
GLOBAL VILLAGE AND THE INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

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Abstract

The world of technology has fulfilled H.M. McLuhan's vision of the global village, which he had expressed at the time when only radio and television were considered as the modern communications technologies. The global communications infrastructure has shrunk the world even more – it has blurred not only information, but also political, economic, or cultural boundaries. There exist a number of branches that have assumed an increasingly international character. However, this world does not place new demands merely on technology. With new horizons opening, the readiness of people to live in a global village becomes an important issue as well. The process of cultural transnationalisation requires that a worker, who actively influences mass communication, should be adequately prepared for internationalization of culture, particularly in the context of the conflict of cultures, or efforts to preserve their national identities. It is an important issue also in the process of education of future experts in mass communication.

Keywords: culture, national, identity, sign, religion

1. Introduction

The problem of multiculturalisation of society is so grave that it has gradually become a permanent theme of social life in every country. At present, there is no society which would not have to face its more or less open question of coexistence of different cultures, either inside the society itself or in the framework of contacts with the neighbouring community. Interaction between different cultures and the resulting contradictions between 'our' culture and the culture of 'those others' has been increasingly affecting the course of social events. There exist a number of examples proving that the perception of group identification has been constantly growing. Multiculturalisation as a process has too many variables in order to become a general and unconditionally acceptable higher stage of social order. Economic migration is at present taking place on the

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north-south axis, and is a consequence of huge differences between economic backgrounds of individual territories. This situation creates, or strengthens the tendencies to protect everything of one's own, domestic. The result is the wave of nationalism which influences politics more and more. The media workers, who are associated with this milieu, should take a sensitive approach to the issues of coexistence of different cultures, regardless of their own opinion on the problems of multiculturalism. Actually, they are expected to inform about various issues concerning this process in a professional, unbiased, open, and foremost, erudite manner. However, this involves having an appropriate education in this field.

The world of technologies has fulfilled H.M. McLuhan's vision [1] of the global village, which he had expressed at the time when only radio and television were considered as modern communications technologies. The global communications infrastructure has shrunk the world even more – it has blurred not only informational, but also political, economic, and cultural boundaries. There exist a number of branches that have assumed an increasingly international character. However, this world does not place new demands merely on technology. With new horizons opening, the preparedness of people to live in a global village becomes an important issue as well. It appears that the diversity of cultures and their coexistence within a determined region pose growing demands on all members of community. In fact, the notion of 'having a new neighbour' need not be accepted from only the positive aspect – meaning the enriching element of the cultural coexistence. Additionally, the process of cultural transnationalisation requires that a worker, who actively influences mass communication, should be adequately prepared for internationalisation of culture, particularly, amid the conflict of cultures and efforts to maintain their national identities. This question is relevant also in the process of education of future experts in mass communication.

The problem of multiculturalism cannot be considered as a new one; unlike the concept of globalisation, the term multiculturalism has been known since the late sixties of the last century, when it began to be mentioned in the theory of cultural pluralism. Primarily, it is a consequence of a strong migration which hit the United States of America after World War II, and which is now perceptible mainly in the Western Europe countries. Later, the term began to be connected with the efforts for social acceptance in general, also including the emphasis on individual equality. For the transforming countries of the Eastern Europe, this is a new phenomenon, but nowadays there is no country that would remain untouched by some of its forms. Although both of the terms principally occur in a close context, often being even interchanged in the lay public, the meaning of these terms does not automatically prejudice their accordance in the process of globalisation. However, if some theoreticians (e.g. a renowned expert in human rights and professor of political science, John G. Ruggie [2]) consider deterritorialisation as a crucial element of the globalisation process, then it will inevitably concern also the social space and its interactions – demographic state, institutional services, aims of political activity, a set of state principles, etc.

Thus, multiculturalism is at present understood as a more complex phenomenon than a mere coexistence of multiple cultures. Steven Vertovec and Susanne Wessendorf connect it with ideals of tolerance, equal treatment, the right for collective expression of attitude towards the state and its legal principles [3]. Martin Solík in his study (about politics of universalism, politics of differentiation) [4] underlines in this context the opinion of Charles Taylor on the occurrence of interconnection between recognition and identity – dignity as a core value of the policy of universalism belongs to all in an equal proportion. Regarding the policy of differentiation which stems from the universalistic base, Charles Taylor adds that, in spirit of the modern idea of identity, every person should be respected for his or her uniqueness, rareness in relation to others. In a surrounding where identity is granted universally, we can acknowledge what makes individual people different from each other [5]. In the words of Charles Taylor – politics of differentiation organically arises from the politics of universal dignity.

