

## THE WAR IN CROATIA: ASPECTS OF MIGRATION AND ETHNICITY

We decided to devote this issue of *Migration Themes* to the war which has befallen our Croatia on the threshold of her independence. We felt that it would be impermissible in these difficult times to close ourselves in academic isolation and not attempt, at least in a modest way, to give a contribution to understanding the situation in which we have found ourselves. The fields of research of the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies are certainly important in the present moment, since the large-scale movement of refugees today in Croatia is certainly a migration phenomenon, and a large part of the discussion in connection with the war and emancipation of Croatia has been directly and indirectly concerned with the question of ethnicity.

Nevertheless, we have to say that we were caught unprepared. The idea to make a special "war issue" of our journal arose in the first months of the war. At that time only a couple of contributions "on stalk" were fitting for such an issue. Thus we felt that the paper by Ante Laušić on the exodus of Germans from the area of what is now ex-Yugoslavia was appropriate. The text by Jadranka Čačić-Kumpes and Jelena Zlatković Winter on ethnic conflict and development was already in preparation, and by its theme fit nicely into our concept. The article written by Josip Anić on naturalisation, and the contribution of Pavao Jonjić on children in exile, were likewise based on material analysed by the authors before the war, and later adopted for this issue. Milan Mesić's paper on refugees came "at the right moment". The author had begun to write it before he heard of the intention of our Editorial Board to publish a "war issue". On the other hand, the article by Jadranka Čačić-Kumpes and Ivica Nejašmić on Petrinja, as well as the contribution by Ivan Lajić on Dubrovnik, were completed "after the deadline". This was one of the reasons why we were late in finishing this issue. Furthermore, we had to wait for the return of our colleague Lajić from the Dubrovnik war zone. However, due to the importance of these two papers, we felt that the wait was worth the while.

Out of a total of seven papers in this issue, four are concerned with migration (and refugees), and three treat the subject of ethnicity. Yet, ethnicity and migration very often compenetrates one another, especially at the present moment in Croatia. It is necessary, however, to give some additional comments on ethnicity, and on the role of science in the present war setting.

The war in Croatia has, without doubt, a strong ethnic component, although we must state that from the Croatian aspect the war is not, in an *essential sense*, an "ethnic war" (as some Western critics had recently attempted to claim). Ethnicity on the Croatian side is present primarily as a quality of Croatian citizens, which are for the most part members of the Croatian *ethnie*, owing to the fact the very Croatian *ethnie* itself represents the principle "ethnic sediment" of the century-old history of the land of Croatia. Yet defence of the homeland is not an "ethnic", but a "civic" affair, even though we must keep in mind that ethnicity, like "culture", occupation, sex and other similar traits, is part of the intimate reality of individual citizens. All of us as citizens possess many traits which determine our personalities and, depending on individual "personal histories", these traits come to be differently emphasized in different people. But the structure of their

relative importance is variable. In war conditions, when a community finds itself in crisis, it is logical that social determinants linked to the feeling of community - and hence also the ethnic determinant - shall be more emphasized. In these conditions ethnicity and "civicness" are brought closer together. Furthermore, we dare to offer the thesis that ethnicity and "civicness" very often have a certain tendential continuity in the core of civic societies. We do not, however, claim that civic societies must be ethnically homogeneous. Ethnic minorities (in the numeric sense) may have an important positive role not only as "bridges" between peoples, but also as dynamic factors in interaction with the majority *ethnie*. When we speak of a "tendential continuity in the core" we wish only to say that "civicness" implies a communality in the *longue durée*, and that precisely ethnicity, in its fundamental sense, may be generalised as an "historic feeling of communality". The lack, or more exactly the conflictiveness of "historic feelings of communality", we believe (i.e. the author of this Introduction believes), was the basic reason why the former state of Yugoslavia could not structurally transform itself into a democratic civic society.

On the side of the aggressor in the present war ethnicity manifestes itself differently than on the Croatian side. The politics of official Serbia, from its first insistence on the idea that only so-called "peoples", and not republics, have the right to self-determination, divorced ethnicity from the civic principle, in a programme of imperialistic conquest. This was the only way in which official Serbia could explain its aspirations to territories outside the sphere of its civil government, although only somewhat earlier it had fought with full force to deny the ethnic principle (in Kosovo and in Voivodina), so as to implement its political domination "on all of its territory". We have a case, therefore, of double standards and manipulation of ethnic categories. Yet this is also a subject of ethnic research. It is possible that we shall have the opportunity to publish, in some of the forthcoming issues of our journal, articles on this aspect of ethnopolitics, as well as on problems pertaining to the inter-relationship between "civicness" and ethnicity in the construction of democratic societies. After the war, which (we hope) shall not last long, we feel that such articles will be necessary.

The problem of war in one's own environment is not easy for social scientists and social science. The scientist is a citizen, and as a citizen shares the fate of his fellow citizens and compatriots. He cannot remain indifferent - but how can he preserve the necessary "critical distance"? There is, furthermore, a general problem. War is an absurdity in numerous aspects. It is absurd from the position of the aggressor, who by destruction wishes to gain, or "create" something. It is absurd for the defender, who must expose himself to danger, and sometimes die, in order to save *himself* (in a wider sense). As a logical activity, science has to enter into the "logic of absurdity", to seek out the roots of the conflict, the regularities in unpredictable moves, and to find a higher meaning and clarity in a situation where meaning is hard to discern. Thus Croatian science, in attempting to understand and describe this war, has found itself in an intermediate position which may be personified as somewhere between the position of Dante and Vergil in their voyage through Hell.

It seems that for now we have said enough in this Introduction.

Emil Heršak,  
Editor-in-chief.