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RELIGION AS DISCOURSE: COMMUNIST AND POST-COMMUNIST COMMUNITY

Introduction¹

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and collapse of Communism was the most important event in the last decade of the twentieth century. During seventy-four years of Communist rule, three sets of ideas, namely liberal democracy, nationalism and religion, were suppressed and could not develop in the Soviet republics, except during the Gorbachev era. These three sets of ideas are separate, but are frequently mixed. Undoubtedly, religion is one of the most influential forces. After the Bolshevik Revolution, campaigns against religion have been part of a permanent struggle conducted by the Soviet rulers. Many efforts were made to introduce a new, non-religious system, the most comprehensive of which was a 1929 amendment to the constitution that prohibited the right to establish any religious institution. The lack of opportunity to worship openly and the propaganda offensive against religion and their believers aggravated feelings of national grievance.²

Culturally, Soviet policy-makers attempted to transform non-Russian communities into something more closely resembling Soviet Russia using revolutionary Marxist-Leninist ideology. Such an ideology was founded on a united territory, a shared economic life, one language, and a common psychological outlook.³ The psychological outlook of the non-Russian socialist nations had been formed on the basis of socialist relations of production, under the direct leadership of the Communist Party, and in conflict with the overthrown exploiting classes, and bourgeois nationalists. Generally, in order to subdue nationalist movements within its borders, the Soviet Union attempted to mix the peoples of the USSR into a “new Soviet people” grouped around a Russian ethnic core, adopting the Soviet variant of Russian culture and the Russian language as its common base. Hence the

1. Dr. Shirazi produced this article while affiliated to Slavic Studies at Monash University as a guest researcher in January 2007.

2. See Walter Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1962).

3. Edward Allworth, *Central Asia: 120 Years of Russian Rule* (Durham and London: Duke Univ. Press, 1989), pp.20-22.

process of nation building as a path to a new Soviet identity followed through Soviet nationality policy.⁴

Soviet nationality policy can be classified into four periods. The first period was the Leninist era, an era of tolerance of national differences.⁵ In this period, considerable freedoms were given to the republics in developing their national identity and cultural development. In this respect, all republics considered a national development programme during 1924 and 1928. The development of language and education had high priorities. According to Umarov, over forty per cent of republican budgets was devoted to the promotion of state languages, transferred to Latin script for the dual purposes of facilitating inter-ethnic bonds and for easier central printing, and literacy campaigns.⁶

The second period was the era of Stalin's consolidation of power. This period put an end to the Leninist accommodation of ethnic differences and heralded an era of "forced assimilation." The second period of Soviet nationality policy in the years 1928-1941 involved a centralisation of political control and a crackdown on "persisting national deviancies" within the republics.⁷

The third stage of Soviet nationality policy was the post-Stalinist period of rapprochement. Rapprochement, or the co-existence of different nationalities, had the effect of allowing more easily for the rejection of Soviet community by the mass of the non-Russian populations, if at the cost of social modernisation.⁸ With regard to the Islamic communities in the USSR, Helene Carrere d'Encausse writes:

A major consideration in the post-war tolerance of the Soviet government to ethnic groups, especially in Central Asia, was the centre's desire to win the support of nationalist revolutionary movements in Asia and the Middle East. They were thus required to assume a more tolerant position within their own borders. Again cadre nativization was re-introduced, although on a somewhat more controlled basis (e.g.,

4. Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 174-84.

5. "Leninist nationality policy can best be understood in terms of its dual objectives, that is, a) the creation and maintenance of a huge and ethnically diverse Socialist Society and b) the eventual unification of these different ethnic groups under an international workers' identity." For more details see Gregory Gleason, *Federalism and Nationalism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 19-40.

6. H. Umarov, "Development and Socio-Cultural Transformation: The Role of Education," in R. G. Gidadhibli, ed., *The Socio-Economic Transformation of Soviet Central Asia* (New Delhi: Patriot Publishers, 1987), pp. 104-07.

7. Umarov, "Development and Socio-Cultural Transformation."

8. See Dale F. Erichman, ed., *Russia's Muslim Frontiers: New Directions in Cross-Cultural Analysis* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1993).

