FACTORS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPARATIONS
FOR WAR TRAGEDY[*]

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I this paper author has been discussed psychological theories of violent behavior, which aspires to explain the origin and structure of human aggressiveness, different rate of extreme violence in different types of population and, finally, the role of psychological factors in the genesis of major and bloody conflicts between human communities, peoples and states.

KEY WORDS: aggressive impulses / psychological theories of violent behavior / war / psychological preparations

Repression of aggressive impulses over thousands of years created collective civilization awareness which strongly opposes interpersonal violence, killing, destruction and wars. Today exists an impressive number of competitive psychological theories of violent behavior, which aspires to explain the origin and structure of human aggressiveness, different rate of extreme violence in different types of population and, finally, the role of psychological factors in the genesis of major and bloody conflicts between human communities, peoples and states.

Problems of human destructiveness as well as factors which prevent the human race from acting constructively and reasonably in conflicts are in the

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focus of attention of many anthropological sciences as topics of far-reaching theoretical and practical importance. The dismal conclusion that man is the cruellest and the most merciless species on the planet (Storr, 1989) is suggested, primarily, by the fact that cruel motives which urge to killing, ill-treatment, torture, wars and tyranny are characteristic of and only of man.

It is obvious that a dramatic macro-social phenomenon such as war cannot be interpreted predominantly by psychological factors; where today nevertheless exists consensus between the experts in different disciplines is that psychological preparations which enable war represent conditio sine qua non. In his Thoughts for the Times on War and Death Freud (1915) presented a point according to which the state is the factor which incites violence; it capitalizes and monopolizes the sources of aggressiveness in individuals, guiding them toward the achievement of its own political goals. Searching for the roots of war, Freud not only reveals the dark side of human psyche and behavior, but also points to the brutal side of the state apparatus epitomized by the holders of public offices. According to Freud (ibid.) the state prohibits an individual by law to do bad things, but not with an intention to abolish these actions, but to "acquire monopoly on them, like on salt or tobacco".

Most experts today agree that the documentation of the trial to World War II war criminals, their registered depositions and personal defense point to the conclusion that committed crimes, defined by the indictment, are not the result of biological programming for crime, but the consequence of specific socialization based on systematic psychological preparations for war. In this context, spreading and instigation of nationalistic ideology is a factor of crucial importance.

During World War II, Dr Johannes Stein, a Vienna scientist, was a confidential advisor of Sir Winston Churchill on the issues of the mind and motivation of Adolf Hitler and leading members of the Nazi party. According to Raven-scroft[1] (1992) it was clear to Stein that the failure of the Nuremberg process to recognize the nature of evil at work behind the exterior façade of natio-nal-socialism could be ascribed to the fact that allied prosecutors on these trials for crimes against humanity lacked moral imagination to comprehend the apocalyptic structure of civilization based on thanatic Weltanschauung. It seemed (op. cit.) as if there was a silent agreement between judges to tre-at the defendants as if they were an inseparable part of accepted humani-

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[1] Stein's student who sorted Stein's unfinished manuscripts after his premature death.

stic and Cartesian system of the western world. The only serious question that could be asked was: how to discover the true motives for such a stupendous collapse of the value system which faced so many people with the risk of horrible moral aberration? (ibid.)

Psychological quintessence of nationalism consists of the syndrome of irrational claims which express the superiority of one's own nation versus the inferiority of members of another ethnic group (Katz, 1965); that fact may easily lead to all kinds of hostile and aggressive actions. Conscious dissemination and popularization of such stands leads to homogenization of the population in the idea of struggle for the establishment of dominant national position on a certain territory. In the situation when affiliation to e certain social group is based on nationalistic prejudices, these prejudices on interpersonal plan are operationalized as verbal or behavioral aggressiveness in relation to the members of another ethnic group. This mechanism further spreads as social infection, assuming the proportions of an epidemic. All latently morbid and destructive potential which used to be cerebrally inhibited and under social control becomes unblocked, released and expressed in the form of homicidal *acting-out*, sexual violence or torture over members of another nation(s) (Reich,1933).

