

Our M-m Mentality is at the Basis of our Misery.

by Pat Patfoort

**Our M-m mentality brings us to war. And it makes we can't get out
of it.**

**So we should learn what other mentality there is, and then of
course how to put this in practice.**

When we have problems, we usually look for a "guilty" one, someone (or a group of people) who are guilty for those problems. But the guilty one is not a person or a group, but a way of thinking, **our** way of thinking.

Our way of thinking which is **at the basis** of most of our problems – for instance war, in particular now the one in Kosovo – is that when there are two different points of view, every time again we associate to those two different points of view judgements of value : the one is the good, the right one, and the other the bad, the wrong one. And the people who have the first opinion are the good people, and the other the bad people. This is the Major-minor or M-m way of thinking (see fig.1).

This is the way of thinking, which also brings about discrimination : then these are not different opinions, but even different characteristics between people with which judgements of value are associated. Because of this the ones are considered as Major (right, civilised, evolved), and the other ones as minor (wrong, primitive, underdeveloped).

This way of thinking also **maintains** afterwards our problems, because it creates the illusion (at both sides) that one can/will win, this means that finally one will be able to conquer the Major-position. And as at both sides each has this illusion, every time again each continues, when he feels put into the m-position, to try to get to the M-position. In this way the **escalation of violence** is built up.

The fact we want to get out of the minor-position, that we don't want to be a loser – each at his side –, is very normal, I even should say very healthy : it's inherent to human beings. Our instinct for self-conservation, for survival, is at the basis of this. But that we therefore want to put ourselves in the Major-position, that we think this is the only way to get out of this minor-position, this is because of our M-m way of thinking.

And there is another way of thinking which can get us out of the minor-position, but without making that we therefore have to put ourselves in the Major-position, with all harmful effects it brings. This is the mentality or way of thinking of the Equivalency, with which a third position appears: **the position of Equivalency** (see fig.2).

So there are **not only two positions** in which we can be (the winner and the loser, the good and the bad one), as the Major-minor mentality tells us, **but three**.

The M-m mentality and the E-mentality in the war in Kosovo.

During history the Serbs and the Albanians in Kosovo did feel many times put in a minor-position by the other one (and on top of that by other ones, what even increased the sensitivity for this minor-position).

Now of course the Albanese feel in a minor-position towards the Serbs.

In the M-m mentality this is not (enough) situated in the context of an escalation, and so there is a judgment that the Serbs (who now are in the Major-position) are the bad ones, the guilty ones, and the Albanese the victims, the good ones.

In the mentality of Equivalency or E-mentality one situates what is happening now in the context of an escalation, and so considers this as a part of the escalation they have with one another. This means that not only the present suffering of the Albanese is recognised, but also the fact that the Serbs put themselves now in a Major-position because they try in this way to get out of a minor-position. So in the E-mentality there are no good and bad ones, but one considers besides one another the reasons and the pain of both.

From 1989-1990 on the Serb government did reduce more and more the autonomy of the Kosovar Albanese (= did push them in a minor-position), because they were afraid the Albanese would require their independency (= would be getting themselves in a minor-position). A way to deal with this fear following the E-mentality could have been to make the life-conditions of this autonomy so attractive and agreeable, and the fact of being part of the Serbian republic so advantageous, that the Albanese wouldn't have seen (any more) the sense of putting energy in trying to separate. There probably would still have been some extremists who would have claimed for independency. But such people are everywhere without getting to problems therefore.

On the contrary by the fact the Serbs did act in a repressive way (= did put the Albanese in a minor-position), there was a big risk that the Albanese would on their turn try to put themselves in a Major-position. One is namely never sure one can reach the Major-position : it depends of the fact if the other party admits his minor-position. Milosevic did clearly do a mistake there. But this is no reason to say he is "guilty" : this mistake is only one of the many mistakes which have been done by the different parties. And following the M-m mentality we in fact all act like him : forbid/punish/take away so that another one wouldn't do what we don't want him to do.

For years the Albanese did not tend to put themselves in a Major-position, but there was a nonviolent resistance inspired by Ibrahim Rugova (= try to get out of the minor-position without putting oneself in the Major-position).

All those years we could have supported the Albanese in their nonviolent resistance. But here is once more clear how in our world the M-m mentality is dominating the E-mentality : it only was when there was a violent resistance that Kosovo did get serious international attention. This means that when the Albanian Kosovars tried to get out of their minor-position by putting themselves in the Equivalent one, the international community didn't really notice they were pushed into a minor-position. Only when they did this by putting themselves on their turn in a Major-position, only then they got attention.

