



Liberals, Conservatives, and Mavericks

On Christian Churches
of Eastern Europe since 1980

A Festschrift for Sabrina P. Ramet

Edited by Frank Cibulka and Zachary T. Irwin

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Introduction

Zachary T. Irwin

"Goodness, therefore, as a consistent way of life, is not only impossible within the confines of the public realm, it is destructive of it...goodness that comes out of hiding and assumes a public role is corrupt in its own terms..."

Hannah Arendt ¹

This is a book about versions of religious goodness compelled to exist in public places. In this sense "public" is inseparable from effective authority. None of our authors deals with the goodness of intentional communities. Some of the personalities discussed ("mavericks") may wish to avoid direct involvement with the public role of clerical traditions. Some may choose to embrace or shape it (liberals and conservatives), and some will be perceived as threatening to their religious authority's relation with the state. From a Christian viewpoint, the life of Jesus Christ may represent the clearest example of Arendt's observation. For many Jews, the same could be said of those who perished in rebellion against Roman rule under the leadership of Simon Bar Kokhba (d. 135 AD). For Shia Muslims the "goodness" consisted in the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson, Husayn ibn Ali (d. 680 A D) at the pilgrimage site of Kerbala in Iraq. More examples could add context to the conflicts involving the church in Eastern Europe. I hope that the importance of our subject may be better understood through selective comparison with the vast history of religious activity (goodness) seeking expression beyond conventional church institutions. Clearly words like "goodness" imply a subjective character. Religiously motivated goodness is not privileged by its claim of transcendental inspiration. For example, in my chapter, I chose to consider the case of a dispute involving the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, through two bishops who represent rival views involving Macedonian autocephaly. Both claim positions founded in goodness and personal conscience, and both have been criticized about the public character of their involvement in autocephaly question. Arendt might acknowledge that both would act in fundamental conflict with their respective public institutions.

¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 77.

Among other goals, the editors of this volume seek to demonstrate the relevance of religious “liberals, conservatives, and mavericks” to Eastern Europe’s current political situation. One of the best ways to achieve that objective is to honor the work of a remarkable scholar who has done so much to endow Eastern Europe with a deserving political significance. The authors and editors wish to recognize the intellectual achievements of Sabrina Ramet. Through her prolific and extensive writings no single author has better demonstrated communism’s ironic legacy. In its struggle to confine religion to individuals and the interior of churches, communism has assured its public role in a post-communist era. More importantly, we think about the place of religion in East European politics differently today because of Sabrina Ramet’s vast contribution to the field. The series of edited books about “civic and uncivic values” now includes individual volumes devoted to analyzing regional political cultures; by 2028 the series will encompass all East European states. The same could be said about the importance of her work in interpreting popular culture in the politics of the area. Our understanding of what is “political” is much more than questions relevant to power and government. Professor Ramet has broadened that understanding as has no other scholar.

This volume offers clear evidence of Sabrina’s contribution. Thorough their geographical breadth and varied content, the authors have assembled overwhelming evidence that religious activity has come to be a key part of public affairs. In this modest introduction, I wish to suggest that Sabrina’s insight is also true of religious dissent in earlier eras of history. I use the word “dissent” to indicate religious activity clearly outside of the mainstream of a specific religious tradition or hierarchy. Religious dissent exists within broader areas of social life. Our choice has been to examine modern beliefs, but dissenting religious beliefs exist much earlier in the church’s history. To speak of “liberals, conservatives and mavericks” may suggest an era comparable with earlier periods of church history. We might imagine a subtitle similar to our book for one about Christianity in the fourth, fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. I believe that a part of this history is relevant to our understanding of the present religious situation in the region. Towards this objective, I believe that certain practices drawn from the study of comparative religion are useful. Traditionally, any belief at variance with inherited orthodoxy, might be called a “heresy.” One distinguishes “Christian heresies” from those within other religious traditions. For example, various currents of Islamic practice and belief (Shi’ism, Sufi mysticism) are seldom considered “heresies” in the sense as “heresy” is used in Christianity. They remain a target of persecution as minorities. To speak of “heresies” is to recall the word’s etymology,

that is, from Greek *hairesis* “a taking or choosing for oneself, a choice, a means of taking; a deliberate plan, purpose philosophical sect, school,” from *haireist-hai* “take, seize.”² The point is that considering beliefs as heretical is a relative and retrospective description. Clearly not all “liberals, conservatives, and mavericks” can be considered “heretics.” Modern churches do not lightly sanction dissenting “liberals, conservatives or mavericks” as “heretics” incompatible with church membership, but the degree of difference is a matter of authority and process rather than simple content. Currently, the charge of heresy involves a formal charge (presentment) and a trial, a process fundamentally different from that of the early church.³ However the accusation of “heresy” has recently become a more casual accusation and use of “heretic” may be more commonplace than we might assume. For example, one current controversy in the Roman Catholic tradition involves the epithet “heresy” directed against the teachings and intentions of Pope Francis.⁴

In this introductory essay, I have made at least two assumptions. Comparing historical eras may suggest insights, e.g., the association of types and sources of dissent across history. It has become widely accepted that plural beliefs are modern phenomena. The sociologist Peter Berger identifies heresies with modernity. He writes “*For premodern man heresy is a possibility—usually a rather remote one; for modern man heresy typically becomes a necessity.*”⁵ Here use of “heresy” fits nicely with the examples of “liberals, conservatives and mavericks.” More may be involved. A broader understanding offers a perspective that suggests novel and recurrent factors. Religion in post-communist East Europe shares a certain resemblance with dissenting movements and ideas from earlier church history. In a broad sense, the current church in East Europe may be in a place(s) where it has been before. The implications of that possibility are not trivial, even if there is less consensus about which “before” is most relevant to the present. Second, certain similarities among dissenters and their beliefs may distinguish patterns of interaction with the church and society. Any comparative endeavor must ultimately satisfy the “so what(?)” question, ultimately a reader’s question. How do similarities and differences in religious dissent improve our general under-

² “Heresy” from the Online Etymology Dictionary, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/heresy>.

³ I. Howard Marshall, “Orthodoxy and Heresy in earlier Christianity,” *Themelios*, 2(1) (September 1976): 5–14. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/orthodoxy-and-heresy-in-earlier-christianity/>.

⁴ Michael O’Laughlin, “Critics of Pope Francis Level New Accusations of ‘Heresy,’” *America*, May 1, 2019, <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/05/01/critics-pope-francis-level-new-accusation-heresy>.

⁵ Peter L. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative, Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (Garden City: Anchor Press, 1979), 25 (italics in original).

standing of dissent? I hope to demonstrate that the character of religious authority raises persistent questions, whose contexts offer insight. The character of “insight” remains subjective, but religious belief imposes a common underlying expression to religion and to Christianity in particular. The theologian Paul Tillich (1886–1965) raised this question starkly in discussing the exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees. The latter asked Jesus “By what authority do you do these things.” (Luke 20:1–8). Tillich recalls the inevitability of the question in most contexts and Jesus’ response.⁶ The point is less about Christianity than about the transcendental nature of belief. Ecclesial and political authority may be procedural, but the vulnerability of all religious authority to a transcendental challenge insures recurrent dissent.

OCCASIONS FOR DISSENT: THE EARLY CHURCH AND BEYOND

Various forms of dissent, if not rising to the level of heresy, have been part of critical transitions in church history. Prior to the Edict of Milan (313 A.D.), effectively legalizing Christianity throughout the Roman Empire, and the Edict of Thessalonica (380 A.D.), creating a Christian monopoly, the Church confronted an outpouring of heresies. Before its legalization, the threat to the church had been external. Alternative Christian beliefs existed in abundance but were less threatening. The creation of a Christian monopoly created an altogether different situation, that is, one increasing the importance of theological coherence. The respective place of external repression and internal dissention begs the question of comparison. Can comparisons across periods of church history be useful? Any comparison demands caution in view of changing expressions of authority and dissent. Nevertheless, both the early church and post-communist Europe were marked by a cession of external repression. The Roman Empire and the communist regimes had perceived the Church as a subversive threat, that is an alternate set of beliefs to official dogma. Diminished repression in both eras initiated a level of religious activity intended to fill an intellectual void legitimizing a refreshed authority. To speak of an “intellectual void” does not imply an earlier deficiency in the quality of Christian thought, collective piety, of sustained activity. Many Christians consider the Roman and the communist eras periods of exemplary faith; persecution created an *ethos* of martyrdom unequaled for its authenticity. However, the end of official repression opened expressive, intellec-

6 Paul Tillich, *The New Being* (New York: Scribners, 1955), 79–91.

tual, and vocational options to the Church that had been considered formerly unrealistic, if it were imagined at all.

Patristic writers in the early church confronted the challenge of “heresies” regarding the reconciliation of the divine and human in Christ. At a time of emerging theology, the notion of esoteric knowledge of the holy (Gnosticism) represented a particular threat to Christianity’s universal proselytizing mission. Comparably, post-communism raised a variety of challenges to the church, some by expanding a tradition of dissent from the communist era. Superficially, the content of fourth century heresies and Christianity’s recent pluralism share little in common. However, dissenters in both eras have sought changes with profound implications for Church and society. Unlike the early pre-Nicene writings, the unhindered development of Arian Christianity and Gnosticism would have created a Medieval Church quite unlike the one inherited by Europe. Theological conservatives have perceived a comparable threat from secular universalism, typically, but not exclusively from values associated with the European Union. Moreover, non-religious political movements also have perceived a threat to traditional values from “globalism.” Conversely, both eras share a problematic relation with parochial secular authority. In post-communist Europe the church risks cooptation by a semi-legitimate state. The church may even perceive its own interests fostered by opting into an eclectic “political formula” described by the Italian political philosopher, Gaetano Mosca.⁷ Such “formulas” depend on the interaction of a specific political and religious tradition. Some aspiring formulas may represent a current of opposition such as “Christian Nationalism” in the United States.

Since the time of Constantine, the church has had a role in legitimizing the state. In the opinion of the religious scholar H.A. Drake, by the time of Constantine’s death (337 AD), “Christian leaders had assumed the rank, dress, and, increasingly, the duties of the old civic elite.”⁸ Leo III’s coronation of Charlemagne (747–814 AD) demonstrated the potential of mutual dependence between church and state. Under such circumstances, the fourth century Christians’ mind perceived the consequences of Christological nonconformity with greater alarm than reactions to contemporary dissent. Yet religious leadership in both eras imagined a distinctive trajectory for the Church’s development within the larger society. In a pluralistic environment religious nonconformity is less

7 Thomas I. Cook, “Gaetano Mosca’s ‘The Ruling Class,’” *Political Science Quarterly* 54(3) (September 1939): 442–47, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2143486>.

8 H.A. Drake, “The Impact of Constantine on Christianity,” in Noah Lenski, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 111–136.

threatening than in era of the early church; dissenters were animated differently. What Church historians describe as non-Nicene heresies are scarcely of current interest. Instead, recent dissent is broadly political, that is, it seeks to use its potential to mobilize opinion to shape public values.

The public character of opposition to Church policy may be broadly expressed leaving uncertain what constitutes religious dissent. Is clerical opposition to a consensus of church opinion necessarily heterodox? In this volume, Katherine David and this author have considered the political consequences of independence for Ukraine and Macedonia, respectively from a larger Orthodox entity (the Russian Federation and Serbia). Implicitly the relevance of “dissent” depends on when, who, and how the question is raised. Not only have political authorities in Ukraine and North Macedonia acknowledged the political consequences of autocephaly, but indirectly they have raised the condemned heresy of Phyletism, identification of a foreign religious minority with an autocephalous church.⁹ Not all clerical authority has agreed with the goal of recognized autocephaly. Only recently has the matter regarding Ukraine and North Macedonia been resolved by the Ecumenical Patriarch. The North Macedonian and Ukrainian Orthodox Churches enjoy recognized autocephalous status.

The “Liberals, conservatives and mavericks” may include opinion that privileges church claims to moral authority as a legislative judge. Certain dissent is especially significant because external developments in the society have become a source of disagreement within the Church. For example, Daniela Kalkandjieva surveys the church’s responses of the Coronavirus pandemic. Milan Vukomanović has chronicled Serbian Orthodoxy’s response to the theological challenge of modern biology. The European Union’s assertion of pan-European standards of human rights may challenge traditional church teachings concerning sexuality.

WHY COMPARISON MAY BE HELPFUL

The idea of comparing religious dissent is not new. It is implicit in comparative religious experience, a matter of great concern to such remarkable thinkers as William James (1842–1910), Aldous Huxley (1894–1963) Mircea Eliade (1907–

⁹ The 1872 Council of Constantinople and Phyletism, <https://ocf.org/the-1872-council-of-constantinople-and-phyletism/>.

1986).¹⁰ These persons and others have been concerned with religion as a way of perceiving reality among diverse traditions. Our goal is vastly more modest. By briefly examining our contributions' subjects, it may be both possible to briefly consider the purposes and persons of each chapter and to suggest a broader context of their activity. Not all comparison is necessarily useful, nor insightful. For example, the recent era of Church activity and early Medieval Europe share a certain resemblance. As I have mentioned, the end of persecution intensified earlier controversy about the nature Christ and the Trinity; Much attention has been devoted to the ideational character of heresy, but much less to the profound implications of early heresies for political authority and ecclesial organization. Challenges to the church from dissenting movements in the present seem to be less consequential than those in the early church. However, for church leadership, the collapse of communist rule offered some an occasion to establish a morally authoritative equilibrium among religion, society and the state. Points of comparison may exist at various eras of church history. We might, for example, look to eras of social disintegration, such as the late fourteenth century. In eras of rapid social change, the church has claims to provide an anchor for personal morality and identity. As a public institution, the church asserts a general moral authority not shared with other non-governing institutions e.g., universities, governments, charities. This legacy coexists uneasily with the sectarian character of church dogma. I recall a discussion with a Serbian librarian in the 1970s who insisted that she remained observant of the Church's teaching and culture as an atheist. For her, the relation of Orthodox teaching and dogma were not uneasy enough! Under communist rule, the "collectivist" claims of a communist morality on behalf of the society were not widely accepted, especially as its claims to political monopoly eroded.

Václav Havel wrote eloquently about the "moral vacuum" in post-communist society. A "vacuum" existed in a double sense. The myth of "collectivist" morality collapsed with the regime, and with it, "lie" of certain progress that it maintained. Public lies be for challenge by the truth at a critical point when public ritual is flouted. The regime of Havel's "greengrocer" became an eloquent commonplace illustrating the latter myth.

¹⁰ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Longmans Green & Co, 1902), Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1946), Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas* (Three volumes) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Because the regime is captive to its own lies, it must falsify everything. It falsifies the past. It falsifies the present, and it falsifies the future. It falsifies statistics. It pretends not to possess an omnipotent and unprincipled police apparatus... It pretends to persecute no one. It pretends to fear nothing. It pretends to pretend nothing.¹¹

The greengrocer's willingness to place the sign "workers of the world unite" in his shop window accepts a common but necessary ritual in a regime made fragile by its burden of lies. Superficial ritual in Roman religion and the rituals of late socialism share a dysfunctional attention to externals, but do not generate productive comparison. Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* found in Christianity itself a reason for Imperial decline, "the persecuted sects became the secret enemies of their country."¹²

Attempts to compare communist rule and the governing the late Roman Empire seem facile or absurd at face value. Facile, because all regimes in decline, like Tolstoy's "happy families," may be more alike than different. Absurd because imperial decline of past empires is both overdetermined and subject to ferocious scholarly dissensus. The same may be said about communist rule. Speculation about the decline of empires and civilizations is the stuff of popular history. My subject is more modest. At best the place of religion in early Christianity and late communism are worthy of comparison in limited but potentially insightful ways. Rome before Constantine seems to have shared something deeper with communist regimes. The role of religion in Samuel Huntington's view of a specific civilization remains its defining feature.¹³ One central attribute of religion in this role is its link between the larger imperial project and the individual citizen and its coincident place in civic life. Jörg Rüpke, a scholar of comparative religion, finds continuity generally in ancient Mediterranean religious practice as "part and parcel of civic identity." The meaning of civic identity offers a fundamental similarity with Havel's Greengrocer in "everyday experiences, practices, expressions, and interactions- these in turn constantly redefine religion as practice, idea, and community."¹⁴ The no-

11 Václav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," October 1978. <https://hac.bard.edu/amor-mundi/the-power-of-the-powerless-vaclav-havel-2011-12-23>.

12 Edward Gibbon, "General Observations On The Fall Of The Roman Empire In The West," in *The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire*, Chapter XXXVIII, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/25717>.

13 Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, v.72(3) (Summer 1993): 22-49, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20045621>.

14 Jörg Rüpke, *On Roman Religion: Lived Religion and the Individual in Ancient Rome* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 1, 4.

tion of “political religion”¹⁵ is a familiar idea applied first to ideology in 1938 by the political philosopher Eric Vogelin (1901–1985). The rituals and resonance shared by religion and communist practices have been well explained.¹⁶

An important challenge of understanding “civic identity” lies in its perceiving its imperceptible erosion. Authorities might not notice the significance of the greengrocer’s rebellion; it is symptomatic of a deeper political malaise. That malaise seldom leaves religious life unaffected. The erosion of religious aspects of civic identity may be a necessary but not a sufficient condition for dissent. The rise of dissenting leadership is more difficult to forecast.

Religions in stasis or decline are subject to challenge from what we might describe as the morally exceptional individual. During late communist rule several exemplary persons became politically relevant. They include Fr. Gleb Pavlovich Yakunin (1934–2014) in Russia, Reverend Gábor Iványi (b. 1951) of the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship and the Romanian Orthodox Priest, Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa (1925–2006); the latter two are subject of chapters in this volume. Jože Pirjevec surveys the entire recent history of Slovene Catholicism. His chapter also includes discussion of the distinguished Christian Socialist writer Edvard Kocbek (1904–1981). Although Kocbek was outside the Church and had fought with the Partisans, his Christian commitment was unassailable. Nevertheless, both Calciu-Dumitreasa and Kocbek were marginalized or expelled for their non-conformity. Their contribution to any larger Christian project was dismissed.

Distrust of individuals of exceptional moral courage, whether nonconforming clergy, or those outside the hierarchy, appears to have had little impact on the church’s perceived legitimacy; the same cannot be said of collaborators with the former communist regime. More than forty years after the collapse of communist rule, a recent case of alleged collaboration indicates the vitality of such suspicion.¹⁷ Clerical collaborators exposed to scandal have undermined the integrity of the church to a greater extent than comparable lustration scandals involving the state. Generally, the act of “lustration” refers to action to “purify by a propitiatory offering or other ceremonial method.”¹⁸ The object of “purification” refers to exposure/expulsion of collaborators and their resignation. For the church lustration

15 Hans Maier, “Political Religion: a Concept and its Limitations,” *Politics, Religion and Ideology*, 8(1) (2007): 5–19, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14690760601121614>.

16 Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

17 Fjori Sinoruka, “‘Communist Informer’ Controversy Hits Albanian Ex-President Comeback,” *Balkan Transitional Justice*, July 28, 2022, <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/07/28/communist-informer-controversy-hits-albanian-ex-presidents-comeback/>.

18 “Lustration” in Thesaurus.com, <https://www.thesaurus.com/browse/lustration>.

was a painful experience.¹⁹ We might point to a certain similarity in the comparison of those clergy who had secretly worked with communist officials and the so-called “lapsed” Christians who recanted Christianity for paganism. The former sought to avoid persecution and regain privilege by providing information to the authorities. The *Lapsi* made sacrifice to the pagan gods and in return received a document (libellus) establishing their restored status.²⁰ Upon completion of a sacrifice, individuals received a certificate or *libellus*, a legal document proving conformity with Roman religion. Should they later seek restoration as Christians, they were forced to do penance. In 251 CE Pope Cyprian called a Council that established degrees of complicity and corresponding penance.

Comparison between recent collaborators and the *lapsi* suggests an important conclusion: religious institutions in the midst of political transition demand evidence of spiritual accountability. Lustration sought to purify the church from the taint of collaboration with the previous regime. In the era of Constantine, Christianity demanded evidence of moral probity and repentance. In that era, as in recent times, redemption and reconciliation did not imply more than recognition as a believer. The assumption of sincerity had been forfeited, and individual acceptance could not be done collectively. Such a process is not unique. South Africa’s “Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” formally confronting the victim and a confessed victimizer, demanded acknowledgement of guilt in exchange for amnesty. A former South Africa Minister of Justice, Dullah Omar, explains the Commission’s purpose as a “*necessary exercise to enable South Africans to come to terms with their past on a morally accepted basis and to advance the cause of reconciliation.*”²¹ The challenge of understanding “Liberals, Conservatives and Mavericks” underscores the need of maintaining the moral rectitude of individuals in the circumstances of regime discontinuity. Some compelling evidence of that rectitude in recent times has been the experience of persecution under communist authorities. We have mentioned examples such persons: Yakunin, Iványi, and Calciu-Dumitreasa. Edvard Kocbek did not survive to see the collapse of communism.

19 For example, Robert Marquand, “Communist Past Fells Polish Archbishop,” *Christian Science Monitor*, January 8, 2007, <https://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0108/p07s02-woeu.html>. A broader view may be found in David Merryman and Heather Tafel, “History in the Hands of Politicians: Lustration, Civil Society and the Unfinished Revolutions in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic,” *Student Summer Scholars Manuscripts*, 27, (2009), <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/sss/27/>.

20 “Lapsi-Christians who ‘Lapse/Abandon’ Their Faith,” *Early Church History*, n.d. <https://earlychurch-history.org/martyrs/lapsi-christians-who-lapse-abandon-their-faith/>.

21 Dullah Omar, Official Website of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1995, <https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/legal/justice.htm>. Italics added.

THE CIVIL AND THE RELIGIOUS: CAN RELIGION THRIVE AMIDST REGIME DECLINE?

During the decline of communist party government, levels of Christian heresy/dissent developed with the context of a less repressive environment. However, religious challenges to the communist regimes were not new. William C. Fletcher characterizes the 1960s as a “decade of religious dissent” in the USSR.²² Elsewhere in Eastern Europe religious dissent was stimulated by political changes. For example in about 1978, Warsaw’s “Flying University” created an alternative intellectual life, enjoying both intellectual vigor and a significant precedent from Russia’s nineteenth-century of dominance of Poland.²³ The dissenting church formed informal ties to the Solidarity Movement, whose unofficial chaplain, Fr. Jerzy Popiełuszko, was murdered, probably by security forces in 1984.²⁴ Similarly, the Czechoslovak regime became especially repressive of the Roman Catholic Church, after the elevation of John Paul II and the church’s informal ties with Charter 77.²⁵ The relative strength of the Church, legal or not, and the regime’s perception of threat shaped the party’s response. Moreover, as the regime fell into decay, the ideal of Christian identity emerged as one alternative compatible with other versions of non-communist identity. With the end of communist rule, nationalist and liberal pan-European world views coexisted with religious practice.

Compared with communist rule, late antiquity offered less evidence of the decline of civic identity, although the rapid spread of Christianity and “mystery religions” throughout the Hellenistic world flourished at the expense of imperial cults.²⁶ But like the claims of communist party rule, those of the imperial order were increasingly unsustainable. Despite the outward dissimilarity of both regimes, the authenticity of personal religious experience in the Roman era and collective self-determination through versions of liberal democracy under communist rule offered powerful alternatives to each order. In both eras a remnant of the former regime persisted. The survival of Paganism under Constantine re-

22 William C. Fletcher, “Religious Dissent in the USSR in the 1960s,” *Slavic Review*, 30(3) (June 1971): 248.

23 Chris Pszenicki, “The Flying University,” *Index on Censorship*, no 6, (1979): 19–22, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03064227908532993>.

24 “Thirty Five Years after His Murder, mystery still Surrounds the Death of Popieluszko,” *Thefirstnews.com*, October 19, 2019, <https://www.thefirstnews.com/article/thirty-five-years-after-his-murder-mystery-still-shrouds-the-death-of-popieluszko-8197> (accessed August 29, 2022).

25 Pedro Ramet, “The Czechoslovak Church under Pressure,” *The World Today*, 39(9) (September 1982): 355–60.

26 Luther H. Martin, “Aspects of Religious Experience among the Hellenistic Mystery Religions,” *Religion and Theology*, vol. 12 (3–4) (2005): 349–65.

mains controversial.²⁷ Estimates of the number continuing pagan practices vary. Neo-communists retain a relatively small share of organized political life under post-communism.

However, the new eras both in late antiquity and post-communism were times of religious instability. Early Christianity experienced divisive cultural and theological differences. Constantine sought to arrest deeper divisions. In recent times, much of Eastern Europe has experienced the erosion of religious values like such erosion in Western Europe. Scandals undermined religious legitimacy comparable to corrupt practices in secular institutions. I have mentioned the phenomenon of lustration. It is possible that cultural and political pluralism exposed religious and political institutions to greater scrutiny. Whatever sources were involved, the erosion of religious legitimacy under post-communism differed from the phenomenon in the West. Thus, the decline of traditional “mainline” religions in the West has taken place independently of political regimes. Typically, in Western states it is more commonplace for decline to express itself through the commonplace expression of those who self-identify as “spiritual, but not religious.”²⁸ In former communist regimes, it was possible for all institutions to decline in tandem, especially in cases of widespread corruption or past political compromise. Few political parties have remained unscathed in the last decades. Religions in stasis or decline may be vulnerable to dissent or revival. In communist regimes of the limits of “permissible” religious practice varied considerably, and dissent may have been present regardless of the status of the permitted church. Poland and Croatia present distinctive cases since majoritarian Roman Catholicism was more adversarial to communist regimes than permissible Orthodox churches. Religions survived and transformed after the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

Roman Catholicism presents a distinctive pattern of decline in religious practice between the end of Communist Party rule and the consolidation of new regimes. A Pew Research Institution compared religious belief in 1989 and 2015 in Poland the Czech Republic and Hungary. Between the twenty-six years period between the surveys the share of the adult population identifying as “Roman Catholic” declined as follows: Poland 96–87%; Hungary 63–56%; Czech

²⁷ Scott Bradbury, “Constantine and the Problem of Anti-Pagan Legislation in the Fourth Century,” *Classical Philology*, 89(2) (April 1994): 120–39, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/270658>.

²⁸ Michael Lipka and Claire Gecewicz, “More Americans say now they’re spiritual but not religious,” *Pew Research Center*, September 6, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2017/09/06/more-americans-now-say-theyre-spiritual-but-not-religious/>.

Republic 44–21%.²⁹ Why each country experienced decline in self-identification is not obvious. Possibly religious identification offered an expression of personal opposition to communism that ceased after 1990.

Regardless, the differences provide useful comparison. Polish Catholicism under communist rule could be described as an institution sharing the features of an opposition party denied the prospect of governing. The elevation of Karol Józef Wojtyła (1920–2005) to the papacy as Pope John Paul II invested the Polish Church with global significance. His 1979 visit to Poland dramatically reinforced the Polish connection with global Catholicism. This event with rise of the independent trade union *Solidarność* (Solidarity) under Lech Wałęsa (b. 1943) left the party in a terminal crisis. Post-communist rule created new challenges. Catholicism became more pluralistic. Strong ties between the Church and the Law and Justice party, governing from 2015 until 2023, illustrate their differences between the church and the immediate post-communist regime. The Polish Church may support some of the governing party's agenda, but it must be a Church of the Polish people, remaining independent of party affairs. However, like a political party, the Church may include such major factions as *Radio Maryja*, described in this volume masterfully by Ireneusz Krzeminski. *Radio Maryja's* aspiration to promote a "Polish National Ideology" vaguely resembles the relatively extremist "Christian Nationalism" in the United States.³⁰

Creedal differences between Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions pertain to the addition of the "filioque," the phrase "and the Son." The Great Schism of 1054 amounted to a disagreement between Latin and Orthodox versions of the creed about whether the Holy Spirit emanates from the Eternal Son as a member of the Trinity. Liturgical practices are much greater. However, the impact of the difference in popular attitudes is not exceptional. According to a Pew Study, religious identification with a sense of "national belonging" is somewhat weaker in Roman Catholic than Orthodox Countries; conversely, there exists a somewhat greater support for the separation of church and state in Catholic countries. In Orthodox countries religion became "more important" for adults than it had been in childhood, but "less important" in East European

29 "Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe," *Pew Research Center*, May 10, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/05/10/religious-belief-and-national-belonging-in-central-and-eastern-europe/>.

30 Again the differences may outweigh the similarities, but both share the notion of a fusion between church and state for the purpose of a more robust national identity, <https://sas.rutgers.edu/news-events/news/newsroom/faculty/3406-religious-nationalism>.

Roman Catholic countries.³¹ Starting from a high level of Church self-identification in Poland (96%), the erosion of self-identification between communist and post-communist rule (10%) remained relatively minor. A 11% decline in Hungary was only slightly greater, but at 52% the Czech Republic represented an astonishing erosion in identification. The spirit of “national belonging” for many Czechs does not identify with Roman Catholicism. The reasons may lie with the impact of the history of the Hussite wars (1419–1434) and the Counterreformation, and with the 1993 separation of the Czech Republic from Slovakia. Instead dissent from communism took the form of Václav Havel and Charter 77, a document that does not exclude “freedom of religious expression” as one of many violated by communist authority.³²

Comparison with Slovakia and the Czech Republic is nicely illustrated in this volume by Agatá Šustová Drelová who speaks of the role of “nationalisation and etatisation” as the basis of the church’s role of preserving the nation at a time statelessness. The Pew study does not include independent Slovakia. Nevertheless, Slovak Catholicism sustained a dramatic decline between 2011 and 2021. In 2021, 23.8% of Slovaks “did not claim allegiance to any church,” a decline from 13.4% in 2011.³³ The decline has been related to conditions like those described by Václav Havel. Ján Jarell and Lyubomir Martin Ondrasek associate the “moral [public] malaise” with prevalence of corrupt practices, and the legacy of communist rule, i.e., “unraveled moral fabric and underdeveloped ethics of responsibility.” The authors find the church’s decline in its failure to respond through a “responsible public theology (or more precisely, theologies) and theologians who can help people of the Christian faith responsibly engage the world.”³⁴ The absence of a “prophetic” role follows from a comfortable relationship with the state. Conversely clerics we might describe as critical “mavericks” have elicited a positive response, such as Milan Lach, S.J., then the Auxiliary Bishop of Prešov, and Lutheran pastors less identified with “clericalism.” A similar observation has been made about the “endemic corruption” in the Czech Republic, the role of the “state in church life and the Church’s decline in public support.”³⁵

31 “Religious Affiliation,” *Pew Research Center*, May 10, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/05/10/religious-affiliation/>.

32 Charter 77, January 1, 1977, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/125521/8003_Charter_77.pdf.

33 Nina Hrabovska Francelova, “Losing my Religion in Slovakia,” *Reporting Democracy*, February 10, 2022, <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/02/10/losing-my-religion-in-slovakia>.

34 Ján Juran and Lubomir Martin Ondrasek, “A Reflection on Religion and Churches in Slovakia 30 Years After the Fall of Communism,” *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 40, Issue 8, Article 2., 29, <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2216&context=rec>.

35 Jeffrey M. Jordan, “Patronage and Corruption in the Czech Republic” *SAIS Review* vol. 22, no. 2 (Summer-Fall 2002): 19, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26996411>.

Thus, there is evidence that Drelova's process of "nationalization and etatisation" retains some relation with the decline of post-communist Roman Catholicism. Orthodox Christianity is shaped by processes of "nationalization and statization."³⁶ While Roman Catholicism may have paid dearly for its relationship with the state, it offers no direct counterpart with church-state practices in Orthodox countries. In Orthodox majority countries the demands of post-communist globalization have combined a wholesale rejection of its liberal aspects and an embrace of its economic and individual values, that is contemporary Orthodoxy seeks to "reconfigure religion according to the demands for lifestyle, personal identity, social bond, and self-realization."³⁷ Typically, personal practices of meditation and an embrace of diaspora Orthodox communities signal an adaptation to current changes in values.

Despite the differences between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, neither has experienced fewer instances of dissent. They are expressed through the subjects of our chapters. We will discover that despite differences in adaptation to post-communism both faith traditions include a variety of dissenting examples. Not all, but most permit comparison with earlier forms of dissent, as I hope to show.

ARIANISM AND AUTOCEPHALY: A FIRST CUT IN COMPARISON

Considering the number of its adherents, the Arian heresy was one of the most threatening among early Christological heresies in its opposition to the Orthodox Trinitarian formula. Briefly, the heresy's founder, Arius (256–336) maintained that God the Father and Jesus Christ were not coeternal; that means that Christ had been created after the Father. Arius enjoyed an unusual following in the Eastern part of the Empire. Richard Fletcher recalls that the standard Trinitarian formula was not a "given," and at the time of the controversy was still being "hammered out" in discussion. More relevantly, he adds a "political" dimen-

³⁶ Francois Gauthier, "Orthodox Majority Eastern Europe: From Nation-State to Global Marker," *Theory and Society* 51 (2022): 37, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11186-021-09451-3>; Francois Gauthier, "Religious Change in Orthodox Majority Eastern Europe: From Nation State to Global Market," *Theory and Society*, vol 5, (March 2022): 177–210, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11186-021-09451-3>.

³⁷ Francois Gauthier, "Religious Change in Orthodox Majority Eastern Europe: From Nation State to Global Market," *Theory and Society*, 51 (March 2022): 177–210, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11186-021-09451-3>.

sion to the controversy that is often neglected. With imperial patronage, theology was no longer a matter of “intellectual debate.”

“What was now at stake was access to huge and unprecedented material resources, legal privileges, and access at the imperial court.”³⁸ Even more broadly, the Arian-Trinitarian conflict was “a political, and national, and one might say a racial issue,” involving rival centers in Alexandria and Antioch.³⁹ More exactly despite the strong Western position, Arius maintained a following among the Visigoths and other Germanic tribes. Constantine would harness the existing ecclesial structure into a major Church Council at Nicaea in 381 affirming the notion that God and Christ were “homousian,” of one and the same substance.

In our volume the goal of a recognized and independent autocephaly has been considered central in the recent history of the Orthodox Church in North Macedonia and, ultimately, of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Initially, comparison would seem fatuous or incomprehensible between the generally accepted practice of self-governing Orthodoxy, and an early medieval heresy. Further consideration reveals a basis for comparison. Both the supporters of Arianism and a recognized autocephaly were motivated by the goal of independence from a larger organized structure. Even more generally, both share a persistent quest to resolve tension between religious identity and ecclesial structure. The Macedonian and Ukrainian hierarchies have confronted larger and longer established churches assigning little value to a separate status for smaller churches. Effective church structures must resolve the question I raised earlier: “by whose authority” do you claim to govern.⁴⁰ Christological heresies marked the early phase of the church’s development. Antioch and Alexandria inspired the original Arian conflict, but their dispute was settled by Imperial Constantinople. The nature of the conflict would return. The authority question reasserted itself through the gnostic Cathars in Languedoc in southern France, the Hussite wars in Bohemia (1419–1434), and in the Protestant Reformation (1517–1600). Violent conflict was the response in the Albigensian Crusade (1209) and the Thirty Years War (1618–1648). The motivation to separate ceased to be violent as war became the prerogative of sovereign states.

The Macedonian and Ukrainian Orthodox Churches differed from the Arian episode in profound ways. The latter would rely on the unusual talent of Athanasius of Alexandria (296–373 CE) who would dominate the Council for Trin-

³⁸ Ricard Fletcher, *The Barbarian Conversion: From Paganism to Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press) 1997.

³⁹ N.H. Baynes and H. St.L.B. Moss, eds., *Byzantium: An Introduction to East Roman Civilization* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1948), 91.

⁴⁰ *Supra*, note 5.

itarianism. Likewise, no early counterpart exists for the role of the Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew I (b.1940), although like Constantine's support for Trinitarianism, the Patriarch would decisively contribute to resolving the recent conflict on behalf of autocephaly. Finally, of course the current conflict would be resolved on behalf of religious pluralism. Ukrainian and Macedonian autocephalists have supported their states' claims of sovereignty. Taken together the recognition of Macedonia's status and the Ukrainian Church's separation from Moscow settled an untidy legacy of communist rule. The Nicaean Creed amounted to a critical milestone in the suppression of one expression of heresy.

AN INTRUSIVE SECULAR CHALLENGE, SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY

Our *Festschrift* includes two chapters that raise the challenge of science to established religious tradition. Milan Vukomanović examines the petition to the Serbian Orthodox Church to reexamine the teaching of evolution in the Orthodox seminaries. Daniela Kalkandjieva examines the conflict between the use of the common spoon in administration of the eucharist and collective measures to prevent the transmission of the covid virus. In this case, the sanitary measures prescribed by medical science clashed with the teaching of Eastern Orthodoxy and its centuries-old traditions. From one theological point of view, the Church is the Body of Christ, the wholeness of which is directly linked with the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, traditionally using a common spoon for the distribution of Holy Communion. In this case, the sanitary measures prescribed by medical science clashed with the teaching of Eastern Orthodoxy and its centuries-old traditions. From a theological point of view, the Church is the Body of Christ, whose wholeness is directly linked with the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. The question of the common spoon was of great consequence to the faithful, but it remained a question internal to the Church. The same was not true of the matter of teaching evolution in Orthodox seminaries.

The question of evolution and the nature of science as an alternate explanation of creation presents a different version of a similar question. Evolution could arguably be the choice of a Sovereign God choosing to reveal himself in ways comparable to prophetic revelation; conversely evolutionary accounts of creation could be incompatible with Genesis.

Support for teaching evolutionary theory became associated with the Orthodox seminary and the University of Belgrade. Opposition from "ultra-conservative" clerics in the Orthodox Holy Synod was distinctive in their opposition to

allegedly “liberal” positions associated with a variety of other issues, pertaining to human rights, lustration, and the status of Kosovo. The difference between the liberal and the conservative positions in the Serbian Church need not concern us; comparatively the question relates a larger question of the church’s relation to external systems of thought. The conflict between external thought and the church implies more than a threat to ecclesial authority and doctrine. Orthodox perceptions, if correct, of liberal toleration and pan-European ideals of human rights imply profound social and legal consequences to the church’s role as a moral arbiter. From the Orthodox viewpoint, evolutionary science could be no less of a threat than Galileo Galilei’s (1564–1642) heliocentric theory to the seventeenth-century Roman Catholicism. As with our earlier comparison, the cautious worldview of modern “liberal” Serbian clergy and a critical founder of modern cosmology seems charitably exaggerated. In fact, both highlight factionalism the church. Galileo’s challenge centered on two important institutions within it, the Inquisition and the Dominicans. He had good personal relations with the Pope Urban VIII, (Mattro Barberini 1568–1644) and had discussed the Copernican view of the Solar System. Possibly had Galileo accepted the notion that Copernicus’ viewpoint was merely a “hypothesis” he would not have been tried.⁴¹ Galileo’s refusal to maintain that Copernicus’ heliocentric view was only a “hypothesis” was the critical factor in Urban VIII’s decision to try Galileo on grounds of heresy.

The points of comparison are twofold. As Professor Vukomanović observes, the question for the Serbian Orthodox Church involves recognition of secular universal norms permitting pluralistic assumptions about the nature of state and society exclusive of the church. The same type of issue was true of Galileo’s method of demonstrating a heliocentric solar system. The threat was not to make the earth “inferior” to the sun, but to recognize a method of creating truth exclusive of the church. Neither civil society nor natural science are religious; they are means for free will to externalize a reality independent of a particular belief structure. Second. The issue of Kosovo made the Serbian Church a critical ally in a way similar to what the Church had become for belligerent states during the Counterreformation and the Thirty Years War. In both cases the church reinforced a moral dimension that could tolerate no variation in viewpoint. In the case of Kosovo Bishop Teodosije may have expressed a keen sensitivity about the destiny of Serbs south of the ethnic demarcation line proposed by Serbian Pres-

⁴¹ William A. Wallace, “Galileo’s Science and the Trial of 1633,” *Wilson Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Summer, 1983), 159.

ident Aleksandar Vučić. Sensitivity was not the issue, any more than was a version of truth differing from the seventeenth century church militant.

PELAGIUS (C.354–418), THE MORAL VOCATION OF EXTRAORDINARY INDIVIDUALS

Normally Christianity embraces the saint and the martyr, as exemplary allies of Christian purpose and mission. The challenge amounts to those whose example is judged not to have been inspired by the church's leadership, or contrary to it. Such questions represent a certain segment of the larger issue of sin and free will. So vast a question has been with us at least since Pelagius, and reaches its apotheosis in the Reformation and descends in more recent times through the thought of Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855). The core problem remains an approach to exemplary behavior that compels a revision of church doctrine. Pelagius notions of "volition" and "actuality" were inconsistent with the tenet of "original sin"⁴² More exactly according to Pelagius, original sin was not transmitted; instead "grace simply helped humans to know what to do to live holy lives."⁴³ Significantly the experience of unmerited grace is no less present in Pope Francis' recognition of the moral potential of persons traditionally excluded from the Church, nor in the assertions of his "heresy" in violating church tradition.⁴⁴

Individual grace motivates the claims of exceptional rectitude on behalf of several of our chapter's subjects, such as Professor Christopher Adam's work on Rev. Gabor Iványi of the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship and Professor Lavinia Stan on the Romanian Orthodox Priest Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa (1925–2006). Both priests directed their ministry towards groups and persons marginalized by society, and both represented a threat or embarrassment to the moral claim of religious authorities. Both may also have contradicted Hannah Arendt's assertion in the chapter's preface concerning the contradiction of moral probity and public life: Iványi for his work in parliament and Calciu-Dumitreasa for his early involvement in the Fascist Iron Guard and outspoken anti-communism. It is the religious context of this involvement that is unacceptable to the

42 Pelagius "On Free Will," Early Church Texts, https://earlychurchtexts.com/public/pelagius_and_free_will.htm.

43 Matthew Barrett, "The Battle for the Will, Part I: Pelagius and Augustine," *The Gospel Coalition*, 2022, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/battle-will-part-1-pelagius-augustine/>.

44 Michael O'Loughlin, "Critics of Pope Francis level new accusation of 'heresy,'" *America*, May 1, 2019, <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/05/01/critics-pope-francis-level-new-accusation-heresy>.

state. Exceptional individuals' pursuit of moral rectitude becomes a potential threat to church authority.

One distinction of communist rule from its secular democratic counterparts involves a moral claim in rivalry with the church. Jože Pirjevec's chapter on Slovene Catholicism includes the Catholic "heretic" and poet Edvard Kocbek, considered unacceptable to Roman Catholic authorities because of his involvement with Tito's partisans and to the Yugoslav communists because of his demand of an apology for the partisan massacre of Catholic *domobranci* (Home Guards). Both Slovene Catholics and communists remained divided over the moral dimension of reconciliation. The Slovene Catholic Vekoslav Grmič was unacceptable to John Paul II as Bishop of Maribor for his advocacy of the left "liberation theology" and a dialogue with regime authorities. Pirjevec recalls the church's refusal to support the current of Christian socialism and its intellectual leader.

Finally, perhaps the most unusual example of an extraordinary individual remains the Czech cleric, Msgr. Tomáš Halík (b.1948). Unlike previous examples, Halík's extraordinary intellect allows him to realize the distinction of a true "public intellectual," in a society experiencing what Václav Havel has called the "moral vacuum" of post-communism. Frank Cibulka's excellent treatment of the subject combines an account of the Roman Catholic Church in the Czech Republic with one of Halík's career and liberal thought. For many devout Catholics, both Czech and foreign, those liberal positions regarding ecumenism, gender, and grace represent a way forward for the Church, but significantly, his prestige in the Czech Republic derives not only from a clarity of vision, but from the current weakness of the institutional Church in Czech society. Significantly, Halík's conservative adversaries are peer individual clerics, such as Archbishop Dominik Duka (b.1943) and Fr. Petr Pitha (b.1938), rather than the state or the collective hierarchy. Halík's "openness" to the pan European values allows him to align with larger intellectual currents in Czech society, transcending conservative religious and secular critics.

SACRALIZING NATION'S AUTHORITY: INTRUSION OF THE SECULAR COMMUNITY

I have mentioned the Orthodox heresy of Phyletism, a doctrine conflating church and nation and an important example of dissent involving the state or the nation. The origins of this dissent consist in the cultural quest rather than separation by religious doctrine. Professor Robert Goeckel nicely includes the compromise of church leadership by an adversarial state (East Germany) while Isa Blumi

examines the inappropriate relations between larger communities and “aggressive” Christian diasporas (Albania). Any such relationship requires qualification of what we have considered “dissent.” The conservative Sadducees did not view their relationship with the Romans as inappropriate or a violation of the Torah or Mosaic Law; the Pharisees did. For Christians, “dissent” involves a violation of the Pauline admonition that the Christian Community transcends rival identities (“Greek, Jew, male or female, slave or free.” Gal.3:28). At their core, heresies/dissent implies “sacralizing” the state, an attitude implying a secular community compensating for a spiritual deficiency in the Church. The “true” Pole must be Catholic, but is the “true” Catholic also Polish? In the West, during the later Medieval era, a conflict between the Church and State created a rivalry of authorities. The Reformation ended the idea of Christian universalism. Following the end of the religious wars, a semi-legitimate state coopted the Church’s authority as a cultural guardian of the nation. Eastern Christianity took a different path. A “divine” pagan emperor may have suggested the divinity of Imperialism and the notion of Caesaropapism. In fact, its legacy sacralized the emperor by uniting in his person the leadership of the Empire and the Church, while investing his responsibility for the conditions necessary for the Church’s well-being. The legacy of the “symphony” of functions became problematic for the Nation-State and more exactly, for a world of multiple Orthodox states, potentially in conflict. The Ecumenical Patriarch has acted as an occasional presiding referee among autocephalous churches.

For many Christians the idea of a “Third Rome” in Moscow could not be accepted as it relegated the Church to an adjunct of Imperial/Soviet policy. Modern Russian Orthodoxy is more cautious. Our contributors, Jerry Pankhurst and Alar Kilp, provide a compelling account of the Patriarch Kirill (b. 1946). They cite Kirill’s support for the concept of Russian cultural integrity and state security, the idea of *Russki Mir* (Russian World), and the spiritual/cultural unity of Slavic Russians, a concept including Belarusians and Ukrainians. There is no mistaking the President’s role in implementing the relation of the nation and the state. Pankhurst and Kilp write, “Russian cultural integrity and state security unity of Slavic Russians, are usually synched with those of the President.” They also emphasize the centrality of Kirill in drafting the 2000 document *The Basis of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church*.⁴⁵ Here the document

⁴⁵ “The Basis of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church,” Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church Vancouver BC, Canada, <https://russianorthodoxchurch.ca/en/the-basis-of-the-social-concept-of-the-russian-orthodox-church/2408>.

avoids claiming any distinction for the Russian Nationality, while legitimizing “Christian patriotism”, i.e., “to preserve and develop national culture and people’s self-awareness.” Such an attitude becomes an expression of “restricting evil and supporting good.” The evil consists in waging an “aggressive war,” an act requiring the church’s condemnation. The document’s provision has not prevented Kirill from supporting Russia’s “special military operation” in Ukraine as a defense of Russian Orthodoxy.⁴⁶

I have discussed clerical collaboration with state security as feature of communist rule. Such practice remains a norm in the current Russian Federation. It is expected that higher church officials in Russia are agents of state security, as in the era of communist party rule.⁴⁷ Instead, one would identify dissent as the attitude of Russian clerics in opposition to the war in Ukraine.⁴⁸ Even a brief survey of such dissent is beyond this modest introduction. Nevertheless, it reminiscent of earlier European religious history. The principle *Cuius regio, eius religio* (whose realm, his religion) derived from the 1555 Peace of Augsburg expressed a similar attitude towards the church-state relations. Prior to the Reformation and the era of modern nationalism, cultural conflict convulsed the Catholic world. One example was the Albigensian heresy (Catharism), in early thirteenth century France. In addition, the larger movement sought to use vernacular language in scripture and or liturgy. Its leadership is associated variously with Peter Waldo (1140–1218), John Wycliffe (1328–1384), and Jan Hus (1369–1415). Clearly these examples do not amount to “national dissent,” in any sense, but they are comparable to the “aggressive” Christian diasporas Professor Isa Blumi describes directed towards a largely religiously indifferent post-communist Albania.

The original understanding of nationalist heresy was confined to the relation of the church and a distinctive culture, modern variants imply a subordinate association with the state. In the modern era, the state becomes the current incarnation of a divinely inspired national spirit. The Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew, has recently criticized the divination of the nation-state as a “fallen

46 Katherine Kelaidis, “In Sermon on Birth of the ‘Fatherland,’ Putin’s Patriarch Kirill Equates Invasion of Ukraine with Defense of Orthodox Faith,” *Religion Dispatches*, September 22, 2022. <https://religiondispatches.org/in-sermon-on-birth-of-the-fatherland-putins-patriarch-kirill-equates-invasion-of-ukraine-with-defense-of-orthodox-faith/>.

47 Konstantine Preobrazhensky, *KGB/FSB’s New Trojan Horse: Americans of Russian Descent* (North Bellerica MA: Gerard Publishing Group, 2008), 68–69.

48 Victoria Arnold, “Russia: Two Priests on Trial for Opposing Russia’s War in Ukraine” Forum 18 (Oslo), October 11, 2022, https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2780&pdf=Y.

mindset, totally alien to the core of Orthodoxy,”⁴⁹ Adoration or divination of the state more properly belongs to a category of totalitarian rule, although neither fascism nor communism considered the state as the rationale for their utopian version of humanity’s destiny. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) has been cited and vulgarized to rationalize that “the state is the march of God through the world,” a chilling and original phrase for liberal critics, such as Karl Popper.⁵⁰ Originally the notion of phyletism was a an ecclesial counterpart to the philosophical version. To repeat the idea of phyletism was condemned as a heresy for its assumption that the “nationalist or statist” identity of a particular community transcended its character as a universal *oikoumenê* (community).⁵¹

However, the idea of a Christian nation is deeply woven into other Christian traditions. In a strict sense involvement in cultivating close links between a metropole and diaspora communities represents a form of exclusivity that defined the initial understanding of phyletism. Such relationships are not confined to Orthodoxy. Regardless, elevating the spiritual content of the nation is a precondition for dissenting/heretical variations of similar ideas. I have mentioned Professor Krzeminski’s chapter on Radio Mariya, and its “national ideology.” Brian Porter makes a similar comment about Roman Catholicism in Poland, that is as a “deeply ingrained, but exclusionary telling of national history.”⁵² In view of the many examples drawn from Christianity the question goes begging whether so close a relation can represent authentic dissent. Several considerations suggest so. First, the degree of political involvement. For example, in the United States the organization “Catholic Action for Faith and Family” associated with Cardinal Raymond Burke claims to uphold values that resonate with Americans; the “action” entails a conservative political consciousness and entailing an agenda. Second, the nation itself confronts a historical destiny well apart from the universal visions of a *Parousia* or apocalypse. Finally, such movements dissent from mainstream attitudes and leadership of the national church.

49 “Ecumenical Patriarch Criticizes Nationalist Tendencies within Eastern Orthodoxy,” *Catholic News Service*, April 14, 2014, <https://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=21254>.

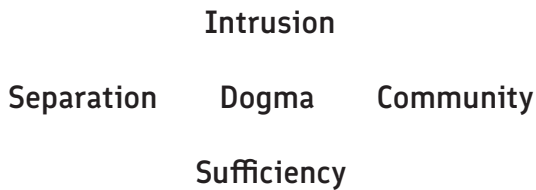
50 Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 31, as cited in Murray N. Rothbard, “Hegel: the State as God’s Will,” *Mises Daily Articles*, September 3, 2017, <https://mises.org/library/hegel-state-gods-will>.

51 John H. Erickson, *The Challenge of Our Past* (Crestwood NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1991), 92.

52 Brian Porter, “The Catholic Nation: Religion, Identity, and the Narratives of Polish History,” *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 45(2) (2001): 289, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3086330>.

WHAT IT ALL MAY MEAN

To return to the initial contention of the chapter. I have maintained that religious traditions in this book represent expressions of a common quality of religious thought exceeding a particular denomination or geographical area. Neither ecclesial authority, political practice, nor a particular era can account for the formative impact of the assumptions, rationale, and content of religious thought. The latter in turn is shaped by a quest to express a transcendental experience of faith. To speak of the transcendental implies more than an experience of “absolute dependence” on God expressed by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834). Beyond personal experience, it becomes a complete system of thought that is metaphysical, epistemological, ethical, aesthetic, and legal. At various times expressions of each have created a dogma whose variations and change may be rationalized theologically or through authoritative individuals. For example, the Anglican “Three-Legged Stool” of scripture, tradition, and reason, mistakenly associated with the theorist and theologian Richard Hooker (1554–1600), offers a distinctive flexibility.⁵³ A consensus about this formula legitimizes a broadly tolerant doctrine. Interpreting Christian dogma has relied on clerical authority, conciliarism, and ultimately, schism. Understanding dogma remains a basis for a common theology, liturgy, and identity. Conversely, dogma and its derivative elements cannot be isolated from the tensions created by change: political, generational, sociological, among others. The resulting tension may create various forms of dissent, or unacceptable heresy. In view of this book’s subject, we might create the following schema of the relationship.



External to dogma, the four categories present various challenges resolved in dogma’s adaptation. Our chapters include examples of all categories. The challenges of “Intrusion” are external to the church such as scientific rationality or the Covid pandemic. (Serbia, Bulgaria). The challenge to “sufficiency” includes

⁵³ Robert S. Munday, “The Three-Legged Stool of Anglicanism” *Virtue online*, Trinity School for Ministry (Ambridge PA) nd., <https://virtueonline.org/three-legged-stool-anglicanism-robert-s-munday>.

what we have described as “extraordinary individuals” (Rumania, Hungary, Slovenia). Emerging from within the church, extraordinary individuals may be perceived to challenge clerical claims to embody the fullness of Christianity through the church exclusively. “Separation” represents the quest for complete autonomy (autocephaly) (Macedonia, Ukraine) from a larger entity. “Community” (Russia, Albania, East Germany) seeks an inclusive relation with secular governance. Here I am assuming that ecclesial compromise with state authority (betrayal) amounts to a misguided pursuit of community, “Community” may also emerge from the quest for a satisfactory relationship between church and state (Croatia). The four groups may not include every type of heresy/dissent.

Finally, not every state may include a single category, of religious value e.g., religiously plural societies, such as the United States, may include different types of dissent. In addition, the categories may also be excessively broad. “Intrusion” can include wars, revolution and social movements. “Sufficiency” may include challenges that are not clearly within or outside the Church, such as “liberation theology.” At the very least, we may conclude that “Mavericks, Liberals and Conservatives” are founded on a basis deeper than simply individual will or regional culture. Our subject expresses the character of religious experience, rather than a particular identity or political culture. As religious expression is universal, so is the pernicious impact of “public” involvement on religious “goodness,” as Hannah Arendt understood its sense in our opening sentence.

One final question concerns the axiological status of religious values, whether expressed in our chapters or elsewhere. I am not qualified to comment succinctly on so challenging a subject! Nevertheless, I consider the question relevant to the four values of the diagram. At least two considerations emerge. We might consider religious values as improvised “social constructions” appropriate, or not, to a given situation. Were this true, any relation between the religious values of contemporary Eastern Europe and earlier eras would be forced or coincidental. However, I am impressed by a comment of C.S. Lewis defending a second possibility, that is, a finite number of values encompass a tradition of natural law. Such values would recur in the history of religious thought. Lewis uses the example of the *tao* as a source of all values. *He* adds “The human mind is no more capable of inventing a new value than of imagining a new primary colour...”⁵⁴ It is best left to the reader to weigh this assertion, or its utility describing religious values.

54 C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2000), 44

Patriarch Kirill

Arenas of Leadership and Challenges of the 21st Century Russian Orthodox Church

Jerry G. Pankhurst and Alar Kilp

Enthroned amidst great pomp and ceremony at Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow on February 1, 2009, the Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, Kirill (Gundyaev) took the new title “Great lord and our father the Holy Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus’ Kirill.”¹ For Kirill to become the head of the Russian Orthodox Church in 2009 was not surprising. There were other viable candidates for the post,² but there was nobody more prominent in all arenas than Kirill, and no one known beyond the boundaries of the Russian Church more than Kirill.

All during the post-Soviet decade of the 1990s and into the 2000s Kirill had broadcast a weekly television show called “The Pastor’s Word”³ which was carried on a main national channel. Across the entire period, he had also headed the Department of External Church Relations (DECR) of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), the primary public voice of the Church internationally. He had established an international reputation from the very beginning of his career in the 1960s while representing the Church in the World Council of Churches (WCC), following the lead of his mentor, Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad (1929–1978, in the office of Metropolitan 1963–1978) who had played an

¹ Per-Arne Bodin, “The Enthronement of Patriarch Kirill: A Liturgical Event,” in *Orthodox Paradoxes: Heterogeneities and Complexities in Contemporary Russian Orthodoxy*, ed. Katya Tolstaya (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 56–70.

² Election of the Patriarch took place on January 27, 2009. On January 25, a senior Bishops’ Council had selected three final candidates: Metropolitan Kliment of Kaluga and Borovsk, Belarusian Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk, and Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad. In the final round Filaret cancelled his candidacy, Kliment got 169 votes, and Kirill 509 votes. “Metropolitan Kirill Elected New Patriarch of Russian Orthodox Church,” *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*, January 27, 2009, https://www.rferl.org/a/Metropolitan_Kirill_Elected_New_Patriarch_Of_Russian_Orthodox_Church/1375534.html.

³ Program “Slovo pastyrya” (Слово пастыря) is accessible also online, <https://www.itv.ru/shows/slovo-pastyrya>.

important part in the peace coalition of the WCC and the International Peace Committee.⁴

We can identify five major stages in the public life of Kirill Gundryaev, all of them expressing his agile mind and activist energy.

1. Ambitious and internationalist Soviet Bishop. As a Soviet Orthodox figure growing in stature: As a protégé of Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad, participant in the World Council of Churches, holding office in the WCC; as a bishop, then archbishop and head of the Leningrad Theological Seminary and Academy, where he is said to have raised the intellectual level of the institution substantially.
2. Leader seeking to insure the place of the ROC in a new democratic order. As a planner of the “coming out” of the Russian Orthodox Church under Gorbachev and perestroika under Patriarch Pimen and then struggling to find a place for the ROC under the post-Soviet conditions as a major lieutenant of Patriarch Aleksii II and head of the Department of External Relations (DECR); and as an engaged entrepreneur in the new-capitalism of the 1990s.
3. Modernizing the ROC organizationally and theologically. As the primary initiator and writer of the 2000 document, the Bases on the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church, as the deliverer of a future-facing Orthodox church in cooperation with the future-facing Russian government of Vladimir Putin (2000–2008, 2012–) and Dmitri Medvedev (“tan-democracy” 2008–2012, meeting the need to connect and empathize with the historic aspirations of Russia for Europeanization.
4. Adapting to the authoritarian patterns of the Putin leadership 2012 forward and establishing a semi-autonomous sphere for the ROC both domestically and internationally. Stage 4 lays the foundation for the next as-yet-incomplete stage as it develops.
5. After the 2013–2014 anti-Moscow Maidan protests in Kyiv, the granting of autocephaly by the Ecumenical Patriarch to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in 2018–2019, and the full military invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, Kirill has been developing a full-throated “Orthodoxy of war”. As this stage is still evolving, we can only point to its pre-2022 pre-

⁴ On the beginning of Soviet era participation in the World Council of Churches, see Geraldine Fagan, *Believing in Russia: Religious Policy after Communism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 21–22.

cursors here. However, detailed analyses of several aspects of this stage can be found in 2022–2023 publications by the present authors.⁵

For the entire period from the end of Soviet rule in 1991 until the present, the figure of Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad and then, from 2009, Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus', Kirill I has been a dynamic force in the Russian Orthodox Church. Whether in front of or behind the scenes, he has been making things happen for the Russian Church. This chapter seeks to delineate his contributions and failings as a leader of the Church and of Russian society.

As we shall argue, his importance has grown steadily over the last thirty years, and his leadership has touched virtually every aspect of religion in Russia, and it has entailed myriad social and political correlates.

What follows is organized in two sections. The first part deals with six arenas (places or scenes of activity) of Kirill's leadership: public persona, church institution, society and culture, history, church-state relations and (geo)political Orthodoxy. The second part of the paper is organized around ten challenges.⁶ The leadership of Patriarch Kirill is tested by these challenges and his response to these challenges defines the quality of his leadership. The challenges are the canvas on which he portrays his leadership, and they are the measuring rod by which we can evaluate his leadership. These challenges are related to the ROC's leadership from the 1980s until the 2020s. We start with challenges that were relevant mostly during the period 1980–2000, because these constituted the starting point for the ROC in the twenty-first century and they also have had lasting impact on what followed later. We use the term 'challenge' mostly in two meanings: 1) challenges that the Church faces either objectively (such as lack of

5 Alar Kilp, Jerry G. Pankhurst, "The Role of Moscow Patriarchs in the Promotion of the Imperial Culture of Sobornost: Thematic Analysis of Religious Leaders' Speeches at the World Russian People's Council 1993–2022," *Religions*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (2023), 436. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14040436>; Alar Kilp, Jerry G. Pankhurst, "Soft, Sharp, and Evil Power: The Russian Orthodox Church in the Russian Invasion of Ukraine," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 42, No. 5 (2022), 1–21. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55221/2693-2148.2361>; Alar Kilp, Jerry G. Pankhurst, "Religious Leadership and Critical Junctures in the 2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine: 104 War Days of Metropolitan Hilarion," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 42, No. 7 (2022), 3. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55221/2693-2148.2376>.

6 The theme of challenges for the Russian Church follows an approach similar to Ramet's in her basic social science analysis of religion in the former communist states: *Nihil Obstat: Religion, Politics and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998. Chapter 9 focuses specifically on Russia. Also see the approach to challenges for the ROC in Alexander Agadjanian and Kathy Rousselet, "Globalization and Identity Discourse in Russian Orthodoxy," in *Eastern Orthodoxy in a Global Age: Tradition Faces the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Victor Roudometof, Alexander Agadjanian and Jerry Pankhurst (Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 2005), 29–57.

resources and sites of worship) or subjectively, when the ROC sees a challenge in religious institutions and actors such as Protestants, Catholics, the Pope and the Ecumenical Patriarch; 2) cases, where the Church is a challenge or is perceived to be a challenge by actors and institutions external to its organization due to its political behavior or religio-political positions and messages (e.g. ROC questioning the ideals of equality of gender and sexual orientations considered universal in most of the West).

ARENAS

1. Public Persona or a Person in the Public Arena

The son of a priest, Kirill Gundryaev fits into a common family tree for Russian Orthodox clerics. The sons of clergymen either marry before taking up posts at a parish or marry the Church and become monks devoted to ecclesial service. Kirill chose the second option, being tonsured a monk at age 22, and entering quickly into the steps leading toward his exalted post today as Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus'.⁷

Recent historical scholarship has come to see the late imperial Orthodox Church in Russia as engaged in a foreshortened social and spiritual exploration of modernity and secularity,⁸ and during the post-World War II era the pre-revolutionary strands of thought and action were still alive within the Church in the Soviet context. Almost certainly Kirill Gundryaev internalized some of the ideals of the evolving Church intelligentsia that his grandfather and father had been born into before the Revolution, and these included "the values of self-improvement, social engagement, and service to a higher collective good."⁹ Living through the influences of enforced secularization under communism, the Gundryaev family endured Stalinism and repressions, but also saw a new Soviet Russia that could be valued in some ways together with Orthodox society. This would seem to be the only explanation for the endurance and adaptation of the Gundryaevs, and in particular of Kirill. He learned to build a place for himself, under the influence

7 A recent portrayal of the life and role of Kirill in Russian Church affairs that corresponds with our descriptions here can be found in Scott M. Kenworthy and Alexander S. Agadjanian, *Understanding World Christianity: Russia* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2021), 196–201.

8 Heather Coleman, "Studying Russian Religion Since the Collapse of Communism," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 25, no. 2 (2014): 309–318.

9 Coleman, "Studying Russian Religion," 315, summarizing the ideas of Laurie Manchester, 2008.

of his patron, Metropolitan Nikodim, in Leningrad that was a springboard for his Church career which blossomed as the Soviet Union dissolved.

Looking at the page on the official website of the Moscow Patriarchate (www.mospat.ru) that presents the biography of Patriarch Kirill, one immediately understands that the Russian Patriarch revels in images. Dressed in all black—as is mandated for Russian monks—the Patriarch invokes the model of the successful, strong male. He is standing alone on a beach covered with grass and sedge, the open sea and sky providing the background. Kirill looks directly at the camera to draw the viewer in to his dominion. His robes waving in the wind, he stands steadfast and sure. There is more than mere image here, however. Kirill has been a central player in the changing Russian society, addressing myriad challenges forthrightly as Russia finds its place in a new global alignment. He clearly has been a major leader in Russia, but as with every person in a leadership position, the question always arises as to whether she or he actually leads by creating new paths of change and structuring new social formations, or, rather, rides the waves of social change washing over the society, adapting to the ride but not creating the waves. We can only address this question by first more closely surveying what Kirill encountered as a church leader.

2. Church Institution or Institutional Religion

For the Church, Kirill also saw a set of theological and intellectual needs that demanded his attention. Having served as rector of the Leningrad Theological Academy early in his career (1974–1984), he understood the importance of clerical education. The Post-Soviet freedoms opened up a wide range of opportunities for lay education, and Kirill used them to grow religious schooling. Moreover, he had been instrumental in drafting the first extensive statement of the ethical principles of Russian Orthodoxy, “The Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church”¹⁰ in 2000, and he faced the challenge of delineating the Russian Orthodox stance vis-à-vis human rights as foreign relations engaged the issue internationally. Consequently, “The Bases of the Social Concept” document served many purposes, including the articulation of positions of the ROC regarding Western conceptions of democracy and human rights; providing legitimation of Putin’s power vertical and giving ROC a sense of mission and *position* in the (Russian) world.

¹⁰ “Osnovy sotsial’noy kontseptsii Russkoy pravoslavnoy tserkvi”. The full English text of the document is available at the official site of the Moscow Patriarchate, <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/3/14.aspx>.

So, what is Kirill's record as an innovator but also preserver of the Orthodox Tradition? What is his record as a guardian of the Russian Orthodox heritage and a developer of its potential in the post-Soviet circumstances? How should we evaluate his role in politics and in walking the path of Russian patriotism and nationalism? How good a leader is he? Although not asserting final answers, the second part of this paper provides major touchpoints for answering such questions.

3. Society and Culture

From the start of his Patriarchate, Kirill faced some problems with which he was already fully familiar as he led DECR, but other problems arose as the result of his instalment in the highest leadership position of the Church. From the moment of his enthronement as Patriarch, he faced challenges of historic proportions. While the institutional condition of the Church had improved mightily over the two decades since the Russian Church came out from under the control of the Soviet communist regime, there was still much to do to fully restore it as a Christian witness to the people and a pillar of Russian society and culture. Russians were not—and still are not—very active in their piety or their support for the Church. Although there was a clear affective bond between the people and the Church, the long period of state atheism under the Soviets had interrupted the processes that nurture religious knowledge or sentiment in the public. Widespread in Russian society was ‘Secularism Soviet Style’, which associated religion with backwardness and treated religion as a defining adversary of (socialist) modernization,¹¹ and the ROC faced a generally unchurched population that Kirill had to see as a major challenge to his leadership.

In the last forty years of existence of the USSR, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) promoted a program of individual transformation of Russians and other members of the population into “New Soviet Persons.” Built on Marxist-Leninist principles and the notion that the country had moved into the stage of the building of communist society—having vanquished the vestiges of the old imperialist and capitalist systems—the society was nurturing these New Soviet Persons through education and social participation. As a result the New Soviet Person was to adhere to the principles of the “Moral Code of the Builders of Communism.” As incorporated into the 1961 Communist Party Program,

¹¹ Sonja Luehrmann, *Secularism Soviet Style: Teaching Atheism and Religion in a Volga Republic* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), 62.

this code “resembles the ethical teachings of most of the world’s great religions”¹² but without the reference to a deity.

In order to understand Kirill, then, we must grapple with the pattern of change in Russia as it experienced late twentieth century secularization and then desecularization. As Catherine Wanner has emphasized, given the Soviet atheist processes of the Soviet era, secularization was experienced differently than elsewhere in Europe—the place which has provided much of our evidence from which theoretical and empirical generalizations about secularization has derived.¹³ Russia’s secularization was different. Soviet enforced atheism and Soviet secularization rooted in state atheism led to outcomes different from secularization in non-communist settings.¹⁴ How these differences were understood and taken advantage of by Kirill is at the heart of any attempt to understand Kirill’s leadership.

A major part of the process of articulating and formalizing the connection between the Orthodox faithful and the ROC was the creation in 2000 of the Bases of the Social Concept for the Church which we have already introduced. The “Bases...” touched nearly every aspect of life, and its acceptance by the ROC and implementation under Kirill’s leadership marked a new role of the ROC in shaping Russian cultural, ethno-national and political life. The Russian Orthodox Church now plays a core role in defining Russian national identity.¹⁵

4. Historic Path (Dependence) and ‘Making History’

Restoring the Russian Church to the center of the popular perception of Russian history, the ROC under Kirill has frequently addressed the unfulfilled hopes of the pre-Revolutionary Russian church which had been undergoing significant modernization and reform processes since the last part of the nineteenth century. Specifically, the ROC has been repeatedly called upon to complete the agenda of the 1917–1918 *Pomestnyi Sobor* (local council) in which Patriarch Tikhon was elected and a raft of modernizing ideas were put on the table for the future of

12 David E. Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1975), 155–57. Cf. Christel Lane, *Christian Religion in the Soviet Union: A Sociological Study* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978): 231.

13 Catherine Wanner, “Introduction,” in *State Secularism and Lived Religion in Soviet Russia and Ukraine*, ed. Catherine Wanner (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1–25.

14 Victoria Smolkin, *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty: A History of Soviet Atheism* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018). For a detailed study of the Baltic region where Lutheran and Catholic churches and believers faced the atheistic program see also Robert F. Goeckel, *Soviet Religious Policy in Estonia and Latvia: Playing Harmony in the Singing Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018).

15 Agadjanian and Rousselet, “Globalization and Identity Discourse.”

the Church. Among these ideas under consideration were developing ecumenical ties with other Christian churches, liturgy reform to make the service more understandable and accessible for parishioners, greater theological education for clergy, vernacular language usage in services, improved spiritual or theological education of laypeople, civil society development and greater reliance on democratic practices in parish life and diocesan administration.¹⁶

Among the first victims of the Bolsheviks, as they fought to subordinate the land and people of the empire and take over the administrative power of the state were leading churchmen. Many were exiled or fled the country, imprisoned or killed, and Tikhon, exhausted by persecution and violence, succumbed in 1925. The Bolsheviks had created a situation in which dissension inside the Church could thrive, even to be seen by some as a means to rescue the Church from total elimination. In 1927, Metropolitan Sergi signed a concordat with the Soviets that provided a place for survival but no hope of thriving.¹⁷ Stalin's ascent to essentially unchallenged power by the end of the 1920s and the consolidation of power by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) thereafter meant that for the rest of the Soviet period, the Church was hardly able to adapt to the needs of modern life as it held on to its very existence under grave threat from the atheist state authorities. The unanswered challenges of modernity during most of the twentieth century had to be left aside by the Church.

There was one legacy of the experience of Tikhon that could begin to be addressed in the 1950s as Nikita Khrushchev opened up international travel for Orthodox hierarchs so that they could participate in (and influence) ecumenical relations with other Churches.¹⁸ It was the primary path of the early use of the ROC in service to Soviet soft power. Tikhon had participated in inter-Church relations with American churches, especially the Episcopal and Anglican churches in North America, when he served as bishop and then archbishop overseeing the Russian Orthodox Church parishes in the United States and Canada. Half a century later, through the World Council of Churches, Russian hierarchs promoted their ecumenical agenda and advertised the achievements of the Orthodox Church in Russia such as they were. After a short period as an assistant to Metropolitan Nikodim at the Leningrad Theological Seminary and

¹⁶ The historical background and details of the Sobor are provided by Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Russian Orthodox Church under the Soviet Regime, 1917–1982, Vol. 1* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), chapter 1.

¹⁷ Pospelovsky, *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 103–112; Fagan, *Believing in Russia*, 22–23 and 44.

¹⁸ William C. Fletcher, *Religion and Soviet Foreign Policy 194–1970* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).

Academy, the priest-monk Kirill became the official representative of the ROC to the World Council of Churches in Geneva and soon took leadership of the European parishes of the ROC. Thus, he began to address some of the issues of global ecumenism that Tikhon had begun to attack nearly a century earlier. In the meantime, of course, the process of secularization in Europe and Russia had diverged. Kirill had to adjust the ROC relationship with ecumenical interlocutors in a very complex global setting as the Cold War escalated.

One of the important challenges that Patriarch Kirill faces is the interpretation of history.¹⁹ As a Church leader, Kirill needs to craft history on at least three fronts. First, he must interpret his own history so as to legitimize his role as a churchman and theologian/teacher during the Soviet period. His presentation of self on ROC Internet sites, including the biographical portrait on the official sites of the Church (www.mospat.ru and patriachia.ru are the most well-known ROC sites) and his various books and other publications inevitably give credence to his own personal story. His weekly television program (see footnote 3 above) and personal appearances on news programs and social media all give him public legitimacy.

Second, he must synchronize his public statements on history with those of the Russian leadership, in particular, of Vladimir Putin. If he does not accept the exact line of Putin or Putin's officials, he must articulate reasons why he differs so as to insure his security and the influence of the Church in state and government affairs. The similar public statements concerning the "Russian world," Russian cultural integrity and state security are usually synced with those of the president. There are times when differences arise, as with the question of the correlation of Church canonical territory with that of the Russian state when Russia has taken control of additional territory. For ecclesiological reasons, the ROC has not claimed canonical supervision for itself of the breakaway territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia,²⁰ but Patriarch Kirill has been very careful not to construe such aggressions publicly in a negative light.

Third, within the ecclesiological sphere, Kirill must recount a narrative of history that comports with the status of the Russian Orthodox Church in the collection of Eastern Orthodox churches and that legitimizes the actions of the ROC at home and abroad as a major historical actor. Arguments related to the prerogatives of the Moscow Patriarchate in comparison with the Ecumenical Pa-

19 Marlene Laruelle, "Commemorating 1917 in Russia: Ambivalent state history policy and the Church's conquest of the history market," *Europe-Asia Studies* 71, no. 2 (2019): 249–67.

20 Fagan, *Believing in Russia*, 41.

triarchate, especially in the recent controversies surrounding the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church which was granted by the EC, are grounded in a particular historical account that must be asserted by the ROC to support its resistance to Ukrainian autocephaly and claim to leadership of Ukrainian Orthodoxy.²¹

5. Church-State Relations

Relations with the Putin government posed another set of challenges. Although the state had signaled its preference for the ROC among other faiths in Russia through its 1997 laws, it generally maintained the separation of Church and state as a legal/constitutional mandate. On the other hand, the Patriarch of the core religious institution with such historic symbolic status for the Russian nation could not remain indifferent toward the politics of Russia. It is significant to note that, at the enthronement, the Russian president, Dmitry Medvedev, and the Prime Minister at the time, Vladimir Putin, had places of prominence at the front of the cathedral, but neither was given a role in the central cult of the ceremony or allowed to be front and center. The affair remained a Church ritual. On the other hand, could Kirill keep a suitable distance from politics going forward? Conversely, how far should he insert himself into the business of state? In Russian history, the boundary between state and Church had been permeable, and under the previous patriarch the post-Soviet status of that boundary had not been fully delineated. It was for Kirill to draw up his own map with this boundary inscribed.

As the ROC, led intellectually by Kirill, crafted the quite revolutionary “Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church,” it mapped out a means by which it could overcome the “fog of mystical pursuits” that typified Orthodox religious practices and turn toward a series of commitments that, although having clear religious content, also bridged into secular concerns of social relations, law and governance. Kirill’s intellectual leadership from this time through his coronation as patriarch and on to the election years of 2011 (parlia-

21 Andriy Firt, “Equivocal memory: What Does the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate Remember?” In *Religion during the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict*, edited by Elizabeth A. Clark and Dmytro Vovk (London and New York: Routledge), 192–210; Cyril Hovorun, “The cause of Ukrainian autocephaly,” in *Religion during the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict*, edited by Elizabeth A. Clark and Dmytro Vovk (London and New York: Routledge), 180–91; Jerry Pankhurst, “History, ecclesiology, canonicity, and power: Ukrainian and Russian Orthodoxy after the Euromaidan,” in *Religion during the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict*, edited by Elizabeth A. Clark and Dmytro Vovk (London and New York: Routledge), 159–79.

mentary) and 2012 (presidential) were years when the boundary line between the Church pursuits and state pursuits were repeatedly tested.

We see the years 2011 and 2012 as a significant turning point in the re-definition of relations between state and church in Russia, which can be considered a 'return to Church-state symphonia' if not in practice, then at least its utilization in the form of an ideal for Church-state relations.²² Under the tsarist order, there was the intermingling of state and Church as institutions, but the Russian Revolution initiated the period of top-down secularization under Soviet control. In this period we can argue for a state-Church collaboration, but given that the two were totally unequal participants in Soviet society, it can hardly be said that the Church had autonomy as a social institution anywhere except in the private sphere of the home. In the home, believers could keep their icon corner, babushka could pray and surreptitiously have her grandchildren baptized, and several old Church traditions (e.g., grave visits on the *Troitsa* holiday) could be remembered, if not fully "kept" or practiced. However, the Church could not exercise its customary role as an alternative approach to social life alongside other approaches (politics, economic pursuits, media, sports, etc.) in the broader society. The public functions of religion were denied.

The collapse of the Soviet system ushered in a new stage with myriad types of societal ambiguity. It was necessary to set out new lines of differentiation between the major social institutions, but while there were many aspiring leaders seeking to map out the new social system, it took many years for the institutional boundaries in the new social structure to be established. At first, in the legislation on religion passed under Boris Yeltsin while still the head of the RSFSR, a system of Church-state separation comparable to the western model was put into play. The debate about this model and the outcomes to which this model led in Russia were immediately controversial. The ROC under Aleksii II (Patriarch 1990–2008) did not at first see the consequences of an open market for religion, where a variety of challengers to Orthodoxy would "invade" Russia and try to steal away the Russians that the Orthodox leaders thought were naturally theirs. The ensuing battle was partially resolved with the passage of the 1997 law on religion that gave a place of honor to the ROC, but it still held a separated sphere of action apart from the state.

For politics and religion, 2011–2012 was a fulcrum year when the de-differentiation of the two institutions began to crystalize in enduring ways. The

22 Mikhail Antonov, "Church-State Symphonia: its Historical Development and its Applications by the Russian Orthodox Church," *Journal of Law and Religion* 35, no. 3 (2020): 474–93.

signal event that revealed the inner workings of the process of de-differentiation was the Pussy Riot controversy. As Dmitri Uzlaner has described it, the tipping point was the social, legal, political and religious debate concerning the nature of the guilt of the Pussy Riot members in their Punk Prayer in the Cathedral of the Savior in Moscow on February 21, 2012.²³ The debate as to whether this protest performance was a secular or a religious event demonstrated the new intentional intermingling of the political and the religious. The laws on causing offense to believers' sentiments were invented and put into practice to convict the Pussy Riot performers, thus ensconcing the defense of church affairs in the embrace of the state. Kirill wrote that Orthodox believers do not participate in public demonstrations of protest, a way to signal his support for the presidential re-election of Vladimir Putin and his collaboration with the post-Medvedev political leaders in power.

6. (Geo)political Orthodoxy

Orthodoxy has been politicized at two levels: domestic and international. Both themes will be discussed in detail below. Here we outline an example not discussed later, but which falls into the category of 'political Orthodoxy', that is 'ROC as a militaristic force in Russia.'²⁴ From January 1992, the very first month after the end of the USSR, when Kirill addressed a major convocation of military leaders of the newly formed Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), to the present, Kirill has been outspoken as an advocate for first strengthening and then institutionalizing relations between the military and the ROC.²⁵ In an exceptionally thorough analysis of the ROC-military relationship, Boris Knorre and Aleksei Zygmunt emphasize several ways in which Kirill as Metropolitan and Patriarch has led the militarization of Church affairs by articulating "a special kind of piety towards military service that is absent in other Orthodox traditions."²⁶

²³ Dmitri Uzlaner, "The End of the Pro-Orthodox Consensus: Religion as a New Cleavage in Russian Society," in *Orthodox Religion and Politics in Contemporary Eastern Europe: On Multiple Secularisms and Entanglements*, ed. Tobias Koellner (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 177–80.

²⁴ Ivan Preobrazhensky, "Russia's Hawkish Church," *Riddle*, August 23, 2018, <https://ridl.io/en/russias-hawkish-church/>. Dmitry Adamsky, *Russian Nuclear Orthodoxy: Religion, Politics, and Strategy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).

²⁵ Adamsky, *Russian Nuclear Orthodoxy*.

²⁶ Boris Knorre, and Aleksei Zygmunt, "'Militant Piety' in 21st-Century Orthodox Christianity: Return to Classical Traditions or Formation of a New Theology of War?" *Religions* 11, no. 1 (2020): 3.

The only case, where Putin and Kirill did not act in tandem in the realm of military issues, was related to the insurrection of 2014 in Donbass and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. The Putin-inspired and Russian military abetted civil insurrection in Eastern Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in the post-Maidan period pushed Patriarch Kirill and the Moscow Patriarchate into a difficult corner. For example, although the Crimea was annexed into Russia, after 1914, the Moscow Patriarchate kept its episcopal structure formally within the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate rather than placing it directly in the *Russian* Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate for many years.²⁷ The Church in Crimea came formally under full Moscow jurisdiction only in 2022 in the midst of the military invasion of Ukraine, although violent attacks on the local clergy had occurred since at least 2018.

Keeping fealty to Putin in place, Kirill never questioned the ill-begotten insurrection and even praised the creation of the self-proclaimed autonomous states of Donetsk and Lugansk. He never condemned the violence of the insurrection leaders but, instead, criticized the legitimate Ukrainian attempt to quell the fighting. The situation probably was beyond Kirill's control, but it intersected with his problems of Church leadership and control in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate was headed by Metropolitan Volodimir Sabodan from 1992 until his death in July 2014, and he had been an increasingly central leader in the Russian Orthodox Church from 1966, when he was appointed Bishop of Zvenigorod. His death marked the start of a period of deterioration in Moscow's control over the autonomous Ukrainian Church which remained a part of the Moscow Patriarchate. Under the conditions of the ongoing war in Ukraine, this remains an unresolved problem for the ROC.

CHALLENGES

1. Learned Accommodative Passivity (during the Soviet period)

The ROC came out of the Soviet period starting in the late 1980s as a Church adapted to the constraints of Soviet atheist governance. Although Soviet state atheism was not monolithic but varied in its intensity and public commit-

²⁷ Roman Lunkin, "Changes to Religious Life in Crimea since 2014," in *Religion during the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict*, ed. Elizabeth A. Clark and Dmytro Vovk (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 150–51.

ment over the period from the Revolution to 1988—the year when the “Scientific Atheistic” establishment officially waned as Perestroika spread under Gorbachev—the Church had learned to manage its existence bounded by the limited possibilities of action of the communist program.²⁸

In her pioneering sociological study of religion in the USSR, Chystel Lane noted that during the 1950s and 1960s a new group of leaders arose in the ROC— younger, not directly driven by the Stalinist experience though knowing about it, and expressing a sympathy for the social teachings of Marxism and Soviet communism.²⁹ She argued that the ROC of this period came to resemble the “Church’-type” end of the Church-sect typology, that is, the type of religious structure that is accommodated with society and politics, not struggling against it. A prominent professional atheist in the Soviet period says of the ROC bishops who came to leadership in the 1960s and 1970s, who were shaped strongly by Metropolitan Nikodim—that is, by Kirill’s mentor—“The new bishops saw themselves as completely Soviet people who were defending the religious interests of the country, which were just as meaningful as all other interests....”. As Nikodim represented a “true Soviet person” who took clear action under the Soviets, he also “could tackle any problem because he understood the limits beyond which it wasn’t worth trying to go.”³⁰ Only with the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev did the regime’s ‘religious climate’ become accommodative and the regime’s policy toward nationalism cooptive.³¹

Although we like to think that the atheist program was toothless as it neared the end, we also know that the late Brezhnev and Andropov years were among the times with significant intensification of the regime’s struggle against all kinds of dissent³² and the highest number of prisoners of conscience in Soviet camps and prisons. We need not rehearse the entire Soviet period’s history of anti-religious policies and actions here, many studies and documents attest to the way ROC leaders collaborated in limited or more expansive ways with the state au-

28 Natalia Shlikhta, “Adaptability as a Survival Strategy under Communism: Reconsidering the Approach of the Russian Orthodox Church,” *Religiski-filozofski raksti* XXV (2019), 217–41.

29 Lane, *Christian Religion in the Soviet Union*, 33–41.

30 Victoria Smolkin-Rothrock, “The Confession of an Atheist Who Became a Scholar of Religion: Nikolai Semenovich Gordienko’s Last Interview,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 15, 3 (Summer 2014), 597–620.

31 Sabrina Ramet, “Politics and religion in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union,” in *Politics and Religion in the Modern World*, ed. George Moyser (New York: Routledge, 1991), 79.

32 Philip Walters, “A survey of Soviet religious policy,” in *Religious policy in the Soviet Union*, ed. Sabrina Petra Ramet (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 27.

thorities and received certain symbolic rewards for their general silence about religious persecution.³³

Important for this study are also two overarching challenges that emerged from 1980s and remained relevant throughout the period:

- a. What should be the role of (Orthodox) spiritual values in domestic and international politics? Already in the end of the 1990s (due to both ideological and social disintegration in Soviet Russia) there emerged a pattern to attribute social ills (which at that time were manifested also in the rising rates of organized crime) to ‘loss of spiritual values’.³⁴ This narrative—which argued that state and society, nation and culture survive and flourish only when spiritual values are protected and maintained—has shaped the relationship of ROC and Russian state through the decades that followed. Accordingly, the security policy of the Russian Federation has a dimension of ‘spiritual security’;³⁵ spiritual values were at the heart of 2015’s National Security Strategy and were included to the foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation of 2016.³⁶
- b. How should the Church relate to the secular state? If accommodation was a norm in the 1980s, then how close and cooperative should a Church be to a state, which is no longer anticlerical? How much (asymmetrical) inequality and one-sidedness (instead of mutuality) should the ROC tolerate in her relations with the state? Particularly in the 2000s the pattern

33 For a dramatic description of the terrible experience of a major Russian Orthodox dissenter who blanched at the seeming passivity of the ROC hierarchy in the face of the atheist program, see Oliver Bullough, *The Last Man in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), who describes the story of Fr. Dmitri Dudko. Dudko ended up not only a destroyed prisoner of conscience, but also a person overcome by the KGB’s mind-bending tactics that sent him back to civilian life as a lost soul. See Smolkin, *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty*; Goeckel, *Soviet Religious Policy*; Wanner, *State Secularism and Lived Religion* for major recent scholarship on Soviet atheist programming and the religious response. Also see Pedro Ramet, *Cross and Commissar: The Politics of Religion in Eastern Europe and the USSR* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987); Nathaniel Davis, *A Long Walk to Church: A Contemporary History of Russian Orthodoxy, Second Edition* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 2003); Jane Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church: A Contemporary History* (London: Croom Helm, 1986); Jane Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church: Triumphalism and Defensiveness* (New York: Macmillan, 1996); Powell, *Antireligious Propagand*; Lane, *Christian Religion in the Soviet Union*; Christopher Marsh, *Religion and the State in Russia and China: Suppression, Survival, and Revival* (New York: Continuum, 2011) and the extensive publications that came from the Keston Institute (Oxford and Baylor University; originally Keston College in Kent, U.K.).

34 Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church: Triumphalism and Defensiveness*, 123.

35 Daniel P. Payne, “Spiritual Security, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian Foreign Ministry: Collaboration or Cooptation?” *Journal of Church and State* 52, no. 4 (2010): 712–27.

36 Kathy Rousselet, “The Russian Orthodox Church and the Global World,” in *Global Eastern Orthodoxy: Politics, Religion, and Human Rights*, ed. Giuseppe Giordan and Siniša Zrinščak (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2020), 46, 48.

of Church-state cooperation strengthened, but the accommodative relations between the Russian state and the ROC remained asymmetric³⁷ in nature. In accommodative Church-state relations both sides compromise, but often they do it unequally.³⁸

Also, the ROC's relationship with democracy has remained complex and controversial. In the 1990s, despite the general sympathy of Russian traditionalists toward the idea of "symphony", they could not accept the Church's contacts with the post-Soviet regime of the 1990s, which they considered criminal and/or liberal and thus in contradiction with Orthodoxy.³⁹

In post-Maidan Ukraine, the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) has been "content with formal neutrality in relations with the state"⁴⁰ and thus avoided political engagements which could secure a positive and constructive relationship with the democratically chosen government. The opposite has happened in the Russian Federation, where since 2012 a new set of challenges emerged from too close relations with political government ('political Orthodoxy') and alienation from political opposition.

2. Bureaucratization vs. Rationalization of Church Administration

The ROC is a clearly hierarchical organization, with many limitations associated with its bureaucracy. Surely, it is often driven by the bureaucratic needs or functions as much as by the evangelical mission (in the broadest sense) of the Christian Church. This, hypothetically, would have led it to act at cross-purposes when communist governance ended. Hypothetically, it would have first set out a protective agenda for the security and prosperity of its bureaucratic order, and the legacy of bureaucracy would have hindered its speed of adaptation to the very new conditions of post-communism. Besides special privilege for bureaucrats, the challenge here is also to fulfill the needs of rational and efficient administration that, according to Max Weber (1968), tend to be mutually inconsis-

³⁷ John Anderson, "Putin and the Russian Orthodox Church: asymmetric symphonia?" *Journal of International Affairs* 61, no. 1 (2007): 185–201.

³⁸ Ramet, "Politics and religion in Eastern Europe", 83.

³⁹ Alexander Agadjanian, *Turns of Faith, Search for Meaning: Orthodox Christianity and Post-Soviet Experience* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014), 94.

⁴⁰ Nikolay Mitrokhin, "Strategy and Tactics of the Russian Orthodox Church towards Ukraine in the First Year of Volodomyr Zelensky's Presidency," *Russian Analytical Digest* 252, no. 8 (May 2020): 9.

tent in the same organization—while bureaucracy involves differential rewards according to office.⁴¹

Kirill's administrative strategy has been criticized for focusing excessively on efficient and effective human and resource management instead of being first and foremost a spiritual authority.⁴² However, if one may use the metaphor of 'building', then Patriarch Kirill is building the Church very actively and relies on the apparatus of management, which is capable of realizing the strategic plan and tasks identified by the Patriarch.⁴³

3. Liberal democratization

The Church was not prepared to face up to the new democracy (such as it was/emerged in 1990s) in Russia. It needed to formulate an approach to the state leadership and apparatus under new conditions.

The relationship with the emerging democratic government was a challenge for two main reasons—it was related to the disintegration of Soviet Union, which was not supported by ROC and which divided politically its canonical territory, and it was accompanied by cultural liberalization.

The resistance to the disintegration of the Soviet Union was not a fervent and long-lasting commitment, but it is still worth mentioning. In December 1990 Patriarch Aleksii was one of 53 public persons who signed an appeal urging then-President Gorbachev to take urgent action to halt the disintegration of the Soviet Union by destructive 'dictatorships of people' in member states of Soviet Union.⁴⁴ That appeal declared the support of religious communities—besides Orthodox, also Muslims, Buddhists and others—but Aleksii was the only religious leader who signed the appeal that supported conservative backlash against democratic tendencies.⁴⁵

During the period (1991–1999) when Boris Yeltsin was president of the Russian Federation, the Russian economy and culture experienced liberalization so that the government of that period was perceived as representing liberalization

41 Stanley H. Udy, "'Bureaucracy' and 'Rationality' in Weber's Organization Theory: An Empirical Study," *American Sociological Review* 24, no. 6 (December, 1959): 793.

42 Aleksandr Zhuchkovskiy, "'Pervaya pyatiletka" Patriarkha Kirilla: Problemy i vyzovy Russkoy Pravoslavnoy Tserkvi," *Voprosy natsionalizma* 17, no. 1 (2014): 38.

43 Sergey Lvovich Firsov, "'Tserkov' i gosudarstvo pri Svyateyshe Patriarkhe Kirille (Gundyayev): osnovnyye tendentsii razvitiya," *Vestnik Russkoy khristianskoy gumanitarnoy akademii* 14, no. 3 (2013): 357.

44 Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church: Triumphalism and Defensiveness*, 125.

45 Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church: Triumphalism and Defensiveness*, 126.

both in cases, where government and state were directly involved in legal liberalization (e.g., regulation of the field of religion was particularly liberal until the 1997 Law on Religion) and in cases where cultural liberalization was considered to have taken place due to state inaction. As will be seen below, the insufficient regulation of the field of religion caused concerns about religious proselytism for the ROC.

For the ROC, the question of the liberalization of cultural values was a challenge from three angles.⁴⁶ First, by the 1990s, the cultural liberalization of affluent western societies had not yet reached the level of marriage equality for same-sex couples; yet there had occurred a mass-scale cultural change, where individuals were engaged in various kinds of modes of consumption due to greater amounts of free/leisure time.⁴⁷ They had more resources and increasingly emphasized self-expression values and human choice.⁴⁸ The linear trend in western democracies had widened the scope of human autonomy and choice in various aspects of people's lives.

At the same time, the ROC and Russian society, however, struggled with economic shortage and had the cultural legacy of the Soviet communist regime, which in comparison with West-European societies, had contributed to the preservation of some traditional religious beliefs (like beliefs in sin and hell), but had also hindered the cultural process of privatization of religion and liberalization of social values.⁴⁹ As a result, individuals in Russian society lacked resources and the economic certainty that contributed to the spread of liberal values in the West. In addition, the development of individual choice on a mass scale was hindered due to the Soviet legacy of anti-individualistic and anti-liberal collective values.

Second, the ROC attributed the responsibility for liberalization and pluralization of Russian society not only to action and inaction on the part of the Russian state and government, but saw a challenge also in international human rights standards, which clashed with the self-understanding of the ROC partic-

46 Marlene Laruelle, "Russia's Niche Soft Power: Sources, Targets and Channels of Influence," *Russie. Nei. Visions*, no. 122 (April 2021), https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/laruelle_russia_niche_soft_power_2021.pdf.

47 John P. Robinson, "'Massification' and Democratization of the Leisure Class," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 435 (1978): 209.

48 Christian Welzel, "Effective Democracy, Mass Culture, and the Quality of Elites: The Human Development Perspective," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 43, no. 3-5 (2002): 319, 320.

49 Alar Kilp, "Secularization of Society After Communism: Ten Catholic-Protestant Societies," *Proceedings of Estonian Defence College* 12 (2009): 223.

ularly in the sphere of religion, where the ROC expected to be treated as Russia's privileged majority religion.⁵⁰

Third, due to the aforementioned factors, the ROC saw a need to *position* itself regarding cultural liberalization at several levels at the same time—on a global level vis-à-vis the universal conceptualization of human rights and at the level of government and national culture vis-à-vis the values of Russian society.

The *modus vivendi* that the ROC adopted regarding liberal pluralism and the Western democratic perspective started to emphasize unity on the basis of traditional Christian values.⁵¹ The particular turning point in this direction was the “Pussy Riot affair” of 2012,⁵² where the antagonism between government and opposition was perceived in terms of conservatism vs. liberalism and the ROC at the level of institutional leadership took sides in the defense of traditional Christian values and Russia's civilizational identity.⁵³

4. Religious market

The ROC was not ready for, nor did it desire to enter into the competition with other religious groups and movements that the new open society placed before it. This is the religious market challenge that the Church faced mightily in the 1990s⁵⁴ and with which it continues to struggle in new ways going forward.

By the mid-1990s, the religious market in the Russian Federation had thoroughly opened up: the state was neutral toward religious organizations; new religious movements were emerging; missionary activity and proselytism increased by various religious organizations and by Protestant missionaries in particular. Against such odds, the ROC took a defensive posture.⁵⁵

In a speech delivered in 1994, Patriarch Aleksii accused Protestant sects, which taught that “it is possible to come to faith in an instant while sitting in

50 Kristina Stoeckl, “The Russian Orthodox Church's Approach to Human Rights,” in *Global Eastern Orthodoxy: Politics, Religion, and Human Rights*, ed. Giuseppe Giordan, Siniša Zrinščak (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2020): 64.

51 Jennifer Wasmuth, “Russian Orthodoxy between State and Nation,” in *Eastern Orthodox Encounters of Identity and Otherness: Values, Self-Reflection, Dialogue*, ed. Andrii Krawchuk and Thomas Bremer (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014): 1.

52 Uzlaner, “The End of the Pro-Orthodox Consensus,” 177–80.

53 Uzlaner, “The End of the Pro-Orthodox Consensus,” 179.

54 Jerry G. Pankhurst, “Russia's Religious Market: Struggling with the Heritage of Russian Orthodox Monopoly,” in *Religion in a Changing World*, ed. Madeleine Cousineau (Westport, CN: Greenwood, 1998): 129–37.

55 Olga Kazmina, “The Russian Orthodox Church in a New Situation in Russia: Challenges and Responses,” in *Eastern Orthodox Encounters of Identity and Otherness*, ed. Andrii Krawchuk and Thomas Bremer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 220.

a stadium,” of profaning and primitivizing “the mystery of Faith and the mystery of man” with stadium and television spectacles.⁵⁶ A similar statement—that American and European Protestant proselytizing groups worked against the ROC in its re-evangelization of a population immersed by seven decades of communist atheism—was presented by Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad in 1996.⁵⁷

The Law on Religion of 1997 introduced a phase in which Orthodoxy as well as other traditional Russian religions (Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism) started to enjoy special status *not* based on the quality of their product in the religious market, but on the basis of their ethnoreligious connection (which in economic terms would be protected market shares). The trend continued in the twenty-first century with the strengthening of the ROC’s position in society and an expansion of its missionary activity “mainly aimed at those who belong to Christian Orthodoxy by baptism or family and ethnic tradition, but who are not yet churchd”.⁵⁸

Another milestone was the Russian National Security Concept issued as a decree on January 10, 2000 by President Vladimir Putin.⁵⁹ This document connected security policy with protection of national cultural values and traditions and with state regulation of the field of religion: “The national interests in the spiritual sphere lie in the preservation and strengthening of society’s moral values, traditions of patriotism and humanism ... Assurance of the Russian Federation’s national security also includes protecting the cultural and spiritual-moral legacy and the historical traditions and standards of public life... There must be a state policy to maintain the population’s spiritual and moral welfare, prohibit the use of airtime to promote violence or base instincts, and counter the adverse impact of foreign religious organizations and missionaries.”⁶⁰

Within the frames of “spiritual security,”⁶¹ the connection between security policy and policy on religion was further strengthened by anti-extremism legislation with a 2002 Federal Law on Combating Extremist Activity⁶² and 2006

56 Patriarch Aleksii, “Education and the Christian View of Man,” *Russian Social Science Review* 35, no. 6 (1994): 46.

57 Payne, “Spiritual Security,” 714.

58 Kazmina, “The Russian Orthodox Church in a New Situation,” 225.

59 2000 Russian National Security Concept, English translation available at: <https://www.bits.de/EURA/natsecconc.pdf>.

60 2000 National Security Concept

61 Payne, “Spiritual Security”.

62 Council of Europe (2012) *Federal Law on Combating Extremist Activity of the Russian Federation* (unofficial translation provided by the Council of Europe), 24 February, https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/3707/file/RF_law_combating_extremist_activity_2002_am2008_en.pdf.

amendments, which did not require association with violence or calls to violence to be found guilty of violation of this law.⁶³

In 2016, two Russian federal bills were passed, which in pair are called the Yarovaya-Ozerov law. The Yarovaya law added regulation of counter-terror and public safety measures to pre-existing anti-extremism. It increased the regulation of evangelism, banned missionary activities in non-religious settings, banned missionary activities that endanger public safety, and allowed missionary activities only on the part of religious groups registered with the public authorities. The Yarovaya Law impacted negatively several religious groups—such as Muslims and the Church of Scientology, Mormons and Pentecostals⁶⁴—but the most direct target of anti-extremism legislation has been the Jehovah's Witnesses, which were banned in 2017 as a movement by the Russian Supreme Court on grounds of extremism. By the end of 2020, more than 400 Jehovah's Witnesses were prosecuted.⁶⁵

The ROC has not been a target of anti-extremism legislation and its opportunity structures in Russian public life have remained unhindered. In the Russian field of religion, the ROC enjoys the status of *primus inter non-pares*⁶⁶ (first among unequals). It has supported the ban of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia,⁶⁷ as its preferred strategy has been to protect its dominant status by restrictive state regulation of the field of religion, and it has been on the basis of 'spiritual security' that the ROC has achieved an elevated status with its competitors either banned or restricted in the marketplace of religions.

5. Evangelization and Counter-Secularization

More broadly, the post-Soviet Russian Church was not equipped with the tools to address widespread secularism of the non-Marxist form. Open evangelical activism was not in its kit bag. It had to mobilize its adherents to face up to religious diversity and the arguments of secularists. The "enchurching" of the Rus-

63 Willy Fautre, "Opposition to Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia: Legal Measures," *The journal of CESNUR* 4, no. 6 (2020): 46.

64 Olga Sibireva, "Freedom of Religion or Belief in Russia: Restrictions and Challenges in 2020," *SOVA Center*, May 4, 2021, <https://www.sova-center.ru/en/religion/publications/2021/05/d44152/>; Mike Eckel, "Russia's 'Yarovaya Law' Imposes Harsh New Restrictions on Religious Groups," *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*, July 11, 2016, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-yarovaya-law-religious-freedom-restrictions/27852531.html>.

65 Sibireva, "Freedom of Religion or Belief."

66 Christopher Marsh, "From Atheism to Establishment?: The Evolution of Church-State Relations in Russia," in *Religion and Regimes: Support, Separation, and Opposition*, ed. Mehran Tamadonfar and Ted G. Jelen (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2014): 62.

67 "Russian Orthodox Church Supports Ban on Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia," *Interfax-Religion*, May 2, 2017, <https://bit.ly/3oqozJo>.

sian people was needed to institute a strong popular bulwark against the many temptations of secularism, but it is still an incomplete process by all accounts.

Secularization is expected to lead to mass unchurched of the population. Measures of unchurched are: the percentage of the population which do not consider themselves members of one or another Church and who do not go regularly to religious services.⁶⁸ Inversely, “enchurched” measures rising identification and involvement with religious organization.

For the particularities of Orthodoxy in Russia, Yulia Sinelina has defined the ‘enchurched’ as follows: “... the state of an individual who has been brought to live within the life of the Church (in this case the Russian Orthodox Church), and is aware of its regulations, rituals, traditions and customs for daily living, feeling comfortable in this sphere; he or she voluntarily recognises the influence of the Church through established patterns of thought and behavior.”⁶⁹ A study that used data from 2011 identified 12% of the population to be “churched,” 37% “partially churched.”⁷⁰

In cross-national comparison, the level of churching in Russian society is the *lowest* among European Orthodox populations, but about an average in comparison with European non-Orthodox cultures. The World Values Survey Wave 7 (2017–2020) included 11 traditionally Orthodox societies and 27 other countries (including Armenia). In the Russian sample (2017) 16.3% of respondents claimed to visit religious services at least once a month, which was equal to the sample of the Netherlands, a higher percentage than in 12 non-Orthodox-majority countries and lower than in 14 non-Orthodox majority countries (Poland scored highest with 64.2%). Attendance of religious services once per month was lower than in any other Eastern Orthodox society in Europe, being quite close to the samples of Bulgaria (17.3%) and Belarus (19.8%), but most distant from Romania (46%) and Cyprus (50.2), and about half the level that was found in Georgia and Ukraine (33.8% in each).

Within the Russian sample, however, the relationship to religion is multivocal in different dimensions of “un- or enchurchedness.” While 55.5% of respondents claimed to be Orthodox, 21% of these visited religious services at least once a month. 9.4% of respondents claimed to be Muslims and 17.5% of Muslims in

68 Frank Lechner, “Secularization in the Netherlands?” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 35, no. 3 (September, 1996): 253–54.

69 Yuliya Sinelina, “The Dynamics of Orthodox and Muslim Religiosity in Russia, 1989–2012,” *Religion, State & Society* 43, no. 3 (2015): 304.

70 Sinelina, “The Dynamics of Orthodox,” 305.

Russia visit religious services regularly. Additionally, 6% of those who do not belong to any religious denomination also attend religious services once in a month.

The low level of religious adherence to Orthodox rituals among the Russian population is observed and assumed by many scholars to be a major challenge or an area of failure for Patriarch Kirill.⁷¹ However, it may be speculated that Patriarch Kirill has not only lacked tools and capabilities, but to a degree also a will to enchurch society the way it is done in the United States or in non-Scandinavian Europe. The will and strategy of Patriarch Kirill seems *not* to have been to Christianize the population *via* improving the religious product, but to build the role of the Church in the political culture and constitute Orthodoxy as the bearer and guardian of national identity and consciousness. To put it differently, Kirill has sought to build a social base for the Church that is based on patriotism, nationalism, and civilizational culture, and not primarily based on religious commitment.

During and since 2012 official statements and documents have sought to protect “traditionalism” against domestic and foreign enemies, and the latter have been treated within the frames of ‘extremism’ so that they are the antithesis of what is considered to be traditional in religion in Russia. Those who threaten Russian traditions may be described as inherently violent or undermining Russia’s moral values: “The identification of ‘radicalism’ and ‘extremism’ in opposition to ‘tradition’ has significant implications, because it effectively equates non-violent challenges to a vaguely defined concept of ‘traditionalism’ with violent attacks on civilians and the state, treating them as equivalent crimes.”⁷² Laws regulating and banning extremism allow legal prosecution for behavior and acts which do not present direct threats to society, the state, or individuals.⁷³ Securitization of the anti-traditional (religions) is a means whereby the Russian state limits religious freedom and the rights of minority religious groups, yet it can also be classified as an indicator of de-secularization to the extent that it contributes to the political sacralization of Russian Orthodoxy.

71 Kadri Liik, Momchil Metodiev, and Nicu Popescu, “Defender of the Faith? How Ukraine’s Orthodox Split Threatens Russia,” *European Council on Foreign Relations*, May 2019, https://ecfr.eu/publication/defender_of_the_faith_how_ukraines_orthodox_split_threatens_russia/.

72 Olga Oliker, “Introduction,” in *Religion and Violence in Russia: Context, Manifestations, and Policy*, ed. Olga Oliker (Lanham, Boulder, New York and London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 4.

73 Alexander Verkhovsky, “The State against Violence in Spheres Related to Religion,” in *Religion and Violence in Russia: Context, Manifestations, and Policy*, ed. Olga Oliker (Lanham, Boulder, New York and London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 11–42.

6. De-Secularization

In reacting to the broad secularization of Russian society—that which was already nurtured by Soviet communism and that which has been growing as Russia shifts to an open capitalistic society—the Russian Orthodox Church had to devise a significant program of de-secularization.

The process of de-secularization is primarily political and does not require processes of desecularization at the levels of individuals and associations. It is “desecularization from above”⁷⁴ and involves de-differentiation of the religious and the secular⁷⁵ or increasing personal, ideological, and institutional entanglements between Church and state.⁷⁶

As particularly since 2012 the ROC has been identified with the government, anti-clerical attitudes have been also on the rise. The previous pro-Orthodox consensus that was manifested by a “good” and “very good” attitude to Orthodoxy and its public role by the overwhelming majority of not only believers, but also for unbelievers, atheists, and “undecided,” has ended.⁷⁷ Orthodoxy, which used to unite members of the political community, has transformed into a new site of conflict and into a political cleavage dividing the nation.

At the level of social practices, digitalization has contributed to the sacralization of profane objects and social practices such as icons portraying Stalin as a saint as well as the sacralization of Epiphany (19 January) bathing (ice swimming) practiced annually by millions.⁷⁸ Such novel sacralized practices are spreading popularly and are not under direct supervision of the leadership of the ROC but form a dimension of desecularization that is autonomous from political desecularization from above.

Desecularization entails including more and more of everyday life under the sacred canopy of religion and keeping allegedly evil aspects outside that canopy. According to Patriarch Kirill, one major evil that has invaded the everyday is

74 Vyacheslav Karpov, “Desecularization: A conceptual framework,” *Journal of Church and State* 52, no. 2 (2010): 232–70; Vyacheslav Karpov, “The social dynamics of Russia’s desecularisation: A comparative and theoretical perspective,” *Religion, State and Society* 41, no. 3 (2013): 254–83.

75 Liliane Voye, “Secularization in a Context of Advanced Modernity,” *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3 (1999): 287.

76 Tobias Koellner, “Introduction,” in *Orthodox Religion and Politics in Contemporary Eastern Europe: On Multiple Secularisms and Entanglements*, ed. Tobias Köllner (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 3–16.

77 Uzlaner, “The End of the Pro-Orthodox Consensus.”

78 Victor Khroul, “Digitalization of Religion in Russia: Adjusting Preaching to New Formats, Channels and Platforms,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Digital Russia Studies*, eds. Daria Gritsenko, Mariëlle Wijermars, and Mikhail Kopotev (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 196–97.

the Internet. In an interesting collection of essays edited by Mikhail Suslov, the anti-modernism of the ROC is explored as it applies to the Internet. Dolińska-Rydzek argues that Kirill has been much less accepting of the digital world than was Patriarch Aleksii II, seeing it as the seat of sin and temptation, seducing Russians with post-Christian conceptions and perversions of traditional Orthodox morals. Suslov confirms: "For example, the League for Safe Internet, blessed by Patriarch Kirill, has been hunting for pedophiles in the social networks since 2011, as well as reporting online pornography, propaganda of extremism, LGBT, methods of committing suicide, and similar information, sinful from the Orthodox viewpoint."⁷⁹ This Internet skepticism goes along with apocalyptic interpretations of its essence and role in modern society.⁸⁰ In a 2019 television interview, Patriarch Kirill said, "The Antichrist is the person who will be at the head of the worldwide web, controlling all of humankind."⁸¹

7. Canonical Territory

The breakup of the USSR into fifteen separate states in 1990-1991 also sundered the geographic territory that the ROC had taken for granted as its national home. The issue of defining proper canonical territory for the ROC, both in territorial conflicts with other Eastern Orthodox Churches (the cases of Estonia and Moldova, and the major break over the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church) and with other confessions, especially Roman Catholicism as it re-established its place in Russia, became of paramount concern and concerted action.

The *Statute of the ROC* (Section 1, Paragraph 3)⁸² names 13 post-Soviet states as comprising the *canonical territory* of the ROC, where persons of Orthodox confessions living in these territories belong to the jurisdiction of the ROC. The only post-Soviet states not included are Georgia and Armenia which have Orthodox Churches of their own. Therefore, when after the Georgian-Russian war of 2008 Abkhazian clergy planned to create their own Church with the help of the Moscow Patriarchate, the ROC did not recognize the independence of the Abkhaz Orthodox Church and repeatedly confirmed that both Abkha-

⁷⁹ Suslov, "The Orthodox Church and the Crisis in Ukraine," 1.

⁸⁰ Magda Dolińska-Rydzek, "Russia's immoral other: moral panics and the antichrist on Russian Orthodox websites", in *Digital Orthodoxy in the Post-Soviet World*, ed. Mikhail Suslov (Stuttgart: *ibidem*-Verlag, 2016): 53-82.