RUMORS AND VICIOUS CIRCLE OF PANIC. "SOMETHING BAD IS GOING TO HAPPEN TONIGHT BY THE RIVER."

Rumors are most frequently defined as unverified and typically innacurate reports, stories, or characterizations which travels through a community usually by word of mouth. (Chaplin, 1986; Reber, 1995). Rumors tend to occur during periods of societal stress and usually are concerned with persons or events in whom or about which there is considerable interest but little concrete, verifiable information. With propagation, rumors tend to undergo both laveling (becoming shorter and simpler) and sharpening (emphasizing particular details and neglecting others).

Rumors as a rule appear in the conditions of obstructed or incomplete functioning of institutional informing of the public. The type of rumor, the speed at which it spreads, the segment of the population in social space encompassed by rumors, and in particular transformation and distortion of reality which the rumor contains, rather reliably indicate what is neuralgic or represents critical problems in the concrete social space.

Therefore, rumors are the news which covertly or openly contain a system of unreliable and unverifiable claims which are rapidly spread in public

by word of mouth, whereby the concrete data are usually not true, but the main patterns of claims contain a grain of truth which introduces dramatic tension in relation to an uncertain situation.

Allport & Postman (1947) insisted on the existence of the "law of social psychology" according to which "no riot ever occurs without rumors to incite, accompany and intensify the violence" (op. cit.).

Literature about rumors largely insists on the fact that they occur in ambiguous, uncertain, strange, unknown, unverifiable and uncontrollable circumstances. Such circumstances are conducive to reinforcement of cognitive elements of ambiguity.

Rumors and generalized unverified convictions psychologically prepare people for participation in collective actions (Smelser, 1964, p. 82). In the conditions of social stress, rumors are what shapes "common culture" in which spontaneous leadership, mobilization for flight or even concrete violent actions may occur (ibid.). Implicitly dangerous function of rumors is contained in their power to influence social processes by generating and inciting dramatic reactions in collective behavior (Prasad, 1935).

Festinger et al. (1948) formulated the "principle of integrative explanation". This principle is that "once the central theme of a rumor is accepted, there will be a tendency to reorganize and to distort items so is to be consistent with the central theme. The central theme of a rumor (op. cit., p. 485) often involves some generalized and mobilizing force which "draws" into action in difficult social situations.

Allport & Postman (1947) have particularly studied rumors which cause dangerous tension mounting. When transferred to the collective plan, it can mobilize to hostile and aggressive outbursts. Allport & Postman (ibid.) are the authors of the following classification of rumors which spread in dramatic episodes. Ordinarily four stages in the process (in the interaction between rumor and violent outburst) are discernibile:

1° Rumors which are the indication of growing social tension and which increase population's frustration, but do not produce violent reactions. These murmurs may take the form of stories featuring discrimination, insults, or misdeeds ascribed by each group to its opponents. At this stage the rumors current do not differ from the usual run of hostile and accusatory stories. They sound like everyday gossip concerning the undesirable behavior. But whenever the normal circulation is exceeded, or whenever the visciousness of the stories grows more accute, we may suspect a pre-riot condition. In themselves these tales will not lead to violence. They serve merely as a

barometer of incrising social strain, indicating that unless the social wind shifts its direction, we may be headed for a storm.

2° Danger is indicated when the rumors assume a specifically threatening form. Rumors get in toughness, intensity and have manifestly threatening or intimidating form, such as e.g. "Something bad is going to happen tonight by the river" (op. cit., p.193) or "The bastards have been saving up guns for a month" (Smelser, 1964, p.248). Rumors of this type usually spread very quickly and may cause mass panic.

3° Inflammatory rumors represent the extremely distorted variant of the initial rumor. That type of rumor includes different versions about extreme incidents e.g. racial conflict in Detroit in the summer of 1943 (Allport & Postman, 1947). The precipitating incident as reported in the newspapers was a first fight between a black and white man. The incident was bruited with exaggeration up and down the beach and into the city itself. Its versions followed the assimilative predilections of each rumor agent, some being tailor-made for white ears, others for black ears. One version asserted that a black baby had been thrown from the bridge by a white sailor; another that a white baby had been thrown into the river by a black man; in the third one a white woman had been attacked on the bridge by a colored man; in subsequent version white sailors gangraped black girls, then white girls obscenely approached the blacks while they were swimming, etc.

