

SUMMARY

The collection of papers from the 19th scientific congress *Vukovar '91 – Croatian Society: 25 years after the Vukovar Tragedy of 1991* is divided into four scientific chapters: *Society, Religion, Philosophy; The Demographics of Croatia and Vukovar; Culture and the Media; and War, Politics and Ideology*. The last paper in the collection is an authentic account by Danijel Rehak, a participant in the defence of Vukovar in 1991 and prisoner in Serbian concentration camps.

The chapter *Society, Religion, Philosophy* consists of five papers. The chapter includes the subjects of solidarity and the common good, war and theodicy from a sociological perspective, the relationship between human suffering and God's responsibility, religious experience and war trauma, and the work of the Catholic Church in Vukovar. Ever since man was able to think, the relationship between God as the absolute good and the fact that evil exists has troubled the human mind. This question becomes topical whenever there are traumatic circumstances such as misfortune, illness or death. Philosophy and religion give different answers to this question, and in this collection, the answers are marked by war, suffering and trauma.

In the first paper, „Solidarity and the Common Good: Inseparable During War and Peace“, Stjepan Baloban discusses the relationship between solidarity and the common good. It is a well-known fact that during the Croatian War of Independence solidarity was omnipresent and it was manifested in many different ways. It is also well-known that this kind of solidarity practically disappeared after the War, never to be seen again. The Croatian people and society have been searching for an answer to this question for twenty years. Truth be told, the Croatian public, that is, „certain actors within this public“, have been completely fine with „nostalgic reflection“ on this solidarity and with the claims that „today everything is different“, instead of really trying to find an answer to the mentioned question. The aim of the paper is to point to the relatedness of solidarity and the common good (*bonum commune*), without which, according to the author, one cannot understand the various kinds of solidarity present during the Croatian War of Independence. Based on empirical research and the papers related to it, this paper points to the issue of desolidarization of Croatian society and the „practically absent thematization“ of the importance of the common good in the Croatian public sphere, without which it would be hard to imagine real change not only in politics, but in society as a whole. While during the War solidarity and the common good were necessarily seen as connected and therefore solidarity was actively present, in peace additional efforts are required for the common good to be first theoretically

established and only then practically applied. The paper puts emphasis on the issue of „not understanding“ the meaning of the common good in the socio-political sphere, which is one of the main reasons behind „the past being quickly forgotten“, which also applies to Vukovar. Solidarity and the common good were inseparable during the Croatian War of Independence and should be so in peace, as well.

In his paper „Where was God in 1991? Human Suffering and God's Responsibility in Luigi Pareyson's Philosophy“, Ivica Šola deals with the issue of theodicy by questioning, in terms of Luigi Pareyson's philosophy, the relation between human suffering and God's responsibility for it. The paper discusses the relation and reconciliation between God's existence and the suffering of the innocent. In post-1945 Jewish thought, the question of where to place God after the Holocaust prevailed. One may apply this on the Croatian case: where to place God after the suffering in Vukovar and the Ovčara massacre. In terms of the reconciliation process, the main points of discussion include a reconciliation between the aggressor and the victim, or in other words, a reconciliation between people, but no one, with some exceptions, speaks of reconciling the innocent victims of evil acts and God who would let such things happen. Drawing on the ideas of the Italian philosopher of Christian orientation Luigi Pareyson and his teachings on the evil in God, the paper discusses, in terms of the biblical Job, God's responsibility for the existence of evil.

Antun Šundalić and Željko Pavić, in their paper „War and Theodicy from a Sociological Perspective“, deal with the relationship between war and theodicy from a sociological perspective. They believe that in political diplomacy, war is the only solution to the problem when all the other solutions fail, while it is always marked by negative connotations which point to its destructive nature. The destruction of human lives, nature, human settlements, but also of all cultural ties between the warring sides are all consequences of war which take time and hard work to remedy. For believers, war destruction is a trial of faith with regard to the issue of theodicy, i.e. to the imperative to theologially explain the suffering and evil that happen during wartime. What is more, the need to forgive and reconcile after being the victim of evil acts are also questions which believers always face. The paper deals with the ways in which believers tried, by intuition, to explain war events during the Croatian War of Independence in theological terms, what kind of consequences arose from the war with regard to religious views, and what the role of religion in (re)constructing social reality is. The authors analysed and interpreted research data gathered by polling believers immediately after the War.

