pragmatic deals as such. But if Vojvodina’s identity boils down to them it becomes nothing but some virtual and simulated identity. All our odes to Vojvodina are in vain if we have such dirty reality and practice.

Bearing in mind its traditional capacities and other traits, Vojvodina could be a driving force of Serbia’s modernization, which preconditions joining European integration processes. But if in the role of such a driving force Vojvodina sees itself as victim it will lose the ability of self-criticism that really makes it European. That happens to minority communities when they too often freeze on to the victim role. Actually, such fixation closes the door to serious self-reflection. And this leads to the danger I call Vojvodina’s self-provincialization. Centralists are not the only ones generating negative trends – we are often a problem to ourselves.

Therefore, Vojvodina should be conceptualized in a different, more flexible and modern way, without relapses into the past. Some ongoing debates in Vojvodina (I am not referring to this meeting, of course) leave me under the impression that we willy-nilly relapse into the past as some ideal category. This reminds me of our popular verse saying, “How fine our dishes used to be once” – and when using it to refer to some better past people seem to neglect that those dishes must be stale for long. We need to give up such reasoning if we want a new beginning. Lamenting over the 1997 Constitution when Vojvodina was a constituent element of the federation are of no avail. The overall situation was different at the time – everything relied on the ideology of socialism. Boasting about ex-socialist distribution of power or some other periods in the past is simply unnecessary and leads nowhere. If Vojvodina wants to demonstrate its specificity, it must say, clearly and precisely, what its specificity is about. Otherwise, we shall not be able to differentiate Vojvodina’s identity from its regional scope. Otherwise, we shall have the same situation as that in the entire Serbia – we shall have Novi Sad as the focal point of distribution of power. This is why we need to find a pattern of collective identity made up of all differences – and that would only be the beginning for the adventure called multiculturalism.

Vojvodina will be able to manifest its identity and creatively join European regions only if it changes the patterns of its behavior. We should always bear in mind that for the center-province relationship there must be the province that recognizes itself as such vis-à-vis the center. Vojvodina must undergo a deep self-transformation if it wants to make a progress.

I share the view of previous speakers – economic and political dimensions alone cannot fully express Vojvodina’s specificity. Indeed, multiculturalism is its specificity. In this sense, Vojvodina is a unique European region or, at least, among unique ones in the “old” continent. To simplify things, I’ll say there is something we call multiculturalism and something we refer to as inter-culturalism. Multiculturalism relates to the arrangements in public life, to political rights, minorities’ participation in the public sphere, etc. Inter-culturalism is a different story – that’s micro-communication in everyday life and the interest the members of one culture show for the impact the members of other culture make. Vojvodina and Serbia alike face the problems of multiculturalism and inter-culturalism. When it comes to multiculturalism, let’s take the much criticized Law on National Minorities for an example. I’ve criticized the law myself primarily because it undermines democratic potential of minority communities and boils down Vojvodina to an aggregation of pragmatic, ethnic agreements.

As for inter-culturalism, I’ll try to place it into a larger context. The problem is in indifference to other cultures – not only the majority’s indifference to

minority cultures but also the other way round. Take, for instance, Switzerland that is being too much idealized – and, indeed, does possess some elements that should be idealized. Some studies on Switzerland I've recently read show that the effects of inter-culturalism are poor. You see, the problem of inter-culturalism is too much complex to be deliberated from one aspect only. The causes of the said indifference are often of economic nature. In today's world marked by intensive economic competition this type of indifference is to be expected.

As someone who has often been engaged in translating from different languages I perceive a problem that sticks like a sore thumb. In Novi Sad and in Vojvodina we don't have enough "translators" to contribute, in crucial moments, to a la Eco model of translation. How come that Vojvodina has such a problem and what the state can do to solve it? Democratic rules of the game do not allow the once practice of the Communist Party – the practice of bringing closer different ethnic groups at any cost. Some time ago, I suggested something I'll repeat here – the state could give scholarships to everyone eager to learn other minority languages, meaning to everyone willing to contribute to multiculturalism. Learning English is not a big deal, English is being taught in elementary schools. But learning Rumanian, Slovak or some other minority language is not that pragmatic as learning the *lingua franca*. You need courage for that. But if the state and Vojvodina administrations want to maintain multiculturalism or inter-culturalism this is what they need to do. The state must create preconditions for overcoming indifference, though it cannot force anyone into not being indifferent.

We shall never solve the problem of Vojvodina's European identity by reiterating dead metaphors. European identity is not something material. Therefore, the real question is the question of how Vojvodina could contribute to the permanently changeable European identity.

Mirko DJORDJEVIC **VOJVODINA'S CULTURAL MATRIX**

Indeed, this is the right time to discuss this topic. The term model – Vojvodina's cultural model – is not used just colloquially here, the more so since doctoral theses are being written about this sustainable cultural model, even by some Germans and Frenchmen. Firstly, the term itself has an authentic tradition in Europe. Secondly, it has not been destroyed in the cycle of Milosevic's Balkan wars, though considerably impaired and jeopardized. Having emerged from the cultural milieu we call "Mittel Europe" this term has persisted to this very day

and still has to be developed and fine-tuned. The term itself testifies of the principle formulated by early Marxists – the principle that culture is universal by its nature and national by its form and language. Actually, Marxists have not been those who have invented that principle. Even Goethe was referring to it in all his observations about European culture and it concretely relates to European identity.

Vojvodina's multicultural model is not a finished cultural matrix, monistic and grounded on a single idea or assumption. In his essay on cultural pattern – one of the best essays on culture we have – Slobodan Jovanovic speaks of Serbia's unfinished cultural pattern. No wonder, therefore, says Jovanovic, that even Njegos has not bequeathed to us "*cultural but national pattern*." Actually, we have never had a cultural pattern or tried to develop one. Slobodan Jovanovic ascribes this to a deficient intellectual potential among those who are mistakenly called elite to this very day. We have never had intellectual but semi-intellectual elite. Jovanovic is quite positive about it in his brilliant essay. People who share his view – including myself – are strongly opposed today.

Vuk /Karadzic/ and Dositej /Obrovic/, along with the entire era of Serbia's Enlightenment, are placed in the frame of Vojvodina's cultural model.

Allow me to make a personal and somewhat sentimental diversion. I was in visit in France when their authorities decided to bury Alexandre Dumas' ashes in the Pantheon. So, Dumas entered the Pantheon two centuries after his death. Not everyone is buried in the Pantheon for the French are not the nation apt to changing the names of their street and squares overnight. This has to do with their identity. The French President himself was present at the ceremony, calling Dumas "a constructor of our national, republican identity."

Let me remind you that Alexandre Dumas was a grandson of a slave and son of a mulatto. He wasn't an ethnic Frenchman at all. Nevertheless, the French recognized him and his artistic expression as a major determinant of their cultural and national identity. Many years ago Victor Hugo said, "Alexandre Dumas' name is more than French, he is an European and he is even more than an European because he is universal – his very name determines writers who are disseminators of civilization."

In today's Serb culture there is no identity of this type – republican and universal. You would be stigmatized should you try to place Serb identity on the scale of those values rather than on that of ethnic origin. Serb identity is nowadays searched for and found only on the map of ethnocentrism and banal nationalism – the map characteristic of small town reasoning that is alien to Vojvodina and the world.

Let me give you some examples that cost us dearly. Today, Dositej is being denied in a variety of “cultural programs” and documents. One of such documents is titled “St. George’s Day Declaration” and the other – quite movingly – “The Second Serb Letter to Haralampi.” Apart from other “wise” signatories, both documents bear signatures of two bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church. And what is this all about? This is about imposing on us a Middle Age, Byzantine and archaic pattern that is typically monistic and useless today. A modern, pluralist pattern is absolutely rejected.

Take, for instance, the term or the phrase that sticks like a sore thumb – “teachings of St. Sava.”

The term itself emerged in our culture in 1935-36. It was Vojvodina rather than Serbia that initiated the cultural cult of St. Sava in 1835 – St. Sava’s personality and work were taken for a cultural idea supposed to encompass the entire Serb cultural space. That was the time when that fine hymn, “Let’s sing with love,” was composed. Verses of this hymn have been forged 46 times since. In the Milosevic era all sorts of verses were inserted into it. “Warriors” riding tanks were singing “Bosnia-Herzegovina, St. Sava’s legacy.”

Serb “teachings of St. Sava” are meant to mobilize the masses for a warring-patriotic ideology, and have nothing to do real teachings of St. Sava. In other words, everything was reduced to a nationalistic pattern.

Or, take another example that is totally neglected over here and relates to Vojvodina. In all world encyclopedia and art books you will find the entry *Serb Eastern Orthodox Baroque*. This baroque is being destroyed for more than twenty years in Vojvodina. Churches in the Byzantine style are being built in Vojvodina! That’s the same absurdity as constructing baroque churches in Sumadija. Baroque marks an era in European culture! What I want to underline here is that development of a cultural pattern is being obstructed by waves of enforced clericalism – and churches are not that much to blame for this as regimes are, including Kostunica’s regime. It forces clericalism upon the society as a substitute for all of its failed ideologies.

Byzantium is given the upper hand over Europe. So, typical ideas of state-building are forced upon the society as a cultural model in the situation when the state itself shrinks while the very ideas monumentally grow out of proportion in some virtual space.

Is there a difference between Eastern Orthodoxy in Vojvodina and in Serbia proper? A German got his doctoral degree on the thesis dealing with this issue, and his thesis was translated into Serbian. Nevertheless, the topic is still a taboo over here.

One should be precise when referring to Eastern Orthodoxy – Serb, Russian, Bulgarian or Vojvodinian. Eastern Orthodoxy is based on dogmas. However, there are differences within Eastern Orthodox churches. In Vojvodina, Eastern Orthodoxy is a cultural idea and we should insist on it as such. But as you know, every insistence on this idea still brings about incidents. This is probably best illustrated by the fact that small religious communities, Christian religious communities, are stigmatized as dangerous sects.

We were witnesses of something the media kept calling incidents. But when incidents reoccur day in day out, and keep reoccurring for months, then they are not just incidents but a threatening tendency – the tendency marked not only by intolerance but also by physical assaults against members of a different religious community. I am referring to Adventists, a small religious community, which has become a target of violent assaults without any reason whatsoever. Anyone just familiar with religion has to know that we, adherents of the Serb Orthodox Church, are actually Adventists since we believe in the second coming of Christ!

I was referring to all those developments to draw your attention to the ongoing practice of renaming streets and squares. This practice is far from being naïve – actually, that’s an attack against foundations of identity. Go to Vichy and you’ll see that not a single street, boulevard or square is named after Petain. But now we have streets and squares named after Dimitrije Ljotic and other Nazi collaborators. You see, those reactionary and dark forces – the Radicals in the first place – they know their business. They smelled out some guilt in Jovan Jovanovic Zmaj – from their point of view – and would not forgive him. Zmaj wrote two anthological poems in 1872 reacting to Prussians’ bestial terror in Paris, when they tied half-dead people to cannons and so dragged them to the pits close to today’s the Wall of Communards. Identity is being undermined everywhere – in the Academy of Arts and Sciences, in the streets, in the politics...To conclude with, I want to underline that Vojvodina’s identity exists though not as a ready-made pattern. It exists as a principle that still has to be developed, but the principle based on multiculturalism and multi-religiousness. Ethnically homogeneous states are almost non-existent.

Gordana PERUNOVIC FIJAT
UNEXPECTED ANSWERS
Or, Why Vojvodinians Foot the Bill

*"The Vojvodina of shovels, razors, prayers and slaps,
Overgrown with desire, lies, struggle, betrayal and love."
M. Antic, "Vojvodina"*

Whatever research of Vojvodina's identity you might conduct you will always stumble into unexpected findings. And most surprised by such findings are those who perceive the entire region as a tame valley where people eat goulash and drink icy cold spritzer, and are so docile and good that would not say a word of protest should everything be taken away from them. That's why recognizing Vojvodina's identity as an European region has always been a real challenge.

A phenomenon you would not detect on sight but the phenomenon that largely influences the functioning of the entire state is a major or probably the main trait of Vojvodina's European identity. I am referring here to Vojvodinians' habit to duly pay their taxes and bills – the habit the population south of Zemun see almost as weird. Not paying your electricity, gas and other bills is a shame for a citizen of Vojvodina. Though prices exceeded people's pensions and salaries long ago, they, especially the elderly, are genuinely in pain when they cannot afford to pay their bills. Take, for example, the 70-year-old Katica Djordjevic whose pension check totals 6,972 dinars. Last winter – a very mild one by the way – she had to pay 4,000-5,000 dinars for gas supply. This, plus other utility bills indicates that her bills only by far exceeded her monthly income. "I have to pay," she says. And she does pay. As old as she is, she has to work to earn some extra money to pay her dues. She complains not about not being able to afford medicaments, let alone other things. She pays her bills and pays them duly. And the great majority of Vojvodinians are like Katica – despite the series of wars, inflation, rationed goods and delayed pensions. Nothing would prevent them from paying their bills.

According to some assessments I read long ago, in 1990s Milosevic's regime actually lived on Vojvodinians, who were duly and persistently paying their dues. Had they, by some fortunate coincidence, deprived the state of their moneys there is no telling what course the history would take. But no, not Vojvodinians – they were paying as they always have. Some say such financial discipline is the legacy of the Austro-Hungarian rule. However, one cannot but wonder how come that this discipline survived Austro-Hungary and many different states with different taxing. How come that people have this conditioned reflex – to pay the state their

dues first and live on what is left? This needs not be about the fear of the state only – on the contrary, people do want to pay their liabilities and thus show that they are solvent. Decent people owing nothing to anyone are the trait of Vojvodina's European identity. They are relieved, happy and proud of themselves when they are capable of paying, and sad and anxious when they cannot afford it despite the fact that this is not their fault.

Another trait of Vojvodina's European identity is its multi-ethnicity, multiculturalism that is often referred to but has never been thoroughly researched and defined. These are the values that should be promoted anew nowadays, unlike in the times when they were taken for granted. Those were the times when it went without saying that people were congratulating religious holidays to their neighbors, colleagues and friends of religions other than theirs. My grandmother Radinka Nincic, born Pakaski, was telling me stories about it. "We were socializing with Catholics and Jews, and were familiar with their holidays. We were paying them visits to wish them good, and they did the same at the times of our holidays," my grandmother was telling me. Even today most Vojvodinians are familiar with customs and tradition of the people of different ethnic origin. And the great majority of citizens of Vojvodina are at least bilingual – speaking their mother tongue and the official one. Hilda Banski, my once kindergarten teacher and now the president of the German Association in Kikinda, is addressing various ceremonies and meetings in Hungarian, German and Serbian. She speaks and writes fluently all the three languages. Only some sixty years ago about 80 percent of Vojvodina Serbs spoke at least one language other than theirs – not because they were notably educated people who have traveled all over the world, but because that was the necessity of everyday life. People simply had to speak several languages. My grand-grandfather Radivoj Pakaski, say, spoke and wrote in Hungarian and German, and mastered Russian well enough as a prisoner of war that he listened to Radio Moscow till the end of his life. My grandfather, Sava Nincic, also spoke and wrote in Hungarian and German, and learned to speak Slovakian while working in Kovacica. Nowadays, before they start learning English in school, young people learn one from another and are familiar with some other language that is spoken in Vojvodina.

Literacy is yet another major aspect of Vojvodina's European identity. In 1773 the village of Ostojicevo – Tisamentmiklosh in the Coka municipality had elementary schools with classes in Serbian, Hungarian, German and Polish – for a group of Polish immigrants, who were later on assimilated – and special classes for Jewish children. Though most population were illiterate at the time, it was obvious that the regime and national leaders – enthusiasts of the time – wanted to enlighten the people. The books published throughout the 19th century some

families have kept for generations testify to this intention. People were buying books to read them – why should they buy them otherwise costly as they were? So, those people, Vojvodinians, knew how to read at the time the people living south of the Sava and Danube rivers were illiterate – for, they didn't have schools at all. Today, despite general belief that illiteracy was uprooted after the WWII, the surveys conducted by the Novi Sad Faculty of Philosophy show that some 30 percent of citizens of Vojvodina are functionally illiterate – meaning they know how to read but do not understand what they read – and that more than 80 percent of people over 30 years of age are computer illiterate. No similar surveys have been conducted in other parts of Serbia. Had they been, the findings would have been rather disappointing, I am afraid.

Further, real estate records, established during the reign of Maria Theresa, are also illustrative of Vojvodina's European identity. After the fall of Austro-Hungary there were attempts to establish the same records in other parts of Yugoslavia that had not been under Austro-Hungarian rule. All those attempts failed, and they failed in all the three ex-Yugoslavias. What is characteristic of us, Vojvodinians, is our need to have all information tidily recorded and traceable. We are proud of our records the same as other Europeans are proud of their castles, museum and well-kept registers.

All this hardly exhausts the list of the traits of Vojvodina's European identity. Much information is still to be collected and processed. Today's situation in Vojvodina is far from what its citizens would like it to be. Some recent developments indicate that we are further away from Europe than we were one or two centuries ago. This trend should be stopped immediately or else there would be no place for Vojvodina in Europe.

Gojko MISKOVIC

THE MISSING LINK

How others perceive us? A personal experience

Dear friends, allow me to share with you – here and now – some of my personal experience over the past several years. From the very beginning of a big adventure – which, later on, turned into a unique, international project on the controversies of ex-Yugoslavia's disintegration – I've have had the privilege to meet tens of internationally recognized scholars dealing with our recent past. Some of them have become my close friends since. And ever since, I've been receiving their newly published studies and books. Most of those works are focused on interpretation of the developments in Central Europe and the

Habsburg Empire, and its final legal form – Austro-Hungary. At the beginning I was astonished at how basically their interpretations of same developments and their causes differ from “official versions” advocated by official authors of textbooks in Serbia. I was so surprised that I wondered whether our interpreters have ever heard that there were opinions and stands different from theirs and whether our national libraries have those valuable, referential books on stock at all.

When I sent a list of some of those “*must-have-books*” (including the epochal study on Hungarian revolution in 1848-49 and Lajos Kossuth) to a competent professional in the National Library of Serbia he wrote back that they didn't have a single title on their stock – and, that those book were not to be found in any library whatsoever in Serbia. However, I stubbornly continued my investigation. I found out that the national library does not even have a copy of the thesis on political stands among Vojvodina Serbs in late 19th century the young scholar who earned his doctorate in history at the Vienna University in 1970 brought to the library in person. According to the general register, the library has only two must-have-books on the Habsburg Empire out of many written by the undeniable authority in the field, Robert A. Kann. I found no trace whatsoever indicating that the library is subscribed to the referential Annual Review of Austrian History.

Combined with the a priori political stand about *anti-Serb sentiments of the peoples and states of Central Europe and the monochromatic picture of “the dungeon of nations” (Voelkerkerker)*, this carefully fostered absence of facts does open the floodgates to endless intimidation and befooling of Serbs. With so created simulacrum “national saviors” can at ease promote opscurants such as St. Nikolaj from Lelic, the Bishop of “the Machine Gun,” Nedic, Ljotic, Limonov, Karadzic, Mladic...

Post scriptum: Several days after the session I found out that the Sombor City Library had a modest collection of books in English. Having inspected them in detail I was surprised to see that the collection included the said study on the Hungarian revolution and Lajos Kossuth!

Marija GAJICKI

LIFE IN A GHETTO

Judging by national diversity of its population Vojvodina is a kind of ethnic phenomenon: 29 nations live here but there are neither ethnic enclaves nor is the population ethnically mixed in urban areas only. Actually, 95 percent of all settlements in Vojvodina are ethnically mixed. The surveys conducted from 2000

onwards usually show a high degree of ethnic distance – and that’s about an upward trend. People coming from different ethnic communities communicate less and less, their knowledge of languages other than theirs is on the downward curve, and their interest in one another constantly grows smaller. The public opinion polls dealing with fears show that one-half of Vojvodinians are afraid of being expelled and that this fear is equally distributed in all ethnic communities in Vojvodina. Even Serbs are mostly afraid of expulsion, despite the fact that they are in the majority.

In 2004, Vojvodina was challenged by outbursts of ethnically motivated violence. Many analysts explain that by the growth of radically nationalistic sentiments not only among the people from the ethnic majority but also from ethnic minorities. In 2006, the number of ethnically motivated incidents in Vojvodina decreased. However, relations among people are still burdened with high ethnic distance. In the past years most assaults reported to the police were targeting Hungarians, Croats, Serbs, Albanians and Roma. The year 2005 was marked by fewer physical assaults but by more nationalistic, slandering graffiti, damaged tombstones, verbal assaults and threats to members of minority communities.

Similar surveys conducted in ethnically mixed communities in West Balkan countries also show a high degree of ethnic distance, the growing number of nationalistic graffiti and of damaged tombstones. The growth in nationalistic incidents and hate speech is most characteristic of ethnically mixed communities. Perpetrators of ethnically motivated incidents are usually young people who have grown up in isolation and at the time of warring propaganda and social insecurity.

The wars waged in the territory of ex-Yugoslavia are among main causes of all forms of hatred and intolerance, including nationalism, xenophobia and neo-Nazism. Nowadays we are faced with the fact that most people have got used to various forms of hate speech, nationalistic and fascist incidents, verbal assault and even physical conflicts.

As an activist of the non-governmental organization “The Vojvodina Woman: Regional Women Initiative” and one of the founders of the Human Rights Festival – VIVISECT-Fest, I would like to share with you some of our experience in presenting the festival programs in different communities. Those programs were focusing the topics “The War in the Former Yugoslavia: Perceived from the Inside and from the Outside” and “My Enemies: Nationalism and Xenophobia.” Those programs were realized in many towns in Serbia, as well as in the ex-Yugoslav republics and Germany (Indjija, Belgrade, Kikinda, Sombor,

Backa Palanka, Novi Becej, Novi Pazar, Ruma, Stara Pazova, Kula, Tuzla, Sarajevo, Mostar, Skoplje and Berlin).

What rather surprised me when it came to Vojvodina was that I experienced it as “living in a ghetto.” This feeling was the strongest at the time we were preparing the publication “Hate Speech and Nationalism: Causes and Consequences.” With this publication we wanted to explain the causes of ethnically motivated violence not only in Vojvodina but also in Kosovo and other regions in Serbia. What drew our attention was the fact that in the past ten-odd years all national communities – those of majority and those of minority population alike – have been entrenching themselves in their communities and have been hardly communicating one with another. As we discuss Vojvodina’s identity we cannot ignore this characteristic of the life in it, this life in a ghetto and this parallel existence of different ethnic communities that do not communicate and mix. One of keynote speakers has already said it was hard to find a translator from one language into another. We were also faced with this problem while looking for a translator for Hungarian and Albanian languages. It was with great difficulty that we managed to have the publication translated in those two languages. And that’s the problem we have to cope with here in Vojvodina.

Speaking of Novi Sad and Vojvodina we have two brands – the EXIT music festival, assembling people from all ethnic communities, who left their ghettos for the occasion; and, the festival of folklore and ethno-cuisine aimed at promoting Vojvodina’s and Serbia’s multiculturalism, which is realized with the assistance of the US government. The plentitude of Vojvodina’s multiculturalism is being demonstrated through different cuisines and folklore. In my opinion, this is not enough.

Speaking of Serbia, another music festival, the one in Guca, is being promoted as its brand. This festival, too, assembles people from different ethnic communities, including those from the territory of ex-Yugoslavia. It is sad that the state of Serbia has only two mass music events, one of which is totally folkloric – meaning that it cannot manifest the entirety of Serbia’s identity.

The biggest problem – as I see it – is that we do not know what the entirety of Serbia’s identity might be. And against such backdrop we cannot tell what Serbia and Vojvodina have in common and what makes them different, what is our common advantage and what mutual handicap. What concerns me the most is this life in a ghetto we are experiencing while organizing various programs – the lives of all those closed communities with no wish whatsoever to get to know better others, those speaking languages other than theirs, professing other religions and keeping up different cultural matrixes. As long as the state does not get genuinely involved in Serbia’s “branding” – and that of other regions,

including Vojvodina – and does not set aside considerable funds for, say, translations, as it does for EXIT and Guca, we shall not be able to remove causes and heal consequences, and cope with indolence and small town mentality.

Here is an illustrative example of how little we know about one another. Within the VIVISECT festival program we organized a photo exhibition in December 2006 in Novi Pazar. The photos displayed were showing graffiti in Vojvodina in the period 2000-2006. The hate speech and intolerance of the great majority of the graffiti were targeting the Hungarian community. “Why are there so many graffiti against Hungarians when Hungarians live in Hungary rather than in Vojvodina?” was the first question most residents of Novi Pazar asked us upon entering the exhibition hall.

What are the realities in today’s Vojvodina and Serbia? What has changed in our everyday lives since October 2000 and the so-called democratic revolution, except for the ruling elites? Except for the fact that one political option came to power and the other became opposition nothing has changed. We still have hate speech and witness verbal assaults and even physical assaults against political opponents particularly in the periods of election campaigns. Opening of “a new chapter” has brought us nothing good – we are witnesses of the same atmosphere of belligerency and chaos.

Instead of coexistence we have people living side by side. Multiculturalism in Vojvodina or Sandzak, or Kosovo is nothing but a trope. People are living in their own ghettos surrounded by barbed wire, baring the fangs at others and occasionally assaulting them. After such incidents tensions lower, people return to their fenced areas to wait for new conflicts as usual.

Aleksandra VUJIC **VOJVODINIANS’ PASSIVITY**

In my opinion the participants have provided most interesting insights so far. There is an aspect, however, no one has addressed, the aspect I would call “Vojvodinians’ passivity.” I refer here to Vojvodinians’ lethargic character and slowness when it comes to adequate responses to various situations vis-à-vis citizens of Serbia and other regions.

To illustrate what I’ve said I’ll give you the example of the National Report on the Implementation of the Charter on Regional or Minority Languages Serbia submitted to the Council of Europe in June 2007. Though over 50 percent of the information in the report have been provided by provincial secretariats of Vojvodina – and our provincial secretariats handle minority related

administration quite differently than those in Central Serbia, which was more than obvious whenever we were drafting alternative reports⁵ - national reports are, as a rule, presented to international conferences by officials of the Belgrade-seated Department for Human and Minority Rights even when the authors of sections on Vojvodina attend such meetings.⁶ In other words, despite the fact that the said report would have been incomplete without the information on the position on minority communities provided by Vojvodina – and not because there are not minorities in Serbia but because information about them are insufficient – Vojvodinians take it quite “normal” when others represent them and speak on their behalf.

Though Vojvodinians are conscientious and meticulous in everything they do, their overall attitude reveals a kind of submissiveness to any authority. This is why they react passively, actually do not react at all, whenever in the company with the people from the capital. Vojvodinians should consider this characteristic of theirs with self-criticism.

Vladimir VALENTIK **DANGER OF SELF-PROVINCIALIZATION**

I would like to add something to the categories Mr. Losonc tackled in his address since I take them crucial for the attainment of the goals referred to by Ms. Biserko. As a member of a minority community I am fully aware of what Mr. Losonc had in mind when he spoke about indifference as synonymous for cultural disinterestedness. If such disinterestedness is so evident in Vojvodina’s cultural life it must affect, in a way, the Province’s multiethnic identity. In my view, Vojvodina’s multiethnic identity should be grounded on civil values. What I hope is that most of us rely on those values to strengthen such identity.

Cultural disinterestedness leads to self-provincialization, which is particularly dangerous to smaller ethnic communities in Vojvodina. Self-provincialization undermines civilization criteria and cultural values and thus the

⁵ Unlike the plenitude of information about education for minority communities in the Province, the information about the education of Bulgarian, Albanians and Bosniaks are more than meagre: Serbia’s administration does not compile the information about the number of classes providing education in minority languages, about the number of students being taught in their mother tongues, about the number of teachers lecturing in minority languages, etc.

⁶ “The role of territorial units, national councils and civil society organizations in securing stability in settlements – communities,” June 12-13, 2007, Palic.

very identity of a minority community as it boils it down to the knowledge of language on the one hand, and to folklore - festivals of folk dances, songs and costumes - on the other.

As I follow cultural events in other minority communities in Vojvodina I can tell you with certainty that Serbia can only be proud of the results of minority culture and arts. However, due to the aforementioned indifference those values hardly ever reach the majority population. Here is an illustrative example: after almost 140 years of their rich theater tradition, Slovaks managed to set up the Slovak Vojvodina Theater in 2003. Only one year later a play staged by the theater troupe was short-listed for BITEF, the most renowned international theater festival in Serbia. Apart from this play, only another one, performed by the Yugoslav Drama Theater troupe represented Serbia at the festival that year. Last year, the play won the Grand Prix of the Asian Theater Festival in Iran. However, the general public in Serbia learned almost nothing about this success. This is just one example. There must be more such examples in the Hungarian community, large as it is.

We from the Slovak minority community try to communicate with general public through the universal language of painting. And yet, we do have to cope with cultural indifference of the media, which threatens with the said self-provincialization. Energy of minority communities has its limits. It manifests itself to certain extent and then, under certain circumstances, starts to decline and to gradually vanish into thin air. Standards of excellence become lower and lower, and finally everything boils down to folk dances and national costumes. I strongly believe that a variety of national costumes, national dishes, etc. could hardly make up Vojvodina's multiethnic identity. Vojvodina's multiethnic identity is much more than that.

Tomislav ZIGMANOV IN THE POSITION OF EARLY CHRISTIANS

Rather than speaking about Vojvodina's identity and its determining elements, I would like to place on the agenda the topic that has not been broached and elaborated enough at this session. I am referring to the power – to the efficiency – of Vojvodina's identity. Speaking of the contents of Vojvodina's identity, one can always enumerate its determining elements, its legal frame, and its popular determinants. However, apart from this, identity implies the components of its own pulsation. Take a look at today's public scene, take a look at cultural patterns or take a look at the educational system – you will find just

traces of Vojvodina's identity – or, for that matter of local identities - in those structures. See, in the era of socialism we did have plural identities. As an elementary school student I was taught the history of Subotica's industry, we had competitions in this subject matter and did have deep insights into the history of our region. But you'll learn nothing about the history of your hometown from today's textbooks. Today, they teach you all the benchmarks of national history but not a single fact about local developments.

Local history is most important, in Vojvodina at least. For, when you are familiar with local history you are familiar with its pluralistic culture. Probably the most tragic consequence of the Milosevic regime was the suspension of everything plural and the identity mostly boiled down to ethnicity – and not ethnicity in cultural sense but rather in belligerent and military one focused on national history. Actually, we are, so to speak, handicapped: for, in the area in which an identity pulsates, in the area of culture and education, we are mostly deprived. Dealing with things that did not fit into the aforementioned concept of national history was considered suspicious. And this refers to any study of local or regional histories.

A table of this size or probably a bit larger would accommodate us all who advocate Vojvodina's autonomy. And mostly the same people have been sitting at that table for the past ten-odd years. So, where are the political elites that advocate Vojvodina's identity? In what way do they implement their programs? Would they give Vojvodina not a single thought the moment they satisfy their petty political needs? Analyzing the attitude towards Vojvodina from 1990s onwards you'll see there has never been a coherently articulated policy.

The question is what is to be done to strengthen Vojvodina's identity. This session has not assembled representatives of Vojvodina's Academy of Arts and Sciences, of Radio and Television of Vojvodina, etc. Therefore, it has not provided institutional elements necessary for the dissemination of the very idea of Vojvodina's identity, let alone for something more serious. This is why we, trying to cope with the topics like this one, seem to be in the same position as early Christians who lived in catacombs looking forward to the day their peaceful and humane concept would prevail.

To conclude with, I'll make a suggestion – the idea of Vojvodina should be dislocated from Novi Sad to Kikinda, Vrsac, Mitrovica or Sid. Meetings like this one should be organized in those towns and should assemble younger generations.

Pavel DOMONJI
A STONE HURLED AT A MYTH

Alpar Losonc has noted the tendency of reducing Vojvodina to a consociation of ethnic elites. I take his observation deserves to be considered at this table. In my opinion, this is about the tendency that plays into the hands of ethnic elites, who manipulate the ethnic question in order to maintain their positions and partake in the distribution of public goods.

In this impoverished country, burdened with the experience of ethnic conflicts and primitive political culture any ethnically motivated manipulation is a risky business. Only certain factions can profit from such practice, not ordinary people from minority communities. The latest illustrative example has to do with electoral rules in Vojvodina. To start with, the electoral rules were defined at meetings with representatives of national councils despite the fact that national councils are not authorized at all to deal with the issue and have no legitimacy since mandates of some have expired.

There is no issue whatsoever that cannot be perceived from the angle of ethno-cultural differentiation. Unemployment, social inequality, educational deficits, positions in the state administration or in privatization processes, etc. – all those issues can be interpreted from ethno-cultural standpoints and on all of them one can build the rhetoric of ethnically motivated deprivation and discrimination.

Interestingly, national elites advocate pluralism at the level of global society but not within their own ethnic communities. In my view, pluralism is crucial for members of national minorities and they are the ones who mostly benefit from it. The strongest opponents of pluralism are to be found in the ranks of national elites. By emphasizing cultural differences and specificities they aim at establishing vertical communication with their counterparts from other ethnic communities unlike ordinary people creating comprehensive, horizontal networks of communication.

Minorities are complex communities. Contrary to nationalistic bias different outlooks, orientations, values and interests do exist among minority communities. I believe there are forces in Vojvodina that are capable to politically articulate those different orientations and put an end to Vojvodina's reduction to ethnic Bantustans. As it seems to me, the Democratic Party has not developed a clear-cut minority strategy. Instead it uses cheap political improvisation and demagogically flatters ethnic entrepreneurs. Its statement about minorities as constituent people of Vojvodina exemplifies this flattery.

I would say that the only efficient strategy is the one that insists on multiplication of identities and focuses an individual rather than a group. Such a strategy would be completely in the spirit of the maxim Jovan Komsic recalled – “live and let live.” However, ethno-nationalistic mobilizations and the advocacy of ethnic identities have scarred the self-perception of citizens of Vojvodina. As if Vojvodina's regional identity has died out. Today, it is almost impossible to determine the number of people declaring themselves as Vojvodinians.

To end with, let me remind you of an incident that took place in Vojvodina in the aftermath of Kosovo riots in 2004. Namely, on March 18, 2004, the graffiti “Long live Serb-Albanian friendship!” appeared on the wall of the Pancevo municipal assembly. The author of the said graffiti, as you know, used the pseudonym “Vojvodinians.”

So, what's the problem with this graffiti? The problem is not in its author's belief in the situation when masses, mad with rage, cry out in the streets, “Kill and slaughter all Schiptars!” The problem is not in the author's belief that relations between Serbs and Albanians have not irrevocably regressed to hatred. The problem is in the author's delusion that Vojvodinians – whom he signed under the graffiti – could counteract the masses thirsting for revenge and stand up for a handful of their townspeople of Albanian origin.

A stone hurled at the window of an Albanian sweetshop in downtown Novi Sad has actually smashed the myth the Vojvodinians themselves have created – the myth about them as nice, polite and civilized Central Europeans, the people whose identity rests on the principles of multiculturalism, civil society, human rights, non-violence and tolerance. All of a sudden all those negative traits that have been ascribed to others – through a cultural-racist construction of their own identity – emerged as a suppressed but a component part of Vojvodinians' identity. In Vojvodina, people generally accept the stereotype about Vojvodinians being superior to the rest of Serbia. According to the stereotype, Belgrade is, say, presumptuous, colonially arrogant, centralistic, aggressive and primitively imperial, while the rest of Serbia is plunged into Oriental obscurity. All those futile fantasies about ourselves being subtle Central Europeans are, in my view, deplorable compensation meant to hide the embarrassing fact that political struggle for civil identity has never been brought to an end over here.

MINORITIES' POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND SAFEGUARD OF VOJVODINA'S MULTIETHNIC IDENTITY

Sonja BISERKO
A NEW BEGINNING

For more than ten years the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia has been concerned with the minority issue. The Committee is probably the only organization in the country that has been documenting the minority situation since early 1990s and published a number of book throwing light not only on the developments in Serbia but also providing insights into future minority-majority relationship. Now that the Serb national project has suffered defeat it is obvious that Serbia has no alternative option but Europe. Therefore, discussions as this one are most welcome from the angle of a new majority-minority modus vivendi in Serbia.

Serb radical nationalism has considerably impaired the country's social tissue, disturbed interethnic relations, brought about segregation of the minority population and excluded it from the larger political, economic and cultural community. In this sense we are, in a way, starting from scratch when shaping those relations for the future.

Polish sociologist Sigmund Baumann says that societies without a common culture and a common normative foundation split into enclaves, refuges, and particularistic cultures concerned with their own interests only, which distance themselves from social, political and cultural togetherness. In such societies any togetherness disappears while many micro-societies emerge. Human rights, as a universal principle, should make up the normative foundation of a new model of social relations. By this universal principle all people enjoy equal rights regardless of their ethnic origins, and all legal acts are subjugated to it. Only then a human being can live a dignified and free life rather than remain imprisoned in his or her

enclave. Specificities of each and every group must be respected in the process of establishing this new model that relates to the majority and the minority alike. This is the only way to establish a society of mutual respect.

Serbia needs to solve the problem of minorities' political representation if it wants to become a well-arranged, stable and democratic society. This major and complex problem has to be considered from various angles – legal, political, cultural and institutional. This is also a major moral problem since members of minority communities, outnumbered by the people from the ethnic majority, are a priori in a back seat. On the other hand, parliamentary seats for minority representatives are most important both for the society's political cohesion and stability. Minorities' representation not only meets their need for recognition but also testifies of legitimacy of the state's representational bodies. Last but not least, the problem is significant from the standpoint of integration into the EU, which, among other things, implies minority representation at all levels of governance.

This complex problem calls for a systematic and well-thought-out approach – it necessitates a coherent state policy and strategy. And this is exactly what Serbia has failed to develop so far. The minority issue and the issue of minorities' political representation are often manipulated in the absence of a political will to have those problems solved more efficiently than they are settled now. Criticism of the government in this regard is fully justified but so is the criticism of minority representatives. Their efforts have not been energetic enough to effectuate changes for the better and more adequate solutions to the problem.

Minorities' political representation is usually placed on the public agenda on the eve of elections. Even we are now discussing the issue while awaiting local, provincial and presidential elections. Apart from testifying of the absence of systematic and well-thought-out efforts, this fact indicates that, under the pressure of political dynamics, a complex problem is often simplified and boiled down to the problem of a natural threshold – i.e. to guaranteed mandates – while scores of other, major issues are being neglected.

Finally, for a region such as Vojvodina – proud of its multiculturalism with good reason – minorities' representation is among the questions that cannot be separated from its identity. The more minority representatives in the parliament, the better prospects for the safeguard of Vojvodina's multiethnic identity. However, the standards of positive discrimination should not be the same for all minority communities. For, one should always bear in mind the huge asymmetry between minority communities themselves, and not only the one between majority and minority populations.

Slaven BACIC
MINORITIES' POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND SAFEGUARD
OF VOJVODINA'S MULTIETHNIC IDENTITY⁷

1. The region nowadays called Vojvodina makes a part of the once larger area of South Hungary that has been, ever since 18th century, more or less marked by multiethnic identity – private and public coexistence of different ethnic communities. Despite strong nation-state policies and geopolitical overturns in the past 150 years, this multiethnic identity managed to survive though in a considerably reduced form. Whereas in the late 19th century the present-day territory of Vojvodina was inhabited by three big ethnic groups – and all the three almost equal in size – Hungarian, German and Slavic (including Serbs, Croats, Slovaks and Ruthenians) and some smaller ethnic communities such as Jewish (small in size but economically powerful) and Rumanian, in early 20th century two-thirds of overall population were Serbs. The historical multi-ethnicity was kept in the one-third of the population.

The last in the series of state-national projects that determined today's situation of Vojvodina's multi-ethnicity was publicly founded at the 8th session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia in 1987. Under the pretext of counteracting "autonomists" – i.e. Vojvodina's political nomenclatura headed by ethnic Serbs, so-called native people, and some members of Slovak, Rumanian and Ruthenian minorities – the publicly inaugurated centralistic Serb national concept of the Belgrade nomenclatura with Slobodan Milosevic at its helm, after months of fierce political propaganda, firstly toppled Vojvodina leadership in the fall of 1988. One of the components of the propaganda matrix was ethnic – ethnicity, a basic element of Vojvodina's autonomy (apart from

⁷ The keynote address for the session "Fostering Vojvodina's Multiethnic Identity" was written in the Croatian language to remind that ever since 2002 when the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina put forward the amendment to its Statute of 1991, whereby Croatian would be an official language in Vojvodina, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia has not placed that proposal on its agenda. Despite the fact that provincial authorities nevertheless implement the said proposal (the Department for Assertion of Authenticity of Provincial Regulations in Languages in Official Use determines whether texts, regulations, decisions and bylaws the Assembly adopts in the languages the official use of which is provided under the Statute are authentically interpreted from Serbian; the Department for Translations has an interpreter for Croatian, who prepares all documents in Croatian for Croatian deputies, etc.) the absence of consent by republican authorities only testify of non-existent provincial autonomy and Belgrade's actual attitude towards minority rights.

historical, economic and cultural), was negated, while Vojvodina's autonomy was emphasized as being, as a university professor phrased it, "the Serb concern."

Though not legally formalized, particularly since 1970s, Vojvodina's multi-ethnicity has been implemented through the Party chain of command and its transmission, governmental bodies. Informally, attention was mostly paid to the so-called national key apart from other public elements of multi-ethnicity (that nowadays make up minority rights: information in minority languages, official use of minority languages, etc.) Since the aforementioned developments annulled this communist concept of minorities' political representation, multi-ethnicity was drastically devastated in 1990s, which in itself was a side effect of Belgrade regime's strategy for Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo: occupation and ethnic cleansing of occupied territories. At that time the situation of minority rights in Vojvodina and Serbia – the same as other dimensions of social life – irresistibly associated the situation of human rights and freedoms in the communist bloc: constitutional milk and honey derogated by ethnic discrimination; caricatured ministries for minority rights meant to win over like-minded people; overt state support to fragmentation of the minority corps, etc.

Milosevic's ouster in October 2000 gave rise to the hope that Serbia – including Vojvodina he was holding in a bear hug – would put an end to its civilization downfall. Though we are now speaking with good reason of disappointments and unmet promises of October 5, we cannot deny that some progress has been made in many domains – and in the domain of Vojvodina's multi-ethnicity. And yet, the reason for Vojvodina's dissatisfaction with the progress made in the past seven years is to be tracked down in the fact that the formation of the Serb national state in the 20th century completely relies on Milosevic's national project – and that includes safeguard of the outcomes of the "anti-bureaucratic revolution" of 1998.

A handful of authentic representatives of national minorities in the parliaments of Serbia and Vojvodina, from 1988 to 2000, were officials of minority parties participating in elections under the same conditions as other parties. A member of a minority community elected MP due to membership of one of the ruling parties – Socialist Party of Serbia, Yugoslav left /JUL/ or Serbian Radical Party – could have hardly been considered a genuine representative of his or her minority community.

The same as in other domains, the rule of DOS /Democratic Opposition of Serbia/ opened a new chapter in the sphere of minority rights. Adequate political representation of minorities is a key element of today's concept of minority rights. And such adequate political representation must be based on the principles of positive discrimination and affirmative action.

2. The same as most minority rights – efficiently developed in the past twenty-odd years only – the right to political representation is a rather fresh right. Major international documents do not yet provide electoral legislation and minorities’ political representation (for instance, Article 15 of the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities provides that signatory-states “shall create necessary conditions for effective participation of members of national minorities in cultural, social and economic lives, and in public affairs, particularly those that directly concern them;” the Article 22, the Instruments of Central European Initiative for the Protection of Minority Rights, which Serbia has not ratified yet, provides about the same). However, all this is undergoing step-by-step changes.

The 1999 Lund Recommendations for Minorities’ Efficient Participation in Public Life envisage various possibilities such as special representation of national minorities through guaranteed seats in a parliament and parliamentary committees, nomination of public servants in charge of minority issues, etc. As for the electoral process, the Recommendations offer several possibilities such as territorial concentration of minority communities, proportional electoral system, some forms of preferential voting (whereby voters range candidates by their free choice) and lower parliamentary threshold.

Allow me just to outline the ways in which minorities’ political representation has been solved in some neighboring countries.

In *Croatia*, the 2003 Law on the Election of MPs explicitly guarantees 8 parliamentary seats to minority representatives (the Croatian parliament, with 100-160 MPs, presently has 152 parliamentarians). Out of the said 8 seats, 3 are set aside for Serbs, Hungarians and Germans have one seat each, Slovaks and Czechs have one mutual representative, while other minority communities – divided in two groups – elect the remaining two. Voters decide whether they will exercise their election right as members of minority communities of just citizens of Croatia.

Under the Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government in *Kosovo*, the Kosovo Assembly, with totals 120 seats, sets aside 20 seats for non-Albanian communities. Ten seats are allocated to the Serb community, and 10 to the rest (Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians have 4 seats, Bosniaks 3, Turks 2 and Goranci 1).

In *Slovenia*, one parliamentary seat is reserved for the Italian community and one for the Hungarian. The Slovenian parliament has 90 MPs. Slovenia recognizes just those two minority communities. In Slovenia, numbers of people of South Slav origin – who have settled there at the time of ex-Yugoslavia – are not considered minorities under the pretext that they are not autochthonous but just immigrant communities.

3. What about minorities’ political representation in Serbia and Vojvodina in the past five years?

After Milosevic’s barbarian legislation (for instance, the 1991 Law on Official Use of Language and Alphabet, which is still in power, provides that “geographical names shall not be replaced by some other names, and shall be written in the language of a national minority and by the rule of its grammar;” this means prohibition of the public use of the names Ujvidék or Szabaka, which can only be written as Novi Szad or Szubotica!) a new chapter in minority rights began with the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedom of National Minorities passed in 2002. However, since the law relies on the Framework Convention it touches not on minorities’ political representation. Later developments will show that this shortcoming was not just a mere coincidence...

Namely, in 2003 the law was followed by the Charter of Human and Minority Rights and Civil Liberties of the /former/ State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, the first document ever that explicitly provided the right of minority communities “to a certain number of mandates in assemblies of the member-states and in the Assembly of Serbia and Montenegro” (Article 52). However, the right has never been effectuated. The state took another course – the one of “hushing up” minorities’ political representation!

In 2004, the republican Law on Amendments and Supplements to the Law on the Election of National Deputies annulled the parliamentary threshold of 5 percent of the total of votes for minority parties (Article 81, paragraph 2) and introduced the so-called natural threshold for republican parliament instead.

The Decision on the Election of Deputies for the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina in 2004 confirmed the annulment of the 5 percent threshold for minority parties and introduced a novelty for minority participation in elections – instead of 6,000 signatures on electoral lists necessary for their candidacy in the election, the decision laid down 3,000 signatures (paragraph 53).

In 2005, Serbia-Montenegro and the Republic of Croatia ratified the Agreement on the Protection of the Rights of Serb and Montenegrin Minorities in Croatia and of the Croatian Minority in Serbia-Montenegro. Article 9 of the Agreement provided that the signatory-states “shall enable participation of members of minority communities in decision-making that relates to their rights and position at local, regional and national levels, establishment of minority political parties and their participation in legislative and executive branches...and shall pass laws securing representation of national minorities in local assemblies and governments.”

The same as the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities, the 2006 Constitution of the Republic of Serbia – notorious for being declared under questionable circumstances – took over the entire section of minority rights from the Article 52 of the 2003 Charter of Human and Minority Rights and Civil Liberties. However, it made one exception – it omitted the paragraph regulating minorities’ right to “a certain number of mandates in assemblies of the member-states and in the Assembly of Serbia and Montenegro!”

By the model of the aforementioned decision of provincial authorities, the Republican Electoral Commission, on November 15, 2006, adopted the Guidelines that illegally changed the election law for the republican elections in 2007. The Guidelines reduced the number of signatures on minority voting lists from 10,000 to 3,000, explaining that enforcement of the election law “would be contrary to international standards.” Actually, that was true. However, the only proper way would have been to change the election law itself. Therefore, the only logical whys for the Guidelines were that lawmakers wanted a priori to secure a parliamentary majority.

In the spring of 2007, the Democratic Party and the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians publicized their proposal for the amendment of the Decision on the Election of Provincial Deputies in the upcoming provincial elections. According to the proposal, instead of 60, 48 deputies were to be elected by the proportional system, and 12 mandates were to be set aside for eight minority communities the representatives of which were to be elected by majority systems and from special electoral lists (which makes up 10 percent of total number of the 120-member provincial parliament). The minority quota would be applied to eight minority communities that have formed their national councils and have at least 10,000 members. By the quota, the Hungarian community would obtain 3 seats, Slovak and Croatian two each, while Rumanians, Ruthenians, Macedonians, Roma and Bunjevci one each. Representatives of minority national councils and top officials of the Provincial Executive Council agreed on the proposal. The agreement was disputed for three months within the ruling coalition and eventually turned down. Instead, the Democratic Party offered national minorities a certain number of guaranteed mandates on its electoral lists.

That was the only attempt at effectuating guaranteed seats for national minority representatives in Vojvodina and Serbia. Republican authorities are not ready to offer guaranteed seats to minority communities. At meetings with representatives of the Republic of Croatia and the Democratic Alliance of Croats in Vojvodina, the republican officials even claimed that by lowering electoral threshold for minorities Serbia has met its obligation vis-à-vis guaranteed representation of the Croatian minority, as provided under Article 6 of the

bilateral agreement. Moreover, the Director of the Department for Human and Minority Rights repeatedly underlined that guaranteed mandates for minorities were unacceptable for the government of the Republic of Serbia!

