

**Research Project: New and Ambiguous Nation-Building Processes  
in South-Eastern Europe**

**Working Paper Series**

**THE FAILURE OF SECULARISATION AND STRENGTHENING OF  
RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AT THE  
BEGINNING OF THE 1980'S**

Dženita Sarač

[http://www.oei.fu-berlin.de/nation-building/resources/wp/sarac\\_02](http://www.oei.fu-berlin.de/nation-building/resources/wp/sarac_02)

The project is funded by the Volkswagen Foundation and the Austrian Science Fund (FWF).



**FWF**

## **The failure of secularisation and strengthening of religious identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the beginning of the 1980's**

Dženita Sarač

### **Introduction**

The period between 1980 and 1990 was marked by two significant events – the death of Josip Broz Tito and the foundation of the Party of Democratic Action (Bosnian: Stranka demokratske akcije – SDA). The aforesaid events are significant because they determine the timeframes in the study of the relationship between the religious and political elements of the Bosniac identity – Tito's death accelerated the democratisation of the society and opened up a space for strengthened religious identities, and the foundation of the SDA party, even though it should have been a mere foundation of a political party, denoted the foundation of a party with a strong religious influence. However, as rightfully remarked by X. Bougarel, the SDA party was not a pan-Islamistic party, but it aspired to become the leading Muslim national party with the aim to complete the Muslim national affirmation. Bougarel wrote in his paper titled *Bosnian Islam between Cultural Identity and Political Ideology*:

“First of all, the SDA party aspires to complete the process of „national affirmation“ which was begun in the communist period, thus providing the Bosnian Muslims with all the features of a nation (language, history, literature, etc.) and national institutions in charge of their maintenance. Moreover, it aspires to confirm the central position of Islam in the changing national identity. At the first congress of the SDA party in December 1990, the Commission for Social Issues presided by R. Mahmutćehajić and H. Silajdžić stated that „the culture of Bosnian Muslims was in its essence a religious one, although some (...) had attempted to impose brutal secularisation on that culture. The secularisation was in fact reflected in the attempt to separate the cultural superstructure from its religious foundations. The atheist ideology, raised to the level where it became the state's religion and transformed into a vulgar anti-theism, contributed to the destruction of Muslims' awareness of their own culture, its forms and its historical accomplishments.”

However, it is noteworthy that the process of integration of the Bosniac nation was

completed even before 1980, but without its national institutions. Yugoslav communists allowed just enough room for the Bosniac nation not to be able to rely on the national institutions, but on the territorial ones. Still, the Islamic Community appeared to be the only national institution of the Bosniac people in Bosnia and Herzegovina after 1980. Because of that, it is noteworthy to analyse the development of the relationship between the religious and national identities of Bosniacs in the period.

In this article we shall observe this relationship through a number of issues. First and foremost, we shall point at some basic theoretical models of understanding the national and religious identities, and then we shall point at the relationship between modernisation and secularisation which in itself is utterly significant for our understanding of the notion of strengthening the religious identity in a society that had been going through the process of modernisation for a long time.

In the second part of this article we will draw attention to the attitude of the socialist authorities towards religious communities and to the national issues in the period after the Second World War. We have touched upon the matters of ideological positions as well as the leading party's actions towards religious communities and national affirmation in Yugoslavia.

The third part of the article is based on archival materials, documents belonging to commissions of the Executive Council of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Socialist Association of Working People (Bosnian: *Socijalistički savez radnog naroda - SSRN*) dating from 1979, 1980, 1981, and 1982. The aim was to show the failure of secularisation caused by the strengthening of religious identity at the beginning of the 1980's (until the so-called *Sarajevo process* in 1983). This has been reviewed in this paper through a perspective of the state in which the Islamic Community found itself which had been imposed by the official authorities. Thereby, special attention was being paid to the following issues: strengthening of religious identity all over the world (the religious influence of the Catholic church and the Pope John Paul II and affirmation of the Islamic unity through the revolution in Iran); changes on a lower, Yugoslav level (personnel changes in the Islamic Community); the controversy in the newspaper *Preporod* concerning Derviš Sušić's *Parergon*; religious manifestations; accusations for the clericalisation of the Islamic Community that had been a preparation for the *Sarajevo process* in 1983.

This paper synthesises the preconditions leading to the events in the 1980's and represents an introduction to the topic that is concerned with this decade. Our further investigation has the purpose to analyse the *Sarajevo Process*, the circumstances which are, directly or indirectly, related to this trial lasting throughout 1983 as well as the immediate

consequences of the process on Bosnian society and the Islamic Community.

### **Theoretical approach to national identity**

There are two different approaches to the national phenomenon in the modern scientific discourse – the so-called modernist approach and the primordialist approach. The first approach, which is advocated for by E. Gellner and B. Anderson, accepts nation as a political construction of the modern epoch where, with the assistance of mass-media, the name, the symbols and myths about national affiliation are accepted. The primordialist approach (A: Smith) is centred on the primordial sense of being related, and nation here represents a higher variant of the survival of an ethnic group. Such social movement justifies the movement from one social group into the other, from one environment into the other, from one region into the other, but not from one national group into the other.

Among the numerous works by authors from both scientific discourses, we shall this time rely on the model developed by Anthony Smith in his work titled *National identity* and by Benedict Anderson in his work *Nation: imaginary community*.

Smith advocates for the thesis that national identity is a „situational construct“ oriented on the political mobilisation of the masses. He talks about the multiplicity of identity, where every single identity is based on social classifications that can be altered or even abolished. Hence, national identity is multidimensional and it relies on other collective identities such as class, religious, or ethnic identity. The author emphasises the close relationship between the national and religious identity arising from the sphere of communication and socialisation. He talks about the „sliding through“ of identities from one into the other, where it is very common that the two may overlap. Although they overlap frequently, mutually they strengthen for the purpose of mobilisation and strengthening of the community they belong to. Analytically, the two types of collective identity should be clearly distinguished.<sup>1</sup>

National identity encompasses both cultural and political identities. Thus, we can make a distinction between the territorial type of political nation, i.e. the civil-territorial type and the ethnic type of political nation (ethnic-genealogical type). The first type was created „top down“, starting from the aristocratic elites and incorporating the lower society layers. Nations belonging to the second type were created „bottom up“ with the assistance of wider intelligence circles aiming at the mobilisation of wider social layers into a politicised nation

---

<sup>1</sup> Antoni Smit, *Nacionalini identitet*, Biblioteka XX vek Beograd 1998, 20.

using cultural resources (ethnic history, language, religion, customs). The Bosniac nation, as well as all the other nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, belongs to the second type, as defined by Smith.<sup>2</sup>

The author makes a distinction between the so-called western or civil and ethnic concept of nation. The first model considers nation to be a community of culture whose members are united by a common history, myths, symbols and tradition, a whole range of common perceptions and aspirations. Opposed to the western model, there is the ethnic concept of nation which also insists on the necessity of affiliation, but that affiliation is determined by birth and is almost impossible to change. According to this model, nation represents a community comprising of people from the same origin.

The second model which is important for us is the widely spread approach developed by B. Anderson who considers nation to be an „imaginary“ community. According to Anderson, nation comprises of a myriad of people who do not know each other and they never will, and hence, they only „imagine“ being a community. He concludes that one „does not have to be“ affiliated, there is also the option „not to be affiliated“ and that every affiliation is imaginary, i.e. an illusion.<sup>3</sup>

In that context, we can also observe Catherine Kintzler's viewpoint that identities of communities do not represent real identities but identifications. Anderson is sceptical about predictions about the disappearance of religions and nation as a form of social identification, i.e. overcoming the era of nationalism, because in his opinion, the contemporary socio-political events have shown that such a thing was not in sight and that being a nation was universally the most acknowledged value in the political life of today.

Therefore, if we start out from different theoretical aspects on the formation, development and significance of nation, we can conclude that it is true that in time, nation did indeed become a true social phenomenon.

### **Modernisation and the issue of the revival of religion**

The process of modernisation developed two approaches to the phenomenon of the relationship between religion and nation. Hence, we can make a distinction between the secular and the anti-secular approach. The secular approach talks about the secularisation of

---

<sup>2</sup> Antoni Smit, 194.

<sup>3</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Nacija: zamišljena zajednica. Razmatranje o porijeklu širenja nacionalizma*, Školska knjiga Zagreb 1990, 9.

society, about the transfer of religion into the private sphere and its subjectivisation. That way, modernisation of society should have been followed by secularisation.

However, one could not notice a decline in religiousness in Europe, but a decline in loyalty to the Church. By repressing religion, secularisation underestimated its significance for the society. Thus, a vacuum in modern societies was created, a vacuum that only religion with all its content could have filled. The stubborn performance of the religious factor resulted in the failure of the classic secularisation model in Western Europe but also in the countries that followed the Marxist principle of perceiving religion as „the opium of the people“.

