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## **ROMAS ABOUT OTHER (Social Distance of the Romas from Southeast Serbia from Serbs, Bulgarians and Albanians)\***

### INTRODUCTION

The paper presents an analysis of some of the data obtained by the empirical research *Quality of the Inter-ethnic Relationships, the Awareness about the Regional Identity and the Possibilities of Cooperation and Integration at the Balkans* carried out in the summer of 2003 on the territory of Southeast Serbia. It represents a part of the three year (2002-2004) project *Cultural and Ethnic Relations at the Balkans - Possibilities of Regional and European Integration* of the Institute for Sociology of the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš. Within the sample of 600 examined, stratified with respect to gender, age and schooling, there were 109 members of Roma nationality questioned.

The social and ethnic distance towards the Roma has been a frequent topic of research in Serbia; this time we present mostly the results of the empirical research projects that dealt with the assumption that the greater the assumed social closeness is, the greater the social distance towards the Romas is. Yet, the opposite process inevitably imposed itself, that is, the formation of certain attitudes of the Roma national minority members towards members of other nations.<sup>1</sup> The same theme will also be dealt with in this paper by analyzing the answers of the examined Romas to the questions from the so-called Bogardus<sup>2</sup> and Luckert's scales<sup>3</sup> that project a Roma view of others, that is, more precisely, of Serbs, Bulgarians and Albanians in Southeast Serbia.

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<sup>1</sup> See summary representation of the Romas' attitudes towards other peoples on the Bogardus exploration scale in the research project "The Religious Life of the Orthodox and Muslim Romas in Southwest and Southeast Serbia" carried out in the summer of 2001 as presented in the paper: Todorović, D., Milošević, L. and D. B. Đorđević (2002), "Social Distance of Romas of Southeastern and Southwestern Serbia towards Members of Other Nations and National Minorities", in: *Globalizacija, akulturacija i identiteti na Balkanu (Globalization, Acculturation and Identities at the Balkans)* (p. 267-273), Niš, Institut za sociologiju Filozofskog fakulteta, Niš.

<sup>2</sup> Social distance scale in which 7 characteristic relations are stated, namely: 1. close kinship through marriage, 2. close friendship, 3. living in the neighbourhood, 4. employment in the same company, 5. acceptance as superior at job, 6. living in the same town, and 7. living in the same state. The examined should give "yes" or "no" answers and thus they should say if they are ready to accept each of the given relations with members of some groups.

SOCIAL DISTANCE TOWARDS SERBS, BULGARIANS AND  
ALBANIANS

Social Distance towards Serbs

Table 1

*ETHNIC DISTANCE TOWARDS SERBS*  
*in %*

<i>Relationship</i>	Yes	No	Neutral
Get married to	<b>68,6</b>	25,7	5,7
Have him/her as a friend	<b>98,1</b>	1,9	-
Live in his/her neighborhood	<b>97,1</b>	2,9	-
Work in the same company	<b>97,1</b>	2,9	-
Have him/her as a boss	<b>89,3</b>	5,8	4,9
Live in the same city	<b>98,1</b>	1,9	-
Live in the same state	<b>98,0</b>	2,0	-

Table 2

*ETHNIC STEREOTYPES TOWARDS SERBS*  
*in %*

Modality	Completely agree	Agree	Indecisive	Disagree	Completely disagree
Industrious	<b>14,3</b>	<b>69,5</b>	12,4	1,9	1,9
Brave	<b>22,9</b>	<b>61,0</b>	13,3	2,9	-
Intelligent	<b>15,1</b>	<b>67,0</b>	13,2	3,8	0,9
Sensitive	18,9	54,7	18,9	4,7	2,8
Sincere	8,6	41,9	<b>38,1</b>	10,5	1,0
Honest	7,7	41,3	<b>32,7</b>	16,3	1,9
Cultured	<b>11,4</b>	<b>68,6</b>	15,2	4,8	-
Clean	<b>13,3</b>	<b>71,4</b>	11,4	2,9	1,0
Kind	13,3	56,2	24,8	5,7	-
Hospitable	<b>21,0</b>	<b>62,9</b>	10,5	4,8	1,0
Peaceful	10,5	53,3	<b>29,5</b>	6,7	-
Unselfish	9,5	48,6	<b>30,5</b>	11,4	-
Civilized	14,3	64,8	15,2	5,7	-
Like other nations	10,5	56,2	23,8	7,6	1,9
Proud	<b>32,4</b>	<b>59,0</b>	8,6	-	-