⁸¹ Anastasia Clark and Chris Bell, "Smartphone users warned to be careful of the Antichrist." *BBC News*, January 8, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-46794556>.

⁸² Ustav Russkoy Pravoslavnoy Tserkvi, 2000, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/133115.html>.

zia and South Ossetia (despite being militarily under the control of the Russian Federation) remain under the jurisdiction of the Georgian Orthodox Church.⁸³

The most intensive struggle for canonical territory has been in Ukraine, where Orthodoxy was split (particularly since 1992, when the unrecognized Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kiev Patriarchate was established). Ukrainian nationalist identity has been rising since 2014, when Crimea was annexed by the Russian Federation and a separatist civil war started in Eastern regions of Ukraine. Developments in Ukraine were a symbolic “battle of Stalingrad”⁸⁴ years before autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine was proclaimed in January 2019. The status of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine has been decisive for the future role of the ROC as a strategic partner in Russian foreign policy and for its status in the Orthodox world.

Patriarch Kirill, who presides over the annual All-Russian People’s Assembly, presented a conceptualization of Russian-Ukrainian relations at the Assembly’s convention of November 2014, arguing that the Ukrainian crisis is a result of Ukraine’s loss of the sense of its own history and called for seeing Russian history as an inseparable whole.⁸⁵ Kirill has been a vocal promoter of discourses of the unity of Eastern Slavic civilization and of the “Russian world.”⁸⁶

The dilemma of the Moscow Patriarchate lies in the incompatibility of the politics of interests and identity politics—the former should lead to more amicable relations with the Kyiv government and liberal values (in order to retain ROC’s authority in Ukraine), while the latter drives “toward confrontation with the secular West and with the newly reconceptualized Ukraine, both of which are perceived as threats to the Russian world.”⁸⁷

One of the places where Orthodox Church ideas seem to support the foreign policy of the Putin regime and serve as soft power assets of the regime is in the deployment of the notion of “Russian world” (*Russkii mir*) in ecclesiological and theological pronouncements of the Church. According to Marlene Laruelle and Mikhail Suslov,⁸⁸ Kirill sees *Russkii mir* as a concept used to name the spiritual/cultural unity of Slavic Russians, but he prefers “Holy Rus’” in place of *Russkii*

83 Alexander Kornilov and Andrey Makarychev, “Russia’s Soft Power in the South Caucasus: Discourses, communication, hegemony,” in *Religion, Nation and Democracy in the South Caucasus*, eds. Alexander Agadjanian, Ansgar Jödicke, and Evert van der Zweerde (London and New York: Routledge 2014), 248.

84 Mikhail Suslov, “The Orthodox Church and the Crisis in Ukraine”; in *Churches in the Ukrainian Crisis*, eds. Andrii Krawchuk and Thomas Bremer (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016): 133–34.

85 Suslov, “The Orthodox Church and the Crisis in Ukraine”, 144–45.

86 Rousselet, “The Russian Orthodox Church and the Global World”, 46.

87 Suslov, “The Orthodox Church and the Crisis in Ukraine,” 153.

88 Laruelle, “Russia’s Niche Soft Power”; Mikhail Suslov, “‘Holy Rus’: The Geopolitical Imagination in the Contemporary Russian Orthodox Church,” *Russian Politics and Law* 52, no. 4 (2014): 67–

mir. This notion of Holy Rus', which references the founding of Christianity in the ancient princedoms of Rus' under the leadership of Grand Prince Volodymyr/Vladimir of Kyiv, encompasses the peoples and area of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, but does not require the imposition of political unity among the states. Nevertheless, *Russkii mir* in its political form has been used to justify the annexation of Crimea by the Russians and the engagement of Russian troops and logistical support for the fighters in Eastern Ukraine in the war that has persisted there since 2014.⁸⁹ Extended to cover Russians abroad, some spokespersons have argued it gives license for Russia to intervene in Ukraine and elsewhere to protect "Russians" who are experiencing some form of danger or deprivation of rights. Kirill and the Ukrainian Orthodox leadership under his patriarchal umbrella have tried to walk this line between political aspiration and spiritual solicitude carefully.⁹⁰

The functional outcome of the conflation of the political concept of *Russkii mir* and the historico-theological concept of Holy Rus' in the popular mind has been the growth of the identification of the Moscow patriarchal Church with the Putin regime's aggressions in Ukraine, Crimea, and elsewhere. It would be very difficult for Kirill to delink his theology from the political interpretation should he want to do so, and there are reasons why it may be useful for him and the Church not to separate from the state too definitively. For example, in league with the Russian government, the Church has been expanding its own structures around the world's capital cities, often directly in connection with the political arrangements of Russian embassies and related state institutions. The stated goal of this expansion globally is to serve the spiritual needs of the Russian diaspora populations which fall under the putative coverage of the Holy Rus' concept. The canonical reunification of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia with the Moscow Patriarchate in 2006 was aided and then celebrated by Vladimir Putin. The construction of a huge Russian cultural complex in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower in Paris has aroused considerable criticism for its confusion of state and Church functions. And the ROC's construction of a church in Ankara, Turkey, raised questions about the canonical territorial confusion evident

86; Mikhail Suslov, "Russian World' Concept: Post-Soviet Geopolitical Ideology and the Logic of 'Spheres of Influence,'" *Geopolitics* 23, no. 2 (2018): 330–53.

89 Several militant groups in rebel territories of Eastern Ukraine claim local territorial control and carry out terror campaigns based on their interpretation of *Russkiy mir*. See "'The Orthodox identification of militants is an element of their understanding of *Russkiy mir*': Interview with Dr. Ihor Kozlovsky," in *Religion during the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict*, eds. Elizabeth A Clark and Dmytro Vovk (London and New York: Routledge, 2020): 213–19.

90 Denys Shestopalets, "The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, the State and the Russian-Ukrainian Crisis, 2014–2018," *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 20, no.1 (2019): 42–63.

in disrespecting the territorial prerogatives of the Ecumenical Patriarch in Turkey. In each of these cases, an expansive interpretation of “Holy Russia” or *Russkiy mir* serves as justification for actions.

Besides the expansionist and imperial implications of the Holy Rus’ project, there is included within it, according to Mikhail Suslov, a daunting aspect of anti-modernity.⁹¹ Tracing the pattern of development of the idea of the “Russian world” in Russian thinking, Suslov contrasts earlier delineations from the 1990s and early 2000s with the most recent stage as articulated by Kirill and more conservative definers. “[T]he geopolitical and palingenetic interpretations of the ‘Russian world’ reinforce mental frames inimical to the idea of modernity and modernization” as compared to its conceptualization earlier among Russians.⁹² As such, the thrust of Kirill’s Holy Rus’ conceptualization undergirds the social conservatism that drives Russian politics and society in its rejection of the west and critique of the European Union.⁹³

8. Internationalization

The opening of the borders of Russia (and the other subsequent states) that followed the break-up of the Soviet Union has meant that Russian Orthodox life in the various diasporas has needed direct attention. In the broader Europe, in North America, Australia, and elsewhere, Russians abroad are faced with already established communities of other Eastern Orthodox branches; if Moscow tries to create an administrative structure for Russian Orthodoxy abroad, it often runs into conflict with the diasporic structures of other Eastern Churches. Special problems have arisen in relations with the Ecumenical Patriarch on this account, as the Ecumenical Patriarch had been trying to establish rationalized episcopal structures for the Americas and elsewhere under his leadership.

Rivalry between the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Patriarch of Moscow existed also before the 1990s. The Ecumenical Patriarch granted autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Poland in 1924, which was recognized by the ROC only in 1948. Vice versa, in 1970, the Moscow Patriarch granted autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in America, a move that continues to be unrecognized by the Ecumenical Patriarch until today.

⁹¹ Suslov, “‘Russian World’ concept.”

⁹² Suslov, “‘Russian World’ concept,” 345.

⁹³ Andrei Melville, “A Neoconservative Consensus in Russia? Main Components, Factors of Stability, Potential of Erosion,” *Russian Social Science Review* 61, no. 3-4 (2020): 220–35.

The crisis in relations between these two Patriarchs has been partly triggered by secular political actors outside Russia. In 1994 Estonian Prime Minister Mart Laar and President Lennart Meri sent letters to the Ecumenical Patriarch asking him to accept the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church into his jurisdiction.⁹⁴ The Ecumenical Patriarch granted what was being asked and in 1996 relations between the Moscow and Constantinople Patriarchs went into the first major crisis of the post-Soviet era.

A similar development took place in April 2018, when President Petro Poroshenko of Ukraine visited Turkey and met with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. During the meeting with the Ecumenical Patriarch, Erdoğan appealed for recognition of an independent Ukrainian Church.⁹⁵

Recently, the ROC has created two new exarchates—West European and South East Asian—which is a strong symbolic claim to represent the ‘diaspora’ Orthodox, who traditionally should be represented by the Ecumenical Patriarch, who coordinated Orthodox life outside the territories of national Churches and patriarchates.⁹⁶ Thus, when the Moscow Patriarchate loses (social and religious) authority in Ukraine, attempts are being made to increase leverage in areas traditionally outside of the canonical territory of the MP.

9. Facing Roman Catholicism

The relations with the Roman Catholic Church and the person of the Pope have been fraught in special ways given the unique claim of each to the authentic history and tradition of Christianity. A particular aspect of this challenge is the normalization of the status of the Greek Catholics and other Eastern-rite groups which accept papal authority but maintain liturgical and spiritual practices tied to the Slavic/Russian tradition. Kirill took special efforts to engage with Pope Francis in their meeting in Havana in 2016.⁹⁷ This meeting also bore implications for the global status competition between Moscow and Constantinople

94 Katja Richters, “The Moscow Patriarchate in Estonia: Russian Versus International Concerns,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 55, no. 1 (January/February 2008): 7.

95 Lucian N. Leustean and Vsevolod Samokhvalov, “The Ukrainian National Church, Religious Diplomacy, and the Conflict in Donbas,” *Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies* 2, no. 2 (2019): 210.

96 Mitrokhin, “Strategy and Tactics of the Russian Orthodox Church,” 6. A similar conflict involving the Moscow Patriarch has arisen since 2021 when two eparchies (dioceses) were created in Africa under Moscow patriarchal auspices; Africa is under the authority of the Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria who did not approve of the expansion of the ROC into his canonical territory.

97 As described in the following section, this meeting also bore implications for the global status competition between Moscow and Constantinople by establishing an equivalence between the Moscow Patriarch and the Pope which excluded Constantinople.

by establishing an equivalence between the Moscow Patriarch and the Pope—an equivalence which excluded Constantinople.

This new orientation was evident in 2009, when Metropolitan (then archbishop) Hilarion (Alfeev), chairman of the Department for the External Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, visited Rome and met with Pope Benedict XVI: proselytism was not mentioned. Instead, they discussed the importance of bearing a common Christian witness, defending traditional Christian values in a secular world, and joint actions in the fields of culture and education. Among persistent problems, Hilarion mentioned only the tension between Greek Catholics and Orthodox in Western Ukraine and the necessity for the ROC and the Catholic Church to settle this long-standing conflict. In his Report to the 2010 Episcopal Synod Patriarch Kirill, while analyzing the current state of Orthodox-Catholic relations, did not mention proselytism either. Instead, he pointed out that in the ROC's dialogue with the Catholic Church a number of positive tendencies had been established and that Russian Orthodox and Catholic perspectives are similar on many issues (e.g., on secularization, globalization, and moral norms). Patriarch Kirill also announced that the ROC and the Catholic Church would cooperate with the UN, UNESCO, and other international organizations.⁹⁸

Catholics in the Russian Federation and Uniates in Ukraine have been a thorny issue for the post-Soviet ROC.⁹⁹ Controversies with Catholics involved also disputes over church property in Western Ukraine.¹⁰⁰ However, the relations have improved more recently, particularly at the level of global religious leadership. In 2016, Patriarch Kirill met Pope Francis in Havana, and they delivered a joint declaration.¹⁰¹ The joint statement does not mean that the Catholic pope endorses the whole package of illiberal value positions of the ROC, but it is a compromise of sorts and includes elements of both 'classical ecumenism' typical of statements of World Council of Churches and also conservative ecumenism exemplified more by the ROC.¹⁰² However, the progress that had been

⁹⁸ Kazmina, "The Russian Orthodox Church in a New Situation," 226.

⁹⁹ According to Samuel P. Huntington, the civilizational 'fault line' in post-soviet Ukraine, ran between Greek Catholics (Uniates)—who are in full communion with the pope in Rome—and the Orthodox. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

¹⁰⁰ Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church: Triumphalism and Defensiveness*, 124.

¹⁰¹ "Full text of joint declaration signed by Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill", Catholic News Agency, February 12, 2016, " <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/full-text-of-joint-declaration-signed-by-pope-francis-and-patriarch-kirill-61341>.

¹⁰² Andrey Shishkov, "Discussing the Concept of Conservative Ecumenism," *State, Religion and Church* 6, no. 1 (2019): 4–19.

made in Orthodox-Catholic relations under Kirill is now being undermined by Kirill's complicity in the war against Ukraine.

10. Moscow vs. Constantinople

Finally, there has developed a personal conflict between the Russian Patriarch and the Ecumenical Patriarch, who is the *primus inter pares* of Eastern Orthodoxy. The Russian Church and Moscow Patriarchate claim power and honor because of their size—largest in the Eastern Christian communion—but frequently find that the Ecumenical Patriarch's historical and traditional claims undermine their reach for power and privilege. While still under Soviet rule, the partial rapprochement between the Catholic papacy and Russian Orthodoxy subsequent to the historic Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) challenged the honorific leadership of world Orthodoxy by the Ecumenical Patriarch (then Athenagoras).¹⁰³ The ROC flew further in the face of the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarchate by granting autocephaly on its own to the Russian Metropolia in the United States in 1970. The Ecumenical Patriarchate had “the traditional right to grant autocephaly to new national Churches,”¹⁰⁴ a right taken by the Patriarch of Constantinople in the case of the Ukrainian Church in 2019. Bartholomew and Kirill have reached a major roadblock on this plain that undermines the pledged unity of the great Eastern Christian Church. Rivalry for the position of *primus inter pares* in the Orthodox world resulted in the break in eucharistic and prayerful communion in 1996¹⁰⁵ and again on 15 October 2018 over the granting of autocephaly to the Ukrainian Church by the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Tensions are highest over the status of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine. For the ROC, there is still only one “canonical” Orthodox Church in Ukraine (UOC-MP), all the others are schismatics.¹⁰⁶ Outside of Ukraine, its strategy has been to extend its presence and plant churches in territories that have been either canonical territories of other Orthodox Churches or have traditionally been considered to be the diaspora area organized by the Ecumenical Patriarch. This, then, is a profound breach in Church relationships that has global polit-

¹⁰³ William C. Fletcher, *Religion and Soviet Foreign Policy 1945–1970* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).

¹⁰⁴ Fletcher, *Religion and Soviet Foreign Policy*, 115.

¹⁰⁵ Serge Keleher, “Orthodox Rivalry in the Twentieth Century: Moscow versus Constantinople,” *Religion, State and Society: The Keston Journal* 25, no. 2 (1997): 125.

¹⁰⁶ Andrii Krawchuk, “The Orthodox Church of Ukraine on the inter-Orthodox agenda at Amman: the dynamics of ecclesiastical recognition,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 62, no. 3–4 (2020): 470.

ical and socio-economic dimensions, and which shapes in significant measure the self-identities of numerous polities, particularly Russia's.¹⁰⁷

In December 2019 the ROC cut ties with those Orthodox Churches, which had recognized the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine¹⁰⁸—including the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, which represents Orthodox Christians mostly in Egypt, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. The Synod of the ROC also decided to remove all of its parishes in Africa from the Patriarchate of Alexandria's jurisdiction to subordinate them to Patriarch Kirill.¹⁰⁹ The ROC thus uses a strategy in extending its presence in the Orthodox world, which it considers illegitimate and uncanonical, when used against itself. In principle, it is not a new strategy and it was used also before 2012, when the relationship between Patriarch Kirill and the Russian government entered into a new phase of partnership.

On another level, the rivalry between the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Moscow Patriarch concerns also the understanding of human rights. In his visit to Germany in the beginning of June 2017, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew presented his critique of Western understandings of modernity and human rights and suggested alternatives from the Orthodox tradition, but unlike the post-Soviet ROC, his vision does not reject or distance itself from several basic tenets of Western modernity (including secularity). In the words of Vasilios Makrides, the Ecumenical Patriarch "seems to come to terms more smoothly with the prerequisites of modernity without endorsing them uncritically. These few examples suffice to reveal the crucial differences between these two Orthodox Christian positions on human rights."¹¹⁰

CONCLUSION

There are several aspects of Patriarch Kirill's life and role in the Church and society that we have not discussed in this chapter. We did not cover allegations, rumors,

¹⁰⁷ George Soroka, "Blessings and Curses from Constantinople: How the Orthodox Church is Reshaping the Conflict between Russia and Ukraine," *Foreign Affairs*, 25 October 2018. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2018-10-25/blessings-and-curses-constantinople>.

¹⁰⁸ By 2020, three Orthodox Churches had supported the autocephaly of UOC - the Ecumenical Patriarchate (January 6, 2019), Alexandria (Egypt, November 8, 2019) and Hellenic (Greece, October 12, 2019). Mitrokhin, "Strategy and Tactics of the Russian Orthodox Church," 3.

¹⁰⁹ Olga S. Kulkova, "Russian 'Soft Power' in the North-East Africa," *Politics and Religion Journal* 15, no. 1 (2021): 119. See also footnote 96.

¹¹⁰ Vasilios N. Makrides, "Orthodox Christianity and Modern Human Rights: Theorising Their Nexus and Addressing Orthodox Specificities," in *Global Eastern Orthodoxy: Politics, Religion, and Human Rights*, eds. Giuseppe Giordan and Siniša Zrinščak (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2020): 15.

or reports of corrupt behavior related to misbegotten capitalist ventures, excessive wealth, intimate improprieties or mysterious real estate holdings¹¹¹ although these issues may deserve further explorations in order to understand Kirill's personal life more fully. Given the state of Russian society and economy, there are probably interesting issues here. We also have not investigated in any depth the management style of the Patriarch. There are certainly issues related to his oversight of the organization of the Church that merit further analysis. However, we have delved into the realm of issues that have profound importance for the ROC and Russia.

Kirill's performance in six different arenas both as Metropolitan and as Patriarch has over the three decades contributed to desecularization from above, a reverse of the process by which the European Union has impacted neighboring countries,¹¹² but leading toward the same outcome—a shift from Church-religion toward religion as culture that has been recognized also in Western Europe¹¹³ and on the global scale.¹¹⁴ The ROC cannot exclude itself from such social processes, and understanding them is an overarching challenge for Kirill and the Church in the future.

Regarding the challenges faced by the Church in the twenty-first century, the overall trend has been toward the politicization of Orthodoxy at the level of the state, which in itself has shifted toward illiberal authoritarianism, and the geopolitization of Orthodoxy also at the level of international relations. For the ROC's future, this envisions both opportunities and pitfalls depending on the fate of the regime of Vladimir Putin to which the Church and its leadership are attached. A crucial turning point in relations of the ROC with Russian society and government occurred during the protests of 2011, where the 'Orthodox consensus' that previously granted social support to the public presence and role of the ROC by significant proportions of all segments of society—including those who are not believers, who are "undecided", "unbelievers" and even "atheists"—started to disintegrate.¹¹⁵ By 2017, the number of people who *disapprove* of the idea that the (Orthodox) Church should influence state decisions increased from 27% (in 2005) to 36% and the percentage of those who approve

¹¹¹ Fagan, *Believing in Russia*, 41–43; "Patriarkh Kiril." *Uznay Vse* ("Learn Everything", a popular entertainment, news, sports, zodiac, etc., site in Russia.) <https://uznayvse.ru/znamenitosti/biografiya-kirill.html>.

¹¹² Alar Kilp, "The Influence of the European Union's Liberal Secularist Policy on Religion upon Religious Authority in Estonia Since 2004," in *Old Religion, New Spirituality: Implications of Secularisation and Individualisation in Estonia*, ed. by Riho Altnurme (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021), 71–85.

¹¹³ Nadia Marzouki, Duncan McDonnell, and Olivier Roy, eds., *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

¹¹⁴ Luca Ozzano, *The Masks of the Political God: Religion and Political Parties in Contemporary Democracies* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: ECPR Press, Rowman & Littlefield, 2020).

¹¹⁵ Uzlaner, "The End of the Pro-Orthodox Consensus," 174.

the idea fell to a mere 6%.¹¹⁶ This situation was cemented in the symbolic realm with the events tied to the February 2012 performance and prosecution of the Pussy Riot actors and the protests associated with it at the time of the 2012 presidential election.¹¹⁷ Patriarch Kirill publicly and decisively sided with Vladimir Putin against the political opposition.

As noted at the beginning of this essay, the fifth stage of Kirill's career is being defined by his militaristic propaganda leadership in the Russo-Ukrainian War as it has developed since 2014 and, in particular, since the massive military invasion by Russia that began on February 24, 2022. Leading the evolution of wartime Orthodoxy, Kirill has been an unmitigated supporter of the invasion and of the politics of the Putin regime, and he has been pursuing related aspects beyond Russia and Ukraine. He has been broadly condemned by religious and political leaders in the west for his outspoken advocacy of the war and for various related extensions of Russian Orthodox prerogatives beyond Russia in support of a bloc of Orthodox churches that are upending the order of world Orthodoxy.¹¹⁸ The ultimate assessment of Kirill's leadership will undoubtedly rest on how the Russo-Ukrainian War is resolved.

Although the Russian Orthodox Church "is not simply the handmaiden of the state,"¹¹⁹ is it too closely allied with the Putin state? What will happen when Putin moves out of power? Or how will the ROC react to the departure of Kirill? Both events are inevitable—for good/natural reasons or ill. And how will the Church leadership muster its resources in the face of the several global challenges that we have mostly set aside in this essay? Is there a successor for Kirill who can manage the enormous tasks of leadership in the face of pandemics like the Covid-19 one or other health emergencies? How will the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church act in seeking to address the global energy crisis with environmental security, an especially fraught problem for Russia with its dependence on fossil fuel resources? And what will Kirill or other leaders of the ROC do to help address the worldwide challenge of climate change and ecological disaster? These are major challenges for the future that leadership must face. If the answer is Orthodoxy, what is Russia?

¹¹⁶ Uzlaner, "The End of the Pro-Orthodox Consensus," 188.

¹¹⁷ Rachel L. Schroeder and Vyacheslav Karpov, "The Crimes and Punishments of the 'Enemies of the Church' and the Nature of Russia's Desecularising Regime," *Religion, State and Society* 41, no. 3 (2013): 295.

¹¹⁸ BYU Law. March 28, 2024. "The Russian Orthodox Church Beyond Russia: Global Pretensions and Security Concerns". Talk About: Law and Religion, Blog of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University Law School, Provo, Utah. <https://talkabout.iclrs.org/2024/03/28/the-russian-orthodox-church-beyond-russia-global-pretensions-and-security-concerns%ef%bf%bc/Bogseries>.

¹¹⁹ George Soroka, "Putin's Patriarch: Does the Kremlin Control the Church," *Foreign Affairs*, February 11, 2

Patriarch Filaret and the Orthodox Church in Soviet and Post-Soviet Ukraine¹

Kathryn David

INTRODUCTION²

In May 1968, a few months before Soviet tanks would roll down the streets of Prague, another kind of Soviet authority would be sent in, namely emissaries of the Russian Orthodox Church. In May 1968, Metropolitan Filaret, then head of the Ukrainian Exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, wrote a report to Communist Party officials in Ukraine about disturbing developments taking place within the Russian Orthodox Church of socialist Czechoslovakia. Based on his conversations with Czechoslovak church leadership, Filaret wrote:

On April 2nd, Metropolitan Dorotej [Arch-Bishop of Prague, Metropolitan of Czech Lands and Slovakia] was invited by Doctor Kadlicova [plenipotentiary for religion] to re-open the Uniate question. On April 5th they met again... Dr. Kadlicova made it clear that the Russian Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia cannot endure [*rasschityvat'*] without the support of the government. At the same time Dr. Kadlicova suggested forming a mixed committee of Orthodox and Uniates... The Uniates have begun to demand the Orthodox Church return to them Uniate churches. In Czechoslovakia, these churches belong to the communities, and not the government...A deputy of the National Chamber of the People], A. Zhiak, friendly towards the Soviet Union and the Russian Orthodox Church, openly stated that the Uniates had been liquidated violently during the period of the Cult of Personality, and thus deputies had no

¹ I would like to thank Frank Cibulka and Zachary Irwin for inviting me to take part in this project, as well as Sabrina Ramet for her contributions to the field. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of State or the United States Government.

² This article was completed before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

right to be against the freedom of the Uniates. In his view, Uniates will return to Czechoslovakia.³

Clearly, among the dozens of reforms proposed as part of the “socialism with a human face” program under Alexander Dubček, religious freedom and open discussions of Czechoslovak history had particular implications for the Russian Orthodox Church. Filaret’s statement included observations that revealed the close relationship between Russian Orthodoxy and Soviet authority in socialist Czechoslovakia. In this report, Filaret relayed Dr. Kadlicova’s remarks that the Russian Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia is wholly dependent on government support. He also reminded Soviet officials in his report of the property structure of Russian Orthodox Churches in Czechoslovakia. Since church property is not officially state property, but belongs to each community, state authority over the ownership of church property was limited in Czechoslovakia. Though he does not state this outright, this means that if believers organize and decide to “return” to the Greek Catholic (also known as Uniate) church and the government does not forbid it, the Russian Orthodox Church could easily lose its churches in Czechoslovakia. In addition, Filaret also reported that representatives of the Czechoslovak government, even “friendly” ones, were beginning to suggest openly that the “reunification” of the Greek Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia that took place in 1950 was not the will of the people but a violently imposed campaign within the context of the excesses of Stalinism.⁴ Filaret did not mean to say here that believers in Czechoslovakia

³ TsDAVOU f. 4648, op. 5, spr. 11, ark. 20-21.

⁴ The Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church in then Czechoslovakia, today’s eastern Slovakia, dates back to the 1646 Union of Uzhhorod, which was established to transfer the local Ruthenian population of the Transcarpathian Rus’ region from Eastern Orthodoxy to a Uniate church under Vatican jurisdiction. By the nineteenth century, when these lands were under Habsburg rule, the Greek Catholic Church in Transcarpathian Rus’ was based in the eparchies of Prešov (today in eastern Slovakia) and Uzhhorod (today in western Ukraine). As part of the imposition of Soviet power in Ukraine, and later a Soviet supported socialist government in Czechoslovakia, Greek Catholic laypeople and clergy were forcibly transferred to the Russian Orthodox Church. In addition, the eparchies of Prešov and Uzhhorod, which had been historically connected as part of the Transcarpathian Rus’ region, were split between two states, Czechoslovakia and Soviet Ukraine. Forced transfers of Greek Catholics were conducted in parallel processes that took place in the eparchies of Lviv, Ukraine (1946), Uzhhorod, Ukraine (1949) and Prešov, Czechoslovakia (1950). These forced transfers were referred to as “reunifications” in order to characterize them as a “return” to what was deemed the “original” faith of these territories: Russian Orthodoxy. While before WWII there was a small community of Russian Orthodox throughout Czechoslovakia, after the forced transfer of Greek Catholics in 1950 the bulk of Czechoslovakia’s Russian Orthodox population of approximately 250,000 were former Greek Catholics concentrated in the Prešov region of eastern Slovakia. Marian Gajdoš, “Political Aspects of Action P in East Slovakia in the Year 1950,” in *Urbs-Provincia-Orbis: Contributiones ad historiam contactuum civitatum Carpathicarum in honorem O.R. Halaga*, ed. Marian Gajdoš (Košice:

were not aware of the forcible nature of the reunification campaign before—but the fact that the government was stating this information publicly was a seismic shift—something that would also characterize the revelations under Gorbachev’s glasnost two decades later.

In the same report, Filaret openly expressed his own concerns regarding how developments in the Greek Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia would impact the USSR, specifically Soviet Ukraine:

The revival of the Uniate Church has far reaching consequences. This struggle is especially pressing for Ukraine, above all Zakarpattia [Transcarpathian Rus’], which has close ties to Czechoslovakia.⁵ As a result of the revival of the Uniates in Czechoslovakia, the Uniates in Ukraine will be catalyzed into action. The Uniates in Ukraine are cheering on [*vosprianut*] this Uniate restoration.⁶

Twenty years later, Filaret would express similar concerns about the re-opening of the so-called “Uniate question,” as well as the question of church autocephaly in Soviet Ukraine during Gorbachev’s reforms in the late 1980s. In order to understand Metropolitan Filaret’s course of action then, it is useful to understand his first experience with the specter of Uniate revival and the collapse of the Soviet system during the Prague Spring.⁷ This historical context is relevant

Spoločenskovedný ústav SAV, 1993), 186; Peter Borza, “Activity of the Communist Government Appointed in the Greek-Catholic Episcopal Office in Prešov,” *E-Theologos* 2, no.1 (2011): 93–101; Paul Magocsi, *With Their Backs to the Mountains: A History of Carpathian Rus’ and Carpatho-Rusyns* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2015), 325–26.

5 The close ties between Ukraine’s western Zakarpats’ka oblast and the region of eastern Slovakia that Filaret recognized here had also been acknowledged by Soviet authorities even as they chose to divide the region’s population between two states in drawing postwar borders. When Soviet diplomats and their partners in the new postwar Czechoslovak government established the border between eastern Slovakia and western Ukraine, Soviet authorities allowed Slovak Communist Party activists to claim the Prešov region for Czechoslovakia as long as Czechoslovak authorities continued to recognize the population’s Ukrainian minority, and provide institutions to foster and preserve Ukrainian culture in this now Slovak region. Members of the Czechoslovak state-supported Ukrainian cultural institutions in Prešov were routinely sent to Soviet Ukraine to foster connections between Ukrainians on both sides of the border. Ivan Bajcura, *Ukrajinská otázka v ČSSR* (Košice: Východoslovenské Vydavateľstvo, 1967), 102–4; Magocsi, *With Their Backs to the Mountains*, 321–28.

6 TsDAVOU f.4648, op. 5, spr. 11, ark. 21–22.

7 Some historians have argued that Soviet concerns that unrest from Czechoslovakia would spread to Soviet western Ukraine was a central factor in the ultimate decision for the USSR to send troops in to quell the Prague Spring movement. This so-called “Ukrainian hypothesis” is explored in Grey Hodnett and Peter J. Potichnyj, eds., *The Ukraine and the Czechoslovak Crisis*. Occasional Paper No. 6. Department of Political Science, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University Canberra, 1970, among other sources. Concerns from Soviet authorities about spillover into Ukraine also led to increased surveillance of west Ukrainians associated with underground religious or nationalist activity, Zbigniew Wojnowski, *The Near Abroad: Socialist Eastern Europe and Soviet Patriotism in Ukraine, 1956–1985* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 137–38.

not only to Filaret's shifting positions on the "Uniate question," but to later autocephaly. Metropolitan Filaret's struggle to maintain influence in the ever-shifting religious marketplace of independent Ukraine, in realms both ecclesiastical and secular, and the sensational scandals that arose out of the context, can only be understood within the context of his own experience in the leadership structure of Russian Orthodoxy in Soviet Ukraine.

In this chapter, I argue that the religious struggles of independent Ukraine, and the cast of characters on all sides, have their roots in the experience of the special role for Russian Orthodoxy that existed in Soviet Ukraine, a role that was based on an understanding of Russian Orthodoxy as an instrument of political power and a key aspect of a pro-Soviet official Ukrainian nationalism.⁸ While scholars usually acknowledge the weight of the Soviet legacy and the context of the Soviet past in understanding post-Soviet politics, even among nationalist groups that emphasize their radical breaks from the Soviet system, fewer scholars apply this framework to religious institutions transitioning from Soviet to post-Soviet regimes.⁹ Religion and church structures are still seen by many as emerging out of thin air in the post-Soviet space. Religious authority and resources can be viewed through the same lens as other forms of political authority and resources up for grabs in the late 1980s and early 1990s. And no example is more illustrative of this than the long and controversial career of Metropolitan Filaret.

Official Orthodoxy in the USSR

On September 4, 1943 a few weeks after the decisive Soviet victory at the tank battle of Kursk, Stalin invited NKVD general Georgii Karpov to his *dacha* (country residence) to discuss plans to found a new Soviet state agency, the Committee for

8 For more on the role of religious institutions in Soviet nationalities policy, especially in the postwar era in Ukraine see Sabrina P. Ramet, *Cross and Commissar: The Politics of Religion in Eastern Europe and the USSR* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 17–19.

9 Two important exceptions that deal with religious institutions that cross the Soviet divide are the work of Chris Hann and Sabrina Ramet, who have both put together edited volumes on this subject. In his work, Hann connects the "post-socialist religious revival" to the "politicization of religion under socialism." See, for example, Chris Hann "Introduction: Faith, Power, and Civility after Socialism," in *The Postsocialist Religious Question: Faith and Power in Central Asia and East-Central Europe*, ed. Chris Hann (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2006), 1–27. In her work on Poland, Sabrina Ramet draws continuities between the Catholic Church's role in nineteenth-century Polish lands, in interwar Poland, in socialist Poland and in today's independent Poland. See Sabrina P. Ramet, "Sources of Strength of the Church in Poland," in *Religion, Politics, and Values in Poland: Continuity and Change Since 1989*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (New York: Palgrave, 2017), 1–17.

the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church (CAROC).¹⁰ The Russian Orthodox Church, or more precisely what remained of its infrastructure after the repressions of the 1920s and 30s, had been allowed to publicly participate in Soviet life beginning in 1939 with the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Confronting Orthodox populations in the Baltics and Ukraine (Volhynia and Bukovina specifically), Soviet authorities relied on Russian Orthodox clergy from Soviet territories to take charge of religious matters, including bringing various churches under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate.¹¹ In 1941, when Nazi armies invaded the Soviet Union, Stalin allowed representatives of the church to conduct “patriotic work” in the service of mobilization for the war. However, as the tide of war shifted in 1943, Stalin and members of his inner circle, Vyacheslav Molotov and Lavrenty Beria, began exploring a more permanent role for the Russian Orthodox Church as a representative of Soviet interests in the international arena. Countries with Orthodox populations, such as Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Romania, could develop ties with an official Russian Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union—ties that could bring these countries away from Nazi Germany and into the Soviet orbit. With an official Russian Orthodox Church, Orthodoxy could, as it had been in imperial times, be used as a claim on populations in Eastern Europe. On the home front, a Russian Orthodox Church recognized and supported by the Soviet state could continue patriotic work, as well as help Soviet authorities to contend with the thousands of churches that had been shut down in the 1920s and 1930s, only to be re-opened by Nazi armies. As Adriano Rocucci argues, these 1943 discussions of a new role for the Russian Orthodox Church represented a profound shift in Soviet policy: Instead of using the Soviet state apparatus to weaken the Russian Orthodox Church, Stalin, Beria and Molotov sought to strengthen the church in order to make it an instrument of the Soviet state.¹²

Stalin was well aware of the imperial precedent for such a role for the Orthodox Church, but made clear to Karpov that the Soviet state’s relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church would not be as it was under the tsars, allegedly telling Karpov, “But always remember, first that you are not the Over-Procura-

10 M. I. Odintsov and T.A. Chumachenko, *Sovet po delam Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tservi pri SNK (SM) SSSR i Moskovskaia Patriarkhiia: Epokha vzaimodeistviia i protivostoiania 1943-1965 gg.* (Saint Petersburg: Russian Association of Scholars of Religion, 2013), 84; Tatiana A. Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia: Russian Orthodox from World War II to the Khrushchev Years* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 16.

11 On the importance of this role for the ROC in Volhynia and the Baltics, see Daniela Kalkandjieva, *The Russian Orthodox Church, 1917–1947. From Decline to Resurrection* (London: Routledge, 2014).

12 Adriano Rocucci, *Stalin i Patriarkh: Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' i Sovetskaia Vlast' 1917–1958* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2016), 10.

tor of the Holy Synod,¹³ and second that your work should heavily emphasize the church's independence."¹⁴

The next day, September 5, 1943, Stalin invited the temporary Russian Orthodox patriarch, Sergei, and two members of his "temporary synod" (including future Patriarch Alexei) to the dacha where they met with Karpov and discussed the structure of an official Russian Orthodox Church, as well as the role for CAROC.¹⁵ In exchange for loyalty to Soviet authorities, and fulfilling the role Stalin envisioned for them, the Russian Orthodox Church was returned key church properties, including the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius (the monastery that had traditionally served as the spiritual headquarters of the Moscow Patriarchate, which had been closed and expropriated by Soviet state institutions after 1917), given permission to found a religious seminary, and permitted to elect an official Patriarch. Sergei was officially enthroned as Patriarch on September 12, 1943, after an election by the Council of Bishops on September 8. When Sergei died in May 1944 at age 76, Metropolitan Alexei was appointed as Patriarch and served in that role until his death in April 1970.

In drawing a comparison between the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in Imperial Russia and his plans for the church in the USSR, Stalin emphasized the church's independence within the Soviet state. Unlike in Imperial Russia, where the Russian Orthodox Church was led by the tsar (since the creation of the Holy Synod under Peter the Great), in the Soviet Union the church was to be portrayed as separate from the Soviet state. However, this role for the Russian Orthodox Church as outside the state did not make sense in a Soviet system where the state was all encompassing—as nothing was outside the state. The Church was "brought back" by Stalin in order to serve a role in the Soviet state and to be mobilized to achieve the aims of the Soviet state, all the while emphasizing the church's independence from the state.

The Soviet decision to mobilize official Russian Orthodoxy to accomplish certain state goals, while minimizing its presence in other plans, is similar to how Imperial Russia used Orthodoxy. As Gregory Freeze first proposed in a 1985 article, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Imperial Russian state often had radically different goals and plans for the subjects of the empire. Even as Im-

¹³ After The Moscow Patriarchate was abolished by Peter the Great, from 1721 to 1917 the Russian Orthodox Church was ruled by a Holy Synod that was supervised by an Over-Procurator, a layman who reported directly to the tsar and often had enormous influence over the church (this explanation is included as an editor's note accompanying this quotation in Chumachenko's monograph).

¹⁴ Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia*, 16.

¹⁵ These church hierarchs were all considered "temporary" because when Tikhon died in 1925, Soviet authorities did not permit an official synod for the Church to consecrate a new Patriarch.

perial Russia drew on the Orthodox Church for legitimacy, it also found itself actively going against the Church and its clergy in order to preserve Russia as a multi-confessional empire, and to preserve diplomatic arrangements with its non-Orthodox neighbors. Even though the Russian Orthodox Church was technically beholden to the Imperial state, it was still an institution with its own interests and worldview, one that was sometimes radically different from the secular state.¹⁶ Following Freeze's lead, historians have gone on to demonstrate examples of these tensions, specifically in instances where the Imperial Russian state was reluctant to promote Russian Orthodoxy among its subjects and had to reign in the activities of the Church, or found it more useful to promote other religious institutions instead of supporting conversion to Russian Orthodoxy.¹⁷

Clearly, the tensions between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Soviet state were much more stark than these imperial-era tensions. The Soviet state, unlike the Russian Empire, did not align itself with the Church, nor draw legitimacy from it, and explicitly portrayed itself as an atheist state. In addition, the Soviet state was also a different kind of state from what the Imperial Russian state had been. The situation that Freeze describes, specifically a Russian Orthodox Church that was both part of the state and an institution with its own interests and authority, could not and did not exist in the USSR. The post-1943 Russian Orthodox Church, and the clergy that took part in its institutions, had corporate interests that they advocated for, oftentimes successfully. Yet, from a structural standpoint, the Russian Orthodox Church as it existed in the Soviet state did not have the space and resources to operate outside, or in opposition to the state, in the way that was possible in Imperial Russia.

Paradoxically, these sharper tensions, when paired with the Soviet Union's modern state capacity, meant that the Soviet Union could mobilize the Russian Orthodox Church in ways that promoted state goals in more efficient and more controlled ways than its imperial predecessor, with more mechanisms than the imperial state had in order to suppress the Church. The USSR was able to instrumentalize the Russian Orthodox Church and its clergy in a way that did

16 See Gregory Freeze, "Handmaiden of the State? The Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36, no. 1 (1985): 82–102.

17 Alfred Rieber, "Conversion as an Instrument of Imperial Rule: The Case of the Russian Empire," in *Friars, Nobles and Burghers—Sermons, Images and Prints: Studies of Culture and Society in Early Modern Europe, In memoriam István György Tóth*, eds. Jaroslav Miller and László Kontler (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010), 233–51; Paul Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy: Mission, Governance, and Confessional Politics in Russia's Volga-Kama Region, 1827–1905* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Robert Crews, "Empire and Confessional State: Islam and Religious Politics in Nineteenth-Century Russia," *American Historical Review* 108/1 (2003): 50–83.

not challenge Soviet state power, something the Imperial Russian autocracy struggled to achieve. When evaluating Filaret's legacy as leader of the Ukrainian Exarchate in the USSR, it is important to keep in mind that Filaret served as a member of the clergy in a church whose role was to serve the Soviet state, and that his own success depended on proving his worth in this endeavor.

FILARET AND THE UKRAINIAN EXARCHATE IN SOVIET UKRAINE

Filaret was born Mykhailo Denysenko in the city of Donetsk in the Ukrainian SSR in 1929, and began his career as a member of the Russian Orthodox clergy only a few years after the church had been invited back into Soviet life, taking monastic vows and attending seminary in the early 1950s.¹⁸ When Filaret was selected as Ukraine's metropolitan and leader of the Ukrainian Exarchate in 1966, Russian Orthodoxy continued to occupy an importance space in the USSR as a whole, and in Ukraine in particular. On the one hand, the declaration of "developed socialism" in the late 1960s meant that Soviet policymakers were increasingly concerned with minimizing the role of religion in the life of the Soviet individual, as well as offering alternative traditions in the name of "scientific atheism." On the other hand, the Russian Orthodox Church was deemed necessary in Soviet foreign policy, in order to counteract the influence of the Vatican in Eastern Europe. The councils of "Vatican II" had, from the Soviet perspective, mobilized Catholic believers in Eastern Europe. The United States and Western Europe found that the Vatican could be their ally in anti-Soviet activities, and Soviet authorities hoped to use the Russian Orthodox Church in the same way.¹⁹ This role for the Russian Orthodox Church in foreign policy partially explains Filaret's presence in 1968 Czechoslovakia, though not entirely. Filaret's observance of church reforms in Czechoslovakia was also key to his public role in Ukraine. Filaret's role in ensuring the presence of official Orthodoxy in Ukraine, and providing a veneer of legitimacy and authenticity to the endeavor, meant that he was considered a public figure in Soviet life, both at home and abroad.

The Ukrainian Exarchate that Filaret led of the Russian Orthodox Church²⁰ in the Soviet Union was one of the most important institutions of official Or-

18 Ihor Losiev, "Filaret: A Statehood-oriented Patriarch," *Ukrainian Week*, November 8, 2012.

19 Ramet, *Cross and Commissar*, 4.

20 For more on the role of the Ukrainian Exarchate in the Soviet period, see Bohdan Bociurkiw, "The Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine: The Exarchate and the Renovators, and the 'Conciliar-Episcopal' Church, 1920-1939," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 26, no. 1 (2002-2003): 63-91.

thodoxy from the perspective of the Soviet state. Ukraine's importance for the Soviet project of official Orthodoxy stemmed from three factors: (1) the sheer number of Orthodox believers living in Soviet Ukraine; (2) the addition of Bukovina, Zakarpattia, Galicia and Volhynia to Soviet Ukraine during World War Two, provinces that had not yet experienced official atheism and Soviet anti-religious policies, and (3) the so-called "church reunification" project run by Soviet secular authorities, which transferred the Greek Catholic priests, laymen and properties in western Ukraine to the Russian Orthodox Church, and created a Russian Orthodox infrastructure in those areas to do so.

Because of the Exarchate's importance, even when Soviet policies changed toward official Orthodoxy in the postwar years, CAROC representatives and members of the clergy were successfully able to appeal to higher-ups to ensure a comparatively robust presence for the Church in Ukraine, especially in the former Catholic majority regions of Galicia and Zakarpattia in western Ukraine. For example by the mid-1960s, after Khrushchev's campaigns of mass church closure, of the 7,500 Russian Orthodox churches remaining in the Soviet Union 4,540 were located in Ukraine, approximately 60% of the total. By the 1960s, one-third of all registered Russian Orthodox churches in the Soviet Union were in western Ukraine, despite the region making up only a small percentage of the Soviet population and its territory. This also meant that the majority of Russian Orthodox clergy were located in Ukraine, and that the vast majority of seminary students came from Ukraine.²¹

In a 1976 interview with the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, the official mouthpiece of the Russian Orthodox Church in the USSR, Filaret emphasized this special role Ukraine and the Ukrainian exarchate played within the Church:

The Ukrainian Exarchate is an integral part of the Russian Orthodox Church; therefore, ecclesiastical life in the Ukraine [sic throughout], based on ancient traditions and canons, is as manifold and diversified as the activities of the Russian Orthodox Church as a whole. There are 18 Orthodox dioceses in the Ukraine administered by metropolitans, archbishops, and bishops. As a matter of fact, before the October Revolution there were only 14 dioceses on the ter-

21 Nathaniel Davis, "The Number of Orthodox Churches before and after the Khrushchev Anti-Religious Drive," *Slavic Review* 50, no. 3 (1991): 619–620. In his memoirs, Mykhailo Havryliv recalls that the vast majority of the students at the Leningrad Russian Orthodox Seminary he attended in the 1970s were from western Ukraine, even though the seminary was located in Soviet Russia. Mykahilo Havryliv, *Kozhna liudina—tse persh za vse istoriia: Avtobiabrafyia ukrains'koho katolyts'koho sviashchenyka v suchasnyi Ukraïni* (Rome: Ukrainian Press Service, 1987), 39.

ritory of this Republic. Every diocese has a different number of parishes, some have over 1,000.²²

In this interview, Filaret emphasizes the growth of Orthodoxy in Ukraine as a positive accomplishment, and one that has been facilitated by the founding of the Soviet Union.

Official atheism (especially the renewed anti-religious campaigns under Khrushchev) meant that priests and believers were marginalized, and often forced to hold services in dilapidated churches. Taxation and property law ensured that the Church itself had little money, and those who participated in the Orthodox religion faced fewer opportunities for advancement in Soviet society. However, fears about Vatican incursions finding a receptive audience in the historically Catholic Ukrainian borderlands meant that, at the very least, Orthodoxy would always receive special treatment in western Ukraine. Central authorities in Moscow continued to be concerned about Ukrainian nationalism throughout the Ukrainian SSR and found that Orthodoxy, with its roots in Kyivan Rus', could be mobilized to support a "special relationship" between Russia and Ukraine within the Soviet Union.²³ The importance of Ukraine for Russian Orthodoxy, as both bulwark and borderland, meant that Filaret's role as metropolitan was a significant one in Soviet public life. Much has been made about men like Filaret and the role the Soviet KGB had in so-called "internal church affairs." It was clear to most clergy that regular meetings with KGB officers would be part of their job description—but this relationship alone does not tell the whole story of official Orthodoxy in the USSR.²⁴

In the late 1960s in Ukraine, Soviet policymakers on religion continued to be pre-occupied with what they viewed as "the Uniate threat." For secular authorities, the clergy and believers in western Ukraine who had been transferred from the Greek Catholic Church to the Russian Orthodox Church never lost their designa-

22 "Interview Given by Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev and Galich to a Novosti Press Agency Correspondent," *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, February 20, 1976, 4.

23 In his work on official Ukrainian nationalism in the USSR, Serhiy Yekelchuk describes a post-war shift in official history and national culture that emphasized "... a revised and acceptable version of the Ukrainian national past that emphasized historical and ethnic ties to Russia." I argue that Russian Orthodoxy was an essential part of this new "revised and acceptable" past. See Serhiy Yekelchuk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 11.

24 For more on the relationship between the KGB and the clergy in the post-Stalinist period, see Geraldine Fagan, "There are things in history that should be called by their proper names: Evaluating Russian Orthodox Collaboration with the Soviet State," in *The Dangerous God: Christianity and the Soviet Experiment*, ed. Dominic Erdozain (Dekalb, IL: NIU Press, 2017), 188–201.

tion as “previously Uniate” or “reunited” Orthodox.²⁵ Within the church hierarchy, accusing a member of the clergy of having “Uniate sympathies” could ensure the accused would not advance in his career. Through this process of a continuous enforcement of religious reunification, Orthodoxy came to be tied to other factors of interest to Soviet authorities, such as an individual’s loyalty to and participation in the Soviet project, while the persistence of the Uniate ritual came to indicate sympathies toward radical Ukrainian nationalism. This connection between Orthodoxy and the success of the Soviet project was particular to the former Uniate oblasts, but ensured a strong Orthodox presence in Ukraine as a whole.

The other “threat” to Soviet authority, in the minds of policymakers, was autocephaly for Ukrainian Orthodoxy. Like the “Uniate” threat, autocephaly or other measures that sought a separation between “Ukrainian” and “Russian” Orthodox traditions came to be construed as a sign of radical, and thus anti-Soviet, Ukrainian nationalism.²⁶

The political threats of the existence of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and a Ukrainian Autocephalous Church were not entirely exaggerated by Soviet authorities. Both churches had been instrumental in historic Ukrainian claims for autonomy within the Russian and Habsburg Empires (respectively), and later movements toward full independence. In Habsburg Galicia, the Greek Catholic Church was the only institution that recognized and reinforced the particularity and autonomy of the Ruthenians—a group that eventually came to see themselves as members of the Ukrainian nation. As John Paul Himka argues, the Greek Catholic Church as an institution created a specifically Ruthenian intelligentsia among the rural population that rejected assimilation into Polish culture, and eventually the Polish nation, advocating for the interests of a separate and distinct Ruthenian culture.²⁷

A similar preservation of difference occurred within the Russian Orthodox Church on Ukrainian lands. When the Kyiv Church and its metropolitan became subsumed under the Moscow Patriarchate in the seventeenth century, this move was meant to express the absorption of the Cossack hetmanate

25 Historian Natalia Shlikhta argues that the reunited priests themselves also held on to a separate designation, allowing them to build a “church within a church” in western Ukraine. See Natalia Shlikhta, “‘Church within the Church’ as a mode of the survival of West Ukrainian religious community under Soviet rule,” *University of Sussex Journal of Contemporary History* 7 (2004): 1–12.

26 For more on the history of the autocephalous movement in Ukraine see Bohdan Bociurkiw, “Ukrainianization Movements within the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3, no. 1 (1979–1980): 92–111.

27 See John Paul Himka, *Religion and Nationalism in Western Ukraine: The Greek Catholic Church and the Ruthenian National Movement in Galicia* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1999).

into Muscovy. However, as Frank Sysyn argues, the historic autonomy of the Kyiv church allowed for a separate church culture that remained distinctive, even as the church was supposedly assimilated into the Moscow Patriarchate. While elites in other sectors of the Kyivan territories assimilated into the official culture of Muscovy, some of the church hierarchy were able to maintain its historic distinctiveness.²⁸ In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the institutional legacy of the Kyivan Church, and the uniqueness of its religious tradition, became tied to national movements that saw these distinctions as being tied to the separateness of Ukrainians as a nation. For some, but not all, nationally-minded clergy and activists, this recognition was grounds for the creation of a Ukrainian Autocephalous Church to go along with an independent Ukrainian state in 1919.²⁹ For their part, Soviet authorities at first accepted this church as an expression of the autonomy of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and official recognition of the Ukrainian nation. However, by 1930, Soviet authorities had placed new limits on expressions of Ukrainian autonomy, limits that included purges of those who championed building Ukrainian Soviet culture alongside building socialism. Eventually, this change in policy came to be applied to the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church, which was banned and its clergy purged.³⁰

Soviet policymakers thus came to see both of these church movements—autocephaly and the Greek Catholic Church—as both the historical origins of and necessarily linked to dangerous political trends. In the case of both of these threats, official Orthodoxy came to be constructed against these dangerous alternatives, alternatives that were explicitly connected with Ukrainian nationalism, and moments in Ukrainian history that had led to campaigns for autonomy. However, official Orthodoxy also presented its own Ukrainian nationalist vision and interpretation of Ukrainian history—but one that was tolerable for the Soviet state. For Soviet historians, Orthodoxy in Ukraine was one of the few institutions that continued to bind Russians and Ukrainians, even as the territories of Kyivan ‘Rus’ were split between various polities. The existence of the Russian

²⁸ Frank E. Sysyn, “The Formation of Modern Ukrainian Religious Culture: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in *Religion and Nation in Modern Ukraine*, eds. Serhii Plokhy and Frank E. Sysyn (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2003), 1–22.

²⁹ For more on the connections between campaigns for autocephaly and modern national movements see Sabrina P. Ramet, “Autocephaly and National Identity in Church-State Relations in Eastern Christianity: An Introduction,” in *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988), 1–10.

³⁰ Frank E. Sysyn, “The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and the Traditions of the Kyiv Metropolitanate,” in *Religion and Nation in Modern Ukraine*, eds. Plokhy and Sysyn, 23.

Orthodox Church and the presence of its adherents in Ukraine and Belarus allowed for Soviet authorities to make the argument that Belarussians, Ukrainians (“Little Russians” in imperial terms), and Russians (“Great Russians” in imperial terms) had always been connected through this religious institution, even as political institutions had divided them. This view of history became officially sanctioned in what David Brandenberger calls the “Russocentric” turn of the 1930s. More specifically, the legacy of Rus’ and the role of the Orthodox Church were rehabilitated within official Soviet history. After 1936, the Russian Orthodox Church was understood by Soviet historians as a “progressive” force because of its connections to Byzantine Culture. Beginning in the late 1930s, Soviet historians began to argue that the presence of Orthodoxy meant that the absorption of Ukraine into the Russian Empire was more of a natural fusion of two related cultures than the imposition of rule by a foreign power.³¹

By 1954, this historical revisionism was applied to the legacy of Bohdan Khmelnyts’kyi, the Cossack leader who agreed to allow his hetmanate to become a protectorate of Muscovy in 1654, a choice that ultimately led to the Ukrainian lands becoming part of the Russian Empire. Three hundred years later, Khrushchev and the interim Soviet leadership decided to officially recognize the events of 1654 as a historical triumph, one that should be seen as a liberation for Ukrainians. In marking this anniversary, Khrushchev presented a historical narrative that would soon become the basis for official Ukrainian nationalism in the Soviet Union: the Ukrainian nation as a distinctive nation whose liberation has always been thanks to and connected to the Russian nation. The Orthodox Church played an important role in this relationship, namely ensuring that the Ukrainian nation and Russian nation had always been tied together, despite changing borders.³²

As leader of the Ukrainian Exarchate, Filaret understood these stakes and his role in enforcing the elements of Russian Orthodoxy that allowed it to play this role in Soviet Ukraine. One moment when Filaret played this role was in Czechoslovakia, reporting to Soviet authorities about the precarious conditions of Orthodoxy during the Prague Spring and what this may have meant for Ukraine, as discussed above. Other moments came when the international

31 David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity 1931–1956* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 50–51.

32 This new historical narrative was announced in a January 12, 1954 *Pravda* article entitled, “Tesisy o 300-letii vossoiedinennia Ukrainy s Rossiei” [Theses on the 300th anniversary of the reunification of Ukraine with Russia]. The “rehabilitation” or “re-consecration” of Khmelnyts’kyi in 1954 is described in Yekelchuk (2004): 155–60, as well as in John Basarab, *Pereiaslav 1654: A Historiographical Study* (Edmonton: The Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1982): 162–82.

community or Ukrainian dissident groups challenged the Soviet Union on human rights violations, including freedom of religion.³³ In response to these charges, Filaret was often asked to give public statements or interviews denying that the Soviet Union restricted freedom of religion. In the same 1976 interview quoted above, Filaret denied the existence of religious persecution in the Soviet Union, stating: "I am surprised that our Church and believers are considered persecuted. No one is persecuted for religious convictions in the Soviet Union... The attitude of the Soviet state to the needs of the Church is considerate and understanding."³⁴

However, using his role to serve the interests of the Soviet state did not always mean repressing the Church. Because of the special role for the official Orthodoxy in Ukraine, Filaret used his position to mobilize Soviet state interests to expand and support the Ukrainian Exarchate. For example, in February 1968 Filaret advised a Soviet state inspector that CAROC should open 70 closed Russian Orthodox churches in L'viv oblast' because the underground Greek Catholic Church had been using closed down churches for "agitation" purposes. In this case, Filaret appealed to Soviet authorities, using state language on security issues ("Uniate agitation") in order to open up closed-down churches that would provide more parishes for Orthodox believers.³⁵

In advance of a 1969 meeting of religious leaders in Vienna, Filaret met a plenipotentiary of the Council of Religious Affairs (the successor to CAROC and the Committee for the Affairs of Religious Cults), to share with him that in order to fight the threat of Baptists in western Ukraine, Russian Orthodox institutions in the region should be strengthened.³⁶

It is this Soviet context, that of a specific role for Orthodoxy in an ideal Ukrainian nationalism, which has influenced Filaret and the discourses on Ukrainian church issues since 1991. The Soviet and imperial legacies of instrumentalizing Orthodoxy, and its connections to Ukrainian nationalism and claims on statehood, turned out to be particularly consequential for the post-Soviet church environment in Ukraine and Filaret's own trajectory.

³³ One example is the 1975 Helsinki Conference, where Ukrainian diaspora and dissident groups aimed to challenge the Soviet Union for human rights' violations, including violating the freedom of religion.

³⁴ "Interview Given by Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev and Galich to a Novosti Press Agency Correspondent." *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, February 20, 1976, 5.

³⁵ TsDAVOU f. 4648, op. 5, spr. 82, ark. 66-7.

³⁶ TsDAVOU f. 4648, op. 5, spr. 128, ark. 216-217.

THE FALL OF THE SOVIET UNION AND A NEW ROLE FOR RUSSIAN ORTHODOXY

Like most Soviet elites, Filaret spent the late 1980s and early 1990s desperately trying to cling to power and his position during years that we now recognize as the Soviet collapse. In the realm of religious institutions, this meant drawing strict boundaries in an atmosphere of liberalization. Filaret's behavior in the years before and immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union can be understood as a continuation of his role as Exarch in pre-Gorbachev Soviet Ukraine. Even as Filaret's positions changed, his understanding of his role did not. In each case, Filaret saw his role as promoting a type of Orthodoxy that would serve the needs of the Ukrainian state, whether Soviet or independent, especially in times of crisis—just as he had in 1968 in Czechoslovakia. Soon enough, the Ukrainian state would see his role this way as well.

In 1988, Gorbachev took the unprecedented step of holding official celebrations and events to commemorate 1,000 years of Christianity in the former Kyivan Rus' lands of the USSR. This celebration has been described as a sea change in official Soviet policy on religion, as it not only acknowledged religion as a part of Soviet life, but seemed to endorse it.³⁷ In light of how the USSR promoted Orthodoxy in Ukraine, I also see these celebrations as a willingness to bring the flexibility reserved for particular Ukrainian contexts to the entirety of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's decision to acknowledge a presence for Orthodoxy in 1988 (and later other religious denominations in the Soviet Union) was not so much a declaration of religious freedom, but an assertion of a revitalized Soviet partnership with various recognized religious institutions inside the USSR. The Greek Catholic Church remained illegal, and was forbidden from participating in official celebrations. In addition, the narrative of the 1988 celebrations reinforced the unity between Russia and Ukraine—at the very moment that some nationally-minded activists were calling this idea of historical union into question.

However, the celebrations of 1988 extended beyond the realm of discourse. As part of the celebration, churches that had been closed in earlier Soviet atheism campaigns were re-opened. Even so, most of these re-opened churches were in areas where agitation for the Greek Catholic and (to a lesser extent) the Ukrai-

³⁷ In her work on Soviet atheism, Victoria Smolkin refers to the millennium of Christianity celebration in 1988 as the end of the Soviet state's scientific atheism project. See Victoria Smolkin, *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty: A History of Soviet Atheism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 2.

nian Autocephalous Church (UAOC),³⁸ were mounting and were re-opened as official Russian Orthodox (Moscow Patriarchate) churches in order to prevent these other groups from claiming them.³⁹ This decision reveals that measures, which on the surface looked like Soviet endorsements of religious freedom, were in reality measures to shape the terms by which religion would become part of Soviet life, just as Stalin's revival of the Russian Orthodox Church had set the terms in 1943.

In the uncertain circumstances of the glasnost era, Filaret attempted to carve out a space for himself and the Ukrainian Exarchate in the changing Soviet Union. This meant discrediting the UAOC and the Greek Catholic Church as both illegitimate and mounting personal attacks against its leadership.⁴⁰ Filaret personally appealed to Soviet state authorities to not invite the Pope to the 1988 Millennium of Christianity celebrations for fear that it would only galvanize the Greek Catholics and "Ukrainian nationalists."⁴¹ In this case, Filaret was following the lead of Soviet state authorities who, despite being open to reforms in religious policy, were just as concerned about the threats of Greek Catholics as they had been when Filaret became exarch in the 1960s.

When the Soviet Union collapsed and Ukraine declared its independence in 1991, Filaret again found himself trying to negotiate a place for himself in changing circumstances, and finding ways he could make his clerical role useful to secular authorities. As Serhii Ploky argues, these changing circumstances meant that from 1991 to 1992 Filaret pivoted sharply from backing a united Russian Orthodox Church to supporting Ukrainian autocephaly.⁴² From 1991 to 1992, Filaret found himself on both sides of various church schisms, eventually supporting the cause of Ukrainian church autocephaly he had previously condemned in order to create a new church, called the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP). The UOC-KP was formed in June 1992 as a way

³⁸ The Ukrainian Autocephalous Church that emerged in Ukraine during the late 1980s was led by clergy and lay activists who sought to resurrect the autocephalous Ukrainian church that had existed in Ukraine (without canonical recognition from Constantinople) beginning in 1921, only to be repressed by Soviet authorities in the 1930s alongside other Ukrainian cultural institutions. The UAOC was brought back briefly during the Nazi occupation, and maintained some support in the diaspora. While the institutional framework for the glasnost-era UAOC's was derived from the Church of the 1920s, UAOC activists trace the origins of their church to the Kyivan Church that began in 988. Sysyn, "The Third Rebirth of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and the Religious Situation in Ukraine, 1989-1991," in *Religion and Nation in Modern Ukraine*, eds. Ploky and Sysyn, 89.

³⁹ Sysyn, "The Third Rebirth," in *Religion and Nation in Modern Ukraine*, 104-5.

⁴⁰ Ploky and Sysyn, eds., *Religion and Nation in Modern Ukraine*, 103.

⁴¹ TsDAVOU f. 4648, op. 7, spr. 399, ark 33-37.

⁴² Serhii Ploky, "Ukrainian Orthodox Autocephaly and Metropolitan Filaret," in *Religion and Nation in Modern Ukraine*, eds. Ploky and Sysyn, 128.

to unify the parishes and clergy of the UAOC with others who had joined Filaret in leaving the Ukrainian Exarchate, and form one Ukrainian autocephalous church.

By 1995, Filaret was selected to lead the UOC-KP as Patriarch. This church was endorsed by Filaret as an alternative to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, a church that was the heir of the Ukrainian Exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, and had previously been led by Filaret himself.⁴³ Those that opposed the creation of the UOC-KP (and Filaret as its leader) continued to maintain separate UAOC parishes in Ukraine.

Many observers at the time saw this pivot as nakedly opportunistic, and Filaret as an individual willing to completely change his outlook based on political trends. This view led to investigations into Filaret's personal life and his finances, as well as his activities in the Soviet-era official Orthodox Church, with many drawing the conclusion that neither seemed appropriate for a Man of God. Theologically-minded observers of Filaret's actions and statements were appalled at Filaret's actions, and rightly so. They pointed to the blatant lack of canonical legitimacy for the ad-hoc arrangements of quasi-autocephaly that Filaret had nearly unilaterally proclaimed.⁴⁴

However, his actions were hardly unique in the "religious marketplace" of post-Soviet Ukraine. In the Galician region of Ukraine, where the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church had been dominant until its forced reunification with Russian Orthodoxy under Soviet rule, the UAOC was able to take hold by drawing on the nationalist trends of the glasnost era. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, as the Greek Catholic Church attempted to return to western Ukraine, the UAOC presented itself as a "Ukrainian" alternative to the Greek Catholic Church. UAOC activists characterized as foreign-based and "Polish", marketing the UAOC as the anti-Soviet and nationalist confessional choice. Characterizing Greek Catholicism as anti-Ukrainian and pro-Polish, in comparison to "authentically Ukrainian" orthodoxy, resembled the narrative deployed by the Soviets during the forced reunification that ended the legal presence of the Greek Catholic Church in the Galician oblasts in 1946.⁴⁵ All the while, the So-

43 The Ukrainian Exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church was renamed "The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate" in 1990 as a reaction to accusations that the Ukrainian Exarchate had been "Russified" and was made up exclusively of Russian clergy and Russian-speakers, with little acknowledgement of local, Ukrainian church traditions. For many activists, this name change did little to address these concerns. Sysyn, "The Third Rebirth," 105.

44 Plokhyy, "Ukrainian Orthodox Autocephaly and Metropolitan Filaret," 129–35.

45 Chris Hann argues that is a direct result of how religion was used and understood under socialism, arguing: "The politicization of religion under socialism meant that no aspect of religious identity after

viet state may have been supporting some efforts of the UAOC in Galicia as a “lesser evil” to Catholicism.⁴⁶

In the rapidly changing environment of the Gorbachev era, religious institutions old and new were finding ways to market themselves to appeal to changing political dynamics. Perhaps singling out Filaret for the egregiousness of his opportunism makes sense in evaluating his legacy, but what is often lost in the discussion is the environment that allowed Filaret to re-invent himself, alongside other Soviet elites. At the same time, Filaret was proposing the creation of a unified autocephalous church after decades of denouncing autocephaly, as Soviet apparatchiks were taking up the mantle of Ukrainian independence after decades of condemning anti-Soviet Ukrainian nationalism. Ultimately, the church that Filaret eventually took the mantle of, the UOC-KP, became the de facto official church of the independent Ukrainian state under President Leonid Kuchma, with more support from the central Ukrainian government than any other religious institution at the time.⁴⁷

By the early 1990s, three churches dominated Ukraine, only one of which had been legal during the Soviet Union: The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP, a successor to the Ukrainian Exarchate that had existed during the USSR); The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP, a church that declared itself to be autocephalous but whose autocephaly was not recognized by either Constantinople or Moscow); and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC, a church whose autocephaly was also not recognized).

While Filaret himself may not have survived the changing church situation with his reputation intact, he did display an understanding of the kind of Orthodoxy that would serve the newly independent Ukrainian state—specifically a church independent from Moscow, but not one that would actively antagonize the new Russian state. Thanks to Ukrainian government support, as well as a politically resonant message, this church attracted Ukrainians who saw it as a legitimate religious institution in the post-Soviet era, even though it was not recognized canonically by Constantinople. While Filaret was eventually excommunicated from the Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow authorities (both

socialism could be free of the political...In some cases this was a direct consequence of the emergence of new sovereign states, but even where the boundaries of political units were not altered, religious revival was intimately connected to the politics of ethnicity and nationalism.” Hann, *The Postsocialist Religious Question*, 7.

⁴⁶ Sysyn, “The Third Rebirth,” 99.

⁴⁷ Plokhyy, “Kyiv vs. Moscow: The Autocephalous Movement In Independent Ukraine,” in *Religion and Nation in Modern Ukraine*, 140.

secular and church) did not see a major threat in the UOC-KP as long as it remained a schismatic, non-canonical church in the eyes of Constantinople. The UOC-MP remained the more popular church in most regions of Ukraine, and the Moscow Patriarchate found that just as in Soviet times, the majority of its parishes were located in Ukraine. Though the designation “Kyiv Patriarchate” necessarily presented the UOC-KP as the heir to the Orthodox Church in Kyivan Rus’, as long as this claim was not supported by Constantinople, it did not threaten Moscow’s legitimacy nor Russia’s claims on the heritage of Kyivan Rus’. Until Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, the UOC-MP and the UOC-KP co-existed relatively peacefully in Ukraine, and only highly religiously observant or politically active parishioners seemed to care about the designation of their priest or parish.⁴⁸

When discussing religion and religious observance after official atheism, historians, anthropologists, and others have made valuable contributions to how the experience of official atheism and Soviet communism has impacted religious observance.⁴⁹ I argue that the Soviet legacy should also be viewed as a critical factor in shaping the religious institutions in post-Soviet cultures, and the ways in which those institutions present their legitimacy to believers and potential believers. In attempts to understand the political cultures of the post-Soviet space, political scientists and activists alike often focus on the contexts that shaped the

⁴⁸ Anthropologist Vlad Naumescu identifies this trend as reflecting an “Orthodox imaginary” that exists throughout Ukraine, and informs attitudes that focus on a shared tradition of religious practice instead of confessional differentiation. Vlad Naumescu, *Modes of Religiosity in Eastern Christianity: Religious Processes and Social Change in Ukraine* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2007). The end of this period of relative calm began during the Maidan protests in 2013. By 2014, during Russia’s annexation of Crimea, some parishes found their congregants demanding to know the affiliation of their priest and church, and in select cases petitioning for the transfer of their church from the Moscow to the Kyiv Patriarchate. See Anatoliy Babnyskyi, “The Complexity and Duplicity of Deciphering the New Ukrainian Law on Religion,” *Public Orthodoxy Blog*, May 22, 2017. <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2017/05/22/church-property-ukraine/>. According to statistics gathered by the Ukrainian government in 2011, the UOC-MP had the largest number of parishes, with 12,251 registered religious communities compared to 4,508 for the UOC-KP and 1,227 for the UAOC [“Religions in Ukraine.” January 1, 2011. *Religious Information Service of Ukraine* <https://risu.org.ua/en/index/reference>]. By 2015, these numbers had changed drastically. According to the Ukrainian think tank the Razumkov Center, the share of those belonging to UOC-KP has risen drastically from 12% of the Orthodox population to 25%. James J. Coyle, “Ukraine May Be Getting Its Own Church, but Not as Fast as Poroshenko thinks,” *Atlantic Council Blog*, April 24, 2018. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/ukraine-may-be-getting-its-own-church-but-not-as-fast-as-poroshenko-thinks>. In a survey conducted, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, the Razumkov Center, and the research group SOCIS, in the fall of 2018 45.2% of Orthodox believers in Ukraine affiliated themselves with the UOC-KP, 17% with the UOC-MP and 2% with the UAOC. “Recent Poll: Majority of Orthodox Ukrainians Affiliate Themselves with the Kyiv Patriarchate,” *Religious Information Service of Ukraine*, September 17, 2018. https://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/community/social_questioning/72673/.

⁴⁹ See for example works by Catherine Wanner, Chris Hann, and Sonja Luehmann.

leadership of these newly independent states. Many have argued that because, in places like Ukraine and Russia, the leadership remains culled from those who gained power within the Soviet system, the political systems created after the collapse operate similarly to Soviet institutions.⁵⁰ In some cases, this had led to calls for lustrations of Soviet officials and the promotion of dissidents, or those viewed as having existed outside the Soviet system, to be leaders of post-Soviet states.⁵¹

Religious institutions and their clergies have, for the most part, escaped these discussions. Because religious institutions, even those officially recognized by the USSR, have been seen as outside and opposed to the Soviet system, their structures have been allowed to maintain continuity across the 1991 divide in ways other institutions have not. Even more importantly, the Soviet legacy of religious institutions' role as an instrument of the state has not been questioned. Filaret is one individual among many who understood this role for a church in a post-Soviet state, and has successfully mobilized it.

Filaret's Next Act: Ukrainian Autocephaly in 2019

On Christmas Day (January 7) 2019, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was officially presented a tomos, an official church document, from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople, recognizing Ukrainian autocephaly for a church to be called the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU). On December 15, 2018, after it had been announced that autocephaly would soon be recognized, the remaining UAOC parishes pledged to join with Filaret's UOC-KP to form one united and canonical Church (the OCU) under the leadership of Metropolitan Epifaniy, with Filaret's unofficial title as "honorary Patriarch," a symbolic and emeritus role.⁵² This development represents a culmination of the instrumentalizing of Orthodoxy by the Ukrainian state, and reflects continuity from the Soviet period. Just as Russian Orthodoxy had been mobilized by Soviet authorities to "reunify" Greek Catholic Ukrainians with other Ukrai-

⁵⁰ See for example, Stephen Kotkin's *Armageddon Averted* for continuities between Soviet and post-Soviet systems and how Soviet elites negotiated the collapse of the USSR.

⁵¹ In particular, this manifested itself in Ukraine during the "Ukraine Without Kuchma" movement in the early 2000s, and again during the Maidan protests in 2013–2014.

⁵² This arrangement, as Roman Romaniuk described in an article for *Ukrains'ka Pravda*, was never put in writing, but was the product of a negotiation between then-President Petro Poroshenko, Filaret and Epifaniy that took place in advance of the December 15th sobor that called for the unification of the autocephalous parishes under one church, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU). The details of this arrangement will be discussed later in the chapter. Roman Romaniuk, "Ottsi i dity. Chomu svariats'ia patriarch Filareta ta mytropolyt Epifaniy," *Ukrains'ka Pravda*, May 15, 2019 <https://www.pravda.com.ua/ukr/articles/2019/05/15/7215131/index.amp>.

nians, and to justify the connections between the Ukrainian and Russian nations, autocephaly has been deployed by the Ukrainian state as a way to assert independence from Russia.

While the campaign for Constantinople to recognize the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as autocephaly is not new—the level of support from the Ukrainian state in this endeavor seemed unprecedented. Filaret himself intimated as much during an interview with the newspaper *Ukrains'ka Pravda*. In response to an interviewer's question about why autocephaly was being granted now, over 25 years after the creation of the UOC-KP, Filaret emphasized the role of Ukraine's political situation and a recognition on behalf of the state of the important role of the Church:

Why after 25 years has the Patriarch of Constantinople made this decision? You should ask him, why he decided not to and then decided to. Why has our president been so aggressive [*napolehlyvo*] in convincing him to give us the *tomos*? Because he has seen that one cannot form a government without a unified, independent Orthodox Church. And because the Church was divided, we had a war and Crimea was annexed.⁵³

In 2018, then-President Petro Poroshenko made Ukrainian church autocephaly a central aspect of his platform, and in 2019 came up with the campaign slogan for re-election, “Army, language, faith.” When autocephaly was granted in 2019, not only did Poroshenko take credit for autocephaly as an accomplishment of his administration, he also connected the recognition of autocephaly with other policy goals he hoped to achieve, including membership in the EU. In an October 2018 tweet, Poroshenko stated:

Autocephaly—it is a meaningful [*naivahomisha*] step [*podia*] in the same category as expressing our desire to join the EU and NATO, our Association Agreement, the no-visa regime with the EU, our exit from the CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States] and our refusal to participate in a “friendship” agreement with Russia as well. All of these provide a foundation for our path toward the development [*rozvytok*] of Ukraine.⁵⁴

53 Roman Romaniuk, Yuriy Panchenko, and Yel'dar Sarakhman, “Patriarkh Filaret: Iakshcho Tomosu nam ne dadut’, to tse oznochaye, shcho Moskva peremohla Vselens’koho patriarkha,” *Ukrains'ka Pravda*, April 14, 2018. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2018/06/14/7183252/>.

54 Petro Poroshenko, Twitter post, October 16, 2018, 2:46pm, <https://twitter.com/poroshenko/status/1053251053360177152>.

Just as Soviet authorities connected the presence of Russian Orthodoxy in Ukraine with secular political goals, including pro-Soviet Ukrainian nationalism, Poroshenko has connected autocephaly with the opposite. In Poroshenko's view, autocephaly would allow Ukraine to break ties with Russia in the economic and political realms, and instead join in with Europe. When the Patriarch of Constantinople officially recognized Ukrainian Church autocephaly, Poroshenko tweeted the following:

we have gained [zdobuvaiemo] spiritual [dukhovnu] independence. We have broken the chains [obrizaiemo puta] that have tied us to the empire. We have returned to our determined path to God, and are moving in our own direction. I am grateful to all the Ukrainians who believed in autocephaly from the very beginning.⁵⁵

Some Ukrainians, including those who support autocephaly, were uncomfortable with the state's explicit role in what they believe should be a sacred matter. In an interview with the *New York Times*, 20-year-old Ukrainian Dmytro Khanenko expressed his unease about how autocephaly was being used by politicians, noting, "I support separating from the Russian church, but I don't like how politics is involved."⁵⁶

While little has been made of the fact that Poroshenko himself played a key role in receiving the tomos of autocephaly in Constantinople, another scandal emerged when a Ukrainian mob boss, Oleksandr Petrovsky (also known as "Narik," which roughly translates to "junkie") was spotted seated next to Poroshenko at an official December religious service celebrating autocephaly. Official statements made on behalf of Poroshenko noted that Petrovsky was invited as an honored guest because of his commitment to Orthodoxy, but many, in both the Ukrainian and Russian media, suspected that organized crime was once again being given a role in the Ukrainian state, even in sacred matters.⁵⁷ However, given how Poroshenko continued to emphasize autocephaly as a crowning

55 Petro Poroshenko, Twitter post, December 16, 2018, 3:01pm, <https://twitter.com/poroshenko/status/1074288501179457536>.

56 Carlotta Gall, "Ukrainian Orthodox Christians Formally Break From Russia," *The New York Times*, January 6, 2019 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/06/world/europe/orthodox-church-ukraine-russia.html>.

57 Tetiana Nikolaienko, "Bid reketu do tomosu: khto takyi Narik poriad z prezidentom," *Ukrains'ka Pravda*, January 17, 2019 <https://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2019/01/17/7204015/>; "Kto takoi 'Narik'? Pochemu vse govoriat ob Aleksandre Petrovskom," *Novoe Vremia*, January 13, 2019 <https://nv.ua/ukraine/events/kto-takoj-narik-pochemu-vse-hovorjat-ob-aleksandre-petrovskom-2516651.html>.

political achievement, Dmytro's view was clearly perceived by Ukrainian state actors as being in the minority, while other concerns about the separation of church and state were brushed aside.⁵⁸ The state-led campaign for autocephaly fits in well with both the Soviet and immediate post-Soviet role for Orthodoxy and its role in Ukraine, in which the church served as both a symbol of a contested historical legacy and an instrument that could be deployed by the state in shaping interpretations of this legacy.

Moments of state mobilization of Orthodoxy in Ukraine, whether in the Ukrainian SSR or today's independent Ukraine, often lay bare the vast discrepancy between what the Orthodox Church ought to symbolize and the realities of the connections between Russia and Ukraine. Imperial Russia used the presence of Russian Orthodox communities, or in the case of the Greek Catholics the *former* presence, to justify the annexation of territory and claims on populations outside its borders. Soviet authorities, both secular and religious, mobilized the existence of the Russian Orthodox Church to make claims about the historic unity of the Russian, Ukrainian and Belarussian peoples, and to counter nationalist claims that challenged that history.

These same projections can also be applied to the Ukrainian autocephalous church. Just as Soviet authorities engineered a confessional transfer to Russian Orthodoxy in West Ukraine at the very moment when Galician Ukrainians were violently challenging their incorporation into the Soviet Union, Ukraine declared autocephaly at the very moment when it could not extricate itself from a relationship with Russia. While the Ukrainian Church may now be autocephalous, large swaths of Ukrainian land have been annexed by Russia or occupied by pro-Russian separatists. Despite formal economic sanctions and trade embargoes, Ukraine's economy remains interwoven with Russia's. Filaret's own hometown of Donetsk is now located in contested territory.

Poroshenko explained the decision to seek autocephaly as being in the interest of national security—arguing that as long as Russia is at war with Ukraine, the ecclesiastical authority of Ukraine's majority confessions must be canon-

⁵⁸ In her work, anthropologist Nancy Ries notes how intertwined organized crime has become with the state in post-Soviet Russia, challenging our categories of state actors versus criminal actors. The role of organized crime in the Ukrainian state seems to be a similar one, and thus Petrovsky's presence at various ceremonies of autocephaly may be considered a further demonstration of the role of the state in the process of autocephaly, a state that is deeply connected to organized crime. See Nancy Ries, "'Honest Bandits' and 'Warped People': Russian Narratives about Money, Corruption, and Moral Decay," in *Ethnography in Unstable Places: Everyday Lives in Contexts of Dramatic Political Change*, edited by Carol J. Greenhouse, Elizabeth Mertz, and Kay B. Warren, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 276–315.

cally recognized as separate from Moscow. In a similar vein, Poroshenko's government investigated the activities of the UOC-MP in the name of preventing Russia from using UOC-MP priests to spread "pro-Russian propaganda", despite little evidence of these activities.⁵⁹

I see the state's interest in autocephaly as defending a national security of a more theoretical, existential type. Canonically recognized autocephaly is the official, international validation of Ukraine as an independent state with a history separate from Russia. As Orthodox theologians point out, the organizing principle for Orthodox Churches and recognition of their autocephaly is territory, not ethnicity. The Church in Ukraine's existence within a Ukrainian sovereign state, a territory separate from Russia, ought to form the basis for autocephaly, even as the congregation of the Church itself includes self-defined Russians and other non-Ukrainian nationalities.⁶⁰ As Nicholas Denysenko explains, claims for autocephaly based on a separate church for a separate nationality have historically been dismissed if they claim to supersede or disregard the authority of the state. In his discussion of the debates around autocephaly for the Macedonian church, Zachary Irwin notes that, "Autocephaly entails not only juridical authority within the Church, but also political symbolism and canonical consequences neither fully consistent nor obvious. The status of an Orthodox community depends on the traditions and meaning of the concept as understood by the Church leadership."⁶¹ In the case of Ukraine, recognizing autocephaly for Ukraine means recognizing Ukraine as a sovereign state, separate from Russia, as well as acknowledging the history of Ukraine's autonomy and autonomous church traditions.⁶² While Russian Orthodox hierarchs in the

⁵⁹ "Ukrainian Police Search Moscow-Aligned Orthodox Churches, Homes of Priests," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)*, December 4, 2019 <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-orthodox-police-searches/29636181.html>.

⁶⁰ This principle, as Metropolitan Kallistos Ware and others have explained, is what was adopted at the 1872 Council of Constantinople with the decree against "phyletism" (which Metropolitan Ware defines as the negative aspects of nationalism). As Metropolitan Ware notes, "in the legislation of the holy canons, the bishop presides, not over an ethnic group, but over a defined territory (238). Metropolitan Kallistos Ware of Diokleia, "Neither Jew nor Greek": Catholicity and Ethnicity" *St. Vladimir's theological quarterly* 57 nos. 3-4 (2013): 235-47.

⁶¹ Zachary T. Irwin, "The Macedonian Orthodox Church in the New Millennium," in *Orthodox Churches and Politics in Southeastern Europe*, edited by Sabrina P. Ramet (New York: Palgrave, 2019), 168-69. In Macedonia, the socialist Yugoslav state originally supported church autocephaly because of the Macedonian clergy's support for the partisan movement during WWII. Like Orthodoxy in Soviet Russia and Ukraine, supporting or condemning church autocephaly could buttress national claims even within a socialist state.

⁶² Nicholas Denysenko, "A Communion of the Holy Spirit in Ukraine: A Theological Rationale for Autocephaly," *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 56, nos. 1-2 (2015): 7. State sovereignty is not the only measure by which churches are recognized as autocephalous. Churches must also have,

Moscow Patriarchate recognize Ukraine as a sovereign state, they have disputed Ukrainian church claims for autocephaly by claiming it does not represent the will of Ukraine's Orthodox believers, who see their church community united through the church's roots in Holy Rus' and the historical borders of Kyivan Rus' that united, not divided, Russians, Ukrainians and Belarussians.⁶³ In response to the Ecumenical Patriarch's initial recognition of Ukrainian autocephaly in 2018, the Russian Orthodox Church severed its full communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople.⁶⁴

While there are other measures of Ukraine's independence that have also been recognized and validated by international authorities, many of these measures carry the historical baggage that has been deployed to contest Ukrainian autonomy over the last century.⁶⁵ One example is Ukraine's borders. As they stand today, Ukraine's borders remain the same borders that were set and ratified by the Soviet Union in 1954. This historical legacy has most often been brought up to contest Ukraine's claim on the Crimean Peninsula, since Crimea was "given" to Ukraine by Soviet central authorities in Moscow in 1954. As long as Russia continues to declare itself the heir to the Soviet state, it can convincingly (for some) argue that it has the right to take Crimea from Ukraine since it was the one who set those borders in the first place. An even more relevant example, though, are Ukraine's borders as they were set in 1945. After World War Two, the Ukrainian SSR was expanded to include the regions of East Galicia, Bukovina, Bessarabia, Transcarpathian Rus' and Volhynia. The annexation of these regions was justified by Soviet authorities by identifying these regions as historically having been Ukrainian territories. Soviet authorities made this argument by pointing to the historic presence of the Russian Orthodox Church in these areas and their connection to the historic state of Kyivan Rus'. This same history that was deployed to set Ukraine's borders in 1945 is now being deployed by Russia to make claims over the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, as well as cer-

as Denysenko enumerates, a system of apostolic succession manifested in the office of the bishop and a commitment to preach to all nations.

63 Denysenko, "A Communion of the Holy Spirit in Ukraine," 4.

64 In assessing the situation in the present-day Czech Republic and Slovakia, Frank Cibulka notes that most European churches, which in recent history have been closer to Moscow than to Constantinople, have supported the position of the Moscow Patriarchate without going as far as to sever their own ties with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Frank Cibulka, "The Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia: Survival of a Minority Faith in a Secular Society," in *Orthodox Churches and Politics in Southeastern Europe*, edited by Sabrina Ramet (New York: Palgrave, 2019), 241.

65 In a seminal essay "Does Ukraine Have a History?" Mark Von Hagen explains how these issues have manifested in the field of historical research, specifically the neglect of Ukraine in serious scholarship because of the contested nature of Ukraine's statehood. Mark Von Hagen, "Does Ukraine Have a History?" *Slavic Review* 54, no. 3 (1995): 658–73.

tain Ukrainian territories. While post-Soviet Ukraine has justified its presence as an independent state on different terms, the reality of its borders from the Soviet era remaining unchanged means that the claims made by Soviet authorities to create a Soviet Ukraine necessarily co-exist alongside claims made by an independent Ukraine. The granting of autocephaly, then, is an endorsement of a vision of a Ukrainian state that can both claim its origins in Kyivan Rus', as well as its separation from Russia. In a way, this is a form of national security.

The Fate of Filaret

The now canonically recognized autocephalous Church that Filaret helped build is no longer under his leadership. In an interview with *Radio Svoboda*, Filaret admitted that he doubts autocephaly would have been granted to the church if he were still its leader, perhaps recognizing his dubious credentials.⁶⁶ For his part, Poroshenko used his time in office to recognize Filaret's contributions to autocephaly, awarding Filaret the prestigious "Hero of Ukraine Award" in January of 2019.⁶⁷ The presidential press service said that Filaret earned the award for his "outstanding historical role in the establishment of an independent Orthodox Church of Ukraine, activities aimed at reviving the spirituality of the Ukrainian people, strengthening the authority of Orthodoxy and promoting ideals of compassion and interreligious harmony."⁶⁸ In a Facebook post regarding the award, Poroshenko wrote:

A scale that could be used to measure the contribution of Patriarch Filaret in fighting for an independent church has yet to be invented. He was, is and, remains the spiritual leader of the Ukrainian Church, the spiritual leader of the Ukrainian people.⁶⁹

While Filaret may still be considered the "spiritual leader" of Ukraine by Poroshenko, he is no longer the *de jure* leader of the Ukrainian Church. The

66 Inna Kuznetsova, *Subotne Interv'iu [Saturday Interview Series]*, *Radio Svoboda*, December 22, 2018 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xLkhcCl-tA>.

67 Filaret's work has also been recognized by the Soviet state. He was awarded an "Order of the Friendship of the Peoples" award in 1980 and the "Order of the Red Banner of Labor" in 1988, as part of his role in the millennium of Christianity celebrations.

68 "Poroshenko decides to award 'Hero of Ukraine' title to Patriarch Filaret," *UNIAN*, January 9, 2019 <https://www.unian.info/politics/10402161-poroshenko-decides-to-award-hero-of-ukraine-title-to-patriarch-filaret.html>.

69 Petro Poroshenko, Facebook post, January 8, 2019, 1:14pm, <https://www.facebook.com/petroporoshenko/photos/a.474415532692842/1502900753177645/?type=3&theater>.

leader of the autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church is Metropolitan Epifaniy, who is from a decidedly different generation from Filaret. Born in 1979 in the Odesa region, and raised near Chernivtsi in southwestern Ukraine (both part of the Ukrainian SSR), he was not even a teenager when the Soviet Union collapsed. He entered the Kyiv Theological Seminary (UOC-KP) in 1996, only a few years after Filaret's UOC-KP had been founded.⁷⁰ Yet, from the start, Metropolitan Epifaniy demonstrated his understanding of the role of the Ukrainian state in securing the tomos of autocephaly, and likely his own appointment as the Church's new leader. On Christmas Day 2019, Poroshenko stood by Epifaniy's side as they walked into Kyiv's Saint Sophia's Cathedral together, carrying the tomos of autocephaly.⁷¹ A week earlier in a New Year's tweet, Epifaniy posted that he hoped that the new year would bring "a victorious end of the war in the east of Ukraine and the return of the annexed Crimea, which means the advance of peace in our long-suffering Homeland."⁷² From the first months as leader of Ukraine's new Orthodox Church, Epifaniy demonstrated the church's role as a partner to Poroshenko and his state's goal for the Ukrainian people.

In the year since autocephaly was recognized, the arrangements that Filaret made with Epifaniy and then-President Poroshenko to unify Ukrainian Orthodoxy quickly fell apart. Metropolitan Epifaniy eventually rejected the model proposed by Filaret for church leadership, which allowed Filaret to serve as "honorary" Patriarch. According to journalist Roman Romaniuk, the arrangements for a joint leadership of the church made in advance of the January 2019 tomos, which were negotiated by Filaret, Epifaniy and then-President Poroshenko, were never put into writing or discussed with the Ecumenical Patriarch. Thus, the tomos that recognized church autocephaly for Ukraine recognized the leadership of the Kyiv Metropolitan, the title that Epifaniy, not Filaret, holds. What Filaret, Epifaniy and Poroshenko negotiated was that Filaret would hold on to responsibility for the internal affairs of the Church, while Epifaniy, as Kyiv Metropolitan, would represent the Church to the wider Or-

⁷⁰ "Mytropolyt Epifaniy (Dumenko)–Predstoiatel' Novoï Ukraïns'koï Tservky," *Religious Information Service of Ukraine*, December 15, 2018, https://risu.org.ua/ua/index/all_news/state/national_religious_question/73918.

⁷¹ "Ukrainian Christians celebrate their first Christmas under an independent church," *The Economist*, January 7, 2019 <https://www.economist.com/erasmus/2019/01/07/ukrainian-christians-celebrate-their-first-christmas-under-an-independent-church>.

⁷² "Metropolitan Epifaniy: May the new year give us hope for a victorious end of the war," *UNIAN*, January 1, 2019 <https://www.unian.info/politics/10396464-metropolitan-epifaniy-may-new-year-give-us-hope-for-victorious-end-of-war.html>.

thodox world. As Romaniuk observes, this arrangement does not follow a clear precedent or reflect institutional customs within Orthodoxy. With the support of key allies within the Church, Epifaniy has taken the leadership role of the Church that his title, Kyiv Metropolitan suggests, sidelining Filaret and preventing him from gaining a foothold as a “symbolic” leader” in the summer of 2019.⁷³ In the meantime, Filaret’s patron in the Ukrainian state, Poroshenko, lost re-election in a landslide.

Filaret did not agree to go quietly. As of January 2020, he withdrew his support from plans to liquidate the UOC-KP, a necessary step to pave the way for one unified autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine under state law.⁷⁴ The divisions that remain among clergy affiliated with separate church institutions, that both claim to be autocephalous Ukrainian churches, have legal implications in terms of ownership of church property and other assets. Contemporary observers have taken note that these public divisions within the clergy have not helped the OCU in gaining parishes and congregants. The tomos of autocephaly, and the subsequent creation of the OCU, has not led to a mass movement of parishioners and clergy toward the new church. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate still remains the most popular church in the country.⁷⁵

Unlike his predecessor Petro Poroshenko, current Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky has not publicly waded into church affairs. In a powerful and controversial New Year’s Address to the Ukrainian people, Zelensky acknowledged and celebrated the diversity of the Ukrainian people in terms of native language, political views and religious belief, but urged the Ukrainian people to focus on what unites them, instead of divided them. In enumerating these differences, he mentions Ukrainians who celebrate Christmas on December 25th and those who celebrate on January 7th. In emphasizing the importance of unity, Zelensky asked in his speech, “Is it important to anyone which churches [Leonid] Kadeniuk and [Valeriy] Lobanovs’kyi attended?” For Zelensky, the notion that famed astronaut Leonid Kadeniuk and soccer coach

73 Roman Romaniuk, “Otsi i dity. Chomu svariats’ia patriarch Filareta ta mytropolyt Epifaniy,” *Ukrains’ka Pravda*, May 15, 2019 <https://www.pravda.com.ua/ukr/articles/2019/05/15/7215131/index.amp>.

74 “Filaret vidklykav sviy pidpys rishenniam pro likvidatsiiu UPTs-KP,” *Ukrains’ka Pravda*, January 10, 2020 <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2020/01/10/7237011/>.

75 Svitlana Goyko, “The Phanar worries about Ukrainian Church’s Future,” *New Eastern Europe*, October 31, 2019 <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2019/10/31/the-%EF%BB%BFphanar-worries-about-ukrainian-churchs-future/>; Thomas Bremer, “Toward a new ecclesiological paradigm? Consequences of the Ukrainian autocephaly” *Public Orthodoxy*, January 14, 2020 <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2020/01/14/toward-a-new-ecclesiological-paradigm-consequences-of-the-ukrainian-autocephaly/>.

Valeriy Lobanov'skyi both distinguished themselves in their field on the world stage as Ukrainians, supersedes any of their differing confessional affiliations for the Ukrainian public.

In posing this question, Zelensky still acknowledged the weight of church divisions in Ukrainian society. In the context of the speech, the question on church affiliation is paired with a host of divisive issues within Ukrainian politics, including plans for ending the war in eastern Ukraine, membership in NATO and trade regulations. Even as Zelensky brings up these issues to insist that Ukrainians must overcome their differences and celebrate their common heritage, he is also calling attention to what he views as the debates that divide the Ukrainian people. The recognition of autocephaly that his predecessor Poroshenko championed may have energized Poroshenko's electoral base in western Ukraine, but it did not get him re-elected. As of 2020, Zelensky has taken a different approach, and has sought friendly relations between the Ukrainian state and all Orthodox Church leaders. In response to the split between Metropolitan Epifaniy and Filaret and ongoing tensions between the UOC-MP and the autocephalous churches, Zelensky called for unity between all church leaders, tweeting that faith should be something that unites Ukrainians, not divides them.⁷⁶ In an interview with Ukrainian network "5 Kanal" (owned by Poroshenko), Metropolitan Epifaniy explained that Zelensky told him that the Ukrainian state would now have an "equidistant" [*rivnoviddalene*] relationship with all Orthodox churches. Still, Zelensky did travel to Istanbul to meet with the Ecumenical Patriarch in the summer of 2019, a move that Epifaniy said reflects Zelensky's understanding of the importance of church autocephaly.⁷⁷ In an interview the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew did with a Ukrainian journalist during the visit, Bartholomew criticized both the Moscow Patriarchate for their refusal to accept Ukrainian autocephaly and Filaret for "taking the wrong path" in his relationship with Metropolitan Epifaniy.⁷⁸

Even if Filaret had remained unified with Epifaniy, Ukraine's church situation would still be a difficult one. As a scholar of Orthodoxy, Thomas Bremer has noted that Ukraine is the only predominantly Orthodox country in the world where two canonical Orthodox churches exist side by side. Reflecting on

76 "Zelens'kiy zaklykav predstoiateliv tserkov do dialohy," *Ukrains'ka Pravda*, July 28, 2019 <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2019/07/28/7222138/>.

77 "Predstoiatel' PTsU rozkazav, chy spilkuet'sia iz Zelens'kym," *5 Kanal*, January 15, 2020 <https://www.5.ua/suspilstvo/predstoiatel-ptsu-rozkazav-chy-spilkuetsia-iz-zelenskym-206239.html>.

78 "Patriarkh Varfolomiy eksliuzyvno rozpoviv pro zazikhannia Rossii na ukrains'ku tserkvu ta dii vladiky Filareta," *Tyzhden*, July 14, 2019 <https://1plus1.video/tyzhden/tsn-za-20190714-patriarkh-varfolomij-eksklyuzivno-rozpoviv-pro-zazikhannya-rosiyyi-na-ukrayinsku-cerkvu-ta-diyi-vladiki-filareta>.

the situation in Ukraine, Bremer has proposed a new ecclesiological paradigm that would allow for multiple Orthodox Churches in one territory, a situation that already exists in Orthodox diasporas in North America and elsewhere.⁷⁹ For Bremer, a new paradigm must be developed to reflect Ukraine's complex history of overlapping sovereignties, and to acknowledge that Orthodox "unity" may never be Ukraine's fate.

CONCLUSIONS

In Filaret's nearly 100-year lifetime, the closest Ukraine came to one church, one nation was under the officially atheist Soviet Union. The Soviet vision for Russian Orthodoxy in Ukraine that Filaret promoted (willingly or not) still seems to influence Filaret and his puzzling career today. Autocephaly, the latest chapter in the Orthodox Church's role in Ukraine, demonstrates the continuities between the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, in addition to the religious institutions created and contested in the interim. Filaret's ability to bridge the gap between official Orthodoxy in Soviet Ukraine and autocephalous Orthodoxy in independent Ukraine calls our attention to these continuities, and how Orthodoxy remains today a convenient instrument of the state. The connectedness or separation of Ukraine and Russia in history, the legacy of Kyivan Rus', claiming contested territories and populations—these issues have all been mediated by a partnership between the Ukrainian and Russian states and Orthodox institutions. Even as Russia and Ukraine define their states and (in some cases) nations as multiconfessional, the Orthodox Church, whether "Russian" or "Ukrainian Autocephalous," remains the first among equals in political partnerships. The Soviet Union's willingness to draw on and redefine the church's imperial legacy as a tool of a multiconfessional empire has set the terms for Orthodoxy's capacity to remain resonant in the politics of belonging in the reunified and re-divided lands that once made up Kyivan Rus'. In the twenty-first century independent Ukraine and Russia, clergy who are willing to provide a vision of Orthodoxy easily mobilized by secular authorities can find long and successful careers ahead of them. Poroshenko's willingness to negotiate for a role for Filaret outside of official church and state channels is just one example of this.

Yet, the split between Metropolitan Epifaniy and Filaret, and Zelensky's hands-off approach in Ukraine, may signal the waning influence of the Soviet

79 Bremer, "Toward a new ecclesiological paradigm?"

legacy in Ukrainian church politics. While Epifaniy and Filaret's decisions can be understood as attempts at power grabs, they have portrayed their ambitions as being connected to divergent visions for Ukraine and its religious life. Filaret's ability to negotiate a place for religious life hinged on his willingness to work with the state, even if it meant suppressing other religious movements and promoting secular interests over religious ones. Metropolitan Epifaniy may be as ambitious as Filaret, but never had to make the kind of compromises a Soviet clergyman was expected to make. For Filaret, he may feel his experience entitles him to lead a newly recognized autocephalous church through the challenges of war and economic decline that Ukrainians continue to face. For Epifaniy, the recognition of autocephaly by Constantinople is an opportunity for a clean break, for an end to the various ad hoc arrangements and divided churches that characterized religious life under Filaret in the 1990s. As journalist Roman Romaniuk suggests, the divide between Epifaniy and Filaret may best be understood as a generational one—between Soviet fathers and post-Soviet sons.⁸⁰ Filaret's latest fall from grace raises the question of whether the clergy of the Soviet generation may soon find themselves phased out of post-Soviet religious life. Yet, even as Metropolitan Epifaniy distances himself from Filaret and his Soviet and post-Soviet career, it remains to be seen whether the connections between church, state and nation forged and mobilized during the Soviet era become part of Metropolitan Epifaniy and his Orthodox Church of Ukraine's path forward.

80 Roman Romaniuk, "Ottsi i dity. Chomu svariatsia patriarch Filareta ta mytropolyt Epifaniy," *Ukrains'ka Pravda*, May 15, 2019 <https://www.pravda.com.ua/ukr/articles/2019/05/15/7215131/index.amp>.

Radio Maryja and Fr. Rydzyk as a Creator of the National-Catholic Ideology¹

Ireneusz Krzemiński

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The role of the Catholic Church in the Polish political transformation process is important and unambiguous. Generally speaking, the activity of the Church in the Polish People's Republic (PRL) favored the formation of independent attitudes and beliefs in society. The Church progressively became a voice of fundamental social values and a defender of freedom and pro-democracy initiatives—even if these were the initiatives of groups that were not tied to the faith or the Church, or were even quite distanced from them, in fact, as was sometimes the case with democratic opposition circles in the 1970s. On the other hand, significant gestures made by representatives of these environments were conducive to creating a common social and political front with the Church in the struggle with the party/state for democracy and civil rights. I am speaking of such significant gestures as the famous book by Adam Michnik, one of the organizers of the Workers' Defense Committee, *The Church and the Left*, which still has great symbolic value today.²

¹ This chapter was originally published in Sabrina P. Ramet and Irena Borowik, eds, *Religion, Politics, and Values in Poland* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 85–112. It is reproduced in this volume with permission of SNCSC.

² Adam Michnik, *The Church and the Left*, trans. from Polish by David Ost, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Many authors have written about the role of the Workers' Defense Committee (KOR), as well as the church, in the democratic opposition, especially Michael H. Bernhard, *The Origins of Democratization in Poland: Workers, Intellectuals, and Oppositional Politics, 1976–1980* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). Other works that are worth noting are: David Ost, *Solidarity and Politics of Anti-politics: Opposition and Reform in Poland since 1968* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990); and Jan Kubik, *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power: The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland* (University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994). See also: Seweryn Blumsztajn, *Je rentre au pays: Polonais, Juif, membre du KOR et de Solidarité* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1985). The most important Polish works on the topic are: Andrzej Friszke, *Czas KOR-u: Jacek Kuron a geneza Solidarności* (Kraków: Zakład, Institute of

In the 1980s, after the implementation of martial law and the dissolution of the Independent Trade Union Solidarity—the great social movement of Poles—the Church gained a high position as an actor that had actively supported Solidarity and the movement of social reforms. The attitudes and actions of individual priests and pastors were varied. Not every priest, and certainly not every pastor, had endorsed and supported the illegal movement. Nevertheless, the Church had become a real public space in the gloomy 1980s and undoubtedly contributed to the victory of an independent society.³ The turning point of 1989 created completely new conditions and opened up new opportunities for the social functioning of the Church. In the communist era, the Church had been an effective force of social and moral opposition to an oppressive power. The opposing attitude of the Church toward the communist political system consolidated it clearly, establishing its basic goals and tasks. However, the fall of communism instantly divided it and problematized the position of the Church in a new way. First of all, the Church was one of the first social actors that benefited from the disappearance of any administrative constraints on its actions. The newly acquired freedom meant that new forms of evangelization and different religious models began to crystallize.⁴ The Church also very quickly began to define sharply its moral and social message, ceasing to be an open space for people with different, sometimes contradictory attitudes and motivations and plans of action. One can risk stating that the Church very quickly decided to undermine its undoubted accomplishments in favor of trying to secure political influence in the new state. Varied and even divergent definitions of the socio-moral role of the Church emerged within its confines, and some of the old traditions came to the fore, including some which had seemed to be completely destroyed during the communist period as well as traditions, which also seemed to be outdated in their ideological message in light of the events of the most recent Polish history. Against this background, it is worth looking at Radio Maryja as one of those ideological centers, whose importance grew very quickly. The ideological achievements of this special religious media and political actor, at the moment, seem

Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, 2011); and Jan Skórzyński, *Sila bezsilnych. Historia Komitetu Obrony Robotników* (Warsaw: Świat Książki, 2012). English version see: Jan Skórzyński, "Polish Democratic Thought, 1968-89. The Long March to Capitalism," in *The Origins of Modern Polish Democracy*, eds. M.B.B. Biskupski, J. S. Pula, and P. J. Wróbel (Ohio University Press, 2010), 238–71.

³ A very important monograph of the role of the Catholic Church in Poland and especially its role during the Solidarity period, mainly in the 1980s is: Maryjane Osa, *Solidarity and Contention: Networks of Polish Opposition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

⁴ Mirosława Grabowska, "Radio Maryja – polska prawicoreligijna," *Miesięcznik Znak*, no. 640 (2008), at <http://www miesiecznik.znak.com.pl/6402008mirosława-grabowska-radio-maryja-polska-prawica-religijna/>.

incomparably more important for the mainstream of the Polish Church than might have been expected earlier. Especially, since earlier such vitally important centres of Catholic thought as Kraków's *Znak* (Sign) and *Tygodnik Powszechny* (Catholic weekly) and Warsaw's *Więź* (Bond), which affected most of the Polish intelligentsia, apparently lost their significance. Unfortunately, the following presentation will not answer the question of why this happened. However, it may contribute to such a response. Radio Maryja has, since the beginning of its operation, tried to connect itself with the tradition of the so-called Polish Endecja, or National Democratic Party, which had been active in the interwar period, in close cooperation with the Catholic Church and enjoying its strong support.⁵

THE HISTORY OF RADIO MARYJA AND THE MEDIA CONGLOMERATE OF FR. TADEUSZ RYDZYK

Radio Maryja (RM) started broadcasting on 9 December 1991 in Toruń. The initiator of the Catholic radio station was Fr. Tadeusz Rydzyk,⁶ who belongs to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, whose priests are popularly called Redemptorists. The concession to broadcast a radio programme was granted to the Warsaw Province of Redemptorists by the Polish National Council of Radio and Television (KRRiT). The concession stated that: "The programme will present issues relating to the Christian faith and the problems of social life from the point of view of faith and the social teachings of the Catholic Church. The programme will seek to instill Christian values." It also stated that "it will not contain advertising and sponsored programmes."⁷ The last point is significant to the extent that, among other things, such a condition is placed on social broadcasters who are exempt from paying concession fees, and RM has had such a status since 2001.⁸ The concession also specifies the time allotment for programmes on

5 The best monograph on the history, see Ronald Modras, *The Catholic Church and Antisemitism in Poland 1933–1939* (Chur: The Vidal Sassoon International Centre for the Study of Antisemitism and Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994).

6 The term "Catholic" when applied to media and journalists is explained as the "structural communion with the hierarchy and authorities of the Church—diocesan and religious—consisting of the presence of an Ecclesiastical Assistant on the editorial board or the fact that the owner of the given medium is a Church organization or institution" according to Grzegorz Łęcicki, "Media katolickie w III Rzeczypospolitej (1989–2009)," *Kultura-Media-Teologia*, No. 2(2) (2010): 114.

7 Concession No. 003/K/2008-R, <http://www.krrit.gov.pl/>.

8 RM has broken the rule of not broadcasting advertisements several times, for which KRRiT imposed financial penalties on the station. I.a. decision no. 3/2014, message from KRRiT: *Hidden advertising messages are forbidden*. <http://www.krrit.gov.pl/krrit/aktualnosci/news,1511,ukryty-przekaz-handlowy-jest-zakazany.html>.

specific topics in the weekly programme; for example, “news commentary programmes about social affairs shall comprise less than 8% of the weekly broadcast programme.” Radio Maryja’s license for nationwide broadcasting has repeatedly been renewed by KRRiT since 1994. The actual nature of RM’s programme seems to fulfill the concession guidelines, because religious programmes far exceed the minimum requirement of 30% and play a very important role in the programme. The daily network schedule includes religious programmes (Liturgy of the Hours,⁹ the broadcast of the Holy Mass., a Chaplet for Divine Mercy, the broadcast from the Appeal in Jasna Góra). Social and advice broadcasts also make up a significant portion of the programme (an ecologist’s advice, medical advice, reading programmes, opera programmes, News from Vatican Radio). Socio-political broadcasts have become especially important (on the media, government and intelligence services, Information Service, News), and above all “Unfinished conversations” (*Rozmowy niedokończone*).¹⁰ We will discuss in a moment how the message of the station is actually constructed.

Father Tadeusz Rydzyk did not stop at Radio Maryja, but created an entire group of institutions. They are often referred to as Fr. Rydzyk’s “empire.” The phrase has entered the vocabulary of everyday language, which is also evidence of the importance of the cultural phenomenon that is RM. Of course, the term “empire” has pejorative connotations, and the person controlling it should be called an emperor, which evokes decidedly negative connotations, although for many commentators they are completely justified.¹¹ If one wanted to use less judgmental terms, then a potentially useful phrase could be *media company* or *holding company*. However, the structure of Fr. Tadeusz Rydzyk’s institution does not meet the organizational criteria in order to apply these concepts. Above all, the structural relationships are clearly personal in nature. So it is best to use the term “media conglomerate,” as proposed by Piotr Migas¹² in one of the texts which scientifically analyses the case of Radio Maryja. The name best captures the meaning of Fr. Rydzyk’s complex organization and it is not emotionally charged like the term “empire” is.

⁹ The Liturgy of the Hours is a Christian prayer said seven times a day.

¹⁰ The list of programmes based on the Radio Maryja schedule, as at September 12, 2015, <http://www.radiomaryja.pl/antena/programme/dzisiaj/>; Programme Title: “Unfinished Conversations,” changes on a daily basis, its guest on September 12, 2015 was Lower Chamber MP Antoni Macierewicz, appointed on November 16, 2015 as the Minister of Defence in the new government of the Republic of Poland of the Law and Justice Party.

¹¹ The terms Emperor were used by Piotr Głuchowski and Jacek Hołub as the title of the reportage-like biography about Rev. Tadeusz Rydzyk.

¹² Piotr Migas, “Konglomerat Medialny Radia Maryja,” *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze*, No. 1-2 (181-182) (2005): 33

How was the media conglomerate Radio Maryja created and what is it comprised of? Well, it consists mostly of foundations, and their president is Fr. Rydzyk. The nationally distributed newspaper *Nasz Dziennik* (Our daily) is a formally independent institution founded at the beginning of 1998 and published by Spes Ltd. Despite being institutionally independent, it works closely with the radio station and the TRWAM television channel. Every day, editors of *Nasz Dziennik* prepare a news broadcast (Aktualności) and participate in editing news services. Father Rydzyk is the founder of the Spes Foundation and sits on its board.

The most important part of his operation is the “Lux Veritatis” (LV) Foundation, which was also created in 1998. The School of Social and Media Culture in Toruń, which is a private institution, is also part of the foundation. The school was established in 2001, converted from a university that was previously known as the St. Maximilian Kolbe School of Journalism. In 2003, the Lux Veritatis Foundation obtained a license to distribute via satellite a television programme called “TRWAM.” This is how the television station TRWAM was established. It is a programming and ideological counterpart to RM, although it does not have the status of a social broadcaster. KRRiT extended the license granted under the existing terms in 2012, but it did not approve the foundation’s proposal to expand the terms of the license to include the right to transmit the signal digitally and terrestrially in the first multiplex. This has become a cause of a bitter social conflict, which will be discussed later. KRRiT changed its decision a year later.

