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RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AND THE CHANGE OF WORLDVIEWS IN SLOVENIA (1918–1991): HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

The article sheds light on religious transformations in the Slovenian territory in the first and the second Yugoslavia by placing emphasis on religious conversion and atheization as a form of deconversion. The historical analysis of the interwar period reveals the first beginnings of religious diversification, with special emphasis being placed on religious conversions. More profound changes in the religious field were provoked by the new political regime, which concomitantly promoted the spread of atheism and religion as a private matter, thus stripping the Catholic Church of its dominant role in society. Gradually, the Yugoslav state authorities developed a more liberal attitude towards religion, which resulted in the dialogue not only between Christians and Marxists but also between different religious communities. It was only the disintegration of Yugoslavia, which led to the democratization of state and social structures and to the inflow of migrants to Slovenia, that enabled the development of religiously pluralistic society in Slovenia.

Keywords: religious conversion, Yugoslavia, Slovenia, atheization, interreligious relations, religious pluralism

LE COMUNITÀ RELIGIOSE E IL CAMBIAMENTO DELLA VISIONE DEL MONDO IN SLOVENIA (1918–1991): PROSPETTIVE STORICHE E POLITICHE

SINTESI

L'articolo presenta la trasformazione della religione nel territorio sloveno nel periodo jugoslavo dal punto di vista del cambiamento della fede e della ateizzazione come deconversione. L'analisi storica del periodo tra le due guerre mondiali mostra gli inizi della diversificazione della religione, in particolare le conversioni religiose. I cambiamenti maggiori nel campo religioso sono stati apportati dal nuovo regime politico che ha arginato il ruolo dominante della Chiesa cattolica nella società con il supporto della diffusione dell'ateismo e con la percezione della religione come una questione privata. Il rapporto tra Stato e religione nella Jugoslavia autogestita si è nel tempo liberalizzato ed ha aperto il dialogo tra cristiani e marxisti e altre comunità cristiane. Nella Slovenia invece si può parlare della pluralizzazione delle comunità religiose solo dopo la dissoluzione della Jugoslavia con la democratizzazione delle strutture statali e sociali e con le migrazioni.

Parole chiave: conversione religiosa, Jugoslavia, Slovenia, ateizzazione, relazioni interreligiose, pluralismo religioso

INTRODUCTION¹

In this article, I will present social and political challenges faced by a religiously plural society. I will place emphasis on historical analysis of religious conversion and atheization as a form of deconversion in the Slovenian territory in the interwar period and under the socialist regime. The analysis of the first period will be based on primary sources from state and private (i.e. Church) archives; the presentation of the post-war period, which was marked by “state-imposed atheism”, will take into consideration relevant references and theoretical discussions of this phenomenon.

The majority of terminology in the humanities and social sciences, in particular, studies of religions, originates from the Western Christian tradition and is, as a result, biased (cf. Kapaló, 2011, 26–27; Roudometof, 2018, 213). Consequently, the major part of the established theoretical and methodological apparatus has not appropriately addressed phenomena related to religious affiliation and individual religious practices, including conversion, particularly in everyday life and outside institutional frameworks (McGuire, 2008, 24–25).

The applicability of “mainstream” religious concepts and models, especially the rights of “other” religious groups, freedom of conscience, proselytizing by minority religious groups, and related phenomena, is easily brought into question in several countries with predominant religious groups, including those with experience of socialist regimes where specific relationships between society, the state and religious institutions have developed. For example, seeing themselves as the bearers of national identity, Christian Orthodox churches often consider religious pluralism to be a threat to national integrity and challenge the legitimacy of conversion – by both well-established groups, such as Catholics, and newcomers to the “religious marketplace”, such as evangelical Christians (Knox, 2005, 160; cf. Ramet, 2019, 2–4). Furthermore, we can observe a multitude of current controversies that pertain to the “universalization” of a Western-centric interpretation of human rights concerning religion; this challenges the dominant ethnoreligious understanding of religion in the region.

In discussions on religious conversions and atheization, the concept of secularization, which has been full of controversy since it arose, cannot be avoided (cf. Casanova, 1994; Berger, 1999). A significant relationship between the explored phenomena and the secularization thesis can be found especially in a gradual loss of influence of majority religious institutions (i.e. in Slovenian case the Catholic Church) and individualization of religious beliefs. The lat-

ter, since the beginning of the late 19th century, manifested itself also in religious conversions (cf. Verginella, 1994), in particular, due to the perception of religious belief as a choice. However, religious conversions can also be considered as the product of the so-called religious market (Stark & Iannaccone, 1994; Stark & Finke, 2000) that started to emerge in multiconfessional Yugoslavia and can be associated with the increased interest in religion (Droogers & Harskamp, 2014, 3), i.e. resurgence of religion. The trend to the latter was in Western and Central Europe, as well as in Slovenia, noticed in the late 1970s, while in most of the other world, we could hardly speak of any decline of religion. The secularization of society as a consequence of the regime policies that restrained the activities of religious institutions and actively promoted atheism has its specifics. While the increase of de-institutionalization resulted also in higher numbers of non-believers, often non-attendance of religious ceremonies had nothing to do with the loss of religious beliefs nor was the attendance necessarily an expression of profound religiosity (cf. Schnell & Keenan, 2011, 73). Henceforth, it would be most relevant for the scholarship to study secularization and resurgence of religion as interrelated occurrences (Riesebrodt, 2014, 3). For this article, phenomena will be explored within specific historical, social, and cultural settings, while also not disregarding some general social trends of de-institutionalization, individualization, and privatization of religion/religiosity.

Owing to the nature of the sources and the aforementioned drawbacks of concepts (which have to be adapted before they are used in in-depth studies related to specific historical, political and geographical frameworks), the main methodological challenge faced by a study of religious changes is how to deal with this topic without bias and how to take into account historical (archival) sources. As regards the period before the Second World War, the trouble with the analysis of sources on religious conversion is their rarity. That period typically lacks ethnographic material (oral sources) as well as biographical texts, while archival sources tend to be mostly factual, thus helping the researcher to form only a superficial picture. In addition, one has to be aware of the methodological pitfall of overgeneralizing the significance of historical events only on the basis of individual representations. What one can do is to focus on the manner in which a religious change has been depicted (Szpiech, 2019, 263), without neglecting to provide a precise historical contextualization. A different perspective offers a practice-based approach to religious phenomena which has already been adopted

¹ The author acknowledges that the research programme (Slovenia and the Mediterranean, P6-0272) and the research project (Inter-religious Dialogue – a Basis for Coexisting Diversity in the Light of Migration and the Refugee Crisis, J6-9393) in the scope of which this publication was published, have been financially supported by the Slovenian Research Agency.

in historical studies (Kapaló, 2011, 32; Badone, 1990, 6; Kapaló & Travagnin, 2010, 134–135).

It has to be pointed out that the field of interreligious relations – in particular at the political and interinstitutional levels, as well as between lay people and non-believers – tends to be pervaded with conflicts rather than cooperation. Naturally, the interactions between different religious communities and individuals cannot be limited only to these two types of relations. Probably the most common attitude is indifference; even if it involves no open conflict, such a stance preserves or even generates new prejudices against, negative stereotypes of, and divergence with the “Other”. The concept of religious pluralism, as used in this article, is understood as the ideal of peaceful co-existence of individuals and groups with different religious and secular worldviews (cf. Droogers, 2014, 24, 180), in a manner that goes beyond mere plurality and diversity. Such an ideal presupposes a world in which tolerance is surpassed through active inclusion of religious diversity (Rouméas, 2015, 15). Tolerance can be regarded as a provisional solution applied when two sides neither strive for an agreement nor a compromise between controversial beliefs, and when they also do not believe that an agreement is possible (Ndayambaje, 2013, 9). In the context of such an understanding, religious pluralism is the ideal that a community, society or state can only approach through its legal remedies.