<sup>3</sup> With every nation there would be a list of 15 attributes (industrious, brave, intelligent, sensitive, sincere, honest, cultured, clean, kind, hospitable, peaceful, unselfish, civilized, like other nations, proud). The examined are expected to encircle one of the five marks on the scale thus indicating to what extent the typical representatives of these nations have each of these 15 attributes clearly manifested.

More than 4/5 of the Romas think that the Serbs are industrious, courageous, intelligent, well mannered, clean, hospitable and proud. A somewhat smaller number of them (and yet over 2/3) ascribed to the Serbs that they are sensitive, kind, civilized and that they love other peoples. There is no complete agreement regarding other characteristics such as being candid, honest, peace-loving and unselfish but even the number of those who are unwilling to ascribe these things to the Serbs does not drop below half of the examined.

About the Serbs as the majority nation that is their most frequent neighbor in Southeast Serbia, the Romas have an exceptionally positive opinion. As many as 68,6% of the examined are even ready to get married with a neighbor of Serbian nationality which is the highest degree of social closeness. Also, the other values on the scale, except for acceptance of Serbs as superiors at job, are approximating hundred percent.

Social Distance towards Bulgarians

Table 3

*ETHNIC DISTANCE TOWARDS BULGARIANS*  
in %

<i>Relationship</i>	Yes	No	Neutral
Get married to	32,7	<b>51,9</b>	15,4
Have him/her as a friend	<b>76,7</b>	12,6	10,7
Live in his/her neighborhood	<b>79,6</b>	13,6	6,8
Work in the same company	<b>84,5</b>	9,7	5,8
Have him/her as a boss	<b>62,1</b>	23,3	14,6
Live in the same city	<b>87,3</b>	7,8	4,9
Live in the same state	<b>87,3</b>	7,8	4,9

Only every third Roma would get married to a member of the Bulgarian national minority while less than two-thirds Romas would not accept any of their fellow citizens of Bulgarian nationality as their superior at work. Other forms of co-existence are also positively characterized and move around 80%.

Table 4

*ETHNIC STEREOTYPES TOWARDS BULGARIANS*  
in %

Modality	Completely agree	Agree	Indecisive	Disagree	Completely disagree
Industrious	<b>4,8</b>	<b>52,9</b>	35,6	6,7	-
Brave	3,8	44,2	42,3	9,6	-
Intelligent	<b>4,8</b>	<b>46,2</b>	42,3	6,7	-
Sensitive	1,9	34,0	43,7	13,6	6,8
Sincere	1,9	31,1	48,5	16,5	1,9
Honest	1,0	27,5	44,1	<b>26,5</b>	1,0
Cultured	2,9	35,0	42,7	18,4	1,0
Clean	5,8	35,0	48,5	10,7	-

ROMAS ABOUT OTHER

Kind	3,9	33,3	46,1	13,7	2,9
Hospitable	5,8	36,9	44,7	8,7	3,9
Peaceful	2,9	38,8	41,7	15,5	1,0
Unselfish	3,9	26,2	<b>54,4</b>	14,6	1,0
Civilized	3,9	35,0	<b>52,4</b>	8,7	-
Like other nations	4,9	28,2	<b>54,4</b>	10,7	1,9
Proud	<b>9,7</b>	<b>40,8</b>	45,6	3,9	-

The Romas do not ascribe to the Bulgarians positive characteristics as they do to the Serbs; we have made such a conclusion on the basis of a high degree of indecision that ranges, in all the proposed solutions, from 42,3% to 54,4%. More than a half of positive answers are obtained when it comes to the characteristics such as “industrious”, “intelligent” and “proud” while the highest indecision is noticed with such traits as “unselfish”, “civilized” and “love other peoples”. Of all the characteristics that can be ascribed to a nation, the Romas most doubt Bulgarian honesty.

