

*Slobodan Antonić*

## **Missionary Intellectuals In Post-Milošević Serbia**

("Misionarska inteligencija u današnjoj Srbiji", *Vreme*, Belgrade, February 5 and 20, 2003; translated by *Vreme*, July 2004)

In this paper I discuss missionary intellectuals in post-Milošević Serbia. After defining the term missionary intellectuals and describing the ideology created by the local missionary intellectuals, I offer my analysis of that trend.

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First of all, who are missionary intellectuals? The very term intellectuals implies inherent difference between that group and the rest of the society. That difference, as a rule, implies that members of that group (scientific and cultural elite) are better educated, more concerned about general wellbeing, and ultimately possess better understanding of public interest than "ordinary people". Their dedication to general ("higher") values also implies the desire to enlighten as many as possible other members of the society about these values, to convert some knowledge or belief into a general good shared by all members of a society. Thus, intellectuals, especially in underdeveloped societies, often tend to see themselves as a source of enlightenment for the rest of society and attempt to inform ordinary people about knowledge or values shared by the intellectuals.

The problem, however, occurs when the society resists acceptance of the values advocated by the intellectuals (or some of them). That is usually the case when values important for the society, basic beliefs that define the identity of the society, are at stake. For example, religion is such a set of beliefs, or values. Foreign educators (with "civilizing" mission, missionaries) are not surprised by that resistance, as they usually do not think very highly about the natives ("they are only savages after all"). That is why foreigners respond to resistance with patience and persistent efforts they invest in dissemination of their values. However, certain local educators, who want to "enlighten", "modernize", "bring into civilized world", their compatriots for their own sake, can frequently be enraged by that resistance. They sincerely wish well to their surroundings because they wish to share best values with their society. That is why they view with disapproval every refusal in the society to accept their recommendations. Often, such rejection makes them angry and irrational. For example, they start criticizing their compatriots and increasingly zealously and nervously promote their ideas. As every zealotry and nervousness lead to exaggeration and harshness, the new values are presented to the society in an increasingly bad light. Thus, the resistance of the environment to local missionaries - as they have in the meantime become missionaries in their own country, since they perceive some other city or country as their spiritual homeland, while they reject the place where they live as foreign (Vukadinovic, 2001: 59-60) - increases and in turn ticks off the missionaries even more and makes them even more strident and irritated.

In the end, local missionaries much too often must face a total rejection by the society. When that happens they experience a sort of a personal blow, a breakdown. They start to believe that actually something is profoundly wrong with members of their tribe, that the whole society is somehow defective. They are bitter, despise the society in which they live, and in the end they start hating it. They end up with persistent, tired, repetitive and totally fruitless denunciations of people from their own nation (region, city...), or even with open calls for occupation by "civilized foreigners". And if that occupation does take place, or they are given an opportunity to participate in government, unfortunately no one is more authoritarian and cruel overlord of their own society, no one is more eager to turn towards violence, impositions, bans, persecution, exclusiveness...

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I think that we can find symptoms of such missionary attitude in post-Milošević Serbia in the intellectual circle gathered around publications *Danas*, *Republika*, and *Helsinki Povelja* [Helsinki Charter]. That intellectual circle is not terribly large, but it is quite influential, especially in the media, cultural, and even political (sub)elite. Columns written by members of this group (for example daily editorial in *Danas*, columns written by Ivan Torov for *Politika*, Gordana Logar or Nataša Odalović, also in *Danas*, Dragoš Ivanović or Nebojša Popov in *Republika*, Teofil Pančić in *Vreme*, Sonja Biserko in *Helsinki Povelja*...) frequently contain a typical ideological function. They want to inform ordinary readers who, after a revolution and fundamental change of national political strategy, still do not possess "finely tuned political views" (i.e. are unsure what is and what isn't right), about "politically correct" attitude with respect to some issue, they criticize and "unmask" certain "unacceptable" trends and call on the authorities to correct "deviations". Of course, the former Communist Party is gone and thereby cannot dictate the "correct opinion" in connection with some issue, but now we have, with the same function, certain non-governmental organizations dealing with human rights or institutes for democracy and transition from Washington or Brussels. They, through their annual programs that finance local media, NGOs, trade unions etc, determine priorities that are through various campaigns imposed on the local society: facing Serb crimes in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo, building of Serbia as a multiethnic and multicultural state, struggle against terrorism (naturally anti-American terrorism), Roma, homosexuals, children with special needs, humane treatment of stray dogs and cats etc. (Đurković, 2002). However, ideological vocabulary is almost the same as twenty years ago.

