

THE GEOPOLITICS OF ORTHODOXY AND THE ETHNO-RELIGIOUS RESURRECTIONS IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE - the case of Serbia-Montenegro, Ukraine and Republic of Moldavia -

Dan Dungaciu – University of Bucharest

Religious pluralism usually means that in a given society there is more than one religious tradition and more than a single, unchallenged worldview of the supernatural. There are many divergent views, so that one can choose freely between a religious interpretation or another, and rival interpretations (or religions) and organisations (churches) compete in the marketplace of religions. The role of state in this picture is passive. In modern, religiously pluralistic societies, religions can play vital roles as sources of meaning for their adherents, but the state or the government should neither force people into sectarian religious observances nor favour some religions over others nor punish people for their religiosity without a very strong reason other than prejudice. This is a typical Western scenario. I will argue that the situation is different in South Eastern Europe, and a main reason is the relationship between religion and ethnicity in this region. Due to the complicated (sometimes dangerous) mixture between these two elements, the national state influenced, explicitly or implicitly, the religious attitude or beliefs of people. To prove this, I shall focus on the Serbian Vlach population. They live in East Serbia, in the valleys of the Danube and the Morava, in the Homolje Mountains and Timok Area. They speak „Romanian" or „Walachian", but their status of national minority is not recognised. As a consequence, they are denied all rights: constitutional and legal rights to education in their mother tongue, official use of their language and alphabet, information in their language, national culture etc. They cannot even practice religion in their own language. The Vlachs in Eastern Serbia, who belong to Eastern Orthodoxy, do not have the possibility to attend religious services in Romanian (or „Walachian" language). And because they have perceived the Serbian Orthodox Church as a state-mechanism for assimilation, the Vlachs began to reject Christian religion as such and resurrect old pagan pre-Christian ! - religious behaviours and practices. This mechanism of de-Christianization and resurrection of pagan religion - a state mechanism, which manages to change the religious landscape of a society - deserves a closer sociological investigation.

Preamble

The international news-agencies have recently presented the case of a Christian Orthodox priest of Macedonia, which empathetically assessed himself as being Orthodox above all and, consequently, he was openly pleading for maintaining the Orthodox Church of Macedonia under Serbian Orthodox Patriarchy jurisdiction. The outlook of that very priest has been received with obvious irritation by the community: "he sold himself to the Greeks", "man of the