Social Distance towards Albanians

Table 5

*ETHNIC DISTANCE TOWARDS ALBANIANS*  
in %

<i>Relationship</i>	Yes	No	Neutral
Get married to	16,5	<b>66,0</b>	17,5
Have him/her as a friend	51,0	<b>36,5</b>	<b>12,5</b>
Live in his/her neighborhood	<b>60,6</b>	32,7	6,7
Work in the same company	<b>66,0</b>	29,1	4,9
Have him/her as a boss	45,6	<b>41,7</b>	<b>12,6</b>
Live in the same city	<b>66,0</b>	29,1	4,9
Live in the same state	<b>63,7</b>	29,4	6,9

The highest degree of social distance and of the stereotypes about other peoples the Romas exhibited towards the Albanians which makes them no different from the Serbs regarding the answers given in some former research projects. As many as 66% of the examined would not get married to the national minority; only half of them would have them as friends while 45,6% would have them as superior in the factory. The percentage of those who would work together with them in a company or live in the neighborhood, town and state is about 60%.

Table 6

*ETHNIC STEREOTYPES TOWARDS ALBANIANS**in %*

Modality	Completely agree	Agree	Indecisive	Disagree	Completely disagree
Industrious	<b>23,8</b>	<b>41,9</b>	20,0	13,3	1,0
Brave	10,5	37,1	23,8	22,9	5,7
Intelligent	7,6	38,1	28,6	21,0	4,8
Sensitive	4,8	41,3	21,2	23,1	9,6
Sincere	9,6	30,8	33,7	19,2	6,7
Honest	<b>13,6</b>	<b>42,7</b>	25,2	11,7	6,8
Cultured	2,9	28,8	41,3	17,3	9,6
Clean	4,8	21,2	34,6	<b>28,8</b>	<b>10,6</b>
Kind	7,7	41,3	26,0	20,2	4,8
Hospitable	15,4	33,7	23,1	20,2	7,7
Peaceful	4,8	24,0	37,5	<b>23,1</b>	<b>10,6</b>
Unselfish	5,8	23,1	44,2	<b>20,2</b>	<b>6,7</b>
Civilized	4,8	23,1	42,3	<b>21,2</b>	<b>8,7</b>
Like other nations	3,8	17,3	45,2	<b>20,2</b>	<b>13,5</b>
Proud	<b>26,9</b>	<b>30,8</b>	23,1	18,3	1,0

More than a half of the examined recognize the fact that they are industrious, honest and proud while the other values do not exceed 50% (it is interesting that the lowest values are obtained when it comes to such traits as “clean,” “peace-loving”, “unselfish,” “civilized” and “love other peoples”).

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An insight into the answers given by the examined Romas on the Bogardus scale enables us to conclude that the least social distance the Romas have towards the Serbs, that it is somewhat more expressed towards the members of the Bulgarian national minority and that it is convincingly largest towards the Albanians. As much as their openness towards their Serbian and Bulgarian neighbors is (not) surprising, so is evident their reserve towards the Albanian environment.

While as many as 68,6% of the examined accept marriage with the Serbs, as many of them, along with 17,5% of the neutral ones, refuse it if the partner would be an Albanian man or woman. The other values of the Bogardus scale range from about two-third majority on the part of positive answers.

Towards one form of social life, however, the Romas express continual reserve, namely, when it comes to the superior at job. In the case of the Serbs, it drops below 90%, hardly sixty percent of positive answers remain when the Bulgarians are at issue while negative answers exceed positive ones in the case of the Albanians. It is obvious that such answers are consequence of the traditional, “socialist” understanding of the place of the worker in the production process in state and social companies that has not yet undergone any change under the influence of the transition. After the inevitable process of privatization of the ownership when the working culture of the employed will change, a

different view of one's own role as well as those of other actors in the production process will be formed.