Another institution was established in 2011. During the celebration of the 20th anniversary of RM in 2011, the launch of the mobile service “In our family” was announced. It was established under an agreement between the LV Foundation and the cooperative credit unions called SKOK.¹³

In addition, other foundations were created at the end of the 1990s. These include the “Our Future” Foundation and “Servire Veritati – Institute of National Education,” which carry out perhaps less spectacular, yet still significant activities. The first is essentially a publishing house promoting literature with Christian values. Every year it publishes the “Radio Maryja Family Calendar,” and in the years 1997–2009, it published the monthly “Family of Radio Maryja,” later replaced by the monthly, “In Our Family.”¹⁴ Since 1998, the

¹³ Jacek Dytkowski, “Startuje ‘w naszej Rodzinie’,” *Nasz Dziennik* (3–4 December 2011), at <http://stary.naszdziennik.pl/index.php?dat=20111203&typ=po&id=po23.txt>.

¹⁴ *Fundacja Nasza Przyszłość* [Foundation our future], https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fundacja_Nasza_Przyszłość C5%82o%C5%9B%C4%87.

foundation has also sponsored a private high school and middle school in the town of Szczecinek.

In turn, the foundation, *Servire Veritati* – Institute of National Education, was registered in 1998. The foundation's website says that it "serves to uncover the truth—which has become imperceptible, silenced, transformed, and distorted in the learning process at different levels of the educational system."¹⁵ The foundation implements its statutory activities through organizing training for teachers (School of National Education), the Academy of Social Skills, scientific conferences, as well as its publishing activity. As can be seen, the foundations, especially the latter ones, were established for the purpose of carrying out broad social, public relations, and missionary activities. It is in this context that the nature of the mission of Radio Maryja and its focus on contact with the audience should be considered.

The station, or rather the organizer and manager of the Radio Maryja conglomerate, has repeatedly come into conflict with the law and with the institution which supervises the media in Poland, as I have already mentioned. First, the National Council of Radio and Television has fined Radio Maryja for broadcasting commercials, which it was not entitled to do as a social broadcaster. Materials advertising *Nasz Dziennik* appeared on the RM station, to which KRRiT responded by imposing financial penalties on it. The second conflict was much more serious and was associated with the transition to digital transmission of the radio and television signal. KRRiT challenged the right to register Fr. Rydzyk's television station in accordance with the current laws. Primarily due to the proven debt of the LV Foundation, it was not allowed to begin the necessary procedures for granting the license. This sparked violent protests and accusations towards the president and staff of KRRiT. And then Father Rydzyk's radio station organized several demonstrations in the country's capital, Warsaw, which included thousands of protesters. Fr. Rydzyk had the support of politicians from Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (the Law and Justice party), which was victorious in the parliamentary elections (in 2015), even though KRRiT acted in accordance with the law and previously established procedures. Demonstrations comprised of many thousands of protesters were a demonstration of Radio Maryja's power, as well as a sign of the acceptance of the socio-political message proclaimed by the broadcast. The capability to mobilize listeners and supporters of Radio Maryja

¹⁵ "Kim jesteśmy? Nasze zadanie," *Fundacja Servire Veritati*, at <http://ien.pl/index.php/menu/ien/nasze-zadanie/>.

on a large scale was demonstrated. In a moment we will take a look at how RM has created such a faithful social environment.

THE SOCIAL CHARACTER OF THE STATION—THE CIVIC OR ANTI-CIVIC NATURE OF THE IMPACT OF RADIO MARYJA?

The interactive nature of the programmes has become a characteristic attribute of RM. Today interaction with the audience is quite common and widespread (especially when it comes to the internet); however, in the early 1990s in Poland, it was certainly a new idea, although it was already used by other radio stations, including Polish Radio (especially Programme III). In this sense—and not only in this one—RM was from the beginning a social medium. Communication with listeners served a clear purpose from the beginning: RM sought to create a strong community of listeners—people with similar values and opinions. It was also supposed to create a strong bond with the radio station. Father Tadeusz Rydzyk recalled in an interview:

From the beginning there was the idea to start with a prayer, then the catechism, followed by telephone calls from the audience. (...) *People love to talk with each other.* (...) Speaking and listening to each other bears fruit. At first, the conversations on the radio were about anything and everything. Yet we must use this time wisely. *You need to have smart people educate us, and we will ask questions.* Many social lessons were learned during those talks. *Somebody accused us of engaging in politics. Yet what is politics if not care for the common good, for the good of each one of us?*¹⁶

The quote from Fr. Rydzyk clearly indicates that contact with the audience was certainly not supposed to be a forum for open discussion or a confrontation of different views. On the contrary: after all, “smart people” were, first and foremost, supposed “to teach us,” meaning the listeners. Radio Maryja had very quickly become not so much a platform for discussion, as were the early morning radio interviews on Radio Channel “three,” or other media, but the promoter of specific socio-political views—and we may add—religious ones as well. It also became not only a forum for the exchange of opinions, but also mutual aid for

¹⁶ Piotr Głuchowski and Jacek Hołub, *Ojciec Tadeusz Rydzyk Imperator* (Warsaw: AGORA SA, 2013), 99 (emphasis is mine).

those who were among the listeners. In a short period of time, the director of the station managed to create a new social identity: “the listener of Radio Maryja.”

The controversial radio station has become a subject of interest for many researchers. The results of the research on the style of communication of Radio Maryja are clear. Among them was one carried out by Izabela Tomala-Kaźmierczak and published in autumn of 2015.¹⁷ Referencing Perloff’s so-called “golden triangle of political communication,”¹⁸ the author stated: “the traditional ‘golden triangle’ was in principle a space for the exchange and interpretation of ideas and opinions among all symbiotically connected elements, regardless of worldview, whereas the triangle centered around the environment of Radio Maryja lacks this trait and is not characterised by such openness. It is a rather fortified and sealed form, which determines a limited (since it is situated between clearly defined elements) dialogic space inside of it.”¹⁹ The author further states that the radio forms of this broadcast are only superficially open to discussion. In fact, we are dealing with monologizing instead of dialoguing. For in Radio Maryja there exists: “a single, unified way of presenting ideas, transmitting meanings and creating a picture of reality shared by the community of listeners of Radio Maryja.”²⁰

The type of community which the organizer and director of Radio Maryja wanted to create has become an example of a closed community of listeners who form their own identity. What is more, this community creates an identity by defining itself in stark contrast and opposition to others, especially in opposition to other broadcasters, the media, and their listeners or viewers. No wonder that almost from its inception, Radio Maryja has caused controversy and inspired conflicting assessments—assessments that were sometimes radically different. And this in a situation where undoubtedly the social activities inspired by RM could at first glance be described as active citizenship, or the active participation of civil society.

However, the phenomenon of the community of listeners and supporters of Radio Maryja is a challenge for researchers dealing with the issue of civil society. Certainly, the director of the radio station and the entire media conglomerate consciously sought to organize people and groups at different levels around

17 Izabela Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji: Analiza treści “Rozmów niedokończonych”* [Radio Maryja’s model of democracy: Content analysis of “Rozmowy niedokończone”] (Toruń: Wyd. Adam Marszałek, 2015).

18 Richard M. Perloff, *Political Communication: Politics, Press, and Public in America* (London: Routledge, 1998), 7–11, as quoted in Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji*, 80–81.

19 Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji*, 80 (Tomala-Kaźmierczak’s emphasis).

20 Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji*, 80.

the radio station. He created the possibility for organizing and self-organization. The radio has developed a number of ways of organizing listeners. Mainly local, organized groups were formed which comprised the “Family of Radio Maryja.” These groups are concentrated around the parish, where there are offices of the “Families of Radio Maryja.” Listeners can also form “Circles of Friends of Radio Maryja” and eventually form informal relations with various institutions. The counterparts of such circles are designed for youth and children may join “Children’s Backyard Rosary Clubs.” Their manifestations can be seen not only in Poland, but also among the Polish community abroad. For example, many such organizations have formed in the US, including the Children’s Backyard Rosary Clubs. An event which is important and which symbolically unites the listeners of Radio Maryja is the annual pilgrimage to the city of Częstochowa, where the nation’s most important Marian shrine is located, which is organized by the station.

In past years, RM has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to mobilize its listeners. It can even be stated that they form a kind of social movement. I have previously described the conflict over access to the digital platform and demonstrations of thousands of people in Warsaw. Another matter of interest was the significance of the political support of Fr. Rydzyk and his radio station for the political party, the League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin). There is no doubt that without such a firm support, LPR would have had no chance of getting into the Polish parliament, as it did first in 2001 and later in 2005. RM’s withdrawal of support from the League of Polish Families in 2007 and its support for PiS that year provoked an immediate collapse in the popularity of the LPR. This shows the significant political influence of Radio Maryja.²¹ The motivations for the political actions of Radio Maryja listeners come from commonly shared views and attitudes. And these in turn are shaped by and stem from the fact that, from the very beginning, the radio has promoted a definite worldview, a definite nationalistic and Catholic ideological picture of Poland and the Polish people, as well as a clear picture of the world. It is politically interpreted in accordance with what Fr. Rydzyk said in the above quoted interview. After all, politics is indeed the concern for the common good. Shaping the proper and real view of the world is the task of the missionary radio. It is worth noting, however, that the idea for Radio Maryja—as father Rydzyk has said himself—was not his original idea. Indeed, there is a radio network operating around the world under the same name, which comprises 30 radio stations. However, the Toruń

21 The information on this subject possible to find at: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liga_Polskich_Rodzin.

station does not belong to it, because one of the network organization's rules is that support for political parties and engagement in political life is forbidden. One of the organizations even wrote a complaint in 2003 against the Polish Radio Maryja, claiming that it uses its name but does not adhere to the rule of abstaining from speaking about political issues in a broadcast which is supposed to focus on prayer.²²

The political activity of Fr. Rydzyk and his radio station has also become a cause of concern for the Polish Episcopate. It can be said that it certainly sparked divergent opinions. Firstly, the ownership structure of RM (Order of the Redemptorists) is such that the station is not directly under the authority of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate. Meanwhile, when complaints or accusations directed against RM appear in the public discourse, they indirectly accuse the Church or the Episcopate, since it is the highest authority in the Polish Catholic Church. The bishops, on the other hand, had very divergent attitudes regarding RM. The Polish primate, Józef Cardinal Glemp, repeatedly attempted to call RM to order, but his attempts proved to be ineffective.²³ Undoubtedly, this proves that there is sufficiently widespread support for Radio Maryja among the Polish bishops. As a result, a team called the Bishops' Committee for the Pastoral Care of Radio Maryja was appointed in 2002. According to the written description of the team, its chief objective is to ensure that: "the religious content which the radio station broadcasts is consistent with the teachings of the Church and the current pastoral programme of the Polish Episcopate. The purpose of the team's work is to foster cooperation based on friendly dialogue, not to censor and control."²⁴ But only in 2006 was a Policy Council created for Radio Maryja, which included members of the Episcopate and Redemptorist priests. It was most likely established as a result of a critical speech made by Pope Benedict XVI, in which he addressed Polish bishops, and urged the Catholic media in Poland to maintain "the autonomy of the political sphere' and the unity of the episcopate."²⁵ The Apostolic nuncio in Warsaw had also written a critical letter at that time. It would seem that Father Rydzyk's influence is sufficiently strong in the most important part of the Polish Church. It is also difficult to avoid the

²² According to another author, analyzing Fr. Rydzyk radio, see: Ewa Bobrowska, *Obrazowanie społeczeństwa w mediach: Analiza radiomaryjnego dyskursu* [The portrait of society in the media: The Radio Maryja discourse analysis] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2007), 43 (footnote 45).

²³ See Bobrowska, *Obrazowanie społeczeństwa w mediach*, 48.

²⁴ See http://episkopat.pl/struktura_kep/zespoly/38.1,zespol.html#office.

²⁵ Bobrowska, *Obrazowanie społeczeństwa w mediach*, 49.

impression that the political line of RM and the mainstream of the Polish episcopate coincide more and more with each other.

Therefore, the social background and the social world of the listeners of Radio Maryja constitute complex issue. After all, the bishops are also listeners of the station, although only a few of them appear as guests of the programmes. However, a certain feature of the environment of the listeners as a whole is undeniable. The social, interactive communication within this environment is based on accepting the “right” views and affirming the fact that their (“our”) view of the world—their teachings or their social representation of reality—is the most appropriate definition of “true Polishness,” which is inevitably both nationalistic and Catholic.²⁶ Regardless of the nuances within this paradigm, it would seem that there exists here, on the whole, a strictly defined, political worldview. People who have different opinions and different ideas have no chance to express their views within this radio communication network. How was such a tight network created and what kind of worldview does it promote? I will deal with these topics in the next part of this chapter.

THE TRADITION OF NATIONAL DEMOCRACY—THE BASIS FOR THE EXPRESSED VIEWS

Fr. Rydzyk’s radio station from the beginning expressed and advocated a precise picture of the social and religious reality. Above all, a view that was to promote the “correct” national direction of the Polish political transformation was expressed and promoted. After all, Radio Maryja began broadcasting its programmes during a very important, historical moment of political transition in Poland. It very actively joined the debate on the shape of the constitution, which took place in Poland in the mid-1990s. It was an opportunity to delineate a vision of the new nation-state, as well as to highlight the role of the Church in the public discourse as a guardian of divine Natural Law. Statutory law—claimed politicians and intellectuals connected with the church on the airwaves of RM—must be in accordance with the Natural Law as confirmed by God. Therefore, believers should adhere only to those views that are consistent with Natural Law. The whole reasoning justified the aspirations of the Church

²⁶ See Artur Gendźwił, “Bóg zapłać tym, którzy mają ogień w sercu,” *Miesięcznik Znak*, no. 640 (2008), at <http://www miesiecznik.znak.com.pl/6402008adam-gendzwill-agata-stasikbog-zaplac-tym-ktorzy-maja-ogien-w-sercu>.

to participate actively in politics: its presence was supposed to guarantee that the principles of Natural Law were taken into account by secular politicians and the secular state. This was to ensure the moral foundations of politics and the state. It was also necessary to show that the Church is closely connected to the people and that it is the best custodian of national interests. It is also the only reliable guardian of national traditions. Yet the national tradition is also a religious tradition for Poles—the tradition of the Church in Poland. It was not difficult to make references to such statements, because, after all, the national experience supported this idea, especially in the 1980s. It was an obvious fact that, during the grim years of communism, the Church expressed the needs of society, and supported the Solidarity movement, as well as the ideals of freedom and democratic aspirations. It was a crucial base, although the Solidarity movement was careful to preserve its independence and clear identity. At the same time, the formation of a new state identity was commonly seen as the creation of a secular state, governed by the rule of law, and based on human rights and civil rights.

I believe that the constitutional debate together with RM's participation in it was a significant development. During the course of these events, we could hear for the first time not only apologetic opinions about the nation being expressed, but also anti-Semitic and xenophobic views as well. For the first time, during discussions on the air at RM, ideas about a state based on the ideology of National Democracy were expressed.²⁷ As it turned out, dozens of phone calls from listeners confirmed the viability of this political tradition, though it had seemed to be entirely forgotten. A cursory analysis of the content of RM's most significant programme, "Unfinished conversations," clearly showed that the memory of the old national ideology was alive and well in the older generation.²⁸ In the phone calls from listeners, admiration for Roman Dmowski, the principal founder of modern nationalistic ideology in Poland, was often quite openly expressed. So let us briefly outline the basic structure of these beliefs, which have become—in my opinion—the basis for RM's ideological and political worldview. Nationalism, which is dominant in the narrative of RM, is integrally linked to anti-Semitism, hostility to foreigners and anti-liberalism.

²⁷ On the role of the National Democracy in pre-war Poland see Ronald Modras, *The Catholic Church and Antisemitism*.

²⁸ Ireneusz Krzemiński, ed., *Czego nas uczy Radio Maryja? Socjologia treści i recepcji rozgłośni* [What does Radio Maryja teach us? Sociology of the content and reception of the radio station] (Warsaw: WAiP, 2009).

The father of this ideology was Roman Dmowski, a Polish intellectual and politician. I will interpret the most important ideas of Dmowski expressed in his work, *Thoughts of a Modern Pole*.²⁹ In this work, Dmowski contrasted “modern patriotism” with Romantic patriotism, of which he was essentially critical; he also accused the nobility and aristocracy of promoting Jews, and thereby making it impossible for the indigenous Polish bourgeoisie, i.e., the middle class, which was the source of modernity, to foster the development of the country. Therefore, it was essential, according to Dmowski, to eliminate the Jews from Polish life so that a Polish native middle class could emerge, which would bring about the modernization of the country and the nation. In this way, Dmowski laid the foundations for a modern political ideology, creating a model of patriotism for a Catholic Pole, who would have an anti-Jewish bias from the very beginning. He would also be hostile to the “individualist” ideas of liberal democracy. That is why the idea of “national” democracy emerged as the “proper” system for the reborn Polish state, which did not exist at the time, as the territory of Poland was divided between three invaders.

The reborn Polish State should be the state of the Polish nation and it should represent the national interest. “Democracy” should be the democracy of the nation, so liberal democratic ideas would be completely useless and dangerous here. In order to rebuild the strong, independent state, a unified, national will was needed as well as real, nation-oriented citizens. The minorities in the nation, especially the Jews, were seen as a threat to the true Polish values and political will. This ideology constructed the new Polish order in great contrast with the Poland of the past, which was a multinational and multicultural Poland throughout the ages.

I say this at the outset because it is important for the interpretation of our results. Firstly, the image of Jews as not only “strangers,” but as a very dangerous agent of social life, really the enemy, returned in the RM rhetoric during the years of transformation. The Jews were concealed among the post-communists and among these ex-oppositionists and Solidarity activists who accepted the idea that the old, party elite can participate in the new democratic order. On

²⁹ Roman Dmowski, *Mysli nowoczesnego Polaka* [Thoughts of modern Pole] (Lwów: Wyd. 3 powiększ.; Lwów, nakładem Towarzystwa Wydawniczego H. Altenberg; Warszawa, E. Wende i Spółka; Kraków, W. L. Anczyc i Spółka 1907). Dmowski ideas were described in Modras, *The Catholic Church and Antisemitism*. Some information can be found in: Andrzej Walicki, *Poland between East and West: The Controversies over Self-Definition and Modernisation in Partitioned Poland* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994).

the other hand, the Jews were coming back from outside to Poland as foreign investors and, of course, as the controllers of capital.

It was the main reason why the anti-Jewish, anti-Semitic opinions appeared during the discussion about the constitution and the market economy. Symbolically, the Jews were important investors or owners of the European capital, who, according to this stereotype, hurt Poland. The fundamental elements of the anti-Semitic stereotypes were strongly present in the new situation. And, of course, the new threat from the Jews had played an analogous role to Dmowski's ideological vision: "they want to go back to their previous position as the modern exploiters of the Polish nation." "Transformation" was a kind of modernization, the process of rebuilding or coming back to a democratic, market economy. The old ideas appeared very useful in this situation, especially as a tool in the political battle between parties. "We should be the real owners of the new economy" was a very popular slogan among listeners of RM. Of course, it meant a very critical position toward macroeconomic reforms, based on the neoliberal strategy to entice foreign capital to come and invest in the country in order to develop the modern economy.

By the way, regardless of the definitively positive changes in the actual stereotypes of Germans, the rhetoric of our radio continued to portray a very negative image of Germany, based mainly on the war-experience. Poles should never trust Germany and German politics. Germans are the big enemy of Polish politics.³⁰ Of course, this was another point in the list of critical opinions of the European Union, in which Germany has played such an important role.

ANTI-MODERNITY AND ANTI-LIBERALISM

Such opinions and images of the world could be described as anti-modern views. They truly were, and the nationalistic tradition was from the outset an important tool in the battle against Poland joining the European Union, and is still the main promoter of euro-skeptic views, which are expressed on the radio station. After Poland joined the EU, public opinions polls (European and Polish)

³⁰ This position was presented during the presidency of Lech Kaczyński and the government of his twin-brother, Jarosław, and it is still interpreted as a fight for the real, Polish interests in the period of 2005–2007. One of the effects of such a politics was the decline of the positive opinions about Poles in the public opinion research in Germany. The new Polish government, officially inaugurated on 8 November 2015, will probably come back to this position.

showed strong acceptance of a unified Europe.³¹ However, on Radio Maryja we constantly heard critical, emotional, and negative opinions about the unification processes into the EU and about the growing role of the EU in the country's regulations. The radio's narrative propagates the stereotypical view of Europe as a federation of nations (and nation-states). What is more, the radio station and its listeners should fight against ideas which promote the interference of European bureaucracy into the affairs of associated states. A basic idea, deduced from the analysis of the discourse on joining the EU, and which is still present in the radio rhetoric and narrative, could be summed up as follows: "There are only two paths to choose from: to follow the 'Christian tradition, the objective hierarchy of good', or to give way to the modern, anti-Christian consumptive civilization."³² In this situation Jews (and Germans alike) are the cultural, religious threat to Polish Nation and now to homogeneous Polish society.

Catholicism (identified with Christianity of course) at the beginning plays a fundamental role in the clarification and legitimation of the nationalistic worldview. The value of the national tradition and national heritage is the intellectual base and the main reason for the critical opinions of the transformational reforms and skeptical attitudes about the EU. The national tradition also means the heritage of Polish Catholicism. The Catholic Church is portrayed as the supporter and great defender of the Polish Nation (it should always be like this, in capital letters...). The nation as a nation, with its own, distinctive culture, survived mainly thanks to the Church, and—of course—the faith of the Polish people or Polish nation. As I have tried to show in my book, *Czego nas uczy Radio Maryja?*, by analyzing the content of the main political radio programme "Rozmowy niedokończone" (Unfinished conversations), one may find many attempts to portray the church and Polish priests as supporters and agents deeply tied with the Polish people, fighting for a better life for simple peasants, workers and the common working classes in general.³³ We can find here the ambivalent image and evaluation of the Polish intelligentsia. Part of this special social category—the real, Catholic Poles—were with us, but the other—perhaps big-

31 Acceptance of the EU in Poland is still very high, and in October 2015 it was 86%, while 10% were against EU, see CBOS Newsletter 39/2015; <http://www.cbos.pl/PL/publikacje/news/2015/39/newsletter.php>.

32 Urszula Kurczewska, *Socio-linguistic Analysis of Public Discourse about the European Problematic*, Ph.D. dissertation (Warsaw University: Institute of Sociology, 1999), as cited in Ireneusz Krzemiński, "The national identity and European consciousness of Poles," in *National and European Identities in EU Enlargement. Views from Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Petr Drulak (Prague: Institute of International Relations, 2001), 64.

33 Krzemiński, *Czego nas uczy Radio Maryja?*, 92–93.

ger and more dangerous part—were against us and were dedicated to the pernicious liberal and leftist ideas. This context strengthens the image of Catholic priests, who are pictured as being in close contact with the people, with common Poles. On the other hand, Polish people are committed to the Church and Poles in general are faithful to religion.

An interesting problem is how are opinions and images which create the Radio Maryja worldview expressed and propagated? During the past few years, some studies have appeared devoted to this subject. For example, there was an interesting study by Izabela Tomala-Kaźmierczak, published in autumn 2015, concerned with the analysis of Radio Maryja's model of democracy, which it was cited earlier in this chapter. The author analyzed the same radio programme as the other investigators previously mentioned, namely "Rozmowy niedokończone" (Unfinished conversations). She has analyzed the content of a sample of radio-programmes during a four-month period following the catastrophe of the presidential plane crash in Smolensk, from April 2010 to August 2010. It was a very important moment in recent Polish history and it happened during the months of the presidential campaign. The analysis ends at the moment when the newly elected president, Bronisław Komorowski, took office. The Tomala-Kaźmierczak study was based on the methodology of critical discourse analysis and used the frame analysis of Erving Goffman, as well as Polish sociologist Winicjusz Narojek's idea of the so-called "stereotypical definition of a situation".³⁴ Her analysis was concerned with these stereotypical definitions of a situation, and showed how Radio Maryja's listeners and supporters are portrayed and self-defined. Unfortunately, the Tomala-Kaźmierczak analysis concentrated on the model of democracy which is propagated and expressed in the analyzed programme, and omitted the open discussion on the nation's affairs.

Radio Maryja is a true Polish medium and its listeners are a representation of the Nation. As summed up by the author of the analysis: "We are experiencing a generalization—We, Poles, hence, the entire nation, have a right to know. In this manner, the Radio Maryja community—Us—are identified with the entire Polish nation in order to create the social conviction that the Radio Maryja community possesses the social mandate to make general statements for the whole of the Polish society."³⁵ Self-description is expressed in the categories of a strong opposition to "other media," called "Polish-language but not really Polish," sometimes also referred to as mainstream media. A special example of such "Polish-

³⁴ Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji*, 14.

³⁵ Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji*, 171.

language” media is the *Gazeta Wyborcza* daily, whose editor-in-chief was (and, at this writing, still is) Adam Michnik, the most renowned Polish anti-communist oppositionist and one of the creators of the Workers’ Defense Committee (*Komitet Obrony Robotników – KOR*), whose Jewish origins were stigmatized by the radio station.

This brief description contains almost all the features of the rhetoric and manner of discussion that are conducted in Radio Maryja. Firstly, the description of the world is based on strong opposition, the aim of which is portraying one’s own position and the views of the radio and its listeners as the only right and appropriate view. The image of the world is generally built around fundamental, black and white divisions. Tomala-Kaźmierczak: “On the one hand, Us and Our community and, on the other hand, everyone Else, who are different from us and have different views from Us, who have the only right outlook (...) It is only Our definitions that are important because they confirm Our notions, claims, expectations or even illusions.”³⁶ Therefore and secondly, statements in Radio Maryja are based on the labelling and stigmatization of others. Stereotypes are initiated which drive the negative and unequivocal characterization of groups and persons. Once again, the results of an empirical analysis: Taking advantage of the labelling strategy, the language of Radio Maryja “*excludes those with a different way of thinking (...)*, thus, it rules out difference and diversity, taking away the possibility of an equal-right coexistence in social space.”³⁷ “The Radio Maryja democracy is *full of stereotypes, schematic, unequivocal categorization and labelling, giving rise to prejudices and dichotomous divisions* that touch various spheres of life.”³⁸

Thirdly, the minorities—particularly national and ethnic minorities—are clearly specified as being subordinated to the Polish majority. In spite of this, they are dangerous as they can constitute a threat (“The modelled pattern condemns all minorities apart from Ours, builds an atmosphere of tension and even their fear if these minorities would obtain a greater impact and greater recognition in the public opinion”).³⁹ In a study of anti-Semitism and national stereotypes over the period of 20 years (1992–2012), we found that anti-Semitic views among regular listeners of Radio Maryja are very common.⁴⁰

³⁶ Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji*, 469.

³⁷ Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji*, 380–81 (Tomala-Kaźmierczak’s emphasis).

³⁸ Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji*, 381 (Tomala-Kaźmierczak’s emphasis).

³⁹ Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji*, 383.

⁴⁰ It was the surveys directed by myself in 1992, 2002 and 2012. I am taking into account only last project: “Antisemitism, xenophobia and national stereotypes third time”; granted by Polish National Scientific Centre no. 2011/01/B/HS6/01957. The full description of the studies is available in Ireneusz

Table 3.1. Listenership of Radio Maryja and anti-Semitism indicator, 2012, in %⁴¹

Listenership Radio Maryja	Traditional anti-Semitism		Modern anti-Semitism	
	No anti-Semitism	Firm anti-Semitism	No anti-Semitism	Firm anti-Semitism
Regular	39.5	21	16	37
Selected radio broadcasts	51	5	36	38.5
Seldom	51	14	38	26
Does not listen	63	10	42	25

Fourthly, Radio Maryja's discourse and model of democracy signifies, in essence, a lack of democratic pluralism. In the words of Tomala- Kaźmierczak, this is a "style of monologue democracy,"⁴² and therefore, a model of the world. Radio Maryja's national and Catholic democracy: "*assumes the restriction of the freedom of speech as something essential*. After all, the views furthered by Outsiders not only may lead to serious consequences but also *cannot possibly be true*."⁴³ Everything that is outside the "discursive space" of Radio Maryja, according to our author, should not be freely promulgated. What is more, the disregard and contravention of the law is completely justified "when this right does not take Our postulates into account and fails to respect Our—Radio Maryja's—conclusions."⁴⁴ After all, the truth is legitimized by the Church, and its teaching and Natural Law are *always* on our side.

Krzeminski and Jaroslaw Garliński, "Does 'Polish Antisemitism' Exist?: Research in Poland and Ukraine, 1992 and 2002," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry Volume 29: Writing Jewish History in Eastern Europe*, edited by Natalia Aleksin, Brian Horowitz, and Antony Polonsky, 425–92. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1kwxfcv.27>.

⁴¹ In our research we constructed two different indicators of anti-Semitic attitudes: first called the "traditional" indicator, based on religious, anti-Jewish stereotypes (the Jews killed Jesus Christ), the second—called "modern"—based on the views of anti-Semitic ideology developed in Europe after the French Revolution (following with the concept of Hannah Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism*, New ed., with added prefaces (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973). The shortened version of the results can be seen in the table due to our indicators playing the role of a scale in the original. See Ireneusz Krzemiński, "Polish-Jewish Relations: Anti-Semitism and National Identity," *Polish Sociological Review*, no. 1 (173) (2002): 25–51, also Ireneusz Krzemiński, "The Resilience of Tradition: Anti-Semitism in Poland and in Ukraine", in L. Rensmann and J. H. Schoeps (eds.), *Politics and Resentment* (London and Boston: Brill, 2011), 249–74; and Ireneusz Krzemiński, "How only Jews Suffered? Holocaust Remembrance and Polish National Resentment", in *Polish Sociological Review*, no. 2 (190) (2015).

⁴² Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji*, 381.

⁴³ Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji*, 386 (Tomala- Kaźmierczak's emphasis).

⁴⁴ Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji*, 384.

Tomala- Kaźmierczak points out the strongly emotional nature of the views advanced by Radio Maryja as well as their moralistic style of describing the world. Radio Maryja is always on some side – generally on the side of those who are defined as victims of injustice, especially when this concerns relations between the state and its citizens or work relations. This is shown in another analysis conducted by Ewa Bobrowska. Her work,⁴⁵ although including the phrase “Analysis of Radio Maryja discourse” in its title, focuses on an analysis of the content of the *Nowy Dziennik* daily published in close collaboration and expressing the views of the radio station of Rev. Rydzyk, which I already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter.

The author analyses a plethora of information on protests that, without exception, one-sidedly describe the existing situation. The description always first stipulates the perpetrators. The authors of the reports do not even allow or represent any other point of view of those that have, in advance, been deemed as the “guilty party.”⁴⁶ This particularly concerns protests, including labor strikes, which are not always fully justified. The opinionated journalism of *Nasz Dziennik* does not take possible employer’s views into account.

Such a relationship characterizes the distinct feature of the discourse of Radio Maryja mentioned earlier, namely, a description of the world which is always conflicting and one where the only right and uncompromisingly defended position always has to be highlighted, which is, of course, the one that is expressed or defended by the radio station itself. Moreover, the assumption of a defensive position of “victims,” first and foremost in the context of the relations between the citizens and the State, has a very specific goal: it expresses the fundamentally negative evaluation of the “liberals” ruling at the time.

This is because the description of the world that can be found in the rhetoric of Radio Maryja is, usually, if not without exception, with direct reference to politics. In fact, one can even go as far as to say that one of the key conceptual frameworks that include the RM message, is an ideological and political framework. The analysis of Tomala-Kaźmierczak shows that the mandate of speaking the truth on the airwaves of the radio station and its right to make statements on behalf of the whole Polish society always carries a distinct political message. It gives the director of the station and his collaborators the right to point out everything that meets the demands of this truth in political life. In this manner, the rhetoric of the Radio points to Jarosław Kaczyński and the Law and Justice

⁴⁵ Bobrowska, *Obrazowanie społeczeństwa w mediach* [note 21].

⁴⁶ Bobrowska, *Obrazowanie społeczeństwa w mediach*, 70–75.

Party.⁴⁷ Only this politician and the party that he established are competent to defend the Nation's interests.

It is also worth pointing out the fact that supporting the poor and more impoverished, supporting "ordinary Poles," is the consistent strategy of Radio Maryja. The element of raising living standards and providing financial assistance was present from the very start of construing the social actions surrounding the radio station. The "Radio Maryja Family" is an environment of people that mutually support each other, hence, the popularity of radio programmes, where people exchange various vital objects of everyday use between themselves, e.g., household objects, or offer free-of-charge or for a small consideration. The whole point is that this is a closed circle, Our circle of people—the listeners of Radio Maryja, who can trust each other, contrary to the rest of society. Assistance and trust is only available to "Our people." Others are excluded from this circle of mutual help and assistance.

This strategy of the Radio can also be located in a broader conceptual framework delineated by the anti-liberal ideological orientation. The aforementioned analysis of Tomala-Kaźmierczak highlighted the characteristics of a liberal democracy: free elections, tenure, majority rule, respect for minorities, and the rule of law.⁴⁸ I have already mentioned, following Tomala-Kaźmierczak, that all these elements have, more or less, been essentially questioned in the rhetoric of Radio Maryja. The position of the Church in a democratic state can also be added to this.

The listeners of Radio Maryja belong, much more often than the rest, to the supporters of the view that the Church should have a special impact on lawmaking in Poland. This question was posed to respondents in studies conducted in 1992 and 2012. Stronger correlations concern the latter study from 2012. Moreover, the conviction as to the lawmaking rights of the Church are generally related to anti-Semitic attitudes. This shows the relationships that were mentioned earlier, namely, accentuating the meaning of the Church as the preacher of Natural Law and the defender of the Nation against outsiders. Below is an illustration in tabular form showing the results of the three-variable study: the listening audience of RM, the listeners' view on the role of the Church in lawmaking, and their anti-Semitism.

The data illustrate well the views that are acceptable for Radio Maryja listeners and which clash with the ideal—model—of a liberal democracy. This is be-

⁴⁷ Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji*, p. 181.

⁴⁸ Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji*, 155.

Table 2. Listenership of Radio Maryja, anti-Semitism, and view on the Church's privileged position, 2012

		No traditional anti-Semitism	Traditional anti-Semitism*	None Modern anti-Semitism	Modern anti-Semitism**
<i>Total</i>	<i>Special impact of the Church</i>	39.5%	18.5%	33.8%	35.7%
	<i>No special impact</i>	70.8%	7.4%	49.7%	17.2%
Radio Maryja listeners	Special im- pact of the Church	31.7%	22.2%	30.2%	42.9%
	No special impact	54%	11.5%	33.2%	30.7%
Radio Maryja non-listeners	Special im- pact of the Church	44.7%	16%	36.2%	30.9%
	No special impact	73.2%	6.8%	52.1%	16%

* For traditional anti-Semitism $p=.005$; Pearson's r for Radio Maryja listeners = -0.262 ; Pearson's r for non-listeners = -0.130

** For modern anti-Semitism $p=.056$; for non-listeners - $p=.000$; Pearson's r for Radio Maryja listeners = -0.176 ; Pearson's r for non-listeners = -0.88 .

cause liberalism is a fundamental evil, the action of which can be illustrated—as shown by Ewa Bobrowska in the analysis of the rhetoric of *Nasz Dziennik*—in the specific description of the labour relations on a “capitalist” market, hence, a market that is governed by economic liberalism. In principle, this portrays entrepreneurs and enterprise executives as exploiters and, it can be said, as structural opponents of manual or other workers.

Ironically, this anti-liberal approach is essentially consistent with the view of the world created by Marxism, which could constitute a separate subject of study. However, the Marxist image of the world was completely discredited as it was an image of the world that was not only atheist but also in opposition to religion... In actual fact, Marxism, which gave rise to communism, is connected with liberalism in the discourse of Radio Maryja. There is generally mention of “liberals and leftists” as those forming one hostile wing. Thus, both one and the other are an evil that has to be rejected by Catholics. The analyses of Tomala-Kaźmierczak leave no doubt whatsoever as to this: “A Catholic cannot be a liberal or a liberal a Catholic since this mixture of Catholicism and liberalism is ‘de-

structive and does not give rise to any good fruit expected by the nation.’”⁴⁹ “The model shaped by Radio Maryja is, therefore, to be *based on the teachings of the Church and natural law, while at the same time excluding liberal principles from its space.*”⁵⁰ Thus, we have a definitive conclusion about the model of democracy that is postulated and practically preached by Radio Maryja.

MODEL VS. LIVING BELIEFS: THE EVOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL WORLD VIEW OF RADIO MARYJA

The thesis advocated herein states that the image of the world (or: the stereotypic definition of the situation or conceptual framework, or system of ideological beliefs), that was the starting point for the mapping of the country’s situation, was based on the tradition of Polish National Democracy. In other words, the rhetoric and narrative of the Polish reality of the director of the station and his colleagues assume a conceptual framework that relates to the ideological image of pre-war National and Catholic tradition. The framework for this ideology created the basic narrative structures of Radio Maryja about contemporary Poland. Above all, it presents a conflicting image of the world where the very milieu of Radio Maryja listeners has an important role to play. It constitutes a representation of the Nation and must be harnessed in defending Polishness, which is almost “organically” considered to be linked with the Catholic Church. A battle must be fought with the current, continuously present but traditional enemies of Poland, such as the Jews, Germans, or communists, as well as the representatives of “liberalism” and the European Union. The Catholic Polish nation is subject to pressure from its enemies; hence, its opponents and all those impersonating Poles must be actively opposed.

I have already pointed out that the idea of modernization based on the historical philosophy of Dmowski could be used to analyze transformations and visions of a “better” democracy—better, because national. It can also be added that Dmowski’s vision of the world portrayed international reality as a world of competing nations, ruthlessly fighting to fulfill their egoistic aspirations. Within this view, international collaboration is nothing more than a game in which participants engage for the sole purpose of optimizing their own interests. Hence, it is an image of the world that completely contrasts the vision of international

⁴⁹ Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji*, 388.

⁵⁰ Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji*, 389 (Tomala-Kaźmierczak’s emphasis).

Table 3. Which nation suffered the most during the War, in %.

Which nation suffered the most during the War	1992	2002	2012
The Jewish nation suffered more	46	38	32
The Polish nation suffered more	6	9	16
Both nations suffered equally	33	48	46
Difficult to compare this	13	4	5
Difficult to say	2	1	1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

policies developed through strenuous post-war efforts in Europe and the democratic West after the tragedy of the Second World War.

However, the ideological image of Dmowski's world of National Democracy was significantly modified right from the start. Above all, as already mentioned earlier, the mastermind behind the national ideology was fiercely against the Romantic tradition, a tradition of Poland as the *Christ* of the nations, a Poland that suffered selflessly for others.⁵¹ In the meantime, the element of national suffering and the hurt that was inflicted by others on an innocent Nation plays a significant role in the rhetoric of Radio Maryja. Strictly speaking, Poles' national suffering and national disasters are interpreted as moral victories and are reasons to be proud.

I have also found confirmation of this in the analyses of Izabela Tomala-Kaźmierczak. Her study of the discourse of Radio Maryja leads to the conviction that a model of democracy cannot be recreated from the discourse of RM without invoking issues relating to the martyrology of the Polish nation. The model of order that is construed in the rhetoric of the radio station: "It almost *derived from (...) the myth of Polish martyrology*, which strongly values ideas, gives a specific shape to the interpretation of current reality and also affects the interpretation of past events."⁵² This is because the "Polish nation has been sanctified by suffering,"⁵³ and this creates the image of the brave and gifted with incredible dignity Poles. The nurturing of the image that portrays the suffering of the Nation, mainly during the Second World War and in communist times,

⁵¹ In English literature there is a wonderful study on Polish Romantic visions and Polish Messianism, see Andrzej Walicki, *Philosophy and romantic nationalism: The case of Poland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

⁵² Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji*, 377 (Tomala-Kaźmierczak's emphasis).

⁵³ Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji*, 377.

is the fundamental task of true patriots. The Polish and Jewish rivalry - *the rivalry for suffering*, appears here, almost naturally, and this is, of course, rivalry as to which nation suffered the most during the War.⁵⁴

Our empirical studies have shown that the evaluation of the suffering of one's own nation and the Jewish nation has been significantly shifted compared to the beginnings of Polish democracy.

Over the years, the drop in the frequency of opinions as to the fact that the Jewish nation suffered more during the Second World War and the increase in opinions as to the greater suffering of Poles, is characteristic. The majority view tends towards – somewhat “evening out” the suffering of Jews and Poles during the German occupation. Public opinions are clearly shifting in that direction, which is undoubtedly presented in the discourse of Radio Maryja. Although such an extensive and direct impact on the views of Poles in general cannot be attributed to this radio station, the importance of the impact of the convictions furthered by Radio Maryja on Polish mentality cannot be ignored. It seems that the resentment of the Jews—surely it is not just them that suffered but we Poles also did!—is presently having a significant impact on the shaping of the opinions of Poles, especially those of believers.

All the more so that the defense of the reputation of Poles entails the demand to be recognized by others—meaning, generally speaking—the recognition of Polish suffering and bravery. Poles—according to the stereotypic definition of the situation—are notoriously undervalued and the picture of the Holocaust and of Jewish suffering dominates the image of war. The views that also criticize Poles during the War, especially their treatment of Jews, are harmful and hostile. Interestingly, this conviction has its political implications. According to Tomala-Kaźmierczak the demand is registered for constantly caring for the Nation: “I command you—also the Radio Maryja community—to fight with the enemies that restrict Polish independence and weaken the nation (...). The suffering will cease once our Enemies disappear and we take control.”⁵⁵ “Our authority” will be outspoken about the suffering and hurt of the Poles and—as one can expect—the proper redress, however symbolic, from the side of European Union and the rest of the world.

⁵⁴ Ireneusz Krzemiński, “The Polish-Jewish Rivalry”, in Michał Bron, eds., *Jews and Christians in Dialogue II: Identity—Tolerance—Understanding* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell Int., 2001), 141–51.

⁵⁵ Tomala-Kaźmierczak, *Radiomaryjny wzorzec demokracji*, 377

My studies on anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and national stereotypes that have been mentioned earlier have brought unequivocal findings.⁵⁶ Out of all the listeners of Radio Maryja, the majority are convinced of the noble actions of Poles throughout history and, of course, of their particular suffering. Hence, they are convinced that Poles suffered more than other nations in history. I have also verified that the supporters of the stance on the noble actions of Poles are usually from among Law and Justice Party voters. The same applies to the suffering of Poles, where 80% of Law and Justice party voters (compared to 60% of the Civic Platform and 73% of the Polish People's Party) claimed that Poles were more afflicted than others throughout the course of history.⁵⁷ It is important to mention that the Civic Platform (PO) is a symbolic liberal party, the Polish People's Party is a peasant party in coalition with the PO during the years 2007–2015. Hence, the views concerning the suffering of one's own nation and the nobility of Poles, is clearly connected to the general elections.

This image of Poland and Poles definitely relates to the vision of a suffering, noble Poland that, because of this, is most commonly exposed to disasters on the arena of other States that are fighting for their own egoistic vales. This is completely different from the concepts of Dmowski's ideology, but also allows the portrayal of a new enemy that has to be identified and taken into consideration.

This, of course, refers to the USSR and Russia. This is yet another derogation from the views of Dmowski and the National Democracy, according to which Russia could have acted as a possible ally because, despite its political power, it stands below Poland in terms of culture. The updated image of the world takes the twentieth century experiences of Poles into account. In line with this, it is difficult not to mention the immense suffering that was inflicted on Poles by Soviet Russia. It is important to take the suffering caused by Soviet Russia and communism into account. And this is important in this specified, peculiar rivalry for suffering with the Jews.

However, from my point of view, the most important modification of the initial platform of beliefs, of the starting-point ideological image of the world, is based on a surprising element. It consists of incorporating the pre-war tradition into the national and Catholic tradition that I have tried to outline here,

⁵⁶ See also Ireneusz Krzeminski, "National Catholic Impact on Anti-Semitism in Poland: Report of the Significant Results of Empirical Research", in Sabrina P. Ramet, Kristen Ringdal, and Katarzyna Dośpiał-Borysiak, eds., *Civic and Uncivic Values in Poland: Value transformation, education, and culture* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2019).

⁵⁷ Ireneusz Krzeminski, "How only Jews Suffered? Holocaust Remembrance and Polish National Resentment", in *Polish Sociological Review*, no.2 (190) (2015): 56.

which is completely different from and essentially in opposition to the vision of Poland and Polishness. There was mention of Roman Dmowski, but Marshal Józef Piłsudski also played an important—if not far more significant role in the history of twentieth-century Poland.

Józef Piłsudski (1867–1935), the effective ruler of Poland from 1926 to 1935, was instrumental in helping to gain independence for Poland. He was the most ardent enemy of Roman Dmowski and was at least partly sympathetic to socialist ideas. Dmowski also has achievements in diplomacy, helping to restore the Polish nation after 1918. Radio Maryja has woven a myth about the similarity between these two heroes despite their political and ideological differences. But in the Republic of Poland, in the pre-war and the Second World War period, the conflict between Dmowski and Piłsudski supporters set out the main political line between the political and identity divisions of the Polish society. These two great leaders played a significant role in the renewal and revival of the independent Polish state; yet they had completely different visions for Poland. Piłsudski was a kind of socialist, although his political activity during the pre-war period couldn't be called "socialists." But he was strongly antinationalist in Dmowski's sense. Therefore, they remained adamant ideological and political opponents until the end of their days.

After 1989, the memory of Marshal Piłsudski experienced its greatest revival. In the first few years after the re-establishment of independence, several dozen monuments of Marshal Piłsudski were put up throughout Poland, two of the most significant of which are in the capital city alone. The public return to the national traditions represented by Dmowski took place much later and from the beginning encountered social protests. Radio Maryja has certainly had a large impact on the renewal of public manifestations of the memory of Roman Dmowski. In this situation, the surfacing of convictions on air in Radio Maryja that not only critically referred to Dmowski's position compared to Piłsudski, was surprising. This particularly concerned the Polish–Bolshevik War and the Polish victory in the famous Battle of Warsaw, considered by many historians as one of the most important battles of the twentieth century for European civilization. To diminish the significance of Piłsudski, the Commander-in-Chief, the opponents coined the expression "miracle on the Vistula." It conveyed the impression that victory over the Red Army was possibly achieved only through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

During the course of the study of the discourse of Radio Maryja, I was able to analyse what I believe to have been the very first broadcast where Piłsudski was "rehabilitated" from the point of view of nationalist views. This occurred

during the “Unfinished Conversations” broadcast in 2008 on the Battle of Warsaw that went on to the late night hours of the night due to the sheer number of telephone calls made by supporters of the national option. Nevertheless, the significance of that broadcast was not accidental. The point was to incorporate, in line with the truth, the Piłsudski tradition into the fundamental framework of the nationalist tradition. The outcome of these measures could be observed in another event organized by an extreme nationalist organization that directly referred to pre-war traditions. This, of course, concerned the Independence Day March that is organized annually in Warsaw since 2011 on Poland’s Independence Day on 11 November. During the march, before approaching the monument of Dmowski—the creator of modern Polish nationalism, the marchers pass the statue of Piłsudski, who historically was Dmowski’s principal enemy and opponent. During the second Independence Day March held in 2012, the participants laid down a small bunch of flowers before the monument of Piłsudski for the first time, whereas during the last Independence Day March that followed this route, the participants already manifested full recognition for Marshal Piłsudski. This is how an enemy of the National and Catholic vision of Poland was incorporated into the new, Radio Maryja version of this vision.

In this way Radio Maryja’s narrative creates the image of the indiscrete, homogeneous, patriotic past of Poland, which should be the reason for pride for Poles. Also, there is the past, which is unitary with the Church and religious history. So, in the Fr. Rydzyk broadcasting station the image is constructed, which completely ignores or/and neutralizes the fundamental conflicts and discrepancies in the political programmes and the visions of Poland, which had been developed at the very beginning of the reborn, Polish state after the First World War.

SHORT SUMMARY

Radio Maryja’s discourse and its narrative on Poland and the Polish situation definitely does not have a direct impact on the thinking of a majority of Polish society or even on most Catholics. The empirical studies show, depending on the research methodology, that the audience of Radio Maryja comprises between 2% and 4% all the radio listeners, according to CBOS (the Public Opinion Research Centre). The latest study, conducted by the Committee of Radio Research (KBR) showed that the station had an audience of 1.9% in the period August–October 2015 which gives RM the sixth rank on the radio sta-

tions list.⁵⁸ However, the real significance of Radio Maryja does not consist of the number of listeners it has, or lie in events described above, organized by the station, although these visibly demonstrate its remarkable influence and ability to mobilize people and public opinion. Certainly, this is strictly connected with the acceptance and support of Polish Bishops for the views expressed by Radio Maryja, and with the political role of the radio station as well as Fr. Rydzyk's entire media conglomerate.

My previous interpretations of the opinions and world-view promoted by Radio Maryja and the way they are formulated, lead to the current political conclusions. Radio Maryja's discourse prepares and provides excellent justifications for the radical modifications and changes in the political institutions and generally in Polish democracy. The narratives of the Radio Maryja programmes and articles in *Nasz Dziennik* justify and promote the model of a political system which could have the following characteristics:

- The pluralism of the opinions and free expression of the different images of the world and different life-styles, including artistic manifestations, cannot remain completely uninhibited; it must remain within designated and *morally* acceptable boundaries;
- A framework for pluralism and freedom of expression should be defined by several factors. firstly, the values and tradition of the Nation; secondly, the moral doctrine of the Church; and thirdly, the current national interests, especially when confronted with the influence of strangers, first of all representatives of foreign national groups;
- Democracy as a system of government cannot, therefore, be characterized by complete freedom, which means arbitrariness, while the national majority should have the deciding vote. Those who reject the basic values of the Nation or are critical of tradition and the major traits of national identity should not have a voice and should be excluded from the national community;
- The conclusion from this is that the voice of the majority must be based on the opinions of those among the political elite who stand for the truth and who have proven their allegiance to the nation, which the ideology of Dmowski already postulated; proven leaders should have the right to define the interests of the nation and uphold justice in society;

⁵⁸ *Dwadzieścia lat Radia Maryja* [Twenty Years of Radio Maryja], Research Report, Warszawa 2011, CBOS and <http://www.badaniaradiowe.pl/wyniki> [accessed on 24 November 2015].

- In this situation, there seems to be only one possible role for the Church: religion, Natural Law and the moral teachings of the Church which are in accord with the national tradition must be upheld and embodied in the political agenda and the rules of collective life.

I believe that the aforementioned points provide a good description of the socio-political thought, which is expressed and promoted by Radio Maryja and other centres under the control of Fr. Rydzyk. Such beliefs took on a whole new meaning when a new, majority government of the Law and Justice party came to power in Poland in November 2015. They can easily be used to make changes to institutions of the Polish state, changes, which can be dangerous for the liberal-democratic system of the country. And even though they express the view of a minority of Poles, this minority can very quickly become the *moral majority*, as Tocqueville described, that can effectively reduce the real rights of individual citizens.

Postscript (after a few years)

I believe that the aforementioned points provide a good description of the socio-political thought, which is expressed and promoted by Radio Maryja and other centers under the control of Fr. Rydzyk. I call this National-Catholic ideology. It can easily be used as a tool to make changes to the institutions of the Polish state—changes which could be dangerous for the liberal-democratic system of the country. And even though they express the view of a minority of Poles, this minority can very quickly become the *moral majority*, as Tocqueville described, which can effectively reduce the real rights of individual citizens.

Indeed, it is a rare situation, when social reality becomes the empirical evidence of possible sociological predictions. In the case of Poland after 2015 or in 2016, when the L&J government had started its activity in full, the events and some processes in socio-political life can be treated as such evidence. First, the new government granted Fr. Rydzyk his radio show and other institutions a great sum of money. Rydzyk received such a “grant” in 2016 amounting to 26 million Polish Zloty (605,000 Euro). Fr. Rydzyk received it from the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management. A year earlier, the National Fund decided not to pay Fr. Rydzyk any money for the geothermal investments in Torun. However, everything changed with the new management of the Fund

during the few months after L&J came to power.⁵⁹ And this was only the beginning of the further major donations to Rydzyk's institutions.

In October 2021, I attempted to find out how much money Rydzyk had received during the previous five years. I found information published by *OKO.press*, an independent web portal. Journalists working for *OKO.press* counted how much state money came to Rydzyk's institutions in Toruń. It was a monstrous amount of money—325 million Polish Złoty (the equivalent to 70,652,000 euro).⁶⁰ In this text, *OKO.press* journalists also showed that other donations poured into Rydzyk's pocket, although there is probably not a full list of state donations to Rydzyk's empire.

Secondly, it should be said that Fr. Rydzyk plays a great role in the government. His contributions and services started with the elections in 2015. The voice of Radio Maryja very loudly encouraged "real Catholics" to vote for L&J. During the next few years, particularly in 2016–2019, Fr. Rydzyk and Radio Maryja regularly organized a variety of meetings for activists and L&J VIPs, such as ministers and prime ministers. There were some ceremonies and festivities, where guests honored Fr. Rydzyk, and at that time some important decisions had been negotiated. But Fr. Rydzyk also organized conferences concerned with many social and political topics, with ministers and other high officials committing to participate at such events. For example, the *Polish Post* issued an anniversary postage stamp celebrating 25 years of Radio Maryja.⁶¹ Last year, when it was the 26th anniversary of Radio Maryja, the press wrote that "*half of the government came to Toruń to worship Fr. Rydzyk.*"⁶² Some ministers of the first L&J government became real Fr. Rydzyk protégés. Some of them, such as Minister of Defense, Antoni Macierewicz, had close relations with Rydzyk and had special programs on Radio Maryja. Polish journalists made a list of the ministers who had played a special role for Fr. Rydzyk. Along with Macierewicz, they added Jan Szyszko (the Minister of the Natural Environment) and the Minister of Justice (and General Prosecutor simultaneously), Zbigniew Ziobro to the list. The latter became even more tied to Radio Maryja during the second period of the

⁵⁹ See <https://www.money.pl/gospodarka/wiadomosci/artukul/kolejne-pieniadze-dla-ojca-rydzika-tym-razem,189,0,2030781.html> (26-10-2021).

⁶⁰ See [https://oko.press/325-milionow-rydzika/\(26-10-2021\)](https://oko.press/325-milionow-rydzika/(26-10-2021)).

⁶¹ See [https://www.redemptor.pl/poczta-polska-wydala-znaczek-25-rocznice-powstania-radia-maryja\(26-10-2021\)](https://www.redemptor.pl/poczta-polska-wydala-znaczek-25-rocznice-powstania-radia-maryja(26-10-2021)).

⁶² See <https://www.se.pl/wiadomosci/polityka/po-rzadu-na-urodzinach-o-rydzika-aa-KFtA-jQik-D7Yr.html>.

L&J governance.⁶³ This minister is one of the most radical in his stance against democracy, and also against the EU.

When I was writing this summary, I found out new information about the way the government had granted funds for Fr. Rydzyk's institutions. The email account of the minister, Michal Dworczyk (the chief of the Prime Minister's Office), was hacked. A lot of Dworczyk's emails were published on an Internet site. This Internet site is registered in Russia, and therefore the Polish government decided not to comment on any of the published emails. Polish journalists regularly scrutinize information taken from Dworczyk's emails. The facts which are now known have proven the veracity of their content. A good example was the information from one of Dworczyk's emails, published on November 5, 2021 by the Internet portal Onet.pl. It was concerning the eight million Polish zlotys for the Rydzyk project, which involved building a so-called Park of National Memory. The email content is special, because the minister had informed the Prime Minister about his attempts to conceal the donation from media and public opinion.⁶⁴

Why was such a great amount of money given to Fr. Rydzyk by the L&J government? I am sure there is only one answer to this question; indeed, the National Catholic ideology constructed by Rydzyk and his media plays the most important role as the moral-political clue, promoting the integration of L&J Party electorate. Undoubtedly, the populist donations for people in Poland were perhaps the most important motive for the support of the governing party. But Rydzyk's ideology is important, as it provides the validation, through using the language of values, of benefits given to people by the government.

National Catholic ideology can play such a role. As I have tried to show in my chapter, Fr. Rydzyk prepared the religious political ideology, which is very useful for Jaroslaw Kaczynski and the governing L&J Party. All of what I wrote above in this summary confirms the main hypothesis, which I have presented in the chapter. Any governing power, even one which is based on violence, needs the symbolic language which legitimizes its rules. Fr. Rydzyk is one of the most important creators of such symbolic systems with his National Catholic ideology, which is purely political, and is playing its role even now, when the percentage of people listening every day to Radio Maryja or seeing TV Trwam (*Telewizja*

63 See <https://tvn24.pl/polska/macierewicz-szyszko-ziobro-ministrowie-blisko-ojca-rydzyska-ra742846-2456751>.

64 See <https://www.onet.pl/informacje/onetwiadomosci/michal-dworczyk-i-dofinansowanie-parku-tadeusza-rydzyska-daje-slowo/ztbodg4,79cfc278> (5-11-2021).

Trwam) is not very high. In any case, a great number of Polish priests and bishops, as well as right-oriented politicians are using the language of Rydzyk's ideology.

This picture looks very bleak, especially if we remember the positive role that the Polish Catholic Church played in the process of the liberation of the country from the communist system. But I need to add that, in the Polish Catholic Church, not every parish priest or bishop follows Fr. Rydzyk's religious ideology, although this ideology is predominant in the Polish Episcopate and among priests, especially in the countryside, and in the provincial towns and villages. There are a lot of niches where the anti-Rydzyk voices are strong. For example, during 2021, the Congress of Catholic Women and Catholics (*Kongres Katoliczek i Katolików*) has been working on an Internet platform. More and more lay Catholics, as well as non-Catholics and even a group of atheists, are discussing the situation of the Polish Church and, above all, what changes are most needed to come back to a Church that fulfills true faith.

Religious Issues and Church-State Relations in Eastern Germany

Robert F. Goeckel

Luther's posting of his 95 Theses on the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany signaled the start of the Protestant Reformation. In anticipation of the 500th anniversary in 2017, the Lutheran church planned a 10-year Luther Decade, largely centered on sites associated with Luther in eastern Germany. It occasioned massive spending (280 million Euros) by governments and the Church, an unprecedented official German holiday, numerous scholarly conferences, and a large variety of public events, in hopes of accommodating the expected strong public interest, internationally and domestically. But expectations were disappointed—church events were under-attended, tourist crowds were thin, and Pope Francis declined to join the celebration. One leading eastern German pastor, Friedrich Schorlemmer, criticized the “outsized mammoth program” and “grandiose illusions” of the Luther anniversary. A church historian plaintively noted that “anyone who imagined that the Reformation jubilee would make the East Protestant again was naturally disappointed.”¹

The Eastern German churches were in need of such a lift, given their downward trajectory since the euphoria of 1989 and the social malaise in the new Länder (states): by virtually all metrics, the churches are weaker. The self-immolation of Pastor Roland Weisselberg in Erfurt in 2006—in protest against the growing role of Islam in Germany—particularly resonated, given the similar action by Pastor Oskar Brüsewitz in 1976 to oppose the repressive communist policies and the churches' weak response.² At the same time, Weisselberg's very different motive foreshadowed the surge of anti-immigrant sentiment, and the rise of extreme right movements, first in eastern Germany and now across Germany.

The mainline churches had rather different approaches to dealing with the German Democratic Republic (GDR), impacting their process of rejoining the

¹ Quoting Christian Marksches, “Luthers Verdauung,” *Der Spiegel* n. 44/2017 (October 28, 2017), 36.

² Stefan Winter, “Raetselhafes Fanal,” *Der Spiegel* n. 45/2006 (November 6, 2006), 46.

West German churches after 1990. The dominant Evangelical-Lutheran churches, after several decades of opposition to the Communist Party (SED), separated from the all-German Evangelical Churches in Germany (EKD) in 1969, and began a process of accommodating the seemingly long-term existence of the GDR. Its stance after 1971 of “a church within socialism” sought to engage the regime in pursuit of particular benefits for the Church, but also moderating communist policies toward believers, while retaining substantial church autonomy and distance from the regime. 1989 became known as the Protestant revolution. On the other hand, the much smaller Catholic Church pursued a policy of political abstinence, comfortable with its niche as a diaspora, a “national church (*Volkskirche*) in waiting.” For their part, parallel to their counterparts in the West, many Lutheran church officials were more sympathetic toward the Social Democrats (SPD) during the communist period, whereas Catholic ones were inclined toward the Christian Democrats (CDU).

Although subjected to similar repression by the SED, their different orientations produced different responses to reunification. Large and influential segments of the Protestant church, skeptical of the CDU-led reunification politically, likewise sought to retain specific features of the GDR model. By contrast, Catholic leaders embraced the West German model, and reclaimed its status as a *Volkskirche* with a public role and corresponding political influence.³

As a result of this divergence, the “institutional transfer” of West Germany’s legal architecture to the GDR churches was not smooth, though ultimately successful.⁴ The German model is neither one of strict separation/laicism nor one of an established church; rather, the partial separation in Germany entails areas of church-state cooperation (*res mixtae*) grounded in the Basic Law and Länder treaties with organized churches, and producing considerable economic benefits for the churches in consideration of their public functions.

APPLYING THE GERMAN MODEL TO EASTERN GERMANY

Four main areas of the German model shall be discussed. First, the church tax, abrogated by the GDR in 1954 though nominally retained by the churches, was restored with reunification. Many eastern Protestants saw advantages to the “vol-

3 Barbara Theriault, “Conservative Revolutionaries”. *Protestant and Catholic Churches in Germany after Radical Political Change in the 1990s* (New York: Berghahn, 2004), 15–48.

4 Robert F. Goeckel, “Church-State Relations in the Post-Communist Era: The Case of East Germany,” *Problems of Post-Communism*, January–February 1997.

untary church” approach that the regime had forced on them. But given their sizable subsidies to the eastern churches during the GDR period, the western churches saw the restoration of the church tax as both necessary and fair. Critics have long seen this as leaving the churches dependent on the state to collect their revenues; a 2015 poll found that 84% oppose the church tax.⁵ But politically, it is less controversial than one might think; the major parties do not want to change the system and individuals can—and increasingly do—eliminate this personal expense by officially leaving the church.⁶

What is more contentious are the subsidies paid by the state to the churches based on legal obligations incurred upon the state acquisition of church and monastic properties in the early nineteenth century. A number of political parties, including even the Greens and the Free Democrats (FDP) at times, have called for their elimination, arguing that they contravene the separation of church and state, are an anachronistic holdover, and are too costly for the FRG. Despite opposition from the party leadership, even in the SPD a Working Group of Laicists has been formed, critical of church privileges and demanding stricter separation as part of the SPD program.⁷ On the other hand, the Greens, whose program had been highly critical of church privileges in the 1980s/90s, downplayed such criticism after 1998.⁸ More recently, the Left Party and the Alternative for Germany (AfD) have demanded an end to these subsidies.⁹

Another privilege for the churches entailed the teaching of theology at state universities and a role for the institutional church in the selection process for professors. To be sure, the GDR retained theology faculties at state universities, despite notions of eliminating them in the 1950s; but it did not give the churches any input into the selection of such professors, and many were considered quite “red” and/or Stasi informants. Catholic priests were trained at their own seminar in Erfurt, and not at state universities. Starting with Saxony-Anhalt in 1993, the Länder negotiated treaties with the Lutheran churches to regulate the privileges of the churches, including their role in naming professors. Unlike the West

5 Kirchensteuer, <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirchensteuer>.

6 The free churches are public entities, entitled to a church tax collected from its members by the state, but have foregone it. The Council of Jews of Germany has joined the system.

7 Herder Korrespondenz no. 11 (Nov. 2011), 11–15. Wolfgang Thierse, leading SPD official and active Catholic, rejected their proposals as “anachronistic.”

8 Herder Korrespondenz no. 3 (March 2011), 120–25. 55% of Green Party members retain church membership, though 62% of its leaders claim no religious affiliation.

9 “Staatsleistung an die Kirchen”, <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Staatsleistungen>. In 2017 the Left Party demanded a tally of all state financial aid to the churches since 1803! The Bundestag rejected the request. It is not clear that the FRG would be ahead by eliminating them, since it might be forced to pay compensation for the properties acquired. In 2022, state subsidies totaled 688 million Euros.

German treaties, however, the Land retains the final disposition in the process in the case where there is a disagreement with the church in question.¹⁰ In 2003, the Catholic seminar was incorporated into the newly-reconstituted state university in Erfurt, becoming the only Catholic theology faculty in eastern Germany.¹¹ Though remaining controversial in terms of separation issues, particularly given the fiscal burden for the Länder amidst declining vocations, the Constitutional Court has upheld their conformity with the Basic Law.¹²

Another contrast with the West German system entailed pastoral care for those serving in the military.¹³ Negotiated by the still all-German EKD with the FRG, the GDR churches were not expected to sign the 1957 Military Chaplaincy Agreement, out of consideration for their precarious political situation. In fact, over time the GDR churches became more critical of the agreement as tying the Protestants too closely to the FRG and, in the context of the rising peace movement, too close to the military. Pastoral care in the GDR was handled by the nearest parish to military bases, and was not reimbursed by the GDR state, unlike in the FRG. To accommodate the objections from the eastern churches after 1990, the EKD agreed to a framework agreement in 1996 which served as a transition until 2004. Under this framework, the EKD would assume responsibility for chaplains in the eastern Länder; the eastern churches were not obligated to contribute personnel but could do so if they wished, with all costs being paid by the Federal government.¹⁴ By 2001, the EKD decided not to extend the agreement, but to make the care a “concern of the entire church,” thereby obligating all member *Landeskirchen* (regional churches) to provide such pastors who would serve under the military bishop of the EKD.¹⁵ The role and con-

¹⁰ Wittenberger Vertrag, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wittenberger_Vertrag, September 15, 1993. See also Michael Germann, “Die Staatskirchenverträge der neuen Bundesländer: Eine dritte Generation im Vertragsstaatskirchenrecht,” in Stefan Mückl, ed. *Das Recht der Staatskirchenverträge* (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 2007), 91–114; Stefan Mückl, “Der Angebotscharakter der Konkordate und Kirchenverträge: Die wissenschaftliche Vorbildung der Geistlichen an den staatlichen theologischen Fakultäten.” *Ordnung der Wissenschaft*, no. 2 (2019): 69–88. <https://doi.org/10.17176/20190424-112000-0>.

¹¹ *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 10 (Oct. 2012): 527–30 and no. 3 (March 2014), 147–51. During the GDR period, 2,000 students and 900 priests were trained at the Erfurt seminar. Yet with only approximately 200 students in recent years it is the smallest Catholic theological faculty in Germany, and relies on a considerable contingent of western professors. But from the GDR era it has retained its own more ecumenical, adaptive pragmatism in contrast with other faculties and with the Berlin diocese.

¹² BVG Decision 28 Oct. 2008, abs. Nr. 57ff. “Theologische Fakultäten,” https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theologische_Fakultät

¹³ Theriault, “*Conservative Revolutionaries*,” 58–88.

¹⁴ Rahmenvereinbarung BRD-EKD bez. Evangelische Seelsorge in den neuen Ländern, Amtsblatt der EKD Heft 3, 1997 (15.3.1997), No. 50, S. 101–102.

¹⁵ “Militärseelsorge,” <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Militärseelsorge>. The new arrangement took effect in January 2004 upon the expiration of the Framework Agreement.

ception of the military chaplaincy has in fact changed considerably since 2001. As German troops have been deployed not only in Bosnia, but also in Afghanistan and elsewhere, chaplains have faced new challenges. The military bishop mandate has been altered to reflect the religious focus on peacebuilding, even as the troops are engaged in enforcement actions. In 2014, the EKD upgraded the position to a full-time one, no longer performed along with other duties by the EKD representative to the Federal government.¹⁶ On the other hand, the end of conscription has reduced the role of the *Bundeswehr*, which has meant the end of the alternative civilian service, though the churches have lobbied to retain their own versions of voluntary social service.¹⁷ However, recent military bishops have been recruited from the western member churches of the EKD, implying that in eastern Germany there is still considerable resistance to this official role in the *Bundeswehr*.¹⁸

Perhaps the most headlines and controversy have been engendered by the issue of religious education in the schools.¹⁹ Abolished by the GDR in the 1950s, the churches in the East were forced to solicit voluntary participation in Christian education, even as the parents of youth feared discrimination for participating. With the exception of Bremen (which was permitted to retain the 1947 status quo with no obligation for religious instruction), in the FRG, religious instruction was a required regular subject, legally grounded in the Basic Law. Parents who objected could opt for an ethics class instead. As noted elsewhere, many in the new *Länder* saw problems in principle and practice: principle, seeing it inconsistent with separation and critical distance to the state; and practical, seeing it as ineffective and even counterproductive given the widespread aversion to religion in the largely dechristianized society and the difficulty of recruiting instructors.

Nonetheless, the West German model was transferred to the East, with two exceptions. In Brandenburg, in 1990, the SPD government proposed an obligatory course, Leben-Ethik-Religionskunde (Life, Ethics, and Religious Studies, or LER) as more appropriate for areligious youth. Both the Catholic and Lutheran

¹⁶ epd Nachrichtendienst Ost, March 13, 2014 and September 8, 2014, in www.ekbo.de, accessed 13 July 2018.

¹⁷ The mutual Catholic and Protestant advocacy for church-based service is discussed in *Herder Korrespondenz*, no. 10 (2010), 492.

¹⁸ For many years, the Catholic military bishop has been Essen Bishop Franz Josef Overbeck, a West German. *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 11 (Nov. 2011), 594. Recent EKD military bishops have included Martin Dutzmann, Sigurd Rink, Bernhard Felmberg, all from western Germany. *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 10 (October 2014), 512; FAZ, 31 March 2020. Interestingly, Rink was earlier a pacifist, but after the Rwandan genocide began to advocate for military intervention.

¹⁹ Theriault "Conservative Revolutionaries," 89–113.

churches rejected this as undermining their efforts to missionize a largely atheistic society, and challenged it as unconstitutional in the Constitutional Court. The EKD issued a 1994 Memorandum affirming its determination to maintain the status quo for religious instruction.²⁰ Eventually, in 2002 a Court-brokered compromise was reached, entailing LER as an elective along with religious instruction as a regular subject, with the costs covered by Brandenburg.²¹

The other exception is Berlin. Covered by the so-called “Bremen Exception” since 1949, religious instruction had been provided by the churches, paid by the state but not a regular part of the curriculum.²² In 2006, the Berlin government sought to introduce a required ethics class, leaving religious instruction as an elective. The churches’ challenge to this decision was rejected by the Constitutional Court in 2007, provoking a petition campaign by church advocates (Pro-Reli) to call a referendum to make religious instruction an equivalent of the ethics class. The ensuing 2009 referendum failed, leaving the 2006 action in place.²³

The above discussion indicates that the eastern German churches largely adopted the West German model of church and state, with the partial exception of the religious instruction. But these short-term changes resulting from the reunification process have been overshadowed by several long-term developments.

LONG-TERM CHANGES IN CONTEXT

First, the churches were unable to halt the loss of adherents, much less recover from their losses. In 1990, 75% of easterners had no relationship with the church. A 2018 study by sociologist Gerd Pickel estimated that only 20% are nominal members. As one Catholic leader aptly put it, “In western Germany God is gone from the heart, but not from the mind; in eastern Germany, God is gone from the mind too.”²⁴ Some anomalies remain, for example, Sunday attendance at church among Catholics is higher in eastern Germany: 23% in Gorlitz, 21% in

²⁰ https://www.ekd.de/ekd_de/ds_doc/identitaet_und_verstaendigung_neu.pdf

²¹ “Religionsunterricht in Deutschland,” https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religionsunterricht_in_Deutschland.

²² Gerd Hepp, “Kirchen und Religionsgemeinschaften,” <http://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/bildung/zukunft-bildung/145240/kirchen-und-religionsgemeinschaften>.

²³ *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 8 (August 2012), 398–402.

²⁴ Gerd Pickel, “Säkularisierung, Pluralisierung, Individualisierung. Entwicklung der Religiosität in Deutschland und ihre politischen Implikationen” [Secularization, Pluralization, Individualization. Development in Religiosity in Germany and its Political Implications] <http://www.bpb.de/apuz/272103/entwicklung-der-religiositaet-in-deutschland-und-ihre-politischen-implikationen>; *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 1 (Jan. 2012), 6 and no. 1 (Jan. 2016), 32–35.

Dresden and Erfurt, but only 9.7% in Essen.²⁵ Accelerating this dechristianization process in the East was the *Jugendweihe* (youth consecration ceremony), begun by the GDR in the 1950s as a means of undermining participation in confirmation and first communion. Given the regime pressure, *Jugendweihe* quickly supplanted the religious ceremonies. Many anticipated that with the end of the communist regime, participation in the *Jugendweihe* would collapse, but in fact it continued strong for some years. Groups, such as the Humanistic Association of Germany and *Jugendweihe – Deutschland*, were formed to organize the process and disseminate it to western Germany.²⁶ Rather than an affirmation of atheism, it had become a part of the culture, passed down inter-generationally, not unlike confirmation in earlier eras. In the 1990s, 40% were estimated to participate in eastern Germany; though the numbers have dropped dramatically in recent years, 2010 saw 31,000 take *Jugendweihe* with only 15,000 being confirmed.²⁷ Rather than insist that youth choose between first communion and *Jugendweihe*, the Catholic Church in eastern Germany is attempting to appeal to unreligious youth with new, less-sacramental programs, called Celebrations of Coming-of-Age; the Protestant churches have rejected this as “confirmation-lite.”²⁸ Indifference is growing among youth, sapping interest in both religious and secular coming-of-age ceremonies.

What has changed is that this dechristianization process is no longer limited to the eastern Länder; large numbers of westerners have also left the church in recent years. Particularly significant is the growing numbers leaving the Catholic Church, many in the wake of child abuse scandals since 2010.²⁹ This affects not only the financial picture for the main churches, but also the validity of their

²⁵ *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 9 (September 2010), 437–38.

²⁶ The HVD does atheistic classes as part of its preparation for *Jugendweihe*, and claims to share the privileges of the churches, rather than end them. In 2011, only 10,000 took *Jugendweihe*, reflecting a growing indifference by youth to religious issues. *Herder Korrespondenz* n. 2 (February 2011), 77.

²⁷ *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 4 (April 2013), 168–69. 95% of those taking *Jugendweihe* are in eastern Germany; only 5% in the west, where confirmation/first communion remains more normative. *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 4 (April 2015), 195–99.

²⁸ Norddeutscher Rundfunk, June 5, 2018, for example, on the Signpost program of the Catholic Church in Schwerin. *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 7 (July 2012), 333–35, on the Celebrations of Coming of Age program in Erfurt diocese. The relative stances of the churches on this issue is ironic, given that during the communist period, the Catholic church insisted that *Jugendweihe* was inconsistent with the Catholic first communion, whereas the Lutheran churches softened their stance to accept youth participating in both ceremonies.

²⁹ *Die ZEIT*, 27. Juli 2017 “Schrumpfende Kirchen; Die Zahl der Protestanten und Katholiken in Deutschland sank vergangenes Jahr um eine halbe Million. War schon schlimmer!, sagen die Kirchenoberen. Ach ja?” [Shrinking Churches: The Number of Protestants and Catholics fell last year by ½ million. It was worse, say the church leaders] Numbers leaving the Catholic Church now outpace the Evangelical Church. In 2013, the average age of Catholic priests was 60; with 100 new ordinations and 350 deaths/retirements per year, the Catholic Church was falling far short in clergy replacement. In-

claim to still provide an ethical perspective to inform the public discourse. A key feature of the German model, religious instruction, is now under pressure: in many areas, there are too few students to offer it, and Catholic and Protestant churches are opting for joint classes in religion.³⁰

A second factor affecting the eastern churches is the coming-to-terms with the communist past. In particular, this has impacted politics in Brandenburg. Well-known is the case of Manfred Stolpe, long-time chief lawyer of the GDR Protestant Church, who collaborated with the Stasi without authorization of his church superiors, and entered politics after the revolution as an SPD leader, eventually becoming the government head of Brandenburg.³¹ Despite the intervening time, the question of Stasi complicity—and the compromises with former communists made by Stolpe and others who became politically active after 1990—returns periodically to haunt Brandenburg politics in the form of a “supra-party cartel of silence.”³² In the case of the Berlin *Landeskirche*, the church website suggests that it continues to take the issue seriously.³³ By contrast, the website of the Evangelical Church of Central Germany (www.ekmd.de) does not even have a link regarding this topic on its website. Along with a significant portion of West Berliners, the Berlin church is therefore more vigilant on the issue of complicity with the Stasi than the other eastern churches.

Third, the churches in eastern Germany are impacted by the polarization of politics reflected in the rise of the far-right and far-left parties, as will be dis-

creasingly the Church has had to rely on foreign priests, mostly in western dioceses. See *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 2 (Feb. 2013), 63–69.

30 For example, in Lower Saxony, joint religious instruction was announced by the regional churches, without consulting their central German church organizations. *FAZ* 19 May 2021. Based on the experiment in Baden-Württemberg, the Catholic bishops and the EKD moved in 2015/16 to approve a cooperative model on a regional basis for religious instruction. *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 1 (Jan. 2017), 11–12.

31 Stolpe’s role as an informant became public in 1992, despite his file having been destroyed in the final days of the GDR. But despite this revelation, voters in Brandenburg rewarded him with reelection in 1994. Robert F. Goeckel, “The Churches and Collaboration with the Secret Police: The Case of East Germany,” presented at American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies Annual Meeting, November 1996, Boston. See also Ralf Georg Reuth, IM “Sekretär”: Die “Gauck-Recherche” und die Dokumente zum “Fall Stolpe,” (Berlin: Ullstein Verlag, 1992).

32 Brandenburg had the largest number of IMs of any Land parliament in the East after 1990. It was the first Land to eliminate the Stasi background checks for civil servants. *Der Spiegel* alleged that Stolpe and the PDS, in need of mutual support politically, engaged in blocking the release of early reports by the church commission to review Land parliament members accused of Stasi complicity by the Gauck Authority. Stefan Berg and Peter Wensierski, “Das organisierte Vergessen,” *Der Spiegel* n. 4/2010 (25 Jan. 2010), 36.

33 Its website includes a link to Coming to Terms with the SED Past. In 2017, it criticized the Red-Red coalition in Berlin for proposing a known Stasi informant as a member of the government, regarding Andrej Holm, a sociology professor at the Humboldt University of Berlin, which also took mild disciplinary action. www.EKBO.de.

cussed below. The Left Party, inheriting the organization of the former SED, has long done well in eastern elections, gaining levels of support sufficient to make them kingmakers of *Länder* governments, either supporting the coalition while remaining outside the government, such as in Saxony-Anhalt and Mecklenburg, or as part of a coalition government, as in Thuringia and Berlin. Building on the Dresden-based *Pegida* movement protesting immigrants and refugee policy, the far-right Alternative for Deutschland (AfD) has risen to become the largest party in the eastern *Länder*, and the official opposition to Scholz's government. Not surprisingly, public opinion in the east is more likely to view Islam as a threat, and support limits on immigration.³⁴

All three of these underlying factors have had significant impacts on the churches in the eastern *Länder*. Most dramatically, the sustained loss of members and revenues has forced the churches to make major organizational changes to cut costs and remain viable. Since the early 2000s, the EKD has been considering "reforms," such as the consolidation of parishes. But these reductions had long been on the agenda in eastern Germany, where even in the GDR period the churches had been unable to maintain buildings and the salaries of pastors without substantial assistance from the West German churches. A mega-merger among the Evangelical Church of the Union was contemplated, but proved too complicated. Instead, the tiny Landeskirche of the Görlitz Region, reassuming the politically-charged name Church of Silesia and Upper Lausitz after 1990, merged with the Berlin *Landeskirche* to form the Evangelical Church of Berlin and Upper Lausitz in 2004.³⁵ It had considered fusion with the geographically-closer, Dresden-based Saxony *Landeskirche*, but as a Union (Reformed and Lutheran) church, Görlitz was theologically closer to Berlin than to the confessionally-Lutheran Saxons.

A second northern merger, more incremental by nature, was between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mecklenburg and the Evangelical Church in Greifswald, which assumed the pre-war designation as the Church of Vorpommern after 1990.³⁶ Small Vorpommern had been in discussions with larger Mecklenburg for some time, but the grassroots forces in the synod balked at giving up its distinctive historical tradition deriving from Prussian times, as well as its

³⁴ Gerd Pickel, "Secularisierung, Pluralisierung, Individualisierung, Entwicklung der Religiosität in Deutschland und ihre politische Implikationen," July 6, 2018, <http://www.bpb.de/apuz/272103/entwicklung-der-religiositaet-in-deutschland-und-ihre-politischen-implikationen>.

³⁵ "Evangelische Kirche der schlesischen Oberlausitz," https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelische_Kirche_der_schlesischen_Oberlausitz; *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 9 (Sept. 2011), 437–38.

³⁶ www.kirche-mv.de.

confessional status as a Union church. After a brief dalliance with Berlin, also a Union church, the fear of domination by Berlin led Vorpommern to return to its original romance with Mecklenburg. But the eventual three-way merger with the richer North Elbian Church in Hamburg would relativize the influence of both Mecklenburg and Vorpommern.³⁷

Finally, some change in Thuringia and the Church Province of Saxony had been anticipated for many years because of the geographic confusion of church borders historically—the major Thuringian city of Erfurt was part of the Church Province of Saxony, for example. But confessional and political differences hindered it: the Thuringian *Landeskirche* was Lutheran and politically quite conservative; the Church Province of Saxony was confessionally Union and very liberal politically. Yet the fiscal exigencies nonetheless forced them to merge in 2009, renamed the Evangelical Church of Central Germany.³⁸

It is worth considering those eastern *Landeskirchen* which have NOT merged, but retained their independence. Saxony has not felt the pressure to merge because it has retained strong membership, financial support, and historical identity. But that hardly explains the case of the tiny Anhalt *Landeskirche*. It boasted only 40,309 members in 2012, declining to 33,900 by 2016. Yet after studying the issue, the church leadership resolved in January 2017 to remain independent, despite facing severe budget problems and years of considering a merger with the geographically and confessionally-similar Church Province of Saxony.

REMAINING EAST-WEST CHURCH ASYMMETRIES AND ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

The eastern *Landeskirchen* remain underrepresented in the leadership of the EKD and other umbrella organizations since 1990. Although the heads of the EKD synod from 2003 to 2013 came from eastern Germany, the higher-profile chairs of the EKD Council have invariably come from western backgrounds; only one eastern bishop (Saxony) was represented on the Council; umbrella confessional organizations of the Lutheran and Union/Reformed churches continue to be headed by westerners.³⁹ Recent cases also suggest a pattern of recruiting Wessies as bishops to eastern *Landeskirchen*, sometimes resulting in conflicts and

³⁷ *Mecklenburg und Vorpommern Kirchenzeitung* no. 1/2017, Interview with Bishop Abromeit.

³⁸ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelische_Kirche_in_Mitteldeutschland.

³⁹ The only exception that could be construed is Wolfgang Huber, Bishop of Berlin-Brandenburg Oberlausitz, but his theological pedigree derives from Heidelberg University. All other EKD Council chairs

even removal from office. With a background in the West German environmental movement, Ilse Junkerman came from Württemberg in 2009 as the founding bishop of the Central Germany *Landeskirche*, but was ousted in 2019: Allegedly, she showed a “lack of teamwork,” but also apparently fell victim to the growing appeal of the AfD.⁴⁰ In another case with political overtones, Bishop Carsten Rentzing was forced to resign in 2019 as bishop of the Saxony *Landeskirche* over revelations and criticism of right-wing actions and writings dating from his student days in West Berlin. His opposition to homosexual pastors and gay marriage made him attractive to the conservatives and pietistic groups, but his ambivalence regarding the AfD made him the target of liberals in Leipzig.⁴¹

The turnover in leadership of the Catholic Church also reflects a similar dominance of western Germany. The position of bishop of Berlin illustrates the pattern clearly.⁴² Bishop Joachim Meissner, bishop of Berlin, left in 1989 for the richer, more influential diocese of Cologne. Later, one of his subordinates, Rainer Maria Woelki, was designated as bishop of Berlin; but upon Meissner’s resignation in 2014, Woelki was shifted quickly back to Cologne after only two years as bishop of Berlin. Meanwhile, the key bishop position in Erfurt remained unfilled for several years after the retirement of Bishop Joachim Wanke in 2012. Woelki’s replacement, Heiner Koch, a native of Düsseldorf and also a mentee of Meissner, was moved from the Dresden-Meissen bishopric after only two years in that position, and was replaced by another Wessi, Heinrich Timmerevers from Münster.⁴³ Bishop Gerhard Feige of Magdeburg is not alone in characterizing the eastern bishoprics as “internship positions” from the perspective of the western dioceses and Rome.

have been from the Rhineland or Bavaria. *FAZ* 7 Oct. 2009. Regarding umbrella organizations in 2013, see *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 12 (Dec. 2013), 600–602.

⁴⁰ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)*, April 9, 2019. Junkerman supported the movement for limits on German autobahns and compared eastern Germany to West Germany in the 1970s when 18% voted for the right-wing NPD party, with both positions likely to antagonize many in the church. Exacerbating this is the structural crisis in the church: the Central Germany *Landeskirche* is still dependent on western churches for 1/3 of its expenditures, despite restoration of the church tax. It is forced to focus on pastoral care of regions, no longer able to fill every parish with full-time pastors. *FAZ*, October 30, 2019.

⁴¹ *FAZ*, October 13, 2019. His successor, an easterner from Saxony, is Tobias Bilz, *FAZ*, February 29, 2020.

⁴² On Woelki’s mixed legacy as bishop of Berlin—seen as a hardliner, but more liberal and innovative than his mentor Bishop Meissner—see *FAZ* 18 Sept. 2014. In the context of the 2017 Reformation anniversary, Woelki however rebuffed Lutheran doctrines of freedom. *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 10 (Oct. 2017), 13–17. Recently, Woelki has been under intense pressure as a result of his handling of sex abuse scandals dating from 2012 in Cologne. See *FAZ* 31 May 2021.

⁴³ *FAZ* 2 June 2015; *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 6 (June 2016), 7. Critics like Feige see the Vatican as unwilling to elevate local candidates, preferring auxiliary bishops from Cologne instead.

Asymmetry with the rest of Germany is also apparent in the Catholic pastoral activity. Of course, the small numbers of adherents—4–6% of the population, few confirmands - and their financial weakness, has left them dependent on western dioceses like the Protestants. However, they are more flexible and innovative than western Catholics as a result of their experience as a diaspora church in the GDR.⁴⁴ It is striking that Bishop Feige has taken Magdeburg's sister diocese in France—rather than western German dioceses—as his role model in dealing with the many parishes lacking priests by authorizing a greater use of laity in services.⁴⁵ Erfurt Bishop Wanke highlighted “positive Christianity” in unorthodox efforts to appeal to youth, e.g., Saturday Night Fever gatherings in public squares and new coming-of-age events as a more informal alternative to a traditional first communion.⁴⁶ The Grolitz bishop, Wolfgang Ipolt, has sought to cooperate with an Austrian order to reopen a monastery as a Silesian pilgrimage site.⁴⁷ The eastern bishops have also been more open to intercommunion in cases of mixed marriages or divorced Catholics who have remarried.⁴⁸ The well-attended Leipzig church fair in 2016 demonstrated the relative youth and vitality of the eastern Catholics. Finally, most of the scandals in the Catholic Church regarding financial corruption and sexual abuse seem to have played out in the western dioceses.⁴⁹

The moving of the capital from Bonn in Catholic Rhineland to largely secular/Protestant Berlin has posed both challenges and opportunities for the eastern Catholic Church. Though a federal system with a strong regional church authority, the move left the Catholics on the defensive in terms of the optics of influence. The 1999 decision of the German Bishops Conference (by a margin of one vote!) to retain its headquarters in Bonn and the “Protestant era” in the CDU under Chancellor Angela Merkel—not to mention the aforementioned

44 *Herder Korrespondenz* n. 1 (Jan. 2018), 48–51, reports a diocesan health study contrasting Magdeburg with Essen and Bamberg, concluding the shortage of priests is the main problem, but that Magdeburg has been able to use laypeople better than Essen, which has closed its seminary and large number of churches.

45 *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 11 (Nov. 2014), 555–59. Yet paradoxically, 70% of the expenditures of the diocese of Magdeburg are paid by the archbishopric of Paderborn. *FAZ*, May 22, 2016.

46 *FAZ*, September 23, 2011.

47 *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 9 (Sept. 2016), 24.

48 Bishop Feige of Magdeburg supported this initiative, as did Cardinal Marx, head of the German Bishops Conference; it was undermined by seven other western bishops who appealed to the Vatican, which overturned the initiative. *FAZ*, May 1, 2018. More recently, Pope Francis has tilted more towards permitting intercommunion on a case-by-case basis. *New York Times*, May 13, 2021.

49 The scandals facing the German Catholic Church are not the main focus of this treatment. But it is striking that the most widely-publicized sex abuse scandals have occurred in Bavaria (Regensburg), Hamburg, and Cologne; the extravagant spending on his residence by the bishop of Limburg cost him his position, though he landed a post in Rome.

turnovers in the Berlin bishopric—have reinforced the impression of a disjunction between the Catholic episcopal center and the German political stage. Yet having 300,000 members, the Berlin diocese has grown substantially since reunification. Catholic bishops have sought to rectify this by upgrading the presence of the church in Berlin. For example, Berlin lacks a university-level Catholic theology faculty, though they have proposed creating one at Humboldt University. Catholic orders, such as Jesuits, have also sought to establish a presence in Berlin. Bishop Woelki called for a “scientific presence” of the Catholic Church in Berlin that could serve to engage with the government on issues of public policy. Some argued that the church needed a think tank more than another theological faculty. Ultimately, the Catholic Church was forced to settle for a smaller theological center, jointly with Islamic and Jewish sections funded by the Berlin government.⁵⁰ Another issue in the church’s effort to upgrade its position was the renovation of St. Hedwig’s Cathedral, with the goal of making it a center of the Catholic presence in the new capital. After being destroyed in World War II, it was rebuilt in the GDR period, but with unusual interior features in liturgical and architectural terms. The project to renovate the cathedral engendered controversy among planners, preservationists and liturgists, not to mention budgetary concerns. But after considerable delays, renovation began in 2019.

Yet, many social-cultural issues do not seem to distinguish between the eastern and western churches. For example, the EKD has articulated positions on certain ethical issues of growing relevance, such as stem cell research and assisted suicide, but the fault lines do not seem to run along east-west lines.⁵¹ Likewise, issues of tradition, such as Sunday blue laws and national holidays, have seen the churches take a unified stance, both eastern and western, Catholic and Protestant.⁵²

⁵⁰ Some Protestant professors supported the idea of adding Catholic, Jewish, and Islamic positions, but the Protestant theological faculty as a whole opposed adding the other confessional positions, arguing that it would endanger its status as a Protestant faculty at the Humboldt University. The reduced need for priests and supply of students, along with the existing heralded faculty at Erfurt, also complicated the Catholic case for Berlin. For their part, the Jesuits advocated for their own autonomous center for philosophy/theology. *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 3 (March 2017), 50–51; no. 5 (May 2017), 13–15, 15–17; no. 3 (March 2018), 9–11; no. 2 (Feb. 2018), 11–13. *FAZ*, November 2, 2019.

⁵¹ See, for example, Prof. Dr. Gerhard Robbers, “Bioethik und die Evangelischen Kirche,” 29 April 2009 <http://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/umwelt/bioethik/33782/bioethik-und-die-evangelische-kirche>. On the right-to-die debate, the EKD position is found at <http://www.bpb.de/mediathek/245106/sterbehilfe-das-sagt-die-evangelische-kirche>. The Catholic position diverges on stem cell research. See Karl Cardinal Lehman’s opposition, in <http://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/umwelt/bioethik/33776/standpunkt-lehmann>.

⁵² For example, the EKD and German Bishops’ Conference opposition to changes in Sunday closing laws in the 2000s. See *EKD Bulletin* n. 3 (Sept. 2004), 4. Also, the EKD opposition to proposals to eliminate German Unity Day as a public holiday, after the earlier elimination of Prayer and Repentance Day holiday. *EKD Bulletin* n. 4 (Dec. 2004), 4.

But regarding Islam, the defensive crouch of the eastern churches and the rising public opposition to Moslems and refugees, seem to yield a different accent from western *Länder*. No eastern *Länder* has introduced religious instruction as a regular school subject for Muslims, although three western *Länder* have done so, and three have launched confession-based experiments. Only two *Länder* (Hamburg and Hesse) have recognized Muslim groups as public organizations.⁵³ Centers for Islamic studies to train teachers of Islamic religious instruction in schools have been founded in only four locations, all in western Germany.⁵⁴ To be sure, the issue of how to bring the ethnically and theologically-mixed Muslim groups into the highly-organized religious architecture in Germany has been very difficult. There are also relatively fewer Muslims in the eastern *Länder*. And one can hardly expect the Lutheran and Catholic churches to spearhead such legal changes, even in the old *Länder*. But nevertheless, it still represents a striking difference between east and west.

For example, on the contentious issue of a ban on headscarves by *Länder*, western church leaders are quite divided. Some leaders, such as the bishops of Hamburg and Lübeck, opposed the ban, as did Johannes Rau, the late president of Germany and a prominent layperson in the EKD. Others, such as the bishops of Berlin, Hannover, Bavaria and Württemberg, favored the ban. The eastern leaders have seemingly avoided the debate.⁵⁵ However, the culture war over same-sex marriage has produced public fissures among the eastern *Landeskirchen*. Berlin and Central Germany have both endorsed same-sex marriage.⁵⁶

The mergers have doubtless produced some tensions and unlikely outcomes on this issue, as many of those conservative Thuringian church leaders who merged into the new Central Germany *Landeskirche* in 2009 likely opposed same-sex marriage. In the Evangelical Church in Saxony, the issue played a large role in the selection of its new bishop, Rentzing, in 2014. Identified with the evangelical wing in the German church and an initiator of a conservative movement, "Time to Arise," Rentzing opposed clergy living in gay relationships in church parsonages. In an extended election process and closely divided synod, he defeated a more liberal candidate.⁵⁷ Saxony has a strong pietistic tradition and movement,

⁵³ Ulrich Willens, "Stiefkind Religionspolitik," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* n. 28-29/2018 (6 July 2018); regarding Hamburg, *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 9 (September 2012), 436.

⁵⁴ *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 4 (April 2011), 196–200.

⁵⁵ *Ecumenical Dialogue* n. 1/2004, supplement to *EKD Bulletin* n. 1/2004, 1–8, with views of various EKD leaders.

⁵⁶ *FAZ*, April 10, 2016.

⁵⁷ Matthias Kamann, "Gegner der Homo-Ehe werden stärker," *Welt.de*, June 3, 2015, www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article141857377/Gegner-der-Homo-Ehe-werden-staerker.html.

so his selection is less surprising. But he succeeded Bishop Jochen Bohl, who had been a Green Party politician. Interestingly both Bohl and Rentzing came from western *Laender*. In many respects, Saxony and Bavaria bear certain cultural similarities; the cross in Bavarian offices and the rejection of same sex marriage in Saxony parsonages epitomize their conservative cultural affinity.

The east-west fault lines also extend to the Catholic Church, as evidenced, for example, in the sanctioning of mixed marriages. The Catholic Church in eastern Germany, following the more-engaging approach of Bishop Wanke of Erfurt, has acknowledged its diaspora situation and become more ecumenical than the majority Catholic regions such as Bavaria and Rhineland. The German Bishop's Conference approved communion for mixed-marriages in 2018, but six conservative western bishops led by Cardinal Woelki of Cologne successfully appealed to Pope Francis to overturn this position. Magdeburg Bishop Feige publicly protested this maneuver, thereby reflecting the contrasting stance of the eastern German hierarchy, but the dominant western dioceses carried the day with the Vatican.⁵⁸

The ecumenical relations between the EKD and Catholic Church have been driven largely by forces beyond Germany, such as changes in and preferences of the Vatican; the east-west German distinction seems to have played a small role. Efforts to develop closer ties have sometimes foundered on issues of shared communion, liturgy, and church governance. The papacy of Benedict XVI did little to foster ecumenical efforts.⁵⁹ Protestant attempts to avoid confessional tensions and accentuate cooperation during the Luther 2017 celebration—branding it a “festival of Christ” and a “commemoration” rather than a “jubilee” of the Reformation—failed to produce the ecumenical breakthrough which they had hoped for.⁶⁰

But in terms of political-social issues, the EKD and the Catholic Church have increasingly found common ground, issuing joint declarations, even as these seem to carry less clout with the political elite of the Federal Republic. For in-

⁵⁸ *Die Zeit*, June 14, 2018, Fabian Klask, “Was der sich traut”; *FAZ*, May 1, 2018.

⁵⁹ Benedict showed more interest in relations with traditional Orthodox churches than with liberal Protestant ones. *FAZ*, September 27, 2011.

⁶⁰ *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 12 (Dec. 2012), 604-605; no. 6 (June 2015), 39; no. 10 (Oct. 2017), 7, 13-17; no. 11 (Nov. 2017), 51, 56; no. 12 (Dec. 2017), 21-23. EKD Chair Heinrich Bedford-Strohm practiced great diplomacy toward the Catholics during the run up to 2017, and developed a positive chemistry with his fellow Bavarian Cardinal Reinhard Marx. The Lutheran leaders were disappointed in the attendance at exhibits and events, and the high cost. Protestant politicians hailed the “end of the confessional age”; Eastern Catholic church leaders, such as Bishop Feige, were more positive about the impact of the anniversary and the need to cooperate with Protestants to missionize; on the other hand, Bishop Woelki and the Vatican underscored the remaining doctrinal and policy differences.

stance, both churches have criticized proposals to legalize assisted suicide.⁶¹ They joined forces to warn of world-wide threats to religious freedom, and issued an Ecumenical Social Initiative on economic justice.⁶² They have both supported refugees and asylum seekers, and criticized far-right extremism.⁶³ And their institutional interests bind them, for example, defending their special status in labor law to limit the unionization of their one million non-clergy employees and a shared pragmatism regarding hiring in an increasingly secular society.⁶⁴ Of course regarding same-sex marriage, gender studies, abortion and stem cell research, major differences remain.⁶⁵

THE PARTIES AND THE CHURCHES

Upon reunification, the eastern German churches became embedded in the German party culture. The catch-all parties, CDU and SPD, had long maintained ties with both churches, even though they were naturally closer to the Catholic Church and EKD, respectively. The ties were quasi-institutional as well, such as the Evangelical Working Group within the CDU, and embodied in personnel, such as SPD party leaders being selected as presidents of the synod and *Kirchentag*, with the balance of party affiliation sought by the Central Committee of Catholics (the main lay organization of German Catholics). But in recent years, the role of the SPD in the religious architecture has altered. Its previously strong

61 The debate in the Protestant churches has been more heated though, especially between church leaders opposing it in church hospitals, and those in the diaconical system who tend to favor it. The Protestants tend to see it as an individual decision, unlike the Catholics. *FAZ*, Nov. 1, 2021 and January 11, 2021.

62 On religious freedom, *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 8 (Aug. 2013), 387–88 and *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 2 (Feb. 2018), 9–11; regarding economic justice, <http://www.sozialinitiative-kirchen.de> and *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 4 (April 2014), 173–77. Previously, the two churches had issued a joint declaration on the social market economy in 1997.

63 *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 6 (June 2015), 4–6 and no. 12 (Dec. 2015), 9–11 regarding the churches' consensus on refugees and right-wing extremism.

64 *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 1 (Jan. 2013), 4–5 and no. 10 (Oct. 2015), 35.

65 The 2013 EKD Orientation Guide on Family, with its ethical defense of gay marriage, was rejected by the Catholic Church and some Protestants. See *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 7 (July 2013), 333–35 and no. 9 (Sept. 2013), 433–36. On gender studies and the Catholic criticism of “gender ideology”, *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 9 (Sept 2014), 439–40. *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 6 (June 2015), 6 and no. 8 (Aug. 2017), 9–11. Like the vote of conscience on abortion, the CDU split, permitting the same-sex marriage legislation to pass. The Catholic Church was officially opposed, but most bishops remained silent or referenced the official position. And regarding its own Caritas employees, in 2015 the German Bishops Conference approved hiring remarried and gay employees, reversing its 2002 opposition. The EKD supported the legislation, even though most *Landeskirchen* do not permit homosexual pastors to cohabit with a same-sex spouse.

representation in EKD official bodies has eroded; some groups of SPD leaders have even broken with the German consensus, and advocated for a full separation of church and state.⁶⁶

More consequential has been the fragmentation of the German party system in the last 40 years, particularly since reunification. Though relatively weak in eastern Germany, the rise of the Green Party has challenged the religious architecture. Initially advocates of stricter separation, the Green Party has shifted toward a greater acceptance of church privileges. Though the leadership has long been characterized as largely without confession, large portions of the membership remain church adherents, and some high-profile leaders have bridged the earlier gap with the churches.⁶⁷

More directly relevant to eastern Germany is the transformation of the former Communist Party into the Left Party since 1989. It has established itself in the parliaments in eastern Germany, and even the coalition calculus. Despite dropping the SED's militant atheism and its stance that religion was a private matter, the Left Party has advocated strict separationist policies, and criticized state subsidies and church privileges; the grassroots remain antireligious.⁶⁸ For their part, the churches have responded in kind: they have co-opted few Left leaders into their governance structures, and rejected Left policies to alter religious instruction. Still, in recent years as the Left Party has joined or supported governing coalitions in eastern Germany, the party has moderated its anticlerical position somewhat, and limited contacts between party and church leaders have been established.⁶⁹ The Minister President of Thuringia, Protestant Bodo

66 *FAZ*, May 2, 2009 and September 29, 2009. Reflecting on the end of the era of Jürgen Schmude and Erhard Eppler, the *FAZ* analyst concludes, "Hardly anything remains of the former dominance of the SPD in the EKD."

67 For example, Winfried Kretschmann, long-time president of Baden-Württemberg, Green leader and active Catholic, has favored a continuation of the partial separation and church privileges. See *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 12 (Dec. 2013), 598–600. The profile of the Greens in the EKD has also risen in recent decades, reflected in the election of Karin Göring-Eckardt as Präses of the EKD Synod in 2009.

68 *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 3 (March 2018), 11–13, regarding the shifting debate in the Left Party between those favoring laicite, and those seeing the churches as progressive on issues of refugees and Muslims and important civil society actors.

69 Reflecting its origins as a merger of former communists and the leftist faction of the SPD, the 2011 Left Party program was a compromise supportive of church work, and did not call for strict separation. For the 2017 program, a dissenting group, centered in Saxony, advocated major changes in the Basic Law to implement the laicite model. The party leadership saw this debate as an electoral distraction, and set up a commission to study the issue. The 2017 program supported work-free Sundays, religious clothing, and dropped opposition to school prayer and a ban on the crucifix. But it retained its opposition to subsidies and the military chaplaincy. The Left Party position thus remains ambiguous regarding the church-state relationship. *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 11 (Nov. 2016), 29–32 and no. 9 (Sept. 2017), 11–13.. Party leaders met with the Central Committee of Catholics starting in 2014. *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 10 (Oct. 2014), 540.

Ramelow, has even been described as the “most well-known Christian in the Left Party”!⁷⁰

Probably more problematic for the churches is the rise of the AfD, its right-wing populist agenda, and its relatively stronger electoral performance in eastern Germany. Studies have shown that those without religious attachment—certainly true for most in eastern Germany—are more vulnerable to authoritarian far-right appeals.⁷¹ Both major churches have criticized the AfD for its racist anti-Islamic positions, and largely shunned interaction with it.⁷² Though claiming to defend Germany’s Christian culture from Islamic influence, the AfD has accused the churches of being “red-green political organizations” who betray their religious members. It alleged that the EKD supported the SED as part of its “unholy alliance with the powerful in history,” and accused it of an “eco-populist climate credo.”⁷³ Citing Pope Benedict, the AfD calls for the “Entweltlichung der Kirchen” (elimination of worldly influences in the churches), and advocates for a stricter separation of church and state, and an end to state subsidies.⁷⁴ Given its strength in the eastern Länder, the AfD poses an acute dilemma for the churches there.

Sabrina Ramet has long had an acute eye for hypocrisy among church officials, particularly those who have been compromised by ties with the secret police in the communist period. The case of eastern Germany has provided considerable grist for this mill as well.

Space limitations make it impossible to provide a full-dress rehearsal of the issue, as others have done so more thoroughly. In general, the Catholic Church has been only marginally implicated by the scandal, reflecting its political abstinence and hierarchical structure.⁷⁵ The Protestant bishops implicated as Stasi informants—Horst Gienke of Greifswald and Eberhard Natho of Anhalt, for ex-

⁷⁰ *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 1 (Jan. 2015), 54.

⁷¹ Reflecting findings of the respected Allensbach Demoskopie surveys, analyzed in *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 8 (Aug. 2017), 21–23. Paradoxically, 93% of the largely-unreligious eastern Germans opposed replacing a Christian holiday with an Islamic one, but only 78% of those in western Germany objected to this, suggesting a cultural Christianity that the AfD taps into.

⁷² The 2017 AfD Party program supports religious freedom, but excludes Muslims. *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 9 (Sept 2017), 11–13. The AfD was excluded from the program of the 2016 Catholic Kirchentag in Leipzig, but was included in the 2017 program in Munster. Interestingly, new Erfurt Catholic Bishop Ulrich Neymeyr objected to this decision. The AfD was included in the 2018 program at the Catholic Kirchentag in Münster, provoking protests. *Herder Korrespondenz* no. 4 (April 2016), 11–13; *FAZ*, May 15, 2018.

⁷³ *FAZ*, June 12, 2019.

⁷⁴ *FAZ*, May 21, 2021. The FDP, Left, and Green parties joined in a proposal to substitute a one-time payment by the Lander in lieu of the annual state subsidies. The SPD-CDU coalition rejected the proposal.

⁷⁵ Bernd Schaefer, *The East German State and the Catholic Church, 1945–1989* (New York: Berghahn, 2010).

ample—resigned or retired soon after the revolution. Others, such as Heinrich Rathke and Christoph Stier of Mecklenburg, or Johannes Hempel and Volker Kress of Saxony, remained unblemished by the Stasi revelations. Still others, such as Werner Leich of Thuringia or Albrecht Schönherr of Berlin, were untarnished by complicity with the Stasi, though they had enjoyed state favor and support in their selection and conduct of their office as bishops. Among newly elected bishops since 1989, one detects a tendency to select either Ossies with a history of dissidence (e.g. Axel Noack of the Church Province of Saxony, Christfried Berger of Greifswald, Andreas von Maltzahn of Mecklenburg, Christoph Kaehler in Thuringia) or Wessies unburdened by the past (Hans-Jürgen Abromeit in Greifswald, Jochen Bohl in Saxony).⁷⁶

Beyond the issue of Stasi culpability, it might be illuminating to sketch the trajectory of several Protestant leaders to suggest the variety of outcomes. Probably most prominent politically, and most controversial, was the case of Manfred Stolpe discussed earlier. His file was never found, but sufficient corroborating evidence confirms his complicity. Stolpe nonetheless claimed he was acting on behalf of the Church in defending human rights cases, and managed to pivot successfully to a career as an SPD political leader in Brandenburg. Stolpe became the acolyte of the partisan yet resentful Ossie.

By contrast, Rainer Eppelman and Joachim Gauck, activists in the democracy movement in the 1980s, also made political careers, but in the CDU. A leading peace pastor in Berlin, Eppelman entered politics and became a minister in the last GDR government, and then assumed other positions in the Bundestag, eventually chairing the Enquete Commission, which investigated the record of the SED regime. A pastor in Mecklenburg, Gauck also went into CDU politics, and in 1991 became the director of the authority to administer the Stasi files, later known as the Gauck Authority. As such, Gauck was at the center of the controversies over complicity with the communist regime. Because of the respect he enjoyed from this role, he was eventually elected president of Germany. Both Eppelman and Gauck represent the option for a partisan yet moral mandate among those Protestant pastors who helped create the 1989 revolution.

A third very distinctive version is that of Friedrich Schorlemmer, pastor in Wittenberg, Saxony-Anhalt. An active critic of the GDR regime, he chose not to enter politics after 1989. But he has remained an often provocative journalistic

⁷⁶ Eduard Berger was convicted of attempted flight from the GDR, Andreas von Maltzahn and Axel Noack opted for Bausoldat status instead of military service, Kaehler was active in the civic and party movements of 1989. Stier and Noack were involved in the committee vetting church officials for Stasi involvement.

gadfly.⁷⁷ At one point, Schorlemmer called for the Stasi files to be burned and for turning the page of history; more recently, he has expressed support for the Left Party. As noted earlier, he criticized the high-profile Luther Year celebration as a failure, and called for more of a focus on parishes than elite ceremonies.

Lastly, I would highlight the case of Heinrich Rathke, former bishop of Mecklenburg. A thoughtful, modest critic of GDR socialism, Rathke chose after retirement to invest a considerable effort in reviving the Lutheran churches in the former USSR. As such, he seems to represent the option to “think locally, act globally,” rather than remain only on the German stage.

To summarize, my review of the role of the eastern German churches since the end of communism indicates that the West German model has largely been adopted in the new *Länder* of eastern Germany. Even though the East German churches dealt with the recriminations of Stasi complicity rather rapidly by means of the Gauck files, church vetting commissions, and changes in leadership, this entanglement and the changed context due to 50 years of official atheism have left the churches far weaker in the East, forcing them to concentrate on organizational maintenance and pragmatic solutions. Yet, the loss of church adherence is now widespread in western regions as well. Both Catholic and Lutheran churches are focused on maintaining the privileges of the status quo; the successive grand coalition governments of the CDU and SPD have little interest in changing it, thus leading to inertia in the official religious policy in the FRG.

But this corporatist stability of the religious policy has been called into question by the recent political fragmentation of the party system in Germany, accelerating societal disengagement from organized religion, and growing identity politics. The continued voting appeal of The Left, with its criticism of the established churches, has combined with the rise of the far-right party, the AfD, with its claims to defend Christian Europe from radical Islam and asylum-seekers, while calling for Germans to quit the church. Both parties have performed extraordinarily well in eastern Germany, hence reflecting the particular fragility of democracy there. In the post-Merkel era—and the post-Gauck era for that matter—will the German leadership be up to the task of defending not only Europe and the liberal order in international politics, but also the German model of church-state relations in the face of change and challenges?

77 Schorlemmer reflects on his youth as a son of a pastor and outsider in the GDR. *Die Zeit*, July 5, 2018

The Priest and the Bishops

Monsignor Tomáš Halík and the Struggle for the Soul of the Czech Roman Catholic Church

Frank Cibulka

Even though the Roman Catholic Church has been a dominant religious institution in the territory of today's Czech Republic for centuries, its status has always been a subject of controversy and inherent weakness. This weakness has become increasingly more pronounced during the twentieth century, and during the period of post-communism. In spite of the loss of religiosity, the Catholic Church has not become more united and cohesive in a protective mode. Instead, its current division mirrors in a milder way the current tensions within the world of Catholicism. Many of the divisions within the worldwide Church date back to the decisions of the Second Vatican Council, which concluded in 1965, and has been accentuated by the papacy of Pope Francis. The current Pope's liberal reformism, coming after a combined 35 years of the conservative papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, has been increasingly resisted by the traditionalists within the Church, including an increasingly more powerful conservative wing of the Catholic hierarchy in the United States.