4. Apart from minorities’ representation in the parliaments of a larger community, the principle of representation has yet another meaning – the one of political representation within a minority community embodied in minority national councils. The issue is regulated under the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities and the Statute on the Functioning of Electoral Assemblies in the Process of Election of Councils of National Minorities. Despite the fact that even adequately regulated process of election of political representatives of minority communities can run into some technical difficulties, the brief practice so far has indicated several shortcomings related to functioning of those councils, which, as it seems, result from conceptual vagueness.

a) Direct elections for minority councils are theoretically unsustainable from the angle of modern democracy. Though there is no need to speak here of positive and negative aspects of direct and indirect elections, and remind of seemingly insurmountable obstacles related to direct elections for minority councils (including possible political repercussions against members of minority communities in undemocratic political orders), what strikes one’s eye is that electoral assemblies – deriving from a minority institution or a list signed by 100 supporters – associate more feudal curiae or “delegations of delegates” of the era of socialist self-government than a truly democratic process;

b) Political pluralism of electoral assemblies is there in principle only. What we have in everyday life is an imitation of a two-party system in all councils (except in the case of a politically homogeneous ethnic group the Milosevic regime has created by artificially dividing the Croatian minority community). Thus, poor democratic tradition – partially a legacy of the communist era – and quasi-parliamentarianism brought about the one-party decision-making by a victorious current within each and every minority community;

c) Instead of being parliaments of minority communities – though nowhere defined as such – national councils meet just on rare occasions in real life. Thus they usually boil down to yet another electoral curia – yet another indirectly elected body – that wastes its energy and purpose on providing support to the ruling current that will germinate another, new body to make decision on behalf of a national council and derive its legitimacy from it;

d) The anyway highly generalized and blurred competencies of national councils are conferred onto their executive bodies, thus establishing obscure, bureaucratized and quasi-governmental governance within a minority

community. Such governance does not imply “the government’s” accountability to its “parliament.” Instead, decisions are mostly made by small circles of minority political elites that have control over the so-called executive bodies;

e) National councils’ proclaimed participation in decision-making or at least their advisory role in the issues of importance for a minority community (the use of mother tongue and alphabet, education, information and culture under the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedom of National Minorities) remained a dead letter. The cases when minority councils provided counseling or participated in decision-making hardly produced any visible effects – the more so since they tackled minor issues and relied on meager funds, and the more so since the very decision-making related to provincial bodies of Vojvodina, the authority of which is anyway limited by the province’s constitutional position and funds it gets from the real center of political power – Belgrade;

f) Only as of lately a more stable inflow of funds for functioning of national councils and their executive bodies has been secured. This at least removed financial obstacles to political representation within minority communities – obstacles to the work of national councils. However, new problems emerged instead. The state has failed to clearly define responsibilities of elected minority officials and – under the pretext of autonomous rights, left minority councils to cope with the problematic. Thus national councils, i.e. their executive bodies, are solely responsible for distribution of funds. In doing this, national councils are hardly subject to any control and even less to accountability.

Therefore, many have been advocating the reform of the minority legal order – the reform of the electoral process for minority councils in the first place – for some time now. Out of several informal draft laws publicized so far, two are of major importance. One, drafted by the Center for the Research of Ethnicity, envisages two crucial novelties in minority self-governance: indirect election system and decentralization of minority self-government (i.e. municipal self-governments rather than a centralized one). The other, outlined by the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, basically retains the existing system and provides optional possibilities for direct elections and decentralized self-governance. The existing regulation on the election of minority self-government bodies calls for reform, the same as the entire system of minority rights. Lawmakers will have to decide whether to reform the entire system of minority rights or just amend the provisions regulating the election of minority self-governments. The manner in which this dilemma will be solved primarily depends on the readiness of the republican parliament to tackle the minority issue in good earnest.

6. Laws, bylaws and other regulations on minorities are characteristic of most post-communist countries, including ex-Yugoslav republics with pro-

European political agendas. By passing these laws post-communist countries – essentially ethno-centric – demonstrate that they have distanced themselves from policies of discrimination against minority nations and generally accept interethnic tolerance. After Milosevic’s ouster Serbia was lagging behind others in this domain too. Regulations meant to breathe life into proclaimed principles were not adopted at republican level. Therefore, some minority issues are regulated sporadically and ad hoc, minorities’ political representation included.

On the other hand, minority elites can neither be amnestied for the situation in the domain of their political representation. Political representatives of bigger minority communities tend toward separate solutions that are favorable to members of their communities or, more precisely, their biggest political parties. Further, elites of the great majority of minority communities are preoccupied with internal conflicts and therefore – despite their surrounding that generates rapid assimilation – pay inadequate attention to real-life minority problems such as political representation.

Non-existent minority strategy both at republican and provincial levels is the main stumbling bloc in the way of implementation of minorities’ political representation supposed to safeguard Vojvodina’s multi-ethnicity in the domain of politics. The problem of minorities’ political representation is usually placed on the agenda on the eve of elections. Minority representatives are either not consulted or consultations include just representatives of the biggest minorities and their strongest parties concerned with their partisan interests only.

The exercise of minorities’ right to adequate political representation depends on the majority political elites’ clear-cut break with nationalistic past of Milosevic’s or any other provenience. In other words, general preconditions for minorities’ full political representation, as well as for the implementation of minority rights are as follows:

a) Instead of its constitutional tradition of centralism Serbia should endorse decentralization and reconstitute Vojvodina’s full autonomy;

b) A comprehensive minority policy and strategy for realization of minority rights and protection of minorities should be clearly defined;

c) Minority related discourse should not insist on proofs of loyalty but the other way round – by the principle of positive discrimination it should demonstrate that minorities are equal with all citizens but need special protection nevertheless.

The practice of comparative law offers several possibilities for the improvement of minorities’ political representation. Most important of those possibilities for the implementation and guaranteeing genuine political representation of minority communities are the following:

a) Guaranteed representation of minorities in parliaments – the number of minority representatives is explicitly determined by the percentage of a minority’s population in total population at a certain level (republic, province, etc.). Technically, this is the most practical solution and most appropriate for regions.

b) Two groupings of minorities should be differentiated – larger and smaller – since their interests are not always identical. So, members of the larger minority communities (Hungarians and Bosniaks) should have representatives of their own, while smaller minority communities should be represented by one or even two representatives. Two common representatives would be a better solution since some smaller communities that are territorially concentrated (e.g. Croats in Northern Backa or Albanians in South Serbia) can also have interests different from those of minorities living in smaller oases (e.g. Slovaks in Vojvodina or Rumanians in Banat and East Serbia).

c) Special care should be taken about active participation of minority representatives in the process of passing laws, regulations and bylaws significant for the realization of minority rights. This active participation should not be of advisory type only. They may be given, say, the right of veto to prevent the majority to have a final say in minority legislation.

Speaking of political representation in minority councils, basic democratic postulates are as follows:

- a) Direct election of members of national councils;
- b) Stable inflow of funds necessary for smooth functioning of minority councils;
- c) Clearly defined competences of minority councils vis-à-vis state authorities. This necessities amendment or supplement of relevant legislation such as those in the domain of education, culture, etc.;
- d) Clearly differentiated competences of national councils and their executive bodies;
- e) Legislation that provides transparent functioning of minority bodies and their accountability.

In any case, as long as the state bodies do not implement minority rights automatically but leave everything to the initiative of minorities that insist on their constitutional and legal rights, minorities’ will have to get organized in conventional political parties. (For instance, this year the Croatian community had to cope with serious problems related to secondary school education in the Croatian language in Subotica. At the time students were admitted to secondary schools educational authorities failed to inform them about the possibility to decide for themselves whether or not to attend classes in Croatian. Later on when

sufficient number of students opted for the classes taught in Croatian, the authorities posed almost fantastic obstacles to the realization of that right – principles of positive discrimination and affirmative action were mere abstractions when compared with the problems the educational authorities challenged the relatively new Croatian minority with.) The effects of an even ideal legislation dealing with minorities’ political representation in minority councils or parliaments are contingent on a larger context: the society’s clear break with the Milosevic era. And the other way round – as long as minority rights are perceived as a window dressing for the “outside” world rather than as a natural outcome of a clean break with the policy of discrimination, the best arrangements possible for minorities’ political representation will be nothing but a sophisticated simulation meant to impress the international community.

Miroslav SAMARDZIC

LOCAL ELECTIONS AND MINORITY PROTECTION

Thank you for the opportunity to speak my mind about a possible solution to minority representation, particularly in the region I come from.

To begin with, I will try to define some criteria the electoral systems in multiethnic societies have to meet.

The first criterion is general and applies to all electoral systems. An electoral system must reflect, as much as possible, voters’ will. As you know, some electoral systems applied in the world – such as the Anglo-Saxon majority system – lead to the establishment of stable governments, despite the fact that a party that has not won the majority vote at national level may have the majority of MPs in a parliament. If we disregard rigged elections in Florida, that’s what actually happened in the United States in 2000 – a candidate that won less votes than his rival won the election. That’s why an electoral system needs to be as true as possible reflection of voters’ preferences. But there is simply no magic formula to attain this. Small political parties – the parties with little influence on electorates – often decisively influence formation of government, while parties with large electorates are permanently in the back seat. The Italian political system may be taken as a typical example in this context. Italian communists used to win over 30 percent of votes but have never been included in a government. Small political parties in Italy and Germany are major factors due to the manner in which governments are formed. As I said, there is no magic formula – the problem is theoretically unsolvable and adequate solutions need to be found for each and every specific case.

The second rule is that an electoral system must be as simple as possible. Recommendations for the solutions favorable to minorities can be found in the literature on the subject. In my opinion, they are much too complicated and, therefore, should be ruled out. Famous political scientist Giovanni Sartori speaks of cumulative or limited voting as a model that might suit minorities. Namely, in electoral units entitled to several mandates a voter has the right to cast more ballots he or she can either cumulate on one candidate or disperse on more candidates. Theoretically, this might suit minorities since a minority voter can give all his votes to a candidate from his minority community. However, the system itself is much too complicated and should not be applied under the conditions over here. Neither Sartori nor other authors offer an analysis of practical implementation of those solutions. Another variant that might be favorable to minorities is preferential voting. That's about alternative voting recommended for the units with one mandate only, where a voter has more than one preference. For instance, a voter invests one candidate with an "A" preference, another with a "B," and so on. Referential literature stresses that in some Asian countries such system produced stabilizing effects on interethnic relations but in other countries failed in this regard. This system is also too complicated and inapplicable to our country since political culture is not yet stable enough to make it effective.

There are, say, proportional electoral systems with open lists – a voter votes both for a list and for a candidate on it. As it seems, such systems function smoothly in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia. But those are the societies that are mostly not ethnically complex. There is a very good website at www.aceproject.org that provides comparative information about electoral systems. According to its authors, the said system was applied in Kosovo and resulted in victories of more extreme candidates. Therefore, one should think twice when it comes to the most appropriate electoral system.

The third criterion is that an electoral system must produce a stabilizing effect on interethnic relations. A formula that perfectly suits minorities but destabilizes interethnic relations is of no avail.

In my view, it's better for our situation to apply the proportional system with natural threshold than, say, with guaranteed seats. Why? The provincial authorities have put forth a solution by which members of minority communities are entitled to more votes than members of the majority nation. That would not be questionable under our Constitution and some international standards since minorities are in unequal position and, therefore, can be invested with more votes. However, the solution's shortcoming is that it has a destabilizing effect on interethnic relations – the majority population would perceive it as discriminatory

against them. And that's the worst possible scenario with unforeseeable consequences. What we need, therefore, is a solution that would meet minorities' justified demands for political representation on the one hand, and avoid the said negative effects on the other. This is why I advocate the proportional system with natural threshold. The proposal offered by the provincial authorities is, in my view, a legal-political catastrophe to which our public, particularly its liberal part, has not reacted at all. Why hasn't it is a matter for further discussion.

Finally, the fourth criterion I've managed to define runs as follows: an electoral system must enable establishment of stable political institutions. An ideal solution for a fair transference of votes to mandates is of no avail unless it secures formation of an efficient government. By the criteria some authors quote, our system could be defined as fragmented or even extremely fragmented. So, what we already have is a deeply divided political culture, a system that favors big parties and yet results not in a stable political situation. Therefore, this criterion must be met too.

Referential literature provides some more possible solutions for minorities' political representation. For instance, minorities could be better represented through "tailored" electoral districts. In majority systems with one candidate only – such as the one of the United States – that's the only viable solution. But, allow me to quote Giovanni Sartori once more. Sartori says, "Bad means should serve noble goals." We know from experience that there is too much manipulation in such cases. And this also refers to the provincial proposal, which, under the veil of minority protection, actually ruthlessly favors the majority. There are similar examples in the United States, though, as far as I know, determination of electoral districts is subjected to judiciary control. The referential literature gives the example of an electoral district so tailored that it run some 160 miles along a highway. The purpose of such tailoring was to concentrate black Americans into one electoral district and thus provide them with the opportunity to fairly manifest their will. I found this example in a book by V. Kimlika. Many years later, I realized what was all that about. Simply, the said highway was running through three electoral districts in which the Democrats' candidates are usually winning the elections. So, under the veil of minority protection, the Republicans tailored four electoral districts out of the previous three, and concentrated all black Americans in a single district. The outcome was that the Republicans scored 3:1 against the Democrats instead of the Democrats scoring 3:0 against them. This was how an electoral variant was "packed" to suit one of the two big parties...

Jovan KOMSIC: Who would be the Republicans over here?

Miroslav SAMARDZIC: Well, I think that all our political parties, regardless of their ideological orientations, would try to tailor electoral districts to their heart's content under the pretext of minority protection.

Antal BOZOKI: That has already been done!

Miroslav SAMARDZIC: Sure, we had such cases. That's what Professor Pajvancic calls a "bunker" system. For instance, in 1990 when we had the majority system, the Croats' party had its deputy. It didn't later on, when the proportional system was applied, because of the manner in which their electoral district was tailored.

In early 1990s when the proportional system was introduced Vojvodina was partitioned into two electoral districts, and later on into seven that were brutally gerrymandered. One electoral district spread from Vrbas to Titel dividing the Hungarian minority community – 65 percent voters of Hungarian origin were concentrated in two electoral districts, while the remaining 35 percent were dispersed in five districts. They stood no chance of having their candidate elected. Therefore, in the situation as we have, I am afraid that having more electoral districts would not lead to a favorable outcome for minority communities but rather to manipulation of minority protection by big political parties with an eye to obtaining inasmuch votes as possible.

Today we have entire Serbia as a single electoral district and we have D'Hondt's system that transfers votes to mandates. Of all the formulas for distribution of mandates, D'Hondt's system suits big parties the most. In Vojvodina, we have a weird system by which one-half of total 120 deputies are elected by the proportional system, and the other half by the majority system in one-mandate electoral districts and in two rounds of elections. Such a mixed system exists in other countries too. However, in Germany it functions differently and that's quite another story. Why did I call this system weird? *Firstly*, there is a huge disproportion between the numbers of voters in some electoral districts. The provincial Statute's provision that every municipality shall have one deputy secures one deputy even for the smallest municipality. That's not a good solution in my opinion. The majority systems with one candidate take care that electoral districts are approximately equal in size. *Secondly*, 60 deputies are elected by the proportional system with a parliamentary threshold of 5 percent of votes and a natural threshold for minorities. At first glance this solution seems to be favorable to minorities but it is not. Why? Because a relatively small number of deputies, 60,

are elected from the proportional list while Vojvodina has 1.7 million registered voters. Besides, mandates are distributed by D'Hondt's rule. Had the provincial administration really cared about minority protection it would have taken Niemeyer's formula that is more advantageous to smaller parties. The paradox is that a political party has to win the same number of votes by the proportional list to be represented in the provincial parliament as it has to obtain for the republican. How come? Well, 250 MPs are elected for the republican parliament by the proportional lists and here only 60. The republic has by far more voters and by far more parliamentary seats as well. That is why I consider this solution a bad one and disadvantageous to minorities. *Thirdly*, we have actual results that are far from being satisfactory. Elections were called on August 10, 2004 and held in September. That's scandalous. Do they really create conditions for better minority representation when they set election rules a month before actual elections? That's not a fair play in politics.

Speaking of the so-called protected seats, I would say a solution as such is possible and legitimate, though, in my view, not appropriate to our situation for several reasons. In Croatia such solution is applied at national level but in Croatia a voter cannot cast ballot twice but has to choose between giving his vote to a protected minority seat or to a basic list. That's how elections for MPs in the House of Representatives are held. At local level, however, they have a most complicated electoral system that may eventually result in protected seats in the event the electoral system does not provide satisfactory solutions. But what's the shortcoming of this system? It is deficient since it necessitates "ethnic" voting lists. In Croatia, a voter shows up at the polls and says, "I am a member of this or that minority," which is entitled to protected seats under the election law, and then gets registered in a special voting list. Composing special voting lists is a complex and time-consuming job that would take us several years to accomplish. Besides, such lists are not provided under the existing legislation. Last but not least, such a solution would have a destabilizing effect on interethnic relations and would further ethnicize social relations. And there is yet another major consideration when it comes to protected seats. Namely, the rule is relatively smoothly applied to the situations marked by a small number of minority communities. But when you have so many minority communities it is really hard to decide which minorities are entitled to representation and how to regulate the matter. Besides, it is most important that every mandate is adequately backed by voters. Theoretically, it is possible to obtain protected seats with a small number of voters. And such could be the outcome of this provincial proposal. But, let's consider negative consequences. For instance, the parliamentary majority could be formed thanks to the MPs whose mandates are backed by a small number of

votes, and an election loser could be then campaigning against minorities and blaming them for the fact that they have been deprived of the possibility to form a parliamentary majority. So, in my view, the proportional system with a natural threshold for minorities is a by far more applicable solution at all levels of governance. Should 120 Vojvodina's MPs be elected by the proportional system applied to a single electoral district, bigger minority communities would stand a better chance for representation. I do not advocate that every small community should have a parliamentary representative of its own, on the contrary. That would be a bad solution for me. Small minority communities can be protected in some other way. For instance, in municipal elections we use the proportional system with the 3 percent threshold and Niemeyer's formula – theoretically, that's not disadvantageous for minorities. Let me remind you that the Article 180 of Serbia's new Constitution provides, *"In autonomous provinces and units of local self-government with ethnically mixed population a proportional representation of national minorities in assemblies shall be possible."* The Constitution provides that something shall be possible! To my understanding this is about equal opportunities rather than about equal results. The proportional system with natural threshold provides members of minority communities with the opportunity to vote for their own national parties if they want to or to cast ballot for the parties from larger society if that suits them better. So, each member of a minority community holds an individual right to vote. On the other hand, people from the majority community can vote for minority parties, nothing prevents them from doing so. I would vote, say, for Roma parties because I am eager to back their wish to have a parliamentarian of their own.

The Minister for Local Self-Government is now announcing the majority system for the upcoming local elections. That means that he would have to envisage protected seats for minority representatives. What formula will they use for 160 municipalities, each with a specific situation of its own? Most probably the Minister doesn't know at all what he talks about! In my opinion we should stick to the proportional system, which is fully justified for, say, Novi Sad.

Another important issue is the election of executive bodies. Mayors are now elected in direct elections. It goes without saying that such election is not adequate for complex societies. Why? Because, as a rule, a mayor comes from the majority community. In other words, in my hometown, Zrenjanin, a Hungarian can never be elected a mayor, the same as a Serb can never be the mayor of Senta or Kanjiza. I take that the previous system was better – there was a weak mayor voted in by a municipal assembly and such mayor needed not always come from the majority nation. Further, we had an executive committee as a collective body with the membership of ten or more people, which made it possible to apply

some conciliatory techniques. That was often the case after 2000 as the authorities were mindful of having minority representatives in executive committees. The solution was better for members of the majority community too, since it secured more transparent functioning of executive bodies at municipal levels. As an opposition activist I've been supplied, till 2000, with all the documents to be discussed at sessions of the executive committee. Those sessions were open to public and you could have monitored budget expenditures. In the present-day system with a mayor in control of a budget, I am in the dark about the expenditures, which are never even publicized.

So, to make a long story short, I take that the proportional system with the natural threshold for minorities should be applied at all levels, the same as the formulas for distribution of mandates that are advantageous for minorities. According to mathematicians, Niemeyer's formula is more adequate than D'Hondt's. A minority community that is too small to pass the natural threshold cannot, unfortunately, have its representative in governance. Otherwise, we would have the same situation as we had in Kosovo during Milosevic's era. Thanks to a small number of votes of Kosovo Serbs Milosevic's Socialist Party of Serbia obtained a considerable number of mandates, which influenced forming of parliamentary majority. In plain words, we must take care about attaining several mutually competing goals – the basic one being minority protection, though other objects are also important.

I took trouble to go through several reports by the Venetian Commission that relate to the problematic we are discussing here. The report for 2005 captured my attention. It emphasizes that members of minority communities should be entitled to freely set up their political parties and non-governmental organizations. That's the case over here – one can register a political party by attaching the list with 100 signatures only. However, under paragraph "c" the report underlines that in the election process candidates and voters alike need not identify themselves as members of minority communities – which is mandatory in the system with protected seats.

Marijana PAJVANCIC*
ELECTORAL SYSTEMS AND THE RIGHT
OF NATIONAL MINORITIES TO REPRESENTATION⁸

Key words: electoral system, national minorities, representation, parliament, Constitution and law.

Summary: By using comparative sources, this paper analyzes the factors of an electoral system that determine national minorities' parliamentary representation either by encouraging such representation or by reducing it. The factors this paper focuses in particular as the following: the rules of electoral mathematics, the rules of electoral geometry, candidacy, voting techniques, electoral threshold and measures of affirmative action. The paper also examines the possibility of a joint action by several factors and the influence they have one on another, which may produce a synergic effect. Finally, the paper analyses the factors beyond an electoral system, including the number of members of a national minority and the territory (territorial distribution) they inhabit (concentration or dispersion).

The right of national minorities to be represented in directly elected representational bodies is one in the series of rights securing their participation in public administrations and decision-making in the matters that are in the competence of public administrations. Apart from the right to representation, national minorities' right to participation in public administration includes all political rights such as voting rights and the right to political organization, the right to participation in public and administrative services and the right to civil initiative.

National minorities' right to participation in public administration is guaranteed by international documents on the rights of national minorities.⁹ This right is also guaranteed and specified under domestic regulations, the Constitution and laws such as anti-discrimination laws (either general or particular providing the manner in which rights of national minorities are exercised), electoral legislation, etc.

* Due to her busy schedule, Professor Marijana Pajvancic could not attend the session. However, her written contribution was distributed to all the participants.

⁸ The basic paper was published in the Bar Gazette of Vojvodina, No. 3 – 4 /2007, pp. 71 – 84. It was adapted and revised to this session.

⁹ See, Lund Recommendations.

This paper analyzes the factors of an electoral system that determine national minorities' representation in representational bodies either by encouraging such representation or hindering it. The analysis relies on comparative sources and domestic legislation.¹⁰

An overview of comparative law indicates that electoral legislations of most countries do not specifically provide national minorities' representation. Also, they often lack special measures meant to secure equal opportunities for national minorities in representational bodies. The exception to this general rule are the countries¹¹ the legislations of which do include special rules on national minorities' representation but those legislations also differ – they either provide strong guarantees for representation (warranted results) or just facilitate realization of this rights (equal opportunities).

Factors influencing representation of national minorities in a parliament

The factors influencing parliamentary representation of national minorities are many and different by nature. They can be divided into two groups, depending on whether they directly relate to an electoral system and parameters determining its character and nature or are beyond the electoral system but, nevertheless, influence implementation of national minorities' right to representation in a parliament.

Many *factors of an electoral system* influence minority representation. The most important of those factors relate to the rules of electoral mathematics and electoral geometry, candidacy, voting techniques, electoral threshold and measures of affirmative action. It should be noted that different combinations of the said factors may appear in an electoral system resulting in more different varieties the electoral system's influence on minority representation in the parliament.

National minorities' representation in the parliament also depends on the *factors beyond an electoral system* that relate to a national minority itself. Three groups of those factors are significant. The first relates to political parties, the second to the number of members of a minority community, and the third to the territory inhabited by members of a national minority.

The national minorities that have formed political parties (one or more) stand better chances of being represented in a parliament than those that are not

¹⁰ See, *Election Law and National Minorities*, CeSID, Belgrade, 2002.

¹¹ E.g., Rumania, Croatia, Slovenia, Belgium, Denmark (by the territorial principle for the population of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), Finland (by the territorial principle for the population of Aaland Islands), etc.

politically organized and have no political parties of their own. Two factors influence the establishment of minority parties: legislation that allows (or prohibits) political parties organized on ethnic grounds on the one hand, and a national minority's readiness to get politically organized and set up a political party on the other. Chances for minority representation in a parliament are better in the countries allowing establishment of parties on ethnic grounds. Many countries do allow establishment of minority parties. In comparative law, there are examples of the countries the legislation of which explicitly prohibits organization of parties on ethnic grounds.¹²

The size of a national minority's population also influences its representation in a parliament. The national minorities that make bigger percentage in total population have better prospects for parliamentary representation than those with smaller percentage.

A national minority's representation is also influenced by the territory it inhabits (territorial distribution). Generally speaking, the national minorities that are concentrated on a certain area stand better chances of being represented in a parliament than those that are dispersed throughout a country. This factor is always closely related to the types of electoral systems and electoral districts – for, depending of the latter and in interaction with them it can considerably determine actual possibilities for minorities' parliamentary representation.

The majority system – under the condition that borders of electoral districts do not split a minority electorate into several electoral districts so as to neutralize the voters supporting national minorities – suits better national minorities. And the other way round – the proportional system suits better the national minorities that are dispersed at a larger area. Applied to one electoral district this system makes it possible for a national minority to agglomerate its entire voting potential in that district and thus maximally profit from minority votes.

The example referred to in the paragraph above indicates that opting for electoral rules favorable to minorities' parliamentary representation is not that easy since the choice itself depends on the factors beyond an electoral system that often produce contrary effects on individual minority communities.

Electoral geometry and minorities' parliamentary representation

Electoral geometry stands for a major factor of an electoral system that influences minorities' parliamentary representation. Determining shapes of electoral districts – the districts inhabited by a certain number of voters - is called

¹² E.g., Albania, Bulgaria, Georgia and Turkey.

electoral geometry. Electoral districts¹³ are formed as uninominal (individual) and multi-nominal (with more mandates). The type of an electoral district depends on the type of an electoral system. Majority systems are characterized by uninominal districts, while proportional systems by multi-nominal ones.

The manner in which electoral units are shaped and, in particular, divided crucially determines minorities' representation as it directly or indirectly contributes to the election of a minority representative to the parliament. This is possible when members of a minority community are concentrated on a certain territory, while electoral districts are so divided to encompass the voters coming for that minority community. Such electoral districts are called bunkers. They can be formed in both proportional and majority systems but are more favorable to minority communities in majority systems.

Bunkers do not suit the minority communities with members dispersed throughout a country. Division of the electorate characteristic for the majority system does not suit such minority communities. In their case, division of the electorate into more electoral districts results in dispersion of ballots cast by voters living in different electoral districts. This reduces a minority's voting potential and negatively affects its chances of having its representative elected to a parliament. In the election theory division of an electorate into several electoral districts that reduces the prospects for electoral success is called "border effect."

Establishment of a single electoral district for the entire territory of a country suits better the national minorities the members of which are dispersed throughout it. A single electoral district is possible only under the system relying on the principle of proportionality. With all voters assembled into one electoral district votes are not dispersed on different political options and candidates.

Last but not least, it should be noted that uninominal electoral districts necessitate relatively frequent change in their borders. Borders need to be changed because the size of a population of an electoral district is a changeable category. Otherwise, population growth in one electoral district and decrease in another would result in a "covert" inequality in the exercise of the voting right. A ballot cast in the electoral district with population growth would be less worth than that in the electoral district where population growth has been lowered. The principle of equal rights for all calls for correction of such a disproportion. However, every change of borders opens the door to gerrymandering. The more frequent the changes in borders, the better opportunities for gerrymandering.

¹³ See, Dr. Marijana Pajvancic, *Izbori – pravila i proračuni (Elections: Rules and Calculations)*, Novi Sad, 1997, pp. 17 – 35, as well as *Uvod u izborne sisteme (Introduction into Electoral Systems)*, the second revised edition, Nis, 2003, pp. 15 – 25.

Speaking of electoral districts as factors of an electoral system advantageous to minorities' representation, it is always possible to take a special measure and form a special electoral district for members of national minorities. Such single electoral district maximally encompasses minority voters and efficiently profits from every ballot cast for a list (or candidates) of national minorities.

All this leads to the conclusion that the type of an electoral district determines minorities' parliamentary representation depending on whether members of a national minority are concentrated on a territory or dispersed throughout a country. Division into electoral districts suits the former as it enables a bunker to accumulate voting potential and contribute to electoral success. The interest of the latter – dispersed minorities – is quite the opposite. Division into electoral districts is disadvantageous to them. Their voting potential is at peak only when an entire country stands for a single electoral district. The examples quoted in the paragraphs above indicate that a same electoral factor can produce different effects on members of different national minorities, which makes it really hard to opt for the type of an electoral district that optimally secures minority representation in a parliament. There are no simple answers to this question.

Electoral mathematics and minorities' parliamentary representation

The type of an electoral system is also a factor influencing minorities' parliamentary representation. How is that influence manifested? One can answer that question only if bearing in mind not only other factors of an electoral system but also the factors beyond it – territorial distribution of members of a minority community in the first place. The type of an electoral system that provides better chances for minority representation depends on a minority's territorial distribution – i.e. whether its members are concentrated at a certain part of a territory or are equally distributed throughout the territory.

Generally speaking, the majority electoral system suits better the national minorities the members of which are concentrated in an area. The proportional system is more advantageous to the minorities that are dispersed under the condition that the entire territory makes up one electoral district or, in countries divided into more electoral districts, that the Badensky system of accumulation of votes is applied.¹⁴ This system for calculation of votes enables subsequent distribution of undistributed mandates from electoral districts (the mandates that have not been assigned by a round number) on the grounds of total balance of

¹⁴ See, Dr. Marijana Pajvancic, *Rečnik osnovnih pojmova i termina o izborima (Glossary of Basic Electoral Terms and Notions)*, CeSID, Belgrade, 2001, pp. 10 – 11.

undistributed votes from electoral districts (votes that were insufficient for an electoral district to obtain a mandate).

Apart from two basic types of electoral systems (majority or proportional), minorities' parliamentary representation is also determined by the type of the electoral formula. The electoral formula is a mathematical formula for calculating votes into mandates. The influence of this factor on national minorities' representation is closely connected with the factors beyond an electoral system.

The size of the population of a minority community inhabiting a specific area is a major factor of the electoral systems based on the majority principle. In such a case even a relative majority of voters¹⁵ – members of national minorities – can be sufficient for obtaining mandates. This is especially characteristic of the situations when more candidates aspire to one parliamentary mandate in the electoral district in which voters from a minority community are in relative majority.

In proportional systems¹⁶ some formulas for turning votes into mandates give the upper hand to bigger political parties (D'Hondt's rule). Those formulas undermine the prospects for minority lists to win a parliamentary mandate and are, therefore, disadvantageous to them. And the other way round – there are formulas for distribution of mandates that favor smaller political parties (such as Neumayer's formula). Those are the formulas that give better chances to minority lists to win mandates.

Types of candidacy lists, voting technique and minorities' parliamentary representation

In proportional systems, the type of a candidacy list¹⁷ can be the factor that either contributes to minorities' representation or undermines it.

A minority candidacy list can be submitted either as the list of a single national minority or as a joint list of candidates coming from several national

¹⁵ More on paradoxes of relative majority, see, Dr. Marijana Pajvancic, *Relativna većina i njeni paradoksi (Relative Majority and its Paradoxes)*, the Bar Gazette of Vojvodina, No. 5/1996, pp. 155 - 162.

¹⁶ For more on proportional electoral systems, see, Dr. Marijana Pajvancic, *Uvod u izborne sisteme (Introduction to Electoral Systems)*, Nis, OGI, 2003, pp. 51 – 62, as well as *Izbori – pravila i proračuni (Elections: Rules and Calculations)* by the same author, Novi Sad, 1997, pp. 88 – 125.

¹⁷ For more on the types of candidacy lists, see, Dr. Marijana Pajvancic, *Kandidatske liste i uticaj birača na popunu poslaničkih mandata*, The Collection of Papers of the Novi Sad Law School, No. 1 – 3/1996, pp. 147 – 157.

minorities. In the countries that allow organization of minority political parties, those parties can also put forth lists of their candidates.

It goes without saying that a list of candidates submitted by a single minority party stands better chances for the minority's parliamentary representation.

A list submitted by a coalition of two or more minority parties also opens the door to national minorities' parliamentary representation. Such lists stand better chances for winning parliamentary seats if candidates are clearly ranged and the criterion for allocation of a mandate rests on the sequence by which candidates are listed.

Representatives of a national minority can also figure as candidates on the lists that are not minority. In that case the closed lists stand better chances for having a minority representative win a parliamentary seat. The sequence of candidates on such lists is determined in advance. Voters cast ballots for the entire list and each is entitled to one vote only. The mandates the list wins on the grounds of obtained votes are allocated to the candidates by the order in which their names have been listed.

A minority candidate placed high on the list stands a chance for getting a mandate.

Free (untied) or weakly structured lists of candidates also have influence on national minorities' representation in a parliament. When included in such lists minority candidates will hardly be elected to a parliament. The sequence in which candidates' names are arranged on the list is not a crucial criterion for obtaining mandates but the number of votes the candidates nominated for the parliament win.

The above-mentioned candidacy lists call for one of the special voting techniques (such as preferential voting, cumulative votes or personal vote)¹⁸ that might, to a certain extent, strengthen the prospects for a minority candidate to be elected on the grounds of personal votes he or she has obtained.

Voting techniques applied to candidacy lists can either strengthen the prospects for the election of minority candidates or undermine them.

Generally speaking, the technique that is the least favorable to minorities is voting with one vote for a closed candidacy list. That's the situation when neither the type of the candidacy list nor the voting techniques give minority representatives better chances for election to a parliament. A candidate's position on a list decisively determines his or her chances for obtaining a mandate.

¹⁸ See, Dr. Marijana Pajvancic, *Rečnik osnovnih pojmova i termina o izborimai*, CeSID, Belgrade, 2001, pp. 37; 47; 50 – 54.

Besides, voting techniques that offer voters the possibility of influencing the election of a person nominated on a list strengthen the prospects for minority representation in a parliament¹⁹, but are not always a reliable and efficient instrument. Preferential (giving of points), cumulative (accumulation of votes), combined (voting for candidates on more different lists) and personal voting (voting for a specific person) are surely the voting techniques that can facilitate minorities' parliamentary representation.

Electoral threshold and minorities' parliamentary representation

Electoral threshold is among electoral system factors that influence national minorities' parliamentary representation. The same as other factors referred to in the paragraphs above, this one may either strengthen or undermine the prospects for minorities to be represented in a parliament. What will be the case depends on the manner in which electoral threshold is defined by electoral legislation.

The electoral threshold appears in the form of a natural threshold and legally defined electoral threshold. The natural threshold is the number of votes necessary for obtaining one parliamentary mandate expressed in percentage. The natural threshold is always lower than the legally defined one and, therefore, provides better chances for the minority communities to be represented in a parliament.

Being higher than the natural threshold, the legally defined threshold can act as a factor that diminishes the prospects for national minorities' representation. This particularly refers to the electoral systems in which the electoral threshold is the same for all candidacy lists. This factor is less decisive for minority representation if legislation provides a lower legally defined threshold for the minority candidacy lists.

However, there are some questions that cannot be easily answered. First, what candidacy lists are considered the lists of national minorities? Are minority lists only those nominated by minority political parties or also those that include candidates from minority communities? Second, who decides and by what criteria that a candidacy list stands for a minority list?

The natural threshold suits better national minorities as it enables their candidacy list (or candidate) to obtain a parliamentary mandate with smaller

¹⁹ Voting techniques favorable to minority representation are incorporated in the legislations of Czech Republic, Slovakia (in the form of four preferentials), Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Poland, Sweden (in the form of one preferential), Letonia, Latvia, Norway (cumulative vote), Switzerland, etc.

number of votes. For its part, the legally defined threshold stands in the way of minorities' parliamentary representation. Minority lists (or candidates) can hardly win the number of votes that preconditions a mandate, even in the event when lawmakers set lower threshold for minority lists to meet the need for minorities' parliamentary representation.

Special measures and national minorities' right to parliamentary representation

Special measures that often make part of electoral systems are aimed at creating not only formally but also factually equal opportunities for minorities to be represented in a parliament.

Special measures are also provided by international documents and domestic legislation, which explicitly lay down three major properties special measures must possess. First, their character, under the Constitution or law, must not be discriminatory. Second, the reasons that justify introduction of special measures are unequal opportunities for the exercise of a constitutionally and legally guaranteed right – in this specific case, the right to representation. Third, special measures are temporary. How long they will be effective depends on the attainment of the goal meant to be realized via special measures.

All the factors that have been analyzed can themselves become one of the instruments within which special measures can be introduced.

Candidacy lists provide more opportunities for taking special measures such as the right to nomination of minority candidacy lists; special conditions for nomination of minority candidacy lists (e.g. a smaller number of signatures of the voters supporting the list); a reserved, safe position at the candidacy lists that are not nominated by minorities (e.g. a closed list, distribution of mandates by the order in which candidates' names are listed, replacement of a vacant position at a candidacy lists, etc.).²⁰

Special voting techniques (i.e. personal vote, preferential voting, cumulative vote, etc.)²¹ can be instrumental in taking special measures that contribute to the realization of minorities' right to parliamentary representation. For, voters are given the possibility of casting ballot for a candidate under the proportional electoral system marked by candidacy lists.

²⁰ For more on the types of candidacy lists, see, Dr. Marijana Pajvancic, *Kandidatske liste i uticaj birača na popunu poslaničkih mandata*, the Collection of Papers of the Novi Sad Law Schools, No. 1 – 3/1996, pp. 147 – 157.

²¹ See, Dr. Marijana Pajvancic, *Izborna pravo*, Novi Sad, Academica Graphica, 1999, pp. 110 – 125.

Electoral districts can be instrumental in introducing special measures, including a major measure for the establishment of a separate electoral district for the election of minority representatives.²² In such case only one electoral district is formed so as to secure equal opportunities to representatives of all minority communities – those concentrated in a certain area and those dispersed throughout a country. A single electoral district for all minority voters prevents dissipation of votes and division of minority electorates, particularly when it comes to the minorities that are dispersed in the entire territory of a country.

Electoral threshold can also be instrumental in taking special measures meant to contribute to efficient implementation of minorities' right to parliamentary representation. Special measure are taken if the electoral threshold is at the level of natural threshold or if the legally defined electoral threshold for minority lists is lower than the threshold other candidacy lists need to pass so as to be entitled to distribution of mandates.

A special measure that definitely secures minority representation is *the number of parliamentary seats set aside* for national minorities. However, this measure is hardly applicable in a country with more minority communities, particularly if they considerably differ by the sizes of their populations. In such case the reserved seats are usually guaranteed to bigger national minorities, while the smaller ones get one seat for a common representative.

Funds for election campaign can also be instrumental in encouraging minority representation in directly elected representational bodies and, in this context, they make part of special measures aimed at securing equal opportunities for minority representation. The budget set aside for an election campaign can include special benefits for minority candidacy lists, as well as for the candidacy lists nominating representatives of national minorities as well.

Minority representation and Serbian electoral legislation

The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, the Law on the Protection of the Rights of National Minorities, the Law on the Election of MPs, the Law on the Election of Councilmen/Councilwomen and the Decision on the Election of Deputies in the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina make a legal frame with relevant provisions on the right national minorities' representation in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia.

²² See, Dr. Marijana Pajvancic, *Izbori – pravila i proračuni*, Nasa Borba, Novi Sad, 1997, pp. 19 – 35.

Serbia's new Constitution provides novel guarantees for minorities' representation in representational bodies. Those novelties relate to the general frame in which minorities exercise their rights, the ban on discrimination and the possibility for taking special measures on the one hand and explicit guarantees for minorities' right to participate in public administration and to representation in the National Assembly on the other.

The Serbian Constitution prohibits any form of direct or indirect discrimination arising from a person's ethnic origin or some other individual characteristic.²³ It provides the possibility of taking special measures the purpose of which is to secure full equality of persons or groups of persons that are basically in unequal position vis-à-vis others.²⁴ The Constitution also defines the nature of special measures and underlines that they shall not be considered discriminatory.²⁵

Further, the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia explicitly guarantees national minorities' right to representation in the National Assembly. The Constitution invests lawmakers with the authority to specify the rules that shall secure the implementation of minorities' right to be "equal and represented"²⁶ in the National Assembly.²⁷ The Constitution does not detail national minorities' right to equality and representation in the National Assembly but only generally guarantees this right. However, even those general guarantees provided under the Constitution as the highest legal act at least mirror policymakers' intention to regulate this minority right.

The Law on the Protection of the Rights of National Minorities does not explicitly guarantee national minorities' right to representation in representational bodies, but only generally provides their right to participation in public life.²⁸ Since this was about a framework law only²⁹ it was logically to expect that legislations of federal units would elaborate its general provisions in more detail. However, the two federal units failed to pass the laws on minority rights but regulated them under several different laws. So, national minorities' right to representation in representational bodies is regulated under the Law on the

²³ Article 21, para 3, of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia

²⁴ Article 21, para 4, of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The said term are used by constitutionmakers. In the context of parliamentary composition, the meaning of the principle of equality remains blurred.

²⁷ Article 100 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia.

²⁸ Article 21 of the Law on the Protection of the Rights of National Minorities.

²⁹ The law was passed at federal level at the time the FR of Yugoslavia was a federation.

Election of MPs, the Law on Local Elections and the Decision on the Election of Deputies in the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. It should be noted that minorities' right to participation in public administration cannot be reduced just to the right to parliamentary representation – for, the former right implies representation in all other bodies of public governance, which is something Serbia's legal system has failed to regulate.

The Law on the Election of MPs is among the laws regulating the issues significant for realization of minorities' right to representation. The Law includes special measures meant to secure equal opportunities for minorities' parliamentary representation. One of those measures relate to the electoral threshold. According to the Law, the electoral threshold at the level of natural threshold is set for candidacy lists nominated by national minorities, while the 5 percent threshold out of the total number of voters participating in elections is laid down for all other candidacy lists.³⁰

The Law provides some general criteria by which the body authorized for the elections (Republican Electoral Commission) shall decide whether a candidacy list has the status of the candidacy list nominated by a minority party for which provisions on natural threshold are laid down. The Law provides too generalized and blurred criteria by which a political party that has nominated a list shall be subject to the 5 percent threshold as a precondition for candidates' right to partake in the distribution of mandates. According to lawmakers, the term political party of a minority community indicates "all those parties the main object of which is to represent the interests of a national minority and protect the rights of members of national minorities in accordance with international standards."³¹

Finally, in the process of amending the Law, lawmakers were not consequent. The special measure that relates to the natural threshold can hardly be applied along with the rule on the minimal number of voters' signatures under a candidacy list. All the lists, without exception, shall be considered legitimate if signed by at least 10,000 registered voters. Besides, bearing in mind that the natural threshold of votes (depending on the number of registered voters showing up at the polls) ranges between 10,000 and 15,000 votes, it is obvious that the support to a candidacy list nominated by a minority community actually replaces the voting for that list – for, the natural threshold that results in mandates for a

³⁰ Article 81 of the Law on the Election of MPs, amendments publicized in the Official Gazette No. 18/2004.

³¹ Article 81, para 3, of the Law on the Election of MPs.

minority list necessitates the same number of votes as that necessary for any candidacy list. The criticism of this solution is fully justified.

In the last parliamentary elections³² the Republican Electoral Commission decided to change the rule on the minimal number of voters' signatures under a minority candidacy lists. The Commission decided that the validity of a list depends on at least 3,000 signatures. The Commission has thus changed the clear-cut legal provision according to which a list shall be supported by at least 10,000 registered voters. This is why the legality of the decision was brought before the Constitution Court. The Constitutional Court decided that the Republican Commission's decision was not contrary to law.

The Law on the Election of Councilmen/Councilwomen does not provide special measures that would enhance national minorities' prospects for representation in local and city assemblies.

The Decision on the Election of Deputies in the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina includes special measures that contribute to the realization of minorities' right to representation in the provincial parliament.

One of those special measures relates to the minimal number of voters whose signatures under a candidacy list make it valid. The number of signatures for minority lists is set at 3,000, while for all other lists at 6,000.³³

Besides, the Decision provides a natural threshold for minority lists as a precondition for the distribution of mandates, while other lists need to win at least 5 percent of total ballots by registered voters who went to the polls.³⁴

The conclusion drawn from an overview of comparative electoral rules and the provisions of domestic legislation dealing with minorities' parliamentary representation indicates that, in this domain, some general or universal rules, i.e. guidelines for the factors of electoral system enhancing the prospects for minorities' parliamentary representation are hard to determine. The analysis given above shows that electoral system factors are not the only ones on which minority representation depends in a directly elected representational body. Apart from the listed factors, those beyond an electoral system are most influential.

In the search for an optimal legal frame for national minorities' parliamentary representation one should take into account institutional arrangements in the context of electoral system that, in principle, enhance the prospects for the election of a minority representative to a parliament (such as the

right to establishment of minority parties, the proportional system, one electoral district, natural threshold, preferential voting, reserved parliamentary seats) along with other factors beyond an electoral system that influence national minorities' parliamentary representation.

Antal BOZÓKI

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

The National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, the Assembly of the Republic of Montenegro and the Federal Assembly adopted the Charter on Human and Minority Rights and Civil Liberties (publicized in the Official Gazette of Serbia-Montenegro, No. 6/2003). The Charter seems to be clean forgotten as if it had never existed, while the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities (publicized in the Official Gazette of the FR of Yugoslavia, No. 11/2002) is claimed to be still in power.

Jurists' opinions about the issue differ. I am among those who hold that the Law has not been in power since the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro ceased to exist, the more so since Serbia failed to incorporate it into its legal system. However, whenever it suits them governmental bodies claim that the Law is in power or that it is not when it suits them not. What we need is a unique stand: if the Law is in power, the Charter is in power too.

True, the Constitution has incorporated many provisions of the Charter. However, it omitted a major one – the provision regulating minorities' right to direct representation in decision-making. The Article 180, paragraph 4, of the Constitution provides, "In autonomous provinces and units of local self-government with ethnically mixed population a proportional representation of national minorities in assemblies shall be secured in accordance with law." This does not meet minorities' needs. For, the phrase "in accordance with law" reduces the constitutional guarantee to some blurred promise of what a law shall provide and what it shall not.

Minorities, that is, at least three out of four parties of Vojvodina Hungarians demand proportional representation at all levels of decision-making, as well as in governmental bodies, public enterprises, etc. The right of national minorities to efficiently – or effectively – participate in public life is one of fundamental human rights the minorities should be guaranteed.

The entire context is marked by political games. When it suits a political party to have minorities at its side it secures some kind of their representation in decision-making. And the other way round – when a political party holds that

³² The elections were held on January 21, 2007. `

³³ Article 53, para 2, of the Decision.

³⁴ Article 74, paras 3 and 4, of the Decision.

having minorities at its side does not play into its hands, it does everything in its power to undermine that right – it manipulates, interprets laws as it suits it, etc. Besides, some claim that minorities “will jeopardize the majority in the parliament.” That’s notoriously misleading as it is simply impossible even with guaranteed seats for minority representatives in the parliament.

Minorities’ participation in public life can be interpreted strictly or loosely. The strict interpretation implies minorities’ representation in the parliament and parliamentary committees, while the loose one implies their employment and proportional participation in administrative bodies, judiciary, public and other enterprises engaged in public works.

Usually, no one touches on a major problem in Vojvodina and Serbia. Namely, the Hungarian community participates in administrative bodies of the province with some 5-6 percent of total number of employees, whereas Hungarians make up 14.28 percent of total population in Vojvodina. Proportional representation in administrative bodies is simply not secured and there has been no progress in this domain for years. All we have are some general promises that have not yet produced any results.

On May 11, 2006, the Serbian government publicized its Conclusion on the Measures for Enhancing Minorities’ Participation in Governmental Bodies (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 40/2006). However no improvement in the ethnic composition of the employees in the governmental bodies has been made so far. The government has not even conducted comparative researches that would have indicated whether the situation gets for the worse or better. The Serbian government adopts some general decrees, conclusions, etc. probably under the pressure from the international community. But those decrees and conclusions change nothing. For instance, Hungarians make 40 percent of total population of Subotica but there are not even 20 percent of Hungarian judges. The ratio in Backa Topola is 60:25 percent, etc. In brief, no real progress has been made, not even after October 5, 2000.

Participants in the discussion have referred to the Lund Recommendation of September 1990. These are just recommendations and are, therefore, not mandatory. However, states should take them into consideration while developing relevant legislation.

So, what about the Lund Recommendations?

According to the recommendations, “States should take care that minorities’ voice is efficiently heard at the level of central governance, which, if necessary, can be secured by special measures.” Those measures, say the recommendations, can include “securing special representation for minorities by providing them with an appropriate number of parliamentary seats in one or in

both houses of parliament and by other guaranteed forms of participation in the process of decision-making,” This is what we have in Kosovo, Croatia and Slovenia but not in Vojvodina.