It was already in the 1970's that the secularist theory was brought into question and marked as a scientific myth, and it was then that the „return of the sacred“ was announced. When criticising secularism, the anti-secularists start out from the idea of the perpetual human necessity to attach meaning to existence, which could only be done with the assistance of religion. However, apart from many justified viewpoints of the anti-secularist approach of the modern society, the advocates of the secularist paradigm made an attempt to modify it, i.e. cause it *to contemporise*. Such a revision of the secular thesis points at two important elements. The first is the claim that religiousness in society was strengthening in situations of individual or group threat and instability. Some bring religious vitality in connection with the role which religion had played in preserving the national ethos in the past, but also in extra-religious circumstances. For instance, in Finland and Latvia, religions played an important role in preserving the national ethos in the periods when those countries were under a foreign rule and thus religions became a part of ethnic identity.<sup>4</sup>

The anti-secularist theory hints at the connection between religion and nationalism in societies affected by a late modernisation and the return of religion into the public sphere is seen as a failure of secularisation. The process of connecting religion with nation is also carried out by political elites which skilfully use and refer back to religious roots as elements of modern culture. This has especially been the case with multi-confessional societies in which ethnic, religious and political borders do not match completely.

Mentioning the numerous examples in which the religious component was brought back into the public, from when the president of the United States, Jimmy Carter declared himself a Baptist, to the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Urs Altermatt claims that in the overall problems of the world, in the perpetual quest for meaning in the last quarter of the 20th

---

<sup>4</sup> Boris Banovac, Željko Boneta, *Religioznost i nacionalizama u hrvatskoj periferiji-veliki scenarij za male zajednice*, Rijeka 2007, 163-166.

Century, religion and Church found new possibilities for their operations.<sup>5</sup> The predictions about overcoming the influence of both religion and nation did not materialise. Instead, the relationship between the two is modified, shaped according to the conditions and needs of the present. The necessity to respect religious values insists on perceiving nation as the ultimate and inevitable form of social organisation. Strengthening of religion does not assume the weakening of nation because believers appear to be the most loyal to the national idea.

The theory of secularisation was brought into question even in the examples from ex-Yugoslavia, at the end of the 1980's, where we see a significant expression of religious identity in an „atheist“ society. The question is as to where did the religious vitality come from? A close tie between ethnic and religious identities in the pre-national phase of development, and a centuries old division of population according to religious affiliation did not lose their significance in the period of the socialist rule. Nations still rely heavily on religious institutions. Strengthening of religiousness is being materialised in the conditions of a more and more pronounced national and confessional homogenisation and an economic crisis deepened by a real or imaginary, personal or collective threat.

„The return of religion“ materialised through an ethno political diversion of the political and even through the ethno politics of religious institutions themselves. The policy of renewal of influence of religious institutions could be labelled as ethno politics; the return of religion into an already secularised society meant a mass affective „re-institutionalisation“, or in other words, a revival of ethnic foundations of religion.<sup>6</sup>

In the last chapter of our paper, we lay particular emphasis on the actual achievements of secularisation in Bosnian society at the beginning of the 1980's. We conclude that after a complex and well-planned project which the communists attempted to implement with all their available means, secularisation of society was not carried out, *the national being was not torn away from its religious roots*. Even though it had been the case that among the authority circles the prevailing question was whether the expansion of religious development represented a growing religiousness, it was stated that *the enemy and clerical force had always existed*. However, at the beginning of the 1980's, supported by the decline of the ruling party and growing economic crisis, there was a new opportunity for religion to return to the public and to politics, or in other words, the Communist Party's attempts to control and then to eliminate national-clericalism failed. Whether or not we considered the interruption of an already poor beginning of modernisation and the failure of secularisation to be an

---

<sup>5</sup> Altermatt, Urs, *Etnonacionalizam u Europi*. Svjetionik Sarajevo, Zurich 1996, 72.

<sup>6</sup> Ugo Vlaisavljević, *Etničke zajednice, etnopolitika i božansko dobro*, Forum Bosna 18/02, Sarajevo 2002, 228.

imperfection and a delay of democracy in our society<sup>7</sup>, our empirical research testified that there had been a period of rapid development and domination of religious nationalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the beginning of the 1980's.<sup>8</sup>

### **The relationship between religious and national identity**

*(Religion as a watershed of peoples)*

Scientific viewpoint treats religion and nation as two completely different notions - two forms of cultural collective identity which have to be clearly distinguished. Religious and national identities also differ from one another because the first is unambiguous and the latter is ambiguous.

However, in everyday practice, the tendency to connect and to identify the two phenomena with one another is much more pronounced than the tendency to separate and make a clear distinction between the two.

The identification of the two phenomena with one another is the reason for a number of similar or identical elements. Religion, as well as nation, materialises its existence through people's communities or groups. The integrating role of religion is materialised through institutions, ceremonies, religious consciousness, while nation does the same through tradition, customs, culture and development of national awareness. They both attempt to provide answers to the question of human existence, they provide personal and collective immortality, revive ethnic relationships by diligently preserving the memory of their „forefathers“, fallen heroes and ancestors, thus inspiring their members with heroism.

In a number of related works, religion is seen as a watershed of the peoples in the Balkans and as the basic integrating element of contemporary nations. It is represented as a pillar of the system of ethnic values and given the role of the prime mover for the development of national consciousness. That is a common feature of the Serbian, Croatian and Bosniac nation. Apart from the viewpoint that religion represents a determining element with a constructive role in the nation building process, there is enough empty room there to raise the question as to how much did religion indeed succeed to divide one ethnic group, or how much did religion indeed succeed to unite different ethnicities into one whole!

The issue concerning the relationship between religion and nation must be put in a

---

<sup>7</sup> Ivan Lovrenović, *Pitanje iz vjere, pitanje iz života*, Zbornik radova *Religija, društvo i politika*. Kontraverzna tumačenja i približavanja, Bonn 2002, 332-333.

<sup>8</sup> Opširnije o pojmu **religijskog nacionalizma** kao društvenog fenomena vidi u Dino Abazović, *Za naciju i Boga: sociološko određenje religijskog nacionalizma*, Magistrat Sarajevo 2006.

wider context, and therefore, we shall cast a glance at the issue of the role of religion in the process of creation of nations and its significance for contemporary nations.

Many papers have been written on the correlation between the Serbian nation and religion, but we would like to mention a paper by Olivera Milosavljević titled *The Relationship between Religious and National Affiliation – Idea and Reality* as a valuable synthesis of the aforesaid correlation. The authoress points out that the identification of Orthodoxy with Serbhood was absolute in the last hundred years, where people had been talking about the „Serbian orthodox people“ and „the Serbian Orthodox national individuality“. By inserting the attribute Serbian into the name of the religion, the attempt was to point at the inextricable relationship between nation and religion. In the 1980's, after a period when the communist atheist doctrine tried to attach a different meaning to the definition of nation, there has been a revival of the traditional way to define nation and the old thesis about the identification of nation with religion and Church as the guardian of the „consciousness of the Serbian national being“<sup>9</sup>

Sandra Prlenda in a work titled *The Relationship between Nation and Religion in Croatian National Ideologies* emphasised that the share of religious elements in national culture as far as Croatia is concerned, depended upon the political relations with the neighbouring peoples. In the 19th Century, in the period of integration of the Croatian nation, and later in the concept of the integral Croathood advocated for by the members of the Croatian Party of Rights, priority had not been given to religion. However, the Croatian Catholic Congress in 1900 formulated the principles of uniting the Catholic and national interests. The authoress considers it a fact that the Catholic Church played an important role in preserving the Croatian national identity in the communist period, and that the instrumentalisation of religion during the war caused a complete concordance between the Croatian nation and Catholic religion at the end of the 20th Century.<sup>10</sup>

The four constants which determine the Bosniac identity are the Slavic ethnic origin, language, Bosnia as a cultural and political space, and Islam as a religious and civilisational affiliation.<sup>11</sup> However, of all the aforesaid, it is very often the case that priority is given to the religious factor of determination and interconnection. Fuad Saltaga is of the opinion that one could accept the thesis that the Muslim, i.e. the Bosniac nation historically developed through

---

<sup>9</sup> Olivera Milosavljević, Odnos između religiozne i nacionalne pripadnosti. Ideja i realnost ( primer: srpska nacija), zbornik radova religija, društvo i politika. Kontraverzna tumačenja i približavanja, Bonn 2002, str. 118.