It is the objective of this chapter to examine the divisions within the Catholic Church of the Czech Republic, with a particular focus on the role and views of one of its most prominent figures—the Templeton Prize-winning progressive theologian, Monsignor Tomáš Halík. The chapter will examine Halík's dissenting opinions from and conflicts with the mainstream, more conservative Church leaders in the country, in particular with the recently retired Archbishop of Prague and the Czech Primate, Cardinal Dominik Duka.

Unlike the Catholic Churches of some of its neighbors, such as in Poland and Slovakia, which were associated with myths of national survival, since the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620 Catholicism in Bohemia has, to the contrary, been linked with the suppression of national independence and identity, as well as with forcible re-Catholicization and Germanization brought about by the Habsburg Empire. While Catholicism has imprinted itself on the face

of the land, and even today dazzles with the artistic achievements of the Czech Baroque visible in hundreds of churches, the Catholic faith, vastly dominant in Czech Lands at the start of the twentieth century, suddenly proved to be fragile during the massive wave of anti-Catholicism after the disintegration of Austria-Hungary and Czechoslovak independence in 1918. The majority of the population of the Czech lands were Roman Catholic, but the Catholic Church was considered anti-national because of its association with Austrian Habsburg absolutism. The new government in Prague, including the country's first president Tomáš G. Masaryk, encouraged the central role in the national life for the schismatic Czechoslovak Hussite Church, composed of dissident Catholic clergy, which was anti-papal and pro-nationalistic.¹ The dominant national myths at that time revolved around the martyred pre-reformation leader Jan Hus and the subsequent fifteenth century proto-protestant Hussite revolutionary movement. Subsequently, in the course of the following century, the Czech Republic earned a reputation as one of the most atheistic countries in the world.

Before examining the actual division and their personification within the Czech Roman Catholic Church, I need to address the general context consisting of the historical place of the Church within Czech society, its non-canonical values as expressed in its attitude toward key social and political issues, and finally the strength of religiosity in the country.

THE CONTEXT OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM IN THE CZECH SOCIETY

Values are defined as fairly stable, “highly general, abstract standards of preference,” which “indicate desirable or preferable behaviors and character qualities.”² They tend to be highly imbedded and contain a moral dimension. Social and political values are not readily changeable and the process of change, once inaugurated, may take generations. Even though the process of globalization seems to have put this wisdom to the sword in certain rapidly changing modernizing areas of the Third World, it cannot be completely repudiated. To further understand a relative immobility of social and political values, we must look toward the cultural and structural context in which they exist. The two key factors in the Czech case are the legacies of the traditional political culture, and of the communist regime.

¹ Sabrina Ramet, *Nilil Obstat* (Durheim, NC and London: Duke University Press 1998), 115.

² Charles F. Andrain, *Political Life and Social Change* (2nd edition) (Belmont, California: Duxbury Press, 1975), 56–57.

The political culture, formerly conceptualized as ‘national character’ and now somewhat out of favor among scholars, has been defined by Lucian Pye as “the set of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments which give order and meaning to a political process, and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behavior in a political system.”³ The meaning of the Czech history has been subject to iconic debates, including individuals such as František Palacký, Tomáš G. Masaryk, Josef Pekař, Zdeněk Nejedlý and Ferdinand Peroutka. The Czechs have shown a great propensity toward myth making, while drawing on such episodes in the nation’s history, such as the Hussite movement. In the twentieth century, a cult of President Masaryk, closely accompanied the myth of a ‘golden period’, allegedly represented in the national history by the First Republic from 1918–1938. In general, one of the key elements of the Czech political culture has traditionally been a commitment to pluralism and democratic values due to the long history of contacts with progressive humanitarian traditions of Western Europe, and due to the elimination of the Czech nobility after the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620. Tomas Garrigue Masaryk stated in *Conversations with T.G. Masaryk*:

Look at us: For centuries we did not have our own dynasty. We did not have—except for minor exceptions—nationally conscious Nobility, we did not have our wealthy and mighty men—we are with our history and nature destined for democracy. That we culturally belong to the European West is yet another bequest for enlightened democratic quality. We are body and soul a democratic nation: If our democracy has its shortcomings, we have to overcome them and not democracy itself.⁴

The legacy of the 40 years of the Communist Party rule was in both countries associated with a rise of collectivistic values and authoritarian values. Jane L. Curry, in a perceptive analysis, identifies a communist legacy of values in the former Eastern Europe, as including among other elements cynicism, egalitarianism, and a lack of social cohesion and solidarity through seeing the world in terms of “Them” versus “Us.”⁵ The communist rule has contributed to the country’s secularization, and the repression it launched against the Catholic Church, was the most

³ Quoted in James A. Bill and Robert Hardgrave Jr., *Comparative Politics. The Quest for Theory* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1973), 86.

⁴ Karel Čapek, *Hovory. S T.G. Masarykem* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1990), 330.

⁵ Jane L. Curry, “The Sociological Legacies of Communism” in Zoltan Barany and Ivan Volgyes, eds. *The Legacies of Communism in Eastern Europe* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 66–70.

severe in Eastern Europe outside of Albania, and the greatest intensity and brutality of this repression in Czechoslovakia, with the exception of the Slovak-based Greek Catholic Church, targeted the Roman Catholic Church in the country.

The Roman Catholic clergy and Church leadership had suffered persecution, both within the Nazi occupied Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (1939–1945), and during the period of Soviet-installed Communist Party rule (1948–1989). While this greatly impacted the role of religion within Czechoslovakia, the Catholic Church has emerged into the post-revolutionary period with a greatly enhanced status. This was due to the fact that the Church, headed by the elderly Prague Archbishop, Cardinal František Tomášek, had since the mid-1980s, actively joined the anti-regime opposition and worked hard to revitalize the spirituality of the country's population. Cardinal Tomášek was inspired by the example of the Polish Pope John Paul II, and gently guided by a narrow group of close advisors, which included the theologians Otto Mádr, Josef Zvěřina and Tomáš Halík. The future Auxiliary Bishop of Prague, Václav Malý, even served as a spokesman for the Charter 77, and assumed a highly visible public profile during the revolutionary days of the Velvet Revolution in November 1989. The democratic legacy of Cardinal Tomášek was sealed with his words pronounced on November 25, 1989 in Prague's St. Vitus Cathedral: "In this important hour of the struggle for truth and justice in this country, I and the entire Catholic Church, stand on the side of the nation. None of us should stand aside when a better future for our nation is at stake."⁶ Cardinal Tomášek became a national icon, and the newly-found popularity of the Catholic Church was reflected for a few years in the increase in church attendance and baptisms, along with a positive coverage of the Church in most of the country's media. But this trend, although it generated excessive optimism about the future status and societal role of the Catholic Church, proved to be only temporary. The resignation in 1991, and the death in the following year of Cardinal Tomášek, was the start of its new decline, aggravated by strategic errors, such as the inability to operate effectively in the society's media space on the part of his successor as Archbishop of Prague, the eventual Cardinal Miroslav Vlk. Among these errors, his confrontational stance toward the government over the issue of religious restitution was the most damaging one to the Church, giving rise to the public perceptions of its unwholesome quest for financial gain, drawing attention from its effort to promote traditional values.

⁶ Tomáš Halík, *From the Underground Church to Freedom* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, 2019), 174.

This has been mainly in evidence in Czechoslovakia, in which the first post-communist elite constituted former dissidents and intellectuals, initially including former reform communists from the Prague Spring reform period. The Czechoslovak state was then symbolized by the figure of the playwright President Václav Havel, who demonstrated a passionate commitment to liberal democratic values and a keen interest in articulating a rather idealistic internationalist positions on global issues. The country's Roman Catholic Church has fully accepted the democratic norms of the post-communist transition, and its leadership has assumed at least a symbolic role in national representation during important state events. There has been no opposition from within the Church over the nature of the new political system, or over key foreign policy orientation, including joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1999, and the entry into the European Union (EU) in 2004. The disintegration of Czechoslovakia in 1993 has allowed for a separate evolution of the ecclesiastical provinces in each new state, further deepening the already significant differences in the Czech and Slovak religiosity, and the socio-political attitudes of the clergy.

A key factor in determining the ability of the Catholic Church to influence the societal values after 1989 has been the degree of religiosity and Church membership in the country.

DECLINING RELIGIOSITY

While the Czech Republic has a reputation as one of the most atheistic countries in the world, an assessment of the religiosity of the Czech population has had to rely on various public opinion surveys, both domestic and foreign, and their results tend to vary widely. What is clear is that there has been a steady trend over the past century toward a loss of religiosity and a decline in the number of Roman Catholic adherents. There are certain indications that the country's religiosity may be stabilizing, albeit at a very low level. These conclusions can be derived from an examination of different kinds of surveys, both domestic and foreign.

During the 1880 and 1921 census count, the percentage of Roman Catholics among the population of the Czech Lands was established at 96.2% and 79.2%, respectively.⁷ Seventy years later, the population census results from 1991 of Roman Catholic stood at 39%, and in 2001 was reduced to 26.8%. The census in

7 Hieronim Kaczmarek, *Stát a Církev. Český případ* (Brno: Centrum pro Studium Demokracie a Kultúry, 2017).

2011 showed that there were only 1,083,899 of self-declared Roman Catholics, constituting 10.5% of the population. However, that figure may not be comparable to those from the previous census results, and is likely too low because the country's citizens had the option of not answering questions about their religious identity.⁸ The figures offered by the Church itself are wildly different because of its methodology. The Church considers the number of Roman Catholics in the country to be the sum of all the individuals who have been christened as Roman Catholics. In 2020, an annual publication of the Czech Bishops' Conference, *Život katolické církve v datech a faktech*, revealed that, on the basis of the examination of the Church registers, there were currently 4.591 million person christened into the Catholic faith in the Czech Republic, constituting 43% of the population.⁹ However, this figure fails to indicate the number of practicing Catholics, as it ignores the trend of disaffiliation. The Pew Research Center determined that "29% of Czech adults who were raised in a religious group (largely Catholicism) are now unaffiliated, a far higher rate than the regional median of 3%."¹⁰ The Pew Research Center survey conducted in 2015–2016, in 18 formerly communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, clearly established the Czech Republic's status as having the most atheistic population in the world, as it is the one country where the majority of the population lack religious affiliation and do not believe in God. A full 72% of Czechs did not identify with a religious group, and 25% declared "atheism" as their religious identity. Among the Czech population, 66% declared that they did not believe in God, while only 29% asserted that they did. The survey also found that some 79% of Czech parents were raising their children without religious affiliation.¹¹ The above figures display a continuing erosion of religiosity in the country, following several decades of relative stability. For example, responding to the question "Do you believe in God?", in November 1993 in the Czech Republic, 31.1 % of Czechs surveyed answered "yes," while 49.3% answered no.¹² In 2007, 28% of Czech re-

8 Czech Statistical Office, *Sčítání lidu, domu a bytů 2011*, "Preliminary Results of the 2011 Population and Housing Census" at https://www.czso.cz/csu/sldb/preliminary_results_of_the_2011_population_and_housing_census.

9 Česká Biskupská Konference, *Život katolické církve v datech a faktech*, 2020, <https://www.dltm.cz/file/129972/zivot-katolicke-cirkve-web.pdf>.

10 Jonathan Evans, "Unlike their Central and Eastern European neighbors, most Czechs don't believe in God," *Pew Research Center*, June 19, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/06/19/unlike-their-central-and-eastern-european-neighbors-most-czechs-dont-believe-in-god/>.

11 Evans, "Unlike their Central and Eastern European neighbors."

12 Věra Haberlová, "Problémy empirického zkoumání religiosity v české společnosti," *STEM. Empirical výzkum pro demokracii*, February 4, 2003, <https://www.stem.cz/problemy-empirickeho-zkoumani-religiozity-v-ceske-spolecnosti/>.

spondents answered ‘yes’ and 48% of respondents answered “no.”¹³ According to the European Value System Studies survey in 1991, 37% of Czechs claim to believe in God, while 47% did not believe.¹⁴ A 2005 *Eurobarometer* survey showed that only 19% of Czech respondents believed in God, while 50% believed in the existence of “some sort of spirit of life force,” and 30% were total non-believers.¹⁵

The one positive sign for the Church is the fairly steady rate of Catholic baptism. During the 1990s, the annual number of baptized Catholics climbed to approximately 28,000. Since 2001, the number of baptisms subsequently declined, and stabilized to approximately 2,000 to 23,000 per year. About 1,200 adults are baptized annually, while in 2019 13.5% of children in their first year of life were baptized as Catholics. In that year, the total number of Catholic baptisms was almost 20,000, only 900 less than in the previous year.¹⁶

One relatively tangible measure of religiosity is an analysis of church attendance. In a 2011 survey, STEM reported that some 40% of the population attended mass during the Christmas holiday, with a greater attendance in Moravia. Nevertheless, the report points out that this is a cultural tradition maintained, even by those who are not believers. It states that only approximately 10% of the population attended mass in church at least once a month.¹⁷ The figures provided by STEM are fairly consistent with the figures on church attendance provided by the Catholic Czech Bishop’s Conference. According to the figures released by the Church in 2020, approximately 45% of the population attended mass during the celebration of Christmas holidays, whereas only 5% took part in a Christian mass (not only Roman Catholic) on a regular basis. The Church report also revealed that 375,000 people attended Catholic mass every week, constituting 3.5% of the country’s population, and 8.5% of all the individuals baptized into the Catholic faith.¹⁸

13 “Víra v boha a názory na církev české společnosti”, STEM. Empirical výzkum pro demokracii, Trendy 2/2007, March 16, 2007, <https://www.stem.cz/vira-v-boha-a-nazory-na-cirkve-v-ceske-spolecnosti/>.

14 Dušan Lužný and Jolana Navrátilová, “Náboženství a sekularizace v České republice” in *Sociální Studia*, 2001, <http://snem.cirkev.cz/download/Luzny.htm>.

15 European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Social values, science and technology : Eurobarometer 2005. Publications Office; 2005, 9, at <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6f869216-9e51-4d84-aa6c-1d2376cde804/language-en>.

16 Daniel Chytil, “Počty každoročně pokřtěných se v ČR mění jen málo, tradiční křty dospělých o Velikonocích budou muset letos počkat,” *Církev.cz.*, April 8, 2020, <https://www.cirkev.cz/cs/aktuality/200408pocty-kazdorocne-pokrttenych-se-v-cr-meni-jen-malo-tradici-krty-dospelych-o-velikonocich-budou-muset-letos-pockat>.

17 “Religiosita a návštěvy kostelů o vánočních svátcích” STEM. Empirický výzkum pro demokracii. December 22, 2011, <https://www.stem.cz/religiozita-a-navstevy-kostelu-o-vanocnich-svaticich-1742/>.

18 Česká Biskupská Konference, Život katolické církve v datech a faktech, 2020, <https://www.dltm.cz/file/129972/zivot-katolicke-cirkev-web.pdf>.

A fairly definitive statement reflecting the view of the Church hierarchy on the issue of membership can be found in the comments made by Cardinal Dominik Duka in an interview with the Czech daily newspaper *Lidové noviny* in April 2022. Regarding the 2021 census in responding to the question, “Do you believe in God?”, he stated:

In a dedicated census column, the “Roman Catholic Church,” the number of 742,019 responded to the question, “Do you believe in God.” Some—amounting to 235,834—wrote the “Catholic faith” or occasionally “Catholic.” If I add both numbers, I see that the adherents to the Catholic Church voluntarily proclaimed 976,853 citizens of the Czech Republic, compared to 1,082,463 citizens in the year 2011. In the Prague diocese alone, the number of citizens believing in the Catholic faith even increased.

You know, in the 20th century, the Catholic Church has undergone “statistical genocide.” After World War I, the Czechoslovak Church and a portion of the population, only saw the future in Protestant Churches. Thus, 25% of Roman Catholics left to join these Churches, or remained without affiliation. That also had its roots and, naturally, some responsibility resulted from steps made by our side. After World War II, comes the expulsion of the German population. Through this, we lost another 25%. We suffered some losses in concentration camps, and then there are two waves of exile in 1948 and 1968. In addition, the numbers are misleading because a number of people did not answer the question dealing with religion. I am not arguing that the number of believers is growing. I could not do that, even due to the demographic curve.¹⁹

It seems apparent that the Czech Roman Catholic Church, weakened by secularization processes and the growing atheization in the country, is poorly placed to exert a significant influence over the values of the population. But it must be kept in mind that many of the basic moral precepts of the Christian churches, starting with the Ten Commandments, have become enshrined as the Judeo-Christian ethic, and became a part of the country’s culture as European values. Therefore, the decline of the Roman Catholic Church may not be accompanied by a commensurate decline in the importance of its moral teachings, especially since there is no ready alternative, outside of the discredited Marxism.

¹⁹ Iveta Křížová, “Nastává nová éra dějin” (A new historical era begins), *Lidové noviny*, April 9, 2022, https://www.lidovky.cz/domov/duka-kardinal-valka-ukrajina.A220410_023809_In_domov_tm.r. (Author’s own translation from Czech.)

DIVISIONS IN THE CZECH ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

And it is precisely because of his response to the crisis of secularism and atheization, that the figure of Tomáš Halík becomes so important. However, before addressing his role and the current institutional divisions in the Czech Roman Catholic Church, one must quickly acknowledge the previous divisions among the clergy and Church hierarchy over the past half century.

Some of the past divisions were caused by the communist regime's attempt to gain control of the Catholic Church through the creation of various organizations for the collaborating clergy. These efforts began in 1949, including the setting up in 1966 of the Peace Movement of Catholic Clergy (*Mírove hnutí katolického duchovenstva*), led by the excommunicated priest Josef Plojhar, who also served as the Chair of the Czechoslovak People's Party (*Československá strana lidová*), and as a Minister of Health in the Communist Party government. During the era of 'normalization', the regime revived its efforts in 1971 to secure an organization of 'loyal', meaning collaborating, clergy through the creation of the Association of Catholic Clergy *Pacem in terris* (*Sdružení katolických duchovních Pacem in terris*). This group, led by the prominent Protestant theologian Josef Hromádka, was presumably tasked with the promotion of world peace. Within the first two years, they secured a membership of 726 priests in the Czech part of the Czechoslovak federation, which constituted one-third of the Czech Catholic clergy.²⁰ During this era of the communist repression of religion, much of the rest of the clergy were either banned from work for the Church, or even imprisoned. The failure to apply either lustration or criminal justice to the collaborating priests, after the ouster of the communist regime in December 1989, meant that tension persisted for some time within the Catholic Church between the two groups.

Another source of tension within the Church after 1989 was the issue of the "underground Church," consisting of secretly ordained priests and bishops, some of whom were married. While agreeing to incorporate them into the existing official Church structures, the Church hierarchy, headed by the Prague Archbishop, Cardinal Miloslav Vlk, placed great obstacles in their way, including the introduction of a concept of "conditional ordination". This produced tensions within the Church, and many observers felt that Cardinal Vlk failed to take advantage of the pastoral strength of the "underground Church." Monsignor Halík himself belonged to the "underground Church."

20 Kaczmarek, *Stát a Církev*, 109.

However, some 35 years after the demise of communism in Czechoslovakia, both of these divisions have faded due to generational change. The tension, which now prevails within the Czech Catholic Church, is a reflection of the worldwide division between a liberal and conservative or traditionalist religious and societal vision. It is in respect to this division that Tomáš Halík stands out as a maverick or dissident, due to his liberal and reformist writings and activism.

THE PHENOMENON OF TOMÁŠ HALÍK

Monsignor Tomáš Halík embraces many areas of human learning. A Catholic priest, and a professor at Charles University, he is a theologian and religionist, a philosopher, sociologist and a psychologist. He is a former dissident and member of the “underground Church.” He is currently an active pastor of the Academic Parish of St. Salvatore Church in Prague and President of the Czech Christian Academy. In 2014, he became the first Czech recipient of the prestigious Templeton Prize, widely regarded as being equivalent to the Nobel Prize in religion and spirituality. He is a prolific writer of religious texts, which stand out through their accessibility to the general public, as well through the beauty of their language. At the same time, he is a public intellectual who does not hesitate to address issues within the Church or broader society. He is committed to ecumenical initiative, and is known for his outreach to spiritually open-minded non-believers. He articulates liberal views on Church matters, such as his support for the ordination of women or the relaxation of celibacy for priests. He favors Church dialogue with broader society over the issue of abortion, and does not believe in the criminalizing of the procedure. His liberalism also extends to the general society, and is reflected on his moderate stand on immigration and the issue of Islam in Europe, while he also adopts a more accommodating approach to the LGBT community than the mainstream Church. His social and political values have closely approximated those of the late President Václav Havel, who appointed him as his external adviser. He has enjoyed the respect and trust of three different popes, and is generally admired on the world stage. However, at home, in the highly atheistic Czech society, he is regarded as a controversial figure with numerous enemies. Many Czechs resent Halík’s incursions into the country’s politics.

Tomáš Halík was born on 1 June 1948 in Prague into a family descended from Chod origins.²¹ His father was a librarian and, following the death of the renowned Czech writer Karel Čapek in 1938, he was “entrusted with processing Čapek’s literary estate.”²² In 1978, Halík was secretly ordained as a priest in Erfurt, East Germany. While a part of the Czechoslovak ‘underground Church’, he became a key member of a religious dissident group associated with theologians Josef Zvěřina and Oto Mádr, and he also worked closely with the then Archbishop of Prague, the elderly František Tomášek. Shortly before the collapse of the communist regime, Halík authored the important ecumenical pastoral initiative called the Decade of National Spiritual Renewal (*Desetiletí duchovní obnovy národa*). He was fortunate in that he was never imprisoned for his illegal religious activity. For a period after 1989, he became an important member of the Czech Catholic Church hierarchy by accepting the position of Secretary of the Czech Bishop’s Conference.²³ However, in a few years, he gave up this position, and selected a path that led him away from the center of power in the religious establishment. In an interview with the author in 2021, Halík explained:

For someone who wants to fulfill the task of providing a moral inspiration for the society and of presenting certain visions to it, it is far better to be free of any political office. Perhaps he could be in the role of public intellectual or shepherd within the Church, but not in the role of the official representative of the Church, for example a cardinal. Thus, this independence provides me with a greater freedom to express myself, even when it is against the majority.²⁴

For the next 30 years, he continued to pursue his academic and pastoral responsibilities while gaining renown and recognition abroad. His theological books have been translated into many languages and celebrated around the world, while succeeding popes called upon him to serve the needs of the central Church in Rome. He has accepted visiting positions at some of the world’s most prestigious educational institutions. He displayed a keen interest in politics, and for some time considered his candidacy to replace his friend Václav Havel as the president of the Czech Republic when the latter’s term expired in 2003.

21 Tomáš Halík, *From the Underground Church to Freedom* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), p. 16

22 Halík, *From the Underground Church to Freedom*, 18

23 Halík, *From the Underground Church to Freedom*, 202. The position of Secretary of the Czech Bishop’s Conference in the Czechoslovak state was not identical as that of the General Secretary of the Czechoslovak Bishop’s Conference which was more influential.

24 Author’s interview with Tomáš Halík, August 9, 2021 in Prague, Czech Republic

He did so because he felt that “if it would really be necessary to connect to establish continuity with the Masaryk-Havel tradition (in presidency), I do have certain qualifications for it.”²⁵

It is not the purpose of this chapter to analyze Halík’s writings. Instead, I would like to briefly examine his key views in several areas: the reform of the Catholic Church, immigration and Islam, the LGBT community and Czech politics. But first I will consider a key question: Is there a clear division in the Czech Roman Catholic Church between progressive and conservative wings? The answer is that, while Tomas Halík is truly a liberal and reformist outrider within the Church, there is no visible consistent division within its hierarchy, and even clergy. Halík himself offered his view on such a categorization of religion: “I think that ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ are somewhat misleading terms which have been taken from political life.”²⁶ In a recent interview with the author, Jaroslav Šebek, who is considered one of the country’s foremost Church historians, he stated the following:

I think that, just like in politics, it is currently difficult to distinguish between the Right and the Left because they are in contemporary times very fluid - I would say that the division is between populists and non-populists; it is equally difficult to distinguish between the progressives and conservatives in the framework of the Catholic Church. I would say that what divides is not only between Right and Left in the Catholic Church, but between whether the person claiming to be Catholic wishes to be open to the world, or whether he wants to, in the spirit of the previous centuries, be oriented with his mentality toward a closed Catholic Church, which basically approaches the world negatively. So this is the way I see it, in that the dividing criterium is not all that well chosen, and I really see it instead in whether people, conservative or thinking in liberal terms, are able to lead an open dialogue with the world around them. ...And, concretely, Tomáš Halík is for people a symbol of that open Christianity, and Dominik Duka for me conversely symbolizes that Christianity, which feels itself to be in opposition toward the contemporary world.²⁷

Šebek further stated that, unlike with American Christianity, there are no strong groups within the Czech Catholic Church refusing to accept the deci-

²⁵ Author’s interview with Tomáš Halík.

²⁶ Author’s interview with Tomáš Halík.

²⁷ Author’s interview with Jaroslav Šebek, July 19, 2022 in Prague, Czech Republic.

sions of the Second Vatican Council. Such opposition is restricted only to small, mostly ‘*pro life*’, groups. Regarding antisemitism within the Church, he argued that, “There were groups which were creating anti-Semitic moods and these were the extreme conservatives. But it is not true that it is a problem of the majority. On the contrary, we have witnessed how Cardinal Vlk and also Cardinal Duka openly took a stand against antisemitism. In general, antisemitism does not have support in the Czech Church.”²⁸ Šebek identified Prague Auxiliary Bishop Václav Malý as the one member of the Bishop’s Conference whose ideas are closest to those of Halík. Bishop Malý was a prominent dissident, and served as a spokesperson for Charta 77. The Bishop of Pilsen, Tomáš Holub, was also identified by Šebek as representing a more open style of Christianity.²⁹

Curiously, Tomas Halík has a notorious counterpart on the other end of the ideological spectrum. This is 85-year-old Catholic priest Petr Pitha, a greatly respected Church scholar and educator, and a former Minister of Education and Youth in the first cabinet of Prime Minister Václav Klaus. Pitha, who has a close association with the Prague diocese, on September 28, 2018 in Prague’s St. Vitus cathedral, delivered a fiery sermon against the ratification of the 2011 Istanbul Convention, designed to protect women from violence. Incensed, like many conservatives, by the clause in the convention, which states that gender is socially constructed, Pitha shocked the nation with his speech. He predicted that a person’s unwillingness to accept a new definition of gender will lead to a forcible break-up of their family, of having their children taken away, and of being confined to vocational re-education camps of “exterminating nature,” as well as result in the rise of “homosexuals” to the position of the new ruling class. Pitha’s sermon caused revulsion and a severe criticism in Czech society but, surprisingly, while Tomáš Halík decisively condemned the speech, Prague Archbishop Cardinal Dominik Duka, in his capacity as the President of the Czech Bishop’s Conference, expressed his support for Pitha and his remarks.³⁰

The Catholic Czech Bishop’s Conference has continued to oppose the convention which, although it was signed by the Czech Republic in 2016, has not yet been ratified by its legislature.

Let us turn to Halík’s vision of the Catholic Church reform. Much vitriolic criticism has been aimed at him, including the claim that he is too ‘worldly’ in his outlook and actions. In spite of that, Tomáš Halík’s commitment to his faith

²⁸ Interview with Jaroslav Šebek.

²⁹ Interview with Jaroslav Šebek.

³⁰ “Kardinál Duka podpořil kněze Pithu který kázal proti homosexuálům”, *iDnes*, October 13, 2018, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/kardinal-duka-podporil-kneze-pithu.A181013_131536_domaci_jumi.

should be beyond reproach. He clearly loves Christ and the Church, he is inspired from the scriptures, and draws strength from the lives of the saints, such St. Teresa of Avila or St. Theresa of Lisieux. In spite of his crushing international workload, he is a devoted pastor of his congregation at St. Salvatore Church in Prague. When he serves mass, the vast church is inevitably completely filled with worshippers.³¹ According to Halík himself, during the 30 years of his command of the Academic Parish, he baptized some 3,000 individuals, in spite of the lengthy two-year period of preparation which he required.³²

Nonetheless, Halík feels that he is witnessing the decline of Christianity and of the Catholic Church, and presses for reforms to reverse this trend. In his book, *Žít v Dialogu* (To Live in Dialogue), he writes that, in recent times, Catholicism “began to function like a ‘worldview’, like an ideology represented by a certain institution.” The Catholic Church, which wants to and should be an inspiring sacred sign, a symbol of unity to which the entire humankind is called, became a self-enclosed ghetto.”³³ He believes that a continuation of this trend would transform the Church into a sect, which would be marginal in the contemporary world. He sees the solution as having been introduced during the Second Vatican Council, which replaced “the strategy of the Church as being a counterculture [against modernity] and the understanding of it as a besieged fortress which must defend itself from all sides against enemies” by “a strategy of dialogue,” with “contemporary secular culture and with inter-religious dialogue.”³⁴

Halík is realistic in his assessment:

After the fall of communism, a question at times emerged, whether Christianity—especially Catholicism—could not in East Central Europe fill the place made empty due to the crash of communist ideology. For some this image was tempting, while it conversely terrified others. ...Those who perhaps expected a dominant role of the Church and Catholic institutions in East Central Europe, based this not only on an unrealistic assessment of the socio-cultural and political developments, but above all on a deformed image of Christianity. If Christianity today should gain new trustworthiness in the “New Europe,” it must first demonstrate that it is not just “Marxism inside-out” (*marxismem naruby*).³⁵

³¹ I can confirm this from my own observation.

³² Author's interview with Tomáš Halík.

³³ Tomáš Halík, *Žít v Dialogu* (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2014), 93.

³⁴ Halík, *Žít v Dialogu*, 93.

³⁵ Halík, *Žít v Dialogu*, 95.

Halík does not believe that Christianity can be rescued from its present crisis, by its strong growth in Africa and a strong presence in Latin America. He points out that the measure of the growth is the number of baptisms, particularly in Africa, rather than the true adoption of the Christian faith. He further assumes that secularization will also soon catch up with these areas of the Third World. He explained the main outcomes of contemporary secularization: “I think that secularization is a certain transformation of religion, and that there are today two very significant types of it. One is the connection of religion with nationalism, with ethnical identity, while the other one is a conversion of religion into spirituality.”³⁶

For these reasons, Halík, in spite of his strong religious faith, has been ready to challenge some of the established practices of the Catholic Church. It is also indicative of his open approach that, as a Catholic priest, Father Halík has had a life-long fascination with the Czech religious reformer Jan Hus, who was declared to be a heretic and burned at the stake by the Papal Council in Constance in 1415, and whose legacy has presented an awkward issue for the Catholic Church, as he has been regarded as one of the forerunners of the Protestant reformation. When it comes to critical intra-Church issues, Halík truly takes an extreme position. He supports the ordination of women as priests, and perhaps bishops, and favors a limited lifting of the celibacy of the clergy. When asked whether the ordination of women will take place soon, he responded:

I’m not a prophet, but I don’t think it will happen in the near future. For years, I said that priests are like fathers, and that women cannot be fathers—that they have an equal role, but that it’s a different one, outside the clergy. But after meeting female priests in the Anglican Church, I began to change my mind. I can’t see any theological objection to it. It’s a psychological, rather than a theological problem. But tradition is hard to break.³⁷

Halík has also repeatedly expressed his openness toward a partial removal of celibacy in the Roman Catholic Church, a view consistent with that expressed at the start of his pontificate by Pope Francis. But, while Father Halík is indeed willing to support marriage for priests, he believes that the members of monastic orders, as well as officials of the Church hierarchy, such as bishops, should re-

³⁶ Author’s interview with Tomáš Halík.

³⁷ Natalia O’Hara, “Tomas Halik interview: Churches need thinkers”, *Reform* (November 2010 issue), <https://www.reform-magazine.co.uk/2014/03/tomas-halik-interview-churches-need-thinkers/>.

main celibate. In 2018, he stated in an interview: “The time probably arrived to seriously re-evaluate the connection of priesthood in Western Church with the obligation of celibacy, and most likely to return to the thousand-year-old practice of the entire Church, that celibacy is mandatory for monks, while for ordinary parish duty it is possible to sanctify even married men.”³⁸

Halík has been totally committed to ecumenical relations. He has been criticized by traditionalists for participating in common prayer and meditation with representatives of other world’s non-Christian religions. In January, while in Rome to lecture newly appointed bishops, he spoke in an interview about his vision of three forms of ecumenism. The first is a religious dialogue between Christian Churches, the second an inter-faith dialogue with non-Christian religions, and the third a dialogue between believers and non-believers in God.³⁹ Halík truly believes that all main Abrahamic religions share one God. In a radio program in 2010, he stated that, “for example people don’t know at all that Christians, Jews and Muslims have the same God. They think that Allah is some special God of the Muslims and don’t know that it is simply an Arabic name for God, and that even the name which Jesus used for God in Aramaic is *de facto* same as this expression Allah.”⁴⁰

Halík is also well known for his more accommodating approach to the LGBT community and causes. While he does not support same-sex marriage, he is in favor of allowing a registered partnership for gay couples. In 2018, he entered into a public argument with Prague Archbishop Duka, following the cardinal’s criticism of homosexuality, and the Prague Pride Festival and march through the city. He argued that Duka’s criticism is shallow and emotional, and discourages young people from the Catholic Church.⁴¹ But when asked whether he would take part in the Prague Pride march, he shared that “to march in that procession would not even occur to me in my dreams,” while he also said that, “Even more foreign for me is to condemn and demonize something only because I do not like it. Rather, I try to understand it and utilize

³⁸ “Pithovo kázání byla hororová fikce. Církvi přísluší pokora, míní Halík,” *iDnes*, October 31, 2018, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/tomas-halik-kazani-petr-pitha-homosexualove-frantisek-papez-istanbulska-umluva.A181029_165501_domaci_lre.

³⁹ “Tomáš Halík prednášal novým biskupom v Rimě. Co im povédá a co oni povédia nám?,” *Christianitas*, January 9, 2023, <https://christianitas.sk/tomas-halik-prednasal-novym-biskupom-v-rime-co-im-povedal-a-co-asi-oni-povedia-nam/>.

⁴⁰ “Jak to vidí Tomáš Halík 20.1” *Dvojka*, January 20, 2010, <https://dvojka.rozhlas.cz/jak-vidi-tomas-halik-201-7469110>.

⁴¹ Josef Pazderka, “Odmítám demonizování homosexuálů, říká Halík. Církev má sama kostlivce ve skříní,” *Aktuálně.cz*, September 4, 2019, <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/odmitam-demonizovani-homosexualu-rika-halik-cirkev-ma-sama-k/3ee1cccac8b211e999160cc47ab5f122/>.

all what I know from social psychology and cultural history.”⁴² However, his liberal views have their definite limits beyond which Halík is not prepared to go. He stated that,

I don't think that the Church will ever change its view that the concept of marriage—especially marriage as a sacrament—should be reserved only for a common life of man and woman. But what is already changing and will change—however with a varied speed in different cultures and groups—is the pastoral approach to people who, in same-sex unions, honestly try to achieve fidelity and mutual support. But I understand that, even reform-minded bishops and theologians, do not wish to be speeding up this development, due to taking into account the conservative majority, and rather follow the old Roman rule *pensiamo in secoli* (let's think in terms of centuries).⁴³

Halík was also critical of some of the highly public LGBT activities:

The LGBT community seeks through different means the acceptance from the majority of society. When they resign themselves to not securing this acceptance, they then provoke the society, sometimes very tastelessly. Our society is quite liberal, therefore part of the LGBT community, which wants to provoke opposition mainly for their own entertainment, is attempting to purposely aggravate and thus ridicule in the society the one even less popular minority, religious conservatives.⁴⁴

The interconnected twin issues of the Islamization of Europe, and of migration, have placed Halík at odds with the prevailing views of the societal majority in the Czech Republic. The issue has also led to his polemics with the two successive Archbishop's of Prague and Czech Catholic Primates, Cardinals Milošlav Vlk (1991–2010) and Dominik Duka (2010–2022), who had both embraced these issues and provided strong warnings about the loss of European culture and Christian religion due to Muslim migration. Halík has been a true globalist, and his experience of worldwide travel and contacts with other cultures and religions, including those in the Islamic world, has led him to a far more ratio-

42. Pazderka, “Odmítám démonizování homosexuálů, říká Halík.”

43. Pazderka, “Odmítám démonizování homosexuálů, říká Halík.”

44. Pazderka, “Odmítám démonizování homosexuálů, říká Halík.”

nal and moderate position on this issue. In a 2010 radio program, he offered his detailed views on Islam:

“Therefore, yes, under certain circumstances, Europe can be predominantly Islamic, if the situation will continue to develop in such a way as the evolution of the European Union, of the state of European Christianity, of a demographic situation, it is then likely that in the course of half a century there will be a preponderance of Muslims”. He continued: “You know, it is not possible to resist Islam through prohibiting immigration. That is foolishness. Until Europe totally changes its culture, especially in the area of family and of producing children, it will very simply need the migrants for economic reasons, and they will primarily come from countries in which many children are born, and where there is a great emphasis on family. It is possible that even conservative Islam will offer a certain attraction for people who suddenly feel that hedonistic atheism does not offer them anything, and to whom Christianity seems to be complicated, obsolete and so on.”⁴⁵ Halík has criticized the Czech government’s refusal to accept Third World migrants through the EU system of mandatory quotas

Finally, one has to discuss Father Halík’s rather controversial involvement in politics. His motivation stems from his deeply felt liberal and humanitarian values, but has not been received well by a significant portion of the Czech population due to his uncompromising and somewhat harsh statements in the media. I had already mentioned Halík’s flirtation with the idea of seeking the Czech presidency following the expiration of President Havel’s term in 2003. This idea was not well received by the Czech public, even though there was a multiple precedent of priests serving in top governmental position in Czechoslovak history. Monsignor Jan Šrámek served as the Prime Minister of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile in London during World War II, while priest Andrej Hlinka and Jozef Tiso were dominant Slovak political leaders just prior to, and during, World War II.

But it had been Halík’s escalating public feud with the head of the Czech Roman Catholic Church, Cardinal Duka, which attracted a great deal of attention. The conflict reached its most intense moment in November 2018, when Cardinal Duka, with the support of the Czech Bishop’s Conference, issued a formal reprimand to Father Halík, seemingly for an unceasing criticism of Cardinal Duka’s public pronouncements. The context of the reprimand was the debate over the Istanbul Convention.⁴⁶ The friction between the Archbishop and his priest

⁴⁵ “Jak to vidí Tomáš Halík 20.1”

⁴⁶ Full name: The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence.

was even more remarkable, because the two men were friends from their days of dissident activity in the ‘underground Church’. There were three major areas of disagreement between the two men: the issue of migration and Islam in Europe, the attitude toward the LGBT community and Duka’s close relations with two Czech presidents: Václav Klaus and Miloš Zeman. Halík has felt that there was a danger for the Church when its leaders become too close to the those representing state power. This feeling was amplified in Halík, as he observed President’s Zeman unpopular and controversial leadership style during his second presidential term. Halík did not hesitate to publicly attack both Klaus and Zeman when he disagreed with their actions. Regarding his reprimand, he stated: “A feud with one’s superior is nothing pleasant for me. But it is a cross which I must bear if I should fulfill my pastoral responsibilities according to my conscience. Truly, many people subsequently congratulated me for helping them through my public position to overcome a temptation to leave the Church.”⁴⁷

Part of the explanation for this feud can be found in the manifest change in Cardinal Duka’s views toward the end of his tenure as Prague Archbishop. An erudite man, Duka began to grow increasingly conservative and unpredictable in his statements. In our interview, Halík attempted to provide an explanation for the cardinal’s behavior: “Cardinal Duka and I have been friends since the 1960s—we cooperated in the dissent movement—and I was pleased when he was named archbishop. But, even then, I saw that he had an affinity toward authoritarian regimes. He came from a military family, and his father was an officer. And I see that the older he gets the more he returns to the authoritarian way of thinking. In addition, he has had this rule to be always on good terms with the government and with the president. He was on good terms with Havel, and similarly wanted to be close to Klaus and Zeman. And these are people of a completely different type [from Havel]. And I think that this tendency dragged him into a kind of trap, as these people managed to tame him a bit.”⁴⁸

The Church historian Jaroslav Šebek further added an explanation of Duka’s evolution: “As I observed him, I would like to say that the essential crossroad from which he was thrust onto the controversial path was the year 2015, in which began the migration crisis, and he identified Islam and the entire Muslim community as the main enemy.” In 2016, Duka was further shocked by the large number of terroristic actions which were perpetrated by Islamists in Eu-

⁴⁷ Pazderka, “Odmítám démonizování homosexuálů, říká Halík.”

⁴⁸ Halík interview.

rope. And out of all the events that were taking place, he was most affected when Islamists cut the throat of an elderly French priest.⁴⁹

There is now an expectation that the long-standing feud between Halík and Duka will end, or have its volume reduced because of the retirement of Cardinal Duka as Prague Archbishop in May 2022. His transitional successor, the former Metropolitan Archbishop of Olomouc, Jan Graubner (born 1948), though considered as a conservative, is in the words of Šebek, “not confrontational in his style” and not using social networks.⁵⁰

At the end, one has to ask whether the Czech society is ready for a man of Tomáš Halík’s views and intellectual power. Historian Šebek took up this question:

I think that there appears the problem that a number of Czech intellectuals are well received abroad but, in the domestic environment, to quote the Bible, “they are not prophets.” For that reason, they are considered controversial. Even in Catholic circles, he is not unambiguously accepted. On the contrary, I believe that he is accepted by people who display an open way of thinking, an open way of communication. But for the others, of which there is a majority, and who adhere to traditional schemes and are afraid of this world, he becomes inconvenient. ...Also, the fact that he is of a very strong intellectual disposition plays a role because that does not suit some Christians.⁵¹

So, due to his progressive views, Tomáš Halík remains a maverick in the Czech Roman Catholic Church and will remain so unless, with the coming years and with generational change, a new set of younger prelates will enter the scene who will share Halík’s views. If this does not happen, in a few decades the Czech Catholic Church might become completely irrelevant. But Halík has now achieved a worldwide renown as a theologian and a public intellectual, while at the same time securing an approval and respect from, in spite of their mutually divergent ideas, three successive popes. The world has become his oyster and his future career, which will be indisputably equally brilliant, does not really depend on the Czech domestic context.

⁴⁹ Šebek interview.

⁵⁰ Šebek interview.

⁵¹ Šebek interview. All translations from Czech to English were done by the author.

One God, One Episcopate, One Nation

The Making of the Public Identity of Catholic Hierarchy in Post-Socialist Slovakia

Agáta Šústová Drellová

In autumn 2021, Pope Francis visited Slovakia. One of the themes of his visit was periphery, a theme that is central to his papacy in general. Commentators diverged on whether a small country of five million people in Central Europe (with a Catholic majority, as far as religious affiliation is concerned) counts as a periphery. Sure enough, during the visit Pope Francis focused on several peripheries within Slovakia: both historical and contemporary. Speaking to the Jewish community in downtown Bratislava next to one of the central memorials to the 105,000 Jews from Slovakia who died in the Holocaust, the Pope brought the tragic history from the periphery of contemporary Church historiography and memory into its very center. As he said, “Your history is our history, your sufferings are our sufferings.”¹ Francis also addressed more contemporary peripheries. Speaking to the Roma community in Luník IX, the largest Roma settlement notorious for dire living conditions and generational poverty, he said, “In the Church, you are not on the margins...You are in the heart of the Church.”² But alongside being present in these historical, ethnic and ideological peripheries, Pope Francis stepped into an ecclesial periphery, or more precisely a hierarchical periphery, when he met Róbert Bezák, the former Archbishop of the Trnava Diocese dismissed by his predecessor Pope Benedict XVI. Bezák’s sudden and unexplained 2012 dismissal sent shock waves through the Catholic Church in Slovakia, and destabilized the authority of the Catholic hierarchy in the country. In this chapter, I understand Bezák’s case as a window into the dy-

¹ Hannah Brockhouse, “Pope Francis to Slovakia’s Jewish community: ‘Your sufferings are our sufferings’” *Catholic News Agency*, September 13, 2021. <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/248962/pope-francis-to-slovakias-jewish-community-your-sufferings-are-our-sufferings>.

² Robin Gomes, “Pope in Slovakia condemns discrimination, prejudice against Roma people,” *Vatican News*, September 14, 2021, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2021-09/pope-francis-slovakia-pastoral-kosice-journey-roma-lunik-ix.html>.

namics of the post-socialist construction of the hierarchy and its identity, especially in terms of its public role.

Ordained as the youngest Archbishop in the history of the Slovak Episcopate (going back to interwar Czechoslovakia), Bezák anticipated the pontificate of Pope Francis in his words and deeds.³ In many ways, Bezák was at odds with the image of Catholic hierarchy, dominant at least since the formation of the first ethnically Slovak Catholic episcopate after the dismemberment of the Habsburg Empire and during the interwar Czechoslovakia when the episcopal identity was constructed in Catholic nationalist terms. Bishops were seen as leaders of a united national and nationally-minded Church, a Church which leads the essentially Catholic nation, protecting it from ideological and ethnic inroads. If we were to understand the history of Slovak episcopate in this sense, we may see the ordination of Róbert Bezák as a revolutionary change. Succeeding Archbishop Ján Sokol, known for his close relations with nationalist politicians, his alleged cooperation with the communist secret police during the last decade of the communist era in Czechoslovakia, his admiration for the wartime Nazi-allied Slovak state and the secretive financial management of the diocese, Bezák quickly became known for his open pastoral style, transparent financial policies and last but not least, open criticism of the hierarchy's involvement with the wartime state. Before long, Bezák was enjoying growing popularity, but also growing criticism, especially within the Church the hierarchy. His sudden 2012 dismissal did not therefore come as that much of a surprise. Despite giving no concrete explanation for the dismissal, Archbishop Bezák was first silenced (first from the Vatican and then indirectly, also by the local Bishops Conference) and then sidelined.⁴ Francis' most recent treatment of Bezák in public effectively brought him back, at least in symbolic terms, into the fold of Slovak hierarchy. Bezák was invited to serve his first public mass in years, moreover as the central mass of the Pope's visit in the most prominent space of popular worship, the national shrine of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows in Šaštín, West Slovakia. This chapter places this story into a broader context of the making of the public role of hierarchy in the contemporary history of the Roman Catholic Church in Slovakia.

3 Marie Vrabcová, *Vyznanie* (Bratislava: Petit Press, 2017), and Marie Vrabcová, *Zamyslenie – Róbert Bezák* (Bratislava: Petit Press, 2017).

4 The first ban to speak in the media came from the Roman Curia's Congregation for Bishops, which concerned only the time until the matter is settled, was reinforced by a general ban from the Slovakia's Bishops' Conference for priests to speak publicly, only with previous consent from the Conference. Bezák first retired to- and then began to teach at a high school in Bratislava.

Histories of post-socialist churches typically assume a recovery of the hierarchy, particularly in terms of their institutional recovery. They seldom look at the construction of their public identity, the why, who and how that shaped their identity, not to mention the pre-history of this process. Contemporary studies of post-socialist Catholicism have destabilized the widely unchallenged role of hierarchy by observing that the central dynamic in churches is conflict, rather than that of disciplined flock following the hierarchy.⁵ However, even in these studies, the hierarchy's role and their authority have been challenged, but not deconstructed. Indeed, these studies often work with an essentialist understanding of hierarchy and its authority, as a compact entity, moving in time and space, and insulated from any outside influences. By contrast, I seek to understand hierarchical authority (and transformation of the dissent) in a socially, historically and locally contextualized way.

The dominant understanding of Catholic hierarchy, against which Bezák's story, especially his ordination and his pastoral style, seem to be an exception, is in fact a construction that was produced and kept alive by many actors for over a century. This is the first and dominant part of the argument presented in this chapter. I argue that the authority of the hierarchy was formed and transformed by a variety of actors, both from within and from outside the Church. Various actors, including members of the hierarchy, participated in the processes of the nationalization and etatization of the hierarchy in the interwar and wartime period, and then again in the early 1990s. By nationalization and etatization, I mean such use or interpretation of Catholic teachings, rituals and historical narratives that construct the Church as an important agent in the making of the nation (nationalization) and constitution of the state (etatization), as well as such use of church institutions, especially the authority of the hierarchy, to promote this state. However, these processes were not, and this is the second part of my argument, the only game in town.

The scope of the chapter does not allow for analyzing the process of the making of the Catholic hierarchy and its public image across almost a century; I will therefore contain myself to the most recent history. In its second part, the chapter returns to the 1990s, when the story of contemporary Catholic nationalism culminated in support of Slovak independence and the break-up of federal Czechoslovakia. In the same decade, a different story began unfolding: one of

⁵ See Brian Porter-Szűcs, *Faith and Fatherland: Catholicism, Modernity, and Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), and Genevieve Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion in Post-Communist Poland* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006).

an assertion of civic Catholicism, in which bishops acted as supporters of democratic institutions and democratic political culture. In this context, Bezák's public and pastoral style not only anticipated that of Pope Francis, but also followed in the footsteps of hierarchy, which challenged the semi-authoritarian rule of Vladimír Mečiar in the mid-to-late 1990s.

THE MAKING OF THE SLOVAK EPISCOPATE AFTER 1918

The Nationalist Catholic narrative, which has dominated Catholic historiography, as well as official memory since the 1990s, portrays bishops as guardians of the Slovak nation from any, outside or inside, political and cultural suppression, ideological inroads and territorial claims.⁶ In this narrative, ecclesial and political self-determination are two parts of a single process of national emancipation. Bishops are those who, aware of this vital interconnection, seek to attain ecclesiastical independence. Once this is reached, they promote it as a foundation for an independent and sovereign state. The constitution of an ecclesiastical organization does not always only necessitate an intensive involvement of state actors (and can lead to a various degree of etatization of hierarchy) when new church entities are demarcated across state borders, especially if these are disputed by one or both sides (as was the case of interwar Czechoslovakia, which was a result of that very specific case).

This Nationalist Catholic narrative begins with Chief Rastislav inviting Cyril and Methodius of Thessaloniki to the ninth-century Great Moravia, a chiefdom which Slovak nationalists have long considered the first state of the so-called "old Slovaks." Apart from teaching in the local language, Christianizing the local Slavic population, and translating Cyril and Methodius, also served as Rastislav's antidote to the Frankish influence on the territory. By the end of the ninth century, Pope John VIII appointed Methodius, Archbishop of Moravia, to lead the (Great) Moravian ecclesiastical province (some nationalist historians use the term "Moravian-Slovak,"⁷ directly subordinate to the Pa-

6 See e.g. Emília Hrabovec, *Slovensko a Svätá Stolica, 1918–1927 vo svetle vatikánskych prameňov* (Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave, 2012), and Emília Hrabovec, *Slovensko a Svätá stolica v kontexte vatikánskej východnej politiky (1962–1989)* (Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave, 2016); Ján Košíar, *Štyridsať rokov slovenskej cirkevnej provincie* (Bratislava: Lúč, 2018); and Peter Mulík, *Úsilie Slovákov o samostatnú cirkevnú provinciu, Zborník referátov z odborného seminára, 20 Rokov samostatnej slovenskej cirkevnej provincie* (Sereď: Bernoláková Spoločnosť, 1997).

7 Košíar, *Štyridsať rokov slovenskej cirkevnej provincie*, 8.

pacy.⁸ Territorial independence was sealed with the ecclesiastical, as the province functioned for only approximately 10 years, ending with the demise of Great Moravia.

For Catholic nationalists, this period is the Golden Age, and a blueprint for future claims of a co-dependency between state and ecclesiastical independence, an age when the national Catholic identity of the Slovak nation was supported by corresponding ecclesiastical and political structures. According to Ján Košiar, a nationalist priest and historian, "It is certain that an independent ecclesiastical province was an ancient desire of Slovak Catholics. This has appeared with a special intensity since the second half of the nineteenth century, together with growing efforts for national and political emancipation of the Slovak nation in Hungary."⁹

The narrative then follows the nation's life in the Kingdom of Hungary, where the nation survived its long statelessness (and an absence of independent province) thanks to its unwavering faith. The idea that "political autonomy...is impossible to attain without simultaneous church-legal independence of Slovakia" emerged, according to Emília Hrabovec, the leading voice in this strain of Slovak historiography, in the nineteenth century with the "first modern Slovak state-legal programmes."¹⁰ As she elaborates, this ecclesiastical independence entailed the "territorial unification of Slovakia in ecclesiastical terms, its separation from the jurisdiction of ordinaries seated outside its territory and its establishment as an independent ecclesiastical province, including Slovakia in its entirety", and "subordinate directly and exclusively to the Pope, as the highest church authority." Hrabovec argues that this involved the "Slovakization" of the Church administration "alongside the Slovakization of political administration and public life, with the Slovak language being introduced as far as cannon law permits."¹¹ Moreover, Church institutions were to be "entrusted to men of Slovak origin and outlook, who, mindful of the distinctive needs of the Slovak faithful, would maintain national and religious traditions, including a special devotion to national patron saints." And so, "Alongside effective pastoral care, they would maintain the nation's national-religious identity."¹² In the nineteenth century, this program remained unfulfilled, as most mem-

8 Richard Marsina, "O začiatkoch cirkevnej organizácie na Slovensku," in *Úsilie Slovákov o samostatnú cirkevnú provinciu*, edited by Peter Mulík (Sereď: Bernoláková Spoločnosť, 1997).

9 Košiar, *Štyridsať rokov slovenskej cirkevnej provincie*, 7–8.

10 Emília Hrabovec, "Národnoemancipačné úsilia a požiadavka zriadenia samostatnej cirkevnej provincie v období neoabsolutizmu 1849–1859," in *Úsilie Slovákov o samostatnú cirkevnú provinciu*, edited by Peter Mulík (Sereď: Bernoláková Spoločnosť, 1997), 31.

11 Hrabovec, "Národnoemancipačné úsilia a požiadavka zriadenia," 31.

12 Hrabovec, "Národnoemancipačné úsilia a požiadavka zriadenia," 31.

bers of the Catholic hierarchy did not show any interest in the national emancipation of Slovaks, with some actively participating in their Magyarization.

After the demise of the Habsburg Empire at the Great War's end, the vision of the nineteenth-century Catholic nationalists became reality. The Catholic hierarchy of Slovak origin appears on the scene, as Slovakia emerged from the Habsburg Empire to become part of Czechoslovakia in 1918. Officially declared as the state of one Czechoslovak nation, in reality the republic was multinational and surrounded by neighbors claiming parts of its territory. For the two decades of the interwar state, the hierarchy was therefore part of struggles over territories and borders, as well as the loyalties of the population within them.

Some of the hierarchs were involved in the creation of interwar Czechoslovakia from its very beginning. In October 1918, the Slovak National Council, a self-proclaimed body of representatives of the Slovak nation, issued the Declaration of the Slovak Nation, thereby declaring the nation's will to become part of Czechoslovakia. The signatories included at least eight Roman Catholic priests, including Andrej Hlinka, who would later become the leader of the Slovak People's Party (SLS, the party's members went by the nickname *Ľudáci*, translated as *Ľudáks*), as well as Ján Vojtaššák and Karol Kmeťko, the future bishops of the Spiš and Nitra Dioceses, respectively. But at the time of the Martin Declaration, these Catholic dignitaries, with their longer-term Slovak and freshly declared Czechoslovak loyalties, were by no means a representative sample of Catholic clergy on the Slovak part of Czechoslovakia's territory.

The over 70% of the Slovak population that counted themselves Roman Catholic, was led by an Episcopate that, with one exception, helped to suppress the Slovak national movement among the clergy and laity alike, and whose loyalties remained with Hungary. Of the six dioceses, four were located in current Slovak territory, while of the three remaining, two (Rožňava, Košice) straddled the Slovak-Hungarian and one the Slovak-Polish (Spiš) border. Most pressing was the case of the Esztergom Diocese, which encompassed the better part of Western Slovakia (together with its administrative (Bratislava) and ecclesial centers (Nitra and Trnava), but whose seat, Esztergom, was in post-1920 Hungarian territory.

The Catholic priest signatories of the Martin Declaration were determined to Slovakize the Church administration. They went on to become leading figures of the Priest Council, gathering nationally-minded Catholic priests, who took it as their goal to reach "Slovak Catholic autonomy."¹³ For some time, this

¹³ Róbert Letz, "Úsilie o uznanie slovenskej cirkevnej provincie v rokoch 1918–1938," in *Úsilie Slovákov o samostatnú cirkevnú provinciu*, edited by Peter Mulík (Sereď: Bernoláková Spoločnosť, 1997), 46.

meant self-governance for Slovak Catholics, led by the Priest Council. But in 1920, the Council declared in one of its meetings that an “independent ecclesiastical province is proper for a liberated nation.”¹⁴ After the elections, when some of these priests became members of the parliament as members of SLS, and after the naming of the first Episcopate, they gained platforms to promote this priority, both within and without the Church.

For some time, their goals overlapped with those of the Czechoslovak state authorities. The ordination of bishops loyal to the Czechoslovak state became one of the state’s priorities. On the other hand, the Vatican was much slower to act. For all the pressure from Czechoslovak political and ecclesiastical representatives, the Vatican waited to make the first steps until after the post-war demarcation lines were confirmed at the Paris Peace Conference, and until (subsequent) diplomatic ties with Czechoslovakia were established. First, three bishops were named in 1921 to vacant bishoprics, which was unproblematic; by 1925, all bishoprics were led by ethnically Slovak clergymen. This was just the beginning of almost 20 years of negotiations among Czechoslovak authorities, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, and German church representatives. The Church boundaries were finally adjusted to state borders in 1937. This was also the first time when the constitution of an independent ecclesiastical province was mentioned as a possible next step. All of these had been very much part of this ecclesiastical part of the consolidation of Czechoslovakia as an independent state.

For the interwar episcopate, political and ecclesial autonomy were interconnected, just as maintenance of the national Catholic identity was part and parcel of good pastoral care. And so, alongside their declared loyalty to the Czechoslovak state, several members of the hierarchy soon began to perceive political autonomy as a means to keep the secularizing Czech and Czechoslovakist influence out of Slovakia. Of the six prelates, four had direct personal and ideological links with the SLS. With Catholic priests comprising over one-third of the party’s membership, Ľudák ideologues drew from Catholic teachings and theologies, but which they typically nationalized.¹⁵ For the next over 30 years, the hierarchy’s relation to politics, and more specifically nationalist politics, was decisively formed by the Ľudáks, up until their abolishment (in 1945) in the renewed post-war Czechoslovakia.

¹⁴ Letz, “Úsilia o uznananie slovenskej cirkevnej provincie v rokoch 1918–1938,” 52.

¹⁵ Miloslav Szabó, “‘For God and Nation.’ Catholicism and the Far-Right in the Central European Context (1918–1945).” *Historický časopis*, 66(5) (2018): 885–900.

During the interwar period, the bishops, alarmed by the initially ambitious secularizing plans of the Czechoslovak leaders, who, for their part, sought to get rid of Austro-Catholicism (i.e. the entanglement between Catholicism and the Habsburg autocracy), its cultural and structural legacies, allied with the harshest critics of these ambitions, the *Ludáks*. The independent ecclesiastical province was therefore seen not only as a protection against the Hungarian territorial ambitions, but also as Czech secularism. For instance, Andrej Hlinka, the leader of the SLS promoted the National Patroness, Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, as a symbol of territorial integrity and the political autonomy of the Slovak nation.¹⁶ True, some bishops became more moderate once the relations with the Vatican stabilized and a *Modus Vivendi* was reached in 1927, e.g., Bishop Karol Kmeťko of the Nitra Diocese (formerly a member of the SLS). Nonetheless, the independent ecclesiastical province remained the common goal of the Slovak Episcopate and the *Ludáks*.

At least two actors worked against the further nationalization and etatization of the Slovak hierarchy, both directly and indirectly. Although all of the changes that were being negotiated during these years could be seen as laying the groundwork for the constitution of ecclesiastical province—this was not the goal of the two main actors in the negotiations. The unitarist Czechoslovak authorities, who played a leading role in the negotiating of the *Modus Vivendi* with the Vatican, did not see the Slovak province as a priority. Theirs was a focus on securing the southern border with Hungary, challenged by Hungarian ecclesial elites, who, for their part, pressured the Vatican to establish an independent Hungarian diocese on Slovak territory (as a blueprint for future political autonomy).¹⁷ The eventual agreement did not mention the idea of an independent Slovak ecclesiastical province. The Czechoslovak state clearly had no need for a unified episcopate governing, in ecclesiastical terms, the Slovak part of the Republic.

The Vatican worked against the etatization of Slovak hierarchy: both directly and indirectly. Pius XI sought to draw the clergy away from politics—for the SLS, this meant no new clergy recruits. Instead, the Pope encouraged grass-roots mobilization, calling on lay Catholics to become engaged in Catholic Action.¹⁸ He did appreciate Slovak distinctiveness through the support of popular devotion; in 1925, he named Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows as a national patron saint.

¹⁶ Andrej Hlinka, "Matka Sedembolestná patrónka Slovenskej krajiny," *Slovák*, April 8, 1927, 1.

¹⁷ Letz, "Úsilie o uznanie slovenskej cirkevnej provincie v rokoch 1918–1938," 51.

¹⁸ Martin Conway, *Catholic Politics in Europe, 1918–1945* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

But in general, the Vatican was slow to act, carefully navigating between Hungarian and Czechoslovak demands, taking another 10 years until agreements between the Holy See and the Czechoslovak state in 1937 mentioned the independent ecclesiastical province as a future possibility. Ironically, this came on the eve of the Vienna Awards, which ceded part of southern Slovakia to Hungary.

The nationalization and etatization of the Church culminated during the Nazi-dominated Slovak Republic (1939–1945), led by priest-politician Jozef Tiso, President and the leader of ruling Hlinka's Slovak Peoples' Party (HSLS). The Catholic Church became a symbol of national identity, territorial integrity, and the unity of the Catholic Slovak nation. The Catholic hierarchy welcomed the wartime state, and the state, in turn, returned to the Church some of its pre-1918 privileges, such as previously nationalized church schools. Some members of the hierarchy were also directly linked to state institutions. Ján Vojtaššák, the bishop of the Spiš Diocese became a member of the State Council (an advisory body to the Slovak president, government and national council). And yet, a constitution of the independent ecclesiastical province during this period was out of the question. As much as the hierarchy worked as an etatizing agent and supported the current state—the Church's administrative organization, not yet fully nationalized as it was, continued to be a destabilizing factor for the state's territorial integrity.

Similarly, to the interwar period, the transnational character of the Church prevented the progressive etatization of the hierarchy. Despite numerous petitions and appeals from the Slovak side, the Vatican refused to make any progress on the matter amidst international turmoil. Moreover, its representatives both in Rome and Bratislava, repeatedly expressed their concern about Slovakia's Nazification, particularly its discriminatory measures against, and the eventual deportation of, almost 70,000 Jews from Slovakia.

After the demise of the Slovak state at the war's end, the idea of state and ecclesiastical independence survived in the West. A considerable number of *Ľudáks* left Slovakia for the West out of fear of Soviet retaliation. In emigration, they kept alive the idea of independent Slovak statehood, complete with the related concept of a national Church, and during the next 40 years of the communist era looked for ways to bring this back to Slovakia.¹⁹

The 1948 communist takeover brought this founding phase of the hierarchy's etatization to an end. The three years of the post-war, not yet communist Czechoslovakia, gave the Church a taste of what was to come. The Church was stripped

¹⁹ Ján Pešek and Václav Vondrášek, *Slovenský poválečný exil a jeho aktivity 1945–1970* (Bratislava: VEDA, 2011).

of its privileges. After the ban of the HSLŠ, priests were removed from politics and the hierarchy lost its exclusive connection to the state power.²⁰ Gradually a new form of the politicization of the Church was being imposed.

The communists politicized (and personally decimated) the Church in a way that made the Church in general, and the hierarchy in particular, almost become fully subservient to the party-state, and entirely disconnected from participating in the national sovereignty discourse. Sovereignty in the state rested fully with the ruling Communist Party, which dismantled the Church's structures, including its religious orders, charities, schools and associations. The majority of bishops were tried and sent to prison for long sentences. The rest of the hierarchy was allowed to be involved in public life, though only in the ways and to the extent dictated by the communist authorities. All real power within the Church was held by an association of priests loyal to the state, the Movement of Peace Clergy. The Church was also controlled by the Office for Church Affairs through the Ministry of Culture. Last but not least, during the first two decades of communist rule, the Vatican went on the offensive against communist persecution. This translated into clashes over the appointments of new bishops (after the current Episcopate was either incarcerated or interned). In fact, the Vatican appointed secret bishops, thereby creating a parallel hierarchy. One of the leading bishops was a young Jesuit Ján Chryzostom Korec.

With this configuration of the relations between the Czechoslovak state, the local church and the Vatican, the active involvement of the hierarchy in its etatization went on hiatus. The constitution of an independent state province, a step that necessitated the cooperation of the state, the local hierarchy and the Vatican, was flatly out of the question. In fact, the communist state saw the wartime Slovak state as its central ideological foe; the repressive erasure of the Slovak Republic and Slovak Catholic nationalism became part and parcel of the communist political and cultural identity. But just as etatized Catholicism was either exiled (in the West) or suppressed, a clerical and largely apolitical Catholicism was increasingly viable, a Catholicism that would anticipate an anti-authoritarian resistance in the 1990s.

In the immediate post-war years, groups of Catholic laity emerged which advocated a Catholic activism entirely apolitical in focus. Notably, the Rodina (English: the Family) Movement was established in the early 1940s by the Croa-

²⁰ James Ramon Felak, "The Roman Catholic Church Navigates the New Slovakia, 1945–1948," in *Christianity and Modernity in Eastern Europe*, edited by Bruce R. Berglund and Brian Porter-Szűcs (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2010), 111–28.

tian anti-fascist priest Tomislav Kolakovič (a pseudonym) among Slovak students in Bratislava. The movement functioned until 1950, becoming one of the central groups for the budding underground church. Amidst attempts on the part of the Slovak wartime state to merge Catholicism and state fascism, Kolakovič advocated for the need for Catholics to engage more zealously in social justice issues. Following Catholic social teaching and the teachings of Catholic philosophers such as Jacques Maritain, Kolakovič therefore sought to follow both the demands of the Gospel, in addition to blocking communist inroads among the lower classes.²¹ Accordingly, as Silvester Krčméry, one of the leading Rodina members pointed out, the movement was not “based on traditional structures, such as the clergy or the monastic communities, but rather it would be representative of every social group: youth, adults, lay people, priests, monks, and nuns, and single and married people.”²² According to James Felak, during the early post-war years, Kolakovič and his followers stayed aloof from politics; they engaged with none of the leading political parties such as the Demokratická Strana (DS, the Democratic Party) and the Communist Party, not to mention the abolished Hlinka’s Slovak Peoples’ Party.²³ They maintained this attitude after the communist take-over, rejecting state control of the Church. Their efforts culminated during the Prague Spring, and were halted in its aftermath, following the Warsaw Pact Armies invasion. Nevertheless, they survived in the underground in the communities of the Secret Church, where they were led by secretly ordained Bishop Ján Ch. Korec. Before I go on to analyze, who and how they were constructed and impacted the public identity of the hierarchy after 1989, one important development needs to be mentioned.

In 1977, at the height of normalization, an independent Slovak ecclesiastical province was established as a result of an agreement between the Czechoslovak state and the Vatican.²⁴ The agreement was made possible thanks to the Vatican’s Ostpolitik, the conciliatory approach to communist governments and late socialist communist nation-building. However, the establishment of an independent Slovak province did not mean that the state was open to acknowledging the Church as vital for Slovak sovereignty. The communist apparatus was very vocal in expressing its view that the establishment of an independent Church organization was not intended to present the Catholic Church as a symbol of Slovak sovereignty or national identity. National sovereignty rested solely and

21 Felak, “The Roman Catholic Church Navigates the New Slovakia, 1945–1948,” 122.

22 Silvester Krčméry and Vladimír Jukl, *V šlapajách Kolakoviča* (Bratislava: Charis, 1996), 12.

23 Felak, “The Roman Catholic Church Navigates the New Slovakia, 1945–1948,” 123.

24 Hrabovec, *Slovensko a Svätá Stolica, 1918–1927 vo svetle vatikánskych prameňov*, 49.

exclusively with the Slovak socialist nation and its representative, the Communist Party. The party made sure that the constitution of the Slovak province did not allow the Catholic Church in Slovakia to function as an independent entity.

SLOVAK INDEPENDENCE—BISHOPS AS GUARDIANS OF SOVEREIGNTY

After the fall of communism in November 1989, the hierarchy went from being incomplete and fully dependent on the socialist state to being fully staffed and more or less independent. Many former members of the Catholic activist movement, the underground church, joined the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) established in February 1990, which was led by the Catholic activist Ján Čarnogurský. The Christian Democrats, together with the hierarchy, spearheaded or co-organized an increasing number of pilgrimages, commemorations and public events. These reflected both the continued interest in a “national moral renewal,” the original Catholic activist program, and also a new drive for using religious culture to legitimize the emerging political agenda and mobilize in their support. This included the question of Slovakia’s political future. This increasingly vibrant public space soon attracted other nationalist actors, especially the returning *Ludák* emigres and ex-communist nationalists. Yet, for some time the ex-activist Catholics were natural leaders, legitimized by their involvement in the underground church. In the first months of democracy, they were widely acknowledged as moral authorities. This especially concerned clergy, as Bishop Korec was becoming a celebrity.

In particular, two nationalist actors were interested in getting the hierarchy involved and actively shaping their role in the process. They entered the political scene as the two most radical and vocal defenders of Slovakia’s independence as early as the beginning of 1990. I shall refer to them as separatist nationalists. They promoted the cause of Slovak independence as a struggle for either Slovak sovereignty or Slovak self-determination. Both of these terms signified a fast-track exit of Slovakia from the common state. These nationalists were recruited from ex-communist nationalists who dominated the heritage organization *Matica Slovenská* and the Slovak National Party, and from separatist *Ludák* emigrés. The wartime Slovak state and the communist state origins of these elites can help account for their etatized understanding of the agency of Catholic hierarchy. Both of these regimes politicized and etatized the Catholic Church hierarchy, each to a different extent, in a different way and with a different ideological justification. Nonetheless, for the former ex-Slovak state and ex-socialist

state elites turned separatist nationalists, it was almost natural to get the hierarchy involved or perhaps better subsumed within their project.

The émigrés and ex-communists soon transformed into a single group promoting the prompt achievement of Slovakia's independence and extensive involvement of hierarchy in the process. For more than two years, the separatist nationalists urged the Slovak National Assembly to declare "Slovak sovereignty," and issued several declarations of sovereignty. Some of these declarations included clauses demanding an extensive Slovakization of the Catholic Church. In terms of historical referents, these nationalists elevated the establishment of an independent Slovak Ecclesial Province in 1977 as the central moment of recent Catholic history, and one that compelled the Catholic episcopate to engage in support of political independence.

However, to get the hierarchy involved, to etatize and even better turn it into an etatizing agent, proved more difficult than expected. This began to change in early 1991 when Public Against Violence, the central pro-democratic post-communist movement which organized the democratic protests of November 1989, mobilized and united pro-democratic forces, and won the first democratic elections in 1990, came apart at the seams. The split happened over the question of Slovakia's political future, the pace and form of economic reforms, and last but not least the lustration law. The key figure in this argument in the run-up to Slovak independence, and more generally in Slovak politics as a whole for the next decade, was the Slovak Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar, a lawyer who, working in a provincial factory before 1989, was co-opted to become the Minister of the Interior of the first post-1989 government. Despite initial general enchantment with his charismatic leadership, Mečiar soon became estranged from both the VPN and the KDH. He was proving increasingly unaccountable to his coalition partners, mostly because of his rather mysterious past and his handling of secret police files while interior minister. Even so, his falling out with his coalition partners had little effect on his popularity among the population at large. As Karen Henderson maintains in her analysis of Slovak post-socialist politics, Mečiar had successfully "tapped into the undercurrents of popular unease about the indifference of Prague politicians to the consequences of economic policy in Slovakia, and the failure of the Czechs to recognize that the Slovaks might have valid reasons for emphasizing their otherness".²⁵ Mečiar, along with a group of followers, left the broader VPN movement, and named itself the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS). Under Mečiar's leadership, the HZDS leaned

25 Karen Henderson, *Slovakia: The Escape from Invisibility* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 35.

to the left, rejected lustration (many of its members were ex-communists) and began to promote confederation. The HZDS promptly became the most popular political force in the country, and Mečiar emerged as a popular populist leader capable of mobilizing others behind anti-Czech rhetoric. Mečiar's voice easily resonated with those of the separatist nationalist ones, with leading members of the Catholic hierarchy also being convinced.

The hierarchy was initially flanked by the Christian Democrats, who were increasingly opposed to separatism, especially the movement's leadership (a group of separatist nationalists began forming within the moment, and eventually split off in 1991). Unlike the separatists, who derived the right to self-determination from the wartime Nazi-dominated Slovak Republic, Christian Democrats referred to "international law." Unlike the separatists who pushed for unilateral secession, the Christian Democrats wanted to achieve independence gradually through a dialogue with their Czech partners. Most importantly for this inquiry, the Christian Democrats did not understand the separatist drive to get the hierarchy involved, as they themselves did not have any clear idea of what the exact role of the hierarchy should be. They knew the Church should not depend on the state, but not much else. This, of course, was an important window of opportunity for the separatists.

Bishop Ján Ch. Korec, who in the meantime had been appointed the first resident cardinal in Slovak history, became the separatist trump card. Korec (ironically, one of the most prominent victims of the Vatican's Ostpolitik) embraced the decrees as the ultimate proof of the Vatican's support for Slovak independence. First, he used them to gain a greater autonomy for the Slovak Church within the ecclesiastical structures in Czechoslovakia, and soon afterwards moved to state institutions. Korec used the Slovak province as an argument to advocate for the independence of the Slovak Bishops Conference from the Federal Bishops Conference, although this endeavor was not successful. The Vatican refused to concede. (This was a setback for Korec. The Conference was established only once Slovakia became independent.) But this did not stop him from promoting the cause of Slovak sovereignty and self-determination, etatizing the Papacy in the process despite its apparent disengagement. Soon afterwards, Korec sent a letter to the Chairman of the Slovak National Council asking him to present the decrees, whose "state-constituting (constitutional) importance is unquestionable"²⁶ at the parliament, make them part of the Slo-

²⁶ Imrich Kružliak, *Cyrlometodský Kult u Slovákov, Dlhá cesta k slovenskej cirkevnej provincii* (Prešov, 2003), 200.

vak code and promulgate them as state-constituting documents. Korec was followed by most of the hierarchy.

When the government led by Vladimír Mečiar issued a “Declaration of Sovereignty” in July 1992, the hierarchy reacted with a supportive proclamation, the “Hour of Sovereignty,” which was to be read in all churches.²⁷ The document was a compendium of ex-communist and émigré arguments, in addition to Korec’s thoughts about nation and sovereignty. The Slovak Bishops Conference acclaimed the declaration “as a ‘natural’ culmination of Slovak history.” The introductory lines are worth quoting at length:

Every nation with a long cultural tradition desires to accomplish its national life in state sovereignty. This was the desire and goal of the endeavours of the noblest personalities in our history, especially in the last 150 years...This natural right established in international documents was fulfilled in 1968 by the establishment of the Slovak Republic...²⁸

The hierarchy claimed that the Declaration was in accordance with Catholic teaching and the Slovak Catholic memory. The Declaration also referred to John Paul II, and his speech to the Polish nation during his first visit to Poland in 1979. Showing just how liberally these words could be interpreted, the Declaration stated that the “peace and rapprochement of nations can be built only on the foundation of respect for objective rights of a nation, such as the right to being, to freedom, to confession.”²⁹ The Declaration was published on the front page of the leading Catholic weekly *Katolícke Noviny*.³⁰ Cardinal Korec then suggested that the Declaration of Sovereignty should be welcomed by the ringing of church bells.³¹ This did not happen in all churches. Indeed, Catholics were not united on this issue.

Following the publication of the “Hour of Sovereignty,” Christian Democrats and “sovereignty nationalists” openly clashed for the first time over the extent to which the Catholic hierarchy should be engaged in political debates. Leading Christian Democrats criticized the hierarchy’s support for the project of Slovak sovereignty as an undue involvement with politics. The clearest and

27 “Hodina zvrchovanosti Slovenska,” July 17, 1992, *Acta Curiae Episcopalis Nitriensis* No. VI/1992, Nitra 21 August 1992, Supplement, missing pagination. See also ‘Hodina Zvrchovanosti Slovenska’, *Katolícke Noviny*, July 30 1992, 1.

28 “Hodina Zvrchovanosti Slovenska,” 1.

29 “Hodina Zvrchovanosti Slovenska,” 1.

30 “Hodina Zvrchovanosti Slovenska,” 1.

31 *Národná obroda*, July 20, 1992.

most visible heralding of this disagreement came in the form of three short interviews with František Mikloško and Ján Čarnogurský of the KDH and Korec, as published in the daily *Národná Obroda*. The three Catholic leaders were asked whether their different stances on the Declaration would in any way divide the Church. Čarnogurský refused to talk about the Church in this way, claiming that he knew nothing about internal Church matters. Mikloško indirectly criticized the “Hour of Sovereignty,” and argued that “the historical problem of the Church (hierarchy) is interfering with the temporal matters.”³² For his part, Cardinal Korec did not seem to see a reason for the hierarchy to maintain a low profile in politics. He clearly saw the hierarchy as the leading representative in the public sphere. In addressing the views of the Christian Democrats, he said that “the Church tolerates their views in all respects and the Christian Democrats should do the same thing.”³³ In this statement, Korec clearly used the Church interchangeably with hierarchy.

The Slovak government and the broader separatist movement in return put Christianity, in its Catholic version, at the center of the symbolic universe of the newly founded Slovak Republic. Slovak sociologist of religion Miroslav Tížik argues that after 1993, the “Christianization of the state” could be observed in Slovakia. The state was transformed from an “ideologically neutral state” to a state “legitimized through Christianity” by using Christian “mythology and symbols to legitimize itself.”³⁴ For instance, the Great Moravia and Cyril and Methodius would feature prominently in the new constitution. This was symbolically confirmed when Cardinal Korec attended the ceremonial proclamation of independent Slovak Republic as one of its central figures. However, this was not only a one-way process. The state may have become Christianized, but in the process the hierarchy became nationalized and etatized. The process of etatization involved various actors, who not only promoted it, but also actively resisted it. Apart from the hierarchy, there were separatist nationalists and Christian democrats. At this point, the etatization remained largely on the rhetorical level—the hierarchy openly supported the drive for sovereignty. It remained to be seen whether the hierarchy would allow, or indeed facilitate, a more comprehensive etatization.

32 “Názory J. Čarnogurského, F. Mikloška a kardinála J. Ch. Koreca (sic)” *Národná Obroda*, August 24, 1992.

33 “Názory J. Čarnogurského, F. Mikloška a kardinála J. Ch. Koreca (sic)” *Národná Obroda*, August 24, 1992.

34 Miroslav Tížik, *Náboženstvo vo verejnom živote na Slovensku, Zápasy o ideový charakter štátu a spoločnosti* (Bratislava: VEDA, 2011), 202.

CATHOLIC BISHOPS AS GUARDIANS OF DEMOCRACY

The Roman Catholic Church maintained working relations with the Slovak government in the first year of the independent state. Their relations started to worsen in autumn 1994, i.e., in the second term of the Vladimír Mečiar government (1994–1998), escalating into an open conflict toward the end of Mečiar's rule at the decade's end. Encouraged by the seemingly unified support for Slovak independence on the side of the hierarchy and the positive attitude toward the Vatican, Mečiar proposed several steps that would reinforce the close links between the Church and the state, and effectively further the etatization of the Church. But not only did his plans backfire, Mečiar was faced with an increasing assertiveness of some of the bishops on issues that directly concerned the Church hierarchy. These bishops were beginning to see their role in terms of support for democratic institutions and democratic political culture. The Slovak episcopate was divided, and among others, Mečiar could rely on the support of its two leading figures, Cardinal Korec of the Nitra Diocese and Archbishop Sokol of the Trnava Diocese.

The pro-democratic bishops held a majority in the Bishops Conference, and were therefore able to issue pastoral letters and proclamations which criticized Mečiar's increasingly authoritarian rule. As early as December 1993, they criticized the low political culture. They complained again in 1995 when Mečiar's government repeatedly attacked President Michal Kováč, staging a smear campaign in the media, and using unconstitutional measures to weaken his position.³⁵ Their frustration (and indeed the polarization with the Slovak episcopate) culminated in the new language law and the so-called "law on the preservation of the republic" being passed in 1995 and 1996, respectively. The language law was an unabashed attempt to greatly circumscribe the use of minority languages (especially Hungarian) in public life. In an act of defiance, the pro-democratic bishops in Slovakia secured the right to use their mother tongue in church life and ceremonies for the Hungarian minority.³⁶ In less than four months, these bishops raised their voices again, when the "law on the preservation of the republic," designed to silence any critics of the government, was enacted. The pro-democratic bishops condemned the law in a public statement.

35 Frans Hoppenbrouwers, "Nationalist Tendencies in the Slovak Roman Catholic Church," *Religion in Eastern Europe* 18 (1998): 15.

36 Timothy Byrnes, *Transnational Catholicism in Post-Communist Europe* (London and New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 68.

The untold leader of the group, Bishop Baláž, saw the law as a breach of democracy and a tool for a future clampdown on civil society. However, not all bishops shared his views. The proclamation was signed by 10 out of 15 active bishops,³⁷ although the two most prominent bishops, Cardinal Korec and Archbishop Sokol, abstained. Mečiar made sure to make this division within the episcopate visible, inadvertently revealing who was and who was not compliant with his understanding of the role of the hierarchy in post-communist Slovak Republic. Mečiar praised Archbishop Sokol, Cardinal Korec and the remaining three bishops as responsible citizens and told the nine other bishops to follow the Pope who, claimed Mečiar, guided the Slovak bishops not to interfere in politics.³⁸

The Papacy played a crucial role in challenging Mečiar's plans with the Church. Pope John Paul II paid his first apostolic visit to Slovakia in 1995. Speaking for the first time to the newly formed Slovak Bishops conference, he criticized nationalism. As he said, "Besides Slovaks, Catholics belonging to other national communities also live in your country...the Church cannot submit to nationalist manipulations..."³⁹ The Pope also dealt serious blows to Mečiar's plans. Most probably, following the advice of Cardinal Jozef Tomko, who was not impressed by Mečiar's policies, the Pope removed Bishop Dominik Hrušovský, one of the most open supporters of Mečiar, from the position of general secretary of the KBS, and sent him to serve as nuncio to Belorussia.⁴⁰ The Vatican also undermined nationalist plans to use the constitution of the independent Slovak province as the papal approval of Slovak independence; in 1995, the province was divided into Western and Eastern provinces. This was most probably an answer to demands from bishops in eastern Slovakia who did not share the nationalizing ambitions of their counterparts in western Slovakia. Hence, with considerable papal help, the anti-Mečiar bishops blocked all of Mečiar's proposals to further the nationalization of the Catholic Church.

The 20th anniversary of the establishment of the independent ecclesial province revealed nationalist disenchantment with the pro-democratic Catholic hierarchy. The central publication was edited by Peter Mulík, the director of the Office for Church-State Affairs at the Ministry of Culture, and Mečiar's right hand in terms of Church matters, led the celebrations co-organized by nationalist hierarchy and state officials. In his preface to the volume, Mulík reiterates the ar-

³⁷ Hoppenbrouwers, "Nationalist Tendencies in the Slovak Roman Catholic Church," 15.

³⁸ Hoppenbrouwers, "Nationalist Tendencies in the Slovak Roman Catholic Church," 17.

³⁹ Príhovor Jána Pavla II, Stretnutie s členmi biskupskej konferencie, Šaštín, July 1, 1995, <https://www.kbs.sk/obsah/sekcia/h/dokumenty-a-vyhlasenia/p/dokumenty-papezov/c/navsteva-svateho-otca-v-sr-1995>.

⁴⁰ Miroslav Kollár, *Slovensko 1996. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti* (Bratislava: IVO, 1997), 275.

gument that the constitution of the Slovak province anticipated Slovak political independence.⁴¹ According to Mulík, the Slovak province “significantly helped to accomplish the process of national emancipation in [our own] state.”⁴² In Mulík’s view, the breakup of the province was unfortunate because it caused the ecclesiastical and legal break-up of the Slovak Republic. However, Mulík was not giving up. He suggested the constitution of a one common ecclesial region and the appointment of a Slovak primate.⁴³ In his view, this would be a “next step towards the gradual re-establishment of a sovereign Slovak nation in Europe,”⁴⁴ but these plans were never realized. Mečiar’s rule ended in 1998, and Mulík struggled to win over the skeptical hearts of the pro-democratic Catholic hierarchy. Nevertheless, the province remained the central theme of Catholic Nationalist memory and historiography. The commemorative volume was co-authored by Catholic historians Emília Hrabovec and Róbert Letz, as well as Viliam Judák, who would later succeed Cardinal Korec as Bishop of Nitra. In the decades to come, all of these would promote the idea of the Church (and the Church hierarchy) as the central force in securing Slovakia’s political and cultural sovereignty.

CONCLUSION

Bishops, the Vatican, Ludáks, secret Church activists, Christian Democrats, émigrés and ex-communists, all of these were involved in the construction of the public identity of Catholic hierarchy. All of these were also involved in the processes of nationalization and the etatization of the hierarchy, but also its engagement in the democratization of Slovakia’s society in the late 1990s.

Nationally-oriented Catholic historiography, which dominates contemporary Church historiography in today’s Slovakia, has constructed the Catholic Episcopate as the guardian and promoter of national sovereignty. With several notable and mostly rare exceptions, the Catholic hierarchs were indeed active participants in the promotion of the cause of national and state sovereignty, at least since the establishment of the first Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. The interwar cohort and their successors embraced populist autonomism, readily welcomed the nominally independent wartime Slovak Republic established as a Nazi sat-

41 Peter Mulík, ed., *Úsilie Slovákov o samostatnú cirkevnú provinciu, Zborník referátov z odborného seminára, 20 Rokov samostatnej slovenskej cirkevnej provincie* (Sereď: Bernoláková Spoločnosť, 1997), 7.

42 Mulík, ed., *Úsilie Slovákov o samostatnú cirkevnú provinciu*, 7.

43 Mulík, ed., *Úsilie Slovákov o samostatnú cirkevnú provinciu*, 72.

44 Mulík, ed., *Úsilie Slovákov o samostatnú cirkevnú provinciu*, 72.

elite, supported the 1968 federalization of Czechoslovakia, and finally the post-1989 cause of national sovereignty and independence. A Catholic bishop rallying behind the cause of national sovereignty was certainly nothing new, as far as the post-1918 history of the Catholic Church in Slovakia is concerned. However, as this chapter sought to explore, this is not the only theme around which the hierarchy mobilized and constructed its public image throughout the long twentieth century. This came forward, especially strongly in the hierarchy's confrontation with Vladimír Mečiar, during the prime minister's semi-authoritarian rule.

A Church on the Margins

Reverend Gábor Iványi and the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship

Christopher Adam

Since 1989, Hungarian churches have played an important role in Hungary's national discourse, even while Hungarian society itself has been relatively secular. The Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Catholics, and most Protestant denominations have occupied a place on the right of the political spectrum, attempting to ensure that patriotic narratives of Hungarian identity and the nation remain infused with Christian symbolism and imagery. However, perhaps the most prominent exception among the Christian faithful is Reverend Gábor Iványi's Methodist community, notably the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship (*Magyarországi Evangéliumi Testvérközösség* – MET). Reverend Iványi served as a Member of Parliament in the caucus of the Alliance of Free Democrats (*Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége* – SZDSZ) during the transition to democracy, and for eight years in the period that followed. Over the decades, Iványi has likely been more intentional in living the Social Gospel, and in advocacy work among the marginalized, than any other Christian religious leader in Hungary with national name recognition. Yet an equally noteworthy part of Iványi's legacy is how he helped to shape public policies and narratives around the relationship between the nascent Third Republic of Hungary after 1989 and the country's religious groups and denominations. Both in his poverty relief work—especially with the Roma, the homeless and refugees—and in policy around Church-State relations, Iványi charted a course that in many ways was at odds with the dominant Catholic and Christian Reformed Church, advocating for both those faith communities and individuals that have been marginalized by society and the dominant churches.

This chapter explores the way in which a politically engaged, liberal leaning Protestant denomination saw the calling of a faith community in a society transitioning political systems in a manner strikingly different to other Protestant churches or the Catholic Church of Hungary. By doing this, Iványi has attempted to bring his church not only to the economic margins, but to the mar-

gins of the Christian faith itself, to those who have had negative experiences with Christianity, for whom religious faith has been irrelevant, or to those who simply do not fit into the mainstream framework of what it means to be a Christian in Hungary today.

THE TOLERATED CHURCH

Iványi was 39 years old when he began his career as an SZDSZ parliamentarian in 1990. His involvement with the liberal thinkers who would form the backbone of the largest opposition party dated back to the final decade of the one-party regime of János Kádár. His small Methodist community was stripped of the property where its services had been celebrated, and he faced marginalization from leaders within the Methodist community itself, thereby forcing the young minister to gather with his faithful on the street. Among those to frequent these services were some of the founders of SZDSZ, including Miklós Haraszti and János Kis. Haraszti wrote critically in 1983 about how all too many cultural figures and artists in Hungary and other Eastern Bloc countries had consented to become building blocks of the one-party state. "A new aesthetic culture has emerged in which censors and artists alike are entangled in a mutual embrace," wrote Haraszti, and he pointed to the "complicity of artists and writers consigned to collaborate with the guardians that govern the society in which they live and work."¹ The collaboration of most church leaders with the regime was analogous to the conduct of many cultural icons and artists. The phenomenon of so-called "peace priests" (*békepapok*) had their origin in the 1950s, and referred mostly to the political "taming" of the Catholic Church. Yet, pragmatic clergy collaboration with the one-party state and the creation of a collaborationist culture through the State Office of Church Affairs (*Állami Egyházügyi Hivatal*) was widespread across denominations. The Office rewarded cooperative churches, and in the 1980s István Berecz, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party Central Committee member overseeing the work of the department, promised to afford each approved denomination with one television broadcast per year as an added incentive to engage in what the regime saw as good conduct.²

¹ This work was originally published in French in 1983, followed by an English translation. Miklós Haraszti, *The Velvet Prison: Artists Under State Socialism* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1987), 5–6.

² Gábor Iványi, "Nekrológ a megszűnő Állami Egyházügyi Hivatal felett" (An obituary for the State Department of Church Affairs), *Beszélő*, Issue 2, 1989, <http://beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek/nekrolog-a-megszuno-allami-egyhazugyi-hivatal-felett>.

György Aczél, Hungary's Deputy Minister of Culture from 1958 to 1967, and later Secretary of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, was the architect of the Kádár regime's policy known in Hungarian as the "three t's," representing the first letter of the Hungarian words for *prohibited*, *tolerated*, and *supported*. Although this policy of communicating to society what was permissible, tolerable and banned afforded cultural and community leaders a certain degree of leeway and flexibility in terms of how they expressed themselves, it also enabled more self-censorship, while incentivizing collaboration. Aczél's goal was to create and preserve a *modus vivendi*, including between clergy and the one-party state. In 1976, Aczél asserted that "the state respects the internal laws governing churches, while the churches value and acknowledge the socialist society and state according to their own principles of faith," adding that "the transparent handling of ideological problems and differences, as well as the many forms of dialogue have a cleansing and constructive effect on socialist national unity."³ In Aczél's view, following World War Two, Hungary's Catholic and Protestant communities had to confront their own ideologically "retrograde" and regressive demons, while Hungary's communist leadership had to address the tendency to engage in "sectarian dogmatism."⁴ Aczél was speaking out against anti-communist religious leaders, as well as Stalinist-style hardliners within his own party, calling instead for a more pragmatic approach that would foster a period of stable consolidation.

With this, Aczél had the support of the country's communist leader János Kádár, who in 1975, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of Hungary's liberation, said:

It is not possible to see into a person's soul, but I think that there is no shortage of believers in our country. When we speak of universal cooperation and socialist unity, we are thinking of them too. We must all stand together. This is why it is a joy for us to see that on the 30th anniversary of liberation, the churches have demonstrated a patriotic spirit, and in harmony with their own intentions and goals, contributed to the success of this celebration. By doing so, their greatest service was not to politicians, but to the faithful. Over the last 30 years, they resolved the inner conflicts of conscience about whether believers could stand with political forces working for the well-being of the people, or whether they

³ György Aczél, *A szabadság jelene, jövője a szocializmus* (Freedom's present and its future is Socialism) (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 1977), 101.

⁴ Aczél, *A szabadság jelene*, 106.

should support the churches instead. This resolution is of great significance in terms of our past and our future.⁵

On the one hand, Aczél interpreted Jesus' words in Matthew 12:17 ("Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's") as "a requirement and demand for believers to accept the power of the given state." On the other hand, he also suggested that in socialist Hungary, where "society is no longer the union of the oppressor and the oppressed classes," this was not merely a matter of obligation, but rather an invitation to participate in the common good, and to support the state's social justice efforts.⁶ Aczél pointed to the salience of liberation theology, the call to dialogue that came out of the Second Vatican Council and examples of faith leaders in North and South America like Martin Luther King Jr., or the Marxist Catholic priest Camilo Torres Restrepo embracing causes of social, economic and racial justice. He argued that these examples should encourage Hungarian church leaders to realize that they cannot

excuse themselves from the responsibilities of the "here and now," notably to battle against the inhumane world of class oppression and exploitation...and in Hungary to choose the path through which—despite the difficult circumstances and the mistakes we have made—we are nonetheless forming a more humane existence by building a developed socialist society.⁷

THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

Iványi and his fledgling faith community remained on the margins of this socialist society. The Office of Church Affairs, which had as its core mandate the monitoring and censuring of churches, initiated a purge of theologians, clergy and other leaders within Hungary's Methodist community, and did so with the collaboration of key leaders in the Methodist hierarchy. In the 1970s, the Methodist faithful in Hungary was estimated at 3,000, and the church was involved in social work, particularly among the elderly and infirm, as well as in areas of addiction counselling and poverty relief. When Iványi and younger genera-

⁵ János Kádár as quoted in Aczél, *A szabadság jelene*, 107.

⁶ Aczél, *A szabadság jelene*, 111.

⁷ Aczél, *A szabadság jelene*, 108.

tions came of age in the 60s and 70s, the outreach to Hungary's Roma communities took off; they worked on tackling illiteracy and entrenched poverty in these communities. Through their ministry, they implicitly highlighted the continued existence of poverty and disadvantaged communities in Hungary, a systemic problem socialist leaders and society more broadly often consented not to see. Within this same circle of liberal thinkers and activists, often publishing in samizdat journals, were the likes of sociologist Ottilia Solt, who spoke of a society where severe hunger had been mostly eliminated, yet where poverty existed in extremely poor housing conditions.⁸ After Iványi was evicted from his home during a period of political persecution in the late 70s, it was Solt who gave him shelter in her home.⁹ In 1979, both Solt and Iványi were founders of an opposition social justice organization called the Fund to Support the Poor (*Szegényeket Támogató Alap* – SZETA). A social justice-oriented church would find much opportunity for outreach, but by doing so would highlight the social ills that the regime neglected.

While the older generation of Methodist clergy and community leaders had often become comfortable within the collaborationist framework that allowed them to exist, the younger generation quickly felt the regime's heavy hand. In 1972, one of these younger Methodists was expelled from secondary school, while another was fired from work, both of which brought home the negative impact of the state's meddling in church affairs.¹⁰ In May 1973, as the term of the Methodist Church's superintendents was set to expire and new elections became necessary, notably at a time when the church was seeing a younger generation become more vocal and active, collaborationist leaders in the church bowed to the State Office of Church Affairs' request that any future general meetings of the Methodist community receive approval from the Department to go ahead, with a proposal to amend the church's by-laws to this effect.¹¹ The proposal, the ratification of which was ultimately delayed, led to internal division within the Church

8 Ottilia Solt, "A hetvenes évek budapesti szegényei" (The poor of 1970's Budapest), *Magyar Füzetek*, issue 2, (1978): 38. http://www.rev.hu/rev/images/content/magyar_fuzetek/02/magyarfuzetek02_soltottilia.pdf.

9 Ágnes Diósi, "A cigányság ügye a demokratikus ellenzék történetében" (The case of the Gypsy community in the history of the democratic opposition), *Esély*, no. 06 (1999): 88. http://www.esely.org/kiadvanyok/1999_6/aciganysagugye.pdf.

10 "A 12 metodista lelkész nyilatkozatának háttere" (The background to the statement from the 12 Methodist ministers), *Magyar Füzetek*, Issue 2 (1978): 109. http://www.rev.hu/rev/images/content/magyar_fuzetek/02/magyarfuzetek02_12metodista.pdf.

11 The charge of forging documents had to do with the fact that authorities removed their occupation as clergy from their IDs, but the accused, as they continued to serve the faithful, decided to restore this title. "A 12 metodista lelkész nyilatkozatának háttere," 111.

and a leadership vacuum that made it easier for authorities to pursue the more outspoken, younger generation of Methodists. Among these was not only Gábor Iványi, but his father Tibor as well. Beginning in 1973, Iványi had a short-lived career as an assistant pastor within the Methodist congregation. In 1974, however, he joined other clergy and laity who had been ejected from, or left, the church, gathering instead his own community of believers. Of 19 pastors within the Methodist church, 12 were removed from their positions.

More concrete forms of persecution against the Methodists began in 1975, when three pastors in Budapest were charged with illegal assembly and forging documents, including a more senior member of the Budapest clergy, Ilona Vadászi, as well as two other pastors in the eastern Hungarian town of Nyíregyháza. All were convicted and received suspended sentences.¹² In 1975 the Budapest 6th District Police Department summoned Iványi to report to the police station, where he faced a charge of “unlawful avoidance of work,” was searched and temporarily detained. His identification documents still listed his occupation as serving as an assistant pastor, but by then he was no longer permitted to fulfill this role. Those leaders of the Methodist Church who were amenable to collaboration with the regime planned to formally strip him of his position, but Iványi refused to cooperate with this process. Iványi and others were accused of “reactionary” behavior, of attempting to undermine the “modus vivendi” between state and church and of doing the bidding of “imperialist circles.”¹³ Charged with illegal assembly in 1977, Iványi received a 10-month suspended jail sentence.

In August 1977, a prayer house in the Budapest suburb of Kispest belonging to the Methodists for decades was sold by collaborationist church leaders, in order to make way for a warehouse. Despite police action to vacate and secure the building, a group of Methodist faithful and clergy, including Iványi, continued to gather illegally in front of the structure. Concurrently in August 1977, police in the eastern Hungarian city of Szeged evicted a Methodist minister and his family, sparking a demonstration from the Methodist faithful who sang religious songs in solidarity and protest. The position of outspoken Methodists was clear, and at times they shared this in letters and appeals written personally to János Kádár. They wanted not only freedom to practice their religion, but also freedom of conscience and using prescient language, as they expressed concern about becoming “victims of the détente between church and state.”¹⁴

12. “A 12 metodista lelkész nyilatkozatának háttere,” 112.

13. Gábor Iványi, “1975,” *Beszélő*, June 7, 1998. <http://beszelo.c3.hu/98/06/07ivany.htm>.

14. “A 12 metodista lelkész nyilatkozatának háttere,” 114.

This example of communist persecution of the church stood in contrast to the narrative increasingly taking hold in the West of Hungary's relatively "soft" Goulash communism and the fact that Christians and Jews were permitted to practice their religion with relative freedom. While Hungary was considerably more tolerant of faith communities than its eastern neighbor, Romania, the price of tolerance was acquiescence of clergy to the state, including in matters of internal ecclesial governance. This was a narrative that helped the administration of President Jimmy Carter prepare for the return to Hungary of the Crown of St. Stephen on January 6, 1978, which the Americans had kept ever since the end of World War Two, and had guarded in the U.S. Bullion Depository in Kentucky. The decision to return the Crown was mired in controversy, as anti-communists perceived it as legitimizing Hungary's communist regime and dishonoring the victims of persecution, while some saw it as a reward for Kádár's relative liberalism and an opportunity to improve foreign relations.¹⁵ During the controversy in 1977, one American letter writer contacted her local paper and made explicit reference to Iványi's arrest. "We promised to keep that crown until Hungary was once again free of communism. Hungary is so free that last September 24 three Methodist ministers, Ilona Vadászi, Gábor Iványi and Gábor Draskóczy were arrested by communist secret police for conducting clandestine church services."¹⁶ While some viewed the return of the crown as legitimizing a regime that continued to persecute church leaders like Iványi, others argued passionately that although it may on the surface "remind Hungarians that today they are obliged to pay their due to Caesar, they owe ultimate allegiance to, and are protected by a higher authority."¹⁷

In 1981, the MET received formal recognition as a church by the State Office, but the faith community was barred from referring to itself as Methodist. As such, the fledgling church, led by Tibor Iványi, adopted a name that allowed it to be abbreviated in such a way that members could still explicitly identify with their Methodist roots. This formal recognition represented a degree of compromise on both the side of the church and the state. A small handful of smaller churches were operating informally, outside the supervision of the Council of Free Churches (Szabadegyházak Tanácsa – SZET), the body affiliated with the

15 For a good example of the press debate in the US on the return of St. Stephen's Crown, see: "St. Stephen's Crown Not Ours to Dispose Of" by Smith Hempstone, followed by readers' responses in the *Democrat and Chronicle*, November 15, 1977, pg. 6A.

16 Mrs. L.J.F. "Crown of St. Stephen Should Remain in U.S," *Waukesha Daily Freeman*, December 10, 1977, 6.

17 Arpad Kadarkay, "Crown Is Important Symbol to Hungarians of Lost Past," *The Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 1978, appearing in *Star-Gazette* (NY), 4.

State Office of Churches that played a supervisory role. Initially, the regime promoted a dialogue between the Methodist Church and the breakaway group, and the state's preference would have been reconciliation between the two. When these talks failed, the MET was afforded recognition, but also had to accept the authority of the state.¹⁸

While the Kádár regime was worried about faith communities that had stubbornly remained outside its orbit, and in the last 10 years of the one-party state's existence appeared willing to engage in some compromise, they faced the same challenge with the fledgling political protest movements of the 1980s. Gábor Iványi stood at the intersection where marginalized faith communities and youthful political activists met. While the regime's hold was unravelling at the fringes, it was still willing to display force when dealing with dissident groups. While Iványi experienced this in the 70s, he also witnessed violent oppression in the 80s. One of the more iconic moments of such repression as the regime neared its demise came on March 15, 1986, when young Hungarians in Budapest defied the party state to commemorate the 1848 Hungarian Revolution with peaceful marches and protests that also called for freedom in the present day. The police responded by encircling the protesters and then beating many of them. In one case, they dragged a young man under Budapest's Chain Bridge, and beat him until he collapsed to the ground.¹⁹

When after the demise of the one-party state Iványi recalled the police's violent response in 1986, he framed the temporal and political in strikingly transcendental terms. As police engulfed the area around the Academy and the Chain Bridge, blocking protesters from leaving without going through the police gauntlet, years later Iványi recalled:

The protesters, tripping over each other, frantically make their way wherever they can go. In that moment, a small woman and a young boy turn back from

18 It is worth noting that the MET was not the only small Protestant community to receive state recognition as a church during this period, and with which the regime appeared willing to compromise. The Hungarian Nazarene community (Krisztusban Hívó Nazarénusok Gyülekezete), with roots in the Anabaptist tradition, received formal recognition as a church in 1977. The state required its members to complete compulsory military service, which applied to all Hungarian men, but without the obligation to bear arms. The new church agreed to the adoption of by-laws and internal rules that were acceptable to the state.

Zoltán Rajki, "A Kisegyházak és az 1947. évi XXXIII törvény," (The Small Churches and Law 33 of 1947), in *Egyházak és tolerancia Magyarországon* (Churches and tolerance in Hungary) (Budapest: Oktatási és Kulturális Minisztérium Egyházi Kapcsolatok Titkársága, 2008), 106. <https://mek.oszk.hu/06600/06620/06620.pdf>.

19 Gábor F. Havas, "Régi jó március tizenötödiké," (The good old March fifteenth's) *Beszélő*, Vol. 2, No. 10, 1990. <http://beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek/regi-jo-marcius-tizenotodikék>.

the last row. They hold each other by the hand, and in their free hand each has a tiny national flag and a flower on a fragile loop stick. They make their way back towards the clenched police batons. They walk hand-in-hand, as if they were on a pleasant stroll. The flower is like the staff of Moses. The closed formation, this faceless sea of hate, parts and they cross it with dry feet.²⁰

Iványi's reflection on the events of March 15, 1986 was tied to both the renewal that comes with spring, and also to Palm Sunday. In what was the largely secular milieu of Hungarian liberal intellectuals and youth mostly alienated from the institutional church, Iványi elevated the practice of chronicling contemporary events to the telling of parables and illuminated Scriptural narratives in a light that even those unschooled in the Church could see. Iványi's goal was perhaps less about making the narratives of the Judeo-Christian tradition relevant and more about demonstrating how these stories, and what they tell us about humankind's understanding of and relationship with God transcend time.

LIBERAL CHRISTIANITY AFTER THE CHANGE IN REGIME

The State Office of Church Affairs was suppressed by the ruling Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt – MSZMP) in 1988 when the representative of the party's Central Committee began initial negotiations with the Vatican on restoring Hungary's relationship with the Holy See, and rescinding the Hungarian state's requirement that it approve clergy appointments. The Central Committee did all of this without input from the State Office. In April 1989, six months before the declaration of the third Republic of Hungary, the State Office's leadership was removed and the department itself was disbanded two months later.²¹

One of Iványi's first addresses in parliament as a new parliamentarian on May 23, 1990 was to congratulate Fidesz, a small, youthful liberal party led by Viktor Orbán, a firebrand politician with staunchly anti-clerical views, for receiving the mansion across from Heroes' Square that had housed the State Office of Church Affairs as its new party headquarters. "I am genuinely happy that Fidesz now has as its base a location that once housed an organization with such an

²⁰ Gábor Iványi, "Máté" (Matthew), *Beszélő*, Vol. 5, No. 5., 3.

²¹ Krisztina Tóth, "Az egyházak és a rendszerváltás" (The Churches and regime change), Barankovics Alapítvány, <https://barankovics.hu/az-egyhzak-es-a-rendszervaltas/>

overcast past. I would like to visit with urgency—and this time with loud, deliberate steps—the building that has won back its dignity,” remarked Iványi.²² After giving a nod to Fidesz, a fellow liberal opposition party with ties to SZDSZ, Iványi raised concerns that the conservative government was avoiding a true separation of church and state, and was continuing to give the largest denominations privileges, while neglecting smaller, more marginalized faith communities. Iványi took issue with the government motto announced in parliament “in a free country a free church” as a way to avoid speaking in more explicit terms about a true separation of church and state, which meant that no ministry would take on aspects of the former responsibilities of the State Office of Church Affairs, and that no government oversight of faith communities would be attempted. Yet, when Iványi speaks of the separation of church and state, his primary concern is what he referred to as the “indispensable element of European liberal church politics that equality between churches is guaranteed.”²³ Iványi noted that this principle was never put into practice in Hungary, and that, even after the change in regime, the government’s use of terminology such as “churches and religious denominations” suggested an unequal treatment of faith communities, as did the fact that minority religious groups were not initially invited to attend the opening session of Hungary’s first free parliament.

On January 24, 1990, before Hungary’s first democratic multi-party election held that spring, Parliament approved legislation on the freedom of conscience and religion, declared the separation of church and state, prohibited the state from establishing a body or an office to direct or monitor faith communities, allowed for the public funding of church-administered educational and social-justice organizations and affirmed in the law’s preamble that:

The churches, denominations and religious communities in Hungary are of special importance in society, as they are a source of value and building community. In addition to their work in the field of spiritual life, they also play a significant role in the life of the country through their cultural, educational, social and health activities, and by fostering national awareness.²⁴

With the collapse of the one-party regime in Hungary and the first fully free multi-party elections in 1990, Iványi’s pastoral work continued with much

22 Sixth Session of Parliament, May 23, 1990, Debate on the Government’s Program, 231–32.

23 Sixth Session of Parliament, 232.

24 1990. évi IV. törvény a lelkiismereti és vallásszabadságról, valamint az egyházakról. Act 4/1990 on Freedom of Religion and Conscience, and Churches.

greater latitude, but in many ways focused on the two issues that had been driving forces in the preceding years, namely socio-economic justice and advocacy for a separation of church and state that would give small faith communities that did not enjoy the privileges of large ones more breathing room. The dominant Catholic and Christian Reformed Churches were deeply intertwined with Hungary's sense of national identity in a way that sometimes created a minimum suspicion and a degree of intolerance for smaller faith communities. Most often, Christian symbols were appropriated by nationalist conservative movements. Nevertheless, the particular nature of the post-1990 Hungarian state's relationship with officially recognized churches also meant that the MET, along with other small faith communities, was the recipient of ongoing state benefits and funding, both for the faith community itself and to partially fund their social justice initiatives, including schools, homeless shelters, soup kitchens, and street outreach. The 1990 Act on Freedom of Religion, Conscience and Churches stipulated that churches that establish and administer these institutions and programs are eligible to receive a level of public funding equivalent to that provided to state-run organizations with a similar mandate.²⁵

Equally significant to the relationship of churches with the Hungarian state was the 1991 act resolving the status of former church properties that had been forcibly nationalized after 1948, without any compensation paid to faith communities. A year after the election of Hungary's first democratic, multi-party parliament, with the conservative Hungarian Democratic Forum – Smallholder – Christian Democrat coalition in power, the language of the legislation around re-establishing the rights and privileges of churches changed to include the new discourse of the times. In the preamble, the act spoke of the “exclusive nature of the materialistic and atheist worldview,” which drastically limited the ability of faith communities to engage with society.²⁶ The process of returning thousands of properties to churches was an arduous one.

In the 90s, the process of establishing faith communities and having these recognized by the state as official “churches” was liberalized, making it quite easy for new churches to form and reap financial rewards. This included the ability of Hungarian taxpayers to divert 1% of their taxes to a church or charity of their choice, as well as the opportunity for fledgling faith communities to establish, with relative ease, schools, healthcare or poverty relief organizations, and collect state funding for these activities. Some groups took advantage of these al-

²⁵ Ibid., 19. § (1).

²⁶ 1991. évi XXXII. törvény a volt egyházi ingatlanok tulajdoni helyzetének rendezéséről

lowances and established churches that were little more than businesses. On the other hand, the MET made use of these new tools offered by the state to better live out the social gospel. Although always a small faith community, the MET developed a disproportionately large network of socio-economic and cultural institutions, and much of this was made possible by state funding, often more generous than that received by secular non-governmental organizations engaged in similar poverty relief and social work.²⁷ Established in 1989, the MET's social justice wing became known as the Oltalom Charity Society, and served to coordinate and oversee the various poverty-relief initiatives.