Another measure, by the Lund Recommendations, could be “formal or informal agreements on a certain number of seats set aside for minorities in the government, supreme or constitutional court, and in the process of appointing advisory and other bodies.” This suggested measure gives some people from the majority nation creeps. So they wonder in panic, “Why do we need minority representatives in the Supreme Court?” But what slips their mind is that adequate ethnic composition of all governmental bodies is a composite part of minority rights and needs to be taken seriously.

Presently, with the exception of the public enterprise “Vojvodina Sume” there is not a single Hungarian representative in the Serbian government, governmental body and even in the governmental Department of Human and Minority Rights. I doubt that a single official of the Department speaks a minority language. So, how possibly could they follow culture, publishing, arts or newspapers in minority languages? The question is how they could possibly monitor the implementation of minority rights!

But the fundamental question is, “What’s Serbia’s attitude towards minorities?” Minorities make up some 30 percent of Serbia’s population including Kosovo, and 17.14 without Kosovo. Despite that, Serbia is not concerned with the minority issue. This conclusion derives from the fact that today’s Serbia does not have a law on the protection of the rights of national minorities, does not have a ministry of human and minority rights but just a relevant department that is under direct control of the Premier and is not accountable to the Serbian parliament.

Since 2002 when it passed the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities Serbia hasn’t bothered to pass a law on the election of national councils. This September it’s been a year since the mandate of the National Council of Vojvodina Hungarians expired. The President of the Council nevertheless behaves as if he were a legitimate and legal representative of Vojvodina Hungarians. And despite the fact that he has not been an efficient president for years, he even coordinates other national councils at the provincial level.

Problems are many. But they have not been inventoried so as to be solved one by one. Serbia’s predominant policy is obviously the one of postponement and sweeping problems under the carpet. The more so will it be difficult to solve them later.

Besides, the problematic of voting lists for the election of minorities’ national council is being blurred. Voting lists do exist in municipalities and there

is not reason whatsoever not to add yet another list for the election of national councils in the upcoming regular local elections.

As it seems, the Serbian parliament has not potential for deciding whether to pass a new law on the protection of national minorities or a law on the election of national councils.

Three draft laws were put forth long ago. The general public knows nothing about two of them – the one submitted by the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians and the other by the government of the Republic of Serbia. The Belgrade-seated Center for Research of Ethnicities publicized its draft back in March 2006. One cannot but wonder why is it that the Serbian government hasn't drafted a unique text of the law and opened public debate on it. There is obviously a small circle of people "of confidence" who have access to all those drafts. I would say those are the people close to the government and ruling structures and the ones that have a final say.

The Article 8 of the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities provides that minorities shall be secured, proportionally to the size of their populations, an adequate number of parliamentary seats. After the World War II there were some 500,000 Hungarians in Vojvodina. Now, according to the 2002 census, there are 290,207 Hungarians. Demographers estimate that in the past five years the number of Hungarians has decreased for some 16,137 people. Therefore, no one needs to be afraid of minorities – minorities will vanish on their own anyway if things remain as they are. People will emigrate, for there is no economic progress over here and no democratization of the society. This may suit some.

The state will grow stronger if every individual, regardless of his or her ethnic origin, exercises human and minority rights, and safeguard his or her ethnic and any other identity. Over here, one has always felt bad if in minority. Minorities cannot jeopardize the majority population, let alone aimed at having it discriminated. The people from the majority nation need not be afraid of minorities. A minority is the one that is endangered and the one to be guaranteed all its legal rights.

Jovan KOMSIC

ATTAINING CONSENSUAL DEMOCRACY

We've been sitting around a table for ten years or more discussing minority rights. We are fewer and fewer, and almost resemble an undercover group. However, the topic we've been discussing is getting hotter and hotter. Some

people, organizations and institutions are interested in a permanent dialogue on minority rights. We have here people from the civil sector that raises the minority issue whereas Serbia's political class – including representatives of minority parties involved in the institutions that have control over material and other resources of power – manifests no sensibility toward the topic. We are placing some topics on the agenda for the sake of progress, for the sake of a democratic, prosperous and European Serbia, as Sonja Biserko put it. That's what we have to do in the ashes of all those nation-building and state-building projects that have been tested in these areas for the last two decades.

Last night on the TV Novi Sad channel I was watching and listening to MPs in the Serbian parliament – those coming from the G17 Plus, the Democratic Party, the Serbian Radical Party and the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians. I carefully followed the polemic between the Democrats and the Radicals. That was the standard gladiatorial hue and cry. Unlike them, a MP from the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians spoke reasonably and pinpointed some key topics of interest not only to his party colleagues and voters of the Alliance but also to all minorities. However, at a certain point a G17 Plus MP retorted that the fact that Serbia's Constitution regulates the minority issue by the highest international standards cannot be denied. This is only an illustrative instance of Serbia's political class's sensibility toward this question.

However, allow me to place the entire problematic in another context – the context of initiatives for supplements and amendments of electoral law, and the pressure by the democratic public on policymakers.

I am referring to two levels – one is institutional and the other cultural, this other being about the presence or absence of, so to speak, consensual political culture. Serious authors that analyze the possibilities for democratic governance in multiethnic, heterogeneous societies often refer to the difficulties such governance has to cope with. It's a fortunate circumstance that from the standpoint of some fundamental human and minority rights democracy functions against the backdrop of Serbia's semi-democratic transition and semi-democratic institutional and political development. Were it not for democracy, minorities would not be entitled to political organization and legitimate participation in decision-making. In brief, under present circumstances democracy is somewhat functional from the standpoint of manifestation of minority interests.

However, apart from institutional solutions there is something more – there is a network of agreement-making between minorities and the majority nation, the network that needs not be laid down in detail by the Constitution or laws. Actually that's a fluid that connects people debating the issues of their community. Is there such a network of the exchange of ideas and agreement-

making between Serbia's political parties or, for that matter, between its most powerful political actors? Are political actors, the ones from the majority political community, interested in the establishment of such a network? That's the problem /Danilo/ Kis broached when referring to the possibilities for co-national states – the states of Central and Eastern Europe – to move fast towards Europe. Unfortunately, warned Kis, representatives of all national communities are never simultaneously eye to eye when it comes to the foundations on which a state should rest, since the very logic of democratic competition extremely favors a winner. But a democratic competition in itself and the power and privileges going to the winner do not necessarily lead to the establishment of the network of the exchange of ideas and agreement-making, and to the consensus on the division of electoral booty. Simply, democracy is a tyranny of the majority, the tyranny of numbers! Along with other mechanisms that force political actors to reach agreements and cooperate, we need an institutional measure that corrects this tyranny of the majority and numbers.

Well, let's analyze Serbia. Does Serbia's political class follow the logic that everything goes to a winner, while a loser should be left empty-handed? Should that be true, it would grossly violate all constitutional and legal guarantees for implementation of minority rights. And such a thesis can simply not be supported by valid arguments. So, the problem is not in the presence and functioning of some bad political formula depriving minorities of any opportunity and thus turning them disinterested in legitimate identification with the state. The problem is in the degree of institutionalization that is only formally close to European criteria for legal correction of the tyranny of the majority. Here the legal correction implies positive discrimination, additional measures of stimulation. See, you have Portugal, you have Greece, you have scores of other European countries that couldn't care less when it comes to minorities.

The question is whether at all or to what degree it suits domestic politicians to have such network of exchange of views and cooperation with minorities, including various instruments for their protection and proportional representation. Judging by comparative analyses, the existence of several (relatively) equally represented minorities makes the background that is most beneficial for the establishment of such cooperation – and, that is not the case in Serbia. Serbia has one predominant national community, a significant and titular one, after which the state is named. Representatives of that community are not interested in and need not be concerned with such cohabitation with minority political representatives. Then, how possibly can one make Serbia's political class adopt consensual political culture?

The Serbian national project has resulted in a homogenized territory and a homogenized state. Without Kosovo, Serbs make 82.5 percent of total population. With Kosovo, the percentage of Serbs falls to some 65. Serbia will have to accept the fact that, this way or another, Kosovo has been pulled out from under its institutional umbrella. That's the reality regardless of the form it will take or has already taken. This makes Serbia a homogeneous nation-state – nor a plural society! But if it still is a plural society, Serbia must seek adequate institutional solutions through such networks of agreement-making and cooperation, through mechanisms of consensual democracy and through the networks of decentralized institutions. Otherwise, the government can only be formed by large coalitions, which can hardly be politically efficient, as colleague Samardzic indicated. Efficient governance is the main task of any policy. But governance cannot be efficient unless it is legitimate from the standpoint of relevant national communities. Take, for instance, South Serbia. The problems plaguing South Serbia have simply forced policymakers to introduce some elements of consensual governance despite the fact that now, when it comes to police forces, those elements are being ignored.

This discussion on minorities' representation only touches on the problem and may channel further discussions to some other levels of the problems of minorities' institutional representation: for instance, to the level we call decentralization. Serbia is still a highly centralized country. Just take a look at its constitutional provisions and the Constitution's general orientation. Should Serbia be decentralized, Vojvodina would be able to control considerable material resources. Moreover, Vojvodina would not have to devise special institutional mechanisms for minority representation since minorities – by the very logic of Vojvodina's social tissue – would have been represented in provincial institutions and thus have control over material and cultural resources. Only mechanisms of consociation lead to a sustainable democracy in the ambience of pluralism.

The minority problem must be institutionally recognized and solved at the level of the entire Serbia. Take, for instance, our electoral system. In a constantly polarized society such as the Serbian it is not realistic to expect an electoral system to neutralize all those deep divides by itself. However, policymakers can be impelled by an electoral system to make agreements and cooperate. We did have a network of agreement-making and cooperation till 2000. That was the year when we had the majority system and when pro-European, democratic, civic and minority parties made coalitions for the second round of the elections so as to successfully counter the candidates of the extremely nationalistic Serbian Radical Party. That was the year when Vojvodina testified that the policies that are beyond tribalism and ethnicity could make politicians cooperative. The

proportional system cannot make them cooperative before the elections, and any agreement following the elections will depend on the size of the booty to be seized and divided. This is why the type of electoral system is that important. Speaking of Vojvodina, I do not oppose the majority system at local level but do emphasize that, eventually, we must seek the modes of consociation and closer cooperation between majority and minority representatives on the common, pro-European platform.

(The above discussion has not been authorized by Mr. Komsic)

Mirko DJORDJEVIC **THREE MARGINALIA ABOUT VOJVODINA'S IDENTITY**

Judging by some essayists loosely dealing with the topic being in minority, religious minority included, is an advantage since that's the position enabling a human being to freely determine his or her identity. However, such standpoint hardly has any meaning at all against the backdrop of political realities. Moreover, a stereotype about minorities indicates quite the opposite. Pronounced Serb nationalist, poet Matija Beckovic, whose paradoxes equal ordinary nonsensicalities, once said minorities – religious included – are “a patient you must constantly please.” And this has become a stereotype with dangerous political connotation – minorities are perceived as an alien element, which legally and legitimately entitles the majority to dominate. I would rather put it in plain words – minorities are everywhere – the matrix of Vojvodina's identity included – a part of a society's identity. Besides, minorities are a changeable category at historical, territorial and legal levels. Religious minorities mirror pluralism that is a component part of every democratic society.

The above remarks may have not been necessary at all. However, the ones that follow – similar though not the same – are significant for our discussion.

I will refer just to some out of many documents and legal provisions, both domestic and international, dealing with religious minorities. I will refer to Serbia's Constitution and the Law on Churches and Religious Communities, particularly to the crying contradiction between constitutional definition of churches and religious communities, and the said law that is nothing but a stumbling bloc in the way of solving the entire problematic. For, that law is simply inapplicable or, when applied, creates even more complex problems. Of course, there is the Framework Convention on the Protection of Minority Rights, there is the Central European Initiative, there are the Lund Recommendations and

scores of other documents. Instead of invoking them, I would rather pinpoint a fact that seems to be unquestionable: namely, laws and legal provisions are indispensable but cannot solve the problem. If in the political-cultural context the phrase Vojvodina's identity matters – and I think it does – minorities, religious in particular, must be perceived somewhat differently. So far, they have been on the agenda only when incidents additionally complicate the situation. There are two dimensions of the problem. The first is always taken into consideration and relates to the manner in which the state and local self-governments react to specific situations. The second that is usually overseen has to do with the reaction by religious communities themselves. The state has privileged some churches and religious communities by proclaiming them “traditional” and “recognized.” As for others, they are discriminated and, in a way, marginalized. Several provisions of the Serbian Constitution regulate the problematic in a modern way – they do not specify a single church or religious community. The Law is another story. And it is the collision between the Constitution and the Law that gives rise to problems.

To understand better the matrix of Vojvodina's identity we need to consider what I've called the second dimension of the problem. Speaking of the situation in Vojvodina, I've been relying on the studies that certainly stand for major sources and overviews of the actual state of affairs.³⁵ Speaking of religious communities I take we should stick to the term community so as to avoid the term “sect,” differentiate various denominations and make distinction between them and the Church /the Serbian Orthodox Church/ as a specific notion. Religious communities are secluded from the outside world – some have opted for self-ghettoization, while others have had it imposed on them. Such communities are excluded from the cultural and religious matrix or, to put it in plain words, they would not accept communication with anyone. The other problem is even more complex: small religious communities usually boil down to their ethnic patterns and recruit their adepts from the ranks of their own ethnicities. This is why the conflicts between them are manifested as ethnic tensions.

Take, for example, a Christian community in Vojvodina, the Nazarenes. You'll find them in Novi Sad and in other towns in Vojvodina. They have a long tradition in this area. The Nazarenes are a typical pietistic – Baptist community founded by the Calvinist priest, Henrik Frelich, in 1830 in Switzerland. They profess Holy Bible but do not accept the symbol of cross. Of all church rites they recognize only baptism and communion by the Calvinist ritual. They reject church

³⁵ Anka Latinovic, „Religious Communities in the Territory of Vojvodina,“ Novi Sad, 2001.

hierarchy, icons and saints, avoid feasts and pomp, they refrain from alcohol and smoking, they are conscientious objectors, they renounce nationalism and advocate internationalism. Though not obliged under domestic law to register their teaching, they do it duly and publicly. Christian churches – the Eastern Orthodox in particular – do not recognize them and label them “sectarians.” Faced with overt animosity, the Nazarenes form individual identities of their believers. However, they are not a cultural factor of the public life since they are simply invisible in it. So, they are both ghettoized and self-ghettoized. In the sum of cultural differences and imperative religious pluralism that crucially determines Vojvodina’s “model” such and similar religious communities could mean a lot but, unfortunately, they do not. Though seriously undermined and impaired in 1988 by the wave of Milosevic’s aggressive nationalism and political populism, Vojvodina’s model still holds on and is interpreted as a value in Europe. However, conflicts persisted at the level of religious communities.

It is common knowledge that present-day graffiti “Stop to sects!” are not being inscribed at random. A priest from Kraljevo, whose small community was attacked by unidentified hawks under the said slogan, said, “I think this the outcome of the latest media campaign against sects, in which self-proclaimed experts in religious sects blame Protestants, believers in the Holy Scripture, and classify them together with Satanists.”³⁶ It is obvious what this is all about and what and who intentionally creates the problem. The idea is to impose on small religious communities the identity matrix by the principle of ethnicity and religious monism, that is, by the principle of some new totalitarianism. If you call all religious communities sects with a negative prefix, fatal political consequences are unavoidable. At the same time, that’s an assault against Vojvodina’s identity that is plural in principle. We should take into consideration two major facts. First, according to modern authorities in sociology of religion small religious communities are those that will have important place in the future, since big, traditional churches have been historically compromised. Second, churches need not be the only ones that label “sects” all the communities that are in some way different. More often than not, the authors come from political structures resolute to remain in power. When the member of Kostunica’s cabinet, Dragan Jovic, in his capacity as the police minister, declares war on sects, that’s – among other things – overt violation of human freedoms. His refers to all such communities as sectarians and Satanists, despite the fact that all, except for Satanists, have been duly registered. This is not about ignorance only but about a conscious political intention that is manifested as a typical witch hunt.

³⁶ *Danas*, September 18, 2007.

To safeguard Vojvodina’s model of “unity in differences” – not only in Vojvodina but also in the entire territory of Serbia – religious communities must be differentiated from sects, and the very term sect specified. Members of small religious communities – such as Adventists – are treated as if they were second-rate citizens. They are under constant pressure. No wonder, therefore, that the Amnesty International reacted to their position. If the afore-mentioned Law on Churches and Religious Communities cannot be significantly amended, it is possible to insert in it a provision on small religious communities’ duty to register their teachings. Domestic politicians are prone to offhandedly call Freemasons a sect. On the other hand, our freemason, Dositej Obradovic, was the one to open a European chapter of Serbia’s enlightenment and culture in all domains of national life, religious included. For the Serbian Orthodox baroque – that is nowadays being destroyed – is the first-class cultural fact.³⁷

Dusko RADOSAVLJEVIC
MINORITIES’ POLITICAL REPRESENTATION
AND SAFEGUARD OF VOJVODINA’S MULTIETHNIC IDENTITY

(Theses)

I see a seed of contradictions in the very title of the topic we are discussing today. Namely, with the political scene as the one we have it seems impossible to create an atmosphere advantageous to the safeguard of the province’s multiethnic identity no matter how favorable solutions for minorities’ political representation might be offered.

- Politicians at republican and provincial levels alike lack the political will necessary for having minorities’ political representation solved productively and in the long run;

- Minority national councils are not legitimate to pursue policies that would effectively suit members of minority communities rather minority political classes only; the manner in which national councils are elected is questionable;

- Vojvodina’s ruling coalition’s proposal for the amendment of electoral rules and introduction of guaranteed mandates for representatives of national minorities has been subjected to political arbitration – that in itself is most problematic in the election year; better chances for political manipulation; facultative bodies are in charge of electoral rolls; certain political groupings

³⁷ An excerpt from a study on the position of religious minorities in Vojvodina and Serbia.

skillfully rig electoral results; the attempt to cement the incumbent political grouping regardless of electoral outcome, etc.;

- Absence of a coherent concept for Vojvodina's development as a multiethnic region; this is why elected officials in the province – but also those belonging to some Belgrade-seated political options cannot influence the safeguard of Vojvodina's multiethnic identity; lack of knowledge of lack of will to perceive and develop Vojvodina in some other way than "7 percent of Serbia's budget;"

- Absence of a wider political, cultural, economic and pluralistic platform for Serbia as an European and multicultural state and political community; such a platform should be developed by all major political groups and elected officials in Serbia (in the parliaments and in the government, including the President of the Republic) with a view to creating preconditions for the country's modernization; the platform as such implies participation of minority communities in the process of building Serbia's identity and, in particular, fostering Vojvodina's multi-ethnicity;

- Desperately obsolete concepts of political elites in Serbia and Vojvodina meant to secure resources for their long rules and for satisfying interests of party memberships – masterly veiled by the so-called state-building topics – also hinder development of an adequate policy in this domain;

- Serbian/Vojvodina's political scenes are incapable of proving their legitimacy on the grounds of the premise that a full personal autonomy is a precondition to the development of a modern political community; that is the main stumbling bloc in the way of minority communities' participation in political processes, building of Vojvodina's multiethnic identity and establishment of a modern political community in the Republic of Serbia.

Tomislav ZIGMANOV

ONCE AGAIN ABOUT GENERAL PROBLEMATIC

I would like to broach some issues that, as it seems to me, have been omitted so far. The first issue relates to legitimacy of minority representatives in a democracy. The predominant principle of democracies is the principle of direct legitimacy of the people for whom we vote and who are in power. Any indirect elections of minority representatives in power create problems, and such solutions are neither democratic nor fair to minorities. Actually, such solutions open the door to the problems within minority communities themselves. Likewise, they

open the door to paternalism and manipulation of minority communities by political oligarchies whenever it suits their needs.

Not long ago, a read a statement by a high official of the Democratic Party. "We shall offer minorities a certain number of seats," he said. That's humiliating. Why should minorities be offered some seats rather than be guaranteed a principled and fair participation? Their participation in governance should not be something to bargain about or dependable on the good will of the people in power. On the other hand, indirect representation deprives minorities of control mechanisms. How could they possible control their elected officials when they have not elected them in direct elections?

Further, minorities' political elites can get alienated forever from citizens from a certain minority community for there is not a single mechanism of accountability. You have the same situation with minority representatives that have now entered the parliament as candidates on the lists of the political parties of the majority nation. They have voted against the interests of minorities and justified that with the stands taken by the political parties on the lists of which they had been elected.

As you know, the "owner" of a mandate under the new Constitution is not an individual but a political party. In it only to be expected that to keep their mandates minority representatives will obey party headquarters rather than stand for minority interests. And there is nothing you can do to prevent such behavior as you have no mechanism for punishing such representatives.

The control over the officials who hold several indirectly elected positions is even more problematic. For instance, a representative of the Hungarian National Council is simultaneously the president of the Provincial Council of National Councils, the coordinator of national councils and the member of the Republican Council for National Minorities. Accumulation of functions is an unavoidable consequence of the unsolved minority representation. And what about democratization against the backdrop of the public space with almost feudal traits when it comes to legitimacy and accumulation of power?

Then take for instance minority representatives in governmental agencies, whose membership is to be ascribed to multiply indirect elections. There is no minority representative in the Broadcasting Agency but there are some in the National Council of Education. Their legitimacy above all derives from religious communities. You cannot control their work for there is no mechanism of control. Actually this is how the entire minority space becomes the space of authoritarianism and despotism.

Pavel DOMONJI

NATIONAL COUNCILS A LA MARX BROTHERS

Some time ago, a Zagreb-seated magazine ran a story about a global triumph of democracy. Even the regimes that can hardly be called democratic invoke democracy, said the author. In my opinion, this thesis about the triumph of democracy is relative at least when it comes to the situation we have over here and at least when it comes to national councils. Last week participants in a conference in Novi Sad underlined that the key dilemma about the election of national councils had not been solved yet. Opinions on whether national councils should be elected democratically through direct elections or indirectly through bodies of electors still differ. People from the same minority community could not reach agreement about this despite their strong criticism of the existing system of electors.

What's problematic about such system of the election of national councils?

Simply, bodies of electors do not secure equal rights to all people from a particular minority community but they do secure domination of a political structure over a national council. For instance, the regulation on the functioning of assemblies of electors has only formalized domination of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians in Hungarians' national council.

But let's stop for a moment for a test. Let's imagine that four years ago national councils were elected democratically. Would the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarian manage to win the majority of seats in the national council? Yes, they would. To sum up – even in such case the Alliance would win. They would probably be less dominating but that's not so important for my point. My point is that their influence would have been legitimate for it would derive from the support by the Hungarian electorate.

There are scores of other problems apart from legitimacy. An electoral system greatly determines legitimacy of an authority. Those elected in democratic elections are by far more legitimate than those elected indirectly. Let me just remind you that legitimacy – and even legality - of the Hungarian National Council have been disputed from the very beginning.

Secondly, the electoral system and legitimacy considerably influence relations within a minority community. Those relations in the case of the Bosniak community have been so radicalized and brutalized that some non-governmental organizations from Novi Pazar called for a ban on some Bosniak political parties. Confronting political options within the Bosniak community have played on any change in the Bosniak electorate's public opinion to formalize some change in their national council.

Thirdly, the national councils of the minorities with established political parties are strikingly dependent on those parties. Such situation brings about many problems. I'll just point out the following two:

a) Since the seats in national councils are set aside for partisan cadres the overall competence of those bodies to deal with the matters in their jurisdiction can be questionable; and

b) The threat of manipulation of national councils by some parties is quite realistic. Those parties are using the national councils to realize their own interests rather than those of a national minority. Take, for instance, the proposal submitted to the Vojvodina Assembly by three parties – the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, the Democratic Party and the Force of Serbia Movement. The said proposal has been agreed on with national councils. The problem is that by dealing with the election of MPs national councils have overstepped the bounds of their authority. Moreover, the mandates of some national councils had expired at the time. The more so they couldn't have had their say in laying down electoral rules.

Fourthly, though mandates of some national councils have expired the latter operate as if everything was normal. Such situation sources a number of harmful consequences:

a) It discredits national councils and boils them down to sinecures;

b) It compromises their dedication to the rule of law;

c) It confirms that Serbian politics are not guided by principled, universally accepted stands. The obligations laid down in the Constitutional Law relate to local, provincial and presidential elections testify that the Serbian political elite is incapable of meeting deadlines and duties it has imposed on itself by passing the said law.

I deliberately underline the Serbian political elite as I wish to draw your attention to some facts of major political significance.

First, as Slaven Bacic noted the Serbian politics lacks a well-thought-out minority policy and strategy. The minority issue is totally marginalized and overshadowed by the Kosovo question;

Second, the Kosovo question is used to keep nationalism alive. Frustrated Serbian nationalists blame minorities as well for their failures. Remember how Tomislav Nikolic commented Boris Tadic's victory in the presidential race? He said that Tadic won thanks to minority votes. So he put through the following message – had only Serbs voted in the presidential elections the winner would not have been Tadic but Nikolic. In other words, minorities rather than the majority had a final say in the election of the President of the Republic.

Statements such as Nikolic's are not only Serbia's specialty. True, people said similar things in other countries but in different historical circumstances. For instance, Konrad Adenauer was elected thanks to a single vote. Everyone dissatisfied with the election pointed a finger at a MP from the ranks for the Danish minority. It turned out later on that his vote had not been the decisive one. Nevertheless, the man was on the carpet for having decided Germany's political fate. In Slovenia, too, President Janez Drnovsek was elected with the one-vote majority. Commenting his election, some Slovenian public figures claimed minorities should not be allowed to arbitrate state matters and their voting right in the parliament should be limited only to the issues that directly concerned them.

All those illustrative instances indicate that the minority issue is a most delicate one. Its successful resolution necessitates support and understanding of the majority, its intellectual and political elites in the first place.

Misa Samaradzic underlined with good reason that the problem of minorities' political representation must not be subjected to arbitrary solutions. Likewise, explanations accompanying some proposals must not be offensive to minorities. For instance, the explanation of the proposal for amendment of the Decision on the Election of Provincial Deputies quotes that only the minority communities that have formed their national councils are entitled to elect deputies, since by forming those councils they have proved their national consciousness and willingness to safeguard specificities of their communities. Formulations as this one imply that, say, members of the Montenegrin community do not possess national consciousness given that they have not formed a national council. And this is hardly acceptable if one takes into account Montenegrins' organizations and associations. We might say that Montenegrins' consciousness is imbued with traditionalism and conservativeness because it relies on a church of their own but to imply that their national consciousness is underdeveloped is offensive.

Anyway, the Constitution provides that minorities can form their national councils, which means that they need not if they do not want to. However, their decision not to form a national council must not be to their disadvantage and make them unequal with the communities that have formed national councils.

To conclude with I would say that the part of the explanation I've quoted has yet another, hidden meaning. Namely, what the Serbian political elite wants is to have citizens organized and differentiated by ethnic principles rather than by some other. In plain words – if you want to have your representative and partake in the distribution of resources, form a national council of your own. This will not

solve your problems but you will at least have your national council, as Marx brothers might put it.

Gojko MISKOVIC ANECDOTAL AND PATHETIC

Figuratively speaking, the inscription on Serbia's national emblem might run – either in Latin or in literal Serbian Cyrillic – “Everything may make sense but need not necessarily.” This piece of “wisdom” – that actually reflects the pre-political spirit of unreliability or, as some German historian put it, Levantine business – best illustrates Serbia's present-day policy. No doubt that in such ambience of total relativization of everything that makes human life normal and predictable the parts of the Serbian nation that have got used, through centuries, to a different value system pay the highest price. Here I refer to myself as a member of that corps – the corps that can be only sociologically and anthropologically determined rather than subjected to a strict definition of a political nation. The Serbs of Vojvodina and the Serbs who used to live in Croatian cities are those who paid dear for this pseudo-principle, this profound, statesmanlike thought ascribed, as far as I know, to Nikola Pasic.

Speaking of minorities and even of national minorities I am quite positive that the population of Vojvodina's Serbs is the biggest minority in the territory of Serbia. We are in a paradoxical situation: our verified and undisputable family histories simply cannot be publicly affirmed because of the hue and cry raised by the state-paid “legionaries of Serbian nationalism.”

And I am referring here to petty thieves that grow into cabinet members or false believers, or, for that matter, prime ministers that the moment they come to power begin manifesting every possible unchristian trait.

In my humble opinion, all those negative impulses have been coming, throughout history, from the Serbian Orthodox Church – that is, from its alienated and self-satisfied hierarchy. Some months ago in Sombor I witnessed what a noble idea to have the dilapidated and ruined Evangelistic Church completely renovated had to go through. The church is symbolically situated at the town's Theater Square and dates back in the early 20th century. Some missionaries and people of good will from the United States were willing to organize fundraising for the church. All of a sudden a man introducing himself the primate of the Evangelistic Church in Vojvodina showed up. To me, he looked more like some small entrepreneur than a pious person. He eventually admitted that he could not decide by himself but had to ask a bishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church

whether the action was permissible or would strengthen the presence of the unwelcome Protestant spirit in the province. I was shocked to learn that he had to turn to someone else for his own opinion. But the man said what he said openly and unblushingly.

Thanks to the endeavor of this group of American humanitarians who live in Sombor and pursue their mission in the circumstances I would not call ideal the Evangelists and their primate in Vojvodina had the roof of their church fixed. The roof at least leaks no more due to the moneys they paid from their own pockets. Actually, they only had some tiles changes and whitewashed sections that cried for thorough reconstruction. All this indicates that the authorities would not allow revival of an “alien” and much needed influence on the province. In early 19th century in the then multiethnic and multi-religious Austria-Hungary the Evangelists were those who contributed to Sombor’s development as an urban area. Sombor has not been developed as such since.

I hope this example of mixed emotions – the examples that makes me laugh and cry at the same time – illustrates the full complexity of today’s situation calling for a rational strategy of modernization.

Josip IVANOVIC
DISCREPANCY BETWEEN MINORITIES’ DECLARATIVE RIGHTS
AND THEIR DEMOCRATIC CAPACITIES
FOR EXERCISE OF THOSE RIGHTS

I feel privileged to partake in this meeting and would like to thank the organizers, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, for having invited me. I take the topic of religious information broached by Mr. Mirko Djordjevic most interesting. I’ve been myself studying religious issues for long. There are many questions he could not have tackled in so short time, which also relate to Vojvodina’s identity since they are about religious minorities and their position and role in Vojvodina’s complex multiethnic structure. For instance, recognition of the Rumanian Orthodox Church is still an open question. Or, there are problems sourcing from the new Law on Religious Rights and Freedoms that need to be solved. In my view, we could trigger off resolution of at least some problems by organizing sessions as this one.

Minorities’ political representation is also important for the right to information in minority languages. In this context, we must pay due attention to the election of national councils. Some participants in the discussion have underlined the fact that legal, four-year mandates of several national councils had

expired and that election of those councils had not been regulated by a law yet. That’s paradoxical.

I would also like to question the very purpose of national councils primarily from the angle of the lawmakers that have passed the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities. I was myself elected the first president of the Croatian National Council. The form I had to fill in the process of the Council’s registration did not have an appropriate classification box for national councils. I was facing the same problem throughout my office as the president – there was no telling what type of institutions national councils were. As you might be aware, Hungarians were those who broke the ice – they were the first to form their national council. Croats came after.

I discussed the problem with Slaven Bacic, who told me that in his view national councils of national minorities were *consultative bodies* the state had devised and incorporated in its system so as to have some, say, Roma of its own to consult whenever challenged by problems plaguing the Roma community. I had the same feeling all the time though I saw that in real life some national councils were behaving not only like parliaments – i.e. representational bodies – but also like *governments*. They became executive powers, which I hold more than problematic.

Some minority representatives heartily welcomed the decision by the Executive Council of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina to hand over ownership rights of the print media to national councils. “Finally, we shall be exercising some power, we shall be distributing some fund and thus at least become a part of collective consciousness of our members,” said some national councils at the time. But someone from the state leadership figured this out soon and the inflow of funds became sporadic. As I said, I was the first president of the Croatian council and members of my community were expecting me to do something. I was chairing the council for two and a half years at my own expense. I had meeting with all sorts of officials, I participated in conferences like this one, but what was the bottom line? None at all.

When the state realized that things can function that way too, the question Pavel Domonji has just broached opened. We cannot just weep and wail, and blame the state for our unrealized rights. Unfortunately, some mechanisms inhibit us and we ourselves hinder our activism. In other words, members of minority communities are incapable of coping with some problems to their own detriment.

But, to tell the truth, some national councils are infiltrated with a special species of people, incompetent people, who cunningly seized the opportunity to get in possession of some funds and start running the so-called ethno-business. In other words, they reason, “I shall be a Croat and will be paid as such. I need not

be qualified for the job, I need not have any insight into the situation, but I will be authorized to make decisions, give counsel, etc. on behalf of my community.”

Drawing from my experience I must say that the then minister of human and minority rights was not exactly concerned with minority issues. It was often hard even to arrange a meeting with him. He once told us, “Feel free to behead me, to spit on me, to do whatever you want to me, but I simply cannot do anything for you.” That’s hardly an approach appropriate to a member of the cabinet. Further, a federal council for national minorities has never been set up at all despite the fact that its establishment is laid down by the afore-mentioned law. Later on, the Republic has taken some obligations upon itself but that was only when everything started going downhill.

There is yet another principled issue when it comes to minorities’ representation – the issue of minorities’ political parties that can also influence the nature and scope of information in minority languages. In this context I am prone to reduce everything to absurdity and conclude that the two issues are contradictory. What’s the purpose of a political party? To seize power? But what are the chances for a minority party to come to power? None. A minority party may gain power at local level only, though this is also problematic. The Croatian community that is, apart from the Roma, the most dispersed community in the territory of the Republic of Serbia has no chance at all, dispersed as it is, to come to power even at local level. The same refers to some other, much bigger minority communities. On the other hand, one should not overlook the ideological affiliation of a minority party.

In principle, the same as members of the majority nation, members of minority communities should be entitled to freely occupy their position at the large scale of political options, platforms and programs. I used to reason that members of minority communities should be free to join whatever political party they wish and as party members compete for offices in representational and governmental bodies. Then I realized that they could accomplish that via national councils but differently devised councils – like those, say, in Hungary that has developed minority self-governments.

Yet, this is about qualitatively different arrangements. The nature of national councils in Serbia is consultative. But, had the authorities strictly followed the provisions of the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities they would have consulted the people in national councils in charge of education in the process of passing the Law on Higher Education. But one bothered to consult them. Anyone concerned with the minority problematic is under the impression that national councils are there for their own sake and for

the sake of the people who are being paid for membership in those councils. In brief, the very concept of those bodies should be thoroughly reconsidered.

To conclude with, I would like to underline what really matters. See, since minority representatives can occupy any part of the political spectrum national councils – under the condition that they enjoy indisputable legitimacy and legality – could be, mathematically expressed, common denominator of politically differently dispersed members of minority communities. Should that be the case and bearing in mind a variety of political options, it would be easier for national councils to find common grounds and respond to political parties’ offers. Party programs would be competing for minorities’ support. In my opinion, various models should be considered, discussed and studied, but also some concrete proposals should be made. Those proposals might fall on deaf ears, the authorities might ignore them, but we must do everything in our power, nevertheless.

Vladimir VALENTIK BETWEEN RESIGNATION AND SIMULATION

We have discussed national councils as forms of minorities’ representation. I do share a dose of skepticism Mr. Bacic voiced in his keynote address. However, one should take into account a certain asymmetry of national communities in Vojvodina. Critical remarks about functioning of national councils cannot apply to all national councils without exception. Each council is specific. At the time national councils were being established – and we have discussed the manner in which they are elected and formed – I’ve been skeptical about such organizational arrangements as I expected them to be nothing but a façade. Nevertheless, the Slovak National Council has managed to attain some results that would have been hardly possible otherwise. In other words, the Slovak National Council has seized the opportunity of a more or less legitimate form of representation to articulate some needs and constraints of the Slovak community in Vojvodina. Of course, I take the functioning of national councils with some reserve, particularly when it comes to minorities’ political representation. Moreover, I am not only skeptical but also resigned. For, whatever model we might advocate and it eventually takes root we shall surely detect so many shortcomings in its functioning to conclude that the bottom line is simulation of a multiethnic political life rather than a true one.

Here is an illustrative example from historical experience. Back in mid-19th century the Slovak minority community tried to get politically organized and was participating in elections along with the Serbian community, which was also in

the minority at the time. The Slovak community succeeded in elections twice – in 1869 when William Pavljini - Tot from the Kulpin electoral district won a parliamentary seat in Budapest and in 1905 when Milan Hodza managed the same. The Slovak People’s Party was revived after the World War I but its effects could hardly be called successful. In the first post-war elections Slovaks got their parliamentary representative, Igor Stafanik of Backa Palanka, brother of the well-known Slovak general Milan Rastislav Stefanik. Several years later, after fierce inter-party disputes, the party decided to change its name into the Slovak People’s Farmer Party. Despite partaking in elections as the only Slovak party, it usually did not obtain Slovak votes. Slovaks preferred to vote for, say, Farmers Party of Stjepan Radic. We can draw lessons from this historical experience in minorities’ political organization and representation, particularly when it comes to smaller minority communities.

We also had 40 years of “brotherhood and unity” and a multiethnic policy that was nothing but a simulation. Therefore, no matter what model of minority representation we choose either at national or regional level, I am afraid the results would not meet our expectations.

Annex

Miroslav SAMARDZIC
ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND PROTECTION
OF NATIONAL MINORITIES³⁸

The Draft Decision on the Amendments and Supplements to the Decision on the Election of Deputies in the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina caused a fierce dispute within the ruling coalition early this summer. The proposal had been submitted by the Democratic Party, the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians and Karic’s Force of Serbia Movement.

According to the electoral rules adopted in 2004, 60 out of 120 deputies in the Assembly of Vojvodina are elected by the majority system and the rest by the proportional. The entire territory of Vojvodina is one electoral district, the parliamentary threshold is 5 percent of total vote, while natural threshold is applied to minority parties and coalitions. The three above-mentioned parties take that this system should be so amended that 60 deputies are elected by the majority system in the same number of electoral districts, 48 by the proportional system (5-percent threshold and natural threshold for minorities) and 12 seats are reserved for minority representatives.

The parties demand such amendment on the grounds of Article 180 of the Constitution providing proportional representation of minorities in the assemblies of autonomous provinces and units of local self-government with ethnically mixed population. It is obvious that the parties submitting the proposal hold that the Constitution insists that minorities should be represented in assemblies as communities. Besides, the Constitution introduces the institute of positive discrimination. According to Article 21, special measures the Republic of Serbia may take so as to secure full equality of persons or groups of persons whose position is fundamentally not equal with that of other citizens shall not be considered discrimination.

According to the proposal, national communities that have already set up their national councils and, by the last census, have at least 10,000 members in the territory of the Autonomous Province have the right to reserved representatives. Hungarians would obtain three protected parliamentary seats, Slovaks and Croats two each, while Roma, Rumanians, Bunjevci, Ruthenians and Macedonians one each.

³⁸ The article has been publicized at the website of the Serbian New Political Thought.

The criteria for determining the number of protected seats have been set arbitrarily. Under the Constitution, national councils are facultative institutions that may be established with a view of exercising the right to self-government in the domains of culture, education, information and official use of a minority language and alphabet. Likewise, the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities the Assembly of the FR of Yugoslavia adopted in 2002 does not provide that a national council is a precondition for a community to be considered a national minority and enjoy minority protection. According to the proposal, members of minority communities would be entitled to cast three ballots in the next provincial elections, while the majority Serbs only two. This solution could be defined as positive discrimination but would apply only to the national minorities that are most disadvantaged in the electoral procedure and are too small to have their representatives elected. Special measures would not apply to the Hungarians that make up some 14 percent of total population of Vojvodina since, under existing regulations, they could win a considerable number of seats. Yet, it should be noted that only the Republic is authorized to take measures of positive discrimination.

Further, the protected deputies would be elected by the majority system in the first round only and in Vojvodina as a single electoral district. The candidate who receives more votes than his/her opponents would be elected a representative of a minority community. If more deputies are to be elected those with highest scores would take seats.

The adverse consequence is that the protected deputies could be elected by gaining by far fewer votes than the rest, which may lead to a political crisis. Namely, bearing in mind the present-day rather equalized balance of power in the provincial parliament (the so-called patriotic bloc on the one side and the so-called pro-European on the other) the "protected" minority deputies could turn the scales for a parliamentary majority.

According to the proposal, only members of a minority community would be allowed to cast ballot for their deputies. Holding of such elections would necessitate separate minority voting lists, which could give rise to many legal and political problems. National councils would be in charge of making minority voting lists. Elections for deputies would be held only under the condition that the voting list of an individual minority community has 50 percent plus one name out of total adult population of that community as registered in the last census. Otherwise, the seat belonging to that minority would be added to the number of deputies elected by the proportional system. Every adult citizen, member of a minority community, with voting right, who lives in the territory of the province and is registered in a separate voting list has the right to vote and to be elected.

In order to be registered in separate voting lists, members of national minorities of voting age should submit claims to their respective national councils. National councils should subsequently decide on a voter's registration and inform the claimant about its decision. A national council could turn down a request if it finds out that the claimant has falsely identified himself or herself as a member of a national community. In that case, the claimant could appeal to the provincial administration authority.

According to the proposal, local self-government bodies in charge of a general electoral roll would be obliged to help functioning of national councils and to enable inspection of the general electoral roll at national councils' request. Further, on the grounds of a separate electoral list municipalities would insert a mark indicating a voter's ethnic origin in the general electoral roll.

The above-mentioned solutions are utterly problematic. Under both the Constitution and the Law on the Rights and Freedom of National Minorities the scope of activity of national councils is restricted to the aforementioned domains. Could an autonomous province expand the competence of national councils without constitutional and legal authorization? Could national councils operate like administrative bodies? Further, could an autonomous province at all manage voting lists? The Constitution provides that the exercise and protection of citizens' rights and freedoms are in the jurisdiction of the republic. An autonomous province can introduce additional rights for national minorities only if entitled by the law. Voting right is one of fundamental human rights. The proposal envisages that a national council can turn down a citizen's claim to be registered in a separate voting list if that citizen has falsely introduced himself/herself as a member of a national community. By what criteria shall a national council determine someone's ethnic origin? There are no objective criteria for deciding a person's nationality. That fact, therefore, cannot be proved in a legal procedure.

Article 47 of the Constitution provides that a person shall freely express his or her ethnic origin. So, no authority whatsoever is entitled to decide whether or not a citizen's declaration of ethnic origin is valid or not. For instance, a census taker is obliged to write a person's ethnic origin in the form as told by that person and the person's declaration is never checked. Moreover, the declaration can be changed. The proposal obviously draws on the conservative stand that one's ethnic origin is inborn and primordial rather than a cultural category. It practically suggests that a national community is a community of the blood. To make things worse, the proposal includes no efficient legal remedies for the protection of the voting right of members of national minorities. Namely, if a national council refuses to register a person, that person can appeal to the provincial administrative authority. The voting right like any other human right

must be efficiently protected by a court of law. However, an autonomous province does not have autonomous judiciary and cannot decide on courts' jurisdiction. Therefore, it cannot decide the manner in which voting lists shall be managed either.

How would separate voting lists be managed in real life? Legitimacy of the existing national councils is disputable and mandates of some have expired. National councils do not have human resources for complex tasks. It is common knowledge that the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians has total control over the Hungarian National Council. President of the Council Lazlo Josza is a high party official at the same time. So, if a Hungarian is denied registration in a separate voting list, he can appeal to the Provincial Secretariat for Administration and Regulations headed by Tamas Korhec, also an official of the Alliance. It goes without saying that the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, a party participating in elections, would be controlling the process of forming the Hungarian electoral roll instead of some unbiased public authority. Possibilities for manipulating such electoral rolls are many since other national councils are also controlled by minority political oligarchies. And there is always a risk that persons considered nationally unsuitable by the criteria of national councils are denied registration and deprived of any efficient legal remedy.

The general electoral roll is managed by the rules laid down in the Law on the Election of People's Deputies (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 35/00). The Law provides that a person who is not registered in a voting list may lodge a complaint before a court of law, which must rule the case within 24 hours. Also, the Law regulates inspection of electoral rolls and the data they must contain. I underline that the Law does not provide that electoral rolls should include information about ethnic origin (Article 15, para 2). Can an autonomous province decide against the law to have the information about ethnic origin added to the general electoral roll?

It is obvious that by many elements the proposal is unconstitutional and illegal. The Constitutional Courts would have to decide the matter should anyone initiate the procedure for assessment of the proposal's constitutionality. However, the Constitutional Court has not been formed yet and there is no telling when it will become functional.

Minority protection is often manipulated to attain some other political goals. In this specific case, the three parties are probably not concerned with improvement of the political position of Vojvodina's minorities but try to tailor electoral rules so as to retain power in the province. Namely, those parties evidently hold that the protected minority deputies will always come from their political groupings and stand against the Radicals, the Socialist Party of Serbia

and the Democratic Party of Serbia. The fact that the province's budget has been raised to some 55 billion dinars is the reason behind such fierce struggle for power – the parties in power now have a by far bigger booty to distribute among themselves.

Political risks of the proposed electoral system are enormous. The growth of interethnic tension could be the worst scenario. Should the proposal be adopted the Hungarian nationalistic party, the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, would be always in power in Vojvodina, while Serbian nationalistic parties would be pushed in the position of a hopeless minority, which would trigger off their activism outside institutions. No doubt that those parties would be convincing Vojvodina Serbs that there are discriminated.

Is this all about a ruthless struggle for power by selfish and irresponsible political elites or the whole story has a larger context? It is common knowledge that autonomist circles are dissatisfied with the status of Vojvodina and do everything in their power to have the Constitution revised. Since domestic population, the Serbs in particular, do not back their endeavor inciting of ethnic and political crisis is a way to have the province's status decided at some international conference or by the EU and the US arbitrage. The autonomist bloc includes the Democratic Party, political organizations of national minorities and the League of Vojvodina Social Democrats. The Democratic Party is the strongest and the most influential party in the group. The League, however, does not support the proposal for purely pragmatic reasons. Namely, in the provincial elections in 2004 the League obtained only one deputy by the majority system and six by the proportional. Fewer deputies elected by the proportional system would surely diminish the League's influence in the Assembly of Vojvodina. The G17 does not support the proposal for the same reasons.

Backed by the Serbian Radical Party and the Democratic Party of Serbia, President of the Assembly of Vojvodina Bojan Kostres suggests that all 120 deputies should be elected by the proportional system with the natural threshold for minority parties and coalitions. The solution he offers for consideration calls for the amendment of the Statute of Vojvodina providing that every municipality shall have at least one deputy. President of the Executive Council of Vojvodina Bojan Pajtic – who advocates the proposal – takes that under the Constitutional Law for the Implementation of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia the incumbent Assembly is not entitled to change the Statute. Finally, deputy Mirko Bajic has proposed that the existing electoral system should only include the natural threshold for minority parties.

A purely proportional system with Vojvodina as a single electoral district and the natural threshold for minorities would probably be the best solution of

all. Such solution would not necessitate forming of separate electoral rolls that are always politically risky. Besides, it would make it possible for every bigger national minority to be represented in the Assembly of Vojvodina, and for every member of a national minority to freely decide whether to cast ballot for a national party or for a party operating in a larger community. The solutions offering multiple choices and an individual's autonomous decision-making are the best solutions. It should be noted that every small minority community cannot have its own deputy in the provincial parliament. The purpose of positive discrimination is not to annul the democratic rule of the majority but to compensate its failures and shortcomings. The natural threshold is a lowest possible point not to be further lowered. Only a person enjoying appropriate democratic support can be a deputy. Last but not least, the proportional system encourages bigger parties to include minority candidates in their lists and thus attract minority votes. All this contributes to social integration and bypasses the risk of simultaneous ethnic and political divides, which usually leads to serious crises with unforeseeable consequences.

MINORITY INFORMATION RESOURCES AND PRESERVING VOJVODINA'S MULTIETHNIC IDENTITY

Sonja BISERKO

Public information in minority languages is very important for the preservation of Vojvodina's multiethnic identity. Arguments based on identity considerations are often put forward in support of the exercise of this right. This is quite justified, for public information in minority languages goes a long way towards contributing to the preservation of the national identity of persons belonging to national minorities.

However, the right to public information in one's native language is a fundamental right which, as such, is of wider effect and significance. The provision of information to members of minorities in their mother tongue helps their integration into global society. Furthermore, it contributes in large measure to the legitimacy of the polity within which the minorities exercise their rights.

The effects of this right ought not to be underestimated with regard to tolerance and reducing ethnic distance either. Otherness originating either within a majority or within a minority community will be accepted far more easily if the media are more responsive to developments in other national communities than is the case today.

After all, public information in minority languages boosts the competence of citizens in the information sphere and makes for greater rationality of political life, a consideration of exceptional importance for an unregulated society and unconsolidated state like Serbia. Nor should one lose sight of the fact that the bilingualism of members of minority groups is a major asset when it comes to imparting and receiving information.

These facts alone lead to the conclusion that peaceful exercise of this right must become a strategic interest not only of persons belonging to minority

communities, their intellectual, cultural and political elites, but of all political actors who look upon themselves as democratically-minded political actors and, as such, strive to constitute Serbia as a democratic community.