4° Rumors that turn into acute fanaticism. Allport & Postman (ibid.) report that "sometimes they are hallucinatory. Tortures, rapes, murders are recounted in a frenzied manner as if to justify the violence under way and to speed up the process of vengeance"; (Allport & Postman, 1947, pp.193-196). Such rumors display all the components of a hostile belief-system: anxiety, generalized aggression, and omnipotence – and the attachment, by short-circuiting, of these generalized elements to specific persons, places, situations, and events.

The proposed classification points to a vicious circle of panic to which inflammatory rumors may lead and thus intensify the atmosphere of anxiety, hostility, readiness to violence, etc. It also suggests that rumors may be applied to specific individuals, situations, places and events in dramatic episodes such as wars, riots or mass accidents (op. cit., pp. 101-109).

Rumors may play a key role in the genesis of ethnic and racial prejudices (Allport & Kramer, 1946). In the situations of confusion and absence of information, rumors in cognitive space satisfy the so-called structure hunger (Berne, 1961).

Allport & Postman proposed a rumor intensity formula, which is nowadays quoted in most referent psychological dictionaries (Reber, 1995). The formula refers to the following generalization: the intensity of rumors tends to be a function of the importance of the subject and its ambiguity, i.e. "**R**=*ia*, where **R** is the intensity of the rumor, *i* = importance and *a* = ambiguity. Note that a multiplicative relationship is assumed; if either *i* or *a* is zero, there is no rumor". (Op. cit., pp. 677-678).

Ambiguous situations conducive to the emergence of rumors are particularly dangerous in the case of unstructured ambiguity of the "totally incomprehensible catastrophe" type, such as unexpected enemy attacks, disastrous earthquakes or floods. Dramatic (mis)information may also give impetus to unstructured ambiguity.

In war circumstances enormous psychological advantage is on the side of those who are capable of maintaining the situation cognitively unstructured (Kris, 1944, p. 153). The secret of the "war of nerves" lies in the fact that one side permanently has the initiative in the transmission of rumors, while the rest of the world may only guess what it is about. In every phase of the war of nerves, Hitler's next move was an absolutely unknown danger (ibid.). Situations of this type, where activities cannot be aimed at any clear goal, create a sense of helplessness and mental paralysis (op. cit.).

WAR AND NARCISSISTIC WELTANSCHAUUNG

Hurt narcissism may appear as a strong generator of aggressiveness (Freud, 1914; Fromm, 1973). Political leaders often demonstrate a high degree of narcissism. A leader convinced of his exceptional talents may systematically use his narcissistic charisma to achieve political influence among the public (*by the way*, he needs applause and success to maintain his own mental equilibrium). The idea of the "leader's" grandeur and infallibility is almost never based on real successes, but on the idea of narcissist grandeur. Underlying it is *narcissistic ego dilatation* (Fromm, 1973). In interpersonal relations a narcissist leader may express enormous quantity of arrogance. Arrogant life position in combination with political power is very dangerous; Berne (1972) claims that such persons start wars, manipulate with "blood and bones" and initiate transactions which end up in court, in mental hospital or in morgue.

A narcissist leader is an ideal figure for the transmission of malignant nationalistic messages and generation of group narcissism among the members of his own group or nation. Verbal messages of the type "our country", "our people", "our religion" is the best, the most valuable, the most