Critics of multiculturalism point at the fact that, even though multiculturalism has become an official policy in some states (Australia, Canada, Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark, Great Britain), its basis is the essentialist perception of ethnic identity, the tendency to homogenise cultural experience, and not to recognise the contextuality implied in cultural identities [6].

At the present time, we can observe several streams of opinion on the role of multiculturalism in the modern, global world – there are a whole number of those who consider multiculturalism as an inevitable precondition of modern society, as well as those who denote multiculturalism as a branch of neo-marxism. As an example of the first stream can be cited the the view of Jaroslav Balvín, who finds multiculturalism to be an ideology of good relations between cultures [7], with the characteristic intentional, systemic, and social exertion on harmonisation of the relationships in the surrounding. Charles Taylor, as has been indicated, says that multiculturalism is the form of recognition of diversity as a value. In his view, the role of each state is to actively support a certain number of cultures and religions - naturally, under the concurrent protection of the basic citizen's rights [8].

The critics of multiculturalism claim that it is basically a political programme trying to institutionalise cultural diversity by segmentation of society (Brian Barry [9], Giuseppe Sartori [10]). It is also caused by the fact that the different understanding of specific awareness of collective identity does not lead to the unified definition of the doctrine of multiculturalism. This is rather presented by a wide scale of ideological attitudes. Owing to the fact that multiculturalism is perceived as the bearer of a new ideology based on the vision of a new society, it has also many opponents who consider multiculturalism outdated and proclaim an unavoidable return to the national principles. They point out that, if multiculturalism is considered as a priority, there will be a conflict between pluralism and nationalism over time. In their opinion, multiculturalism has resulted in disintegration of plural society into more and

more closed subunits and homogeneous communities. This phenomenon has become an increasingly urgent political agenda, mainly in the context of the present ethnic tension in Europe.

If we disregard more detailed specifications of multiculturalism, distinguishing a communitarian model (the primary role being played by cultural determination of a human) and a liberal model (a universal state of freedom of an individual), we can state that the very basic approach to the study of this problem divides the professional public into two streams – advocates of primordialism, relying on ethno-historical roots, and proponents of modernist thought – an instrumentalistic one, based on the idea that national and ethnic groups are social constructs, because the membership to a certain ethnic group can change according to the needs and interests of an individual [11]. It must be pointed out, though, that this does not signify a denial of the reality of national identity, even if some empiric studies in the USA refer to a frequent opinion that ethnicity is not something that is fixed, unchangeable, but rather is a dynamic and situational form of group identity. On the contrary, primordialism is based on the emotional form of ethnicity [11].

2. Nationalism as a consequence of an attempt for multiculturalism

In the context of the outlined reflexions, it emerges a problem with the concept of nationalism. The translation itself of the word ‘nation’ into the Slovak language evokes ambiguity (originally, the Latin word is ‘natio’, but the meaning has been changing in individual languages), since in the English language ‘nation’ does not pertain to ethnicity, but to the term ‘state’. As a good example may serve the name of the United Nations Organisation, although this institution does not unite nations but states. The use of terms ‘ethnic group’ or ‘ethnic nationalism’ did not help to eliminate the terminological ambivalence, on the contrary, it rather deepened the problems. In spite of the objections of many theoreticians, the concept of nationalism itself has a negative connotation and it has reduced to denote pathological phenomena [12]. At present, for instance, Eugen Lemberg understands the concept of nationalism as an anomalous and pathological form of devotedness of an individual to the nation, whereby its integration function is omitted. However, the distinction between the so-called inner and outer nationalism is made here. According to Hans Kohn, open nationalism can be considered as its modern form. It is responsive to mutual relationships between nations and it accepts the principles of civil society, i.e. the territorial arrangement and viewing its citizens regardless of their racial or ethnic origin. Closed nationalism emphasises the autochthonous character of the nation, common origin (race and kinship), and rootedness in land inherited from the predecessors. Based on these ideas, Zygmund Bauman expresses his opinion that the difference between nationalism and patriotism is rather rhetoric than factual [13]. Naturally, the scope of this study does not allow us to discuss in more detail other dichotomous concepts of nationalism (eastern vs. western, civil vs. ethnic, political vs. cultural). Nevertheless, we want to point at the fact that