His community remained intact and offered a meaningful experience to liberally minded thinkers, thanks to both Iványi's keen ability to reconcile liberalism with Christianity, even though on some contentious social issues—particularly in the case of abortion, where he supported restrictions—his viewpoints would diverge from many in liberal circles. Iványi was not bound as much by party discipline as others in the SZDSZ, and he was never a card-carrying member of the party, even though he occupied a seat in this caucus. Still, his thoughtful engagement with social justice issues from a theological perspective made him both a credible and a unique voice in this political community. Iványi argued that both the Creation narrative in the Book of Genesis, and the Ten Commandments, showed God to have been, in essence, a liberal. God is open to dialogue with his Creation, humankind has freedom of choice and the Creator proclaims the protection of all parts of Creation, however great or small.²⁸ In Iványi's exegesis, both Moses and Jonas argued with God, as the Creator allowed for this. We see from Scripture that dialogue and debate are woven into the fabric of Creation, and in the political sphere, liberals embrace that diversity of views.²⁹

It is not surprising that Iványi felt compelled to explain liberalism's compatibility with religious faith. The first democratically elected government of Prime Minister József Antall, the conservative coalition led by the Hungarian Democratic Forum (Magyar Demokrata Fórum – MDF), appropriated Christianity in many explicit ways, but perhaps most notably by using direct quotes from the Our Father prayer on its campaign posters, specifically the terms “Your Kingdom Come” and “Your Will Be Done.” Iványi's position as both clergyman and

27 György Kerényi, “A kis birodalom harca a naggyal: Iványi Gábor vs. Orbán Viktor” (The small empire's battle with the large one: Gábor Iványi vs. Viktor Orbán), *Szabad Európa*, February 26, 2021, <https://www.szabadeuropa.hu/a/a-kis-birodalom-harca-a-naggyal-ivanyi-gabor-vs-orban-viktor/31121587.html>

28 Lajos Nagy, “Az Isten is szabadelvű volt” (God was a liberal too), 24 Óra, October 29, 1991, 5.

29 Nagy, “Az Isten is szabadelvű volt”, 5.

a liberal parliamentarian meant that the diversity of the Christian experience could appear on the national stage. At the same time, Iványi also found himself explaining the compatibility of the two roles, especially in light of his community's commitment to the separation of church and state, and an end to the state's meddling in church affairs. When asked in 1991 about the tension of the two "hats" that he wore, Iványi shared:

I think that by the nature of the position, a pastor already does work that involves representation. The pastor represents his faithful before God and he also represents them within a community, and before third parties too. So, the pastor must possess empathy and patience. If a pastor takes seriously his vocation, then he is able to work along these lines as a parliamentarian too. I feel that we find ourselves at a historic crossroads, and so I had to accept this challenge—indeed, as a challenge from God. I think that, in some small way, the entire country has become my parish.³⁰

The SZDSZ's connection with faith was real and tangible. Iványi was not the only clergyman to find a home in the SZDSZ. One of his close colleagues was Rabbi Tamás Raj, who expanded on the view that Iványi had long held concerning the relationship between church and state, as well religious faith and liberalism. Echoing Iványi, Raj suggested that "the true believer must be a liberal" as the first commandment is the "law of freedom," whereas the last is the "sanctity of property," requiring believers to respect the freedoms and properties, including the intellectual rights, of others.³¹ On the matter of church and state relations, Raj and Iványi shared a very similar viewpoint. Raj suggested that "it's not the state that needs to be saved from the church, but rather that the church was to be freed from the state's leash," and that one way to do this was for the state to begin returning to churches properties that the prior regime had confiscated.

A PROPHETIC CHURCH

One of the paradoxes of Iványi's Methodist community is that while its leader occupied a place very much at the center of national political discourse for much

³⁰ János Lengyel, "Hit, Liberalizmus, Szabadság," (Faith, liberalism and freedom), *Somogyi Hírlap*, July 23, 1991, 3.

³¹ Lengyel, "Hit, Liberalizmus, Szabadság," 3.

of the post-1989 period, and had privileged access to the press, his ministry continually took him to the furthest margins of society, which sometimes happened to be in the heart of Budapest. In Iványi's 1997 anthology on homelessness, he shares the story of presiding over the indigent burial of a man called Mr. Pados. The only people to attend the interment of the ashes were the toilet attendant from the Kálvin tér metro station in inner city Budapest, the dishwasher from the local bar at the corner of Teleki Square, in the capital's disadvantaged 8th District, and two cemetery employees. Mr. Pados' homeless widow wanted very much to attend, but became heavily intoxicated and slept on a public bus as it travelled towards the terminal while her husband's urn was being buried.³² Iványi recited a Scripture verse often shared during funerals, notably John 14:2, in which Jesus speaks to his disciples of how his Father's house has many rooms, and how he is going there to prepare a dwelling place for each. In Iványi's ministry among the homeless, where the only people to remember the deceased are the attendants of public restrooms—the lowest paid laborers themselves who worked next to where the homeless lived and slept on scattered blankets—a Gospel message that speaks of Christ preparing a safe home for each person resonates in a particularly powerful way.

What underpins Iványi's ministry is a Scriptural, rather than secular understanding of love. In this sense love is an action, and it is generally unsentimental. In Iványi's words:

According to Jesus' profession of faith, love is not an emotion, nor is it the search for earth-shattering ideas, followed by their theoretical development. Love is the proper recognition of a given situation, followed by an immediate and the fullest possible response on our part, in which (and this is what the apostles found most difficult to learn) it is utterly irrelevant as to what social, cultural or other demographic group the person in need happens to belong.³³

In a philosophical outlook that builds on the concept of the wounded healer as shared by Father Henri Nouwen,³⁴ and indeed at the precise time when Iványi was just beginning his ministry and feeling the full weight of an authoritarian regime, the Hungarian Methodist pastor emphasized that ministry to the marginalized is a reciprocal experience of giving and receiving. The giver must be lib-

³² Gábor Iványi, *Hajléktalanok* (The homeless) (Budapest: Sík Kiadó, 1997), 272.

³³ Iványi, *Hajléktalanok*, 272.

³⁴ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979).

erated from the “enchantment of material goods,” and one way to do this is to invite a close proximity with the other, following in the footsteps of the Parable of the Good Samaritan or indeed a doubting Thomas, who is invited to touch the wounds of the resurrected Jesus. At its core, Iványi embraces what is often referred to in progressive Christian circles as radical hospitality, which transforms and renews both the giver and receiver.³⁵ Building on the Parable of the Lost Sheep, Iványi believes that to find true value in life, “one must take a deep descent, knowing that it is worth it to give up everything for the person who is lost. This is the vantage point that drives the good shepherd to make the striking decision to leave his flock, in order to find the one that is lost.”³⁶

When during the Kádár regime Iványi was removed from the Methodist Church due to pressure from the Department of Church Affairs and faced imprisonment, he had his own personal experience of homelessness, after being stripped of his clergy residence. Iványi, his wife and their three small children roamed from one temporary abode to another, relying on the goodwill of others. Iványi experienced a type of metanoia through his homelessness, seeing a side of the Bible that his mind had not previously seen, and learning that perhaps “God thought from the very beginning that at different times one or the other ought to be forced to accept the help and solidarity of others.”³⁷

Following the collapse of the one-party state in 1989–90, nearly all of the MET’s work within in the community has been among the most marginalized. Oltalom, the MET’s social justice charity, opened its iconic shelter in Budapest’s Dankó Street, located in the most disadvantaged part of the 8th District, in 1992. The location, which once housed a butcher shop, was dilapidated when Oltalom took it over and renovated the building, supporting between 100 to 130 homeless men every day and providing temporary shelter, including a separate section serving refugee men. Since 2000, at the invitation of Budapest’s municipal government, Oltalom has operated a separate shelter housing 64 women in the city center, as well as housing at a different location for families who had become homeless. Across all of the MET’s shelters and outreach programs, including a communal kitchen and a small hospital serving the homeless in Dankó Street, an estimated 500 marginalized people make use of these services each day.³⁸

35 Ilsep Ahn, “Economy of Invisible Debt and Ethics of Radical Hospitality – Toward a Paradigm Change of Hospitality from ‘Gift’ to ‘Forgiveness,’” *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol. 38, no. 2 (June 2010).

36 Iványi, *Hajléktalanok*, 269–70.

37 Iványi, *Hajléktalanok*, 264.

38 Júlia Láng, “A kenyér összeköt” (Bread connects us), *Galamus Csoport*, December 4, 2014, http://galamus.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=426035:a-kenyer-osszekot-426035&catid=9:vendegek&Itemid=134.

Separately from these shelter programs administered by Oltalom, the MET directly runs a network of schools, particularly in northeastern Hungary, serving mostly children from Roma families. All major churches in Hungary and smaller faith communities as well operate schools, and are able to collect state subsidies to do so. However, there is a striking difference between schools operated by more dominant denominations and those operated by the MET. While the larger churches also offer some outreach to Roma and to families living in abject poverty more generally, the country's system of state subsidized schools ultimately reinforces the ethnic segregation that already exists in the country's schooling system.³⁹ More affluent parents enroll their children in church-run schools that are ethnically homogeneous which, in rural and small-time Hungary, means that they do not include Roma children. In contrast, the MET's schools, particularly in northeastern Hungary, often serve only or primarily Roma children. Iványi shared the scale of systemic poverty in these regions when he noted that children are often hungriest on Monday mornings. They often had no food to eat at home between Friday afternoon and Monday morning, and so on Mondays, they all but get to fight for bread after arriving to school. This is especially true in the winter months, when it is not possible to pick berries or mushrooms from the forests.⁴⁰

As a church working on the margins of society, among some of the most neglected in Hungary, the MET found itself once again marginalized after 2011, when using its two-thirds majority in parliament, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Fidesz Party redefined the prerequisites for being considered a church in Hungary. The law strongly favored so-called "historic" churches and, in particular, entrenched the privilege of Hungary's Catholic and Christian Reformed churches. The new piece of legislation also made parliament the arbiter of what qualifies as a legitimate church and what does not. Both the Constitutional Court of Hungary, and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, found the law to be discriminatory, ruling in favor of 16 faith communities that had been stripped of their prior designation as churches, including the MET. The Deputy Prime Minister and leader of the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) consistently argued that the MET had no substantive membership, and therefore could not be considered a church. Iványi was able to increase his church's membership to 22,000, as Hungarians of many backgrounds who saw that he was un-

39 In 2020, an estimated 500 to 600 Hungarian municipalities had schools that exercised segregation. Source: Átlátszó's interview with Jenő Setét, May 19, 2020. <https://oktatas.atlatszo.hu/2020/05/19/legalabb-500-600-telepulesen-van-elkulonito-azaz-szegregalo-iskolai-gyakorlat-interju-setet-jenovel/>.

40 Lángh, "A kenyér összeköt."

der attack expressed their solidarity by registering with the MET. At the same time, Iványi argued that the church's status should not hinge first and foremost on a numbers game, as a church's role, extending to the time of the apostles, was to go out into the world on mission and plant the seeds and works of the Gospel wherever they do not yet exist.⁴¹

Iványi's community was borne out of a desire to live the social Gospel by travelling to the most neglected margins of society, making the disempowered visible to authorities and more privileged society. That message, mission, and at times a willingness to shake the status quo, may have been a jarring experience for those in power who were unaccustomed to a church approaching socio-cultural and socio-economic questions from an activist and progressive perspective, thereby contributing to the MET's state-sponsored persecution. Yet paradoxically, it was the post-1989 *modus vivendi* between church and state, anything but a classic separation of the two, that allowed the MET to establish an expansive network of largely state-funded institutions that also helped it to gain the church national name recognition, and expand its boundaries far beyond the small community of the faithful. Similarly, Iványi's position as a parliamentarian, initially sitting among the members of the country's largest opposition party, afforded him a place, a privilege, in terms of social capital and connections, even as he took his church to the peripheries of the country. Initially perceived as an anti-communist activist- and of significant appeal to another anti-communist liberal, the youthful Viktor Orbán, whose two eldest children the Methodist minister baptized, Iványi fell out of favor as quickly as political allegiances changed in a country amidst transition. Much of the MET's value, in addition to its social justice work, is the complexity and diversity it introduces to the Hungarian public discourse on the Christian faith, demonstrating that the Gospel can speak to and engage progressives, and that faithfully living its message of radical hospitality necessarily takes us to the margins.

⁴¹ Gábor Iványi, "A MET egyházi státusza és Semjén Zsolt" (The MET's status as a Church and Zsolt Semjén), https://metegyhaz.hu/files/Semjen—valasz_180803v.pdf.

Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, the Forgotten Anticommunist Dissident¹

Lavinia Stan

Under the dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaușescu (1965–1989), Romania could claim only a handful of dissidents who were courageous enough to openly and publicly defy the communist authorities. Of those outspoken few, only a handful were clergy members. By far the most important of them was Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa (1925–2006, known as Gheorghe Calciu), an Orthodox priest whose heart-felt *Seven Words for the Youth* landed him in prison for engaging in anti-communist dissidence. Besides incurring the wrath of the state authorities, Calciu was further persecuted by the hierarchs, fellow priests and theology teachers representing his Orthodox Church, which defrocked rather than protected him.

This chapter offers an in-depth analysis of Calciu's life, church service, and political activities in an effort to understand his dissidence during the late 1970s and the early 1980s. His open defiance of the regime came at a time when civic movements were emerging through other Soviet bloc countries, while the Romanian communist authorities claimed that the entire people stood united behind the dictator, a significant segment of the population genuinely endorsed national-communism, and the country's few dissidents were isolated by elaborate surveillance programs or forced to emigrate. Calciu's dissidence was made even more remarkable by the cold response and outward hostility he received from other Orthodox clergy. Hierarchs, priests and seminary teachers believed that collaboration with the atheistic regime was required to ensure the Church's survival as an institution and avoid the fate of its sister churches in other communist lands. Calciu's dissidence took the form of short sermons written as letters and addressed to theological seminary students that heavily drew on theological arguments, and used a plethora of religious terms

¹ As a historical theologian, Lucian Turcescu reviewed this chapter, once written, validated the data and its interpretation, and confirmed the content and structure of the argument. Work for this chapter was funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grant for which Turcescu was principal investigator, and Stan was co-investigator.

and symbols to encourage religiosity or criticize materialism and atheism. None of these reasons was strong enough for his fellow Orthodox clergy to stand by him.

To fully understand Calciu's impact on the lives of Romanians and of the Romanian Orthodox Church, this chapter positions his case within two emerging literatures. On the one hand, we try to position Calciu vis-à-vis the so-called "prison saints," a group of clergy and lay people who suffered (some even died) for the anticommunist cause before 1965, when Ceaușescu took control of Romania. The "prison saints" included notorious former members of the inter-war Iron Guard, a fascist organization blending anti-Semitism and Orthodoxism. On the other hand, the "prison saints" phenomenon intersected with the ongoing campaign to rehabilitate the "red Patriarch" Justinian Marina (1948–1977). This rehabilitation campaign has been pursued by both Patriarch Teoctist Arapasu (1986–2007) and his successor, Patriarch Daniel Ciobotea (in office since 2007), and picked up steam in 2017. The campaign promotes the view that even Patriarch Justinian's acceptance of atheistic policies was a calculated move against the regime, designed to guarantee the Church's survival. In so doing, this campaign has muddled the difference between clergy who resisted and clergy who collaborated with the communists.

Thus, our analysis looks at the way in which Calciu's communist-era dissidence has been remembered and celebrated by the Romanian Orthodox Church after 1989. We focus on a puzzle: Under Ceaușescu, Calciu was more daring and outspoken than many other Orthodox clergy, but after 1989 the Church treated him with less respect and less recognition than other Orthodox figures. Indeed, the Church has produced or endorsed numerous publications that celebrate Orthodox anti-communist dissidents. Among these documents are its response to the final report of the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of Communist Dictatorship in Romania, compilations of selected Securitate secret documents pertaining to the life of the Orthodox Church, hagiographic books dedicated to Orthodox priests and bishops who opposed dictatorship, as well as posters for the festivities, debates and conferences organized in 2017 to recast Patriarch Justinian and his collaborators as anticommunist dissidents. These materials, which we consulted before writing this chapter, present Calciu as a minor figure whose anticommunism was overshadowed by the "prison saints" and Patriarch Justinian. Our chapter proposes several reasons for the Church's reluctance to give Calciu the credit he deserves.²

² This analysis is based on research conducted as part of a larger project on collaboration/resistance of religious denominations in communist Romania. The project is generously funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

The chapter starts by tracing Calciu from Mahmudia and Tulcea to Bucharest and Washington, D.C., and draws on information he offered in interviews published after 1989. This biographical sketch emphasizes his two imprisonments (1948–1963 and 1979–1984), and briefly identifies the reasons for his targeting by the communist authorities. We then turn our attention to the concerted campaign through which, after 1989, the Orthodox Church has recast itself as a victim by downplaying its collaboration with the dictatorship. In so doing, we discuss the Church's celebration of the "prison saints" and of Patriarch Justinian as being key to Church efforts to rewrite its history. In the third section we contrast and compare these celebratory efforts to the Church's position toward Calciu, and then explain why the latter was relegated to a secondary role unbefitting his status as the most important Orthodox dissident under Ceaușescu's rule.

THE FIRST IMPRISONMENT

Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa was born on November 23, 1925 in Mahmudia, a small impoverished fishing village in southeastern Romania, which bordered on the Danube Delta and was home to Romanians, Russians, and other ethnic groups. He was one of 11 brothers and sisters raised by a pious mother who educated her children by attending mass, praying regularly, observing religious rituals, and quoting popular folk tales and moralizing Bible stories. The father had little influence in the family, and therefore was quasi-absent from Calciu's memoirs.

In 1940, the 15-year-old Calciu was sent to high school in Tulcea, a small town not far from Mahmudia (at the time, high school included grades 9 to 12). There, he made contact with *Frațiile de Cruce* (Cross Brotherhoods), youth organizations close to the fascist Iron Guard. This was not his first encounter with the Guard, as Mahmudia had its own Guard members who, in his own words, were "well-liked by everybody except the police and some others." The Guard members of Mahmudia "were serious people, Christians, engaged in the [life of the] church," whereas the Cross Brothers of Tulcea gained Calciu's admiration for their "honesty, correctness," "authority with students," and ability to act as "models" for the others.³ In Calciu's apologetic and hagiographic recollections,

3 *Viata parintelui Gheorghe Calciu dupa marturiile sale si ale altora* (Bucharest: Editura Christiana, 2007), 25.

the Brotherhood had educational not political objectives, was character-building and peaceful, but unjustly became the target of government persecution. In 1941–1942, after the Iron Guard rebellion, the leaders of the Tulcea Brotherhood were placed under arrest, but Calciu was not among them.⁴

As a high-school student in Tulcea, Calciu might have known little of the dark side of the Iron Guard and its youth organizations, but by the time he was interviewed in the late 1990s and the 2000s numerous testimonials and solid historical evidence had established the Guard as a paramilitary organization systematically engaged in violence, ideologically xenophobic, responsible for killings and terror campaigns. Calciu's interviews reflected little of this information, instead presenting the Guard and the Brotherhood as akin to a "revival of Romanian Orthodoxy" that "placed belief and self-sacrifice for *neam* above everything else."⁵ The violence perpetrated by the Guard was a serious mistake, conceded Calciu, but it was attributable to a handful of its members who used it only "marginally." That was why, in Calciu's view, "religiously and morally we [the Guard] made fewer mistakes in comparison to other groups."⁶ He did not name any of those other groups, but presumably the communists were among them.

In 1946, he enrolled in the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest out of a desire to "help the people," as the Brotherhood urged its members.⁷ By that time Romania's communist government had turned full-force against the Iron Guard. As a student, Calciu remained close to the Guard, and this is why on May 22, 1948 he was arrested, together with several thousand other Guard members and sympathizers. Later that year, he was sentenced to eight years in prison for undermining state security. In early 1949, hundreds of students who belonged to the Guard were sent to the Pitești prison, where they joined the Guard members arrested in 1941–1942 after the rebellion, as well as high-ranking left-wing politicians such as Lucretiu Patrascanu and Titel Petrescu. According to Calciu, close to 90% of all prisoners at Pitești were students, possibly Guard members or sympathizers.⁸ Together with his other cellmates, all Guard members, including Calciu, openly participated in many debates that augmented his "spiritual

4 A rebellion took place on January 21–23, 1941 in Bucharest in response to Marshall Ion Antonescu's decision to distance his government from the Iron Guard and cut down their privileges. The rebellion escalated into a pogrom in which Guard members killed 125 Jews and 30 soldiers. Following this violence, the Iron Guard was banned and 9,000 of its leaders and members were imprisoned. Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime, 1940–1944* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000).

5 *Viata parintelui Gheorghe Calciu*, 29–30. *Neam* refers to the ethnic nation.

6 *Viata parintelui Gheorghe Calciu*, 33.

7 *Viata parintelui Gheorghe Calciu*, 34.

8 *Viata parintelui Gheorghe Calciu*, 40–41.

education” and brought him even closer to the Guard. The situation changed drastically within months.

By Christmas 1949, a small group of Guard students led by Eugen Turcanu obtained permission from the prison guards to conduct the fearsome “reeducation experiment” aimed at torturing fellow right-wing inmates in order to extract personal information that could then be used by the communist secret police, and to reeducate inmates in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism (by forcing them to turn against their family, friends, religion, and everything else they held dear). Initially, Turcanu tortured inmates, some of whom were forced in turn to torture others. The level of pain was so elevated that some victims committed suicide during or after their imprisonment, and all of the tortured ones said and did whatever was asked of them. During the experiment, hundreds of victims became victimizers, all of them being reduced to the status of mere cogs of a long torture chain that was sustained for close to two years.⁹ While elsewhere he denied involvement as a reeducation torturer, in his interviews Calciu explained that he had no way to escape the terror, and he left the Pitești prison a broken man known as “the fallen angel with blue eyes.”¹⁰ In Pitești, he said, “I saw beatings and horrors, horrors suffered by others that saddened me and tormented me more than my own suffering,” “annihilated me and made me fall hard from my humanity.”¹¹ His ordeal continued in the Gherla prison, where he was transferred from Pitești in 1952, and where the experiment continued for several more months.

The prison guards, and the Securitate forces to which they belonged, encouraged and tolerated the Pitești experiment, but, once those crimes became known outside of the prison, the communist authorities ended the reeducation program and attempted to distance themselves from Turcanu and the torturers. In 1956, Turcanu and some of the other prisoners stood trial for their crimes, while some participants in the reeducation experiment were called to testify against them. In his testimonial, Calciu blamed the Securitate, not Turcanu and the Guard victims, for the terror that accompanied reeducation.¹² His accusations did not change the outcome of the trial, which was ab initio meant to lay the entire responsibility for the experiment on the inmates and to absolve the Securi-

9 On the Pitești experiment, see Virgil Ierunca, *Pitești* (Madrid: Limite, 1981); Dumitru Bordeianu, *Mărturisiri din mlaștina disperării. (Cele văzute, trăite și suferite la Pitești și la Gherla)*, two volumes (Bucharest: Gama, 1995); and Mircea Stănescu, *Reeducare în România comunistă*, three volumes (Iasi: Polirom, 2010 and 2012).

10 *Viata parintelui Gheorghe Calciu*, 57.

11 *Viata parintelui Gheorghe Calciu*, 143.

12 *Viata parintelui Gheorghe Calciu*, 59.

tate, and the communist regime for which it worked, of any wrongdoing. Turcanu was sentenced to death, whereas Calciu and other Guard members were found guilty and sent to Casimcea in July 1956. Casimcea consisted of five special cells in Jilava, an underground prison located not far from Bucharest. With no fresh air or light, Casimcea amounted to an extermination site where most of its 16 inmates lost their lives.

Three years later, Calciu was moved to the Aiud prison, from where he was released on the 15 or 16 of May 1963. His refusal to engage in “self-criticism,” a ritual that would have led to the acceptance of communist ideals and the rejection of his faith, resulted in his transfer to Zarca, a special section of the Aiud prison where prisoners were kept in solitary confinement and denied proper food and medical assistance. Faith in God, ardent prayers, theological discussions with fellow inmates (including lectures by renowned theologian Dumitru Staniloae), as well as the moral support of fellow inmates and various priests he met in prison cells sustained Calciu during those years. After his release, Calciu was assigned a forced domicile in Viișoara, a desolate village in the Bărăgan plain (in southern Romania), whose residents were mostly former political prisoners forced to work in the nearby agricultural cooperative. He was permitted to leave that place in August 1964 with the last group of political prisoners released by Ceaușescu, the country’s new leader. Ceaușescu made a point of breaking off with the Stalinist practices of his predecessor, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, by granting a general amnesty to all political prisoners.¹³ Despite such decisions, by the early 1970s Ceaușescu was as keen as Gheorghiu-Dej to suppress opposition and dissent. Calciu became a victim of Ceaușescu when he started to criticize his megalomaniac policy choices.

At the time he left the Bărăgan, Calciu was 38 years old, having spent 16 years in prison or forced domicile. His initial arrest had been prompted by his association with the Guard, not his personal involvement in any specific crimes. True, the Iron Guard had committed a string of atrocities, anti-Semitic pogroms and assassinations of prominent politicians who dared to criticize it. Calciu joined the Guard’s cadet branch, the Cross Brotherhood, at age 15 and then continued to attend their lectures, camps, and other events, supporting their blend of nationalism and Orthodoxy. Despite the efforts of the Securitate to taint his reputation, no shred of evidence ever linked Calciu personally to the violence perpetrated by the Guard. Moreover, he was never one of the Guard or Brotherhood leaders who could sway members. His 1956 sentencing for involvement in the

¹³ *Viata parintelui Gheorghe Calciu*, 74–76.

Pitești experiment was equally flawed from a legal viewpoint, both because the extreme level of terror rendered him unable to refuse participation, and because the main culprit (the Securitate) was never brought to justice for encouraging and tolerating the experiment.¹⁴ At the time of his release Calciu had a high-school diploma, but his status as a former prisoner prevented him from reentering the Faculty of Medicine to continue his university studies. Medicine was not on his mind, as Calciu had other plans.

THE SECOND IMPRISONMENT

Prison had turned Calciu into a deeply religious man. Despite graduating with a university degree and securing a job as a teacher of French after his release, Calciu was unhappy because he had promised God he would become a priest if he ever survived his prison ordeal “healthy in mind and body.”¹⁵ After being refused entry into the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Bucharest, he requested the help of Patriarch Justinian, who had personally aided other former political prisoners: the Patriarch “sent priests [who had just been] released from prison to other eparchies, if their initial ones were unavailable. He reappointed professors, such as Dumitru Staniloae shortly after his release.”¹⁶ At the Patriarch’s suggestion, Calciu resubmitted his entry request file, but omitted his tainted past. The strategy allowed him to become a theology student, while also earning a living as a teacher. Unfortunately, weeks before his graduation, the Securitate verified the background of all fourth-year students. Calciu’s past conviction was revealed, and as a result he was expelled from the Faculty of Theology. The intervention of Patriarch Justinian allowed Calciu to graduate, become an Orthodox priest, and land a teaching position at the Orthodox Seminary in Bucharest in 1972. At the same time, the Securitate placed him under surveillance in 1971, and introduced hidden microphones into his home in 1978.¹⁷

¹⁴ According to documents presented to the court at his 1956 trial, Calciu joined the Guard in 1945 and remained a member until his arrest in 1948. Although during that trial some former participants in the Pitești experiment identified him as a torturer and one of the leaders of the Iron Guard prisoners, the defense councilor doubted the veracity of such testimonials. “Note de concluziunile apararii inculpatului, Calciu Gheorghe, in sedinta din 6 mai 1957, dosar nr. 1730/[1]1956 – Col. de fond al Tribunalului reg. II-a militara,” cited in Mircea Stănescu, ed., *Documentele reeducării* (Bacău: Vicovia, 2013), vol. 1, 459–464.

¹⁵ *Viata parintelui Gheorghe Calciu*, 77.

¹⁶ *Viata parintelui Gheorghe Calciu*, 77.

¹⁷ *Viata parintelui Gheorghe Calciu*, 78–19 and 214.

Founded in 1948 as a School for Church Singers, the Seminary allowed the Romanian Orthodox Church to train religious singers at a time when religious activities were greatly restricted by the self-avowed atheistic regime. In 1955, the School was restructured to resemble the pre-communist Seminary that offered theological training to prospective priests and deacons. At the end of the first two years, students qualified as church singers. They could then continue their studies for three more years in the same building, becoming Seminary graduates ready to be ordained into the priesthood. The Seminary, as other religious establishments in communist Romania, was closely monitored by the Securitate, but it was run by ordained priests who also served as teachers and administrators. In 1959, four Seminary teachers were arrested, and the Securitate confiscated a number of “subversive” anticommunist materials found in classrooms and dormitories. Religious persecution abated after 1964, the end of Gheorghiu-Dej’s rule. Afterwards, as the Seminary website contends, “daily activities in the Seminary assumed a measure of normalcy, though the authorities’ antireligious vigilance remained present.”¹⁸ Ironically, the official history of the Seminary posted on the internet makes no mention of Calciu, his arrest, or his denunciation by other Seminary teachers. His faith-based defiance of the communist regime was thus written off in official Seminary documents.

Two events emboldened Calciu to speak out against atheism, materialism, and communism in his *Seven Words for Youth*.¹⁹ First, the 1977 earthquake destroyed many buildings in Bucharest, including part of the Seminary dormitories. Calciu helped to save the students trapped in the collapsed ruins. Still, two students died in the rubble. The slow and inadequate response of the authorities and Seminary administrators brought Calciu and the students closer together. Second, authorities took advantage of the earthquake destruction not only to rebuild the affected buildings, but also to destroy historical churches in downtown Bucharest. Calciu was greatly affected by the destruction of places of worship by the atheistic regime, and the silence and inaction of the Orthodox Church hierarchy, which at the time was led by Patriarch Iustin Moisescu (1977–1986), a former Securitate collaborator.²⁰ That silence became unbearable to Calciu, once Ceaușescu unveiled plans to move the headquarters of the Pa-

18 “Istoricul Seminarului Teologic,” no date, available at <https://old.seminarortodoxbucuresti.ro/istoric/seminar>.

19 *Viata parintelui Gheorghe Calciu*, 79–81, and 170–171.

20 Comisia Prezidentiala pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din Romania, *Raport final* (Bucharest, 2006), 466, available at: https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/article/RAPORT%20FINAL_%20CADCR.pdf.

triarchate out of the capital, and the Seminary outside the downtown area. He hence resolved to voice his concerns in seven sermons for students delivered every Wednesday during the Great Lent of 1979.

The audience of his first sermon, read on March 8, consisted of dozens of Seminary students whom he advised. Over time, they were joined by students from the University of Bucharest and the Polytechnic University, reaching close to 400 youth. The sermons made the Seminary teachers and Church leaders fearful that authorities would retaliate against the Church, the clergy, and the faithful. The Department of Religious Affairs, the Securitate-controlled government agency that monitored religious life in communist Romania, unsuccessfully asked Calciu to cease his sermons, then pressured his colleagues to fire him, and when that did not work took steps to prevent students from attending the sermons. At first, Calciu spoke to the students in the Seminary chapel, but on the fourth Wednesday they were locked out of the chapel, so discussions took place in the schoolyard. The next week, the gates of the Seminary compound and the dormitory doors were locked, but students jumped over the fence and out of the windows to listen to Calciu. By the seventh week, the doors and gates were again left open, and the sermon was delivered unhindered in the chapel in front of an even larger audience.²¹

The sermons were written in an openly direct and highly engaged manner that sought to provoke discussion and self-reflection. Calciu talked to the young student as “my dear friend,” questioning the antireligious policies of the Romanian communist regime, providing examples and quotes from the Bible, as well as encouraging the student to assert his freedom and explore spirituality. His dear friend was “noble and pure because the atheistic education failed to cloud your inner self,” but at the same time was “suffocated by materialism” because in school “you were told about class hatred, political hatred, hatred and only hatred.”²² More importantly, Calciu repeatedly stressed that in communist Romania the youth was not free because “your liberty is the liberty of constraint” and “the understanding of necessity, which is always imposed on you.”²³

²¹ *Viata parintelui Gheorghe Calciu*, 83.

²² Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, “Cuvânt rostit în Biserica Radu-Vodă, în a doua miercuri a Postului Mare, la 22 martie 1978”; Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, “Cuvânt rostit în Biserica Radu-Vodă, în cea de-a patra miercuri a Postului Mare, la 5 aprilie 1978”; and Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, “Cuvânt rostit în Biserica Radu-Vodă, în miercuria din Săptămâna brânzei la 8 martie 1978,” all available at: <https://ortodoxiatinerilor.ro/tinerii-societate/7-cuvinte-tineri-gheorghe-calcui>.

²³ Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, “Cuvânt rostit în Biserica Radu-Vodă, în prima miercuri din Postul Mare, la 15 martie 1978,” available at: <https://ortodoxiatinerilor.ro/tinerii-societate/7-cuvinte-tineri-gheorghe-calcui>.

For the communist authorities, “to be faithful is almost [equivalent to] treason,” but “authoritarianism enslaves, whereas faith liberates” and therefore the youth “should not be afraid to declare your faith openly, to reject an atheistic ideology that seeks to break your soul, to openly affirm that our people have been Christian and Orthodox from the beginning.”²⁴

While the youth was approached with gentleness and encouraged to discover faith patiently, official policies were openly criticized. Calciu identified atheistic education as the root cause of the lack of individual liberty: “What do you know about Jesus? If all you know is from school, then you missed the only Truth that could set you free. What do you know about Church? If you know only of Giordano Bruno, about whom you heard in atheistic-scientific classes, then you were inhumanely deprived of the brightness of spirituality, the guarantee of your liberty as a human being.”²⁵ The atheists were closeted believers, who turned to God and prayer in times of crisis, such as the 1977 earthquake, and shared an incurable metaphysical fear of death.²⁶ The destruction of the Enei church was another topic to which Calciu returned time and again, enraged that in its stead the authorities planned a bar, as though the Orthodox Church was not a living church, but instead an outdated museum item.²⁷ “We cannot affirm the continuity of Romanian spirituality and national tradition by destroying the churches that embody them. We cannot celebrate our *voievozi* [princes] by knocking down what they erected, or Mihai Viteazul by demolishing Enei in a single night!” He continued by saying that “without churches, without monasteries, we are unbelievers,” and encouraged the youth “to rebuild the Enei church in our soul, living and eternal, until the day she will stand again on its initial site.”²⁸

Under pressure from the State Secretariat and the Securitate to keep quiet and discontinue the sermons, Calciu sought the support of Bishop Roman, under whose jurisdiction the Seminary was placed at the time. Instead of being offered a helpful hand, however, Calciu was fired from the Seminary and denied

²⁴ Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, “Cuvânt rostit în Biserica Radu-Vodă, în cea de-a treia miercuri din Postul Mare, la 29 martie 1978,” available at: <https://ortodoxiatinerilor.ro/tinerii-societate/7-cuvinte-tineri-gheorghe-calcui>.

²⁵ Calciu-Dumitreasa, “Cuvânt rostit în Biserica Radu-Vodă, în miercuria din Săptămâna brânzei la 8 martie 1978.”

²⁶ Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, “Cuvânt rostit în cea de-a cincea miercuri a Postului Mare, la 12 aprilie 1978, pe treptele Bisericii Radu-Vodă, deoarece directorul V. Micle a încuiat biserica și pe elevi în dormitoare, pentru a împiedica rostirea prediciei,” available at: <https://ortodoxiatinerilor.ro/tinerii-societate/7-cuvinte-tineri-gheorghe-calcui>.

²⁷ Calciu-Dumitreasa, “Cuvânt rostit în Biserica Radu-Vodă, în cea de-a patra miercuri a Postului Mare, la 5 aprilie 1978.”

²⁸ Calciu-Dumitreasa, “Cuvânt rostit în Biserica Radu-Vodă, în prima miercuri din Postul Mare, la 15 martie 1978.”

Church protection.²⁹ In his interviews, Calciu recounted the relentless persecution campaign that the Seminary director, some teaching advisers, and a Faculty of Orthodox Theology confessor launched against him and the students who remained by his side. In a letter addressed to Keston College in the United Kingdom, five Seminary priests denounced Calciu as an “unbalanced” man and a “megalomaniac” who tried “to poison the souls of seminarians with fascist ideas.”³⁰ The threats, the insinuations, the calumnies, the lies—all of them isolated Calciu within the Seminary and the Church, turning him into a pariah who could be abandoned without regret. He bitterly remarked that, “Who better than the Securitate could address the spiritual and confessional problems of the Church? They were the country’s confessors, they had methods envied even by the theologians who were investigating me.”³¹

Weeks after his dismissal from the seminary on March 10, 1979 Calciu was arrested for inciting students against the regime. The journal he had kept since 1977 was confiscated.³² Some of the students who had been close to him were expelled, others were forced to denounce him, and still others left the Seminary in protest over the way he and they were treated by the Securitate agents and the Church leaders. Initially condemned to death, his sentence was commuted to 10 years in prison after his sermons were published in English in the West and broadcast by Radio Free Europe. At the appeal hearing the defense councilor turned against Calciu, attesting yet again that Ceaușescu’s courts were never meant to deliver justice in an impartial way, and that anti-regime dissent and opposition were to be harshly punished.³³

Once the verdict was pronounced, Calciu was sent for three months to the psychiatric ward of the Jilava prison. He then spent time at the Securitate dungeons in Bucharest and the Aiud prison, where he survived an extermination program of cold, hunger, and torture. His appalling prison conditions became a matter of concern outside Romania, and showed Ceaușescu’s disrespect for human rights to the international community. Word of his suffering turned Calciu into a “modern-day confessor of the faith” and “one of the most prophetic voices in the contemporary Orthodox world.”³⁴ Calciu was released on August 20, 1984 as

²⁹ *Viata parintelui Gheorghe Calciu*, 179–90.

³⁰ Cited in Alexander Webster, “Prophecy and Propaganda in the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate,” *East European Quarterly*, 25:4 (1992), 522.

³¹ *Viata parintelui Gheorghe Calciu*, 196.

³² Patricia Gonzalez Aldea, “The Identity of Ceausescu’s Communist Regime and Its Image in the West,” *Revista de Stiinte Politice*, nos. 33–34 (2012): 19.

³³ *Viata parintelui Gheorghe Calciu*, 93.

³⁴ Webster, “Prophecy and Propaganda,” 521.

a result of numerous appeals lodged by Western politicians and governments. In October of that year, the Orthodox Church defrocked him, thereby finally cutting ties with a devoted priest who had defended Christian values against atheism and materialism at a time when Church leaders had remained silent. The decision read that Calciu “has excluded himself from our Church” by “opposing the state authorities in word and deed and joining groups that undermine the authority of the state.”³⁵ The punishment he received from the authorities (prison) and from the Church (defrocking) did little to silence Calciu. In November 1984, he wrote to Pope John Paul II to ask for help: “We are not the official church. We are not visited by the brotherly ecumenical delegations. Our brothers do not bend over our injuries. Their ears do not hear the denigrating words uttered against us.”³⁶ For the following year, Calciu and his family were placed under strict surveillance by the Securitate, and barred from meeting others. In August 1985, the family emigrated to the United States.

In the United States, Calciu was re-ordained by a Romanian-American bishop to serve as a priest in Alexandria, Virginia. He led a modest life, and often worked as a construction worker in order to gain a livelihood. He continued to advocate for religious freedom and human rights, help Romanian refugees in the West, publicize the plight of persecuted believers, and collaborate with Radio Free Europe. In turn, the Securitate continued to smear him in the hope that he would lose the support of his Western collaborators and supporters. A secret document dated from 1978 showed the Securitate’s plan to “select one or two Jews to compromise Cucu-Gelu [Calciu] abroad and determine Radio Free Europe to refuse to help him. These individuals should inform Jewish organizations in the West about the fascist past of the target and ask Noel Bernard [head of the Romanian section of Radio Free Europe] no longer to offer his support.”³⁷ The plan was unsuccessful, and Calciu was never isolated in the West. To make amends for its past mistakes, the Romanian Orthodox Church revoked the defrocking decision sometime after 1989. Calciu visited Romania several times after the collapse of the communist regime. After his death in 2006 in the United States, Calciu was buried in Moldova at the Petru Voda monastery, whose spiritual leader was monk Iustin Parvu, a former political prisoner and Guard leader.

³⁵ *Viata parintelui Gheorghe Calciu*, 233.

³⁶ Webster, “Prophecy and Propaganda,” 521.

³⁷ Arhivele Consiliului National de Studiu al Arhivelor Securitatii (CNSAS), file I 155 109, vol. V, 206, cited in *Viata parintelui Gheorghe Calciu*, 216.

CHURCH EFFORTS TO REEXAMINE ITS COMMUNIST PAST

Since 1989, the Romanian Orthodox Church has made substantial efforts to present itself primarily (if not exclusively) as a victim of the communist regime on the grounds that it faced restrictive policies that damaged it institutionally, while its clergy and faithful individually suffered imprisonment, discrimination, and harassment for their faith. This discourse imbued the Holy Synod communique of 1990, the 2009 official rebuttal through which the Orthodox Church countered the final report of the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of Communist Dictatorship in Romania, the books and studies edited by Church-affiliated historians, and the individual positions taken by Church members on the internet.³⁸ The victim was the Church; the victimizer was without fail someone else—the regime and its leaders, the state agencies and their bureaucratic representatives, the prison guards. Punished by both the communist state and the Orthodox Church, Calciu hardly fits the official narrative of his own Church. His case unveils an inconvenient truth that renders null the Church's claims to victimhood, painting the Church as an institution, and its Ceaușescu-era leaders as victimizers devoid of moral compass.

The Church's narrative of victimhood, of course, has left out the less flattering moments in the life of the Orthodox Church, and its morally questionable choices in communist times. The Church benefited financially and socially from the communist decision to disband the Greek Catholic Church and transfer some of its property to the Orthodox in 1948. Countless hierarchs and priests acted as the eyes and ears of the Securitate, betraying the secret of the confessional. As late as the 1980s, the Orthodox leaders chose to defrock not only Calciu, but also five other priests who denounced "the Church's prostitution with the communist power, and its hierarchy's involvement with Ceaușescu's politics"³⁹ in a letter sent to Patriarch Iustin in 1981. Some Church leaders were active promoters of Ceaușescu's anti-religious policies, while Metropolitan Antonie Plămădeală even defended the demolition of churches by claiming that "city ur-

³⁸ On the attitudes of the Romanian Orthodox Church towards its communist past, see Lucian Turcescu and Lavinia Stan, "Church Collaboration and Resistance under Communism Revisited: The Case of Patriarch Justinian Marina (1948-1977)," *Eurostudia* 10:1 (2015), 75–103 available at <https://www.erudit.org/fr/revues/euro/2015-v10-n1-euro02010/1033883ar/>; and Cristian Vasile "Coming to Terms with the Controversial Past of the Orthodox Church," in Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu, eds. *Justice, Memory and Redress in Romania: New Insights* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2017), 235–56.

³⁹ Cited in Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu, "The Romanian Orthodox Church and Post-Communist Democratization," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 52:8 (2000): 1470.

banization and modernization is a general and inevitable phenomenon [which] unfortunately requires, as everywhere, sacrifices.”⁴⁰ Churches in other countries provided refuge for anti-regime opponents, but the Orthodox Church in Romania offered little protection to critics from inside and outside its ranks. In terms of their number and span over time, the instances of collaboration with, and obedience to the communist authorities, were numerous enough to qualify the Church as a collaborator, and instances of resistance against the dictatorship the exception.⁴¹ Indeed, as Lecomte argued, “The harm of communism in Romania would have been smaller if the Romanian Orthodox Church had not been the most committed to the communist power of the entire socialist bloc.”⁴²

The first document to explain away the Church’s collaboration with the communist regime was the Holy Synod communique of 1990, which differentiated the public discourse of the Orthodox Church under communism from its private actions. It argued that the Church was obliged to praise the regime publicly, but its deeds were heroically confrontational, championing the interests of the Church and its members in private conversations with state officials. The Holy Synod asked for forgiveness for “our too great fear to openly oppose the dictatorship” and its past adulatory and false statements, while suggesting that was “the price we needed to pay for the Church to meet its most basic needs.” The communique further argued that at the time the Church had to choose between “a lesser evil, this forced, artificial, insincere way of speaking, and a greater evil, the refusal of the atheistic state to recognize priests, allow for the functioning of theological schools, publish religious and theological books, repair churches and monasteries, build new places of worship, promote international ecumenism, and publish [a significant body of] literature through which we maintained awareness of the Christian origins of Romanian culture and Romanian continuity [with its past].”⁴³ The communique said nothing about cases like Calciu’s, in which the Church had turned against its own members to quash their anti-communist opposition and freedom of religion, belief and thought. The commu-

40 As quoted in Stan and Turcescu, “The Romanian Orthodox Church and Post-Communist Democratization,” 1470.

41 Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu, *Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Romania* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

42 Bernard Lecomte, *Cómo el Papa venció al comunismo. La verdad triunfa siempre* (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, 1992), 291, cited in Gonzalez Aldea, “The Identity of Ceausescu’s Communist Regime,” 20.

43 Comunicatul Sf. Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 3-4 ianuarie 1990, cited in George-Eugen Enache, Adrian-Nicolae Petcu, Ionut Alexandru Tudorie and Paul Brusanowski, “Biserica Ortodoxă Română în anii regimului comunist. Observații pe marginea capitolului dedicat cultelor din Raportul final al Comisiei prezidențiale pentru analiza dictaturii comuniste din România,” *Studii Teologice*, 5:2 (April-June 2009), 15.

nique set the tone for all of the Orthodox Church's subsequent efforts to white-wash its communist wrongdoings.

Such a half-hearted and insincere apology was deemed sufficient by the Church leaders, who since 1989 have sponsored a long series of publications that downplay the Church's collaboration in order to emphasize its resistance to and persecution by the communist regime. These books have listed the communist antireligious campaigns, the surveillance program that controlled the Church and collected information on its members, the numerous secret documents the Securitate kept on the Church, the impositions and intimidation of Church leaders by the State Secretariat, and the loss of church property confiscated by the authorities.⁴⁴ These writings generally uphold the position of the 1990 communique, and argue that the lies, compromises, and betrayal were unfortunate but necessary for the very survival of the Orthodox Church in times of great terror. Calciu is hardly mentioned in these books, which dedicate entire chapters to other clergy who were imprisoned, or monks and nuns forced to exit monasteries. This literature, published during the 1990s and the 2000s, shows the continuity in Church efforts to underscore resistance and conceal collaboration. It conceals the fact that the Church made compromises, both with the Stalinist regime of Gheorghiu-Dej (which dismantled the Greek Catholic Church, arrested many clergy, and seriously restricted religious life), and the regime of Ceaușescu (who allowed for some religious liberalization and imprisoned far fewer clergy). Similarly, it ignores the reasons why official non-recognition (the very fate that the Orthodox Church sought to avoid by bending to communist whims) had not annihilated the Greek Catholic Church, which survived underground until 1990 when it was officially re-legalized.

44 Among others, Ioan Dură, *Monahismul românesc în anii 1948-1989. Mărturii ale românilor și considerații privitoare la acestea* (Bucharest: Harisma, 1994); Constantin Aioanei and Cristian Troncotă, "Contra 'armatei negre a călugărilor și călugărițelor,'" *Magazin istoric*, 30:1 (1996), 3-5 and 30:2 (1996), 17-21; Constantin Aioanei and Frusinica Moraru, "Biserica Ortodoxă Română în luptă cu 'diavolul roșu,'" *Altarul Banatului*, 12:1-3 (2001): 89-99; Cristina Păiușan and Radu Ciuceanu, eds., *The Romanian Orthodox Church under The Communist Regime, vol. 1: 1945-1958* (Bucharest: INST, 2001); Mihai Săsăujan, "Măsuri represive comuniste împotriva preoților chiaburi în anii 1950-1952," *Arca*, nos. 10-12 (2001): 178-200; Adrian Nicolae Petcu, "Biserica Ortodoxă Română în timpul patriarhului Justinian," *Dosarele istoriei*, 8:11 (2002): 30-42; Adrian Petcu, "Translări și demolări: biserici bucareștene, victime ale sistematizării ceaușiste," *Dosarele istoriei*, 8:10 (2003), 39-46; George Enache, *Orthodoxie și putere politică în România contemporană* (Bucharest: Nemira, 2005); A. Lemeni, Fl. Frunză and V. Dima, eds., *Libertate religioasă în context românesc și European* (Bucharest: Ed. Bizantină, 2005); Adrian Petcu, ed., *Partidul, Securitatea și Culte. 1945-1989* (Bucharest: Nemira, 2005); *Martiri pentru Hristos din România în perioada regimului comunist* (Bucharest: Ed. Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al BOR, 2007); George Enache, *Orthodoxy, Liberalism and Totalitarianism in Modern and Contemporary Romania* (Targoviste: Cetatea de Scaun, 2016).

The same narrative was put forward in a counter-report published in 2009 in the official review of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Bucharest. Three years earlier, the Presidential Commission had detailed the collaboration of the Orthodox Church with the communist authorities in its Final Report, written from what the Orthodox Church considered to be a strictly atheist perspective. To counter the general assessment that “churches have made countless compromises with the totalitarian regime, moral, economic, ideological and occasionally doctrinal”⁴⁵ and to emphasize the persistent resistance of the Church to the dictatorial regime, the Church hastily commissioned four young historians to draft a 100-page counter-report openly presented as the official position of the Church toward the past.⁴⁶ Most of the counter-report discussed church-state relations from the viewpoint of the state, with relatively little detail on the attitude of the Orthodox Church towards the state. In 30 pages, the document exonerated Patriarch Justinian of any wrongdoing to prove that his nickname, the Red Patriarch, erroneously brushed off his monumental help to the Church. According to the counter-report’s authors, Justinian did not openly defy the communist regime, as his ardent critic Bishop Nicolae Popovici thought best, but adopted a “push and pull” strategy that stood firm in its goal of preserving the Church but gave in to the authorities in cases of smaller importance. Justinian paradoxically engaged in a full-fledged resistance even when he accepted anti-religious policy, implemented communist orders, subjected monasteries to work programs that coincided with communist goals, and colluded with state authorities to persecute his critics within the Church.

More importantly, the counter-report pointed a finger at the Final Report for criticizing the Church leadership for the demolition of churches in Bucharest under Ceaușescu and the Church’s attitude toward Calciu. Again, no details were offered to clarify the ways in which Calciu’s defrocking by Church hierarchs and persecution by other Orthodox clergy failed to show the Church as subservient to the state. The counter-report claimed that secret documents from the Securitate archives suggested that Patriarch Iustin Moisescu verbally opposed Calciu’s defrocking, but the information neither refuted the collaboration theory (since Moisescu was not the only oppressor of Calciu) nor explained why the Church leaders withdrew protection shortly after Calciu got out of prison

45 Comisia Prezidentiala pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din Romania, *Raport final*, 438.

46 George-Eugen Enache, Adrian-Nicolae Petcu, Ionut Alexandru Tudorie and Paul Brusanowski, “Biserica Ortodoxă Română în anii regimului comunist. Observații pe marginea capitolului dedicat cultelor din Raportul final al Comisiei prezidențiale pentru analiza dictaturii comuniste din România,” *Studii Teologice*, 5:2 (2009): 7–104.

in 1984 (since earlier Patriarch Justinian had protected former political prisoners, and defrocking was a Church, not state, decision). The counter-report was at a loss for words in the case of Calciu, whose ordeal it acknowledged in only three sentences. As the other Church documents discussed earlier, the counter-report diminished Calciu's importance and failed to adequately position him in the communist history of the Romanian Orthodox Church. According to the counter-report, the church hierarchs opposed the regime by accepting the demolition of churches in downtown Bucharest, because by so doing they prevented the demolition program from being extended to other areas of the capital.⁴⁷ The explanation was surprising, as there is no evidence that Ceausescu ever planned to destroy places of worship outside some specific areas in downtown Bucharest where he erected his megalomaniac House of the People, and the apartment blocks bordering the Victory of Socialism Boulevard.

The extent to which Calciu represented the Achille's heel of Orthodox efforts to honestly reevaluate the communist past was fully unveiled in 2017. At the initiative of Patriarch Daniel Ciobotea, the Romanian Orthodox Church declared 2017 the year for the commemoration of Patriarch Justinian Marina and of the communist-era "defenders of Orthodoxy," thus placing the controversial Patriarch Marina, who had worked with the regime, in the same category with clergy, monks, and nuns who had opposed the regime and suffered in prison, or had been killed as a result of their actions. The celebration seemed befitting, since 2017 marked the 40th anniversary of the death of the Red Patriarch, but it also blurred the lines between collaborators and resisters. Numerous conferences, workshops, and sermons were organized in churches in Romania and abroad, while celebratory publications, pamphlets, and glossy calendars were printed and widely distributed. Historians close to the Church published studies and collections of historical documents meant to give a veneer of respectability to the official position that the communist authorities considered Patriarch Justinian a genuine enemy, whereas the large number of persecuted clergy proved that the Orthodox Church as an institution was the regime's victim.

These materials fall within two broad categories. First, many of them were produced by the Patriarchate, bishops, and priests to emphasize the larger-than-life stature of Patriarch Justinian and his courage in confronting the communists and championing Church interests. In their tone, the examples they use to illustrate the Red Patriarch's resistance and opposition, and that the interpretations of his words and deeds of these materials echo the 1990 communi-

47 Enache et al., "Biserica Ortodoxă Română," 99.

que, the 2009 counter-report and the hagiographic literature produced with the blessing of Patriarchs Teoctist and Daniel. The most suggestive for this first category, and the way it positions Calciu among the “defenders of Orthodoxy,” is the official poster that accompanied many of the celebratory articles published in the Patriarchate’s official newspaper, *Ziarul Lumina*.⁴⁸ The black-and-white poster had a larger photo of Patriarch Justinian at its center, surrounded by the smaller mugshots of 132 monks, nuns, priests, and bishops who suffered under communism. Ironically, the poster gathered clergy arrested by the Stalinist regime together with the Patriarch, who was said to have resisted by collaborating with the very authorities that imprisoned those clergy members. One needs patience to identify Calciu in the top left-hand section of the poster. The poster literally cut Calciu to size, listing him as one among many antiregime opponents belonging to the Orthodox Church, though his Ceaușescu-era dissidence was unique, his double imprisonment made him a special case, and his defrocking placed him in an even tinier group, as argued above. The importance of his defiance of communist antireligious policies is therefore almost lost, as though the very inclusion on the poster is recognition enough of Calciu, the defrocked-re-frocked priest.

Former Guard members—who joined the 2017 celebrations to whitewash the Guard, defend its anticommunism, celebrate former Guard members and their suffering, and recruit new members—produced a second strand of celebratory materials that were often imbued with pronounced nationalism. They focused on the victims of Gheorghiu-Dej, who spent long years in prison or were killed before 1964. Collectively, they are known as the “prison saints” (*sfinții inchișorilor*), a term first suggested by Orthodox monk Nicolae Steinhardt, another former political prisoner. This campaign excluded the Red Patriarch, loathed for his subservience to the atheistic regime and declaration that “Christ is the new man. The new man is the Soviet man. Therefore, Christ is a Soviet man!”⁴⁹ Instead, it focused on “Romanian martyrs in prison with Christ,” whose name, date of birth and death, occupation at the time of arrest, and length of imprisonment were posted on the internet.⁵⁰ While the above-mentioned official celebrations singled out clergy members as victims, these celebrations included ordi-

48 For example, Raluca Brodner, “Despre memoria martirajului românesc din timpul comunismului,” *Ziarul Lumina*, 19 March 2017, available at: <http://ziarullumina.ro/despre-memoria-martirajului-romanesc-din-timpul-comunismului-120909.html>.

49 Czesław Miłosz, quoted in Arthur Versluis, *The New Inquisitions: Heretic-Hunting and the Intellectual Origins of the Modern Totalitarianism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 11.

50 Two of the most comprehensive websites are <http://www.marturisitorii.ro> and <https://www.fericitici-prigoniti.net>.

nary believers who in some cases had been too young at the time of their arrest to claim a significant contribution to the life of the Church. Again, the campaign poster is suggestive. Patriarch Justinian's photo was replaced by Christ, surrounded by the mugshots of 35 martyrs, Calciu among them.⁵¹ As the official campaign, this campaign celebrated Calciu for his first imprisonment more than for his activity under Ceaușescu. In contrast to the official campaign, here his anticommunism was mostly reduced to his affiliation to the Iron Guard, whose most prominent members were among the celebrated victims.

CONCLUSION

Calciu's case remains to this day an inconvenient truth for the Romanian Orthodox Church. Since 1989, in its rush to recreate its communist past by selectively emphasizing resistance or persecution and concealing collaboration, the Orthodox Church has persistently paid attention to the clergy members who suffered at the hands of the communist authorities, and refused to acknowledge the wrongdoings of clergy who persecuted or spied on other clergy and faithful. The hope has been that by its sheer magnitude, the individual suffering of these martyrs will bestow a measure of credibility and legitimacy on a tainted Church leadership that included few who openly challenged the atheist regime. Calciu bears testimony to the shameful past of the Church because his anticommunist opposition was open, his belief in and dedication to God was genuine, and his persecution by both state and Church actors blatant and persistent. In the case of other "prison saints," their claim to victimhood was tempered by their involvement in the violence perpetrated by the inter-war Iron Guard. Not so in the case of Calciu, who unequivocally rejected violence. To acknowledge the uniqueness of Calciu's opposition to the regime, and persecution by it, would require that the Orthodox Church admit to its own mistake in defrocking, slandering, marginalizing, and throwing him and his family into a precarious life by dismissing him from his job at the seminary. While eager to point the finger at the communist state, the Orthodox Church has been unwilling to confess its own sins.

⁵¹ "Marturisitori," no date, <https://www.fericiticeiprigoniti.net/marturisitori-a>.

Global and Local in the Response of Orthodox Churches to the First Wave of the Coronavirus Pandemic

With a Special Focus on the Case of Bulgaria

Daniela Kalkandjieva

The COVID-19 pandemic derailed religious life throughout the world. Without an effective medical cure against the new virus, national governments embraced social distancing as the most effective means of curtailing its spread. Hence, they started imposing bans on public gatherings. In the case of faith congregations, however, the civil authorities adopted different approaches. Some governments ordered the local religious ministers to close their temples and prayer houses, while others tried to achieve the same through negotiations. At the same time, the response of religious ministers varied from country to country and faith to faith. Some agreed with the temporary interruption of public services for their faithful. As a result, many synagogues remained closed during the Purim festivities,¹ the annual Hajj to Mecca was cancelled,² and Pope Francis held the Easter mass without public attendance.³ However, other religious leaders refused to close the temples. For this purpose, they agreed to introduce various disinfection measures, and even to modify the traditional performance of certain rites and customs.

From this perspective, the chapter analyzes the developments in Eastern Orthodox Christianity at two levels: global and local. Correspondingly, the first part addresses the commonalities and differences in the responses of individual

¹ JTA Staff, "Jewish coronavirus updates: Catch up on the first month of Jewish COVID-19 news here," *Jewish Telegraph Agency*, March 5, 2020, updated April 20, 2020, <https://www.jta.org/2020/03/05/global/the-latest-jewish-coronavirus-updates-el-al-downsizes-services-move-online-and-more>.

² Usaid Siddiqui, "Epidemics, war have impacted Muslim worship throughout history," *Aljazeera*, May 13, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/epidemics-war-impacted-muslim-worship-history-200420210254391.html>.

³ Inés San Martín, "Pope to celebrate Holy Week without the presence of the faithful," *Le Crux*, March 14, 2020, <https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2020/03/pope-to-celebrate-holy-week-without-the-presence-of-the-faithful/>; "Pope and church leaders prepare for virtual Easter as lockdowns tighten worldwide," *The Guardian*, April 12, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/12/pope-and-church-leaders-prepare-for-virtual-easter-as-lockdowns-tighten-worldwide>.

Orthodox churches to the new challenge. Meanwhile, the focus of the second falls on the impact of the pandemic on the relations of a particular Orthodox church—the Bulgarian one, with society and the domestic state authorities. In short, the chapter aims to shed light on the different roles played by religion and politics in the encounter of Eastern Orthodoxy with the first wave of the pandemic, by drawing parallels between its global and local dimensions.

EASTERN ORTHODOXY AND THE PANDEMIC: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

The spread of the coronavirus overlapped with the Great Lent. In Eastern Orthodoxy, this is the period of the most strenuous annual fasting that starts on Clean Monday, and ends with the Easter celebration of the resurrection of Christ. For 49 days, the faithful should abstain from any animal products, and take part in all religious services. Nowadays, many believers are not able to observe the custom so strictly, but do it for shorter periods. In this regard, the fasting during the Passion Week is especially important, as those who have passed this trial are allowed to take communion on Holy Thursday when the Church commemorates the establishment of the sacrament of the Divine Eucharist at the Last Supper.⁴ For this reason, the religious services before and after Easter are the most attended in Orthodoxy. Christmas gathers a lesser number of churchgoers. To some extent, this peculiarity is predisposed by the use of two different calendar systems in contemporary Orthodox churches. Known as the old Julian style and the new Constantinople one, they split the faithful into two congregations during the celebration of the so-called fixed holidays like Christmas, but have no effect on the movable feasts associated with the resurrection of Christ.⁵ Thus, Easter is of enormous importance for the unity of Eastern Orthodoxy. From this perspective, the spread of the coronavirus infection during the Great Fast in 2020 presented a unique challenge for its adherents.

Two types of factors influenced the response of Eastern Orthodoxy to the pandemic. On the one hand, the reactions of Orthodox communities were de-

4 About the Eucharist on Holy Thursday, see: *Great and Holy Thursday*, the website of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, <https://www.goarch.org/holythursday>.

5 In 1923, as convoked by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the ecclesiastical council introduced the so-called New Revised Julian Calendar. In the subsequent years, it was adopted by some Orthodox churches, while others continued to observe the old Julian calendar. As a result, some Orthodox Christians celebrate Christmas on December 24, whereas others on January 7. Nevertheless, they are united on the Orthodox Easter. Only the Orthodox Finns make an exception, as their Church has embraced the Gregorian calendar after the establishment of the independent state of Finland (1918).

terminated by the health situation in their countries, and the anti-epidemic policies of the local civil authorities. In this regard, church hierarchy, clergy, and laity had two options: to assist the efforts of their state to fight the disease, or to become part of the problem. At the same time, the manner of the implementation of the anti-epidemic measures by national governments hid some threats to the freedom of religion. On the other hand, the response of Orthodox communities to the coronavirus crisis is also determined by religion-related factors. Functioning as an institutionally decentralized network of locally established ecclesiastical bodies, global Orthodoxy failed to provide a unified approach to the pandemic. Instead, each individual church leadership produced its own responses.

The Closure of Temples

As a rule, the Orthodox churches followed the call of the World Health Organization⁶ and the state authorities for social distancing as a primary tool for slowing down the spread of the virus. According to the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, the anti-epidemic measures pursue the common good for all human beings. Thus, they are not expected to harm the faith, but rather to rescue the lives of believers.⁷ Most Orthodox Church leaderships also admitted that the mass gathering of the faithful might present a potential threat to their health. For this reason, they undertook various sanitary measures and issued many encyclicals to inform their believers. In the countries where Eastern Orthodoxy is the majority religion, the church leaderships acted separately from the other religious ministers. In the meantime, the patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem, who represent religious minorities in Syria and Israel, respectively, did not issue individual statements, but instead did it together with the representatives of the other local Christian denominations.⁸ In turn, the Patriarch-

6 The WHO has addressed the risks for religious life during the pandemic on various occasions since the outbreak of the pandemic. On April 7, 2020, it issued a special document, entitled "Practical considerations and recommendations for religious leaders and faith-based communities in the context of COVID-19," whose text is retractable via https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/practical-considerations-and-recommendations-for-religious-leaders-and-faith-based-communities-in-the-context-of-covid-19?gclid=CjoKCQqAlsv_BRDtARIsAHMGVSYBZuhcncsAAkHZUDWsvEdSNdZESAKqlTslfpgrtdpk5OBv161Bg2qlaAg6sEALw_wcB.

7 "Patriarchate of Constantinople – Halt to All Orthodox Services Globally due to Coronavirus," *Diritto e Religione nelle Società Multiculturali/ Law and Religion in Multicultural Societies*, March 20, 2020, <https://diresom.net/2020/03/20/patriarchate-of-constantinople-halt-to-all-orthodox-church-services-globally-due-to-coronavirus/>.

8 Zlatina Ivanova, "Merki na pomestnite tsarkvi za ogranichavane razprostranienieto na koronavirusa" [An overview of the anti-epidemic measures taken by the local Orthodox Churches], *Dveri*, June 9, 2020, https://dveri.bg/component/com_content/Itemid,100521/catid,280/id,69662/view,article/.

ate of Alexandria contributed to the special fund set up by the Egyptian government to combat the disease.⁹

Furthermore, the cooperation of the Orthodox ecclesiastical leaderships with the state authorities in the fight against the epidemic led to some changes in religious life. In most countries, the churches had to interrupt their public religious services, but clergy continued to perform religious services behind the closed doors of temples. In such cases, many temples and monasteries started broadcasting their divine services via various electronic devices. Although this invention did not substitute for the physical partaking of Orthodox laymen in the Church's liturgical and sacramental life, it was spiritually beneficial for them. Some believers saw in it an opportunity to keep the Orthodox liturgical tradition alive, although in an extremely subdued manner.¹⁰ Another solution was found in Albania, where Eastern Orthodoxy is a minority religion: the local churches remained open, but only for private prayers.¹¹

At the same time, not all believers and priests were ready for such compromises, especially if they had to postpone the taking of communion until the relaxation of the epidemic situation.¹² While some adherents of Eastern Orthodoxy accepted it as "a necessary sacrifice for the good of the other,"¹³ others regarded it as a sign of weak faith, and even as apostasy. As a result, the anti-epidemic requirements confronted the faithful with the choice between their religious devotion and their civic responsibility to public health. In Greece and Cyprus, the decision of the central church authorities to close the churches temporarily incited the opposition of individual bishops, priests and laymen.¹⁴ For example, the Metropolitan of Kerkira (Corfu) served a liturgy on Palm Sunday in the presence of laymen, and gave them communion despite the legal ban on such activities.¹⁵ At the same time, when the epidemic started waning, the Greek

⁹ "The Patriarchate of Alexandria donated 200,000 Egyptian pounds against the coronavirus outbreak," Serbian Orthodox Church's website, April 8, 2020, http://www.spc.rs/eng/patriarchate_alexandria_donated_200000_egyptian_pounds_against_coronavirus_outbreak.

¹⁰ "Patriarchate of Constantinople – Halt to All Orthodox Services Globally due to Coronavirus."

¹¹ Ivanova, "Merki na pomestnite tsarkvi."

¹² Yiannis Baboulias, "Communion and the Coronavirus: COVID-19 triggers deep Orthodox divisions," *Balkan Insight*, April 27, 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/04/27/communion-and-the-coronavirus-covid-19-triggers-deep-orthodox-divisions/>.

¹³ Mark Roosien, "Fasting from Communion in a Pandemic," *Public Orthodoxy*, March 17, 2020, accessed January 2, 2021, <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2020/03/17/fasting-from-communion-in-a-pandemic/>.

¹⁴ Ivanova, "Merki na pomestnite tsarkvi."

¹⁵ "Case file against the Metropolitan of Corfu and faithful who attended the Palm Sunday," *Orthodox Times*, April 13, 2020, https://orthodoxtimes.com/case-file-against-metropolitan-of-corfu-and-faithful-who-attended-divine-liturgy-on-palm-sunday/?fbclid=IwAR1CQzERA_RO%E2%80%A6; "Metropolita Kerikira arestovali za prichastie vo vremya karantina" [The Metropolitan of Korfu was arrested because of the distribution of communion during quarantine], *Russkie Athiny* [Russian

Synod found an alternative to the public celebration of Easter. It was performed on May 26, right before the Ascension of Christ.¹⁶

The resistance of many Orthodox hierarchs, clerics, and faithful to the closure of their churches was also fueled by a temple-centered approach that neglected the broader understanding of Christianity as a religion that cannot be limited to the attendance of a liturgy. Such an identification of religiosity with church-going is particularly popular among the neophytes in the former communist states. To a high degree, it is a product of their recent historical experience when the atheist regimes impeded their access to religious services. At the same time, this approach led to a neglect of the forms of religious life outside the church's walls.¹⁷

Moreover, a few Orthodox churches refused to interrupt the regular performance of religious services, but agreed to introduce some sanitary measures. Their hierarchs instructed the priests and parochial boards to regularly disinfect the icons and other objects of veneration. They also obliged laymen to wear masks and keep a distance of two meters between themselves in the church. In addition, those believers who were sick or felt ill were requested to stay home, thereby preserving the health and lives of their co-believers. If needed, their parochial priest was obliged to visit them. Lastly, there was a group of radical ecclesiastical leaders who claimed that nobody could get infected in the Orthodox churches, as the sacraments had made them virus-free spaces.¹⁸

The Debate on the Communal Spoon

The physical distancing was not the main challenge faced by Orthodox communities during the pandemic. The use of a common spoon for the distribution of Holy Communion raised much more serious tensions among the adherents of this faith, because the sanitary measures prescribed by medical science clashed

Athens], April 13, 2020, <https://rua.gr/news/koronavirus/35549-mitropolita-kerkirkosgo-arestovali-za-prichastie-vo-vremya-karantina.html?fbclid=IwAR1wQcDovdtGIZAdnak465%E2%80%A6>.

16 "Pashalno bogoslužhenie shte bade otsluzhenno tazi vecher v hramovete na Gartsiya" [This evening the Easter liturgy will be celebrated in the temples in Greece], *Dveri*, May 26, 2020, https://dveri.bg/component/com_content/Itemid,100724/catid,19/id,69626/view/article/.

17 Sergey Chapnin, "Zakrytie khramov: Prichiny, znachnie, posledstviya" [The closure of temples: Reasons, meaning, aftermath], in *Sistemnye problemy Pravoslviya: Analiz, osmyslenie, poisk, resheniy* [Systematic Problems of Orthodoxy: Analysis, comprehension, search, solutions], ed. Sergey Chapnin (Moscow: Proekt "Sobornost," 2020), 28, 38.

18 "Bez promeni za bogoslužheniyata za Velikden zaradi koronavirusa" [The Easter Liturgy will not be changed despite the coronavirus, An interview with BOC's Metropolitan Gavriil of Lovech], *Bulgarian National Radio's Program "Horizont"*, March 10, 2020, <https://www.bnr.bg/horizont/post/101238771/bez-promeni-za-bogosluzheniyata-na-vazkresenie-zaradi-epidemiata>.

with Eastern Orthodoxy's teaching and its centuries-old traditions. The Orthodox conceive of the Divine Eucharist as "the quintessential mystery of the church, the mystery that constitutes the church and gathers together in one place the scattered people of God—inasmuch as the Eucharist was considered an icon and symbol of the *eschaton* in history."¹⁹ Therefore, the partaking in communion is not a merely symbolic act, but instead a transformative one. The communion-takers witness the existence of the Church as the Body of Christ and reassert their belonging to It in the present life and post-mortem. All this makes lay participation in the Divine Eucharist essential for the Church's unity. Thus, the very thought of abstention from communion is not only painful, but even tragic for the adherents of this branch of Christianity.

During the first wave of the pandemic, the form of the distribution of communion provoked passionate debates among the believers. In this regard, particular attention should be paid to Sergey Chapnin's observation that the participation of faithful in the Divine Eucharist cannot be limited to the taking of communion.²⁰ In parallel, many theologians pointed out that the distribution of the latter by the same spoon had not been set up by Christ himself or sanctioned by ecumenical councils, but is a historical development that appeared about a thousand years ago. As a result, the issue of the compatibility of the medical requirements for personal hygiene and the communion-related practices provoked a division among the Orthodox believers.

The one pole was presented by the rigorists.²¹ Firmly convinced that strong faith is the best cure against the coronavirus infection, they were ready to condemn any deviations from this rite as an apostasy. Their opponents were the moderate believers. Being open to the arguments of science, they placed an emphasis on the meaning of the sacrament, rather than on its form. In an attempt to find alternative solutions, these theologians referred to the teaching and history of the Orthodox Church. Some of them referred to the experience of hermits, who have not taken communion most of their lives, and advance the idea of temporary abstention from this sacrament.²² Others point to the ancient Christian

19 Pantelis Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy & Political Theology* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2012), 98.

20 Chapnin, "Internet translyatsiya menyaet predstavlenie o liturgii" [The internet transmission of the liturgy has been changing the perception of this religious service], in *Sistemnye problemy Pravoslviya*, 40.

21 The term "rigorists" is borrowed from Vassilios Makrides, "Orthodox Christian rigorism: Attempting to delineate a multifaceted phenomenon," *Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society*, 2, no. 2, (July 2016): 216–52, <https://doi.org/10.14220/ijrat.2016.2.2.216>.

22 In his sermon, held in the Moscow Cathedral of Christ the Savior on March 29, 2020, the Russian Patriarch Cyril reminded about St. Maria of Egypt, who spent has most of her life in the desert without taking communion. See "Patriarshiya propoved v Nedelyu 4-yu Velikogo posta posle liturgii v Khrame Khrista Spasitelya" [The Patriarch's Sermon delivered on the Fourth Week of the Great Lent

practices that did not involve the use of a common spoon.²³ In this way, despite its painful effect on the life of the Orthodox community, the pandemic opened up new horizons for theological reflection. On this point, Rev. John Chrysavgis raises the highly relevant question: “Why do we spend so much effort and time defining the incorruptibility of the Body and Blood of Christ, instead of defending the safety and well-being of the church as the Body and Blood of Christ?”²⁴

Besides, the response of Eastern Orthodoxy to the COVID-19 crisis has also been influenced by the organizational mode of this Christian denomination. As in the other hierarchically structured faith communities, decision-making is concentrated in the hands of a specific group of its members—the Orthodox hierarchs. They are not obliged to consult about their decisions with priests and laymen. Correspondingly, the Orthodox episcopate approaches all issues about the Divine Eucharist as its exclusive right. In this respect, all Orthodox hierarchs unanimously declared that the communion could not cause any disease. In his pastoral letter to the faithful, the Romanian Patriarch Daniel reminded his flock that, “the Holy Eucharist is not and can never be a source of sickness and death, but a source of new life in Christ, of forgiveness of sins, for the healing of the soul and the body.”²⁵ Similarly, the Greek hierarchs assured their flock that the Eucharist is “the medicine of immortality for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.”²⁶ The Russian Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk also made a statement that the transmission of any viruses via the communion is impossible.²⁷ However, this theological accord did not lead to the elaboration of a uni-

in the Christ the Savior Cathedral], the Moscow Patriarchate’s website, March 29, 2020, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5613859.html>.

- 23 See: John Chrysavgis, “The Value of Nothing: Lessons from COVID-19 from Silence and Stillness,” *Public Orthodoxy*, April 9, 2020, <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2020/04/09/the-value-of-nothing-lessons-from-covid-19-on-silence-and-stillness/?fbclid=IwAR3SPxpQ4H5Prn6-81ujqtO5eK%E2%80%A6>; Pia Sophia Chaudhari, “Depth Psychology and the Courage of St. Mary of Egypt,” *Public Orthodoxy*, March 31, 2020, <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2020/03/31/depth-psychology-and-courage-of-st-mary/>; Mark Roosien, “Fasting from Communion”; Will Cohen, “Coronavirus and Communion,” *Public Orthodoxy*, March 14, 2020, <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2020/03/14/coronavirus-and-communion/#more-6094>, etc.
- 24 Chrysavgis, “The Value of Nothing: Lessons from COVID-19 from Silence and Stillness.”
- 25 Aurelian Ifimiu, “Patriarch Daniel sends pastoral message to strengthen faith and Eucharistic communion,” the Romanian Orthodox Church’s website, February 28, 2020, <https://basilica.ro/en/patriarch-daniel-sends-pastoral-message-to-strengthen-faith-and-eucharistic-communion/>.
- 26 Ernica Martinelli, “The Greek Orthodox Church at the time of the SARS-CoV-2 epidemic,” *Diritto e Religione nelle Società Multiculturali/ Law and Religion in Multicultural Societies*, March 25, 2020, <https://diresom.net/2020/03/25/the-greek-orthodox-church-at-the-time-of-the-sars-cov-2-epidemic/>.
- 27 “Mitropolit Volokolamskiy Ilarion: Esli epidemiya koronavirusa kosnetsya stran kanonicheskogo prostranstva Russkoy Tserkvi, my budem prinimat’ mery dlya minimizatsii ugrozy zarazheniya” [Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk: If the coronavirus pandemic reached the canonical space of the Russian Church, we would undertake measures to minimize the threat of infection], the Moscow Patriarchate’s website, March 10, 2020, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5604795.html>.

fied solution, as the individual Orthodox church leaderships developed different approaches to how communion was to be distributed during the pandemic.

The Holy Synod of the Georgian Orthodox Church categorically refused to introduce any changes in the centuries-old custom.²⁸ Hence, the Georgians, who are among the most fervent churchgoers in the Orthodox world, used a common spoon for communion despite the epidemic. Quite different was the approach of the Romanian patriarchate. Its priests abroad were the first who introduced the distribution of communion by disposable spoons.²⁹ Once used by a worshiper, the spoon was discarded and a new one was used for the next faithful. In Romania, however, the Orthodox hierarchs insisted on the use of a common spoon. Indeed, they admitted that individual believers might be afraid of contamination, and allowed the use of personal utensils as an exception. Even so, the access to this option was not easy. The Romanian Holy Synod publicly declared the eschewal of the common spoon as a sign of weak faith.³⁰ It also obliged the respective believers to seek in advance the permission of their parochial priests, that is, the final decision was in the hands of clergy.³¹

No less intriguing was the approach of the Moscow patriarchate. Initially, its Holy Synod ordered a regular disinfection of the communal spoon after use by every believer.³² Nevertheless, this method turned to be ineffective for the elimination of the virus. Thus, a step further was made, and clerics were instructed to utilize disposable spoons for the distribution of communion.³³ In this way, the faithful were released from the dilemma over the communal spoon. The new method also prevented those who would opt for individual spoons of accusations of being weak in their faith. At the same time, the decision provoked sharp criticism among church “hardliners” (bishops, priests, monks, and laymen), who rejected the existence of any virus. According to Sergey Chapnin, this

²⁸ “The Georgian Orthodox Church refuses to change communion rites despite the COVID-19 concerns,” *New Europe*, March 27, 2020, <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/georgian-orthodox-church-refuses-to-change-communion-rites-despite-covid-19-concerns/>.

²⁹ Georges Ashkov (Ecumenical Patriarchate’s priest in France), “Praktiki prichashcheniya: ‘bogoslovie lozhki’” [Communal Practices: “Theology of spoon”], in *Sistemnye problemy Pravoslviya*, 31.

³⁰ Ifimiu, “Patriarch Daniel sends pastoral message to strengthen faith and Eucharistic communion.”

³¹ Iulian Dumitrașcu, “Patriarhia Română: Măsuri sanitare și spirituale în timp de epidemie” [The Romanian Patriarchate: Sanitary and Spiritual Measures in a Time of Epidemic], the Romanian Orthodox Church’s website, February 27, 2020, <https://basilica.ro/patriarhia-romana-masuri-sanitare-si-spirituale-in-timp-de-epidemie/>.

³² Ashkov, “Praktiki prichashcheniya: ‘bogoslovie lozhki,’” 31.

³³ “Instruktsiya nastoyatelyam prikhodov i podvoriy, igumenam i igumeniyam Russkoy Pravoslavnoy Tserkvi v svyazi s ugrozoy razprostraneniya koronavirusnoy infektsii” [Instruction to the chairs of parishes and deaneries, hegumens and abbesses in the Diocese of Moscow concerning the threat of the spread of the coronavirus infection], the Moscow Patriarchate’s website, March 17, 2020, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5608607.html>.

COVID dissidentism has become a quite broadly spread manifestation of Orthodox fundamentalism.³⁴ Among the most extreme reactions is that of Sergii Romanov, a monk from the region of Sverdlovsk, who rejected the existence of the pandemic and cursed everybody who was closing temples. In his view, neither the political powers nor the religious ones had such a right.³⁵ Meanwhile, disobedience to the instructions of the central church authorities resulted in a significant number of infected, sick and dead bishops, priests, monks, nuns, and students in the Church's seminaries and academies. Although there are no official data about the Church's victims, much reliable information appeared in Russian media.³⁶

In this regard, it is also important to point out that COVID dissident was widely supported by the bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church who were in charge of its autonomous structures in such Near Abroad countries with Orthodox majorities as Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova. Yet, these branches of the Moscow patriarchate did not follow its example, but continued to use common spoons for communion. COVID dissident became especially strong in the Moldovan Orthodox Church under Moscow's jurisdiction. Its Synod condemned in advance the future vaccine against COVID-19 as a tool which would be used by the anti-Christ "to put microchips in human bodies in order to control them using the 5G technology."³⁷ No less intriguing is the response of the autonomous Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow patriarchate to the coronavirus crisis. Initially, its episcopate turned a blind eye to the anti-epidemic requirements of the local state authorities. The hegumen of the Monastery of the Caves in Kiyv even encouraged the faithful to visit the monastery, to baptize their children and to take communion as before because he believed that no in-

³⁴ "Prazdnik neposlushaniya: Sergey Chapnin o tom kak patriarkh Kirill teryaet rychnagi upravleniya RPTs" [The feast of disobedience: Sergey Chapnin comments how Patriarch Kirill is losing control over the management levers of the Russian Church], *The Insider*, April 22, 2020, <https://theins.ru/opinions/215270>.

³⁵ Milena Faustova, "Russkoy tserkvi dosazhdaet ne tol'ko koronavirus, no i sektanstvo" [The Russian Church is bothered not only by the coronavirus, but also by sectarianism], *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, April 27, 2020, https://www.ng.ru/faith/2020-04-27/100_faith27042020.html.

³⁶ "It is impossible to receive any illness through communion. As a massive post-Easter COVID-19 outbreak spreads through the Russian Orthodox clergy, here's what high priests are and aren't doing to stop the disease," *Meduza*, May 4, 2020, <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2020/05/04/it-is-impossible-to-receive-any-illness-through-communion>; "V rossiyskikh tserkvyakh i monastyryakh massovoe zarazhenie COVID-19" [COVID-19 mass contagion in Russian churches and monasteries], *Meduza*, April 29, 2020, <https://meduza.io/feature/2020/04/29/v-rossiyskikh-tserkvyah-i-monastyryah-massovoe-zarazhenie-covid-19>.

³⁷ "Moldovan Orthodox Church says Bill Gates, 5G dangerous for mankind," *Interfax-Religion*, May 20, 2020, www.interfax-religion.com/print.php?act=news&cid=15654.

fection could take place in a temple.³⁸ However, when many monks and novices got sick, he admitted his fault.³⁹ In the meantime, the autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church accepted the anti-epidemic measures of the government from the very beginning with the argument that this was an act of care of the other, which is a duty of every Christian.⁴⁰

The dilemma on the communal liturgical spoon reached the Serbian Orthodox Church as well. It seems that the fear of contamination by the use of common utilities also found a place among its faithful. On this occasion, Vukašin Milićević, a priest and assistant professor in the Faculty of Orthodox Theology at the University of Belgrade, pointed to the Russian and Romanian examples, and suggested the temporary use of disposable spoons. He did this as a participant in the Serbian TV program "Utisak nedelje" (Weekly Impression). The church authorities immediately accused Fr. Vukašin of speaking publicly without their permission. He was soon forbidden to perform the liturgy for an unspecified time. The case provoked many Orthodox theologians throughout the world to sign an appeal to the Serbian patriarch to affirm the freedom of academic thought, but the action had no effect.⁴¹

Finally, the issue of the communal spoon did not bypass the Orthodox diaspora.⁴² It arose in the last century as a result of subsequent emigration waves from traditionally Orthodox lands. Most of its members settled in Western Europe and North America, but there are also a significant number of Orthodox believers in South America and Australia. Historically linked with different political formations (the Ottoman and the Russian empires, the Balkan nation-states and the Middle East), this diaspora is ethnically heterogeneous and

³⁸ "Postaviha Kievo-pechyorskata lavra pod karantina" [The Monastery of the Caves in Kyiv has been placed under quarantine], *Dveri*, April 7, 2020, https://dveri.bg/component/com_content/Itemid,100724/catid,19/id,69474/view,article/.

³⁹ Ilya Zhegulev, "Head of stricken Kiev Monastery says underestimated gravity of coronavirus," *Reuters*, April 10, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-ukraine-church/head-of-stricken-kiev-monastery-says-underestimated-gravity-of-coronavirus-idUSKCN21S14F>.

⁴⁰ "Rival Ukraine Churches clash over Easter lockdown rules," *Associated Press News*, April 16, 2020, <https://apnews.com/f6a611ae2035030477a3c340aa978745>.

⁴¹ "International Academic Theologians' Appeal to His Holiness Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church to Affirm the Freedom of Academic Thought," accessed January 2, 2021, https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSevLU_rAzKS8yIVyEI4Ceo83_BWwLx5W6oeE_IMNuqAaDw/view-form. The link to this document is also retractable from "On the Suppression of Academic Freedom: Orthodox Church of Serbia," *The Wheel*, May 3, 2020, <https://www.wheeljournal.com/blog/2020/5/3/on-suppression-of-academic-freedom-orthodox-church-of-serbia>.

⁴² *Public Orthodoxy* offers a comprehensive overview of the most burning issues about the Orthodox communion during the pandemic, which have been intensively discussed in the Orthodox diaspora. See Febe Armanios, "Coptic Orthodox Communion in the age of COVID-19," *Public Orthodoxy*, March 10, 2020, <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2020/03/10/coptic-orthodox-communion-in-the-age-of-covid-19/>; Cohen, "Coronavirus and communion"; Roosien, "Fasting from Communion in a Pandemic."

keeps strong relations with those Orthodox churches that share the same linguistic tradition. As a rule, the members of the Greek-speaking diaspora belong to the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople or that of the Orthodox churches in Greece and Cyprus and the Arab speaking under that of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, while those from Eastern Europe are affiliated with the corresponding national Orthodox churches—the Russian, the Serbian, the Romanian, the Bulgarian, and the Georgian. What unites all these communities is their adherence to Eastern Orthodoxy. From this perspective, the eruption of the coronavirus pandemic changed their priorities. Their behavior was determined by the health situation in the countries of their location. Under the new conditions, the common faith became a more important incentive for their reaction rather than their belonging to a specific church jurisdiction. In addition, the Orthodox clerics who were in charge of diaspora communities became more open to learning from the experience of other Christian denominations, that is, they became more ecumenical. For example, the Orthodox parishes in Italy followed the example of the local Catholic Church and closed their parishes, although some of them belonged to Orthodox churches, in which holy synods refused to interrupt the public religious services in their home countries.

At the same time, the ways of distribution of communion in the diaspora communities were also not always identical, even in the case of parishes under the same church jurisdiction. For example, the metropolitans of the Ecumenical Patriarchate responded differently to the ban of secular authorities on the use of a common spoon for communion. In particular, Metropolitan Arsenios, who serves as the patriarchate's Exarch for Austria and Hungary, introduced communion in accordance with the typicon of the ancient liturgy of St. James as a temporary solution.⁴³ In this case, the believers “received from the celebrant a portion of the consecrated Bread into their hands, and they communed directly from the chalice, exactly the way priests do today.”⁴⁴ In turn, Metropolitan Augustin, who is in charge of the German diocese of the same patriarchate, adopted a different approach. It envisions only churchmen as taking communion, while lay believers are merely present at the religious services.⁴⁵ Metropolitan Athenagoras of Belgium and the Exarch of the Netherlands and Lux-

43 “Austria: Holy Communion to be offered with the typikon of Divine Liturgy of St. James,” *Orthodox Times*, May 12, 2020, <https://orthodoxtimes.com/austria-holy-communion-to-be-offered-with-the-typikon-of-divine-liturgy-of-st-james/>.

44 Rev. Fr. Stylianos Muksuris, The Holy Spoon and Proper Hygiene, *Orthodox Research Institute*, [2020], http://www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org/articles/liturgics/muksuris_holy_spoon.html.

45 “Mitropolitat na Avstriya Arseniy vavede prichastyavane po china na Yakovata liturgiya” [Metropolitan Arsenios of Austria introduced communion according to the typicon of the Jacobite liturgy],

embourg did the same as well.⁴⁶ Subsequently, the Metropolitan of the Serbian Orthodox eparchy of Düsseldorf and all Germany abandoned the communal spoon, and started distributing the communion on a plate as individual portions. In contrast to Vukašin Milićević, however, he was only warned and not punished by the Serbian patriarchate.⁴⁷

As the epidemic situation in the world has been very dynamic and varies from country to country, it is reasonable to expect certain differences in the reactions of Orthodox churches. Still, their approaches to the Divine Eucharist demonstrated an unusual diversity. No less disturbing were the tensions on the communal liturgical spoon which emerged at a local and global level. These developments indicated a serious threat to the inner unity of the Orthodox world.⁴⁸ Therefore, on May 17, 2020, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew invited the primates of the other Orthodox churches to discuss the problem.⁴⁹ He pointed out that the decision made by many Orthodox churches temporarily to celebrate the liturgy without the faithful had been inspired by their Christian ethos of solidarity and care for the health of people. Nonetheless, in Bartholomew's view, the Church's obedience to secular authorities during the pandemic was not limitless. It could not be at the expense of the Divine Eucharist that is the essence and center of the Orthodox faith. On these grounds, he opened a theological discussion which, among other things, should outline the border between the religious devotion of Orthodox believers and their civic responsibility to public health in the twenty-first century.

EASTERN ORTHODOXY AND THE PANDEMIC: BULGARIAN PERSPECTIVES

The local encounter of Eastern Orthodoxy with the COVID-19 pandemic is discussed for the case of Bulgaria. The profile of this country is especially advantageous for such an analysis because it stands in for the states where this branch of

Dveri, May 16, 2020, https://dveri.bg/component/com_content/Itemid,100724/catid,19/id,69602/view,article/.

⁴⁶ Ashkov, "Praktiki prichashcheniya: 'bogoslavie lozhki,'" 32.

⁴⁷ Ashkov, "Praktiki prichashcheniya: 'bogoslavie lozhki,'" 33.

⁴⁸ Evangelos Sotiropoulos, "Exclusive: Holy Communion and the Coronavirus: Faith, Fear, and Fame in a Pandemic," *The Orthodox World*, June 14, 2020, <https://theorthodoxworld.com/exclusive-holy-communion-and-the-coronavirus-faith-fear-and-fame-in-a-pandemic/>.

⁴⁹ "Correspondence of the Ecumenical Patriarch with Primates of other local Orthodox Churches regarding the way of distribution of the Eucharist," the Ecumenical Patriarchate's website, June 2, 2020, <https://www.ecupatria.org/2020/06/02/correspondence-of-the-ecumenical-patriarch-with-primates-of-other-local-orthodox-churches-regarding-the-way-of-distribution-of-the-eucharist/>.

Christianity represents the majority religion.⁵⁰ Bulgaria also relates to the Eastern European countries whose modern history has been marked by a symbiosis of Eastern Orthodoxy with (ethno)nationalism. These features presuppose that the response of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to the coronavirus crisis played an essential role in shaping the attitude of society to the new challenge. Finally, Bulgaria represents the former communist states, the citizens of which are inclined to perceive any restrictions on religion as a return to the era of militant atheism.

The State Anti-epidemic Measures and the Reaction of Religious Leaderships

The first cases of the COVID-19 infection in Bulgaria were registered on March 8, 2020. Following the World Health Organization's recommendations, the national government adopted a policy of social distancing. In addition, the National Crisis Staff was set up with the task to monitor the epidemic situation, and to recommend sanitary procedures. The faith communities agreed with some of the anti-epidemic measures without discussion, but declined others as incompatible with their religious traditions. The paragraphs below summarize the reactions of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (BOC), the Grand Mufti's Office, the Episcopal Conference of the Catholic Church of Bulgaria, the Union of the United Evangelical Churches, the Armenian Apostolic Church in Bulgaria and the Central Consistory of Jews in Bulgaria.⁵¹

As a representative of the most numerous religious community in the country, the behavior of the BOC's leadership was of special importance. The first to react was Neofit, the Patriarch of Bulgaria and Metropolitan of Sofia. On March 10, he instructed the clergy and laity in his diocese to observe a physical distance during the church services.⁵² The priests were also obliged to keep their churches

⁵⁰ The 1992 Census registered 7,274,592 Orthodox Bulgarian citizens (or 85.7 %), while the one from 2001 reported some decline 6,552,751 (or 82.6%), probably caused by the increased post-Cold War economic emigration. The 2011 Census registered an abrupt decrease in Orthodox believers, as only 4,374,135 Bulgarian citizens (or 59.4%) defined themselves as Orthodox. A summary of the 2011 Census results is published by the National Statistical Institute of the Republic of Bulgaria at https://www.nsi.bg/census2011/PDOCS2/Census2011final_en.pdf.

⁵¹ According to the Directorate of Religious Denominations at the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria, there were 191 officially registered religious denominations in the country by April 31, 2020. See: <http://veroizpovedania.government.bg/data/docs/1571189255620.pdf>.

⁵² "Razporezhidane vav vrazka s epidemiologichnata obstanovka v stranata i opasnostta ot zarazyavane s koronavirus COVID-19" [Instruction on the epidemiological situation in the country and the danger of COVID-19 infection], issued by the Office of Metropolitan Neofit of Sofia on March 10, 2020. A scanned copy of the document is available on the website of the Diocese of Sofia: <https://mitropolia-sofia.org/index.php/извънредни-съобщения/3643-разпореждане-във-връзка-с-епидемиологичната-обстановка-в-страната-и-опасността-от-заразяване-коронавирус-covid-19>. Accessed January 2, 2021.

open and regularly disinfected. In parallel, the patriarch referred to the faithful who were felt to be sick, and asked them to stay and pray at home. In addition to these general sanitary measures, the document included theological guidelines. More specifically, Neofit stressed that communion could not transmit diseases because it is a cure for any spiritual and physical illness. Thus, he declared that the faithful should not abstain from partaking in the sacrament of Eucharist, and obliged priests to give communion to everybody who had been appropriately prepared for this step (that is, after fasting and confessing).

Furthermore, the Metropolitan of Sofia reminded the priests from his diocese that they were not allowed to decline such requests under the pretext of a fear of infection. If parishioners were sick, clerics were told to conduct the respective rites in their houses. As the corona crisis exploded at the beginning of Lent, churchgoers were invited to intensify their fasting and prayers. At the same time, Neofit made a concession by permitting laymen to show their respect to priests and bishops by making obeisance instead of kissing their wrists. On March 11, the patriarch invited his peers to follow his example.⁵³ Soon, the other diocesan hierarchs in Bulgaria issued their own instructions to their diocesan clergy and faithful.⁵⁴ In his encyclical, the Metropolitan of Ruse modified another custom that might endanger the health of people. He allowed believers to replace the traditional kissing of icons and other objects of veneration by making bows.⁵⁵

On March 13, the Bulgarian parliament voted for the introduction of a temporary state of emergency. On the grounds of this law, the Minister of Public Health issued an order about sanitary measures during the lockdown. In parallel, the Directorate of Religious Affairs appealed to the religious leaders to inform their faithful about the requirements.⁵⁶ In response, the various religious leader-

53 "Okrazhno pismo otnosno poyavata na noviya koronavirus i bogoslužebno-tsarkovniya zhivot" [Encyclical concerning the new coronavirus epidemic and the liturgical and religious activities], the BOC's website, March 11, 2020, <https://old.bg-patriarshia.bg/news.php?id=316006>.

54 Mitropolit Kipriyan: "Da obedinim dushite si v obshta molitva" [Metropolitan Kipriyan: "Let's unite our soul in a joint prayer"], *Dveri*, March 11, 2020, https://dveri.bg/component/com_content/Itemid,100723/catid,14/id,69324/view,article/; "Izjavlenie na Rusenskiya mitropolit Naum vav vrazka s epidemiyata ot koronavirus" [Statement by Metropolitan Naum of Ruse concerning the COVID-19 epidemic], *Pravoslavie.bg*, March 12, 2020, <https://www.pravoslavie.bg/България/изявление-на-русенския-митрополит-на/>; "Okrazhno pismo na Varnenskiya mitropolit Yoan vav vrazka s epidemiyata ot koronavirus" [Encyclical Letter by Metropolitan Yoan of Varna concerning the COVID-19 epidemic], *Pravoslavie.bg*, March 12, 2020, <https://www.pravoslavie.bg/България/окръжно-письмо-на-варненския-митропол/>.

55 "Izjavlenie na Rusenskiya mitropolit Naum vav vrazka s epidemiyata ot koronavirus."

56 The Directorate's appeal to the religious leaderships is retractable from its website: <http://veroizpovedania.government.bg/home>. Accessed January 2, 2021.

ships instructed their faithful on how to implement the measures in agreement with their faith. The Catholic and Armenian Church administrations closed their churches to laymen. Clerics continued to conduct the corresponding services behind closed doors, but transmitted them via social and electronic media. The two Jewish synagogues in Sofia and Plovdiv were also closed. Meanwhile, the adherents of Judaism were invited to celebrate Purim in their houses.⁵⁷

The Protestant denominations adopted a more relaxed approach,⁵⁸ as their churches remained open for individual prayers. Similarly, the Grand Mufti's Office cancelled the Friday collective prayers at mosques, and appealed to Muslims to pray at home.⁵⁹ Still, the opportunity for individual prayers in the mosques was preserved. Additionally, at the beginning of Ramadan, the Grand Mufti's administration referred to the faithful with a special statement justifying the proposed changes through references to the Quran and hadiths.⁶⁰ An intriguing feature of this document is the clarification that disinfection was mandatory, even when the respective solutions contained alcohol.

The state of emergency provoked some novelties in the position of the BOC's Holy Synod as well. One of them was the introduction of special prayers against the COVID-19 pandemic. Some metropolitans introduced additional sanitary measures in their dioceses (for example, the working hours of their administrations were reduced, local parochial educational centers were closed and free telephone lines for psychological support were open at the offices of some metropolitans). In parallel, the lockdown inspired another wave of synodal and diocesan encyclicals. Now they contained references to the Holy Bible, which is a novelty in the communication of the Bulgarian Holy Synod with its flock.⁶¹ In their statements, the Orthodox hierarchs underscored that the pandemic was not God's punishment, but advanced different interpretations: Gavriil of Lovech compared the situation with a fiery ordeal, while Yoan of Varna sought its roots in the secularization of the world.

⁵⁷ According to the 2011 Census, only 706 Bulgarian citizens belong to Judaism.

⁵⁸ According to the 2011 Census, the Protestants in Bulgaria are 0.9% of the local population, while Catholics and Armenians count for 0.7% and 0.1%, respectively.

⁵⁹ According to the 2011 Census, the Muslims in Bulgaria are 7.0 % of the local population.

⁶⁰ "Izvyavlenie na Glavnoto myuftiystvo kam myusyulmanskata obshtnost po povod obyavenoto izvanredno polozhenie v stranata" [Address of the Grand Mufti's Office to the Muslim community in the country on the state of emergency], *Grand Mufti's Office*, March 15, 2020, available at: <https://www.grandmufti.bg/bg/up-to-date/novini/9519-2020-03-16-16-28-35.html>.

⁶¹ The previous statements of the Bulgarian Holy Synod did not include such references. See *Special Address of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church – Bulgarian Patriarchate with Reference to the Migration Crisis*, November 26, 2016, <https://bg-patriarshia.bg/appeal-20>. The document was issued in Bulgarian in 2015, and re-issued in English a year later.

Furthermore, as Easter was approaching, the government initiated two talks with the BOC's hierarchs in an attempt to persuade them to close their churches. The state authorities were afraid that the traditionally large lay attendance in the services on Palm Sunday and Easter would escalate the epidemic. Both meetings took place in the Synodal Palace in Sofia. The first of them, held on March 30, did not change the principal position of the BOC's leadership. The metropolitans accepted the introduction of additional sanitary measures in the religious sites, and issued a new encyclical. In particular, the Holy Synod required laymen to use medical masks inside churches, and to maintain a distance of two meters from each other during religious services. The clerics had to do the same, except during the liturgy. The document also commented on the performance of funerals during the lockdown. They had to take place in the open air, and were attended only by a few relatives. Special attention was paid to the popular distribution of willow branches and flowers on Palm Sunday. This time, the priests had to do it outside the churches, thereby allowing the faithful to keep a safe distance between each other. No changes were foreseen for the performance of the Easter liturgy. It had to take place inside the temples as usual. The document ended with an expression of gratitude to the medical personnel, policemen, and civilians involved in the struggle with the epidemic.

On April 9, the Synodal Palace was visited by another state delegation, now led by the Prime Minister, Boyko Borisov. This time, the Orthodox hierarchs made more tangible concessions. They cancelled the traditional distribution of the blessed willow on the forthcoming Palm Sunday (April 12). They also agreed with the government's idea about a start of the Easter liturgy outside the temples, and its continuation inside after the mid-night announcement "Christ is risen!". The measures were expected to reduce the risk of infection during the most attended part of the religious service. Finally, the Holy Synod gave up its plan to send a church delegation to Jerusalem to receive the Holy Fire from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Instead, the fire preserved from the previous Easter was used.⁶² In addition, the money saved from the cancelled trip was donated to the fight against the epidemic.

⁶² The custom of sending a church delegation to Jerusalem on Easter Eve is a new invention that became very popular among the Orthodox churches in the former communist states after the end of the Cold War. In 2020, the Orthodox churches in Russia, Ukraine, Greece, Cyprus, Georgia, Romania, Moldova, Belarus, Poland and Kazakhstan sent such delegations despite the pandemic. See Daniel Estrin (with the contribution of Joanna Kakissis), "Holy Fire Ceremony To Mark Orthodox Easter Held In Near-Empty Jerusalem Church," *NPR*, April 18, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/04/18/837883795/holy-fire-ceremony-to-mark-orthodox-easter-held-in-near-empty-jerusalem-church?t=1593613222702>.

As in the cases of other Orthodox churches, the aforementioned decisions were not applied in the BOC's dioceses abroad. The metropolitans, Antonii of the Western and Central European diocese and Josif of the US, Canada and Australia, as well as their clerics, obeyed the requirements of the secular authorities in the countries where they had been maintaining their offices. In short, the BOC's parishes abroad were closed in contrast to the services continuing in Bulgaria. Metropolitan Antonii, who spent the first wave of the pandemic in Bulgaria, recited the liturgy and other religious rites in accordance with the agreement reached between the government and the Holy Synod.

In final terms, the Orthodox Church remained the only Christian organization that continued its public religious services during the lockdown in Bulgaria. Such an exception could be attributed to the definition of Eastern Orthodoxy as the "traditional religion" in the 1991 Constitution of Bulgaria (Art. 13.3).⁶³ This quality, however, is not identical to the Orthodoxy's status as the dominant religion promoted in 1879 by the Constitution of the Bulgarian Kingdom (Art. 37), and abolished in 1947 by the communist regime. In 1998, the Constitutional Court issued a special judgment clarifying that the traditional character of Eastern Orthodoxy "expresses its cultural and historical role for the Bulgarian state, as well as its contemporary significance for the state life, and especially by its impact on the system of national holidays."⁶⁴ From this perspective, the aforementioned constitutional text does not represent an infringement of the rights of the religious minorities in the country. However, the Religious Denominational Act adopted in 2002 eluded this understanding by distinguishing the local Orthodox Church, that is, the institutional representative of the traditional religion, from the other faith communities. It granted the former an *ex lege* recognition as a judicial entity (Art. 10.2), while obliging the latter to obtain court registration (Art. 14-20). On the one hand, this differential treatment placed the BOC's Holy Synod in a more privileged position than the leadership of the other religious denominations. On the other hand, it facilitated the establishment of closer relations between the Orthodox Church and the state, which recall the Byzantine model of harmony.⁶⁵

63 The English version of the 1991 Constitution of Bulgaria is available at <https://parliament.bg/en/const>.

64 Constitutional Court of the Republic of Bulgaria, *Judgment No. 2/1998*, 18 February 1998, e.g., retractable from www.constcourt.bg.

65 The state support for the BOC's growing influence is commended in Daniela Kalkandjieva, "The Bulgarian Orthodox Church: Authoring New Visions about the Orthodox Church's Role in Contemporary Bulgarian Society" in *Orthodox Churches and Politics in Southeastern Europe: Nationalism, Conservatism, and Intolerance*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (London: Palgrave, 2019), 53–83.

Its essence has been recently summarized by Metropolitan Nikolay of Plovdiv in a pastoral message issued on the occasion of the Dormition of the Mother of God. Placed in the “Important News” section of the BOC’s website, it was quickly distributed to all corners of the country by public media at a moment when anti-government protests had been calling for the resignation of Boyko Borisov from the office of Prime Minister. The religious feast seemed to be a formal impetus for Nikolay’s oration, which praised the three governments of Borisov as the best time for the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.⁶⁶ The Metropolitan argued that this particular political leadership had appreciated the Church as a “pillar of the state.”⁶⁷ As a result, the state authorities heard the Synod’s protests against the legalizing of surrogate motherhood and same-sex couples, as well as the ratification of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. For the same reason, in 2020 the state budget started covering the salaries of the Orthodox clerics, the Ministry of Education and Science approved the Synod’s handbooks for the discipline “Religion-Orthodoxy” in public schools and the government allowed the Orthodox temples to continue their regular religious services during the coronavirus epidemic.

In the meantime, the secular authorities turned to apply double standards to the various faith communities. They penalized the evangelical church in the Roma district of the town of Samokov because of a collective prayer, which was held in its yard on Palm Sunday. It was punished despite the observance of the sanitary requirements, that is, the believers wore medical masks and kept a two-meter distance between themselves during the prayer.⁶⁸ In response, the United Evangelical Churches (UEC) referred to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Prosecutor General and the head of the Directorate of Religious Affairs with a request to clarify the rights of the believers under the lockdown.⁶⁹ In his letter, the UEC’s Chairman pointed out that the Bul-

66 Boyko Borisov has headed three Bulgarian governments as their Prime Minister. The first of them functioned from July 27, 2009 to March 13, 2013, the second – from November 7, 2014 to January 29, 2017, with the last one starting its work on May 4, 2017.

67 “Arhipastirsko poslanie na Negovo Visokopreosveshtenstvo Plovdivskiya mitropolit Nikolay” [Pastoral message of His Eminence Metropolitan Nikolay of Plovdiv], the BOC’s website, August 15, 2020, <https://old.bg-patriarshia.bg/news.php?id=334036>.

68 “116 akta v Samokov: pastor sabra stotitsi evangelisti v romskata mahala v Samokov” [A Pastor gathered together hundreds of evangelicals in the Roma quarter in Samokov], *Bg-Voice*, April 14, 2020, <https://bg-voice.com/116-akta-v-samokov-pastor-sъбра-стотици-с/>.

69 “Evangelските tsarkvi molyat premiera da razyasni na sluzhtelite si pravata na vyarvashtite” [The evangelical churches ask the Prime Minister to explain to his officials the rights of the believers], *News.Bg*, April 14, 2020, <https://news.bg/society/evangelските-tsarkvi-molyat-premiera-da-razyasni-na-sluzhtelite-si-pravata-na-vyarvashtite.html>.

garian Constitution (Article 57 §3) did not envision any restriction of religious rights in the case of a state of emergency.

In June 2020, the evangelicals again entered into the focus of Bulgarian media. This time, journalists announced the contamination of several pastors with COVID-19 after a religious meeting in a small Bulgarian town.⁷⁰ On this occasion, the UEC sent a letter of protest to the Minister of Health and the Chief State Health Inspector.⁷¹ Its authors stressed that in no other case had the media commented on the religious identity of the infected persons. In their view, the multiple publications about sick pastors created an impression that the disease affected only evangelicals. The document also pointed out that the data collection and announcements about the religious identity of contaminated people contradicted the WHO's instructions on the respect of religious freedom. The letter had an effect, and the media stopped announcing the religious identity of ill people. In this regard, it is also worth mentioning the publications about the coronavirus infection of Orthodox churchmen, metropolitans and priests.⁷² Such news appeared in a website run by Orthodox laymen, but was not officially confirmed by the BOC's administration.

The Public Debate on the Church's Response to the Pandemic

The spread of the COVID-19 infection in Bulgaria engaged the local Orthodox community in a twofold debate. At an intrareligious level, its members faced the same dilemmas as their co-believers throughout the world. Still, as the BOC's public services were not interrupted, the attention of its faithful was focused on the closure of churches abroad. Bulgarians were surprised that the Greek Holy Synod had supported such a measure. When the communist regime collapsed, Orthodox Bulgarians began to refer to Greece as a role model because of the privileged status of Eastern Orthodoxy preserved in its state constitution. In short, nobody in Bulgaria could have imagined a cancellation of public church services in Greece, especially during the Great Lent. The BOC's Holy Synod

70 "Zarazata v Perushtitsa idva ot evangelisti" [The source of the infection in Perushtitsa are evangelicals], *Bulgarian National Radio – Radio Plovdiv*, June 18, 2020, <https://bnr.bg/plovdiv/post/101295460/ot-sbirka-na-evangelisti-e-ognishteto-na-koronavirus-v-perushtica>.

71 "Obrashtenie na OETs do Ministerstvo na zdraveopazvaneto" [OETs's appeal to the Ministry of Health], *Evangeliski vestnik*, 19 June, 2020, www.evangeliskivestnik.net/news/8429/Обръщение_на_ОЕЦ_до_Министерството_на_здравеопазването.

72 "Mitropolit Arsenii e s koronavirus" [Metropolitan Arsenii has been infected by coronavirus], *Dveri*, August 5, 2020, https://dveri.bg/component/com_content/Itemid,100723/catid,14/id,69778/view,article/. The article also announces the COVID infection of his protosyngelos, Father Dobri Chakov.

used the shock of this paradox to underscore its own Church's righteousness. Gavril of Lovech went even so far as to pay tribute to the Bulgarian Prime Minister, Boyko Borisov, for leaving the churches open. In his view, this harmony between the church and state authorities guaranteed that God would help the country to overcome the coronavirus crisis.⁷³

While Orthodox Bulgarians had no reason to worry about their participation in religious services, they were deeply concerned about the issue of communion. Yet, the reactions of the hierarchy, clergy and laity were not identical. The episcopate was unanimous that the sacrament of the Eucharist cannot transmit any disease. This position also received the support of the white clergy (married priests) and a tiny congregation of black ones (monks and nuns).⁷⁴ Moreover, for the first time since the fall of communism, the latter has come up with a public statement. It was signed by several hegumens and abbesses, who argued that every spiritual illness had been preceded by a spiritual one. In their view, the return to God was the only remedy for both. As a result, they invited the Orthodox believers to intensify their prayers, to repent for their sins and to take the medicine of Holy Communion.⁷⁵ Though similar, the position of the married clerics was rarely heard outside their parishes.⁷⁶ In final terms, laymen became the most active participants in the dispute about the communal spoon. It disclosed three types of believers who can be conditionally depicted as "rigorists," "moderates" and "aesopians." The first of them considered that only those who take communion are true Christians. Therefore, they perceived the deprivation of

73 "Borisov: V hramovete - samo tezi, za koito vyarata e po-vazhna ot zdraveto" [Borisov: Let the temples stay open only for those for whose faith is more important than health], *BTV Novinite*, April 9, 2020, <https://bvtvovinite.bg/bulgaria/borisov-v-hramovete-samo-tezi-za-koito-vyarata-e-po-vazhna-ot-zdraveto.html>.

74 Neither the Holy Synod nor the Directorate for Religious Affairs at the Council of Ministers provides official information about the Orthodox monks and nuns. Thus, the numbers announced by journalists vary quite a bit. Some speak about 110 monks and nuns, while others increase this number by three-four times. See Silvia Nikolova, "Monasi izdarzhat 60 manastira, sami i v mizeriya" [Monks run 60 monasteries without assistance and in misery], July 6, 2016, *Monitor*, <https://www.monitor.bg/bg/a/view/55153-Монаси-издържат-60-манастира-сами-и-в-мизерия>; "Napliv za monasi, poslushnitsite se uvelichili dvoyno za dve godini," *Blitz*, September 12, 2015, https://blitz.bg/obshtestvo/napliv-za-monasi-poslushnitsite-se-uvelichili-dvoyno-za-2-godini_news360646.html.