"Initiative has again passed to the destructive forces in the society; remnants of the former regime are becoming increasingly dominant and, naturally, arrogant; well known nationalist and racists again dare speak in public... through the media and in all other ways, dismal hate speak, discourse of racism and intolerance is being renewed, xenophobia is again gaining strength, and it is more than alarming that today chief

protagonists of this new rush by Serbia towards the atmosphere of conservatism, primitivism, digging through biographies and national origins, are precisely some leaders of 'the most-democratic government in the world'" (Ivan Torov, *Politika*, April 14, 2002)

This influential faction of our intellectuals hails from a much larger circle of pro-Western and critical intellectuals who in the early nineties were sincerely shocked by the nationalist euphoria that had engulfed Serbia. Nationalism did at the time drive the ruling political elite, older intellectuals and even ordinary people crazy. In the atmosphere of nationalist madness and combativeness, the whole society rushed towards its demise. And the catastrophe, despite warnings from this wider group of pro-Western intellectuals - gathered around the then association Belgrade circle and publications *Borba*, *Vreme*, *B92*, *Republika...* - finally came. Bloody wars in Croatia and Bosnia broke out, and Serbia became a global pariah nation and suffered crushing economic sanctions in 1992 and 1993. However, even though the national collapse undoubtedly led to collective acquisition of knowledge in the most important groups in the society - political and cultural elite, as well as ordinary people - a smaller part of pro-Western intellectuals was dissatisfied with the speed of that education. It is undeniable that nationalism speedily lost ground in Serbia (especially after 1995), that Milošević both in 1993 and 1997 actually lost elections and that in the winter of 1996-97 Serbian population supported biggest and longest civic protests in history (see AntoniĆ, 2002b: 165-242), but none of that terribly impressed "mondialist pasardans" (as they were labeled by their critics). They kept repeating mantras about how the local population and elite are incorrigibly infected by nationalism, how the people has exactly the kind of government they deserve and the whole Serb society (both people and the elite) is essentially defective and incapable of democratic transformation.

"Persistent resistance to even a beginning of the process of transformation of the Serb society can be viewed not only as an institutional blockade (therefore, a short-term phenomenon) but much more as an effect of a long-term process in the sense of political culture that is essentially provincial and exclusive... It is evident that Serbia will for a long time coming remain shackled to the position of unadapted society, or a society that keeps failing to correctly adapt to the changing conditions in its surroundings" (Gredelj, 2000: 221-222).

"Potential resources for democratic transition in Serbia are today very weak and limited... Long term, Serbia not only will not be able to carry out a democratic transition but will be forced to fight for its bare survival and the survival of the Serb nation... there is no evidence that Serbia could in the near future join the process of democratic transition, even with a ten year delay..." (Inić, 2000: 50; 58; 61).

Since, therefore, Serbia is a "democratically deficient" society, the only way, according to these social thinkers, to establish democratic order in the country was - foreign administration!

"Serbia cannot on her own and in an authentic way implement a democratic transition... Serbia could use a sort of a *xenocratic* political form of society and national status that would provide conditions for the most efficient implementation of the democratic transition with crucial reliance on the Stability Pact... therefore, we can expect new military adventures of this regime, which would be a very suitable opportunity for the international community to move from the phase of 'containment of the Belgrade regime' to the phase of its direct removal with the goal of establishment of some sort of *protectorate (helping hand)* administration that would direct the country" (Inić, 2000: 63; all emphasis from the original sources; also see Sonja Biserko's calls for the occupation of Serbia mentioned in Antonić, 2002: 274-5).