The two basic characteristics of interreligious relations in the period in question in the Slovenian territory are the existence of a new historical and political entity – i.e. the state of Yugoslavia and its different forms or periods (kingdom, occupation during the Second World War, and the socialist regime) – and the (persistent) dominant role of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church has been determining the relations between the state and other religious communities in Slovenian and Croatian parts of the (former) country also in the socialist period. In the interwar period, it preserved its dominant position in majority Catholic regions even when the regime in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia expressed a preference for the Serbian Orthodox Church. To provide an example: the first Yugoslav state favoured the Serbian Orthodox Church over all others. At the Yugoslav and above all local level, such a preference was clearly visible in the strained relations between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church.

The second part of the article will focus on the role of nonbelievers in the context of increased religious diversification in Slovenia, especially during the existence of the second Yugoslavia. That time was marked by the secularization of state structures, and in particular, the atheization facilitated by the regime’s “ideological

apparatus”. This state policy propagated the individual right to either belong to religious communities or not. Religious sentiments, however, were declared a personal and private matter of individuals concerned (cf. ZKS, 1958, 479–490). The restrictions on religious communities loosened over the years, starting with the Law on the status of religious communities that was passed in 1953 (cf. Dolinar, 1995, 28–29), and mostly put a stop to nearly open hostility towards the Catholic Church endorsed by the Communist Party. The Second Vatican Council gave an impetus for the agreement between Yugoslavia and the Holy See (so-called Yugoslav protocol) to be signed in 1966 and the subsequent reinstatement of diplomatic ties with the Vatican in 1970. The situation for the religious communities was improved especially with the Law on the legal status of religious communities in Slovenia (1978), although certain questions were still left open. Lay believers in practice kept experiencing some level of discrimination, in particular teachers, professors, and clerks, whose profession was considered incompatible with religious beliefs.²

Nevertheless, in Yugoslavia (cf. Lavrič & Friš, 2018), other socialist countries, and Western Europe (Ganiel, 2014) a considerable spread of noninstitutional forms of belief was noticed. The increase in self-proclaimed religious affiliation in the 1990s gave rise to the trend towards belonging without believing, distinctly in countries with Christian Orthodox majority (Smrke, 2017, 9; Bogomilova, 2003, 21), that is especially in the Balkans strongly interconnected with the ethnicization of religion and nationalism (Mantinen & Tervo-Niemelä, 2019, 71). Such developments show that the implementation of atheism had different consequences, which calls for a historical analysis of the situation in individual states, and, in the case of Yugoslavia, in individual republics.

INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS AND RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION IN THE SLOVENIAN TERRITORY IN THE FIRST YUGOSLAVIA

The [Great; A/N] war with its consequences really eroded the old worldviews and changed the popular mentality, not only in the political but also in other respects. Everything was still seething and people did not trust the current situation, expecting further changes. The economic situation was so precarious that only the most economically secure people dared to set up new hearths [start new families; A/N], and so most did not marry and preferred to get along the best they could on their own (Prežihov Voranc, 2010 [1946], 85; translated by the author).

² AS, 1589/IV 487, 4391, Report on the implementation of the Act on the Legal Status of Religious Communities in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, 18 October 1978.

Yugoslavia was a multi-ethnic and multireligious state with various historical, cultural and political backgrounds. Its history of religions has been often addressed through the prism of multi-ethnic conflict, yet interreligious relations in Yugoslavia were always much more complex (cf. Perica, 2002, vii; Mojzes, 2011a, xiii–xiv; Ramet, 2006, 1–2) as no nation or religion had an absolute majority. As a result, Yugoslavia was the only state in Europe with large Christian Orthodox (46.6% of the entire population according to the 1921 census), Catholic (39.4%), and Islamic (11.2%) religious communities. By far the strongest influence was exerted by the Serbian Orthodox Church, especially in the political, administrative and military arenas. Even if it lost the status of the state church *de jure*, it did not lose the support of the ruling Karađorđević dynasty. The Yugoslav religious traditions had a different understanding of not only the role of religion in society and politics but also of interreligious and interethnic co-existence. In former Yugoslavia, peaceful interethnic co-existence was quite a challenge. For instance, Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks shared a series of related characteristics, especially the language, while their ethnicities as their strongest identifiers were based on religious and historical differences; i.e., the constructed ethno-religious identity. It is representations of religious conversions – ranging from the conversion to Islam in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 15th and 16th centuries to the forced conversion of Serbian Orthodox believers to the Roman Catholic Church in the Independent State of Croatia period (Škiljan, 2014, 99, 107–108; Tomasevich, 2010, 599; Aleksov, 2006, 25–26) – that can be found at the core of national myths still (re)produced by national historiographies. To quote Michael B. Petrovich: “[...] religion was not so much a matter of private conscience as of one’s public identity. In some cases, the identification between religion and nationality was so great that a religious conversion automatically entailed a change of nationality in the eyes of others, if not in those of the convert himself” (Petrovich, 1967, quoted after Elzarka, 2018, 30).

During the interwar period, the question of conversion and its related phenomenon – proselytization – remained a sensitive issue in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/Yugoslavia. For the first time in history, Slovenes and Croats succeeded in presenting themselves as two modern nations and attained partial national affirmation in the name of the state they had established together with the Serbs in the 1920s, namely, with the use of their own languages in public administration, intense development in the cultural field, etc. Nevertheless, they had to face growing Serbian centralism and Yugoslav unitarianism. The attempts to weaken national and ethnic identities became especially vigorous after

the introduction of a royal dictatorship in 1929 and they reverberated in the field of religion as King Alexander I had prohibited the operation of political parties and societies of “tribal” (i.e. ethnic) and religious nature (cf. Gašparič, 2007, 123). Such developments affected the relations between the two historical rivals: the Catholic Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church. Each of these had strong national and political connotations.

The field of interreligious relations was neither regulated nor unified from the legal point of view, since throughout the existence of the first Yugoslavia the old legislation was still valid. That said, it is enough to look at the operation of the Catholic Church to see that these old laws were regionally specific. The constitution was the only state-wide legal instrument that regulated the field of religion. Religious equality for members of accepted and recognized creeds was stipulated by the Vidovdan Constitution (1921) and the Octroyed Constitution (1931), which did not mean, however, that religious equality was consistently respected or that the two constitutions facilitated the deconfessionalization of society and state institutions (Mithans, 2017, 81–86, 102–103; Salmič, 2015, 108–111). On the contrary, in the so-called parithetic system of religion-state relations of recognized and unrecognized religious communities, the dominant majority religious institutions could preserve their monopoly at the regional level, with their influence over politics being temporarily limited only on a few occasions. The period witnessed several (unsuccessful) attempts to adopt an interreligious act, which resulted in the immediate opposition of Catholic circles in Slovenia and Croatia, mostly because of issues about interfaith marriages and education of children born in such marriages, religious affiliation, and conversions (Mithans, 2011, 91–93). Interreligious conflicts culminated in the signing of a concordat between the Holy See and Yugoslavia. The agreement between Yugoslavia and the Holy See also addressed some issues from the sphere of interreligious relations, particularly the regulation of interfaith marriage, as well as the demand for institutions and property of the Catholic Church to remain in the possession of the church in the event of the population served by them converting to other faiths. Owing to the opposition of the Serbian Orthodox Church and oppositional political parties, it was never ratified (Mithans, 2017, 188–203, 335–337).

In the Slovenian territory, the interwar period was also marked by the attempts of re-Catholicization (Jogan, 2008, 28–33, 37; Jogan, 2016, 28–29) or, to put it differently, of the comprehensive social renewal in modern history carried out in accordance with the Catholic model. This took place from the late 19th century to the outbreak of the Second World War.³ On the other hand, the period marked by the unifi-

3 Interestingly, similar tendencies could be observed in the aftermath of Slovenia’s independence in 1991, in particular, in right-wing political circles and within institutional structures of the Catholic Church. As the first re-Catholicization, however, could be considered Counter-Reformation.