As for Serbs, Bulgarians and Albanians, the Romas have exhibited absolute agreement about only two of their traits, namely that they are "industrious" and "proud." The Serbs fared best: 15 characteristics offered as options on the Luckert scale are ascribed to this nation always with more than a half of positive answers. As for their being "sensitive," "kind", "love other peoples" and "civilized", there is somewhat less agreement comparing to the former character traits while the greatest hesitancy is shown when it comes to honesty, sincerity, love of peace and unselfishness of Serbian nation.

With surety the Romas would, when it comes to the Bulgarians, in addition to the already listed traits, add that they are also "brave" and "intelligent." Yet, regarding the subsequent traits, resoluteness is suppressed by uncertainty in ascribing some concrete features to the Bulgarian people that ranges between 42,3% and 54,4%. It is exceptionally expressed in judging whether the Bulgarian people are "unselfish", "civilized" and that they "love other peoples". We also register disagreement that is almost as high in percentage as agreement about "honesty" as the Bulgarian characteristics.

One character trait is especially ascribed to the Albanian people that the Romas least put their trust in. While in the case of Serbs, the Romas are in two minds about judging them as honest while in the case of Bulgarians they openly express the doubt that they are gifted with such a character trait, the Roma people, to an important percentage, agree that the Albanians are "honest." As for all other positive traits, the positive answers ("I completely agree" and "I agree") do not exceed the sum of indecisive and negative answers. The Romas would say, to a slightly higher percentage, that the Albanian people are "brave," "intelligent," "kind" and "hospitable" but, on the other hand, they would also refuse to accept the assertion that they are clean, peace-loving, unselfish, civilized and that they love other peoples. These traits are not ascribed to the Serbian and Bulgarian peoples, either.

#### FREQUENCY OF ROMAS' DISTANCE

For the sake of further analysis, the overall distance measure is intersected with the invariable factors (gender, age, schooling, profession, habitation, marriage status, religious and confessional identification). The overall distance measure is achieved by giving one point to each refusal of some relationship while acceptance was marked with zero (that is, distance is measured instead of closeness). The overall result ranged from 0 (meaning no distance without implying complete acceptance since the examined could also give "neutral" answers and this is something that should be kept in mind in doing the analysis) to 7 (since there are 7 relationships tested) which marks complete distance. All the examined are divided, with respect to the distance scale results, into 4 groups, namely:

- no distance and "neutral" (0 points)
- small distance (1-2 points)
- moderate distance (3-5 points)
- large distance (6-7)<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Kuzmanović, B. (1994), *Socijalna distanca prema pojedinim nacijama (etnička distanca) (Social Distance Towards Particular Nations (Ethnic Distance))*, in: M. Lazić i saradnici, *Razaranje društva* 118

Table 7

*FREQUENCY OF ROMAS' DISTANCE*

*in %*

<i>Social Distance</i>	Serbs	Bulgarians	Albanians
No distance and "neutral"	67,0	38,5	26,6
Small distance	26,6	41,3	32,1
Moderate distance	-	9,2	10,1
Large distance	1,8	5,5	25,7
No answer	4,6	5,5	5,5
TOTAL	100,0	100,0	100,0

Frequency of Romas' Distance towards Serbs

Only slightly more than the fourth of the Romas in our research manifest negative distance towards Serbs and this even being the smallest one.

Among those who manifested it, in one of the three varieties, the number of women is more prominent (43,4%) than that of men (16,1%). The examined are between 50 and 59 years of age (40%) (it is the least present among those who are older than 60 /21,1%/ and in the age group of 40-49 years /24,1%/). The negative distance declines with the increase of schooling (no schooling /35%/, three-year school /22,2%/, high and university/no such schooling at all, though more than 20% of high school students did not want to give any answer /). The most prominent distance is among housewives (48,4%) while the least is among workers (22,2%). It is higher in the town (31,1%) than in the village (21,4%). It is exhibited by 27,7% of the married women and men who were otherwise the most numerous in the sample (76,1%). It declines with the increase of religiosity (non-religious /35,3%/, indifferent to religion /34,7%/, religious (/23,1%/). It is most expressed by the members of the Protestant religious communities (36,7%) and those who do not accept confessional identification (27,8% – 22,2% small and 5,6% high). It is less present among the followers of Islam (23,1%) and the least by the Orthodox (9,1%, though as many as 18,2% Orthodox Romas did not want to give any answer).

