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CROATS' TROUBLED SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

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The identity of our part of Europe has been manifested and preserved by citizens living in the countries of the region. From this point of view, it consists of: shared collective consciousness, convictional ties, and a sense of patriotism and of citizenship¹. This does not mean, however, that public activities, although geographically close, cannot sometimes display prejudices and stereotypes, as it takes place not only in Croatia, but also, for example, in Serbia and Macedonia (this phenomenon can also be witnessed in the case of other Balkan states)².

Identification is the result of the process of historical evolution, as expressed in common beliefs, shared experiences, common ethnic background, language, culture, and usually common religious faith³. I quote: “You can tear down walls, plow the landscape with tanks, paint over graffiti on the walls, shift borders, decimate, relocate or imprison people, but you cannot destroy the world of symbols present in the consciousness of descendants”⁴.

The modern archetype defines a set of values, artworks, and myths, which are valued and preserved by the national community and passed down from generation to generation. The crucial role in its shaping is played by a country whose organizational, educational, and promotional action preserves the values and makes it possible to develop them⁵.

¹ For more information see: Zb. Puczek [in:] *Rozmyślenia o cywilizacji*, J. Baradziej, J. Goćkowski (eds.), Kraków 2001.

² Cf.: S. Wójcik, *Tożsamość narodowa Polaków w procesie transformacji systemowej* [in:] M. Żmigrodzki (ed.), *Kierunki ewolucji systemu politycznego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, Lublin 1997; E. Skotnicka-Illiasiewicz, *Powrót czy droga w nieznanie? Europejskie dylematy Polaków*, Warszawa 1997.

³ For more information see e.g.: S. Huntington, *American Politics. The Promise of Dishonor*, New York 1981, p. 60; T. Łepkowski, *Uparte trwanie polskości*, Londyn–Warszawa 1989; Cz. S. Bartnik, *Idea polskości*, Lublin 1990; A. Kłoskowska (ed.), *Oblicza polskości*, Warszawa 1990.

⁴ J. Żylińska, *Jeszcze o polskości*, „Znak” 1988, no. 3, p. 72, [as cited in:] K. Łastawski, *Polska tożsamość narodowa we współczesnym procesie integracji europejskiej*, Warszawa–Rembertów 2003.

⁵ A. Kojder, *Kultura i polityka: nie kończące się znaki zapytania*, [in:] S. Sztompka (ed.), *Imponderabilia wielkiej zmiany*, Warszawa – Kraków 1999, p. 334.



The foundation for shaping the identity is constituted by the nation's cultural heritage together with the stock of shared feelings – citadels of historical memory, the works that integrate and solidify the community⁶.

Identity seems to be the task, which every human being faces, and which after Anthony Giddens can be called a “reflexive project.” So, it is the object of the continuous process of construction and reconstruction⁷. Identification can erase it or push into the background: it can be enriched or diminished, but never fundamentally changed. Herold R. Isaacs promotes the concept of “core ethnic identity,” which embraces everything that an individual is born with and what they acquire⁸ simply because of living in this and not another cultural environment. Of course, this heritage is also constituted by the nationality of the individual. All this creates the foundation, on which other – “secondary” – qualities⁹ are eventually developed.

The Trans-European system does not reduce the national diversity and does not supplant the identity, as it cannot ignore in the Balkans the imprinted consciousness typical to the not distant areas¹⁰. What connects participants of the process, as it is the case in the countries, which are entrenched in their independence, and in their commitment to shared values of democracy and the rule of law. This in no way means the abandoning of the concern for the social, cultural and geopolitical heritage of the Croats, Serbs etc.

An important element of national consciousness is the relationship to “the other,” to “the foreign,” to “the enemy.” To clarify this relationship it is important to mention the term “depth of the wound.” “The alien” is not only different. “The alien,” whose *definiens* was developed in the Balkans into a fetish, is the one who has done “wrong,” or it is convenient to consider him or her as such. That mental bias proves itself “as nowhere else” in the former Yugoslavia, and results in a kind of uniformity and intolerance in the name of the common struggle against other than national forces¹¹.

The halter of the past events

At the southwestern frontier of the Slavic element the equality and internationalism functioned mostly alongside the feeling of national identity, but never together with it, and many times against it. As in the beginning of 1966 the power of repressive apparatus on the Sava and Danube had started to wane, it also began to crack the bridge based on the “federal brotherhood.” Not without reason did the Unitarians identify the greatest danger

⁶ Among the identity determinants, a very important place should be given to exhibiting the ideals of freedom and individualism.

⁷ Cf.: A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, London 1990, pp. 34 ff., Among books translated into Polish vide: A. Giddens, *Europa w epoce globalnej*, Warszawa 2009.

⁸ Cf.: H. R. Isaacs, *Power and Identity, Tribalism in World Politics*, Boston 1979.