Table 1: Religious composition in Slovenia (Drava Banovina / Socialist Republic of Slovenia) according to the 1921, 1931, 1953, 1991 and 2002 population censuses.

	Catholics	Lutherans and Reformed Church	Christian Orthodox	Muslims	Greek Catholics	Other religions	Unaffiliated	Non-religious, atheist	Refuse to answer	Unknown
1921	96.57%	2.59%	0.63%	0.06%	0.05%	(17 people)	/	/	/	/
1931	97%	2.2%	0.6%	0.08%	0.21%	(190)	/	0.02%	/	0%
1953	82.8%	1.5%	0.3%	0.05%		0.02%	0.13%	10.3%	/	4.9%
1991	71.6%	0.9%	2.4%	1.5%		0.04%	0.2%	4.4%	4.3%	14.6%
2002	57.8%	0.8%	2.3%	2.4%		0.2%	3.5%	10.2%	14.6%	7.1%

cation of south Slavic nations in Yugoslavia saw the very beginnings of religious diversification and the modernization of society, as well as secularization. Furthermore, Slovenia exhibits the characteristics of Latin (Catholic) religio-cultural patterns, characterized by the confrontation between two poles: political-cultural Right and political-cultural Left that especially came into the fore during the socialist period. Political Catholicism already before World War I denied the possibility that ethnic Slovenes could be anything other than Catholics. That was the notion advanced by the Bishop Anton Mahnič that with the demand for the “division of spirits”, i.e. gradual elimination from public life of all ideas that were not in line with the Catholic interpretation of reality (Roter, 1996, 79; Dragoš, 1996; Pelikan, 2006), only contributed to political and social differentiation, and thus to the secularization of the “anti-clerical pole”.

What has to be pointed out is an extremely high percentage of people who declared their religious affiliation in the Slovenian part of the kingdom, which goes along with the *Zeitgeist*, however, identifying as a member of some religious community, being religious and attending religious ceremonies diverge, especially in modern times. The 1931 census shows that almost 97% of the Slovenian population was Catholic, 2.2% Protestants and 0.6% Christian Orthodox (Šircelj, 2003, 70). However, I would like to question religious homogeneity in that period and the reliability of certain data and interpretations. The fact is that the majority of people found it socially unacceptable to be nonbelievers in a time when religious communities were (still) so embedded in state structures: in Slovenia, it was the Catholic Church that kept registers of births, deaths, and marriages, and that conducted religious education in public schools (up until 1949), etc., with one of the

few non-religious instruments for nonbelievers being civil marriage. Such a high prevalence of one religion easily led to the potential social exclusion of and discrimination against many non-Catholics: they were often regarded as aliens. The percentage and above all the visibility of non-Catholic believers and nonbelievers were higher in urban spaces (the former were most easily observed when new non-Catholic religious buildings were erected), as well as in the media and the arts (representatives of social realism were often supporters of Communism or even Communist Party members).

In the interwar period and already before the Great War, also remarkable heterogeneity of those who identify as members of the Catholic Church can be observed (Smrke & Uhan, 2012, 509), with the syncretism of religious practices and beliefs in popular religiosity (Kerševan, 1989, 12, 17–18), most often connected to folk medicine (Kotnik, 1943, 122; Kotnik, 1952, 124), and political differences, which led to the final dissent between the Catholic Right and the Catholic Left (Christian Socialists) in 1937 (Dolenc, 2005, 56). If the political Catholicism somehow managed to respond to the social crisis in the late 19th and beginning of the 20th century with the organization of loan cooperatives and saving banks, the social Corporatist model they envisioned in the interwar period was not adequate to respond to the issues of the modernity (cf. Pelikan, 2009, 313–314).

If the social differentiation with the larger number of workers and the spread of communist and socialist ideas was more obvious in the post-World War I period that by itself caused some change of beliefs and disaffiliation, the power of the Catholic Church over their believers diminished well before. The

phenomena of “localized revolts” of entire villages or several families against the Catholic Church or its representatives, which mostly did not go beyond the threats of conversion to Christian Orthodoxy and/or Greek Catholic Church can be documented in Slovenian ethnic territory already in 1889. Such are the cases of the village of Podraga in Vipava valley (Možina, 1996) and in the years between 1900 and 1910 in the village of Ricmanje near Trieste (Verginella, 1994, 189–190), followed by several others in the interwar period (Cvelfar, 2017, 116–119). The motives for the “revolts” that in some cases also evolved into conversions were mostly political and administrative, usually demanding greater autonomy (establishment of an independent parish). In the case of Ricmanje, where the whole village (temporarily) converted to the Greek Catholic Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church, and some also proclaimed themselves non-religious, people also demanded permission to introduce the Glagolitic liturgy. The latter can be understood within the context of the conflict between Slovenes and Italians, but foremost – in these villages as well as in the other, but not that obviously – people’s faith and their attachments to religious institutions have transformed. Basically, they underwent a process of desacralization (Verginella, 1994, 189–190).

Even if in terms of percentages the religious composition in the Slovenian part of the kingdom did not change much until the end of the first Yugoslavia, Slovenian towns – which were quite conservative at that time – already witnessed the very beginnings of religious diversification, which could not be inferred from mere statistical data. To provide a larger picture of the then situation: Judaism and Protestantism were present in certain Slovenian regions and large towns already before the period in question. One of the major “new” players in the Slovenian religious field after the end of the First World War was the Serbian Orthodox Church, which in the immediate aftermath of the unification of south Slavic nations in Yugoslavia established three Serbian Orthodox parishes in three large Slovenian towns: Celje, Ljubljana and Maribor. Initially, Orthodox believers were largely immigrants from other parts of Yugoslavia, while later the number of Slovenian converts started to increase. In 1938, the number of believers in the Celje Orthodox parish amounted to 683 (a figure that does not include the approximately 1,000 soldiers who were at that time in the region), of which 242 were of Slovenian origin and 3 of German (Bulovan, 2010, 76–77; Cvelfar, 2017, 317). Given the fact that prior to the First World War the region was not home to Christian Orthodox believers,⁴ the aforementioned 245 people must have

been converts, i.e. approximately one third of permanent residents. In comparison with other religious communities, the Serbian Orthodox Church saw the largest increase in membership and was able to recruit new members through the media and public institutions. It was not uncommon that newspapers published articles promoting the Orthodox religion, and that the Sokol (“Falcon”) gymnastic society explicitly supported the “national religion” in the 1930s. Statistically speaking, one of the few religious groups that witnessed a slightly higher increase in 1931 in comparison with the situation in 1921 was Greek Catholics, which can be accounted for by the slightly re-drawn border of the Drava Banovina. The province had grown to include the area of Žumberak, which was home to the Uskoks who adhered to Greek Catholicism. Another new religion in the region was the Old Catholic Church, whose members shared the sentiments of dissatisfaction with the Catholic Church and could be to some extent regarded as a cover organization of Freemasonry. The number of Muslims in the region remained low, even if their membership slightly increased. Still, in 1931 Ljubljana saw the establishment of the first imamate in the Slovenian territory. Their number increased considerably only in the 1970s as a result of the inflow of economic immigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first two mosques in the Slovenian territory were built during the First World War, one in the village of Log pod Mangrtom and one supposedly on the mountain of Rombon, in order to attend to religious needs of Muslim soldiers on the Isonzo Front. When they lost their function, the mosques were soon demolished. Religious diversity was also enhanced by the arrival of Russian immigrants, with many of them being soldiers who decided to stay in Slovenia after the end of the First World War (cf. Ratej, 2014; Mithans, 2018, 70).