Such articles were published as late as the Spring and Summer of 2000. However, in the Autumn of the same year, the very same "deficient" Serbia rose up and overthrew its dictator. But, instead of sobering up, moderating and recognizing the democratic potential of the Serb society, this part of our cultural elite continued with accusations on the account of the people and the rest of the elite, accusations that were frequently totally unjust and untruthful. Thus, we obtained our own "missionary intellectuals", a group that sees itself as some sort of missionaries of the Atlantic world and its values in Serbia.

For example when receiving the award *Press Media Pioneer* of the International Institute for Journalism, representative of *Danas* Radimir Ličina stated that journalists of that newspaper view their job "as much as a mission as a journalism" (*Danas*, May 13, 2002, page 3). Thus we again got journalists who are not merely journalists, but something more - perhaps again some sort of "social-political workers" [terminology from Communism]? Only now, it seems, the content of "social-political work" is somewhat different. True, just like under Communism, the fight against Greater Serbian nationalism, conservatives, tradition (Church and Serb Academy of Science and Arts), monarchy, Chetniks, petit bourgeoisie and its morality, inappropriate dedication to the rule of law and so on, remain a priority. Only liberalism (the so-called "anarcho-liberalism" under the Communists) has ceased to be a target for direct criticism. However, it still isn't in itself a positive value. Whenever mentioning liberalism, it is obligatory to stress that in Serbia the only "true" liberalism is actually anti-nationalism.

The basic ideological mould of such missionary thought is very simple and consists of five points:

1. *The Serb people is essentially primitive, anti-modern, and un-European.*

"When you see the masses at 'Zeleni venac' green market, and I pass that way every evening, that is the essence of this country as far as I am concerned. A bus from New Belgrade arrives, turns from Brankova street to Jug Bogdan street and unloads passengers arriving from New Belgrade. The crowd is huge, old grannies, elderly, all classes, blue collar workers, white collar workers, honest intellectuals... They are waiting to get on a bus. But they never wait at the proper bus station, where the bus they are waiting for is

supposed to stop. No, they are always trying to screw someone, to trick someone, to subvert the system. They are a sort of people who think this way - I am a rag, I am now going to enter the shitty bus, to sit on my shitty seat, I do not give fuck about anything, that's me and I live submerged in shit and I shall behave like that and who can do anything to me, and we can go on like that until the end of the world. That's what that image reminds me of. That is Serbia, dirty, smelly, noisy Serbia that assaults one from all sides" (Teofil Pančić, in B92 radio show "Pescanik" [hourglass], March 27, 2002; b92.net)

2. *Such a primitive nation is collectively sick with nationalism.*

"Never before, let me not be pathetic and say 'never in history', here, no religion, no ideology or utopia took such a degree and left such deep tracks as ethnic nationalism. It started as a moral deviation, and it ends as mentality, as a national sickness. It is not any less dangerous now that it has taken off military fatigues, put on a civilian suit and slowly returned to certain political parties, many institutions and nearly all the media" (Mirko Tepavac, *Republika*, 1-15 December 2002, page 4)

In Serbia today there is "an organized campaign of hatred of everything non-Serb and everything different... followed by outbursts of xenophobia and anti-Semitism (Sonja Biserko, *Helsinki Povelja*, January 2002, page 1). "The general understanding is that Milošević is not guilty because he ordered that *non-Serbs* be killed, but because he did not have *enough* of them killed" (Gordana Perunovic Fijat, *Helsinki Povelja*, February 2001, page 14, emphasis from the original)

3. *Just like the local population is collectively sick with nationalism, so is its elite.*