As is well known, providing information in minority languages can be achieved in two ways: either by setting up separate minority media outlets or broadcasting special programmes in minority languages by the existing (ethnic majority language) media organizations. The existence of a minority media outlet is not essential to providing information in a minority language because a minority can receive information in its own language from a public service broadcaster in the form of special features, shows or programmes. From the point of view of the majorities, the existence of minority media is the most desirable option. A minority with no media outlet of its own and no possibility of receiving information in its mother tongue would be in the most disadvantageous position.

The decades-long practice in Vojvodina of public information in minority languages should continue to be promoted as a mainstay of Vojvodina's identity. A statutory provision under which media (above all local electronic ones) are to be privatized by the end of the year (2007) raised concerns within minorities as a threat to their rights, given that the minority media market is simply too restricted from a commercial point of view.

A survey conducted by the Fund for an Open Society indicates that representatives of minority cultural elites were unanimous in the view that the privatization process would greatly affect the quality of public information in minority languages. On the other hand, however, they were highly confident that the minority-language media outlets had a future.

Tomislav ZIGMANOV
INFORMATION IN NATIONAL MINORITY LANGUAGES
IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

The Fund for an Open Society undertook the survey of the situation in the field of public information in minority languages to ascertain the facts regarding the minorities' right to receive information in their mother tongue as well as to assess the economic, technical-technological and professional capacity for transformation of the existing minority media organizations. We also wish in this way to draw the attention of the public and of the political decision-makers to the possible negative effects of forthcoming transformation and to suggest elements for new institutional arrangements with a view to ensuring the continuing and adequate exercise of the right to public information in one's native language.

Serbia is home to persons belonging to a great number of minorities, so it is essential for every pluralist society to create conditions in which members of national minorities can enjoy peacefully both their general civil and their specific rights. The way minority rights are regulated and whether they are exercised or not is of considerable effect on the extent to which minorities are integrated into society, the quality of interethnic relations, the stability as well as democratization of society.

The right to public information in one's native language, in addition to the rights to education, preservation of culture or official use of language and script, is a key minority right. At the same time, it is an important identity resource as well as being significant from the point of view of civic competence. In Serbia and particularly in Vojvodina, where a tradition of information in national minority languages has existed for decades, a process of ownership transformation of such media and others is under way.

Introduction – Media Sector Transition in Serbia

A good majority of minority-language media are still being financed from public sources, that is, from the Serbian or Vojvodina budget, or from the budgets of local communities – municipalities. This kind of financing continued after 2003, the year the founding rights of the minority-language media outlets established by the Republic of Serbia or the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina were transferred to the national councils for national minorities. At local level, minority-language media organizations broadcasting in minority languages are chiefly founded and financed by municipalities. Though financing from public sources ensures economic viability, it also means a monopoly on public information in minority languages regardless of the quality, editorial policy, developmental and professional capacity.

The present legal framework, adopted in the wake of the democratic changes in 2000, has not fully been adjusted. This lack of adjustment is the potential source of trouble regarding the minority media transformation currently in progress. It is feared for a reason that exposing such media outlets to the market could affect the right to public information in one's native language, especially at local level. The absence of a wider debate concerning the strategy of development of broadcasting in Serbia, the frequency allocation plan, and the process of constitution of broadcasting organizations in Vojvodina and Serbia, is an additional source of concern that the quality and extent of exercise of the right to public information in one's native language achieved may suffer.

The current media privatization in Serbia, which should be completed by the end of 2007 as a result of the adoption and implementation of the 'European standards', will entail new institutional arrangements and new forms of financing or providing subsidies at national and local levels. As a result of privatization, the minority-language news media too will become a commodity with a reputation for limited marketability and competitiveness in the media market and therefore with little prospect of viability and survival.

In order to ensure in such conditions the exercise of the guaranteed right to public information in minority languages, to preserve or improve its quality and to render minority media sustainable, it is necessary to consider and establish on time new institutional arrangements and new sources and forms of financing. Other than calling for intervention in the sphere of public finance, which implies, among other things, diversifying the allocation of funds raised through obligatory subscription fees for the services of the public service broadcasting organization, the obligation to ensure public information in minority languages will also entail interventions in the sphere of fiscal policy at national and local levels.

What matters is that the principle prohibiting the concentration of ownership should be implemented also regarding media which provide information in minority languages. However, the implementation of this principle in this sphere raises certain specific considerations reflected, for instance, in a far smaller number of media outlets, different institutional arrangements and lower democratic potentials within minorities. This imposes the need to search for special solutions as far as regulatory bodies and supervisory institutions are concerned.

It is necessary to explore the potential for use of certain European standards in the sphere of information and new possibilities, such as cross-border television, community electronic media and so on, as tools for improving the quality of information in minority languages. Looked at in the medium term, digitalization, the use of blogs as a means of keeping the public informed and so on are also potentials that must be taken into consideration in planning the future of public information in minority languages, its growth and ways to ensure its viability.

The state has a duty of providing an adequate legal framework for the exercise of the right to public information in minority languages as well as adequate financing conditions so that this right could be realized. It has a special duty of supervising the implementation of laws and other norms. However, the prime responsibility for the development of public information in minority languages today rests on the national councils for national minorities.

One need also frame and implement a new coherent policy of public information in minority languages which would take into consideration the new

legal, political and economic circumstances which have a bearing on the exercise of the right to information in minority languages. This policy must be framed with the participation of the parliaments and governments of Serbia, the national councils for national minorities, the Council of the Broadcasting Agency, nongovernmental organizations and professionals and interested members of the public from within both minority and majority ranks.

The Legal Framework,

The right to receive information in one's native language is guaranteed by various international instruments. It is regulated by legislation dealing with the sphere of minority rights, legislation regulating the provision of information itself and, in Serbia as a state undergoing transition, also by legislation regulating privatization. Legislation on information of members of Serbia's national minorities in their respective native languages has changed over the past ten years or so. During this dynamic period the quality of information in minority languages has varied owing to resulting changes in the policy of financing minority language media and their administration, with frequent noticeable interference from the sphere of politics.

The field of protection and exercise of national minority rights is regulated by two international instruments in particular, both ratified relatively recently: the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Regarding media freedom, the new Constitution of the Republic of Serbia provides in Article 50 that everyone may '...without obtaining permission, found a newspaper and other public media, in the manner envisaged by law.' The constitutional provisions relating to the rights of members of national minorities include those regulating information: Article 79, which prescribes the right to the preservation of identity, guarantees persons belonging to national minorities the right to 'full, timely and impartial public information in their [respective] languages, including the right to express, receive, impart and exchange information and ideas', as well as the right to 'establish their own public information media, in conformity with law.'

The normative provisions on the legal regulation of public information have been subject to frequent changes. As many as four laws on public information have been enacted in Serbia since 1990. As a result of such a state of affairs, a whole field of public information in minority languages in Serbia had largely been undeveloped in legal terms, and there was room for all kinds of ad-hoc solutions, manipulation and checks on the process of exercise of this right.

The Law on Public Information is the principal piece of legislation regulating this matter. From the point of view of the exercise of national minority rights, Article 5 is of significance because it imposes on the Republic, the autonomous province and local self-government the duty of providing part of the resources or other conditions necessary for the work of public media organizations which publish or broadcast in national minority languages. Another important provision stipulates that while a public media organization may be founded any domestic or foreign legal or natural person, it cannot be founded either directly or indirectly by the state or a territorial autonomy, nor by an institution, company or other legal person under majority ownership by the state, or by one which is wholly or partially financed from public revenue.

Another piece of legislation of crucial importance is the Law on Broadcasting. It provides that the public service broadcasters have the duty of 'ensuring satisfaction of the needs of the citizens for programme content reflecting the cultural identity both of peoples and of national minorities and/or ethnic groups, making it possible for them to follow particular programmes or thematic programme groups, in the areas where they live and work, in their native language and script.'

The question of media privatization is also of relevance in the context of the exercise of the right of national minorities to public information in their respective native languages. The Law on Public Information namely specifies that public media must be privatized within three years of the law entering into force, but this time limit ran out on 30 April 2006. As to the radio and television stations, their privatization must be carried out by the end of 2007, in conformity with the Law on Broadcasting. The transfer of the print media founding rights to the national councils for national minorities should encourage search for stable sources of financing as well as help create prerequisites and institutional arrangements for regulatory bodies in order to reduce the influence of certain centres of power within minority communities on media editorial policy, something yet to be realized.

Media Production in Minority Languages

Persons belonging to national minorities exercise their right to public information in their respective native languages through access to various media products. Formally viewed, these products may differ according to their status (separate or parts of a larger whole in another, mostly Serbian language), scope of content (larger or smaller number of items of information in the minority language), frequency (daily, on workdays, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly

and even annually) and specific purpose (reporting on events of local, regional or broadest social importance; or events from the field of culture and tradition of a particular minority; or events of a religious nature; or content intended for a narrow target group such as children or youth).

The data we are presenting in this report pertain to the situation during 2004, 2006 and 2006. During this period, members of Serbia's national minorities had access to 164 media products in their respective native languages produced by 101 media organizations. Of these, media products in electronic form were more numerous than those in print form. There are 38 print media in Serbia, of which 34 are in Vojvodina and only four in central Serbia. Radio programmes in minority languages are broadcast by 86 stations: 74 in Vojvodina and 12 in central Serbia. Television programmes are broadcast by 32 channels: 27 in Vojvodina and five in central Serbia. Eight cable television channels broadcast programmes in two minority languages: seven in Hungarian and one in Slovak. There is only one registered news web portal, and it is in Hungarian.

Nineteen print media, 12 radio stations and three TV stations in Serbia produce 34 products only in national minority languages. The majority of minority media outlets (nine) operate in the Hungarian language: eight newspapers and one radio station. Members of the Rusyn, Croatian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian and Bunjevac minorities have one media product in print form each.

Situation in the Sphere of Minority Public Information

Media establishments carrying on these activities are very diverse, ranging from religious communities and nongovernmental organizations to private institutions to cultural-informative and specialized media. Of course, these establishments also differ in terms of size, state of development and capacity. Our survey covers only those media organizations which are primarily concerned with providing regular (and relatively) comprehensive information of general interest in a minority language, that is, 72 media establishments with 112 media products in minority languages. The survey was conducted during March, April and May 2006 and encompassed about 75 per cent of minority-language media products throughout Serbia.

The majority of media establishments have the status of public institutions, those in private ownership being the second most numerous. The least numerous are those founded by 'citizens' associations, that is, by nongovernmental organizations. The survey established that these media are not interlinked, more than half are not members of professional and/or business associations, and as many as two-thirds have no strategic partnership with any entity in the media sphere.

Half of these media establishments operate in rented premises. Their technical-technological conditions of work are not very satisfactory either. Media production in minority languages depends largely on foreign grants, in this particular case on regular subventions by appropriate government bodies and less so on market income. Resources in the form of donations do not exceed 10 per cent of the income. The most frequent sources of donations are international donor organizations (e.g. Fund for an Open Society, European Agency for Reconstruction) and Diaspora funds in kin-states.

Journalists account for most of the staff of Serbia's minority-language media. Most of them (just under 48 per cent) are secondary school graduates. The next most numerous group (just over 32 per cent) are journalists with university qualifications. Two-year post-secondary school qualifications are possessed by 18 per cent, with the rest having no secondary school qualifications. In terms of age, most of the employees (48 per cent) are between 35 and 55 years old. The next most numerous group (31 per cent) are those over 55 years, and there are at least 21 per cent of those under 35 years of age. Such a state of human resources in the field of public information in minority languages cannot be described as favourable.

Cases of advanced professional training of journalists were rarely registered. Fewer than half the journalists employed by these media establishments (41 per cent) are members of a professional journalist association. The fact that most of the media establishments are not prepared for privatization gives rise to concern: some 30 per cent of those surveyed have no privatization plan whatever.

The media products in minority languages are monoethnic to a significant degree, with 70-80 per cent of the coverage devoted to events from own community. Events concerning the majority nation are covered to a greater extent (20-25 per cent) than those concerning other minorities (5 per cent).

Dubravka VALIC NEDELJKOVIC
MULTICULTURALITY IN PROGRAMMES OF VOJVODINA'S
PUBLIC BROADCASTING SERVICE

This paper presents results obtained by quantitative-qualitative analysis of broadcasting programmes in six languages (Serbian, Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian, Rusyn and Romany) of the Broadcasting Institution of Vojvodina (RUV) during three monitoring periods (September 2006 - January 2007), its focus being on the presence/absence of multicultural content in the public service provided, gi-

ven that this media establishment's mission is precisely to support minority cultures and communities and promote them through majority and minority language programmes, as well as to support multiculturalism as a model of community living in Vojvodina. The analysis includes a number of results obtained by the method of in-depth group conversation which relate directly to the presence/absence of a multicultural content in Vojvodina's public broadcasting service. The chief finding is that such content is lacking both in the majority language programme and in those broadcast in the national minority languages. The recommendation for good practice is for the RUV to invest serious effort into long- and short-term planning of programmes featuring multiculturalism as a topic at all levels – informative, educational and entertaining.

KEY WORDS: Multiculturalism, tolerance, hate speech, stereotypes, public broadcasting service, media in national minority languages.

1. Introduction

1.1. Theoretical Framework

In lexicographical literature, multiculturalism is defined as 'interfusion and coexistence of several cultures, of several forms of cultural life in an environment or state', and multicultural as a term 'relating to several cultures which encompasses the cultures of several distinct peoples' (Klajn and Šipka, 2006: 799).

In professional literature this concept has been interpreted in a number of ways and considered from many points of view. Thus, for instance, in his afterword to Semprini's study of multiculturalism on the example of the United States as prototypical for testing and contemplating the concept on an ideological level as well as the level of everyday politics, Branimir Stojković (1999, 147) writes that 'multiculturalism is an idea or an ideal of the harmonious coexistence of diverse ethnic and cultural groups within a pluralist society.' In the same text, Stojković adds that the 'necessary prerequisite for a multicultural society is a common civic culture based on the recognition of the fundamental institutions of the legal and economic system, as well as on the right to cultural diversity' (Afterword, Stojković: Semprini, 1999, 147).

Journalists concerned with this phenomenon in particular may find relevance in the reasoning of Pascal Zachary, who points out in the introduction to his work *The Diversity Advantage* (2003: XXV) that multiculturalism is a concept with numerous meanings, implying, in addition to the usual diversity of language and culture in relation to the majority community, citizenship as a legitimate status of minority communities, as well as identifying the need for special legislation,

institutions and social policy in order to overcome the barriers and ensure the full participation of minorities in society (2003: XXV). Pascal Zachary also asks a number of questions which journalists too may find very stimulating: Which type of multiculturalism? In whose name? Which laws support assimilation without understanding the identity of minority communities? Which laws are protective of minorities or local groups to such an extent as to make their members bitter, stigmatized and only reluctantly seen as part of the majority community? What is the view of some minority representatives of the disappearance of once-distinct inter-ethnic boundaries? Do those who are obliterating these boundaries think that they are turning their backs on their own people? Do the guardians of multiculturalism strive to preserve the integrity of the different groups, or do they defend the freedom of individuals to enter into variegated ethno-racial affiliations? The multiculturalists are self-satisfied with the diversity – instead of the American melting pot, which is gone, there exists rather an ever-changing alliance between individuals and groups, says Pascal Zachary (2003: XXVII). He argues that one should adopt new terms in order to define the phenomenon more appropriately, namely ‘mongrel’, ‘hybrid’ and ‘cosmopolitan’.

Ethnoanthropologists will be more inclined to name this phenomenon ‘aculturation’ and ‘cultural contact’. For example, Redfield, Litton and Herskowitz (as cited in Giordano, 2001: 8) say that Aculturation comprises those phenomena that occur when groups or individuals that belong to different cultures come into direct contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural pattern in one of the groups or in both. On the other hand, Fortis (according to the same author) argues that cultural contact must be viewed as a continuous process of interaction between groups with different cultures (Giordano, 2001: 8).

Many authors, including those cited previously, share the view that misunderstanding in inter-cultural communication is a rule rather than an exception, both in distant and very close communication but more so in the second. As this is often conditioned by historical events which add to cultural differentiation, one may actually conclude that multicultural relations as a rule are not harmonic (Giordano, 2001: 39). For this reason the role of the media in such communities is exceptionally important: while it can contribute to the development of tolerance and community harmonization, it can also deepen the gap between the minority and the majority by encouraging stereotypes about minority cultures and therefore contribute to ‘meetings of cultures with no understanding’. The way the media will operate will depend greatly on the politics-media relationship, legislation, rule of law, development and level of professional and ethnical standards achieved in the media sector.

Although tolerance is a concept which is almost three centuries old, many believe that it was engendered by the 20th century in the aftermath of the two major wars. The modern view is that tolerance is an ‘essential part of a society in which every individual could lead an independent existence and an inseparable part of the idea that each personality in itself is worthy of respect; or, a necessary implication of the requirement that the state should be based on justice and be neutral towards the various concepts of good’ (Krstić, 2004: 137). Without tolerance of otherness and difference there can actually be no multiculturally organized society, a society in which media would be a channel of communication which provides information free from stereotypes and prejudice. The crucial thing, however, is where to draw the line, that is, the question whether limitless tolerance may degenerate into anarchy and even encourage violence through failure to act. The foregoing also suggests who should draw the line which a democratic society must not cross in tolerating extremes and how this should be done. Modern theoretical thought makes the determination of limits relative to the context, also taking into consideration that the community must be aware of the fact that the limits are not determined once and for all and that the question of ‘moderation’ is crucial to making such decisions. In discussing the question of limits, Davis argues quite plausibly (as cited in Krstić, 2001, and Primorac, 1989) that since society must restrict liberties, there must exist an ‘economy of liberty’ which is necessarily an ‘economy of want’ since the clamour for liberties exceeds that which society can afford. This implies the necessity of drawing up a ‘budget of liberty’ which, Davis believes, could quantify with precision such items as tolerance of liberty, quantity of diversity, rate of change and the effects of that on social disintegration (Krstić, 2004: 145).

It appears that societies in transition are not yet fully agreed on the problem of tolerance, the absence of which is at its most pronounced in the media sector. There is no clear will for that either in the political or economic sphere, or in the media sphere. The tabloidization of the media sphere, including the public broadcasting service, ensures ‘no preconditions for the media representation of minority groups in society, while at the same time striving to make the reader passive by applying the principles of servility and pandering’ (Kanižaj, 2006: 24). States undergoing transition (van Cuilenburg, 1999) are distinguished by considerable media expansion and aggressive, unfair competition. In such unregulated media sectors, the plurality of media is a smokescreen for flooding the market with programmes which differ from one another only in terms of visual presentation, constants and form. So, plurality is no guarantee of diversity.

The tabloidization not only of the press but of electronic media including the public broadcasting service (e.g., RTS talk shows with guests quarrelling all

the time) is both a media and essentially a social phenomenon supportive of evasive journalism focusing on matters ordinarily unconnected with the public sphere, e.g., sex scandals, touching human interest and bizarre world-of-crime stories ...offering a ready-made framework for interpreting social and political reality in the shape of individual and personal motives and reactions (...) This fragmentation and trivialization of the complex social reality (...) reduces the ability of the public to impart sense to events and to think and act rationally (McNair, as cited in Kanižaj, 2006: 22).

The total simplification of the media content does not leave room for cause-and-effect considerations of questions of public interest including multiculturalism and marginalized groups (national minorities being one of the most prominent among these). The emphasis is on sensationalism, dramatic quality, conflict, deviant behaviour inappropriate in a civil society. A minority group makes it to the daily newscast only if such a quality or activity is recognized and considered by the editor as newsworthy.

In other words, media in transition societies for the most part ignore the problems of minorities except where these problems are the subject matter of a crime discourse. The selection of news items from the information source to the editor follows an internal implicit rather than an explicit logic and has a crucial bearing on the way reality is portrayed. While reality is exceptionally complex – based as it is on history, abstraction, discontinuity, irregularity, complex relationships and different views of the reality – the media logic rests on the concrete, the fragmentary, slices of life, selling the news story, and that without being able to present the background of an event. This is contrary to the logic of everyday life (Altheide-Snow, 1979, as cited in Kanižaj, 2006: 29). The deconstruction of that logic is the object of analyzing the discourse of the media content. This survey, too, uses its highly effective technique in the quantitative-qualitative content analysis.

Media in general and the public broadcasting service in particular are expected to exercise responsibility in the selection of topics to be treated, the placement of particular items in the programme schedule, the importance to be attached to a topic by means of specific mechanisms and, lastly, the effect of all this on the citizens' assessment of the performance of public sphere actors. Being responsible for the choice made is the essence of ethical journalism, which implies not only rights but also obligations above all for a responsible attitude towards an item of information in respect of both the source and the recipient. Responsibility implies freedom of choice on the part of the journalist and the audience as individuals in both these cases, as citizens of an open society, for today the citizen finds his chief stronghold in the sphere of civil society, and this is why one of their chief

tasks consists in protecting the autonomy of civil society and opposing from that stronghold threats (as well as real menaces) made not only by the state but by the market as well (Ridden and Turner, 2000: 144-145: as cited in Molnar, 2004: 33-34).

Another question that arises is whether responsibility can be a moral recommendation to be followed unquestioningly according to instructions from a given list of good practices recommendations, or whether responsibility should be considered from the point of view of contextual conditionality, merely implying sufficient openness to the others and the different. One also wonders whether responsibility can give a feeling of self-rectitude or moral superiority or whether, to the contrary, it gives rise to anxiety that a decision was not quite correct or well balanced and that something else might have been better, something journalists will identify as a most frequent feeling even in their everyday practice as reporters.

It should be borne in mind that the system of public service communication implies that decisions are based on preferences which are not eternal and which are themselves the product of conscious and deliberate confrontations of several opposing points of view (Keene, 1995: 131). This approach can help expose the hidden socio-economic and political forces which manipulate the public definition of risk according to their own narrow interests (...) in this way the public service media could help the public to embrace sober strategies for reducing or eliminating serious risks, according to Keene (1995: 130). In doing so the media could benefit greatly from the established democratic decision-making procedures which imply the right to say things some would not like to hear, but also the right to further consider and reconsider the options on the table.

In the media sector there exist various aids designed to facilitate more realistic decision-making. One of them is M*A*S, standing for Claude-Jean Bertrand's media accountability systems. M*A*S, according to its author, has a threefold aim, namely to help the journalist to serve the public better; to help them to form a profession and improve its standards; and to recover public trust in order to be able to resist political and economic pressure. The systems are developed in three areas. The first comprises texts and documents; the second are people (individuals and groups); and the third processes (short- or long-term). The inventory of written documents comprises 41 elements including general and specific codes of ethics, readers' letters, blogs, web pages for example offering journalists information and advice on accountability promotion (www.ifj.org/regions), websites presenting foreign media coverage of the country with translated articles (e.g. Watching America), annual collections of newspaper reviews drawn up by reporters or media users and edited by academics. The second group comprises individuals or groups and presents 44 possibilities

including an in-house contents evaluation commission; an ethics committee: an outside critic paid by a newspaper to write regular columns about the paper; a consumer reporter who warns readers/viewers against misleading advertising; an ombudsman; a complaints bureau; journalist unions; a panel of readers; a radio club, to listen together and debate issues; national, regional and local press councils; media monitoring; an NGO for training the personnel; a journalists' association; a government media office or a parliamentary commission... The last segment, the processes, comprises 28 variables. The recommendations in this regard are, firstly, to employ only staff with university degrees; all journalists and editors must attend professional ethics courses; further education of journalists; databases; a 'media literacy' campaign to educate the public against media lack of ethics and triviality; regular public opinion polls; international cooperation; regular conferences organized by journalists to discuss matters concerning the functioning of the media sector; awards and credits. Another classification of M*A*S depends on who is involved and the author suggests a division into internal (self-regulation proper, quality control in the narrow sense); external (accountability can be applied to the media without their consent); and cooperative (the whole media sector can join together for quality control).

The Republic Broadcasting Agency issued in June 2007 a Generally Binding Instruction on the conduct of broadcasters in conformity with Article 12 (5) of the Broadcasting Law. In the chapter titled General Programme Standards, paragraph 6) alone prohibits discrimination on account of sex, race and ethnic, religious, social or national affiliation. While even prescribing that television and the public broadcasting service in particular must ensure that persons featured in programmes must look and be dressed decently, the instruction does not address the issues of hate speech, discrimination and obligatory protection of minorities and/or minority and regional languages with due seriousness and in sufficient depth. Such lack of elements does not facilitate decision-making by editorial management and journalists in everyday media practice. While this may at first sight appear as a way of encouraging media independence, a public consensus must be reached on the limits of tolerance regarding public utterances carried by the media, bearing in mind that there must be clear limits to tolerance if the community really wants to follow the principles observed by democratically-minded civil societies.

Hate speech can also be regarded as engineered misunderstandings as part of a strategy of achieving dominion. Rather than consisting merely in imparting discriminatory messages brimming with stereotypes and prejudices about the others and the different, it aims at excluding the minorities from public life. By the same token, failure to impart any information can also be considered part of a

strategy sharing the goals of hate speech, namely exclusion of minority communities by denying them representation in public discourse. This means ignoring the minorities as such and their problems and failure to promote minority cultures and public use of regional and minority languages by means of the media. Although hate speech is a matter regulated by both media legislation in Serbia and professional codes of journalistic ethics, the strategy of integration is not fully defined.

At present, the implementation is unsystematic and there are no mechanisms in particular concerned with the identification and penalization of omission or, more correctly, of the failure to inform the public.

1.1.1. International and Domestic Legislation

A precondition for the exercise of all cultural rights is the right to participate in cultural life, a right belonging to the fundamental rights of national minorities as the 'right to the protection of their group cultural identity' (Dimitrijević, 1999: 126).

This right is closely linked with the right to freedom of expression, which implies seeking, receiving, using and disseminating information and ideas, regardless of frontiers, by any means including the mass media. This right involves various obligations of the state authorities including regulating and assisting the operation of media in national minority languages in environments in which they predominate.

In countries establishing democratic processes only now, as is the case with Serbia, that is, countries where democratic laws are not fully established or enforced in everyday practice, 'media are the only controller of government and the only link between that government and those who elected that government in a supposedly democratic way (Pešić, 2003: 37). It is therefore very important that such a role of the media should have a foundation in both international instruments and domestic legislation.

Both international and domestic law regulates this area thoroughly at several levels.

The foundation is rooted in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) with Article 19 providing for the freedom of thought and expression and for media freedom. The European Convention on Human Rights, in Article 10, also specifies that everyone has the right to freedom of expression including freedom to hold opinions and receive and impart information and ideas. The Treaty on European Union lays down, in Article II-71, that media freedom and plurality are to be respected. This fundamental piece of legislation includes the

prohibition of discrimination and hate speech. Hate speech is usually regarded as the dissemination of information based on racial, ethnic, national or religious discrimination, as hatred of and violence against any race and/or group of people of a different nation, religion or colour.

The 'first floor' of international standards in the media sphere relates to freedom of disseminating information and protection from discrimination and, above all, from hate speech as already defined. There are many international instruments which define hate speech and prohibit discrimination in general and in the media in particular. The Council of Europe Declaration on the Freedom of Expression and Information states in IIIc. that the member states are resolved 'to promote the free flow of information, thus contributing to international understanding, a better knowledge of convictions and traditions, respect for the diversity of opinions and the mutual enrichment of cultures' (Tatalović, 2004: 11). According to the resource pack *Achieving Media Responsibility in Multicultural Societies* (2006: 14) the relevant provisions are included in Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1951), Articles 20 and 26 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), Article 4 of the UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Article II-81 of the EU Treaty (2004), Article 7 of the COE European Convention on Transfrontier Television (1989, amended 1998), Article 22a of the EU Television Without Frontiers (TWF) Directive (1989, 1998).

The 'second floor' consists of international instruments protecting minority rights, the Council of Europe being the most active institution in this regard, adopting in 1995 the most important related document, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Minorities' access to the media is a major test of the protection of minority rights and the democratic organization of a country. Article 9 of this Convention lays down the fundamentals of minority rights in the media sector.

1. The Parties undertake to recognise that the right to freedom of expression of every person belonging to a national minority includes freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas in the minority language, without interference by public authorities and regardless of frontiers. The Parties shall ensure, within the framework of their legal systems, that persons belonging to a national minority are not discriminated against in their access to the media.

2. Paragraph 1 shall not prevent Parties from requiring the licensing, without discrimination and based on objective criteria, of sound radio and television broadcasting, or cinema enterprises.

3. The Parties shall not hinder the creation and the use of printed media by persons belonging to national minorities. In the legal framework of sound radio and

television broadcasting, they shall ensure, as far as possible, and taking into account the provisions of paragraph 1, that persons belonging to national minorities are granted the possibility of creating and using their own media.

4. In the framework of their legal systems, the Parties shall adopt adequate measures in order to facilitate access to the media for persons belonging to national minorities and in order to promote tolerance and permit plurality of cultures.

Another exceptionally important instrument is the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Article 11 of this instrument is crucial for the creation of minority media policy.

The relevant standards are established by these international instruments. The first standard is that national minorities must have access to all media without discrimination, that they must be able freely and without any restrictions to receive and impart information regardless of frontiers and political government in power.

The second right, also specified by our domestic legislation (notably the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of the National Minorities in the Republic of Serbia, as well as the package of media laws of the Republic of Serbia) is the right of national minorities to establish their own media and to manage them independently, while the third right laid down by the Framework Convention is actually the obligation of the state to facilitate access to national minority representatives and public information media. This then relates to public broadcasting services. The purpose of this provision is to enable minorities to participate in the editorial policies and the preparation of programmes of public broadcasting services. As this was not fully understood and abided by by all countries, the Council of Europe subsequently issued commentaries and recommendations regarding precisely this Article, recommending all the countries signatories of the Framework Convention to finance separately programmes in national minority languages and programmes about national minorities made in the majority language. In other words, informing the minorities about each other in their respective languages and informing the majority about the problems and life of the national minorities is of equal importance. It is precisely in this second segment that Serbia's media scene is insufficiently developed and democratically immature. So, it is not enough to pay lip service to the right of national minorities to be kept informed, it is necessary to provide money among other things to support such information. It is stated expressly that additional financial resources are to be provided for national minority media given that their operation calls for supplementary funding and entails extra costs.

What other conventions omit and the Charter underscores is the need to provide continued education of minority language and minority media journalists to bring them up to the standards of their colleagues employed by other media, a necessity also pointed out in the OSCE Recommendations for Serbia and Montenegro issued at the time the State Union still existed in 2003.

The third level relates to cultural diversity and is still being developed as part of international legislation. In 2001, UNESCO adopted the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity which deals with the subject only very generally and states the following objectives:

- encouraging digital literacy
- promoting linguistic diversity in the cyberspace
- encouraging production, preservation and dissemination of diversified cultural goods through the media
- global informative networks
- promoting the role of public broadcasting services in developing audiovisual production of goods of high professional quality (Achieving media responsibility in multicultural societies; 2006:18).

Domestic legislation too defines this sphere in a very detailed manner. The Broadcasting Law, 2002 (Article 21, 'Suppression of Hate Speech', Article 68 'Basic Broadcaster Obligations in Respect of Programme Content', Article 77 'Achieving Public Interest in the Public Broadcasting Service Sector', Article 78 'Public Service Broadcasters' Obligations in Achieving Public Interest', especially paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 5, 10 and 11, as well as in the Law on Public Information, 2003 (Article 38 'Prohibition of Hate Speech'), the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, 2006 (Article 14 'Protection of National Minorities', Article 21 'Prohibition of Discrimination', Article 79 'Freedom of Thought and Expression'), Article 48 'Encouraging Respect for Diversity', Article 79 'Right to the Preservation of Identity', Article 81 'Developing a Spirit of Tolerance'), provide for developing a spirit of intercultural dialogue in the media, prevent hate speech, and enable all living throughout the country to receive and impart information through by means of public information media.

However, media theory and media legislation are still to come up with a clear definition as to what is meant by the notion of 'national minority media' and, in this connection, to offer mechanisms for the realization of media diversity and multicultural approach in creating media policy.

The question still remains, first of all, whether national minority media are:

(a) only those media outlets which are fully established and programmed in a national minority language and recruit their administrative and technological personnel from the national minority in question (such as the newspaper

publishing houses Hlas Ludu, Magyar Szó, Ruske Slovo, Libertatea); or whether they are also

(b) those media which earmark only part of their 'space' or 'air time' for programmes in a national minority language or languages and engage for this purpose journalists from minority communities working as part of their own autonomous desks (such as the Radio televizija Novi Sad public service which has six national minority language desks as well as a whole majority-language desk and administration, *Zrenjaninske novine* with a page in Hungarian and Romanian, and *Kikindske* with a page in Hungarian edited by ethnic Hungarian journalists); or whether one may also regard as minority media

(c) majority-language media which translate into national minority languages and publish or broadcast only part of their own output without engaging journalists from the communities in question (like the BETA national minority language service and Radio Niš news broadcasts in Bulgarian); whether these include

(d) media established as multiethnic desks with productions in different languages fit into a single programme (like Multiradio of Radio 021 NS); or whether minority media can be thought of as including

(e) those not designated exclusively as 'linguistic' and 'ethnic' but (also) 'racial' or 'religious'?

Public broadcasting services in countries of South East Europe recognize two standards as far as media and minorities are concerned:

- broadcasting information on multiculturalism and national minorities prepared by journalists from the majority nation for a majority-language audience;
- broadcasting information on multiculturalism and national minorities prepared by journalists from minority communities for minority-language audiences.

The first model is of limited scope and stereotyped perspective and does not fully meet the information needs of individual national and especially linguistic minorities.

As regards the second model, its real threat is ghettoization, the shutting oneself off inside one's native-language media and therefore limited access to the leading media establishments and prime-time slots. On the other hand, the majority believes that in this particular case it has solved the problem and fulfilled the requirements laid down in the international instruments it has ratified in order to become part of the democratic world. The essence of multiculturalism is not achieved in this way, especially because the slots earmarked for minorities by electronic media, including the public broadcasting service, are for the most part

filled with folklore themes such as preparing traditional ethnic dishes, thereby reinforcing the widely-held stereotype that national costume, national cuisine and national folk music are the chief distinguishing features of a minority. On the strength of the foregoing, one should not draw the conclusion that the existence of national minority language programmes is not to the advantage of the national minorities concerned; rather, encouraging high-quality national minority language programmes and providing their regular translation into the majority language and broadcasting in prime-time slots on radio and television, particularly those of the public broadcasting service, is of great importance for the promotion of multiculturalism. 'If we really want to become open societies in which everyone can feel at home – and there is no reason why ethnic minorities should not feel that way, especially those in the southeast part of Europe – then the "mainstream", that is, the majority programme, must open itself to the minorities. (...) So, instead of referring to minorities only in a political context, on the eve of elections and wars, and instead of identifying by nationality only criminals belonging to a minority, television stations, especially public ones, ought to bear this in mind while creating their "news agenda". After all, everybody finds himself in a situation of being in the minority. One ought to bear this in mind, too. So, for a start, one should look at the world through the eyes of the other person. For, to that other person, we are the others.' (Pešić, 2003: 42.)

Minority audiences consider, according to a survey referred to in *Achieving Media Responsibility in Multicultural Societies* (2006: 39), that good national minority programming should achieve three objectives:

- to inform,
- to develop and shape a minority culture,
- to educate.

In this regard, a combined model can be considered a good practice.

With a view to developing plurality of cultures and encouraging tolerance and non-discriminatory media discourse, possible recommendations for promoting media multiculturalism and supporting national minority media would be based, above all, on improving and enforcing the legislation already in force, encouraging media self-regulation, empowering public broadcasters, organizing awareness-raising training for journalists on minority affairs and multiculturalism issues, and cooperation between the public broadcaster and others, especially regional and local media, including minority communities and the nongovernmental and governmental sectors. Providing translation of minority language programmes for the general public which uses the majority language as its common means of communication is especially important.

1.1.2. Transforming RTV Novi Sad into Vojvodina's Public Broadcasting Service

The Law on Broadcasting provides for restructuring Radiotelevizija Srbije as a state-centric media organization into two public services: Broadcasting Institution of Vojvodina (RUV) with a registered office in Novi Sad and Broadcasting Institution of Serbia with a registered office in Belgrade, an undertaking completed in 2006 as far as the formal prerequisites are concerned.

RTV (RUV) inherited a radio and TV programme schedule comprising broadcasts in as many as eight languages, including the majority language and national minority languages (Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian, Rusyn, Romany, Croatian, Ukrainian). RTV has desks for programmes in Serbian, Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian, Rusyn and Romany as integrated units structured as sectors. RTV has occasional broadcasts in Croatian and Ukrainian, and sometimes in German, that are prepared by individuals or by independent producers. All this complicates the position in the wider community of this major media establishment with a half-century tradition. In a process of transformation, multilingualism calls for serious thought to be given to the framing or creating of programme schemes which focus on multiculturalism or interculturality (a higher level of respect for and observance and practice of multilingualism and tolerance) as the principal way to strengthen the 'Vojvodina identity', a chief reason for the existence of the Provincial Broadcasting Institution. Mutual respect in these regions rests on knowledge of and information about the cultures of all the national communities inhabiting Vojvodina. The province's public broadcasting service therefore has the task above all of promoting intercommunal tolerance precisely through the majority and national minority language programmes as a common asset for accepting and understanding diversity.

It is worth noting that the Broadcasting Institution of Vojvodina broadcasts programmes using three frequency networks. One serves programmes in Serbian, another those in Hungarian, and the third programmes in the Slovak, Romanian, Rusyn, Ukrainian, Romany and Bunjevac languages. Owing to lack of adequate equipment, Banat and Bačka are very poorly covered by the second and third frequencies respectively. Specifically, the programme in the Bunjevac language cannot be heard in the area of Subotica, where the minority lives, and that in Romany in the greater part of Vojvodina. It should also be pointed out that RUV radio programmes at this moment (spring 2007) do not conform to the statutory minimum of 92 per cent for signal coverage of the territory of Vojvodina. The TV programme is broadcast on two channels. The first is reserved for the majority

language and the second shared by all the national minority languages as well as used part of the time for rebroadcasts of RUV Channel 1 programmes.

RUV launched its own transformation process in the second half of 2006 in very unfavourable circumstances: it had no premises of its own (the Televizija Novi Sad building having been destroyed during the NATO air strikes in 1999) and very modest technical potential and, by far the most serious problem, personnel capacity, given that the transformation of the state-centric radio and television networks into public broadcasting services was preceded by rationalization of business operations including an offer to all the employees of a 'welfare programme' regardless of whether their professional skills were indispensable to the operation of the organization. The unselective welfare programme brought about a total collapse of operation, crippling especially the minority language desks of Radiotelevizija Novi Sad. This called into question the realization of programmes of the Public Broadcasting Service of Vojvodina and therefore its mission of developing information services in national minority languages.

In view of the deterioration of the majority language and especially of national minority language programmes over the years, the management and the editorial and journalistic staff in particular are expected to address the framing and programming of both informative and educational and entertainment content in a systematic manner, as well as to create a new identity for Vojvodina's public broadcasting service with focus on the fostering of multiculturalism, among other things. In order to achieve this, a thorough renewal of personnel and the raising of professional and technical standards is necessary.

This study outlines the situation prior to and the initial steps taken during the transformation process as well as suggestions about improving and speeding up the process.

1.2. The Method and Corpus

1.2.1. The Method

Analysis of the media discourse was the primary method of monitoring. Two techniques were employed: (a) quantitative-qualitative content analysis and (b) in-depth group conversation.

(a) The quantitative-qualitative content analysis used a code comprising the basic information (media outlet, day of the week, programme, ordinal number and length of news item) including the coding of genre, topic, actor, information source, audio/visual presentation, occasion, location, news item author, subject,

subject personalization, explicit intertextuality, actors, actor personalization, actors value context.

The analysis unit was, according to Emanuel Schegloff, communicational, namely the statement. To recall, according to Schegloff, determining the analysis unit, which must correspond to the nature of that being researched, is an important stage of methods and techniques determination in analyzing media discourse. Since we are here dealing with two monitoring cycles (first and third), a quantitative-qualitative analysis of the content of RUV's main news and current affairs programmes (CIPE), the unit of analysis chosen was 'the statement', or more precisely the single item from the time of its announcement to the moment it is signed off. The same principle was applied to the second monitoring period covering so-called collage or slow-moving programmes.

(b) The in-depth group conversation (focus groups), as a supplement to the quantitative-qualitative method of content analysis, was organized in December 2006 in six languages and focused on the researchers' most important questions. The discussion was semi-structured, necessitating an active role on the part of the moderators, who were themselves experts on the topic, cultural code and language.

1.2.2. The Corpus

The monitoring of programmes of the Broadcasting Institution of Vojvodina RTV – Vojvodina's public broadcasting service in the majority and national minority languages – was carried out in three cycles from September 2006 to January 2007.

- The first monitoring cycle covering news contents in the main news and current affairs programmes (CIPE) took place from 18 to 24 September 2006.

- The second monitoring cycle covering news and cultural-educational content took place from 6 to 12 November 2006.

- The third cycle focusing on information content in relation to the election campaign took place from 12 to 18 January 2007.

Each cycle involved the monitoring of seven days of radio and TV programmes in the Serbian, Hungarian, Slovak, Rusyn, Romanian and Romany languages.

The first cycle covered a total of 73 main news and current affairs programmes and the second news, education and entertainment programmes in the majority and all minority languages for an average of three hours a day.

The third cycle, following the model used in the first, covered news programmes with focus on the Serbian parliamentary elections campaign.

2. Analysis of Empirical Material

2.1. Introductory remarks

In this section we wish to present the findings obtained by quantitative-qualitative analysis of programmes in six languages (Serbian, Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian, Rusyn and Romany) of the Broadcasting Institution of Vojvodina, with emphasis on the presence/absence of multicultural content in the public service provided, given that this media establishment's mission is precisely to support minority cultures and communities and to promote multiculturalism through majority and minority language programmes as a model of coexistence in Vojvodina. The analysis includes a number of results obtained by in-depth group conversation which relate directly to the presence/absence of multicultural content in Vojvodina's public broadcasting service.

The results relate exclusively to the period from September 2006 to January 2007, that is, the time the RUV management began to take stock of the state of affairs inherited and to plan the transformation of this state-centric media organization into a public service outlet. This means that they should be considered in the given context, a very unfavourable situation for launching a media outlet, in light of the communication needs of the province as a whole, that is, the needs of both the majority and minority population.

It is worth recalling that the 2002 population census puts the national minority population of Serbia, not counting Kosovo and Metohija, at 1,135,393. The majority of the national minorities live in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina: Hungarians (290,207), Croats (56,645), Slovaks (56,637), Romanians (30,419), Roma (29,057), Bunjevci (19,766), Rusyns (15,626), Macedonians (11,785), Ukrainians (4,635), Germans (3,154), Czechs (1,648) and others.

Vojvodina's electronic media cater for the own/native language communication needs of Serbs, Hungarians, Slovaks, Romanians, Rusyns, Roma, Bunjevci, Croats, Macedonians, Czechs, Germans, and Ukrainians. During the monitoring period the province's public broadcasting service transmitted programmes in eight languages. The project team decided to monitor six programmes distinguished by decades-long tradition, rounded-off programme blocks, well-established desks with clearly-defined structures and hierarchies, and stable programme schemes meeting the information, education and entertainment needs of the audience in the majority and minority languages, both on radio and television.

The monitoring is a long-term project aimed at identifying progress in transforming RTV NS into RUV. It may already be announced that an

improvement on the results presented in this report has been detected in later monitoring cycles. It should be noted that they will be discussed in detail in the next publications. This edition deals only with the starting position and the state of affairs inherited, point zero of the transformation of RTV into RUV.

2.2. Results and Analysis

The results of the three-cycle quantitative-qualitative analysis of RUV content concur with the results of similar surveys carried out in this country (Milivojević, Valić Nedeljković), in neighbouring countries (Vilović, Malović, Tatalović, Kanižaj) and elsewhere (Theun van Dijk).

The concurring results indicate that reporting on minorities is directly conditional on the quality of intercommunal relations in an environment; there is no proportionality between the size of a minority population and its presence in the media; an imbalance of topics is in evidence (with political topics prevailing and minority culture, education and arts topics lacking); social stereotypes and prejudices are also reflected in the media content; the tabloidization of the media stimulates simplistic, sensationalist and intolerant reporting on minority affairs; facts about cause-and-effect events are presented selectively in analysing phenomena relating to minorities, their rights, their position in society (for example, Roma are often referred to in connection with petty crimes). At the same time, media also encourage the dissemination of stereotypes and prejudices; they promote the discriminatory use of politically incorrect language; and they ignore minority problems as a whole. Topics relating to national minorities which are the subject of research are, according to van Dijk's studies, mostly problems minorities inflict on society, and many topics which are a regular feature of coverage of majority population affairs (participation in the economy, politics, society) are lacking as far as minority populations are concerned although examples of good practices and results are as numerous in their environments. The predominant picture of the minorities painted by the media is that they are the cause of the problem (van Dijk, 1987). Minorities are the object of manipulation also when it comes to selecting news items and their representatives are not quoted (especially not in their native language with subtitles in the majority language (Valić Nedeljković).

The provincial public broadcasting service monitoring results indicate that Vojvodina's multiethnic character is rarely in evidence in RUV's news programmes in any of the languages covered.

The multiethnicity is given very scant coverage regarding:

(a) the selection of topics dealt with in the news,

(b) the selection of persons whose activities or views are reported, and

(c) the content of views being indirectly approved or criticized in a programme.

a) The news content analysis code includes as a separate topic the absence of any mention of multiethnic life in Vojvodina, that is, of more than one ethnic community, e.g. statements by officials referring to the position or rights of minorities, educational or other activities connected in some way with ethnic communities, and even official congratulatory messages to ethnic groups on the occasion of their holidays. In spite of the very broad definition given to the topic of multiculturalism, in the monitoring period RTV programmes contained very few items dealing with the subject either as a sole topic or a secondary issue. During the monitoring period, there was no mention of it in the TV news in Serbian and Romany and in radio news in Slovak and Rusyn, and only two or three times in other programmes.

Multiculturalism was registered nine times in a total of 775 registered topics in all TV news programmes (1.2 per cent) and six times in a total of 738 topics in all radio news programmes (0.8 per cent) during the first cycle.

b) Persons from minority ethnic communities are relatively rarely featured among people whose activities or views are reported in the news, and this is true not only of the majority language programmes, that is, Serbian, but of programmes in the native languages of their respective communities. Non-Serbs accounted for 3 per cent of all persons featured (7 out of 203) in Serbian language TV newscasts and for 6 per cent of those featured in radio programmes.

Persons of Serb nationality by far predominate also in ethnic community language programmes, in which minority members account for 1-20 per cent of all registered participants. Persons belonging to a minority other than the one in whose language a programme is broadcast are only very rarely featured. As a rule, persons from ethnic communities are more often featured in TV newscasts (10 per cent of the cases) than in radio programmes (6 per cent).

Of all the programmes analyzed, TV programmes in Hungarian and Romany pay the most attention to their respective ethnic communities, with 17 per cent and some 20 per cent of persons of other ethnicities featured respectively. The same findings were obtained, for instance, during the third monitoring cycle, which focused on the last week of the election campaign. It was noted that the TV programmes in the Romany language favoured the two Roma parties and the Roma association to the exclusion of all others, as a result of which the Roma audience was unable to hear and see other political actors during the crucial stage of the election campaign.

The corresponding percentage in respect of TV news programmes in Romanian and Rusyn were 12 per cent and 11 per cent, with Hungarian radio newscasts registering 10 per cent.

Contrary to this practice, Slovak language radio and TV newscasts report the activities of Slovaks exceptionally rarely (1 per cent and 3 per cent respectively), with Rusyn and Romanian radio and TV services pursuing similar policies (2 per cent and 6 per cent respectively).

The results mentioned, which relate exclusively to the broadcasts monitored, indicate an absence of coordination between the planning of programmes and the mission of the media, a flaw borne out by the fact that newscasts in minority languages pay insufficient attention to developments in the respective ethnic communities. This indicates that journalists preparing some of the newscasts spent more time translating agency news items than following events in their own and other minority communities.

At the same time, one notices that journalists and editorial staff in particular are not sufficiently sensitized to the furtherance of a multicultural society which puts a premium on all ethnic communities being informed about each other's affairs. The xenophobic shutting off within one's own ethnic and linguistic community so far as the minority language programmes are concerned corresponds with the findings of other studies which indicate, in the aftermath of the break of Yugoslavia, a growing ethnic distance between national communities, that is, their shutting themselves off in Vojvodina/Serbia (Baćević, Golubović, Ilić, Cvejić, as cited in Komšić, 2006: 413-421).

This finding was confirmed by members of the focus groups, who pointed out that in minority programmes in particular the same people keep appearing as experts; they speak on behalf of the minority and about it and represent minorities in programmes in their native language as well as in the majority language. Other studies have produced similar results (Noelle-Neumann – Mathes, as cited in Kanižaj, 2006: 28) which are seen as an 'overlapping' phenomenon. In other words, journalists follow what other media are doing and in turn invite the same persons or persons of similar standing to deal with topics which are seen as being featured frequently in the sphere of public communication. This is even more characteristic of minority communities because their choice is, a priori, narrower than that which the majority nation has to offer. At the same time, the elites are equally powerful and reduced to an even smaller number of people.