„With Religiousness Against Social Marginalisation: The Example of Vukovar's Defence Veterans“, a paper by Ivana Bendra and Vine Mihaljević, is based on a careful

examination of people's relationship with personal religiousness on the example of Vukovar's defence veterans, who have found religion to be a good answer to social marginalization. From 2010 to 2014, the authors carried out a qualitative and quantitative study titled „Religiousness of the People of Vukovar During the Croatian War of Independence“. This study showed that for the veteran population, which took part in the city's defence or were imprisoned in a Serbian concentration camp, religion had been one of the key factors that made it easier for them to deal with great physical and mental suffering. The next part of the study looked into the role of personal religiousness for the veteran population in contemporary Croatian society. The study used a quantitative research method based on nine in-depth interviews with the same sample from the previous study. The results have shown that in contemporary Croatian society, personal religiousness plays an important role in the lives of Croatian veterans. Croatian veterans' spirituality has become their main stronghold and strength in facing great physical and mental suffering that they still experience.

In their paper „The Catholic Church in Vukovar: The Guardian of Identity and Advocate of Peace“, friars Henrik Ivan Damjanović and Mario Zubak present the work of the Catholic Church in Vukovar, particularly of the Franciscan order. In a short historical overview of the said topic, they deal with the entire area of the city of Vukovar, which had three Catholic parishes before the Croatian War of Independence. During the War, the Franciscans remained with the people and in this way provided spiritual-sacramental and moral support both to Vukovar's defending army and its residents. During the time of exile, they remained with their people, while their friaries also served as centres of a kind, where the people of Vukovar gathered and maintained their contacts. After the peaceful reintegration of the Croatian territory along the Danube river, the Franciscans returned to Vukovar and immediately started working on the city's reconstruction, both in spiritual and material terms. In this sense, they served Mass in an improvised space, organized humanitarian help, while also serving as a kind of Vukovar's messengers outside Croatia. In covering the pre-war, war, and post-war periods, the authors present a clear and complete picture of the work of the Catholic Church in Vukovar.

Two papers make up a special chapter: *The Demographics of Croatia and Vukovar*. These papers cover demographic issues in Croatia („A Demographic Crisis in Croatia: The Reflection of the Social, Economic and Value Crisis“), and in Vukovar („The Contemporary Demographic Features of the City of Vukovar: Between War, Occupation and Post-War Renewal/Return“). Ivo Turk, Nikola Šimunić and Dražen Živić make up a team of scholars who covered the two subjects together, and in this way consistently and coherently presented the findings of their research. In the paper

which deals with the demographic crisis in Croatia in general, they presented their research by focusing on the social, economic and value factors, which, each in its own way, also affect the complete demographic picture of a particular society. It is probable, the authors highlight, that negative demographic trends in Croatia will continue because they are not only a reflection, but also a function of a serious social, economic and value crisis. All existing demographic projections, regardless of the hypotheses, point to the continuation of total depopulation and population aging. Even though Croatia as a whole is affected by a severe demographic crisis, there are regional differences with the trend of homogenisation in terms of negative features. The question arises of how to improve the existing bad conditions. There is still hope, but in order to improve the conditions, it necessary to start implementing a comprehensive demographic and family policy. This must include a range of pro-natalist measures, and at the same time enable high-quality parenthood to young families through a well-planned family-policy.

The second paper, which focuses on the city of Vukovar itself, fits in the demographic framework established by the authors in the previous paper, with the difference being the fact that Vukovar saw terrible war destruction whose consequences are reflected on the demographic factors. According to formal statistical and demographic criteria, Vukovar has been experiencing a continuous total depopulation since 1991, and a continuous negative natural change since 1998, alongside twenty years of a negative net migration rate. This means that population growth is negative both in terms of natural population growth and the net migration rate. What is more, demographic structures, particularly the age-sex structure, exhibit increasingly negative features. In such conditions, it is hard to imagine improvements in terms of social and economic development, which is still stalled by the consequences of war. Therefore, it is necessary to achieve a consensus about the measures of a stimulating demographic policy in all its aspects (pro-natalist, controlled-immigration and redistributive) at national and local levels (municipalities and cities), while making sure that these measures and policies are comprehensive and long-term.

