

Lecture by Drago Pilsel : Political Theology – The Theology of National Anti-Myth (Role of religion in war and post-war).

Mostar, 14. July 2007

[Authorized text!](#)

Zelimir Zilnik:

Good morning everyone, today as we have already announced, we have very special guests, Mr. and Mrs. Pilsel. I told you what you are going to hear in today's lecture and that there will be time for discussion. It is a very special day today because as we are researching the role of religion in today's society, Mr. Pilsel is a great expert in that area. He is not only an excellent essayist and journalist in this field, but he also has an interesting background regarding his schooling in South America and here in the Europe. So today we have someone who can tell us a lot of interesting things and whom we shall be able to ask some really serious questions about religion, Christianity and about the role and position of the Church in today's society. So I will give the podium to Mr. Pilsel. He will speak Spanish because that is his native language. Mrs. Pilsel will translate to English. Afterwards you can ask questions and you can speak German as Mr. Pilsel speaks German or English, French and Italian, the languages they both speak as well. Some of you speak Italian and Portuguese, so you can ask questions in those languages, and of course in Croatian, and I think that you can understand Bosnian and Serbian as well.

Drago Pilsel:

Please if you can not hear or understand me, raise your hand. It is not a problem to repeat because I do not know how the acoustics are and if can you hear me. Or do I need to speak louder? Let me know. Is it ok over there? Ok!

Most informal presentations start with a little humour. Drago has asked me to tell a joke that is actually a video clip in German which advertises for a language school. It shows how easily language and communication difficulties can cause huge problems or misunderstandings. The joke is called 'The German Coastguard'. A young man is at his first day at work with the coastguard. His boss shows him the control buttons, the microphones, the centre of communication for boats and coastguards. He finishes and leaves, wishing the young man good luck. Everything starts easy enough. The young man is enjoying himself, everything is going well. There are no calls, everything is quiet. And then all of the sudden a panicky voice calls: "Mayday, mayday we are sinking". The young man runs around trying to find where the voice is coming from. He finally finds the button and hears again: 'Mayday, mayday we are sinking. Can anybody hear us?' He pushes the microphone button and says (with a German accent): "Zis is ze German coastguard. Vat are you sinking (thinking) about?"

Drago Pilsel:

First of all, let me give you a few words of introduction about who we are. Tomorrow the topic will be my autobiography, how I was raised as a Nazi-fascist-nationalist and how I became an anti-fascist and a fighter for human rights. This will give you an idea of who we are and what I am talking about.

I have studied journalism, political science and theology. I was born in Buenos Aires in 1952, to a Croatian refugee family in Argentina. I arrived in Yugoslavia

in May, 1989. At that time I was a Franciscan monk. In October 1991, my brother's boat was hit by a missile from a Yugoslav navy ship and together with five other soldiers he disappeared. Their boat sunk and there was nothing left. The place is just an hour from here. When this happened, I quit my theological studies and became a volunteer in my brother's former brigade. I more or less took his place as a soldier. During the 5 months I was fighting, I was in a process of re-examining many things and especially the concept of my identity: Not just my ethnic or national identity, but also my cultural identity, and especially my religious identity.

I arrived here in '89 and by '91 I had reached the point where I realized that my attitude and my relationship with the Catholic Church in general, and especially the Catholic Church in Croatia, was not what I had expected it to be. This is probably due to my Argentinean roots. Back in Argentina I had been very involved in a theological movement called "Liberation Theology". Its base is the people of the Church and the hierarchy is very, very flat. This is completely different compared to the Catholic Church in Europe, which has a very steep hierarchy. So the Catholic Church in Croatia not only has a hierarchy that is very, very visible, but they also still have a very feudal mentality, attitude and structure.