I also think there have been M-m situations inside of the Albanese resistance. When I was there in the fall of 1997, I talked as well with Rugova as with representatives of the student movement. The students were then organising some big demonstrations because they thought that the agreements Rugova and Milosevic did sign in the fall of 1996, were not (quick enough?) made concrete. They wanted things to move. From my talks I got the impression that as well Rugova

as the students did feel put in a minor-position by one another. The communication between them didn't go well. So the resistance movement did fall apart in two parts : on one hand the non-violent resistance movement of Rugova, and the violent one of the liberation army UCK that grew out from the student movement. I think this violent resistance movement could have been avoided if

1) Rugova would have made/been able to make himself stronger in front of Milosevic. I think that he (and together with him the resistance movement) indeed at that moment was in a minor-position towards Milosevic. More international support probably could have been able to help there. Then probably there should not have been a need inside of the resistance movement to put themselves in a Major-position.

2) the communication between Rugova and the student movement would have been more Equivalent. This probably would have made that the position of Rugova also towards Milosevic would have become more Equivalent.

And then there are all the M-m situations created by the international community.

Already in the second round in Rambouillet it became clear how the Serbs felt more and more put in a minor-position by the international community. In fact they then did drink more than they talked : they didn't see any sense in talking anymore. It became more and more clear that the Americans were at the side of the Albanians. The Serbs were under pressure of "sign or being bombed". The American minister Madeleine Albright did put herself in a Major-position towards the Serbs as well by her nonverbal language as by some offensive remarks. Diplomacy although just means usually to try to be perceived in an Equivalent way, this means that everyone gets the feeling to be respected, to be listened to, to be taking account with (even if this is only a superficial layer, a piece of theatre).

Perhaps Milosevic became tired – like Saddam Hussein? – to have the feeling to have to do everything just like the American officials tell him to do...

The problem in Rambouillet was that there was an agreement on the table that the "mediators" did put together, and that the parties just were asked to sign it. And the "round" meant thus to convince the two parties to do so. If such an agreement doesn't respond to the needs of (one of) both parties, then of course this or these feel(s) pushed into a minor-position.

In the Equivalency a mediator is not someone who brings an agreement with him, and either someone who tries to convince the parties. A mediator in Equivalency is someone who facilitates so that the communication between both parties goes as much as possible in an Equivalent way, so that they together can come to a solution which responds to the needs of both. Eventually a mediator can make proposals for agreements, but these have to remain only proposals. The mediator never imposes them, and also doesn't put any pressure on the parties.

The NATO also did clearly choose side, and not only pro Albanese, but also against the Serbs.

At our side – the side of the Allies – we get to hear and to see the different aspects of the M-m mentality :

- "Milosevic makes difficulties"

- "He did create the problems himself"

- "We have the justice at our side" (Solana, secr.gen. of NATO, 12/4/99)

In this way Milosevic is the problem, he is the guilty one for everything, an enormous campaign is made about the suffering of the Albanese fugitives – this is of course awful, but shouldn't therefore be put only on the shoulders of the Serbs –, Milosevic is presented as the only bad one, he is a monster, he is "the Hitler of the Balkan". Holbrook although did describe him only half a

year ago as "a hard but cooperating negotiator". Then Milosevic did agree to have an international peacekeeper force in Kosovo, to reduce his army in Kosovo, and to negotiate with the Kosovars. But because of internal problems inside of the US things didn't happen.

Milosevic did put himself in the Major-position, and thus, following the M-m mentality, he has now to be put in any possible way in a minor-position.

- "We put Milosevic under pressure, we shall get him on his knees, we put him with his back against the wall, we shall destroy everything is valuable to him,..."

And meanwhile the allies present everything they do themselves in a positive way, or emphasize it so. They present their bad deeds as mistakes – after they first have tried not to admit them or to put them in the shoes of the Serbs. So they try to empower the fact that Milosevic is really the only bad guy. Propaganda by and manipulation of the media are practical means here fore.

The Alliance tries in this way to conquer the Major-position :

- " The allies will continue to bomb until Milosevic gives in, until the Serbs bend, until they have reached their goal, possibly until the summer (16 April 1999)"

- "We shall win" (Solana, 12/4/99)

But they do this in the illusion that effectively they will one day be able to conquer this Major-position. But what if Milosevic doesn't give in? And what if the bombing has to last longer than the summer? It's now already weeks later then one had thought. Originally everyone had thought that Milosevic would bend after a few days. And what if the Serbs develop or get in any way means of power the allies did not expect? The illusion to be able to conquer the Major-position is fed by pretension and arrogance, and a lack of humility, by which in advance one thinks to know what the other party all can and will do. This is called strategy...