The chapter *Culture and the Media* includes four papers. The complex relationship of culture and the media can and should be analysed by using an interdisciplinary approach, whereby sociology, psychology and intertextual literary research can fulfil their cooperative potential to the fullest.

Renato Matic and Anita Dremel („Vukovar: Between Violence and a Universal Symbol of Resistance“) analyse the relationship between violence and resistance from the perspective of sociology of power, based on the example of the city of Vukovar in the year 1991. The authors explain that, in a physical sense, the relation of force and resistance in nature does not threaten the entire existence, but when transferred

to society, the force which is used directly not only threatens freedom, but also the right to exist, which is why resistance expresses a need for freedom, making resistance from a right into a duty. Vukovar is a prime example for this universal pattern of the social relations between violence and resistance to it.

The paper by Roman Domović („Controlling Perception Through the Media’s Depiction of the Battle of Vukovar“) is the first in a line of three papers discussing the relationship of the media and the perception of the Battle for Vukovar, or rather, of culture and the veterans. Domović deals with the creation of the thesis that Croatian leaders, headed by President Franjo Tuđman, betrayed, that is, sold Vukovar and turned it into the factual truth which was supposed to become a part of general knowledge about the Croatian War of Independence. Considering that so far there has been no proof of such a theory, while there has been proof against it, the supporters of this theory have been trying to make it dominant by running information and influence operations. By analysing TV shows, theatre plays and by following media writings, it is possible to show the methodology of these operations and the techniques of manipulating information used in the falsification of the events surrounding the Battle of Vukovar with the goal of it becoming the dominant memory pattern in society.

In his paper „Integration and Inclusion of the Veteran Population Through Cultural-Artistic Activities: Veterans’ Subliminal Messages“, Tomislav Orečić wants to show the ways in which veterans’ subliminal messages could be understood based on their artistic expression. The paper discusses the isolated cultural-artistic activity, in this case literal production, which the veteran population primarily chooses without the influence of the other. The author depicts the field of subliminal messages that are products of the said activities (specifically, the written word), which can be understood as symptoms in the form of subliminal messages. They can characterize the psychosomatic state, which is reflected through the written word. This, in turn, offers us the opportunity to take multidisciplinary action toward the authors, the veterans, with the end-goal being their full recovery in a wider sense of the word. The paper does not offer solutions, but points out the possibilities the system must and can use in its approach to solving the posttraumatic issues of veterans.

Mateusz Seroka („The Depiction of the Siege of Vukovar in Polish Newspapers of 1991: The Example of *Gazeta Wyborcza*“) presents Polish media reports about the war in Yugoslavia, singling out in this case study the influential daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* and their reporting on the Siege of Vukovar. The main focus of the Polish media during 1990 and 1991 were the events in the USSR, which was falling apart similarly to Yugoslavia, and it was not until the start of a „civil“ war between Slovenes and Croats on the one side and the Yugoslav People’s Army on the other that the focus of interest shifted to this part of Europe. The Polish correspondents

of the leading newspapers of the time (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Rzeczpospolita*) came to Croatia and started sending back news for the Polish public. The greatest attention was given to two sieges – those of Vukovar and Dubrovnik. Those cities (along with Sarajevo, Mostar and Srebrenica) became for many Poles the symbols of the wars which broke out on the territory of former Yugoslavia.

With his article „With Sun Tzu on the Croatian War of Independence Before Vukovar“, Andrija Platužić opens up the fourth and last scientific chapter of the collection titled *War, Politics, Ideology*. The phenomenon of war would have a different meaning if the relationship of politics and ideology were omitted. These two concepts, each in its own way, influence the preparation for war and its course, as well as the post-war state (the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in Hague). Possible approaches to this topic range from theoretical presentations and the application of various mental concepts to looking for traces of influence and the agency of ideology in war and post-war events. Platužić in his own way wants to use the strategic reasoning of the classical Chinese philosopher as a referent theory when interpreting the events from, first and foremost, the beginning of the Croatian War of Independence. Through comparing events from the war and this theory, he discusses the level of strategic coherence of the involved sides.