during the last decade, nationalism and the establishment of the idea of nation has been regarded as the most relevant social phenomenon. The problem of nationalism is especially topical in today's modern, global society and, at the same time, it is also extremely complex. Eugen Lemberg points out that problems related to this issue are also given by different historical experience, because in the Western Europe, nation is considered as a collection of citizens, and nationality (nationalité) as a citizenship, while in the Eastern Europe nation is considered as a language and cultural membership, and nationality is a membership to the group which distinguishes from the majority by its language and national awareness. However, if there is such a different perception of the given term in a professional community, then there is no surprise that we practically do not see any other than a negative meaning of this concept. This is a simplification, which is a consequence of the absence of specialist education concerning not only the producers of media contents and editors approving these contents, but, not least, it is also a consequence of the absence of critical feedback on the side of professional and lay public.

The question to be asked is then, what is the role of nationalism in a contemporary society? Can it be measured only through the prism of pathology? Václav Štetka in his publication 'Mediálna integrácia v čase globalizácie' (Media integration at the time of globalisation) discussed these problems in the chapter with a symptomatic title, 'Nacionalizmus ako implicitné (občianske) náboženstvo' (Nationalism as an implicit (civil) religion). In the introduction, he stems from the works of Émile Durkheim. This eminent French sociologist understood the concept of society as a moral collectiveness integrated by means of ideas and values, which have in their essence a religious character [14]. The society in this context takes over the guarantee of stability of the social order from the religion. And, because secular values have a sacred character similarly to religious values (they are realised through rituals and ceremonies), the sacred respect towards one's own moral authority is typical for both for society and religion. Consequently, Émile Durkheim formulates his view that almost all great social institutions were born in the religion.

Similar conclusions were made by a Dutch religionist Jacques Waardenburg. He asserts that the attribute 'religious' can be applied to any system of signs, and thus, there are regulation systems in a society that can be qualified as a religion [15]. Furthermore, he distinguishes between a civil society, by which he means a special kind of a functional religion defining the rules and standards of the proper functioning of society, and a civil religion which he defines as a profile, rights, and duties of the proper citizen.

There is another aspect to the complexity of contemporary society, in particular, the globalisation tendency affecting the realm of values. In their article 'Influence of Church on Cultural Evolution', Romanian authors Iulian Rusu and Gheorghe Petraru [16] claim that our globalised cultural environment has been supersaturated by technology, producing the generation of Nintendo kids and Internet dependent persons, and preferring the so-called material values. In this way, a human can lose his or her identity as spiritual being. They

express concerns that spiritual values, established by the western culture with its Christian tradition, may vanish in this global context and, the present-day ideology of secularism and anthropologic reductionalism, rejecting the transcendence of the Divine Absolute, may in fact lead to self-rejection in the complex cosmic and community relations.

South African philosopher and theologian Cornel du Toit states that religion was the primary source of human identity, but now it has been replaced by technoscience, of which gene mapping is the best example. Reflecting on the relations between culture and nature, science and life world, he asks, “Must we really choose between techno-scientific capitalism and pre-modern transcendence, or can techno-scientific capitalism be reconciled with spiritual values?” In his view, techno-scientific capitalism is a closed system liable to grow uncontrollably, like cancer. On the other hand, he warns that “any form of spiritual fundamentalism offers its adherents the certitude of one-sidedness and fanatical hope, with all the fatal consequences we hear reported on the daily news” [17].

This study does not aim to uncover in detail the problems of terminological determination of such expressions as ‘nation, nationalism, patriotism, ethnicity, multiculturalism, secularisation, Religious science’, because nor sociologists, political scientists, philosophers, historians, or psychologists have not agreed on a generally valid (or at least more widely acceptable) explanation of the given terms. Nonetheless, we want to point at some other terminological problems, which have been brought into multiculturalism following the clash of religion and secular public, or the clash of individual religions.