One of the reasons why I more or less became an enemy of the politics of, as well as of the person of Franjo Tudjman in 90's was that he used Catholicism to create a new national identity to replace the Marxist identity of Yugoslavia. I was also very much opposed to his very autocratic style of leadership, which did not allow for the development of a civil society in Croatia. When Tudjman and Milosevic agreed to divide Bosnia, it was the final reason I needed to oppose Tudjman. I have Bosnian roots. Both of my grandmothers were from Bosnia. I am from a very mixed Austro-Hungarian family.

Later, I completed my theological studies, but I did not want to have a degree from the Catholic Theological University in Zagreb. It was a way for me to show my opposition to the Catholic Church and its role in the nationalistic movement in Croatia. So shortly before finishing my studies, I moved to the Protestant Seminary in Osijek, Croatia. My field of specialization is political theology.

Many of the questions raised in your project booklet are the topics that I have been dealing with on a daily basis. In September, I will be finishing my Master's degree and the title of my thesis is "The Theology of Anti Nationalism".

I have worked as a correspondent for many international medias. I have written for El Pais, which is the most important daily in the Spanish-speaking world. I have also worked for a number of newspapers in Slovenia. For the last 12 years I have been working for Novi List, the only independent daily newspaper in Croatia which was not controlled by Tudjman in the 90's.

Claudia is from a German family but she was born in the Philippines. Her parents were missionaries doing development and aid work in the Philippines. Claudia grew up in very rural region with a people group called the Dumagat. It is a very small minority. Later she went to school in Manila, and because at the time there were not any German schools, she attended an international school following the American system. After finishing high school in Manila, she went to Germany to finish high school and then to study in Heidelberg. She majored in English Philology with minors in Spanish and Education. She also worked on a project at the Heidelberg Academy of Science, working on a dictionary of medieval Spanish. Medieval Spanish has a lot of words that are of Arabic or Hebrew origin. She also taught Spanish, German as a foreign language, and

business English and intercultural relationships for managers. She trained people who work in South-east Asia, teaching them about the cultural differences.

The title of my talk today is “The Moral Foundation of Our Society”. Why does political theology interest me? My path or journey of faith started with my experiences in Latin America. It can not be separated from the Words of God and the Scriptures or from the point of view of the victims – the victims of racial discrimination or racial acts of violence, victims of sexual abuse, ethnic abuse or religious discrimination.

From this background, it seemed “natural” to me to become the first Croatian journalist to write about the war crimes committed by Croats against the Serbian minority after the liberation of the Croatian territories which had been occupied by the Serbs. As you can imagine, I was called a traitor. However, for me the most important thing was to serve and to represent the victims. In the same way, I did not have a problem being the representative speaker of the first Croatian Gay Pride held in March 2000 in Zagreb.

But let us go back to the victims. We choose absolutely independently to believe or not to believe in God. Metaphorically speaking, all of us have a moral obligation to take the victims off the cross. This is one reason why I am interested in political theology. Another reason is that it is necessary to demystify the concept of “the nation” and “nationalism”.

Just a few weeks ago, for example, the Croatian Cardinal Bozanic said a very strange thing during a commemoration service in Bleiburg, Austria. This is a place that has mythological meaning for Croatian nationalists. As some of you may know, during WWII the Independent State of Croatia was declared. Back then it also included the whole of BiH, parts of Serbia, the city of Zemun and a

part of Montenegro. It was a fascist state which collaborated with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. So when it was clear that Germany and Italy were losing the war, many fascist Croats left for Bleiburg to meet the English troops. They thought that the English would help them fight against the Partisans in Croatia - especially since a large part of Austria was already occupied by Stalin's troops. Of course these Croats were quite stupid because it was already clear that Tito had a pact with the allies, which included the repatriation of all who were considered enemies. So Bleiburg is the place where Croatian fascist troops went to meet English troops, hoping to be able to fight together against Tito's Partisans. There were not only Croats in this group, but also people from many other ethnic groups such as Serbian Chetnics, Slovenian Belogardists and Bosnian Muslims. But Croatian nationalism likes to present Bleiburg as the place where the Croatian nation was betrayed and sacrificed. So every May 15th, a Croatian Bishop goes to Bleiburg to hold a mass. The Cardinal of Zagreb held the ceremony this year and at one point he said that he was the Bishop of the "Church of the Croatian Nation".

