



FORUM: Postkoloniale Arbeiten / Postcolonial Studies

RADA IVEKOVIC

### **The Split of Reason and the Postcolonial Backlash**

The colonial as well as the Cold War divides Orient/Occident or East/West are examples of the Split of Reason, which was classically paradigmatised in Western thought by Kant as “theoretical” and “practical” reason. The split of reason can take different twists and refer to different contents. Some non-dualist Indian schools of thought, as well as Taoism, on the other hand, have theorised preventively ways to overcome the divide, sensing that what can be split, might also, alternatively, be shared or put in common. *Splitting* and *sharing* (in only one French word: *le partage*), so, come together/separately as two sides of a coin and are a major feature of reasoning as a process: as parting *and* partaking. There are instances of divided reason and of separated memories as (seemingly and at least temporarily) *definitive* everywhere: the memory of the victors and that of the defeated are often irremediably incompatible, in that they are usually unable to reconstruct a common, shared, past. *The fact is that memory itself takes part in the past event in order to reinterpret it for the future*; also, “memory is itself a historic fact producing other facts”<sup>1</sup>. The narrative *on* the past erases important alternative histories from the horizon of imaginable possibilities. This is how history becomes closed, monolithic and normative. Colonialist history obliterates any of the other imaginable scripts but the one favouring the dominant history. Post-socialist “restoration” by ethnocracies in East-European history removes willingly 50 or 70 years of *real life history* of a population, creating new selective “collective” memories in view of the new nationalist projects. No common history is recognised any more<sup>2</sup>. As the adherence to Europe of ten new members is celebrated, every journalist seems to now locate the infamous *Iron Curtain* between Slovenia (then Yugoslavia) and the West, forgetting that Yugoslavia was open and not a member of the Soviet block.

1 Alessandro Portelli, *L'ordine è già stato eseguito*, Rome, Donzelli 2001, p. 436. Cf. Giovanni Con-  
tini, Silvia Paggi (eds.), *Storia e memoria di un massacro ordinario. La memoria divisa, Civitella  
della Chiana 29 giugno 1944-1994*, Rome, Manifestolibri 1994.

2 Močnik, “East!”, in *New Moment*, n° 20, 2002, *East Art Map – A Reconstruction of the History of  
Art in Eastern Europe*.

Modernity came to Third World countries through colonial brutality. The rapid changes brought about through the French Revolution in the West provoked, within the revolutionary idea itself, paradoxically, a reaction in slowing down and enhancing a conservative process and “traditional” societies<sup>3</sup>. It only intensified colonising. The latter supposed and enhanced an irreparable civilisational fissure East-West, later South-North. This cleavage is still the basis not only of colonialist or Cold War knowledge, but also of a part of Cultural Studies. Colonialism and Orientalism have been the framework for any other contents. A *symptom* could probably be seen in those European countries that were not historically part of the colonial project, East-European currents of thought ignoring the colonial fact, even in the “Socialist” sense as subsidising underdeveloped regions. After the Cold War, some pauperised European formerly socialist countries rapidly became Third World.

Post-colonial studies (stemming from Cultural studies), Subaltern Studies, Dalit studies propose to question “from below” and to reinterpret *South-South* colonial history, that of oppressed “races”, indigenous peoples, peasants, ethnicities, downtrodden groups etc. They claim intervention (though fatally limited to university, forgetting the “physical nature of colonial reality and the physicality of the response”<sup>4</sup>). Subaltern Studies marks, over languages (leaving French out though referring to “French Theory”), a certain exhaustion due to the absence of political projects and to its inspiration being both revolutionary and liberal.

There have been roughly 3 kinds of more or less sovereign states in Modernity: the Welfare (Capitalist) state, the post-Colonial state as its “periphery” (mainly produced by Capitalism, but also producing Capitalism in the Centre) broadly called the Third World, and the State-Socialism state. All can be said national states. The 3-fold blueprint is indeed the weakest in the examples from the Third World, which has many shapes that are difficult to gather under one mould. All three types of state have failed, and it is the Liberal (Capitalist) state with liberal economic policy that is today’s general tendency. The Welfare aspect and the Social-economic aspect failed in their purposes – Welfare and Social-economic benefits. The post-Colonial state (where the state itself is imposed by the West), which was meant to be non-racist, secular or at least trans-religious, usually took after one of the two models economically, or a combination. It is usually considered that the post-Colonial state and the Socialist state both failed not only economically and systemically, but also and above all *politically*, while credit for political democracy is still given to the former Welfare and now more-and-more Liberal state : formal “democratic” requirements are supposed to be met here. It should be added that these (free elections, mainly) are not only linked in their origin to the Welfare and also to the Liberal type of state, but are now also supposed to be universal. Not surprising therefore that formal political democracy should find itself on the side of the “historic winner” of this portion of the

---

3 Vasant Kaiwar & Sucheta Mazumdar (eds.), *The Antinomies of Modernity. Essays on Race, Orient, Nation*, Duke University Press 2003, p. 271.