Russians were second secretary in every republic) and while periodic religious purges continued, there was a tacit acceptance of religion (institutionalised in Central Asia with the creation of the Islamic Spiritual Boards). While Russia continued to be the “Elder Brother” in nationality relations and national unity did continue at least rhetorically to be the long term political objective, policies no longer attempted the violent (forced) implementation of this objective.⁹

A fourth period – that of Gorbachev – might be considered in its initial stages as a return to the Stalinist model with the absence of violence, but events rapidly came to overtake the political centre, and the Gorbachev period as a whole saw many opportunities for the assertion of local independence.

The general reaction to Soviet nationality policy was characterised by a complete lack of receptiveness on the part of the non-Russian communities, with Muslims among the most negative.¹⁰ This rejection was evidence of a strong sense of ethnic identity on the part of the indigenous populations and resistance to central attacks on that identity. Rather than co-operate in the socialist experiment, the Central Asian communities chose to remain loyal to their own heritage.¹¹ But by so choosing, their own capacity to develop an assertive national consciousness, with a strong affinity to their new nations, was also reduced. This defence of their own ethnic identity can thus be considered an “introspective nationalism,” inward-looking and defensive (protecting itself from the incursions of Soviet life), but incapable of positively asserting the idea of nationhood and a popular loyalty to this idea.

Existing religious identities like Muslim Central Asian traditional communities and institutions are inconsistent with revolutionary Marxist-Leninist ideological goals intended to create a modern socialist society.¹² The Soviet rulers considered it imperative to destroy all forms of traditional Islamic social and cultural identities and institutions in Muslim Central Asia and to replace them with new Soviet ones.¹³

9. Helene Carrere d'Encausse, *The Decline of an Empire* (New York: Newsweek Inc., 1979), ch. 1.

10. Roger J. Kaiser, “Nations and Homelands in Soviet Central Asia,” in Robert A. Lewis, ed., *Geographic Perspective on Soviet Central Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 293-302.

11. Erich W. Bethmann, *The Fate of Muslims Under Soviet Rule* (New York: American Friends of the Middle East, Inc., 1985).

12. See Alexander Bennigsen, *Islam in the Soviet Union* (London, 1966).

13. See Alexander Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State* (London and Canberra: Croom Helm, 1983).

The spirit of belonging together and resistance to Soviet domination reflected a powerful attachment to religious ties and traditional culture, and could be considered an indicator of a strong sense of nationalism. But popular rejection of the Soviet model of social development left the indigenous population socially isolated and fragmented, unable to translate this introspective nationalism into political action.¹⁴ The freedom of *Glasnost* led to an awakening of more assertive nationalism. *Glasnost* was also an opportunity for religious people to worship openly and re-establish their religious institutions.

This article examines the symbiotic relationship between ethnic and national identity, and religion. It will argue that the endeavor of ethnic revival, or nationalism, may use religion as an additional force, while, at the same time, in its struggle for survival and to regain territory, religion uses the ethnic and national identification. Accordingly, the issue arises of the similarity and difference between those two processes. Since the strengthening of religion, neo-islamization and neo-evangelization could use nationalism as a resource. In a number of Soviet republics, a stronger influence of religion and opposition to secularization are inseparable from nationalism.

Generally, the religious revival in the ex-Communist has taken the form of re-islamization and re-evangelization. Different versions of Islam¹⁵ and Christianity are the mainstreams in this shift to the de-secularization or de-atheization of these communities, as people search for faith, meaning, solace and support in order to be able to cope with their broken lives and realities.

The revivification of Christianity and Islam in the ex-Communist world, Asia and Africa is, as a matter of fact, a revivification of two old adversaries. During this millennium, Russia and the Balkans have always been frontline sites, areas of contact and conflict between those two great civilizations.

The revival of Christianity and Islam in these regions is linked first and foremost with the failure of the two major projects of modernity, both originating in the enlightenment: Communist society and Westernization. The attempts at rapid industrialization in order to overcome the “backwardness” of modernization without market capitalism and liberal democracy in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have failed. When the power of the efforts to overcome the “backwardness” and build modern secular communities are compared, it is clear that the stronger communities that

14. See Alexander Bennigsen and Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1986).

15. For more details see Shirin Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union* (New York: Routledge, 1987).

have developed have done so because of the restoration and resurgence of religion.

This article will explore that how post-communist communities are much more open and eager for a new evangelization and islamization.

Interaction between national and religious identities

There are many similarities of national and religious identities that allow close interaction and integration between them. Let us examine four of these relations.