⁹ J. Szacki, *O tożsamości (zwłaszcza narodowej)*, „Kultura i Społeczeństwo” 2004, No. 3, p. 34.

¹⁰ Experts in the history of the region as, for example, H. Batowski, are inclined to explain Yugoslavian divisions as resulting from atavisms, *genius loci*, moods emerging on *this bridge* between Europe, Africa, and Asia. Some others interpret those splits and diversities in terms of a peculiar genotype.

¹¹ Cf.: W. Walkiewicz, *Nationale Identität – Herausforderungen des neuen Jahrhunderts*, [in:] H. Renockl, S. Balaban (ed.), *Jetzt die Zukunft gestalten! Sozialethische Perspektiven*, Wien–Würzburg 2010, pp. 227–237.

to the idea of unity with the “Croatian Spring,” whose ancestors had demanded cultural independence, treated by the former as the attempt to revive nationalism, and thereby rejected by them (Karadžorđevo)¹².

What reinforced the bastions of resistance was ethnic cleansing, the lack of sensitivity toward the needs of minorities (mainly of the Serbian one in Croatia), of willingness to compromise on the level of symbols and formulations in the internal affairs, and pogroms. The test for genuine Croatian identity has become the nationalism, declined in all cases, as well as the obligatory anti-Serbian sentiment. Despite the changes in the official policy at the turn of the Millennium, nationalist forces continue to measure the past along the black-and-white matrix, where “we” always appears as innocent victims of violent opponents.

The new-Croatian history shaped after the Zagrebian, Herzegovinian fashion and imbued with Pavelić's resentment in response to anyone attempting to revise them invariably brings forward the accusation of sympathizing with communism and empathizing with Titoism. Croatian fascism was born on the basis of national and social crisis in the royal Yugoslavia and its ideological foundation was Starčević's testament¹³. In 1931, the Ustaša and Macedonian separatists proved “their devotion to the cause” by murdering King Alexander I and Foreign Minister Louis Barthou who was trying to mount the Eastern Pact, in Marseille. It was convenient to Separatists that the government had to operate in adverse international circumstances: in March 1939 the annexation of Czechoslovakia took place, and in April the Italian army invaded Albania¹⁴.

Banovina, which was kept safe from centralization, embraced the territory of 65,456 km². Croats made up 70.1 percent of its inhabitants, Serbs – 19.1 percent, while other nationalities together made up 10.8 percent¹⁵ of the total population of this new entity. According to the “statistical” publications, “reissued” in the 1990s, estimating the *opening balance*, the autonomy “reached slightly above 66 thousand km, inhabited by round 6 million people”¹⁶. Seemingly having the charm of archaism, this formulation becomes a carrier of relevant content if you consider that the preamble notes that “the division is based neither on the historical nor economic nor ethnic criteria, but religion still remains the crucial factor”¹⁷. But could the feeling of political potency, of megalomania, and xenophobia not be amplified by the closest possible cooperation with the economy of the Reich, the significant increase in industrial production, the extension of the commercial fleet, and by laying the foundations for modern agriculture?¹⁸

¹² Cf.: W. Walkiewicz. *Jugoslawia. Państwa sukcesyjne*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 251–252.

¹³ I. Ognnyanova-Krivoshieva, *Ustasha nationalism in Croatia during the second world war (1941–1945)*, [in:] *Sprawy Narodowościowe*, Poznań–Warszawa, 2006, fasc. 28, p. 34.

¹⁴ Cf.: Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanske zemlje i velike sile 1935–1937*, Beograd 1968, p. 294; i d e m, *Sukob interesa Velike Britanije i Nemačke uoči drugog svetskog rata*, [in:] *Istorija XX veka, Zbornik radova*, Vol. II, Beograd 1961.

¹⁵ The source: M. Lorković, *Narod i zemlja Hrvata*, Zagreb 1996, p. 261.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 262.

¹⁷ Banovina didn't make, therefore, the territories with a majoritarian Croatian nationality or territories being “Croatian” in the historical sense, but territories that in terms of geography and the economic system are gravitating towards the former (ibidem, p. 263).

¹⁸ The economic success of Banovina has been presented in contemporary literature by I. Šute: *Slogom slobodi! Gospodarska sloga 1935–1941. Srednja Europa*, Zagreb 2010, see especially pp. 364–436.

On the ramparts of collective memory

As the crowning achievement of their political thought the patriots on the Sava cherish the directions contained in their peculiar *Mein Kampf*, entitled *The Croatian Problem*, whose first copy *poglavnik*¹⁹ was eager to pass to the Reich Chancellery. The debate on the origin of the Croats from the Goths was irrelevant, they agreed on the *common enemies... from freemasons to communists*. So, it should not be surprising that while striving for the “cleansed space” minister Artukovic decided to issue the regulation prohibiting Serbs, Jews, Gypsies and dogs from entering parks, visiting restaurants and using public transportation²⁰. In the summer, at the same time as the deportations of Jews to the camps in Koprivnica, Bjelovar and Kerestinac, the slaughter of the Orthodox began. Tens of thousands of Orthodox Serbs were forcibly converted to Catholicism, rebellious ones were deported to “the places of detention and rehabilitation,” many a time of the final one – as in Jasenovac, Lepoglava, Krušica.