4 R. Samaddar in an e-mail to me on May 03, 2004.

History Game. Modernity was not equally kind to all, and only one pattern – Western Enlightenment - was recognised as rational and good for all (universal). In this perspective, colonising & occupying foreign territories was seen as civilising, and those territories as empty. Sovereignty is however claimed by all.

The three collapses differ too: in the European Union we live within Welfare States that are rapidly abdicating every aspect of Welfare and are heading towards the liberal model; most of the East-European Socialist states have ducked overnight into the liberal model forgetting about Welfare as a possible intermediary between Socialist and Liberal economy. Ethnocracies, newly and proudly capitalist and neo-liberal, have failed in the sense that they gave up former social and collective policies in favour of individualism and primary accumulation, leaving jobless populations who may have been politically unfree during Socialism, but were at least used to full employment, free education, health & social insurance. The Welfare and the Socialist state actually failed over comparable long-term projects related to social standards. They also failed in securing secularism. Secularism & the type of welfare and economy are fatally linked. The third kind of state, Post-colonial & independent (though imported), failed in all that as well (while having those objectives rather as ideals than as functioning policies – whether Welfare or Socialism) and, moreover, it aborted in its non-racial secular political projects while alternative histories (Samaddar) remain incomplete. If the (nation) state failed universally, we might well look up for other forms of socialisation and of collectivity than the nation and than community, as well as for other continuities (Clavero).

Let's not forget that 1492, one of the first landmarks of Modernity, was both the year of the conquest of the Americas and of the fall or of the *Reconquista* of Granada, both of inner and outer ethnic cleansing<sup>5</sup> of the nation state; that the national state was a colonial state<sup>6</sup> and is now a securitarian state, that colonialism was the very form of Western Modernity<sup>7</sup>, that the French Revolution itself was colonial, that the leader of the first Black revolutionary independence movement, Toussaint Louverture (Haiti), died in a French prison though inspired by the French Revolution, and that *the securitarian state*.

---

5 Klaus Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*, 1-2, Verlag Roter Stern, Frankfurt a.M./Basel 1977, 1978 (3e edition); Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms*, Verso, London 2002.

6 Kristeva, Julia, *Etrangers à nous-mêmes*, Paris, Fayard 1988.

7 Gilroy, Paul, *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Verso 1993.

*A linguistic digression*

In English, Post-colonial studies are imbedded through Cultural Studies – often *in* or *from* former colonies - *in a globalised language*, having passed through some USA academia. There is no comparable situation for French. Since in France there are no departments of Cultural Studies etc. and since the colonial memory is erased, they are not being constructed and identified as a discipline. Post-colonial studies are easier to pass on in Spanish or Portuguese, especially the former, over Latin America and Juridical studies stemming sometimes from Spain itself<sup>8</sup>. There has certainly been no *public* debate in France about the colonial past (and present) or responsibilities related to it, though that may soon start and introduce a much *belated and possibly painful catharsis*. This unfolding, *deeply* related to the colonial past, to immigration as well as to the recent history of Europe's division, is likely to be enhanced by Europe's construction. *No decolonisation of France* comparable to the de-nazification of Germany has taken place yet after the defeats of 1954 or 1962, *no political humiliation due to the French role in history*. Soldiers from the Vietnam war have been decorated by Chirac in May 2004 for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dien Bien Phu, and it is not even officially acknowledged that this was a *military and moral* defeat. I would like to rely on the authority of B. Clavero again in saying that alas Europe is being established upon its colonial heritage still unremoved and uncriticized:

“Let us say simply that (colonialism) is the presumption of supremacy and the exercise of dominance of some peoples over others. (...) Let us not forget that, historically, constitutionalism has not been very democratic and that, in fact, it coexisted for quite a long time with colonialism. (...)”

“Between a clearly articulated *pre-constitutionalism* and a relative *post-colonialism*, let us be vigilant. [...] (The Chart of Rights, “*la Carta de Derechos*”) [...] is historically loaded with the representation of Europe, since antiquity, as the (entity that) gives birth to, promotes, transmits and spreads civilization in the singular. All the cultural heritage of Europe, including the religious heritage, pursues and covers the objective of a civilization with a universal value and aimed at humanity as a whole. [...] Universal values should, of course, be promoted, if those are values of liberty; yet, what is being considered here is not a constitution for humanity, in spite of the fact that Europe seems to consider itself enabled for an undertaking of such a magnitude. As to the more humble goal of constituting itself, why does it require and why does it resort to such a preaching of universality – furthermore, by using terms of a registry of property? If it is trying to protect itself with disproportion, we cannot but remain concerned. Is it not the manifestation of remains of colonialism or, at least, of what such remains carry in terms of supremacist pride and conviction as to the singularity of civilization? Is it not a sketch of a colonial script for a universal history in which Europe would presume itself as the virtualising agent, if not the generator of humanity in freedom? If such is the case, let us warn immediately that the awareness

---

<sup>8</sup> Clavero, Bartolomé, *Genocidio y Justicia. La Destruccion de las Indias, ayer y hoy*, Marcial Pons Ediciones, Madrid 2002.

is missing (*la conciencia falta*). The preamble still assumes that such a history is the history of human civilization and not of European colonialism”<sup>9</sup>. So much for the Constitution to be.