If it can be generalized that contacts between various religious groups were marked by the negative image of the religious and often national Other (e.g. Slovenes were Catholics, Protestants were Germans (Lutherans) and Hungarians (Reformed Christians)), it is not surprising that responses and adjustments to religious diversification were potentially conflict-ridden. However, despite the importance of Catholic heritage in the formation of Slovenian nation, it would be false to assume that in the contemporary history religion has significantly connected or differentiated Slovenes on the national level nor differentiated them with the neighbouring nations (Kerševan, 1989, 99) like it does Croats and Serbs, for example. Most of the autochthonous non-Catholics in Slovenian territory were Germans and Hungarians, neighbouring nations

4 See also: ZAC, SI ZAC-0995, no. 4, List of Orthodox Households of the Serbian Orthodox Parish in Celje – Composition as of 31 December 1936.

that are still otherwise majority Catholics. Slovene Protestants living in the north-eastern region of Prekmurje, which was in the time of Austria-Hungary in the Hungarian part of the monarchy with a more tolerant religious policy, were the only exception.

Nevertheless, in the mid-19th century, the Slovenian territory saw the first attempts at rapprochement between Catholicism and the Orthodox creed based on the Cyril and Methodius idea of Christian connectedness, which opened the possibility of another view of the Other. Such initiatives were later complemented by those of early ecumenism, which were indeed much more receptive to dialogue, though still founded upon certain ethnic assumptions. One of the most active Slovenian theologians of the interwar period was Franc Grivec, the initiator and one of the main organizers of unionist congresses in Velehrad in Moravia (1907–1936) (Ambrožič, 2003, 69–86), and the pioneer of modern ecumenism in this part of Europe. The newly established Faculty of Theology in Ljubljana (1919) showed interest in the Orthodox religion and established a chair of Christian Orthodoxy, and, through its journal *Bogoslovni vestnik*, it also tried to build a bridge between the Western and Eastern branches of Christianity (Dolenc, 2018, 54–57; 71–72; Janežič, 2003, 186). Such a mediating role suited Slovenes, since their relations with Orthodox nations were not as burdened with political conflicts as those between Croats and Serbs were. Yet Slovenes often did not trust other Christian denominations (e.g. Evangelicals, Anglicans, Reformists) (cf. Ehrlich, 1922a, 20–29; Ehrlich, 1922b, 298–299; Juhant, 2002, 127), irrespective of the fact whether they were present in the region and irrespective of inter-Christian initiatives. The majority of the Slovenian population were reluctant to cooperate with non-Christian religious communities.

Later the modern ecumenical movement gained momentum, particularly with the establishment of the World Council of Churches in 1948 (the Catholic Church is not a member, but it does follow its operation) and the Conference of European Churches in 1959. In 1962, the Catholic Church, which was by far the most influential church in Slovenia, convened the Second Vatican Council and established an intense dialogue with the secular population, other Christian Churches, as well as non-Christian religions. In his encyclicals *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964) and *Lumen Gentium* (1964), Pope Paul VI launched the idea that anyone who is in honest search of god can achieve redemption irrespective of their official religious affiliation. His idea was supported by the Second Vatican Council and by progressive Slovenian theologians (Osredkar, 2016, 20–23; Turnšek, 2013, 25–27), and can be considered an important divergence from the deeply rooted Christian inter-

pretation of heresy (Zalta, 2019, 99) and the attitude to adherents of other religions.

During the Second Vatican Council in April 1965, Pope Paul VI established the Secretariat for Non-believers, the aim of which was not only to study atheism but also to organize groups of priests and lay people who would be willing to get in contact with atheists when such opportunities arose. After all, the Secretariat was named for non-believers, and not against them, stressed its first president, Cardinal Franz König. While for the Catholic Church unbelief remained unacceptable (see: Bullivant, 2012, 70), the Second Vatican Council ascribed responsibility for it partly to Christians themselves. To quote a paragraph from the encyclical *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), which reveals this remarkable aspect of the Catholic teaching on atheism:

Undeniably, those who wilfully shut out God from their hearts and try to dodge religious questions are not following the dictates of their consciences, and hence are not free of blame; yet believers themselves frequently bear some responsibility for this situation. For, taken as a whole, atheism is not a spontaneous development but stems from a variety of causes, including a critical reaction against religious beliefs, and in some places against the Christian religion in particular. Hence believers can have more than a little to do with the birth of atheism. To the extent that they neglect their own training in the faith, or teach erroneous doctrine, or are deficient in their religious, moral, or social life, they must be said to conceal rather than reveal the authentic face of God and religion (Pavel VI., 1965, art. 19).

RELIGIOUS CONVERSION IN THE FIRST YUGOSLAVIA

According to Lewis Rambo, religious conversion means turning from and to new religious groups, ways of life, systems of belief, and modes of relating to a deity or the nature of reality (Rambo, 1993, 2–3). It is thus a process of change that takes place in a dynamic field of persons, events, ideologies, and institutions (Halama, 2014, 185–186).

Contemporary studies also support the idea that conversion does not happen in a vacuum but in relation to the social and cultural contexts in which converts are situated (Guzik, 2013, 15). In line with Gooren, I understand religious conversion as a “passage” through levels, types, and phases of religious participation (cf. Gooren, 2010, 3–4). Despite the struggle of converts to be accepted by other believers as “full” members of the new religion, they will

very likely be permanently labelled as “converts”. It is therefore salient for a better understanding of a particular religious field – although such is not the main focus of this paper – to discuss the autonomy of converts’ actions during the process of conversion – before and after the “formal acceptance”. The agency of the converts should be analysed in regard to their impact on re-evaluation, re-instatement and re-negotiation of everyday and formal/institutionalized religious practices, expressions and meanings (cf. Kapaló, 2014, 239–240; Shanneik, 2011, 505).

During the existence of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/Yugoslavia and later, interreligious relations were largely determined by relations between religious communities and state authorities, by the politicization of religion (and vice versa, the introduction of religious contents into politics), and by individual chapters of the history of religious conversion: mythicizing of conversions to Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Ottoman Empire and of conversions to the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Catholic Church in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy; the interwar expansion of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Slovenia and Croatia; and forced conversions from the Orthodox Church to the Catholic Church in the Independent State of Croatia (Aleksov, 2006, 25–28, 49–50; Lovrenović, 2013, 103, 109, 122–125; Sancaktar, 2016, 1–2). If one takes into consideration only the 20th century, religious conversion in the Slovenian territory did not seem to play such a prominent role as it had in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. If one argues that conversion processes include not only Christianization but also Reformation, Counterreformation, and the perpetuation of the negative stereotype of non-Catholic believers as religious and ethnic Others, then their importance grows considerably.

In the interwar years, the most common type of conversion in the Slovenian territory was related to other ethnic communities, i.e. to immigrant and ethnic religions (cf. Lesjak & Črnič, 2016, 296–297) and mostly involved disaffiliation from the Catholic Church. Germans converted from Catholicism to Lutheranism for the purpose of ethnic consolidation, and Slovenes converted to the Serbian Orthodox Church (Zajšek, 2011, 99–100; Cvelfar, 2017, 113–131) because it was perceived as a “Yugoslav” religion, with conversion to the autocephalous church in practice entailing some kind of Serbian “acculturation”. A few Slovenes converted to the Old Catholic Church, and even if some converts were occasionally perceived as supporters of the former Croatian Peasant Party, ethnic affiliation did not play a major role, which, however, did not mean that the Catholic Church viewed such conversions in a more favourable light.

Taking into consideration the various push and pull factors, the following five types of religious

conversion in Slovenian and Yugoslav context can be proposed, that are not necessarily exclusive and surely not fixed:

- conversion of convenience (e.g. marriage, divorce [Serbian Orthodox Church, Islam], political opportunism [conversion to the “national religion”, i.e. the Serbian Orthodox Church], national consolidation, and protection [conversion of Jews to the Catholic Church before and during the Second World War]);
- conversion of “committed” converts (converts are active in religious rites and social activities of the religious community they were recently accepted in);
- reconversion (conversions back to the former creed; also in the form of religious renewal or vivification);
- deconversion (e.g. atheization, especially after the Second World War – further explored beneath);
- forced religious conversion in the Independent State of Croatia (if conversion processes are analysed in the Yugoslav framework).