It was only in 1998 when Argentina (where as the first ambassador was appointed a Nazi Ivo Rojnic) extradited deputy commander of the camp in Jasenovac – Dinko Šakic. His wife Ned, filled with sorrow, was did not accompany him in this journey. At the time of taking the spectacular wedding she was only 16, and was acting as the head of the sub-camp in Gradišće. The regime was more kind about Slovenians, who were treated as the Alpine strain of the Croatian nation, and with Muslims, who *because of their race were most vulnerable to the process of restoring the motherland*. This does not mean, however, that racism, whose only two exemplary manifestations were anti-Semitism and anti-Serbism, as well as the totalitarianism modelled after the German fashion, did not encounter any opposition. The dream of power took the heavy toll of 80 thousand Ustashas and Domobrans²¹ killed in fratricidal fights against Chetnicks and partisans, the number equal to victims of the eastern front.²² There are still remembered those nearly 150 thousand people forced to return from Bleiburg by the British, of which thousands were killed²³, and the others faced punishment, not always fair, from the hands of the authority, people’s only by name.

Ethos – mythology – cult

It is an inalienable right of every ethnic community to formulate the principles of their identification, to decide about their gradation, and to verify them. An outside researcher cannot do anything but observe the efforts of placing in the national pantheon the reviv-

¹⁹ In Croatian political vocabulary it means “führer”, “duce”.

²⁰ For more information see: M. Vavić, *Andrija Artuković*, Zagreb 1985; Ž. Olujić, *Kako nisam obranio Andriju Artukovića*, Zagreb 1991.

²¹ Civil recruit, special armoured formations in the NDH.

²² Cf.: W. Walkiewicz, *Południa słabość do faszystwu*, [in:] *Tantum Historiae, Księga ofiarowana Mięczysławowi Tantemu w osiemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, P. Żurek (ed.), Bielsko-Biała 2008, pp. 166–171.

²³ In the debate on the actual amount of losses – in the number of soldiers, Ustasha’s members as well as civilians –M. Waldenberg estimates between 30 and 40 thousand, Serbian researchers are inclined to underestimate this figure, and argue that approx. 90 percent of those turned back from Bleiburg were released from, the so-called “transit camps.” within a few months

ers of Croatian statehood. Among the exiled, *pravaši*, the true defenders – among whom Pavelić and Tuđman can be numbered – particular place falls to Mile Budak. The staunch advocate of Catholicism with its fundamental value, which is family, the implacable enemy of Orthodoxy, the standard of devotion to homeland – worthy of worshipping in the names of streets and in patriotic gatherings.

Custodians of the NDH tradition are prone to recognize the most important stage of building the national self-consciousness in this political entity, which was based on values equally fundamental to the Croats as culturally alien to their eastern neighbours. Such views were shared with the ruled by Poglavar, who died in 1999²⁴; the virtues of fascism were extolled by the chairman of yje Parliament Nedjelko Mihanović,²⁵ such values are still promoted by the academic world, by literature etc.²⁶

In recent years, while searching for how to reorient the attachment and the imagination of national identity, socio-political²⁷ research and *the comparative studies of Croatian and European values* have been made carried out on Croatian soil. The leading role in maintaining the “old-new” dimension of the identification is still being fuelled by Serbian antagonism²⁸. It represents not only the cultural and religious distinction – in the relationship between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, by the former being accented as pro-western – but also a remedy for such ailments as corruption, and political clientelism.

In the late processes of nation building an important compensatory role is played by mythological heroism – fuelled by the authorities.. Peculiar hagiographies of officers of high levels of command – often of exotic provenance – the ubiquitous “iconography” of martyrs “for the cause” – including the convicted by the Hague Tribunal – remain an extremely important material for identity building²⁹.

Discalibrated ethical standards, involved in the so-called public trust institutions or in religion – such ideals as resourcefulness, and getting rich by any cost is not a share of the whole society. Its trustworthiness has been shaped by the state, which has implemented the doctrine of *the economic leap forward* by using two hundred of the finest families (Croatian from flesh and blood), by mounting psychosis of being threatened by the neighbours, and by precise ideological manipulation of the media³⁰.

²⁴ The member of the Presidium of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts; since the 1990s philosophy and the history of political thought has been taught from his books, where he, for example, denies the existence of the Jewish people. Cf.: F. Tuđman, *Bespuća povjesne zbilnosti: Velike ideje i mali narodi; Nacionalno pitanje u suvremenoj Evropi*, Zagreb 1990.

²⁵ Born 1930, Ph.D., writer, lexicographer, HDZ activist, led the second term of parliament (1994–1995).

