The worst 20\textsuperscript{th} Century prophesies were based on the narrative superiority of totalitarian ideology, which can ill afford to manipulate, conceal and distort any discourse other than its own. What used to terrify us the most and give us a little perverse pleasure in predicting the horrors of all our negative utopias, was the mixing of words and power, ideology and the repression that inevitably springs from it. The ideology that seeks to achieve rhetorical persuasiveness and narrative tension, superior, hypocritical and very easily prevalent over all means that we once new, including guerrilla and revolution, was an impressive enemy – it was impressive to such an extent, that people with backward ways of thinking and checked reading in former socialist countries still think that they can achieve some intellectual status by attacking ideology ‘as such’. The entire situation described here is characteristic of the social and cultural state of elitism; perhaps it is even inevitably related to the elitism that used to be so typical of many dissident circles and cultures unambiguously related to dissidence, as was the case of the Yugoslav situation. The proletarianisation of cultures in new transitional cultures, nationalist populism and the trivialisation of public discourse, have all put an end to the late socialist elitism. Negative ideologies no longer meant a thing; ideology no longer had any discursive power. It was replaced by simple narratives of affiliation, without reliance on a more serious philosophical system.
Let us be open, no Right wing discourse, even when attempting to appropriate a more significant philosophical line, could compete with Marxism on the grounds of its success, and it ended up, at least in our time, in simplistic formulae. It is questionable whether ideology died with Marxism (if it is dead at all), but the condition of the public discourses and narratives of the late 20th and the early 21st century speaks of this very convincingly. One of the major cultural shocks during the break up of Yugoslavia (that is, a few years before the beginning of the war and afterwards) was the impoverished public discourse, which turned from a developed dialogue between the dissident and the official (ideologised) parties into a stripped narration of collective rights (‘we’), lands, blood, bones and particular folklore - finally melted into an identical, monophonic (sic) discourse of a nation. Therefore, it is entirely understandable that this dying and fundamentally restructured opposition, whose numbers, presence and cultural impact have radically diminished, if not even disappeared, clutched for so long to the Yugoslav discourse of identification as a possible answer to nationalism. On a political plane, that option will become relatively open only with European integration, although I do not deny the strong therapeutic effect it may have had on an individual during the war crisis. In other words, perhaps all that we had of ideology was not bad - if nothing more, it was at least a good ground where, in conditions of minimal democracy, that is, minimal participation in the public discourse, an oppositional way of thinking could develop. On the other hand, the situation regarding the socialist parties in Europe, i.e. the powerful left oriented ideology that, due to permanent concessions and hesitation, fails to find its feet when in government, shows the power of ideological discourse when it is among the ranks of the opposition. If nothing else, we must conclude that the dynamism of public discourses in Europe greatly depends on the presence of ideological discourses, unlike in the USA.
значи, на моќната лева идеологија, која поради постојаните отстапки и воздржаност не успева добро да се снајде кога е на власт, исто така покажува каква е моќта на идеолошкиот дискурс кога е во опозиција. Ако ништо друго, мораме да заклучиме дека динамизмот на јавниот дискурс во Европа во голема мерка е условен од присуството на идеолошките дискурси, за разлика од САД.

Фасцинированоста од појавата (моќната нарација од 11 септември) може да го заведе европскиот „аутсајдер“ да заборави на изразениот динамизам на политичките промени во Америка, вклучувајќи го и јавниот дискурс. Во таа смисла, има повеќе надеж отколку што изгледа на прв поглед, во ситуација кога одбраната (посебно екипата адвокати) на Клинтон во аферата Левински денес изгледа поблиску како пристапна беседа на некој француски академик, отколку како булеварска комедија, како што тогаш ја разбра голем дел од Европа. Станува збор, секако, за промени во јавниот дискурс на официјалната американска внатрешна и надворешна политика. Она што на почетокот изгледаше како комичен јавен одраз на неподготвениот, неизвежбан, и конечно несоодветен ум на новиот претседател и на неговиот тим, денес се покажува како недосмислен ефект од умирањето на идеологијата, како целосна неспособност да се смисли нарацијата, и со неа логичен и реторички апарат кој ќе служи не само за убедување, туку и за градење на опозициозкиот дискурс. Опозицијата на Буш, американската пред сè, вкупност е немоќна, затоа што ниту во една точка не може да најде дијалошка, односно критичка поддршка за спротивставување (значи и за анализа) на официјалниот дискурс. Критиката на Буш и неговата администрација, посебно од злонамерните луѓе во сенка, изразува само најостри и најрадикални квалификации кои немаат никаква смисла затоа што критичарите не се на истото ниво на авторитет: смртта