One might note that no conclusive debate on colonialism ever took place in Great Britain either and that it may even be more unlikely there. The two cases of Great Britain and France may also help us understand where Central Europe, Eastern Europe<sup>10</sup> and people who do not traditionally belong directly to colonial history (but do somehow fit, with an “a posteriori effect”, in other people’s colonial past and an own *cultural* colonial history, together with a long history of imperial occupation of neighbouring lands) - fit into the story.

The two countries we might introduce here are *India*, an indirect rule colony, not a settler’s but a “private” colonisation<sup>11</sup> at first, a Western type of “democracy” at independence, and *Algeria*, a settler’s colony with a glorious revolution that was alas betrayed by its own children (for all sorts of internal and external reasons) and gave rise to an authoritarian non-democracy. Unlike India, there was no public debate in Algeria either, the discourse on colonialism, though existing, had one official form after independence. One of the reasons why the United Kingdom was lucky to escape without any relevant public debate about its colonialism was that a powerful Indian intelligentsia (GB had formed elites in India, which France never did to that extent in Algeria; moreover, the FLN\* decimated its own intellectual and revolutionary elite at the very beginning of the freedom fight<sup>12</sup>) took hold of the topic. Excellent Indian scholars, historians, feminists studied that colonialism, its developments and aftermaths (critical not only of British rule but also of Indian independence), within a tolerant public space and in a global language (with the obvious disadvantages, some advantages too): the debate spread directly over the world thanks to that language and was relayed in the academic ghettos in the US. *This defused the necessity for the debate to burst out within Great Britain itself, and they got away with it.*

France wasn’t lucky to have its own critics and interlocutors in Algeria talk to French intellectuals on an equal footing – the very conditions of the Algerian liberation war were so harsh and the independence so dearly paid in lives that there was no scope for a friendly public chat. The indirect rule in India had formed a powerful intelligentsia (with a local middle class). No such thing in Algeria where, due to the brutal-

---

9 Clavero, “Europa hoy en la encrucijada preconstitucional y postcolonial o de la provocación cruzada entre derecho e historia”, (manuscript) paper at *jornadas sobre Una Constitución para los Ciudadanos de Europa*, Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad de Sevilla 23-24 October 2003. Translated from the Spanish by Goran Fejic. Clavero examines the *Draft Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe* and *The Preamble to the Chart of Fundamental Rights of the Convention of 2000 (la Carta de Derechos)*. Further in his paper he compares the statements of intention of the departments of Law and of History-and-Civilization at the European University Institute in Fiesole, Italy.

10 As Birgit Wagner shows too in “Postcolonial Studies für den Europäischen Raum. Einige Prämissen und ein Fallbeispiel” in [www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/theorie](http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/theorie)

11 Term by Mohamed Harbi, “L’Algérie en perspectives”, in: M. Harbi, Benjamin Stora (dir.), *La Guerre d’Algérie 1954-2004. La fin d’une amnésie*, Laffont, Paris 2004, p. 36.

\* Front de Libération Nationale, in independent Algeria to become the one party.

12 Harbi, *op.cit.*, p. 42.

ity of the war, *no intermediary or neutral shared public space* between the two countries, colonized and colonizing, was left, while for India and GB, English played that role. After a long sequence of one party rule, Algeria capsized into internal violence in 1991 (when the Islamists would have won the elections but were not allowed to power by the military), which all prevented a softer development comparable to the one of India and GB (though the latter relationship, due to the globality of the language, was at the same time *displaced*). There are, of course, Algerian intellectuals and French scholars doing and exchanging excellent work, but it didn't make a school: after all, Frantz Fanon was there (famous in the sixties and forgotten since) and today Mohamed Harbi, Daho Djerbal and others. The language did the difference. Besides Algeria introducing massive Arabisation (with its advantages and disadvantages) and partly loosing the colonial language in education, French is *not* a global world language. Facing the French, there weren't former colonials criticising them in their own language *as a world language*, which delayed but never defused or displaced the conflict or a possible outburst, which may still come. In order for a discipline to be identified, you also need to have it surge out in some kind of opposition, response or to institutionalise.