1. These are the two larger *Gemeinschaften* overstepping the direct relations characteristic of family and kinship. They require overriding all other obligations, call for sacrifice, and satisfy the need of affective relationship. Because the national and religious communities are not directly “visible,” identification with them is realized by means of highly developed symbolic and ritual system.

2. These two communities put strong emphasis on the role of the past, tradition, history as factors for identification.

3. Their sets of symbols are included in the culture and interact with all other symbols in the cultures. If a religion is strongly rooted in a culture, it could play a larger role in ethnic and national identity. Religion and nation exchange their symbols and mutually support each other. But major religions go beyond nations. They are included in the cultures before they rise of national identity, but not conversely. Religious distinctions can conflict with national distinctions, and could become boundaries for the identification of different nations.¹⁶

4. The major causes bringing about today's religious revival – disruption of the other communities, social insecurity, the rise of non-material values, etc. – also bring forth ethnic and nationalist revivals.

Ethnic and national movements use religious identifications and symbols to strengthen their positions. Religions also use ethnic and national movements to strengthen their own positions.¹⁷ This is one of the best available opportunities for their inculturation. But in different periods, different types of relations between religion and nationalism can be found.

16. See R. F. Miller and T. H. Rigby, eds., *Religion and Politics in Communist States* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1986).

17. Alfred Cobban, *National Self-Determination* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1945), p. 12.

The first type is that of separation, which, in a secular society and a secular national movement, religion is separated from the State. But the main characteristic of a secular nation is that this is a community desiring support from the State. That is why nationalism might divide from religion. The case of the father of the modern Turkish nationalism, Kemal Ataturk is typical: he divided the State and Islam to give birth to a secular nationalism.

The second type of relationship between religion and nation is one of relative independence and interaction. In some situations and within some limits, religious identity prompts national identity or national identity prompts religious identity.¹⁸

In the third type of interrelationship between religion and culture, the religious identity becomes the ground for nation (or ethnic) identity and is considered at the most important part of this identity.

Re-evangelization and re-islamization

As argued above, the religious revival in the ex-communist world has generally taken the form of re-evangelization and re-islamization, wherein different versions of Christianity and Islam appear as a response to the failure both of the communist experiment, as well as the project of Westernization.

Nationalism and religion have emerged as the “answers” to these failures of communism and Westernization. In the Christian states, nationalism and religion partially overlap. In the Muslim world the feeling is widespread that Islam provides a self-sufficient ideology for both State and society, a valid alternative to secular nationalism, socialism, and capitalism. As John Esposito points out: “In the nineties, Islamic revivalism has ceased to be restricted to the usual marginal organizations on the periphery of society and instead has become part of mainstream Muslim society,¹⁹ producing a new modern-educated but Islamic oriented elite which work alongside, and at times in coalition with its secular counterparts.”²⁰ Revivalism continues to grow as a broad-based socio-religious movement, functioning today in virtually every Muslim country and [is] transnational. It is a vibrant, multi-faceted movement that will embody the major impact of Islamic revivalism for the foreseeable future. Its goal is the transformation of society through the Islamic formation of individuals at the grass-roots

18. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday, 1959), p. 243.

19. See Bernard Wilhelm, “Moslems in the Soviet Union, 1948-1954,” in Richard H. Marshall, ed., *Aspects of Religion in the Soviet Union, 1917-1967* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1917).

20. John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992), p. 46.

level. Dawa (call) societies work in social services (hospitals, clinics, legal-aid societies), in economic projects (Islamic banks, investment houses, insurance companies), in education (schools, child-care centers, youth camps), and in religious publishing and broadcasting. Their common programs are aimed at young and old alike.²¹

There is a revival of Christianity also in the ex-communist block, but the situation is quite different compared with most Islamic countries. On

the one hand, there is a surge in the quest for religion as a refuge from the severe value crisis and as a foundation for the identity of the personal self. But the Orthodox Churches in most of these countries are not sufficiently mobile and versatile to react to this quest. They do not have enough missionary spirit and missionary structures. Both internally, as well as in public, a furious struggle for power is being waged in some of these churches. They are not too well prepared to face the growing need for re-evangelization, since, for the last hundred years they have had almost no experience in inculturation, and they therefore lack the ability to adapt themselves to the psychology of the contemporary person. Thus, many other denominations are trying to gain influence in this region.