Frequency of Romas' Distance towards Bulgarians

More than half of the questioned Romas exert a negative distance towards Bulgarians, small, moderate or high. Taken as a whole, in percentage, this distance is twice as large as the one expressed towards Serbs though it is still within the category of the "small distance."

Even in the case of a negative distance towards members of the Bulgarian national minority the Roma women are ahead (67,9%) of Roma men (44,6%). The distance is the least in the age group between 40 and 49 years (41,3% though including 17,2% of those who avoided giving an answer) while it is the largest between 19 and 29 (68%). It declines with the increase of the achieved education and it is once again recorded among housewives (77,4%) (though it is not smaller among workers – 48,1%). This time it is more present in the rural (71,4%) than in the urban population (54,5%). It is present among more

*(Jugoslovensko društvo u krizi 90-ih) (Destruction of the Society) (Yugoslav Society in the Crisis of the Nineties)*, Belgrade, Filip Višnjić.

than a half of the questioned married people, single and widowed ones. Again, it is least liable to occur among religious people (49,3%) comparing to those indifferent to religion (60,8%) and non-religious ones (70,6%). It is expressed by 61,2% of confessionally indecisive people, every other Muslim (56,4%) and Protestant (53,4%) while it is far less expressed by Orthodox (36,4% though again there were even 27,3% of those who avoided giving an answer to the question).

#### Frequency of Romas' Distance towards Albanians

We have stated that the negative distance that the Romas manifest towards their "neighbors" of different nationality is by far the largest towards Albanians. It is worrying that a fourth of them do not express it but yet it is far more worrying that there is another fourth of those who expressed to the utmost degree as a "large one." Due to such results, we shall schematically present the frequencies of intersection of the negative distance with some independent variables.

Table 8

#### *FREQUENCY OF DISTANCE TOWARDS ALBANIANS* (Distribution with Respect to Gender in %)

<i>Gender</i>	Small	Moderate	Large	Examined total
Male	21,4	12,5	23,2	56
Female	43,4	7,5	28,3	53

There are clearly more Roma women (79,2%) than Roma men (57,1%) who manifest a negative distance towards Albanians. Yet, the intensity of the manifested distance is stronger among Romas: there is approximately twice of those whose distance is moderate or large than those whose distance is small. With Roma women a small distance is prevailing.

Table 9

#### *FREQUENCY OF DISTANCE TOWARDS ALBANIANS* (Distribution with Respect to Age Group in %)

<i>Age Group</i>	Small	Moderate	Large	Examined total
19 – 29	28,0	8,0	24,0	25
30 – 39	46,2	3,8	26,9	26
40 – 49	34,5	6,9	17,2	29
50 – 59	20,0	20,0	30,0	10
over 60	21,1	21,1	36,8	19

In the overall score, the negative distance is the smallest with age groups 19-29 (60%) and 40-49 (58,6%) while it is the largest with the oldest population (79%). It is exactly the last two age categories of population, that is, the population older than 50 years of age, that express an otherwise high negative distance as moderate and large. There are



even twice as many of them comparing to those who express a small distance. Young Romas between 30 and 39 years of age should not be neglected, either; almost a half of them exert a small negative distance while more than a quarter of them express the highest intensity one.

Table 10

*FREQUENCY OF DISTANCE TOWARDS ALBANIANS*  
(Distribution with Respect to Schooling in %)

<i>Schooling</i>	Small	Moderate	Large	Examined total
No schooling	20,0	15,0	50,0	20
Incomplete Elementary School	37,5	12,5	16,7	24
Elementary School	41,2	8,8	23,5	34
Three Years of Professional School	-	11,1	55,6	9
Completed Secondary School	41,2	-	5,9	17
High and University Education	20,0	20,0	-	5

A negative distance towards members of the Albanian national minority is also expressed by uneducated and educated alike. Since the acquisition of the institutionally acknowledged education has never been an imperative for the Romas, the most worrying are high values of the negative distance among common, uneducated and poorly educated Roma people, namely 85% among those with no education, 66,7% of those with incomplete elementary school and 73,5% with elementary school. Not even among those with completed secondary, high or university education does the negative distance drop below 2/5 though they are present, in percentage, much less in the total sample.