According to the Second Vatican Council, something like this cannot exist within the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is universal. It is not about ethnic groups or nations. The message of Christianity is a personal message to all people, men and women, from different ethnic groups and nations. Anyone is free to accept it, or not. Those who accept it are baptized and become part of the new community of people belonging to God. The strength of this new community does not come from any sense of national pride. It is a gift from the Holy Spirit. This is the explanation of Christian theology.

It is very similar in the Orthodox Church and in Islam. According to Islamic theology it is not about the conversion of ethnic groups to Islam. But here, again, the message of the Prophet is a personal message and requires the

submission of each individual to the will of God. In the Orthodox Church, even though they are structured as national Churches, there is the Russian Orthodox Church, the Polish Orthodox Church, the Serbian Orthodox Church, Romanian Orthodox Church, Greek Orthodox Church, etc., which are all national Churches, the Church itself always requires an individual response and an individual relationship with the Creator.

So the reason I am interested in political theology is because of the concepts of “the nation” and “nationalism”. They have been one of defining powers in the creation of nations not only in the 1990’s, but also throughout history.

You can find a good example of this type of nationalism in connection with religion right here in Mostar. The huge cross on the hill across from here and the huge tower were built by the Bishop Peric and the Franciscans. That tower has nothing to do with Franciscan spirituality or Franciscan teachings, which are about humility, minorities, serving the small - most of all they stress the need for dialogue. Let us go back and remember the Crusades in the middle of 13th century. St. Francis, who started the Franciscan order, was against the Crusades. He took a boat and went down to the Holy Land to talk to the Muslims. Since that time, the Franciscans have been present in the Holy Land. Their main goal there is to develop a dialogue with Muslims. Have a look at what they have done here in this city after the war. Look at what they have done here in Mostar after the war by placing the cross up on the hill and building a bell tower, which is hugely out of proportion. It is an act of domination, arrogance and provocation, which goes absolutely against the principles, the function and the ideas of religion.

Why? The problem is that they have lost their roots and have forgotten what they actually stand for. You can find the same with the Vatican and its latest

declarations. The focus has shifted away from theology and the individual human beings to the nation and the state. I believe that the Church and all religions need to transcend nationalism and nations. If we identify ourselves with a certain church, religion, religious group or with a certain ethnic or nationalistic group we exclude everyone who does not belong to our particular ethnic or religious group. God in Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and in every monotheistic religion is a personal God and has universal relationships. On the other hand, by combining the religious identity with a national or ethnic identity, the Church loses one of its most important functions. When I talk about the Church I am talking about any kind of religious community and wish to include the Muslims in this term as well.

The role of any religious community is to examine itself and to accept and recognize the sins or mistakes made by this particular group in the past and the present. I have a quote here from an important person of the 20th century who was the first post-war Chancellor of Germany. In February 1946, Konrad Adenauer wrote a letter to a friend who was a Catholic priest in Bonn. "I think that the German nation as well as the Catholic clergy and Protestant priests and bishops are very guilty and carry a part of responsibility for what happened in concentration camps in Nazi Germany. This lack of responsibility started long before the war because the nation, the people as well as Churches, supported the Nazi agitation and campaign and many of them were in fact very enthusiastic supporters of the Nazi regime."

Adenauer said this and for this reason, my friends, I think that the moment has arrived that we need to start talking about the responsibility for the sins of our generation and the generation of our fathers and to stop playing around with fascism. We need to stop allowing the fascists to influence the faith by putting the nation up to the level of a divinity, and making the nation sacred.