peace-loving, the most cultured, the fairest, etc. are the most conspicuous indicator of the collective narcissist dilatation which homogenizes members of a group in regard of such overrated and grandiose ideas. Group accord about such statements (cognitive distortions) creates a kind of mythical opinion and, conditionally speaking, a narcissist Weltanschauung (outlook on the world). In extreme cases, such an outlook on the world may have an implication of creating an autistic parallel reality (Folie a beaucoup; Campbell, 1996). Group narcissism promotes solidarity and cohesion of the group, which facilitates manipulation with the masses by appealing to adopted narcissist prejudices. Group narcissism is psychologically contagious, since it performs an important compensatory function in case of an individual's inferiority (Adler, 1990). Even for a person suffering of pronounced inferiority complex, ergo for someone who perceives himself as an unsuccessful, failed, miserable and least respected member of the group—the group narcissist identity compensates this well and transforms into the feeling of satisfaction, value and pride ("I am a part of the best group in the world"). A particularly dangerous attribute of group narcissism is fanaticism (Fromm, ibid.) in which members of other groups (ethnic, religious, political) are denied the right to difference. This may lead to the outburst of malignant aggressiveness and major interpersonal conflicts.

In case of a conflict between different narcissist groups which contest each other, while having essentially similar attributes (situation termed by Freud "narcissism of small differences") may lead to a crescendo of hostilities which not rarely ends in bloodshed. Those infected by group narcissism have "heightened" reaction to almost any violation (real or imaginary) inflicted to members of their group.

A narcissist individual, unless extremely mentally disturbed, can have at least certain doubts about personal narcissistically idealized scheme. Unlike an individual, a member of a group contaminated with narcissism is absolutely uncritical and unburdened with doubt about his "grandiose" feelings since social support of the majority exists for that narcissism. In case of violation of any symbol of group narcissism such as a flag, a coat of arms or the leader's figure -the group may react with intense and uncontrolled rage. If the authorities in that situation are inclined to war politics, such circumstances may trigger off bloody conflicts.

Collective aggressiveness of a narcissist group represents one of the most malignant forms of human destructiveness, particularly if it appears in the form of reaction to experience that one's own interests perceived as vital are jeopardized. Pathological narcissism of conflicting groups may lead to bloody

and cruel mass massacres such as those which occurred e.g. between the Hindu and Muslims at the time of division of India. A good illustration of such a constellation of aggressive-narcissist impulses are also wars in the territory of ex-Yugoslavia waged in the last decade of the 20th century.

ON INSTRUMENTAL AGGRESSION.
"WARUM KRIEG" (WHY WAR?)

The aim of instrumental aggression is not liberation from a frustration or accumulated destructive instincts, but achievement of something perceived as desirable, necessary or unjustly taken away, expected to be achieved or recovered by war as the most drastic form of instrumental aggression. Fromm (1973) discusses the absurdity of the thesis that war is caused by accumulated human destructiveness. All statesmen, from Babylonian and Greek to the modern ones have *planned* (Fromm, ibid.) wars they waged for reasons very realistic and rational in their opinion or at least goals that could be clearly defined.

Today psychologists largely agree that the thesis which maintains that wars are caused by human aggressiveness – is absolutely false. Aggression is a necessary condition which enables execution of war actions, but the factor of human aggressiveness is not sufficient for plausible explanation of this complicated macrosocial phenomenon. Like the wars among antic states, most modern wars among nations are not the consequence of accumulated aggression of the population, but of synergic effect of complex dynamics of instrumental aggression of military and political elites. This standpoint is corroborated by the ideas formulated, in their correspondence, by two probably most influential (if that influence, among other things, can be measured by the number of quotations) 20th century scientists, Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud.

Einstein, in his letter to Freud in 1932, later published in the book *The World as I see it* (Einstein, 1934) mentions how Freud has shown "with irresistible clarity" that instincts of aggression and destruction in the psychical life of people are inseparably connected with instincts of love and vital self-assertion, whereby from these (Freud's) deliberations also emanates craving *for the high goal of internal and external liberation of man from war*. Einstein (ibid.) further claims that there exist solid grounds for conviction that an area so important for the fate of mankind has been left at the mercy and irresponsibility of political power-mongers. Political leaders i.e. governments owe their position partly to force, and partly to election by the masses and as such cannot be

considered representatives of spiritually and morally superior part of the nation. Unfortunately, their personal and political interests decide in crucial matters of war and peace.