One of the primary tasks of the public broadcasting service in Vojvodina is to reduce the ethnic distance again, further multiculturalism and facilitate the permeation of cultures. One of the ways of achieving this is by raising greater

awareness of the languages of others, something the public broadcasting service should do by introducing new programme standards, namely that every actor should speak or be quoted in his or her native language with translation into the broadcasting language provided.

c) the content of views being indirectly approved or criticized in a programme. Absence of support for ethnic tolerance as a major social asset

The analysis of the news programmes sought to register also specific elements, that is, subjects (objects) of views expressed by persons whose activities or opinions were featured in the news programmes.

Interethnic tolerance was not a frequent subject of views of persons speaking in RTV news programmes: during the first monitoring period this was registered once in a Serbian radio programme and a Hungarian TV programme each, twice in Serbian TV and Hungarian radio programmes each, twice and three times respectively in Slovak programmes, and not even once in a Romanian TV programme, Rusyn radio programme and Romany TV programme. The broadcasting of multi-lingual items and the promotion of local language was only sporadic in all RUV programmes.

Following are several examples which stood out among the rest on offer in RUV radio and TV programmes during the monitoring period covered by the expert report (September 2006 - January 2007).

For instance, television broadcasts in the Romany language promoted multiculturalism through various suggestions on how to integrate the Roma in the majority community. In one of the programmes monitored, a Roma spoke of good relations with non-Roma and cited the existence of many mixed marriages as proof of this. The context was education of Roma children in the village of Jabuka: the children attend school, have no problems with their non-Roma peers, and there is generally no discrimination in the village. Other researchers (Vesna Dejanović and Ljubomir Pejaković, 2006) also detect this trait which is prototypical of the Roma population, namely to perceive their distance towards non-Roma as being less than vice versa. In the Romany language broadcasts, multilingualism or rather bilingualism – the use of Romany and Serbian – is common practice. Programmes are often wholly in the majority language, with presenters only announcing and signing off in Romany. As much as one approves of bilingualism and the promotion of multilingual presentation of media content in multicultural environments as a good practice, in this case this is not desirable because these programmes should, above all, contribute to the standardization of the Romany language.

The Rusyn TV broadcasts, which are almost wholly devoted to one field – education and culture (with an occasional sports programme) – represented a rare

example of good practice in the monitoring period. While promoting the Rusyns' ethnic identity (with strong emphasis on the importance of their native language and national cultural values), it also exhibits a positive attitude to the multicultural and multiconfessional context. One of the reports was about a drive by the organization Caritas, which brings together youth from different ethnic and religious environments through sports and other voluntary activities. Another covered a folklore festival with participants speaking four languages: Rusyn, Russian, Ukrainian, and Serbian. A Rusyn language TV programme promoting the learning of the language of the environment deserved special attention. By way of encouraging the learning of other minority languages as a prerequisite for tolerance, the presenter announced a report on the teaching of Hungarian to non-Hungarian children in Kucura. She asked the children about their progress in learning Hungarian, the meaning of some words, whether they talked with anybody in Hungarian, how they liked the language, and so on. The urgency of such programmes is borne out by the fact that the teaching of languages spoken in one's environment all but disappeared during the 1990s. The former good practice of raising young people's awareness of others and other things through learning others' languages is today very rare indeed. This is precisely why programmes of this kind are necessary as part of the primary mission of the public broadcasting service, which is the furtherance of Vojvodina's multilingualism.

The examples mentioned are about multiculturalism being cultivated as an exception; they are not the norm and therefore they are all the more worthy of attention.

In a Hungarian TV broadcast alone, and only in a linguistic context, multiculturalism was promoted in a different way, as an integral part of everyday life; the stress was on its necessity in daily affairs without any noticeable rhetoric (which is a good thing).

Of the total of 95 persons featured in the programme, 16 did not speak Hungarian. Serbian was mostly used in programmes for farmers. Of the 25 persons heard speaking, 11 spoke Serbian and one Rusyn. In these programmes, too, there was no serious discussion of the difficulties being encountered by the Hungarian community in developing a multicultural society. The ethnic mix of Vojvodina's population was referred to in this programme seven times from among a total of 95 topics, and that in the context of the need for tolerance and respect for minority rights.

The majority language programmes rarely present the greats from the minority cultures; one of the exceptions was Radio Novi Sad's collage programme

‘Od devet to jedan’, introducing the ‘great man of Rusyn culture Havril Kosteljnjik’.

Discussions within the focus groups revealed highly positive participant reactions to multicultural themes. The expectations of the audience were noted that there should be many more such programmes and columns, as well as that it would be desirable to hear people speaking different languages with interpretation or subtitles provided. We wish to emphasize that the public broadcasting service is expected to improve noticeably the exchange of items within programmes, to offer a greater variety of topic concerning the life of other national communities, including minorities in Serbian language broadcasts. Suggestions were made, and noted, that the public broadcasting service should play an educational role in acquainting the audience with the minority languages spoken here.

The public broadcasting service would in that way contribute to the deghettoization of the minority ethnic community and the presentation of their situation as it is, which should, after all, be the chief distinguishing mark of RUV programmes. The members of the focus group said they would like as their interlocutors members of other nations, both from the majority nation and other ethnic groups and not necessarily only their fellow nationals.

3. Conclusion and recommendations for good practices

The conclusion to be drawn based on the analysis is that multicultural context, as well as linguistic diversity, were not present enough in each RUV radio and television programme in the monitoring period (September 2006 – January 2007). None the less, considering broadcasting as a whole, RUV is no doubt a unique media establishment not only in Serbia but in the territory of southeast Europe as well by virtue of its concept and the sheer number of multi-language programmes, and this gives it a comparative good practices advantage.

In spite of good legislation and professional codes of ethics, most journalists in Vojvodina, including those employed by RUV, are not encouraged to follow and research themes from the domain of ‘otherness’, or even to understand the need for that.

An occasional media ‘excursion’ to another environment/community/marginal group cannot be regarded as a satisfactory informative practice. The worrying rigidity of this mainstream media practice is all the more apparent if one considers discriminated and media-neglected segments of minority populations within this corpus of ‘others’ and ‘otherness’, not to mention further

considerations such as gender, people with special needs, those with different sexual orientation.

Owing to their decades-long shutting off within their own groups, the advent of democratic changes has brought about no reduction of the social distance between the minority (ethnic, religious, gender, handicapped and other) communities and the majority population. This is also certainly due to their poor mutual exchange of information, a phenomenon borne out by the quantitative-qualitative analysis of RUV.

Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that RUV broadcasts during the monitoring period do exhibit a high threshold of tolerance regardless of the fact that none of the individual programmes addressed – at least not sufficiently and adequately – the problems encountered by every minority community in Vojvodina in the development of a multicultural society; this could be achieved by identifying and exploring by comparative analysis the common denominator of all minorities in the province as far as this subject is concerned. It goes without saying that it would be a good practice for RUV to deal with these questions in its majority language programmes and thus fulfil its task and mission of a multilingual media outlet in a markedly multicultural environment such as Vojvodina.

We should always bear in mind that stereotypes ‘fester’ inside us even if we do not believe in them. A first step towards multicultural conduct in public communication would therefore entail raising awareness of stereotypes and a conscious effort to avoid them in media rhetoric both in the use of language and in discursive strategies of media speech and, later, when it comes to planning the programme content, selecting topics and events to be covered, choosing actors and information sources, using media performances (picture, sound, music...). The priority tasks of Vojvodina’s public broadcasting service in this regard therefore should include programme exchanges, joint shows, joint productions, translations of documentary and drama programmes, TV films in minorities’ countries of domicile with majority language subtitles, encouraging learning of and listening to the language of the environment.

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Aleksandra VUJIC

PUBLIC INFORMATION FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF NATIONAL MINORITY MEMBERS

In 2007, Serbia was required to submit to the Council of Europe the first state report on the implementation of the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages³⁹ and the second on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.⁴⁰ At present, these international instruments represent the most powerful mechanisms for the protection of persons belonging to national minorities on regional and universal levels, their ratification being a condition for Serbia's admission to membership of the Council of Europe.

Simultaneously with the submission of the state report, in June and September this year, the Council of Europe was sent alternative reports⁴¹ on the implementation of the Charter for Languages and the Framework Convention prepared with the participation of members of 17 national minorities (in Vojvodina: Hungarians, Slovaks, Romanians, Rusyns, Bunjevci, Croats, Roma, Macedonians, Germans, Czechs and Slovenians, and in central Serbia: Albanians, Bulgarians, Bosniaks, Vlachs, Greeks and Aromanians), that is, representing 11 national councils for national minorities and 15 organizations.

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³⁹ Hereinafter: Charter for Languages

⁴⁰ Hereinafter: Framework Convention

⁴¹ The reports were submitted by the Vojvodina Centre for Human Rights and the Committees for Human Rights in Serbia Network

The alternative reports show that commentaries about multiculturalism and encouragement of the spirit of tolerance and multicultural dialogue in Vojvodina were made by members of only some of the national communities: the Roma, Romanians and Macedonians were in principle satisfied with the contribution of their respective communities to the development of multiculturalism in Vojvodina while the Croats and Hungarians made objections in this regard. The Slovaks, Rusyns, Bunjevci, Germans, Czechs and Slovenians made no comments at all.

The Roma pointed out as a 'step forward in an intercultural sense' the bilingual TV programmes in Romany; the Romanians drew attention to an increase in the number of items on other national minorities in the weekly *Libertatea*, stressing at the same time that 'monitoring of activities and events of other minorities within the framework of RT Vojvodina is almost nonexistent'; the Macedonians for their part were particularly optimistic about the fact that the 'fostering of the spirit and tolerance of intercultural dialogue and cooperation with members of other ethnic communities' is characteristic of members of their minority.

The Croats drew attention to the failure to sanction the use of hate speech on TV Novi Sad, and the Hungarians to the fact that the Executive Council's project of the Affirmation of Tolerance and Multiculturalism is the only project of significance in this field and that it should be applied to other parts of Serbia.

Data of the Vojvodina Centre for Human Rights concerning the 'absence of an intention to further a multicultural society in Vojvodina, in which it is important for all ethnic communities to be acquainted with the lives of other linguistic groups'⁴² reveal insufficient involvement by both majority and minority media in this regard, also indicating lack of willingness in the province to engage in such work, given that 'media can bring about changes in society only in an environment in which public attitudes are in favour of multiculturalism (for instance, of all the states reported on by the Advisory Committee for the Framework Convention, people in Norway alone wanted to find out more about their fellow citizens belonging to ethnic minorities).'⁴³ Research by the Media Diversity Institute points to similar examples in countries of South East Europe with a deficit of multicultural content in media programmes. The findings include that media standards and journalist practices produce only a limited number of reports on diversity and tolerance across the region and that simplified,

sensationalistic and often discriminative reporting about ethnic minorities is a 'common malaise' which contributes to the creation of a vague and passive image of ethnic peoples. Prime-time media news programmes rarely quote or show them and give them no opportunity to interpret their activities themselves.⁴⁴

Some minorities in Vojvodina are objecting that the television and radio programmes produced for them do not pay enough attention to their languages and are getting shorter (Hungarians and Croats). Such programmes, which are undeniably deprived of intercultural content, carry the threat of the further ghettoization and marginalization of minorities in the province. This state of affairs is also borne out by the fact that members of national minorities in Vojvodina are rarely featured in the press and in prime-time TV and radio station news broadcasts other than political commentaries on their leaders or cases of their being targets of hate speech and discrimination. Minority representatives report mostly matters which affect them and only rarely other questions of relevance and currency concerning other ethnic communities and society as a whole.

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Alternative reports lead to the conclusion that members of national minorities in Vojvodina consider that although they are able to exercise their right to public information in their native languages, they cannot fully enjoy it without an extra state endeavour, namely affirmative action, because of a whole range of shortcomings affecting its implementation. In this connection, the most frequent problems concerning electronic media which prevent the provision of quality information in minority languages are:

- financial problems (Hungarians, Romanians, Rusyns, Slovaks, Bunjevci)
- personnel problems: inadequate training and staff shortages in minority desks, age of journalists, low pay and uncertain job status of employees (Hungarians, Roma, Romanians, Rusyns, Slovaks)
- insufficient minority participation and representation in the process of deciding on public information matters which concern them (having to do, for example, with the appointment of minority members to management and programme boards and to positions of authority at the provincial and republic levels) (Hungarians)

⁴² Alternative Report for Vojvodina, Vojvodina Centre for Human Rights, p. 33

⁴³ Pešić Milica, *Medijsko prikazivanje nacionalnih manjina i unapređivanje duha tolerancije i međukulturalnog dijaloga*, in *Popunjavanje okvira*, Savet Evrope, 2004 (p.140)

⁴⁴ Pešić Milica (p.139)

- nonrecognition of the institution of councils for national minorities with regard to the Law on Broadcasting and disregard for national council decisions in the decision-making process (Hungarians, Romanians, Rusyns)

- lack of adequate technical equipment of minority desks and obsolete equipment (Rusyns, Bunjevci)

- poor reception and signal coverage (Croats, Romanians, Rusyns, Slovaks)
- unequal treatment of individual minority communities (Croats, Roma)

The problems concerning the print media are as follows:

- unsolved systemic financing of minority print media and their dependence on funding by the provincial Executive Council in spite of the fact that founding rights with regard to print media have been transferred to the national councils (Hungarians, Bunjevci, Roma, Romanians, Rusyns)

- decrease of the purchasing power of the population has affected the circulation of the print media (Hungarians cite children's papers as a special problem)

- personnel problems, desks affected by cash shortages, low pay (Hungarians, Slovaks)

- no print media at local level (Bunjevci).

Hungarians and Romanians also pointed out the inadequate quality and content of minority programmes, covering mostly music festivals and folk music events, as well as the absence of children's, educational, entertainment and documentary broadcasts.

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Considering that at the present day media must perform their activity in an increasingly competitive and commercialized environment, with the electronic media public services caught up in this vortex whether they like it or not,⁴⁵ media privatization is emerging as a common problem of all the minority communities in Vojvodina. Minority members are concerned that certain scenarios regarding the privatization process may affect the treatment of media in national minority languages in various ways; for example, the limited number of their audiences can result in a lower income from advertising and, in turn, a general reluctance to broadcast minority language programmes especially at peak times.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Torlek MekGonel, Pristup pripadnika nacionalnih manjina medijima, Popunjavnje okvira, 2004 (143)

⁴⁶ Torlek MekGonel, Popunjavnje okvira, 2004 (147)

Dubravka VALIC NEDELJKOVIC THREE ITEMS OF INFORMATION

There are three items of information I omitted giving though they don't concern this monitoring. One of these is a 'slice of life' story, as journalists are wont to say. Journalists from Stara Pazova radio got in touch with us yesterday to tell us that, as a result of privatization, this municipal radio station with two programmes and two frequencies at the moment, one for the Slovak language and one for the Serbian language, would keep only one, so that, even before the final decision regarding the allocation of frequencies is known, the Slovak language programmes will be joined to those in Serbian. What is more, the sacking of the journalists working in the Slovakian language is envisaged because there's no more room for them. They wanted to know what to do. So, this is a slice of life. I think that in January or February we shall have concrete facts about how such slice of life stories really affect people, that is, journalists. The Media Studies Department of the Philosophy Faculty and the Vojvodina Ombudsman have namely carried out an extensive survey about the position of Vojvodina's journalists. The students have succeeded in completing 450 questionnaires with answers from people working in Vojvodina media. They had great problems with that because the journalists believed that the survey was a prelude to dismissals and were not willing to fill the questionnaires in spite of the fact that the students had been issued cards testifying to their identity and that the results would not be abused as this was a matter of scientific research. But the journalists simply believed that the data-collection involved the making of new lists to be used for dismissing people. Very interesting, isn't it?

And, finally, the third item of information: I wish to inform you that monitoring of majority- and minority-language media during the election campaign has been approved, with focus on showing doubly discriminated people – women politicians members of national minorities. I believe this is the first study of the kind in the whole region because it focuses on women candidates from the ranks of national minorities.

Pavel DOMONJI: Just one question: What are the Stara Pazova journalists supposed to do now?

Dubravka VALIC NEDELJKOVIC: They can do what we advised them to do, namely to first draw up a speech programme scheme rather than one combining speech and music, with a high quality content explaining why journalists are necessary, that programmes in minority languages are not only

about dancing but a very important way of fostering culture, language, traditions and so on. So, we advised them to work out their own programme scheme and to insist that the programmes, if they must be cut, should be cut proportionally, including the Serbian language programme, if that's really essential. We considered it very important that they should take that proposal to several addresses. We pointed out to them that there are international conventions, laws, that things can't be done that way. Our suggestion was to take that plan to the Slovak National Council, to the Secretariat for Legislation, Administration and Minority Rights, to go to the Information Secretariat of the Vojvodina Executive Council because, that simply isn't a good practice model. We thought that these should be the first steps to be taken.

Jovan KOMSIC
THE PASSES THAT INSTILL FEAR

So far I have refrained from speaking, but now I do want to say a few things, prompted by what Dubravka said about the fear of the poll. You see, the things Dubravka said could be an occasion for reflecting on the exercise of the minorities' rights to information and, generally, on the atmosphere in which human rights and freedoms are exercised. The fears are not groundless. In the autumn of '92, all of us employees at TV Novi Sad had our pictures taken for new passes. On the first of January 1993, some 200 'unacceptable' ones were unable to enter the TV building because they didn't have the new passes. They were denied entry. The new passes were only for the 'fit'. Those who remained in journalistic establishments after that personnel cutback remember that and a number of other occasions of similar 'stock-taking'. I'm citing this as yet another example of journalists' fears and concerns.

Pavel DOMONJI
FEAR AND HANDICAP

Evaluations of media practice are very important. I would say that their importance is twofold: first, they are important for the media audiences themselves, naturally if they can have access to the results. Evaluations are useful because they are a reminder to the audience that media representations of reality are constructions and that what media emphasize does not have to be important and essential to the audience. Second, evaluations are useful to the media

themselves because they give the media people an indication of whether they are or are not succeeding in fulfilling their role, in this case of satisfying the need for programmes expressive of the cultural identity of this or that social group.

What is RTV's contribution, if any, to social cohesion in Vojvodina, or does it encourage public fragmentation along ethnic lines?

This question was raised in some form or other at our first round table too. I wish to recall that Alpar Lošonc warned then against the tendency to reduce Vojvodina to a consociation of ethnic elites, to reduce it to a mere sum total of ethnic compacts, to reduce it to pragmatic deals between the political elites.

RTV is expected to report on developments in Vojvodina. However, most items in RTV news programmes are devoted to what goes on in the world, not in the province. I'm not saying that RTV should not also provide information on events beyond our frontiers, especially if they have a bearing on the situation in Vojvodina. Developments in neighbouring countries for instance. Developments in Hungary, Romania, Slovakia no doubt merit attention considering that members of the Slovak, Hungarian and Romanian minorities live here. But if excessive attention is paid to events that have no connection with Vojvodina, one may ask with good reason: does not such an orientation call into question the purpose of the existence of a special broadcasting service?

If, as the scene of an event covered by the news, Vojvodina comes only second or third, what is the implication? What does this mean, then? Is RTV in a subordinate capacity to RTS? Belgrade affairs are given priority over Vojvodina affairs. Why? Republic officials and institutions have primacy over provincial ones. Why? Not to mention the fact that RTV neglects the citizens, their associations, nongovernmental organizations, for instance. Does RTV really stimulate pluralism of thought and contribute to greater freedom by enabling the ruling class to present its views and positions?

There is another interesting detail. The question of Kosovo is the most frequent topic in the news programmes. In certain minority language services, say broadcasts in Slovak, Rusyn and Romanian, Kosovo as a topic figures more prominently than in programmes in the majority language. We should dwell on this finding.

I am not denying that the minority members as citizens of this state are interested in solving the question of Kosovo in a way that will not jeopardize its territorial integrity. However, I see that the minorities' interest in Kosovo does not reflect only their concern about the certain further fragmentation of the state, but above all their concern about possible negative consequences they might face should be question of Kosovo be resolved contrary to the demands of the Serbian authorities. If the minorities must prove their loyalty by paying more attention to

Kosovo in their news programmes than the desks using the language of the ethnic majority, this then testifies above all to the minorities' fear of being exposed to renewed pressure and violence.

This matter may be considered from another angle – what are the minority language programmes? Are they separate wholes, do they enjoy any degree of autonomy, do they satisfy the needs of this or that minority community and to what extent, or are they carbon-copies of the Serbian language programmes?

The fact that RTV news programmes pay little attention to interethnic tolerance is another fascinating finding. If there is a place where tolerance needs to be discussed as an important practical-political virtue, then that place is Vojvodina. I have watched the quiz show 'Koliko se poznajemo' [How much we know about each other] on several occasions. As you may know, that is part of the project of the provincial Secretariat for Minorities, Administration, Legislation and National Minorities [sic] concerning multiculturalism and the promotion of tolerance in Vojvodina. The kids say that these programmes are boring to death. My son, for instance, says that a man who watches such programmes must be a true masochist. At some place in the report of the Novi Sad School of Journalism – I think it's in the article by Milena Dragičević Šević – this programme is described as boring because it burdens the kids with a plethora of unnecessary and superfluous information.

One more thing. The law on minorities of the neighbouring Republic of Hungary says that minority cultures are a component part of Hungarian culture. There is no such provision in our minorities legislation. But the absence of such provision is not the problem; the problem is that the works of Laslo Vegel or Vladimir Hurban Vladimirov, for example, are not considered part of Serb culture. The politicians often stress that the minorities are our advantage, our asset and our treasure, but this somehow is not reflected in the RTV programmes. This fact is not a handicap for the minorities alone. This fact is a handicap for the members of the majority because it deprives them of opportunities to acquire a better knowledge of the history, culture and art of their fellow citizens, to broaden their horizons and, if you will, broaden and enrich their self-knowledge.

Antal BOZÓKI

STOP TAKING MINORITY INFORMATION SYSTEMS APART

First of all, I'd like to comment on what the director of the Vojvodina Centre for Human Rights in Novi Sad, Aleksandra Vujić, said in connection with the 'alternative report'. I must express my objections to the fact that the civil

organizations of the Vojvodina Hungarians received no invitation to attend the gathering organized to prepare that alternative report; representatives of the National Council of the Vojvodina Hungarians alone received an invitation, but, as far as I know, it is not a civil organization at all. We from the civil organizations have had enough of people telling us how we live, what we feel and how we view our situation.

It was for this reason that we held a conference of the Vojvodina Hungarians' civil organizations on 3 November 2007, that is, before that consultation, and we prepared our alternative report on the situation of the Vojvodina Hungarians. The report was transmitted to the observer delegation of the Council of Europe, whose members visited Novi Sad on November 27. I protested to the delegation over this practice and attitude towards us, specifically towards Argus, the civil association of the Vojvodina Hungarian for minority rights of which I am the president and which is the oldest civil organization in Vojvodina concerned with the study of the status and rights of minorities.

We submitted that report – in 'white book' form titled 'The Situation of Hungarians in Vojvodina' – to the OSCE and the Council of Europe. We expect the report to be included in the report by Andreas Gross, who, I hope, will make a realistic and correct report, though the delegation's visit to Vojvodina was surrounded by considerable perplexity and mystification. Not even the programme of the delegation's visit was made public.

Mr Gross received us in the Hotel Park lobby where there was loud music playing, which wasn't correct. But he received us all the same, though we thought grudgingly because we'd protested to the OSCE and the Council of Europe about the manner in which the visit had been organized. I think that this isn't the way to do things. When a delegation of the Council of Europe or any other delegation comes to Vojvodina to discuss the situation and rights of members of national minorities, then its programme should include the civil organizations, especially when it is a question of preparing an alternative report. I hope that this won't happen again because we're always going to say what we think regardless of how others look at it.

As to the topic itself, I wish to say this: the right to public information in one's native language is of exceptional importance for every man regardless of his national affiliation. Members of national minorities, under domestic regulations and international conventions acceded to by Serbia, are entitled to that right and the state has the duty of contributing to the exercise of that right, above all by providing adequate financial assistance. However, the way in which this right is ensured is not irrelevant, that is, whether this right is ensured formally or at a professional level in conformity with the rules of the profession. As regards the

number of news media in the Hungarian language, there is one daily newspaper (*Magyar Szó*), two weeklies of which one is published in Subotica (*Hét Nap/Sedam dana*) and the other in Novi Sad (*Családi Kör/Porodični krug*), though the second is not of great importance being chiefly a review and entertainment paper not covering political topics, whereas the Subotica weekly is under the competence of the National Council, that is, the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians. There is a youth weekly and a paper for school and pre-school children, published monthly.

The press – I'm referring above all to the Hungarian language newspapers – is beset by material, personnel and technical problems. Radio Novi Sad's equipment dates back to the 1950s and its medium wave coverage is poor, but this is another story, it's been denied frequency, that is, it broadcasts in another frequency which cannot be received throughout Vojvodina.

Regarding the editorial policy, I'd say that that Hungarian language daily and *Hét nap*, which is published in Subotica, are distinguished by partisanship. One might even say, and that's why I'm saying this, that the Vojvodina Hungarians are gradually being deprived of their right to objective information. Whether this deprivation of rights is part of a 'deliberate state policy' as Mr Žigmanov termed it, it remains to be seen.

The quality of the youth paper *Képes Ifjúság* has suffered so badly due to editorial policy, something I'm not going to go into now, that young people stopped buying it. It is currently published as a supplement to *Magyar Szó*, so everybody who buys that daily must buy the supplement. Because of its editorial policy it has lost its entire readership.

In my opinion, the transfer of founding rights to the national councils, at the session of the Vojvodina Assembly on 29 June 2004, was a total failure. This is especially true of the National Council for the Vojvodina Hungarians which, as is well known, is composed overwhelmingly of members of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians. So, this is an almost purely one-party body. Moreover, as is well known, that council's mandate expired as far back as 20 September 2006. Since 2002 Serbia has made no move towards adopting a new law on the election of national councils. Judging by the statement of the minister for local self-government, it probably has no intention of doing that soon.

Practice has shown that the founding rights – and now I'm talking about the electronic media too – oughtn't to have been transferred to the national councils but only to the desks. As a result of the change of founder, the desks have lost their autonomy. The editor-in-chief and the director are chosen on the proposal or recommendation of the national council, and that in agreement with the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians This probably accounts for the fact why no

one replied to the advertisement for the position of editor-in-chief of *Magyar Szó* so, as a result of which the [old] editor-in-chief remained.

The influence on editorial policy with the Hungarians is manifested as encroachment and guidance by the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, which isn't right. This directly harms objective information. Thus you can read whole pages of interviews with leaders of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians and representatives of various state agencies, which isn't good. I've heard journalists say that certain politicians put questions to themselves and then answer them. This leads nowhere. At the same time there is lack of analytical and critical texts pointing out what's good and what isn't in the social development and political life.

In fact, all that is leading directly to the impoverishment of the Hungarians' culture and language and also information in their language. By the way, the circulation of *Magyar Szó*, which is probably lowest in its history, is the best indicator of its quality.

As to the Hungarian language desk of RTV Novi Sad, the number of staff has been halved in the last decade, with those remaining performing their duties only with the greatest difficulty on account of, as I've already mentioned, their antiquated equipment.

The TV Novi Sad desk, according to people who work there, had about 100 employees and 20 stringers before October 1990. The desk's systematisation of job positions in force permits only 26 positions including 21 journalist positions and five for auxiliary staff.

During the 1990s, TV Novi Sad broadcast 20.06 per cent of its programmes in the Hungarian language, compared with a mere 4.65 per cent in 2007. This is a drastic cut, and it brought about a drastic fall in the quality of individual programmes.

The lack of scientific, educational and children's programmes and of programme exchanges with television companies in Hungary poses a special problem. All this is leading to the impoverishment of the language and culture of the Hungarians in Vojvodina. So, even seven or eight years after Milošević's fall there is no exchange of television programmes in Hungarian. What is TV Novi Sad afraid of in such exchanges? Shouldn't the local Serbs too be acquainted with the culture of the Hungarians? What's the problem? Don't there exist international regulations and international obligations concerning the exchange of ideas, the exchange of programmes, the need to get to know each other? Though everybody is referring to Vojvodina as a multiethnic region, nothing is being done in this regard.

The Radio Novi Sad Hungarian language desk had 101 employees in 1990 compared with 43 at present. In their estimate, the broadcasting of quality programmes requires at least 67 employees, which means that another 24 should be taken on.

The announcement of mandatory privatization of local radio and television stations has brought the provision of multilingual information in Vojvodina into jeopardy and could also be regarded as a breach of so-called acquired rights. The things I spoke about a short while ago also constitute breaches of acquired rights. We have this right, the guarantee of acquired rights, also provided for by law, but these rights are not exercised in practice. This also applies to the category of acquired rights in numerous other fields, not only in information.

So far as I know, this was the way Radio Srbobran, the information centres in Sombor and Kula, were privatized, but then the privatization was stopped probably by agreement between the Vojvodina Executive Council and the Serbian Government. All this indicates that the Government of the Republic of Serbia has no clear concept of a minority policy. First they want that privatization at all costs in spite of being warned not to do it, then they call it off and no one is called to account for anything! What should be done about it now? Why were the radio stations privatized in Srbobran, in Kula and Sombor, what's going on? We've got this twofold condition now, how is it going to be solved? A state shouldn't have a legal system like that, permitting one to do things one way today and another way tomorrow... This also shows that the protection of acquired rights under Article 8 of the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities exists only on paper. This state of affairs must certainly be regulated to avoid even greater damage.

Regarding today's discussion, I think – wishing to be a bit more critical about this – that this discussion would probably have been richer and more comprehensive had minority desk representatives taken part in it.

To sum up, this is what I propose:

First, we should stop the deconstruction of the system of minority language public information, by which I mean the press and the electronic media.

Second, the state should be consistently fulfilling its material and other obligations concerning the exercise of the right to public information in the languages of the national minorities, by financial participation corresponding at least to the percentage of the national minority members' share of the total population in Vojvodina. Because the members of the national minorities are, like the members of the majority people, taxpayers who pay taxes used to finance the provision of information, among other things. Besides, TV Novi Sad should provide programmes in the Hungarian language – I don't know the situation concerning

the other languages – according to the Hungarian's share of the population. At present the share of the Hungarians of the population of Vojvodina is no longer 20 per cent but only 14.28 per cent, I mean, the lowest ever. Laslo Vegel did not observe for no reason that 'whenever we tune in to TV Novi Sad second channel programmes, we see members of national minorities doing nothing but dancing and singing', as though nothing else goes on, no problems, everybody's happy and content. I think that this state of affairs is untenable, nothing's been done about it for years! Do we really want to do something about it or not?

Third, something should by all means be done about the exchange of television programmes with television companies in the national minorities' mother nations, to provide adequate cultural, educational, scientific-research, educational, sports and other coverage, because for us the elementary thing is to keep abreast of the culture, science and other aspects of the culture of the mother nation in order to preserve our identity, but not only because of that, but also to acquaint members of the majority people with the cultures of the minority peoples. At any rate, [the initiatives] to start the subtitling of TV programmes at long last deserve to be supported because that is of elementary importance for understanding the content. This really is a very serious matter, actually perhaps one of the most serious because providing information and being informed is the beginning of almost everything. So, one should by all means insist on the full exercise of the right to objective information.

Aleksandra VUJIC

CLARIFYING THE MISUNDERSTANDING

Speaking about the conference organized by the Vojvodina Center for Human Rights and the Committees for Human Rights in Serbia Network, there is obviously a misunderstanding. I mean, the secretariats in charge of monitoring the situation of the minorities (the Secretariat for the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the Secretariat for the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights) are two completely separate bodies and should not be confused. Our conference was devoted to the Alternative Reports submitted to the secretariats already mentioned, while the rapporteur of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe visited our country independently of that.

Another thing. An alternative report on the implementation of the Framework Convention and the Charter may be submitted by any organization or

NGO concerned with minority affairs, and also by any individual including all of you present here. The Vojvodina Center for Human Rights and the Committees for Human Rights Network for their part invited 15 nongovernmental organizations and all the national councils to draw up the reports together with them, but this could at the same time have been done by anybody else. What's more, the Council of Europe is open to everybody and urges that as many reports be submitted as possible in order to gain a more complete picture of the situation of a country's minorities. In view of the number of organizations participating in the drawing up of the reports transmitted by the Vojvodina centre and the Committees Network, we could say that this involves the collection of a number of individual reports, each of which was signed by the organization or the national council for national minority for which had framed it.

Third. Those invited to the conference organized in the Assembly of Vojvodina included representatives of organizations, NGOs and national councils who took part in the drawing up of the reports: 15 nongovernmental organizations and 11 national councils for national minorities, together with representatives of domestic and international institutions concerned with minority affairs. So, the conference was devoted to the promotion of the Alternative Reports and there was no consultation involved. The Hungarian National Council was one of a total of 14 national councils invited, and the conference venue was provided by the secretary for legislation, administration and national minorities as a sort of favour to the citizens by a state institution representative. We are thankful to him for that because his gesture is a good example of cooperation between the governmental and nongovernmental sectors.

The reaction we heard a short while ago, though somewhat awkward owing to lack of information about the functioning of the Council of Europe, was basically a call on the citizens themselves to take part in similar activities, so I am inviting all to start writing alternative reports in the future and then to send them to the secretariats mentioned previously.

Antal BOZÓKI
CALL FOR COOPERATION

Dear Miss Vujić, you've just said that you'd had a 'meeting with the national councils', but your organization is a civil organization, isn't it? The alternative reports are written, as far as I know, by civil organizations, but you've just said that you'd 'collected the individual reports of various organizations'.

So far as I know, the national councils are not civil organizations. Besides, we are not pleased with the work of the National Council for the Vojvodina Hungarians either. What kind of report, whose report is it, then, which you wrote? That, if you'll forgive me, is no report at all. If an alternative report is to be written, then let the civil organizations' reports be sublimated, then make a single report which should be verified in some way.

Please, I'm not angry with you. I'm angered by your unacceptable attitude to the civil organizations of the Vojvodina Hungarians, because you do something in our name, but without us and over our heads. We, the 14 nongovernmental organizations of the Vojvodina Hungarians, drew up our own report on the situation of the Vojvodina Hungarians in November 2007, that is, before you did. If you're doing something on our behalf, then you should at least involve us in what you're doing, or at least ask our opinion about that.

We appended to the report a memorandum entitled 'Active Minority Policy, Development and Peaceful Coexistence', whose 22 points give a comprehensive overview of the situation and problems of the Hungarians in Vojvodina and which we handed to Mr Andreas Gross, the Council of Europe rapporteur, during his visit to Novi Sad on 27 November 2007.

I am for cooperation between nongovernmental organizations and I went to see you at your office with this object in mind, although I am much older than you. I wonder why, for what reason are you not including the civil organizations of the Vojvodina Hungarians in such an activity?

I used the word 'consultation' because I'd learned about your gathering from the media, and that only the next day, after the gathering had been held. I mean, this is the word that the newspapers actually used. So, I am kindly asking you now also in public to include the civil organizations of the Vojvodina Hungarians in activities concerning the minorities in the future and to leave us the option of saying ourselves what we think about our situation and the related problems, because we know that best and are aware of it.

Mirko DJORDJEVIC
RELIGIOUS PRESS IN MINORITY LANGUAGES

Since the introductory statements have convinced me that we should deal with this aspect of the topic too, I'm going to say a few words about the minority language religious press in Vojvodina and about the state of affairs there. There'll also be a few observations – it won't be at length – which will dovetail into what has been said already, but first of all a few remarks.

First: We dealt with the media in Serbia recently and a good deal of that was published in the latest issue of *Republika*. True, the subject matter was somewhat limited, concerning church and lay media, and also reporting and writing about Kosovo. Second: this topic, the religious press in Vojvodina, is completely neglected. There are, of course, reports and analyses of a purely official nature at the provincial secretariat for legislation, administration and relations with minorities, as well as at the Ministry of Religion of the Government of Serbia, but no one has dealt with this topic seriously. It fits in here because it, too, is part of the press in the minority languages which is supposed to mirror the current state of affairs, which certainly concerns the question of Vojvodina's identity, a situation which really hasn't been explored.

To make matters worse, the councils, churches and religious communities in Vojvodina have their media, print media, newspapers, periodicals, they also have electronic [media], but an overwhelming majority of them have nothing, these are so-called small religious communities which are portrayed in other church media, including lay ones, as sects, a problem which causes collisions on the public stage, and very complicated ones at that.

Religious media in Vojvodina are generally characterized by being closed in on themselves, reduced to their own ethno-confessional communities. They don't break out of that cliché and are not concerned with others too much. This is a big problem because there's no communication between them in a general sense, a situation having to do with the general state of affairs around us. We have the problem of centralization there too. The majority of churches and religious communities in Vojvodina mimic their religious centres or carry out their directives. The language of hatred and exclusiveness may not be predominant – though there's evidence of that too – but we have no communication to speak of either. Rather than exhibiting genuine pluralism of forms of religious association within the church and religious communities – something which objectively exists, it's an objective historical fact – these media, in Slovak, Rusyn, Romanian, and so on, reflect another kind of pluralism, of a political character. What I'm saying is that these media are politicized to such an extent that the manner of their rhetoric is easily identified. Besides – this is yet another characteristic, though I can elaborate on it on some other occasion – some religious media, both electronic and print media, are dominated by certain clichés and stereotypes that are in evidence in various other media. Thus, to begin with the church media in the Serbian language, you'll find in them two clichés all the time: the one is about the problem of Vuk Branković – betrayal. It has occurred to no one in the lay media, nor to anyone at gatherings such as this, to explain that it was a clergyman, of all people, Archimandrite Ilarion Ruvarac, who proved that Vuk

Branković was no traitor at all, that this is a cliché that's been going the rounds since the 15th century and was created by a foreigner (Orbini) – in fact, the opposite is the case. All the same, this cliché dominates even today, it dominates and you can't shake it off. The big problem about clichés is that it's impossible to evaluate all that unless a thorough analysis is made, and there lies that other cliché that's been running through the media in the Serbian language, with religious media in other languages also making references to it in this or that way – and that's *Svetosavlje* [the cult of St Sava]. Third observation: all the church media outlets – both those of the smaller and those of the bigger religious communities in Vojvodina, including the media in Serbian, Rusyn, Slovak, Romanian languages, at least all those I have followed and analyzed – they're all blind to the state of religious instruction which was, as you may know, introduced into the lay, state system of education by a provision having the force of law; the media are disoriented and one notices another fact, that they, the media are being manipulated by political power structures, as well as by power structures in the religious organizations themselves.

Consider two things I've talked about on several occasions, things we in the media don't see, a topic no one has addressed himself to – St Sava, 'Svetosavlje', that cliché, that's an idea from Vojvodina dating back to the beginning of the 19th century, it originated here, in Vojvodina, though not under the name of 'Svetosavlje', but as a cultural idea from Vojvodina without the word 'Svetosavlje' figuring there at all. The hymn *Uskliknimo s ljubavlju* [Let us sing with love] was first sung in Szeged; it has been modified nine times since and is still being reworked to fit the needs of the moment, so that, for instance, one version of it currently runs: 'Bosnia and Herzegovina, land of St Sava's grandfathers...' You see, this is the problem. So, the media are dominated, the religious press in Vojvodina is, by the *Svetosavlje* idea in a political sense, which – one need hardly go into that here – has nothing to do whatever with St Sava as a historical phenomenon. That's the size of it.

For comparison purposes, we can classify the media as periodicals, newspapers, bulletins, radio and television programmes. The periodicals for the most part deal with dogmatic, ecclesiological problems, and they include *Beseda* here in Novi Sad, of the Eparchy of Bačka, *Srpski sion* of the Eparchy of Srem and our Greco-Catholics' *Dzvony* of Novi Sad, a rather solid paper albeit with limited resources, material and technical. They have no communication whatever because the other religious media write them off as Uniates, investing the concept of Uniate with a connotation that is obviously ideological and political. Some progress has been made concerning the Ecumenical Centre in Novi Sad, which has publications in several languages and scripts, it's trying to bring all the

religious circles and confessions together, so to speak, and to let their voices be heard there, but their reach is limited, what with the phenomena already mentioned predominating.

The trouble here is, somebody from the outside, that somebody being the state, not only manipulates members of religious minorities against their will, it manipulates them crudely. So the state ordains that there can exist only one Orthodox church, that there cannot be a Romanian Orthodox Church vicariate, a Macedonian Orthodox Church, or Montenegrin... What's the problem? Let's leave the law aside for now. The thing is, there is no communication at all within one confession, the media are blocked, so, for instance, the religious media in the Romanian language are concerned with this problem, of the Romanian Orthodox Church not being recognized in Serbia, although the Serbian Orthodox Church is recognized in Romania. These are problems that give rise to serious conflicts.

I am saying all this because it's time, and it's long overdue, for carrying out a thorough analysis, a systematization of the thematic content of religious newspapers in Vojvodina and for identifying the patterns of political manipulation, as well as that which brings them together. The things the Christian denominations in Vojvodina have in common, that is far from being in the forefront, not even in their respective papers. Since no such analysis has been made, I'm going to say a few words about that. It is necessary to make headway so that we could come out of these complicated media collisions that give rise to social collisions. Whether the gymnasium [grammar school] in Novi Sad will be called Serb Orthodox Gymnasium or something like that, whether it should be attended by other pupils, we see that this is turning into a political problem without a real, historical basis for anything of that kind. A gymnasium can also be Jesuitical, but as a gymnasium it must have a curriculum.

To repeat, many religious communities in Vojvodina have no media outlets at all. The fact that they have none may be explained by lack of financial resources, though it seems to me that this isn't about financial constraints but about something else. An act of discrimination has been made, the law has privileged some and completely excluded others, and so we have a chaotic situation with repercussions on the social plane in the form of serious collisions, therefore a mere commentary is not enough and a real analysis should be carried out at some time. These media are, by all means, part of the media public sphere and influence the determination of identity, and so also of the identity of Vojvodina. In none of the religious media, Orthodox, Catholic, Evangelist, in the Rusyn and Slovak languages, for instance, is there any suggestion of an idea that one should discuss, in a normal way, the identity of Vojvodina, and therefore this sphere remains on the sidelines. After all, Vojvodina's Orthodoxy, as has already

been discussed, also Orthodoxy in Serbia, Orthodoxy in Ukraine, they don't differ in dogmatic and ecclesiological terms, but in a culturological sense they do differ substantially. I have referred to Orthodox baroque before, for instance, so I'm not going to go into that again now, I only want to point out that this sphere should be included in one of the forthcoming sessions.

Pavel DOMONJI

NONAUTONOMOUS EDITORIAL POLICIES

To follow up on what Sonja Biserko said, I'd wish to explicate a matter which only implicitly figured in her speech. We namely must bear in mind that the minority language media are, above all, media and that therefore their role is, as it were, to be of *service* to the public by providing accurate, timely, reliable information, to contribute to the critical examination of matters of public interest, as well as to the more transparent work of the key institutions within their respective communities. One should not forget the fact, either, that minorities are complex structures, with diverse orientations, interest groups, existing within them, that within minorities too a battle is being waged for the redistribution of influence, power and resources, and also that the media are one of these resources over which the opposing orientations are trying to establish their control.

The survey referred to by Tomislav Žigmanov included the following question put to members of minority cultural elites: '*Are you satisfied with the media informing you in your language?*' Most of the respondents expressed partial satisfaction. Those who were dissatisfied with information in their native language outnumbered those who were by almost four to one. The following was cited most frequently as the main causes of the dissatisfaction: not being up-to-date, unobjective information, personnel problems, inappropriate length of programmes, technical obsolescence, poor territory coverage, lack of minority language programmes.

Asked '*What are your expectations of the media in your language?*' the respondents cited the following: greater objectivity and professionalism, better quality programmes, more equal treatment in the media field, better territory coverage, technical improvements, longer programmes and higher budget outlay.

Similar answers were given in reply to the question '*What would you like to see changed in public information in a native language?*' The most respondents – more than a half – wanted changes in the editorial policy and better programmes, followed by greater dispatch and objectivity of information, greater diversity of information, innovation of programme content and media political independence.

In reply to the explicit question: *'What are your main objections to the media in your language?'* the respondents said: an unwillingness to open 'sensitive' issues, lack of competence, superficiality and incompleteness of information, coverage partiality and lack of a clear posture.

Having referred in their replies on several occasions to problems concerning editorial policy, the members of the minority cultural elites were asked to *evaluate the media editorial policy in relation to the centres of power*. The replies received on that occasion show that most members of minority elites share the conviction that there is no autonomous editorial policy in the minority languages. The editorial policy, in the opinion of the respondents, was mostly under the influence of: political parties, founders, representative bodies (national councils and so on), editorial teams (by virtue of their professionalism), local financiers, donors, minority community cultural societies, nongovernmental organizations, influential members of minority communities, local authorities, and so on.

Asked what prerequisites should be ensured in order for the minority media to completely fulfil the tasks set to them, most respondents chose the following answers from among a choice of others in the questionnaire: increasing desk staffing levels, ensuring stable sources of finance, insisting on professional standards and journalist codes, raising technical levels, ensuring thematic diversity of programmes, improving coverage, and so on.

Gordana PERUNOVIC FIJAT BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

The provision of information in the languages of the peoples living in the area of Kikinda has been gaining in importance since the start of the battle for frequencies. VK Radio, which was granted a regional frequency, broadcasts programmes in the Serbian, Hungarian and Romany languages. At present, the municipal Radio Kikinda, which wasn't granted a regional frequency but has applied for a local one, broadcasts programmes in the same three languages, but only the staff producing the Romany language broadcasts are part-time employees, with no pay, and the rest are full-time employees. Radio Tota (the Wheel) broadcasts most of its programmes in the Romany language, while KUM Radio, Radio Mokrin and Ami Radio broadcast most of their programmes in the Serbian language. The attempt by the local authorities – the coalition between the SRS [Serbian Radical Party] and several smaller parties – to discontinue the Hungarian language broadcasts of the municipal Radio Kikinda (the incident is

presented in the rubric 'Povelja na licu mesta' of the periodical *Helsinška povelja*) provoked a coordinated and very determined reaction of Hungarian cultural-artistic societies, nongovernmental organizations, the SVM [Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians], all media outlets not controlled by the citizens, and there was such public outcry, including notification of international organizations, that those who initiated the move backed down promptly and have not attempted anything of the kind. So, it was at least clear that multilingual information would be very difficult to abolish because it is supported by people with civil roots irrespective of their party affiliation (or 'non-affiliation') and nationality. Apparently the residents of Kikinda hold that the provision of information in several languages is something that goes without saying, something that must exist.

The programme scheme of Televizija VK includes news in the Serbian and Hungarian languages, and this also applies to Televizija Rubin, which was denied a frequency; it will probably close down and its owner return to Kruševac. As to the print media, *Mokrinske novine* is published in the Serbian language, *Ruskoselski glasnik* in two languages which are about equally represented (the same texts appear in Serbian and Hungarian), *Kikindske*, published as part of *Dnevnik of Novi Sad*, has a weekly page in the Hungarian language, and *Kikindske novine*, formerly in municipal ownership and privatized in June 2007, has two pages in the Hungarian language. While at present there are no texts in the Romany language in the newspapers published in the municipality of Kikinda, articles are printed occasionally about actions of Roma nongovernmental organizations and prominent individuals.

The election campaigns so far have not been characterized by an abundance of promotional materials in the Romany language (with none at all in some cases), and materials in the Hungarian language have not been in plentiful supply either, except those distributed in areas with a majority Hungarian population or those prepared by the SVM. The policy of other parties is quite frequently to address potential voters only in the Serbian language. Is this a matter of mistake, omission, ignorance or intention? – one can only guess.

There's an interesting phenomenon which perhaps merits being looked into by sociologists: Hungarians read papers in the Hungarian language and papers in the Serbian language, and they follow radio and television programmes in the Serbian and Hungarian languages, usually in broadcasts from Hungary; on the other hand, however, growing numbers of Serbs are no longer able to read a line of text in the Hungarian language, nor can they understand a sentence spoken on Hungarian radio or television. There are estimates (admittedly they're not substantiated with figures and would therefore pose a real challenge for researchers) that in Austria-Hungary more than 80 per cent of Serbs were

bilingual, being able to understand at least one language other than their own. The same phenomenon was observed in other peoples, who also spoke the languages of their neighbours. Children of both sexes 'went visiting' places differing from the ones to which they were accustomed, staying at the houses of neighbours belonging to other nations, other faiths, living and working with the hosts and having meals with their families in order to learn the language. That wasn't an exclusive pastime of the idle well-to-do people who, as a matter of course, learned the German and French languages, but a practice among the poorest: community living simply necessitated that one should have a practical, rather than purely theoretical, knowledge of several languages: knowledge of languages was necessary at the workplace and for business purposes. For example, as late as the 1930s, Stevan Fijat, a tailor from Perlez, knew and communicated with this customers in Serbian, Hungarian, German and Romanian; Radivoj Pakaški, a clerk from Ruski Krstur, spoke Serbian, Hungarian and German, the last so well that Germans hired him to translate things for them, and when he was taken prisoner of war he acquired a solid knowledge of Russian during the four years he spent in Russia; Sava Ninčić, a teacher, spoke Serbian, German, Hungarian, as well as learning Slovakian while serving as teacher in Kovačica, all this being active knowledge comprising reading, writing and interpreting. This practice was inherited from the former Austria-Hungary: newspapers in the German, Hungarian and Serbian languages were published in Kikinda up to the outbreak of the First World War. Although the Jews, not a large but economically a significant and respectable category, had no newspaper in their own language (though they had books), they read the papers in the languages in which they were printed without a problem because they spoke those languages. Every Jewish doctor, tradesman or solicitor without exception knew the language of every people living in the town. Even today one encounters among people over 60 years of age somebody who speaks several languages. The legendary professor of the English language in Kikinda, Richard Pfeffer, spoke Serbian, Hungarian, German (as his mother tongue), Slovakian and Polish, an accomplishment which deserves to be respected and followed.