²⁶ Nedjeljko Kujundžić, professor of educational sciences, backed by the right-wing extreme groupings, founder of Croats' ethnogenesis “school”. Cf.: N. Kujundžić, *Inne spojrzenie na historię – Chorwaci w stuleciu śmierci*, Zagreb 2002 (Polish edition, alongside dozens in other languages).

²⁷ Cf.: *U potrazi za identitetom. Komparativna studija vrednota: Hrvatska i Europa*, (ed.) J. Baloban, Zagreb 2005.

²⁸ An example of it could be the “work” by R. Muminović, full of atavistic hate *Fenomenologija srpske genocidne svijesti*, Ankara 1995.

²⁹ For more information see: W. Walkiewicz, *Jugosławia. Państwa sukcesyjne*, pp. 459–463.

³⁰ It is worth believing that the EU membership can cool down the “virtuous” feeling of intolerance, hatred, and chauvinism.

In the melting pot of the established consciousness

The “Post-Yugoslavian” context does not make it easier to deliberate on regional identity, on not so euphemistic “transgression of the local levels of identification,”³¹ and on the common “system of convictional ties”³² of nations. Can we still be sure that the core of “our” part of Europe is made up by Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, and that it is the only area where, quoting Milan Kundera, the “experience of extremely condensed history” has its origin? The *Zeitgeist* of today is to return to Europe, which – according to Klaus Müller – is the process that can be treated as a cultural code for the transformation in Eastern and Southern Europe³³.

To determine the specificity of the identity of the Central and Southern part of the continent, the involvement of its peoples in the struggle for freedom, the impact of subordination of their lives to stronger countries, it is worth recalling the words of Miłosz: “humiliated national pride is usually fertile ground for delusions, self-pity and different mythologies. While observing it, a resident of that inferior Europe receives a training in irony”³⁴. Is the scenario prepared by history for Croats, by assigning them the role of the participants of an entity being subordinated to the others centuries ago, in the best case in a quisling way, and did it have to lead to the explosion of nationalist hysteria resulting in intolerance and chauvinism?

The discourse on identity: national, international, regional, group, personal is the manifestation of reflection, as well as the mirror reflecting multiple anxieties. “When people start talking: it is a good thing to have identity, that means they probably have doubts whether they really have it and do not really know what should be done to have it. However, to have an identity is not to feel the need to reflect on it. The awareness or the need to have an identity appears when it turns out that the answer to the question: Who am I? and: Where do I belong? – which in practice is the same – is neither simple nor clear”³⁵.

In this context, President Tuđman while welcoming John Paul II, during his first visit³⁶ to Croatia, and declaring that his countrymen came from their ancestral home, “White Croatia,” which was located in the region of Poland where the Pope was born”³⁷ did not

³¹ Zb. Pucek, *Rozmyślenia o cywilizacji*, p. 199.

³² Cf.: Z. Bukzańki, *Tożsamości zbiorowe*, Warszawa 2006, pp. 108f.

³³ From an informal conference observation by K. Müller (Freie Universität Berlin), Visiting Professor at the AGH University of Science and Technology in Kraków, in reference to his monograph: *Globalisierung* (Frankfurt/M 2002).

³⁴ L. Lengyel, *Czasy trudnej demokracji*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 30 X 2003, p. 16.

³⁵ Z. Bauman, *Tożsamość – jaka była, jest i po co?* [in:] A. Jawłowska (ed.), *Wokół problemów tożsamości*, Warszawa 2001.

³⁶ Due to the relation of the international community to the authoritarian ruling in Croatia, that was such a high-rank visit as the Pope’s visit on the occasion of the celebration of 900 years of the Archdiocese of Zagreb.

³⁷ *Pozdravni govor Predsjednika Republike dr. Franje Tuđmana prigodom dolaska Sv. Oca Ivana Pavla II. u Hrvatsku 10. Rujna 1994*, [in:] *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, Zagreb 1994, XXVI, No. 2, p. 207. According to the book by M. Lorković, *Narod i Zemlja Hrvata*, Zagreb 1996, which refers to Constantine Porfirogenet, and which has been updated by Lj. Hauptmann, the territory of the White and Greater Croatia stretched from Łużyce (near Wrocław), Częstochowa, Prague and Brno to Przemyśl (!), and in the South embraced Carinthian and Pannonian Croatia, Dalmatia, Slavonia, and the lion’s share of Bosnia, Montenegro (Red Croatia) and the enclave of western Serbia (!), pp. 276–278.

have to be dishonest, just as the stories about the Iranian origin of the Croats do not have to be purely opportunistic³⁸.