I am aware of the fact that some of the Catholic Bishops in Argentina supported the dictatorship that started in Argentina in 1966. I was 14 years old when the dictatorship started, so you can tell I am not that young anymore. In 1983 when the dictatorship ended and democracy returned, different human right's groups began to publish information. The Argentinean society had to accept not only the loss of the war for the Falklands, but also the figures, which showed that more than 30 000 people had been killed or had disappeared during the dictatorship. The Church never said anything to condemn this. Not even when two left-oriented Bishops, who were fighting for human rights, were killed because they had spoken out about these facts.

I am studying Political Theology because I am aware that the role and responsibility of a theologian and a journalist who is working to promote civil society, is to also to be able to work in times of difficulties. At first it seems like a very abstract concept. The job of religious ideology is to promote freedom, peace, justice, and reconciliation. This is not only the ideology of Christians, but also of every religious group in the Balkans. There are different types of religious ideologies that deal with political ideologies. In Latin America, Liberation Theology wants to liberate poor people from any kind of oppression. This is especially so because their poverty is a result of unfair and uncontrolled capitalism.

Here in the Balkans, the focus is more on humans being enslaved. For example, many young people feel trapped in their countries. It is very difficult to travel abroad. There are regions and cities with mixed populations where the educational system is still completely segregated and very nationalistic. There are schools where, for example, in the morning there are classes for Croats and in the afternoon for the Muslims and at some other time for the Serbs.

We are, therefore, looking for a way to liberate the individual. In the Communist Age, the individual was considered an instrument of ethnic propaganda. Today, for example, if you are not a good Catholic you cannot be a good Croat; if you are not a good Orthodox you cannot be a Serb; if you do not wear a scarf you cannot be a faithful Bosnian Muslim, and so on.

So we are talking about a kind of criticism that wants to introduce new values such as love, solidarity and compassion into society. The goal is not only to bring changes to society in general, but also to bring more democracy into institutions and especially into religious structures.

So to conclude this introduction, according to the definition of freedom in political theology, or the sacrament of hope, as it is called in dogmatic theology, it is our job and it is our responsibility to liberate from any type of slavery.

I am going to skip some of the more theoretical topics so that we have time for a discussion, which will be more interesting.

I would like to invite you to think about the fact that the building right next to the Pavarotti Centre is completely destroyed. It is in ruins. The international community, people like Pavarotti or Bono, have reconstructed this building as a musical and cultural centre. But the community of Mostar, the politicians here in Mostar, people who have money here in Mostar, the young people in Mostar have not done much. This not only represents the problem of a lack of identity on a national level in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also a lack of values which allows this building to continue to be in ruins for years.

Travelling from Slavonski Brod to Sarajevo, you can see destroyed houses everywhere. Where are those people now? Where are the children of those who lived in these houses? Many of them left and never came back.

I lived in Sarajevo for 3 years from 1996 to 1999. During that time I studied Islamic theology and investigated the results of the war. I am aware of the fact that many people left to save their lives because Sarajevo was completely under siege. It was basically a lottery whether you would stay alive or not. There were many people who said, “I don’t want to sacrifice my youth and I don’t want to face the people who burned houses, destroyed churches, killed people, and created concentration camps.” There were actually concentration camps opened by all sides in the conflict. I do not want to say that all ethnic groups have the same level of guilt and responsibility in the last war. I accept the fact that in this last war, Bosnian Muslims suffered a much higher rate of destruction and number of deaths, and that on a political level they were victims of the conflicts created by Tudjman and Milosevic.

We cannot deny the fact that religious representatives worked together with nationalistic leaders to promote nationalism, xenophobia, to scare people, and to create areas and regions that are completely ethnically cleansed.

The result of all of this is that a large part of the population is confused, unmotivated, and without any creative capacity or energy. I am talking on a general, national level. On a more informal level here in Mostar, those of you who are local can confirm this, there is a movement for change among young people. People are mixing more and disregarding whether one is Croat, Bosnian or Serb. The aim is to simply go and meet in cultural cafes and bars. But this level of motivation, the desire and attitude does not exist on a national level.