In his letter "Why War?" (Freud, 1933) addressed to Einstein, Freud claims that reasons for wars should not be sought in human destructiveness. The causes of wars lie in political conflicts among groups which are resolved through violence since there existed no international law according to which – as in civil code – conflicts could be resolved peacefully. Freud ascribes only an auxiliary role to the factor of human destructiveness, as a means to facilitate people's readiness to go to war when political leaders decide to wage it.

MYTHIC THINKING AND "FATAL ATTRACTION TO WAR"

In his book *The Psychology of War: Comprehending Its Mystique and Its Madness* , former military psychologist Lawrence LeShan (2002) uses his extensive knowledge of the human psyche to shed light on mankind's fatal attraction to war.

The central premise of LeShan's book is that societies often engage in war when citizens have shifted into a "mythic" mode of experiencing reality. As defined by Erik Erikson, mythic thinking divides the world into the good (us) and the evildoers (them). Of course, the person (or nation) viewing the world through a mythic lens always identifies himself as "good", regardless of the facts, and therein lies the danger.

LeShan's explanation for mankind's attraction to warfare is directly linked to mythic thought. War is appealing for the same reasons that a mythic take on reality is appealing. When one's country is fighting an apocalyptic war for survival against evildoers, trivial personal problems disappear, social stresses dissolve as people band together, daily life suddenly has gravity and meaning, and decision-making is simple: either you're helping the war effort or you're hurting it. The best examples of entire nations experiencing mythic reality can be found in accounts of World War II.

According to LeShan, the majority of a country's citizens must shift into mythic thinking and thus reap the benefits of a mythic view of reality for a war to have popular support. When people perceive a war as it really is, through the everyday manner of seeing the world (which LeShan calls "sensory" reality), the war will not receive popular support.

Mythic wars are extremely dangerous. They impair people's ability to think rationally and make informed decisions.

CONCLUSION: A "TERRIBLE LOVE OF WAR":
THE FUSION OF EROS AND THANATOS?

Why do we love war, asks Jungian psychoanalyst Hillman in his controversial book *A terrible love of war*? One might ask in reply, do we, in fact, love war? Hillman answers unequivocally in the affirmative modern pretension to prefer the Prince of Peace to the god of war. Mars is the central character in Hillman's exploration of war as an archetypal impulse and that is why it is so terrible, so loved, and so hard to understand.. Hillman also effectively evokes the transcendent, Mars-like fury that overtakes soldiers in battle ("I felt like a god... I was untouchable," writes one). Throughout, Hillman offers other disturbing insights: readers may feel a shock of recognition when he compares our addiction to viewing war (whether real or cinematic) to the viewing of pornography, noting that we are all voyeurs.

De Tocqueville (1963) describes "a new kind of servitude" where a supreme power covers the surface of society with a network of small, complicated rules, minute and uniform, through which the most original minds and energetic characters cannot penetrate to rise above the crowd. The will of man is not shattered but softened, bent and guided. Such a power does not destroy; but it prevents existence; it does not tyrannize, but it compresses, enervates, extinguishes and stupefies a people, till each nation is reduced to nothing better than a flock of timid and industrial animals, of which government is the shepherd...The state becomes the sole guarantor of self-preservation...Thus do conditions become right for the Prince, who, as Machiavelli (2005) wrote, "Should have no other thought but War..."Hillman does not hesitate to draw the unavoidable conclusions from the fact that Ares always lies down with Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love. From ancient Sumner to present day the story is the same: the excitement, the glory, and the 'erotics" of war pass every other experience in intensity and delight. The hold of war (Thanatos) is as powerful as Eros.

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FAKTORI PSIHOLOŠKIH PRIPREMA ZA RATNU TRAGEDIJU

U ovom tekstu autor diskutuje psihološke teorije violentnog ponašanja koje pretenduju da objasne poreklo i strukturu ljudske agresivnosti, različitu stopu ekstremnog nasilja u različitim tipovima populacije I, na kraju, ulogu psiholoških faktora u poreklu velikih i krvavih konflikata među grupama, narodima ili državama.

KLJUČNE REČI: agresivni impuls / psihološke teorije violentnog ponašanja / rat / psihološke pripreme