A European ‘outsider’ might be lured by apparent fascination (the powerful September 11 narration) to forget the striking dynamism of political changes in America, including the ones in the public discourse. In this sense, there is more hope than it might seem at a first glance, in a situation when Clinton’s defence (particularly that of the team of lawyers) in the Lewinsky scandal nowadays seems more like an accessible oration delivered by some French academician than like a boulevard comedy, as much of Europe perceived it at the time. Of course, what we are dealing with here are shifts in the public discourse of American official home and foreign policy. What seemed in the beginning as a comical public reflection of an unprepared, unpractised and, finally, inadequate mind of a new president and of his crew, now proves to represent the unambiguous effect of the death of ideology - utter inability to come up with a narration and a logical and rhetorical apparatus that would serve not only to persuade but also to build the discourse of the opposition. Bush’s opposition, above all the one in America, is in fact powerless, because it cannot find a single point of dialogical, i.e. critical footing for resistance to (and therefore analysis of) the official discourse. The criticism against Bush and his administration (particularly against the hawkish people in the shadows) expresses only the sharpest and most radical qualifications, which are pointless because the critics are not on the same level of authority: death of ideology results in catastrophic consequences on democracy, particularly in the case of
America, where democracy is wrapped in a thick mythological-narrative layer. Without that layer, that is, if the narration is not invested in, the consequence is an adialogical discourse of the kind ‘we are a democracy - you (they, all others) are not’. That is how Collin Powel’s body language can be understood, as he frequently had tics when he was interviewed during his recent tour of Europe - something that ruined on a performative level the possible effect of his one-way statements. This, of course, does not indicate an emerging conscience in this politician but more likely a certain professional uneasiness. The death of ideology has had an effect on Europe as well, where the Right has been toiling to patch up the remains of the identitary nations similar to the Yugoslav ones. The American example encourages further impoverishment of discourse and elimination of the need for good narration and its persuasion apparatus. In this sense, not only the ones from the Right who oppose the war in Iraq gain (Le Pen) but also those who support it (Berlusconi): both cases result directly from the death of ideology, i.e. from the disappearance of discursive standards, and hence the increased direct threat to all forms of democracy.

But the worst effect of the death of ideology, a terrifying example how not only words but also absence of words can produce catastrophic consequences for human reality is the so called post-war situation in Iraq. The colonial indolence towards the colonised, who are depicted as a ‘savage’ (the looting) continues in the installation of a new administration, where we witness only rapacity (for oil and other forms of penetration of capital) and total absence of willingness to establish a civil state in the country. Two images, mediated not only by the post-
September manipulative machine of CNN but also by practically all international agencies, are becoming crucial for the analysis: one is the image of the ‘thief of Baghdad’ leaving a public building with a plastic vase and plastic flowers in his hands (attention - the pop-culture image coming from several films with the same title is not without sense), the second is a neutralised documentary sequence of pillage and destruction in the Baghdad National Museum. The first image portrays the ‘savagery’ of the colonised in a comic light, the second the very same savagery is portrayed in its dangerous local and political context. The mediated message of the first image is that what we are talking about are savages who do not know what real culture means, the second that they are savages who are ‘that way’ even without Saddam’s dictatorship. The hidden text underlying both messages is that savages need not civil culture, democracy or freedom to decide, but summary leadership - until the exploitation pays off, we might fill in the blank of this utterly simplified colonial narration. Let us upgrade that gaping blank with other available data, that is, with the absence of data - say about the educational system, about the number of American servicemen and women who are able to communicate in the local languages, about the number of scholarships offered to young Iraqi men and women (especially in light of the extremely restrictive requirements for a student visa), and so on.