Since non-Catholic religious communities often had an ethnic character, the religious conversions themselves and the disputes they (could have) triggered transcended the boundaries of the sphere of religiosity. These were typical cases of double minorities (cf. Đurić Milovanović, 2015, 291–292) and processes of othering, not generated solely by the members of the original religion that a convert abandoned but also by members of the newly elected religious community in which the convert was for a long time (sometimes forever) perceived as an “Other”. We know of cases where even priests were not happy with certain converts. The main reason for their displeasure was, of course, the large share of converts who changed their faith with the sole purpose of obtaining a divorce, “circumventing” the law by converting from Catholicism to Serbian Orthodoxy or Islam, as many of them would afterwards not even attend religious ceremonies (Cvirn, 2005, 92–95). Often we come across comments made by people from Catholic circles that the “apostasy” of these people from the Catholic Church was not a loss, as they never were good Catholics anyway and would not make good Orthodox either (and the same applies to converts to other faiths) (Cvelfar, 2017, 114, 118–119). Religious conversions for personal (secular) benefits, which, according to some estimates by the state officials and the Orthodox

Church alike, occurred in as many as 80% of cases of conversions to Orthodoxy (Bulovan, 2010, 72),⁵ and already mentioned “revolts” of villages that converted or threatened with mass conversion to either Christian Orthodoxy or Greek Catholic Church or with disaffiliation instigated by “secular” motives, also point to the different role of religious institutions in the society. Moreover, some people were already before World War II, which shattered the trust of many in major religious institutions, inclined to abandon the idea of religion as something you were born into for life.

In another variant, the Serbian Orthodox rector in Celje asserted in his writings in 1936 that a large portion of Slovenes converting to the Serbian Orthodox Church were reluctant to adopt Orthodox customs and remained Catholics “at heart” (Bulovan, 2010, 72). We can conclude from this that a conversion to the Serbian Orthodox Church in a predominantly Catholic environment represented a cultural shock and that converts were excluded from certain segments of the society. For similar reasons, only a small number of Slovenian converts chose to convert to Protestantism, as affiliation to Evangelical religious communities (except in Prekmurje, which had been part of the Hungarian half of the Habsburg Monarchy prior to the First World War) was considered as “a refuge of the Germans” (cf. Zajšek, 2011, 100).

The case of the Lutheran Church (in this territory, called the German Evangelical Church) in Maribor is specific, as it registered a high number of conversions after the First World War,⁶ in a sort of second “Away from Rome!” movement [Ger. *Los-von-Rom-Bewegung*]. This, however, was no longer limited to Catholicism or Protestantism, for dissatisfaction with the Catholic Church was in a way expressed by every single case of disaffiliation from it, and most notably through the actions of the German ethnic community, which indicated the emergence of national consolidation among the remaining Germans in Slovenian regions. In fact, after disaffiliating from, mainly, the Catholic Church, they connected with fellow countrymen within the Evangelical parish. Nevertheless, membership in the German Evangelical Church decreased as a result of the expulsion and voluntary migration of the members of German nationality; in the Evangelical parish in Maribor it dropped from around 1,800 in 1918 to 900 in 1925.⁷ The pressure on the converts was considerable, with the police

interrogating each and every one of them to establish whether the conversion was politically motivated (Zajšek, 2011, 98–100). The number of people joining the German Evangelical Church rose slightly again before the Second World War, from 1937 through 1941.⁸ All things considered, it was not surprising that several members of German Evangelical community propagated Nazi ideas already in the 1930s.

Further, the manner in which the converts were integrated into the new religious community (if at all) and the permanence of their decision could also be in contrast with their expectations in view of the reason for their conversion. A person who at first intended to convert in order to advance professionally could later develop genuine religious feelings towards the religion to which they converted, becoming profoundly religious. Or the initial enthusiasm over the newly adopted religion could give way to disillusionment. Many Slovenes complained, for example, that the Serbian Orthodox Church spoke exclusively Serbian and used the Cyrillic alphabet, the Brotherhood of Orthodox Slovenes even demanding that the Slovenian language and the Latin alphabet be introduced into Orthodox liturgy in Slovenia and a Slovenian Orthodox Church be established (Bulovan, 2010, 72; Cvelfar, 2017, 100–101, 174–175, 220–221).

It was through such contacts and interactions that various religious groups constantly negotiated their own boundaries (cf. Barth, 1969). If to be a Serbian Orthodox believer meant that the believer had to be of Serbian nationality and had to use the Cyrillic alphabet, such principles and expectations were shaken by Slovenian converts as mentioned above. The example described above also testifies to the struggle between (fairly exclusive) elements of national and religious identities (cf. Kapaló, 2014, 230–231). In that period, such a struggle was complemented by at that time unsuccessful attempts of the state authorities to form a supranational Yugoslav identity, which in the first Yugoslavia proved to be nothing but a version of (poorly) disguised Serbian political centralism.

SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA AND RELIGION – BETWEEN ATHEIZATION AND RELIGION AS A PRIVATE MATTER

When I asked her if she still believes in God, she said no, then she corrected herself that she doesn't really know. 'You know, if God exists,

5 “The lowest number of converts are those, who enter Orthodoxy based on principles, but even those are not religious, but national” (ZAL, LJU-489, 2012, The report of the city of Ljubljana to the Bishop's office, 8. 8. 1928).

6 The fond of the Evangelical Parish of Maribor in the Maribor Regional Museum preserves 564 certifications of disaffiliation from 1918 to 1922 (PAM-1821060/2, Disaffiliation from the Roman Catholic Church 1911–1918; PAM-1821060/3, Disaffiliation from the Roman Catholic Church 1919–1945).

7 Similar trend was also in Celje (Maver, 2014, 514–515).

8 PAM-1821060/2, Disaffiliation from the Roman Catholic Church 1911–1918; PAM-1821060/3, Disaffiliation from the Roman Catholic Church 1919–1945.

then he's not just good and he's not like they say in church. Why would he just look at such a slaughter as the war is? How they killed, tortured, and burnt people in the extermination camps? What kind of God of love is that? And I'm convinced that God didn't create humans. It was the other way around, humans created God! Otherwise, we would have only one god, and if that god would have created a human, we would be all equal and his united herd. Now we have Christ, some have Allah, others have certain Buddha in the Himalayas, and what kind of gods people in Africa have I have no idea [...] If God would have created humankind, then it would be only one god; because humans created gods, there are more of them! Different people: different gods... And different religions. Am I not right?' [...] In spite of that, we agreed that a little faith can't hurt the children, because you never know where the world will turn. So we sent the children to the communion [...] and then to the confirmation [...]. Just in case (Partljič, 2019, 28; translated by the author).

After the end of the Second World War, the Yugoslav socialist regime considerably limited the activities of religious communities, even if with the passage of years the limitation of the rights of believers weakened and all the time there existed differences between the situation in different republics. In general, the state fostered two approaches towards religions: one was the separation of religious institutions from the state, including the declaration of faith to be a private matter, assurance of religious freedom and religious equality (which was nothing but a matter of interpretation); the other was support of “progressive” Marxism to the “liberating” process of fading away of religion, which was considered inevitable. Yugoslav communists intended to introduce equality and to attain reconciliation by building socialism on the basis of “scientific materialism” (Mojzes, 1992, 343–344).

The atheization of society in Yugoslavia (and, roughly speaking, in other countries with a socialist regime as well) should be regarded as a form of deconversion imposed by the state via its ideological apparatus (cf. Althusser, 2018) rather than a synonym for secularization as witnessed in Western Europe (Pasquale & Kosmin, 2013, 462). Despite frequent exertion of public pressure and discrimination, the decision to relinquish faith was still a private one. Many people decided to stop attending religious ceremonies yet did not lose their faith (cf. Borowik et al., 2013, 633–635). The personal reasons for such partly “state-imposed atheism” are embodied in the following five characteristics suggested by Streib:

1. loss of specific religious experiences;
2. intellectual doubt, denial or disagreement with specific beliefs;
3. moral criticism;
4. emotional suffering;
5. disaffiliation from the community (Streib et al., 2011, 22; cf. Barbour, 1994, 2).