On the other hand, by contrast to most Muslim countries where neo-islamization is an expression of disillusionment with the process of Westernization, understanding their failure to be a result of Westernization, in the ex-Communist countries the attitudes are just the opposite. The mass impression is that a lack of Westernization is the main reason for the failure of their countries. They are ardent and zealous adherents of anything coming from the Western world, and it is in the Western world that they seek support for their distress. This leaves room for a great influx of different sects, religions and denominations from the West, and above all, from the United States. They bring with them not just their religious hope, but the lure and reputation of something from a country seen as an example to be followed. Some of them are Christians, some of them are not, but there is much room for neo-evangelization. What is different from the Muslim revival in the Middle East is that this process of neo-evangelization is taking place in conditions of greater democracy, openness, and competition among different religions. Moreover, most of the sects and churches coming from the West bring with them some idea of the limits of the appropriate activity of the church in civil society and the division between civil society and State. They are accepted by people as part of their way to the new dream: the wealthy West.

21. T. F. O'Dea, "Sociology of Religion," *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. xii, and p. 263.

Accordingly, we have conditions for a more monolithic and authoritarian²² re-islamization and more open and pluralistic re-evangelization. If the former is connected with a tendency to full desirialization, the second is connected with an endeavor to overcome authoritarianism. If islamization is a strong political movement toward unity between State and church, re-evangelization is above all a shift in civil society without so strong a tendency to unite church and State. For instance, the new post-communist constitutions of Eastern Europe countries such as Bulgaria do not merely promulgate once again the separation of church and State, but forbid the establishment of parties on religious grounds.

Across a huge territory from Asia and Africa to Europe, we observe the revival of two old rivals with different positions, advantages and disadvantages in the processes of evangelization and islamization, re-evangelization, and re-islamization. In this process Western and Eastern traditions encounter one another.

Their difference from the point of view of a strategy of inculturation is that in principle in most cases evangelization and re-evangelization have as their points of departure some distinctions dividing sacred and profane, secular national identity and religious identity. In contrast, Islam tends to deny these distinctions in principle and strives to include under its rule the whole person and culture.²³ That is why Islamic conversion encloses the whole person in a specific world and is quite successful. For this reason, it is more difficult to convert a Muslim to another religion or to secularize him than to do so which a Christian. It is a well known fact in the history of the Muslim religion, that although Muslims were initially a minority in the conquered territories, in time they became a majority, due largely to mass conversions of local Christians. In addition, those who remained Christians were Arabized, adopting the Arabic language and culture.²⁴ At the same time, there is not a single case of mass conversion of Muslims to the Christian faith. That is why the communities of Muslim emigrants in the developed Western countries are more closed and more difficult to integrate into the whole society.

The major peculiarity in the Islamic world is the near inseparability of the religious from the national (or Ethnic). Evangelization does not mean ethnic or national conversion. Islamization means a change of the entire way of life and practically always leads to a change of ethnic or national

22. Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1956).

23. A. Gauhar, *The Challenge of Islam* (London: Islamic Council of Europe, 1978), pp. 67-68.

24. Robert S. Ellwood, "Emergent Religion in America: An Historical Perspective," in Jacob Needleman and George Baker, eds., *Understanding the New Religions* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), pp. 273-82.

identity. When converted to Islam, a Christian or a Buddhist population, for instance, either affiliates itself to the closed Muslim nation or claims its own specific Muslim national identity.²⁵ This is true throughout the world. In Bulgaria, Christians who changed their faith to become Muslims under the Ottoman Empire are now inclined to identify themselves as Turk, because Turkey is the nearest nation which is Islamic in religion.²⁶ At the same time in Bosnia Serbs identify themselves as a specific Muslim nation, although they speak the same language as Christian Serbs. Even if, as in the case of Bosnia, people are not very religious, religion left so deep a vestige that now, with their brother Christians, they wage the most bloody nationalistic civil war in recent European history. To be Bosnian means first of all to be Muslim, and to be Muslim means to be Bosnian. In the same way in Malaysia many consider it axiomatic that to be Malay is to be Muslim. Consequently, Islam has been retained as the way of life, and there remains the self-consciousness of "us" Muslims as different from "them." Their Islamic identity and their appropriate ethnic or national identity are inseparable. According to Esposito, the modern notion of religion as a system of personal belief makes an Islam that is comprehensive in scope, with religion integral to politics and society, both "abnormal," insofar as it departs from the accepted "modern" norm, and nonsensical. Thus Islam becomes incomprehensible, irrational, extremist and threatening.²⁷

The problem however is not just that of different perceptions of religion as a result of modernity. There are two more important distinctions. The first distinction is the originally different notion of relations between the sacred and profane, religion and the State, which are characteristic of Christianity and Islam, and not just of modern and pre-modern visions of religion. The second distinction is that the inseparable unity in Islam between religion and State leads to an integral unity of religious and national identity. The nation is a phenomenon of modernity, of the modern world, and now this modern phenomenon is linked with the pre-modern unity between religion in State.