"As the crime is becoming increasingly obvious and as the evidence is becoming more accessible, the society in Serbia, or to be more precise, its elite, is taking increasingly organized efforts to not only relativize crimes, but also to de-ethnify them. The way in which this Truth is being distributed, especially through the so-called independent media such as B92 or *Vreme* - is equally totalitarian as nationalism that at the time started the machinery of war. The totalitarian mode of thinking is, unfortunately, now in the society in Serbia the chief obstacle to the democratization of the society and the best illustration of that is the interpretation of the recent past" (Sonja Biserko in *Feral Tribune*, reprinted in *Vreme*, August 1, 2002, page 14)

"The ideology introduced by the former regime served to justify war expeditions, and the few critical contributions could not do much against force in action. Ideology today cannot rely on force as before, but it is trying to establish itself as a value, to submerge everything in public life, with the clear goal of justifying the previous resort to force and war expeditions. That is why they are trying to kill off the same critical voices and are doing that much more loudly than under the previous regime" (Olivera Milosavljević, *Republika*, December 1-15, 2002, page 13)

4. *There are only two cures for the nationalist sickness of the Serb society. One is to bring to the end "the natural disintegration of the former Yugoslavia"...*

"By insisting on continuation of a *de facto* nonexistent state, FR Yugoslavia, the European Union is essentially supporting those forces that led to the break up of the former Yugoslavia and the war and that actively participated in the war. Such biased behavior of the EU goes against the goals that imply pacification and stabilization of the region. The process of disintegration of FR Yugoslavia cannot be stopped because it follows the logic of the dominant process of the break up of the former Yugoslavia and every forced cessation of that process and denial of the right to self-determination (in this case of Montenegro) can again lead to an implosion and continued collapse of the region to the point when it would become irreversible. By propping up FR Yugoslavia, the EU is actually supporting the concept of Greater Serbia" (statement issued by the Council for New Regional Cooperation; members from Serbia: Latinka Perović, Sonja Biserko, Olga Popović-Obradović, and Obrad Savić; regarding the status of Montenegro, *Danas*, March 13, 2002, page 6).

5. *...while the other cure for Serb nationalism is decisive repression: banning of books, ban on public activities, prison sentences and, in general "putting a stop to anti-civilization pluralism".*

"If Karadžić's increasingly numerous friends can print his book in Belgrade, Koštunica, Đinđić, and Labus can pack their suitcases and buy a one-way ticket;... if those who hold levers of power in Belgrade are really convinced that after October 5 there was no reason to ban any political party, if they are convinced that there was no need to remove from public life certain personalities and supporters of certain ideologies - they should not be surprised when Karadžić or [bishop] Filaret get elected for representatives in the parliament" (Mihal Ramač, *Danas*, April 25, 2002, page 9).

"It should be mentioned that... after October, no one has been prosecuted on that basis (nationalism - Slobodan Antonić's remark), although even the worst sorts of chauvinism, of pro-Ljotić and OBRAZ type, racism, and anti-Semitism are present" (Mirko Tepavac, *Republika*, December 1-15, 2002, page 4; literal quote from the original).

"The behavior of the new authorities is very worrisome. Instead of outright banning Obraz and similar organizations, they are timidly and hypocritically chastising them. Instead of arresting all of them and sending them to prison as a clear warning, we are still listening to calls for tolerance and a few denouncements, because we are, of course, a multiethnic and multireligious and above all democratic society. Just like, for example, Denmark!" (Jasna Bogojević, *Danas*, January 3, 2003, page 9).

"Here, for years already, a strange sort of pluralism has been dominant... There is voluminous literature and the media are very active in imposing, for example, the ideology of Dimitrije Ljotić, Chetnik Ravna Gora movement, Milan Nedić, and Aleksandar Ranković... Such a nightmare is contrary to

civilizational and democratic understanding of pluralism" (Nebojša Popov, *Republika*, December 1-15, 2002, page 13).