Deconversion cannot be simply identified with disaffiliation from membership in a religious community. It also encompasses a change in the individual's religious orientation in a certain period of life, which results in the transformation of religious identity and the system of beliefs or worldviews and in the restructuring of mentality, moral judgements and attitude towards authorities (Streib et al., 2011, 22–23). In fact, formal disaffiliation is not a precondition for deconversion either.

According to a basic typology of religion-state relationships from the perspective of religious liberty formulated by Paul Mojzes, interwar Yugoslavia exhibited the characteristics of Type B: Religious Toleration. The state is benign toward religion in general but tends to give preferential treatment to one or more religious communities. Religious minorities are tolerated but are often given unequal practical treatment. Post-war Yugoslavia, however, was more inclined towards Type C: Secularistic Absolutism.

This type consists of radical and sometimes even violent restrictions to public expressions of religiosity, driving religion into the private sphere under the guise of separation of church and state. Religious instructions are eliminated from the curriculum and atheism is vigorously promoted in education as it is in most areas of life. Communist countries implemented this model to various degrees. Former Yugoslavia initially practiced this model but gradually relaxed and modified its implementation up to the end of the 1980s (Mojzes, 2018, vii).

In Yugoslavia, which was known as the socialist country with the most liberal stance on religion, atheization could be defined as an organized attempt (albeit “unsuccessful”) to confine religion to the personal sphere through “soft” persuasion by limiting public religious ceremonies, cancelling religious holidays and not allowing religious education to be carried out at public schools. Concomitantly, the regime celebrated Yugoslav antifascism and “brotherhood” among various nationalities. Initially, though, it was openly oppressive towards religious institutions (Mirescu, 2009, 63; Alexander, 1979).

After 1945, when the whole of Eastern Europe witnessed an unprecedented limiting of religious rights (Mojzes, 1992, 345), the pre-war situation

changed completely. The determination of state authorities to promote Marxist “scientific atheism” sprang not only from the Marxist conception of the role of religion and human alienation but also from the regime’s understanding of religion: it feeds itself with nationalist feelings and can be used as a means of manipulation when conflicts, particularly between the Serbs and the Croats, arise (Mirescu, 2009, 63; Alexander, 1979). The sharpest criticism was aimed at “clericalism” in order to prevent particularly the Catholic Church from political engagement.

The Yugoslav Communist Party, especially in the first decade after coming to power after the Second World War, tried to inhibit the various nationalisms through restrictive policies towards religion. The introduction of socialist self-management was supposed to make the Communist Party loosen its direct authority; however, everyday practice of believers and control over them remained based on Leninist ideological principles. The key points of public criticism by individual Catholic intellectuals were discrimination in employment, distorted representations of religion in the media, disagreement with the status of second-class citizens, to which the religious population felt demoted in the atheist education system, and the prevention of charitable activities (Feyérđi et al., 2018, 461; cf. Radić, 2002). The authorities deemed the leading religious communities as mainly accountable for atrocities during the Second World War and the hostility between the different Yugoslav ethnicities (Mojzes 2011a; Mojzes 2011b). The officially declared atheism and the promotion of the policy of limitations of religious activities to houses of worship, while religiosity was considered as a private matter, was not only an expression of Marxist ideology but also a specific political strategy of ethnicization of religion (see: Waldenberg, 1998, 63; Mantsinen & Tervo-Niemelä, 2019, 72). However, the State Commission on Religious Affairs in Slovenia encouraged new religious organizations to undermine the importance of the Catholic Church in society (Dolinar, 1995, 30). For instance, it considered most Protestant Churches exemplary (with some exceptions, such as the Church of the Nazarene and the Seventh-Day Adventists), at least from the 1950s onwards, after a short period when the socialist regime did not allow Lutheran worship in Slovenian towns, as their members had been largely comprised of the post-war, significantly diminished German-speaking community (Mojzes, 2011a, 11; Nećak, 2013, 109–110).

The Slovenian philosopher and theologian Janez Janžekovič, a member of the state-founded Cyril-Methodius Society of Catholic Priests and a promoter of dialogue between Marxists and Christians, argued that socialism as a socioeconomic order was more acceptable to Christians than was Marxism as the

communist worldview. In his opinion, the main adversary was not communism but atheism (Režek, 2020; Juhant, 2002, 53), with atheization being one of the regime’s policies facing the strongest opposition from representatives of the Catholic Church. The only partial exception was the auxiliary bishop Vekoslav Grmič, who believed that a Christian could and even had to accept atheism as a demand of humanism as he identified the abolition of religion with the abolition of the ideology of the ruling class (Ramšak, 2014, 1025; Grmič, 1979, 170–177).

The state intruded into interior affairs of religious communities by encouraging the establishment of priestly societies within the existing Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim communities and by granting their members special privileges. It is quite probable that some members of such societies were secret agents of the state, yet during the Second World War many of them had been members of Christian Socialists – the largest group within the Slovenian Liberation Front – and had fought together with the partisans against the occupiers (Mojzes, 1992, 345; Kolar, 2008, 233). The state authorities also wanted to establish a national church that would not be dependent on the Holy See and would be modelled upon Orthodox religious communities, yet their attempts proved unsuccessful from the very beginning. By the early 1950s, the number of priests in Slovenia decreased almost by half, falling from around 2000 (in 1945) to 1,100, largely owing to emigration and some to incarceration. In the first decade of the second Yugoslavia, the administrative authorities ordered penalties in as many as 1,033 cases against priests, while 319 priests were tried before the court. In 1952 alone, as many as 735 charges against priests were filed to the misdemeanour court (Režek, 2005, 102, 104). As a result, the gap between the regime and religious exponents widened, and mutual distrust increased.

Communists actively promoted the atheistic agenda, which Roter describes as follows: activist atheism (the creation of circumstances in which society will no longer need religion) is the dominant type of atheism, occasionally combined with the enlightened subtype (the “exposing” of religion as delusion), the institutionalized subtype (communists as “missionaries” of atheism in various educational institutions), and combative political atheism (the equating of religion with clericalism) (Roter, 1976, 233–236). The programme also encompassed a rule that citizens had the right to belong to a religious community or not and that the right should be respected. However, religious feelings were considered a personal and private matter of an individual (Ramšak, 2015, 171). The regime was concerned about the side effects of the liberalization of the religious policy, and in the early 1970s it accused

the Catholic Church of selecting individuals in order to carry out a proselytical action (Ramet, 1982). Ramet describes the ambivalent policy on religious organization in very vivid terms: *“The Church was a tolerated species destined to gradual extinction when the achievements of the communist paradise on earth would have confined the state and the Church, nationalism and class inequality, hierarchy and oppression to historical oblivion”* (Ramet, 1982, 271).

On the one hand, it was mostly Catholicism (the two other major religions in Yugoslavia, the Serbian Orthodox Church and Islam, were more prone to subordination to state authorities) that was (more or less justifiably) thought to pose an ideological threat to the Communist Party / League of Communists of Yugoslavia and its policy of socialist self-management. On the other hand, the Marxist state and its policy of socializing secular values endangered religious institutions. Some authors argue that Western “secularization” and deinstitutionalization were more dangerous to religions than Marxist atheism, while others contradict them by claiming that Yugoslavia dissuaded people from religion and systematically spread atheization as the state could use all means available (Ramet, 1982, 264–265).

The attitudes of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia towards religions and believers were based on Marxist and Leninist critique of religion as means of alienation. The communist view of religion was additionally burdened with militant “atheistic proselytism” modelled upon that of the Soviet Union. After Tito’s split with Stalin in 1948, it could still be detected in Yugoslavia in its less militant form of conviction that religions were rivals to radical Marxist humanism. Together with liberalist traditions (“cultural struggle”), such views gave rise to a pronouncedly negative attitude towards religion, which marked the post-war period until 1953 (Ramšak, 2015, 171).