<sup>10</sup> Sandra Prlenda, *Odnos između nacije i religije u hrvatskom nacionalnim ideologijama*, zbornik radova Religija, društvo i politika. Kontraverzna tumačenja i približavanja, Bonn 2002, 140.

<sup>11</sup> Mustafa Imamović, *Identitet Bošnjaka u XX stoljeću*, Godišnjak BZK Preporod, Sarajevo 2003, 9.

religious acculturation as a religious and cultural confessional community, then as a social and finally as an ethnic community.<sup>12</sup>

Hence, through a range of socio-historical and cultural interventions, Islam defined an ethnic awareness of a common destiny<sup>13</sup> and such a religious foundation, under the influence of other factors, according to Arif Purivatra, resulted in national particularity at least to the extent to which the Serbian and the Croatian national individual differed from one another.<sup>14</sup> In line with that, professor Imamović came to the conclusion that the process of constituting the Bosnian-Muslim nation actually represented a process of secularisation and a transfer of religion into culture, i.e. a process of merging religion with ethnicity and state.<sup>15</sup>

Nowadays, we can determine the true relationship between the religious and the national in the process of development of the Bosniac nation only with a serious intent to discover something of the religious in the national and something of the national in the religious, i.e. when we neither belittle, neglect nor glorify the impact religion has had on nation.

The Islamic perception of the world is inextricably bound to the supranational, all-encompassing Muslim community in the world known as *ummet*. The contemporary crisis of the Muslim identity arises from the question as to which of the two is ordering the ultimate loyalty of an individual in society – *ummet* or secular nationalism! However, the concept of *ummet* did not abolish the individual identity; it only altered the hierarchy of individual identities, and thus after identifying oneself with *ummet*, the second most important for an individual is the tribal, i.e. the national identity.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, the dilemma of loyalty between “two cities” – the city of God based on the holy Shariah law, and the secular city founded on reason and life experience in a community – is rather artificial. The solution of the dilemma lies in the possibility for the two cities to meet in a common goal – by a corresponding agreement on the question as to what was the common good for the society.<sup>17</sup>

In our corner of the world, Islam is often observed through three different dualisms.

---

<sup>12</sup> Fuad Saltaga, *Muslimanska nacija u Jugoslaviji*, Sarajevo 1991, 7.

<sup>13</sup> Fuad Saltaga, str. 36.

<sup>14</sup> Atif Purivatra, *O nacionalnom fenomenu Muslimana, Muslimani i bošnjaštvo*, Sarajevo 1991, 20.

<sup>15</sup> Mustafa Imamović, *Bošnjački etnos, identitet i ime*, Prilozi 32, Sarajevo 2003, 326.

<sup>16</sup> Abdullah al-Ahsan, *Ummet ili nacija*, Sarajevo 2004, 35.

<sup>17</sup> Abdulaziz A. Sachedina, *Vodenje ili vladanje? Muslimanska zamisao o dva grada*, Forum Bosna 19/2002, Sarajevo, 147.

The first dualism is the fusion of the worldly and the domestic, the second is the relationship between the religious and the national matters, and the third dualism is the institutionality (official) and spontaneity (unofficial).<sup>18</sup>

Every segmentation within dualisms or these three dualisms represents a difficult task and there is a possibility that our results may not correspond to the true state of affairs. Namely, we believe that it is important to emphasise that in this part of the world, Islam has taken on, not so much of a new form, but new and specific elements.

However, it would be wrong to state that Bosnian Muslims were isolated in their existence and that changes, i.e. the so-called re-islamisation of the Islamic world, and hence the Iranian revolution did not have any impact on the events in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the beginning of the 1980's.

The second dualism is the relationship between the religious and the national in Islam, i.e. the relationship between the religious and the national identity of Bosniacs. If we were to superficially observe the current situation, it would appear to us as if the overlap of the two identities was absolute, because Bosniac identity necessarily implies the Islamic confession. This is a consequence of the historical course of development, many other elements and wrong decisions which resulted in an exchange of priorities. Following the recognition of a separate nation in 1968, the name *Muslim* is given to the same, a name which is exclusively related to religion and that was what brought the religious and the national identity of the members of this nation closer together.

The third dualism is the dualism comprising of the official and the unofficial. When examining archival materials, published and unpublished sources, we have been able to find both official and unofficial discourses; issues that were publicly talked about and discussed. However, many crucial issues were only marginally or not discussed at all, although there were some other sources that told us about their topical quality.

However, another example, about which we were told by the Dutch anthropologist Ger Duijzings (*Religion and Identity in Kosovo*), has shown that Islam, as a watershed, was not so monolithic in the Balkans after all. Using the example of Albanians in Kosovo, Duijzings has shown that religion was not a crucial element of national identity. Opposite to that, he has shown how in time, Albanianhood was a pronounced element of religion and not the other way round. In that context, he also talks about the confrontation of the dervish orders with the Islamic Community which was seated in Sarajevo, a confrontation which was particularly

---

<sup>18</sup> Darko Tanasković, *U dijalogu sa islamom*, Beograd 1990, 18.

severe from the beginning of the 1970's. This has to a certain extent lead to the creation of a separate religious life of Albanian Muslims.

On the grounds of the aforesaid, we could argue for the thesis that the relationship between religion and nation should not be observed as a relationship between a universal idea and a partial community. Religion did not constitute a nation, but religion as an institution (the Church) served as a foundation for ethnic differentiation.<sup>19</sup> This favours the opinion of professor N. Dugandžija who says that when defining the two terms, one should emphasise that religion was not an element according to which nations differ, but an element which influenced their formation.<sup>20</sup>

Parallel to the process of recognition of the Muslim nation which was to be separated from the Islamic Community to the greatest extent possible, the communist authorities carried out the process of formation and recognition of a separate Macedonian Orthodox Church. The main reason for doing so is found in the attempt to decentralise and legitimise the particularity of the Macedonian nation and the historic space of this republic. Olivier Gillet considers the denial of particularity of the Macedonian Church which the Bulgarian, Greek and Serbian Orthodox churches expressed at the time, did not represent a denial of Orthodoxy in Macedonia but a denial of the existence of a separate Macedonian nation with the church as its constituting element. He considers this case to be a clear example that there is a direct relationship between religion and nation, ethnicity and religion, between religious and national affiliation in today's south-eastern Europe.<sup>21</sup>

### **Socialist rule and religious communities**

General features of the communist system were the atheisation of society, marginalisation of religious communities and reducing their scope of activities exclusively to religious institutions and matters. Starting out from the viewpoint of atheist Marxism, the socialists recognised the existence of religion and Church, which was recorded in the Constitution in 1946, and enacting the Law from 1953, the socialist rule politically separated the Church from the state, proclaiming the principle of freedom and privacy of religion.<sup>22</sup>

Such an attitude of the Communist Party towards religious communities had its own

---

<sup>19</sup> Esad Ćimić, *Iskušenja zajedništva*, Sarajevo: Did, 2005, 11.

<sup>20</sup> Nikola Dugandžija, *Nacija i religija*, Zagreb 1983, str. 167.

<sup>21</sup> Ismet Osmanović, *Politika države prema vjerskim zajednicama u Bosni i Hercegovini od 1945-1990. godine*, Magistarski rad, Univerzitet u Sarajevu Fakultet političkih nauka Sarajevo 2003, str. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Savjetovanje-seminar o problemu fenomena religije i crkve te djelovanju Saveza komunista Jugoslavije i Socijalističkog saveza radnog naroda Jugoslavije prema tom problemu, Beograd 1977, 80.

ideological and political reasons. Ideologically, it was accepted that religion was a "reaction" and a negative social occurrence, a remnant of the previous system, a reflection of people's helplessness, a means in the hands of exploiting masses. Political reasons result from the Party's attempts to remove any actual or institutionalised force which could jeopardise its position and importance in the society in which atheism had been promoted as very advanced and contemporary solution.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, religious communities, closely linked with national identity and with a significant influence on the masses, were considered to be strong opposing elements for the system.

The new religion of "brotherhood and unity" with its sacred elements, sufferings and scaffolds from the war, martyrs and national heroes, should have united and overcome all religions and national differences as potential enemies of the new system.

After 1945, religious communities were being repressed from the public life, the press issued by religious communities was reduced to a minimum; institutions which were helped by the Church, such as hospitals and homes, became the responsibility of the state; numerous educational institutions were closed. Many religious customs were forbidden. Holidays and ceremonies such as Christmas were not publicly celebrated nor treated as festivity days. The agrarian reform confiscated a significant portion of, or better said, almost the entire possessions of religious communities and put it under the administration of the state.<sup>24</sup>

Numerous professionals from all religious communities were intimidated, arrested, processed, sentenced to several years of hard labour losing all their civil rights, or sentenced to death under the accusations for collaboration with enemies during the war or for an opportunistic attitude towards the communist authorities. The aim was to remove all influential persons from the top of religious communities which, as a result of the aforesaid, were getting weaker and weaker.

The Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina but also in other Yugoslav republics had particularly been injured by the confiscation of the *vaquf* property which nearly lead to the abolishment of the entire endowment system as well as to the abolishment of *mektebs* (Muslim primary schools), *tekijas*, dervish orders and the Preporod association, by enacting the Law on the prohibition of veils, prohibiting Muslims to go on hajj and abolishing the greatest religious manifestation Ajvatovica in 1947.

---

<sup>23</sup> Ismet Osmanović, n.d. 57-59.

<sup>24</sup> Katrin Boeckh, Vjerski progoni u Jugoslaviji 1944-1953.: staljinizam i titoizam, ČSP god. 38. broj 2. Zagreb 2006, 412.

However, under an obvious pressure, the Islamic Community expressed its loyalty to the regime, and in 1947, *reis-ul-ulema* publicly expressed his gratitude to the Communist Party for the existential preservation of Muslims. That, of course, was a consequence of numerous investigations and lawsuits such as those against imams in 1947 and Young Muslims in 1947 and 1949, when four Young Muslims were sentenced to death. Certain segmentation within the Islamic Community was achieved, which was particularly noticeable in the conflict between the Bosnian Islamic Community and a civil-religiously oriented Islam and the dervish orders in Kosovo, and to a lesser extent in Macedonia.<sup>25</sup> It was the Association of the officials of the Islamic confession of the People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina itself which supported the enactment of the Law on the prohibition of veils during their founding assembly in 1950, claiming that there were no religious obstacles for such a decision. The activists of the Women's Antifascist Front were particularly engaged in the implementation of this Law in 1947.<sup>26</sup>

The authorities kept a vigilant eye on the events taking place within religious communities and the relevant departments for the task were the Committees for relations with religious communities. The Committee for relations with religious communities of the Executive Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina recorded all the events within the communities, all the alterations, appointments, plans and finances. It conducted several analyses of all the important gatherings, festivities, meetings, pilgrimages. All the important and less important decisions within religious communities were made only after immediate consultations of the members of the Committee with religious communities, and it was very often the case that the officials of the communities had been summoned upon a request issued by the Committee so that their responsibility concerning a certain issue could be determined. By conducting such a strict surveillance, the authorities attempted to perceive the so-called clerical-nationalist activities of religious communities and religious professionals without any authorisations, aiming at homogenisation and religious nationalisation of its followers.

As opposed to the Soviet model, the republic committees for relations with religious communities in Yugoslavia were much better organised and more important than the Federal Committee for relations with religious communities in Belgrade as the relevant advisory body for religious issues. Committees, apart from the common Law on the legal position of religious communities which was passed in 1953, had a great responsibility in their respective republics, and therefore we cannot talk about a unique Yugoslav policy towards religious

---

<sup>25</sup> Isto, 420-422.

<sup>26</sup> Radmila Radić, *Islamska vjerska zajednica 1945-1970. godine*, Forum Bosna br.32/05, Sarajevo 2005, 104.

communities.

However, after a period of repressions and radical changes, particularly after 1953, and later, after 1966, the strings were gradually loosened. Having recognised the existence of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the state made a precedent but not with the aim to strengthen religion and the religious community; the aim was to strengthen the particularity of Macedonia itself, its population and territory.

The changes in the country could be felt after the new Constitution from 1974 after which the new Law on the position of religious communities of Bosnia and Herzegovina was passed (1976). The Law regulated the attitude of the republic towards its religious communities. However, the attitude towards religion did not change significantly.

In 1977, religious communities were facing serious dilemmas concerning their adaptation to the social life, and hence, clergy's attitude from 1945 onwards varied from an open confrontation with the socialist society, formation of a "silent opposition" and a doctrine which advocated the apolitisation of the Church, to the aspiration to achieve a partnership between the Church and the state.<sup>27</sup>

It is important to note that the state had insisted upon the presence of religious personnel in the above-mentioned committees as well as in the Coordination Board for Interethnic Relations at the Socialist Association of Working People. Apart from these organisations, organising and supporting the monoreligious associations of religious professionals, and later, also the multireligious ones, the Party attempted to keep the religious communities under its control, far away from the public and political discourse

The reports of the Committee for Relations with Religious Communities of the People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly those dating from the period between 1980 and 1990 anticipated the politisation of religious communities which opposed the socialist development, politicised their religion, manipulated with religious freedom and religious facilities, equated the religious with the national, collaborated with nationalist and anti-socialist forces, institutionalised religious education, divided the population into believers and non-believers, etc.

The state has skilfully used religious communities in its foreign policy affairs, having attempted to promote itself in the Arab countries and the countries that were members of the Non-aligned Movement. In addition to that, the state, albeit evenly and constantly, financially supported religious communities and its officials and participated in the maintenance and

---

<sup>27</sup> Savjetovanje-seminar o problemu fenomena religije i crkve te djelovanju saveza komunista Jugoslavije i Socijalističkog saveza radnog naroda Jugoslavije prema tom problemu, Beograd 1977, 81.

repair of religious facilities, particularly those that had a cultural and historical significance. However, until the downfall of the communist system, the state had constantly meddled in the affairs of religious communities, supervising all the events within the same, monitoring certain groups and individuals and recruiting numerous spies.

### **The attitude towards the national issue**

In many aspects of internal organisation, the Yugoslav socialist system was based on the Soviet model. We can also draw parallels with the Yugoslav attitude towards its nations and the process of national institutionalisation as described by Rogers Brubaker. Brubaker talks about the constitution of territorial nationalities and ethnic nations in the Soviet Union, which was done by dividing the state into more than fifty national states with their own territories, names, administrations, thus creating states of specific ethno national groups. On the other hand, the regime divided the citizens into a number of exclusive ethnic nationalities that represented the foundations of the social community. Ethnic nationality was determined by the so-called omnipotence of being born into a religious and national community or by the place of birth.<sup>28</sup>

According to this principle, a person is already born into a religious and social national community and his/her affiliation is hence determined by birth.

However, in reality, the identification with a certain religious group predominantly represents a symbolic affiliation, and thus religiousness and practicing of religion is being kept in the background. Therefore, we should interpret one's religious and national affiliation as a confession about one's origin and not about one's personal beliefs. In line with this principle, those who had been raised or just born in the spirit of the Islamic tradition are considered to be members of the Bosniac nation.<sup>29</sup>

Socialist systems can be characterised as anti-nationalist but not anti-national. The Yugoslav Constitution from 1946 recognised five nations enjoying equal rights, and in 1968, the Constitution recognised a sixth - the Muslim nation which alongside numerous other nationalities represented the Yugoslav population. The division of population into nations satisfies a person's "desire for affiliation". An individual feels the necessity to identify himself with and to belong to a nation and that is a consequence of the direct impact of national consciousness. Nation saves an individual from any mental efforts that he would

---

<sup>28</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge 1996, 17-18.

<sup>29</sup> Smail Balić, *Bosna u egzilu*, Preporod Zagreb 1995, 16.

have to engage himself in, in order to think, and all the decisions that he makes as well as his attitude towards certain issues are always in line with the views of his nation.<sup>30</sup>

The national issue, throughout the period of the socialist rule, was at the very centre of interest for the authorities, because nationalism, in ethnically mixed communities such as Bosnia and Herzegovina represented an extreme political doctrine. Equality of all ethnic groups was imposed and, although not transparently, leaders were chosen from all the three ethnic groups. With the aim to preserve the national policy from any incidents and attenuation of nationalism, the political system of Bosnia and Herzegovina became very rigid, and the notion of a civil society, as a source of criticism and new ideas, remained unknown.<sup>31</sup>

The recognition of the Muslim nation, and before that, the recognition of a separate Macedonian Orthodox Church was aiming at the “destruction of nationalism”. The recognition of the Muslim nation represented a confrontation with traditional nationalism which had found its shelter in the religious discourse. Thus, Muslims, who were going through the process of secularisation, should have turned to the worldly elements of co-existence instead of turning to the Islamic Community as their only guardian at the time.

However, nowadays the communist authorities are reproached for providing inadequate solutions to the national issue. The main problem lies in the distorted and imposed image of national relations, the neglect of important issues and the authority’s lack of persistence in their intents. The recognition of the Muslim nation opened up numerous discussions in political and intellectual circles on the very name of the nation, and what is most important, on the issue of national institutions. Muslim national institutions had not been formed and the authorities attempted to direct Muslims to the common institutions of the republic. It all secured the position of the Islamic Community as the only institution of Muslims as believers and Muslims as members of a nation, which would particularly become prominent in the 1980’s.