Learning the languages of other peoples living in the same town (or village) has no attraction for the majority of the Serb population (if it had, they would take the trouble to learn them). While young people do learn English to some extent, in order to be able to communicate with their peers from other countries, or out of the desire to go abroad at last and never come back, the adults do not bother at all, at least not until they lose their jobs and are made to attend an English language course run by the employment office. So there we have a paradox: a young person speaks, reads, writes English and translates from it rather well, communicating

without a problem with young people from, say, Norway or the USA, but is unable to greet a Hungarian neighbour with a few words in Hungarian, let alone communicate with him. An educational worker in Kikinda is openly boasting of not knowing a word of the Hungarian language although he has been married to a Hungarian woman, herself an educational worker, for 30 years. This example should be quite enough to make the point.

There are, of course, different examples.

Tibor Katai, the ethnologist and choreographer with the cultural-artistic society Egység (Unity), says: 'I was rather surprised to see Serb children enrolling in folklore courses, they speak Hungarian and want to learn more.'

They come and ask: "Do you also organize Hungarian language courses?" I was at a loss: "No, we don't." "But where then can we take lessons?" "The only thing to do is to go to a Hungarian language teacher and ask him if he wants to give you lessons privately." These days some schools are providing Greek language lessons for adults, but no one is organizing teaching of the Hungarian language. I think that we should be more enterprising.'

Tamara Isakov, a pupil attending the Fejes Klara bilingual instruction primary school: 'Our Hungarian friends learn both Serbian and Hungarian, while we learn only Serbian.'

This is discrimination: this way we'll speak one language less. Why don't they start teaching us languages earlier? At the kindergarten there was a woman teacher who spoke Serbian and Hungarian and addressed each child in his or her language. So we learned both languages and began talking to each other. But she got married and moved to Senta, and the other teachers didn't speak Hungarian.'

Istvan Mezei, a labourer: 'My daughter has had English language lessons since she was six, in addition to learning to speak Serbian and Hungarian at home. The more languages you know, the more you're worth.'

In contrast to this last, upbeat statement, it is possible to cite far more examples of mixed marriages where the children speak no other language than Serbian. According to Kornel Boronka, the president of the Kikinda office of the Alliance of Romanians, this is seen in marriages between Serbs and Hungarians, and even more in marriages between Serbs and Romanians (of whom there are not many in Kikinda). As to the Romany language, it is still a *terra incognita* for all save the Roma: instances of non-Roma speaking the Romany language are few.

Ljubiša Francuski, an ambulance driver: 'I picked up Romany as a child from the children in my neighbourhood.'

For them it was fun to teach me, and for me to speak a language no one in the class spoke. Later in my life I learned English and German (I worked in Germany), but it is at my present work that the knowledge I acquired in my

childhood has been useful to me. While driving back from the Roma settlements on the outskirts of Kikinda – the roads and the living conditions are appalling out there – being able to address the patients and their relatives in their own language has been useful to me. All of a sudden, they appear more trustful.'

Trust is a key word in the relations modern Europe is trying to build, offering all an equal chance of expressing themselves in their own language. After all, there's no need to reinvent the wheel in this regard: evident and telling examples of practices involving the use of different languages date from Austria-Hungary, as already mentioned (we need not go further back into history than that); I'm referring to the books and newspapers in different languages that were freely published throughout the Empire. They had to pass through censorship, but books in German and Hungarian were also subject to censorship, that was the procedure before you were permitted to print them. Here's one example: a copy of the Bible translated by Đura Daničić, property of the great-great ancestor of mine Lazar Pakaški, a 1867 edition, Pest, 'the printing house of Hornjanski and Traeger'. So, in the middle of Pest of all places, having a majority Hungarian population, Hornjanski and Traeger – a Slovak, Czech or Pole and an Austrian or German, judging by the surname – print a book in the Serbian language, in a very elegant and readable Cyrillic script. People of any knowledge of the print media will be aware that, in order to print a book in the Serbian language, Hornjanski and Traeger had to have in their printing shop first of all the Cyrillic fonts, to use the modern term; second, they had to have a typesetter with a knowledge of Serbian, a printer who spoke Serbian, a reviser, and they also had to have at least some knowledge of Serbian to make sure that nothing politically suspicious got through in order not to have problems with the imperial administration. But why did they print a book in the Serbian language, given that it was not an official language of the Empire? Because it was their job to print books, newspapers, invitations, almanacs and other publications, and that in a language specified by the client and, probably, using the type chosen by him. In those days business crossed all barriers between people and will cross them again, when common sense and the normal need to communicate prevail over the need to talk about territory, blood, honour, the need to shut oneself off inside one's frontiers instead of seeking contact with other people. And, when we have hammered out the final business arrangements, we can proceed to the exchange of cultural goods. Among which the knowledge of languages is exceptionally highly valued. The challenge is there but it won't wait long: this match is not won by those who know how to fight, but by those who are prepared to learn things.

Jovan KOMSIC **SERBIA – AN UNFINISHED STATE**

In Kikinda in 1860, the German, Hungarian and Serbian languages were all in official use, to use the modern expression. I don't know whether this was a requirement imposed by Vienna, but it was no doubt a good example. So, I'm pointing out the fact that the Serbian language was in use too as further proof of Kikinda's multicultural and multilingual tradition.

We are currently going through democratic transition and have relegated the communists with their sinister decades-old luggage to the past. We have achieved this by combining the forces of the Serb ethnos intelligentsia, as well as those of the intelligentsia of a good many minorities in Vojvodina. Some members of the minority intelligentsia used to say that the decades of self-management and Tito's socialism had catastrophic consequences for, say, the identity of the Hungarian national community. There were probably very serious problems and consequences for the national identity and the community itself, especially at the time when the nations were opening up and entering into interaction with each other, the time when we had the highest ratio of ethnically mixed marriages in Europe. So, while such things are happening, there will always be people who will say that they pose a threat to the national substance. In my works I have quoted a number of authors who hold that such things are very dangerous for the identity of the nation and the community. But, let us ask ourselves what are our fundamental values? What kind of state do we want? What kind of national policy? What kind of project for the province? It is only after we have asked and answered these questions, it is only then that we shall be able to judge the institutions in terms of consistency of behaviour in interaction. Let's proceed from this: are our institutions already distinguished by consistent behaviour in interaction? This is the elementary definition of a custom turning into an institution, an institution which is far more durable and much more serious a civilizational affair than an organization.

Let us not be angry with the national councils. States in transition, states like this one, necessarily experiment. Serbia is an incomplete state (Zoran Đinđić), an unripe state, so one wonders what kind of policy concept we need. What kind of multiculturalism concept? Some very serious authors from the Serb cultural body with pro-European orientations are already expressing doubts about the concept of multiculturalism and pointing out that multiculturalism has proved dysfunctional. Some serious theorists abroad are also warning against the controversial effects of multiculturalism. All right, there are also authors who say, 'You can't exorcise the devil with Satan's help.' As the research results presented

here show, the solution does not lie in shutting oneself off from others, nor in segmentation, nor in running away from interaction. But what kind of interculturality and interactivity concept do we want? Interactivity, inclusivity, sensitization, these words are especially frequent these days. All right, let's go into that now. How do we sensitize the powerful ones to support a good idea? But let's first see what a good idea is. Provision of information in minority languages? Yes, it is a good idea to preserve the elementary prerequisites of multiculturalism and human and minority rights. The state, if it wants to be a European state, must invest more money, and that's where we agree. So, the state must help towards solving the problem of the media, because the media are not only something one fights for in the battle for markets, a battle resulting in the tyranny of the majority consumers. While on the one hand we expect of the state to intervene, on the other we merely watch the politicization of our own ethnonational interests without giving thought to that which constitutes the joint institutional framework for all of us regardless of the tribe to which we belong. Let's see what kind of Vojvodina we want and let me wind up with a discussion of poverty and fears. Regarding Aleksandra Vujić's report and all these surveys, what are they about? They are about fears. Journalists don't want to give complete information about themselves. Why, at the time of the 'differentiations' in 1988, the marking down of us 'autonomist' communists, the key criterion of suitability was our attitude to the rallies, the way the rallies were covered in the broadcasts of TV Novi Sad including the minority desks. Mind you, 20 years later people still live in fear of losing their regular pay, I meet them in the streets of Novi Sad and they complain to me all the time. However, they have survived and kept their regular jobs because even under Milošević the television had to sham multilingualism, though even now they fear that their attitude to Kosovo will be used as a criterion in possible new differentiations. So, let us have understanding for this deeper level of the problem. The problem is, the state is impoverished, it has no resources for ensuring the elementary rights, the rights to employment, to social security, to certainty, to wellbeing and a future, then a whole range of human and minority rights, as an essential condition of quality living.

What is implied by the European model? What can we do now? What is the purpose, the effect of our discussion today? We had excellent introductory statements. The state institutions do not make such serious analyses and do not posit the problem with such seriousness. Now, how can one use these statements to sensitize the political class of Vojvodina? Where is the political class of Vojvodina? Why, from the point of view of the distribution of power, we're on the margins. I don't like feeling like someone being on the margins, I think I'm not a person on the margins. But, at the same time, I don't wish to live in the illusion

that the media scene in Vojvodina shakes whenever I say something. It shakes, my eye. In order for discussions of this kind to have effect, we must have here with us people from the most influential, most powerful parties in the Vojvodina Assembly, people from the relevant democratic parties with a pro-European orientation, all who are responsible for the provision of information. All of them must be publicly asked specific questions by the nongovernmental sector. What is their concept of Vojvodina? What kind of information concept? What kind of multiculturalism concept? What kind of human rights concept? What kind of concept of Vojvodina's place in Europe? Well, when all of them are gathered here, then we can include in the dialogue the topic we're discussing today. Our topic is overshadowed by much broader and more substantial topics and we're also marginalized by the media. The news media thrive on thrill. At the moment there're no brawls, no expulsions, no intercommunal incidents, so the media simply aren't interested. But the organizers of discussions of this kind should consider using some of the stage-manager's tricks to make them more attractive.

Dubravka VALIC NEDELJKOVIC
A VOJVODINA WITHOUT POWER-WIELDERS

This time I'll refer back to our research, to the monitoring of the Novi Sad School of Journalism. What did the monitoring show? The monitoring showed that the news category is the predominating media genre in the minority programmes. What does it mean? It means that Beta and Tanjug news items are simply translated, and that's why there are so many Kosovo topics. I think that Jovan Komšić is partly right, that they really think that their ratings depend on how they report on Kosovo. However, I think that this is also due to something else, beginners are namely entrusted with doing the news every two hours. The model is simple, you put in whatever you receive, what Koštunica said about this or that, what So-and-So did, finally what Pajtić did, and when you add all that up Kosovo accounts for 17.5 per cent of the air time. Well, this is a bad model. However, I don't think that it is a matter of editorial policy so much as it is a matter of inertia. To be sure, there is also fear, but there's more of what I've just mentioned. The fact that media aren't paying enough attention to themselves is a far more serious matter, it is a big problem. Therefore they're not going to be the fourth estate for very long, in the sense of the hackneyed phrase. *Blic* yesterday published a list of the 50 most powerful media people in Serbia, with not one of them from Vojvodina. You should please read the article. The list includes people from advertising agencies, god knows who all those people are. Mind you, even

the person who is the general manager of Radio televizija Vojvodina didn't have the honour of being included among the most powerful media people in Serbia. In a way, this is a reply to what Komšić said. We're somewhere on the margins. That survey of the 50 most powerful ones may have been faked, it doesn't matter, *Blic* is still the newspaper with the largest readership in Serbia, is it not? They have an annual survey of the most powerful people in the fields of education, culture, politics, media, and so on. And among those 50 most powerful media people, there isn't even one from Vojvodina.

Boris VARGA
MINORITY MEDIA ARE RATHER SELF-CONTAINED

I think that one of the main causes of all the problems mentioned here lies in unskilfulness, that is, because journalists lack qualifications, especially many of the journalists and editors running media in national minority languages. Speaking the language of a national minority myself, Rusyn to be specific, and having contacts with colleagues from national minority language desks, I consider lack of skills as one of the main problems concerning the 'self-contained behaviour' on the part of ethnic communities in Vojvodina and probably in Serbia.

All these media 'fears' we've been talking about at this round table, the alleged political and state pressure, the things said regarding the coverage of Kosovo, the inadequate media conduct in somewhat extreme political situations, all that is due to lack of professional journalist skills. To be specific, my view is borne out by the facts presented by T. Žigmanov in his address, by the surveys showing that media in national minority languages in Vojvodina have the least percentage of qualified journalist personnel. What is worrying is the fact that as many as 30 per cent or so of journalists have secondary school qualifications.

Second, the Media Department at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad is currently training the first generation of journalists, and the Novi Sad School of Journalism is also training professional multi-lingual journalist personnel in Vojvodina. I can tell you from experience that they're really good journalists, at least those we've had the opportunity of seeing during their practical training.

Another serious problem, other than lack of qualifications among journalists working for media in national minority languages, is how to replace generations of journalists in national minority language desks with qualified personnel who will be graduating from the Media Department of the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad in the years to come or at least passing the courses of the

Novi Sad School of Journalism. The adequate replacement of qualified personnel should be effected primarily through specific laws and regulation and monitored by the nongovernmental sector and journalist associations.

The media in national minority languages are rather self-contained and staffed mostly by journalists graduating from the National Languages Department of Vojvodina, whose knowledge doesn't fully meet the needs of modern media undergoing constant development and improvement. National minority language desks are often conservative and sensitive to change; I'm saying this out of experience with certain desks in the Rusyn, Slovak and Romanian languages. Qualified and inexperienced journalists are often not accepted and they therefore must work in Serbian language media or, because of the reasons mentioned before, they do not want to collaborate with media in their native languages.

To sum up, lack of qualifications and conservatism give rise to closed media 'communities' which are pray to political and other manipulation. A skilled workforce in national minority language media will reduce such risks and raise the quality of information. Therefore one should seek additionally to regulate and professionalize the media of the ethnic communities in Vojvodina.

Gojko MISKOVIC
A RAVANGRAD'S MEDIA NOCTURN

My considerations will necessarily be focused on the media situation in Sombor, with special references to information in minority languages. In doing so I can't shake off the impression that we live in a primordial creation which we can call a state only if we have plenty of imagination and good will, something which is neither at least neutral nor discriminates positively in favour of the needs of its citizens of minority ethnic origin. Within the journalistic profession, lack of professionalism and inadequate horizontal communication and solidarity are easily perceived.

Our impoverishment and decay is mirrored by the fate of the weekly *Dunataj*, whose existence over the decades was cut short by a decision of the national socialists of Slobodan Milošević and the Radicals; after the change of government, the paper was relaunched in 1997. Under the guidance of its 'spiritus movens', the director and executive editor Istvan Varag, the decision was taken internally that *Dunataj* should be a paper in Hungarian rather than a weekly for the Hungarians. The prospect of this much-needed weekly being destroyed by blind privatization and market forces was averted on time mostly thanks to Mr

Virag's personal engagement; this was accomplished by transferring the founding rights from the local self-government to the Hungarian Civil Hall in Sombor.

What was, almost simultaneously, happening to *Somborske novine*? Under a travesty of a law still in force, it was privatized along party lines and is now in fact subordinated to the party interests of the Democratic Party of Serbia. Every Friday, its readers have the pleasure of being offered the global-planetary ruminations of the ministers Predrag Bubalo, Zoran Lončar, Aleksandar Popović, the nation's high priest and grudge-monger Matija Bećković... It is only thanks to the fact that *Dunataj* escaped the fate of being privatized by cronies that we can stay that by virtue of its structure, number of news items and analytical texts this weekly outclasses the much thicker *Sombor* (DSS) *novine*. If you see what the one and the other publishes, you realize the importance of professional and personal considerations for the quality of a media product.

The local media scene in Sombor was destabilized by the arrogant and autocratic operation of the Republic Broadcasting Agency (RRA). It seems to me that in many aspects this 'institution' outdoes the present Serbian Government. Have a look at the list of television stations granted permission to broadcast in the territory of Vojvodina and you'll see that there aren't more than five! On top of that, only one member is from the territory of Vojvodina, and his appointment provoked considerable debate and disagreement in public. In our Sombor case, the chosen media outlet is of the highest 'quality' but only on paper, since reality convincingly contradicts that which is written about it. One wonders whether such an information monopoly may not cause incidental as well as planned disinformation of the public through not fully verified reports: when recently they announced the results of a public opinion poll about the most popular people in Sombor, the most surprised ones were precisely the people who had been declared 'winners'. For this reason, I propose entering a corrective in the laws and regulations governing the electronic media in the shape of a Broadcasting Agency of Vojvodina as a guarantor of neutrality and as a counterbalance to the creature the RRA has become. Making decisions mostly by crude overruling and providing livelihood to a great many yea-saying employees with a clerk's mentality, it is in the danger of becoming an end in itself. Given that Radio televizija Vojvodine already exists as the proclaimed public service, I don't see why it is not possible to have an efficient and effective regulatory body responsible for the same territory and citizens.

The present position of Radio Sombor also deserves mention. Its decline is the result of experiments by the 'democratic forces' and a desire to create new sinecures in the shape of directorships. There was a ray of hope during 2005 and 2006 when the radio was under a professional appointed in a round of personnel

musical chairs. His programme conception appeared promising and contained revolutionary elements: the language of the tolerated ethnic minority (Hungarian) emerged from its strict ghetto in the shape of a one-hour slot and began to be used throughout the programme, with similar plans in relation to the other historically-founded languages in Sombor (German, Croatian) and the nongovernmental sector. Such a media concept met with the combined resistance of 'journalists with national-socialist and democratic leanings' and local politicians of insignificant merit. Because the 'alliance of the stupid and the indifferent' created in this way replaced the maverick director summarily, this municipal media outlet was not restructured and revitalized ahead of privatization.

Alpár LOSONCZ

MINORITY MEDIA TRAMMELLED BY SHORTCOMINGS OF THE MINORITY POLICY

The speakers spoke well, I liked it. I think that they made an adequate presentation of these complex problems, so it remains for me merely to paraphrase what has already been said here. One can hardly resist the impression that the problems being discussed here are not a mere segment of the minority policy, but a test for the minority policy as a whole and even for self-understanding on the part of the society as a whole. It has occurred to me that, during the 1990s, when we first used syntagmas such as collective rights and affirmative action, we always found it appropriate to mention the media, that is, information in minority languages. Because the problems of minority media lie at the heart of every minority policy. It is not a surprising that what has been said here today reflects the whole ambiguity, inconsequence which characterizes the national, social policy of the political classes in Serbia. The first thing to note is the fact that there is no consensus about the main project regarding society in Serbia. It won't go amiss to mention that a substantial segment of the political classes or elites, whichever you prefer, either think or say that only a monoethnic community can be successful and democratic. Traces of such a discourse can be found even in the Constitution. Because precisely such a kind of discourse runs through the Constitution, and if we look at the situation from such a perspective, it is clear that everything that's been happening to the minorities, the intercultural, multicultural aspects of the majority-minority relationship, everything's dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis. For instance, if you consider the political moves made since 2000, the impression is that they were always forced and unwilling moves, not moves resulting from a well-thought-out, coherent

national policy. The conclusion to be drawn on the basis of these arguments is that there is either no consensus in Serbia about the majority-minority relationship and about how to regulate a heterogeneous and complex community, or such consensus as exists is too weak to be used for consistent regulation of the relationship between the majority and the minority. The regulation of institutional relations all too often bears the mark of political occasionalism: decisions are very often made according to the situation. The inconsistency of the minority policy (which always reflects a position on the majority-minority relationship and, at least indirectly, on the structure of the political community), the propensity to take ad hoc measures, the increasingly frequent practice of dealing with particular situations not through automatic procedure by the state bureaucracy but under contingent external and internal pressure, all that merely testifies to the fragility of the consensus mentioned.

So, there's nothing new under the sun, it seems to me that what we're saying about the media follows from this basic constellation. Besides, we cannot ignore the fact that a good many minority issues have been pushed into a region that is *extra legem*, that is, unregulated by law. In this connection, I fully agree with Jova Komšić's observation that 'all that is terribly dependent on the institutional order established'. Because everything having to do with the minorities, the minority media, is always linked to the current constellation of power, that is, to the shortcomings of the institutional infrastructure. Now, one should consider critically things such as institutionalized stability and well-shaped or unshaped political will in relation to consequent regulation of minority questions, including that of minority media.

This question is characteristic also because the troubles of transition, if I may say so, have a bearing on the issue we are discussing. What is the distinction of the market in Serbia? – of course, it is monopolized, carved up by a multitude of monopolies. In view of the monopolies of this kind existing in other spheres of social life, one can hardly expect the situation here to be different. Or, in view of, say, the quality of the transition being implemented in Serbia which, as we are very well aware, is creating a great asymmetry of power, which is reflected on the minority policy and consequently the minority media. It's hard not to see that the quality of the privatization is reflected in, borne out by these relationships. Of course, the privatization is being constantly referred to for a reason, and it is in terms of the privatization that we see the lack of consideration regarding the media, the extent to which the situation is susceptible to the current whims of power. For instance, one of the most powerful political parties has been claiming from the first that the minority media will be privatized, but then, all of a sudden, as a bolt from the blue, a different message is reaching us. The elections context

may have to do with this. All this indicates that there's no concept, that we're faced with demonstrations of power all the time. To cite Jovan Komšić again, because he is quite right: the state must experiment during transition in order to arrive at optimum solutions. Certainly, but ours is not the kind of state which would engage in experiments, because in order to experiment, one must be sufficiently strong, sufficiently audacious... but what we have is, above all, a weak state that is constantly exposed to all kinds of oligarchic economic, business interests, pressures from different business empires. There may some day come along a well-wisher from the ranks of the oligarchy to put the country on the right course, someone who may say something along the lines of, 'well, we're for European values, for European codes', and so on. Such newspeech, empty rhetoric already exists, many use it ritually, without thinking what it means. However, a serious policy cannot be based on that. And especially a long-term policy cannot be based on that.

Now, we're taking about the national councils and the press. What's the problem there?

The problem doesn't lie in the fact that the national councils are mere slaves or instruments of a political orientation, I would say that this is more a consequence, that is, that it is not the cause. The cause is something else! I mean, national councils installed in a system like this produce extremely problematic results. To be sure, journalists themselves, weighed down by fear, behave in a conformist manner, without taking any risks, and without risks there is no true journalism... A journalist will never have a minimum of courage if he does not have any sense of social and legal security, that's simply impossible. That is, if the sword of Damocles is suspended above your head all the time, if you think that tomorrow you may be fired from your job by some minority or majority political leader, naturally always in the name of economic efficiency. Today we have one myth, one mantra, which is the source of considerable manipulation, namely that there's no money, that business operations must be rationalized, that one must have economic efficiency. You can use this to get out of the way anything you don't like without being outright violent. Because these days violence is far more subtle than it was a few years ago. But this is where questions are raised that are often left unanswered... Ethnic parties can always invoke the power of a totalizing principle, say, the 'interests of a given minority', something that is very difficult to problematize in the impoverished public sphere of the minorities.

So, what is our problem? The problem is that in the present constellation the national councils are only a kind of smokescreen, they have no authority whatever, no competence, while making decisions *de jure*. This means that any political option, any political whim, any political group which prevails at the

moment can make a decision, a legitimate decision, by relying on a national council. There, that's the problem. I don't consider it the main problem, as Duško (Radosavljević) put it, that certain doctors, professors, idle intellectuals, people from the academic sphere, and so on, do not want to profane themselves by participating in everyday politics. The problem lies in the deficiencies of the institutional order.

By the way, there are other things that need thinking through. One such thing was mentioned by Pavel (Domonji) when speaking about the problems of the minority media. Add to this what Dubravka (Valić-Nedeljković) said, namely, that there's no need to watch the minority media, to accept anything from them, given that they merely translate what has already been announced by Beta and Tanjug. This really doesn't make sense. Of course, we should consider such an important thing as, say, what it means to write a critical article for a minority media outlet. We namely say that it is to be expected that journalists with minority media establishments too will follow the line of least resistance, that they too will conform. Why shouldn't they be that way, if conformity means having a sense of elementary rationality in a situation like ours?

To wind up, although there's a lot more I have to say, but, what can one do, how can we possibly influence the state's will?

In this regard, I always see – to put it scholastically – two levels: the one level is the level of *multiculturalism*, the other level being the level of *interculturalism*. Multiculturalism refers to the level of institutions, of institutional relations, institutional infrastructure – that segment of the social world is not based on, is not instituted on the basis of, one's goodwill or disposition but is founded on coercive rules. Therefore, in this respect, to put it this way, the state must behave consistently and categorically clearly. Of course, our state doesn't do that. Another thing, this interculturality thing, what Aleksandra (Vujić) said a few moments ago is a valid point, because indeed a growing indifference between various ethnic groups is in evidence throughout the world. Of course, this fact calls for an explanation, but we have no time for that. Let's just say that, according to authoritative studies, even the much-vaunted Switzerland is increasingly characterized by indifference between its various constituent nations. In such situations the state can act only indirectly, because a state cannot create an intercultural mood. Whether I or any other minority actor, if I may say so, am interested in what goes on in Serb culture and vice versa, the state cannot engender that in me. But the state can and should create the conditions for intercultural communication of the widest possible kind. Bearing in mind the poor performance on the part of the institutions in Serbia, as well as the weaknesses of the mechanisms for coordinating the problems of a complex

society, the exposure of the state to contingent power influences, the negative developments in the system of minority political representation, the legal uncertainty regarding the regulation of minority questions, it won't be hard for me to conclude that the problem lies in our state's being inconsistent, unimaginative in the creation of intercultural conditions.

Nedim SEJDINOVIC NO STRATEGY

At today's round table on national councils and their internal problems, the drift of our discussion implied an assumption that the transfer of founding rights from the print media in national minority languages to the councils is a final and good solution. This, however, is a kind of stop-gap solution, a decision which actually indicates lack of any strategy at all. I mean, this is a matter of a lack of solutions, an attempt to somehow get around the substance of the law and to buy time until such moment as the state has enough capacity to take care of the media in national minority languages, to protect the media against possible bad consequences of privatization.

I think that it is abundantly clear that the transfer of founding rights is a transitional solution and that the privatizing of these media, the print media in national minority languages, is an inevitability. Of course, much depends on the capacity of the state to give them some protection from closure, not to expose them to a fierce market competition in which they have a marginal starting position. This, then, is what we ought to discuss.

Not enough has been said here about what should be done about the media in national minority languages since, as we have noted, neither the state, nor apparently the province, has any strategy other than putting off the final outcome. I think that both studies presented could be a good basis for nongovernmental organizations to put forward some strategy for solving this problem.

Some of the possible solutions were discussed at the round table organized by the Independent Association of Journalists of Vojvodina at the beginning of 2007. Suzana Jovanić of the Fund for an Open Society put forward ample arguments in support of the need for the state to set up a fund to finance media coverage in minority languages, through competitions enabling the participation of all media, including those not operating in national minority languages. As for the electronic media in national minority languages, she (Suzana Jovanić) put forward the idea, saying that it was absolutely not incompatible with the media legislation, that part of RTS subscriptions should be channelled not only to a

public service provider in national minority languages but also to local and regional radio and television stations broadcasting in national minority languages. I think it is interesting and should be considered.

I should say that the disheartening findings of the research presented by the keynote speakers which can be summed up in a few words – lack of capacity, want and so on – can in many instances also apply to many majority media establishments belonging to the smaller body we call the serious media. At that conference I mentioned there was another interesting development, namely that almost all the representatives of minority language media came out strongly against privatization. However, so far as I could gather, privatization was opposed not only on the grounds that the media themselves would be jeopardized, but to some extent as a result of inadequate capacity, a measure of conformity, a lethargy, a desire to preserve the positions gained during the ‘burgeoning of socialist self-management’.

In conclusion, I wish to wind up with an almost anecdotal incident: a colleague of mine working for a reputable newspaper published in minority languages – I don’t find it necessary to name it – asked the president of the state, Boris Tadić, for an interview on the occasion of the newspaper’s anniversary. He agreed and, naturally, wanted the questions in advance. One of the questions was about dealing with the past.

The question provoked a sharp protest from Boris Tadić’s public relations officer, who said: ‘How come a minority media outlet like you is interested in this matter, who gives you the right to ask such a question at all?’ This was an unmistakable indication of her attitude towards the minorities and the things media in national minority languages should concern themselves with in general. Talking about whether there is a question of fear involved, of a struggle to retain job positions, or of mere inertia on the part of minority media desks which only translate agency news items, one should bear in mind that the minority media, in common with the minorities in general, usually behave according to what the majority expects them to do.

Vladimir VALENTIK **THE APPLICABILITY OF OUR MODEL**

I am glad, above all, because, following the keynote speeches, certain views about this topic have evidently been successfully put across. Thus many of my impressions – as someone looking from the outside without having done any research in this sphere – largely correspond to or are even identical with some of

the information we’ve obtained through research, that is, based on methodology. I’d like to focus on a few of the theses topicalized during this discussion, above all, regarding the multiethnic identity of Vojvodina and its relation to media or information. Before we can discuss the multiethnic identity of Vojvodina we may proceed from the thesis that the circulation of information must be ensured. However, as the research has shown, we are faced with a situation where minority information in particular is restricted. In addition to the mentioned causes of the closedness of minority information, for instance the educational structure of journalists working for those media, one should bear in mind a mechanism that is activated in a situation like that. One might say, somewhat humorously, that minority journalists – in both electronic and print media – know all their readers, viewers or listeners in person, particularly those from smaller minority communities. In such a situation, in addition to education, human nature plays an important part, having a tendency to ease or, as you put it, conformism and lethargy. Therefore, being in a situation like that and owing to a natural tendency to easygoingness, these journalists, regardless of their education and skills, neglect their work, they begin to take things easy and are content with what they have achieved. The security of existence is most important of all. It is for this reason, among others, that the local or minority media oppose privatization. In such a situation we have something which may be incomprehensible in ‘normal’ reporting, namely, that the editor of certain media outlets are insufficiently informed about things they are reporting! Nothing is more detrimental to reporting. Such a situation results in the decline of reporting. In general, this is a logical development that follows from the situation I have described. Although a serious analysis of the whole structure necessitates taking into consideration the other levels of this phenomenon, I have, for the purpose of this discussion, singled out a close relationship between cause and consequence.

At today’s round table the privatization of local media has been referred to a number of times. Specifically, as regards the Slovak minority community, the privatization of local media and radio stations with a long tradition is under way. The local population in the regions concerned has grown used to those media. If they are closed down, my feeling is that the population will miss those media much more than they would miss information in the Slovak language provided by the Radio Vojvodina public service. I think that people are more attached to local media – again, I wish to make clear that this is an impression – especially to radio, then to the public broadcasting service.

Looking at the normative side, the acquired rights have been referred to in the context of attempts to stop the privatization of minority local media. These radio stations have been in operation for some 40 years: Radio Petrovac, Radio

Kisača, which is probably the oldest local radio station in Vojvodina, Radio Kovačica, which has programmes in the Serbian, Slovak, Romanian and Hungarian languages, Radio Stara Pazova, where we have this situation, which used to broadcast Slovak programmes from four to six hours depending on the time of year, on Radio Stara Pazova channel two. As regards its privatization, the situation is at a standstill.

It was only yesterday (11 December 2007) that the Municipal Assembly of Bački Petrovac discussed these questions. By coincidence, nothing was done in the four years during which the privatization of local media was being announced. Twenty days before the privatization deadline was to expire, they decided to transform the public institution into a public company in order to create the conditions for its privatization within the next two weeks.

On the other hand – speaking of privatization – various risks are emerging and they have been referred to here. There is being created, among other things, the prospect of political manipulation of those media – not direct but covert, through intermediaries. There is also the danger that the radio stations founded as private enterprises may seek the support of national councils in an effort to obtain frequencies, because the owners, the founders of those radio stations had the ambition to broadcast in minority languages too. A written application to this effect is granted in the majority of cases, but, as it turns out, it is not binding on the owner. In most cases, on being granted a frequency, the owner broadcasts in the minority language for a month or two, then discontinues the programme because it doesn't pay.

To conclude. I'm going to say a word or two about the minority print media. I'm not going to talk about *Hlas ludu*, whose founding rights have been taken over by the Slovak National Council.

By tradition, Vojvodina Slovaks have had a publishing industry that is separate from the information industry, that is, from the weekly *Hlas ludu*. By coincidence, the publishing industry, which accounts for the bulk of the Slovak language periodicals in Vojvodina, found itself in private hands less than two years ago. So, the publishing establishment was privatized. It so happened that publishing in the Slovak language was not the publisher's prime activity and the whole affair was not much of a success. Actually, in this connection, I'd like to mention a model which we have established and which, I think, is applicable to other minority national communities in Vojvodina. A national council has possibility to set up funds for certain activities. On the other hand, as a legal and legitimate representative of its national minority, it can enter into a protocol with a government authority, in this case with the Executive Council of the Assembly of Vojvodina. Based on that protocol, it can secure certain specific-purpose funds.

On the other side, if there exists within the national community concerned an entity engaged in such an activity in order to ensure its continued operation, it can conclude a protocol with the National Council Fund because publishing, which is its core business, is commercially unviable. This, then, is a model that can be applied. We at the Slovak National Council have set up such a fund. It has operated since 1 September 2007 and relates to publishing activity and the provision of information, but only specialized. The only children's periodical in the Slovak language is financed in this way. Also the only journal of literature and culture in the Slovak language. *Novi život*, the only periodical of the Vojvodina Slovaks, and *Narodni kalendar*, the year book published since 1919, are also financed in this way.

The model we have applied to the print media may also prove applicable in the case of local radio stations. So, the national councils for the minority communities could establish information funds and use them to finance the broadcasting of programmes in minority languages. Such funds could be co-founded by local self-governments, which would earmark assets from their budgets for this purpose. This would ensure the provision of information in minority languages by private media at local level.

VOJVODINA AND MULTICULTURALITY POLICIES - Experiences and Prospects -

Pavel DOMONJI
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The recent elections have confronted us with the fact that Serbian society is deeply divided into two, nearly identical, parts. The ideological portraits of these two Serbias are being trumpeted daily by the media and party propagandists. The one Serbia is usually labelled as isolationist and nationalist, the other as pro-Europe and democratic. The boundary between these two Serbias is not as well-defined and impermeable as it looks at first sight, because a strong nationalist rhetoric exists also within this other (self-styled as) civil and liberal, especially with regard to Kosovo. Though this rhetoric may be a tactical concession, a small subterfuge on the part of an ideological mind, to weaken and cushion the onslaught of the first Serbia, at this moment is of less importance. What seems more important to us is the answer to this question: Which of these two Serbias has more consideration for the demands coming from Vojvodina?

In determining the subject for discussion, we used the plural in the name of the round table on purpose and defined the subject as policies of multiculturalism. We didn't do that because Serbia is divided, but because multiculturalism is not a homogeneous concept with only one meaning. The question is: What kind of policies of multiculturalism are suitable for Vojvodina? Which type of multiculturalism is better suited to it – interactive, segregative or liberal?

Incomplete states, states faced with the loss of part of their territory and societies devoid of a basic consensus are not a rich seed bed for the practice of multiculturalism. Nor are, after all, societies faced with an identity crisis of the majority nation. Where the state borders are in question and the identity crisis is

long-lasting, as is the case with Serbia, nationalist concepts see in multiculturalism an obstacle to social progress and a threat to the national identity.

Not infrequently, the ideological alarm bells and agitated ideological recitals about the national identity elicit in us an image of identity as an isolated and closed monad. The maintenance of that identity, the preservation of its 'authenticity and original purity' is usually considered as part of the job of a special social stratum – the national intelligentsia. The impression is that, even when they talk about multiculturalism, a good many intellectuals are doing this very insincerely and not with a view to promoting the relevant policies.

One of the problems is that the word *culture* as part of the conceptual construction *multiculturalism* is construed in a strong ethnic sense. For instance, who does Miroslav Krleža belong to? To whose culture – Serb or Croat? Did Krleža write the short novel about the Baroness Lembach in the Serbian or in the Croatian language? Is this a question of two different languages, or is it a question of different names for one and the same language? Or, what about Nikola Tesla, for example? He died in the United States, but he was born – where, in Austria-Hungary or in Croatia? Does he belong more to Gospić or to New York? Does he belong more to the Serbs, Croats or Americans?

If Krleža belongs to both the Serbs and Croats, doesn't that render absurd the idea of a pure national or cultural identity? If Krleža is a constituent of Serb culture, then, for instance, Paljo Buhuž, Martin Jonaš and Laslo Vegel are that too. If Miroslav Krleža is a Croat, Martin Jonaš a Slovak, and Laslo Vegel a Hungarian, then Serb culture cannot be reduced to its ethnic foundation. Cultures are, therefore, open, inclusive and hybrid, but the boundaries dividing them are political. What I said is nothing new, but I hold that it is worth while to recall such 'trivial' things from time to time.

For a plural and complex society, which is what Vojvodina is called, a situation where political and ethnic boundaries coincide is a very unfavourable one. The chances of multiculturalism increase where political and ethnocultural identities separate. Why? Because that leads to a multiplication of identities on the one hand while weakening the ethnicization of politics on the other. Where social and economic disparities are ethnicized, for instance, the result is a highly flammable, explosive mix which can easily threaten ethnic peace. At the provincial elections, the SRS [Serbian Radical Party] met with debacle. The Hungarian Coalition too met with failure, winning half as many mandates as it hoped it would. Are these facts of any deeper significance? Do they indicate, for example, a weakening of the attraction of ethno-cultural differentiations? Which political actors and party affiliations, what policies, including policies of multiculturalism, can draw benefit from this?

There are not only boundaries dividing ethnicities, but also boundaries within ethnicities. There are not only boundaries between, but also boundaries within cultures. A minority community is just as complex a structure as the majority community. Individuals adopt and incline towards different cultural models, demonstrating different value systems, exhibiting different affinities regarding sex, belief, music, clothes, food and a number of other things.

I'm mentioning sex on purpose. The feminists teach that we are in the domain of biology as regards sex, and in the domain of culture as regards gender. What is the relationship of feminism and multiculturalism? Is multiculturalism, from the standpoint of feminism, a bad policy? What is its attitude to multiculturalism in the case of a minority culture, whose preservation it advocates, having been turned into a haven for barbarous practices?

Problems exist also in relation of some other groups. For instance, the majority of refugees have in common with members of the ethnic majority their ethnicity, language, religion... A few years ago, the refugees accommodated at Palić asked the state to grant them a national minority status. The refugees, to be sure, are a minority but not an ethnic one. This bizarre demand speaks of three things: first, it speaks of a desire to substantially improve the desperate situation of the refugees by means of national minority status. The second thing lies in the answer to the question: Why by means of national minority status? Because the intention was not only to draw the attention of the international community and its agencies, but also to make it intercede with the government to solve the problems. And, finally, the third thing: this item of information is significant in that it testifies to a lack of ethnic solidarity. There was not only no solidarity, but the refugees were looked upon as a burden and a source of problems. For instance, in places where refugees have settled in large numbers and built new small settlements, there are no street canals and the streets are very narrow. During long periods of rain this causes certain problems. The indigenous population grows irritable and the newcomers are at a loss, because street canals did not exist, nor were necessary, in the places they came from. I wish to point out that the refugees did not bring along with them only their bags, as people are often in the habit of saying, but also the cultural context in which they became socialized and which they draw upon in organizing their new life, something which gives rise to problems in their new environment and generates a strong aversion towards them.

Highly ethnicized policies are blind to such internal differences, differences existing within one national community. Being narrow-minded and intolerant, they considerably influence the formulation of demands of other ethnic communities. In considering, for instance, the demand of certain Hungarian

parties for territorial autonomy, one should bear in mind that it is partly a reaction to a highly-ethnicized context in which minority demands are ignored and depreciated.

Where multiculturalism is not only an ideal but also a concrete policy, its content is found in the various sub-systems of society: political, cultural, media, educational... Now, what kind of educational policies, for instance, are conducive to multiculturalism? Do our educational policies encourage young people to adopt some aspects of their neighbours' cultures, or do they, more or less, suggest to them to distance themselves and shut themselves in the identity of their own ethnic group? I wish to recall that Alain Finkelkraut writes in one of his essays that barbarity begins when the individual shuts himself within the cultural identity of his own group. Lastly, the main ambition of this fourth panel discussion is to help, as far as possible, by means of adequate policies, the democratic consolidation of these regions and the application of solutions which satisfy the key interests and needs of the citizens.

Tamás KORHECZ
STATE, PUBLIC AUTHORITY
AND POLICY OF MULTICULTURALITY

Introduction

This paper devoted to problems linked with the policy of multiculturalism in Vojvodina consists of three small chapters.

The first part gives a definition of multiculturalism in a rather broad and general manner and points out possible attitudes of public authority to the phenomenon we have defined as multiculturalism. The second part of the paper sums up the policy of the Assembly and the Executive Council of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina on multiculturalism in the past seven years. This part draws attention to some guidelines, characteristics and results of that policy in Vojvodina. In the third part we shall try to define outlines and principles of a future successful policy of multiculturalism in the territory of Vojvodina.

Multiculturalism and the public authorities

When speaking about multiculturalism, like any other social phenomenon it can, of course, be defined in different ways, it can be approached from different points of view and, of course, we shall never reach full agreement on how to

define the phenomenon of multiculturalism. We'd like to offer a definition here which is rather widely accepted. Under this definition, multiculturalism means a situation where a number of different cultural identities occur, exist in a defined area, in the territory of a state or a narrower region as part of that state. We are here referring above all to differences between ethnic and national cultures, though multiculturalism can also be considered at the level of sub-cultures. Multiculturalism therefore exists if the citizens inhabiting a defined space have different cultural identities, notably linguistic identities, but also identities with regard to folklore, popular customs, identities concerning religion and denomination, certain specific systems of cultural values which form an integral part of everyday life. Of course, when speaking about cultural patterns and cultural identity, we must make clear that there are no strictly defined boundaries between those cultures. Cultural identities, their boundaries are not fixed and immovable, they develop and change in a dynamic way. However, irrespective of this relativity, when speaking about multiculturalism we are referring to more or less defined separate cultures existing in the same area.

In terms of such multiculturalism, neither Serbia nor Vojvodina is quite uniform, for there is hardly a state in which multiculturalism is not part of everyday life to a less or more extent, that is, part of the life of people living at least in some parts or regions of those states. There are, of course, more or less multicultural states in this regard, and it goes without saying that multiculturalism is bound up with multiethnicity and multinationality. Though different identities, national, ethnic, religious, cultural, and even linguistic identities often overlap, this overlap is never complete, for while someone may belong to a group in an ethnic or linguistic sense, his or her cultural activity can be part of another culture or of the other culture too.

In each of such multicultural states, the state and public authorities pursue a different policy, can have different attitudes towards this phenomenon. In this connection, the state is not referred to as a central authority, but as a public authority as a whole, by the state we mean also local self-government and the various forms of regional autonomy or regional state. Each of these levels of power can have a uniform or partly different attitude to multiculturalism in its territory. To put it simply, states can be grouped together in three categories according to their policy in the sphere of multiculturalism.

The first category includes states pursuing a policy which may be defined as 'nationalistic' or a policy of ethnic or cultural homogenization. Such a policy implies, in a less or more extent, systematic activities on the part of the state in an area where multiculturalism already exists, that is, where there are a number of cultural identities, the aim being to create a dominant cultural identity within the

state by employing more or less rough methods of forcing other cultural identities out of public life. Of course, such a 'nationalist' policy can have very diverse forms, very diverse methods, but the objectives of such a policy are plain, namely to achieve the homogenization of the cultural space, the homogenization of the population in terms of language, religion, tradition and value system characteristic of each individual culture.

I should term the second kind of policy a state can pursue in relation to existing multiculturalism a policy of multiculturalism. Such a policy regards existing multiculturalism as an asset which ought to be preserved. Therefore such a policy treats multiculturalism not only as a reality but as something which is in the interests of the state. Such states regard the safeguarding and development of cultural pluralism as an important objective of state policy. To be sure, there are different variants within such a policy. While one variant of that policy lays stress on the element of conserving cultural diversity and rounding off individual cultural identities, another emphasises some other element, the element of multiculturalism where the state fosters the mutual knowledge and permeation of different cultures in addition to creating conditions for the preservation of specific cultural identities.

The third form or third kind of policy a state can pursue in relation to multiculturalism is a 'culturally neutral policy'. Some call such a policy a liberal policy, though one may wonder how liberal it can be. In this case public authority considers that as regards culture, language, tradition and cultural identities the state should not play an active part, should not interfere and implement no policy of one kind or another. What distinguishes this policy is the presumption that the state must be neutral in the domain of culture. However, as Will Kimlika has proved in his works in a well-argued way, no state policy can be neutral with regard to culture. This third kind of policy, liberal policy supports, mostly in a covert manner, the process of cultural homogenization and gradual disappearance of the multicultural character of the state.

Policy of multiculturalism of AP Vojvodina organs

After this introductory part, we're going to discuss briefly the analysis of the policy of the Executive Council of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina in relation to Vojvodina's multiculturalism during the last seven years. Although Vojvodina is not unique by virtue of being multicultural, it is a unique area in Europe in terms of certain attributes and degree of multiculturalism, with regard to language, cultural output, media and languages in which programmes are broadcast. In view of this, the significance of the policy of multiculturalism in Vojvo-

dina is arguably greater than in some states or regions in Europe. During the period 2001-5 this policy was characterized by very vigorous development of an institutional and legal framework designed to safeguard national cultures, especially those of minority communities in Vojvodina. During this period, the Vojvodina administration placed the policy of multiculturalism among its political priorities. At this juncture it is worth mentioning that during this period allocations from the provincial budget for safeguarding and developing the cultures of national communities increased more than ten times in real terms. In this period various institutions for safeguarding or developing national and cultural identity were set up, several secondary schools in the Hungarian language were established, a faculty in the Hungarian language was established, an institute for the culture of the Vojvodina Hungarians and four other national communities were established, the Romany language weekly *Them* was launched, education in the Croatian language in primary and secondary schools was introduced, the newspaper publishing house Hrvatska riječ was established, a Bunjevac newspaper and a paper in the Ukrainian language began to be financed from the budget, professional theatres in the Slovak, Romanian and Rusyn languages were established, and so on. In most cases, the institutions in question are completely new, with no predecessor in history, rather than revamped establishments. One need hardly say that all this required large budgetary outlays.

Since 2005 there has been a new element in the policy of the Executive Council, namely the policy of interculturality. Organs of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina have launched several projects, the largest being that of the APV Executive Council called the Affirmation of Multiculturalism and Tolerance in Vojvodina. This project is unique in European proportions by virtue of its budget, number of participants and character accorded to it by the public authority. The project consists of various programmatic activities sharing the same objective, with over 200,000 mostly young people from Vojvodina participating in its realization at present. The object is, on the one hand, to raise the awareness of young people of multiculturalism as a value and distinguishing mark of Vojvodina through a tolerance quiz, a tolerance cup and ethno-days in schools and, on the other, to acquaint youth with the cultures of other communities in the territory of Vojvodina through new knowledge. The object of the project is to get to know other cultures and cultural diversities other than ours, to orient young people towards the cultural wealth and heritage of Vojvodina. The project, whose realization began in the autumn of 2005, is characterized above all by its mass character and the continuing expansion of programmes. Since 2005 the number of programme participants has grown steadily, as have the budget funds earmarked for the purpose. Another characteristic of the project is the

highly active participation of Vojvodina schools; this is what really matters and what distinguishes this project from all the others, namely its realization in close collaboration with institutions in the education sphere and partly with institutions from the field of culture and public information. So, this is not a project which bypasses institutions but a project increasingly involving both RTV, Vojvodina's public broadcasting service, and all educational institutions throughout Vojvodina. The project was not envisaged as a campaign, a project of the Executive Council, but designed to be incorporated in the continuous efforts of institutions and establishments throughout Vojvodina. The fact that young people's support for the project is far greater than at first envisaged is an especially valuable experience. It had been predicted by many that the project would fail owing to resistance on the part of institutions, establishments, young people. Fortunately, it turned out that young people were willing and glad to participate in the project, the only cause for concern being the fact that there had been no such projects and curricula in the past. Unfortunately, owing to lack of understanding on the part of the authorities charged with preparing the school curricula, many of these projects have not yet been included in the curricula and extracurricular activities, though this has not had negative effects on the success of the project.

Outlines of a quality policy of multiculturalism

At the end of this paper we shall define some elements of the policy of multiculturalism based on the practice of the Executive Council so far. It is of special importance that the policy of multiculturalism should (in addition to safeguarding and developing the institutional and legal framework) be defined and declared in the highest legal acts as an asset of special importance for Vojvodina. Such a definition of multiculturalism as a special value in the highest acts would only amplify the significance of such a policy. The implementation of a policy of strategic planning is also very important. In order to realize such an asset in everyday life, one must define a clear strategy, with specified implementing agencies, fixed-term commitments and measures designed to ensure the successful realization of such a policy. Unfortunately, such a strategy has not been framed and this might be considered as an omission on the part of the provincial organs in the past period. It is important for multiculturalism to be as evident as possible, to be more transparent at every turn – public rather than private multiculturalism is what distinguishes such a policy.