No-one has access to reason as whole<sup>13</sup>: there is no such thing as the whole of Reason, or Reason as a whole, or the Totality of reason. (Though there are cases of such pretence, and we are just now living through one in the USA fundamentalist crusade.) Reason is patched up of disconnected bits and pieces that reside at different addresses. It is always partial, in all senses. Being shared is its way of being. Yet there are situations of temporary undecidability which are the possibility though not fatality of extreme brutality or of physical violence. Such situations can be described, at the level of individual or collective subjectivity, as an absence of agency, as de-empowerment. R. Konstantinovic has called such states of mind *palanka*<sup>14</sup>.

---

13 The following part of the paper draws on an extended, more elaborate version prepared for the conference « Cultural Diversity, Globalisation & Globalisations » under the title « The Liberal Totalitarian System and Gender », Paris, June 4-6, 2003, see [www.mondialisations.org](http://www.mondialisations.org). It was also used in my paper for the Dignity Forum within the World Social Forum, Mumbai 2004: "The Veil in France : Secularism, Nation, Women" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Bombay, March 13, 2004. <http://www.epw.org.in/showArticles.php?root=2004&leaf=03&filename=6943&filetype=html>

14 Radomir Konstantinovic, *Filozofija palanke*, Nolit, Beograd 1981, 2nd ed.; see by the same author: "Sur le nazisme serbe", in *Lignes 06*, 2001, pp. 53-75, tr. by R. Ivekovic; "Sur le style du bourg", in *Transeuropéennes 21*, 2001, pp. 129-139, tr. by R. Ivekovic; "Samuel Beckett, Ne rien céder à la traduction/Yield Nothing to Translation", in *Transeuropéennes 22*, 2002, pp.187-199, tr. by Mireille Robin & Natasa Ilic (bilingual, Fr. & Eng.); R. Ivekovic, *Autopsie des Balkans. Ein psychopolitischer Essay*, Droschl : Graz 2001. The central concept of *palanka* (literally "small town" or "province") denotes a state of mind rather than a location, in the sense of "spirit" or rather of "spectre". It means an incomplete integration of a still communal and perhaps partly even rural society in *transition*, whose contradictions - face to face with modernity - may, but need not, lead to violence. It denotes the always possible totalitarianism, a state of latent fascism of which everyone is capable and that is never historically overcome. Relapses are possible at any stage, as recent events in many parts of the world have shown (take the Balkans; the long march of racist and rightist ideas in the way Europe is being institutionalised; the "axis of evil" concepts; Rwanda, etc.). This type of society (*palanka*), of hesitation about Modernity, is possible anywhere, and is not limited to (post) colonialism or (post)socialism, but is known to late capitalism too.

In the case of France, it is *laïcité* (“secularism” – though the histories of the two concepts differ) that has to be re-imagined as well as the universal. *Laïcité* was the basis of equality (neutrality of the state) in founding the metropolitan-colonial centre of the French republic, but was the very basis and principle of inequality in the colonies, which were excluded from constitutional considerations. To the effect of the colonial divide & division of reason, a “nation”, claims an imaginary common origin and operates a backward time-appropriation. It adopts a vertical and patriarchal<sup>15</sup>, hierarchical form. It needs subalterns, women, the colonised, slaves and other pariahs, *as well as a secularism imposed starting from a non-recognised monotheism*. Secularism pretends to neutrality and sweeps away alternative discourses without appearing to be eliminating them forcefully. So the subordinations of some will have been the condition of the integration of others. Today we have reached the limits of *laïcité* and secularism everywhere<sup>16</sup>. It is now the leading subject that will have to de-identify. It *has to give up some of its authority and normativity in order to share it*. I am here pleading for de-identification. Within a configuration of the universal seen as a rapport rather than as the supreme office, the autonomy of the subject may be *complex, relational, relative, but saved*. A *nación* could then be composed of different *pueblos*<sup>17</sup>.

It is necessary to recognise the *theological origin* of state secularism (and of *laïcité*) inasmuch they are the *secularisation of a divine concept* - sovereignty itself<sup>18</sup>. This allows to better understand why “laicisation” doesn’t always give the expected results<sup>19</sup>: whereas universal projects (such as the “republic”, “democracy”) have been de-legitimised with utopias<sup>20</sup>, particularistic (communitarian) claims are more and more insistent as alternative, and are supported by the general condescendence to cultural, religious etc. essentialisms, though they may also be expressions of oppression.

There are no cultural differences, no sexes or genders outside society, outside the community, or apart from / without language. And of course, *apart from the state*. The ever new forms of partition, of political and emotional demobilisation and of division are *supported by the founding rift of reason (which they reinforce), from*

15 « Patriarchy » is a general hierarchy concerning generations, classes and gender inequality (not “différence”!). According to some authors who reduce it to mere “gender difference”, patriarchy would be an outdated concept, while gender inequality would be a purely *modern* phenomenon in the sense of *homogenising women* as a group for the first time in history, and thus not any older than geographic colonisation itself.

16 The French debate about the “Islamic veil” and the law on *laïcité* shows it, cf.: “The Veil in France”, *op. cit.*

17 José M Valdés, “HOW CAN A MODERN HISTORY OF THE BASQUE COUNTRY MAKE SENSE? On Nation, Identity, and Territories in the Making of Spain” (manuscript).