3. Multiculturalism and religion

One of the primary conditions of functioning of the theory of multiculturalism is respecting the religious traditions. The problem of rights and limits of the religion within the public space has become up-to-date also in the context of its presence in politics. Since the religion is a multi-layer and ambivalent phenomenon, in the course of history and in different socio-cultural contexts it has played various, often very different roles. As said by a theologian and religionist Tomáš Halík [T. Halík, *Evropa vs. muslimové. Maříme historickou šanci*, in Halík v médiích, January 16, 2015, <http://halik.cz/cs/ostatni/halik-v-mediich/>], today it also plays the role of a defendant of the seemingly or really endangered group identity – destructivism of radical Islamic groups may be given as an example. Furthermore, religious symbols, which are accumulators of tremendous energy, can serve as tools for destruction. This happened in the tragic case of the Charlie Hebdo newspaper offices, revealing the conflict between the right to respect for one’s religious feelings and the right to freedom of expression. Quite naturally, a discussion about the functioning of modern society intensified after this act. Multiculturalism as a normative reflection of globalisation has been subject to a

new wave of criticism and there is a growing debate on its crisis or survival both in professional and political circles. This also evokes a discussion about the growth in extreme nationalism as a defensive element against globalisation, which glorifies cultural and ethnic symbols.

The problems of religion in a multicultural society pose several questions. The first one relates to the coexistence of diverse religions in the European space. The current contact of Europe with Islam seems not to be its first experience, but we could denote it as 'forgotten'. Europe's new contact with the religious fundamentalism, which in the spirit of Sharia connects religion and public life, paradoxically, changes the attitude of secular society towards its own Church. Of course, on the assumption that the Church will enter in the public space with the defence of 'ours'. The second question results from the contact of the secular society with its outer or inner religiousness. Primarily, we mean the coexistence of the secular part of society with the religious one, secondarily, the ability of the secular society to cope with its own spirituality. Another question emerging in this connection is the idea of the Church about its engagement in public affairs, which some theoreticians call re-Christianisation. This is the idea of exerting influence on education, culture, family life, economics, even domestic and foreign policy, etc. An integral part of this question in some transforming countries is also the problem of separation of the Church and state, as well as mutual coexistence of individual Churches within the state. In the transforming countries of the Central European region, the problem of Islamisation of Europe is not being posed with such an urgency (whether justified or not) than in the countries to which the waves of migrants are heading. The problem of multiculturalism in Slovakia is mainly connected with the coexistence of the majority population with the Roma minority. The problems with the other national minorities (Hungarian), or the tension resulting from the coexistence of the secular part of society with the faithful have rather a causal character. In any case, this problem comprises a whole complex of questions that will gradually affect the Central European region with greater intensity.

4. Multiculturalism and its mediatisation

Despite their complexity, the problems we have outlined here frequently appear on the media scene. An inevitable question arises 'What is the quality of professional preparation of the media workers, so they could cover such themes in an expert manner?' After all, it is no secret, particularly in the countries of the transforming Europe, that the percentage of journalists not having an adequate education (or, specialist education in the field of media) is still very high. This is the debt to a still open problem of legislation in the mentioned countries, which allows a person to become a journalist without any professional qualifications – it is enough to declare the membership of some of the journalist organisations. However, this is not a phenomenon that would be specific only to the countries of the Eastern Bloc. In terms of the previous division of the European space on

the west-east axis, we can notice significant differences between individual countries of the determined space. In the context of social theories, journalism is generally considered to be a certain form of public service (e. g., in a position of legal watchdog or mediator of information). This inevitably involves the requirements for education, general knowledge, and life experience of workers in journalist professions, which can be considered as basic attributes of professional credibility. In this sense, the absence of specific qualifications to perform the journalist profession can be replaced by appropriate life experience and a wide range of professional knowledge. The audience is able to accept an expert in a certain area also as a bearer of information about the given field. In the countries where the journalist profession has not experienced substantial ideological turbulences, it generally works in this way, as many cases prove. However, the situation in the transforming countries is different in this regard, too. Media which have passed through transformation, lack a historical context – they broke up with the previous one and have not built the new one yet. The older generation of journalists left the editorial offices – either due to the links to the previous regime's ideology, or due to unwillingness or incapability to comply with the demands of transformation. Consequently, the way to management positions unexpectedly opened for the middle-aged generation. Moreover, private media started to offer a whole series of further opportunities. For these reasons, the Slovak media witnessed the decrease in the number of the middle-aged and older journalists, i.e., those who could be regarded as bearers of adequate life experience. The gap was filled (and is still being filled) by the graduates of journalistic schools without any practice and, as we have mentioned, in many cases by people without the required qualifications, or even without a completed higher education. At present, a total of 13 schools in Slovakia offer single-specialisation journalistic or related studies (there are three accredited fields of study – journalism, theory and history of journalism, and mass media studies):