Concerning the flowers, it is not even necessary to invoke Jack Goody and his new book in which, among other things, he ‘rehabilitates’ artificial flowers, because the status of the material does not diminish the rural function: it would be enough to mention the key visual status that plants and flowers have in Islamic cultures. Strings of beads, mirrors, toxic waste, suspicious food and medicine,
followed by the mocking with the new use value that the colonised might discover in all that - all that the coloniser’s culture does not appreciate. This ‘generosity’ of the coloniser was torn asunder in post-colonial theory long time ago. This new visual construct (‘the thief of Baghdad thief’) works impeccably for European and American racism. The broader and more reasonable global public still has the ability and the option to compare those images with the signs that civil life is (virtually in no way) being implemented in Iraq, although the space for fundamentalist organisation is getting ominously bigger. The view that America’s new policy, instead of destroying, is in fact creating centres of global terrorism, so far well attested in Afghanistan, could be reinforced in Iraq - of course, for those who still believe that the fight against terrorism is among the key objectives of this new American colonialism.

But let us reflect once again upon those two images: in the same way they allowed state property to be taken out from the institutions of Saddam’s regime without visible sanctions, the Americans (by failing to enforce basic protective measures) allowed the looting of invaluable monuments of human culture in the National Museum. We could interpret this in several ways:

- Ignorance - which is never ‘ naïve’, for it also means that no experts were hired, none who knew what Bagdad’s National Museum contained (let alone what other museums in Iraq, archaeological sites, later monuments etc. contained), that is, exclusion of any policy on culture. Savages do not need culture?
Destruction of the possible sources of identifying narrations (collective memory); Saddam’s regime had, to a certain degree, already used this narrative potential.

Planned involvement in the lucrative business of selling works of art, perhaps even more comprehensive stocking of American museums.

Insensitivity to other cultures, with a touch of racism.

Whatever the interpretation, or the combination of interpretations, it would demand an instant and bitter reaction from organisations such as UNESCO. There were, to be fair, reactions, as well as expert advice, delegations and opinions, but in doses that were entirely inappropriate for one of the greatest cultural disasters of the past decades: remember the outrage at the destruction of the Bridge in Mostar, or the world-wide reaction to the demolition of Buddha’s statues announced by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

The sum total of the American intervention, i.e. the war in Iraq, is simply catastrophic. Casualties and material damage, no result from the weapons of mass destruction investigation (which has lost all credibility over time), unimpaired terrorism, chaos and absence of civil society in Iraq, open and unlawful takeover of another country’s natural resources, destruction of world cultural heritage: but all these objections, however obvious, do not have an addressee, for there is not a single discursive channel that could lead to dialogue. It is hard even to imagine a situation more propitious for terrorism and solving problems through violence in one’s narrow local circle,
ното решавање на судирите во својот тесен локален круг, без контакти со остатокот од светот – освен кога таму се рушат симболични цели. Негативните утописти на 20-от век не беа во право: во безнадежниот тоталитарен режим не се оствари вишок идеологија, додека умирањето на идеологијата има неспоредливо посилно и побрзо дејство врз потполната поделба на светот и на човештвото на владетели и поданици.

Превод од српски јазик: Татјана Митревска

out of touch with the rest of the world - except when symbolic objectives are thrown down there. The negative utopians of the 20th century were wrong: the excess of ideology has not resulted in a hopeless totalitarian regime, while the death of ideology has an incomparably quicker effect on the total division of the world and of humanity into rulers and subjects.

Translated from Serbian by Ognen Cemerski