Language is a key element of any policy of multiculturalism and must not be neglected in relation to Vojvodina. Any relativization of the importance of

language and script in Vojvodina is erroneous and in some way amounts to a covert policy of assimilation. Because there can be no multiculturalism in Vojvodina without the existence of multilingualism in Vojvodina, the policy pursued by the state in the sphere of language must change. This is not only a matter of the official use of language, enormous as its importance for multiculturalism is, but primarily of the need to foster multilingualism in the territory of Vojvodina more generally. The things which were widely in evidence in the present territory of Vojvodina in the 19th century must be encouraged and promoted also today. In the 1990s vigorous attempts were made to reduce and eradicate multilingualism in Vojvodina. In markedly multicultural environments, it would be very good if the majority of citizens were to use the languages characteristic of the environment. Istria in Croatia is a good example of this. The example may not be most appropriate but it can be important. In Istria, 90 per cent of the total population is multilingual (speaking both Croatian and Italian) although Italians account for 10 per cent or so of the population of Istria.

In addition to continuing the present policy, as well as strategic planning in the domain of multiculturalism, a significant role should be played by institutional development of multilingualism in Vojvodina. Efforts should be made for as many residents of Vojvodina as possible to become multilingual, above all through the educational system, but also with the help of the media. Important as it is to enable and help members of national minorities to learn the Serbian language as much as possible, it is of no less importance for as many Serbs as possible to become multilingual in places and areas with very high percentages of Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian populations.

Dragan PROLE

**LOCAL HERITAGE – MAINSTAY OF POLICY
OF MULTICULTURALITY**

The inevitability of the policy of discontinuity

In spite of the optimistic forecasts pompously announcing a picture of a completely different Serbia after 5 October 2000, the view that the legacy of the 1990s lingers on tenaciously in Serbia is almost universally held. The reforms, the magic word by which optimists put so much store, have not made much headway in spite of undeniable successes. Without embarking on an analysis of the state of affairs in the domain of the state apparatus and all its auxiliary services, we may note insufficient reform progress also in respect of the reception of the minority

communities by the majority people, and also in respect of the degree of exercise of minority rights, of psychological security as their equivalent of life and true indicator of the quality of interethnic relations.

The legacy of the 1990s is far from benign: xenophobia, the branding of minority communities as a detrimental factor upsetting the spiritual and jeopardizing the territorial integrity of Serbia, the treatment of minorities as a security risk... The new political reality has been created by the almost daily presence of these model attitudes towards minorities. Voices regarding the ethnic, religious and cultural plurality as factors aimed primarily at the destruction of the vital interests of the Republic of Serbia, including at secession, have not yet disappeared from the public scene. In this connection, identifying all minority community interests as anti-Serb interests is especially dangerous. Given the intensity and public influence of such voices, the considerable period of time since the end of the wars in the territory of the former Yugoslavia has unfortunately not brought about an improvement. What is more, the generations brought up and raised in an atmosphere in which positive conceptions about the possibility of 'brotherhood' between different peoples were destroyed and the belief promoted that one should recognize as a 'brother' a member of one's own nation, have exhibited potential for violence against people other than 'brothers'. One's 'brother' in the former Yugoslavia is simply not the same as the person called 'brother' these days, because 'brotherhood' has now assumed strong nationalistic connotations which are not easily discarded.

If the fights between young people that have been registered in many places in Vojvodina are ethnically motivated, then they merit much greater attention than the phenomenon of sporadic incidents, above all because they reflect in a brutalized and denuded form a state of affairs characteristic of the legacy of multicultural relations at the beginning of the new millennium. Besides, the proclamation of the independence of Kosovo has additionally complicated matters: by potentially fuelling arguments equating minority and secession, it reduces to the absurdum any effort to promote multicultural relations as a step against the preservation of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia. In a word, creating an atmosphere for considerably weakening the motives resulting in conflicts in the aftermath of Kosovo's self-proclaimed independence, has become an even more difficult task.

'Consistency' in authorities' attitude to minority communities

For all the tumultuous events on the political scene and the political actors succeeding one another on it, eight years after the 5th of October the attitude of

the political elites to minorities can be described as only too consistent. The problem is, what makes it consistent is not the absence of a radical break with the previous state of affairs, but the refusal by the republic government, in which power is concentrated, to constitute a special ministry for minority communities. Such a ministry had not the least chance of being constituted even during the last Serbian Government reshuffle aiming to maximize the number of ministerial posts. This only proved what had been suspected before. This is why critics incline to the assessment that the ministry that operated at the level of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was primarily a simulation, given that the dissolution of the union did not lead to the institutionalization of its republic level equivalent. In spite of the law that was passed and the establishment of the National Councils as intermediaries between the state and the minority communities, one may conclude that very little has changed on the plane of daily experience.

If we pay attention to the situation in the region, we shall be hard put to identify recipes applicable in Vojvodina. The impression is that the mechanisms of political power not only in Serbia but in most countries undergoing transition in the territory of Central and South East Europe are operating on the presumption of the homogenization of culture. The attitude of one culture to another is always the result of a previous situation of the first culture. The effect of this is the far-reaching marginalization of moments of mutual influence, that is, of the constituent role which intercultural relations played in the formation of own culture. To the extent to which it has been deprived of the influence and criteria of the political elites, the autonomous force of culture is heading in precisely the opposite direction. Its intention is not to homogenize the cultural 'specificities' of particular nations, and to present them in markedly 'purified' forms, but to establish the differentiation of cultural reality in which there is always room for the presence of the 'alien' (belonging to a minority, a neighbour) within one's own.

One of the fundamental prerequisites for the implementation of genuine reforms in Serbia is the affirmation of such model of 'cultural translation' of identity. Its potentials are extremely applicable primarily at the level of education, as is nicely illustrated by the monographs on 'cultural ties' published in Serbia in recent years. However, they are not confined to the sphere of translation and publishing with the object of throwing light on the historical closeness and permeability of particular cultures, because their scope of political applicability is far greater.

There is no doubt whatever that the efforts of the republic and provincial authorities aiming to generate different intercultural relations in a highly unfavourable context are confronted with an exceptionally delicate and complex

situation. All the same, it seems necessary to express reserve towards the effectiveness of billboards bearing messages such as: '*Let the neighbour's cow live and be healthy*'. [The popular curse runs: 'May the neighbour's cow die'.]

Impotence of propaganda in policy of multiculturalism

In appraising the justifiability of such propaganda,⁴⁷ we shall be much more circumspect if we bear in mind the observations which recognized in that approach a mechanism capable of distorting everyday language into an instrument turning into a means rather than an end in the hands of those to whom it appeals. It is therefore not by accident that words such as *tolerance* and *wealth of diversity*, which are most often used in campaigns of the provincial authorities, have long lost their substance. Faced with the complexity of life's phenomena they simply don't have much chance, even from the point of view of those who are always inclined to recognize in them affirmative expressions of sociality.

There is no doubt that the situation in the field of culture is not immune to the sphere of morality, which itself is often suggestive of a financial logic, namely that discretion which predominates in conditions of welfare turns into public commotion once the means become scarce.⁴⁸ Frequent recourse to phrases about multicultural relations indicates that there is an awareness of the need for 'normalization' and improvement, as well as suggesting that we lack other mechanisms for addressing the present situation.

Although a well-wisher might observe that the European Union too relies on metaphysical constructs in the form of phrases such as 'unity in diversity', one may reply that the main pillars of sociality shouldn't be advertised alongside consumer goods after all. Furthermore, everybody who has outgrown his or her

⁴⁷ The reference here is above all to the strong critique of the inevitable manipulative characteristics of propaganda inaugurated by Adorno and Horkheimer: 'Propaganda for changing the world, what nonsense! Propaganda turns language into an instrument, a lever, a machine. Propaganda fixes the constitution of man, such as came about under social injustice, insofar as it actualizes that injustice... Everybody knows deep inside that by using means it has become a means itself, like in a factory.' *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Frankfurt am Main 1969, p. 273.

⁴⁸ This topic was raised by Otfried Hoffe, who remarked wittily: 'It is interesting that as a subject of ethics, morals are treated like money. Where there is enough of it, in banks, discretion is required, and in the exercise of morals, modesty; it is only where there is lack of it that the matter finds itself in the vortex of public confrontation.' *Moral als Preis der Moderne. Ein Versuch über Wissenschaft, Technik und Umwelt*, Frankfurt a/M 1993, p. 291.

childhood feels or knows that advertisements inevitably conceal an element of allurement.

On the other hand, the heavy burden of legacy and the collapse of the values relied upon by the socialist community make it necessary to create news forms of togetherness. The legitimation of these forms must be based on social reality rather than on the stimulative qualities of propaganda. At the same time, mass confidence in the future, stabilization and improved economic situation and in benefits from European integration must nevertheless not be left unattended.

Speaking in principle, Vojvodina is, after all, not reducible to a space whose content is exhausted in interethnic strife. Its history abounds with examples of multicultural life which in many respects can serve as models in European proportions. It is therefore to be recommended that one should rely on the phenomena from everyday life, which is generally comprehensible to all and free from any manipulative influence.

In this light, the initiatives of the provincial authorities to change the schoolchildren's attitudes to multiculturalism by means of 'familiarization' quizzes do not seem a particularly happy solution! The fact that they are evocative of the forced learning of information about the 'glorious' past of the 'progressive' representatives, that is, of the communist descendants of our nations and nationalities, is not the only reason. Those who learned from publications like *The Seven Secretaries of the Union of Communists Youth of Yugoslavia* in preparation for the former quizzes know best how little they remember. The competent Provincial Secretariat would operate much better if it stopped being self-assured and held an occasional consultation with representatives of institutions and nongovernmental organizations committed to improving the multiculturalism situation on the ground. It is illogical that the provincial authorities and the nongovernmental sector should operate as institutions engaged in the same activities but on two different planets.

Unlike the quizzes, which involve formal familiarization with cultures existing next to us through a wealth of data about historical events and distinguished individuals, and whose flaw lies in the fact that such knowledge may not bring about a change of value judgements, acquaintance with living fellow-citizens, their lives, dreams and emotions can go a long way towards relativizing the discrediting fallacies. This is why information about local heritage can be much more convincing and productive in the shaping of human relations than data pertaining to the history of a people. Life's content has proved to be the deciding factor in the policy of multiculturalism insofar as it rids the whole subject of elements of a tribunal, of an atmosphere in which we accuse and pass judgement on each other.

Such a policy would rely on more discrete operation of the political sphere implying above all the disqualification of any emanation of violence both in verbal and in brutal, physical form. One thing is certain: the disappearance of words such as tolerance and multiculturalism from public life will not necessarily mean that all the problems addressed with their help have finally been solved; but it will certainly indicate the existence of certain new elements rendering unnecessary their presence on the horizon of daily experience.

Nicu CIOBANU
VOJVODINA AND MULTICULTURALITY POLICIES
Experiences and Prospects

A discussion of Vojvodina's multiculturalism is actually a discussion of its substance: Vojvodina indeed is an authentic combination of multiculturalism. That is its specific genetic code. Precisely because of this, it is necessary, from time to time, to re-examine the extent to which the rights of different ethnic collectivities are exercised as an indicator of co-existence in Vojvodina, or of unity in diversity. Unfortunately, the past 20 years are a period when Vojvodina's multiculturalism in particular was seen as a political and economic burden, leading to the violation and abolition of many of the acquired rights of national communities.

The multiculturalism of Vojvodina, its distinguishing mark, has continuously been violated to such an extent that differences between various ethnic communities in terms of the exercise of their rights are becoming increasingly noticeable, all of which is happening with the support of the power structures. A new reality is being created, new criteria – different, unequal – are being imposed, and this is hugely frustrating for anyone aspiring to establish higher standards. It is obvious that because such a state of affairs suits all political structures, even in the wake of the 5th of October, all the more so as it constitutes the legacy of the 1990s, they feel no primary responsibility for it; but they are responsible in that they are unwilling to change it.

As has been seen, effective mechanisms for normalizing a distorted, disrupted multiculturalism should not be sought either in the political will of the authorities – by the way, these very authorities will take credit for them whenever they can – nor in the outcome of real needs for something which would bring about harmony and respect for the fundamental principles of a civilized society and respect for human rights, but in the pressure of the international community and the imposed need to adopt European values.

The Vojvodina's multiculturalism has also been used as a means of manipulation. The political elites have used multiculturalism as a safety valve on the road to the achievement of their political objectives, not infrequently also as a blind for the concealment of semblances, in trying to win political points and favours both at home, in the electorate, and abroad.

If all this is taken into consideration, it is not easy to lay down and foster genuinely neutral standards. This may give rise to crucial problems: reconciliation of legitimate demands for unity and diversity; achieving political consensus without cultural uniformity; coexistence but not also assimilation; fostering the unity of the Vojvodina cultural space while at the same time respecting its legitimate cultural diversity; respect for all cultural identities without weakening the identity of collectively belonging to Vojvodina's multiculturalism. Vojvodina's multiculturalism should be approached as a reality, as an essential component of its existence, and less so as a pathetic manifestation of its wealth behind which lurk the pitfalls of a politicized society. Not as a folklore phenomenon or an ideological relapse into the past, though there were periods when Vojvodina was stronger, more substantial precisely in that past.

The very notion of culture and its manifestation plays a crucial role in understanding Vojvodina's multiculturalism, different views of culture result in different understanding of multicultural practice. This is not only a question of different meanings of the concept of culture, but of different aspects encompassing the content of the concept of culture. Today Vojvodina's culture is increasingly seen as an open-ended, evolutive process, never as a process of mutual permeation of intercultural influences. The level of development and compatibility of cultural identities of different ethnic communities, above all their permeation, are without doubt essential components of Vojvodina's reality on the path of building a healthy multicultural society. Affirmative action in operation, as a major component of multicultural practice, and political will are essential factors for establishing and facilitating communication between different cultural models.

Today, the participation of national communities in the Vojvodina government is on the margins of their needs, but not of their real potential. It is only a part of the political discourse, not a part of practicable intentions to really do something about it. This moves us away from an authentic Vojvodina multicultural space. The example of Vojvodina enables one to perceive a variety of relationships between existing, traditional, ethnic communities, but more recent developments make it necessary to adopt a different concept of a different multicultural reality, different from that which had been emblematic of Vojvodina during the past 30 years. Besides the traditional cultural models of Vojvodina, we

are faced with new models in the aftermath of the developments/wars of the 1990s, with the fact that there is communication as well as tension between the indigenous population and the newcomers as representatives of the new cultural model, a matter discussed earlier by Mr Domonji, among others. The extent of that population's integration is, actually, a prerequisite for the proper functioning of the society as a whole, so one should pay special attention to multicultural relations as an essential element of a healthy society. It is precisely this communication, or, more specifically, it is on this communication that the prospects of Vojvodina's multiculturalism depend. Impairment of the multicultural space of Vojvodina means encroachment on its essence. It goes without saying that in this process both the media and the structures of government, as well as relevant nongovernmental organizations, bear enormous responsibility for the definition of the level of existing multicultural relations, which implies the identification of new cultural models with the object of avoiding potential risks of conflict and of preventive action in this direction. If we regard relations between different cultural models as relations between different national cultures and entrust the matter to the testing ground of political discourse, we shall not achieve the desired effect of unity in diversity. Political discourse usually leads to deception and to strengthening of the national culture model. Vojvodina doesn't need strengthening but articulating national cultural identities, the mutual permeation of different cultural models and the creation of a new, qualitative content.

A distinguishing mark of Vojvodina is cooperative multiculturalism, which thrives on the coexistence of different cultures. Such a model usually accepts the coexistence of different cultures but opposes their mingling. A multiculturalism which does not lead to integration is a factor which inevitably leads to separatism, just as a policy overemphasizing identity and a struggle for rights – not within the majority people, but between members of national communities, a struggle degenerating into a fight for special treatment, status, benefits and privileges – can become a factor of destabilization in Vojvodina. This also gives rise to radical multiculturalism, which often espouses the collective rights of a cultural minority in accordance with their demands for autonomy, whether linguistic, cultural or territorial autonomy. The realization of such kind of multiculturalism ought to be addressed with great responsibility and competence. Therefore, from a political point of view, multiculturalism must strive towards the abolition of mechanisms for the exclusion of diversity, that is, towards increasing the potential for integrating unity into diversity. Instead of emphasizing cultural differences, one should accept a model of cultural and national permeation, intermingling and

reciprocal influences. Any model other than this may bear the risk of ethnic separatism.

Since Vojvodina's future lies in its multiculturalism, it must be fostered as a real need, a specific, precious asset developed over the centuries, rather than as political window-dressing by the structures of power patterned on the imposition of the affirmation of multiculturalism and employing the mechanisms of socialist realism – a consideration the Secretariat for Legislation, Administration and National Minorities had in mind in initiating, supporting and realizing a great number of projects.

Svenka SAVIC

WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO MULTICULTURAL VOJVODINA

Vojvodina is today held up as a positive example in the region where many different national groups have lived for a long period of time without major upheaval. Hence the hope that this region can be a desirable example of what the European Union has in its programme of unity in diversity. In Vojvodina, an enviable level of multicultural life has been achieved, although during the previous century there was a sizeable reduction of the number of 'others' relative to the majority population.

So far no one has raised the question of whether the development of multiculturalism in Vojvodina has also been marked in gender terms. Have women contributed or not to the furthering of coexistence in the province and in what way? Do women belonging to other national communities contribute to the development of multiculturalism in a different way from women belonging to the majority nation? (One should bear in mind that the term *majority people* has changed essentially over the past two centuries: at the end of the 18th century non-Serb population predominated compared to the situation in Vojvodina today.)

Our social sciences are concerned with the question of multiculturalism mostly at global level, less so at individual level, and almost not at all in terms of gender problems (male and female population). This is why we find it rather difficult to address the whole problem in a different way.

In a poll of female students (Savić, 2001) we asked whether today young women from the majority people in Vojvodina (Serbs) look upon women from other national communities among whom they live in the same way or whether they differentiate between them. Whether, for example, they see women from another national community as being 'more' different and feel towards them a

greater social distance as a result, or whether they have the same attitude to women from other national communities.

I'm going to present here only a few basic items of information from that research.

Regarding their attitude to women from other national communities with whom they coexist across Vojvodina (Albanians, Croats, Jews, Hungarians, Germans, Roma, Romanians, Rusyns, Slovaks), young Serbs have an attitude of 'otherness' which they manifest through various prejudices and social distance. Serb women have more positive attitudes to Croat, Slovak, Rusyn, Jew and German women and markedly negative attitudes to Albanian, Roma and Romanian women. For instance, Roma are dirty, uneducated, have lots of children... Albanians are subordinated to their husbands, have lots of children...

Such stereotypes among Serbs bear out elements of patriarchal or hierarchic attitudes to 'other' women, as well as considerable ignorance and lack of knowledge of women from other cultures.

Whereas Croat, Hungarian, Slovak, Jewish women figure as part of the family, relatives or neighbours, Roma and Albanians are hardly accorded a positive attribute or seen as being part of one's environment (other than when begging in the street).

In addition to having negative attitudes to women from certain national communities, young Serb women see themselves as tradition-bound, dominated by their men and subordinating their lives in large part to the needs of the narrower and wider community (the Kosovo Maiden model, the Orthodox persuasion...). Dissatisfied with their own position in society, they project part of their subordinate role to women from other national communities living in these parts.

We added to the information obtained on the basis of the poll data from interviews (oral history) conducted with (un)known (elderly) women from different national communities in Vojvodina. This information contains an abundance of examples of how women from different national communities cooperated with each other, helped each other, how they learned from each other and went to each other's aid as trusted friends. There is also information about how events in general (street roundups, colonization, post-1990s refugee situation) affected their lives. The results obtained by combining the two methods of data gathering enable us to challenge the belief that a multicultural form of life is in itself something positive. One might rather say that this approach too gives grounds for the preservation of the patriarchal mode of life, at least where women are concerned, because traditional cultures rest on a hierarchically organized order, an order with man's power at the top of the pyramid. Therefore, in

theoretical considerations of multiculturalism in general, and with special reference to Vojvodina, one ought to bear in mind that the polysemy of this term clouds the real picture. Interculturality and multiculturalism carry the danger of reflecting patriarchal relations of domination in both society and education. Thus, some 'different' people are considered more different, and therefore also more undesirable, in the multicultural society we are all so proud of. With regard to women, Roma, Albanians and Romanians are considered 'more undesirable' than women from other national communities, at least according to our poll. Further, this term conceals the fact that in many cases it is not a question of *coexistence* but of *parallel existence*, without cooperating, getting to know each other and respecting each other.

We don't have enough information about relations between women from different national communities (for instance, relations between Hungarians and Slovaks, or Serbs and Romanians, and so on). It is therefore necessary to continue and identify in further research the substantial and numerous contributions made by both famous and less well known women from different national communities to Vojvodina's multiculturalism (of which we are today so proud to ourselves and to others).

Given that multiculturalism involves respect for the (cultural) customs of a community, I should like to recall some facts by way of a proposal for discussion. Nearly every community has customs by which woman's subordinated position is confirmed in this or that way. Let us cite only those glaring examples which are directly contrary to women's rights and human rights, those which are part of traditional cultures in various parts of the world, including these parts. For instance, forced marriage, where a girl not yet of age is married to a man chosen for her by others, is still practiced by the Roma community today (and was practiced by the Serb community in the previous century). Further, customary law is still in force in respect of succession: female children inherit less than male children, although our law is very modern in this regard. There are customs in other cultures (distant from us) where a woman is cremated when her husband dies, where she is stoned for adultery, denied the right to vote and be elected, where barren women are cast out, where female genitals are cut, not to mention polygamy...

While some people in this country are currently proposing that marriages between minors should be punished by law, at the same time there are instances of religious dignitaries having more than one wife including under age ones. We see how elusive is the meaning of multiculturalism when broadened with the perspective of gender equality. Introduce the variable of social power into this

perspective, and we see that those who have power also have the right to keep woman in patriarchal subordination, and that under the pretext of a custom.

In this connection, Ana Bogdanić deconstructs the very notion, as well as the theoretical framework, of multiculturalism by analyzing a newspaper article published in Croatia about a Roma man raping an underage Roma girl, his distant relative and refugee from Kosovo, near the town of Rijeka. The court imposed an exceptionally lenient sentence (a suspended six-month prison sentence) on the grounds that for Roma girls, entering into sexual relationships at a young age is part of the Roma community's traditional culture. In doing so, the court manifested its ignorance of fundamental human rights to a life without violence and its patriarchal attitude to women, namely the fact that it considers the act of rape as carrying less weight than a traditional custom. Apparently the court chose no other time than the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-15) to exercise 'flexibility' in its appreciation of the Roma question and knowledge of the intercultural.

So, the problem is: how can one respect cultural customs which provide shelter to barbarity and brutal violation of women's human rights in relation to universal human rights and cultural rights in particular? In this connection, we're raising the question of human rights: are they universal or are they, after all, conditioned by culture and particular? If the existing patriarchal relations and woman's subordination to the needs of the community as a whole and of man (husband) in particular are hiding behind the concept of multiculturalism, then we do have big problems. Findings of gender studies – research concerned with the deconstruction of culture in order to identify oppression of women – strongly emphasize the need to take account of gender perspectives, among other things, in discussions of multiculturalism.

Notes

At the time of the research our state was called Serbia and Montenegro. Meanwhile the two states have separated, which would be reason enough to conduct an additional poll and ask the question: If I said to you 'Montenegrin woman', what would your first association be?

Basic findings indicate that young Serb women have a positive attitude to Montenegrin women, above all an attitude of respect, though they see them too as victims of patriarchal norms in society: the woman who stands behind the Montenegrin man; a woman who is a slave to her home and family; under great influence from her husband; a person who is aware of her position in the home and doesn't fight for her self-respect too hard; a woman in a subordinate position in relation to a man; a woman subjected to her husband; a woman whose life closely follows strict patriarchal conditions; a woman with a patriarchal upbringing; obedient to husband, father; mother of a patriarch.

In lieu of a prologue

It goes without saying – at least on this occasion – that there is no need for any reference to the history of Vojvodina, it's not something that's unknown, and, besides, I have written and talked about that on numerous occasions. Right now, however, top scholars are involved in serious debates in Europe itself about Vojvodina's identity, citing the 'Vojvodina model' as a warning to Europe. Some of these studies place the problem on the widest possible foundation, an approach which is still largely lacking here.⁴⁹ On another occasion – somewhat earlier – the same author explains the matter in quite precise terms.⁵⁰ Academician Beranger proceeds from the fact that in the space of the post-communist East – the historical space of a long-disappeared empire – there is a nostalgia for a state which is gone and that this is no accident. Hence the conclusion on which we, too, insist: states' forms or 'frameworks' under international law are far more ephemeral than they appear to us, with cultural patterns usually outliving such forms. Of course, if the meaning of the syntagma 'cultural and identity pattern' is construed as it was construed by Slobodan Jovanović in one of the best short essays on the topic we have in the recent history of our political publicist writing. The truth of this has been borne in on us in the aftermath of the latest collapse of the etatistic 'greater' Serbia concepts from the period of Milošević's Balkan war adventure, though there had been such concepts in the shape of 'greater' Bulgaria, Romania and so on before. This leads to some other conclusions of current relevance. The idea of national unity as a cultural idea based on language and traditions makes sense and is viable, but its opposite – the etatistic notion of unity – is deleterious and risky. That all Serbs or all Hungarians are linked together by language and cultural traditions is not in issue, but it is when it comes to realizing a state that there are collisions whose scenarios are known to us: a modern state can be organized on principles of fullest diversity, but a purely ethnic or religious or confessional state is impossible. Without these facts one can hardly engage in serious discussion about Vojvodina's identity. Some of the examples are from the context of daily politics and they tell us a lot, since Europe is being built on this second principle.

⁴⁹ Jean Beranger: *L'Austriche-Hongrie 1815 – 1918*. Paris, ed. Armand Colin, 1994.

⁵⁰ Jean Beranger: *Lexique historique de l'Europe danubienne – XVI – XIX siècles*, Paris ed. Armand Colin, 1976.

A few days ago the notorious 'Serb vaivode' sent word from The Hague that the murderer of Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić is another Gavrilo Princip. He is not the only one – a good many members of the national elites think that way. Arguing that the late Zoran Đinđić was not an Archduke Ferdinand does not make sense; but this reference to Gavrilo Princip urges us to touch upon another thing connected with the topic being discussed today. The well-known French historian Francois Fejto – everybody finds his name difficult to pronounce, he is of Hungarian origin and well acquainted with the situation in Vojvodina – puts forward several theses which merit attention. Though we may argue them on some other occasion, his remarks about Gavrilo Princip are important in this work whose title *Requiem for a Defunct Monarchy* contains yet another thesis; one should take this into consideration when talking about the Vojvodina model which is today rightly seen as a historical paradigm.⁵¹ We shall here leave aside the question of whether the Monarchy fell apart or was murdered by some in the West because it was catholic, which allegedly appealed to the masons and Clemenceau, as well as to the Paris intellectuals following the Jacobin ideals of nation states that were later adopted by all ethno-nationalists in particular. We all know the Balkan 'story' at least from the events from the last decade. What is important in this regard is that with the shots fired by the Miljacka river 'Serbia ushered in terrorism as a new form of political struggle'. This conclusion is important also because the latest developments show that this still holds true in the Balkans – and not only regarding the Serbs – or that no lessons are learned from experience of the last decade.

The Vojvodina stamp on the multitude of languages

Naturally, this is emblematic and is not mentioned as a mere bizarre incident but as an important sign. It is hardly necessary to debate whether the Vojvodina 'model' is perfect: naturally it is not and one should do everything to develop it in accordance with the principles of the balance achieved. Although this is not easy in view of the blind forces of daily politics, the principles we have mentioned do mean something. Something to all the peoples, ethnoses, religions and confessions in the region. This is also the political philosophy on which the EU is being built.

⁵¹ Francois Fejto: *Requiem pour un Empire defunt*, Paris, 1988.

Gordana PERUNOVIC FIJAT
TERRA INCOGNITA: THE ROAD DOESN'T PASS THIS WAY

On my way back from Kraljevo, where I was on a recent visit, to Kikinda, where I live, I took a taxi to take me to the Kraljevo bus station. 'Where are you from?' inquired the talkative taxi driver. 'Ah, from Kikinda? I know where it is, I once drove to Budapest, Kikinda's round about there,' he said complacently. By the way, Kikinda's not 'round about' Budapest, it takes five, six hours to get from Kikinda to Budapest on condition that your means of transport is a car and not a train or bus, and that the queue at the Horgoš-Reske border crossing isn't too long. And, second, from whichever angle you look at the road map, the Kraljevo-Budapest road doesn't run via Kikinda – actually it runs nowhere near. Whether a motorist heads for Budapest via Belgrade and Zrenjanin, or via Novi Sad and Subotica, he doesn't have to pass through Kikinda, unless he intends to make a detour before he goes on.

Thus, a conversation lasting less than 60 seconds confirmed to me what I already knew: that for people living in Serbia south of Zemun, and particularly south of Belgrade, Vojvodina is a rather unknown and exotic land.

By the way, the orchestra performing on the barge restaurant on the Ibar (a young girl from Kraljevo was celebrating her eighteenth birthday) played a great many songs composed and sung in Vojvodina for many decades. They were not only Đorđe Balašević's songs, but hits that are, perhaps, a century old or even more. There's no doubt that none of the musicians and guests knew that those songs were from Vojvodina, especially because they were played on instruments that are not used in Vojvodina, in a strange rhythm so unlike Vojvodina, and because the guests danced a somewhat subdued version of *čoček* to the music. The songs are, therefore, all right; but talking about autonomy isn't. And when multiculturalism does make the 'agenda', people only talk in phrases such as, 'It doesn't matter what nationality he is, only what kind of man he is', and so on. After all, what is the use of talking multiculturalism in places inhabited by only one people (Serbs) with a percentage of, say, Roma, where even refugees from Bosnia (and Serbs by nationality) have not succeeded in settling in large numbers? What kind of multiculturalism is possible in an environment where being Serb and Orthodox Christian is the only pattern, where there are no other patterns? In Kraljevo, in the SOS Children's Village for parentless children alone there are a few children of Slovak (two) and Hungarian (one girl) nationality; this fact is pointed out with pride, as proof of a genuine multiculturalism, because the staff make it possible for the children to mark, say, Easter, according to the rules of their faith. But the SOS Children's Village is something else: it was set up by an Austrian foundation whi-

ch establishes such villages all over the world, guaranteeing the children in each of them respect for their national and religious identity – but what about the environment? Now, who was it that said, 'We like minorities, but only if they're quite small'? In other words, the establishment 'likes' other nations (and misses no opportunity of pointing this out) only and solely if they are so small in number that they can be used for cosmetic purposes, a trump card the authorities pull out when they want to portray themselves as 'completely' well-meaning and European, especially where there are no minorities at all. By the way, my return to Kikinda dispelled a good part of my hopes that things could be different. Though the last election round did ensure that Savo Dobranić (DS) would be provincial deputy instead of his rival Dr Branislav Blažić (SRS), one has no reason whatever to believe that the treatment of other nations in Kikinda, and 'further afield', will change in the immediate future. Because the Radicals won in our place, their 17 mandates combined with three SPS and two DSS ones were enough to form government. In this government, Jasmina Dudaš continues to serve as coordinator for national minorities, her only qualification for the job being that she is married to a Hungarian; and it is on the strength of this that she's in the habit of saying (not only in private, but also for the media) that 'intercommunal relations in Kikinda are excellent'. A graffiti on a building in Kikinda reading 'God, save us from the plague and the Croats' (wherever did its author read that phrase?), as well as hate graffiti targeting Jews and Hungarians scrawled on the house of an elderly resident, a Hungarian woman, caused a reaction from state institutions, which dispatched a delegation post-haste to look into the matter; however, the local (SRS) authorities replied that 'there are no problems', at least that they saw none, so, if they could not see any problems, it meant that there were in all probability none. For the nations which are not particularly numerous in the Vojvodina/Kikinda milieu, there is only one choice left: either to demand protection of their rights as loudly as they can, or to fall silent forever (the quite likely outcome, considering that their members are actually dying out). At the seminars of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, organized by the Novi Sad office, I've heard it said often that we'll have wonderful multiculturalism mechanisms some day, only none of the peoples who could benefit from such mechanisms will be around any more.

Some time ago, a branch of the Community of Romanians, of whom there are some 200 in Kikinda municipality, was established in Kikinda (with Kornel Boronka the branch president). Most of them have Serb first names and surnames. They don't speak the language well or don't speak it at all although Romania is eight kilometres from Kikinda. A member of the majority nation commented, 'Why are they organizing themselves into that association since there are *so few* of

them?'; but then, he added that he had 'nothing against that, let people gather together, it's nice of them to be cherishing their culture'. In the vocabulary as well as in the minds of the large majority of the population, 'cherishing one's culture' on the part of less numerous peoples implies only folklore events along with exhibitions of fancy work and traditional cooking. National diversity is still not reflected at all in political life, other than when the municipal president (SRS) turns up – but not always – at events organized by cultural-artistic societies for the cultivation of Hungarian and Roma cultures, and attends Jewish Culture Days, something he does regularly. Absurdly enough, Hungarians occupy several key positions in the ruling SRS in Kikinda, which couldn't be said of the DS, LSV and LDP. In the local elections the Hungarian coalition won two places in the Municipal Assembly of Kikinda; however, the less numerous minorities (a pleonasm?), represented in the town and the villages by only a few families (Jews, Germans), are simply not visible, including in politics. The Roma are nowhere to be seen either, although they are more numerous. The only exception are those Roma who are with the SRS and those undergoing NGO education.

There is another curiosity visible in the political and everyday life of Kikinda, namely differences between Serbs and Serbs. The indigenous Serbs – descendants of the border guards from the time of Maria Theresa – and the Serb colonists still exhibit a kind of anecdotal mutual intolerance, which didn't stop with the arrival of the refugees in the 1990s. 'What do you think, how do I feel, being from a mixed marriage?' a friend of mine asked me much to my surprise, because I knew that both her parents are – Serbs. 'My father's a Ličanin [a native of Lika region], my mother a Bosnian, but both were born in Vojvodina. What am I to consider myself – a Ličanka or a Bosnian? How should I declare myself?' she went on, moved. I admitted that I myself was at a loss and suggested to her, with a touch of irony, to sort out that horrible personal problem herself. Such problems are likely to become more frequent and drastic as a result of Montenegro's declaration of independence, and now there's Kosovo as well, given that sentiments about one's nationality and homeland are very difficult to explain, and even more difficult to talk about, because everybody's on edge, people fall out far more easily than they come to an understanding. Contrary to the popular saying that only time will tell, we don't need time to tell us who is going to implement policies of multiculturalism and in what way in such a social climate, a climate made worse by the population's poverty, insecurity and lack of prospects, because we've already seen too much to expect anything. After all, other than paying lip service, the government and its institutions have no intention of really framing and carrying out a policy of multiculturalism, otherwise they would have already found the means to do so, given that they have both the money and

personnel for that. So, implementing a policy of multiculturalism will – again! – be considered as something which, in the opinion of the majority and its institutions, 'the world is forcing us to do'. And so we have to do that which the world is forcing us to do, though we try our best to only go through the motions, without getting to the bottom of things, because that would not be to the liking of the majority of vote-casters.

To paraphrase Pavel Domonji: the policy of multiculturalism is a sort of foreplay. Some have heard of this word, but don't understand what it means; other have heard it, but pretend they haven't; and others still have heard it but, guessing that it's indecent, don't use it. And neither the first, nor the second, nor the third know to put the word into action, so they don't put it into action and wouldn't be seen dead asking someone who knows. The maxim about translating words into deeds is of no use here. That is, not counting those few who know how and would like to do it, only those in power don't ask their opinion and don't take them seriously; and so, inevitably, they are sooner or later reduced to small groups of people in the know who discuss good things with much zeal and little clout, with the reality outside pretty much the same as before.

If Vojvodina doesn't raise the question of policy of multiculturalism, the odds are that Serbia won't. As far as some of the nations which once were part of the 'multifariousness of Vojvodina' are concerned, the hour is rather late.

'Yet late is better than never' – Tolkien.

Boris VARGA

VOJVODINA: MULTICULTURALITY AND CIVILITY⁵²

In Vojvodina, the notion of multiculturalism in practice often excludes the values of civil society, or civility, which is a higher objective of modern democratic societies and the European Union. This is due to the absence of civil values in Serbia, weak legal foundations of multiculturalism and abuse of the ethnic question for daily-political purposes.

The elections and the Constitution

The campaign for the presidential and parliamentary elections in Serbia in 2008 showed that few parties are prepared to propagate civil values in Serbia, and

⁵² 'Civility' as a term to denote a universal, supranational system of values based on the rule of law and on political and social pluralism.

thereby in Vojvodina. In the past two years, a number of factors have further jeopardized civil values in Serbia: the adoption of the new Constitution, the declaration of Kosovo's independence, and the 'swing to the right' during the last parliamentary elections on the part of the leading members of the former DOS coalition: DS and, in particular, DSS and NS.

The fact that the new Serbian Constitution was not confirmed *de facto* in Vojvodina was borne out by the poor voter turnout. The new Serbian Constitution failed to deliver on the promises of the pro-Europe forces to reinstate Vojvodina's 1974 autonomy status. Also, the Constitution differentiates between the citizens in the very definition of the state: 'The Republic of Serbia is a state of the Serb people and all citizens living in it'. Looking upon the nation as an active real category, where membership is gained through 'becoming one of the people', causes great problems for the integration of societies, that is, of states, as testified to by the processes of 'falling apart', from the former Yugoslavia to the present, and further on (Pešić V., *Nacionalna država (ili o Srbiji i Građaniji)*).

Multiculturalism and democracy

Nearly two decades after the introduction of multi-partyism, Serbia has no well thought-out conception of multiculturalism. In Vojvodina, the most conspicuous multiculturalism model in evidence was created in the communist era, with the apparent objective of preserving the local ethnic communities through Cultural-Artistic Societies (KUD), a model which began to change actively only after 5 October 2000 (Losoncz A., Vojvodina and policies of multiculturalism (discussion)). Such a *KUD-ite* model of multiculturalism is often alienated in character because it closes the community, nurtures local ethno-nationalism and impedes the integration of national minorities into contemporary Serbian society.

In legal terms multiculturalism in Serbia is not fully regulated and is prone to political manipulation. Although important steps have been taken in building a new model of multiculturalism in Serbia since the fall of the regime of S. Milošević, the process remains incomplete. The first national councils for ethnic communities have been established, but there is still no law on the national councils although it was announced over half a decade ago. Also, the state has no well thought-out and uniform policy with regard to national communities. Thus, at state level, two almost identical bodies for coordinating the national councils have been established – one at provincial level and the other at republic level (Ilić S., Vojvodina and policies of multiculturalism (discussion)). These national bodies for the coordination of national councils have not become fully operational and have mostly been used for current political purposes.

The values

The existing multiculturalism value system in Vojvodina often does not correspond to the system of general civic values. Interculturalism and multiculturalism carry the danger of reflecting patriarchal relations of domination in both society and education (Savić S., *Doprinos žena u multikulturalnoj Vojvodini*). Nearly every local ethno-nationalism in Vojvodina has its foundations precisely in patriarchal society.

The absence of civility causes segregation in contemporary Serbian society. Owing to the lack of universal values, and that in an atmosphere of national euphoria (like in the wake of the proclamation of Kosovo's independence), local ethnic communities in Vojvodina project vulnerability fears, seal themselves off and often become nationally radicalized inside. In view of this, one may assume that, should Serbian society become integrated into the European Union and develop civic values, one of the more difficult processes will involve 'opening up' these local communities because they are not very responsive to change (let us not forget the KUD legacy).

Existential autonomies

The calls for territorial autonomies in Serbia and Vojvodina are a direct outcome of the absence of civic values. The Hungarian national community in Vojvodina is satisfied with the creation of conditions for personal autonomy but, in view of the political influence brought to bear on the national community and the unstable state of Serbian politics, representatives of the Hungarian ethnic community are also demanding territorial autonomy in the north of Vojvodina (Galambos L., interview with Inter). Development of national civic and European values would obviate in Vojvodina the need for territorial autonomy on an ethnic basis.

Official Belgrade's rhetoric about lost territory – bearing in mind Kosovo but not acknowledging the two million or so citizens of Albanian nationality – has realistic chances of provoking a reaction by the Albanians in the Preševo valley in the shape of demands for ethnic autonomy, something which could be interpreted as their existential protectionism to say the least.

Conclusion

There is no uniform interpretation of multiculturalism in Serbia and Vojvodina. The process of creating a legal framework for the development of multiculturalism is incomplete, which leaves room for manipulation of ethnic

issues for current political purposes. Considering that the Serbian state does not foster civic values in society, 'greater-Serbian nationalism' has a direct influence on the development of so-called 'minority nationalisms'. If a system of civic values is not developed in Serbia, and therefore in Vojvodina too, the state might enter upon a period of long-term political, societal and territorial destabilization. There is no doubt that the development of multiculturalism, as a component of civility in Serbia and Vojvodina, can facilitate, among other things, the process of integrating the state into the European Union.

Gojko MISKOVIC
'TITANIC' AND 'CARPATHIA'

The scuttling of nation-building strategies

It was with great personal satisfaction that I listened to Mr Mirko Đorđević and his richly argued and, above all, deeply sincere approach to exposing the lies that fetter the majority ethnicum in the territories of Vojvodina and Serbia. I am probably one of the few apostates who possess and read proscribed books in order to find out how many dramatic untruths the unfortunate citizens of this ruined country have to cope with. To repeat, I am very grateful to Mr Đorđević for providing me with so inspired a cue.

Having arrived from Sombor and driven on Vojvodina roads, I would like to present what I wish to say in the form of several fragments or themes. I'm coming from a city which *de facto* isn't that any more. For a very long time, for nearly 90 years, there have been attempts to challenge the supranational idea which Vojvodina, of all parts of the former Austrian empire, that is, Austro-Hungary, has adopted most successfully as a model for the future. If in a city, held up for a reason as a hearth of the urban spirit, you have such uncivilized phenomena, like distribution of bread free of charge in a place where bread has never been in short supply, then that is something deeply alarming. Nevertheless, thanks to individual acts of resistance that finally translated into a civic action in defence of a minority's rights, with the participation of a good many of us gathered here, we can say that there is hope. And yet, your hope diminishes when you see that these victorious political pseudo-elites, with their avowed advocacy of Europeanism, are also unable to recognize the social trends, that they do not want nor wish to stop leading us up the garden path with their petty-politicking.

I wish to say that I take the things we encounter every day as a kind of occupation and *enslavement of the spirit and identity*, as an attempt at all costs to

subject all Serbs in Vojvodina to a chimerical and ethno-phyletic approach being enforced by the priestly of the Serbian Orthodox Church. On my way to this meeting, I reached Srbobran or Sentomaš, as the Vojvodina Serbs used to call it. If you ask me, parallel use of the name *Szenttamás* again would do no harm, but when, driving along the road, you come across pictures of Hague inmates, garnished with posters of *Obraz*, and also posters of the Radical candidates, then you have no more doubts whatsoever as to why the name *Szenttamás* was painted over with black car spray at the exit from Srbobran.

Last night I watched what I would describe as a tragic episode of the spiritual decay of Vojvodina's RTV. The television was showing a rather unusual Russian serial, with fierce black-robed Russian priests questioning and revising the past, or rather the history of the Byzantine Empire; I recognized in that an attempt to create an *orthodox church of god in Russia and Serbia* which never existed save in the realm of ideas. I watched the programme with my son and, you can take it from me, this 14-year-old saw easily through the whole rubbish they kept pouring on us through the screen. What I saw last night was really the worst product of malignant intellectualism which is very often pressed on us as the only permitted interpretation of the past, as well as of the future.

I shall finish my ruminations aloud with a bit of black humour symbolism, something which may soon become part of our future's 'manifesto' and which states – *Zemun is ours!* The results of the second round of the Vojvodina elections show very clearly that the citizens are much more intelligent than are the bunch of politicians and analysts concerned only with themselves. I fear that in addition to this slogan we shall have a 'Titanic-Carpathia' situation, only this time the 'Carpathia' (Vojvodina) in its role of rescuer of the surviving citizens from the 'Titanic' called Serbia, won't be able to repeat what the steamer Carpathia did in the case of the glorious and tragic shipwreck. It also seems to me that the political will of the triumphant group of people who, at the end of 1918, gathered together in a festive mood in the former Hotel Meier in Novi Sad, in the shape of the Grand National Assembly of Serbs and Bunjevci, that that political will will not stand the test of the near future.

In the days to come, we shall need much more sense, realism and conciliatoriness than the present social pseudo-elites in Vojvodina and Serbia have. I think that they and their predecessors are not aware of the fact that throughout the 20th century they sowed a great deal of wind but that the storm is yet to come.

Alpár LOSONCZ
MULTICULTURALITY AND POLITICAL ALCHEMY

As I listened to Mr Pavel Domonji's opening speech, I thought that I must have confused the decade, I thought that I was actually living at a time two decades ago. What I'm saying is not a critical remark about what he said, but rather a diagnosis of the current state of affairs. I mean, what he said sounds like a repetition of the things debated during the 1990s. It's simply baffling that, after all those varied and heated debates, assurances and attempts at enlightenment, if you will, we should still be at the starting point. Because, for instance, the fact that identity is of a dialogical character, that identity cannot be understood in terms of an unadulterated essence, that identity always comes into being through interference, these are, I think, the starting points not only for me, but for the people sitting at this table, who have taken part in many a crucial practical action in Serbia. To discuss things we already know, to repeat things which are already on record, that's too much even if our aim is to underestimate ourselves. But in all this, as I said a moment ago, there is a gloomy diagnosis of the present situation. In other words, the repetition of known facts bears witness to our impotence. Besides, though I know very well that this session is not devoted to elections, I can't help feeling that, in connection with the elections, there is a symbolic moment which throws light on our general condition. Because, regardless of the outcome of the backroom dealings which are part of the post-election alchemy, it is clear that one of the principal players on the Serbian political scene is going to be the same agent that dealt many a blow to multiculturalism in Vojvodina during the 1990s. Meanwhile, our political elites, parts of the state apparatus, have learned Europe's official language of multiculturalism, they know how to repeat certain slogans parrot-fashion. In the end, everybody will officially become great fans of multiculturalism, if not for pragmatic reasons, then because of the reality tailored by Europe. I have no objection to that. The only problem is, multiculturalism in Vojvodina is an irreversibly reduced demographic substratum. During the 1990s the ethnic map was changed very much as a result of various actions, which I'm not going to go into now; in the end, we shall be happily savouring European multiculturalism, enjoying exposure to all kinds of ethnic content, cooking according to the recipes of various ethnicities – only the protagonists won't be there. I'm not looking at this now as a kind of incidental moment, but as a problem of continuity with the 1990s. If I'm not mistaken, Dragan Prole suggested in his address that there is a continuity that is too strong, that there aren't any elements, as it were, of a necessary discontinuity between the 1990s and the present decade. Whatever might be said about this period, about

the constellation in the wake of the year 2000, there is a strong tendency in the Serb political elites to normalize, to Europeanize nationalism, and so it seems to me that the things which are about to happen, at a symbolic and at all other levels, will somehow lead to a quiet rehabilitation of the 1990s, so that in the end those years will look to us as a mere incidental calamity. The trouble is, this presupposes the erasure of some people's memories. After all, one might call this national reconciliation, syntheses and unifications of various kinds, this can teleologically be placed in the context of European integrations, we may come up with all kinds of euphemisms, one might argue that this involves blending nationalism with sound Serbian capitalism with European overtones – but that won't change things. The question, then, is which part of the truth are we prepared to sacrifice for the sake of our pragmatic designs? As things stand at the moment, this part of the truth is too substantial. Of course, there's truth in what Pavel termed aptly as our 'twoness': democratic and undemocratic fronts, democrats and radicals, national and non-national ones, global and parochial ones, and so on. All these are rigid divisions which are *de facto* of little relevance. They are artificial bounds serving to justify things or used by some to assuage their troubled conscience. These differences are very porous, though this might be put in stronger terms. Vojvodina's multiculturalism is the first victim of reconciliation marked by excessive pragmatism over the Serbian election arithmetic, that is, of investing the Socialists with the image of a nationalist-turned-European upstart. Multiculturalism is, namely, again subject to an all-embracing relativization, which is bound to gain strength in Serbia as a result of the conclusion of new political alliances. Or, to put it another way, multiculturalism is becoming a pale memory of something which presumably existed at one time, or something it could have become.

To return to our findings. Now, what is the source of multiculturalism in Vojvodina? Although this is not immaterial, it is strange that it needs to be raised anew in spite of all that has already been said in this regard. Contrary to what some would like to believe, the source of multiculturalism doesn't lie in economic migration evocative of the situation in West Europe or the United States. It doesn't imply the survival of an indigenous population in the wake of colonization, as in Canada. This is about the course of history, and I fully understand why Mirko Đorđević brought historical considerations to the fore a little while ago. History is the source of multiculturalism in Vojvodina, more exactly the tortuous course of history which has brought the present ethnicities into a complex of both conflict and cooperation. Denying this source means not seeing the essential. But in discussing history in this case the reference is not to something antiquated; rather, history hints at tendencies which we must

constantly strive to understand. The history of Vojvodina's multiculturalism is not something ephemeral, it is the crucial element in the fashioning of present-day multiculturalism.