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There are several mistaken, and even dangerous traits in the ideology of our missionary intellectuals. The first such trait is *dogmatism*. If someone refuses to align his or her beliefs from time to time with experience even when it is clear that reality clearly refutes these beliefs, then such a person promotes typical dogmatism. For example, the intransigent refusal to accept democratic potential of the Serb society after the democratic revolution of October 5 is turning into comical assertions that nothing has significantly changed since, and that everything is the same - above all domination of xenophobia and Greater Serbian nationalism in politics, culture and science, only with different advocates (instead of Milošević - Koštunica?). This dogmatism (or, as we would say in Serbia - stubbornness) naturally creates other bad traits of the ideology. One of them is intolerance of criticism and even every different opinion, no matter how much it may be argued. "A good part of our democratic and intellectual (quasi)elite," Mirjana Vasović observes correctly (*Vreme*, November 21, 2002, pages 76-77), "is characterized by rigidity of (political) opinion, i.e. dogmatic thought that, ultimately, satanizes and denounces all those who even slightly differ in their views and beliefs, and the discussion of ideas is replaced by labeling, attacks and attempts to discredit people".

Another trait of this ideology is *cognitive exclusion*. This implies epistemologically privileged status of its proponents, which makes it ineligible for discussion. Marxism was an example of such an ideology. Its privileged cognitive power allegedly stemmed from the understanding of the importance of class struggle and the interest of the proletariat. Thus, every criticism of Marxism could easily be rejected with the dismissive claim that the critic is only showing his non-proletarian roots, which by definition makes his criticism unacceptable. The missionary intellectuals similarly claim that nationalism has so thoroughly penetrated all pores of the Serb society that everyone is infected - except for them. If for example, you disagree with the assertion that after October 5 there is as much (and even more!) nationalism in Serbia as under Milošević, you are thereby only demonstrating that you have been infected as well. And just like Marxism acquired immunity to every criticism by in advance discrediting all cognitive approaches except for its own, thus anti-nationalist missionaries become immune to criticism because they have qualified all other positions as *by definition* nationalist. Thus, even when you decisively reject the ideology of Serb nationalism, that is not enough to acquire non-nationalist legitimacy. Because, if you even in the least disagree with the description of the Serb society given by the missionaries or, God forbid!, mention elementary patriotism, you automatically join the group of "moderate nationalists". And it is well known that "'moderate nationalists' are only moderate to the extent they won't hit you right away" as Teofil Pančić nicely explained in the article with more than indicative title: "About extreme moderation" (!) (*Vreme*, October 24, 2002, page 29).

The third trait of "anti-nationalist ideology" is the *discourse of intolerance*. It totally makes sense that, if you have a strong sense of mission, sense that you are about to save the whole country, then you give yourself the right "to call evil by its true name". Thus, whenever "evil is to be named", ordinary or average citizens of Serbia become "selfish fucked up scum from the Silent Majority" (Teofil Pančić, *Vreme*, November 28, 2002, page 32), president of FR Yugoslavia becomes a "Nazi" and "stupid politician, just like Koštunica" (former used by Miodrag Stanisavljević, *Republika* November 1-15, 2002, page 48, latter by Stevan Dedijer, *Republika*, December 16-31, 2002, page 16), academicians from the Serb Academy of Science and Arts become "idiots", "crazy advocates of anti-democratic ideology, nationalism and chauvinism", "bloodthirsty academicians", "mentally retarded historians", "national workers ready to butcher" (in order, Pancic, *Helsinki Povelja*, October 2002, page 2; Stevan Dedijer, as above, page 14; and the rest to Petar Luković, *Helsinki Povelja*, Novembar 2002, page 38) and so on. However, if you respond in kind to our missionaries, you will immediately be denounced as a proponent of "hate speech". But, if you point out that they themselves use vocabulary that is not worthy of civilized discourse (see analysis by Mirjana Vasović, 2002), you'll either be told that in their case we have "justified anger", and "youthful exuberance", or on the other hand, "full blooded dedication", or will be in turn verbally assaulted and defamed (see Pančić's "debate" with Mirjana Vasović, *Vreme*, November 28, 2002, page 77).