18 Roberto Esposito, *Communitas. Origine e destino della comunità*, Einaudi, Torino 1998 ; *Immunitas. Protezione e negazione della vita*, Torino: Einaudi 2002; Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and Its Critics*, OUP India, Delhi 1998; Carl Schmitt, *Le Léviathan dans la doctrine de l’Etat de Thomas Hobbes. Sens et échec d’un symbole politique*, traduit de l’allemand par Denis Trierweiler, préface d’Etienne Balibar, Seuil, 2002 ; Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer*, traduit par Marlène Raiola, Seuil, Paris 2002.

19 Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and Its Critics*, *op.cit.*

20 Generally speaking, it is thought that the “end of master discourses”, the end of hope in a transcendence or of awaiting a universal solution (or one *through* the universal) is also the end of utopia as such.

*which they gather their further divisive, normative and excluding efficiency.* This is why it is necessary to be thinking the new political subjects, those that outgrow both the reductive language of citizenship, as well as the depoliticised conceptualisation of governmentality<sup>21</sup>. *Violence as depoliticisation* would somehow have its origin in refusing the fact that life itself (as well as culture) is always owed to the other<sup>22</sup>. In this sense self-generation, which is at the basis of the idea of nation is also potentially (virtually) violent to others and derivatively suicidal. Generation is itself a partitioning.

Partitions of states, whether started or accomplished, produce apatrids, the non-documented persons, people without right to the law (Hannah Arendt), forced migrants, deported and refugees, both internal and external, that largely outgrow, nowadays, the definition of the *Geneva Convention* of 1951 (UN) : at least on political refugees rights, on their right to *non-refoulement*, the Convention is today outdated<sup>23</sup>, while the distinction between political and economic emigration becomes undecidable. Europe under construction has produced its own « nostalgic » of partitioned countries such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Cyprus, sometimes even the Soviet Union (incomparable cases, it is true). The apparent nostalgia for that period is only a regret for peace lost since and for a mixed society, and not an aspiration for the dictatorial regime. Once the independence legitimating of the latter exhausted, the equilibrium of peace crumbled. The « nostalgia » in question, denounced by various nationalists, had also been a resistance. But the *processes nowadays under way*, that the « nostalgic » themselves are not always able to grasp because their own lives may be at stake, are not those same nationalisms, fundamentalisms, ethnocracies being established, but rather the *becoming of Europe itself and the new configuration of the planet* (globalisation) of which they are a portion.

The intermediary ethnocracies that ruined our lives may well have been just secondary historic occurrences. Nationalism etc. will after all have been bloody and obnubilating episodes, incidents of transition – towards new integrations and the new liberal world order. The question is then that of Europe. These new nationalisms and fundamentalisms, communalisms, while bringing violence - also *homogenise* – and seem in that sense modern : yet they are far from being it from the point of view of their social function, where they appear as conservative in the best of cases, and more often worse in the international context<sup>24</sup>.

21 Ranabir Samaddar, “Dreams of the Colonised”, manuscript; by the same author: “The Last Hurrah that Continues”, in *Transeuropéennes* 19/20, 2001, pp. 31-49; “The Destiny of a Translated Constitutional Culture”, in *Transeuropéennes* 22, 2002, pp. 75-87; “Utopia and Politics in Muslim Bengal”, in *Transeuropéennes* 23, 2003, pp. 193-219.

22 Rada Ivekovic, *Le sexe de la nation*, Léo Scheer, Paris 2003; *Dame Nation. Nation et différence des sexes*, Longo Editore, Ravenna 2003.

23 Samaddar, Ranabir, *Those Accords. A Bunch of Documents*, Kathmandu, South Asia Forum for Human Rights, Paper Series 4, 2000.

24 See Malcolm Spencer at the same conference, “Kulturelle Differenzierung in Musils Roman *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften. Die Stadt B.*”, whose presentation pushed my reflexion in this direction. The same ideas are confirmed, concerning another example, in the paper by José M. Portillo Valdés, “HOW CAN A MODERN HISTORY OF THE BASQUE COUNTRY MAKE SENSE?” *OP. CIT.*



The origin of the misunderstanding lies in a bad negotiation of the *relationship* between the universal and the particular, between the nation and its parts, and not at all in the particular (culture, religion, indigenous people etc.) itself, and not in the universal as such (“nation”, “state”).

I have witnessed in the former Yugoslavia, in anticipation of its partition at the end of the eighties (after Milosevic’s “coup d’Etat” in the Party in 1987 - Yugoslavia being a party state) and during its civil wars over the nineties, state-building exclusive, aggressive and racist nationalisms and ethnocracies. Those nationalisms far from the liberation independence-seeking post-colonial pattern, they are comparable to communalism in India. They all addressed women as bearers of the nation and of soldiers. At the same time, the non-nationalist (and here, non-partition) resistance as well as what was left of the Left, didn’t address them at all. Power – even as it slipped out of hand - was not to be shared with women.