Accordingly, nationalist and religious revivals, which could be quite separate in other cultures, tend to coincide. This multiplies their force, strengthening both religious and national identities. This is in some sense a new historical phenomenon. When the two parts of a uranium nuclear bomb unite they become qualitatively new and different, and are followed

25. A. Al-Azmeh, *Islam and Modernity* (London: Verso, 1993), pp. 26-27.

26. Graham E. Fuller, *Turkey Faces East: New Orientation Toward the Middle East, the Old Soviet Union* (Santa Monica: Rand Press, 1992), pp. 41-44.

27. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, pp. 29-30.

by an enormous explosion. Similarly, the fusion of nationalist and religious revival may be the greatest danger in the Post-Cold War World.

As a matter of fact most of the nationalistic and ethnic wars and conflicts during the last decades have been religious-ethnic wars. This makes conflict much more plausible in the case of ethnic (national) opposition and tension between “us” and “them.” Accordingly, along the thousands of kilometers of the borderline between Islam and Christian civilizations we observe tensions, conflicts, terrorist acts and wars. It begins from the military clashes with the Muslim minority in the Philippines, passes through Islamic terrorism and separatism in India, the civil wars between Muslims and Christians in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Lebanon, Cyprus, the relations between Jews and Arabs, the tensions between Greece and Turkey, and so on. Everywhere the war is between religious-ethnic identities. Two additional factors prompt the confrontation between these two different religious-national identities and cultures. The first factor is the traditions and stereotypes of the confrontation between these two civilizations. The second factor prompting the confrontation between Christian-national identities and Islam-national identities, between the processes of re-evangelization and re-islamization is the desperate crisis, destitution, and marginalization of millions of peoples in the area of the main contacts between the two civilizations in ex-communist countries and a large part of Muslim states in Asia and Africa. In these conditions people become intolerant and look for scapegoats and enemies, which is the strongest factor reinforcing the nationalistic identity. This occurs in the “zone of contact.”

In any case, the process of re-evangelization in the ex-Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is inseparable from an encounter and tensions with the concurrent process of re-islamization.

Totalitarian ideologies as religion

One could understand the strength of the quest for a new faith in Eastern Europe if one takes as a starting point that a religion collapsed and that this gave rise to a search for a new one by its disillusioned adherents.

There is an old debate whether the Marxism-Leninism in the ex-communist world was a religion, a surrogate of religion, or had nothing to do with the religion. First Berdiaev in 1937 put forward the idea of Communism as a rival religion, explaining in this way its conflict with Christianity. If we take some of the most popular definitions of religion we can see in them several recurrent characteristics:

A Supernatural (transcendent) reality

Religion, regarded as a supernatural reality, is a qualitatively different reality from that which is experienced as “nature.” It is an explanation of

the surrounding world, not by its intrinsic properties, but by means of something added. The predominant personal link with this world is not rational and could be provided not by science, but by religion.

To oppose this position Marxism-Leninism calls its credo “scientific.” But, in fact, there is nothing from positive science in this understanding.

The Marxist-Leninist claim for the existence of objective laws governing the movement of Human history toward Communist community is a claim for the existence of a supernatural reality. The main proof for this “scientific” character is the ability of its ideas to influence people as “social historical practice.” From this point of view the “objective laws” and the “objective necessity” of Marxism-Leninism play the role of a supernatural (transcendent) reality.²⁸

The Sacred

According to Berger, “empirically speaking, what is commonly called religion involves an aggregation of human attitudes, beliefs and actions in the face of two types of experience – the experience of the supernatural and the experience of the sacred.”²⁹ Berger distinguishes the sacred as another kind of reality, one that overlaps with the supernatural and carries redemptive significance. The sacred affirms the individual at the centre of his being and integrates him within the order of the cosmos.

We find many indications of this reality in the practice of the ex-communist communities. They have their prophets and saints – Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, etc. The Communist community is the future sacred reality placing the individual at its centre.³⁰ The working class is the redemptive force; the sufferings of present generations will be redeemed by the “bright future.” The writings of the “classics” are like a scripture, revealing past and future events.