The political climate in Croatia, for example, has changed radically since the 1980's. First of all, people have understood that international laws, conventions and agreements are above local legalisation. It is much more important what Carla del Ponte says than what the Croatian Prime Minister or President says. As the work of the Tribunal in The Hague is coming to a close, the cases that are left will be handed-over to Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian courts. People have recognized that international law is more important than local legislation. They think that the nation-state can function to a certain degree if they respect the minorities and if they give them certain rights.

An example from another region is the situation of the Kurds. They want more than the Turks will ever give them. Although it is an internal problem, it will not be solved. Not even Angela Merkel will be able to help, as she has a different policy in her agenda.

Any questions?

Question: Sometimes when we speak about multicultural development, what are we talking about? This political union of regions - can it really affect the world in a positive way? As you mentioned, in one part of Europe the national identity is growing simultaneously with the religious identity, and in another part of Europe, in my experience, the opposite process is happening - the religious identity is getting messier.

D.P.: What is clear now is that in the next 20 to 30 years there will not be this kind of a situation in the EU. So why don't we suppose, for example, that Albania will be a member? As you know, Albanians are Atheists, Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants and Muslims. With further democratization there are absolutely no obstacles to have the same situation among the Albanians in

Kosovo. If you talk with an Albanian Catholic from Kosovo, or a Muslim Albanian from Kosovo, or even with Catholic or Muslim Albanians from Tetovo in Macedonia, you can feel the same intensity of nationalism and the strong support for the independence of Kosovo. This is just an example of one state. For Albanians, the religious identity plays absolutely no role.

But if you take Ireland, on the other hand, the religious question is absolutely fundamental. And after 30 years, they finally have a new constitution and a new parliament. So for the first time, the Orange March took place without any violence. What will happen in the future depends mainly on the educational system.

The policy of segregation starts with the children in the city of Vukovar, in Croatia. The Serbs and the Croats have separate kindergartens - one building with two kitchens, two playgrounds, two doors and everything is absolutely separated. But now, young people are getting together in cafés. This is something that is also happening now in Mostar. This is the result of the efforts of some NGOs, which have created projects for starting dialogues and getting young people together. For 7 years we worked together with an NGO that was doing projects to connect Serbs and Croats for 3 weeks. Vukovar has seen the first mixed marriages again. So all this depends on the social and political climate and the system of education. The desire or willingness of the religious communities to promote reconciliation and dialogue is also crucial.

But your question was the future of civil society. Civil society requires that all the members of society have equal status. It requires stability and tolerance, so that we are able to say, "I don't really like that person but I respect his lifestyle". This is just the first step.

There are such communities or regions which already exist in Europe. A part of Croatia is involved in an experiment called the 'Alpe-Dunav- Adria' which includes Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Italy and Hungary. These countries cooperate in different cultural and economic projects. For example, there are industrial areas in Croatia, especially in the area of the city of Varaždin, where local authorities grant special status and conditions to any regional company if it wants to open its offices there. Students also study the culture of different parts of the region: Slovenian culture, for example, or the German language, Hungarian folklore, Italian civilization etc. This is very important for Istria, a part of Croatia. It is a region which is becoming truly multicultural – more than any other part of Croatia. I do not know what the final result of this experiment will be, but in my opinion it is a positive process.

Anyway, we want to change the political model in Croatia and create five regions. We also hope to create more cultural and political dialog between the regions. For example, Croatia is not aware of the fact that it is actually part of the Mediterranean. In Croatia everything is still centralized in the capital Zagreb - the economy, the education just to give you two examples. Zagreb has a predominantly central European cultural identity.