- Department of Journalism at the Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava (founded in 1952);
- Department of Journalism, and Department of Mass Media Communication and Advertisement at Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (1995);
- Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of SS Cyril and Methodius in Trnava (1997);
- Department of Communication and Media Studies at the Faculty of Arts, University of Prešov in Prešov (1998);
- Department of Journalism at the Faculty of Arts, Catholic University in Ružomberok (2002);
- Department of Slovak Studies, Slavonic Philologies and Communication at the Faculty of Arts, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice (2007);
- Faculty of Mass Media, Pan-European University in Bratislava (2007);
- Department of Mediamatics and Cultural Heritage at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Žilina in Žilina (2011);

- Media Academy, a professional school for media and marketing communication at the Slovak Syndicate of Journalists in Bratislava (2011);
- Faculty of Media and Cultural Studies, Hochschule Goethe Uni Bratislava (2012);
- Department of Journalism at the Faculty of Social Studies, College Danubius in Sládkovičovo (2013).

In spite of doubts expressed about a high number of journalistic schools in Slovakia as to whether the media market of such a small country needs so many schools, paradoxically, practice shows that there is still the lack of graduates from these schools. Apart from understuffed editorial offices, needing more specialists in journalistic communication, there is another phenomenon which caused this situation, namely, an unprecedented interest of journalism graduates in a position of spokesperson (press secretary) in a firm or in an institution. This interest is a consequence of a new approach taken by companies in their communication with the public. It consists in centralisation of communication flows within an institution and setting a barrier between the management and the public in case of the forced communication directing inside the institution. In other words, the communication which is not part of the public relations of a particular institution. This trend is at present so strong that it also changes the habitual ways of journalistic work. The information flow coming from the sender of information has a two-stage character, the media primarily receive only the mediated statements in the shape which has a precisely determined content, scope, and form. It is essentially an anonymous communication, because in this type of communication, the standpoint of an institution and not that of an individual person is presented. Then, a common contact with the top representative of the institution has rather a character of investigative journalism than a form of mediated interaction.

The media schools in Slovakia preferentially deal with the theory of mass communication, media law, ethics, psychology, future profession, sociology, and further, with specialised subjects relating to the performance of the future profession, and subjects enhancing language competencies in the native or the chosen language. However, the content of educational process is also influenced by specific focus of the faculties where the departments were created. The differences can be seen in the ratio of theoretical subjects and practice-oriented subjects, in the range of subjects taught in the native language, etc. In the context of the problems outlined in this study, we definitely cannot consider journalistic education as appropriate. Political science is taught only at five schools, but only during one or at most two semesters, which cannot be found sufficient at all. With this range of subjects, we can hardly expect that the subject matter should offer more than basic principles. We could obtain more information from the analysis of the study documentation, but schools do not include it into publicly accessible sources. It is even worse with Religious science, as this subject occurs only in the study programme of one school. In practice, it means that a person who many a time has not processed his or her own spirituality, nor has he or she acquired qualification in religious science, assesses and comments on the

spirituality of others, analyses religious questions without the knowledge of religious life, and reports on the coexistence of religions without their deeper understanding.

5. Conclusions

It is worth considering if, in the context of the problems outlined in this article, the topical problems of globalisation do not require to include in the study programmes a compulsory education in the fields of religious science, political science, cultural studies, or sociology (sociology in general, not only sociology of journalism or mass media communication). These are the questions that will resonate in media in the next decades. The problems of ‘international’ multiculturalism will also affect Central European space. In fact, it is only a question of time when the transforming countries will also become objects of interest of the economic migrants. If the contemporary economic development of these countries does not attract them now, it does not mean that it will remain unchanged in the next years. And lastly, common space of the European Union encourages us to express our opinion on the issues that may seem distant to us, but as far as they concern the Union, they have become our concern, too. The European Federation of Journalists declared already at its meeting of October 2003 that the work of journalists of the Central and Eastern Europe countries suffered from the absence of social and professional standards. Even though it has been more than a decade since the conference took place, nothing seems to suggest that this situation should radically change, despite thirteen schools of journalism. Current economic underfunding of media reflects in the understaffing of editorial offices. Professional working contracts in most cases do not allow the journalists to continue in some form of specialised study during practice (due to the absence of offer or due to the lack of time), and the editorial offices are not interested in it, either. For we all know very well how ‘a new neighbour’ should move around our backyard...

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