### **The authorities’ views on the antagonistic tendencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the beginning of the 1980’s**

Our goal in this chapter is to present the ways in which the authorities evaluated the relationship between religious and national identity at the beginning of the 1980’s (until 1983). Using several documents, we strive to present the views that the authorities took of the new tendencies in society and what their attitude towards such *negative occurrences* was. Our

---

<sup>30</sup> Nikola Dugandžija, *Religija i nacija*, Zagreb 1983, 62.

<sup>31</sup> Neven Anđelić, *Bosna i Hercegovina između Tita i rata*, Beograd 2005, str. 39-41.

sources are documents of the Committee for the Relations with Religious Communities of the Executive Council of the People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Coordination Board for Religious Issues and Activities of Religious Communities of the Socialist Association of Working People of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The available documents are treating several issues. We have attempted to define the basic problems as well as new ideas and tendencies which had particularly caught the attention of the authorities. We shall detain ourselves on the period prior to 1983, due to the great lawsuit that would be lead against a group of individuals who would be treated as an enemy group called the Young Muslims by and that lawsuit will be analysed in our next article.

The events taking place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, i.e. in Yugoslavia at the end of the 1970's and beginning of the 1980's should be reviewed in a wider context. That was a period which represented a turning point in the direction of the development of new democratic relations. The Church becomes actively involved with the concept of political and ideological crisis and changes of the current state of affairs.

The Church gradually sneaks into politics and political struggles; its activities vary – at times it seems to be right-wing and sometimes extremely leftist. The aspirations to introduce certain principles which would define the nature of politics and represent a foundation for the state and the political community seem to be the world's trend. An activity of this sort is a reflection of non-religious activities of religious communities. *As a rule*, their activities have a worldly interest, and in some regions and countries the Church assumes the role of the *guardian of national identity*.

There are several transparent examples of “the world's renaissance of religion”. The Catholic Church was inspired to act by the teachings and ideas of the new Pope John Paul II. The events in Poland which started in the 1950's with the “Great Millennium Novena”, as well as the events in Latin America and Africa influenced the new consolidation of the Catholic Church. As opposed to the Catholic Church which had its central authority in Vatican, the Orthodox Church was divided into national Orthodox Churches. That was the reason for a poorer coordination and development of the Orthodox Church. However, in the 1970's the collaboration between Orthodox Churches became more prominent and international congresses and gatherings of the Orthodox clergy were much more frequent. The material support which the Churches offered to each other was also more significant.

New activities in the world's church associations such as the attempts to bring the two Christian churches closer together (the Catholic and the Orthodox Church) are a reflection of the strengthening of the Church as an institution and the strengthening of the religious in the

domain of social relations.<sup>32</sup>

The strengthening of Islam fits into the context of the global revival of importance of religion and the religious. The *awakening* of the Islamic world was a result of natural movements and freedom from colonialism. However, the Islamic movements had two-sided tendencies, i.e. the tendencies for national affirmation and tendencies for an all-Islamic solidarity. It was clear that there had been a much closer collaboration between Islamic countries, between the Islamic world and other Muslims from all over the world. This strengthening was particularly influenced by Saudi Arabia as the centre of Islam, the Islamic Council for the Muslims of Europe, the Pan Islamic League (Rabita), various Islamic centres as well as the Middle East Crisis, the Iranian Revolution, the Iran-Iraq War, the Camp David Accords, the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan, etc.<sup>33</sup> The Iranian Revolution which re-introduced the Islamic values by introducing the Shariah Law into the legal system was particularly important. It was a concrete example of the strengthening of religion and an obvious religisation of society and state, while in the global discourse, the Iranian Revolution was a synonym for extreme religious nationalism, fundamentalism and pan-Islamism. Globally, pan-Islamism was being discussed as a striving for a global unification of Muslims, extreme and negative pretensions aiming to re-organise the world.

*Pan-Islamism* strengthened through propaganda and raising of the issue of “Great Turkey” which should have included parts of Yugoslavia that were populated by Muslims.<sup>34</sup>

As a consequence of the liberal course which the state had taken and which had begun in the 1960's, the Church as an institution was gradually strengthening its position. Even though some social studies, particularly in the 1970's, have shown that the number of declared followers and the number of those who attended religious offices was on decline, religious institutions renewed and extended their resources. The events in Poland exercised an important influence on the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia and so the Croatian Episcopate attempted to emphasise the analogy between Poland and Croatia, countries that in the 1980's represented a dam against the evil from the East called communism. „The Great Novena“, a nine-year-long celebration called *Thirteen centuries of Christianity among the Croats* began

---

<sup>32</sup> Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, *fond Komisija za odnose sa vjerskim zajednicama*, str. pov. 09-65/80, Stanje odnosa sa vjerskim zajednicama u SRBiH i karakteristična kretanja u njima u toku 1980. Godine, Sarajevo 31.10.1980.

<sup>33</sup> Arhiv BiH, *Komisija za odnose sa vjerskim zajednicama str.pov. 09-81/81. god*, Neki aspekti aktivnosti vjerskih zajednica iz Bosne i Hercegovine u inostranstvu i uticaja spoljnog faktora na njihovo ponašanje, Sarajevo septembar 1981. godina

<sup>34</sup> Arhiv BiH, *Komisija za odnose sa vjerskim zajednicama str.pov. 09-81/81. God*, Neki aspekti aktivnosti vjerskih zajednica iz Bosne i Hercegovine u inostranstvu i uticaja spoljnog faktora na njihovo ponašanje, Sarajevo septembar 1981. godine

in 1975, and in the meantime, numerous mass manifestations were being held such as the jubilee dedicated to the Duke Branimir or the national pilgrimage dedicated to the Pope John Paul II as the first Pope of Slavic origin.<sup>35</sup> Although somewhat weaker and delayed, there was a reorganisation of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Church made tremendous efforts to connect with the Russian Orthodox Church and the Patriarchate of Moscow. Collaboration was achieved through material support as well as through mutual personnel exchange. However, the strengthening of the Orthodox Church and its ever growing ethno-nationalisation runs simultaneously with the destabilisation of Kosovo. Demonstrations organised by the Albanians in Kosovo as well as other numerous events such as setting the Patriarchate of Peć on fire in March 1981 had been enticing nationalism on both sides. The Serbian Orthodox Church presented itself as the eternal guardian of the Serbian nation and began „the struggle for the Serbian truth about Kosovo“.<sup>36</sup>

By 1980, all the three religious communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina underwent significant personnel changes. The new Assembly and the President of the Islamic Community Assembly of The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had been elected, as well as the first muftis in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the senior management of the Association of Islamic Religious Officials in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Six hundred and six new *dzemat* boards had been elected and numerous members of the editorial board of the Preporod newspaper had been substituted. A new bishop of Mostar had been elected as well as the provincial government of the Franciscan order from Herzegovina and a new episcope of Banja Luka.

At the beginning of the 1980's, activities carried out by certain individuals were notified – activities which were not only limited to religious rituals and matters. As far as the Catholic Church was concerned, it became clear that more and more often it had been identifying Catholicism with Croathood, while the Serbian Orthodox Church claimed that *the religious and the national constituted an integral whole*. The Islamic Community was propagating certain interpretations of the holy Qoran, which treated Islam as a universal category; thus, Islam became both a social and a political category. It was claimed that the Islamisation of Patarens had been voluntary, without applying any force or pressure. Such claims testified about the tendency to believe that Muslims originated from Patarens and Bogumils and that they were the only indigenous people in Bosnia and Herzegovina as proper

---

<sup>35</sup> Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkanski idoli I*, Beograd 2006, str. 170-177.

<sup>36</sup> Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkanski idoli II*, Beograd 2006, 7.

Bosniacs (as pointed out by Dž.S.).<sup>37</sup>

Documents continuously reported on a certain strengthening of clericalism, nationalism, chauvinism within religious communities, an increased foreign influence and the tendency to identify the religious with the national, attempts of mobilisation, and on the religious communities' demonstration of power. General but also particular analyses of the current state of affairs or of particular events, created an image of active religious communities which aspire to strengthen their position in society with the aim to disturb the balance and oust the current regime. Religious communities imposed certain religious values as a foundation upon which the social and the inter-ethnic relations should be built. The general opinion was that the strengthening of religious communities in a multi-national environment represented a potential threat for the authorities and for the state's integrity. Hence, the state's integrity was undermined by emphasising the indigenoussness of Muslims and their right to claim Bosnia and Herzegovina, because that way, the others felt threatened.