The question may also be *how to inscribe in the nation a population whose exclusion from it was the condition of the nation’s integration*: that was the case in the Americas, settlers countries where the nations were formed *without* the people (the local indigenous population) as a political agency, whether because these were exterminated, or because they were colonized and completely subdued. In France, the population of Moslem origin, even as many of them are secular or unconcerned by religion. The problem is really economic, political and social at a time when the Welfare State is rapidly been abandoned everywhere<sup>25</sup>.

#### *Post-socialism and Post-colonialism compared*

Not only do Socialism, Capitalism and Colonies belong to different forms of one and the same Modernity producing different though *interrelated, complementary and intertwined conditions*, but there are parallels to be drawn from that moment in contemporary history that marked the Turn (*Wende*), the moment from which on globalisation (though an old process), became visible to all and hyper exposed: the year 1989, marking the end of the Cold War, of the official division of Europe, the common entrance into globalised neo-liberal history which also marked the end of the simplistic controversy between Capitalism and Communism. The end of this dichotomy, or of one of the *partitions of reason* enhanced many other partitions (including *state* partitions such as in the former Yugoslavia), but that is a different question: partitions always give rise to further partitions<sup>26</sup>. *I want to expose here the generally shared sense (itself highly ideological) that “real Socialism” alone failed*, while it was clearly a more general failure – the failure of *a division of reason, of a binary*, in

---

25 Immanuel Wallerstein shows that the Welfare option, historically really a Liberal *safety valve* meant to prevent or to defuse Socialist options, was meant to prevent the latter and to protect the Capital from it, while, as a “lesser evil”, yielding to the “dangerous classes” in some calculated points. Its objectives were comparable to those of Socialism, though “softer”. I. Wallerstein, *After Liberalism*, The New Press, New York 1995, and other writings.

26 Ghislaine Glasson Deschaumes & Rada Ivekovic (eds.), *Divided Countries, Separated Cities. The Modern Legacy of Partition*, Delhi: OUP 2003. See the situation in Kosovo today, March 2004.

this case expressed as the political *Cold War divide* East vs. West, Capitalism vs. Socialism, Good vs. Bad Guys etc. The *partage de la raison* is difficult to grasp, since we are ourselves usually located within it. To “understand” it means basically that not being in an *objectal* relationship, difference is not philosophically interesting as an object, but it is – in its form that I call *partage* – *the very shape and movement of reason itself*.

The fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 started a major crisis in Third World countries helped by the socialist ones. It is from that time on, *from 1989 on*, one could say from a Post-Modernity identified of sorts, that the significant *differences* between what was the former Socialist block and the countries independent after WW II sprang up<sup>27</sup>.

The Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia imploded and gave rise to a quantity of new nationalisms, nations and states. The claim was in many cases that these were *liberation nationalisms* equivalent to those in once colonised countries. But “nationalism” in India or in Algeria had and still has (relating to those times) a positive aura (regardless of the price paid, we now know), while the same has become, for the new Balkan nations, associated with ethnicism, communalism, communitarianism, racism and ethnic cleansing. It is a matter of definition, nomination and standpoint, and the situations are varied. Resorting to the term of “semi-colonialism” as is done by the “Kakanien” scholars<sup>28</sup> may be practical but is theoretically unsatisfactory. I would suggest two main traits in the definition of a colony which, in any case, is a brutally *physically exploited* country - that a colony is a *non-sovereign country* (but any federal or rather *federated* state is so too) with no state autonomy (but most free states have lost that sovereignty today, and no autonomy can be absolute autarchy in any case), where a population of a basically different origin is made subaltern to the metropolis *in terms of the order of bodies, of citizenship, freedom and rights*, and cannot travel freely to the centre; there are variations here between settlers and non-settlers colonies. The inequality is institutionalised including some degree of *apartheid* between the ruling and the ruled. When the occupied country does have some political autonomy (as in non settlers colonies with Home rule), a colony would be the one country with a separate and clearly subordinate status compared to main parts, and physical oppression from the centre. If this is so, the definition of parts of the old empires (Austro-Hungarian; Ottoman; Russian, Soviet, Russian “empire” again; Iberian<sup>29</sup>) as colonial states is partly problematic in the sense that different countries (usually neighbouring and with populations though foreign, at least familiar and known) within the empire often have different statuses compared to a centre that diversely keeps them at distance. A third element for a tentative definition of a colony as we understand it today (but again, it is a matter of definition), is that modern colonies

---

27 Rada Ivekovic, “From the Nation to Partition; Through Partition to the Nation: Readings” in Glas-son Deschaumes, Ivekovic (eds.), *op. cit.* pp. 150-175.