75 "Otvoreno pismo ot monasi, monahini i sveshtenici otnosno vavedenoto izvanredno polozhenie i epidemiyata s koronavirus" [Open letter on the state of emergency and the coronavirus epidemic, issued by monks, nuns and priests], the BOC's website, March 20, 2020, <https://old.bg-patriarshia.bg/news.php?id=317090>. The published copy of the letter is followed by the names of eight abbots and three abbesses, but include no priest's name.

76 Teodor Stoychev is one of the priests and theologians who communicated their personal positions to a wider audience. "Svetata evharistiya ne e magicheski ritual," [The Holy Eucharist is not a Magical Ritual], *Dveri*, April 6, 2020, https://dveri.bg/component/com_content/Itemid,100656/catid,29/id,69472/view,article/.

communion as tantamount to death.⁷⁷ Led by the firm belief in the omnipotent nature of the Holy Eucharist, many rigorists professed in their Facebook profiles that they did not fear the epidemic because they had already taken communion.

Such an attitude, however, tends to neglect the theological concept of the Holy Eucharist as a sacrament offered not only to those who take communion, but to all members of the Orthodox Church, both alive and dead.⁷⁸ Being more sensitive about this theological aspect, the moderate believers did not condemn those who were afraid of getting ill by using the same communal spoon. Instead, they appealed for mercy and solidarity with the abstainers, because the latter's isolation would transform the Church into a "close corporation," isolated from society.⁷⁹ The moderates also reminded people that care of the neighbor is at the core of the Christian ethos. Lastly, there was a group of laymen who might be defined as "aesopians." They preferred to present their views indirectly by publishing overviews or translations of treatises of the Church's Fathers, theological studies and materials from the foreign Orthodox press.⁸⁰

Furthermore, the soft attitude of the state authorities to the Holy Synod provoked tensions between the Orthodox community and the rest of Bulgarian society. The government's consent for the continuation of the BOC's public services provoked sharp criticism on the part of the proponents of public health. Over 200 medical experts and public figures issued an open letter addressed to the Chairman of the Parliament, the President, the Prime Minister and the Patriarch.⁸¹ They referred to the behavior of other religious institutions

77 Mariyan Stoyadinov, "Dots. Mariyan Stoyadinov: Ne move da iziskvame ot horata da hodyat po voda" [Assoc. Prof. Mariyan Stoyadinov: "Ordinary people should not be required to walk on water like Christ"], *Dveri*, March 19, 2020, https://dveri.bg/component/com_content/Itemid,100658/catid,120/id,69361/view,article/.

78 Chapnin, "Internet translyatsiya menyaet predstavlenie o liturgii" [The Internet transmission of the liturgy has been changing the notion of this act], in *Sistemnye problem Pravoslviya*, 40.

79 Kalin Yanakiev, "Kam tsarkovnite hora – v izpitanieto" [Addressing the church people in a time of trial], *Kultura*, March 22, 2020, <https://kultura.bg/web/към-църковните-хора-в-изпитанието/>.

80 Nikola Antonov, "Nikolay Kavasila: Kakva e tselta na svetoto prichastie" [What is the purpose of the Holy Communion], Facebook, April 9, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/notes/nikola-antonov/nikolay-kavasila-kakva-e-tselta-na-svetoto-prichastie/2988001771256669/>; Reneta Trifonova, "Korona virus i prichastie" [The coronavirus and the communion], *Reneta Trifonova's blog*, April 5, 2020, <https://renetrifonova.wordpress.com/2020/04/05/коронавирус-и-причастие/>; Tanya Ilieva, "Svesthenik na Spinalonga prichistyaval prokazhenite i izpolzval sashata lazhihka za sebe si" [The priest of Spinalonga Island has used the same spoon for the communion of lepers and for himself], *Tanya Ilieva's blog*, March 9, 2020, https://taniailieva06.blogspot.com/2020/03/blog-post_12.html?spref=fb&fbclid=IwARoJo4V3ehmVjcPHbRzmGxosEVDV6kxD-hqNsLtutBDBfZ07nw8M%E2%80%A6.

81 "Lekari, eksperti i obshtestvenitsi nastoyaha bogoslužheniyata v tsarkvite da sprat" [Doctors, experts and public figures insisted on the interruption of church services], *OFF News*, March 17, 2020, https://m.offnews.bg/news/Obshchestvo_4/Lekari-eksperti-i-obshchestvenitsi-nastoiha-bogoslužheniia-v-tsarkv_724170.html; "Obshchestvenitsi iskat zabrana na bogoluzheniyata s miryani" [Public

throughout the world, and requested the closure of the BOC's temples. In their view, the temporary replacement of public services with an online transmission of the liturgy was a reasonable solution. In parallel, individual intellectuals expressed their firm conviction that the Orthodox Church cannot disregard the law, health and security.⁸²

All this resulted in a growing fear in society that the communion takers would become potential sources of contagion. The most extreme critics of the church-state agreement on the continuation of the religious services even labelled such believers as the "Orthodox Taliban."⁸³ At the beginning of the Holy Week, the Bulgarian Fellowship for Liberal Democracy also attacked the government. Its members insisted that a secular state like Bulgaria should not prioritize the right of believers to practice their religious rites at a time when all other public spaces (parks, theaters, restaurants, etc.) were closed down. The Fellowship also criticized the continuing practice of local Orthodox priests to use the same spoon for communion despite the epidemic. According to it, the agreements of the national government with the Holy Synod were "not restrictive enough to prevent the spread of the disease."⁸⁴

These attacks ignited a counterreaction from the Orthodox hierarchs, as well as many priests and lay believers. They compared the advocates of the closure of churches with the Byzantine iconoclasts and the communist destroyers of temples. In parallel, the Orthodox zealots praised the government for the free exercise of religion.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, the expansion of the epidemic provoked a slight

figures require a ban on the lay attendance in religious services], *Fakti.bg*, March 17, 2020, <https://fakti.bg/bulgaria/455863-obshtestvenici-iskat-zabrana-na-bogoslujenia-s-mirani>.

82 "Professor Anna Krasteva: Krizite sa vreme na lideri i paraziti, grazhdanite sa edinstvenniya korektiv" [The crises are a time of leaders and parasites, the citizens are the only corrective], *Marginalia*, April 14, 2020, <https://www.marginalia.bg/aktsent/prof-anna-krasteva-krizite-sa-vreme-na-lideri-i-paraziti-grazhdanite-sa-edinstvenniya-korektiv/?fbclid=IwARoTViQaR%E2%80%A6>.

83 "Pravoslavnite talibani pobediha" [The Orthodox Taliban won!], *Novini.bg*, April 12, 2020, <https://novini.bg/bylgariya/obshtestvo/592769>.

84 "Demokratsiyata i pravata na choveka pri izvanrednoto polozhenie vav vrazka s pandemiyata na COVID-19" [Statement on Democracy and human rights in the situation of emergency announced due to the COVID-19 crisis], *Bulgarian Fellowship for Liberal Democracy* [Balgarska obshtnost za Liberalna Demokratsiya], April 13, 2020, https://boldbg.net/демократията-извънредно-положение/?fbclid=IwAR1zq9W03B_azzqUEDB-4BkwbWc7ty1p62Euai-TG7jCrI1tsN9eQneTyOs.

85 Velislava Dareva, "Hramobortsi" [Destroyers of temples], May 24, April 15, 2020, 24may.bg/2020/04/15/xramobortsi/?fbclid=IwAR27XBb4aJ8FV6Ux6wQ8ULF-zhBFIIzoScBg5ALi3R7_vdcDgToMz7rNaSU; Dareva, "Vragat ne e Tsarkvata" [The church is not the enemy], Pogled, March 27, 2020, <https://pogled.info/avtorski/Velislava-Dareva/vragat-ne-e-tsarkvata.114692?fbclid=IwAR1pfA4UvLlhrbwvhHokjR4OdAxeld6SsQuPcrZSdJLgbFSyJc7e%E2%80%A6>; "Sveshtenik: Samo pri komunizma zatvaryaha tsarkvi, v trudni moment hramovete tryabva da sa otvoreni" [Priest: "The churches have been closed only under communism; they should be open in difficult times"], *Plovdiv24*, March 26, 2020, <https://www.plovdiv24.bg/novini/print/949199.html>.

turn in the state's policy. The Orthodox churches remained open for believers, but the civil authorities intensified their appeals to the churchgoers to stay and pray at home. This change became obvious during the Easter liturgy, held in front of St. Alexander Nevski Cathedral in Sofia. For the first time since the fall of communism, no state representative or political leader was present there. The hundreds of citizens who used to attend it were absent as well. The secular understanding of the public good took over the traditional practice of the Eastern Orthodoxy.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The encounter of Eastern Orthodoxy with the COVID-19 pandemic reveals different features at a global and local level. From a worldwide perspective, the need for social distancing as a means of fighting the spread of this disease impeded and even blocked the normal performance of centuries-old rites of this branch of Christianity. Moreover, it raised questions about its teaching regarding the Divine Eucharist that is at the core of the concept of the Orthodox Church as One Holy Catholic and Apostolic. All this has presented a threat to the unity of Eastern Orthodoxy, and calls for an in-depth theological reflection and debate.

From a broader historical perspective, the current situation provokes some parallels with the experience of Christianity with the Black Death (1347–1353). According to Joshua J. Mark, the absence of God's answer to the prayers of Christians during this trial undermined the power of the medieval Catholic Church, and created grounds for the rise of the Protestant Reformation (1517–1648).⁸⁶ Nevertheless, in the Orthodox East, the spread of the Black Death coincided with the Ottoman conquest of Byzantium and the Orthodox polities in the Balkans. The Muslim expansion had a more profound effect on the minds of the Orthodox Christians than the epidemic. As a result, they did not produce a new religious teaching as happened in the West, but gave birth to the political theology of Moscow—the Third Rome. From this perspective, the long-term effect of the COVID-19 pandemic could be expected in two directions. On the one hand, it might provoke new religious visions and an eventual internal split in Eastern Orthodoxy on theological grounds. On the other hand, if the spread of the infection is combined with political developments, such a process may stim-

⁸⁶ Joshua J. Mark, "Religious Responses to the Black Death," *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, April 16, 2020, <https://www.ancient.eu/article/1541/>.

ulate a further decentralization of global Orthodoxy, including the transformation of some Orthodox churches into fully detached bodies.

At a local level, the encounter of the Orthodox community with the epidemic is complicated by various political and social factors. Living in a secular world, the Orthodox Christians need to find an adequate answer to this challenge, which is to reconcile their religious teaching with the sanitary norms prescribed by medical science. Their failure to contribute to the fight against the disease could stimulate a growing indifference to religion among the rest of the population.⁸⁷ It could also increase the so-called “liminars,” that is, “individuals betwixt and between the religious and the secular, but they are not necessarily on the path to being one or the other.”⁸⁸ They stay away from organized religion and tend to define themselves as ones of no religion in national surveys. Such a development would affect the incomes of the Orthodox churches in countries such as Russia, where the religious institutions depend on donations.⁸⁹ In a long-term perspective, the rise of the liminars would undermine the majority positions of some Orthodox churches, and change their relations with the state authorities.

At the same time, the anti-epidemic policy of the state authorities is no less an important factor. When conducted with respect to the freedom of religion, it could ameliorate the communication between the local Orthodox community and the rest of society. However, if the government fails to find the right balance between the defense of public health and the religious rights of its citizens, it could incite tensions and even conflicts between the different faith communities, as well as between them and society in general. In short, while the global encounter of Eastern Orthodoxy with the COVID-19 pandemic is dominated by theological considerations, the local one is penetrated by political and social ones.

87 Steve Bruce, *God is Dead* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 235.

88 Chaeyoon Lim, Robert D. Putnam, Carol Ann MacGregor, “Secular and Liminal: Discovering Heterogeneity Among Religious Nones,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 49, no. 4 (2010): 598.

89 Chapnin, “Tserkovnye finansy i nalogi” [Church finances and taxes] in *Sistemnye problem Pravoslviya*, 75-82.

In Defense of Darwin

Is there a Liberal Wing within the Serbian Orthodox Church?

Milan Vukomanović

This chapter tackles the public appeal of twelve theologians, professors on the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade, in defense of the autonomy of academic research. Their public statement, issued in May 2017, was soon after criticized by the hierarchy of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), while these theologians were reprimanded and sanctioned by the Holy Council of Bishops and the Patriarch of Serbia. In the forthcoming appraisal, this event will serve as a case study regarding the possible emergence of liberal currents within the SOC, which is otherwise largely considered a conservative, nationalist religious institution whose authority is rarely disputed not only by its own clergy, but also by the secular Serbian authorities.

“HERESY OF EVOLUTIONISM” AND ITS ORTHODOX ADVOCATES

It will be helpful to begin by providing a résumé of the events that preceded the publication of the disputed public appeal (known as *Stav*). On May 4, 2017, the document entitled, “A Petition for the Revision of Study of the Theory of Evolution in our Schools and Faculties”¹ appeared in public after it had already been addressed to the following Serbian state institutions: the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Committee for Education, Science and Technological Development of the Serbian Parliament the Presidency of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and the senate committees of all universities in Serbia. The *Petition* was signed by 166 individuals and pub-

1 V. Andrić, L. Valtner, S. Čongradin, “Dekan Biološkog fakulteta: Potpuno anahrone i nenaučne ideje,” *Danas*, May 5, 2017, <https://www.danas.rs/politika/dekan-bioloskog-fakulteta-potpuno-anahrone-i-nenaučne-ideje/>.

lic figures, most of whom had some background in science and education.² The authors of the *Petition* critically assessed the Theory of Evolution, and invited the aforementioned state institutions to “revise” study programs in schools and at universities in cases where they were based on the Neo-Darwinist Theory of Evolution. Furthermore, they accused evolutionary biologists of promoting their “false science” for “personal and globalist reasons.”³ Last but not least, this document displays elements of various conspiracy theories, referring to some unspecified “power centers” that, allegedly, financially support such biologists.

Less than a week later, a group of twelve theologians, professors at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology,⁴ reacted to the *Petition* in public and stated that “in the school curricula of biology, at all educational levels, there is nothing that could currently replace the theory of evolution.”⁵ Moreover, “none of the institutions, recipients of this petition, has jurisdiction to interfere in any area of science and perform ‘revision’ of a scientific theory that is studied by, and taught to, students.”⁶ They further reminded their readers that similar initiatives for “revision” could not, at least in principle, be launched by groups of citizens (notwithstanding their number or reputation), but only by science and its relevant disciplines, such as biology, that is, by a community of experts with an appropriate level of expertise. These theologians also referred to the long-term scientific practice, based on research, which made possible civilizational progress. Accordingly, the signers of the *Petition* were invited to conduct their own research and propose theories alternative to the Theory of Evolution; there are no shortcuts for this procedure. In fact, there are “no plausible alternative scientific theories that could replace” the Theory of Evolution. This includes the “biblical creation theory,” which is not a scientific alternative to the Theory of Evolution. Therefore, the Bible is not a textbook pertaining to a scientific discipline. For example, the

2 <https://pescanik.net/nauka-i-vera/>. A full PDF version of the *Petition*, which was addressed to the Parliament of Serbia, is linked to this reference.

3 Ibid.

4 More precisely, this list included 11 professors and one teaching assistant, as follows: Bishop Maksim Vasiljević, Professor of Patristics; Fr. Radomir Popović, Professor of Christian History; Fr. Vladan Perišić, Associate Professor of Christian Epistemology; Predrag Dragutinović, Associate Professor of the New Testament; Rade Kisić, Associate Professor of Ecumenical Theology; Marko Vilotić, Assistant Professor of Theology and Christian Philosophy; Andrej Jeftić, Assistant Professor of Patristics; Nenad Božović, Assistant Professor of the Old Testament; Fr. Aleksandar Đakovac, Assistant Professor of Dogmatic Theology; Fr. Zoran Devrnja, Assistant Professor at the Department of Canon Law; Dn. Zdravko Jovanović, Assistant Professor at the Department of Patristics and Fr. Vukašin Milićević, then a teaching assistant at the Department of Systematic Theology (now Assistant Professor of Christian Ethics).

5 “Profesori Bogoslovije: Teorija evolucije nema zamenu,” *Danas*, May 9, 2017, <https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/profesori-bogoslovije-teorija-evolucije-nema-zamenu/>.

6 “Profesori Bogoslovije: Teorija evolucije nema zamenu.”

Book of Genesis does not even belong to this genre of literature. There may be studies in schools within the programs of religious education, literature, art and philosophy, but this is not science, notwithstanding its importance for education and the value systems of students. "Insofar as the Christian interpretation of the Bible cannot provide a valid scientific alternative to biology, biology itself (or for that matter, physics or anthropology) may not offer a valid religious alternative to the Christian doctrine of God, human being and the world."⁷ The theologians concluded by expressing their hope and trust that the relevant state institutions would not launch any process that could compromise the study of the Theory of Evolution in elementary, high school, and university education in the Republic of Serbia.⁸

Some of the professors who signed this public statement provided additional explanations and comments regarding their document. Andrej Jeftić, Assistant Professor of Theology (Patristics), emphasized that their statement was not an official announcement of the Orthodox Faculty of Theology, but only an expression of views of professors and assistants who signed the document.⁹ According to the former dean of this Faculty, Prof. Predrag Puzović, the institution itself would not publicly comment on the *Petition*. His view was that it would be best to organize a conference and invite both the proponents and the critics of Darwin's Theory of Evolution. Their views and arguments should later be published in a special collection of articles. He also confirmed that the signers of the public appeal against the *Petition* would not be sanctioned by the Faculty because of their private opinions.¹⁰ Although the SOC does not, at least in principle, appoint teachers at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, the Holy Synod, as the main executive body of the Church, provides blessings (*missio canonica*) to all professors at this institution prior to their appointments. A teaching assistant is blessed by a designated prelate, that is to say, by a bishop in jurisdictions of his eparchy. Professor Pribislav Simić, another former Dean of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, explained that the Church could not fire any professor at this institution, because they were hired and paid by the state. However, the SOC may ask for the removal of a professor if their teachings are in contradiction with the articles of faith, or if their behavior is inappropriate or immoral. In those cases, the Holy Synod is empowered by the Faculty's statute to "withdraw," as it were, its

⁷ "Profesori Bogoslovije: Teorija evolucije nema zamenu."

⁸ "Profesori Bogoslovije: Teorija evolucije nema zamenu."

⁹ Darko Pejović, "Podrška Darvinu s Pravoslavnog Bogoslovskog fakulteta," *Politika*, May 10, 2017, <https://www.politika.rs/st/clanak/380253/Profesori-Bogoslovije-protiv-peticije-za-ukidanje-Darvina>.

¹⁰ Pejović, "Podrška Darvinu s Pravoslavnog Bogoslovskog fakulteta."

blessing to a certain professor.¹¹ Simić concluded that in this particular case “the SOC overreacted. Maybe they just wanted to stay in touch with the contemporary scientific currents, without thinking through the consequences, or knowing enough about the theory of evolution.”

Concerning the theological position of the Eastern Orthodoxy vis-à-vis the Theory of Evolution, one could admit that it is not tied to any particular dogmatic viewpoint. It is more often the case that different theologians adhere to either compatibilist or dualistic positions. Briefly put, compatibilists contend that the Theory of Evolution and Christian theology are congruent, and thus should be considered complementary revelations of God. On the other hand, the dualists adhere to the view that evolutionary theory has its roots in the philosophy of naturalism and, as such, is incompatible with divine revelation.¹² It seems, however, that in this case doctrinal issues were not the primary reason for the negative reaction of the SOC high officials to the Faculty theologians. After all, the entire dispute did not arise within the Orthodox theological turfs, but instead through a modern theological opposition to Serbian creationists with a lay background. Later on in this chapter, I will argue that the negative institutional reaction of the SOC leadership should, in fact, be placed in a larger context of the ecclesiastical and political power structures that involve not only the higher clergy, but Serbian political leadership as well. Moreover, the joint demand from the rebellious clerics—withstanding an issue under consideration—is their uncompromised obedience to authorities. At any rate, this case was perhaps a necessary trigger that prompted the University of Belgrade to more precisely define the SOC’s (that is, the Holy Synod’s) relations with the Faculty of Theology. This Faculty joined the ranks of the University of Belgrade in 2004 after half a century of an institutional hiatus,¹³ but in practice its internal administration and regulation has not been fully adjusted to the state legislation. Until very recently, the SOC—which, according to the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, is separate from the state—did not have much involvement (tacit or more visible) in the administrative decisions made at the Faculty. As for the

¹¹ Unfortunately, the new Serbian Law on Higher Education, passed in 2021, only cemented the procedures administered by the Faculty of Orthodox Theology with regard to the enrollment of students, and the selection and dismissal of its professors. This Law, in fact, seriously infringed university autonomy which is a right guaranteed by the Constitution.

¹² Konstantin Bufojević, *Jeres evolucionizma*, in *Neka bude svetlost – stvaranje sveta i rani čovek: Pravoslavno tumačenje Knjige Postanja* (Belgrade, 2006), 570–619.

¹³ From 1952 to 2004, the Faculty was not part of the University of Belgrade, because the post-WWII socialist authorities in Yugoslavia placed it under the jurisdiction of the SOC. Throughout this period, it operated as the Faculty of Orthodox Theology of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

state institutions, recipients of the *Petition*, the Senate of the University of Belgrade condemned the Petition due to its arbitrary conclusions and untrue statements.¹⁴ As such, it did not deserve the attention of the academic and professional public: “No scientific theory is beyond reproach, but serious theoretical discussions should not neglect facts or ignore scientific procedures and violate valid logical argumentation.”¹⁵

In this context, it is interesting to note that the regular session of the Holy Council of Bishops of the SOC started in mid-May 2017, only a few days after the public reaction of the young theologians. The Serbian press reported that one of the signers of this public statement, Bishop Maksim, was criticized at the very outset of this event, but he vigorously defended his own, and his colleagues’ position.¹⁶ According to the church hierarchy, the theology professors should not have intervened in the public discussion on Darwin’s Theory of Evolution. Some bishops interpreted the statement as lack of a belief of its signers in the biblical account of the creation. Even before the convocation of the Bishops’ Council, the theology professors were warned that their public statement was a mistake.¹⁷ The polemics continued during the Council’s official sessions, while Bishop Maksim was labeled as a “Darwinist,” that is, as one who believes that man originated from apes and not from God.¹⁸ Needless to say, this kind of “argumentation” is far from any valid modern theological position. Notwithstanding these accusations, Bishop Maksim was not deposed from his ecclesiastical rank or his professorship at the Faculty of Theology. As a result of this criticism, the signers of the public appeal were invited to officially address the Holy Council of Bishops (*Sabor*). According to the spokesperson of the SOC, “the signers of this text addressed the Sabor, confessing their authentic Christian belief in God the Creator.”¹⁹ In written form, they quoted reasons why they signed their public appeal against the revision of the school and university curricula regarding the Theory of Evolution. The Sabor “accepted this with the comment that this entire discussion, regardless of its intent, was unnecessary.”²⁰

14 Pejović, “Podrška Darvinu s Pravoslavnog Bogoslovskog fakulteta.” Dean of the Faculty of Theology is a member of the University Senate.

15 Pejović, “Podrška Darvinu s Pravoslavnog Bogoslovskog fakulteta.”

16 “Darvin ili Gospod – rasprava na Saboru SPC,” *B92*, May 19, 2017, https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2017&mm=05&dd=19&nav_category=12&nav_id=1262090.

17 “Darvin ili Gospod.”

18 “Darvin ili Gospod.”

19 Vladimir Veljković, “Sabor SPC i sloboda misli,” *Peščanik*, May 29, 2017, <https://pescanik.net/sabor-spc-i-sloboda-misli/>.

20 Veljković, “Sabor SPC i sloboda misli.”

Nonetheless, this was not the end of the entire affair. Very soon after the dismissal of the Council of Bishops, the university teachers of theology were deprived of their priestly duties in their eparchies. They were allowed only to assist in liturgies. Moreover, they were let go from their positions in the official church media, such as the Radio *Slovo ljubve* and the bimonthly *Pravoslavlje*, the official journal of the SOC. The decision was made by the then Patriarch Irinej himself. The Patriarch also prohibited these professors from giving further public statements without his approval: "Whoever violates this rule will be sanctioned in a church-disciplinary process."²¹ It is interesting that this decision (effective June 1, 2017) was not published on the official website of the SOC, or on the web portals of these priests' eparchies, which is probably an indication of its rather controversial nature.

However, entirely different reactions came from the Eparchy of Zahumlje-Herzegovina, known for its theological conferences in the area of social and natural sciences. This manifestation, held in Trebinje (Bosnia-Herzegovina), strongly advances the culture of dialogue and free discussion. To date, six conferences were attended by over 100 academics, university professors, Orthodox and Roman Catholic prelates, Islamic theologians and writers and artists from 10 countries in Europe, as well as the US and Canada. At one of those conferences, "Theology in Public Sphere," one could have heard arguments and opinions very similar to the statements of the Belgrade theologians, the signers of the public appeal. As a matter of fact, a significant number of these theologians participate in this event on a regular, annual basis.²² The 2017 conference was opened by Dragan Davidović, director of the Secretariat for Faith of Republika Srpska, an institution that, according to his words, supports "free thinking and different points of view of all participants."²³ In 2017, this eparchy was under the jurisdiction of Bishop Grigorije (Durić), and later on I will pay some more attention to his own liberal proclivities.

If we now take into account the legislation of the Republic of Serbia, primarily the Law on Higher Education, a group of theologians who criticized the *Petition* in public did not have any obligation to explain their position on Darwin's

21 Jelenka Popadić, "Muk na Bogoslovskom fakultetu posle čistke zbog Darvina," *Politika*, June 6, 2017, <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/382287/Muk-na-Bogoslovskom-fakultetu-posle-cistke-zbog-Darvina>.

22 For example, in 2017 the list of participants included Vladan Perišić, Rade Kisić, Marko Vilotić, Andrej Jeftić, Zdravko Jovanović and Vukašin Milićević, all of whom are professors at the Faculty of Theology and signers of the public appeal. Among the participants in 2018 and 2019, we also find Predrag Dragutinović and Aleksandar Đakovac. Interestingly enough, the topic of the 2020 conference was Theology between the Church and the University.

23 Veljković, "Sabor SPC i sloboda misli."

theory or creation doctrine to any particular institution, be it religious or secular. As academics, they had a full freedom of expression of their intellectual ideas and moral views. Article 5 of the Law on the Higher Education of the Republic of Serbia (2016) clearly stipulates that academic freedoms include “freedom of research and scientific work, art production, as well as the freedom of publication and public presentation of the scientific results and art accomplishments.” According to the Law on the Churches and Religious Communities (2006), faith institutions do have the right to independently organize their internal and public affairs (article 6), but, at the same time, “religious educational institutions included in the educational system are obligated to respect conditions and standards valid in the system of education, in line with its legislation” (article 37).²⁴ After all, this group publicly opposed the attempts to use the Bible, and its description of creation, as a basis for denying the Theory of Evolution. On the other hand, the members of the Bishops’ Council deprived the university professors of their right to publicly present views pertaining to their academic area of expertise. Accordingly, the Council members interfered in the freedom and autonomy of the university, and challenged the legal and constitutional rights of these professors (freedom of thought and expression). However, at that time, there was no reaction from the relevant state institutions or the University of Belgrade concerning the legal ramifications of this case.

HAWKS AND DOVES

In the volume edited by Sabrina Ramet, Radmila Radić and I have argued that by the mid-1990s there were rumors within the SOC about the existence of two different factions: the zealots and the moderates, or the “hawks and doves.”²⁵ Their differences were expressed in some dogmatic issues, as well as on questions concerning the SOC’s view of national identity, political engagement, priesthood, religious education, ecumenism, etc. By 1998, the disagreements among the bishops were so significant that they could have even caused an internal schism. Even so, the late professor Radovan Bigović, a prominent SOC theolo-

²⁴ Zakon o crkvama i verskim zajednicama, https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_crkvama_i_verskim_zajednicama.html.

²⁵ Radmila Radić and Milan Vukomanović, “Religion and Democracy in Serbia since 1989: The Case of the Serbian Orthodox Church,” in *Religion and politics in post-socialist Central and Southeastern Europe: Challenges since 1989*, ed. Sabrina Ramet (London and New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2014), 188.

gian, stated the opposite: “The claims that there are ‘hawks’ and ‘doves’ within the Church are completely senseless, although I heard them many times. But I have not learned the criteria for the demarcation.”²⁶ On that occasion, Bigović admitted the existence of differences between some bishops, but he did not find them substantial. Indeed, all the major schisms or dissents within the SOC were motivated by political reasons (for example, the schism in the diaspora of 1963).²⁷ In contrast, one could hardly expect the SOC clergy (considering their hierarchical, paternalistic institutional structure) to admit that there are any gaps within their higher ecclesiastical ranks. The most one could expect in this matter is perhaps an understatement concerning the possible personal disagreements between some bishops, but not a straightforward confirmation of any ideological or doctrinal rifts. This, of course, does not mean that such rifts have not existed, especially from the standpoint of a neutral observer, including a scholar. Let us therefore attempt to provide some contextual framework for this rather controversial issue.

Historically, the SOC, like the majority of other Orthodox churches, evolved in predominantly non-democratic political contexts (medieval states, the Byzantine Empire, Ottoman conquests, communist rule, etc.). Because of that, an excessive hierarchical control and domination took place, including the passivity of the clergy and lay indifference. To this, one should add the principle of obedience and seniority among bishops, the strict rule that the younger prelates are obedient to the senior ones.

A new element that has emerged in the post-socialist period—something that the Church previously experienced only in the diaspora (that is, in the democratic countries in which its eparchies had been present for some time)—is a whole range of open issues and problems concerning democracy, modernity, national culture, education, religious and political pluralism, civil society and church-state relations. For example, what is the exact scope of social problems that belong in the domain of religious institutions’ concerns and constitutional ramifications? How capable are religious organizations to deal with those problems, and what is their capacity to solve them? How relevant are their responses to contemporary social, legal and political issues? Is Orthodoxy, then, compatible with democracy, seen not only as the will of the majority or a political election procedure, but also as the political culture of pluralism and rule of law? Can

²⁶ Radić and Vukomanović, “Religion and Democracy in Serbia since 1989,” 188.

²⁷ Radmila Radić, “Srpska pravoslavna crkva tokom 90-ih,” *Poznańskie Studia Slawistyczne*, no. 10 (2016): 266.

we conceive of a “civic Orthodoxy” more in line with Western democracy and pluralism? Such a civic religion could be compatible with democracy, but a dogmatic essentialism, rejecting the possibility of cultural change and scientific progress could not. In this sense, globalization in non-Western societies does not necessarily entail an adoption of Western cultural values and norms. Today, those norms also include the secular values of civil society that is not Christian (Orthodox, Catholic, etc.), Islamic, or Jewish, but instead international in its character.²⁸ The demands for human rights based on common secular values and the democratic political culture are primary in this context. Thus, one needs a consensus between Orthodoxy and secular political philosophy regarding the fundamental values, such as democracy, civil society, pluralistic discourse, secular tolerance and individual human rights.

On the other hand, the views of the most prominent Serbian theologians of the twentieth century, Nikolaj Velimirović and Justin Popović, about the secular and “de-Christianized” West and Europe are, even nowadays, often cited in Serbia by both theologians and historians. Those views have been uncritically reproduced in the books and at the public fora of the leading conservative bishops, the “hawks” (“Justinians”), such as Atanasije Jevtić, Irinej Bulović and the late Amfilohije Radović.²⁹ Nikolaj Velimirović, who was canonized in 2003 as a Serbian saint, is particularly influential in this regard. Velimirović’s sermons against Europe, its “idolatry and corruption” are scattered throughout his opus. Some of his basic ideas could be summarized as follows:

1. Europe cannot survive without Christianity; the three “fatal spirits” of European civilization are Darwin, Nietzsche and Marx, who propagated fatal theories in natural sciences, ethics and social theory.
2. The French Encyclopedists declared war on religion and, consequently, the European Enlightenment is another adversary of Christianity and Europe.
3. Other enemies include: the “absolutism of science”, the wars and revolutions in Europe from Friedrich the Great to the 20th century, proletarian ideologies and the domination of economy and materialism.³⁰

²⁸ Bassam Tibi, *Political Islam, World Politics and Europe* (London: Routledge, 2008), 230.

²⁹ To this group of bishops I would add the former Serbian Orthodox Bishop Artemije (Radosavljević), but one should remember that in 2010 he was deposed from that office by the Holy Council of Bishops. In 2015, he was even excommunicated from the SOC.

³⁰ Milan Vukomanović, “The Serbian Orthodox Church: Between Traditionalism and Fundamentalism,” in *Fundamentalism in the Modern World*, vol. 1, ed. Ulrika Martensson et al. (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 157–58.

The SOC representatives, particularly the higher clergy, often express their fear of the destruction of the “true faith” by openly resisting the secularization of the modern (Western) world. They argue that modern society is seriously ill, and in order for it to “heal itself,” it is necessary to return to the original interpretation of the *eschaton*, i.e., to refer to an authentic Christian interpretation of eschatology, because Christian ontology derives from it. According to this SOC discourse, the most reliable guide for such a course is the liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Instead of initiating a dialogue with the modern world, the SOC hence opts to officially condemn it, by withdrawing into its own, self-imposed hermeneutical and liturgical “ghetto.”³¹ In his *Runaway World*, Anthony Giddens presents an interesting thesis, namely that the spirit of cosmopolitanism and the spirit of fundamentalism are two different and opposed reactions to the process of globalization. Fundamentalism is thus tradition defined in the traditional manner, invoking the ritual truth in an increasingly global world looking for reasons.³²

However, after the collapse of communism, the Church tore down the walls of its liturgical ghetto. The historical model of symphony with the state has enabled the SOC to offer a new ideological framework and symbolic-normative system for state institutions in Serbia. The SOC’s opposition to EU integration, democracy, ecumenism and the secular worldview, and its post-2000 attempts to impose itself as an authority in the sphere of culture and public education,³³ are all factors that pull the SOC towards religious ultra-conservatism. After all, the conservative current within the Church has always had an advantage because the SOC is under the major influence of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow.³⁴

It is no accident that in this context the SOC’s sharpest criticism is reserved for Serbian educators, or pro-pluralism and pro-Europe “new ideologues,” “Euro-whiners” and “New-Agers,” independent intellectuals and activists. In a metaphysical and even apocalyptic tone, the views of these opponents are rejected as

31 Vukomanović, “The Serbian Orthodox Church,” 153.

32 Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalization is Reshaping Our Lives* (New York: Routledge), 2000.

33 See Milan Vukomanović, “The Serbian Orthodox Church as a Political Actor in the Aftermath of October 5, 2000,” *Politics and Religion*, vol. 1, issue 2 (August 2008): 240.

34 The more recent illustration of this is the November 2018 statement of the SOC Holy Council of Bishops, in which the Serbian prelates criticized the Ecumenical Patriarchate for its decisions regarding the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The SOC Council of Bishops called “canonically unjustified” the decision of Constantinople to rehabilitate the leaders of the Ukrainian dissenters Filaret Denisenko and Macarius of Miletich, and stated that this act has no effect for the SOC (<https://chelorg.com/2018/11/12/the-serbian-church-does-not-recognize-the-withdrawal-of-the-anathemas-from-constantinople-philar-et/>). At the same time, SOC has not broken its official ties with the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

non-Christian, anti-Christian, pro-globalization and pro-Western, even pro-communist. This primarily relates to their secularism, which is misinterpreted as a remnant of communist atheism. At stake here is a general lack of sensitivity for and insight into the problems of contemporary society and developments—including a severe absence of understanding the crucial distinction between the communist ideological and authoritarian atheism, and modern liberal-democratic forms of secularization rooted in the Enlightenment.³⁵

It seems, however, that the outset of the twenty-first century Serbia saw the emergence of a small liberal wing within the SOC, more open to the aforementioned secular influences. From time to time, their liberal proclivities could be detected in public speeches and media interviews, more than in official church gatherings and ecclesiastical bodies. In my opinion, this group includes the following bishops: Grigorije (Durić), Maksim (Vasiljević), Teodosije (Šibalić), Joanikije (Mićović), Lavrentije (Trifunović), Ignatije (Midić), Andrej (Čilerdžić) and Irinej (Dobrijević). Interestingly enough, half of these prelates serve today as bishops in the Western diaspora—the US, Austria-Switzerland, and Germany (Maksim, Irinej, Andrej, Grigorije), while the senior ones (such as Lavrentije) served in the diaspora in the twentieth century. It is also important to note that the liberal attitude of these bishops varies depending on a theme under consideration, and does not automatically refer to all the issues in a public debate. For example, most (if not all) of these bishops would have a rather unified ecclesiastical-political view of Kosovo, although they would express a much more flexible attitude regarding science, education, human rights, ecumenical dialogue, etc. In February 2021, Bishop Grigorije and Bishop Joanikije, two candidates from this liberal turf, were proposed by their peers for the new Patriarch of Serbia, winning more than one-third of the Holy Council of Bishops' votes, respectively. Moreover, after a long period of time—during which the patriarchal position was occupied by a senior prelate—Metropolitan Porfirije (Perić), another relatively younger bishop (b. 1961) has eventually occupied St. Sava's throne.

It seems that the positions of the theologians, signers of the public appeal regarding the Theory of Evolution, display some traits of this kind of liberal influence within the SOC and its Faculty of Theology. These influences normally flow through at least two channels of communication: 1) from the more liberal senior professors (including some bishops, such as Maksim) to junior lecturers (assistant professors and TA's) at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology; and 2) from the more liberal bishops to younger priests (some of whom are also junior faculty)

35 Vukomanović, "The Serbian Orthodox Church," 167.

under their ecclesiastical supervision or jurisdiction. I contend that these possible influences created a relatively free intellectual environment at the Faculty itself, especially if we take into account that, due to generational renewal, most of the Justinian “hawks” (such as the late Metropolitan Amfilohije or the late Bishop Atanasije) are not teaching there anymore. Another important element that should be taken into consideration in this context is certainly the educational background of at least some of the junior faculty, as they were additionally educated at, or received degrees from other, secular institutions at the University of Belgrade (for example, Faculty of Philosophy: departments of history, philosophy, etc.). Finally, most of them pertain to a generation that has intellectually come of age during the post-socialist period. This means that they have acquired new scholarly and pedagogical paradigms, and were not so much burdened by the political heritage of ethnic nationalism and ecclesiastical authoritarianism.

I have already mentioned how Bishop Maksim vigorously defended the position of his younger colleagues at the Holy Council of Bishops in May 2017. Two years later, at the spring session of the same Council, Maksim debated with the conservative Bishop Irinej (Bulović) concerning the “Ukrainian ecclesiastical issue.”³⁶ Apparently, Maksim advocated a minority position within the SOC that was not in line with the general pro-Russian proclivity of the Serbian episcopate. In addition, Bishop Irinej published a Council document regarding the alleged “case” of Bishop Maksim.³⁷ Eventually, on July 8, 2019, Maksim was deposed from his professorship at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology by the decision of the Holy Synod.³⁸ This unexpected decision of the high ecclesiastical body applied to yet another professor who signed *Stav*—Prof. Marko Vilotić, now Secretary of Bishop Grigorije in his German eparchy. One of the official reasons for those sudden discharges was related to the engagement of the two clerics in the diaspora affairs of the SOC, following their alleged inability to regularly teach at their Belgrade faculty. Nevertheless, this Synodic decision was not confirmed by Bishop Ignatije, the then Dean of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, so that the Holy Synod consequently withdrew its blessing to the Dean for his “disrespect” of the Synod. As a result of this, Bishop Ignatije resigned from his position on November 12, 2019.³⁹ Until 2024, two more professors who signed the *Stav* document (Andrej Jeftić and Vukašin Milićević) were ousted from their Faculty. This led to another institutional crisis within the Faculty of Theology,

³⁶ Daily *Danas*, July 24, 2019, 5.

³⁷ Daily *Danas*, July 24, 2019, 5.

³⁸ Daily *Danas*, July 24, 2019, 5.

³⁹ Daily *Danas*, November 13, 2019, 7.

related to the Statute of the University of Belgrade. Specifically, the University Statutory Committee found that the Synod's involvement in the Faculty of Orthodox Theology affairs (by granting of the *missio canonica* for teaching appointments and enrollment of students) was not in accordance with the university regulations and the Law on Higher Education. Therefore, the University, as the legal founder of this Faculty, has not approved the deposition of the two theologians. Moreover, the University declared the election of the new faculty administration to be illegal.⁴⁰

Apart from Maksim, some other bishops from this liberal group, such as Grigorije and Teodosije, have also been more pronounced in the Serbian media during the last several years. I will therefore quote some of their statements that represent a sort of refreshing novelty in the public discourse of the SOC prelates.

Bishop Grigorije (b. 1967) belongs to the same generation as Maksim (1968). Prior to his deployment to Germany in 2018, he was the bishop of Zahumlje-Herzegovina since 1999. There, he succeeded the throne of an ultra-conservative cleric, Bishop Atanasije Jevtić. Already as a student, Grigorije organized anti-Milošević demonstrations in Serbia. Today, he is well known for his support of ecumenical dialogue and social responsibility. He is noted for having said, "Do not build so many churches while our hospitals collapse and children die!"⁴¹ And also: "Christ was a corporate personality. Every bishop should be a corporate person. Our behavior should be like that, we should be all things to all people and do the best we can in service of life and citizens. While doing so, we have nothing to be afraid of, and we should go our own way."⁴² As a bishop in Herzegovina, Grigorije asked for forgiveness regarding the war crimes in Bosnia and the destruction of Dubrovnik. This event took place at the Dubrovnik Roman Catholic Cathedral. The bishop of Dubrovnik responded accordingly, which marked a new stage in Orthodox-Catholic dialogue in the Balkans.⁴³

In a 2016 interview for N1 TV (a media branch of CNN in the Balkans), Grigorije emphasized: "We should not live in fear from others, but should live for others. If someone violates our freedom, this is perilous... With my entire being, I believe in the richness of diversity, and I think that we should be happy and content because of that; because we have an opportunity to live in such di-

⁴⁰ Weekly *NIN*, February 13, 2020, 30-31.

⁴¹ "Proteruju Vladiku Grigorija: Crkva ga šalje na 'KAZNENU EKSPEDICIJU' u Nemačku," *Srbija Danas*, May 24, 2018, <https://www.srbijadanas.com/vesti/region/vladika-grigorije-otac-na-sluzbenom-putu-2018-05-24>.

⁴² "Vladika Grigorije o Nikoliću: Popili, popričali kao ljudi," *N1*, January 6, 2016, <https://n1info.rs/region/a124131-vladika-grigorije-o-nikolicu-popili-popricali-kao-ljudi/>.

⁴³ "Vladika Grigorije o Nikoliću."

versity... We cannot say that anyone can shut themselves in a closed unit without receiving other influences. Our advantage is to have our own identity and receive what is good from others. This makes us healthy.”⁴⁴

Bishop Grigorije is also known as a sharp critic of internal affairs within the SOC. Back in 2008, he wrote a letter to the Council of Bishops, referring to some serious problems within the episcopate, and naming some of the prelates for their unacceptable behavior. This letter was not meant to be published, but it nevertheless found its way to the media. It was published at the time of crisis for the SOC, because the late Patriarch Pavle was seriously ill and the Bishops' Council had to consider the option of his early retirement. Grigorije went a step further, proposing the lustration of some bishops, including Pahomije (accused of pedophilia),⁴⁵ Filaret, who cooperated with the Milošević regime during the 1990s (for financial misconduct), Artemije (who set the foundation for a schism) and Bishop Nikanor. The lustration of clergy was a process conducted in some other formerly communist states, such as Romania, Bulgaria and Russia. In his letter, Grigorije also alluded to infiltration of the secret police in the SOC, and invited the Church to conduct more transparent activities. Furthermore, he criticized the religious education program in public schools administered by the SOC, as well as the prolonged construction of St Sava's Orthodox Temple in Belgrade. Finally, he referred to the lack of an active bishop in the capital city of Belgrade.⁴⁶ Interestingly enough, most of the clerics named in Grigorije's letter were deposed or retired in the following years. All of them were known as members of the ultra-conservative current within the Church. Today, Grigorije supports the group of “rebellious” professors from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, and openly opposes the tacit coalition between the Holy Synod and the current political regime in Serbia led by Aleksandar Vučić. In the most recent period, this criticism has been directed against Vučić's policy regarding the possible solution of the status of Kosovo.

⁴⁴ “Vladika Grigorije o Nikoliću.”

⁴⁵ Bishop Joanikije, another SOC prelate from this liberal group, is also known for his fierce criticism of the SOC bishops accused of pedophilia. On one occasion in 2013, as reported by the Serbian press, he tried to prevent Bishop Vasilije (Kačavenda) from administering a liturgy in the city of Srbobran (Vojvodina province). According to some sources, Bishop Vasilije suffered a stroke in the aftermath of this quarrel: “Kačavendu napao vladika, pa doživeo moždani udar!”, *Kurir*, September 9, 2013, <https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/drustvo/996733/kacavendu-napao-vladika-pa-doziveo-mozdani-udar>. At the Council of Bishops in May 2013, Bishop Joanikije demanded that Bishop Vasilije be prosecuted before the Church court, but his proposal did not win the majority support (Z. Jevtić, “Grupa episkopa branila bludnog Kačavendu pred Sinodom SPC,” *Blic*, May 30, 2013, <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/tema-dana/grupa-episkopa-branila-bludnog-kacavendu-pred-sinodom-spc/txf09rv>).

⁴⁶ The integral version of this letter is available at: https://www.glassrpske.com/novosti/vijesti_dana/Pismo-Vladike-Grigorija-Arhijerejima-SPC/lat/15007.html.

THE KOSOVO COVENANT

In 2010, Bishop Teodosije (b. 1963) succeeded the eparchy under the jurisdiction of the deposed Bishop Artemije, one of the “hawks” within the SOC, who died of COVID-19 in 2020. The seat of the eparchy of Raška-Prizren is in the monastery Visoki Dečani in Kosovo, the biggest male monastery of the SOC, and a safe haven for civilians during the war of 1999 and its aftermath. This is where Teodosije organized humanitarian aid for the local population, notwithstanding their ethnic or religious background. Known as a moderate person and minister, Teodosije inherited the difficult mission of protecting the local Orthodox population during the period of the frozen conflict between Belgrade and Priština, and the subsequent political negotiations under the supervision of the European Union (EU). Part of this task was to protect the Church’s property, real estate and historic landmarks in Kosovo.

The heritage of the late Bishop Artemije, an ultra-conservative prelate in Kosovo, was highly controversial and, at some point, could have caused a serious schism within the SOC.⁴⁷ Artemije’s view of Kosovo was almost eschatological. Let me illustrate this by a few of his quotations: “Kosovo is not about geography, but about ideology, it is an ideal... whoever thinks differently is only biologically a Serb, but not in the spirit.”⁴⁸ Or, again, Kosovo is “our spiritual and cultural cradle, our Serb Jerusalem. What Jerusalem is for the Jewish people, Kosovo and Metohija is for the Serbian people.”⁴⁹ Even the late Patriarch Irinej went so far as to exclaim that Kosovo independence would be a “sin,” and that this province should be “defended with blood.”⁵⁰ During the patriarchate of Pavle (2008), the SOC issued an Easter message that corresponded to the eschatological view of Bishop Artemije:

Kosovo and Metohija are not only about the Serbian territory. Above all, it is about spiritual being, because we used to be born with Kosovo and Metohija, we used to grow and live with it as individuals and as a people, we lived and died with the Kosovo covenant... this is why the question of Kosovo and Metohija is so vitally, psychologically, spiritually and mystically important for each and every one of us.⁵¹

⁴⁷ See Radić and Vukomanović, “Religion and Democracy,” 188–190, 203.

⁴⁸ Artemije Radosavljević, *Kosovo i Vidovdan* (Eparhija Raškoprizrenska, 2007), 7, 12.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Filip Ejodus and Jelena Subotić, “Kosovo as Serbia’s Sacred Space,” in *Politicization of Religion, the Power of Symbolism*, eds. Gorana Ognjenović and J. Jozelić (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2014), 169.

⁵⁰ Ejodus and Subotić, “Kosovo,” 170.

⁵¹ Ejodus and Subotić, “Kosovo,” 174.

Kosovo has therefore always been the most sensitive ecclesiastical, political and even “ontological” issue for the SOC. It is no wonder, then, that any bishop in charge of an eparchy in Kosovo assumes a distinct political role by his very jurisdiction. In the most recent period, Bishop Teodosije became known for his opposition to Serbian President Vučić’s proposal to negotiate ethnic demarcation lines between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo. Teodosije’s major concern was that the majority of Serbs living south of the Ibar River would have to leave their homes and their most sacred temples and monasteries, such as Pećka patrijaršija (a former seat of the Serbian Patriarchate), Visoki Dečani, Gračanica and Prizren. This, in fact, would represent a new instance of displacement of the population in the Balkans based solely on their ethnicity. Because of this opposition, coming from the ranks of the Kosovo Orthodox prelates (Teodosije, Sava Janjić), in the summer of 2018 an unprecedented political and media campaign was launched against them by the Serbian government and the president of Serbia himself. Bishop Teodosije appealed to the authorities in Belgrade and Priština, and to representatives of the international community concerning “the politically and morally irresponsible statements of politicians” on both sides, who speak of the “final solution” in the context of the “territorial division” and “demarcation between Serbs and Albanians,” thereby resulting in anxiety in the local population. Teodosije asked if there existed individuals who would have the historical and moral “courage” to instigate the exodus and calamity of tens of thousands innocent people. The Bishop believes that such a principle, which led to the tragedy of many innocent people being killed during the wars of the 1990s, is a continual threat to peace and stability even beyond the Western Balkans. Thus, the solution for all issues in Kosovo and Metohija could and should only be sought in the pursuit of peace, security for all citizens, particularly the minority ethnic and religious communities, in preservation of their spiritual and cultural heritage, historical identity and human and religious freedoms. Teodosije emphasized that his appeal did not mean an invitation to a frozen conflict, because the SOC is against all conflicts: “This is an invitation to a responsible and transparent continuation of the dialogue within the framework of stability of the region and the European continent, and also in line with all the relevant international charters and standards, including the UN Resolution 1244.”⁵²

⁵² “Vladika Teodosije: Podela Kosova vodi iseljavanju Srba i stradanju baštine,” *Politika*, July 25, 2018, <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/407943/Vladika-Teodosije-Podela-Kosova-vodi-iseljavanju-Srba-i-stradanju-bastine>.

Lastly, in May 2019, President Vučić visited the Serbian prelates during the unofficial session of the Holy Council of Bishops and, on that occasion, he criticized Teodosije for “sabotaging,” as it were, his policies concerning Kosovo. It is interesting that Bishop Maksim later regretted not being present at this meeting, where he would have defended his brother Teodosije from the president’s criticism. However, an unusually anxious debate with Vučić included some other Orthodox prelates, such as Grigorije, Joanikije, Jovan (Ćulibrk) and the late Metropolitan Amfilohije.⁵³ It became clear, I think, that the opposition coming from the ranks of the more outspoken bishops within the SOC has been directed against both the Serbian presidency (government) and the Holy Synod, presided over by Patriarch Irinej, and heavily influenced by the Bishop of Bačka Irinej (Bulović). Interestingly enough, the issues of the Serbian state policy regarding Kosovo and the administration of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology have been at the core of this, as yet unresolved, dispute. It therefore seems that a certain correlation could be detected between the two burning issues that severely burden the SOC today. The new voices among the Orthodox theologians (heard both at the Council of Bishops and at the Faculty of Theology) have been blocked, to a certain extent, by the Church’s hierarchy. The hierarchy opted for cooperation with the Serbian government, and the younger clerics were targeted from both directions: by President Vučić and by Patriarch Irinej. The controversy regarding the status of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology and the destiny of its proscribed professors thus appears as a litmus test for broader disagreements within the SOC, including the prospective solution of the Kosovo problem. The regular session of the Holy Council of Bishops, held in May 2021, was presided over, for the first time, by the new Serbian patriarch Porfirije. It was also an opportunity to settle at least some of the aspects of this unprecedented internal—both doctrinal and organizational—cleavage within the SOC.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let me provide several additional comments regarding the question posed in the title of this article. In the SOC, the distinction between a liberal and a conservative wing has traditionally been tackled in relation to the election of a new patriarch, or concerning the possible visit of the pope to Ser-

⁵³ Jelena Tasić, “Vučić pretio vladikama poverljivim papirima,” *Danas*, May 14, 2019, <https://www.danas.rs/drustvo/vucic-pretio-vladikama-poverljivim-papirima/>.

bia, whereby the bishops who are committed to ecumenism have usually been labeled as liberal. For example, when Patriarch Pavle was surprisingly elected in 1990, most of the commentators did not view him as a member of either a conservative or a liberal current. He was simply considered a modest monk who had spent most of his episcopate in Kosovo. On the other hand, his successor, Patriarch Irinej, was perceived, at least in some circles, as a moderate bishop. However, one should bear in mind that conservatism is the predominant feature in the SOC Sabor. The conservatives are openly against Serbia's accession to the EU and, hence criticize almost any political movement of this country towards the West. Accordingly, they are predominantly in favor of Russia and its Orthodox Church, and have pronounced eschatological and idealistic perceptions of Kosovo. In fact, one could probably speak of even three theological and ecclesiastical orientations in this context: Russian, Greek, and Serbian. The first significant post-World War II generation of Serbian bishops was educated in Athens. They were later appointed as professors at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology (Atanasije, Amfilohije, Irinej Bulović). Russian and Serbian schools are similar, especially concerning liturgical issues. Nonetheless, in their younger days, some of the "Greeks" turned out to be pro-Russian in their senior years (such as the case of the late Metropolitan Amfilohije).

Apart from their moderate, pro-European stance, which could probably be explained by these bishops' appointments in the Western diaspora, as the liberal current supports the modernization and gradual transformation of the Church, including a more independent, university- and not church-oriented, status of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology. The age of a bishop might be another indicator in this regard (for example, younger liberals and older conservatives), while another pointer is perhaps the region: Bosnian bishops are traditionally considered more conservative and even rightist in their political and ideological leanings. Finally, of no less importance are the former links of a bishop with the authorities in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina: Some of them were supporters of Milošević or Karadžić, whereas others were more in favor of the post-Milošević democratic governments.

As for the theologians who appealed against the creationist *Petition* in 2017, I would be inclined to place their liberalism in yet another context. Here, we speak of a predominantly younger generation of Serbian Orthodox professors of theology, mainly born in the 1970s and 1980s. I have already indicated that they intellectually came of age during the post-Milošević democratic period, which could have influenced their political and social upbringing. They are predominantly the millennials educated in modern schools, and at the post-2000 Uni-

versity of Belgrade. Darwin is part of their secular education, as Nikolaj and Justin are included in chapters in their theological curricula and literature. Some of them were active in the alternative educational projects (such as the regional peacebuilding and reconciliation programs of various CSOs) and, with their no small international experience, they are normally inclined towards ecumenical dialogue and tolerance. With the more pronounced, or at least tacit, support of bishops who predominantly serve in the Western diaspora, they do have all the necessary preconditions for nurturing their reformist and modernist outlooks in both theological and ecclesiastical matters. It remains open to see how deeply they are going to participate in the evolution of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the forthcoming decades.

Catholic Church in Croatia

Legal Framework and Social Frictions

Siniša Zrinščak and Frane Staničić

INTRODUCTION

Similarly to other post-communist countries, the position of churches in Croatia underwent a dramatic change in the twentieth century, exemplified by a largely privileged position in the period before World War II, a severely deprived position during communist times and again a privileged and welcome position since 1990. Such profound alterations were reflected in public debates in the early 1990s which, from the point of view of state-church relations, have been summarized as a dilemma between two possible models: “that of the United States and that of Western Europe, which is varied but basically unitary.”¹ At large, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe followed Western European norms and ideas, such as respect for religious freedom, respect for the autonomy of religious denomination and selective collaboration of the states with the churches.² However, the fact is that the gap between what is written in laws and what is happening in practice, albeit present everywhere, seems to be wider in post-communist Europe, and accompanied by some truly regressive developments with respect to guarantees of religious freedom.³ While there is plenty of evidence of that in scholarly literature, one aspect has not been systematically addressed in literature on state-church relations or religious freedom. As Miklós Tomka noted, the issue was not (or not only) which model to choose and how to implement it, but instead concerned different expectations about the position of church in

¹ Silvio Ferrari, “Conclusion. Church and State in Post-Communist Europe,” in *Law and Religion in Post-Communist Europe*, eds. Silvio Ferrari and W. Cole Durham Jr. (Leuven – Paris – Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2003): 411.

² Ferrari, “Conclusion,” 421. See also Siniša Zrinščak, “Church, State and Society in Post-Communist Europe,” in *Religion and the State. A Comparative Sociology*, eds. Jack Barbalet, Adam Possamai and Brian S. Turner (London: Anthem Press, 2011): 157–82.

³ Ferrari, “Conclusion,” 422–23.

society following the very specific position, where the religious sections of society and religious institutions had been during the communist rule. A mixture of various ideological positions and various social experiences, inherited and further strengthened in the early 1990s, conditioned debates on the churches and the religious policies advanced by the new political order.⁴ Thus, this chapter principally aims to reconsider the legal position of the Catholic Church (CC) in Croatia, and sociological data on its position from the point of view of memories of the past circulating in society in the present. The question is which elements of the past underlie and shape the new legal position of the church and all the debates surrounding it. Although the chapter is not based on a comprehensive analysis of narratives, we believe that a brief sketch of history helps us understand how history reworks and shapes the legal and social arrangements that have evolved during the post-communist period.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The section on the historical process of nation- and state-building describes the position of the Catholic Church in three distinct periods: the nineteenth century when Croatia was part of the Austrian and Austro-Hungarian Empire, the period from 1918–1945, in which Croatia experienced the so-called first Yugoslavia and the Second World War, and the communist period (1945–1990). A detailed description of the legal position of the Catholic Church is given in the next section, followed by an analysis of sociological data on religiosity and the image of churches in Croatia. The concluding part discusses the findings of this chapter.

CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE HISTORICAL PROCESS OF NATION- / STATE-BUILDING

19th-century legacy

In comparison with those of today, state-church relations in nineteenth-century Croatia, when Croatia was part of the Austrian Empire (Austro-Hungarian Empire from 1867), were much more intertwined. The CC was the “state” of religious community, and Catholicism was the state religion. Other religious communities were *religiones receptae*, like the Augsburg Protestants and Orthodox

4 Miklós Tomka, *Church, State and Society in Eastern Europe* (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2005): 128–30. See also Miklós Tomka, “Država i Crkva u Mađarskoj – novo ustrojstvo jednog odnosa,” in *Crkva i država u društvima u tranziciji*, ed. Ivan Grubišić (Split: HAU – Split, IPDI-Centar Split): 165–84.

churches which, despite enjoying all civil rights, had no privileges.⁵ Even more so, Protestant religious communities were banned up to 1859, with citizens belonging to these communities enjoying no civil or political rights in Croatia as the Croatian Parliament passed an act banning, within the borders of Croatia, all religions other than Catholicism. The status of Jews was regulated by the Act of 1729 of the Croatian Parliament, which denied Jews permanent residence and the right to own property, instead recognizing only their right to unlimited trade. During the rule of Joseph II (1780–1790), the *Toleranzpatent* was enacted. This Patent proclaimed religious tolerance: Catholicism was proclaimed the ruling faith, while other religions were tolerated. After the death of Joseph II, the position of religious communities in Croatia reverted to its former state.⁶ In 1855, the Monarchy signed a Concordat with the Holy See guaranteeing the CC the status of the state's official church,⁷ and in 1859, the Imperial Patent, which also entered into force in Croatia, equalized the legal status of Evangelical churches with that of the CC.⁸ However, the status of the CC as the privileged and dominant religious community was largely established by the Concordat of 1855, and was maintained throughout this period, although in the rest of the Monarchy this position of the CC did not outlast the Austro-Prussian war of 1866.⁹ Specifically, after 1868 and the Croato-Hungarian Compromise, Croatia gained autonomy in religious matters.¹⁰ Therefore, the position of religious communities was resolved through a set of new acts of the Croatian Parliament by 1916, when the Islamic community was legally recognized.

Throughout this period the Church performed many public duties. Since 1784, and with the enactment of the *Josefinische Gesetzsammlung* of February 20, the handling of state registries (births, deaths, marriages, religious conversion) was bestowed on religious communities, except in the case of Muslims, Nazarenes and Baptists, where the state authorities were competent.¹¹ Religious education was obligatory in all schools, and the competent church authorities had the exclusive right to implement it. In every elementary school with more than

5 Dalibor Čepulo, *Prava građana i moderne institucije, europska i hrvatska pravna tradicija*, (Zagreb: Pravni fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2003), 160, Frane Staničić, "The Legal Status of Religious Communities in Croatian Law," *Zbornik Pravnog fakulteta u Zagrebu* 64, no. 2 (2014): 226.

6 Staničić, "The Legal Status," 227.

7 Ivan Padjen, "Church and State in Croatia," in *Law and Religion in Post-Communist Europe*, eds. Silvio Ferrari and W. Cole Durham Jr. (Leuven – Paris – Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2003), 59.

8 Čepulo, *Prava građana*, 165, Staničić, "The Legal Status," 227.

9 Staničić, "The Legal Status," 228.

10 Mirela Krešić, "The Matrimonial Law of the Muslims of Croatia, 1916–41," in *Crossing Legal Cultures*, eds. L. Beck Varela, P. Gutierrez Vega, and A. Spinosa (Munich: Meidenbauer, 2009): 368.

11 Staničić, "The Legal Status," 229.

five teachers, there had to be one catechist. Church authorities had the right to information about morality and religiosity in all schools, as well as the right to demand that the Land Government adopt specified solutions in the case of any noted deficiencies. Religious studies were a mandatory subject from the first to the eighth grade of secondary school, with two hours of classes per week.¹² Therefore, it is safe to surmise that the CC enjoyed a privileged position throughout the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. This would change dramatically after the dissolution of Austria-Hungary in 1918.

1918–1945

On December 1, 1918, a new state was forged, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SCS/Kingdom of Yugoslavia). One of the most important questions and a problem encumbering the relations between the state and churches, and between the different nations living in the SCS, was the status of religious communities. More specifically, with three major religions—Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Islam—the SCS presented a complex religious picture. Prior to this period, the CC had enjoyed a privileged position in Croatia, while Orthodoxy had been, constitutionally, the state faith in the previous Kingdom of Serbia. One of the main issues concerning the 1917 Corfu Declaration was the equality of religions,¹³ with the pivotal political leader of the Serbs, Nikola Pašić, arguing that the Constitution of the Kingdom of Serbia should become the Constitution of the SCS, or that it should at least provide a starting point for the drafting of the new Constitution.¹⁴ As this was unacceptable to the CC and all the other religious communities, Regent Aleksandar issued a Proclamation in 1919, guaranteeing equality of all religions in the SCS and, more importantly, denying the status of the state religion to the Orthodox Church. Religious relations were important enough to merit a special Ministry of Faith, which was established on December 7, 1918. Yet another issue burdened state-church relations, as the state undertook agrarian reforms in which the churches, especially the CC and the newly established (1920) Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC),¹⁵ suffered the loss of a lot of real estate.

¹² Staničić, "The Legal Status," 230.

¹³ Sabrina P. Ramet, *Tri Jugoslavije – izgradnja države i izazov legitimacije: 1918.-2005.* (Zagreb: Golden Marketing/Tehnička knjiga, 2009), 83.

¹⁴ Staničić, "The Legal Status," 231.

¹⁵ Ramet, *Tri Jugoslavije*, 89.

Still, the state retained a special relationship with the SOC, while attempting to undermine the strength of the CC, for example, by supporting the Old Catholic Church that arose after the First Vatican Council and had a number of followers in Croatia,¹⁶ emphasizing the Vatican's support of fascism, aiding the proselytism of the SOC and, of course, withholding state funds. A telling example is that, although in 1921 Catholics made up 39.9% of the population and Orthodox Christians 46.7%, the Ministry of Faith allocated 141,246,426 krunas to the SOC and only 10,903,993 krunas to the CC.¹⁷

When the 1921 Constitution was finally enacted, it abandoned the system of state churches, but did not separate religious communities from the state. They gained the status of public institutions, enjoying a special position and special privileges and having the authority to perform certain public law duties, which was similar to the legal regulation in Croatia before 1918 (registries, marriages). The Constitution recognized "adopted" and "legally recognized" religious communities. The former were those that were legally recognized in any part of the SCS prior to December 1, 1918. The latter were those that in the future would be recognized by law.¹⁸ During the dictatorship of King Aleksandar (1929–1931), special acts regulating the status of all registered religious communities were passed—except for the CC. Its status was regulated by four agreements: the Concordat of 1855, the Concordat of 1881 (for Bosnia and Herzegovina), the Concordat of 1886 (between the Holy See and Montenegro) and the Concordat of 1914 (between the Holy See and the Kingdom of Serbia). Nonetheless, this status it enjoyed did not satisfy the CC, which demanded that a new Concordat be concluded as soon as possible.¹⁹ However, the SOC was fiercely opposed to the signing of a new Concordat and consequently instigated the Concordat crisis, which ended in a failure to regulate the status of the CC. The SOC was able to spur protests, ultimately preventing the government from concluding a Concordat with the Holy See, which was an enormous political blunder that the government was aware of, but was unable to avoid.²⁰ In turn, this resulted in a deterioration of relations between the state and the CC.

¹⁶ Ivo Goldstein, *Hrvatska 1918.-2008.* (Zagreb: Novi Liber, 2008), 159.

¹⁷ Ramet, *Tri Jugoslavije*, 139, similar in Goldstein, *Hrvatska*, 159.

¹⁸ Staničić, "The Legal Status," 233.

¹⁹ Hrvoje Matković, *Povijest Jugoslavije* (Zagreb: Naklada Pavičić, 2003): 123-125, Ramet, *Tri Jugoslavije*, 141, Staničić, "The Legal Status," 234.

²⁰ Staničić, "The Legal Status," 236.

1945–1990

The period of socialist Yugoslavia marks the most turbulent time in state-church relations throughout the entire history of Croatia. For the most part, the stage for conflictual relations had already been set.²¹ Besides the previously discussed difficult relationship with the SCS/Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the CC had reservations regarding any kind of “South-Slav state community,” primarily due to its strong links with the Croatian people. The role of the CC during World War II, and its relationship with the so-called Independent State of Croatia (NDH), were also issues overwhelmingly exploited by the new political regime.²² The opinions of the Church about the economy and society, the principles of state organization and the fundamental determinants of public life (private property, public authority, workers’ questions) had been determined and set in the doctrinal documents of the Church, as were its views on the two ideologies of that time—liberalism, and socialism/communism.²³ On the other hand, Marxist theory viewed religion as a socio-historical phenomenon that could not be separated from class struggle. In their program, Yugoslav communists pointed out that religion “which is born and maintained under certain historical conditions of the material and spiritual backwardness of man cannot be eradicated by administrative means, but can be reduced instead through the constant development of socialist social relations, expansion of scientific knowledge and a general raising of social awareness, by which man’s real freedom is progressively achieved and the material-spiritual conditions for various misconceptions and illusions are eliminated.”²⁴ Religion was seen as a backwater, an unevolved social awareness which could (and should!) be combated by an ideological struggle and the socialist development of humanity.²⁵ The communist regime treated believers and the Church as a potential threat, a conservative and reactionary opposition core which could endanger the development of socialism and self-government.²⁶

21 Siniša Zrinščak, “Odnos Crkve i države u Hrvatskoj od 1945. do 1990. godine,” in *Religija i sloboda, religijska situacija u Hrvatskoj 1945-1990*, Ivan Grubišić et al. (Split: Institut za primijenjena društvena istraživanja, 1993): 111.

22 Zrinščak, “Odnos Crkve,” 111–13.

23 Zrinščak, “Odnos Crkve,” 112.

24 Program of the Yugoslav Communist Party, according to: Ivan Grubišić, “Politički sustav i građani vjernici,” in *Religija i sloboda, religijska situacija u Hrvatskoj 1945-1990*, Ivan Grubišić et al. (Split: Institut za primijenjena društvena istraživanja, 1993): 103, Zrinščak, “Odnos Crkve,” 114.

25 Zrinščak, “Odnos Crkve,” 115. See also: Siniša Zrinščak, “Religion and Society in Tension in Croatia: Social and Legal Status of Religious Communities,” in *Regulating Religion. Case Studies from Around the Globe*, edited by James T. Richardson (New York: Kluwer Academic, Plenum Publishers): 299–318.

26 Grubišić, “Politički sustav,” 104.

Furthermore, atheism as a vital part of Marxism always remained a necessary condition for party affiliation and, as such, a condition of socially desirable and promotional behavior.²⁷

From the legal point of view, the status of religious communities was, at first glance, regulated in quite a liberal manner. All federal and republic-level constitutions guaranteed religious freedom. The first Yugoslav Constitution of 1946 prescribed in Art. 25, that "to the citizens, freedom of conscience and freedom of religion are guaranteed." Also, the state and religion were for the first time legally separated. All religious communities were equal and new ones could be founded freely without having to follow any formal procedure.²⁸ For the first time, religious communities lost their prerogatives regarding state registries and marriages, while religious teaching in schools was abolished/prohibited. Also, they came to be faced for the first time with self-financing as the only or, at best, predominant way of financing.

Despite this legal framework, the reality was, as has already been indicated, substantially different. This period was marked by the persecution of "religious believers generally, and the CC specifically,"²⁹ especially in the early period. Another agrarian reform was carried out, and the Church lost most of its earthly possessions. It was not allowed to own real estate until 1963, and the new Constitution explicitly prescribed that "religious communities can own real estate within the boundaries set by federal law" (Art. 46).

Hence, all religious communities had to accustom themselves to an as yet unforeseen situation. No religious community had privileged status, as there were almost no state subsidies, and the state was, in the early period at least, openly hostile to them. Priests were prosecuted and incarcerated (the most striking example being that of Archbishop Stepinac, who was made Cardinal during his incarceration). It was tremendously difficult to erect new religious buildings, and religious newspapers were occasionally banned and confiscated. It is safe to say that the actual position of religious communities in socialist Yugoslavia was such that they were discriminated against, which was in direct opposition to the legally established system.

After 1966, the situation changed and the government and religious communities, especially the CC, attained a certain level of coexistence.³⁰ The communist period can be divided into two sub-periods: the sub-period of open and

²⁷ Zrinščak, "Odnos Crkve," 115.

²⁸ Staničić, "The Legal Status," 236.

²⁹ Padjen, "Church and State in Croatia," 59.

³⁰ Padjen, "Church and State in Croatia," 239.

extreme opposition between the state and Church (1945–1966), and the sub-period of coexistence and careful cooperation after 1966, including the signing of the Protocol on Negotiations between the Representatives of the Government of Yugoslavia and the Representatives of the Holy See, followed by the establishment of full diplomatic relations in 1970.³¹ Still, the basic hostile relations remained unchanged until the very end of the communist regime.

LEGAL POSITION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH SINCE 1990

Social and legal background

Once again, the stage had already been set. The simple fact that communism collapsed created conditions in which the communist legacy came to be not only abandoned, but also fully despised. Thus, religion immediately became a very welcome social fact and the CC a much appreciated social institution. In addition, this new position of the CC was further strengthened by the process of nation- and state-building, in which it acted as the main legitimating factor.³² Although going fully back in terms of regulating its social position was not an option, social debates and new legal arrangements reflected a wide range of positions and expectations.

The new Constitution, which opted for the principle of state-church separation, was passed in 1990. According to the Constitution, all religious communities (RCs) are equal before the law and there is no state church.³³ However, the framers of the Constitution did not choose what is known as the “French” model of state-church relations—the model of absolute separation, or, as Brugger calls it, the model of strict separation in theory and practice.³⁴ The Constitution does stipulate that “all religious communities shall be equal before the law and separate from the state” (Art. 41/1), but it also stipulates that all religious communities “shall enjoy the protection and assistance of the state in their activities” (Art. 41/2). The state and the RCs form separate, autonomous entities

³¹ Zrinščak, “Odnos Crkve,” 115–18, 121.

³² Vanja Ivan Savić, “State and Church in Croatia,” in *State and Church in the European Union*, ed. Gerhard Robbers (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2019), 251.

³³ Savić, “State and Church in Croatia,” 244.

³⁴ Winfried Brugger, “On the Relationship between Structural Norms and Constitutional Rights in Church-State-Relations,” in *Religion in the Public Sphere: A Comparative Analysis of German, Israeli, American and International Law* ed. Winfried Brugger and Michael Karayanni (Springer: Berlin – Heidelberg – New York, 2007), 31.

that coexist in the Croatian legal order, but the RCs have the right to expect the protection and assistance of the state, as this constitutes a legally binding obligation of the state. This line of reasoning was confirmed in a recent decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Croatia (Court) U-I-4504/2010 of December 18, 2018³⁵ on the conformity with the Constitution of Article 13 of the Act on the Legal Status of Religious Communities (ALSRC)³⁶. The Court pointed out that it:

[had] first establishe[d] that the assertions made in the proposing party's proposal [could] in essence be reduced to the position according to which only the absolute separation of state and church [was] in conformity with the Constitution, regardless of any other circumstances, because according to their understanding any other arrangement [was] contrary to the constitutional principle of separation of religious communities from the state.

The Constitutional Court further note[d] "that such a position [was] based on an isolated interpretation of Article 41, paragraph 1, of the Constitution which [did] not take into consideration paragraph 2 of the same Article of the Constitution. Specifically, according to Article 41, paragraph 2, of the Constitution, religious communities enjoy[ed] the protection and assistance of the state in their activities. It follow[ed] from this provision that the separation of state and religious communities [was] not absolute." The Court also referred to one previous decision, in which it established that the separation was a two-way barrier.³⁷

This barrier preserves the autonomy of religious communities with respect to the state, but also has the task of preventing them from interfering in state business.³⁸ Although this determination by the Constitutional Court is not entirely precise and determined, we can agree that it would represent an unconstitutional arrangement were a RC to supersede the "civil" legal system with its own; in other words, were a religious community, in certain or all questions, to supersede the state, or *vice versa*.³⁹

35 Available at www.usud.hr (December 19, 2020), 9.

36 Narodne novine (Official Gazette) no. 83/2002.

37 Tomislav Sokol, and Frane Staničić, "Pravni položaj Katoličke Crkve kao gospodarskog subjekta u pravu Europske unije i hrvatskom pravu," *Zbornik pravnog fakulteta u Zagrebu* 68, no. 1 (2018): 44.

38 Matija Miloš, "Hrvatske vjerske zajednice u (protu)većinskoj prizmi svjetovne države," *Zbornik Pravnog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Rijeci* 35, no. 2 (2014): 660.

39 Marko Petrak and Frane Staničić, *Katolička Crkva, vjerske zajednice i hrvatski pravni sustav* (Zagreb: Novi informator, 2020), 35. As Savić states, an absolute, 100% pure, separation of church and state is not possible even in countries which embraced the French model of separation. See in Savić, "State," 246. Even in France this model is not 100% pure, as stated by Bauberot: It also contains exceptions

The said constitutional provision and social circumstances allowed for a new legal regulation of the position of the Catholic Church and this before a general act, the ALSRC, was passed in 2002. As in the specific case of the CC, this legal arrangement is based on the treaties signed between two subjects of international law (Croatia and the Holy See), Article 141 of the Constitution regarding the importance of international treaties being relevant. Under this Article, all international treaties which are in force are in the hierarchy of sources of law above domestic law. As Croatia signed four treaties with the Holy See, these establish the present legal position of the CC in Croatia. Because of their place in the hierarchy of sources of law, it is safe to say that the CC has an “above-law” status within the Croatian legal order.

Treaties

In 1996 and 1998, four treaties were signed and ratified by the Croatian Parliament: 1) the Treaty on the Spiritual Care of Catholic Believers Who Are Members of the Armed and Police Forces of the Republic of Croatia,⁴⁰ 2) the Treaty on Co-operation in Education and Culture,⁴¹ 3) the Treaty on Legal Affairs,⁴² and 4) the Treaty on Economic Affairs.⁴³ For the purpose of implementing these four treaties, numerous other documents were signed between the Croatian Episcopal Conference (CEC) and the Government, or its ministries and public institutions.⁴⁴ These are mostly not available for public consumption. Still, most of them can be found in a book published by the CEC.⁴⁵ Since their ratification, they are the primary source of regulation of the CC’s legal status.

The most important among these treaties is the Treaty on Legal Affairs, which gives the CC a somewhat unique status.⁴⁶ One of the more important provisions

based on tradition (the example of this being the Alsace-Moselle department in which the state funds religious instruction for three recognized religions since a concord with the Holy See is still in force there). Jean Baubérot, “La laïcité française: républicaine, indivisible, démocratique et sociale,” *Cités* 52, no. 4 (2012): 12.

40 *Ugovor o dušobrižništvu katoličkih vjernika, pripadnika oružanih snaga i redarstvenih službi Republike Hrvatske*, Narodne novine: Dodatak međunarodni ugovori (Official Gazette: International Contracts) no. 2/97.

41 *Ugovor o suradnji u području odgoja i kulture*, Narodne novine: Dodatak međunarodni ugovori (Official Gazette: International Contracts) no. 2/97.

42 *Ugovor o pravnim pitanjima*, Narodne novine: Dodatak međunarodni ugovori (Official Gazette: International Contracts) no. 3/97.

43 *Ugovor o gospodarskim pitanjima*, Narodne novine: Dodatak međunarodni ugovori (Official Gazette: International Contracts) no. 18/98.

44 See in Petrak and Staničić, *Katolička Crkva*, 74, 75.

45 *Ugovori između Svete Stolice i Republike Hrvatske* (Zagreb: Hrvatska biskupska konferencija, 2001).

46 Staničić, “The Legal Status,” 246.

of this Treaty is Art. 2, which recognizes the public-law personality of the CC, and its legal persons as regulated by canon law. These legal persons are registered in a special state registry.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the CC enjoys absolute freedom regarding its inner organization (Art. 5) and its external communications (Art. 3). A disputable provision is Art. 8/1 which prescribes that, in the case of criminal investigations into the clergy, court authorities must *first* inform the appropriate church authorities that an investigation is to be conducted. This provision confers a sort of quasi-immunity on the clergy.⁴⁸ However, a constitutionally correct interpretation of Art. 8/1 would be that such information is obligatory *after* the criminal proceedings have already been instituted, i.e., after the defendant has already been informed of this.⁴⁹ The inviolability of confessional secrecy is guaranteed (Art. 8/2). Sunday was proclaimed a holiday, and seven other holidays were also established (Art. 9). Yet, although certain governments tried to make Sunday an official holiday, the Constitutional Court abolished such laws in 2004⁵⁰ and 2009.⁵¹ However, in 2024, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Croatia, somewhat surprisingly, ruled that the latest amendments to the Trade Act, which mostly prohibit work on Sundays in trade and service activities, are not inconsistent with the Constitution. Therefore, from July 2023, Sunday is a non-working day in trade and service industries.⁵² Marriages conducted before the clergy (canon marriages) were made equal to civil marriages provided that there were no barriers to such unions, as laid down in the Family Act (Art. 13). Other provisions granted the CC the rights to found educational institutions at every level of education (Art. 15), and to provide spiritual care to persons in hospitals, prisons, etc. (Art. 16), while believers were allowed to freely form religious associations (Art. 14). Also provided was the right of CC institutions serving the common good to receive state aid, the amount of such aid having to be agreed upon between the competent bodies of the state and the CC (Art. 17/4).⁵³

The Treaty on Economic Affairs gives the CC the right to receive charitable contributions and donations from believers without their being subject to Croatia's tax rules (Art. 1). Furthermore, the state undertook to subsidize the CC

47 Staničić, "The Legal Status," 246.

48 Staničić, "The Legal Status," 247.

49 See in Marko Pleić, and Ivana Vukušić, "Neka pitanja suradnje države i Katoličke Crkve u području kaznenog prava," *Zbornik radova Pravnog fakulteta u Splitu*, 57, no. 3 (2020): 770, Petrak and Staničić, *Katolička Crkva*, 113.

50 See decision U-I/3824/2003 from April 28, 2004, *Narodne novine* (Official Gazette) no. 55/2004.

51 See decision U-I/642/2009 from June 19, 2009, *Narodne novine* (Official Gazette) no. 76/2009.

52 See decision U-I-3291/2023 and others from February 6, 2024, *Narodne novine* (Official Gazette) no. 21/2024.

53 Staničić, "The Legal Status," 247.

(Art. 6/2). This system of state funding of the CC is facing strong criticism. Despite this being the subject of numerous discussions, the state never made an effort to change this system of funding.⁵⁴ Additionally, the Church was granted the right to the return in kind of the property seized during the communist era (Art. 3), and where this was not possible, an appropriate substitute property or an appropriate amount of money was to be given instead (Arts. 3, 4).

The Treaty on Co-operation in Education and Culture guarantees the provision of confessional religious education in all public schools and preschool institutions as a “mandatory” course for all those who choose it under the same conditions as those applicable to other mandatory courses.⁵⁵ Additionally, it provides that the educational system shall take into account the “values of Christian ethics” (Art. 1/2,3). This provision also triggered criticism. Contrary to the interpretation according to which the state is obliged to create a “Christian” educational system, the argument is put forward that such values should be taken into account only where practicable and/or possible.⁵⁶ All in all, there are many tensions in Croatia’s public sphere regarding whether or not confessional religious education should be taught in public schools.⁵⁷ One of the arguments in favor of this is that all teachers of confessional religious education must be “qualified.” This means that they must be, in the opinion of the Church authorities, suitable for appointment. Suitability is demonstrated by the issuing to the person in question of a “*missio canonical*,” which is issued and revoked by the local bishop. If revoked, such a teacher loses employment, which was confirmed as lawful by the ECtHR in *Travaš v. Croatia*.⁵⁸ Teachers are employees of the state (Art. 3/3), and they must also abide by all Croatian laws and regulations (Art. 7/2). According to the 1999 Agreement between the Government and the CEC, all programs, textbooks and didactic materials are to be drafted by the CEC and approved by the state. The costs are to be borne by the state.⁵⁹ The CC is authorized to establish all kinds of schools and preschool institutions, and to govern them in accordance with canon law and Croatian law (Art. 8/1). The state also funds the Catholic faculties in Zagreb, Split, Rijeka, and Đakovo (Art. 10/2) and the Cro-

⁵⁴ Staničić, “The Legal Status,” 248.

⁵⁵ Petrak and Staničić, *Katolička Crkva*, 72.

⁵⁶ Frane Staničić, “Treba li nam revizija ugovora sa Svetom Stolicom?”, *Zbornik Pravnog fakulteta u Zagrebu* 68 no. 3-4 (2018): 403; Petrak and Staničić, *Katolička Crkva*, 146, 147.

⁵⁷ Siniša Zrinščak, Dinka Marinović Jerolimov, Ankica Marinović and Branko Ančić, “Church and State in Croatia: Legal Framework, Religious Instruction and Social Expectations,” in *Religion and Politics in Post-Socialist Southeastern Europe*, ed. Sabrina Ramet (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 138–45.

⁵⁸ Case of *Travaš v. Croatia*, no. 75581/13, October 4, 2016.

⁵⁹ Petrak and Staničić, *Katolička Crkva*, 72.

atian Catholic University, which was established in 2006.⁶⁰ The state agreed to allow the Church access to state television and radio (Art. 12/1-3), and there are many religious broadcasts and broadcasts covering religious topics on Croatian Television and Radio, with the Sunday Mass being regularly broadcast on both radio and TV.⁶¹ Also, the state conceded to fund systematically the restoration and preservation of religious cultural heritage monuments and artworks in the possession of the Church (Art. 13/4).

The Treaty on the Spiritual Care of Catholic Believers Who Are Members of the Armed and Police Forces of the Republic of Croatia consists of only 12 Articles. It provides for: 1) the establishment of the Military Ordinariate and the appointment of the military ordinarius (Arts. 1-2); 2) the legal status and duties and responsibilities of military chaplains, assistants and associates of the military ordinarius (Arts. 4, 6-7); 3) which persons are under the authority of the military ordinarius (Art 5), and 4) the way in which the Military Ordinariate and military chaplains are to be funded and material costs covered (Art. 9). The military ordinarius is a member of the CEC and is appointed by the Pope, the Pope being required to inform the Government of the appointment *ex ante*.⁶²

RELIGION IN CROATIA: TWO OPPOSING SOCIAL IMAGES?

If and how the legal position of the CC is borne out by its public image is a matter of both sociological data and their interpretation. Often, the main argument in favor of the current legal arrangements is the high percentage of those belonging to the CC.⁶³ However, the social reality is more complex.

There is no denying the truth that religiosity is a prominent social fact. The 2011 Census data confirm that religious belonging is widespread.⁶⁴ That year, 86.28% of citizens declared belonging to the CC, 4.44% to the SOC, 1.47% to the Islamic Community and 0.77% to other religions. A total of 4.57% opted for the categories of agnostics and skeptics, or non-religious or atheists. Although

⁶⁰ Petrak and Staničić, *Katolička Crkva*, 72.

⁶¹ Savić, "State and Church in Croatia," 255.

⁶² Petrak and Staničić, *Katolička Crkva*, 71.

⁶³ Savić, "State and Church in Croatia," 239.

⁶⁴ See Popis stanovništva, kućanstava i stanova 2011. Stanovništvo prema državljanstvu, narodnosti, vjeri i materinskom jeziku (Census of Population, Households and Dwellings. Population by Citizenship, Ethnicity, Religion and Mother Tongue), Statistička izvješća (Statistical Reports), Zagreb: Državni zavod za statistiku (Croatian Bureau of Statistics), 2013, available at: <https://web.dzs.hr/Hrv/census-es/census2011/censuslogo.htm>.

the more detailed sociological data presented in Table 1 reveal a slight decline over the period of almost 20 years, the degree of religiosity within Croatian society is, comparatively speaking, still high.⁶⁵

Table 1: Religious image of Croatia according to the European Value Research, 1999–2017⁶⁶

	1999	2008	2017
Belonging to religious communities	88.7%	82.3%	82.1%
Religious self-identification – persons who identified themselves as religious persons	79.9%	77.8%	78.3%
Importance of religion in life – very important and important	77.2%	70.3%	63.9%
Religious service attendance – at least once a month	52.5%	40.5%	34.9
Confidence in Church – a great deal and quite a lot	62.8%	52.4%	31.1%

Interestingly, the data show a change in indicators usually termed “church religiosity,” as opposed to indicators understood as “personal religiosity.” The indicators of religious service attendance and confidence in the church declined noticeably, whereas the indicator of belonging to religious communities decreased only marginally. Conversely, the indicators of religious self-identification, prayer outside church services and religion providing comfort and strength have remained stable, while the indicator of the importance of religion in life experienced a slight decline.

The dynamics between church and personal religiosity are intriguing, in particular with respect to future trends. According to the privatization or invisible religion theory, a high personal religiosity can persist over time despite a decline

⁶⁵ The 2021 Census confirmed that religious belonging is still widespread. That year, 78.9% declared belonging to the CC, 3.32% to the SOC, 1.32% to the Islamic Community, 4.83 % declared “as other Christians.” A total of 4.71% opted for the categories of agnostics and ckeptics, and non-religious or atheist. Therefore, there were no significant changes in comparison to the 2011 Census. See *Konačni rezultati (Final Results) Državni zavod za statistiku (Croatian Bureau of Statistics)*, available at: https://dzs.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/Popis%202021/PDF/Popis_2021_konacni_rezultati.pdf.

⁶⁶ Krunoslav Nikodem and Siniša Zrinščak, “Između distancirane crkvenosti i intenzivne osobne religioznosti: Religijske promjene u hrvatskom društvu od 1999. do 2018. Godine,” *Društvena istraživanja* 28, no. 2 (2019): 371–90; Krunoslav Nikodem and Siniša Zrinščak, “Religioznost, nacionalni identitet i političke orijentacije u hrvatskom društvu,” in *Uz vjerovab, zato besjedim (2 Kor 4,13). Zbornik u čast Prof. dr. sc. Josipa Balobana povodom 70. godine života*, ed. Josip Šimunović and Silvija Migles (Zagreb: KBF Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, Kršćanska sadašnjost, 2019): 431–49.

in church religiosity.⁶⁷ Not only is this being constantly rejected by the different variants of the secularization approach, but available data throw into question the idea of a high degree of independence between the two dimensions of religiosity.⁶⁸ The decline in church attendance was rather significant in the period from 1999 to 2017, and resulted in the emergence of two very distinct groups, one consisting of strong and committed believers scoring high on both church and personal religiosity, and the other comprising distant believers. A more profound analysis that would determine whether or not the category of distant believers is a consistent one and how it scores on the other dimensions of religiosity is needed, but the relevant point to be made is that 40.5% of the persons interviewed in 2017 said they attended religious services rarely or never.⁶⁹ The gap between these two categories of believers has been further conditioned by the fact that the link between higher degrees of religiosity, on the one hand, and right-wing political orientation and national pride, on the other, became very visible in 2017, compared to 1999 and 2008 research data.⁷⁰

These data shed more light on the already known fact that a high religiosity coexists with a social distance from the CC as an institution and hesitancy towards the political involvement of the CC. An analysis based on the various data from the late 1990s and 2000s showed that people expected social engagement from the churches, but explicitly rejected their political involvement.⁷¹ Moreover, this rejection (based, e.g., on questions whether religious leaders should influence people's vote or whether religious leaders should influence the government) was not only very high in Croatia (84.6% and 80.5%, respectively), but was higher in Croatia (and Slovenia) than in Slovakia or the Czech Republic, the other countries included in the analysis.

More recent comparative data reveal that the statement that religion should be separated from the government is supported by approximately 70-80% of respondents in Scandinavian countries, but also in some post-communist countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland,

67 Thomas Luckmann, *La religione invisibile* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1967), Grace Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

68 This, however, does not mean that there is a mechanical relation between these two dimensions. They are independent and highly related at the same time, and their relations are affected by a wide range of specific social factors.

69 Nikodem and Zrinščak, "Između," 383.

70 Nikodem and Zrinščak, "Religioznost," 447.

71 Branko Ančić and Siniša Zrinščak, "Religion in Central European Societies: Its Social Roles and People's Expectations." *Religion and Society in Central and Eastern Europe* 5, no. 1 (2012): 21-38.

and Croatia.⁷² While in the case of Scandinavian countries this is a reflection of the long-standing principle of two kingdoms, in some post-communist countries this is very probably an echo of the feeling that religions are too involved in politics. Data from Table 2 are quite illustrative of this. Note that Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Poland have the highest shares of those who think religions are too involved in politics. The percentages surpass 70% in these countries, while the median is only 39%. Among the countries analyzed, Croatia has the highest percentage of those who think that religions are too focused on money and power, followed closely by Poland and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Table 2: Statements on the social roles of religious institutions – those agreeing that religious institutions ...⁷³

	Bring people together and strengthen social bonds	Strengthen morality in society	Play an important role in helping the poor and needy	Focus too much on money and power	Focus too much on rules	Are too involved in politics
Georgia	73%	80%	70%	25%	55%	28%
Greece	66%	68%	59%	53%	53%	43%
Lithuania	63%	66%	50%	40%	43%	32%
Romania	69%	65%	61%	53%	41%	44%
Belarus	62%	64%	49%	20%	28%	21%
Russia	57%	62%	46%	39%	36%	37%
Ukraine	58%	61%	45%	42%	31%	36%
Moldova	56%	59%	49%	49%	42%	43%
Poland	54%	53%	52%	68%	58%	71%
Estonia	56%	52%	59%	28%	41%	20%
Hungary	51%	50%	57%	41%	47%	38%
Latvia	49%	50%	46%	40%	42%	27%
Bulgaria	49%	49%	35%	57%	40%	39%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	52%	47%	44%	66%	47%	71%
Croatia	51%	45%	53%	69%	55%	72%
Serbia	50%	45%	35%	59%	38%	55%
Czech R.	46%	40%	51%	55%	58%	42%
Armenia	36%	31%	35%	63%	37%	39%
MEDIAN	55%	53%	50%	51%	42%	39%

72 Pew Research Center, *Eastern and Western Europe Differ on Importance of Religion, Views on Minorities, and Key Social Issues* (Pew Research Center, 2018): 25

73 Pew Research Center, *Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe* (Pew Research Center, 2017), 94

CONCLUSION

The main goal of this chapter is to link the legal position of the CC to the historical background. As illustrated, the status of the CC and its “positioning” in social life and politics can be seen as a consequence of historical changes and the reactions of the CC to these changes. The CC’s privileged position in the nineteenth century, then its awkward coexistence within the SCS, followed by its painfully difficult position during the communist era, created a pattern for how the CC and key political actors would position themselves in the immediate post-1990 period. Because of the still vivid memories of its continuously deteriorating position, the CC welcomed the creation of an independent Croatian state as a unique historical opportunity to better its position. Moreover, the CC saw this as an opportunity to co-create a system in which its position and status would not be endangered in the future by various actors. The Treaties concluded with the Holy See were instruments by which today’s “above the law” position and funding of the CC were achieved in the late 1990s. This status of the CC is almost unchangeable, as all four treaties include the same stipulation: “In the event that one of the high contracting Parties considers that the circumstances in which this Treaty was signed have changed significantly, in a way it should be amended, that the contracting Party shall initiate appropriate negotiations.” This clearly means that in the event of non-agreement, the treaties cannot be changed unilaterally.⁷⁴

There has been a discussion on how to view the legal and social positions of the CC from the standpoint of state-church relations. If we proceed from the usual models of state-church relations (cooperation model, state-church model, separation model),⁷⁵ it is obvious that from both the legal (constitutional set-up and other legal arrangements) and social perspective (numerous links between religious and state organizations), Croatia belongs to the cooperation model.⁷⁶ As a result of Croatia’s history, but also due to the simple fact of majority/minority belonging, Croatia’s cooperation model privileges the CC, this being further strengthened by the fact that agreements were signed with the Holy See.⁷⁷ However, this does not mean that the other religions do not enjoy similar rights. It

74 Sokol and Staničić, “Pravni,” 47, Frane Staničić, “Treba,” 423, Petrak and Staničić, *Katolička Crkva*, 67.

75 Gerhard Robbers, “State and Church in the European Union,” in *State and Church in the European Union*, ed Gerhard Robbers (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2019): 677–89.

76 Robbers, “State and Church in the European Union.”

77 See, in more detail in Miloš, “Hrvatske,” 565–57 and Petrak and Staničić, *Katolička Crkva*, 53.

might even be argued that the aspiration of the CC to better and safeguard its position created an opportunity for the other RCs to achieve better statuses for themselves. The ALSRC passed in 2002 regulates the rights of RCs. It therefore enabled them to secure for themselves a legal position (regarding the level of attained rights) similar to that of the CC, which resulted in the signing of agreements between the state and the 19 other RCs that exist in Croatia.

Nevertheless, the group of European countries belonging to the cooperation model includes a wide range of different practices and different rights enjoyed by religious communities.⁷⁸ This is the point at which fierce debates start about whether specific legal arrangements and social practices correspond to, e.g., the constitutional and/or democratic principles of separation and equality, the pluralistic nature of contemporary societies or the need to promote tolerance and inclusiveness. While not denying the democratic and scientific relevance of such discussions, this chapter introduces another, thus far neglected angle concerning the relevance of sociological data on religiosity. Such data paint a complex picture, and reveal somewhat contradictory perceptions of religious institutions in Croatian society. On the basis of the sociological analysis briefly presented here, three points stand out as challenges facing further analysis. The first is the growing differentiation between highly religious and distant believers' sections of society. In the 1990s, during the turbulent times of nation- and state-building, Catholicism acted as a broad baldachin, whose role suppressed differences in how various sections of society look at the CC, and how they see their own position with respect to religious matters.⁷⁹ As this role of the CC diminished, and other processes occurred in the meantime (e.g. Europeanization, pluralization), differences in religiosity became more visible. The second point concerns the growing differentiation between a general rejection of the direct political role of religious institutions and leaders on the one hand, and the obvious political role of religions on the other, which can be seen in three dimensions. The first dimension concerns the fact that there exists a link between higher religiosity and right-wing political orientation. As a normative framework, religion is undeniably a source of a range of social and political standpoints. The second dimension arises from the growing influence of conservative social movements in Croatia using religion and religious values to normatively legitimize their public claims. The third dimension emerges from the numerous links between religious and

⁷⁸ Robbers, "State and Church in the European Union," 677–89.

⁷⁹ Gordan Črpić and Siniša Zrinščak, "Between Identity and Everyday Life: Religiosity in Croatian Society from the European Comparative Perspective," in *In Search of Identity: A Comparative Study of Values: Croatia and Europe*, ed. Josip Baloban (Zagreb: Golden marketing – Tehnička knjiga), 45–83.

state institutions. The mere presence of religions in the education or health and welfare sectors gives rise to confusion, in particular where the borders between what is social and what is political are not straightforward, or where there is no intention to make them clearer. The third and final point refers to the rather unfavorable image enjoyed by religious institutions, which, in the eyes of the public, are too focused on money, power and rules. Whether or not this reflects the present situation, or maybe yet another legacy, is a matter for further investigation, one which would also examine whether the “dark side” of history, the one mainly depicted here and legitimizing the new legal and social position of the CC, is the only memory the Croatians have inherited from the past.

The Slovene Roman Catholic Church Yesterday and Today¹

Jože Pirjevec

PROLOGUE

The ancestors of the Slovenes adopted Christianity toward the end of the first millennium CE, during the time of the Carolingian restoration of the Roman Empire. It was a lengthy and bloody process, but one that integrated this group of Southern Slavic tribes into the sphere of western European civilization. In fact, their area of settlement was under the pastoral care of three powerful church entities, each with its center in foreign territory: the Patriarchate of Aquileia in Friuli, the Bishopric of Salzburg, and the Bishopric of Brixen in South Tirol. Under circumstances contingent on a symbiosis between the Church and the feudal state, there was not much room for the development of Slovene culture, for there was no native nobility and hardly any bourgeoisie whose members were typically Germanized or Italianized during their social ascent. For the peasantry bound by vassalage to the local gentry, a prayer or a sermon in their language sufficed, as attested to by the Freising manuscripts—the first Slovene texts—written at the turn of the ninth century, and by a few rare fragments of preserved medieval writing. It was into this void, in which the Slovene population remained at the margins of European intellectual discourse, that in the first half of the sixteenth century Martin Luther's church reform entered the picture.²

There was a fortunate coincidence. The Trieste patrician Pietro Bonomo, who had long served as chancellor to Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I, returned to his hometown in his old age and installed himself as the town's bishop. He came armed with the experience of the Habsburg court and a European worldli-

¹ This work was supported by the Slovenian Research Agency [research project J6-9353], [research program P6-0272].

² Primož Simoniti, *Humanizem na Slovenskem* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1978).

ness that encompassed cultures from Moscow to Istanbul, with which the monarch had just started to establish contact. The Latin language was unsuitable for communication in either capital, whereas Slovene was useful as a link to the Russian and Serbian languages. In fact, the latter was widely spoken at the High Porte. It is no coincidence that the first diplomats whom the Emperor sent to the Russian and Ottoman capitals included noblemen from the Slovene ethnic area, whose mother tongues were German and Italian, but whose contact from an early age with servants and peasants at family mansions and estates resulted in knowledge of Slovene as well. Bonomo was one of them—we know that he was a member of the delegation appointed by Maximilian for talks with the Muscovite emissaries when they visited Innsbruck in the early sixteenth century. Upon his return to Trieste, Bonomo founded a school for promising novices in his Episcopal palace which was attended by Primož Trubar (1508–1586), a penniless youth from central Slovenia. As Trubar relates in his memoir, the bishop would acquaint his pupils with both ancient and contemporary humanist culture, reading to them and interpreting not only Virgil, but also Erasmus of Rotterdam, all the while using three languages: Latin, Italian, and Slovene. As he was not impervious to the reformation impulses coming from the German, Swiss, and Italian territories, he “infected” Trubar with them. The result of this twofold, linguistic and religious influence was fertile. Trubar soon became an apostle of Luther’s rebellion against the Roman Catholic Church and its corruption, as well as an initiator of a religious renewal among the Slovene population. With the help of local gentry and bourgeoisie, he laid the foundations for the Protestant Church in Carniola, the heart of Slovene lands, and after being forced into exile in Württemberg by the Catholic Counter-Reformation, he continued his work from there. Well aware of the significance of Guttenberg’s invention of the printing press, and in accordance with the Biblical precept “... every tongue shall confess to God,” he started writing and publishing religious books in Slovene and, with the help of his colleagues, managed to publish some 40 more or less extensive texts over the span of 40 years, including a translation of the Holy Bible.³ This work by Jurij Dalmatin, a disciple of Trubar, was a monumental achievement considering that a standard language had to be created from nothing, a language that would be capable of conveying all the ideological and Mediterranean wealth of the sacred scriptures. It represents the beginning of the intellectual ascent of the Slovene people. However, the Protestant movement in

³ Jože Pirjevec, *Parola e libro: Riforma protestante slovena del XVI sec., Beseda in knjiga: Slovenska protestantska reforma XVI. stoletja* (Trst-Trieste: Narodna in študijska knjižnica, 1989).

Habsburg hereditary lands was brutally suppressed by the Counter-Reformation as started by the Council of Trento (1545–1563).⁴ It only survived in the north-east of present day Slovenia, in the region of Prekmurje, once a part of the Kingdom of Hungary. Although the latter was also under Habsburg rule, it did not experience the kind of repression that occurred in the hereditary lands of this dynasty. The Magyar magnates were not so susceptible to the religious fervor of their “elected” King as the gentry of different principalities and other feudal entities that composed the variegated Habsburg puzzle. In Carniola and in the adjacent areas, Protestants were persecuted and banished at the hands of the Catholic clergy, their books going up in flames. It was not only books which were set afire: The symbolic acme of the victory of the Roman Catholic Church in this part of Europe was reached in 1595, when Peter Kupljenik, a Protestant pastor who would not be broken by years of imprisonment and torture at the hands of the Holy Inquisition, was burned at the stake in the Campo de’ Fiori square in Rome just a few years before the famous Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno.⁵

Over the following two centuries, the Roman Catholic Church had complete control over Slovene spiritual and intellectual life, although it could not totally eliminate the impact of Protestant publications. Above all was Dalmatin’s translation of the Bible, which remained confined to the use of the Catholic clergy for pastoral and liturgical purposes, but shaped their modest literary production per force. Although the Republic of Slovenia celebrates “Reformation Day” each October 31 as a national holiday, likely the only Catholic country to do so, it would be too much to say that the Protestant heritage has imprinted the successive political or mental development of the nation. Primož Trubar and his collaborators are remembered as creators of the Slovenian literary language and early heralds of a specific national identity, but were rediscovered by intellectuals and became popular only in the late nineteenth century. The lamentation of Ivan Cankar, the most famous Slovene novelist, who asserted that the Counter-Reformation forced into exile all those who had some courage, so that only servants remained in our land, “and we are sons of these servants,” was often quoted when things went wrong over the next decades.

There was another important turnaround in Slovene history at the close of the eighteenth century, when under the rule of Maria Theresa (1740–1780) the ideas of French Enlightenment and German Pre-Romanticism even reached the ob-

4 Peter Kovačič Peršin, *Duh inkvizicije: Slovenski katolicizem med restavracijo in prenovo* (Ljubljana: Društvo 2000), 234, 235.

5 Silvano Cavazza, Peter Kupljenik, *Una vicenda di frontiera/ Peter Kupljenik, Čezmejno dogajanja*, Isonzo/Soča, marzo, aprile, maggio, Gorizia, 2011.

scure Austrian province of Carniola. With one of her reforms, Maria Theresa introduced compulsory primary schools into her dominions, where children were taught in their mother tongue, conferring the role of educators on the priests, and thus further consolidating their social status. The successive ecclesiastical reforms enacted by her son Joseph II, who tried to subordinate the Church to the State and make it into an instrument of the secular authorities, additionally reinforced the idea of Catholic Integralism, which to this day governs the ideological horizon of the Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia. On the other hand, it promoted the sprouting of intellectual and political thought among a small group of secular personalities, gathered around a rich nobleman of Italo-Slovene origin, Baron Sigismud (Žiga) Zois. Impregnated with enlightenment ideas, he could be considered the father of the Slovene nation in political terms. The bipolarity and inevitable rivalry between the laic and ecclesiastic intelligentsia, which appeared at the end of the eighteenth and at the start of the nineteenth centuries from then on, bears his mark on Slovene social life. In the decades that followed, characterized by a rapid propagation of literacy among the peasant masses and the parallel rise of national awareness—especially during and after the revolutionary period of 1848–49—the Roman Catholic Church took on the role of the protector of the Habsburg monarchy in the face of liberal ideas, as well as that of the people's teacher and political leader. In this capacity, the Church accomplished a great deal of cultural work with the help of its well-educated clergy. Since the Slovenes were split among six hereditary provinces—Štajerska (Styria), Koroška (Carinthia), Kranjska (Carniola), Goriška (Gorizia), Tržaška (Trieste) and Istria—and were mostly peasants with scant political weight, for a long time the Church was the only structure within which they could ascend to the highest ranks of society. In accordance with Pope Pius IX, Emperor Franz Joseph appointed prelates of Slovene descent and national awareness to the seat of the Prince-Bishop of Gorizia, who was the head of a large metropolis that included the bishoprics of Ljubljana, Trieste and Koper. The dioceses of Maribor/Marburg, ethnically heterogeneous, much like those of Trst/Trieste and Koper/Capodistia, were also traditionally presided over by a series of Slovene bishops. Accordingly, for a long time the Church was the only institution representing and keeping the Slovene people together as a whole. But this structure began to waver as early as the second half of the nineteenth century, when a modest yet assertive bourgeoisie started emerging among the Slovenes, later followed by the working class. Under the impact of liberalism and socialism, both of these new classes tried to question the traditional social order, and thereby the hegemony of the clergy within it. Political pluralism began to flourish after 1860 in circum-

stances that forced Emperor Franz Joseph to adopt a constitution, as well as to convene a parliament in Vienna and legislative bodies in his crown lands. This sweeping political shift took the Roman Catholic Church by surprise, and it was a change with which the clergy were not able to come to terms. The most characteristic voice of its unease at the time was Anton Mahnič, a priest from Gorizia and later Bishop of the island of Krk, who in his newspaper *Rimski katoлик* (*The Roman Catholic*; 1888–1896) advocated the idea that only a Catholic could be a true Slovene, and that every true Slovene should be Catholic. According to him, there was apparently no place for liberals, let alone socialists, in the Slovene national community.⁶ Mahnič's radical and vocal preaching had a far reach, causing a drastic "division of spirits" (as the divorce between the partisans of the Church and their opponents were called) in society. It acquired violent verbal tones and fatally split the Slovene nation. However, it is fair to say that the marked integralism of the Catholic Church, which tried to maintain its dominant role in society, was not entirely conservative. Under the influence of German and Viennese thinkers, who became the harbingers of Christian social ideas in the late 19th century, and under the impact of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum novarum* (1891), a strong social movement emerged within Catholic ranks, headed by a priest, Janez Evangelist Krek, who turned out to be an extraordinary ideologue and manager. The success of his cooperatives and savings banks further contributed to the popularity of the Slovene People's Party (SLS), founded after the German model in 1892, which under the aegis of the Church developed into the principal political force among the Slovene peasant masses.⁷

Upon the outbreak of the First World War, the Slovene People's Party acted as an advocate of the Habsburg monarchy in the hope that the latter could be transformed to assume a "trialistic" character, i.e., that the two entities of which it had been comprised since 1867—Austria and Hungary—could be joined by a third, namely Yugoslavia. This would unite the Slovenes and Croats, as well as the Serbs and Bosnian Muslims, who had become subject to the Habsburgs over various historical periods. But towards the end of the war when it became increasingly obvious that the Austro-Hungarian monarchy could not survive, the idea of joining the Kingdom of Serbia, allied to the Entente, started to make its way even into the Slovene People's Party. There was confidence that under the

6 P. Kovačič Peršin, *Duh inkvizicije*, 149, 157–59, 241–42; Sabrina P. Ramet, *Nihil Obstat: Religion, Politics, and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia* (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 1998), 159.