Table 11

*FREQUENCY OF DISTANCE TOWARDS ALBANIANS*  
(Distribution with Respect to Profession in %)

<i>Profession</i>	Small	Moderate	Large	Examined total
Worker	33,3	7,4	18,5	27
Unemployed	26,3	5,3	31,6	19
Housewife	41,9	12,9	35,5	31

We have singled out three professions that the examined in our sample are mostly engaged in and that are otherwise most spread in Roma population. While it is among workers and unemployed workers about 3/5 (though it is of stronger intensity among unemployed) only 10% of Roma housewives do not manifest it towards Albanians.

Table 12

*FREQUENCY OF DISTANCE AMONG ALBANIANS  
(Distribution with Respect to Habitation in %)*

<i>Habitation</i>	Small	Moderate	Large	Examined total
Village	64,3	-	-	14
City	27,8	11,1	30,0	90

A negative attitude towards Albanians is present only to a small percentage within the total score, less in the village than in the city. But, on the other hand, the urban Romas are much more characterized by a large and moderate distance while among the rural people it is located in the category of a small negative distance.

Table 13

*FREQUENCY OF DISTANCE TOWARDS ALBANIANS  
(Distribution with Respect to the Marriage Status in %)*

<i>Marriage Status</i>	Small	Moderate	Large	Examined total
Married	30,1	12,0	24,1	83
Single	41,7	-	16,7	12
Widow/widower	25,0	8,3	50,0	12

Though they are not significantly present in the total score, the information is still alarming that there are 83,3% of widows/widowers who have a negative attitude towards Albanians while it is of noticeable intensity in every other one. Not even the married ones are lagging behind them (66,2%) though their distance is of lower order.

Table 14

*FREQUENCY OF DISTANCE TOWARDS ALBANIANS  
(Distribution with Respect to Religion in %)*

<i>Attitude to Religion</i>	Small	Moderate	Large	Examined total
Religious	33,8	3,1	32,3	65
Indifferent to Religion	21,7	26,1	17,4	23
Not Religious	41,2	11,8	11,8	17

Though there are no drastically prominent differences in percentage, the case of a negative attitude towards Albanians takes a new turn when it comes to the religious identification of the questioned Romas, namely, the least tolerant are religious Romas (69,2%) while the most tolerant are non-religious ones (64,8%). The religious ones almost without exception fall into the category of a large negative distance comparing to those indifferent to religion and non-religious ones.

Table 15

*FREQUENCY OF DISTANCE TOWARDS ALBANIANS*  
(Distribution with Respect to Confessional Affiliation in %)

<i>Confessional Affiliation</i>	Small	Moderate	Large	Examined total
Orthodox	27,3	9,1	18,2	11
Muslim	33,3	12,8	17,9	39
Protestant	20,0	6,7	60,0	30
I don't want to declare myself	44,4	5,6	-	18

At all the modalities on the confessional affiliation scale the Romas' negative distance towards Albanians exceeds 50%. While it is relatively uniform among Orthodox and Muslims, it shows that Protestants and those who do not want to declare themselves as members of any confessions are quite prominent. In the former case, the situation is almost alarming, namely 86,7% of Protestant Romas do not want any contact with the Albanian national minority while with 2/3 of those who declared their confession within that percentage threaten to turn into open enemies. A group of the examined that refuse confessional identification is an example of the lowest extent of the negative distance.

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It has been shown that the Roma women are more susceptible to the social distance than the Roma men, least towards Serbs (43,4%) and most towards Albanians (79,2%).

The most tolerant turned out to be the examined in the category of 40 to 49 years of age. They have manifested the smallest distance towards the majority Serbian and minority Bulgarian and Albanian population. The contradictory data, however, are obtained for the youngest and the oldest Roma population. While the youngest clearly show resistance towards Bulgarian that is lacking when it comes to Albanians, the oldest are openly more in favor of Serbs but not of Albanians.