Extra-religious activities of the Islamic Community that were documented could particularly be noticed through religious gatherings and manifestations, religious education and lectures, publishing activities, contacts and relations with the so-called Islamic world, building of religious facilities, a growing interest in national topics and problems and through discussions on the Islamic socialism as a counterpart of the self-governing socialism. According to the aforesaid, the enemy forces presented Islam as the basic component of the national being and development of Muslims. *Pan Islamism* is perceived as *the Islamic internationalism*. Discussions on the interests of the Muslim people, national issues, identifications of the religious and the national; discussions on Bosniachood, on Muslim women wearing head covers, and on the foundation of the Islamic museum in Sarajevo became more and more frequent. The attempt to registrate the believers and distribute membership cards was perceived as a certain type of mobilisation, homogenisation and grouping of citizens according to their religious affiliation, which, of course, was not in line with the politics of the ruling party.<sup>38</sup>

One of the most important issues about the Islamic Community in this period was the relationship between the Islamic Community and the Islamic countries. A more active liaison between the Islamic Community and the Islamic centres was presented in the documents as a political implication aiming at strengthening and spreading of Islam throughout Yugoslavia

---

<sup>37</sup> Arhiv BiH, *Komisija za odnose sa vjerskim zajednicama str.pov. 09-80/81. god*, Vanvjerski držaj u djelovanju vjerskih zajednica, Sarajevo septembar 1981. godina

<sup>38</sup> ABIH, *Komisija za odnose sa vjerskim zajednicama, Podsjetnik za razgovor sa reis-ul-ulemom i predsjednikom Starješinstva Islamske zajednice u BiH, str. pov. 055-46/80 Sarajevo 24.6.1980.*

and then throughout Europe, whereby the Islamic Community in Yugoslavia acted as a bridge for transferring Islam to Europe.

Such an opening-up of the Islamic Community was achieved through numerous religious officials who had been educated in Islamic countries and were the bearers of various *political ideas*. The foundation of the Islamic Theological Faculty did not stop students going to universities in Islamic countries and some records have shown that there were several attempts to publicly extort their opinion of the events in the world and in the Islamic countries. The afore-mentioned opening-up was materialised through numerous participations of representatives of the Islamic Community on Islamic gatherings which were not exclusively religious. Religious officials made contacts with delegations from Islamic countries, whereby they presented themselves as the mouthpieces of national interests. The necessity for a better organisation of the Islamic Communities from abroad was more and more pronounced, “*particularly after Khomeini’s seizure of power*”. It has been pointed out that a group of hostile Muslims was involved with the immigration of Ustashis via “Croatian Islamic centres” which were striving for support from Islamic countries.<sup>39</sup> It was only after 1976 that the establishment of Islamic Communities abroad had begun. All the world events, the Iranian Revolution, and a more active immigration had a great impact on the believers, i.e. guest workers from Bosnia and Herzegovina who had been employed abroad. A better organisation, i.e. a tighter control over religious organisations should have disabled the spreading of pan-islamistic terrorist aspirations to act against the socialist rule in the country.

However, only individuals and certain groups were accused of clericalist and nationalist activities and not the entire Islamic Community, as witnessed in the documents of the period.

The subjects of observation were clericalists and nationalists, people accused of various malefactions during the Yugoslav People’s Liberation War, Young Muslims, the so-called *maspokovci* (an abbreviation for *masovni pokret*, i.e. the members of the mass movement) who were occupying prominent positions in the Islamic Community, at the Islamic Faculty, working in libraries or mosques. Those circles have revived the idea of organising an Islamic world community whose seat was supposed to be in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Apart from that, they accentuate the thesis about Islam as the crucial “moment of raising of national consciousness” (as the integrating element of nation) of Muslims, and

---

<sup>39</sup> Arhiv BiH, *Komisija za odnose sa vjerskim zajednicama*, Informacija o vanckvnoj delatnosti delova verskih zajednica iz SFRJ u inostranstvu među radnicima na privremenom radu i iseljenicima, Savezni sekretarijat za inostrane poslove, Beograd jun 1981. godine

thus the term Muslim in the national sense is identified with the term Muslim in the religious sense. There was an important remark that “*some circles had pointed out that the solution to the ambiguity of the terms Muslim with capital M, and Muslim which is not capitalised, lies in the term **Bosniachood, i.e. in the Bosniac nation***”. (Underlined by Dž.S.)<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, there was a certain dichotomy within the Islamic Community. The reason for that was that on the one hand, there were people within the frameworks of the Islamic Community who were loyal to the authorities, known as “the regime people, recruited spies, people of the UDBA (State Security Administration)” and, according to the authorities, *groups of clericals who were acting against the state and the Party*, on the other. Reis-ul-ulema, imam Naim Hadžiabdić, the head of the Islamic Community was collaborating closely with the authorities. The notes of the Committee for Relations with Religious Communities state that reis-ul-ulema had distanced himself from all the negative tendencies within the Islamic Community (those perceived by the authorities), claiming that many contacts with Islamic countries had been made without his consent. It has been stated in the report that reis-ul-ulema “*confessed that certain things were happening without his consent and that he had committed a grave mistake by appointing certain young people to certain positions in the Islamic Community*”, and also that “*the reis had obviously referred to Ahmed Smajlović*”.<sup>41</sup>

However, the President of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Community, one of the key personae of the Community, dr Ahmed Smajlović, attending a gathering in Paris in 1981, in his paper called *Islam and Muslims and the Self-governing Socialism in Yugoslavia* said, “*When it comes to the issue of Islam and Muslims in the self-governing socialist system in Yugoslavia, one has to bear in mind that the Islamic Community today, in the conditions of the socialist self-governance, supports the views of a broad co-existence, getting out of the closed, narrow, national, religious and ideological circles, as it attempts to support the brotherly and friendly relations with other religious communities with all means possible, firmly believing that good inter-confessional relations are the basic condition not only for a faster and better economic development, but also for a normal development of religious life. I shall not exaggerate saying that the followers of Islam in this country realised and felt the*

---

<sup>40</sup> Arhiv BiH, fond *Koordinacioni odbor za pitanja iz oblasti religije i djelovanja vjerskih zajednica*, Neke novije pojave i tendencije u djelovanju vjerskih zajednica i zadaci organizacije SSRNBIH, Sarajevo februar 1980. godina

<sup>41</sup> Arhiv BiH, fond *Komisija za odnose sa vjerskim zajednicama* broj 055-3/82, Zabilješka o razgovoru Muhameda Bešića sa reis-ul-ulemom i zabilješka o razgovoru M. Bešića sa dr. Ahmedom Smajlovićem, Sarajevo 11. 1. 1982.

blessings of brotherhood and unity.”<sup>42</sup>

Hence, it is necessary to observe the activities of some people within the Islamic Community in the context of the period, personal and collective possibilities, which indicative of the above-mentioned dichotomy between the official and the unofficial.

The activities of religious communities with an enormous impact on the masses, which were not in the very interest of the authorities, were present throughout the period after the Second World War. As it had been stated in one of the documents, at the end of the 1970's and beginning of the 1980's, their animosity was more pronounced and *manifested itself in various ways in association with neo-clericalist and nationalist groups outside religious communities.*

Allegedly, clericalism in the Islamic Community was strengthening its position by the foundation of the Islamic Theological Faculty, after which there were some more significant involvements of pupils and students in discussions on extra-religious issues. A clericalist excess was recorded at the faculty's opening ceremony when the names of those who had compromised the Liberation movement in various ways were found on the panel containing a list of donors. It was stated that those were the people who had collaborated with or publicly supported the *detestable occupants.*

*The politisation of the Preporod newspaper* was actualised with the publication of excerpts of Derviš Sušić's *Parergon* in the daily newspaper *Oslobođenje* from 6 August to 31 October in 1979. It was stated the essence of the reaction of individuals and groups gathered around the Preporod newspaper had not been “Parergon” itself, it had only served as a motive to express their political ambitions and their attempt to interfere in the politics and inter-ethnic relations with an obvious wish to identify the religious and the national. A group which formed a part of the Islamic clergy was enticing the followers in mosques and various religious gatherings against such writings.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Preporod br. 1/249, 1. januar 1981. godina, Ahmed Smajlović, Islam i muslimani i samoupravni socijalizam u Jugoslaviji

<sup>43</sup>Note: In an interview with Derviš Sušić, the President of the Association of Writers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which appeared in the daily newspaper *Oslobođenje* on 26 December 1977 under the title „A literary workshop and all about it“ the publication of his new work „Parergon“ had been announced. „Parergon“ (Greek: side issue), i.e. the excerpts from his unpublished book which he had written while working on his novel *Tale* were published in series, in the daily newspaper *Oslobođenje*, from 6 August until 31 October 1979. The introduction to *Parergon* was written by Fuad Muhić. The author discusses the factors which influenced the formation of the Muslim national being and goes on to show that the activities carried out by individuals and groups in the period between the two World Wars and during the People's Liberation War did not go in favour of the Muslim people. Hence, the relationship between the notions of nation and class of the Muslim people in Bosnia and Herzegovina was not properly distinguished. „Parergon“ is treating the issue of traitors among the Muslim people, it is analysing the phenomenon of betrayal on the examples of the Ustashi and Chetnik