7 Matjaž Ambrožič, ed., *Janez Evangelist Krek: Sto let pozneje (1917–2017)* (Ljubljana: Teološka fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani, Znanstvena knjižnica 64, Ljubljana, 2018).

reign of the Karadjordjević dynasty, Slovenes and Croats would be saved from a victorious Italy, that wanted to annex Slovene and Croat territories in the Littoral area and Istria in the name of imperial ambition. Thus, on December 1, 1918, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SHS) was hastily formed. The peoples constituting it were equal on paper, but in truth, the state power was held by Serbia, which was the largest component, though economically and culturally less developed than the other two. However, the creation of the Kingdom SHS could not protect the Slovenes from the appetites of Italy, which with the Treaty of Rapallo, signed in November 1920, succeeded in obtaining one-third of the territory of Slovenia, the former Austrian Littoral (Primorska), and approximately one-fourth of its population. Consequently, after WWI the Slovenes found themselves in as tragic a situation as ever before. They were split between two hostile states, the Kingdom of SHS (later renamed Yugoslavia) and Italy, had a relatively strong ethnic minority in Austrian Carinthia and were dependent on the center of power—Belgrade—more alien to them than Vienna had been in the past. From the beginning, the Italians came to the formerly Austrian Littoral, renamed Julian Venetia, with the intention of assimilating the “alloglot” populations as soon as possible. When Fascism rose to power in 1922, this proposal translated into state violence in the form of the dissolution of all Slovene cultural and economic institutions, the compulsory Italianization of Slovene names and surnames and a ban on the use of the Slovene language, even in church. In circumstances of such terror, against which even Pope Benedict XV protested, the Slovene clergy once again assumed the role of national defender. With its secret organization—“Council of Priests of St. Paul”—it strove to oppose the Fascist regime, and managed to preserve at least a spark of Slovene cultural and intellectual life in the subjugated area.⁸

Meanwhile, in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Roman Catholic Church found itself in a context completely different from that in which it had existed in the Habsburg monarchy. While the latter had been markedly Catholic, the Kingdom SHS had a pluri-religious character with a Serbian Orthodox Church, which considered itself the guardian of the dominant nationality. At a time when the theory was in vogue that Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were only different “tribes” of one and the same people, who had grown apart due to unfavorable historical circumstances, but should be culturally and linguistically united again, the Catholic Church took a stand against the siren call of Yugoslav unity. This stance ensured the 1920 victory of the People’s Party in the elections for the

8 Egon Pelikan, *Tone Kralj in prostor meje* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2017).

constituent assembly, and reaffirmed the Church's role as the interpreter of national identity and culture. However, it should be stated that, unlike the Croats, among whom the Catholic Church did not have a similar political role, the Slovenes did not engage in an open conflict with Belgrade centralism, but tried to establish a reasonable *modus vivendi* with it. Hence, the Slovene People's Party supported various coalition governments in which the Serbs were predominant, and in return was allowed to manage domestic affairs without too much outside interference. When King Aleksandar dissolved parliament in 1929, prohibited all political parties and adopted direct rule in order to save Yugoslavia from the chaos into which it was sinking mostly because of Croat opposition, the Slovene People's Party survived, albeit in hiding, thanks to the influence the Church exerted on the masses. This became particularly obvious in the second half of the 1930s. After the successful assassination attempt on the life of King Alexander on October 8, 1934, organized by Ante Pavelić, leader of the Croatian extremists, the People's Party became an influential member of a right-wing coalition called the Yugoslav Radical Union. During the period when the Union was in power, and priest Anton Korošec, leader of the People's Party was the Minister of Interior, the Roman Catholic Church experienced its political apogee. In the "Drava province," as the part of Slovenia integrated into Yugoslavia was officially called, it exercised an autocratic influence on political and social life, emphasizing a dogmatic Catholicism that did not shy away from sympathies with totalitarian neighboring states. On the occasion of a triumphal Eucharistic congress, organized in Ljubljana in 1935, the Church hysterically denounced, for instance, the danger of communism, without mentioning that of Fascism and Nazism, which were *ante portas*.⁹

Even among believers, not everyone could agree with the clerical order which took on intransigent characteristics in the Drava province. The spark that ignited the accumulated tension was the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). Whereas the Church, headed by the Ljubljana Bishop Gregorij Rožman, firmly stood in defense of Francisco Franco's pro-Fascist Falange, a group of Christian Socialists, whose most prominent member was the poet and writer Edvard Kocbek, declared themselves for the Republic. A verbal and ideological clash ensued, which had fatal consequences for the Slovene people in the Second World War. Kocbek, a disciple of the French philosopher Emmanuel Mounier and his personalism, as well as of Romano Guardini, a German theologian of liberal address, asserted that Christians should not remain extraneous to the struggle for freedom and social

9 Spomenka Hribar, *Razkrižja* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2009), 222.

justice, but should engage in it with all their physical and intellectual strength. In doctrinal but not political matters, Kocbek remained a faithful believer but up to a point, being convinced, as he famously said, that “heresy” (intellectual freedom) was a positive and creative factor.¹⁰

On April 6, 1941, Hitler’s Germany and Mussolini’s Italy attacked Yugoslavia, and forced it to capitulate within six days. They then divided the country between themselves according to their appetites, while sparing some of the spoils for Hungary and Bulgaria as well. With regard to the “Drava province,” Hitler took the Gorenjska and Štajerska regions for himself, leaving the Ljubljana Province to the Italians and Prekmurje to the Hungarians. In the territories under their occupation, the Germans immediately introduced a genocidal policy in accordance with the order given by the Führer to his local representatives: “Make this land German again!” Similarly, the Hungarians did not acknowledge the Prekmurje population as part of the Slovene national body, and considered them a special “*Windisch*” tribe that could be easily assimilated. The Italians, for their part, opted for a more tolerant policy. Contrary to their practice in Julian Venetia, where for 20 years they had tried by force to suppress its predominantly Slovene identity, they did acknowledge a peculiarity of the occupied Ljubljana Province and assured it cultural autonomy, although they annexed it to their kingdom. Although this behavior was of a transitory nature only, it nevertheless differed from the German terror in Northern Slovenia. In such a situation, the Slovene Catholic Church found itself split three ways. In the Štajerska region, it was forced to lay low as the Nazis organized a regular purge of Slovene priests, and had the majority banished from the country.¹¹ The Bishop of Maribor Ivan Jožef Tomažič refused to collaborate with them, and was confined to his mansion. In Julian Venetia, the local clergy persevered with their anti-Fascist stance, and supported an anti-regime resistance. In the Province of Ljubljana, which besides the capital incorporated the Notranjska and Dolenjska regions, Bishop Rožman saw a lesser evil in Fascist rule, hoping that at least the core body of the Slovene people could be saved. He was supported in this by the representatives of the political parties of the collapsed Yugoslavia, primarily by those politicians of the People’s Party who had not fled abroad into the arms of the British with King Peter II, but stayed in their homeland.

¹⁰ Kovačič Peršin, *Duh inkvizicije*, 244, 245.

¹¹ Jakob Kolarič, Škof Rožman, *Duhovna podoba velike osebnosti na prelomnici časa* (Celovec: Družba sv. Mohorja, 1967–1977), 78.

The *modus vivendi* established between the Italian occupation authorities and the traditional representatives of the nation was upset by the emergence of the Liberation Front (OF), a resistance movement determined to stand and fight Fascism with arms. Its initiators were communists who until then represented a marginal group within the Slovene and Yugoslav realities, and had been forced to operate underground since 1921. They were joined in the Liberation Front by left-wing liberals and Christian Socialists, who, though they had no illusions regarding the horrors of the Stalinist regime, believed that in the situation in which the existence of the Slovene people was at stake they should close ranks, even with communists. Following Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, these three groups and several smaller ones engaged in an active resistance. The invaders were greatly annoyed by this, as was the Slovene bourgeois establishment. Principally, Bishop Rožman remained faithful to the instruction from the 1937 *Divini Redemptoris* encyclical by Pope Pius XI, that a Christian could not, under any circumstances, cooperate with them. The fact that after the formation of an alliance between Great Britain and the Soviet Union in the struggle against Nazi-Fascism the new Pope, Pius XII, lapsed into a cautious silence, somehow escaped Gregorij Rožman. He declared a crusade against the Liberation Front and was willing to accept any ally without any attempt at subtlety. First he cooperated with the Italians and then, when they capitulated on September 8, 1943 and were forced to withdraw from Ljubljana province, with the Germans. Since the Catholic Church wielded a particularly strong influence over the rural population, its negative stance toward the Liberation Front resulted in the formation of armed troops placing themselves at the service of the occupiers as an auxiliary military police force.¹² This turned central Slovenia into a scene of fratricidal violence marked by virulent fanaticism, not only on the part of the Catholics but also on the part of communists, who in 1943 succeeded in taking control of the Liberation Front. Due to a high level of organizational skill, discipline, and military experience that their leaders had acquired during the Spanish Civil War as members of international brigades, the communists, headed by Josip Broz Tito, were very successful, reminiscent in their zeal of the adepts of religious sects in their more dogmatic phases.¹³

The year 1945 saw Tito's partisans, assisted by western and eastern allies in the victors circle over the Third Reich. They liberated the entire ethnic territory

12 Janko Pleterski, *Senca ajdovskega gradca: O slovenskih izbirah v razklani Evropi* (Ljubljana: samozaložba, 1993).

13 Arhiv Slovenije, Ljubljana, Dedijer, t. c., 242, Kopija iz memoarov druga M. Djilasa, 159.

of the Slovene nation, including those parts that were under Italian or Austrian dominance, and with the creation of the Republic of Slovenia, laid the foundation for its statehood within the federative socialist Yugoslavia. Upon the downfall of his German protectors, Bishop Rožman tried at the last moment to form a common front with the Croatian Ustaše and the Serbian Četniks, both on his side of the fence, in the erroneous belief that the Anglo-Americans would lend them an ear and allow them to continue the armed struggle against the threat coming from the East with the Red Army under their leadership. Bishop Rožman was not wrong in observing that the split among the Western allies and the Soviets was verging on confrontation, but he did not expect it to remain at the stage of a “cold war.” He also failed to understand that the Anglo-Americans had no intention of cooperating with troops that until very recently had been at the service of the Gestapo, and had fled to Austrian Carinthia to escape the partisan avalanche. Writer Alojz Rebula said about these troops—of approximately 12,000 men—that they may have donned German uniforms, but had English hearts beating underneath.¹⁴ However, the British, who had occupied Carinthia in early May 1945, did not appreciate that fact, and sent them back to their home country in accordance with agreements made by “The Big Three.” To prevent unrest on their departure, the British resorted to deceit, claiming that they intended to transport them by train to Italy. When the unfortunates found themselves back on home soil, they were surrounded by partisan troops, packed in camps and hastily sorted. While the minors were allowed to return to their homes, all those over the age of 18 were shot in a mass execution, their bodies thrown into sinkholes.¹⁵ For decades to follow, the communist authorities carefully concealed the truth about this massacre from the public, carried out in strict secrecy, although the knowledge of it could not be completely suppressed. Bishop Rožman, who also fled to Austrian Carinthia, did not share the tragic fate of the young men he had driven to destruction with his political intransigence and machinations. He later emigrated to North America, where a strong Slovene diaspora formed, much like in Latin America and Australia, which persevered in the opinion that the struggle against communism justified national treason and collaboration with the Nazi-Fascist invaders.

¹⁴ Alojz Rebula, *Ob babilonski reki* (Celje: Društvo Mohorjeva družba, 2007), 246.

¹⁵ John Corsellis, Marcus Ferraris, *Slovenia 1945: Memories of Death and Survival* (London, I. B. Tauris, 2015), 41–86.

THE COLD WAR

On September 8, 1943 the Carinthia *Gauleiter* Friedrich Rainer, Commissioner of the Province of Ljubljana after the fall of Italy, characterized the policy pursued by Bishop Rožman as unique across occupied Europe, as nowhere else had there developed such a close cooperation between the Roman Catholic Church and the Nazis.¹⁶ The entire Catholic community was left to foot the bill for that association after the war, even the clergy from Primorska who had always fought against Fascism. The new rulers, young people frequently without much formal education, experience and the kind of tolerance that comes with age, were fanatical atheists in their Marxist orthodoxy. They abolished the pre-war political structure, banishing the Slovene People's Party, which faintly lingered on in diaspora among political exiles, and started to build a new society according to the Soviet pattern. The new rulers hated the Church not only for having fought the partisan movement, but also because they recognized in it the only other organized institution capable of standing up to the Party, as well as a branch of the Vatican.¹⁷ Pope Pius XII was not only an ideologue, but also a national foe, as it was clear that he had taken Italy's side in the battle for the western Slovene borders which had flared up between Yugoslavia and Italy at the Paris Peace Conference. It is true, however, that the pope was not entirely to blame for the tension. In July 1945, the most flexible among the Slovene Communist Party leaders, Boris Kidrič, sought to establish a *modus vivendi* with the Catholic Church, but the Belgrade center rejected it after the Archbishop of Zagreb and the primate of Yugoslavia, Alojzije Stepinac, refused to cooperate with Tito.¹⁸ During the years of "wartime communism," which in many ways resembled the Stalinist regime, the Slovene clergy pursued a very cautious policy. As early as July 1945, the vicar general of the Ljubljana diocese regretted wartime violence and condemned the collaboration which had taken place with the invaders.¹⁹ And when Alojzije Stepinac, in his capacity as primate, published a pastoral letter in the autumn of 1945 fiercely condemning the nationalization of church property, the Slovene priests, unlike their brothers elsewhere in Yugoslavia, did not read it from the

16 J. Pleterški, *Pravica in moč za samoodločbo: med Metternichom in Badinterjem* (Ljubljana, Modrijan, 2008), 436, 461, 462.

17 Mateja Režek, "Cuius Regio Eius Religio. The Relationship of Communist Authorities with the Catholic Church in Slovenia and Yugoslavia after 1945," 215.

18 Z. Roter, *Padle maske: Od partizanskih sanj do novih dni* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2013), 160.

19 Režek, "Cuius Regio," 215; Hribar, *Razkrižja*, 248.

pulpits.²⁰ This sign of goodwill was not valued by the authorities at the time. In August 1946, they put Bishop Rožman on trial along with other eminent Nazi collaborators amid a great media hype used to smear the Church as an institution. Obviously, the trial had a political bias, although it was based on charges related to dealings with the enemy, which could hardly be refuted. The bishop, who was sitting safely in Klagenfurt, Austria, was sentenced *in absentia* to 18 years hard labor, loss of political and civil rights for 10 years following the expiration of his sentence, and confiscation of all his property.²¹ Rožman tried to clear himself by writing a long letter to the Pope, in which he entirely omitted the Fascist and Nazi invaders with whom he had collaborated, and justified his struggle against the communists and the Liberation Front by invoking the *Divini Redemptoris* encyclical.²² His vicar, Anton Vovk, who ran the Ljubljana diocese in that difficult period, was capable of a more objective view, for in a 1946 New Year pastoral letter, he bravely distanced himself from the Church's behavior during the war. Unluckily enough, for unknown reasons the letter was never published.²³ Even if it had been, it more than likely would not have helped, since the authorities needed an "internal enemy." The fact that Vovk did not compromise himself by consorting with the invaders did not spare him mental and physical abuse at the hands of the "political police" (best known under the acronym UDBA), as well as of the blindly fanatical local functionaries. The mistreatment to which Bishop Vovk was victim, reached its apex on January 20, 1952, when an "unidentified person" in Novo Mesto doused him with a flammable liquid and set him on fire. He only received medical assistance upon his return to Ljubljana several hours later, and suffered the consequences of this assassination attempt for the rest of his life.²⁴

The fact that this incident elicited a sharp response from the Minister of Internal Affairs, Boris Kraigher, and his request that Vovk receive the best possible medical treatment at the Ljubljana Hospital, indicates the highly-complex Party-Church relationship in Slovenia. At the very top, the Party officials were more tolerant than those on the middle and lower echelons. The vicar's fate mir-

20 Sabrina P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel. The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milošević*. 4th Edition, (Boulder: Westview Press, 2002), 85–86; Roter, *Padle maske*, 184.

21 Tamara Giesser-Pečar and France Martin Dolinar, *Rožmanov proces* (Ljubljana: Družina, 1996), 17.

22 Gregorij Rožman, "Škofa Rožmana odgovor," *Nova revija*, 11, 93–94, 1990, 879–93.; J. Pirjevec, *Pričevanja NOB, Narodnoosvobodilni boj in današnji čas* (Ljubljana: ZZB NOB; 2014), 186; Jure Ramšak, "Katoliška levica in marksizem v Sloveniji po II. vatikanskem koncilu: ideološka kontaminacija in njene politične posledice," *Acta Histriae*, 2014, Vol. 22, M. 4.

23 Jure Trampuš, "Ljubezen se je sprevrgla v sovraštvo," *Mladina*, April 23, 2008, <https://www.mladina.si/43256/ljubezen-se-je-sprevrgla-v-sovrastvo/>; Hribar, *Razkrižja*, 247–54.

24 <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi814645/>; Roter, *Padle maske*, 177.

rored the fate of dozens of Slovene priests who were followed, tapped, imprisoned, and persecuted after the war by the UDBA, with informers infiltrating their ranks—the so-called “deep throats.”²⁵ It is also evidence that the authorities were aware of the sensitivity of the relationship with the Roman Catholic Church, in view of both international relations and domestic public opinion, considering that it still had a significant influence on the general public. This is also corroborated by the fact that toward the end of that decade, approximately half of all primary school pupils attended catechism lessons, and that their number was constantly rising despite all administrative obstacles.²⁶ In this situation, Boris Kraigher tried to form an alternative Slovene ecclesiastical sphere that would be as autonomous as possible in relation not only to the Vatican, but to Archbishop Stepinac as well. To this end, he resorted to a carrot and stick strategy. On the one side, he placed his trust in the canon of Gorizia, Mihael Toroš, the apostolic administrator of that part of the local Bishopric assigned to Yugoslavia. To have his support, Kraigher allowed him to publish the religious paper *Družina* (*Family*), open a small seminary and later a religious high school in the provincial city of Vipava.²⁷ On the other side, in his desire to avoid criticism from Belgrade for being too lenient, and to show the Slovene Church how essential it was to defer to the State, he expelled the Theology faculty from the University of Ljubljana in 1949, and banned catechism in schools in 1952. (Still, he kept the Theology lecturers on the state payroll, many among them intellectually prominent and socially active persons.) His greatest achievement was the founding in September of 1948 of the Cyril-Methodius Society, named after the Apostles of the Slavs, which was joined by priests who in return for their support of the regime received some financial aid for better economic security and social welfare status.²⁸ Although the Society was explicitly banned by the Vatican, the three Slovene bishops tolerated it under pressure from their clergy, an attitude which the top political circles in Slovenia were unable to properly appreciate due to their ideological rigidity.²⁹ That same rigidity also dictated their decision made soon after the war was over, to gradually isolate Edvard Kocbek, leader of the Christian Socialists, who had fought on the side of the communists in the war as a member of the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front.

25 Roter, *Padle maske*, 146; Režek, “Cuius Regio,” 221.

26 Režek, “Cuius Regio,” 217, 221, 222.

27 Roter, *Padle maske*, 164, 170, 176, 178.

28 Egon Pelikan, “The Catholic Church and Politics in Slovenia,” in *Religion and Politics in Post-Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe, Challenges since 1989*, ed. Sabrina Ramet (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 116; Roter, *Padle maske*, 165, 166.

29 Roter, *Padle maske*, 187; Režek, “Cuius Regio,” 222, 223.

They brutally forced him out of political and public life in 1952, taking as a pretext a collection of short stories *Strah in pogum* (*Fear and Courage*), which he had written under the influence of the French novelist Jean Bruller, writing under the pseudonym Vercors and describing his experience of the partisan struggle. At a time when literature was still under the heel of Muscovite “socialist realism,” Kocbek’s writing, with its unapologetic portrayal of partisanship, was so provocative that it provided an excellent excuse for condemning him. By banning Kocbek from their midst, the communists also discarded Christian socialism as one of the essential components of the Liberation Front, robbing it of its ideological and historical multi-dimensionality.³⁰ Kocbek, whose critical attitude toward the conservative policy of the Catholic hierarchy before and during the war, was considered a dangerous rebel; thus, he remained completely isolated from both institutions—the Party and the Church—but was nonetheless able to preserve his dignity and independence of thought.

In 1948, due to the dispute between Stalin and Tito, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform, an organization which united all the major communist parties of Europe. Stalin was convinced that with that move he would take down the Yugoslav dictator and his comrades, who were far too independent for his taste, and replace them with a more obedient crew. But the plan failed, as Tito found sufficient support in his homeland and in the West to remain in power and start charting his own path to socialism, one that was different from Stalin’s and not based on a rigidly planned Soviet-style economy, but instead on workers’ self-government. The original design of this experiment was Catholic, as it had been developed as early as the 1920s by the Christian socialist Andrej Gosar, a lawyer, politician, Professor of Sociology and Economy at the University of Ljubljana, and also president of the Yugoslav section of the International Paneuropean Union. A disciple of Janez Evangelist Krek, he was the first in Slovenia to speak about workers’ self-management, whereas Edvard Kardelj, considered later its main ideologue, merely combined Gosar’s ideas with Marxist doctrine and installed it in the Party praxis, ignoring its origins. During the Second World War, Gosar disapproved of collaboration of any kind with the occupation forces, and was sent to Dachau by the Nazi German authorities in retaliation. From the very start, he refused to join the Liberation Front because of its pro-communist bias, and was ostracized by the victors after 1945.³¹

³⁰ Andrej Inkret, *In stoletje bo zardelo: Kocbek, življenje in delo* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2011) 329–36.

³¹ Peter Kovačič Peršin, *Stopinje v pesku zgodovine* (Ljubljana, Buča, 2018), 135; Marko Zupanc, “Ekonomska misel Andreja Gosarja,” *Zgodovinski časopis* 53, 4 (1999), 553–75.

In the context of turbulent developments following the rift with Stalin, accompanied by a cautious liberalization of the regime, Tito made a conciliatory gesture to indicate his willingness to improve relations with the Roman Catholic Church. The Archbishop of Zagreb Alojzije Stepinac, who had been sentenced in 1946 to 16 years of hard labor on charges of collaborating with the Ustaše, was released from jail in 1951 and confined to his home village. With the approval of the Vatican, he persistently refused to sign a clemency plea and then leave the country.³² Pope Pius XII and his propaganda machine did not respond positively to Tito's signal for dialogue, but launched an anti-Yugoslav campaign based on the premise that the rift with Stalin was a scam. To stress his negative attitude vis-à-vis Tito's regime, the Pope also made a decision on November 29, 1952, the Yugoslav National holiday, to elevate Stepinac to the rank of cardinal, a decision which Tito could not understand. In fact, this nomination came precisely at the moment when he was preparing his first State visit to Great Britain in order to strengthen military ties with Winston Churchill's government against the Soviet Union.³³ In leading circles in Belgrade, the indignation for such a hostile gesture on the part of Pius XII was so great that they decided on December 12, 1952 to sever diplomatic relations with the Holy See. A week later the Yugoslav Foreign Minister Edvard Kardelj himself took the floor in the People's Federal Assembly in order to explain the reasons for such a dramatic tit-for-tat. He repeated the grievances against the Catholic Church as a result of its collaboration with the occupiers during the war, and accused Vatican diplomats of sabotaging Yugoslavia's pro-Western foreign policy. "The question is," he said, "why does the Vatican try so hard to disturb the international orientation of Yugoslavia, and this just at the moment when Yugoslavia opposes international pressure (from the Soviets) on its sovereignty not just because of its own independence, but also because of the threat this pressure represents to all European nations." Kardelj's answer to this question was obvious. At the very time when the tension between Rome and Belgrade was reaching its peak because of the Trieste border controversy, "the Vatican was one of the most important sponsors of Italian expansionist circles."³⁴

The international stir caused by the fate of Stepinac and the quarrel with the Vatican pushed the Belgrade government to mend fences with the Holy See as soon as possible, but it was to no avail. The Roman curia was not ready to listen

³² Režek, "Cuius Regio," 223.

³³ Roter, *Padle maske*, 175.

³⁴ Jugoslawische Nachrichten, Herausgegeben von der Presse- und Informationsabteilung der jugoslawischen Botschaft, Nr. 4, 1. Jhgr. Bonn, im Dezember 1952.

to signs of appeasement coming from Tito himself, thereby contributing to the worsening of relations between the Roman Catholic Church of Yugoslavia and the regime. On January 8, 1953, at a meeting with some of the most intransigent bishops—among whom was Anton Vovk—Tito stressed his desire to regulate the relations between State and Church. His hosts presented him with a 10-point document, identical to the requests of the Holy See. Last on the list, but by no means least, was the release of Stepinac. In spite of the convivial mood he tried to create meeting the Bishops, the Marshal answered tartly that this would not go.³⁵ One of the most conspicuous and unpopular measures resulting from this deadlock was the decision to abolish the celebration of Christmas, introduced by the authorities in 1953. However, it is also necessary to point out that after Stalin's death on March 5, 1953 and the subsequent improvement of relations with the new Kremlin leadership, in Slovenia at least the depressing anti-clerical atmosphere slowly started to improve,³⁶ as much as the dynamics of the foreign and internal Yugoslav policies would allow. Only with the death of Cardinal Stepinac in 1960 would relations finally thaw. His successor in the episcopal seat, Cardinal Franjo Kuharić, requested that Stepinac be buried in the cathedral in Zagreb, the Croatian capital. The local authorities initially rejected his request, but at Tito's insistence they eventually had to lift their veto.³⁷

The "cold war" waged by the Vatican against Yugoslavia in the 1950s does not mean that all dialogue between the two sides was prevented. This happened on the level of the Belgrade government with the mediation of the American and German embassies,³⁸ but also on the level of the Ljubljana government under the auspices of Boris Kidrič, the federal Minister of Internal Affairs and later Prime Minister of Slovenia. Zdenko Roter, a State Security agent, reveals in his memoirs that he often travelled to Trieste on Kidrič's behalf in order to hold discussions with Carlo Musizza, a prominent canon of the local Church who was at odds with Bishop Antonio Santin, an arch-enemy of Yugoslavia. As it happened, Musizza was a personal friend of the Venetian patriarch Giuseppe Angelo Roncalli, who was elected Pope in 1958 and enthroned under the name of John XXIII. Due to a more liberal course, major shifts soon occurred, followed by the election of the new Vicar of Christ on Earth and the impact of the second Vatican council, which he convened in order to respond to the challenges

35 Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖStA), Vienna, BMfA, Nachlass: Wodak, E/1785:73, Belgrad, 25. I. 1953, 20. 2. 1953, 21. 3. 1953.

36 Roter, *Padle maske*, 186.

37 Dušan Bilandžić, *Povijest izbliza. Memoarski zapisi 1945–2005* (Zagreb, Prometej, 2006), 264.

38 ÖStA, BMfA, Sektion II-pol., Belgrade, 10. 12. 1954; 4. 2. 1957.

of modern times. The new Pope had more sensitivity to the plight of the Yugoslav flock than his predecessor, and acted accordingly. Among other things, he acknowledged the post-war changes in Yugoslavia, distanced himself from the intransigence of the Ustaša emigration and in 1963, on the occasion of Tito's South American tour, invited the local bishops to refrain from hostile statements with regard to his visit. In September 1960, mostly at the instigation of Slovene bishops, the Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia addressed a long memorandum to the federal government, in which for the first time after 1945 it stressed the desire to build relations between the Church and State on the basis of the constitutional order in force. It asked for freedom of religious teaching, the return to the Church of the seminaries that had been closed, the right to publish religious press and the restoration of diplomatic relations with the Holy See.³⁹ This proposal, promptly made public by the official newspaper *Borba*, was met with a positive response on the part of the federal government as early as October 3.⁴⁰ The Vatican reacted to such a promising attitude, and later took action by elevating the Bishop of Ljubljana to Archbishop at the beginning of 1962. That happened with the tacit approval of local authorities, who started to demonstrate to the prelate on public occasions all due respect and friendliness.⁴¹ For his part, in June 1963 after the death of John XXII, Tito hailed the election of the Archbishop of Milan, cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini, to the Holy See with "much pleasure," and in 1964 paid an official visit to the Slovene Carthusian monastery of Pleterje, whose abbot Father Leopold Edgar had collaborated with the partisans during the war, denouncing any collaboration with the occupying forces as an aberration.⁴² As the Archbishop of Belgrade Josip Antun Ujčić appropriately said, "Something similar to an armistice has been instituted between Church and State."⁴³ But much more was going on behind the scenes, also thanks to friendly relations established between John XXIII and German, the patriarch of the Serb orthodox Church, relations also kept alive by Paul VI, as the new Pope called himself.⁴⁴ In particular, there was a decision by the State Security Service (UDBA) to forego the "deep throat" agents tasked with monitoring the activities of the Catholic Church, and the Party's decision to aban-

39 Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 91–92.

40 Roter, *Padle maske*, 237; ÖStA, BMfA, Sektion II-pol., Belgrade, 18. 10. 1960.

41 ÖStA, BMfA, Sektion II-pol., Belgrade, 19. 2. 1962.

42 The National Archives, London, FCO 287/1630/ENU 1/7; AJ, KPR, II-4-a; G. R. Swain, *Tito: A Biography* (London: I. B. Tauris), 175; ÖStA, BMfA, Sektion II-pol., Belgrade, 24. 6. 1963, Hribar, *Razkrižja*, 223.

43 ÖStA, BMfA, Sektion II-pol., Belgrade, 19. 2. 1962.

44 ÖStA, BMfA, Sektion II-pol., Belgrade, 2. 11. 1963.

don its dogmatic ideological stance towards believers. In his capacity as president of the Ideology Commission of the Party's Central Committee, Stane Kavčič, one of the most liberal Slovene politicians in the first half of the 1960s, encouraged the Marxists to enter into a constructive dialogue with Christians, a dialogue based on common humanist values.⁴⁵ This rejection of Marx, saying that "religion is the opium of the people," a rejection that did not come without internal struggles, bore fruit. On the Slovene cultural scene, Edvard Kocbek re-emerged after years of ostracism—first with articles published in various magazines, and then in 1962 with the publication of *Groza* (*Dread*), a collection of poetry dealing with partisan themes and problems. In a sense, together with the poet, Christian Socialism was rehabilitated, as became obvious when in 1964 Kocbek was awarded the Prešeren Prize—the Slovene equivalent to the Nobel Prize for Literature—and even more so when he published the sequel to his wartime diaries. They had been issued in a first volume, entitled *Tovarišija* (*The Comradeship*) shortly after the war, and now in a second volume entitled *Listina* (*The Document*), highlighting the ideological pluralism that characterized the Liberation Front at its start. As to the diaries covering the period when Kocbek was at Tito's Supreme Headquarters in Bosnia, from the end of 1943 to the final victory, the UDBA had them mysteriously disappear. Although incomplete, *Listina* generated a lot of attention, and raised public awareness that the credit for the national liberation struggle should be given not only to the communists, but to Christians as well.⁴⁶ In this thawed atmosphere, a Chair of Sociology of Religion was founded at the College for Political Sciences in 1963, with former UDBA agent Zdenko Roter nominated as professor. The year after that, his protector Stane Kavčič opened a meeting of Party activists by speaking about major changes in the Church, and condemning any unnecessary sectarianism between Party members and believers.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, secret talks had taken place between Yugoslavia and the Vatican, proceeding in four stages in Rome and Belgrade, and leading to a new, more liberal law on religious communities in 1965. A year later, a joint protocol was signed with a commitment to the restoration of diplomatic relations by 1970. The Serbian Orthodox Church, traditionally hostile to special relations between Yugoslavia and the Vatican, this time took a firm stand against this agreement, but to no avail because it was supported by Slovene politicians and Tito

⁴⁵ Roter, *Padle maske*, 571.

⁴⁶ Inkret, *In stoletje bo zardelo*, 444–59.

⁴⁷ Roter, *Padle maske*, 221, 222, 231.

himself.⁴⁸ The fact that Tito originated from a Slovene-Croatian, hence Catholic, background likely played no small part in that. In the same period, the first (and last) meeting of Marxist scholars and Catholic theologians took place in Idrija, a small industrial town in the Slovene Primorska region, where they discussed the points of convergence between Christianity and Marxism. In December 1964, the end of the VIII Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), important because it signaled the start of sweeping reforms in Yugoslav economic and political life, the clause stating the incompatibility of LCY membership and religious affiliation was left out of the party statute.⁴⁹ The Yugoslav Catholic episcopate observed this development with some suspicion, fearing that the *détente* between Belgrade and the Holy See, not corresponding closely enough to their wishes, would overtake them, thus pursuing goals that were not theirs. This, in fact, was precisely the case. The Pope, who was pushing for the normalization of relations with Yugoslavia, wanted to have his nuncio in Belgrade as a first step in search of a *modus vivendi* with other communist countries. Indifferent to such a broad vision by Paul VI in the frame of his “Ostpolitik,” the Yugoslav bishops boycotted the final signing of the agreement in Belgrade in July 1966, stating that it did not assure them any additional rights from those they already enjoyed for the carrying out of their pastoral mission.⁵⁰ The crowning event of the rocky approach process between Yugoslav communists and the Holy See was Tito’s state visit to Pope Paul VI in 1971. The latter highly appreciated the non-alignment policy of the Yugoslav president, with whom he had allegedly corresponded in secret for several years. Glossing over the fact that Tito had been excommunicated by Pius XII because of his involvement in the Stepinac trial, he was received by Paul VI in the Apostolic palaces with full honors, and proclaimed in his welcoming address that he was an outstanding fighter for peace, who brought together “nations and continents.”⁵¹

The start of the 1970s was marked by ideological liberalism in Yugoslavia, which also mirrored the Church-State relationship. The Socialist Alliance of the Working People (SZDL), an organization that existed parallel to the League of Communists and was founded with the purpose of integrating noncommunists into the political process, played an important role in this context. In 1970, it established a special Coordination Committee for the Regulation of Relations between Church and Self-Management, which was supposed to work together

48 Roter, *Padle maske*, 238.

49 ÖStA, BMfA-Sektion II-pol., Belgrade, 23. 12. 1964.

50 ÖStA, BMfA-Sektion II-pol., Belgrade, 13. 7. 1966

51 J. Pirjevec, *Tito in tovariši* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2011), 571, 572; Roter, *Padle maske*, 305.

with the clergy toward solving contentious everyday issues.⁵² However, the brief liberal period was brutally interrupted in the wake of a return to Marxist orthodoxy, which Tito tried to revive by purges in Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia and Macedonia in order to block an evolution that was spinning out of his control. This is not to say that the dialogue set up between the Church and the authorities did not continue in a “civil” and “cooperative,” even “friendly” atmosphere.⁵³ It did, largely owing to Edvard Kardelj, whose 1974 constitution—the fourth in three decades - attempt to implement the direct democracy of self-management, that would also make a place for the religious members of society. However, this pragmatic cooperation between the Church and the regime was not beneficial for those Christians who were considered *persona non grata* by either institution because of their critical attitude toward both. Edvard Kocbek was left out in the cold by both the Church and the State in 1975, when in a publication honoring his 70th birthday and printed in Trieste, he spoke of the post-war massacre of the *domobranci*, the Catholic “Home Guards”, who collaborated with the German occupiers in fighting the partisans. Though not the first to ever broach this taboo subject, he was the first to demand an apology from the Party for the crime committed. A flaming controversy ensued, resulting in a renewed ostracism of the poet and writer by the authorities.⁵⁴ Although Kocbek always professed himself to be a Christian, the Roman Catholic Church did not come to his defense, as it considered him a heretic due to his role in the Liberation Front, and because it did not want to sour relations with those in power. The rare personalities in Slovenia from Catholic circles who took the author’s side saw their lives made miserable.⁵⁵ The magazine *Revija 2000*, which started out as a students’ *samizdat* under the editorship of Peter Kovačič Peršin and subsequently became the gazette of young Christian Socialist intellectuals, was suppressed for two years for having the audacity to reprint an interview with Kocbek.⁵⁶ The Slovene bishops shrouded themselves in total silence. A fighter for freedom of

52 Jure Ramšak, “Between Ideology and Pragmatism: Polemic on the Civil Rights of Christians in the Socialist Slovenia of the 1970s,” *Religion, State & Society*, Vol. 43, N. 2, 168–183, at 171.

53 Jure Ramšak, *The League of Communists and the Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia 1966–1990: A Model of the Yugoslav Religious Policy?* Unpublished manuscript, p. 10; Idem, “The Crumbling Touchstone of the Vatican’s *Ostpolitik*: Relations between the Holy See and Yugoslavia, 1970–1989,” *The International History Review*, 43(4), 852–869, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07075332.2020.1819859>.

54 Inkret, *In stoletje bo zardelo*, 501–59.

55 Roter, *Padle maske*, 219.

56 “Peter Kovačič Peršin, Jožica Grgič, Misliti, da prevrati niso več mogoči, je naivno,” *Delo*, July 2, 2011, <https://old.delo.si/zgodbe/sobotnapriloga/peter-kovacic-persin-misliti-da-prevrati-niso-vec-mogoci-je-naivno.html>, 2, 3.

speech and thought, even a Christian one, did not interest them, as he was not “one of ours.”⁵⁷ “During the Party’s time in power and the Church’s marginalization from public life,” says Peter Kovačič Peršin, “the hierarchy continued to keep alive conservative forms of Catholicism, servile mentality, and authoritarian management, thereby preventing Slovene Christianity from ideological and organizational modernization. In this way it obstructed, intentionally or not, the affirmation of a new spiritual climate and civil courage among its congregation. This suited not only the existing conservatism in the Church, but Party totalitarianism, as well.”⁵⁸

The understanding between Socialist self-management and Christianity in the second half of the 1970s was most originally expressed by Vekoslav Grmič, who strove to introduce into the Slovene Roman Catholic Church a theology of “earthly reality” and “liberation theology,” as it had emerged in South America. In 1968, Pope Paul VI unexpectedly appointed Grmič Auxiliary Bishop of Maribor, as part of his greater design. He envisioned that under Grmič’s lead, the Bishopric of Maribor would become an experimental area for a dialogue between Christianity and Marxism throughout Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, this plan was not implemented, partly because after the death of Paul VI in 1978, his Polish successor John Paul II opted for a policy of confrontation with Eastern European communist regimes, and partly because of the crisis that befell these same regimes. Following a conversation with Karol Wojtyła in 1978, Grmič understood that, after the death of his patron, the Bishop of Maribor Maksimiljan Deržecnik, he would not be made the titular diocesan of Maribor, although the Slovene authorities had lobbied for him in the Vatican through diplomatic channels.⁵⁹ He had, in fact, dared to contradict the Pope by telling him he was wrong to attempt to destroy Yugoslav self-management socialism, as it represented a great hope not only for the reform of real-socialism in the Soviet bloc and for the co-existence of the Yugoslav peoples, but also for the Non-aligned countries.⁶⁰ His failed candidacy for the episcopal seat of Maribor was also due to a lack of support from the Catholic Church in Ljubljana, which did not approve of his views on the partisan struggle and on Bishop Rožman’s collaboration with Fascism and Nazism. Grmič was a harsh critic of all crimes committed

57 Kovačič Peršin, *Duh inkvizicije*, 163.

58 Kovačič Peršin, *Duh inkvizicije*, 177; Klaus Buchenau, “What went wrong? Church–state relations in socialist Yugoslavia,” *Nationalities Papers*, 2005, Vol. 33, Issue 4, 547–67.

59 Ramšak, *The League*, 14; Pedro Ramet, “The Catholic Church in Yugoslavia, 1945–1989,” in Pedro Ramet, ed., *Catholicism and Politics in Communist Societies* (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 1990), 181–206.

60 Kovačič Peršin, *Duh inkvizicije*, 196.

by the communists during and after the war, but also of the Catholics who had collaborated with the occupiers. He wrote: "Subjectively speaking, the Home Guards had indeed been mostly misled, and they were unaware of their fallacy and deceit because even the official leadership of the Catholic Church in Ljubljana was on their side, encouraging them in their struggle, just as it had advocated Catholic Integralism, anti-socialism, and militant Catholicism before the occupation."⁶¹ In 1993, John Paul II sent a letter to Grmič for his 70th birthday, in which he admitted his mistake in not having supported him, but his apology came too late and was of a private nature. The "Red Bishop" remained a thorn in the side of the Slovene Roman Catholic Church, but as long as Yugoslavia existed, the Holy See did not openly argue with him. The ruling regime in fact considered Grmič a *persona grata*, as his pro-socialist ideas and writings elicited considerable response both at home and abroad.⁶²

In the 1980s, after the deaths of Kardelj and Tito, the tensions that had been smouldering between Ljubljana and Belgrade since the war flared up dramatically. The Slovenes opposed the rise of Serbian centralism and nationalism, demanding greater autonomy and democracy, and emphasizing their adherence to Central and Western Europe. This trend was not only championed by the emerging opposition groups, but also by prominent representatives of the League of Communists of Slovenia, including those from the partisan generations. Typical of this was a statement made by Mitja Ribičič, a former high official of the Security services and former head of the Yugoslav federal government, that opposition should not be fought by force since "a book should be countered with a book."⁶³ Concurrently with the rift between the Slovenes and the Serbs, which was taking on increasingly aggressive tones, relations between the Catholic Church and the Slovene Party leadership further improved. Seeing that in the early 1980s, two of the three episcopal sees were vacant, the Pope installed two personalities in those chairs—Alojzij Šuštar in Ljubljana and Franc Kramberger in Maribor—who proved to be men of dialogue.⁶⁴ "The relations between the State and the Church are getting better" read the headlines highlighting a silent agreement reached by the Party and the ecclesiastical hierarchy: the first should lead the

61 Marjan Horvat, "Zamolčani mož dialoga," *Mladina*, July 17, 2008, <https://www.mladina.si/44197/zamolcani-moz-dialoga>.

62 J. Ramšak, *Katoliška levica in marksizem v Sloveniji po II. vatikanskem koncilu: ideološka kontaminacija in njene politične posledice*. Acta Histriae, 2014, vol. 22, N. 4, 1015-1038; Kovačič Peršin, *Duh inkvizicije*, 197.

63 "Umrle Mitja Ribičič," *Delo*, November 28, 2013, <https://www.delo.si/novice/politika/umrl-je-mitja-ribicic.html>.

64 Ramšak, *The League*, 15, 16.

economy, the second the moral sphere. "Instead of accepting free elections the League of Communists tried to strengthen its legitimacy with the help of the Church," Spomenka Hribar—the Cassandra of contemporary Slovenia, later wrote with disdain.⁶⁵ This understanding also became possible owing to the appointment of a young politician, Milan Kučan, to the position of the president of the Commission for Ideological and Theoretical Work with the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia. Though originating from an Evangelistic family, Kučan was very sensitive to the problems of the Catholic Church. As early as 1979, he initiated an important debate on the issues of Party and State policies toward the Church, which profoundly upset the dogmatic officials with its critical tones. The editorial office of *Družina* came into possession of a transcript of the discussion and published it. This resulted in a veritable "scandal," which contributed to Kučan being "exiled" to Belgrade in 1982.⁶⁶ He returned four years later as Secretary General of the League of Communists of Slovenia at the very moment when the Yugoslav crisis reached a fever pitch. The equivalent position on the Serbian political scene was assumed by Slobodan Milošević, who openly waved the flag of Serbian nationalism, and in the following years strained relations between the republics to the point where the federation started to disintegrate. During the process of extreme acrimony, democratic pluralism started to emerge in Slovenia, which the League of Communists of Slovenia did not oppose; in fact, the League even supported it. In 1990, the first free elections were held and won by DEMOS, a coalition of several opposition parties. Since the largest share of votes went to the Christian Democrats led by young Lojze Peterle, it was he who became the prime minister of the first post-communist Slovene government. To DEMOS' great disappointment, the elections for the president of the republic, which followed immediately after on April 22, were won by Milan Kučan, throwing Slovenia into a diarchy of new and old politicians. But despite representing different ideological stances, in the months to follow the leaders of the republic were able to find common ground in their struggle with Slobodan Milošević. This common struggle generated the initiative for "a national reconciliation" among the Slovenes still traumatized by the Second World War, which should represent a global renewal of the nation. Under the impact of the 1975 interview with Kocbek, the idea was set in motion by sociologist Spomenka Hribar with an essay entitled, *Krivda in greh* (Guilt and Sin). Though not justifying the collaboration of the Home Guards with

⁶⁵ Hribar, *Razkrižja*, 268.

⁶⁶ Roter, *Padle maske*, 327.

the occupying forces, she condemned their execution after the war, demanding that the communists confess their part in the massacre and denounce it. The essay brought on a turbulent controversy among the guardians of Marxist ideology, who accused the author of equating the partisan and Home Guard movements, which led to an important symbolic gesture five years later. In Kočevski Rog, one of the settings of the killing frenzies which took place in the last days of May and the first days of June 1945, the Archbishop of Ljubljana France Šuštar and the President of the Republic Milan Kučan held a reconciliatory ceremony on July 8, 1990, which gave some hope that Slovenes would be able to let go of the grudges borne due to the fratricidal rift.⁶⁷ At the ceremony, the metropolitan bishop was still calling for peace "in our common homeland of Yugoslavia," but after the plebiscite organized toward the end of 1990, in which the electorate accepted the idea of independence by an overwhelming majority, he too, on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church, took an openly positive stance toward this option.⁶⁸ When on June 25, 1991 the Slovene parliament unilaterally declared the sovereignty of the Republic, eliciting a short yet dramatic intervention on the part of the Yugoslav National Army, the Justice and Peace Commission published a statement on behalf of Slovene bishops, in which it invited the international community to recognize Slovenia's independence immediately.⁶⁹ This would not have been possible without approval from the Vatican, which in the following months engaged in a lively, yet discreet diplomatic activity geared toward recognizing Slovenia and Croatia. The Vatican had not been fond of Yugoslavia ever since 1918, because its Catholic community was subordinate to the Orthodox (Serbian) one, and became even less so after 1945 when the communists came into power. Although aware that the support for Slovenia and Croatia would compromise the ecumenical dialogue that he tried to initiate with the eastern churches of the Byzantine Rite, John Paul II could not sidestep the obligation to plead for two traditionally Catholic republics. When toward the end of the year progress was made in this sense due to Germany's decision to recognize Slovenia and Croatia, the Holy See promptly reacted. On February 9, 1992, two days before the recognition by the member states of the European economic union, its newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* announced that the Vatican intended to establish diplomatic relations with Ljubljana and Zagreb, and open apostolic nunciatures in the two capitals.⁷⁰

67 Kovačič Peršin, *Stopinje v pesku*, 106–11.

68 Ramšak, *League*, 21.

69 Pelikan, "The Catholic Church," 121.

70 Pelikan, "The Catholic Church," 123.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

During the thaw between the regime and the Roman Catholic Church, some Party leaders opposed any attempts at closer relations, claiming that “a leopard cannot change its spots.” What they meant by this was that the Church was not to be trusted. The wisdom of this adage was soon confirmed. After Slovenia gained its independence, the Roman Catholic Church first organized an autonomous episcopal metropolis, and tried to arrange better social security for priests and other pastoral workers. According to newspaper reports, the government “reacted favorably” to its requests.⁷¹ Upon the decision of the Slovene parliament adopted in November 1991 to right the wrongs committed by the socialist regime by the nationalization of the property of the more affluent social strata, the Church also submitted a request for the restitution of confiscated real estate, particularly fields and forests, to an extent of no less than 33,000 hectares across a small republic made up of 20,273 square kilometers of territory in all. Archbishop Alojzij Šuštar asserted that the Roman Catholic Church was not led by capitalist motives, but was looking only to survive and carry out its mission, as “what belongs to the Church, belongs to the Slovene nation, too.” But this was merely a façade concealing the desire for power, evident from another statement made by Šuštar, that “the Church will have as much social leverage as its capital power amounts to.”⁷² Such arguments were countered by numerous experts, including sociologist Veljko Rus, who was one of the first to express a negative opinion regarding the denationalization of ecclesiastic property, for this would mean “a sort of re-feudalization” that would make the Church the largest tycoon in Slovenia.⁷³ Bogo Grafenauer, the Nestor of Slovene historiography, a Christian Socialist, also addressed a letter to Archbishop Šuštar, which was later published in the weekly *Mladina*. In his writing, he pointed out that as early as the mid-19th century, the Ljubljana bishopric had sold its estates of feudal origin to the state, which subsequently established a special fund for the maintenance of religious buildings and the clergy. In spite of the agrarian reform that the Kingdom of Yugoslavia endeavored to carry out after 1918, the Church regained possession of its forest holdings in a legally dubious manner in the 1930s. Grafenauer put a moral question to the archbishop, as to whether the Church’s claims were correct, but Šuštar remained unconvinced. Those personalities within the

71 Jože Prinčič, *Križ in kapital* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2013), 202, 203.

72 *Delo*, 29. 5. 1992, p. 2; Kovačič Peršin, *Duh inkvizicije*, 289.

73 Prinčič, *Križ in kapital*, 237.

Church who expressed their disagreement with the hierarchy's thirst for possession had no luck either—they were ruthlessly removed from their leading positions. Due to legal snags triggered by denationalization, the Catholic Church had to wait for an entire decade to enforce its "right", but ultimately achieved its objective. Of all the sister Churches in the former socialist states of the Soviet bloc, the Slovene Roman Catholic Church was the one given back the largest amount of property by the state.⁷⁴

The Slovene Church not only wanted to turn back the clock with regard to worldly wealth. It was soon also striving to restore the political role it had held in the Drava Banate in the last years preceding the war and in the Ljubljana Province during the Second World War. As early as the mid-1980s, in influential ecclesiastical circles, professors from the Faculty of Theology in particular, started to exert pressure on Archbishop Šuštar to this end, to which he succumbed at the beginning of the next decade. Those Catholic intellectuals who wanted to restore the tradition of Catholic Socialism and form a political party of their own, one of them being Peter Kovačič, the editor of *Revija 2000*, remained completely isolated. The fate of Bishop Grmič was even worse, as he was removed from all Church functions.⁷⁵ From this quest to return to the past emerged the initiative for the rehabilitation of the Home Guards, justified by the argument that communism was an evil that had to be fought by collaboration with the Fascists and the Nazis. Connected to this was also the question of the extrajudicial killings committed immediately after the war by the communists. In 1993, the Slovene parliament founded a special commission tasked with clarifying the dynamics of the events, and determining who the culprits had been. This only sparked public outrage and caused bad blood between the two opposite camps, without ever achieving the desired results.

The starting point for the historical revisionism, based on the theory that with the fall of communism the Home Guards were the true victors of the Second World War was provided by the visit of John Paul II to Slovenia in 1996. It took place in a very tense political atmosphere, in which an openly right-wing Slovene Social Democratic Party led by Janez Janša started to take shape. Janša, a fervent member of the Communist Party in his younger years, and a zealous

74 Ali Žerdin, "Fevdalci XXI. stoletja," *Mladina*, July 17, 2001, <https://www.mladina.si/93708/fevdalci-xxi-stoletja>; Ivo Žajdela, "Zmote, predsodki in očitne laži ob cerkvenem premoženju," *Družina*, November 19, 2005, <https://www.druzina.si/clanek/54-47-zmote-predsodki-in-ocitne-lazi-ob-cerkvenem-premozenju>; Kovačič Peršin, *Duh inkvizicije*, 289; Tamara Kotar, "Political Liberalization in Post-Communist States: A Comparative Analysis of Church-State Relations in Croatia and Slovenia," Thesis, Department of Political Science, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 2008, 365.

75 Ramšak, *The League*, 20; Roter, *Padle maske*, 413; Kovačič Peršin, *Duh inkvizicije*, 199.

protagonist of the independence process later on, started pursuing a policy of aggressive nationalism and anti-communism. Stopping at nothing to achieve his objectives, he became a threat to the newly formed democracy. Thus, in 1994, Prime Minister Janez Drnovšek was forced to relieve Janša of his duty as Minister of Defense, without being able to stop him. He and his followers started to present themselves as victims of the old communist lobby—which they called *ud-bomafija* (coining the appellation from the acronym UDBA and the word “mafia”)—with President Milan Kučan in the lead. According to their accusations, the “Left” had seized power and was trying to preserve its old privileges even in the new democratic setting. The Roman Catholic Church also eagerly participated in this smear campaign, and dismissed the idea of a dialogue that Kučan strove to cultivate after the conciliatory ceremony in Kočevski Rog on the graves of the murdered Home Guards. For example, after the establishment of the Slovenian Bishops’ Conference in 1993 Kučan tried to hold yearly meetings with the heads of the Church in the hope of further building a national reconciliation. However, at the beginning of 1994, Dr. Drago Ocvirk—a member of the influential ecclesiastic congregation of Lazarists—published an article in the weekly *Družina*, suggestively titled *Dvojna igra* (*Double Game*). In it, he pointed a finger at politicians of the past regime who, in his opinion found the Church interesting only because the meetings with its representatives provided them with moral legitimacy at home and abroad. When the communists were in power, the Church hierarchy had no alternative but to accept such advances. However, the collapse of communism had created a new situation. Now the Church was able to find other partners. Referring to Stalin’s famous and ironic question at the Yalta conference in 1945: “How many divisions does the Pope have?”, in order to stress his political impotence, Ocvirk argued that the Church, having no legions of its own, was forced to enter into a natural alliance with “real democrats.” Whom he meant by that was soon revealed by Archbishop Šuštar, when towards the end of April 1994 he visited a group of Janša’s supporters determined to protest against his exclusion from the government by a hunger strike.⁷⁶ In 1995, on the second anniversary of the Slovenian Bishops’ Conference, its members declined the invitation to attend a meeting with the President of the republic, thus announcing which side they were on. Nor did they take part in the official celebration of the end of the Second World War in honor of the partisan victory over Fascism and Nazism.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Roter, *Padle maske*, 451.

⁷⁷ Repe, *Milan Kučan, prvi predsednik*, 430; Hribar, *Razkrižja*, 55.

The initiative for the Pope's visit to Slovenia had come from Milan Kučan. He was trying to comply with the wishes of the Slovene Catholic Church, despite its high representatives making him the target of their attacks, and to strengthen the international standing of the country during its candidacy for EU and NATO memberships. A group of the President's most irreconcilable opponents inside and outside the Church was against the visit, claiming it would legitimize the government of a post-communist elite, but the prevailing opinion in the Ljubljana bishopric was that the Pope's visit would be beneficial, as it would accelerate negotiations between the Vatican and Slovenia to sign a concordat.⁷⁸ For his part, John Paul II expanded this pastoral mission into a broader political framework which he had set himself, and which sought to re-Catholicize Central European countries after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In the process, he became, unwittingly or not, a tool of revenge for the leadership of the Slovene Catholic Church, who ever more openly asserted that the Home Guards who had been massacred after the war were martyrs for having lost their lives for Christ.⁷⁹ This aberrant assertion had been first put forward by Bishop Rožman himself, but following Vatican II it became obsolete, being justifiable only from the viewpoint of the antiquated theology of "the Holy War."⁸⁰ John Paul II clearly proclaimed: "Nobody can consider himself a believer of the great and merciful God if he dares in the name of God to kill his brother..."⁸¹ Yet, in his public speeches between May 17 and 19 1996, the Pope never mentioned the national liberation struggle, but only the foreign occupation coupled with a civil war "in which brothers laid a hand on one other", without condemning the collaboration of many Slovene Catholics with Italians first and Germans later. With no regard for the specific Yugoslav path to socialism, he equated the latter with the other two totalitarianisms of modern European history: Fascism and Nazism. Since the Pope's visit coincided with the parliamentary election campaign, his words were thoroughly exploited by political parties, particularly by Janez Janša. He claimed that the Pope had finally spoken a historical truth: the 1941–1945 war in Slovenia was a civil war!⁸²

The one to reap the greatest benefits from the visit of John Paul II was Msgr. Franc Rode, who was a member of the Pope's closest entourage, and at the time working in the Vatican as a collaborator of the Commission for Culture. There is

⁷⁸ Roter, *Padle maske*, 492, 493.

⁷⁹ Roter, *Padle maske*, 509.

⁸⁰ Kovačič Peršin, *Duh inkvizicije*, 174.

⁸¹ Hribar, *Razkrižja*, 243.

⁸² Roter, *Padle maske*, 514–18; Hribar, *Razkrižja*, 75–80.

no doubt, asserts Zdenko Roter, that he was the co-author of the Pope's speeches.⁸³ Rode was born in Slovenia in 1934, but his family fled from the communists to Austria in May 1945 and a few years later to Argentina. In Buenos Aires, he entered the Congregation of the Mission founded in 1632 by St. Vincent de Paul, the aforementioned Lazarists; he then continued his studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and at the Catholic University of Paris, where he obtained his doctorate in theology in 1968. During the 1970s, he lectured at the Theology Faculty in Ljubljana, and soon attracted attention with his erudition and eloquence. For example, one of his highly resounding lectures was one given in 1978, entitled *Slovensko krščanstvo včeraj, danes in jutri* (Slovene Christianity Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow). In it, he critically evaluated the policy of the Catholic Church during the inter-war period, as well as the socialist regime's policy regarding believers after 1945. He lashed out against the social and economic privileges of the Church before the war, its meddling in daily politics and its lust for wealth and power, thanking divine providence for making the Church modest, almost indigent. As a member of the Pontifical Council for Dialogue with Non-Believers he was very invested in this topic, maintaining that it was possible to find common ground between Christians and Marxists.⁸⁴ But in the new atmosphere of triumphant revisionism that prevailed in the Vatican following the death of Paul VI, and the enthronement of John Paul II, he completely changed his tune. When the new Pope nominated him as successor to the archbishop and metropolitan Alojzij Šuštar in March 1997, he soon showed his ambition to secure that central place in Slovene society which the Roman Catholic Church had held before the war. Among other things, he advocated for the restitution of Church property and the introduction of religious instruction in schools and the abolishment of access to abortion, curbing criticism of the Church by the media, military chaplains and access to religious rites and services in the army, the police force, prisons and hospitals, in addition to acknowledgment from the state that the Roman Catholic Church carried out useful and respectable work in promoting moral values.⁸⁵ His public appearances drew widespread attention, particularly his yearly homilies on the Marian feast day of August 15, when he would preach to the thousands who had gathered in the square in front of the pilgrimage church in Brezje, dedicated to the Mother of God, "Queen of Slovenia." In his sonorous style, obviously learned at the Laz-

83 Roter, *Padle maske*, 514.

84 Roter, *Padle maske*, 360; Kovačič Peršin, *Duh inkvizicije*, 290.

85 Roter, *Padle maske*, 542–45.

arist schools, he would start in exalted tones and then launch himself like a hawk, straight into the pressing issues of the day, arousing enthusiasm among the most traditional believers, and bewilderment and indignation among the broader Slovene audience.⁸⁶ Public opinion painted a bleak picture showing that the Roman Catholic Church was rapidly losing its reputation among the Slovene population. A distrust of the Church and the clergy was markedly on the rise, although, interestingly, the share of believers did not decrease. In fact, from 1993 to 2012 it ranged between 45% and a good 50% of the entire population.⁸⁷

The style of managing the Roman Catholic Church envisaged by Msgr. Rode displeased the Apostolic Nuncio Edmond Farhat, who, just like his pre-war predecessor in Belgrade, Ermenegildo Pellegrinetti, viewed Slovene clericalism from a critical distance.⁸⁸ In line with his balanced stance, as early as January 1996, and prior to the first visit of Pope John Paul II to Slovenia, Msgr. Farhat sent to the Vatican a memorandum written by the Union of Slovene Associations of Veterans, the guardians of the partisan tradition, in which the address of the Bishops' Conference on the 50th anniversary of the victory over Nazi-Fascism was criticized. Specifically, the address stated that the Liberation Front was essentially a criminal organization.⁸⁹ It is dubious whether this admonition, once it had been studied in the Vatican offices, had any effect. But on his second visit to Slovenia, on September 19, 1999, the Pope did not use the beatification of Anton Slomšek (1800–1862), a Maribor bishop and a nineteenth-century patriot, as a pretext to mention the Second World War. He did even more. On January 29, 2004, a day after the National Assembly ratified the concordat between Slovenia and the Holy See, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, the Pope's Secretary of State, informed Archbishop Rode that he had been nominated prefect of the Roman Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life (monks and nuns), thus ending his seven-year-long episcopacy in Ljubljana. The news came like a bolt from the blue, and was generally commented on using the Latin saying *promoveatur ut amoveatur*—"Let him be promoted to get him out of the way." Two years later, when the successor to John Paul II, Benedict XVI, made Rode the first Slovene cardinal after Jakob Missia (1838–1902), his role within the Slovene Catholic

86 Roter, *Padle maske*, 544, 545.

87 Niko Toš, *Sociolog v dialogu: Pogovori z novinarji 1987-2016*, Ali Žerdin, ed. (Ljubljana, Znanstvena knjižnica, Fakulteta za družbene vede, 2017), 337, 338.

88 J. Pirjevec, *Novosti iz vatikanskega arhiva o Katoliški cerkvi na Slovenskem, 1930-1938, Problemi demokracije na Slovenskem v letih 1918-1941* (Ljubljana: SAZU, 2007), 305–315; Gašper Mithans, "Reprezentacije obmejnega področja Julijske krajine v diskurzu nuncija Ermenegilda Pellegrinettija," *Acta Histriae*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (2015): 333–56.

89 Roter, *Padle maske*, 515, 555.

Church had been considerably weakened by his retirement. This is also corroborated by the Pope's decision, published on April 7, 2006, to establish three new bishoprics in Slovenia—Celje, Novo Mesto, and Murska Sobota—in addition to the existing ones, an idea promoted by Nuncio Msgr. Farhat for years, and strongly opposed by Rode.⁹⁰ Although his friend, the well-known writer Alojz Rebula magniloquently claimed that Rode had been called to the “General headquarters” when he was moved to the Vatican, he not only lost his influence, but became a source of embarrassment for the Slovene Catholic Church. This was due not so much to his conservative opinions as much as to Rode's propensity to luxury, which elicited indignation even in the international press. His lavish renovation of the summer residence of Ljubljana bishops in the mountain region of Gorenjska had sparked a widespread protest in Slovenia, which eventually prevented him from moving in, and leaving him to make do with his spacious 400 m² apartment in the Vatican with a view of St. Peter's dome.⁹¹

The appetite for wealth became fatal to the Slovene Catholic Church, which in its desire for economic and political control over Slovene society completely disregarded the basic principles of the social doctrine of the Church as spelled out by Vatican II.⁹² In 2005, its weekly *Družina* published an article entitled, *Zmede, predsodki in očitne laži ob cerkvenem premoženju* (Confusion, Prejudices and Obvious Lies about Church Property). The author, Ivo Žajdela, argued with those who asserted that the Roman Catholic Church was committing a sin against morality by its request for the restitution of nationalized property. “For the past decade, the main emphasis has been on the independence of Slovenia,” wrote the journalist, “but equally important has been democratization, a break with totalitarian rule. An integral part of this program has been righting past wrongs. One of the elements of the process of redressing past wrongs is the denationalization law passed in 1991. It has been fourteen years since then, and the confiscated, or better, stolen property has yet to be returned to its owner. Like many other things, this too is an indication that we are still not living in a true democracy governed by the rule of law, based on truth and justice.”⁹³ This defense of material wealth, counter to the pastoral constitution of Vatican II *Gaudium et spes*, which states that the Church is willing to give up even certain legitimately acquired rights should it become clear that their use will cast doubt on

90 Roter, *Padle maske*, 547.

91 <https://www.zurnal24.si/slovenija/franc-rode-na-razkošnih-400>

92 P. Kovačič Peršin, “Slovenska katoliška cerkev petdeset let po 2. vatikanskem koncilu,” *Znamenje: Revija za teološka, družbena in kulturna vprašanja*, No. 1/6 (2012):7.

93 Žajdela, “Zmote, predsodki in očitne laži ob cerkvenem premoženju.”

the sincerity of its witness, is typical of the Slovene post-independence Church hierarchy and its right-wing spokesmen.⁹⁴

The truth about Church property, which had also been made exempt from taxes, broke out on February 3 that same year. In the Italian weekly *L'Espresso*, the journalist Emiliano Fittipaldi, a well-known "Vatican expert," published an article entitled "Toh, la Chiesa ha fatto crac" (Wow, the Church has gone bust).⁹⁵ The article revealed the dubious financial maneuvers of the Bishopric of Maribor, which in the name of neoliberal capitalism with high-risk investments, had allegedly generated an 800 million Euro loss. Following the Bishopric's statement that this was just a canard, it turned out that the financial collapse was even more severe, the loss amounting to nearly 1,740,000,000 Euros. Although the Holy See initially refused to help, it later decided to meet at least the minimal economic needs of the bankrupt Bishopric, which also received assistance from fellow Austrian bishops.⁹⁶ It was a huge scandal, for it came to light that the Slovene Catholic Church had concealed financial information, falsified business records and even invested money in a television station broadcasting pornographic programs, thereby penalizing, in addition to banks and corporations, even some 30,000 shareholders, mostly believers. This debacle radically affected the Church's reputation in the public eye, but it learned nothing from this material defeat and moral downfall. For this reason, no less than five Slovene Bishops were demoted between 2009 and 2013. The first was the metropolitan and archbishop of Ljubljana, Alojz Uran, who had been nominated as the successor to Msgr. Rode by John Paul II in 2004, but was removed as early as 2009 by Benedict XVI, officially on the grounds of bad health. Following the Pope's decree, he was banished from Slovenia, first to Carinthia in Austria, then to Trieste, from where he was only allowed to return to his homeland in 2016. The next to go was the Archbishop of Maribor, Franc Kramberger, again allegedly because of "poor health," but in reality due to the bankruptcy that he had been unable to prevent. Even more drastic was the decision made by Pope Francis in the middle of 2013 to remove after only three years in office, for unstated yet obvious reasons, Uran's successor in the Ljubljana episcopal see Dr. Anton Stres, who was well-known for his bellicose temper in combining religion with politics, and the new bishop of Maribor, Marjan Turnšek, only two years after his instalment. With the resignation of the Bishop of Koper Metod Pirih in 2012,

94 Kovačič Peršin, *Duh inkvizicije*, 180.

95 Prinčič, *Križ in kapital*, 286–98. Emiliano Fittipaldi, "Toh, la Chiesa ha fatto crac," *L'Espresso*, January 21, 2011, <https://lespresso.it/c/attualita/2011/1/21/toh-la-chiesa-ha-fatto-crac/4617>.

96 Prinčič, *Križ in kapital*, 286–98.

the Slovene Church was virtually decapitated, a process which must have been an all-time first.⁹⁷

Before being dismissed, Msgr. Stres at least had the satisfaction of being able to bury the mortal remains of Gregorij Rožman officially in the Ljubljana cathedral. Bishop Rožman, who had fled the home country in May 1945, emigrated to the US and died in Cleveland on November 16, 1959. There is a long story behind this act of piety, which testifies in its own way to the relations between the State and the Catholic Church in the years following Slovenia's independence. The first discussions about the possibility of transporting the mortal remains of the contentious Bishop date back to the early 1990s, when President Kučan held several meetings with the Vatican's Secretary of State, Sodano. While not rejecting this idea, Kučan requested that the interment of Msgr. Rožman in his homeland not be done as a show of triumph. Msgr. Rode did not agree to his request, thereby preventing the matter from being resolved.⁹⁸ In 2001, during Sodano's visit to Slovenia, Kučan renewed the proposal for reburial, which the State Secretariat of the Holy See welcomed but would only accept on the condition that there be a revision of the 1946 trial in which Rožman was sentenced to sixteen years' imprisonment. Kučan thanked the Cardinal Secretary of State for the answer, but stood by his own proposition. "For the sake of the conciliation over controversies arisen from the now remote wartime events, it would be better if the reburial of the late archbishop of Ljubljana, Msgr. Rožman, were not linked to ongoing legal proceedings in the Court of Ljubljana. A grave in his homeland is owed to him according to our understanding of the European Christian civilization, and this ethical dictate cannot be contingent on the legal outcome, nor be a motive for any kind of triumphalism."⁹⁹ In 2007, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Slovenia overturned the conviction of the deceased Ljubljana Bishop due to procedural mistakes, and remanded the case to the District court for a retrial. On April 10, 2009, the District court dropped the charges, leaving open the question as to whether Rožman was guilty of treason for having collaborated with Italian and German occupiers. Since the deceased Bishop was formally no longer a convict, the condition set by the Secretariat of State of the Holy See was met. The 550th anniversary of the diocese of Ljubljana was a befitting occasion to bury him in the Bishop's vault of the Ljubljana cathe-

97 "Dekret iz Vatikana," *Pozareport*, August 28, 2013, <https://2013.pozareport.si/post/389579/dekret-iz-vatikana-odstavljena-skofa-stres-in-turnsek-morata-v-tujino>.

98 Roter, *Padle maske*, 508.

99 MMC RTV SLO 28. Oktobra 2007.

dral on April 13, 2013.¹⁰⁰ The event remained within the framework of a solemn religious ritual without a revisionist emphasis, but the leadership of the Catholic Church could not resist the temptation to exalt the controversial prelate, and commissioned a life-size portrait of him in which he is depicted wearing an ermine coat as a religious, but also secular ruler.¹⁰¹

The Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia, which, but for an isolated episode, has preserved the appearance of an oasis of purity amid the storm of pedophilia scandals that hit the universal Church, perseveres with its traditional view on history and politics. A testimony to this is the book by Capuchin father Metod Benedik *Krščanstvo na Slovenskem v luči virov* (*Christianity in Slovene lands in the Light of Sources*), issued in 2016 by the Mohorjeva družba publishing house in Celje. The Protestant reformation which brought literacy to the Slovenes is only cursorily mentioned, with the author disregarding everything in connection to it that might be understood as criticism of the Roman Catholic Church. Even the period of Enlightenment, which marked the second ascent of the Slovene people in its cultural and political development, is treated unilaterally and presented as the key source of secularization. Based on these premises, which rely on the rejection of the French Revolution and its civilizational achievements, the author proceeds to present all the following history, including the national liberation struggle and the role of Christian Socialists and numerous priests within it. “Unfortunately,” says Peter Kovačič Peršin in his review, “this is the reason why the author cannot understand the fact that, in an age of secularization, Christianity can address a person only as an existentially ethical choice and path, and not as a hierarchical institute.”¹⁰² The Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia has not yet come to this awareness, though it would be enough to take into account the results of public opinion polls to realize how quickly the estrangement to religious practice has progressed in Slovenia. The percentage of people questioned in recent polls who declare that they never pray has reached 40.1%, the percentage of those who never participate in Church activities of any kind 66.3%, and the percentage of those who declare themselves “non-believers” being 43.6%. To those, add the interviewees who do not know whether God exists or whether

¹⁰⁰ Katoliška Cerkev v Sloveniji – Uradna spletna stran Slovenske škofovske konference, <https://katoliška-cerkve-prizadevanj-za-prekop-škofa/>; Repe, Milan Kučan, prvi predsednik, 430, 431.

¹⁰¹ France M. Dolinar, “Pokop pokojnega ljubljanskega škofa dr. Gregorija Rožmana,” *Novi glas*, April 4, 2013; <https://www.noviglas.eu/pokop-pokojnega-ljubljanskega-skofa-dr-gregorija-rozman/>; Nadškof Alojzij Urban pred portretom škofa Gregorija Rožmana na novinarski konferenci, Ljubljana 12. oktobra 2007, *Mladina*, 19. 10. 2007, 42.

¹⁰² Peter Kovačič Peršin, “Reformacija v Benedikovi zgodovini Krščanstvo na Slovenskem v luči virov,” *Stati inu obstati, Revija za vprašanja protestantizma*, Vol. 14, No. 27 (2018): 9.

it would ever be possible to know that (6.7%), and those who do not believe in God as a supernatural being, but as some kind of supernatural force (28.6%), and those who “sometimes believe in God, sometimes not” (9.5%). Of the rest, 14.5% have some doubts but nevertheless believe in God, while only 22.1% are firm in their faith.¹⁰³ This somber reality is hard to accept for the Slovene ecclesiastical hierarchy, which feels—as Zdenko Roter wrote as early as 1982—like a kind of “nightmare” insofar as realizing that it will have to bid farewell to the overused concept of Slovenes as a “Catholic nation.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Niko Toš, *Vrednote v prehodu XIII.: Slovenija v mednarodnih in medčasnih primerjavah* ISSP, ESS, SJM 2017-2020, Ljubljana, 2020, 415, 440; See also Niko Toš et al., *Podobe o Cerkv in religiji (na Slovenskem v 90-ih)* (Ljubljana, FV-IDV, 1999).

¹⁰⁴ Zdenko Roter, *Vera in nevera v Sloveniji 1968-1978* (Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1982), 22, 23.

The Curious Case of the Macedonian Church

A Survey of the Past and Present

Zachary T. Irwin

This book is dedicated to the life's work of Sabrina Petra Ramet. Among her many works on the religious situation in Eastern Europe, the scholarly place of the Orthodox Church is distinguished. In addition, her many books on the Yugoslav successor states include a valuable contribution to our understanding of Macedonia. One of the finest remains the edited volume, *Civic and Uncivic Values in Macedonia*.¹ Because of its emphasis on changes in Macedonian intellectual and social life, the book highlights the context of Macedonia's emerging political system. The breadth, value and accessibility of the book remain unequalled, yet it is only one in a series of books on Yugoslavia's successors. No such collection has done more to broaden our understanding of the complex legacy of former Yugoslavia. It is to such lasting scholarship that this chapter and volume are dedicated.

THE CHAPTER IN BRIEF

In this chapter, I wish to examine the recent history of the Orthodox Church in North Macedonia, with an emphasis on its two best known dissidents, Archbishop Dositej (Dimitrije Stojkovic, 1906–1981) and Bishop Jovan Vraniškovski (Zoran Vraniškovski, 1966–). Both have become dissenters as a result of the relations between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Church of North Macedonia. Dositej, a Macedonian Serb, was ordained Bishop of Toplica in 1951 and served as an aide with responsibility for Macedonian Affairs to the Serbian Patriarch, Vikentije II. As early as 1951, an Initiative Board in the Re-

¹ Sabrina P. Ramet, Ola Listhaug, and Albert Simkus, eds., *Civic and Uncivic Values in Macedonia: Value transformation, Education, Media* (New York: Palgrave, 2013).

public of Macedonia demanded that Dositej replace the then Metropolitan of Skopje, Josif Cvijović, an outcome that took place in 1958. Dositej was also ordained Archbishop of Ohrid and Skopje, as well as Metropolitan of Macedonia. The following year, the Serbian Church recognized the Macedonian Church as autonomous, that is, the Church in Macedonia retained certain privileges under the authority of the Serbian Church. In 1967, the Macedonian Church proclaimed its autocephaly, that is, its full independence, a status contested by Serbian and other Orthodox Churches. By remaining primate, Dositej defied the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Second, the chapter will examine the cases of the Macedonian Archbishop Jovan Vraniškovski, and Zoran Vraniškovski (1966–), who was ordained Bishop of Veles in 2000, following the 2002 contested Niš agreement reestablishing relations with the Serbian Church and restoring the Macedonian Church's autonomous status. When a majority of Macedonian bishops denounced the Niš Agreement, Bishop Vraniškovski declared his allegiance to the Serbian Orthodox Church, which was the same year he was appointed Exarch of the Serbian-sponsored Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric. An Exarch is lower in rank than a patriarch, yet retains a wider jurisdictional area than the metropolitan of a diocese. The Ohrid Archbishopric remains a Church in exile, insofar as contesting the legitimacy and canonicity of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. The two cases bear a qualified and opposing symmetry in relation to Serbian and Macedonian Orthodoxy. In this chapter, I wish to discuss the emergence and significance of Dositej and Vraniškovski and their meaning for the Church in Macedonia and Orthodoxy in general. I make no pretense of judging the respective merits or canonicity of their choices. However, their examples help highlight larger questions about independent Macedonia, and its relationship with Socialist Yugoslavia and Serbian Orthodoxy.²

More specifically, Dositej and Vraniškovski represent opposite tendencies in a long-standing relationship between Serbian and Macedonian Orthodoxy. Each cleric's choice has been ostracized by their respective Churches. I have chosen the word "dissident" to describe them, aware that the word does not exactly collapse the phrase "liberals, conservatives and mavericks." However, it does imply an expressed attitude that falls outside a consensus of Church values. Dissident suggests a more general form of activity. For example, clerical support for European standards of sexual tolerance could be considered dissent, as well as

² Stella Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 283–85.

opposition to the Church's inherited viewpoint about its autocephaly. In this respect, the case of Macedonia is interesting. Neither positions in favor nor positions against autocephaly might amount to "dissent" outside Macedonia. The word "dissent" nicely avoids the problem of the relativity of place in our choice of subject. More substantively, we might consider the matter of Orthodox dissent nestled within the legacy of Church doctrine and the question of Macedonian identity. Dissent in the Macedonian Orthodox Church bears a particular significance because of the perception of North Macedonian nationality and the Church's place in its affirmation. More exactly, the Church's significance lies in its relationship with the country as a whole. I hope to demonstrate that the role of the Church in Macedonian politics magnifies the impact of dissent. Moreover, the Church's role is one that nicely explains the importance of religion in the Balkans as a whole.

Macedonian identity has been a matter of scholarly attention since the state's post-communist inception. Perhaps not all Macedonians would agree with the assertion of Vjekoslav Perica, that a Macedonian national is a member of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.³ This position implies a deficiency in other attributes associated with national identity. However, a consensus exists about a distinctive role of Macedonian Orthodoxy. "[Where] other aspects of national identity are under challenge, such as language, history and territory, religion and ecclesiastical organization may be expected to become important."⁴ What constitutes a "challenge" and what is "important" can be easily suggested. Like Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia had not enjoyed an independent existence before Yugoslavia's collapse. Montenegrin independence (1878–1918) was eliminated at the creation of Yugoslavia. Initially, Serbia and Greece denied the rationale for an independent Macedonia. Serbia had gained a substantial part (Vardar) of Macedonian territory after the Second Balkan War, ruled the territory in interwar Yugoslavia and sought to annex a part of the post-Yugoslav state; Greece appeared to express a similar attitude towards Aegean Macedonia. A Greco-Serbian division of the Republic of Macedonia recalled the 1913 alliance between Athens and Belgrade against Bulgaria. President Kiro Gligorov considered that Milošević's Serbia nourished active plans for the annexation of "Southern Serbia." But the potential of territorial claims for a wider Balkan war

³ Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkan Idols, Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 174.

⁴ Håkan Wiberg and Biljana Vankovska, "A Special Part of Europe: Nation, State and Religion among Orthodox South Slavs," Danish Institute for International Studies, 2005, 7, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep13412>.

in 1993 occasioned American intervention on behalf of Macedonia's security.⁵ Following Milošević's ouster, Skopje and Belgrade established diplomatic relations in April 1996. Although Sofia was the first to recognize Macedonian statehood, it does not recognize the Macedonian nationality or language as distinct from Bulgarian, hence implying that North Macedonia may constitute a potential *irredentum*. The case of relations with Greece has been more dramatic. Only the Prespa Accord has resolved the "name issue" by declaring North Macedonia to be separate from Greek Macedonia.⁶ Relations between Macedonian Orthodoxy and the respective Churches of Greece and Bulgaria have varied.

Alleged evidence of Macedonia's diminished status is not only an external question. The VMRO-DPMNE (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity) Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski (2006–2016) promoted a domestically politicized version of identity and nationalism, described as "antiquization." The term implies the creation of monuments intended to be visual reminders of the nation's historical identity. The campaign "Skopje 2014" succeeded in stimulating competitive projects with "Yugoslav" and "Albanian" themes.⁷ However, any version of the country's history scarcely equals the role of the Church. The leaderships of both major Slavic parties have declared the Church to be a "pillar" of national identity.

The significance of religious dissent in Macedonia derives from the Church's place in national identity. Potential deficiencies in other components of identity, e.g., language and territory, presume, albeit illogically, that historical duration is tantamount to symbolic authenticity. Dissent in the Church cannot simply be considered a matter of consequence for the Church hierarchy if it is closely linked to identity. For example, the unilateral proclamation of autocephaly in 1967 was explained as a restoration of the abolition of the Archbishopric of Ohrid by Sultan Mustafa III in 1767. The eparchies of the Church had been gradually transferred to other Autocephalous Orthodox entities after the loss of Skopje to the Ottomans and the reestablishment of the Archbishop of Peć.⁸

5 Johathan Landay, "US Troops Arrive in Macedonia to Keep Watch on Serbian Border," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 7, 1993, <https://www.csmonitor.com/1993/0707/07011.html>.

6 Tony Barber, "Renaming North Macedonia a Rare Diplomatic Success," *Financial Times*, May 19, 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/c5c77a76-4a29-11e9-bde6-79eae5ac64>.

7 Paul Reef, "Macedonian Monument Culture Beyond 'Skopje 2014,'" *Südosteuropa* 9(66(4)) (2018): 451–80.

8 Aleksandar Trajanovski, "Restoration of the St. Clement's Ohrid Archbishopric-Patriarch as the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Ohrid Archbishopric," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (2017): 22–23, <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/rec/vol37/iss4/3>.

However, the Archbishopric of Ohrid came into being after the Byzantine Emperor Basil II defeated the Bulgarian Emperor Samuil in 1018.

Nevertheless, the Church became identified with the restoration of an autonomous Macedonian Socialist Republic in post-war Yugoslavia. In two decades, the Church would further fortify that relationship through the declaration of an independent autocephaly shared with other Balkan Orthodox Churches. A fully sovereign post-communist Macedonian state has helped to create a greater value for Macedonian Orthodox institutions. The Bulgarian cultural anthropologist Ivalyo Ditchev has theorized about the foreign policy demands on national identity experienced by each Balkan state. He views the Balkans as a region of “semi-independent states...torn between the need to fit into the schemes of geo-political sponsors”... to “differentiate themselves....and adhere to the universal image of modernity.”⁹ Ditchev contrasts the strategies of Serbia and Bulgaria in seeking to satisfy these criteria. Bulgaria’s identity narrative was supportive of European Union candidacy criteria, while Serbia has been less so. He also identifies “simplification” as an “essential aspect of identity.” Independent North Macedonia made the Church’s presence both conspicuous and unambiguous, satisfying Ditchev’s criteria generally, if imperfectly. Macedonian Orthodoxy enjoys an astonishing level of domestic support, and with it, Ditchev’s notion of “differentiation.” To adhere to a national Orthodox tradition is a distinctive category of identity, a fact that enhances an acknowledged and legitimate Orthodox autocephaly. Approximately 69.3% of Macedonians are Christian, and among these the overwhelming majority are Orthodox. Taken as a whole, some 88% of Macedonians consider themselves religious compared with 83% in Kosovo, 77% in Romania, and the lowest share, 39%, in Albania.¹⁰ Thus, the Church can be considered a national institution.

There is little evidence among Orthodox laity that the Church’s prestige has been diminished by the controversy concerning its autocephalous status. However, no extra-regional authority, save the Ecumenical Patriarch himself, could confer legitimacy on the claims to legitimate autocephaly. By contrast, Ditchev’s criterion for “modernization” is most clearly demonstrated by progress towards or membership in the European Union. The government’s efforts to win EU accession remain some of the highest among candidate countries, that is, 69% of

9 Ivalyo Ditchev, “The Eros of Identity,” in *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, edited by Dušan Bjelić and Obrad Savić (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 236.

10 Marcus Tanner, “Religion Remains Powerful in the Balkans, Survey Shows,” *Balkan Insight*, January 15, 2018, <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/01/15/religion-remains-powerful-in-balkans-survey-shows-01-15-2018/>.

the adult population favor accession, with only 7% in opposition.¹¹ With a nearly 10:1 ratio of support, North Macedonia for EU membership remains the highest among candidate members. The challenge of sustainable statehood has been to achieve a mutually reinforcing relationship among differentiation, simplification and modernization.

THE BALKAN IMBROGLIO

The impact of the regional environment's impact on the three attributes suggests a more detailed consideration of each. Simplification implies the lasting impact of a single and irreversible action. Typically, diplomatic recognition of a state entails irreversible consequences, unlike recognition of a particular government. Similarly, modernization has been associated with a variety of internal changes related to economic development. For EU candidates, modernization demands the harmonization of domestic legislation and an adherence to the so-called Copenhagen Criteria of governance. Perhaps not all Macedonian political forces would embrace such change, but EU membership is a prized outcome. Outside the Balkans, differentiation has involved an acknowledged political consciousness and its formal acknowledgment by other states.

Balkan minorities and the independent successor states of Socialist Yugoslavia are different from each other. Independent Macedonia (now, North Macedonia) offers compelling evidence of the importance of "differentiation" as a necessary condition for other political objectives. Proclaiming an autocephalous Macedonian Church in 1967 fortified the Republic's differentiation from Serbia. Support for autocephaly has been clearly identified as an affirmation of Macedonian identity. The Macedonian diplomat Aleksandar Trajanovski asserted that, even in its 200-year absence, an unextinguished religious identity was a beacon of liberation: "The Ohrid Archbishopric has maintained and nourished St. Clement and consequently the Macedonian Religious spirit, traditions and general national identity for centuries."¹² St. Clement (830–916) was a Bulgarian apostle of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, associated with the Glagolitic and Cyrillic alphabets and the origins of Christianity in the Balkans. The fact that St. Clement was the First Bishop of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church does not seem to

¹¹ "North Macedonia Social Briefing: Public Opinion and Popular Narratives Ahead of the EU Council Vote," <https://china-ccc.eu/2019/10/24/north-macedonia-social-briefing-public-opinion-and-popular-narratives-ahead-of-the-eu-council-in-fall-2019/>.

¹² Trajanovski, "Restoration," 22.

have detracted from his role in Macedonia. The country's largest Macedonian Orthodox Cathedral in Skopje and the Saint's resting place in Ohrid bear his name. St. Clement's life offers a certain metaphor for the problem of differentiation; his central place in Orthodoxy is shared while the Orthodox tradition is both common and distinctive.

DIFFERENTIATION AND THE CHURCH: THE CRUCIAL PLACE OF A UNIFIED CHURCH

Uncertainty about Clement's national identity may render moot claimants who seek his legacy in support of national legitimacy. Other issues of differentiation continue to disrupt goals of simplification and modernization, that is, resolving potential vetoes of Macedonian membership in the European Union. After prolonged negotiations leading to the resolution of the "name issue" with Greece in the Prespa Accords, Bulgaria objected to the phrase "the Macedonian language" in EU accession talks. The "language issue" is compounded by Sofia's objections to the existence of "Macedonian minorities" in Bulgaria.¹³ Raising the issue could have been a negotiating tactic to improve Bulgaria's position in the EU; yet, Sofia's current veto of North Macedonia's possible accession suggests a wider regional problem of latent, if not violent, conflict. Right-wing elements in Greece and North Macedonia were not the only interested parties in the Prespa Accords. In Ditchiev's phrase, they involved extra-regional "geo-political sponsors," Russia, the United States and the European Union. From Skopje's viewpoint, membership in NATO and the European Union would represent a modernizing objective, but from outside the Balkans the changing regional balance involved rival strategic objectives. Of course there is a certain bias in the word "modernizing." States aspiring to join the European Union are expected to revise domestic governance with respect to achieving the *acquis communautaire*, that is a political "standard of civilization" associated with Western Europe.¹⁴

Macedonian Orthodoxy expresses both "differentiation" from other Orthodox Balkan states, and for North Macedonia, it expresses a distinctive sov-

¹³ Sinisa Jakov Marusic, "Bulgaria Refuses to Remove Barrier to North Macedonia's EU Talks," *Balkan Insight*, December 8, 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/12/08/bulgaria-refuses-to-remove-barrier-to-north-macedonias-eu-talks/>.

¹⁴ Stephen Silvia and Aaron Beers Sampson, "Acquis Communautaire and European Exceptionalism: A Genealogy," ACES Working Paper, 2003/1, (Washington DC: European Union Studies Center (July 2013), 10–13, <http://aci.pitt.edu/8961/1/2003.1.pdf>.

ereignty in relations with neighboring states. As I have mentioned, resolving North Macedonian “differentiation” in a “simplified” way has implications for the state’s political destiny. Differentiation offers a central rationale for independent statehood. To repeat, an autocephalous Macedonian Church represents a regional source of differentiation. Were there no distinction between Serbian and Macedonian Orthodoxy, the distinction between their respective nations would be diminished. However, unlike the state’s claim to sovereignty, the Church’s status within the Orthodox community is derivative, both from Orthodox traditions and from the recognition of other autocephalous churches. Arguably, the Orthodox notion of a Church-state “symphony” may make the distinction unsustainable in certain instances. Prior to the exercise of state sovereignty or church autocephaly, the foundations of church and state fundamentally differ. The state exercises a legal monopoly of force over a defined territory, but the Orthodox Church depends on a synod of its bishops. The Primate presides over the assembly of bishops, but the Church’s status remains useful for assessing the place of dissent. Conversely, the socialist Yugoslav regime discovered that pressure on the Serbian Church could not force its recognition of Macedonian autocephaly. The Church’s contribution to a sense of Macedonian nationality may involve both Skopje and other state actors, but it also involves Orthodox tradition and practice. For example, North Macedonia’s status could be affected, both by the attitude of Serbian Orthodoxy and by the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople, an actor, in principle, beyond state control.

For the sake of discussion, I am suggesting a distinction between issues integral to the Church, derivative issues and those beyond its control involving other actors, such as contingent issues. Most derivative issues are straightforward, since they involve internal matters of recognized practice. For example, an autocephalous Church is pertinent to national sovereignty. Clerical hierarchy is based, respectively, on the traditional authority of ordained bishops. Each bishop’s authority is derivative of an inherited assumption, practice or doctrine. Not all bishops will use that authority in equal measure, as secondary derivative issues may include the Church’s viewpoint about the legitimacy and mutual responsibility of church and state. Secondary issues are contextual. A unified and self-confident Church might use its moral authority to address Macedonia’s political corruption and scandals, and to occasionally act as a subordinate diplomatic partner with the state. Conversely, the Church may also derive benefit from the state. The relationship is nicely illustrated by Macedonian President Stevo Pendarovski’s recent plea to the Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew (b. 1940), imploring him to “esteem the call of our people and people to use your prerogative, and fi-

nally give our citizens of the Orthodox Christian faith the opportunity to.... focus on a common future, coexistence and true freedom... [and] to be equal with other Orthodox Christians across the globe.”¹⁵ Such an unusual appeal reinforces the Orthodox notion of church and state as a “symphony” of coordinate wills. However, the relationship has not prevented the Church from political endorsement. Bishop Agatangel of Veles recently endorsed VMRO-DPMNE during a celebration of St. Tryphon’s Day, the Patron Saint of Winemakers. The Bishop praised the party as “the largest and holiest” of parties, praying it would “bring back all that is Macedonian.”¹⁶ The speech objected to the Prespa Accords, the Friendship Treaty with Bulgaria and the negotiations with Sofia on its objections to Macedonia’s EU membership.

The history of relations between the Serbian and Macedonian Churches has involved a continuing and dramatic narrative of East European Orthodoxy. It has also given rise to one of Macedonia’s most notorious religious dissidents, Bishop Jovan Vraniškovski.¹⁷ Vraniškovski had been Bishop of Veles and at one point concluded that as the “Mother” of Macedonian Orthodoxy, the Serbian Orthodox Church was to be honored, rather than the Macedonian Church’s claim to autocephaly. The response of North Macedonian authorities has ensured Vraniškovski’s status as a dissident

It is useful to distinguish between the Serbian minority in Macedonia and the claims of its Church. At the time of writing, final results of the 2021 census were not available. According to the 2002 census, Serbs in North Macedonia numbered approximately 35,000 persons (1.78%) concentrated in the north of the country and Skopje. The Serbian presence in North Macedonia and Skopje is part of the canonical Eparchy of Polog and Kumanovo, but remained under Serbian Orthodox jurisdiction. Sensitivity to Serbs’ presence in the country is relevant to current ecclesial relations. Interwar Yugoslavia considered Macedonian autonomy an unacceptable source of Bulgarian irredentism.¹⁸ Instead, Belgrade sought to settle up to 50,000 Serbian families in Macedonia through a de-

¹⁵ “Ecumenical Patriarch Urged to Recognize North Macedonian Church,” BBC Monitoring, September 20, 2020, (accessed April 20, 2021) in *Newsbank*, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/17DA257B7288CC50&f=basic>

¹⁶ Sinisa Jakov Marusic, “Bishops Political Sermon Sours North Macedonia Winemakers’ Holiday,” *Balkan Insight*, February 15, 2021, <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/02/15/bishops-political-sermon-sours-north-macedonia-winemakers-holiday/>.

¹⁷ Zachary T. Irwin “The Macedonian Church in the New Millennium,” in *Orthodox Churches and Politics in Southeastern Europe: Nationalism, Conservatism and Intolerance*, edited by Sabrina P. Ramet (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 167–96.

¹⁸ Myron Weiner, “The Macedonian Syndrome: An Historical Model of International Relations and Political Development,” *World Politics*, 23(4) (July 1971): 671–72.

liberate policy of “internal colonization,” but only 2,800 families had settled by 1940.¹⁹ In addition to other features of “Serbianization” and the suppression of Bulgarian influence, Belgrade’s policy was deeply resented by local Macedonians. One result ensured the popularity in Macedonia of the outlawed Communist Party of Yugoslavia, at least in part owing to its advocacy of “self-determination.” As mentioned, the Serbian Church did not recognize the 1967 Declaration of Orthodox Macedonian autocephaly. In 1991, Serbs collectively chose to boycott Macedonia’s independence referendum. I have mentioned the attitude of Slobodan Milošević. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1996, Skopje’s support of Kosovo’s independence has been a persistent source of conflict.

THE CORE PROBLEM: THE CHURCH IN CONFLICT

The origins of the ecclesial conflict over Macedonia’s status lie in the immediate postwar era. Before the war’s end in March 1945, a “First Assembly of Clergy and Laity” was organized in Skopje, and resolved the creation of a restored Macedonian Orthodox Church. An “Initiative Board for the Organization of Church Life in Macedonia” was also created, and later reorganized, to resolve matters involving the Church and the laity, and implicitly, the Communist Party. The Initiative Board had demanded the removal of Bishop Josip Cvijović, a close associate of the exiled Serbian Prelate, Nikolaj Velimirović, from his Eparchy in Skopje.²⁰ After his initial refusal to comply, Serbian Patriarch Vikentije II permitted Cvijović to become an administrator of the Metropolitanate of Montenegro; Cvijović was arrested, apparently for wartime activities, in 1950. He died in 1957.

The Initiative Board had sought the appointment of Archmandrite Dositej (Stojkovic) to replace Cvijović. Born in 1906 in Smederovo, Dositej had enjoyed a distinguished early career in the Serbian Church. He had been appointed Vicar Bishop of Toplica in 1951, and served as an advisor to the Patriarch on matters concerning Macedonia, possibly because his family been Serbian “Patriarchists” (under the Patriarch of Constantinople) in Ottoman Macedonia. Dositej was born in 1906 in the town of Mavrovo in western Macedonia, and was educated in Belgrade, the Seminary Sremski Karlovzi, and Sveta Bogodolica Precista Mon-

19 Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 320.

20 Jovan Byford, “Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović: ‘Lackey of the Germans’ or ‘Victim of Fascism,’” in *Serbia and the Serbs in World War Two*, edited by Sabrina P. Ramet and Ola Listhaug (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 128–52.

astery in Kičevo.²¹ There is good reason to assume that Dositej won the confidence of the Serbian Patriarch as his chief advisor on Macedonian affairs, probably supporting Vikentije II's refusal to countenance the Macedonian Church's request for special status.

Nevertheless, Patriarch Vikentije II and the Serbian Synod were explicit in their denial of a separate hierarchy for the Macedonian Church, the name "Macedonian Orthodox Church," and much more, recognition of autocephaly or autonomy. After extensive discussions, the Patriarch and the Synod accepted two demands of the Initiative Board: the appointment of Macedonian-born bishops to head the Macedonian dioceses, and the use of the Macedonian language in internal administrative affairs.²² However, candidates for the bishops' sees were considered unqualified by the Synod owing to their ecclesial experience and their being married. However, the Macedonian question for Serbia appeared to move toward a resolution without a consensual settlement. The President of the Macedonian Assembly, Lazar Koliševski, met with the Serbian Patriarch. Koliševski warned that without the creation of a Macedonian Church, a religious sentiment in the Republic would likely turn to a solution involving a deeper schism through an affiliation with the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, or even with Eastern Rite Roman Catholicism.²³ Vikentije II had been willing to discuss Macedonia's religious status, with both the Federal Commission for Religious Questions and the Initiative Committee; however, he was unwilling to concede any change that could lead to a distinctive Macedonian hierarchy. Dositej had come to think differently; his actions would demonstrate a conviction that a distinctive Macedonian Church could still retain canonical relations with Serbia, despite Serbian opposition. It is not possible to know at which point Dositej had changed his thinking, or if he had ever changed. Stella Alexander observes that as early as 1951, he had celebrated "triumphal" Orthodox services in the Macedonian language in Skopje, Bitola, and Ohrid in Macedonian; moreover, Dositej considered himself of Macedonian nationality, despite his birth in Serbia.²⁴

21 Georgio Nurigiani, *The Autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church and its Head Dositej* (Teleropa: Rome, 1968), 3.

22 Deacon Ivica Čairović, "The Role of Vicar Dositej (Stojković) at the Beginning of the Church Schism in Macedonia in 1958," *Istorija 20. veka* 36(2) (2018): 166, https://istorijazoveka.rs/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2018_2_09_cai_155-186.pdf.

23 Koliševski's actions against the activity of Roman Catholic clerics advancing the cause of Eastern Rite Catholicism in Macedonia are well established. See Borče Ilievski, "The Attitude of the Authorities of the Peoples Republic of Macedonia towards the Roman Catholic Church in the 1950s" <https://hr-cak.srce.hr/file/199384>, Dositej had objected to potential Macedonian Bishops because he considered them "Bulgarophiles," Čairović, "The Role of Vicar Dositej," 165, 171.

24 Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*, 208.

On July 5, 1958, the Patriarch suddenly died, and was replaced by German (Hranislav Đorić) Bishop of Žiža. The death of Vikentije altered the context of the Macedonian decision. German had reportedly enjoyed the support both of Tito and Aleksandar Ranković. It is difficult to speculate about the extent of initial trust between Dositej and the new patriarch. Following German's installation, events moved quickly in Macedonia. A "Church National Assembly" convened in Macedonia to proclaim an "Ohrid Archbishopric," as well as several new dioceses. Following extensive and ultimately fruitless negotiations with Patriarch German and the Federal Committee on Religious Questions, the Assembly unilaterally resurrected the Archbishopric of Ohrid; it would consist of three Dioceses, Skopje, Prespa-Bitolj, and Zletovo-Strumica. The new institution would remain in canonical unity with the Serbian Church. Patriarch German neither participated in nor openly approved of the proceedings. On October 4, 1958, Dositej was uncanonically proclaimed the "Archbishop of Ohrid and Skopje, and Metropolitan of Macedonia" by the mixed assembly of clergy and laity.²⁵ The new institution was intended to remain in canonical unity with the Serbian Church, though Dositej's account of his involvement is worth recalling:

I listened to the voice of my conscience and the call of God, as expressed by this church national council, and accepted the arduous and responsible duty of becoming one of the bishops of the Church in Macedonia. In the course of its deliberations, the entire church national assembly, as the lawful representative of the clergy and the faithful of the Orthodox Church in Macedonia, unanimously expressed its desire for my meekness to assume the primacy of the renewed Archbishopric of Ohrid and the Metropolitanate of Skopje of Macedonia, and elected me with 215 votes in the ancient Saint Sofia Cathedral, by free and secret ballot, for their first Metropolitan.²⁶

Two considerations may be relevant. By all accounts, Dositej's piety and sincerity seemed beyond reproach. Second, it is possible, if improbable, to confirm that he could have expected, or been informally assured, that the Serbian Church would grant a level of autonomy similar to the Churches in Finland, Estonia, and at that time, Ukraine. In fact, the latter took place in 1959.

²⁵ Deacon Čairović, "The Role of Vicar Dositej," 177. I am especially indebted to Čairović for the details leading up to the elevation of Dositej as Metropolitan Archbishop and to the account of events prior to his election.

²⁶ 6 AHS of SOC – Letter of the Archbishop of Ohrid and Metropolitan of Skopje, No. 15 of September 22, (October 5) 1958, Ohrid. Cited in Čairović, "The Role of Vicar Dositej," 178.

The next year realized a level of reconciliation between the Serbian Church and the new Macedonian Church. The latter remained “autonomous,” that is, independent of the Serbian Church in all but the appointment of a future primate, as well as a limited series of questions in which the Macedonian Sabor would meet with Serbian representatives. But the meaning of “autonomous” was unclear, particularly in the matter of ordaining bishops. Serbian Patriarch German ultimately resolved to heal the schism by formally recognizing Dositej’s authority by joining in the consecration of the newly elected Bishop of Prespa-Bitola.²⁷ Nevertheless, Patriarch Dositej solely consecrated the Bishop of Zletovo-Strumica.²⁸ Hence, Dositej had defined his understanding of autonomy in a way probably different from what German had expected. The relationship could not have been completely satisfactory; yet, the Yugoslav regime sought to reward the Serbian Church’s cooperation by resolving two of its serious financial problems, a persistent budget deficit and the perennial problem of clergy pensions.

The new Macedonian Archbishop was enthusiastically welcomed by the government, that is, both by the Federal Executive Council and Milan Vukasović, Chairman of the Federal Commission on Relations with Religious Communities. The Yugoslav spokesmen referred to the Church’s fulfilling the [popular] “wishes” regarding the “the national question.”²⁹ Belgrade was especially alert to the use of the Church in foreign policy. Together, Patriarch German and Archbishop Dositej visited Patriarch Aleksii in Moscow, an affirmation of ecclesial unity and the Macedonian nationality.³⁰ Dositej and Vukasović pledged to “work against the assimilation of our fellow nationals abroad.”³¹ The apparent assumption was that nationally conscious Macedonians could lobby for Yugoslav interests in their adoptive country. Ultimately, Macedonian dioceses would be created in Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand.

The problem was that international Orthodox relations could cut both ways. The proclamation of an autocephalous Macedonia Church in 1967 elevated it to the same level as all Churches within the Orthodox community. Patriarch German rejected the Macedonian Orthodox Church’s request for autocephaly.

²⁷ Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia since 1945*, 266.

²⁸ Macedonian Orthodox Church, A Brief History of the Strumica Diocese, nd. <http://www.mpc.org.mk/english/mpc/strumica/history.asp>.

²⁹ Federal Executive Council, *Tanjug*, March 15, 1960, translated in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS)*, FRB-60-053, March 17, 1960.

³⁰ Joint Meeting of Serbian and Macedonian Churches with Russian Orthodox Patriarch Aleksii, TASS, October 20, 1961, FBIS, FRB-61-205 October 23, 1961.

³¹ “Resistance to Assimilation of our Fellow Nationals Abroad” *Tanjug*, in FBIS (EE213) November 2, 1974.

Consequently, the Serbian Orthodox Synod declared the Macedonian Orthodox Church “a schismatic religious organization,” and broke off all liturgical and canonical links with its bishops. The Macedonian Church became one of “irregular status,” and not in communion with other Orthodox Churches.³² The recognition or non-recognition was analogous to the theories of diplomatic recognition. Like theories of “constitutive” recognition, the validity of Macedonian autocephaly depended on the acknowledgement of others. Except for its claim of continuity with the former Archbishopric of Ohrid, the Macedonian Church embraced a “declarative” approach, dependent on the components of autocephaly, exclusive of the decisions of others.³³

Otherwise, the question of recognizing autocephaly was both a question of doctrinal consensus and practical politics. German and the Serbian Synod had already made a substantial concession to the Yugoslav regime in recognition of an “autonomous” Macedonian Church. What would the Serbian or any other Orthodox Church gain by a further concession? Not only did the Serbian Church condemn the “schismatic” church, but the Greek Orthodox Church followed in condemning the “unlawful and irregular activity” of the Macedonian Church, and broke off all relations.³⁴ Relations between the state and the Serbian Orthodox Church appreciably worsened. The Serbian League of Communists condemned the Church’s “nationalist” and “anti-self-managing” attitudes regarding the Macedonian Church. The Serbian Church was criticized for its activities among young people and the construction of new churches. The resolution posed a more general threat in criticizing the “liberalist (sic) view that no special activities of the League of Communists are necessary to overcome the harmful effects of [religious] sectarian attitudes...”³⁵ Meanwhile, the Macedonian Church enjoyed a singular level of cordiality with the Yugoslav state and party, which reciprocated the attitude. During Tito’s final illness, the Archbishop praised Tito’s “statesmanlike wisdom and great authority” in world politics.³⁶ The Serbian Church may have also lost a potential defender in the 1966 ouster of Serbian First Vice President Aleksandar Ranković, but the relatively offensive stance was con-

32 Ines Murzaku “Motherless Despite Three Mothers: The Plight of the Macedonian Orthodox Church for the Recognition of Autocephaly,” *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol. 38, issue 3 (2018): 43, <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/rec/vol38/iss3/3/>.

33 Ti Chiang-Chen, *The International Law of Recognition* (New York: Praeger, 1951).

34 Athens Domestic Service, September 14, 1967 in *FBIS, Daily Report*, FBIS-FRB-67-181, September 18, 1967.

35 Belgrade Domestic Service, June 24, 1975, *FBIS, Daily Report*, June 25, 1975, FBIS-EEU-75-123.

36 Borba, January 26, 1980 translated in *FBIS Daily Report*, January 29, 1980 translated in FBIS-EEU-80-020.

sistent with a more authoritarian attitude of the League of Communists after 1972 toward the pluralistic centers of power. However, following Tito's death, relations improved between the Church and the Serbian League of Communists. In a "cordial" 1985 meeting with Patriarch German, the LCS President, Dušan Čkrebić, noted the problem of "sectarian" attitudes in the Church, while recognizing German's particular concerns regarding the Serbian minority in Kosovo.³⁷

The case of Dositej and the Macedonian Church left a certain level of uncertainty. Clearly, the reasons for any church to act canonically should be demonstrable. The right of other Orthodox Churches to declare the Macedonian Church to be "schismatic" in its identity or "uncanonical" in its creation is not in question. However, the involvement of communist authorities in its declaration leaves problematic the question of a valid process, such as the canonicity of the Macedonian Initiative Committee. While the Macedonian Church remained isolated, its status contradicted the principle of ecumenicity and, possibly, the ban on phyletism.³⁸ Finally, both the Macedonian Church Constitution before 1967 and the tradition of a "mother" church likewise leave the declaration problematic. The idea of a mother church was part of an earlier tradition. The Russian Orthodox Church has claimed its authority to recognize Orthodox Sees in Estonia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The issue suddenly became relevant when, on October 11, 2018, Bartholomew I, the Ecumenical Patriarch, indicated his intention to recognize the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, an action that precipitated the decision of the Russian Orthodox Church to break relations with Constantinople.

Comparatively, an earlier precedent may have supported the Macedonian claim. The Council of Ephesus had upheld the independent status of the Cypriot Church in 431 CE from a senior Apostolic Church, the Patriarch of Antioch. In the absence of an Ecumenical Council, the Patriarch in Constantinople held responsibility for a declaration of autocephaly. John H. Erickson, a scholar of Orthodox canonical law, observed the Council was not "*granting*" autocephaly to the Church in Cyprus, but was "*confirming and preserving*" its right against the "illegitimate intrusions of Antioch."³⁹ Erickson adds that "forms of the supra-

³⁷ *Tanjug*, January 18, 1985 FBIS, *Daily Report*, June 19, 1985, FBIS-EEU-85-118.

³⁸ Phyletism has been defined as an "ecclesiological heresy which says that the Church can be territorially organized on an ethnic, racial, or cultural basis so that within a given geographic territory, there can exist several Church jurisdictions, directing their pastoral care only to the members of specific ethnic groups." "The 1872 Council of Constantinople and Phyletism," *Orthodox Christian Laity*, February 23, 2012, <https://ocf.org/the-1872-council-of-constantinople-and-phyletism/>.

³⁹ John H. Erickson, *The Challenges of Our Past* (Crestwood New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991), 95 (emphasis in original).

episcopal organization in Orthodoxy have varied considerably” over history, a fact that makes it difficult to identify a single precedent. Erickson refers to the cities of Alexandria, Rome, and Antioch as traditional centers of authority. In accordance with that group, including Constantinople, the Ecumenical Patriarch refused to consider his ruling in the case of Ukrainian Orthodoxy, a precedent for Macedonia.

JOVAN VRANIŠKOVSKI, A DISSENTER OF PRINCIPLE

After Macedonia’s 1991 declaration of independence, tensions increased between both Belgrade and Skopje, and between their respective churches. The former centered on the Serbian minority that had boycotted Macedonia’s independence referendum and the reported Serbian attempts with Athens to divide the country.⁴⁰ In the absence of a Serbian Church in Macedonia, Metropolitan Jovan declared the “obligation to protect our own believers and numerous Serbian shrines in that republic.”⁴¹ Relations between the Churches were embittered by a likely misstatement of the new Macedonian Archbishop Mikhail, who claimed that his Serbian counterpart had said that “Macedonian people...have a right to have their own church.” Archbishop Pavle immediately contradicted this claim.⁴² Serbian Patriarch Pavle asserted his Church’s “obligation to protect believers and the numerous Serbian minority.” More substantively, the Serbian Synod issued an ultimatum to the Macedonian “parishes” to “return to the Church order,” and “enter into the canons.” For those faithful to the Serbian Church, Bishop Pahomie, of the Eparchy of Vranje, safely outside Macedonia, was appointed as “administrator of Macedonian eparchies.”⁴³ The Macedonian Church coincidentally reaffirmed its autocephaly by promulgating a new constitution, one describing the Church’s identity as being, “holy, catholic and apostolic... [which] protects the dogmas, canons, and unity of the divine services with the Eastern Orthodox Ecumenical Church.”⁴⁴ The Constitution further declared the 1767

⁴⁰ Perica, *Balkan Idols*.

⁴¹ *Politika*, December 18, 1992 translated in FBIS, *Daily Report*, January 15, 1993, FBIS-1993-10.

⁴² *Tanjug* (Domestic Service) January 11, 1994 translated in FBIS Eastern Europe, *Daily Report*, January 12, 1994, FBIS-1994-008.

⁴³ T. Cepreganoy, M. Angelovska-Panova, and D. Zajkovski, “The Macedonian Orthodox Church” in *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Lucian N. Leustean (London & New York: Routledge, 2014), 428.

⁴⁴ “Constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church,” Translated in *Li Con Du* (Freedom of Conscience and Human Rights) n.d. <http://licodu.cois.it/?p=7939&lang=en>.

Ottoman abolition of the Church to have been “uncanonical.” The escalating conflict had been less a matter of ecclesial order than one of measured hostility. The Serbian Church had moved from accepting “autonomy” thorough denying “autocephaly” to appointing a rival “administrator” for Macedonian dioceses.

SECOND THOUGHTS?

There is no evidence that the leadership of the Serbian Church lacked any consensus concerning its stance regarding Macedonian autocephaly, but for some Macedonian clerics isolation from the wider Orthodox community was painful. The end of Socialist Yugoslavia had been received with some ambivalence among Macedonia’s population at large, and despite independence, the separation from the Serbian Church demanded efforts towards reconciliation. Moreover, a common sovereign state made more ironic the Church’s isolation from the larger Orthodox community. In the meantime, relations improved between Belgrade and Skopje. Since independence, there had been little apparent progress in bilateral relations, but the ouster of Slobodan Milošević in October 2000 altered the context of interstate relations. A Serb-Macedonian Boundary Commission resumed its work, and soon agreed to preserve the existing boundary inherited from Socialist Yugoslavia. No less important, an agreement between the two states on mutual security addressed the burgeoning problem of terrorism and smuggling.⁴⁵ Apparently, talks between the two churches started in 2001. The next year, three Macedonian Bishops (Petar of Australia, Timotej of Debar and Kičevo, and Naum of Strumica) negotiated and signed the Niš Agreement. The accord fundamentally ended the dispute through asymmetrical concessions. The Agreement restored the pre-1967 status of Macedonian “autonomy” and [Serbian] “canonical norms,” thereby implying permission for the Macedonians for their own Primate and Synod. Even so, the Macedonian Primate was clearly responsible for the Serbian Synod and its Primate. The Primate’s role was to “represent his Church before the Serbian Orthodox Church in ...establishing Eucharistic communion and canonical unity with the Serbian Orthodox Church” [and] as a “witness for Church unity with remaining local Orthodox Churches.”⁴⁶ Perhaps, most Churches would restore relations, although

45 Zoran Vučković, “An Outline of Serbian-Macedonian Relations in the First Decade of the 21st Century,” *Politeja* (Warsaw) Vol. 4, No. 30 (2014): 365.

46 “Draft Agreement on Establishing Church Unity” Niš, May 17, 2002, <http://poa-info.org/history/schism/nisdok.html>.

the “name dispute” between Athens and Skopje made future relations with the Greek Orthodox Church problematic. The agreement did not refer to the Macedonian Church or state, possibly to win Greek support. Instead, its supporters presented the Niš Agreement to the Synod as a point of direction toward eventual autocephalous status.⁴⁷

From the time of its promulgation, the Niš Agreement provoked unusual controversy. Presumably, so significant a question should have required unanimity among all bishops. The response begged a question about how a consensus of Macedonian Bishops could have accepted or understood the agreement before its promulgation. Macedonian Archbishop Stefan (Stojan Veljanovski, b. 1955) took a “neutral” position in the controversy. Conservative clerics accused the three bishops of “treason.” The Synodal Chair, Bishop Georgi Naumov, excoriated the “degradation” and loss of the title “Macedonian Orthodox Church”; he claimed that if the agreement were accepted, the head of the Macedonian Church would automatically “lose the status of Archbishop of Ohrid and Macedonia, and will have to ask for permission from the SPC [SOC] Patriarch for all of his activities.”⁴⁸ Significantly, the bishops who signed the agreement had been educated in Belgrade (Petar and Timotej), and Naum had been a Monk on Mt. Athos in Greece.⁴⁹ Only one bishop among those of the Synod had been present in 1967, and it is possible that younger bishops valued ecclesial unity higher than autocephaly. In any case, the youngest bishop now refused to accept the outcome. As the press and public mounted an offensive, acceptance became doubtful. Nenad Živković, a professor at the University of Nis, considers that the “Macedonian Church was basically prevented from ratifying the agreement owing to the political and public pressure to overcome the common ecclesiastical position.”⁵⁰ At best, a “common” position among the Macedonian bishops seems doubtful, yet only a common, if not unanimous, position could have effectively endorsed so important an issue.

