POETICS OF RESISTANCE

SUMMARY

The war in the former Yugoslavia has brought ethnological and folklore research to the forefront of a variety of scientific issues. Ascertaining the causes and pretexts of this war, as well as acknowledging the growing need of the Croatian people to not only confirm and construct their national identity, but also to prove to the world their right to an independent state, proved to be a challenge. The primary question was: should ethnologists and folklorists serve the national cause by attempting to establish an indisputable notion of “Croatian identity”, based on a historical approach, or should they rather deal with ongoing political and daily life, searching for those elements of contemporary expressive culture through which Croats articulated their political aspirations prior to the war, and during the war, their fear and determination to resist the aggression waged against them? The three authors of the paper chose the latter perspective, each in their respective scientific field. Lada Cale Feldman's subtopic are "public events" i.e. all forms of collective theatrical behaviour with an either magical, religious or political impact, during the pre-war and war period. These phenomena are considered and analyzed in their "logic of design" as theatrical performances of a special kind. They can be divided (according to their ideological impact, referential frames, aims, implicit receptors, relative liberty of gathering and expressing one's emotions) into the presentational "rituals of statehood", modelling anti-war rituals and re-presentational theatrical procedures. Consequently, they can be viewed as parts of...
a consistent process which reflects all the key moments of, in Turner's terms, the Croatian "social drama". Reana Senjković analyzes the profusion of traditional and newly formed national symbols in visual arts connected with war themes. Her analysis shows how visual symbols, stemming from different cultural levels (both elite and popular) develop a rhetoric in concordance with the current political spirit in Croatia. She also shows how symbols and other signs "transform" in connection with daily political and social events and changes from the 1990's elections and post-electional times, during the war in Croatia until the very moment this article was written. Her analysis includes election and war posters, postcards, children's drawings, cartoons, newspaper illustrations as well as the Croatian soldiers visual image. Ines Prica treats the war period from an anthropological point of view, seeing it as a social and cultural crisis within which social values disintegrate and reintegrate into new systems, confronting them with the wider cultural context of our time. As a total social and cultural disarrangement, the condition of war destabilizes the common manners and motives of the very ethnographic writing. In the sort of the "war ethnography" the author illustrates how little ordinary things and issues become the means of symbolic resistance. By sequencing fragmentary associations which, in their form and content, refer to an everyday war experience, the author shapes several topoi through which a personal and public image, realistic and symbolic level are doubling.

(Translated by L. Čale Feldman - I. Prica - R. Senjković)