

The war in Yugoslavia drew nearer when letters started to arrive at the small art magazine that we were running at that time, asking us to publish enclosed texts which were petitions for arm deliveries. These letters and texts reached us first from Slovenia, soon later from Croatia. The basic argument along which they were written was that of a re-evaluation of the concept of nationalism. The goal was to establish a so called "good" nationalism, and thus to consider the possibility to say "I just love Croatia."

The analogy that was made in these texts at that time, just as I am now making one in this text to the Yugoslavian war, was to the Spanish Civil War, or to name it more precisely, the invasion of the Spanish Republic by the Francoist troops. Spain, one of those texts explained, and I never looked it up to see if it was true, had been placed under an arms embargo by the League of Nations.

Slovenia was not given the necessary weapons against the invading Serbian tanks. "We are led to the slaughterhouse with our hands bound!"

The positioning that was demanded from us was not something that we could do easily. Publishing is more than having an opinion. In a way, it would have meant to enter the war, entering a logic and a language of war, not only taking a side. On the whole, our publishing friends in the leftist media in Vienna were reluctant to comment on the war. Maybe the rupture caused by the Yugoslavian war was greater than it is today, in a generation in which any war was read as a historical aberration into a purely economic logic. War was thought of as stupidity imposed by military-industrial male interest groups if too many people became too wealthy, therefore money became too cheap, and had to be destroyed.

This knowledge was confronted by the Yugoslavian intellectual diaspora, who, like other hundreds of thousands of their compatriots, had fled, many to Vienna or Budapest, who wanted to write and publish why they were fighting this war. There was something viciously confusing about what was happening, and we did not yet know that this is always so, must be so, because this uncertainty, the pressure to enter into a friend-foe system, as well as that specific stress which permeates everything because of the death threat: implied by war, forms the basis of warlike thinking.

In Germany, there was obviously even less desire to position oneself. Our request to befriend magazines, "how to proceed?", was met with a polite shrug. Five years later, in view of the NATO bombardment of Belgrade and other Serbian cities, and thus Germany's entry into the war, this eventually changed.

But a responsibility towards the freedom of ones' thinking kept us from aporia, or from simply carrying on. And since it was possible, and trains were running, we realized after a while that we had to go there before we could speak about this war. We went to Zagreb at the time of the Croatian mobilization, after the massacre of Vukovar. The war still had its most gruesome phases ahead of it, Srebrenica, Bosnia, but that was impossible to foresee. The bombarded Zagreb was in ruins and full of refugees from besieged Sarajevo, with a currency whose bills showed fabulous values in the millions, while clouds of small notes were blown through the streets by the wind. But bars and cafes were

full and the daily life seemed relatively stable due to the stationing of UN troops. We had a series of appointments with art institutions, magazines, aid organizations, artists. Trains were full with UNPROFOR soldiers, who spent the weekends vacationing in the clubs of Vienna.

War pervades one, grabs the next best person and tries to make him or her a participant. I remember that after one of the many conversations in Zagreb, where we had decided only to listen and not to have or express an opinion, the aggression between us was so high that R. turned around in the street mid-sentence and slapped L. in the face (and we were only three). But, and possibly at that moment, we also realized that none of this was us, that we were about to transform into strange hybrid aliens, a kind of Robocops or Robo-Militia, mixed beings armed to the teeth in which only morsels of a the former self were hidden.

When the US forces invaded Iraq, I was working for the UN, at that time at the UN headquarters in Nairobi. We, the UN, another we this time, opened - and I'm sure it was on the same day - an exhibition of the projects that were part of the Food for Oil program. What was the most confusing? The delegate from Iraq in his light gray suit, whose job was dissolving just like his country? The Spanish ambassador who opened the exhibition while planes were leveling Iraqi cities not named Guernica? We, who were there because these projects had been paid for by our cooperation budgets, knowing that everything that lay before us in glossy brochures was just being reduced to rubble? How could one ever make sense out of this.

This madness has been described a hundred times, but then also: all this writing does not become effective, because part of the irrationality is also the assertion that what is happening now forms an exception, is the state of emergency that needs this other thinking. Therein lies a complete brainwash concerning the wars of which I write. In reality there is no difference and the old answers of the many people who have written from analyzed experience are just as right as the question itself is wrong.