Fourth dangerous trait of the missionary ideology are its persistent *appeals for more repression*. We have seen what the demands in that sense are. However, almost all such demands can be characterized as anti-liberal and anti-democratic. For example, Ramač's demand for a ban on Karadžić's book (comedy *Sitovacija*) implies that the book is not banned because of its content, but because of the author. A liberal, however, knows very well that correct, incorrect, truth and lies have to do with concrete books and actions, not with individuals. Also, Tepavac's and Bogojević's demand for prosecution of members of *Obraz* for nationalism, and demands for a ban on this organization, respectively, imply that someone can be tried only for advocating certain (nationalist) ideas, and that an organization can be banned because it is a nationalist organization. However, until members of *Obraz* commit a crime or a violent act and such a crime is proven in a regular trial, there can be no consideration of a punishment or a ban. Another demand, by Gordana Logar, mentioned in her column in *Danas* (April 22, 2002, page 7), that young men and women from *Obraz* must, before putting up their posters request a permission from the authorities, is also anti-liberal. If something like that is not requested from any other organization (political party or NGO), how come it is requested from this particular organization, even if we dislike their nationalism, without resorting to pure willfulness and discrimination? Finally, Nebojša Popov's division to "fake - anti-civilizational and anti-democratic pluralism" and "true - democratic and civilized - pluralism" (quoted article, page 14) is also extremely dangerous and anti-liberal. Pluralism is pluralism, we may like some ideas more, some less, but it is nothing but an ideological construct to claim that there is some sort of true pluralism that, oh by chance, includes ideas we like, while all other views, those we dislike, amount to

"fake pluralism", which is unnecessary and should be somehow destroyed. It is especially hypocritical to assert such a division at a round table debate about pluralism (held on November 23, 2002) that you organized in order to invite only your ideological and political allies! (participants were Nebojša Popov, Lazar Stojanović, Mirko Đorđević, Filip David, Olivera Milosavljević, Verica Barać, and as the host, manager of the National Theater Ljubivoje Tadić).

Finally, we should warn that the effect of the activities of missionary ideologists on the whole society can be totally opposite of their intentions. By fixating on something, even with best intentions, they can only bring more harm than good, especially to the mission itself. Good hygiene is good, but if you obsessively start cleaning everything and everyone around you, the result will be harmful in two ways. First, you'll not have time for anything else as you'll turn into a slave to hygiene. Secondly, your obsessive behavior will discredit the very idea of hygiene and give arguments to the advocates of benefits of dirt. The same applies to nationalism and anti-nationalism. Nationalism is an evil that must be fought. But, fixation with nationalism, finding of nationalism even where it does not exist, exaggeration of nationalism and general obsession with anti-nationalist exorcism can only end up as either an awkward social extravagance that provokes snickers of a majority of the society or, if you come to power, yet another dogmatic tyranny and persecution of the society in the name of an ideology. In both cases, instead of uniting all democratic and pro-European forces in Serbia on the difficult task of modernization of the country (see wider explanation in Antonić, 2003), intolerance, skirmishes and scuffles between democratic forces can only dissipate social energy and result in yet another downfall of the modernization project in Serbia. And then, no one will stand in the way of true explosion of nationalism in Serbia and yet another cycle of violence, wars and catastrophe.

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**Slobodan Antonić**

## **Idea, Power, Wasteland...<sup>1</sup>**

While I believe that four particular criticisms of the original paper deserve response, I prefer not to take into account two types of argumentation used by my critics, above all because of methodological reasons.