The third event which gave rise to general public criticism upon which several personnel and core changes within the Islamic Community took place, was an event which happened in the village of Poriče in the vicinity of Bugojno. The opening ceremony for the new mosque was held in September 1979 and for that particular occasion, the documents recorded the clericalist and hostile excess of Husein Đozo and the mufti of Belgrade Jusufspahić who both addressed the audience with “Dear brothers Muslims”. Their excess was characterised as a sectarian activity, a religious and national mobilisation, as well as an attack on the brotherhood and unity of peoples and nations.<sup>44</sup>

However, it is clear that the event in *Poriče* represented a sequel to the controversy about *Parergon* between *Preporod* and *Oslobođenje*. In the context of what had been written in *Parergon* about religious officials and the Islamic Community, the mufti pointed out that there had been some negative issues, but that they had been overcome by the same. The event has shown that the Islamic Community had not only been discussed in the domain of the religious and so the scope of activities of religious officials was exceeding the allowed religious boundaries. A certain tension between the state and the religious community could be felt because of the new demarcations of the scope of their activities and their primary position in the society.

The above-mentioned events were labelled as hostile manifestations of the strengthening of a religious community, its more and more active estrangement directed at the ruination of the accomplished religious and national brotherhood, unity and co-existence. After those events, the authorities attempt to suppress such negative actions by implementing certain measures. Following the event in Poriče, a meeting organised by the Association of

---

movements, certain religious officials, as well as some town groups which, in line with their own interest, played their petty political games.

Source: Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Committee for Relations with Religious Communities' Fund, Information on certain forms of clericalist-nationalist and shovinst activities by individuals in the Islamic Community, the Association of *ilmijas* and the editorial board of the *Preporod* magazine. In Sarajevo, February 1980

<sup>44</sup>Note: The Mufti Jusufspahić said, „*We are all offended by what Oslobođenje has been publishing these days. In the development of the Islamic Community in the past, there were some dry branches and we are bound to admit that, but now we are a healthy society and why is it necessary to stick thorns into a healthy foot? He who drives thorns into healthy feet is the enemy of this society, he is sick and needs to be cured*“. He also added, „*My Muslim brothers, do not eat pork meat because it has been scientifically proven that those who eat pork gain the features of the animal whose meat they are eating.*“

Source: Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Committee for Relations with Religious Communities' Fund, Information on certain forms of clericalist-nationalist and shovinst activities by individuals in the Islamic Community, the Association of *ilmijas* and the editorial board of the *Preporod* magazine. In Sarajevo, February 1980

ilmija and the Coordination Board of the Republic Conference of the SSRNBiH for the treatment of religious issues and activities of religious communities was held on 10 December 1979, as well as a number of meetings of regional religious officials. The general conclusion was *that clericalist and nationalist activities of the group which had been centred around the President of the Association of Ilmija and the editorial board of Preporod as well as the clericalist and nationalist excesses of certain religious officials during religious manifestations and nationalists who attempt to engage the Islamic Community in order to achieve their goals was to be publicly condemned*. The activities of Husein Đozo and Hilmo Neimarlija<sup>45</sup> were considered harmful, clericalist, and *without being given any kind of permission*; their groupings caused *serious damage to the inter-ethnic relations*, and they had the aim to oppose the People's Liberation Movement and the self-governing system. The document that was issued cited the opinion of the attendants of the meeting on Preporod's controversy about Derviš Sušić's Parergon. The members were all of the opinion that Preporod should not have taken part in the controversy, because Derviš Sušić's writing had been part of the general truth and that certain religious officials had been related to the occupant, fooled by the promises of an alleged Muslim state. At its very end, after an almost idealistic perception of the success and concluding remarks of the meeting, the document also mentioned the individuals who attempted to transfer their responsibility for clericalist activities to the entire association, thus reducing the gravity of the issue.<sup>46</sup>

Husein Đozo, according to the document issued by the Committee, distanced himself from the event in Poriče, expressing his regrets that the efforts of Preporod to introduce the Muslim population into the current social affairs and to free it from backwardness were perceived as forms of nationalist activities and aspirations for the identification of the religious with the national. Đozo pointed out that the intention of *Preporod* had not been to

---

<sup>45</sup> Note: Hilmo Neimarlija, as chief editor of the *Preporod* magazine, became prominent with his severe reaction to the publication and contents of „Parergon“. The reactions to the text were published in the edition 218/79 of the magazine. The articles were titled „Sporedno djelo“, „Namet na pamet“ and „Izvolite na pravu adresu“. The author of the first article was Hilmo Neimarlija. He pointed out that Sušić's text did not have a historical relevance and that it only represented an incoherent mixture of different documents and author's suppositions and impressions. He said that all Muslim politicians and figures had been put into the same basket, and called thieves and traitors. Certain members of the Executive Board of the Association of Ilmija and the Editorial Board of Preporod organised a meeting on 26 September 1979 on which they concluded that Sušić's attitude towards *ilmija* had been one-sided and negative and that it had been denying all the positive features of *ilmija*.

Source: Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Committee for Relations with Religious Communities' Fund, Information on certain forms of clericalist-nationalist and shovinst activities by individuals in the Islamic Community, the Association of *ilmijas* and the editorial board of the Preporod magazine. In Sarajevo, February 1980

<sup>46</sup> Arhiv BiH, fond, *Koordinacioni odbor za pitanja iz oblasti religije i djelovanja vjerskih zajednica*, Informacija o održanim regionalnim sastancima Udruženja *ilmije* u SRBIH, februar 1980. godine,

attack Derviš Sušić and *Parergon*, but it did consider it a mistake that the entire history of the Muslim people had been described in a negative fashion. The officials of the Committee suggested that resignations were not to be interpreted as an exercise of pressure by the authorities, which would ensure the attributes of victims and martyrs for Đozo and Neimarlija.<sup>47</sup>

Following the meeting of the Association of *Ilmija* in December 1979 and the acceptance of resignations of Husein Đozo and Hilmo Neimarlija, a reorganisation of the Islamic Community had taken place, and Preporod became the responsibility of the Supreme Islamic Council.<sup>48</sup>

The personnel changes and a public condemnation of individuals should have prevented any further “clericalisation” of Muslims (Bosniaks) and served as an example to those who share the same views. However, *the activities of enemies could not be prevented*.

At the beginning of the 1970’s, mass religious manifestations which, according to the authorities, represented an opportunity for the clericalists and nationalists to step out became much more frequent. The manifestations were perceived as a mixture of traditional and national-religious gatherings which surpass the religious boundaries. During the manifestations, politisations of religious issues were recorded, as well as discussions on brotherhood and unity and public support to the Palestinian people and the necessity of jihad (holy war). It has been said that these manifestations were more like fairs and parties with a tendency to become a tradition.<sup>49</sup>

The Mevlud on the Buna in 1981 had drawn special attention of the authorities.<sup>50</sup> For the first time after so many years a mevlud was being held in the tekija in Blagaj, even though

---

<sup>47</sup>Arhiv BiH, fond *Komisija za odnose sa vjerskim zajednicama* str. pov. 055-6 1980 Zabilješka o razgovoru druga Muhameda Berberovića, predsjednika RK SSRNBIH sa Huseinom Đozom, predsjednikom Udruženja Ilmije u SRBIH i odgovornim urednikom „Preporoda“, Sarajevo 31. 1. 1980.

<sup>48</sup> Arhiv BiH, fond *Koordinacioni odbor za pitanja iz oblasti religije i djelovanja vjerskih zajednica*, Neke novije pojave i tendencije u djelovanju vjerskih zajednica i zadaci organizacije SSRNBIH, Sarajevo februar 1980. godina

<sup>49</sup><sup>49</sup> Arhiv BiH, fond *Koordinacioni odbor za pitanja iz oblasti religije i djelovanja vjerskih zajednica* Osvrt na neka pitanja u vezi sa djelovanjem vjerskih zajednica i udruženja vjerskih službenika u SRBIH, Sarajevo april 1981. godina

<sup>50</sup>Note: the Federal Committee for Religious issues and the Rijasat of the Islamic Community have more than once discussed the issue of the mevlud. It was concluded that mevluds concerning family festivities (moving into a new home, weddings, etc.) in line with the Law on the legal position of religious communities could be performed all the year round without being compelled to ask for permission, which would be regulated by some Closer regulations for the implementation of the Law on the position of religious communities. For all other cases, permission has to be sought.

