

## STATE – RELIGION RELATIONSHIPS IN THE BALKAN-ASIA MINOR GEOPOLITICAL FIELD

1) The *National State* as we know it is a Western European phenomenon in origin and nature. It was formed initially in England, France and Spain by the beginning of the Modern Times; it experienced slow progress outside the area of its origin; it effected the transformation of the central European axis (Germany – Italy) only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; and finally dominated definitively in full sway Eastern Europe (Hapsburg Empire, Russia) and our Balkan-Asia Minor geopolitical field (Ottoman Empire) in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In all parts of the World where this West-European model of State-construal has been imitated, the result was more or less permanent turbulence, incessant unresolvable conflict and much unnecessary human pain.

2) The essential character of the *National State* is that it predicates a mystic union in race among its members as the foundation of its statehood. In this respect, it resembles some of the ideologies connected with a *City-State*, but in such an extended scale that renders the idea historically absurd. Besides, belief in common ancestry (let alone real racial identity) was never the necessary bond of union in even the elementary range of a City-State. It rather operated as a projection onto the mythical level of the actual cohesion of a small close-knit community.

3) The National State imposed an unprecedented homogenization on its members, far beyond what any absolutist Empire had ever succeeded in effecting. This is proving too much for the rest of the World, where manifold diversification in characteristic individual or group attributes went hand in hand with State authority and dominant tradition. The degree of enforced homogenization presupposed by an effective National State is clearly manifested by the ingrained xenophobic attitudes that are vented even at the present juncture in many countries of the European Union, as well as by their in-built repression of religious freedom, typically, say, in France.

**4)** To the National State it is contrasted in principle the State as a territorial organization, as the integral of human presence in a given *space* (of some greater or smaller objective geopolitical unity). To this normal type of political, societal integration our vicinity and most of the world were accustomed and naturally adapted.

**5)** The secular trend in State-building during our era is away from the National State and towards some efficient form of the Territorial State. Nation-building now is anachronistic. The forms of Territorial State vary; the appropriate form is the one best suited to meet the particular conditions of each concrete case. Federalism is not a privileged norm in this connection, especially if it consists basically in the federation of lesser national-states.

**6)** The integration of a living space into a Territorial State is grounded ultimately on an organic nexus of attitudes to world and life, techniques of understanding, codes of valuation, principles of appreciation, aspirations and satisfactions – such nexus being expressed in a certain socioeconomicopolitical order (involving a corresponding mode of life) on the one hand, and in the specific achievements of high culture on the other. The organizational factor of a space is at bottom its cultural emanation, the identity of the (especially higher) forms of human life which are developed in it macrohistorically. This cultural make-up provides the common language of comprehension that alone secures the community of people and the stability of the State. Geocultural considerations must be substantially involved in Geopolitics.

**7)** The cultural dynamics of a space (i.e. its tradition) must be cultivated, but it normally needs not perhaps the explicit recognition, and certainly not the privileged protection, on the part of the Territorial State, which can create unacceptable tension between such self-identifications and the constitutive obligation of the State to safeguard conditions of optimal self-realization for the individual. Provided that the dynamics is a living, powerful presence and does not amount to a concocted ideology of an extinct past, the individual self-realization will spontaneously enhance the potential of that common dynamics, without the necessity of self-defeating directives. What can and should be done is to sustain conditions under which the common cultural heritage can produce works of magnitude bearing the stamp of its own idiosyncratic character.

**8)** The cultural identity of a space may be enshrined in one religion – but this is not necessarily so. When religious division of a cultural unity obtains, this has to be handled very carefully in reformative times, more cautiously in fact than the caveat involved in the preceding article implies. Above all one should not confuse such division with religious difference between forms of belief that correspond to alien spaces.

**9)** In case, therefore, of multiple religious identities within a space of common cultural heritage, these identities have to be ranged as follows in a fourfold hierarchy:

- a) The dominant religion expressive of the cultural dynamics.
- b) Minor religion(s) expressive of the common cultural dynamics.
- c) Minor religion(s) expressive of alien cultural domains.
- d) Novel movements of religious or metaphysical belief.

**10)** Dominant in a State is normally the religious expression (of the cultural identity) which is to be found in the given territory of the State (or area as the case may be). This religious expression may not be dominant in a broader or narrower perspective. If we have to do with a certain geopolitical field of significant historical unity, and consider greater and smaller parts within it, it is evident that dominant and minor religious forms of its overall cultural integral may alternate as we move from larger territories to sections inside them. This emphasizes the point above made, that one should treat preferentially within a state minor religiosities expressive of a common cultural identity, as against minor religiosities expressive of an alien cultural identity. One should even discriminate positively in favour of the former vis-à-vis the latter.