Harms suffered by Croatian nationalists as a result of the so-called “Bleiburg Way of the Cross”³⁹, followed by the deprivation of function of the Metropolitan Cardinal Stepinac, and penal companies as Goli Otok and others, have been exploited as the manifestation of national martyrdom. Despite the severity of the sanctions, not always deserved, still more rarely fairly sentenced, they have marked the national bastions. The important foundation of self-identification was the protest staged by 130 intellectuals and expressed in the petition *Deklaracija o nazivu i položaju hrvatskog književnog jezika*, which despite the condemnation issued by central forces has resulted in Croatization, which *de facto* was the symptom of abandoning the hopes for creating the Yugoslavian national identity. Launched on the Sava in 1971 Maspok⁴⁰ and the Croatian Spring⁴¹ led, among other things, to the approval of amendments to the constitution in 1972, to the weakening of the union state, and to the strengthening of the Croatian sense of autonomy.

Croatian ideology was growing up along with the myth of *the unbroken historical line of statehood*⁴², supported by the claims for territories in BIH (not only in Herzegovina), and even for the Serbian ones, and using the favourite expression of the later president “*to Zemun*”. The impulse, who knows if not the most important one, for strengthening the nationalism, and in consequence the self-identity, has been brought by the revelations of the Mother of God in Međugorje, who supposedly introduced herself as the Queen of Peace (*Kraljica Mira*) and asked, in Croatian, for the forgiveness for (political) enemies⁴³. This does not change the fact that the miracle, first critically accepted not only by the regime⁴⁴ but also by the Orthodox Church, happened at the most convenient time: amid the deep social and economic crisis, and the increasing aspirations⁴⁵ of ethnic minorities such as the “mass ethno-nationalistic mobilization” on the Sava⁴⁶.

The exploitation of these circumstances for the efforts to create an autonomous state has to be seen as natural, that theoretically could have taken place at any other latitude.

³⁸ Apart from the established in NDH scientific doctrine of Germanic origin of the Croats, of the “Iranian trace,” etc. there similar theories appear from time to time, and, for example, in the early 1990s a hit organized under the auspices of the European House, but also of other agencies of the Republic was made, lectures of a certain Evheny Paszczenko claiming that Croatian tribes arrived from Dnieper in the 4th century AD.

³⁹ The fact that in Polish literature one can come across historical parallels such as *Bleiburg as Croatian Katyń*, does not require any comment.

⁴⁰ *Masoni pokret* – a mass movement, which is popular, although led by the elite (also the political one), it opts for articulating distinct features of cultural heritage, etc.

⁴¹ In the wave of contestation of federalism of the growing chauvinism, and also of economic demands, including the request for another algorithm of dividing foreign exchange, on 22 November 1971 at the University of Zagreb started a strike, which rapidly spread to other centres, and which brought the slogan “own army and the right to create a sovereign country”.

⁴² Such an entity has lasted until the 12th century in Dalmatia, i.e. until it has been incorporated by Koloman into the Kingdom of Hungary.

⁴³ V. Perica, *Balkanski idoli*, pp. 278–279.

⁴⁴ Cf.: R. Bayer, *Međugorje Day by Day*, Notre Dame 1993.

⁴⁵ For more information see: A. Jagiełło-Szostak, *Idea narodu politycznego kontra etnonacjonalizmy*, Wrocław 2013, pp. 203–205.

⁴⁶ V. Perica, *Balkanski idoli*, Vol. 2, p. 31.

It is possible that elsewhere there would be less approval for the grassroots work on the restitution of the identity being dysfunctional towards the existence of a community. Let us add the name – which is going to soon become a slogan – coined by the Cardinal of all Croats of the “Croatian holocaust”⁴⁷, and of the “martyrdom for the faith”. The glorification of his achievements and his canonization⁴⁸ has reinforced the idea of the Church being the most important *creator* of the nation and its guide throughout history of its heroic resistance against Serbian nationalism.

***The Domovina*⁴⁹ project and its fringes**

As the political realities were changing hagiographies of heroes, which preserved the Croatian identity were also growing: people were pilgrimaging (in secret, but this was giving them the glow of courage) to Madrid to meet there the Argentinian returnee⁵⁰ Pavelić⁵¹, they were gathering on sessions devoted to Budak’s commanders, there were emerging new icons of the fight for the cause, taking the place of those killed in the fight for the Great Croatia as Andrić⁵², Zvonko Bušić (Taik)⁵³, Miro Barešić⁵⁴, all being the commanders of such groups as, for example, Bodensee⁵⁵. Tony Kikaš, a businessman from Toronto who on 1 August 1991 sent to Zagreb at his own expense the plane with 18 tons

⁴⁷ Determined by Ivo Omarčanin, participant of the “Way of the Cross”, i.e. the return from Austria of the convoy of refugees, mainly the NDH elite to the controlled by a team of communist partisans Yugoslavia. More in: B. Vlašić, A. Vojinović, *Križni put. Povijest, svjedočanstva, dokumenti*, Zagreb 1991.

⁴⁸ The beatification procedure was implemented by Paul VI, on 3 October at the shrine of Marija Bistrica, and he was blessed by John Paul II.