According to the 1953 census, “only” 10% of the Slovenian population and 12% of the entire Yugoslavian population declared themselves atheists, which so disappointed the authorities that Yugoslav censuses no longer included questions about religious affiliation (Šircelj, 2003).⁹ A striking characteristic of the data gathered after 1953 is the fact that as many as 80% of Montenegrins, 71% of Serbs, 60% of Macedonians and 30% of Croats living in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia declared themselves atheists (Šircelj, 2003, 72–73), which was much higher than the Yugoslav average. To provide a larger picture:

only 3.5% of the population living in Slovenia was of foreign origin, and only 2.2% of the population declared themselves to belong to other Yugoslav nationalities. Perhaps this is a reason – in addition to political pragmatism and loyalty to the ideal of multinational unity promoted by the Yugoslav policy – why such high shares of (self-declared) atheists among the immigrant population in Slovenia can be interpreted as resulting from the intolerance of the majority Slovenian population. It is possible that non-Catholic immigrants simply tried to avoid standing out as members of a religious minority.

“Coordinating committees” were established with the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Yugoslavia in 1960 to “resolve” conflicts and tensions between religious institutions and local communities. Religious representatives, mostly sympathetic to the regime, were involved in these committees (Dolinar, 1995, 30). In the 1960s, many of the aforementioned conflicts were solved or at least lessened when the state granted religious communities greater autonomy of organization and even allowed the establishment of new religious organizations. With the new 1961 legislation on the legal status of religious communities, pressure on religious officials decreased, but discrimination of lay believers persisted. As argues Dolinar: *“Candidates for advanced state service positions and, especially, in teaching and cultural work had to possess “moral-political qualities” that is, convinced, practicing Catholics were not suited for such jobs.”* (Dolinar, 1995, 30) Moreover, members of the Communist Party (since 1952 League of Communists of Yugoslavia) remained to be banned from affiliation with any religious group. Hence openly religious people were deprived of several privileges that membership in the party came with.

These better circumstances within the Yugoslav “liberal” socialism had a positive impact on further ecumenical initiatives promoting interreligious dialogue between Christian religious communities (Perica, 2002; Mojzes, 1992, 348) and on external politics as well. However, such “religious liberalism” was much more accepted in Slovenia than in Croatia and Serbia, where ecumenism was received with considerable reservation. Even in Croat Catholicism, the Second Vatican Council was poorly received (Buchenau, 2005, 553). In the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council and the signing of the Yugoslav “protocol” (1966), Yugoslavia was the first socialist state recognized by the Vatican, and a *modus vivendi* with the Catholic Church was finally negotiated. In 1970 Yugoslavia also restored diplomatic

9 In Slovenia, the question of religious affiliation has been included in annual surveys of Slovenian public opinion carried out by the Public Opinion and Mass Communication Research Centre (University of Ljubljana, College of Political Sciences (today: Faculty of Social Sciences) since 1968 (cf. Toš, 1997). Statistical data, based on censuses or surveys, have to be approached critically, more as an orientation point, as “numbers are not neutral but shape and are shaped by perceptions and identities” (Day & Lee, 2014, 345; cf. Höpner & Jurczyk, 2015).

relations with the Vatican (Ramšak, 2015, 169–170; Ramet, 1990, 192–193). The Ljubljana Faculty of Theology founded special chairs and organized several symposia on ecumenism. An active promoter of ecumenism was Archbishop Franc Perko, who attended ecumenical symposia organized since 1974 by the Faculties of Theology in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana. In 1987, the Vatican appointed Slovenian Cardinal-to-be Franc Rode secretary of the Secretariat for Dialogue with Non-Believers (Osredkar, 2018, 200) after he had worked at the Secretariat for several years. In 1960, priests were permitted to travel abroad, while the Ecumenical Patriarch, the Moscow Patriarch, the Vatican's Secretary of State and other religious dignitaries were allowed to visit Yugoslavia and to hold religious ceremonies.

In the late 1960s, a reconciliatory attitude of the young liberally oriented generation of theologians towards socialism, and an open attitude of the young generation of sociologists towards religion, who analysed it from a Marxist perspective and did not simply oppose it, resulted in a short period of dialogue between Christians and Marxists in Slovenia and Croatia (Buchenau, 2005, 558; Ramšak, 2014, 1023). Moreover, prominent foreign scholars, such as Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann, were allowed to deliver public lectures, and since 1977 Dubrovnik hosted an annual international seminar on the future of religion (Mojzes, 1992, 365–366).

In the 1970s, the definition of the status of religion and believers in the socialist society was one of the key political dilemmas of the League of Communists. In the late period of Yugoslav socialism, one of the most burning issues became how to convince believers, i.e. the majority of the population, to start supporting socialist self-management. The dilemma appeared when the so-called positive abolition of religion was still a valid principle of the League of Communists. In the late 1960s, the leading Yugoslav ideologist, Edvard Kardelj, had rejected dialogue between Marxists and Christians; by the early 1970s, however, he was assuring believers absolute equality at least at the formal level (Ramšak, 2014, 1029).

In this period, all religious communities were allowed to publish or distribute their press, although with some censorship. The first religious newspaper that was allowed to be published after the introduction of the socialist regime was *Družina* (The Family) in 1952, followed by *Ognjišče* (The Hearth) and periodical of the Theological Faculty *Bogoslovni vestnik* (Theological Quarterly) (both in 1965). Public religious services in the assigned places of worship were never severely hindered, although to organize religious ceremonies outside those premises (e.g.

processions) still special permissions were needed and donations collected during religious services were taxed. The Catholic religious representatives complained about the latter issue, as well as on discrimination of, especially teachers, who were religious, in the report on the new law on the status of religious communities in Slovenia of 1978.¹⁰

Although religious education was removed from public schools in 1949, according to the surveys still 45–50% of children attended it at the parish houses in the 1960s and maybe an unexpectedly high share of 80% in 1981. According to the survey performed by the Public Opinion and Mass Communication Research Centre, few high school students in 1981 felt discriminated in the school due to their religious convictions (only 8%) (Kerševan, 1989, 96, 98). In 1989, Christmas was reintroduced as a non-working day, after it had been cancelled with other religious holidays in 1952 and replaced with other holidays, like New Year's tree celebration (Židov, 2016, 121). The declared religiosity and religious affiliation tended to be – expectedly – also in the 1980s lower than the share of those who experience some form of either private or institutional religious upbringing (see: Kerševan, 1989, 96, 100–101). The deinstitutionalized forms of religiosity or autonomous religiosity, that developed in socialist as well as democratic regimes, although with somehow different reasons, in Slovenia seem to be higher than institutional religiosity (24% vs. 21%), unlike in most of the other post-socialist countries (Toš, 2000, 212, 226). The “religious resurgence” in the 1980s and especially the 1990s affected institutional religiosity (i.e. attendance at religious services) less than it would be expected. Even high(er) attendance at religious services observed in some economically less developed Slovenian regions, may not exhibit “true” religious sentiments of people, but rather a mere public declaration of religious affiliation (Lavrič & Friš, 2018, 58).

Jože Rajhman, a Catholic priest and a follower of a version of Liberation Theology, subtly mentioned the changed religious practices and power relations on the religious field, also regarding the autonomous religion:

World has changed, and according to the Latin proverb, so has a human. [...] The modern world is necessarily secularized. In this secularized world a new type of a human has been created. [...] Slovenian people feel relatively well in the current society [...] Slovenian believers who are somewhat educated know that outside the Church, but at the same time

10 AS, 1589/IV 487, 4391, Report on the implementation of the Act on the Legal Status of Religious Communities in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, 18 October 1978.

because of the Church, they can find enough opportunities to connect with their inner existence and transcend themselves. So they leave church buildings and the Church, without finally and forever leaving it [...] This is the paradox of the Church and also, of course, the time in which we live (Rajhman, 1985, 410–411).