When we speak about the smallest (in the case of Serbs) and the largest negative distance (in the case of Albanians), we can see that it is always most present among the uneducated and poorly educated Roma population (with no schooling, with incomplete or complete elementary school). They are dominant in the sample of our research as much as in real, everyday life since for centuries the Romas have not been given any genuine help in the acquisition of the institutional education.

Roma housewives are most liable to the negative influence of the stereotypes. They are followed by unemployed workers while the stereotypes are least effective among employed working population. Such a result could have been expected regarding the registered negative distance among women and uneducated and insufficiently educated population. The Roma woman, most often without any single day of work and permanently preoccupied with child rearing and household chores, has always remained on the margin of social developments and under devastating influence of the traditional views of the immediate surroundings.

The Roma urban population has a larger negative distance towards Serbs and Albanians while it is larger towards Bulgarians in the rural population.

The greatest number of the questioned Romas are married (83 of 109 of the examined). The distance, when there is one, is the least towards Serbs followed by Bulgarians and Albanians (a manifested negative distance towards members of other nations and minorities is, in percentage, concentrated in the category of "a small distance"). The most unfavorable data are only in the case of the distance towards Albanians as manifested by widows and widowers: though they make up only ten percent in the sample, half of those who show it describe it as prominent.

Religious persons are more tolerant than those indifferent to religion and non-religious ones as shown by the data about the distance with respect to confessional adherence. Such an expected result, however, is missing in the case of the negative distance towards Romas. The religious persons share the same attitudes as those of non-religious nature or are even more prominent in their negative attitudes towards the national "otherness": about 2/3 of the religious persons show a distance; in half of them it is small while in the other half it is prominent.

Three kinds of conclusions impose themselves while considering the confessional identification of the examined Romas. The Orthodox Romas have the smallest distance but this result is as a rule clouded up by a high percentage of those among the Orthodox believers who have avoided giving concrete answers (18,2% towards Serbs and 27,3% towards Bulgarians, that is, Albanians) so that we do not know what group they would have belonged to if they had given the required answers. Not to accept confessional adherence is a legitimate answer on the scale used to examine religious affiliation. It is exactly this category of the examined Romas (they make up slightly less than 20% in the overall sample) that gave contradictory answers; while, on one hand, they are ahead of those distancing from Serbian and Bulgarians, they are, on the other hand, together with the Orthodox believers, an example of a peace-loving attitude towards Albanians. It is somewhat strange to notice a negative distance among the Romas of Protestant affiliation. They are at the very top regarding their negative attitudes towards their surrounding peoples; at the same time, while in the case of Serbs and Bulgarians, their attitudes are within the limit of a small distance, in the case of the Albanian nation, their attitudes take on the characteristics of an open hostility: as many as 86,7% Protestant Romas manifest a distance; of them all, 60% Romas describe it as large.

#### INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION

The problems of the Balkans depend to a large extent on the historical development. That is why the contemporary political and economic moment of the Balkans is so firmly determined by it. In addition, being what it is, it represents a new challenge to the Balkan traditional spirit of small and permanently jeopardized peoples. The centuries-old attempts directed to integration and state-forming organization have not changed what remained constant, namely, the feeling of jeopardy shared by the small peoples as well as by common man. Are jeopardy and antagonism, lack of tolerance and sufferings really a Balkan doom?

The nineties of the previous centuries gave rise, at the Balkans, to a high degree of intolerance as well as tragic conflicts among members of different nations, especially on the territory of former SFRY. Without any special wish to penetrate more deeply the social and economic causes of the conflict, in the eyes of the common citizens they were simplified and reduced to religious animosity. This was largely encouraged by the widely-spread

“Balkan” identification of religious and national adherence and (ab)use of religion by the militant political and religious leaders. The leaders have skillfully used the mobilizing role of religion and that is how they succeeded in giving legitimacy to the actions they undertook. Even after the passions calmed down, very little was done by the warring parties to expose the difference between the genuine religious tradition and the use of religion for the sake of justifying violence.