The same differentiation should be accorded, in strictness, to novel religious movements, depending on whether they do, or do not, stem from the cultural matrix pertaining to the geopolitical space in question. But these are nuances given the gravity of the present situation.

**11)** To apply then the preceding principles to the problem at hand.

The Balkan-Asia Minor geopolitical field is a complex of strong cohesion, proven historically by its effective multimillennial integration. The cultural projection of its integral is of a definite nature, of an eminently hard identity, very resistant to interfering transplants. The geopolitical unity and cultural community of our human space, being manifested on the political level of integration by territorial, and not national, Statism, has been extraordinarily compatible with characteristic racial, national, even tribal and local, also religious variation. This diversification demonstrates the cardinal fact that the long-standing political unity of the field in the past did not produce the terrifying homogenizations that sustained the powerful Nation-States of Europe. In fact the essential predicament of our space consists precisely in the extraneous introduction of the principle of the national organization of State in an area of extreme, and moreover interpenetrating, national and other variation. Nationalism is the direct product of the European National State. We suffer for foreign crimes, which are then imputed on us, in a classic reversal of the cause-effect sequence.

**12)** The solution to the problems facing us in this part of the World must be sought by developing new solutions of our own consonant to the character of our geopolitical space. The eye should also be fixed on the on-going process of coordination and integration which has de facto started with

the final dissolution of the Ottoman Empire – an objective process (through strife) that is only superficially obscured by the destabilizing effects of the European field, as this latter finds itself in the terminal crisis of its decline. The similarities of the regional history for the last two centuries to the turmoil in the area during the centuries (11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>) of the struggle for the emergence of a new order, are striking.

**13)** Two parameters are paramount in the sought for solution. First, a cooperation of Orthodox and Muslim factors is imperative. In connection with the religious question, this means that the Serbian State should enter into two basic relationships, *of unequal but coordinated status*, with the climate of the Serbian Patriarchate on the one hand, and with an autonomously constituted Moslem *non-territorial "millet"* on the other. Such fundamental Concordats may better be elevated to the level of constitutional law. There will follow similar separate concordats of decisively less weight with other Christian denominations and any movement that wants to be formed within the realm. Appropriate jurisdiction will be apportioned to the dominant and the minor religions that share the cultural communion of the common broader space. Such jurisdiction may be significantly more extensive than usual. Religious settlement of this kind could help pave the way for a better mutual understanding of the related political problem. The two aspects of a final settlement should be kept separate, though interacting. Cooperation with countries where the minor Serbian religious form is dominant (Albania and, in the last analysis Turkey) might clear political apprehensions and soothe the harshness of aspirations. Things should be better worked out simultaneously, and not in a piecemeal fashion, if a naturally stable outcome is the chosen strategic option.

**14)** The second crucial parameter has to do with the relative interest of the World Hegemonic Power on the one hand, and the principal European Powers on the other, in a stable, sustainable solution of the "*Eastern Question*". I have repeatedly argued analytically that while U.S.A. is vitally interested in promoting a genuine cooperation and integration process in the Balkan-Asia Minor geopolitical complex, the chief European Powers are really destabilizing in various ways such developments. Our geopolitical field should therefore be tuned as a first priority to the globalized field of American Hegemony, rather than to the unfulfilable dreams of European integration. The stabilization of the Balkan-Asia Minor geopolitical field does not cohere with the process of European unification by virtue of strong geopolitical reasons. If nothing else, the circumstances pertaining to the dissolution of Yugoslavia make that all too clear. For a generally stable architecture in our area, probably something like the triple Pact of Bled (1954) should be constituted (perhaps informally) as the driving force of developments. Yet do not count Greece, at the moment, for this. She will have to be forced into it. But I am not going here into the necessary *political* arrangements in former Yugoslavia and beyond, and the principle of higher politics, capable of promoting grand ends.

Major things are in the making in our fertile environment. Serbia can play a leading role if she could “cut the losses”, does not devote her energy to futilely trying to reverse the consequences of her former leadership’s grave errors in the past decade, but instead face creatively the challenges for a future new order in the Balkan-Asia Minor geopolitical and geocultural field.

9 – 2 – 2011

[Report written for a Serbian friend, man of letters and politician].