

SOME DISPUTES ON ETHNIC AND (OR) NATIONAL IDENTITY

Panel at the Conference *Democracy and Human Rights in Multiethnic Societies*

Ljubica Djordjević (Univ. of Dresden) & Ranko Milanović-Blank (Sarajevo)

General Informations:

The seventh international seminar is organized in co-operation with the Dept. of Comparative Politics and the Rokkan Centre, Univ. of Bergen, Norway, and supported by the Project *The Politics of Democratic and Welfare Development in South Eastern Europe: A Network for Research and Education*, backed by the Center for International Univ. Cooperation and the Norwegian Research Council, Oslo.

Deadline: April 1, 2004.

Date: July 12-17, 2004.

Place: Cultural House, Konjic, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Please, send your proposals (ca. 100 words) to Ranko Milanović-Blank: rtkmb@bih.net.ba and/or Ljubica Djordjević: ljubica_djordjevic@yahoo.com

For details on the seminar, please contact Dzemat Sokolovic: Dzemat.Sokolovic@isp.uib.no.

Transport and accommodation information is available at the Institute's web site: <http://www.democracy-konjic.org> or http://www.bosnet.org/democracy_institute/

Inspired by the spontaneous discussions at the Konjic seminar in 2003 on the multiethnic character of the Balkan region and problems that it brought and unfortunately still brings, we decided to organize a special workshop that deals with ethnicity. It is our wish to gather 15 to 20 participants with most possible different relations to ethnic identities and wide range of perspectives in order to discuss some questions of ethnic identity.

As a collective identity *Ethnie* is a conceptualization of *us* defined by the presence of *them*. This poses a question of awareness of *us* and recognition of *them*, and the following distinction of *us* from *them*. In these constellations one could ask how, i.e. under what criteria, an ethnic group can identify itself as *us* and other groups (not) having some characteristics as *them*. In addition, what makes a single person to identify him/herself as a member of a certain ethnic group is not of minor importance. And last but not least we come to another level of our debate, to the characterization of an ethnic group from the third, neutral, party.

Defined as the basic phenomenon of existence (Germ. *Daseinsphaenomen*) of humans, ethnicity has been matter of interest of different sciences (sociology, ethnology, political science, law, etc.) so that some definitions and criteria have been defined. For example, the following criteria could be essential when dealing with ethnicity: collective name, the myth of common ancestry, a specific common culture, the connection to some specific territory, a sense of affiliation or solidarity. Speaking in definitions, an ethnic group could be defined as a group of people that speak the same language, acknowledge their integrative origin, and have a complex of customs and way of living, hallowed and preserved by means of the tradition that makes this group distinguishable from others of the same kind.

Because of the problems and even armed conflicts that have been based, among other things, on the ethnic differences of the population in the Balkans, it could be useful to discuss two more terms, ›nation‹ and ›citizenship‹, and the relation of ›ethnicity‹ to them (*ethnos-demos*). If one assumes that nationhood (in the Balkans) is conceived in ethnic terms, is it possible to find some solutions in redirecting this concept to civic terms, i.e. to nationhood based on common citizenship. In case of the latter there comes up the question of protection of national minorities and, back to our principal topic, their ethnic identity.

The main questions that should be discussed at the Workshop could be resumed as follows:

- Is it possible to list main characteristics of an ethnic group?
- What are characteristics that the participants find relevant to declare themselves as members of particular ethnic group?
- Is there any international code defining what these characteristics are, or should be, or how can one prove her/his belonging to an ethnic group?
- Is it possible for all members of an ethnic group to share the same characteristics?
- What if someone declares to belong to an ethnic group, to which s/he ›obviously‹ does not belong?
- Could nationhood based on citizenship solve the interethnic conflicts on the Balkans or would this cause a wider gap between different ethnic groups, above all between the majority and the minority/ies.

The Workshop will take place within the 7th International Seminar in Konjic. It will be interactive, working language is English (without translation). The facilitators will present the results of the workshop the next day, at the plenary session with translation (ca. 10 min.).