⁴⁹ In Croatian: homeland.

⁵⁰ In May Pavelić managed to sneak in to Carinthia, where he was hiding as a farm labourer, and soon in the guise of a Franciscan was transported by religious brothers to Trieste, where he went by sea to South America.

⁵¹ According to propagandists: demigod, the son of the nation and its saviour; in the official paper “Hrvatski narod” on only one page (2 July 1941) he was described by the word *Poglavnik* 39 times. Cf.: M. Czerwiński, *Język propagandy w Niezależnym Państwie Chorwackim. Próba charakterystyki*, “Socjolingwistyka”, 2005, Vol. XIX, p. 67.

⁵² This is about Adolf (bearing the same name as the most prominent Yugoslavian writer), commander of a sabotage group of commandos deployed from Austria in the Vrba valley on the night from 24 to 25 June 1972, with a view of initiating the uprising of the Ustasha element against Yugoslavia [in:] W. Giełżyński, *Sto twarzy Jugosławii*, Warszawa 1977, p. 160.

⁵³ Among his most spectacular manifestations of attachment to the homeland should be mentioned the abduction in 1976 from La Guardia airport of a TWA aircraft flying from NYC to Chicago. It was diverted to Paris, to draw the world’s attention to the issue of Croatia. He was tried in the United States, he served the sentence of 32 years in prison, in September 2013 not being able to accept the political situation in the Republic, he committed suicide. Several thousand fellow countrymen gathered at his funeral at Mirogoj Cemetery.

⁵⁴ Famous for Stockholm terrorist attack (7 April 1971) on the ambassador of SFRY, Vladimir Rolović (who died after 8 days), during arrests rose cries of “Long live Ante Pavelić”, “Long live the Independent State of Croatia”. In 1972 his group hijacked plane from Malmö to Madrid with Barešić on board. The Spanish authorities authorized his trip to Paraguay, where he was operating under the name Toni Šarić, died in mysterious circumstances in the summer 1991 in Benkovac; some, like N. Majstorović, suggest the involvement of the then Minister of Emigration, Gobjko Šušak.

⁵⁵ Sabotage group made up of Croatian immigrants in FRG, specializing in terroristic acts conducted in public places, such as railway stations.

of Singapore guns, arrested on Pleso, Gojko Šušak hastening to the relief from Canada, and ready to defend the “Croatian Pearl”, Dubrovnik, Šarlija-Daidža appointed a brigadier with the experience of the military back to the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), and hardened in the legion service patriots like Rosso, Gotovina, and many others.

What played a significant role in the strengthening of the Croats' identity was not only the declaration of state-confession made by the Croatian state at the very beginning of its existence, which resulted, firstly, in the increase in number of Catholics from 64.8% in 1988 to 90% of the population in the late 1990s, secondly, in glorifying the Ustasha, thirdly, in blaming Serbs for the crimes perpetrated by Croatian Chetniks and partisans, and, fourthly, in ennoblement of ISC symbols (in original *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*)⁵⁶. The resources of Pavelić's dictionary have been developed into the universal measure, which was praised by president Tuđman himself⁵⁷, who was acclaimed as “the father of the nation”, “the architect of resistance”, “a great Croat”, and even “the Croat of all times”⁵⁸.

In an authoritarian system, there is no way to blame society – which under the threat of, for example, armed conflict is usually inclined to support those holding power⁵⁹ – for allowing to exchange symbols, such as monuments⁶⁰, and names of streets and squares: for example of Victims of Fascism, and of patrons of schools, for NDH ideologues and heroes. The same is true about cleaning libraries of inadequate books –especially Cyrillic – and about destroying atlases, maps, and even signposts to localities lying outside the country's recovered territory⁶¹. Quoting Slobodan Novak, the chairman of PEN-Club, in this way Croatia became cleansed of the yugo-unitary and great-serbian rubbish, which it was filled up with during the last century⁶².

⁵⁶ While the Croatian National Parliament originates from the period of the Quslingian statehood, the national currency *kuna* – “currently defending the tradition and strengthening sovereignty” – was used already in the Middle Ages, the letter “U” embracing the whole globe came to prominence several centuries later, and the modified fields on the chessboard, additionally decorated with coats of arms of the five lands, provided a proof of the “new opening”.

⁵⁷ Cf.: K. Krysienieł, *System polityczny Chorwacji*, Poznań–Chorzów 2007, pp. 118–121; 173–179. The author emphasizes that Tuđman by “the mandate of the people” received unlimited possibilities for implementing his vision of politics: the widest prerogatives, including the right to issue decree-laws, but also e.g. the power to decide about fortunes of his *tycoons*, or – more banally – about the final arrangement of football rankings (1999).

⁵⁸ D. Ugrešić, *Kultura kłamstwa*, Wołowiec 2006, p. 131. There is no exaggeration in the paragraph being cited, if one takes into consideration that it refers to the youngest general (38 years old) in the Yugoslav People's Army, the author of an obligatory to read trilogy, the thinker presented, for example, in the school final examinations as equal to Aristotle and Hegel.