The first type of argumentation that I avoid has to do with the distortion of opponent's claims. Claims that are supposed to be discredited are first pushed to the extreme, until they stop making sense, and then are easily mocked (or even better, the opponent, supposedly the author of the distorted, extreme claim, is exposed to mockery). For example, Čurgus Kazimir claims that my criticism of the counter-productive and already boring imposition of certain topics to the local intellectual and other public is nothing but an extremist demand that only a specific approach to those topics be allowed. There is no doubt in my mind that these topics (from Serb war crimes to the status of Roma) are often taken into consideration and written about even without financial support from various foundations from "Brussels and Washington". Of course, these topics do deserve attention and we should think and write about them. However, what bothers me is that these topics are imposed on our public *because* of foundations from Brussels and Washington. I am convinced that that does disservice both to the topics themselves and to our public as well. The public cannot but be intrigued by the fact that tens and hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent on research and other projects about, for example, the status of Roma in Serbia, on visits of various expert teams from abroad in connection with that issue, on international conferences, on glossy multilingual publications, on meticulously designed advertisements... Results? If the public is not mistaken in its belief that the small circle of "fund using" elite and local and foreign experts are living much better while the Roma live as before, and if we are again told that the local public is still not any more interested in the solution of, for example, the "Roma question" than before, then something is certainly amiss and we need answers. I find these concerns and questions self-explanatory, because many problems,

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<sup>1</sup> Previous essay has caused the reaction by Dušan Pavlović, Tomislav Vojnić, Velimir Čurgus Kazimir and Miloš Stanojević in *Vreme* (No. 632, 13th February 2003, pp. 72-6). This is my response to the criticism, published in *Vreme*, No. 633 (20th February 2003, p. 58-59).

including the status of Roma in Serbia cannot be resolved on their own independently of other acute social problems.

The other type of argumentation I would also like to avoid in the future is the shift of discussions from arguments and assertions made in the discussion to personalities. I am referring to the questions-comments of the sort: which political party or intellectual group is "peaking" from me? (Stanojević); or why am I so frustrated (Ćurguz Kazimir)? This type of argumentation, in my opinion, does not lead in the right direction. It has been known for a while that the truthfulness of a statement does not depend on the character of the person who makes that statement, neither on the motivation for that statement, but exclusively on whether the statement corresponds to facts (reality). Therefore, let us see again whether my assertions correspond to the reality.

In that sense, arguments that deserve response are the following:

**1. Intellectuals referred to as "missionary intellectuals" do not all think the same and cannot be classified as a single group.**

This would be absolutely correct if we did not have certain criteria for classification. Even the same individual may change his or her opinion with time, and depending on occasion and context. I do understand that the assertions made in *Helsinki Povelja*, *Danas*, and *Republika* are not exactly the same. The first publication contains the most extremist views, the third the least. However, intellectuals who gather around these publications can be classified in the same category (that corresponds to a certain sociological model) on two bases. The first is similarity of their views. It is true that not all of them are convinced that "all our social theory is soaked with Nazism, as is obvious from the papers written by the youngest, middle and oldest generation of theoreticians," or that denazification in Serbia "should start in *kindergarten*". But, all of them are convinced that the most important and decisive problem in Serbia is and remains - *Serb nationalism*. The other basis is that there is no debate within this group. The day we read in *Republika* first criticism of something written in *Helsinki Povelja* or the other way around, it will become clear that this is no more, roughly speaking, a single type of discourse, or a single intellectual group. Until then, it is not unjustified, in a certain context, to treat them as a single group.

**2. "Missionary intellectuals" do not have decisive influence.**

My formulation was "significant influence". That should fall half way between "great influence" and "insignificant influence". Of course, this group of our intellectuals does not direct national policy, nor is in control of the public opinion (which would represent "great influence"). But it has such ambitions and is diligently and, I would say, increasingly successfully working on achieving its ambitions (which would constitute "significant influence"). Its voice is heard far wider than the small circulation of the mentioned publications. Not only because some of them have been promoted to columnists of much more influential publications (*Politika*, for example), and because their topics, and they themselves, enjoy support of influential factors from abroad, but also because