And moreover there probably also are all kind of M-m feelings and situations between the different partners of the Alliance. For instance I would not be surprised that the reason why the German peace proposal didn't even get discussed was that the American politicians have it difficult (= feel in a minor-position) when the peace proposal is not coming from them.

Equivalency in the war in Kosovo

Anyhow the escalation has to stop as quickly as possible. It's now already much more difficult than before the bombing to get to Equivalency. And every step of the escalation makes it even more difficult.

Then there are now two relations in which Equivalency has to be worked on : the one between the Serbs and the Albanese, but also the one between the Serbs and the NATO. To do this all M-m elements should be eliminated from these relations. And one should not anymore look for guilt by the one or the other, not by Milosevic, but either feel guilty ourselves, like for instance when Clinton defended himself : "it's a shame to suggest that the Americans were the ones who caused this disaster". None is the only guilty for this disaster. All kinds of parties did contribute in it, some by doing something (mistakes), other ones by doing nothing.

Of course we have to get the Albanese out of their awful minor-position. But not by trying to put Milosevic and the Serbs on their turn in a minor-position, but by taking account in an Equivalent way with the needs of each. Not only because in the first way the Serbs resist in a much harder and more aggressive way, but also because then we are preparing and provoking the next step, with which the Serbs will put themselves a next time again in a Major-position towards the

Albanese or allies. To push the one who did put himself in a Major-position on his turn in a minor-position, is **never** a solution.

About solutions : much more important than what they contain, is how they are brought or created. They should not be imposed from outside, but can be suggested or proposed. The real solution has to be built up and decided by the parties concerned.

For an Equivalent or Nonviolent solution the process is the more important thing, while in the M-m mentality usually people are permanently focused on the solution. And in this way often people are not taking care of the way they are trying to get to this solution.

We have to consider that not only the Albanese and the allies would like to get at the end of the escalation, of the suffering, but also the Serbs and Milosevic. But important is that nobody (also not the Albanese) wants to finish this escalation in a minor-position : loosing face. And the more suffering there has been, the more one wants it shouldn't have been for nothing. So the stronger one becomes not to give in the fight.

What if one of the parties makes a positive act towards the other, with a proposal for a step towards de-escalation, like for instance when Milosevic says that the Red Cross, after one month of war, can work again in Kosovo, or when the three American soldiers are released?

Then there are three possible positions :

- 1) either one doesn't respond at all, and continues to bomb : this is the Major-position. One presents this as an act of weakness, as a proof the other one is becoming weaker, he is giving in, because it's becoming too difficult for him. One imagines that this is a sign one is winning, one is on the right path, that there won't be too much to do anymore to win;
- 2) either one immediately jumps on this, stops every action against the other one, believes the other one from now on only has good intentions. This is the minor-position.
- 3) or one makes know that one appreciates this act that one would like to deescalate together in this way and get closer, one does oneself a proposal to deescalate. This is the Equivalent position.

Usually the one who does such an act presents it as strong and humanitarian (= Equivalent), and on the other hand the adversary presents it as weak, like if it was coming from a minor-position.

Concerning the living together of two communities : we should grow from a multicultural towards an intercultural society.

In a multicultural society both groups live in the same territory, but besides one another, without looking for contact with one another, usually with quite a lot of prejudices about one another. This is in a M-m mentality.

In an intercultural society there is contact between the two groups, they build and maintain communication with respect for one another. This is in a E-mentality.

Finally I would still like to add something about the difference between the M-m and the E-mentality. The E-position is not at all something between the Major- and the minor-position. The E-position is obtained on basis of a totally different process than the one bringing us to the M-m-positions. To learn to reach the E-position we have to replace our usual way of thinking by another. This is one of the most difficult things to realise, because this way of thinking is anchored deep in ourselves. So this change requires we touch ourselves. And this is one of the

things we have most difficult with.

And perhaps one could think there are now more important things to do than considerations about ways of thinking... Of course it's incredibly important now to do all what is possible to help with the suffering which already has been done. But besides that :

1) Towards a solution for the war it is very important to work on a replacing of our Major-minor mentality by an Equivalent one.

2) To try to avoid similar situations in the future, we should finally have to seriously work on trying to eradicate our M-m mentality, and to replace it by the E-mentality. Now, in this acute situation, we can more clearly than ever observe what are the disastrous consequences of our usual way of thinking. Hopefully we are now more stimulated than ever to do something about it. When the situation will be less acute, we risk not to be enough motivated anymore to do something about it...until we get into the next acute situation...

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