In appraising a policy of multiculturalism or a policy towards multiculturalism in Serbia, my personal assessment is as follows: undervaluation of multiculturalism began in Serbia even before Serbia, her political, and also her intellectual elites, even familiarized themselves with multiculturalism in the strict sense of the word. This is where the simulation of pursuit of multiculturalisms began; while I couldn't present an exhaustive catalogue of critiques of multiculturalism in Serbia, studies concerned with the problem in a serious way are not very numerous. So, multiculturalism in Serbia is being criticized even before we have approached the problem at all. And this is one of the reasons why, in 2008, we are still at the starting point and must talk about the basics. Therefore, I find it hard to get over the suspicion I feel that it was only in the context of the call of European integrations, and with an eye to a quantitative increase in European resources that can be shared out, that the elites mentioned became genuine advocates of the ominous multiculturalism.

By the way, multiculturalism is, to my mind, an attempt, to put it briefly, to render different ethnic groups visible, what is more, to render them visible to the public by using a non-hierarchical model. Multiculturalism is always bound up with some policy or other, it is a specific link between policy and culture. I can't conceive of multiculturalism without having regard to certain political moments. To say that it ought not to be politicized, that it ought to be kept out of petty politics, as is implied by reducing multiculturalism to simple ethnic manifestations – that's naïve and taking a rosy view of things. Experience, namely, shows that an ethnic community will have difficulty obtaining certain cultural resources unless it has a measure of power. Finally, multiculturalism is a story which exists only in a democratic regime, whereas in a democracy there's power, conflicts, a scramble for resources. Being plaintive about this won't do any good at all. Now, we're also talking about interculturalism, the source of many misunderstandings. Interculturalism is to me a set of patterns of behaviour at the level of everyday life, it is the habitualization of these patterns, their permeation, the being interested in another culture, the being ready to adopt the content of another culture and so on. Indeed, this question – the extent of permeation of different patterns of behaviour, different cultures at the level of everyday life – is more a matter of sociology than of political organization of reality. I find this distinction, too, important for the following reason: we also recognize such situations elsewhere in the world – and I'll give you an example right away – where you can have a consistently developed multiculturalism pattern alongside weak interculturalism patterns. For

instance, Switzerland is a good example of that. While many speak of Switzerland as a ready-made utopia with regard to multiculturalism, many anthropological and cultural studies indicate the existence of weak codes regarding interculturalism. These studies reveal that there is, simply, a marked indifference to other cultures. The significance of this distinction is that it gives us an insight into the tasks the state has in this regard. It is obvious that it can promote a multicultural content in a much more implicit way than an intercultural one, namely that in relation to the latter it can proceed only in an indirect way. Multiculturalism and interculturalism, then, may be combined in various ways, and it seems to me that we here, in Vojvodina, will have to give thought to such combinations.

I wish to say a word or two about experiential tendencies in Vojvodina. I'll mention that I've been influenced by a survey I read about recently and that I've been looking forward to an opportunity to comment on it. The survey, involving secondary and primary school pupils, was conducted under the umbrella of the Secretariat for Legislation, Administration and National Minorities and the Pedagogical Institute of Vojvodina and gives us very interesting information. The good thing is, we are currently faced with contradictory tendencies, as distinct from, say, research carried out at the beginning of the present millennium, where we found markedly regressive tendencies. So, we have positive tendencies which, simply, indicate some sort of progress and – in a manner of speaking – realization of some results of the mentioned multiculturalism policies at the level of Vojvodina. For instance, elements of violence are apparently on the decrease – something we should welcome – ethnic distance is reduced, young people are paying visits to each other, and so on.

On the other hand, however, there is something extremely worrying and I wish to lay as much stress on this as possible. There are latent conflicts between pupils, latent conflicts which are very often actualized. Now that I've come to this, I'd like to point out one more thing: I think that we are very mistaken in viewing the problem of intercommunal relations and multiculturalism independently of other trends in society; these things, simply, are not independent of each other in spite of our tendency to view them apart. But to return to the mentioned example and demonstrate what I mean. Actually, the majority of violent conflicts are not of an interethnic but of an intraethnic character. In other words, brawling and violence occur mostly within the same ethnic community. What does this prove? This proves that in this society there exist codes of violence which are very often latent, very often concealed, but that at certain moments they rise to the surface with a vengeance. The problem lies in the fact that multiculturalism itself is not impervious to such influence.

At the very end, I wish to say one more thing. I have always believed that in Serbia, and therefore in Vojvodina too – given that Vojvodina is porous to influence from Serbia – there exist at the same time several different patterns, that in Serbia and Vojvodina there actually exists a hybrid reality. I wouldn't embark now on the clarification of these patterns, something I occasionally do but more in writing, because there are complicated things involved. In many situations we can still see the mark of that which goes by the name of communist integrationism, that is, an ideological outlook on multiculturalism. We can also perceive ethno-anarchist trends from the 1990s as well as codes of Europeanized nationalism in evidence from 2000 to the present day, and it seems to me that they will continue to develop in accordance with the post-election arithmetic. Of course, there also exist, sheepishly and unconvincingly, elements of what we call multiculturalism, that is, what the people gathered at this table are appraising in a normative way. Those who want to get to know Vojvodina will have to have the strength to differentiate between these two trends.

Snezana ILIC

TOWARDS EFFECTIVE MINORITY POLICIES

Professor Losoncz, being a very good professor, gave me as many as three cues for what I am about to say. Now, first I'm going to refrain from approaching multiculturalism as a concept, a political theory, something which most of this afternoon has been devoted to in this or that way. This means that I'll try, drawing on my particular subject of study, to offer an assessment of the policies of multiculturalism in Serbia, or in Vojvodina.

Since one can always measure consistency in the framing of a policy, as well as measure effectiveness and transparency in policy implementation, I'll focus on this in brief outlines. This is the second cue Professor Losoncz offered me, namely making assessments of a policy, and although he was referring to something else, I'll reduce this to a practical level. The third cue follows up on this, on the fragility of Vojvodina, the porousness of its borders vis-à-vis the wider state framework, vis-à-vis Serbia as a whole. In this connection it could be said here that the majority of problems, or shortcomings characteristic of the implementation of minority policies, policies of multiculturalism, are generated at central level and exported to Vojvodina.

As to Vojvodina itself, it is necessary to point out for the nth time that there is a great disparity between Vojvodina and the rest of Serbia regarding the completeness and efficiency of minority policies implementation. This disparity is

noticeable in all respects. Being a Germanist, it will give me pleasure – and I hope you will not find it boring – to quote in this connection too what the inspiring Goethe wrote more than two hundred years ago: 'Tolerance as such can only be an initial disposition, it must grow into an acknowledgment, for forbearance is, in fact, insulting!'... (An interruption by D. Prole, in German...) Dr Prole, being a good philosopher, is also very familiar with German literature... So, Goethe says in the end: 'True liberality lies in acknowledgment!' Therefore, at the heart of any serious policy of multiculturalism, there must lie acknowledgment, respect for an identity, in this case recognition of a collective identity and the rights stemming from it, of specific minority rights.

I'm going to discuss this multiculturalism field, as it were, from a purely practical point of view, I mean, I'm going to address the policy of multiculturalism by trying to outline its implementations on four planes: political, legislative, criminal-law and institutional planes. By appraising the effect on all these planes and the degree of earnestness on all these planes, we can actually make a general assessment of the extent to which a state itself, a state formulating and implementing a minority policy, is acting as a truly concerned, benevolent manager of the cultural differences involved.

So, what does it look like viewed on all the four planes?

The political plane of a minority policy would involve, as we have stated repeatedly, the creation of an ambience, with the minorities being partners of the state rather than a burden. A good illustration of this is the oft-repeated comment of the director of the Institute for Publishing Textbooks, who said: 'We're losing a lot of money on the printing of minority textbooks!' As if profitability were the ultimate criterion regarding education in minority languages! In other words, minorities are too often treated in public as a special liability and burden of the state. Further, speaking of minorities as partners of the state, let us find out to what extent minority representatives participate in the making of decisions. There aren't any minority representatives on many bodies – the Broadcasting Agency, National Educational Council... Decisions, of importance for the minority population, are made without their participation, depriving every third resident of Vojvodina, or every fifth resident of Serbia, of a chance to exert their influence. As to the campaigns for promoting tolerance, intercommunal tolerance, a subject discussed by Dr Korhec, among others, one must not lose sight of the fact that campaigns involving public opinion polls are, after all, short-lived and of limited effect. The question is solved in the long term by systematically including specific content in the educational, informational, cultural subsystem, where it finds its proper place and survives from one generation to the next.

I'm not going to dwell too much on what we all know: on the legislative plane we have a completely unfinished story, an unfinished legal framework, that is, an incomplete legal basis for a minority policy. The last, most recent report of the Council of Europe, from February this year, also highlights the absence of a law on national councils. Now, we've had this situation for years, as Professor Losonczi put it aptly, '...as if now is still the year nineteen-ninety-something...', regarding our discussion of the legislative plane of minority policy, we said the same things in 2005, 2006, 2007 and, now, we're again saying them in 2008. Therefore we found ourselves in a position to be surprised when in April this year, before the election, on 8 April to be precise, the Constitutional Court ruled that the minorities were required to collect the same number of signatures for their lists as the majority parties as a condition for participating in the elections, and we also forget that nothing has been done about amending the Law on the Election of National Deputies for years. Therefore, by not addressing this question legally, the state, that is, its highest legislative body, sent out a clear signal that in dealing with the problem of minority political representation it is guided above all by party calculations, rather than aiming for a long-term, well-rounded legal solution.

Let us now have a look on the criminal-law plane of the implementation of minority policies. Let us proceed from the simplest thing: statistics regarding the enforcement of Article 317 of the present Criminal Code, the article that sanctions the dissemination of racial, religious and intercommunal hatred. Such statistics could serve as an accurate indicator of the earnestness of the state in addressing the prevention and punishment of ethnically-motivate violence. First, the state organs have no integrated, comprehensive record of incidents targeting ethnic minorities, and the same applies to religious minorities. The state says: there have been 60 attacks on members and property of religious minorities.... According to our records, there have been from 150 to 200 attacks on property and members of smaller religious communities. This is compounded by lenient punishment of such criminal offences. For instance, a petrol bomb is thrown at the Adventist prayer facility in Sombor, at night, into the bedroom of the priest and his family, and that is designated as 'causing damage to others' property'. So, recourse is had, impermissibly and unpardonably, to the mildest designation under the criminal law. Needless to say, the outcome of this is that the people concerned feel like second-rate citizens, like citizens who don't have the protection of the state and are as such exposed to harassment and violence that is not punished. Also, the system omits informing the public fully and timely about ethnically or religiously motivated incidents and their sanctioning, thus also failing to send unequivocal, encouraging signals to any person who has been threatened.

Lastly, I should say that the implementation of minority policies, as viewed on the institutional plane, paints a rather gloomy picture. It has been pointed out repeatedly by the Council of Europe and by all the organizations and individuals concerned with minority problems in any way that the key institution, that is, the Service for Human and Minority Rights, is impermissibly politically and institutionally weak. The Council of Europe points this out again in its latest document on Serbia. This government agency does very little of what falls within its competence. It ought to be initiating amendments of the law. It is not initiating any. It ought to be reacting in various ways in cases of violations of human and minority rights. It is not reacting. The service should be working towards the empowerment of minority self-government bodies, or national councils, as well as of state bodies competent for human and minority rights. It is not doing this. Its work is shrouded in mystery, there's no website, no public announcements about the various events; for instance, the Constitutional Court's April ruling was a good occasion for it to react. Not a thing! You can see Petar Lađević in public only when he turns up at specifically Roma happenings, as it were, during the Roma Decade. The provincial administration is actually more sensitized to a serious approach to the implementation of multicultural policies, there are sound initiatives, there are continuous efforts in accordance with high standards. Nevertheless, in Vojvodina too some things are not done in a thoroughly thought-out manner, they are done as part of short-term political wheeling and dealing. To recall, a year go, in May 2007, there was talk of introducing guaranteed seats for minorities in the provincial parliament, of introducing a bicameral parliament, talk that the AVP Assembly was going to amend electoral legislation in Vojvodina in June 2007, and so on – there was talk about it for several weeks, than it all died down... Further, a new body called the Provincial Council for National Minorities was formed two years ago. The council was envisaged as a counterpart to the republic Council for National Minorities, was going to be made up, like the republic one, of prime minister, ministers or secretaries in charge of relevant secretariats and representatives of all minority councils, and was going to coordinate the work of all Vojvodina national councils and provincial organs. So, what became of it? Why, there aren't any substantial, visible results! Actually, a constituent session was held and, so far as I know, another session, with the founding act incorporating a decision to hold council meetings every three months.

So, lots of things exist on paper, but in practice we have an insufficiently serious and insufficiently wide reception of multicultural theory on the part of the professional public, and an insufficiently sincere and insufficiently through-out formulation and implementation of multicultural policies on the part of the state.

Though, to tell the truth, viewed in a broader context, it's not only the state that's inconsistent, inefficient and inert regarding this matter of minorities. This applies to many other things. Consider, for instance, the way in which the question of competence of local self-governments is being dealt with and you'll see that there's nothing great about it, the situation regarding that question has been obscure for years.

The intention behind this approach to today's topic is, basically, to point out the existence of comparatively clear and precise parameters for evaluating effectiveness in the implementation of multicultural policies. This means that the shortcomings and omissions can be clearly defined and then eliminated and made up for. But not at this rate and speed, the way it's been done so far! Why am I introducing the factor of time now? Because the demographers are warning us that the minorities are dying out. They are documenting this convincingly with minority population demographic trends between the last two population censuses. Well, this is now practically a race against time. If we go on at this pace, in a few decades we're likely to have wonderful, effective minority policies but without the 'consumers', because those meant to benefit from such policies will gradually diminish in numbers. Or rather, there will be very few of them! The degree of earnestness of a minority policy will be in inverse proportion to the demographic performance of its consumers.

They will constitute small but very satisfied minorities.

Dusko RADOSAVLJEVIC
LACK OF POLITICAL WILL

Someone observed here that we've been talking about multiculturalism all the time, without first talking about the existence of an elementary culture in these regions, of a political culture. Why am I saying this? We look forward to every year and every new election with great hopes, but afterwards it turns out that we'd been pulled by the ears, afterwards we're surprised and always content with the small progress we made at the polls. Then we find fault with this and that and feel resentful, but why do we feel that way, given that we knew in advance that we're going to blame it on one thing or other? So, this year yellow's all the rage, we've painted ourselves yellow, we've put very, very much trust in a political option which, of course, will not prove itself worthy of it, as it has shown several times. What are the implications of this? How can we talk multiculturalism in Vojvodina, seeing as the leading political option in Vojvodina and beyond has never declared that multiculturalism is its commitment, it has not

confirmed this as the holder of political mandates in the Assembly and the executive, nor has it tried to put this into practice. A question to ponder: can you call yourself a civil party and celebrate a religious community's saint's day as your party *slava*? This talk – we're all democrats in a way, only we celebrate the slava of St George – I for one don't buy it; why, if the members of the Socialist International wanted to look more convincing, they could unite in a 'Social Democratic Party' and celebrate as their slava the day of St Joseph the worker, to make me trust them, they could mark the 1st of May, that would somehow be OK.

What's the problem here? What really is the problem here? Let's not play around with this Serbian political scene *mainstream* thing any more, I keep repeating maliciously that neither the *stream* nor the *main* part of it believes in multiculturalism. Now, I myself would translate multiculturalism into nice manners, a responsible behaviour. They know that, if they want to build a state, a nice, decent and responsible one, they must put all this in, because a nice, responsible state is a mixture of human rights, democratic institutions, market institutions and all the rest. Can anyone make big political profits, can anyone make big economic profits, can anyone make any kind of profits if people behave responsibly? Try to imagine us, creating a very responsible state and then being bored like the Swedes!! Why, as you know, generations have been returning from the West saying: It's boring over there! Think of it, the trains run on time over there, the round tables start on time, the theatres start..., why, everything starts on time. I was in the Czech Republic recently, I was surprised, the tram cars are controlled by computer, something of the sort...no uncertainty there! No excuses such as we usually make – I was fifteen minutes late, I waited for the bus, transport... Public personages, professors come and tell us there's no creativity in Europe, no 'life's juice', no real life, you know, no struggling with daily problems, no challenges, like, whether there'll be any petrol, cooking oil, powdered sugar, no things that help us sharpen our wits while believing that life consists in overcoming such basically trivial things...

That's the story, we always have the impression that something will change of itself, but then we end up with the holders of political mandates, the top ones, those in whom we put our trust every year, being re-elected with the rationale, why, better him than the other one! No positive programme there! Well, you know, I also think that Boris [Tadić] looks better than Toma [Nikolić], I don't have to go into my concepts of aesthetics today, but let me put this question: what do we have after four years of that, has the president of the republic put multiculturalism into practice? He has not! What's going on? What is the Democratic Party's approach to solving the problem, the problem of political involvement of national communities in Vojvodina? It consists in picking out one

'minority man' from each [minority] and telling him: 'You're going to be my candidate for deputy!' But then, the 'minority folks' aren't politically illiterate, they say: 'I'd better vote for A.T. or whatever than vote for a list not featuring a fellow national of mine', A.T. is said to be better than X.Y., and so we cast our ballots. Then we ask him: 'And what have you got to show for it, for these last four years? What did you do in the years you were there?' Nothing!!! What did you do, my Orthodox brother, or whatever your religion, colour and nation, over there in the Assembly? Nothing! Apart from milking the Assembly coffers dry every month, you may have contracted a condition in that place that has to do with too much sitting, what with those hard benches and the like. So we keep talking about the political situation, saying not that it is getting more complex, but that there are going to be elections again, someone's going to say again that yellow is nicer than blue – if you ask me, it may not be nicer but it's more useful to vote for – again we're going to find ourselves in a position to be told: at this election the vote is not about the character of Vojvodina, but about the character of Serbia – why, hasn't our voting been about the character of Serbia all these years? Shouldn't the Serbian political scene change its tune at long last, so that tomorrow we can become normal people? You've heard what they're saying in Belgrade – that tendency of yours towards autonomy, the election didn't bear it out! Why, of course it didn't, considering that the leading political parties in Serbia won't disown Milošević's concept of Serbia, an autarchic and xenophobic country, desirous of somehow cuddling up to Europe without adopting its values. And these mean decentralization, Vojvodina's autonomy, multiculturalism... Now is time to answer the question: Did Vojvodina figure at the elections? If the parties belonging to the pro-Europe bloc truly meant Europe, then it did; but if they merely went through the motions about it, then we have a problem. I keep saying that the true solution of all these problems begins with the framing of a credible policy on the part of the relevant actors on the political scene, above all the parties of the pro-Europe bloc.

The Serbian political oligarchy has turned the state into a two-party system: those are ugly and we are good! As clear cut as that. But how come the good ones never get round to making multiculturalism work, that's the question? Actually I fall for this kind of logic too, I too feel better voting for this guy, though in fact I didn't vote quite that way, I voted for some others, but you fall for that kind of logic all the same! Let's not vote for Čeda [Čedomir Jovanović, LDP], we're told, that'll be throwing away our votes – that was interesting! Come, others say, don't vote for the SVM [Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians] – because I was involved in Istvan Pastor's campaign in some way, a high-ranking official of the Democratic Party asked me bluntly: 'Did you do that for money?' I replied in the negative,

saying I did that because Pastor was the strongest political candidate. The man crossed himself and turned away! He objected: 'But he's a Hungarian!' 'Why, are you trying to say that your candidate is politically stronger?' He didn't tell me that he was – that would lead to an argument; instead, he asked: 'But how come you're voting for...'. Why, didn't the president of the Republic himself wonder that the Hungarian coalition should have a candidate for the state presidency! And that in Serbia, which used to babble to itself about being a civil state. Now then, on the other hand, what was it that made me go on and on about this? I was appalled by the fact that the president of the Republic, in his capacity as leader of the election winning party, should say, 'Let's go for a historic reconciliation! Well, I can't help asking myself – who exactly are we reconciling with? The multiculturalism supporters are now coming round to my way of thinking as to why things have come to such a pass. Who are we supposed to make it up with? With a party which is still unable to say, to condemn the crime committed precisely against [inaudible?], as it were, from chauvinistic motives. With a party never able to come up with a plausible reply to the question, say, how come that 485 bodies were found fifteen kilometres from the centre of Belgrade? Was that a contribution to multiculturalism? Was that the contribution of the party that shelled Vukovar from, say, my birthplace of Šid? One hopes that journalists will arrive some day and write something about how, all of a sudden, between five and seven thousand Croats happened to disappear from around Šid. After all that, the leader of 'all democratic Serb folk' comes to us and tells us: 'We're going for a historic reconciliation.' Who with? What with? With Ivica Dačić the 'noble one'? Can you imagine Dragan 'Palma' Marković as a great builder of Serb multiculturalism, as its personification by virtue of his mental makeup... But we could go on and on like this... Anyway, as I've already said, there can be no European Serbia without decentralization, multiculturalism, protection of human and minority rights, without standards... Does this mean that Serbia has no chance? No, only that at last it must – and this is where the role of certain parties is indispensable – take the plunge and begin to live 'like all other people!' I mean, like those in Europe above all.

Antal BOZÓKI

VOJVODINA'S IDENTITY AS A POLITICAL ISSUE

I'd like to set out a few reflections of mine about the things we've been discussing at this round table today.

Because Vojvodina's identity was brought up, I wish to say that this kind of identity is more than an 'academic topic' and that it is not mentioned only in 'scholarly books', as was said here, but that it is also talked about in the highest political bodies of the European Union and the Council of Europe. This means, then, that the question of Vojvodina's identity and the related question of Vojvodina and its autonomy is not only an academic matter but also a political issue, an issue which is discussed in Europe too, and it seems to me that we often forget that it also has international-law implications.

Therefore, I'd like to call your attention to, say, three or four documents relevant to this topic: the first is the 16 September 2004 document of the European Parliament concerning the harassment of national minorities in Vojvodina [P6_TA(2004)0016], which was published in the official journal of the European Union (C 140E/163). In this document the European Parliament 'expresses deep concern at the repeated breaches of human rights in the province of Vojvodina' and 'insists on the importance of immediate and effective action, so that similar events are not left unremedied and are prevented in the future'.

The second is the Council of Europe document of 29 September 2005 (document HLC140.E), which includes positions on the safeguarding of the multinational character of Vojvodina, namely the topic we're discussing today. This document, in point 6, calls on the organs of the then State Union of Republic of Serbia and Montenegro to restore to Vojvodina the autonomy it enjoyed until 1990 and to establish the subject matter jurisdiction of the parliament in Vojvodina, thus enabling the regional parliament to frame relevant policies in this multinational region.

The third document, adopted by the European Parliament on 25 October 2007, contains recommendations to the Council of Europe concerning relations between Serbia and the European Union. This document is somewhat larger, comprising forty-nine points which summarize Europe's expectations of Serbia in the process preparatory to European integrations. Point 32 calls on the Serbian authorities to take additional measures to promote the development of national minorities in multi-ethnic Vojvodina, to promote peaceful coexistence amongst them and to ensure that the police, the judiciary and other state bodies act on an ethnically neutral basis. In addition, it states that in order to build the necessary trust amongst the population towards those institutions, the Serbian authorities are to ensure that the ethnic composition is adequately reflected on the staff of those authorities.

To this should be added the fourth document, namely the 14 December 2007 report of the Council of Europe working body against racism and intolerance published on 29 April 2008, which states that in Serbia there is still a climate of

hostility against religious minorities and that this climate is partly created by certain media outlets and politicians. The report urges the Serbian leadership to pay more attention to racially motivated incidents and to launch an information campaign with a view to contributing to better mutual knowledge and understanding of various groups.

I'm asking you, we can actually all ask ourselves whether there is anything being done about this at all, to implement these positions of the European institutions, and what is really being done in Serbia other than discussing the unstable political situation? One should also bear in mind that the European institutions didn't adopt these documents in order merely to publish them in the official gazette. They certainly didn't, because there are people and institutions in Europe concerned with how documents and political positions are implemented.

My impression is that the topic being discussed today is still approached largely from theoretic positions, not from the point of view of practice, of how multiculturalism is realized in practice. I must admit that I have seen no specific research on this topic. Of course, this topic can and ought to be discussed from a theoretical point of view, but my preference is that we should talk about how this matter is realized in practice. Therefore our round tables should have two parts, theoretical and practical, so that we could find out how some things are realized in direct practice.

This is also necessary because the meaning of certain things is not clear to some people: some look upon multiculturalism as something dangerous, something aimed against national minorities, while on the other hand, there are people who advocate focusing on oneself and one's own nation, which would result in the ghettoization of national minorities. In this connection, it should be said clearly that the distrust between national communities stemming from the 1990s still exists in Vojvodina. I think that we shouldn't keep silent about such things. Overcoming this distrust will take a long time, some say twice as long as it took to sow it.

Our politicians often brag, especially in front of guests from abroad, that a great many national minorities live in Vojvodina, some say there are members of twenty-six and others twenty-nine nations. In spite of that, we in Vojvodina have no official institution concerned with those intercultural, multicultural, or interethnic relations. What is more, there is no official institution concerned, on a professional and scientific basis, with the study of development of inter-community relations, problems arising in those relations, the implementation of international treaties in the field, and so on.

So, as far as multiculturalism is concerned the situation is not idyllic, whatever we may have heard from politicians here today or might have inferred

on the basis of some of the keynote speeches. I personally consider that much more could have been done on this plane, and that not everything that could have been done has been done.

In my opinion, any serious discussion of multiculturalism, or of any other topic, must involve various perspectives including those concerning analogy and comparison. Every comparison of states and information is precious because it makes for a deeper insight. It is not enough to say, for instance, that we have so many new institutions; it is necessary to say whether such institutions have existed before or not. For instance, the opening of two secondary schools in the Hungarian language in Vojvodina is by all means important, but it ought to be said whether this is more than we had before or less. I don't know the answer to this question. I don't think we have much cause to be particularly self-praising about having two new schools! This, if you ask me, is quite a normal thing and not a merit of any organ of government. As you know, members of national minorities are entitled to education in their native languages.

Talking about schools, I think we ought to talk seriously about the extent to which the school and school textbooks contribute to multinationality, multiculturalism and the development of intercommunal relations. Has everything been done on this plane that could have been done? I think that it has not and that it is necessary to prepare a serious analysis of the content of our school textbooks. I know that there are many objections, especially regarding the history textbooks. I'm no expert in this field, but I hear that the textbooks don't take sufficient account of the distinguishing traits of Vojvodina. If this is true, then why are we surprised at our children's incomplete knowledge of the history of the other nations to which their peers, their school mates belong? Apart from that, the abolition of teaching of the language of the social environment in Vojvodina was a cardinal mistake. Reintroducing the teaching of this language is an urgent necessity, because any talk of multiculturalism makes no sense if one doesn't speak the language, as a condition sine qua non of mutual communication.

To repeat, textbooks are of primary importance, as is the learning of languages, with regard to multiculturalism. This is of key importance for young people learning about each other. Snežana Ilić spoke about what the Serbian authorities ought to have done in this regard but failed to do.

In the end, I propose that the Helsinki Committee do an analysis of all this, because the organs of power are either unable or unwilling to concern themselves with that for some reason. This document should include an analysis of the implementation of documents of the Council of Europe, European Parliament, so that we could see where we are and also force the organs of power to act more efficiently.

Any failure on the part of the organs of power to fulfil their obligation is, namely, a serious challenge to the credibility of the state. In this matter there's no need to think up anything new because Europe and the international community have already said what they want. We who act in the sphere of civil society and are present in the public have the obligation to remind the authorities to do their job. Any serious discussion of multiculturalism is impossible without being involved in an analysis and consideration of these aspects.

Danica STEFANOVIĆ ON MULTICULTURALITY

When this question of such vital importance for Vojvodina is discussed, it is most often discussed from highly theoretical and scientific points of view. The impression one gains from such an approach is that multiculturalism is something which belongs in the books and that it is for this reason that it is important to talk about it, not because it means life in the streets, homes, schools, squares... something which is so closely bound up with life.

I am not trying at all to say that this scientific angle for considering multiculturalism is not necessary. On the contrary, it is exceptionally important, but the life approach is just as important. Multiculturalism is namely a condition of life in communities which differ in ethnic, cultural and linguistic terms.

I am therefore addressing this question from the aspect of life, from an angle I am familiar with. And this means my attitude to neighbours, colleagues, friends and all the unknown ones who are different from me or those from whom I differ. I am therefore asking both myself and you, what is actually multiculturalism? Does this word, which sounds fine, mean coexistence? Does it mean living together, or does it have a third meaning? And if it means just that – which it certainly does – I'm asking right away, how can people live together? It is to this that I wish to make a small contribution devoid of any pretence and representing merely view from my angle.

Actually, we're debating this question (I won't say problem) for the nth time, and we're establishing 'good' intercommunal relations for the nth time. This can only mean that the practice during the past fifteen years or so (or is it only fifteen years or so, what about the 'brotherhood and unity' story?) has left a deep mark and that we must invest a great deal of good will, much effort and patience, much tolerance to rectify what the regime in the 1990s called 'good and stable' intercommunal relations.

Multiculturalism and good relations with neighbours can't be established artificially. They can't be a one-sided affair. The system of legislative measures taken by the state lays the foundations for building a normal situation and the affirmation of national diversity.

It is necessary at long last to build a society which will respect fundamental human rights and thus lay good foundations for the charting of good intercommunal relations. This in order that we shouldn't begin talking about multinationalism instead of multiculturalism.

I think that in approaching this extremely complex issue one should proceed from the reasoning of the citizen of our country or region called Vojvodina. To find out the attitude of the citizen, of his needs and to proceed in that direction. To explore the potential of the Serb citizen, the Hungarian citizen, the Slovak citizen and of all other citizens and their willingness for integrative processes. Or how the citizen looks upon this phenomenon called living together.

As part of the project called *Multiplikacija – živeti tolerantno* [Multiplication – Living in Tolerance], we are exploring precisely such views of the citizens in eight Vojvodina towns and learning to think that civilization and tolerance are the assets and symbols of the Vojvodina climate. This is a good foundation for a good new beginning.

If we accept that civilization and tolerance are the asset and symbol of our, Vojvodina, region, then it is possible to make an attempt to establish a new form of dialogue between people belonging to different ethnicities. By establishing a new dialogue one actually establishes communication between people from different cultural, linguistic or confessional groups. By establishing communication between diversities one creates the possibility of a genuine heightening of awareness of what we call civil legacy and the legacy of diversity. But diversity as an asset, not as an impediment or a source of division.

Our approach to the question of multiculturalism as citizens rather than as members of a majority or minority group is what perhaps distinguishes us from others in this project. Our approach is from the position of the citizen who regards his otherness as an advantage and an asset, as his wealth, rather than as a burden. I think that this is the key to our success as well as to our singleness of purpose. Of course, both this approach, an alternative approach, and the nongovernmental sectors to which I belong offer an alternative view of the world. Maybe because this kind of approach does not encumber us with various prejudices, we are able to bring together around ourselves different individualities, groups – very professional, worthy, creative people from all national groups – and to pursue our alternative approaches in a very professional manner.

Why is this so easy with us in the nongovernmental sector? Maybe only because these people are not burdened by their nationality and because, being free of such a burden, they can prove their worth as people, as experts, artists, musicians, professors... So, in asking himself, 'Who am I?', the individual doesn't identify himself in terms of what he was taught or acquired, not as a Serb, Hungarian or someone else but as a painter, professor, resident of Novi Sad, and so on.

This, it seems to me, is as relevant as ever for communication between people as the underlying principle of our work. But how is communication established? To return to the beginning, to the question of the notion of multiculturalism which includes the moment of communication. If this means the coexistence of citizens who differ in terms of their ethnicity, culture or language, then it would also have to carry a message of permeation. But today, we have in reality small, cosy Vojvodina towns such as Bečej, Temerin, Subotica...in which there is coexistence in the same geographical area but without or with little communication. We ask ourselves immediately, what's the problem?

In order to solve it, one might have to begin from the beginning. If language as one of the fundamental human rights is the right key to better living, understanding, greater trust, then let's learn the language of our neighbours. And thus take a step in the direction of a better life.

And that means the permeation of diversity, but this is a topic related to interculturalism. And this is what we work towards through our programmes. The thing is not to be afraid. No need to be afraid of interculturalism, is our message, with more and more citizens responding positively to such kind of multiculturalism.

To conclude. The things we in our parallel, nongovernmental sector have achieved through our alternative approach, including creating a broad basis for mutual tolerance, may serve as a model to governmental institutions. And so, we're offering models. All the governmental institutions need to do is show some initiative and adopt these models as a possible work pattern or just as a topic to be considered. That would be a good beginning in establishing communication. Possible topics to consider could include:

- how to implement decentralization and further local initiative in an interesting and programmatic manner,
- how to contribute to the fostering of diversity through an alternative approach to creative expression.

Perhaps also through model approaches to cultural and educational work.

Everything is preceded by 'perhaps', but some day it may become a reality. Who knows?

Marija GAJICKI
A MULTICULTURALITY 'IMPRISONED' WITHIN THE HOLLOW
FACADES OF A POTEMKIN VILLAGE

Current discourses about multiculturalism in Vojvodina and Serbia remind me of the hollow facades of Potemkin's villages. Why? Because for the last twenty years in Serbia, from the moment the former Yugoslavia began to fall apart, we have lived within the facades of notions and meanings laid down after the Second World War which cannot provide a realistic explanation of the state affairs existing in the 21st century, in Serbia. Discussion of multiculturalism today is only important for Vojvodina, it doesn't exist so far as the rest of Serbia is concerned. Multiculturalism as a subject of discussion is reduced to various manifestations of folklore art, to promoting national cuisines and drinks, an occasional window-dressing for an 'idyllic' state of good neighbourly relations between the most numerous national groups living in Vojvodina. In the last ten years or so multiculturalism has been promoted only through singing, food, dancing, with no mention made of either education, or literature, there's been no mention of anything belonging in the domain of high art and culture representative of members of other national groups in Vojvodina. There is, actually, only one level, the level of the Potemkin village facades bequeathed to us. On the other hand, the European Union and the Council of Europe look upon what we have in Vojvodina as a good example, thinking how to establish and maintain a good climate of intercommunal coexistence and how to make a step further by building on that.

Future debates about multiculturalism must consider the direction in which the level of multiculturalism achieved in Vojvodina should further develop and, more importantly, how to proceed from the rung of multiculturalism to that of interculturalism. We must also bear in mind the fact that, as a result of wars in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, the national structure of Vojvodina's population has changed, that there are, in addition to the traditional national groups making up the population of Vojvodina, new groups which are also becoming part of the multinational and multicultural body. Therefore, we must take account of this too, because there can be no serious discussion of the content and form of multiculturalism in Vojvodina if this is left out.

There is another thing which is well known to all and which may not have been very visible in the last two or three years, although it was in the period between 2000 and 2005, namely the seclusion and ghettoization of national communities. In simple terms, communication between minority national communities began to shrink and weaken, and only communication of minority

communities with the majority nation intensified, there was an exchange of sorts with a more or less pronounced tendency to assimilate the minority communities in the majority community in Vojvodina.

In my opinion, the situation will not improve until the political elites in Vojvodina, and also in Serbia, take a clear position on the direction in which things should move, on how to continue developing multiculturalism in Vojvodina and, especially, on the direction of that development. Unless that happens, we'll remain on a parallel track for ever, we'll keep receiving information and assessments of one kind from the European Union and of another from either local institutions or those at provincial and republic levels, and our communication will go on suffering from interference of one kind or another all the time. For instance, every time we receive from the Council of Europe, say, a report or an assessment warning against our impaired intercommunal relations, we'll interpret it as an incorrect report and an unfounded assessment, as something that fuels conflict, because of the fact that the report or the assessment was drawn up by various minority lobbies, and so on. I mean, we'll think up all kinds of excuses and never seriously deal with the issue we're supposed to address.

I wish to point out that we must bear in mind that a large number of people have found their place in Vojvodina or are in the process of doing so, that the national structure of the province has changed. True, most of these people speak the Serbian language, but they've brought with them some of the cultural habits they practiced in the places in which they lived before. Therefore, I think that it is important to involve this population in future discussions about multiculturalism in Vojvodina and in Serbia. Unless we do this, an ever greater number of those who regard themselves as a minority on account of certain cultural differences will not look upon this society as a space where cultural diversity represents a quality that combines but as something that divides and causes rifts between the minority and majority populations in both Vojvodina and Serbia.

Mirko DJORDJEVIC
THE CHURCH IN A MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

This problem, which has never been fully elaborated, must be addressed at three levels. One should first bear in mind that the Christian Church has from its very advent existed within the systems of the day, from slavery to feudalism to modern capitalism. It is there but it does not identify itself with any system. This is clear at least from a doctrinal point of view, because it was created above the

system and form of government, chiefly as a distinct supranational entity. In other words, by virtue of its doctrine the Church is a distinct system of values and this was decided, as it were, at the very beginning. We would know little or nothing about the Colossians as a people if Apostle Paul had not addressed them in his well-known epistle. The epistle – Chapter 3.11 – lays down this doctrine of the Church’s supranational essence and internationalist values: ‘Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.’ These references are necessary if only to point out that while, according to the doctrine, things should still be that way, the reality is quite different. The Christian Church keeps jumping out of the system of that indisputably universal culturological pattern and betraying it by defining itself in ethnic-national and politically recognizable terms. Through the force of historical circumstances – and this is where quite concrete problems begin – the mark left by the Church throughout history is smaller than the mark the world has left on the Church.

While the teaching of the Church remains officially the same, its attitude to the cultural pattern is another matter. The example of Vojvodina in particular is a situation which is not simple to treat of at all.

The conduct of the churches in Vojvodina is characteristic in this regard: while their doctrine it is not in question, the attitude of the churches and religious communities is. A cursory glance at the state of affairs, without the need for any detailed sociological analysis, is enough to realize this. We shall therefore cite some of the problems. All the Serbs under the jurisdiction of the SPC are Orthodox, all the Rusyns are Greek Catholics or more popularly ‘Uniats’, the Hungarians are for the most part, but not all, Catholics, and so on. The fact that there are, say, Serbs who are not Orthodox doesn’t interest the SPC, which is also not interested in any cultural pattern ‘framework’ within which a pluralist rather than a narrowly nationalist value system could be pursued. Consider briefly the number of incidents on religious grounds – there are more and more of them – and you’ll conclude without difficulty that churches divide more than they unite, the graffiti messages are something that’s easily understood because they are reduced to a national or political key within which they are interpreted. All of a sudden all Serbs who are Adventists are seen as enemies, or all who have not committed themselves nationally are regarded as enemies and given dirty looks. This is also the attitude of others towards Serbs. In this connection, problems arise within the cultural pattern itself. Many in the SPC object to the Orthodox baroque style and would like to have it destroyed, arguing that churches in Vojvodina should be built in the Rascian-Moravian style. This rather characteristic position betrays an attitude that is doctrinally challengeable and culturologically untenable.

ble. The monistic cultural pattern is more than simply unacceptable, it is the source of tension and strife which endangers multiculturalism as a state of being and a value category. The matter is even more complicated if considered on a multiconfessional plane. Examples of this indeed abound. Vojvodina Orthodoxy has distinctive traits which do not dovetail – although they should – into the current SPC national-confessional scheme. We have here something which is only a seeming paradox: instead of multiculturalism and multiconfessionality being an asset of Orthodoxy and Christianity in general, we have an opposite situation. A specific sociological analysis would bear all this out, and it couldn’t be said that such analyses do not exist. Everything points to a conclusion which is officially not in issue, but in practice things don’t happen that way. The Churches and religious communities, therefore, are yet to ‘revert’ to the universal of their beginnings.

In principle, multiculturalism is more in line with Church teachings, though in the example of Vojvodina the lesson appears not to have been learned.

The state of affairs is such as to make it necessary to repeat the conclusion already emphasized. In terms of the scale of values, churches and religious communities ought to be moving forward, but the opposite is the case. Put this in a more specific context and the conclusion becomes more evident: although it has been recognized that politically motivated forced clericalization will bring no good to the Church as such, the Church itself is not aware that the clericalization holds no promises for it. An open democratic society is a more suitable ‘framework’ for the Church as it provides greater scope for its mission. Not only the SPC but other churches and religious communities as well look upon this not only as paradoxical but also as scandalous. This speaks volumes in itself. Add to this the fact that the line separating the confessional and the secular was recently violated in both Vojvodina and Serbia, and we shall easily agree that this topic is acquiring wider implications. That the Vojvodina multiculturalism model is a success in a historical sense is clear, but something else is also clear: it can be endangered and denied ever anew.

Political considerations, then, are at both the beginning and the end of the problem of Vojvodina’s multiculturalism as a value system.

Nedim SEJDINOVIC **THE MEDIA AND MULTICULTURALITY**

The role of the media in the promotion and articulation of the multicultural, intercultural life and values of a civil society is inestimable. However, the Vojvodina media have proved themselves unequal to this task, the Vojvodina

media do not recognize multiculturalism as an asset or something which is Vojvodina's distinctive trait. One of the causes of such a state is certainly the complete domination of the central media in Belgrade of the Vojvodina market: they dominate it not only by their circulation and coverage, but also by successfully forcing their topics, ideas and values on the passive provincial media projects. As experience has shown, the Belgrade media are either acting in bad faith or are not sufficiently, if at all, sensitized to Vojvodina's values or the values of multicultural life.

The majority cultural model being reproduced in the media sphere is, unfortunately, not capable of communication with other cultures because it is convinced in its superiority. Interculturality, however, is based on an 'encounter in equality' and rules out a relationship in superiority-inferiority terms. Vojvodina's intellectuals have pointed out repeatedly that minorities figure in our media only in a folklore context, which reflects the majority culture's superior attitude bent on divesting everything different of its human face. 'The minorities which only dance and sing', as featured on our television, are actually mere dehumanized dancing robots.

Unfortunately, Radiotelevizija Vojvodine, which is funded with all citizens' money, leads the way in promoting such a media and cultural model. Research by the Novi Sad School of Journalism shows that the Vojvodina public broadcasting service encourages simplified, sensationalistic and intolerant reporting on minorities (covering only incidents), as well as being selective in cause-and-effect terms regarding information about phenomena characteristic of minorities, their rights and position in society being often linked to petty crime (Roma). At the same time, the public broadcasting service also encourages the dissemination of stereotypes and prejudices, promotes the discriminatory use of politically incorrect language, and ignores minority problems as a whole.

Unfortunately, the changes which have occurred on the Vojvodina media scene in recent time as a result of the process of so-called media regulation, privatization and allocation of radio and TV frequencies, have not contributed to an improvement of the media content. What is more, numerous retrogressions have been noticed in respect of reporting on diversity, multiculturalism and interculturality, or reporting on the Other and Different. The retrogressive changes are also in evidence at the level of information about the recent past, the topic of war crimes having been banished even from the few media according to the subject a modicum of attention. The privatization of local print media carried out by the consortium Vojvodina.info was probably aimed at undercutting local newspapers in Vojvodina as one of the few successful media projects in these regions. There are notorious cases of newspapers losing almost their entire

editorial staff overnight as a result of ownership change. Editors and journalists have been leaving newspapers out of refusal to discharge their duties in an unprofessional manner, to 'frame' certain political options. The new proprietors are targeting in particular political options advocating a higher degree of autonomy for Vojvodina.

The role media play in multicultural environments such as Vojvodina is exceptionally important because they can contribute to the development of tolerance and the harmonization of communities, as well as to desired acculturation (affirmative and sorely needed interaction of groups with different cultures). Conversely, they can do what they are doing now, namely encouraging the stereotypization of minority cultures and widening the gap between the cultures and cultural groups. Such a social model can have very bad consequences for the citizens of Vojvodina especially in crisis periods, when they can become a powerful generator of conflict and lack of understanding.

Media must promote interculturality as modern society's asset which enriches its daily life and possesses strong potential for not only cultural and political but also comprehensive development of the community as a whole. Media should stimulate intercultural exchanges which contribute greatly to the relaxation of intercommunal and intercultural relations. The role of the media and media workers is: to identify and 'quarantine' stereotypes and prejudices existing in society; to contribute to the knowledge of other communities and their positive as well as critical evaluation; to stimulate attitudes, behaviour and social changes in the direction of the abolition of all discrimination.

Tomislav ZIGMANOV
MULTICULTURALITY vs. INTERCULTURALITY
The case of Vojvodina

When talking about multiculturalism, or interculturality, we must be aware that these are complex phenomena linked to problems of the functioning of liberal democracies. Although they sound similar, they are quite distinct concepts. They were called into being by post modern art, having discovered the simple fact that modern democratic states are largely self-sufficient and not only in ethno-cultural terms. What is more, they act as a source or generator of injustice, the target of this being mostly numerically weak subjects. This injustice does not stem from a classic economic or, more narrowly, political framework but is situated in the sphere of culture. Now, the inequality in public life of particular aspects of culture, say language, has negative effects on the person speaking the language in

question; importantly, these negative effects do not remain in the sphere of culture alone but spread to other spheres of life, for example affecting the social status of members of a social group. One of the foremost theorists of multiculturalism at present, Will Kymlicka, believes that belonging to a culture is the context in which we chose our goals and recognize their value. If our culture is not recognized as being of equal value, then the feeling that our objectives are worthy of realization cannot be a precondition for self-respect. And self-respect is, according to the renowned modern political philosopher, John Rawls, the most important primary good, which is attained precisely through the successful realization of own goals. In this sense, multiculturalism represents a normative ideal whose purpose, through the pursuit of various policies, is to help achieve the equality of cultures, and consequently greater justice in society. A fundamental prerequisite for such policies lies in the creation of equal conditions for the unimpeded establishment and development of several collective identities within the framework of relatively distinct coexisting spaces. The intention of interculturalism, on the other hand, aims for something quite different: it wants to realize cultural communication, interchange and joint action in the creation of new values. It goes without saying that these goals must not be mere attitudes or projections of the individual's wishes but must be translated into specific policies by the authorities. By policies I mean such programmes, institutional mechanisms and activities of public authorities, political actors and civil organizations as establish and develop systemic responses to the problems, needs and challenges encountered by the citizens.

In this connection, if someone were to ask me which of these two concepts I would opt for and why, I would reply that I'm for both because they are mutually complementing. In other words, their relationship is not one of an 'either-or' exclusion but involves this presumption: if you want to achieve interculturalism, you must ensure multiculturalism. This involves a variegated dialogue with the Different, and in order for this to happen both must be equally equipped for it. This has been noted in discourses of the post-colonial world, in the course of which it was realized that a dialogue with the West is not at all easy because it is superior in many ways. A similar situation obtains on the plane of intercultural communication in modern national states too. Can a university professor discuss the challenges facing modern man with a person in charge of a minority community's folklore society, for folklore is what cultural practice among members of minorities is most often reduced to? In all probability there would be very little the two of them could talk about, with the folklore man being at a great disadvantage.

Now, what is our reality in Vojvodina in this regard? This depends above all on the culture segment in question. If you take the widest, anthropological definition, according to which it includes a codified everyday behaviour and value system, then one must admit that we are a markedly monocultural city with a low cultural level into the bargain! Consider the citizens' attitude to the environment: Vojvodina has never been dirtier in its history, with illegal dumping grounds becoming almost a distinguishing feature. Or take the authorities' attitude to the architectural legacy: this attitude is almost devoid of any cultural elements because it is dictated by the profit logic of the alienated power centres! If, on the other hand, you consider culture in a narrow sense, as a relatively autonomous area of human activity which is internally heterogeneous and ethnically marked, then you come to the conclusion that you don't have a developed multiculturalism but possibly a biculturalism, given that not all national groups enjoy equal conditions for their cultural practice, and little is being done to change this situation. The negative effects of this are also felt in the field of interculturalism – given that equality is not always there, you have a relationship of supremacy and, occasionally, even hegemony. Of course, Vojvodina should partly be amnestied in this regard because a substantial number of policies with consequences in this area are formulated by the central government.

It should also be pointed out that the attitude to multiculturalism is today more a matter of posturing, albeit resting fairly stably on decent traditions, or of role playing out of faddishness, than a result of serious and conscious striving. As such, they often end up in absurdity. At the beginning I said that these concepts are part of the traditions of liberal democracies, and we're still in an age of infancy in this regard... For instance, these traditions imply wide participation on the part of the public, especially the professions, in the work of the organs of government, but we're often aware of the fact that the authorities keep treating us as mere subjects. Also, out there steps are taken judiciously with a view to their long-term effects rather than with a frantic rashness: in our midst, this is best exemplified by the erection of churches – they are springing up chaotically like mushrooms after rain.

There is something else that must be mentioned: out of fear of being assimilated, minority communities are voluntarily shutting themselves off. However, the following consideration is important: a ghetto has never in history been a matter of free choice, of voluntary decision. It is the consequence of exclusive policies, those acts on the part of the authorities which exclude certain categories of the population from certain segments of society. This probably obtains even today, but it is not of primary importance. But more decisive is the demonstration of arbitrariness and self-sufficiency on the part of local cultural

circles as well as their unwillingness for creative encounter. This, in fact, is more a product of insecurity and incompetence on the part of the culture bearers, which is generally characteristic of provinces, than of their planned efforts. Certain aberrations occur on the margins, that is, among those who are not in possession of power.

FOSTERING VOJVODINA'S MULTIETHNIC INDENTITY

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