from time to time the ruling political faction gives them space in the media they control (thus, already during the first DOS scandal - in connection with the murder of Gavrilović - TV Pink in its main news program, on August 21, 2001, read commentary by Gordana Logar published in *Danas*; another example is the way endless letters by Nataša Odalović [also from *Danas*] were read on the same TV station during another scandal). I think that, for intellectuals, not politicians, these people are very influential and powerful. Let me use the following example as an illustration of their perceived power. When my paper was published in *Vreme*, which enraged Ćurgus Kazimir so much, I could hear from several of my sincerely concerned friends the following: "You really have guts", "you are not aware who you're criticizing" and "you're going to see how powerful they are". My friends are probably exaggerating. But, if my critical paper dealt with any other intellectual group in this country (and especially the one mentioned by Ćurgus Kazimir) I am convinced that it would not have provoked nearly as many reactions. Actually, it is likely that there would be no reaction at all (perhaps that's precisely what prompted me to write the paper?).

### **3. In the country burdened by nationalism, every criticism of criticism of nationalism must be objectively nationalist.**

First, let me say that I do not think, regardless of all nationalist outbursts, the Serb nationalism is the chief problem in this country today. Racists and ethnic incidents occur everywhere, even in the developed Western democratic countries. In the USA, after September 11, a number of mosques were attacked, some burned, and there were numerous attacks on Muslims and foreigners. Even today persons with Middle eastern features ("Arabs") find it rather unpleasant to travel in the US. But, I do not quite recall assertions that "American nationalism" is the main problem in the US. I think that politically and socially Serb nationalism suffered in the nineties a huge defeat in this country. It hasn't totally disappeared, but it is far from being an acute social problem. And it cannot be pacified by incessant complaints or calls for persecution of nationalists, but only through serious democratization and modernization of the society (please, consult my study about modernization, available at [www.nspm.org.yu](http://www.nspm.org.yu)). In that sense, it is not irrelevant from what position someone attacks nationalism. For example, criticism of criticism of communism does not automatically turn one into a communist, because Communism can be criticized from at least four points of view: Nazi-fascist, traditional-authoritarian, social-democratic, and liberal. In the loudest "post October 5" criticism of nationalism I was bothered by the recognizable anti-liberal tone, as well as a lack of understanding of the true problems of this society. Consequently, I spoke out about that.

### **4. Stated criticism of the ideology of "missionary intellectuals" is in itself ideological.**

It is true that my criticism in itself implies certain values and that I find liberal stance more appealing than other views. However, a set of values is not sufficient to label someone's discourse as ideological. Another important element

is required for that - dogmatism, resistance to the influence of reality on personal beliefs. In that sense I can say that I do not think that the social and my personal experience during the past decade did not influence me and force me to sharpen, and in some ways totally change my view of the Serbian society. Anyone who cares to compare my first book ("Serbia between populism and democracy", 1993), with my last book ("Captive land", 2002) can easily confirm that. But, I would really like to hear any social experience, or event that would convince our "missionary intellectuals" that the Serb nationalism is not anymore the chief problem of this society, that this is a society with a "defective elite" and nationalism as "national mentality", and consequently "democratically insufficient". Perhaps such an even hasn't happened yet, but can it happen at all? And can it happen without essentially implying the destruction and disappearance of the whole society?

Finally, let me draw attention to the *spirit* of the letter written by Mr Stanojević in which he protests that the money "contributed by us, taxpayers" (this is not a quote, but paraphrase) is spent on scientific projects within which "Antonić's paper, the paradigm of whining rightist nationalism, has been created" (this is a quote). That is precisely what I talked about in my paper - about excessive zealousness, blindness, clamoring for repression... That is the old ideological pattern, well known from the recent past - "what are we wasting worker's money on?", or later - "what is the Serb money being wasted on?". That is the same logic of repression that would - for the sake of "ideological struggle" - abolish projects, ban publications, "cleanse" the University... Only this time the "great idea" is neither Communism nor nationalism, but instead anti-nationalism.

On the other hand, the essence of my paper is precisely a warning that this latest "great idea", if protected from criticism, may end up ossified as a mere "ism" and, provided it is paired up with suitable source of political power, can end up creating the same wasteland in our society as the previous two. It is up to us to make sure that does not happen.