There is no space for the identity of the Danube Region. And yet Croatia has so much in common with the Serbs and Hungarians. Not to mention the history of the city of Dubrovnik. Dubrovnik was a city-state with a lot of cultural identity. This was 700 years ago. Dubrovnik also had a lot of trade with the Turkish Empire.

I believe in the future, especially if you analyze the level of respect towards the civil society in regions like Istria or Bavaria, in Germany, where the cultural life is very rich. Istria has the best film-festivals, best school of alternative music,

the best ecological organizations, the best level of respecting human rights and is the part of Croatia where local legislation works the best and there is no separatist activity or attitude. At the same time, they have a very strong identity. They are open towards their neighbours and conscious of the fact that they were an important part of the Partisan movement. Istria will always be a part of Croatia. People in Istria are very much aware of this all and it would be very offensive to see Istrian people as bad Croatians. That is another example that people with different cultural and religious identities within one nation can work together.

The problem is that at the moment there is no political desire or motivation to accelerate these processes of regional cooperation within the European Union. Part of the problem is that there is a conservative nationalistic movement in Poland for example. The Catholic Church in Spain is fighting with the government in Spain because they do not want to accept that in public schools the subject “Citizen’s Culture” be taught. We are not talking about private Catholic schools, but public state schools. The Catholic Church is against a subject called ‘Citizen’s Culture’ which has been introduced. In this class, for example, a marriage is not defined only as a union of man and woman, etc. As you may know, in Spain homosexual relationships can be given a legal status and they have the right to adopt children. The Catholic Church wants to put a stop to it.

In 2000, after Tudjman died, the Bishops of the Catholic Church in Croatia were so furious when the Social Democrats won the elections, that they did not attend the annual New Year’s reception of the President. Traditionally, representatives of the Catholic Church attend. Their boycott sent the message to the general public that the victory of the Social Democrats was a revival of Yugoslavia. That was because the new government opened the economic relationships with

Serbia and other republics of the former Yugoslavia. An intelligent and smart person would respond to this by not attending the Catholic Church mass. You have the same conflict between left and right all over the EU.

We see the results of the war against terrorism every day: In Iraq every day, the attacks on the Spanish tourists in Yemen, the war in Lebanon, the fighting between the Hamas and Fatah in Palestine etc. The fact that Bush is using the fundamentalist religious position for his politics shows that nothing would be possible if the people were not ready and willing to behave in a fanatical way. Mostar is an example of ethnics and religious fanaticism. It is more prevalent on the Croatian side than on the Bosnian side.

I said it before, but I want to repeat it again: When religion takes a nationalistic position it says that a person cannot be a good representative of their religion if they are not at the same time a good patriot. Let us remember what the Catholic theologians who supported Mussolini said: “We can be moral, only according to the degree that we identify our morality with Italian patriotism.” And Croats said the same thing. And so did the Serbs. And so has Al Quaida. They do speak about an ethnic or religious identity in the wrong way. The result is a breakdown of communication within the civil society and the effectiveness of NGOs. This creates fanaticism. If someone has not developed a high personal awareness, it is only one small step to enter into this circle of national hate.

What happened in BiH was absolutely disastrous. The objective of the respective wars was to create ethnically clean regions. It would never have been possible if there had been no discourse, which was both religious and nationalistic at the same time and which produced fanatics. There is absolutely no difference between the attitude of the Scorpions who killed Muslims in Srebrenica and the Muslim brothers who behead people in Egypt, the Al Quaida

or the Ku Klux Klan. These are the same forms of behaviour which I saw in Argentina. So when I arrived here, I immediately understood what was going on.