On the other hand, Josip Esterajher in his paper „The Greater Serbian Ideology: A Political or Criminal Project“ discusses – motivated by the acquittal of Vojislav Šešelj, in which the International Court in Hague concluded that the Greater Serbia project was first and foremost political, not criminal – the true origins and influence of the Greater Serbian ideology on the Croatian War of Independence. In contrast to the court's verdict, the author points out that the intention of the Prosecution in the Hague Tribunal was correct, and that the crimes and aggression make up the core of the Greater Serbian ideology. One of the ways through which this ideology was supposed to be realized was the forced displacement of the non-Serbian population from some parts of the Croatian and Bosnian-Herzegovinian territories, which were considered to be Serbian. Šešelj's concept of Greater Serbia does not allow for Croats to remain in the areas which are considered to be Serbian, nor does it include the possibility for Serbs to stay as a minority in a population where the majority is Croatian. Šešelj's Serbian ultranationalist ideology is the basis for Milošević's criminal acts, which have yet to be condemned, as well as the criminal acts of the Yugoslav People's Army and Serbian nationalists against Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This ideology is also the cause of many civilians suffering, starting from Vukovar and ending with the genocide committed in Srebrenica. Šešelj was and still is an instigator, planner and active aide and executor of crimes

committed by the Yugoslav People's Army and Serbian forces (chetnik volunteers among others) in Vukovar and Croatia.

Friar Henrik Ivan Damjanović and Petar Elez („Serbian Orthodox Church: A Factor in National (In)Security 1991-2015“), continue along these lines. They deal with the role of the Serbian Orthodox Church during and after the Croatian War of Independence. The authors show that this is a case of continued and thought-through actions with the goal of creating additional tensions, which would lead to more conflict. After the War, the Serbian Orthodox Church showed no willingness to stop creating insecurity and mistrust between the members of the two nations and religions – Croatian and Serbian. To conclude, it can be said that the Serbian Orthodox Church did not give up the idea of Greater Serbia and that it is has been using various ways to, directly and indirectly, keep up the tensions, and still refuses to communicate with the Croatian majority or the Catholic Church in Croatia. All the listed theses are presented on the example of Vukovar.

In the last paper of the fourth chapter of the collection („Reasons and Consequences of Alija Izetbegović's Refusal of a Military Alliance with Croatia“), Miroslav Tuđman discusses the complex issue of the relationship between the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Croatian Defence Council (HVO) in the context of negotiations and Alija Izetbegović's refusal to form a military alliance with Croatia. The author believes that the fact a military alliance was not signed was based on the Muslim/Bosniak leadership's strategy of a unitary organization of Bosnia and Herzegovina, or rather, not agreeing with a federal organization of the country. Croatia was interested in forming a military alliance with Bosnia and Herzegovina for multiple reasons: for the Croatian Army, the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Croatian Defence Council to be able to undertake joint military actions against the common enemy, but also to be able to realize the international community's peace plans for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The paper analyses the Bosnian strategy and the reasons as to why the military alliance was signed only just before the Operation Storm, that is, on July 27, 1995.

The last paper in the collection, „Croatian Prisoners in Serbian Concentration Camps: 25 Years after the Imprisonment“, was written by Danijel Rehak. In this paper, the author points out the grievous position of prisoners, who were faced with daily abuse, and many of whom were killed. He warns about the position of these prisoners in Croatian society, about the question of responsibility of the Yugoslav People's Army and Serbian rulers for establishing concentration camps, and about the abuse and killing of prisoners, as well as about the position of the Croatian justice system on the issue of forcibly taken and imprisoned Croatian soldiers and civilians. This position of

the justice system is unclear, and questionable from the point of view of justice and fairness, even 25 years after the imprisonment.

This collection presents the intentions of the organizers of the scientific congress *Vukovar '91* in an adequate manner. The intention was to research and contextualize facts and phenomena related to events which are related or refer to the Battle of Vukovar (1991) in a special way, without neglecting all the potential and consequences of war and the damages it brings for the local community, as well as for society in general. The paper in this collection have fulfilled these goals in their entirety.