⁵⁹ The power can be illustrated, for example, by the report (bearing the much telling title: “What does Tuđman do? Tuđman has built Croatia for a thousand years”) on the meeting that took place in Karađorđevo in late March 1991, where Milošević out of respect not only gave the Croatian statesman the former Banovina (up to then belonging to Serbia), but also strongly encouraged him to take “the Turkish part” of Cazin, Bihać, Kladuša. Cf.: S. Mešić, *Ja sam dogovorio sastanak u Karađorđevu* in an interview given on 27 February 2008, (<http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/1045335.html>, access: 27.12.2016).

⁶⁰ One of such partisan monuments was blown up with dynamite in the capital city cemetery Mirogoj.

⁶¹ What was bothering those traveling, including convoys with humanitarian aid, were road markings, transit railway lines, and highways to the east, on which the last marking point was Lipik, by the total ignorance of culturally foreign Belgrade.

⁶² Cf.: D. Ugrešić, *Kultura kłamstwa*, pp. 105–106.

The academic world, in many cases grown on the ideology of “brotherhood and unity” under the inspiration of neophytes⁶³, produced studies, which try to prove, among other things, the indigenous presence of Croats since the Iron Age by the reference to their kinship with the Persian, to appropriate for the *raison d’être* the “thirteen centuries of Christianity”, etc. The same circles initiated the debate about blocking the awarding the Nobel Prize to the author of *Bespuća hrvatske zbilnosti* (“Sideways of Croatian Reality”), who was Franjo Tuđman, by the Oslo Committee. Although one can refer differently to the achievements of the pretender who, while being interviewed by the Swedish television, confessed that the honour (in the field of literature!) was not given to him only because he had been discredited by the commission as a Croat⁶⁴, the message of “another injustice done to the constantly abused nation” has translated into even stronger identification with the nation.

Other symbols of the struggle for sovereignty, and above all of the *iron* identification with the nation, have become the “Oluja” (Storm) and “Bljesak” (Flash)⁶⁵ campaigns, and the splendour of the national hero has been carried by General Gotovina, who organized the campaign of driving out Serbs from the so-called Carniola in 1995. His arrest in 2005 in Spain under the pressure of the European circles and his handing over to the Hague was accompanied by spectacular manifestations of thousands, cementing the society in the process of shaping its firm self-identification. So, it was still more important when after the defence had proven his complete innocence, he returned from the Netherlands with the governmental plane⁶⁶. There is no doubt that Gotovina by repeating to the accompaniment of the crowds and the hierarchy, by giving thanks for the grace of justice, for his earlier Marian Vows, next to his war merits, erected the next level of the edifice made of solidarity, of unity, and of the deepest feeling of the communal fate.

Referring to the legacy of the past, to its being enrooted in bygone events, and entangled in attitudes, in the structure of preferred values, it is important to refer to the researchers proving that “unlike the traditional communities, the Croatian nation needs to be perceived as a community embracing representatives of all social strata, as a community of a strong feeling of self-identity constructed within the processes of modernization”⁶⁷.

⁶³ For example, immigrants from the former Vilajet, Posavina, Krajina Cazin, Banja Luka, etc., all territories treated by extreme nationalist groups as not having any prior national character, and populated by those arriving to Slavonia in search of livelihood, and also by many artists, scientists, athletes born in other regions of the Kingdom, then of the federation, who up to the 1990s declared themselves on the side of the Communist Union, federal Yugoslav etc.

⁶⁴ Cf.: K. Krysienieł, *System polityczny Chorwacji*, p. 177.

⁶⁵ Facing – what was symptomatic of the whole situation – the opposition of the UN Security Council, although being in advance arranged with Washington.

⁶⁶ The ruling that in light of an earlier indictment of perpetration of killing and driving out tens of thousands of Serbs, fortunately stopped the enormous social pressure for the construction of the Shrine of Croatian Martyrs, whose rough stone base (taken from the ruins of the Krbava Cathedrale) was blessed on 8 June 2003 in Rijeka by John Paul II, and which was intended to become the place of paying homage to the General.

⁶⁷ A. Srešćen, D. Piskač, *Hrvatski nacionalni identitet i Europska unija*, “Slavia Meridionalis. Studia Slavica et Balcanica”, t. XII, L. Moroz-Grzełak (ed.), Polish Academy of Sciences, Warszawa 2012, p. 161.