Further progress in the field of interreligious relations was achieved with the appointment of several Yugoslav Orthodox, Muslim and Catholic theologians as members of the Yugoslav Committee for the Defence of Human Rights founded in 1988 (Mojzes, 1992), as well as with similar initiatives of the civil society at the level of the republics. Because of the outbreak of war in the major part of former Yugoslavia after the fall of socialism and the focus on interethnic conflicts among the Yugoslav nations/ethnic groups, many important aspects of religious identity, change as well as the importance of the aforementioned cooperation have been relegated to the background or ignored.

Scholarship should not be predicated on the knowledge that a war was to follow, but rather on all the nuances of cohabitation of peoples of such ethnic, historical, and religious diversity. The major religious institutions in Yugoslavia may not have succeeded in establishing a lasting cooperation (Radić 2003), but in Slovenia dialogical endeavours primarily between Christian groups did produce some short- and long-term positive results.

CONCLUSION

It is of key importance that we understand how representations of religion and atheism are embedded in historical processes that may strengthen or weaken religious identity at the collective and individual levels. Both religious identity and religion are always subject to change even if believers often do not perceive that fact. Among major factors of change are relations between religious communities and state authorities – the latter can exert influence on religion through the politicization of religion, and marginalization or favouritism of certain religious communities – and relations between different religious communities. A special case in point is the relative openness to religious conversion presented in my article or, more precisely, openness to conversion to a certain religion rather than disaffiliation from it.

In the interwar Slovenian territory, religious conversion was often intertwined with political preferences, and non-Catholic religious affiliation was usually associated with people of foreign nationalities. Converts were under great pressure and had to face a number of obstacles when trying to adapt to life in a new religious community. As a result, in the second half of the 1930s, many of them reconverted to their original creed.¹¹ Having adopted individual agreements with most of the acknowledged religious communities (except with the Catholic Church), the Kingdom of Yugoslavia witnessed an increased need to regulate religiously mixed marriages and to restrain religious conversion whose sole purpose was divorce, and it tried to do so at the highest level by passing a state law on interreligious relations and by signing a concordat with the Holy See. The former was never passed, the latter never ratified.

Even if the number of religious conversions was low and the number of non-Catholic believers as well, large Slovenian towns had a much more multi-religious character prior to the Second World War than prior to the First World War. Religious diversification went hand in hand with a gradually more open attitude of culture, politics and the media towards religious plurality and secularism. The period also saw a few initiatives promoting ecumenism, and signalled the beginning of religious plurality in the Slovenian territory, which was followed by a change in the regime in the aftermath of the Second World War.

The Communist Party / League of Communists encouraged the atheization of society. In the first decade of its reign, it was openly oppressive towards religious institutions; later it tried to limit their public engagement in various ways. Data gathered through the 1953 census and Slovenian public opinion surveys conducted since 1968 has revealed that religion would not “fade away” (Andrews, 2016, 105–125). The largest group in Slovenia remained those who declared themselves religious.¹² Interestingly, at that time it was possible to establish a dialogue between Christians and Marxists. In the 1980s, it also became more or less clear that the “brotherhood-and-unity” ideology and the attempt to construct a Yugoslav identity that would prevent interethnic and inter-religious frictions would not bear fruit.

The period of socialism when the political system usurped the Catholic Church’s dominant role created a “space” in the religious field, and together with the democratization of state and social structures

11 NŠAL, V, 100.

12 According to the Slovenian sociologist Marko Kerševan, the downward trend stopped or even turned slightly upward in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In the year 1978, however, the number of religious dropped below 50% (to 45,3%), still slightly higher than the number of non-religious. On the basis of data from the late 1980s and early 1990s, he estimated that around a third of Slovenians was religious and in contact with religious institutions, that a third was religious but had (almost) no contact with religious institutions, while a third was non-religious (Kerševan, 1994, 243; Roter, 1980, 659).

(e.g. public religiosity) and the migration of a non-Catholic population from former Yugoslav republics enabled today's religious diversity. Hence the second and third-largest religious communities (Islam and Serbian Orthodox Church) are mostly comprised of immigrants and their families. At the time being, Slovenia records 56 registered religious communities to which the constitution grants an equal status and the freedom of conscience (see: Furlan Štante, 2019, 26). Approximately a quarter of the registered religious communities were established after the changes and revisions of the Law on religious freedom (2007) were made in 2013 that diminished some privileges of the traditional religions. It is estimated that of around 140 active religious communities in total,

100 are New Religious and New Age Movements (Lesjak & Črnič, 2016, 299). Their members are mostly ethnic Slovenes, and do not present a high share of population. Such religious diversity naturally poses new social challenges of how to maintain good relations with both believers and nonbelievers. In these endeavours, the main actor is always the Catholic Church, by far the most influential religious community, now self-declared "pillar" of civil society, which also has strong indirect political power. A positive impact is to be expected by The Amendment to the Law on religious freedom that awaits parliamentary discussion since 2018; the public debate, however, will probably only politicize the topic as it had in the year 2007 (cf. Flere, 2014, 88–91).

RELIGIJSKE SKUPNOSTI IN SPREMEMBE SVETOVNEGA NAZORA NA SLOVENSLEM
(1918–1991) V ZGODOVINSKO-POLITIČNI PERSPEKTIVI

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POVZETEK

V prispevku je predstavljen proces sprememb na religijskem polju na Slovenskem s poudarkom na dveh pojavih: verskih prestopih v času med svetovnimi vojnami in ateizaciji v obdobju socializma. Zgodovinska analiza obdobja prve Jugoslavije kaže na zametke religijske diverzifikacije in individualizacije, predvsem kot posledico novega državnega okvirja, neurejenih oziroma pomanjkljivo urejenih odnosov države do religijskih skupnosti in notranjih migracij. Posebnost verskih prestopov, zlasti iz Katoliške cerkve v Srbsko pravoslavno cerkev, pa tudi v islam, je bila visok delež prestopov iz koristi (zakonska razveza s ponovno poroko, napredovanje v službi ipd.), ki pa ne izključuje kasnejšega religijskega udejstvovanja v novi religijski skupnosti. Diskriminatorna politika oblasti do nemške narodnostne manjšine pa je povzročila utrditev te narodne manjšine znotraj Nemške evangeličanske cerkve s številnimi prestopi katoliških Nemcev v evangeličansko vero. Visok delež članov te religijske skupnosti, kot tudi parohij Srbske pravoslavne cerkve, predvsem če upoštevamo stalno naseljeno prebivalstvo, so bili konvertiti iz Katoliške cerkve. Verski prestopi pa so vendarle bili razmeroma redki in številčno se verska sestava religijsko izrazito homogenega območja takratne Dravske banovine ni dosti spremenila. Večje spremembe na religijskem polju pa je prinesel povojni režim, ki je s podpiranjem širjenja ateizma (kot oblike dekonverzije) in vzporedno politiko omejevanja javnega delovanja religijskih institucij zaježil dominantno vlogo Katoliške cerkve v družbi. Odnos socialističnih oblasti do religije in njenih predstavnikov je bil v Jugoslaviji do leta 1953 izrazito negativen, sčasoma pa se je liberaliziral kar je med drugim omogočilo dialog med kristjani in marksisti ter med religijskimi skupnostmi. Migracije predvsem iz drugih jugoslovanskih republik v zadnjih petdesetih letih so prispevale k večji številčnosti pripadnikov nekatoliških verskih skupnosti. Po razpadu Jugoslavije v Sloveniji z demokratizacijo pravnih struktur opazamo porast religijskih vsebin v medijih, vrsto novih registriranih in neregistriranih religijskih skupnosti – prve nove religijske in novodobniške skupnosti se sicer pojavijo že v 1970. letih – hkrati pa tudi ponovno utrditev položaja Katoliške cerkve, ki sedaj nastopa iz pozicije civilne družbe.

Ključne besede: verski prestop, Jugoslavija, Slovenija, ateizacija, medverski odnosi, religijski pluralizem

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