28 [www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/theorie](http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/theorie)

29 José M Portillo Valdés, “How CAN A MODERN HISTORY OF THE BASQUE COUNTRY MAKE SENSE?” *op. cit.*

usually have to do with, or start from, the accumulation due to industrialisation and contribute to the construction of capitalism: European capitalism was historically fed by colonialism, as much as it reconstructed the colonies in its turn as “premodern” and closer to nature, providing raw material, thus paradoxically including slavery (historically, an “older” formation) within the modern economy and legitimising the “civilizing” mission. The consumption of goods from the colonies took place in the colonising country, centre of power. We could nuance here, and decide that colonialism has helped build other types of Modernity too, such as Socialism, and that assertion would hold likewise, but we would then need to account for the differences between these two kinds of “colonialism” (capitalist and socialist colonialism). Such divisions belong to our conceptual apparatus rather than to what we deal with, which in all events requires a case-by-case analysis. It is risky to apply exclusive definitions. It is worthwhile, however, to test Samir Amin’s quite convincing inversion of the roles played by colonialism and imperialism here, from the perspective of the *peripheries*. According to him, it is capitalist imperialism, that developed colonialism as its instrument<sup>30</sup>.

Regarding the Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia, neighbouring countries and in some cases peoples historically linked to the political centre, received within the federation relative state autonomy, or indeed got thereof their first and only stately status. This was the case of Macedonia or Bosnia-Herzegovina, federal units with recognised nation[hood] in (socialist) Yugoslavia. A case appearing more like colonialism is that of Kosovo (underdeveloped compared to the rest of the country), where the cultural and linguistic difference is felt more between Albanians and Slavs for historic and in recent history mainly economic reasons. But the linguistic, and the constructed ethnic, difference is certainly played out and escalated on both sides. There is no doubt that Kosovo suffered repression within Serbia, unprotected by the Federation. But again, Kosovo had, and especially so since 1974, stately autonomy, its citizens had formally exactly the same rights as any other Yugoslavs. With some other regions in Croatia, with Bosnia-Herzegovina etc., declared as an underdeveloped region, Kosovo was also highly subsidised directly from federal funds. (Another matter analysing and criticising how the subsidies were distributed and how development was planned. Subsidies also reproduce subalternity.)<sup>31</sup>

*Colonisation is not one particular event in the past, but a natural tendency of stately power to spread. This took many different forms of which some were historically called “colonisation”, while the spreading itself actually had degrees, including different levels of brutality and violence.* Colonialism is not a unique or separate phenomenon, it is the dynamics of state-building as such.

---

30 S. Amin, *Le virus libéral. La guerre permanente et l’américanisation du monde*, Le Temps des cerises, Paris 2003, p. 40; only Maoism, he continues, understood the challenge! But that is another question.

31 Ivekovic, Ivan, *Ethnic and Regional Conflicts in Yugoslavia and Transcaucasia. A Political Economy of Contemporary Ethnonational Mobilization*, Longo Editore: Ravenna 2000.

New nationalisms of the nineties in Europe are not liberatory. Post-colonial studies may not be useless to understand these too. There haven't been forgotten European colonialisms here, but its colonial heritage remains unquestioned. It is facing now the making of the "New American Century". New nationalist ethnocentric drives in East Europe can be compared with West European separatist nationalisms, such as the Basque one. After 1978, the Spanish "de-constitutionalisation" through largely distributed autonomies to provinces whose nationalists consider themselves colonized by the Spaniards, produced various paradoxes, as shown by Bartolomé Clavero: "A project is promoted that brims over its own authority of institutional representation"<sup>32</sup>, inasmuch as both the establishing principle and an established regime are asserted in one and the same move while the tension between constituting and constituted power is not resolved<sup>33</sup>. The nationalist project, claiming response to a colonialism, really de-empowers its people by a double-bind. "That there be a historiography imagining a Basque people as a colonized subject over time and in the present seems to be at least offensive for those peoples that really suffer colonialism", adds Clavero<sup>34</sup>. The autonomy of the Basques, divided between France and Spain *within* Europe, necessarily questions the latter's making. Or the adherence of a truncated Cyprus.

As NGOs in Skopje have a conference on Postcolonial critique and the Balkans in 2003, as the opposition Belgrade Circle publishes Subaltern and Post-colonial authors, as the Centre for Women's Studies in Zagreb teaches post-colonial literature and movements, one can conclude to a suddenly growing interest for (post-)colonial studies in the Balkans. Many there will now be "Subaltern" claiming to have been colonised yesterday by one of the Yugoslav components, or today by the "West". Most have forgotten the non-aligned third-world policy of then Yugoslavia, showing a non-contemporaneity of history and historiography. There is a gap and a *postponed remembrance* here, a *displaced recollection*. Non-alignment was a boring official discourse then. The real-socialist pattern was often abhorred though pride was taken then in the Yugoslav resistance to Nazism and Stalinism, as much as the post-colonial one was largely ignored. So the present belated recognition of a once existing (state-cultivated!) and fundamentally neglected parentage has some traits of all the "post-": they execute a strange "loop" in time with a *petitio principii* in the "post-". *Consciousness is oft belated, and received history may mask the many alternative histories.* The *displacement / being out of place*, or (*e*)*migration*, being *stateless*, which is a general human condition but so palpable in situations of partitions and