Europeanness at a distance

At the foot of Medvednica there is no lack of communities, which are searching for the national identity, and are doing their best to distract attention from the most sensitive issues. While the doctrine of only glorious cards of history, and of playing out the close neighbour relations makes us respect the policy of restraining from discussing such problems as the relation to fascism, to minorities, to confession etc., *the comparisons of the closest relationships*, apart from the *demographic* function or the *material motivation* of officials, who are expected to define the bridgeheads, are not able to rise to the challenge⁶⁸. They reflect the scale of the difficulties faced by those trying to verify the weight of the elements shaping the identity that would be imaginable, solidified, passed down from generation to generation, barely modifiable by knowledge, for example about the consequences of injustices done as a result of self-perpetuating spiral of *hostility towards otherness*. They also determine the hope for identity, not only those already acquired in the historical experience of being a nation, with an abundance of differentiating features, but also those constructive ones, demanding respect for others⁶⁹.

Throughout their difficult history Croats were absorbing and adapting values of the European culture to their own conditions, and the national elites were taking shape under the influence of the common tradition of modern art, science, and also law – that until today has been depreciated⁷⁰. Ethno-community, which centuries ago was deprived of statehood, and, thereby, has been condemned to the attempts of restituting it – sometimes doomed to fail – has enrooted itself in the European intellectual legacy, in the aspirations towards independence, and in the values of the family. While respecting the right to someone's own catalogue of preferred and fixed values (if they only do not contradict others way of living), we must remember that national identities take a variety of forms of collective self-perception, reflecting the characteristics of their culture – they are syndromes of beliefs and attitudes⁷¹.

The most important components⁷², which find expression in the acts of consciousness, are a kind of bridge connecting events with each other, the fundamental need to feel glory – even if sometimes mediated – and the everyday life. Creating and sustaining myths and hoaxes, like the glorification of NDH as a period of great achievements and

⁶⁸ According to the sociological research conducted in nine countries of the Central and Eastern Europe, the least importance to the closeness of the mutual relations between spouses has been attached by Croats, while the highest by Ukrainians. The former, instead, take the lead in the pragmatic approach to the matters that can be positively settled only by offering a bribe. Cf.: J. Bałaban, *U potrazi za identitetom, Komparativna studija vrednota: Hrvatska i Europa*, Zagreb 2005.

⁶⁹ The previous project of this type, called "History Books" (prepared by the EUROCLIO) designed to ensure the widest possible education in the nation history thanks to scientists, teachers, and "third generation" textbooks full of consoling explanations of antagonistic issues has succeeded in Scandinavia, has failed, however, among the original recipients.

⁷⁰ Such opinions have been expressed by the author in the introduction to the bilingual (Polish/English) publication: J. Muś, M. Szpala, *Chorwacja w Unii Europejskiej*, Łódź 2012.

⁷¹ Cf.: A. Wolff-Powęska, *Rola tożsamości narodowej w procesie kształtowania się demokratycznej kultury politycznej Europy Środkowej*, "Przegląd Zachodni", Poznań 2000, No. 2, pp. 1–28.

⁷² Sometimes called "pillars" (*epos, genos, logos, ethos* and *topos*). They form a kind of pentagram, which can serve the function of an analytical model.

the determinant of the current patriotic condition, is characteristic to many small nations, trying in this way to compensate for the deficit of the national history.

Should the pantheon of the founding fathers really be embellished with the pathos and the ostentatious pride of sometimes fantastic genealogy in order to enhance the nation's confidence in their strength and capabilities, which are so often denied to their neighbours? Do the attempts to answer the question: "Who are we?", or more inquiring one: "Who were we?" have any chance to initiate the reflection on the attitude to the others by being challenged with the truth on the Sava River?

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Wiesław Walkiewicz

Croats' Troubled Search for Identity

Abstract

In the article, which is a continuation of the research emphasis, is built on Croatian identity without reference to (self)identification coincidences, splits, sometimes historical events, in way of ethnic communities that create a united continent. The leitmotif of the discourse is “screening” categories of defining Europe for showing different possibilities of perceiving it. The discourse summoned title translates into a continuity of the occurrence of national and trans-European matters and their mutual conditions and implications. Against this background and also in the context of articulating constituent features of European citizenship, the author conducts an analysis of central-east identity, in the same measure regional as exceeding local levels of identification. In the described social study, the analysis is based on the example of the “Balkan flank”, but more precisely on the casus of Croatian historical experiences and their projections relative to the position of the nation among others that are located around. An important place in the considerations is not so much taken by the matter of the difficult past (NDH, diverse attitude to the Tito regime, not shunning from terrorist actions) but a mythologized reflection on it and role of elites in the creation of a contemporary policy and formation of collective perception. The central accent of the study is

the boundaries and memory as the possibility mental imprinting of this borderland at South Slavic reality—compensational myth creation and revision of the past. Reflections finds in inquiries root matters, but also need of building more positive external relations, with taking universal threats related to integrational processes in consideration. An important place in the discussion are the latest efforts of the elites over the Sava in defining the Croatian identity in terms of political correctness templates without actual constitutive features that are not necessarily well received in countries shut off from the authoritarian tradition.

Keywords: Croatia, Croatian identity, history of Croatia, collective memory, symbols of Croatian history