In the era of globalization, it is of crucial importance for the national communities at the Balkans to develop cooperation. This goal makes it important to identify the differences; yet, it is even more indispensable to identify the common values and similarities as well as the common interests in the sphere of security and peace, culture and economic development.

Unlike many European states, Serbia is economically underdeveloped but it is a nationally, culturally and religiously diversified country. It shares the fate of the controversial Balkan space in which - not rarely and without any true reason - these differences are punctuated and experienced as barriers on the path of general prosperity. On the other hand, the transition wave that has spread throughout most of the Balkan societies has imposed entirely specific dynamics of development and changes in the national and global framework. A multicultural Serbian society, after decades of stumbling upon so many barriers, is in the process of critical re-questioning itself and its adjustment to the spirit of the times, namely, the idea of pluralism, civil democracy, human rights and tolerance. These ideas are yet to take roots here.

Thus tolerance, that is, acceptance and respect for differences becomes a fundamental need of individuals, ethnic groups and the whole social community.<sup>5</sup> The disturbed interpersonal and inter-national relations in Serbia were mainly fostered by the already-mentioned unfortunate happenings in the last decade of the previous century as well as the opening-up of the new points of conflicts (Kosovo and Metohija). But, this is not all. The lack of a better grounded democratic tradition, along with deeply-rooted patriotism, authoritarianism, exclusiveness and populism, have given rise to the fact that the so far prevailing dominant patterns of behavior on the political scene (such as party single-mindedness, condemnation of differences in opinion, instrumentalization of differences, inability to overcome differences through dialogue), accompanied with uncritical publicity in mass media, have been easily transferred to people *en masse*. That is why, in addition to the lack of information, the old stereotypes have been publicly or interpersonally encouraged just as the new stereotypes and prejudices about members of other nations and ethnic communities have been promoted. Such a (non)cultural pattern has been supported and implanted by primary socialization in the family and extended socialization in the educational institutions.

Regarding all this, a very conspicuous example is that of the Roma position in Serbian society. Though the last year's *Act on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of*

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<sup>5</sup> In the survey “Religious, Cultural and Civil Tolerance” carried out in September, 2002, by the Center for Media and Communication of the Institute for Political Studies and the Yugoslav Society for Religious Freedoms, Belgrade, on the random sample of 1004 examined (741 in Serbia and 263 in Montenegro), to the question “Are there in Serbia/Montenegro good and tolerant interpersonal and social relations?”, a negative answer was given by 67% of the examined in Serbia and 55% of the examined in Montenegro. More about it in Popović, N. A. (2001), *Da li smo tolerantni (Anketno istraživanje o pitanjima i problemima tolerancije u Srbiji i Crnoj Gori)? (Are We Tolerant? A Survey of The Issues and Problems of Tolerance in Serbia and Montenegro)*, Belgrade, Jugoslovensko udruženje za verske slobode.

*National Minorities* represented the first instance of a state act acknowledging the status of the national minority, though for the first time the interest of the general public in the real state in which the minorities find themselves became evident to everyone, there are still so many things to be done in order to improve the legal-political position, social and economic and cultural position of this nation. In addition to poverty and lack of education, the main “arbiter” of the Roma's social status are prejudice and stereotypes of the environment in which they live. Both the members of the majority as well as those of other minority nations regard them as lazy and dirty, liable to frauds, alcoholism and violence. Under the above-mentioned pressure of their surroundings, and partly because of their specific mentality, they are most often dwellers of isolated, closed and non-hygienic settlements. They are, in fact, *a culturally closed* nation, with a specific historical fate and a rich cultural treasury based upon oral tradition, folk legacy, myths and legends.

On the basis of examining the Roma answers on the Bogardus and Luckert's scales, it is difficult to conclude if their attitudes are a result of the culturally implanted views or just impressions created by personal contacts. It is known that tolerance is primarily an individual attitude towards someone different but it is also the attitude that is to be adopted through the process of upbringing and education, that is, socialization process. It is upon the society to find, with respect to its own potentials, adequate means for cherishing a tolerant attitude among the members of different national communities and ethnic groups.

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