---

32 Bartolomé Clavero, "Entre desahucio de fuero y quiebra de estatuto: Euskadi según el doble plan del Lendkari", in *Revista de estudios políticos*, abril-mayo 2003, p. 58. Portillo Valdés, *op. cit.*

33 The paradox appears in the Additional Disposition of the Autonomy Statutes of the Basque Country or Euskadi: "La aceptación del régimen de autonomía que se establece en el presente Estatuto no implica renuncia del Pueblo Vasco a los derechos que como tal le hubieran podido corresponder en virtud de su historia, que podrán ser actualizados de acuerdo con lo que establezca el ordenamiento jurídico." *Ibid*, p. 46.

34 *Ibid*, p. 73, n. see also his book : Clavero, *Genocidio y justicia. La Destrucción de las Indias, ayer y hoy*, Marcial Pons Historia, Madrid 2002.

wars, was recognised by the Balkans only when it happened here – i.e. 50 after the South Asian example, in spite of the former non-aligned ideology. *No-one else's life can feel as real as our own*. But various contemporary nationalisms, fundamentalisms rely on post-colonial discourses of other times, and trick their public. A narration is linked to a space, or “translates a space into a place<sup>35</sup>”, *utopia* into *topos*. Non-aligned citizens had no narrative field for the concept of “partition” until its meaning sprang up through “their” own *bodies, territory*, culture and identity. It is in a way when it lost a territory (the Yugoslav space) and its referent other, the “non-aligned”, that the non-nationalist opposition earned itself a narrative field for post-colonial imagination. The post-colonial text is now the deviation of “our” own unconscious. There is a paradox here, since the strategy of anti-colonial and anti-imperial resistance is structured by the wish to reshuffle the relationship to the other through a *translation* of the past or of the unconscious into a new *common* narrative field, yet avoiding binaries; which also means reconstructing the hegemony as all the players in the game are being replaced.

One could argue that land conquered by Empires, in the European case neighbouring countries, are forgotten “colonialisms”. It is a matter of convention but it is *not* philosophically challenging. Such a decision, whether to encompass or not such cases into the description of colonialism – is itself necessarily *located*, a matter informed ideologically, and this is itself part of the *partage de la raison*. There are many common elements with colonialism here, and many others that aren't. It's a matter of nomination. See for example the “matriochka” (Chinese boxes) form of Russian unity<sup>36</sup> all through the empire throughout the Soviet Union & back to Russia which is still an empire of sorts: to the contrary of other colonialisms, the annexed peoples have here in their turn in some ways become co-founders of the central (Russian, then Soviet) identity as much as the latter formed them<sup>37</sup>. The settlers have often, though not always, been absorbed into local elites in “Eurasia”, building through them a cohesion with the centre. Today, after the crumbling of the Soviet regime, it is the local elites in newly independent states, that in many cases never asked for independence (unlike Chechnia), who took over maintaining what seems to be an uninterrupted continuity of power since the Tsar. Can one speak of colonialism here in the same sense as in other cases? Or of inner colonialism? K. Theweleit called the subordination of women “inner colonialism”. The way in which large territories East and South of Russia were annexed, absorbed, integrated, maintained attached to the centre must be studied.

---

35 Sanjay Chaturvedi, “The Excess of Geopolitics: Partition of ‘British India’”, in: S. Bianchini, S. Chaturvedi, R. Ivekovic, R. Samaddar, *PARTITIONS. Reshaping States and Minds*, Frank Cass, (forthcoming 2005).

36 Stefano Bianchini, “Partitions – Categories and Destinies”, in: S. Bianchini, S. Chaturvedi, R. Ivekovic, R. Samaddar, *PARTITIONS. Reshaping States and Minds*, *op. cit*

37 Michael Thuman, *La Puissance russe. Un puzzle à reconstituer?*, Alvik, Paris 2003, mentioned in: Sylvie Braibant, “Impuissance et émancipation de la Russie” in *Le Monde diplomatique*, January 2004, p. 31

*Self-determination*, Lenin's and Woodrow Wilson's idea, seen later by two blocks as the balance of power, was *also* to be the basis of post-colonialism and of "non-alignment": then universalised, it is now shattered mainly by the USA.

Prof. Rada Ivekovic  
Université Jean Monnet  
Faculté SHS  
33, rue du Onze novembre  
F-42023 Saint-Etienne CEDEX 2

Collège international de philosophie  
1, rue Descartes  
F 75005 Paris

E-Mail : [rivekovic@hotmail.com](mailto:rivekovic@hotmail.com)