A set of coherent answers to the universal existential problems of mankind

Marxism-Leninism claims to give a comprehensive explanation of all core existential problems, from the physics of nuclear particles to appropriate haircuts.

An organization mediating between the sacred and the profane, the natural and the supernatural

28. Of course, the ideas of the world religions have influenced people over thousands of years, and Christianity displayed a stronger ability to change the human world and to create a new civilisation. Yet this does not provide a concrete “scientific” proof.

29. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, pp. 41-42.

30. Walker Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 87-88.

Some additional explanatory remarks could give a sociological account of these similarities. First, any revolution desperately needs some new religion to inspire the people. Such a “new” religion could be posed *against* some old religion, but the disintegration of society during the revolution requires even more urgently a set of beliefs, which acts as a religion. It is paradoxical that the victors in the strongest battles against religious forces most desperately need their own religion to replace the old one. The French Revolution provides a classic example of this. While priests were being hanged and church property confiscated, at the same time a surrogate religion was being established, a new civil religion in which reason came to be worshipped as a high metaphysical entity.

Second, at first sight ex-communist communities are atheistic, anti-religious and lacking in any basis for religion. In fact, their need for religion is stronger and the conditions created by them stimulate religious growth more than do the conditions of modern bourgeois community. On the one hand, the lack of developed market and profit motivation in the individual's behavior means that they have been exposed to much less instrumental rationality and materialistic values, which are the grounds of modern secularism. The market is replaced by the party and its decisions, relying on historical laws, and necessity. Higher and transcendent laws and necessities are evoked by the party and its leaders to replace the real market forces. But because a real substitute is impossible this evocation and all economic policy become irrational. This creates much more “false consciousness” than the one that was analyzed by Marx in bourgeois society. Market forces are replaced by religious faith in the power of the non-market plan.

On the other hand, there is a desperate need for some religious substitute because forceful and very rapid industrialization and urbanization destroy all old communities and identities. The party and its ideology is suggested as the only possible identity.

Max Weber has argued that Protestantism and its ethics is the religion of the capitalist society – the spirit promoting its birth – which is, in turn, the birth of modernity. It could be claimed that Marxism-Leninism in the ex-communist states was a specific religion necessary for the rapid modernization of “backward” Eastern authoritarian peasant societies. For lack of the condition for an individualistic Protestant ethics these societies gave birth to a collectivist totalitarian (fundamentalist) ethics and religion. They required asceticism and sacrifice now in the name of the “Bright future.” This ascetic was necessary for the initial accumulation of capital, for rapid industrialization, and for the predominance of heavy over light production. The satisfaction or personal needs was limited in the name of future gen-

erations. The distinction, however, was that the sacrosanct revelation was the result not of personal experience, but of party documents.

The proliferation of this kind of fundamentalist religion was connected with the marginalization of the traditional Christian religions. Now the collapse of Communism as a religion has opened room for the restoration of Christianity and re-evangelization.

Conclusion

There are several important dimensions of the process of inculturization which promote the process of evangelization. First, establishing connections with and support of traditional culture removes any accusation that the church “from abroad” destroys traditional values and identities. It is especially meaningful now when, because of the crises, all subsidies for the national arts and folk culture have been cut off. In the conditions of emerging “wild capitalism” the church will stand up for national values.

Second, religion could play a very important role for the defense of individuals from political persecutions in conditions of growing authoritarian attitudes, because religion can give a strong sense to the person in consideration of his individual rights. This led him in his engagement with some political forces. The church as a shelter in a collapsed world is thus one of the best positions for inculturation.

Third, applying a sociological approach, religion is uniquely able to attend to the different needs, ways of life and behaviors of the various social groups comprising these ex-communist communities – scholars and undergraduates, the unemployed and homeless, men and women, the single and old people, the disappointed and those broken in spirit.

In this way we observe different modes of Westernization. The traditional type of Westernization of societies from the Third World is connected with an imposition of secular culture and the abandonment of many of the traditions and values of the societies. This kind of modernization failed and had many negative effects. Now we observe in the ex-Communist countries the quest for a new mode of Westernization in which not secularization but some form of de-secularization (evangelization, de-atheization) is taking place. This is a new chance to unite this region with the Western World. Re-evangelization is part of this difficult and complicated process.

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