Kle 23 1957-1958. Izvor: Arhiv Srbije i Crne Gore, *Savezna komisija za vjerska pitanja* broj fonda 144, br, fascikle 23 1957-1958. Izvještaj za 1957. godinu, Strogo povjerljivo. Samo na ličnost

the dervish activities had been banned by the Law from 1950 onwards. The mevlud was reported on by *Preporod*, inviting all the believers to come.<sup>51</sup> It was held in the presence of the representatives of the Islamic Community from Mostar. This event in itself is an evidence of the strengthening of the Islamic Community, widening its scope of activities; and it is more of an evidence of changes within the society than of the Community's courage and awakened interest of Muslims in religious manifestations. Of course, this event was reported as an incident in all the documents, as well as a violation of regulations, as capriciousness and a great failure of the Islamic Community and the *Preporod* newspaper.<sup>52</sup>

The issue of the Islamic Community's constant demands for new religious facilities fits into the context of the more and more pronounced interest in religious manifestations such as Mevlud in Blagaj on the river Buna. The actual questions had been as to where did this expansion come from after thirty years of socialism and people's freedom, and did it represent a growth of religiousness<sup>53</sup>. The authorities did not have a benevolent view of the megalomaniac projects for new facilities of the Islamic Community due to influences which in this case, were exercised by Islamic countries which provided their material support. According to reis-ul-ulema Hadžiabdić, those projects were unrealistic demands of those who pinned their hopes on those Islamic countries, taking no account of the real needs and possibilities.<sup>54</sup>

At the beginning of the 1980's, certain circles outside Bosnia and Herzegovina which were in a close relationship with the forces inside the Community known as the clericalists and Muslim nationalists among the authorities, began working on the revival of religious values and practices. Generally, just the same as we make distinctions between intellectual circles which are more inclined to the religious element of a nation, i.e. the worldly and linguistic national foundation, in this period we make a distinction between more than one Muslim worldly fraction. The first fraction were the communists of Muslim origin who wanted to fortify the Muslim national identity and to re-structure Bosnia and Herzegovina within Yugoslavia, and the second fraction, according to Vjekoslav Perica, was also an advocate for a nationalist affiliation, but they were anti-communists and were called the

---

<sup>51</sup> Obavješnje o održavanju Mevluda na Buni objavljeno je u listu *Preporod* 1-15.maja 1980. godine, br. 12/236 i najavljeno je njegovo održavanja 3. maja.

<sup>52</sup> Arhiv BiH, fond *Komisija za odnose sa vjerskim zajednicama*, Informacija 6. Sarajevo 1981. godina

<sup>53</sup> Arhiv BiH, fond *Komisija za odnose sa vjerskim zajednicama*, Razmatranje Analize o građevinskoj aktivnosti vjerskih zajednica u SR BiH, Zapisnik sa Devete sjednice Izvršnog vijeća Skupštine SRBIH za odnose sa vjerskim zajednicama Sarajevo 2. juli 1980. godina

<sup>54</sup> Arhiv BiH, fond *Komisija za odnose sa vjerskim zajednicama* 055-3/82 Zabilješka o razgovoru Muhameda .Bešića sa reis-ul-ulemom i zabilješka o razgovoru M.Bešića sa dr. Ahmedom Smajlovićem, Sarajevo 11. 1. 1982.

Young Muslims.<sup>55</sup>

Xavier Bugarel emphasises the significance of the re-engagement of Young Muslims who were being convicted during the 1940's and who were now, with the support by Husein Đozo, the President of the Association of Ulema and the editor-in-chief of Preporod, spreading religious literature, strengthening the activities within mosques, and bonding with the foreign students in the country. It is particularly important to mention their activities in the so-called Mesjid in Tabak. Thanks to that "debating club" lead by a young imam called Hasan Čengić, young Muslims succeeded in winning some of the students of medresas for the implementation of their ideas.<sup>56</sup>

„The Islamic renaissance“ also includes the lectures held in the Mesjid in Tabak, attended by university students and pupils. Lectures and discussions on religion and its importance were lead by students, but many lectures have been written by the sentenced Young Muslim group members who were not religious officials (Rušid Prguda, Munir Gavrankapetanović, Salih Behmen, and Alija Izetbegović). Similar lectures were held in the mosques Jedileri, Ašikovac and Velešići. The work in mesjids was looking up to the system of lectures which started in the Bey's Mosque in 1967 and later in 1968, transferred to the Emperor's Mosque, and were finally banned in 1972 after the students of Gazi Husref-bey's medresa expressed their discontent.<sup>57</sup>

The authorities, i.e. the UDBA followed the events taking place in the Mesjid of Tabak, and in public, the "lay radicalism" was somewhat more discussed.

The case of two students of the medresa who "had taken off, torn and thrown away a picture of comrade Tito in the bin", according to the reports by the State Security Service (SDB), was an example of hostile activities carried out by students who were attending lectures in the Mesjid in Tabak in their attempt to revive the association Young Muslims and participated in the rituals of the "Dervish" sect.<sup>58</sup>

The authorities attempted to suppress the hostile activities of groups and individuals who had been propagating the pan-islamistic and nationalist ideas with the help of executive and judicial organs.

---

<sup>55</sup> Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkanski idoli I*, Beograd 2006, str. 190.

<sup>56</sup> Xsaviyer Bugarel, n. d. 7.

<sup>57</sup> Omer Behmen, *Na dnu dna. Život i djelo*, Sarajevo 2006, 214-232.

<sup>58</sup> Arhiv BiH, fond *Komisija za odnose sa vjerskim zajednicama*, str.pov. 09-10/81 RSUP-Informacija o slučaju cijepanja slike druga Tita u GH-Medresi u Sarajevu, Sarajevo 18. 2. 1981.

The enemies of brotherhood and unity have been legally processed in other Yugoslav republics as well, but the most important legal process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, often represented as the trial of the decade, was the lawsuit filed against eleven Young Muslims who were gathered around the mesjid in Tabak. Accusations for grouped and planned nationalist and clericalist operations and a close observation of all the movements within and outside the Islamic Community which was carried out by the authorities, represents an introduction to the so-called Sarajevo Process. This trial against the group of Young Muslims will be the subject of our future research.

## **Conclusion**

Following the period of rigid surveillance over religious communities and numerous lawsuits against religious professionals, there was a material and organisational strengthening of religious communities in Yugoslavia and consequently in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the end of 1960's and during the 1970's. Religious communities, following the world events, i.e. „the world's religious renaissance“ with their eyes wide open, become more and more occupied with the attempt to establish connections among different ethno national communities. Their interests and scope of work surpassed the religious boundaries which had been set by the Constitution of a state in which the religious communities were clearly separated from the administrative authorities. Once again, religious communities impose themselves as supporting pillars for national communities, as a permanent and inseparable element of identity. Strengthening of religious communities collides with the process of modernisation and secularisation in socialist societies of the 20th Century.

The events within the Muslim corpus and activities of a certain part of the Islamic Community at the end of the 1970's and the beginning of the 1980's serve as an example of the failure of secularisation. Documents issued by the authorities labelled the events as a form of politisation and clericalisation of religious communities, which was manifested in a number of events that underwent special analysis which was carried out by the authorities.

To have gathered enough courage to set up a plate on the Islamic Theological Faculty building represented a clear confrontation with the official authorities. The controversy between Preporod and Oslobodjenje concerning the contents of „Parergon“ has shown that religious community had not only been concerned with religious issues and that its complexity was a subject of a wider socio-political discussion. The event that took place in Poriče and Mevlud in Blagaj, at the source of the river Buna, are a prove for the changes that took place within the Islamic Community, but also within the society in which the authorities

did not have the opportunity to implement its strong concepts of secularisation and personal privatisation of religion any more. These examples, as well as the documents issued by committees which have been analysed in the text, question the revival of religion as an increased interest in religious communities and religious manifestations. It might be more correct if we asked what this Mevlud at the source of the river Buna meant to an average Muslim from Bosnia and Herzegovina after so many years.

However, we would like to refer back to the claim that going back to Church did not mean a return to the Church. The mass attendance of manifestations was not a reflection of the growing religiousness of the attendants, nor a reflection of their personal beliefs. Perhaps, coming to attend a mevlud represented something more than just sheer curiosity and striving for the forbidden.

Apart from the fact that we approach the problem of national identity from the viewpoint of a specific historical development and a close connection between the religious and the national, we cannot neglect the fact that religious communities skilfully used the economic crisis in the country and even the wider political issues to impose themselves as true leaders with adequate solutions. Even though the process of secularisation failed, or only partially succeeded, a renewed religisation and nationalisation of population represents a significant process taking place in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1980's.