This type of hypocrisy, which began in the 1950's, has now transformed itself into the hegemony of North America. Not to be critical of Bush and those who support him is to be hypocritical in the same way as it was for Nixon, Johnson and even John F. Kennedy to not recognize or admit that they had lost the war in Vietnam. It is hypocritical of Bush that he does not want to admit that he has lost the war in Iraq and that they have a civil war there. What is he doing now? He is blaming Iran for financing the terrorists in Iraq. It is probably true. But at the same time it is also a consequence of US politics. It has been proven in the US Congress that Americans had plans to invade Iraq long before the attacks in New York and Washington. And it was not by accident or by chance that Donald Rumsfeld, the former defence minister, financed the army of Hussein after '92. The plan was to allow Hussein to stay in power in order to have a reason for invasion later on. In the same way, Franjo Tudjman allowed Muslim soldiers from Arabic countries to enter Bosnia. The Croatian secret service not only provided clean papers for Mujahedins, but also for those who killed Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić. This was Tudjman's political tactic: To keep the enemies in order to justify the future attack. This policy works all around the world and you can find it in Africa, Asia or South America.

But fortunately, there are some societies that are under control and who do punish violations of the law. For example, in Germany you can not walk around wearing a t-shirt showing fascist symbols. In Croatia, you can. Recently some 50 000 people attended the concert of a very controversial singer who keeps claiming that he does not have anything to do with this ideology. The same concert was shown on Croatian television. At the same time, Croatia wants to be

a member of EU! Croatia likes to think of itself that it is a much better society than Bosnia or Serbia. From an objective point of view, it is better organized, yes. But personally, I am not sure, if the creative potential of the Croatian youth is better or higher than that of those in Serbia, Bosnia or Slovenia. In Slovenia the situation is better because the country is organised. They have managed to enter into the European Union, and there are more possibilities. But in all the other countries of former Yugoslavia, young people have no way to express themselves.

Democracy returned to Argentina not only because of the political opposition, or because the military party lost a war against Britain, but because there was a very strong democratic movement at the universities during the dictatorship. Sixty-five percent of the victims of the dictatorship who were younger than twenty-five years were students.

Question: Do you think it is necessary for a nation or country's existence that the religion can be practiced?

D.P.: No, The main issue is cultural identity. The Croatian cultural identity, for example, is basically inseparable from the Catholic element. For example, the first document written in the Croatian language is on a stone, two metres long and about one meter high and is written in Glagoljica a unique Croatian alphabet, which was used before. This document says that in the year 1060, King Zvonimir gave a piece of land as a present to two Benedictine monks in order to construct and build the monastery where they would pray for the king's soul.

This is the first document of Croatian culture in history. In this document you find the union between Church and state. This is something, which has

continued throughout the history of Croatia. On May 30th, 1990, when the first democratic elections in Croatia were held, as a symbolic act, a cradle was placed in front of one hundred thousand people in the main square in Zagreb - a child's cradle with a loaf of bread, which symbolized life. The President of Croatia, Franjo Tudjman and Cardinal Kuharic, the head of Croatian Catholic Church, stood side by side beside the cradle. Cardinal Kuharic blessed the loaf of bread in the cradle as a symbol of the resurrection of the Croatian nation.

So what does this have to do with civil society? And this is a part of the reality! What are people like me - the journalists and theologians- trying to do? We want to introduce a new social concept and a better understanding of the concept of the nation. The fact is that the message of Christianity can help improve the quality of a nation if it promotes solidarity - if it is not a school of fascism.

If in order to be a Croat you need to be a Catholic, it means that it is more important what happened between your mom and dad in bed than the fact that you were baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. And so baptism and religion are reduced to folklore and we return to the theory of blood and land and we return to the Nazism. At the same time, we are trying to accelerate the process of integration into the European Union.

For this reason, the last time I was on TV I attacked Cardinal Bozanic and other Church leaders in my interview. They were saying that the Croatian language will be lost in the EU. They also have two very different messages depending if they are speaking in Bruxelles or in Croatia. If you are aware of the fact that 40% of Croatians are illiterate, that 42% of them do not participate in elections or that only 6% have a university degree, you understand that you have a situation in which the leaders of political parties as well as the leaders of religious groups can very easily manipulate the people.

We will talk more latter. Thank you.