In response to the rejection of the agreement, Zoran Vraniškovski (Jovan) and his congregation declared their loyalty to the Serbian Orthodox Church. Vraniškovski was only 34 in 2002; he had studied engineering in Skopje, and in

47 Nenad Živković, “Surrendering to Public Pressure: The Macedonian Orthodox Church and the rejection of the Niš Agreement in 2002,” in *Orthodox Religion and Politics in Contemporary Eastern Europe: On Multiple Secularisms and Entanglements*, edited by Tobias Köllner (New York: Routledge, 2019), 223.

48 *MLA News Agency* (Skopje) June 5, 2002, *BBC Monitoring International Report*, in *Access World News*.

49 Zoran Bojarovski, “Macedonia: Church Deal Bishops Accused of Treason,” *Institute of War and Peace Reporting*, June 7, 2002, <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/macedonia-church-deal-bishops-accused-treason>.

50 Živković, “Surrendering to Public Pressure,” 229.

1990 matriculated at the University of Belgrade's School of Orthodox Theology, and further completed a Doctorate with the thesis, *The Unity of the Church and the Contemporary Ecclesiological Problems*. He advanced quickly in the Macedonian Church hierarchy. In Bitola, he had had been a Macedonian Bishop of the Dioceses of Dremvitsa and Vicar to the Bishops of Prespa and Pelagoniain in 1998. In March 2000, he was elected Bishop of Veles.⁵¹ Vraniškovski responded to a situation in 2002 with lifelong consequences for his role as a cleric. For his Church, the challenge was no less fraught.

First, the Macedonian Church could not dismiss the danger of a larger schism. The least predictable element was that other Macedonian clerics would follow Vraniškovski's example. A Serbian cleric held a joint service with two Macedonian priests in Kumanovo in October, nearly five months after the Niš Agreement had been denounced.⁵² The service was declared in memoriam of a major battle of the First Balkan War (October 1912), when Serbia, as well as Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro, fought the Ottoman Empire. Second, the level of conflict between the two churches became intense after Vraniškovski's defection. The Serbian Church created a rival ecclesial entity to the Macedonian Church. The Serbian sponsored Archbishop of Ohrid and Metropolitan of Skopje, threatening the Macedonian Church's claim to represent the nation. The Serbian patriarch and the Orthodox Synod confirmed Jovan IV (Vraniškovski) as Archbishop of Ohrid and Metropolitan of Skopje. Such a step was not easily reversed, and suggests the expectation of prolonged conflict. Understandably, Vraniškovski's justification bore a certain resemblance to that of Bishop Dositej 35 years earlier in emphasizing conscience in his decision. In a statement to Bitola television he remarked, "I concluded that now is the right moment (to accept autonomous status),...Some are accusing me of national treason and that may be so, but as a bishop of the Holy Church I cannot place national interests before spiritual ones. While the Church may recognize a nation, that always comes second."⁵³

Regardless of his rationale for the choice, Vraniškovski's decision created a dilemma for the Macedonian Church. No party in the controversy could return to the situation before Vraniškovski's change of allegiance, particularly

⁵¹ "Jovan VI (Vraniškovski)" Orthodox Wiki, 2015, n.p. [https://orthodoxwiki.org/Jovan_VI_\(Vrani%C5%A1kovski\)_of_Ohrid](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Jovan_VI_(Vrani%C5%A1kovski)_of_Ohrid).

⁵² MIA News Agency (Skopje) October 28, 2002.

⁵³ Tera TV (Bitola) June 26, 2002, cited in Zoran Bojarovski, "Macedonia Bishop Accused of Treason after Accepting the Authority of the Serbian Orthodox Church," *Religioscope*, July 2, 2002, <https://english.religion.info/2002/07/03/macedonia-bishop-accused-of-treason-after-accepting-the-authority-of-the-serbian-orthodox-church/>.

the Macedonian Church. There was little space for negotiation with the Serbian Church, yet if the Macedonian side had been unwilling to compromise, the result could have further divided its leadership. However, had the leadership overlooked Vraniškovski's behavior, the outcome could have encouraged like-minded Macedonian clerics. Finally, to criminalize Vraniškovski might have antagonized foreign entities concerned with religious freedom, such as institutions of the European Union. Threats of a wider schism were difficult to ignore. In response, both the Macedonian Church and the State responded in two, somewhat contradictory directions, that is, an effort to negotiate with the Serbian Church and the prosecution of Vraniškovski. According to Amnesty International, Vraniškovski, was arrested on January 12, 2004, and charged with "causing national, racial or religious hate, discord and intolerance" under Article 319 of the Criminal Code.⁵⁴ Significantly, the arrest took place more than 18 months after Vraniškovski had accepted the offer to lead the alternative Serbian sponsored ecclesial entity. At that time, he had been denounced by Macedonian Church authorities as a "traitor," and deprived of his status as a bishop. The occasion for the arrest in January 2004 apparently had been his determination to lead other Macedonian clergy towards the alternative Archbishopric. On January 10, he had announced agreement on "canonical unity" with like-minded Macedonian clerics in accordance with the Niš Agreement. Twelve clergy from Veles and Povardarje who had signed the agreement were expelled from the Macedonian Church and arrested. The document they signed expressed "canonical unity," owing to its "supranational" character in "supporting the efforts of 'Metropolitan Kyr John (Jovan).'" The statement commended Jovan for his activity on behalf of the unity of the Church, and sharply criticized the Macedonian Church for its alleged "biological" (national) bias. "We consider that a Church which will not rise above the biological features of a man, and will not direct humankind towards the eternal values and towards the life in the kingdom of God, where there will be 'neither Jew nor Greek,' is not much better than a political party or a religious sect."⁵⁵ It is not altogether clear if the statement was entirely Vraniškovski's choice, but there is no doubt that it indicated the Serbian Church's unwillingness to bargain over the basic issue.

⁵⁴ "Zoran Vraniškovski, "Macedonia: Prisoner of Conscience," AI Index EUR 65/001/2004, January 13, 2004. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/96000/eur650012004en.pdf>.

⁵⁵ The Agreement of the Priests from the Metropolis of Veles and Povardarje for Entrance into a Liturgical and Canonical Unity with the Serbian Orthodox Church, January 10, 2004, http://poa-info.org/history/schism/potpisi_svest_velest.html.

The Macedonian Church sought to open negotiations without compromising the basic issue. The Vraniškovski episode only deepened the conflict. Then in 2018 Archbishop Stefan offered a compromise. He offered to drop the name “Macedonian” in exchange for reconciliation with the Ecumenical Patriarch, and to implicitly accept the status of an autocephalous Church. The Church would become the Archdiocese of Ohrid. However, Prime Minister Zoran Zaev defended the compromise. He wrote that the title Archbishop of Ohrid would be consistent with the Prespa Agreement, renaming the country North Macedonia, and that it would recall the apogee of the Church’s influence before the Archbishopric’s abolition in 1767. Should the proposal have been accepted, the result would have had undesirable consequences for relations between the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Serbian Church. Recognition by the Ecumenical Patriarch would effectively overrule the Serbian Church’s claims to superordination. Moreover, the Prime Minister’s involvement in the matter appeared to violate Macedonia’s Constitution. Othmar Oehring of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung finds the Zaev letter “certainly questionable” in light of Article 19, requiring all “religious communities be “separate from the state and equal before the law.”⁵⁶ In fact, the issue of church and state in Macedonia was not new.

State involvement in church affairs was part of the history of the Vraniškovski episode, well before the 2009 exchange between the then Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and the Social Democratic opposition. Macedonia’s Supreme Court’s decision had rendered unconstitutional the Gruevski government’s law on state support of religious schools.⁵⁷ Ironically, in 2018, Zaev’s letter to the Ecumenical Patriarch had raised the issue of separation of church and state. By this time, the state’s response to the Vraniškovski episode appeared both relevant to the separation of church and state, and more broadly, to that of freedom of religion, potentially in more than a single religious tradition.

First, the government had categorically denied the registration of the Serbian-sponsored Archbishopric of Skopje. Non-registered communities have no legal personality, and cannot legally conduct public services, build churches or collect tithes. When asked about the rationale for the decision to deny registration, a government spokesman implied it had been a response to the refusal by

⁵⁶ Othmar Oehring, “Is the Dispute between the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church a Burden on North Macedonia,” *Facts and Findings*, No. 426, February 2021, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, <https://www.kas.de/documents/252038/11055681/Dispute+between+the+Macedonian+Orthodox+Church+and+the+Serbian+Orthodox+Church.pdf/9ccbf9c-be06-d5e2-8525-2e368392cc56?version=1.0&t=1612446156571>.

⁵⁷ “Macedonia’s Ruling Party ‘Attacks Constitutional Court,’” *Balkan Insight*, April 22, 2009, <https://balkaninsight.com/2009/04/22/macedonia-s-ruling-party-attacks-constitutional-court/>.

the Serbian Orthodox Church to recognize the Macedonian nation, national and cultural identity. The assertion was denied vigorously, both by Patriarch Pavle and Archbishop Jovan.

Second, as noted above, Jovan was charged with “inciting national, racial and religious hatred and intolerance” (Article 319), as well as embezzlement.⁵⁸ The sentence was later reduced by Macedonia’s Constitutional Court.⁵⁹ His attempts to hold religious services privately were disrupted by paramilitary violence.⁶⁰

THE INTERNATIONAL CONSEQUENCES

Macedonia has been a party to the Council of Europe since November 1995, and the European Convention on Human Rights since April 1997. Most importantly, it has also been a candidate for EU accession after its 2004 application. Presumably, its human rights record is relevant to its accession. Here, a candidate’s conformity with European practice and legal standards is addressed through such bodies as the Venice Commission. As an advisory body to the Council of Europe, the European Commission for Democracy through the Rule of Law (Venice Commission) offers opinions on constitutional matters and human rights at the request of members seeking to align their municipal law with European standards. The Commission was critical of Macedonia’s 2007 Law on Religious Communities because the law had not only required potentially arbitrary registration for religious bodies, but required that “such [an unregistered] group shall be different from ...the names of already registered ...groups.”⁶¹ Despite 2008 revisions to the law, the Ohrid Archbishopric remained unregistered in May 2020. In 2007, the Venice Commission had ruled that religious freedom implies that religious groups, “are not subordinate to any kind of specific system of registration or religious entities,” and that national security is “not a permissi-

⁵⁸ Amnesty International, “Further Information on UA 16/04 (EUR 65/001/2004, January 13, 2004), Prisoner of Conscience Jovan Vraniskovski, Index: EUR 65/008/2004 02 February 2004” <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/eur650082004en.pdf>.

⁵⁹ Drasko Djenovic, “Macedonia: Sentence Reduction Sees Serbian Bishop Freed,” *Forum 18*, March 6, 2006, https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=738.

⁶⁰ Branko Bjelajac, “Macedonia: Serbian Orthodox Archbishop Arrested Again,” *Forum 18*, January 13, 2004, https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=228.

⁶¹ International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion and Belief, “Submission to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief for his Report to the United Nations General Assembly on Eliminating Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief and the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16),” Oslo, May 30, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/Submissions/CSOs/41.ippforb-2.pdf>.

ble ground for limiting the freedom to manifest one's religion," citing a decision of the European Court of Human Rights that "pluralism is indissociable from a democratic society within the meaning of the Convention."⁶² A 2008 version of the law claimed that previous restrictions had been revised, a view not shared by foreign observers.⁶³ Possibly by its own decision, the European Commission did not wish to press Macedonia on the question. Olli Rehn, EU Commissioner on Enlargement, responded to a question about freedom of religion before the European Parliament. Answering on behalf of the Commission, Rehn replied that it was "well aware of the religious diversity" in Macedonia, and that the Commission considered the newly revised law "provided for more liberal procedures for registration of religious institutions." Rehn undertook to promise that the Commission "will monitor closely the implementation of the new legal provisions, once they have entered into force, in order to assess compliance with international standards."⁶⁴ Successive progressive reports by Macedonia to the Commission mentioned advances in human rights, but made no mention of the Vraniškovski case.⁶⁵ Without implying any justification of Macedonia's law, it should be noted that Serbian authorities had denied the Macedonian Orthodox Church the right to open a church in Serbia.

Macedonian authorities could not contain the Vraniškovski case. The World Council of Churches, Helsinki Watch, and Amnesty International took up the Bishop's cause.⁶⁶ This involvement was less consequential for Skopje than confronting those institutions associated with the European Union. The most com-

62 § 35, 28, 46 European Commission for Democracy through the Rule of Law, (Venice Commission) Opinion 424?2007 CDL -AD (2007), Strasbourg, March 22, 2007, [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2007\)005-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2007)005-e).

63 Drasko Djenovic, "New Religion Law perpetuates discrimination," *Forum 18* (Oslo), March 31, 2008, https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1107.

64 European Parliament, "Parliamentary Questions, Joint Answer Given by Mr. Rehn on Behalf of the Commission" written questions, E-5735/07, E-5736/07, E-5737, January 18, 2008, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-6-2007-5735-ASW_EN.html.

65 Commission of the European Communities, "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2009 Progress Report," {COM} (2009) 533 Brussels October 14, 2009 SEC(2009)1553, 18. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-7-2010-02-10-ITM-008_EN.html. Commission of the European Communities, {COM(2010) 660} "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2010, Progress Report," SEC (2020) 332, Brussels November 9, 2010, 18, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52010SC1332>.

66 "Minutes adopted by the WCC Central Committee on the Unlawful Detention of Archbishop Jovan of Ohrid and the Metropolitan of Skopje of the Serbian Orthodox Church (sic)," Kolympari, (Crete), August 28–September 5, 2012, *The Churches in International Affairs 2010-2013*, Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, (Geneva, 2014), 364; CSCE, "Religious Freedom in Eastern Europe, January 5, 2005, <https://www.csce.gov/international-impact/religious-freedom-south-eastern-europe?page=1>; Amnesty International, Zoran Vraniskovski, Prisoner of Conscience, EUR 65/008/2004, February 2, 2004, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/eur-650082004en.pdf>.

elling opinion was provided by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The Court had adjudicated cases involving Macedonia, and expressed opinions on a spectrum of issues, including police brutality.⁶⁷ Initially, in 2009 the ECHR declared Vraniškovski's complaint of religious discrimination to be inadmissible because the defendant had not exhausted his rights of appeal before the Macedonian Constitutional Court.⁶⁸ However, in a subsequent precedent, the Court ruled that the state could not deny registration to a group of Bektashi Muslims on the grounds that only a single religious entity could be registered, citing the previously mentioned 2007 opinion of the Venice Commission.⁶⁹ Moreover, the ECHR held that such a limitation on the "right to freedom of association and religion was not justified. There has therefore been a violation of Article 11 of the Convention read in the light of Article 9."⁷⁰ In October 2017, the Vraniškovski case returned to the Court after denial of its claim by the Macedonian Court. The ECHR insisted that the state had "a duty to remain neutral and impartial in exercising its regulatory power and in its relations with the various religions, denominations and groups within them. What is at stake here is the preservation of pluralism and the proper functioning of democracy." The court also rejected Macedonia's "crucial argument" that no other Orthodox Church, other than the MOC, should be "allowed to operate in the respondent state as contrary to the requirement of neutrality and impartiality."⁷¹ Since the decision, Macedonian authorities appear to have been forthright. In its 2019 report to the European Commission, the North Macedonian Church government acknowledged "violations of the European Convention on Human Rights in 12 cases related

67 "Court system reformed after justice delayed for over a decade," Impact of the European Convention on Human Rights/North Macedonia, n.d., <https://www.coe.int/en/web/impact-convention-human-rights/-/court-system-reformed-after-justice-delayed-for-over-a-decade>; see also, Council of Europe, "Action of the Council of Europe in North Macedonia," <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/north-macedonia..>

68 European Court of Human Rights, Fifth Section, Decision as to Admissibility of Application 57973/05, Jovan Vraniskovski vs. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, May 26, 2009, [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:\[%22001-93204%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-93204%22]}).

69 "Opinion No. 424/2007 of the European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission), 13 March 2007" cited in the European Court of Human Rights (First Section), "Case of Bektashi Muslims and Others vs. Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia," Final Decision Applications nos. 48044/109, 75722/12, 25176/13, April 12, 2018, [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#{%22itemid%22:\[%22001-182170%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-182170%22]}).

70 Ibid., §74.

71 European Court of Human Rights, (First Section) "Case of Orthodox Ohrid Diocese (Greek Orthodox Ohrid Archdiocese of Peć Patriarchy) vs. Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia," November 16, 2017, https://www.stradalex.com/fr/sl_src_publ_jur_int/document/echr_3532-07.

mainly to freedom of association in conjunction with freedom of religion, right to liberty and security and right to a fair trial.”⁷²

There has been nothing suggesting reconciliation between the Serbian and Macedonian Orthodox Churches. Patriarch Irinej of the Serbian Orthodox Church broadly condemned the “defamatory” accusations against Jovan in a letter to the “schismatic” Stefan.⁷³ Vraniškovski was released from prison in February 2015. Since then, the case has continued with no resolution.

TOWARDS A CONCLUSION: THE UNRESOLVED SITUATION

The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) has taken a particular interest in Vraniškovski in its overall contest with the United States and Europe; The ROC has become a “vehicle of influence” to advance Moscow’s position in the region.⁷⁴ Meanwhile, Archbishop Vraniškovski was reported to be seriously ill in 2021.⁷⁵ Both Patriarchs Irinej and Amfilohije of Montenegro died of Covid-19 in 2020. The new Patriarch, Porfirije (Prvoslav Perić b.1961), initially indicated little interest in healing the schism. However, on May 23, 2022, he celebrated mass jointly with Patriarch Stefan in Skopje’s St. Clement of Ohrid, announcing “God’s Church is one and our Church is one.” The announcement included a statement that the Serbian bishops had “unanimously” accepted the Macedonian church’s autocephaly.⁷⁶ Several issues seemed relevant in ending the long dispute, and none were favorable for the Serbian sponsored rival church. First, there appeared to be no real successor to Archbishop Jovan. Several other bishops are listed as composing Bishop Vraniškovski’s Holy Synod.⁷⁷ The Bishop of Polog and Kumano had been deposed. Second, the rival church could show little

72 European Commission (Brussels), Staff Working Document, North Macedonia Report 2019, SWD (2019)218 Final, May 29, 2019, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/north-macedonia-report-2019-o_en, 24.

73 Response to the letter of His Eminence Stefan, Archbishop of Ohrid in Schism, September 2014, http://arhiva.spc.rs/eng/response_letter_his_eminence_stefan_archbishop_ohrid_schism.html.

74 “Russian Orthodox Church, Department of External Relations,” Archbishop Jovan of Ohrid: “The authorities do not execute the Strasbourg court decision,” March, 25, 2022, [https://mospat.ru/fr/news/87046/\(accessed April 2, 2022\)](https://mospat.ru/fr/news/87046/(accessed April 2, 2022)); Annie Himes and Paul Stronski, “Russia’s Game in the Balkans,” Carnegie Endowment for Peace, February 2, 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/02/06/russia-s-game-in-balkans-pub-78235>.

75 “Serbian media report that former Bishop Vraniskovski is seriously ill,” *Republika*, May 1, 2021, <https://english.republika.mk/news/macedonia/serbian-media-report-that-former-bishop-vraniskovski>.

76 Konstantin Testorides, “Churches of Serbia, North Macedonia, end decades-old dispute,” *AP News*, May 24, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/skopje-northmacedonia-serbia-religion-79d2862b57a3744d14d5d85a3188b35d>.

77 *Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric*, “Holy Synod,” n.d. poa-info.org/engcese of Ohrid.

activity that would sustain its purpose. The most significant recent “news” consists of the 2017 decision of the European Court of Human Rights mentioned earlier. The rationale for a separate Macedonian Church increasingly existed as an expression of a dispute between two national hierarchies.

Finally, the rationale for the Ohrid Archbishopric was fundamentally compromised through recognition of the Macedonian Orthodox Church by the Ecumenical Patriarch on May 9, 2022. Earlier recognition of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and the reception of a Macedonian delegation by the Ecumenical Patriarch, appeared to be linked. A Serbian source had been especially concerned about the latter.

The authorities clearly support the Macedonian Church, and have actively lobbied for it to receive the Tomos Patriarch Bartholomew. On the other hand, as part of the SOC, the Archbishop of Ohrid has been persecuted. Given these circumstances, the granting of autocephaly to the Macedonian Church took place in 2022.⁷⁸

The viability of the Macedonian state has been enhanced by the Prespa Accords and Macedonia’s probable entry into the European Union. Nevertheless, an important question remained, namely the Serbian minority in northern Macedonia. The religious status of this minority is a difficult and seldom discussed question.⁷⁹ The principle that two Orthodox churches cannot exist in the same territory is well established through condemnation of the practice of phyletism.⁸⁰ Even so, some sort of accommodation between the Serbian minority, affording a Serbian Orthodox presence among the minority, could be settled by the end of the schism.

The decision to end the schism represents a significant gain for the Macedonian state and the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch. Without Bartholomew’s initiative, the Serbian patriarch would have had much less incentive to end the schism. In the meantime, the Church in its widest sense and the state continue to exist in a political culture that doubly discourages accommodation. Religious orthodoxy is both ethically and organizationally infused with an intrinsic skepticism of accommodation, both to the demand of temporal change (*chronos*) and to those of canonical principle. Concurrently, the symbiotic rela-

78 Kirill Alexandrov, “Did Phanar take the Path of Recognizing Macedonian Schmatics?” *Union of Orthodox Journalists*, December 22, 2021, <https://spzh.live/ge/zashhita-very/85013-fanar-stal-na-puty-priznaniya-makedonskih-raskolnikov>.

79 “Chronology for Serbs in Macedonia,” Refworld (Geneva: UNHCR), April 4, 2022. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/469f38b8c.html>.

80 Fr. Stephan Bingham, “The 1872 Council of Constantinople and Phyletism” *Orthodox Christian Laity*, n.d. <https://ocl.org/the-1872-council-of-constantinople-and-phyletism/>.

tionship between the Church and the nation makes the ecclesial basis of national identity a bastion of political legitimacy, or a “pillar” as it had been described in Macedonia. Apart from the Church, the rise of the secular nation-state, particularly in the recent case of Macedonia, became directly relevant to Orthodoxy, not in the notion of caesaropapism, but one in which the parochialism of the national state bore a “direct bearing on the meaning of Orthodoxy, if not on its survival in the post-Ottoman Balkans.”⁸¹ In a sense, the past conflict of the Macedonian and Serbian Churches represents a recent expression of that reality, and Archbishops Dositej and Former Bishop Vraniškovski its representatives.

⁸¹ Milicia Bakić-Hayden, “What’s so Byzantine about the Balkans,” in Bjelić and Savić, eds., *Balkan as Metaphor*, 70.

The Derailed Christian Mission

Neoliberal Globalization Claims another Victory in Post-Communist Albania

Isa Blumi

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Ramet's career of upsetting conventions extends in often profound ways to how we study the evolution of religion in the Balkans' modern history. Ramet's work often seeks to nuance the influence of religion as natives traverse the brutal transformations of the post-Ottoman era.¹ No doubt a factor as sectarian affiliation becomes a key category of differentiation within the context of the growth of the modern nation-state, it is nevertheless also noted how people rarely neatly fit into those imposed distinctions unless political agents force them to. In the process of charting the tensions shaping how states developed bureaucratically to define the subject along these religious lines, Dr. Ramet's contributions thus complicate our analysis of policies meant to service certain, often foreign, powered interests at the expense of resiliently autonomous local and regional constituencies.² The resulting rich analysis of especially the late Cold War era has proven even more valuable with the events shaping the Balkans since the structural collapse of those same twentieth century states by 1989/1990.³

In spite of Dr. Ramet's warnings, in the frame of navigating the different doctrinal approaches to analyzing "the end of communism," early commentators fervently embraced resurrected clichés about the Balkans that often extended back to the nineteenth century.⁴ Failing to embrace Ramet's critical engagements

1 Sabrina P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milošević*. 4th edition (London: Routledge, 2018).

2 Sabrina P. Ramet, *Nihil Obstat: Religion, Politics, and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

3 Sabrina P. Ramet, *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: The Sources and Consequences of the Great Transformation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

4 For a critical assessment of some of the many scholarly examples of such narratives see David Campbell, "MetaBosnia: narratives of the Bosnian War." *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 2 (1998): 261–81.

and corrective approaches to the study of the Balkan political culture, many of the tropes international relations' scholars mobilized to account for the violent changes witnessed in Southeast Europe abandoned a theoretical rigor mobilized elsewhere to upset the sloppy evocation of "ancient hatreds" popular in the press.⁵ Through classic "orientalist" lenses that stressed "difference" as the animating force behind events in the Balkans, the generic analysis of the transition out of the Cold War thus tended to overwhelm our understanding of the very specific dynamics afflicting not just Southeast Europe as a whole, but the specific pockets of social, political and economic life found during those years of structural collapse.⁶

In an attempt to correct such emphasis on the generic transitional experience afflicting "Eastern Europe," this chapter takes several approaches inspired by Dr. Ramet's scholarship on the issue of surviving the transformations of the last century.⁷ The primary events covered below take their forms as first the consequences of the communist era in Albania (and Yugoslavia) and only then are the contexts influencing people's many (contradictory) decisions to survive the transitional period from 1990 onward considered. Of particular focus are the many Albanian Christian sectarian experiences as they transition to a new era that saw very different kinds of regimes change, but not necessarily vanish.

A TOOL OF NEO-COLONIALISM?

In part because of the way the Balkans were imagined in the outside world during the Cold War era, foreign interests sought to exploit a presumed window of opportunity with the structural demolition taking place since the late 1980s (a process no doubt many outsiders helped exasperate). At the forefront of those who aggressively sought to capitalize on the chaos—Jeffery Sachs and the other "Harvard Boys" come to mind—was the introduction of reliable "local" assets who could help fill assumed political, economic, and, for our purposes here, spiritual vacuums. At the forefront of these assets were modern-day equivalents of colonial-era compradors, agents with local connections who could facilitate for-

⁵ David Campbell, *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity, and Justice in Bosnia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

⁶ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (London: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁷ Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State-Building and Legitimation, 1918–2005* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

eign infiltration and then rapid plunder by “reintroducing” religion into the lives of natives forced to abandon their faith in the Cold War.

Crucially, it was the partnership western financial capitalists’ agents had with those claiming inherited links to the region, especially religious leaders of Albanian heritage found in North America and Europe. These claimants of religious authority marketed this heritage to claim a certain expertise and thus political legitimacy in the period of transition covered below. Leading the tsunami of would-be “western” representatives who would commandeer the transition, men like Bishop Rrok Mirdita and Xhuzepë Facaro with already established roles in shaping the spiritual lives of Albanian Catholics in the United States and Italy respectively, hoped to replace the collapsing modern state and its areligious ethos with organized faith.

Armed with their own stereotypes about their “backward” Balkan cousins, even secular leaders of Albanian diasporas found in Western Europe and North America imagined themselves to take on the missionary role of filling the assumed “empty” souls of Albanians. Crucially, these religious and business leaders from various Albanian diasporas were operating under the impression that they were working in partnership with a larger Western Civilization to save the Balkan homeland from its centuries-long nightmare (starting with Ottoman “Turkish” occupation in the fourteenth century), liberating its peoples with values assumed to be the exclusive domain of “the West.”⁸ What these would-be saviors did not realize was that their evangelical missions were no match for the other rival ideological project seeking expansion in the Balkans: Neoliberalism.

As will become clear below, since around 1990 Albanians have been compelled to navigate a new political economic order that includes the mobilization of religion for purposes no longer historically coherent to experts on the Balkans. While Albanians are generally treated as marginal in the Euro-American world, some theoretically contradictory foreign interests nevertheless sought access to the region inhabited by Albanians by the early 1990s.⁹ As such, any possible resource that could secure leverage in a politically fluid period would be supported. Indeed, the process of assuring that lands inhabited by Albanians did not fall into the “wrong hands” (be they aggressive Albanian nationalists or ir-

8 It was often framed in problematic terms of bringing “justice” to those denied their ancestor’s faith (and Church properties). See Ines Angeli Murzaku, “Transitional-Unconditional Justice? The Case of the Catholic Church of Albania,” in L. Turcescu and L. Stan, eds., *Churches, Memory and Justice in Post-Communism* (New York: Springer, 2021), 135–54.

9 On the recent reinsertion of Albanians into the strategic matrix see Isa Blumi, “The Albanian Question Looms Over the Balkans Again,” *Current History* 119, no. 815 (2020): 95–100.

redentist neighbors whose penchant for violently “cleansing” these areas promised unpredictable instability) proved precarious for NATO and other would-be foreign guardians of order.

Primarily due to lingering stereotypes about Albanians (as Muslims and thus alien to Europe) and the larger Balkans, religion would be one of the points of entry, not only for political and economic agents who directly operated under the pay of Western capitalist institutions, but also for scholars commissioned by globalist agents seeking access to the “new markets” the end of communism promised. In this respect, an entire generation of scholars paid to contribute knowledge about the region grappled with outdated tools of analysis that stressed religious differences and ethno-nationalism as the best prism to understand sociologically the peoples of the Balkans.¹⁰ To the ultimate frustration of such intersecting circuits of knowledge, however, there remained local contexts that failed to cooperate with the simplistic calculations that equated religion with influence in these early years of a transition that animates this special volume. The task below is to mediate these local with regional and global interests while trying to find a new approach to accounting for events that did not follow predicted pathways. In order to find such an approach, we first need to return to the longer twentieth century story.

A GENEALOGY OF ALBANIANS’ SPIRITUAL DIVERSIFICATION

Surviving the Balkans’ twentieth century was no simple task, especially for Albanian Christians and their far larger number of Muslim fellow countrymen. At the heart of their unique set of experiences are the distinctive encounters different Albanian groups had with the modern state. Already living a precarious life in a modern world order demanding the previously fluid cultural, political, and social associations of Albanians to fit within neatly defined bureaucratic frames of subjecthood, most remained hesitant to abandon their older transient relationships. As such, throughout the first half of the century, numerous “rebellious” communities clashed with modern readings of how human communities needed to function.

¹⁰ A complaint about the tendencies of the scholarship already articulated in Isa Blumi, “The Commodification of Otherness and the Ethnic unit in the Balkans: How to Think about Albanians,” *East European Politics and Societies* 12, no. 03 (1998): 527–69.

To the frustration of modern bureaucracies, older forms of socially negotiated, temporary associations among Albanians continued to bring unity to those professing different faiths. Such sensibilities certainly persisted over the entire twentieth century, despite quite different state-building projects—in Yugoslavia, Greece, or Albania itself—that aimed to destroy them. In other words, despite their sectarian “differences,” the Albanian exception to the general sociological rule constantly upset efforts to “divide” these regions in order to rule over their valuable lands. This tendency to embrace when necessary momentary “nationalist” associations that cut across sectarian divides was not the only example of social cohesion in the region across different possible categorical readings.

Increasingly under universalists models of socio-economic organization associated with the rise of socialism and capitalist-driven liberalism, the state occasionally sought to unify subjects within different prisms of association. Because their societies were so dynamic and complex, any hope of securing political stability demanded that post-World War I Yugoslavia and Albania declare their states as “secular” at key moments, seeking to avoid the tendency by their Greek or Bulgarian neighbors to declare citizenship as linked to a “national” faith.¹¹

The strategic (and soon legally necessary) mobilization of “difference” along religious lines took a more complex direction for those identifying themselves as Albanians. Struggling to form a response to rival state expansions at the end of the 1912 Balkan War, a number of competing claimants to authority adopted a twentieth century iteration of older loose associations, a plethora of claims expecting foreign patronage (of which there existed a number of competing actors). These often contradictory politics seeking exclusive authority over a large territory in the Western Balkans led to initial efforts at establishing safety for the community directly clashing with the needs of modern states to secure a “monopoly of violence.”

In this frame of development, what had been a rallying cry of some (but not all) to protect Albanians who professed to a multiplicity of faiths and sects from the new expectations of social identifier uniformity, under the emerg-

¹¹ Clearly these periods of professed “tolerance” were upset when political expediency mobilized hostility to targeted threats to these societies. In Yugoslavia, throughout the interwar and postwar periods, campaigns labeling Albanians as aliens within especially Serbian society corresponded with state policies to expel these “dangerous” populations, despite the formal constitutional rights afforded all peoples in Yugoslavia. Similar campaigns in supposed secular Albanian regimes targeted communities along specific religious/regional associations. See Isa Blumi and Gëzim Krasniqi, “Albanians’ Islam (s)” in Jocelyne Cesari, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 475–516.

ing rivalries for political and economic power in the 1910s and 1920s, regions inhabited by these religiously diverse speakers of Albanian dialects (and numerous other languages) became the target for many violent corrections. Albanian cultural diversity, deemed a critical but not determinant factor in what late Ottoman era intellectuals evolved to identify as a collective ethno-national association in the modern era, became the source of potential threats to those seeking that critical absolute monopoly of violence. Unable to coopt the diverse constituencies that rarely embraced sectarianism exclusively, the resulting bureaucratic rigidity sanctioned by an international group of actors—primarily industrialist Americans like Rockefeller and Carnegie under the League of Nations—unleashed an era of “diplomacy” that promoted imposing separation of peoples along those same religious lines Albanians sought to deemphasize. To the end, Albanians and those struggling for a unitary “Yugoslav” state, resisted these internal and external pressures to harness the state to secure the expected integration of the Balkans economically to the larger world via “divide and rule” formulae.¹²

Important to this corrective study about how we may need to rethink the era after the 1990s collapse of the post-Ottoman states in the Balkans is that appreciating religion and control over its primary institutions became an imperative of the state. Various twentieth century Albanian states thus sought to challenge the capacities of groups of Albanians, at times on the basis of their distinctive religious affiliations, to remain autonomous from bureaucratic authority.¹³ In the interwar period, numerous regional political projects with sect as the main criterion of distinction found support from Italian, Serbian, and Greek would-be masters of Albania. As evidenced by the rival governments in the interwar era led by Prenk Bib Doda, Fan Noli, Ahmed Zogu, and Essad Pasha Toptani, they all required the interventions of powerful Albanian diasporas in Egypt, Italy, and the United States to suppress these regional powers’ efforts to break Albania apart by way of religious differences. These challenges continued after World War II.¹⁴

¹² For details about these attempts by Albanian nationalists and Yugoslavs to push back against the imposition of sectarianism on post-World War I societies, see Andrew Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1998) and Robert Clegg Austin, *Founding a Balkan State: Albania's Experiment with Democracy, 1920-1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

¹³ Besnik Pula, “Binding Institutions: Peasants and Nation-State Rule in the Albanian Highlands, 1919–1939,” *Political Power and Social Theory* 25 (2013): 37–70.

¹⁴ Isa Blumi, “An Ottoman Story Until the End: Reading Fan Noli’s Post-Mediterranean Struggle in America, 1906–1922,” *Journal of Balkan and Black Sea Studies* 5 (2020): 121–44.

Of primary concern here was this post-WWII era, when the unifying agendas of the Communist Albanian Workers' Party, faced resistance from a variety of constituencies whose primary base of support came from regional affiliations often reduced to religious solidarity. This was particularly the case in the north of Albania, inhabited by various, loosely associated Northern Albanian (Gheg) constituencies whose Catholic and Sunni Muslim mixed families resisted an emerging Southern Albanian (Tosk) political elite.¹⁵ With the post-war state firmly in the hands of a southern-dominant Hoxha regime, with strong support from Stalin's USSR and initially even the Yugoslavs keen on creating synergies with allied Marxist Working Party affiliates, the resulting decades of persecution and then complete elimination of Gheg religious life in Northern Albania eventually extended to all of the country.¹⁶

What shaped the experiences of Albanians living through the at times brutal 1944–1991 period took on different levels of state violence, depending on time and context. In Albania, the northern religious infrastructure and the cultural elite that had survived World War II, became the primary targets for elimination, with a majority being either killed or forced into perpetual labor prisons or exile. Southern Albanian clergy were to also witness by the 1970s a complete usurpation.¹⁷ These distinctive patterns of repression had an impact on Albanians who would experience “freedom” in 1991 as adults who grew up in environments that enforced anti-religious sentiments differently.¹⁸

Importantly, this persecution in Albania significantly differed from equally violent state-building projects in neighboring Yugoslavia and Greece. Albania's two neighbors sought to transform the demographics of those Albanian-populated regions in Kosovo, Montenegro, Novi Pazar, Macedonia, and Chamëria/Florina (in Greece) by expulsion or forced assimilation into regimes often de-

15 Isa Blumi, “The Politics of Culture and Power: The Roots of Hoxha's Postwar State,” *East European Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (1997): 379–98.

16 Isa Blumi, “Hoxha's Class War: The Cultural Revolution and State Reformation, 1961–1971,” *East European Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (1999): 303–26.

17 Already in 1965, efforts to “liberate” especially women from the tyranny of Albanian traditions included freeing them from the influence of especially northern religious traditions, Enver Hoxha, *Lufta kundra zakoneve prapanike dhe besimeve fetare shprehje e lufte s'klasave* (Tiranë, 1965). It finally took a formal state policy by late 1967, Albanian State Archives (AQSH), F. 14/AP S.T.R., V. 1967, D. 26, f. 59.

18 The distinction between treatment of Tosk Christians and Muslims, out of which the regime mostly came and the violently persecuted Ghegs is evident when protests to the shutting down in 1967 of Orthodox Churches led to large numbers of women taking to the streets. Unlike in the north, when such protests were violently suppressed, authorities restrained the use of violence, acknowledging a rationale that warranted greater sensitivity and cooperation in this “long-term” project to weed women from the strangle-hold of religious patriarch, AQSH, F. 14/AP S.T.R., V. 1967, D. 6, f. 8–9.

manding ethno-linguistic uniformity. Napoleon Zervas (himself a native of the region of Chamëria) and Serbian Minister of Interior Aleksandar Rankovic continued policies that expected Muslim and Catholic inhabitants of areas militarily captured to flee. Crucially, while successful in Greece, these policies ultimately could not be realized fully in Yugoslavia due to a number of factors, including the simple fact demographically that the labor requirements to efficiently mine (exploit) the resources of Kosovo required both a supply of men Kosovo's indigenous population provided and relative stability.¹⁹

As we will see in the next section, this postwar generation will have shed the faith of their grandparents, with considerable rewriting of the Albanian cultural DNA as a result. While nationalism took its liberal form in the interwar period among a small intelligentsia, the postwar violence of the Hoxha state instilled a new national mythology that explicitly excised references to Catholic and Sufi Muslim associations and replaced them with party loyalty. By 1991, with most of the pre-World War II generation having been forced into exile, dead, or no longer carrying a leadership role in society, the only likely candidates to embrace religion were those still too young to be fully indoctrinated by a crumbling Albanian state. If this youth were to embrace "western" faiths, however, it would rarely manifest in attending traditional churches.

Albanians' oft referenced spiritual plurality ultimately allowed various state-building projects inside Albania and in neighboring regions inhabited by Albanians to persecute those whose faith differed from the larger society's temporary political affiliations. As such, religion had been identified by often different political projects as either the primary source of resistance or the primary tool for interests based in Belgrade, Athens and/or Tirana to destroy opposition. In the case of Albanians throughout the Balkans, such varied functions of their various faiths led to large scale persecutions and subsequent expulsions. Over decades of violence against religious Albanians (or those neatly associated with unwelcome, "foreign" religious communities) millions ended up resettling in Turkey, Western Europe, Australia, and the Americas.

19 While Rankovic ruled over a regime that was xenophobic, practical issues inside Tito-era Yugoslav politics demanded a new approach when earlier efforts starting in the 1930s failed. Yugoslav elites, that by the 1950s included Bosnian Muslims, ventured to use Sunni Islam against Albanian Sufi Muslims and force assimilation through formal state-backed religious institutions based in Sarajevo. Isa Blumi, "Religion and Politics Among Albanians of Southeastern Europe," in S.P. Ramet, ed., *Religion and Politics in Post-Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 288–94. For the case of Greece, see Laurie Kain Hart, "Culture, civilization, and demarcation at the north-west borders of Greece," *American Ethnologist* 26, no. 1 (1999): 196–220.

THE DIASPORA

Having been able to sustain and in many ways expand the distinctiveness of their various creeds while in exile (Catholics moved into almost exclusive Catholic ghettos in American cities, while Orthodox Christians and Muslims scattered into separate diasporas), migrant Albanians became more distinctively religious, a mirror of their host societies' patterns of organization. It is these subsequent diasporas' activism on behalf of the homeland, often via religious institutions and organizations—especially the Catholic and Orthodox Churches—that the leadership of these large communities secured political influence both in exile and in post-communist Albania. As their affluent constituencies spread money to different political classes after the 1960s, Albanian-American communities in New York and Michigan could depend on the support of politicians representing their districts to pursue their Cold War-era politics toward their homelands.²⁰ Similar political influence slowly emerged by the 1980s among Albanians assimilating into Swiss and German societies.²¹

Studied here in the context of transition, the key processes associated to different experiences of the changes since 1991 proved to be an equally informative dynamic of tension as those based in the United States in particular expected to immediately fill-in political gaps. Albanian (Gheg) Catholics, under the leadership of Rrok Kolë Mirdita (1939-2015) would push for full integration into post-1991 Albania. Born in Montenegro, Mirdita was ordained a priest already at the age of 25 and served in Albanian parishes in the Bronx and Westchester counties of New York. On the basis of his constituency's political influence, Mirdita brought considerable leverage upon arriving in Albania, an authority recognized by the Vatican, which nominated him Archbishop of Durrës-Tirana almost immediately in 1992. His rapid appointment in 1993, along with fellow American-based Catholics Zef Simoni, Frano Illia, and Robert Ashta as bishops, marked the apex of Pope John Paul II's campaign to fill in a spiritual and political vacuum created by the fall of communism in Eastern Europe.²² Securing over the rest of his life various roles sanctioned by the state and Vatican, including the Presidency of the Episcopal Conference of Albania, Archbishop Mirdita was

20 Frances Trix, *Albanians in Michigan* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2001).

21 Isa Blumi, "Defining Social Spaces by Way of Deletion: The Untold Story of Albanian Migration in the Postwar Period," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 29, no. 6 (2003): 949–65.

22 Zbigniew Stachowski, "The Polish Church and John Paul II's Evangelization Mission in Slavic Countries," *Religious Studies and Theology* 27, no. 1 (2008): 115–25.

an active agent of efforts that corresponded with Albanian nationalism.²³ His efforts to resurrect a Catholic presence in Albanian society included the construction of St. Paul's Cathedral in Tirana.²⁴

The cathedral, which opened services in early 2002, aspired to symbolize the cohabitation of Islam, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Catholicism in Albania. Indeed, throughout the 1990s Mirdita sought public displays of such harmony, securing an occasional cooperative moment of unity from the Greek-born Eastern Orthodox Archbishop Anastasios (Anastas) and various Muslim leaders.²⁵ The problem with such measures was that the conscious effort to emphasize unity belied the contradictory efforts taken by these same institutions in other moments. Most of the Christian activists, being foreign born, tried to exploit the resentment Albanians felt in face of the stigmatization they received in larger Europe for their associations with "non-Western" traditions like Islam. At times, the arrogant assumptions that Albanians were simply awaiting a savior from both communism and Islam translated into heavy investments in programs that stressed competition over Albanian souls rather than their material well-being. Many interpreted the campaign as divisive and contradicting the needs of Albanians in the face of aggressive, at times irredentist neighbors. The most aggressive proponents were the numerous evangelical organizations that originated from North America, at times rival coalitions of churches that embraced the spirit of conquest that still today celebrates the successful conversion of former "Atheists and Muslims" as something akin to a military victory.²⁶

Already by the end of 1991, 245 religious groups, organizations, and foundations, in addition to the 4 traditional faiths, actively operated in Albania. This number included 189 Protestant organizations, many associated with the Albanian Evangelical Brotherhood (Vëllazëria Ungjillore Shqiptare).²⁷ To many of these organizations populated by mostly evangelicals from North America (many who cannot speak Albanian), the mission in the Balkans is a war.

23 <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bmirdita.html>.

24 <https://www.stpaulalbaniancatholicchurch.org/>.

25 Genti Kruja, "Interfaith Dialogue in Albania as a Model of Interreligious Harmony," *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies* 7, no. 3 (2020): 76-87.

26 Fatos Bytici, "Out of Hiding, Some Kosovars Embrace Christianity," *Reuters*, September 28, 2008, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE48So7Y/>.

27 Throughout the 1990s, even after large amounts of resources invested in recruiting Albanian youth to return to their heritage, religious practices continue to be rather limited. On paper, the number of religious sites of worship have exploded, the problem that has not responded in actual adherence. Studies produced in the 2000s show that 90% of Albanians believe in God. This does not mean, however, they need to associate themselves with these "foreign" institutions. Gjergj Sinani, "Fenomeni Fetar në Shqipëri," *Shqipëria në Tranzicion dhe Vlerat* (Departamenti i Filozofi-sociologisë, Universiteti i Tiranës, Tiranë 1999) 67-108 (see 75 and 88).

Within their Assemblies of God World Mission literature, the project of converting Muslims is part of their mandate to “discipline” Albanians to adapt to the twenty-first century.²⁸ This militant campaign to “service in Albania” over the last 24 years has produced “a spiritual awakening and outpouring of the Holy Spirit” to the extent that 13,000 Muslims are claimed to have converted in this period.²⁹ As articulated in their literature, the Balkans in general have been denied what these Americans have to offer: “Across the Balkans, there is a desperate need of a move of God. This will come only through prayer, fasting, and spiritual warfare. Over 99 percent of the 42 million people in this region have no adequate witness of the gospel—no access, no opportunity, and almost no presence of missionaries, believers, or churches.”³⁰ To chagrin of many among the older established sects struggling to secure parishioners from the small pool of practicing Albanians, this aggressive language of conquest has contributed to the larger rejection among those who believe such sectarianism contradicts the ethno-nationalism spirit that makes their place in the Balkans and larger Europe unique.³¹

A rival to these more radical evangelical groups from North America is the “Vëllazëria Ungjillore e Shqipërisë” (VUSH), a union of churches and social centers that started to function legally in Albania already in 1995.³² Part of the larger European Evangelical Alliance, VUSH has sought to consolidate a unified evangelical front to pool resources which it receives from the Albanian state, the European Union, and a broad network of donors seeking to keep order in a very competitive spiritual field. Led by Pastor Ylli Doçi who joined in 1992 while a student at the University of Tirana, the now celebrated local evangelical recruiter eventually married into a growing network of “city ministries” under the umbrella of CRU.³³ Along with his American wife, Doçi provides a less confrontational option to the Albanian youth these Christian organizations seek to reach through their various missionary programs. Now armed with formal state sanction (since 2011), the “evangelical brotherhood of Albania” is an offi-

28 Rick Love, “Discipling All Muslim Peoples in the Twenty-First Century,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 17(4) (2000): 5–12. Available at https://ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/17_4_PDFs/01_Love_hw.pdf.

29 Alexander Miller Duane and Patrick Johnstone, “Believers in Christ from a Muslim Background: A Global Census,” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 11 (10) (2015): 2–19.

30 Kurt and Stephanie Plagenhoef, “Historic Albanian FireBible Dedicated,” October 22, 2019, <https://news.ag.org/en/News/Historic-Albanian-FireBible-Dedicated>.

31 Antonia Young, “Religion and society in present day Albania,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 14, no. 1 (1999): 5–16.

32 As noted on their webpage: <https://vush.al/>.

33 For his profile see <https://give.cru.org/0599991>.

cially recognized religious community equal to the Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic Christian, and Bektashi communities).³⁴

What these projects do not reveal in their professionally produced online sites is the larger conditions they face in Albania. Aside from what some identify as lingering Eurocentric chauvinism that simply inserts one missionary's current project—Albania—into a normative frame that is equally xenophobic and borderline racist, the eager push to orientate Albanians “out of the Third World” confirms the larger criticism among nationalists. This is especially the criticism of Greek-born Archbishop Anastasios, who is accused of regarding Albanians as mere objects to serve a larger agenda that is alien to Albania itself.

The focus on Albania's alien place in the community of Christians has left the country's faithful exposed to what many identify as a patronizing disregard of all those experiences that makes Albanians and their spiritual needs distinctive. In the end, it was only the Catholic Church whose leadership reflected the specific national needs of larger society. And yet, those whose heritage may have made them prime candidates to return to their ancestor's affiliation to a Catholic Church run by a popular national figure like Rrok Mirdita, still did not produce results. To the enduring shock (rarely publicly voiced) of leaders, the numbers as early as 1995 suggest that the anticipated flood of returnees never materialized.³⁵

In contrast to the efforts by the Vatican to win over the souls and minds of heritage Catholics and a larger pool of Albanian nationalists, the Orthodox Church has approached Albania on entirely a different set of long-term goals. For many Albanian members of the community, the Greek-born Archbishop Anastasios explicitly views Albania and its people as culturally alien to a global agenda embraced by the Patriarch's offices. Very much like the criticism heard about the foreign Muslim and evangelical missionaries who flooded the region, local criticism of the Orthodox Church extends to seeing its agenda in Albania as neo-colonial.

Of course, the public relations campaign suggested something different. In the eyes of friendly media, the leadership of the Greek-born Archbishop has been a success.³⁶ From the heavy investment in rebuilding the infrastructure of the

³⁴ For a copy of the law that recognizes VUSH, see https://knfsh.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/07_Ligji_10394_Marrevshja_me_VUSH.pdf

³⁵ In the first five years after the collapse of the old regime, scholars noticed that the number of Albanians sending their children for baptism or registering their marriages with the Church remained very low. Peter Bartl, “Albanien,” in Erwin Gatz, ed., *Kirche und Katholizismus seit 1945* (Paderborn, 1999), 29–40, 39.

³⁶ Luke A. Veronis, “Anastasios Yannoulatos: modern-day apostle,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 19, no. 3 (1995): 122–28.

Church (1608 Churches and missionaries were in ruin by 1991), to adopting an aggressive missionary approach vis-à-vis the larger Albanian population, both in the Balkans and the diaspora, it has been argued by foreign observers that the Orthodox Church has once again secured a legitimate place in Albanian society.³⁷ In response, many think of the last 20 years as an attempt to reinstate foreign spiritual authority over Albanians. The latter, indigenous response from the early 1990s onwards has given fuel to the political ambitions of the likes of Sali Berisha and allies who controlled the post-communist government in the 1990s. In alliance with disgruntled locally-born members of clergy, Berisha's main platform for confrontation was the demand that the leader of the resurrected Albanian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (AAOC) be Albanian. The insistence from the Patriarchate that it would be a Greek national to lead the rebirth of the Church in Albania, despite the very explicit demands of nationalists both within the government and the emerging clergy, initiated a struggle that lasts until today.³⁸

Refusing to capitulate, the Church's foreign leadership emphasized its quest for "unity" despite the fact Albanians were not "of one mind." Among those not "of one mind" were many Albanian-born clergy who quietly supported Sali Berisha's polemics and by 1994 openly stood behind the politician's call for a Referendum to redraft the Albanian constitution in order to assure that the Archbishop of the Albanian Church be native born.

Even though the November 1994 Referendum failed to secure the votes needed, the conflict expanded. In 1996, in a provocation that bewildered and likely alienated even more Albanians in the still fragile country (recall that in 1997 Albania exploded into violence in response to the notorious "Ponzi" scheme) the Patriarch sent a new wave of Greek-born Bishops to serve in Albania. The response to what many read as an arrogant provocation by Greek-nationalists was a broad coalition that included the Albanian government, local clergy, and the larger population. Protests to the Patriarch's defiance lasted until July 1998.³⁹

37 Jim Forest, *The Resurrection of the Church in Albania: Voices of Orthodox Christians* (World Council of Churches, 2002).

38 Despite claims in 2000 that the "Greek" Orthodox Church had become hegemonic in Albania, this struggle that began in August 1992 when Archbishop Anastasios was initially "enthroned" in Tirana despite opposition on the grounds that he was a Greek, has proven to be a major factor behind the Orthodox Church's failure. Albert Doja, "The Politics of Religion in the Reconstruction of Identities: The Albanian Situation." *Critique of Anthropology* 20, no. 4 (2000): 421-38.

39 Peter Bartl, "Albanien," 35-37.

In face of such destructive policies coming from decrees issued from abroad, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, via arbitration from Albanian members of the AAOC, eventually agreed with the Albanian state to form a Synod consisting of two Church leaders of Greek origin and two of Albanian heritage.⁴⁰ In spite of this concession, the insistence on such a presence of Greek-origin leadership at the expense of developing the available Albanian clergy left a lasting impression on the larger society, one that alienated most youth and elders alike with consequences that are still felt today. While the American evangelicals and Saudi/Qatari missionaries anticipated new successes as the older “indigenous” institutions failed, the biggest winner would prove to be the secularists associated with the Berisha government. On the principle that it was the duty of all citizens to protect Albania by insisting that an Albanian autonomous Church secure its place within the society, the ideological divide between neoliberalism and the divisive politics of religion took form throughout society.

In the subsequent two decades, the Orthodox Church pursued an aggressive campaign of reconstruction. Armed with funds from outside Albania, the Church has sought to secure the return of Church properties confiscated by the Hoxha regime in the 1970s and 1980s. It also paid for the conspicuous reconstruction of hundreds of structures and the development of a seminary at Saint Vlash. Amid this heavy investment, the clergy has consolidated and in 2006 rewrote the Constitution for the AAOC. Reflective of this effort to quietly address the previous decade of tensions with Albanians, in November 2008, relations with the Albanian state even improved to the point that the two institutions signed an agreement that became state law after ratification by the Albanian Parliament.

This settlement resulted in several “elevations” to Bishop of Albanians, leading to the current composition of the Holy Synod of the AAOC consisting of 8 members, the first in the history of the Church. They included the appointment of two bishops Nicholas Hyka of Apollonia and Anthony Merdani of Kruja, a significant moment triggered by the November 2006 rewriting of the Constitution.

Clearly the leadership inside the Patriarchate responded to anger over the previous decade. Able to establish parishes in most towns, the public ordaining of 165 Albanian clergymen reflects the belated investment in the training of locals.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Joan Pelushi became Metropolitan of Korça and Kozma Qirjo became Bishop of Apollonia.

⁴¹ For an official report on the successes of the Church’s activities see <https://orthodoxalbania.org/2020/2018/03/09/veshtrim-i-pergijthshem-1991-2020/>.

Still, there remain enduring questions about the larger quality of life and the deterioration of morals in face of this new effort to ingratiate the Albanians. It seems that while Albanian clergy are much more eager partners to engage with local civilians, they are regularly “interrupted” by American or other “foreign” programs, who again liken their mission to a war. While Albanian clergy do not approach the larger population in terms of sectarian differences, to their frustration, these foreigners (often with specific Greek or Slavic orientations) promote a Global Church that also embraces a “missionary” zeal that seeks to confront local conditions in terms of inter-ethnic and sectarian strife. This is a far cry from the regular messages coming from politicians and some local religious leaders calling for “tolerance” and “brotherhood.” What many conclude, therefore, is that the primary problem with the AAOC specifically, and foreign Christian organizations more generally, is a heavy investment in a message that extends beyond the Albanian context.

As a result, there has emerged a new wave of opposition to the Orthodox Church leadership on the basis that it has failed to protect the community from hemorrhaging members, either by way of conversion to more effective evangelical groups or cultural alienation thanks to the influence of neoliberalism. These criticisms draw from the results of various polls and a national census, the last being 2011, which all indicate the numbers of AAOC (as all Christian sects) are dropping.

Facing a regime of capitalism (neoliberalism) that absorbed the socialist Balkans in the 1990s, the efforts of various sects of Albanian Christians to adapt seem, in hindsight, inadequate. Throughout the 1990s and now for 20 years since the new millennium, religion has proven to be a false friend to social scientists eagerly predicting violence in a helplessly diverse and “mixed” Balkans unleashed from the suppressive state regimes. One must read these struggles of the post-communist Albanian Christians that confronted the “universal” neoliberal enterprise in the context of the concurrent tensions within Albanian circles seeking the reaffirmation of ethno-nationalist claims and a new place in a world largely intolerant to religion. In questioning how the rebuilding of various Christian communities reflected, yes an aggressive missionary approach led by mostly foreign-born, or foreign linked, personalities, it becomes clear how necessary it is to read this on-going process of rebuilding/surviving the post-communist era on several institutional and ideological, if not entirely spiritual plains. Albanians in Hoxha’s Albania had effectively been deprogrammed from their ancestors’ ecumenical traditions; their subsequent reaction to the collapse of the one-party state and the arrival of capitalist-backed missionaries aspiring

to update their epistemological hardware proved upsetting to the neat models of intervention produced in Euro-American think tanks.⁴²

At the heart of this corrective analysis resides a recognition that there remains a universal actor whose resilience ultimately frustrates the would-be heroes of revitalizing faith in the post-communist Albanian context(s). We identify them as the individual enfolded in the neoliberal construction of such an agent of the post-communist era Albania (and larger Albanian communities) who seeks integration into a technologically savvy, and explicitly post-religious world. Increasingly, the individual ambitions promoted in the neoliberal ethos of “market-capitalism” that is global by the late 1990s, undermines the ambitions of religious entrepreneurs and demands our focus of analysis decenter religion as a force of change.⁴³ We best see this manifested in a series of reports produced by various institutions that over the last 20 years demonstrate Albanians explicitly rejecting the opportunities to embrace Christian institutional guidance.

IT ENDS WITH A BANG: CHARTING A STRUGGLE FOR NEW INFLUENCE

For this special volume I choose to highlight a set of sociological surveys that from the early 1990s until 2018 signal quantified shifts in Albanian societies in their relationship with religion. Instead of religion filling a supposed spiritual void left by communist rule, what is demonstrated in various statistical studies conducted in Albania over these years is that Albanians have not returned to the religious heritage of their grandparents (the last generation who regularly associated with a sect in the larger Albanian society). Instead, data collected over the last 20 years have documented a rapidly declining significance of religion generally and especially Christianity in Albanian lives.

Crucially, it is the reaction from those “foreign” religious institutions that is critical. The response was aggressively dismissive. The Catholic and Orthodox Churches lost much local credibility while “new” Christian groups, much more closely linked to the global trends associated with post-communist neoliberal regimes prove statistically more successful as their numbers are growing.

42 Critical to how events evolved in Albania since 1991, the ascendancy of Tosk southerners persisted in the minds of many Albanians as a documented “fact” by way of how many former party elites survived the transition. Gjuruaq Tonon, “A Stale Ecumenical Model? How Religion Might Become a Political Issue in Albania,” *East European Quarterly*, XXXIV, no. 1 (March 2000): 21–49.

43 For a clear example of how such tensions manifest elsewhere, see Joud Alkorani, “Some kind of family’: Hijra between People and Places,” *Contemporary Islam* 15 (2021): 17–33.

It is crucial to recognize that these are very different groups of Albanians with different histories that account for their resulting distinctive roles during the transition era studied here. More importantly, because they are largely foreign to the actual lived daily experiences of Albanians whom they seek to reinduct into religion, the narratives they seek to project on the events often overwhelm our analysis of events. This is especially evident in scholarship that seeks to highlight the phenomenon of religious revivalism while neglecting to account for the relational dynamics at play between those targeted and their would-be foreign (Albanian-heritage) saviors.⁴⁴

According to the first studies produced on Albanian religiosity since the early 1990s, up to 75 percent of the population in Albania has declared no religious affiliation. According to a survey made by the University of Tirana in 1999, 33% of the persons of the sample very rarely go to a place of worship, 30.5% at least once a year, 23.9% at least once a month, 9% once a week, and 3.1% more than once a week.⁴⁵ By the mid-2000s, the numbers proved equally abysmal for those hoping to transform Albania into a hub of influence via Christianity. Among other statistics, only 26% heritage Christians in the study actually observed their faith, with only 1% attending Church services regularly.⁴⁶

The numbers drawn from these numerous surveys and a 2011 census continue to reinforce the impression the heritage faiths have done poorly in the post-communist era. The very fact that numerous governments have fought against religious institutions, especially the Orthodox Church, since 1992 led by a Greek-born Archbishop highlights, how politically and culturally, Albanians (like their Greek neighbors) have actually avoided religion, reinforcing a general story of rapid resecularization during an era of integration into the neoliberal, global economy.⁴⁷ Itself telling that funds were provided by the United States, UN, and European states to study the religious evolution of Albanians after the collapse of communism, the underlying assumption for most of this period was that Albanians from abroad, considerably different from those they deemed their poor, backward cousins living in the country, would naturally provide the leadership

44 Much of the cited material here provide important insights into this process and must be read in the frame of their response to scholarly tropes established outside the region, Nathalie Clayer, "God in the 'Land of the Mercedes': The Religious Communities in Albania since 1990," in Peter Jordan, Karl Kaser, Walter Lukan et al., eds., *Albanien* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), 277–314.

45 Sinani, "Fenomeni Fetar në Shqipëri," 80.

46 Genc Burazeri, Artan Goda, Jeremy D. Kark, "Religious observance and acute coronary syndrome in predominantly Muslim Albania: a population-based case-control study in Tirana," *Annals of Epidemiology*, 18 (12) (December 2008): 937–45.

47 Victor Roudometof, "Greek Orthodoxy, territoriality, and globality: religious responses and institutional disputes," *Sociology of Religion* 69, no. 1 (2008): 67–91.

to help these societies to adjust to the modern world. Added to this disharmonious approach was the level of aggressive, and arrogant, “invasion” by American-based Christian religious institutions who caused the backlash that manifests in the many studies discussed here.⁴⁸

In the 2011 census, 56.7% of Albanians declared themselves to be Sunni Muslims, while only 17% of the population declared themselves Christian. Crucially, those claiming affiliation to Roman Catholicism only amounted to 10%, with the Orthodox Church a mere 6.75%. Further studies in 2015 found that 61 percent of Albania’s youth did not practice a religion and only attend ceremonies at Church during main religious holidays and festivities. More specifically, a full 23% of respondents claimed to never practice the religion of their heritage.⁴⁹ These numbers, despite protests from the Christian institutions discussed here, were again reinforced in a Swiss Metadatabase of Religious Affiliation (SMRE) study in 2018. For the period 2006–2015, the SMRE estimates 8.7% Catholics, 9.1% Orthodox, 52.5% Muslim, and 29.5% people with no religious affiliation.⁵⁰

The religious leaderships, almost entirely coming from outside the region itself, have responded in ways needing analysis here. What the statistics say and upsets most religious leaders, is that Albanians have not waited for their heritage faith to address their very present concerns, fears, and traumas. Albanians, if nothing else, had a unique experience with the 1990s. This is true of both those growing up in societies where religion was either restricted or a barrier to a better life, basically after World War II until the 1990s, and their children growing up in a Balkans invaded by neoliberalism and so-called “market” forces. The resulting efforts to capture these, what outsiders assumed, empty shells desperate for religious meaning proved largely failures.

Despite the fact that a period in the early 1990s saw an instinctual return to the grandparents’ heritage, over the next two decades of neoliberalism, Albanians have followed the larger global trends. As already noted, the 1990s proved especially difficult for Orthodox Church authorities. Constant legal battles over property confiscated by the old regime pitted the Church against Albanian nationalists and the thousands who faced eviction from lands awarded by

48 Odeta Barbullushi, “The Politics of ‘Religious Tolerance’ in Post-Communist Albania: Ideology, Security and Euro-Atlantic Integration.” In Michael Pace, ed., *Europe, the USA and Political Islam: Strategies for Engagement* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 140–60.

49 Religiosity in Albania (2016 Barem-WIN/ Gallup International). https://www.gallup-international.com/fileadmin/user_upload/surveys/2016/2016_Religion_Race_Culture.pdf.

50 Antonius Liedhegener and Anastas Odermatt, *Religious affiliation as a baseline for religious diversity in contemporary Europe. Making sense of numbers, wordings, and cultural meanings*. Working Paper 02/2018. (Luzern: University of Lucerne, 2018).

the courts. In these struggles, the Church and its largely foreign-born clergy resisted the growing impression that it was fighting a patriotic government in Tirana and thus was at odds with larger society. In the face of such heavy criticism, it is worth considering that so many of the youth in the period of transition turned their backs on a Church that would not even allow Albanians into the Church's leadership, let alone actively seek to force entire communities out of their homes. The manifested distrust in the Church as evidenced in all the surveys mentioned throughout constituted a realignment of loyalty that left its inner core at odds with a leadership incapable of reaching out to a youthful society faced with real material concerns. For many in this struggle over who would lead the Albanian Orthodox Church (an issue avoided by the Catholic Church), the foreign-born leadership became synonymous with the aggressive destruction of life in the country. The hostility to the Church must be part of the accounting we offer for the census of 2011 results, which again reported that only 6.75% of the population see themselves as belonging to the Orthodox community.⁵¹

As is the case with all the Christian groups operating in the country, the message from the Church fails to assuage a larger society's concerns with foreign power over their lives. The leadership's message that other national groups (especially Greeks) were in fact a much larger percentage of the constituency that made the AAOC resembled the irredentism of Greek nationalists constantly claiming most of Southern Albania is inhabited by "unaccounted for" Greeks. With Church officials demanding that Albania accept their own demographic claims, a requisite for Albanians hoped to become a member of the "civilized world," the tone emanating out of Greek-born leadership proved toxic. For a new generation of Albanians faced with constant browbeating from foreigners, the Church's position has caused only dissent and flight. Consider the official response of the Church after the dismal numbers of professed followers of the Orthodox sect in 2011: "The search for the truth is foundational for a civilized society, especially in a case as sensitive as the religious identity of the citizens. Only the truth can help Albania on its journey towards a united Europe and in general, for progress in the twenty-first century."⁵²

This language, long synonymous with foreigners proselytizing in Albania, remains problematic for Albanians seeking nationalist leadership. As a Greek-born

51 Gëzim Visoka and Elvin Gjevori. "Census politics and ethnicity in the Western Balkans," *East European Politics* 29, no. 4 (2013): 479–98.

52 The Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania to Patriarch, "The Results of the 2011 Census regarding the Orthodox Christians in Albania are totally incorrect and unacceptable," <https://orthodoxalbania.org/2020/en/2011/04/03/official-declaration/>.

Patriarch consistently sought to inflate the numbers of Greeks living in Albanian society, he found new fervor in response to the poor performance in the 2011 census. The insistence that at least “200,000” Greeks were not counted in the census did not articulate an Albanian Orthodox Christian sentiment, but one that invariably unleashed fears of Greek and/or Slavic irredentism.⁵³ The Orthodox Church has become associated with conflicted interests that undermine its other attempts to attract more to its authoritative grasp.⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

According to many frustrated youth, having grown up since the collapse of the regimes of the 1980s, one of the main themes plaguing Albanians today is the way clergy have not shied away from insinuating that Muslims do not belong in Europe. The stress on Islam being the primary force behind Albanians remaining outsiders has been neatly used by various Christian, especially American/Canadian evangelical communities, capitalizing on their affiliation with the United States. This is where the irony begins to manifest fully as the full scale campaign to secure influence over the Balkans after 1990s is part of the (neo)liberal multilateralism that has been the American imperial project since World War II and saw its most advanced form in Latin America.⁵⁵ It is in this larger context that efforts from the early 1990s to insinuate a sectarianism in order to promote a re-entry of Christianity into the lives of Albanians have likely alienated most. This needs further study, but with perhaps a new focus that recognizes the contributions of research on the intersection of faith during a similar period of “revitalization” studied in Muslim communities throughout the world.⁵⁶

Above, we explored how these distinctive Albanian Christian struggles to re-constitute a community otherwise eviscerated from the cultural terrain reflects

53 Vasilios Makrides, “Why Are Orthodox Churches Particularly Prone to Nationalization and Even to Nationalism,” *ST Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 57, no. 3-4 (2013): 325–52.

54 For details, Isa Blumi, “Navigating the Challenge of Liberalism: The Resurrection of the Orthodox Church in Post-Communist Albania,” in S.P. Ramet, ed., *Orthodox Churches and Politics in South-eastern Europe* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 197–222.

55 Greg Grandin, “The liberal traditions in the Americas: Rights, sovereignty, and the origins of liberal multilateralism,” *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 1 (2012): 68–91.

56 A very similar schism observed in Muslim societies has manifested in debates that would be helpful for our understanding and subsequent research into events among Christians in the Balkans. Framed in the terms of “Islamic revivalism” and challenges to how we study “everyday” experiences with faith, a new field of research known as Anthropology of Islam has driven the larger discipline for the last 20 years. Talal Asad, “The idea of an anthropology of Islam,” *Qui parle* 17, no. 2 (2009): 1–30.

an enduring tension in the post-communist era. Complicating the process is the rise of Euro-American neoliberalism in the Balkans, both economically and culturally. The underlying task of reconstituting a community of believers in the face of globalization has complicated a transitional story repeated often in the literature on the Balkans today. While parallels are evident, the Albanian case proves unique. As discussed throughout, what constituted a new opportunity with the end of communism proved a complex experience for Albanian Christians. Faced with persistent questions from erstwhile rival “ethnic” or “western” churches laying claims to the faith of so many of Albania’s population presages a dangerous shift towards marginality for one particular constituency and larger structural confusions for others. With the spread of neoliberal secularism, the Albanian case is thus a story of navigation, one that requires wondering aloud how the various Christian missionary communities could survive in the face of the plethora of challenges the end of the communist era introduced and globalization has materialized into how Albania’s youth engage the world.

There is a seemingly unbreachable chasm created by what others have called liberal secularism in the context of the arrival of Euro-American economic and political power. I suggest here that what is analyzed in Muslim societies by Talal Asad, Saba Mahmoud and others, warrants similar investigation in the Balkans among Christians.⁵⁷

While many focus on the fact that countries like Albania host a majority of Muslims and more generally studies still focus on sectarian politics, it may be argued that the Balkans offers us a unique context to analyze the post-communist world. Indeed, as noted with this case of Albanians navigating the period since 1991, how many invested in retaining what Sabrina Ramet correctly identifies as afterimages of the twentieth century, including nationalism, reflects a number of tensions unique to the Southeast European context. In as much as we are inspired by the Talal Asad-inspired work that explores how “secular” sensibilities either clash with, or compliment, “traditional” or “revivalist” ones in entirely different socio-political settings, the cases in Albania reflect different sensibilities and concerns.⁵⁸ For one, the project of identifying ontological others as much as creating/reaffirming what it means to be Albanian, Greek, or Serb seems indelibly challenged with the arrival of neoliberal sensibilities constantly restated

⁵⁷ Ovimir Anjum, “Islam as a discursive tradition: Talal Asad and his interlocutors,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 3 (2007): 656–72.

⁵⁸ See special issue debate, Meditation on Nadia Fadil and Mayanthi Fernando, “Rediscovering the ‘everyday’ Muslim: Notes on an anthropological divide,” *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 5(2) (2015): 59–88.

in the outpouring of evangelical confidence from American/Canadian groups and Archbishop Anastasios' lectures on universal values alike.⁵⁹

In this regard, the project here is perhaps entirely reserved to opening up suggestively new channels of inquiry, with some preliminary observations of what the unique Albanian context offers us as we position the transitions from post-communism within a study on the role of institutions of faith. According to interlocuters, it is a secularism that seems to, in affective spirit, take form in the iterations of a pervasive Western liberalism that is behind a fundamental disconnect between very powerful, now opposing sensibilities festering inside an Albania facing new waves of neoliberal austerity. Paradoxically, as much as the official statements from various Churches' media reassure a global audience that their project not only addresses the fears of sectarian intolerance and associated violence (never a problem in Albanian society), but also is winning over hearts of minds of previously "atheistic" devoutly secular people, sources including the census suggest a far less successful tenure in post-communist Albania. The preaching of the many different Christian organizations currently operating in the country are now confronted with a wave of activism promoting "lifestyle" choices deemed antithetical to traditional moral values. Indeed, the open embrace of "others" and the preaching of tolerance has been viewed as an ambiguous but nevertheless "contradictory" position on increasingly charged debates surrounding globalization and the cultural "innovations" and "infringements" associated with it. More still, issues of class have been entirely avoided, as it is the privileges enjoyed by foreign clergy that prove most glaring in many of these kinds of settings where traditional faith and institutions clash with globalization.⁶⁰ As much as the many different evangelical and traditional Christian groups wish to indulge these neoliberal values in order to remain relevant to the lives of aspiring, materially bereft Albanian youth, the message that comes out clearly in various media still suffocates our reading of the exchanges with

59 Among them are Global Christian Centre Ministries (GCCM), whose headquarters are located in Calgary since 2001. Led by Kurt and Stephanie Plagenhoef, 80 pastors of various evangelical and Pentecostal churches have been mobilized to confront "past obstacles to the spread of God's Word. In the early 1990s, before Bibles were available in Albanian, believers would pass around pages or portions of Scripture. It's a new day! The famine of God's Word among the Albanian people has ended." <https://www.europemissions.org/europe-blog/growing-church-albania>

60 Perhaps it will require more ethnographic work on the preaching classes themselves, whose migration to the post-communist Balkans belies a set of class and perhaps racial associations that have been fruitfully studied elsewhere, see for instance, Jaafar Alloul, "'Traveling habitus' and the new anthropology of class: proposing a transitive tool for analyzing social mobility in global migration," *Mobilities* 16, no. 2 (2021): 178–93.

a moralizing positionality that is entrenched inside overtly patriarchal institutions with equally dubious Albanian nationalist credentials.

The above accounting of this process of adaptation and perhaps fundamental reorientation reflects the larger forces of change afflicting the Balkans and its inhabitants of all faiths. Far more than a sectarian issue, however, the experience of Albanian Orthodox Christians, for example, can serve as an interesting entry-point to appreciate better the larger structural, existential, and ideological underpinnings of traumatic changes in the region for the entirety of the twentieth century and now well into the present day. On the pretext of looking specifically at how the values of those coming to Albania to preach have transformed to fit external political, socioeconomic and cultural forces far greater than their own, it may thus be possible to introduce a new set of analytical tools to appreciate change in a region perhaps most directly impacted by events over the three decades.

The most invaluable contribution Dr. Ramet's interventions to study and analyze the processes that transpired before her (and many of our) eyes was the space created for later scholars to include their own insights into how religious sensibilities have "afterlives" entirely distinctive from their traditionally assumed roles. As suggested above, the cultivation of knowledge about what has been happening to Christians in a larger region demands approaching issues specific to distinctive groups of Albanians considered here, with an openness to adopting the interventions of scholars debated, for instance, events in Egypt after the revival of Islam in 2011.⁶¹ The preceding intervention was thus a celebration of Dr. Ramet's ecumenical supportive spirit and also the recognition that the processes afflicting the millions of Albanian-speakers during the tumults of the last 30 years cannot as much mirror and deflect as upset how we study the other cases explored throughout this special volume.

⁶¹ Samuli Schielke, *Egypt in the Future Tense: Hope, Frustration, and Ambivalence before and after 2011* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

Reflections on the Role and Functions of Religion in Eastern Europe and Elsewhere

Sabrina P. Ramet

Christian religion is typically understood to be about three things: first, belief in the supernatural, combined—in monotheist religions—with an imperative to obey the commands of God as relayed by the clergy; second, an exhortation to believers to take the moral law as their guide, loving one's neighbor as oneself, as Christians put it; and third, creating and promoting a sense of community, both at the local level and at the national level, whether through ritual or through such things as cultural preservation and, in the case of nineteenth-century Poland, support (on the part of local priests, though not of the Holy See) for Polish insurgency against Russian rule. It is immediately obvious that the first and third of these functions are political. But the second function, promoting a concept of morality, is also deeply political, whether one considers the communist states, where authorities wanted to control moral education and the content of social morality or noncommunist states such as Poland, Croatia, or, for that matter, the United States, where Christian Churches have agitated against gay and lesbian rights and demanded that abortion be banned.

Whatever one makes of polytheist religions, it is clear that monotheist religions are profoundly political and that they often present their demands, for example on questions of homosexuality and abortion or even, for the Catholic Church, on contraception, as nonnegotiable. It is this deeply political character of monotheist religion, and here of Christianity, and the tension from time to time between the dictates of conscience and the dictates of religious authorities which have held my attention for most of my life. It is also striking that, when the communists held sway, the Catholic Church stepped forward as a champion of religious freedom, but once the communists were out of power, that same Church tried—in Poland, Slovenia, Croatia, and Slovakia, and even up to a point in Hungary—to dictate its agenda to the secular authorities. In the case of the Czech Republic, where belief in astrology is

greater than belief in God, the Catholic Church has adopted a more liberal and less activist stance.

Conscience is, of course, the window on the moral law; it is one's internal sense of what is right and wrong. It is not infallible but, when a Christian with some authority calls on fellow Christians to kill physicians performing abortions (as happened in the USA in the 1980s) or when an Islamic cleric calls on fellow Muslims to kill Christians or other non-Muslims, it should be clear that there is a tension between the supposed "commands of God" and the dictates of the moral law, and in particular of the command to love one's neighbor as oneself.

The fact that clerics sometimes want to maintain their right to override conscience is a clue to the claim, typical among monotheist religions, to be "the one true faith," which in turn leads to intolerance of other faith communities. Even now, the official position of the Catholic Church is that, aside from itself, only the Orthodox Church was established by God; all other Churches (called "sects" by the Catholic Church prior to the Second Vatican Council) are human creations. The Orthodox Church does not reciprocate the compliment and claims unique status for itself, writing off the Catholic Church too as a "human creation": "the Catholics were the first Protestants," a Serbian bishop told me in 1982. The assignment of other Churches to the second rung as human creations suggests that their sacraments have no effect and, potentially, that membership will not lead to salvation. The most extreme example of this attitude, among those Churches with whose representatives I have met, involved the New Apostolic Church; meeting with a bishop of that body in Berlin in 1988, I learned that, for that faith community, all other Churches are "tools of Satan." Since this was the first time that I had heard such language from a bishop of any Church, I admit that I was rather shocked. But, staying with the German Democratic Republic for the moment, I also encountered the Church of John (Johannische Kirche, founded by Joseph Weißenberg), whose claim to be a Christian Church was (and probably still is) rejected by other Church bodies in its environment. The same fate has befallen the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, whose members are usually called Mormons, after the Book of Mormon, which members revere. Again, that religious body professes to be a Christian Church, but other religious bodies not only deny that it is Christian but also, sometimes, even deny that it is a Church, calling it, rather, a "cult." One may consult *The Future of Religion*, a book written by Rodney Stark and Williams Sims Bainbridge,¹ to see

¹ Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation*, Revised ed. (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986).

that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints does not fit the definition of a “cult” as provided in that volume.

One might rightly ask, why do Christian Churches, all of which preach brotherly love and peace on earth, nonetheless indulge in so much intolerance of, even contempt for, fellow Christian Churches. “Ah,” one can imagine them saying, “it is because those others are going down the wrong path. It will not do to tolerate error.” Indeed, in *The Ratzinger Report* (1987), then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger told his interviewer, Vittorio Messori, that one cannot vote on truth or tolerate falsehood.² And who is to judge what is true or false in religious doctrine or morality? Why, the Catholic Church, of course—at least for Ratzinger, who would later serve in the years 2005–2013 as Pope Benedict XVI.

In the East European context, it is, of course, no surprise that some clerics have become hugely controversial. I will mention three of them. The first is Alojzije Cardinal Stepinac (1898–1960), Archbishop of Zagreb from 1937, who was put on trial by the communists on trumped-up charges of collaboration with the fascist Ustaša regime and sentenced, initially, to 16 years in prison. He was released after having served five years. In fact, during the war Stepinac delivered public sermons condemning Ustaša atrocities, did as much as he could to save Jews from the Holocaust, and when Serbs appealed to him to allow them to «convert» to the Catholic faith in hope of saving their lives, he agreed, even adding that they could return to their Orthodox faith after the war ended.³ He was beatified in 1998 and, in 2016, the Zagreb County Court annulled the verdict which had been handed down in 1945. However, efforts since 1998 to promote his canonization have, so far, been vetoed by Serbs, who continue to hold to the view that the verdict of 1945 was correct. Among Croats, he is widely considered a hero. He is buried in the Cathedral in Zagreb.

The second controversial prelate is Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović (1881–1956), who served as Bishop of Ohrid and Žića from 1920. A man of high intelligence, he was a gifted orator and also skilled theologian. He visited England in 1910 and acquired fluency in the English language, later lecturing at St. Paul’s Cathedral and other locations in England. Soon after the Nazis invaded Yugoslavia in June 1941, they arrested Velimirović, confining him first in the Monastery of Ljubostinja and later, together with Serbian Patriarch Gavril V, in the

² *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and Vittorio Messori (Ignatius Press, 1987).

³ For details and documentation, see Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State-Building and Legitimation, 1918–2005* (Washington D.C. & Bloomington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press & Indiana University Press, 2006), 124–126.

Monastery of Vojlovica. He was later moved to Austria, where he was liberated by American forces at war's end. The following year he emigrated to the United States, teaching at several Orthodox seminaries, including the Saint Sava Seminary in Libertyville, Illinois. He has been controversial above all because of his sharply anti-Semitic beliefs and statements. On this point, it may be recalled that Velimirović had a high regard for the Serbian fascist, Dimitrije Ljotić, and even praised Hitler at one time.⁴ In spite of his anti-Semitism and favorable opinion of Ljotić and, at one point in his life, also of Hitler, he was canonized by the Serbian Orthodox Church in 2003. He is buried near the tomb of Jovan Dučić, a poet, at the Monastery of Saint Sava in Libertyville.

My third example of a controversial clergyman is Father Tadeusz Rydzyk (b. 1945), a Polish member of the Redemptorist Order who established a wayward radio station in Toruń in 1991. As of 2002, Radio Maryja claimed to have an audience comprising 10% of adult Poles. Alongside religious programs, the radio has also broadcast programs and speeches laced with anti-Semitic, xenophobic, and Europhobic messages. Yet, although Fr. Rydzyk has been reprimanded by ecclesiastical authorities from time to time, he has always had his defenders within the Church and continues to broadcast. After he claimed, on his radio, that the airplane crash which killed about 100 Polish notables, including President Lech Kaczyński, was a plot carried out by the Polish left, there were howls of protest, but also of approval, from rival sectors of Polish society.⁵

At the outset of these reflections, I mentioned that religion exhorts people to take the moral law as their guide. Obviously, the prelates and clerics who pass along this exhortation are themselves bound by the same principle. Yet there have been prelates who have fallen short, such as those who have violated both the moral law and the civil law, not to mention their oath of celibacy, by having sexual relations with minors, whether boys or girls; cases of sexual molestation of minors have been reported in several European countries as well as in the United States. More complex is the issue of collaboration with the security police in communist countries. In researching my introductory chapter for my edited volume, *Religion and Politics in Post-Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe*, I found documentation of such collaboration on the part of prelates and/or clergy in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania,

4 On his praise of Hitler, favorable view of Ljotić, and anti-Semitism, see Jovan Byford, "Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović: 'Lackey of the Germans' or a 'Victim of Fascism'?", in Sabrina P. Ramet and Ola Listhaug, eds., *Serbia and the Serbs in World War Two* (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), especially 135–148.

5 For further discussion, see Ireneusz Krzemiński's chapter in this volume.

Slovakia, and Slovenia. In Slovakia, Archbishop Ján Sokol admitted to having met with agents of the Štátna bezpečnosť, but claimed that, in conversations with the agents, he “tried...to distract their attention to irrelevant issues.”⁶ In Poland, Bishop Wiktor Skworc of Tarnobrzeg admitted to inappropriate contacts with the SB but “claimed to have been recruited without his knowledge” or awareness.⁷ Often such collaboration is launched and maintained through a combination of blackmail or threats and promises of rewards for cooperation. But, in the case of the Polish Catholic weekly, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, the entire calculus was different. As I learned from a lengthy interview with a former staff member of that newspaper in 2011, the entire staff of the newspaper discussed how to respond to overtures from the Służba Bezpieczeństwa (SB). The paper’s journalists decided collectively to open channels of communication with the police but to keep the interests of the paper and the Church uppermost, providing only such information as the staff had collectively approved in advance. Moreover, from the questions posed by the SB agents, the journalists could learn something about the regime’s priorities and, by engaging in a friendly way, they hoped to, and were in fact able to, soften the behavior of the SB.⁸

With the constant pressure to collaborate—which meant mainly passing along information of interest to the respective security service—prelates had to make a choice. Was it a black-and-white choice between collaboration and opposition or was there another path? As I learned when I visited the German Democratic Republic in 1988, the Protestant Church (Evangelische Kirche) embraced a third way—“between opposition and collaboration”—and, while advertising itself as a “Church in socialism” (“Kirche im Sozialismus”), it did not intend by that to signal anything more than a recognition of the political reality in which it found itself and the legal constraints which that entailed. As Bishop Werner Krusche had put it more than a decade earlier, the Church sought to occupy “the narrow space between opposition and opportunism.”⁹ Be that as it may, Bishop Albrecht Schönherr, chairman of the Evangelical Federation, met with Erich Honnecker, General Secretary of the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED), in March 1978, opening up a new era in Church-state relations in the GDR. Six months

6 As quoted in my chapter, “Religious Organizations in Post-Communist Central and Southeastern Europe: An Introduction,” in Sabrina P. Ramet, ed., *Religion and Politics in Post-Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe: Challenges since 1989* (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 11.

7 Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History: From 966 to the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 234 (emphasis removed).

8 For details and documentation, see Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History*, 235–36.

9 As quoted in Gisela Helwig, “Zwischen Opposition und Opportunismus: Zur Lage der Kirche in der DDR,” in *Deutschland Archiv*, Vol. 9, No. 6 (June 1976): 578.

later, when the authorities made pre-military training mandatory in the elementary schools, the Protestant Church felt emboldened to offer sharp criticism of the move and to host pacifist groups on its premises. Yet, in the wake of the 1978 summit, there was also a fresh impulse to cooperation, in particular in connection with the celebration of the Martin Luther quincentenary in 1983. For the SED, this was a chance to cast Luther as a forerunner of socialism,¹⁰ while, for the Church, it provided an occasion to celebrate its founder. An official Martin Luther Committee was set up, with Honecker as its chair; Church representatives took part in its work.

The foregoing examples highlight the inescapability of politics. Organized religion satisfies some fundamental human needs and, accordingly, is inevitably of interest to political authorities, just as most, if not all, religious organizations nurture an interest to influence or shape policy on some issues (abortion being the most obvious example). And when religion enters the political arena, the religious understanding of morality is often center stage. Sometimes morality gets mixed up with dogma and *dogma*, as the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary informs us, is “a point of view or tenet put forth as authoritative *without adequate grounds*” and, further, “a doctrine or body of doctrines concerning faith or morals formally stated and authoritatively proclaimed by a church.”¹¹ Or, to put it differently, if it is set forth “without adequate grounds,” then dogma may be understood as opinion which is regarded as higher truth. This makes dogma highly potent and, thus, potentially either positive or harmful. On this point, I recall a conversation with a Russian Orthodox cleric many years ago. It was not a formal interview but a free-wheeling conversation and, along the way, the subject of the Eastern-Rite Catholic Church came up. My Orthodox conversation partner was nothing if not dogmatic on this Church, declaring that “so-called” Eastern-Rite Catholics do not accept that there are two “stools” (his term)—an Orthodox stool and a Catholic stool—and that “they want to sit between the stools.” But, he added, there is no stool between the Orthodox and Catholic stools. In this way, Orthodox dogma dictated a moral judgment against the Eastern-Rite Catholic Church.

In my own life, as the foregoing may already suggest, I have come to prize the moral law above religion. If a bishop or other cleric tells us that God wants us to kill someone, we should reply either with “No he doesn’t” or, as I would,

¹⁰ Robert F. Goeckel, “The Luther Anniversary in East Germany,” *World Politics*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (October 1984): 119.

¹¹ *Merriam-Webster*, at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dogma>, my emphasis.

“That is immoral and your command cannot be obeyed.” I have found solace in the writings of Cicero, Seneca the Younger, St. Thomas Aquinas, Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and the sometimes misunderstood Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Although each of these thinkers had unique insights, all of them counseled the primacy of morality and the duty we all have to our fellow human beings and, in the first place, to those among whom we live. Above all, what I have learned from these thinkers, as well as from others, is the imperative to be kind to others, to treat others with respect, and to endeavor, as far as possible, to be useful.

How Does She Know All of This?

Sabrina Ramet's Contribution to the Field of Slavic Studies and Beyond

Aleksander Zdravkovski

INTRODUCTION

Sabrina Petra Ramet is probably the most prolific and widely recognized contemporary scholar in the fields of Slavic Studies and East European history. As of August 2024, she has written 16 scholarly books and edited or co-edited 41 volumes; in addition, she has written more than 100 academic articles and book chapters for volumes edited by other scholars. Some of her works have been re-issued in expanded and updated editions, with several of her books having appeared in translations into Serbo-Croat, Italian, German and other languages. Any attempt to properly review her corpus of writings is destined to be flawed with shortcomings and gaps. Her scholarship straddles an unprecedented and wide area of the social sciences and the humanities: sociology, political science, human rights, political philosophy, and most importantly, history. In terms of chronology, the bulk of her works deal with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is quite challenging to create a reliable and precise taxonomy of Professor Ramet's body of work, but I think that we can cluster her publications into roughly four interconnected categories: research on Yugoslavia and its successor states, research on democratization and human rights in Central and Eastern Europe, research on religion and politics, and lastly, miscellaneous writings (especially academic writings on rock counterculture, gender equality and the media, as well as humorous novels and humorous verse). Needless to say, this categorization is not without exceptions and overlaps. This chapter is an attempt to take a measure of Ramet's body of work, and attempt to explain the unique academic trajectory and scholarly career undertaken by her. In this essay, I will offer the readers a chronological and thematic account of Ramet's accomplishments and writings. I have made a subjective selection of the literature produced by Professor Ramet during her 45-year-long prolific career. I encourage all inter-

ested readers of this chapter to download and peruse her detailed CV, which is available on the official web pages of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Her lengthy résumé is a testimony to her unparalleled academic career and myriads of achievements.

Before I dive into the topic of my chapter, I would like to briefly describe my relationship with Professor Ramet and all the most important antecedents to our cooperation. I think that this will be helpful, as the readers will understand my particular vantage point when surveying her scholarly career. In the spring of 2005, I visited an English language bookstore in Kraków, Poland. Among the many interesting monographs that were available there, Ramet's volume, *Balkan Babel: Politics, Culture, and Religion in Yugoslavia*¹ immediately caught my attention. The design of the cover was interesting and the title was thought provoking, and as a consequence, I started reading it with great interest and focus. The fact that this book was so comprehensive, and that its contents so perfectly mirrored my areas of interest, was nothing short of a revelation for me. The narrative was well written, and the analysis and views were backed-up by reliable sources. I read this monograph, and was able to learn many interesting details about the sociopolitical landscape in the Socialist Yugoslav federation. Many of the cultural topics covered by the author were a *terra incognita* for me. This came to me as a surprise, as I had spent more than 17 years of my life in the Western Balkans, and was confident that my knowledge of the region was extensive. The author of the book was clearly a scholar with prodigious creativity, writing talent and a profound knowledge about the three monotheistic religions, especially Christianity and its most important Churches, the Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant communities. The monograph's narrative was clear and compelling, and the plethora of information truly humbled me. After reading the book, I was convinced that the author—Sabrina Petra Ramet—was an exceptional scholar with vast knowledge and competences, not only about the Western Balkans, but also about the wider Slavic Studies area and beyond. In 2011, I got in touch with her, and offered my interpreting services during her planned field study trip to Poland. We met in Kraków, where Professor Ramet interviewed a number of people (Catholic clergy and members of the laity), and I was again impressed by her insights and scholarly instincts. The interviews were very enlightening and some of Ramet's hosts were among Poland's most distinguished scholars. Furthermore, it turned out that we have

¹ Sabrina P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel: Politics, Culture and Religion in Yugoslavia* (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1992); published in a fourth edition in 2002.

common research interests. We spent a few days together in Poland, and this research trip set the tone for our future projects. The following year I applied to enter a doctoral program under her supervision, and shortly after I was granted a doctoral fellowship by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Subsequently, my academic cooperation with- and mentorship under- Sabrina Ramet commenced. Between 2012 and 2015, I was her PhD student, and she supervised my doctoral research. I became very fond of her, not just as a scholar, but also as a person and a friend. I learned to love her sense of humor, wit, empathy, and especially discipline, in regard to her professional engagements and deadlines. I have never met a scholar who had such a conscientious work ethic. Ramet is also an expert on English grammar and syntax. Her command and mastery of the American English language is truly unparalleled. She is an outstanding and professional copyeditor who always delivers on time. Then, in working with her on common projects, I found her to be highly organized. Her writing style is comprehensible, even for the readers who have limited knowledge of the pertinent area of research. She is a dedicated and zealous coordinator of academic projects, and also excels in editing volumes that cover quite complex themes. Collaborating with her was an unadulterated pleasure, and working with her on several common projects was always smooth and easy. We were always able to deliver on our commitments on time, and I also spent a considerable amount of time talking with her about history, philosophy, ethics and politics. One thing is common in all of these hours-long conversations. I was always struck by the amount of information and expertise offered by Sabrina Ramet. She was not only able to elaborate in-depth on her views, but was additionally able to back her claims up with high quality academic research. As a consequence, my usual reaction to her discourse was, “How does she know all of this?”

PROFESSOR RAMET’S BACKGROUND AND HER WORK AS SCHOLAR AND TEACHER

Sabrina Ramet has a very colorful and peculiar background. Here, I will try to mention the details that I believe have shaped her intellect and system of values. Ramet’s father, Sebastian, was born in Spain and her mother was born in Austria. Her father was born in the town of La Linea de la Concepción (province of Cádiz) into a Catholic family. When he was a child, he moved with his mother to Casablanca and there he learned to speak Arabic. In 1936, General Francisco Franco launched an armed and bloody rebellion against the Spanish

Republic, which eventually metastasized into a full blown civil war that sent shock waves across the globe. Outraged by this political abomination and treachery, at the tender age of 14, Ramet's father joined the ranks of the anarchists. After the war was lost, he wanted to continue his struggle against the Nazis and their allies, and volunteered for the British Army and served with distinction. He was wounded in Belgium, and was flown to Bournemouth to recover. After leaving the army, he started working as a chef. Ramet's father had a strong respect for the British working-class people, and in his youth held negative opinions about the Catholic Church. Ramet's mother, Ida Maria Sonderegger, was born in the village of Götzis in Vorarlberg. Hers was a rather typical lower middle-class Austrian family (her father was the village tailor), in a village where the people were uniformly Catholic; throughout her life, Ramet's mother attended Mass every Sunday and went to confession at least once per year. But the village was divided politically: Some households, such as the Sonderegger family, were bitterly anti-Nazi, while some of the families there gave their support to the annexation of Austria (1938) by Hitler's totalitarian regime; some Austrians were, of course, politically apathetic. Ida Maria Sonderegger was interested in traveling, and wanted to study foreign languages. Thus, she applied to move to the United Kingdom and there, she met Sebastian Ramet in 1948. Sabrina Petra Ramet² was born on the 26th of June 1949 in London, England.

Interestingly, Professor Ramet's fascination with the history and peoples of the Habsburg and Russian Empires was sparked not only by conversations with her mother but also, in part, by her stamp collecting hobby, in the course of which she encountered various historical figures, including Kaiser Franz Joseph of Austria-Hungary (d. 1916) and the last Tsar of the Russian Empire, Nicholas II (d. 1918). She also became familiar with the maps of Europe before and after World War I, and the immense territorial changes that were ushered in by this global conflict made a huge impression on her. This early exposure to history and politics had a lasting impact on her fascination with European societies, empires and the complexity of interreligious relations.

Turning to Sebastian Ramet, her father had strong anarchist and freedom-loving leanings, and always showed a keen interest in social justice and human rights. He also nurtured a huge admiration for the charismatic Spanish anarchist, Buenaventura Durruti (d. 1936). I am certain that these facts influenced her, and raised an interest in utopian societies and ideas. It is very probable that this unique blend of values, experiences and interests espoused by her parents,

2 Born as Pedro Ramet. She underwent gender reassignment procedures beginning in 1990.

closest family members and trips to Austria during the 1950s had a profound impact on her intellectual development and scholarly interests. Her depth of understanding of the peculiar sociopolitical dynamics of the peoples of Eastern, Southeastern and Central Europe, and of communism, must stem in part from her background and early exposure to these themes. At the age of 10, she moved with her parents and younger brother to the United States, and there she continued her education. She finished elementary school and then entered Servite High School, a prestigious Catholic school in Orange County, California. While in high school, Ramet showed a keen interest in the social sciences and history, and read about Russian history, among other topics. She was also a witness of the era of civil rights and desegregation in the United States. She acquired U.S. citizenship in 1966, and earned her undergraduate degree in philosophy at Stanford University in 1971.³ Ramet showed a special interest in the history of philosophy, the philosophy of religion and ethics. She volunteered for military service, and between 1971 and 1975 served in the U.S. Air Force, serving at Ramstein Air Base in Germany for most of her time in the Air Force. During those years, she also studied international relations through an overseas program offered by the University of Arkansas (M.A. degree conferred in 1974). Serving in Germany presented her with a unique opportunity to travel and allowed her to explore parts of Western Europe. After finishing her military service in 1975, she enrolled at Penn State University, where she met her lifelong friends, Zachary Irwin and Frank Cibulka. At an early stage of her scholarship, she showed exceptional interest in the area of Slavic studies, especially in the history of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Ramet pursued her academic career, and her expertise in East European affairs further expanded. During the 1970s and 1980s, she visited Yugoslavia on several occasions, and witnessed the emerging crisis of the south Slavic federation. Her knowledge and expertise in Yugoslav affairs grew, and she decided to dedicate more space and time in her scholarship to this part of Europe. I believe that these trips shaped her in a profound way, and further strengthened Ramet's keen scholarly interest in the history of the Yugoslav nations, their culture and traditions. I remember her telling me that during these trips, she was struck by the various shortages of foods in Belgrade's shops (shortages of coffee and whole milk, shortages of normal lightbulbs and shortages of certain meats). Coming from the prosperous West, these peculiar economic dynamics must have made a lasting impression on her. She continued her diligent

3 In philosophical terms, Sabrina Ramet is a Kantian who subscribes to the classical liberal tradition in regard to political legitimacy, individual rights, etc.

academic career, and in 1981 was awarded a doctoral degree in political science at UCLA. Her supervisor there was Dr. Andrzej Korbonski. Subsequently, Ramet was employed as a visiting lecturer by the University of California in Santa Barbara and UCLA, and was later employed as a visiting assistant professor by the latter university. During this period, Ramet began to actively research the concept of federalism, and to analyze the complex relations between the federal units of Socialist Yugoslavia. In 1983, she was hired as an assistant professor at the University of Washington, and in 1984 the Indiana University Press published her dissertation under the title, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1963–1983*.⁴ In this volume, Professor Ramet describes in detail the complexity of Yugoslav politics and its sundry controversies. As she would point out later, in her *Three Yugoslavias*, the heating up of nationalist fervor was the result, not the source, of the system's dysfunctionality, including its unequal treatment of the national groups in the interwar kingdom.⁵ *Nationalism and Federalism* received many positive reviews by experts in the field of communism and Slavic Studies. Ramet's book helped readers to understand how Slobodan Milošević ascended to power in 1987, and how he shook the Yugoslav federation to its core. Today, *Nationalism and Federalism* is Ramet's second most cited work (after *Balkan Babel*), but although greeted by scholars, it was scarcely noticed by policy makers. I believe that if policymakers had absorbed the lessons of that book, many of the mistakes that the international community made prior to- and during the Yugoslav wars of succession, could have been avoided. This monograph is also a very good early example of Ramet's talent for analyzing very complex problems, and giving those well-deserved analysis and research.

It is worth pointing out that Ramet's scholarship and wide area of interest straddled many themes throughout the early stages of her academic career. For example, during the 1980s, Sabrina Ramet developed a deep understanding of Church-State relations, and the impact these dynamics had on the political landscape and wider society. Based on her thorough research into the Croatian Catholic Church and its internal divisions, she advocated for the employment of the nuanced "factional approach" when studying this complex theme. In 1985, the academic journal *Slavic Review* published her article, "Factionalism in Church-State Interaction: The Croatian Catholic Church in the 1980s." It is not an exaggeration to state that this writing changed the scholarly paradigm on how to

⁴ The second, extended edition (1962–1991) was published in 1992.

⁵ Pedro Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1963–1983* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

treat and examine Church-State relations within communist countries. Convincingly, she points out that within ecclesiastic organizations, the hierarchical structures are not a monolith, and that factions and internal rifts are quite common. Hence, the policies adopted by religious institutions are often a result of compromises and long negotiations within the respective decision-making organs. Within the Croatian Catholic Church, Ramet distinguishes three different rifts that divided this ecclesiastic institution during the communist era. First, there was the fault line between the clergy and Franciscan monks in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The second rift was the rivalry between the relatively liberal Archbishop of Zagreb and the more conservative Bishop of Split. Lastly, there was the internal competition for influence between the Church's hierarchs and the independent-minded members of the Christianity Today⁶ community. On a couple of occasions, the rivalries within the Croatian Church erupted into open hostilities. Another layer of disagreement within the Church was the attitude towards the proposed dialogue with the regime. Whereas the liberal Archbishop of Zagreb advocated against the dialogue, his conservative counterpart in Split was a supporter of the engagement with the regime. These ideological subgroups were often played against each other by the state apparatus, and also that the religious institutions can make use of the factions within the regime, provided that those exist. Ramet also offers the readers a very detailed survey of the factions within the Croatian Communist party. The Orthodox and active Marxists were staunchly against the Church, and claimed that religion is at loggerheads with Marxism by default. On the other hand, the passive contract Marxists advocated for a more conciliatory approach when dealing with religion and ecclesiastic institutions. Lastly, the Marxist sociologists engaged themselves in active dialogue and debates with the Catholic theologians. Each of these groups advocated for a different approach when dealing with the Catholic Church and its leaders, and the official state policy towards the Catholic Church was adopted after long processes of hammering out difficult compromises between the three subgroups within the Croatian chapter of the Yugoslav League of Communists.⁷

In 1987, the Indiana University Press brought out Ramet's second monograph, focusing on religion under communism in the Soviet bloc. Her *Cross and the Commissar* perfectly complements her previous research, and is a good introduction to her subsequent scholarship. The richly documented analysis illustrates

⁶ *Teološko društvo Kršćanska sasašnjost*.

⁷ Pedro Ramet, "Factionalism in Church-State Interaction: The Croatian Catholic Church in the 1980s", *Slavic Review*, 44-2, 298-315.

the complex relations between the state and various religious institutions in the wider Eastern bloc. Professor Ramet offers several complementary theoretical frameworks to help understand the Church-State relations. Furthermore, the book is divided into four interconnected sections. Ramet also manages to successfully explain the different levels of cooperation and positioning of Christian, Muslim and Jewish religious communities in the Eastern European countries. The aforementioned “factional approach” was among the theories employed in this monograph, alongside functionalist analysis and organization theory. Her analysis provides evidence that the policies of the political elites toward these religious groups were not monolithic. Different religious communities and institutions developed disparate levels of engagement with the state, and as a consequence their evolutions within society took divergent courses. Last but not least, Sabrina Ramet devotes space to the connection between religion and nationalism.⁸ This monograph perfectly illustrates the area of interest of Professor Ramet during the 1980s. She primarily focused on the USSR and the wider Eastern bloc, and in particular she was showing a keen interest in the topic of religion in this vast region. However, the beginning of the 1990s compelled Ramet to put out an extra effort, and dedicate much more time for researching the Balkans.

The eruption of open warfare in Yugoslavia took place in 1991. The state institutions began to crumble, and in this mayhem the Yugoslav army sided with Serbia’s president, Slobodan Milošević. The following year, the war spread from Croatia to Bosnia and Herzegovina, claiming the lives of approximately 100,000 people, most of whom were civilians. The harrowing accounts of the warfare and the waves of refugees shook the world, with Sabrina Ramet providing the audience with state of the art scholarly research on these dynamics. During these tumultuous years, she gave many public talks in Europe, the U.S. and Japan. She also contributed articles to the World Book Encyclopedia, the American Academic Encyclopedia and the Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia. Most of these writings dealt with the history of the Yugoslav successor states, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Serbia, etc.

Her academic career continued to progress, and in 1994 she was promoted to full professor at the University of Washington. Four years later, Duke University Press published her seventh monograph, *Nihil Obstat: Religion, Politics and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia*. The book is another example of Ramet’s ability to cover topics that straddle the fields of sociology, his-

⁸ Pedro Ramet, *Cross and the Commissar: The Politics of Religion in Eastern Europe and the USSR* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

tory and political science. This compilation of original and previously published articles is probably one of the very finest works of Sabrina Ramet, in which she managed to comprehensively research the most important historical and contemporary trends regarding the relationship between religion and politics. In this volume, the author convincingly argues that the religious landscapes in the communist bloc were not valid, and that the religious communities under communism could actually be divided into three different categories: co-opted, tolerated and proscribed.⁹ In addition, a survey of the peculiar trajectories of the relations between the state and religious organizations in diverse communist countries was provided (for example Cuba, China, and Czechoslovakia). Importantly, Ramet provides the readership with a very useful taxonomy of the phases of revolutionary development of the communist states. The first phase is the system destruction, where the new authorities attempt to eradicate the last vestiges of the previous regime (political parties, institutions and traditions). The next phase is system building, where the fundamentals of the new system are erected by the new ruling class. The subsequent phase is system stabilization, in which the communist elites use the opportunity to introduce reforms in order to further buttress the functioning of the state institutions. Depending on the success of this phase, a country could go into an era of system decay (for example, Poland and Socialist Yugoslavia), or an era of progress and economic development (one such example is China under Deng Xiaoping). This analysis is extremely useful, as the policies of the state apparatus in general depended on the phase of revolutionary development. It is important to underscore that the length of these phases largely depended on internal factors.¹⁰ The analysis provides the readers with compelling evidence that in most cases the Communist authorities clamped down on many fringe religious movements, such as “the Castrates” in the USSR and the Jehovah’s Witnesses in Romania. However, in communist Poland and East Germany, the state took a different approach and actually employed a tolerant and liberal approach towards some nontraditional religious movements, such as the Mariavites, the Church of John, etc. On the other hand, the communist state apparatus took a different approach when dealing with more traditional religious communities and creeds. For example, the Romanian state authorities forced the Orthodox Church to adopt changes to the way bishops were selected. In some cases, the state sponsored the rebuild-

9 Sabrina P. Ramet, *Nil Obstat: Religion, Politics and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), 5.

10 Ramet, *Nil Obstat*, 10–49.

ing of churches (in Yugoslavia), financed religious events or even went so far as to compel the members of the Communist party to participate in these rites (as in Czechoslovakia). A balanced and interesting historical analysis is provided as an introduction to contemporary events and the transformation of the religious communities after the fall of communism, which is succinctly illustrated and analyzed. Generally speaking, the sociopolitical transformations after the fall of the Berlin Wall brought positive changes for mainstream religious organizations. For example, the Polish Catholic Church benefited from the introduction of democracy, and the position of the Russian Orthodox Church was greatly strengthened in Boris Yeltsin's Russia. However, there are some exceptions to this overarching dynamic. In Slovakia, the Catholic Church was often at loggerheads with the nationalist government of the Prime Minister, and later President Vladimír Mečiar.¹¹ Importantly, Ramet also dedicates space to describing the rise of nontraditional religious movements, such as the Evangelicals in the region. In this regard, Ramet's work offers an abundance of interesting details, all carefully nuanced. For example, in some countries the post-Communist elites embarked on a political campaign of repression, and clamped down on novel religious movements. This was the case of Armenia and Belarus. By contrast, other countries took a more liberal approach and attempted to accommodate the evangelical sects.¹² *Nihil Obstat* was a resounding success, and sold copies all across the globe. Presently, it is a must read for any person who shares an interest in religion and politics in Eastern Europe. This monograph is evidence of the vast knowledge and palpable progress of Sabrina Ramet's scholarship and research on Eastern Europe.

The success of Ramet's academic career, and her impact on the wider debates, drew the attention of many prestigious institutions in Europe. She also benefited greatly from her sabbaticals at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, Japan, Georgetown University and Northwestern University in the U.S. In 2001, Professor Ramet moved to Trondheim, Norway with her partner, Christine Marie Hassenstab. Between 2001 and 2019, Ramet worked as a professor at the Norwegian University and Science and Technology-Department of Sociology and Political Science. At this prestigious institution, she supervised 23 master's theses, and mentored four doctoral fellows, three of whom completed their doctoral dissertations and were conferred PhD degrees. Her outstanding work and scholarship were recognized by the Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and

¹¹ Ramet, *Nihil Obstat*, 142.

¹² Ramet, *Nihil Obstat*, 270–1.

Letters and the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, and she is currently a member of these two distinguished institutions. Ramet is a polyglot and speaks English, German, Serbo-Croat and Norwegian, and can also read texts in Italian. The Norwegian chapter of her academic career is probably the most prolific one. There, she was provided with excellent academic conditions, and was able to write some of her most important and impressive works, such as *Thinking about Yugoslavia*,¹³ *The Three Yugoslavias*,¹⁴ and *Alternatives to Democracy in Twentieth-Century Europe*.¹⁵ The first of these takes on the difficult task of comparing the scholarship that was produced during the course of the Yugoslav conflicts. The most salient debates and scholarly conflicts are carefully studied and analyzed by the author, and most importantly, Ramet managed to also include works that had been written in German, Serbo-Croat and Italian. This book is probably the most concise summary of all the most pertinent and poignant debates and narratives regarding the Yugoslav wars of succession. By contrast, *The Three Yugoslavias* is a massive body of work (819 pages long), where the author manages to successfully describe and analyze the most important dynamics that led to the eventual crumbling of the Socialist Yugoslav federation. A careful and comprehensive analysis of the conflicts between the Serbs and Croats during the inter-war period is available there, with the author also dedicating considerable space to illustrate the most important dynamics during World War II. Ramet argues that the main reason why Socialist Yugoslavia was not able to survive the violent reincarnations of nationalism that took place during the 1990s was the lack of a robust and palpable legitimacy of the pertinent institutions, in addition to the corruption which subverted those institutions. The claims in the book are backed up with interviews with a wide range of knowledgeable people, as well as archival material and secondary works in Serbo-Croat and other languages. The book received very positive reviews,¹⁶ and has been a resounding success. Finally, in *Alternatives to Democracy*, Ramet contrasts the experiences of the Soviet Union, Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and the anarchist communes erected during the Spanish Civil War with the record of liberal democracy.

13 Sabrina P. Ramet, *Thinking about Yugoslavia: Scholarly Debates about the Yugoslav Breakup and the Wars in Bosnia and Kosovo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

14 Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State-Building and Legitimation, 1918–2005* (Bloomington, Ind. & Washington D.C.: Indiana University Press & The Wilson Center Press, 2006).

15 Sabrina P. Ramet, *Alternatives to Democracy in Twentieth-Century Europe: Collectivist Visions of Modernity* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2019).

16 See for example: Reneo Lukić, “Review of Ramet’s *The Three Yugoslavias*”, *East European Politics and Societies*, 2007, 21–4, 726–33.

In addition to her scholarship on Yugoslavia, Ramet has dedicated much time and space in her writings to the topic of human rights, particularly the rights of women and sexual minorities. For example, in 1996 an edited volume entitled, *Gender Reversals and Gender Cultures: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*, was published by Routledge. In this volume, Sabrina Ramet managed to assemble a group of prestigious scholars in different academic fields, each of whom wrote a chapter carefully analyzing the phenomenon of gender transitions and the fluidity of sexual identities. Most importantly, the chapters are comprehensive, and include an analysis of the research phenomenon during the ancient era (for example the Sumerian culture), but also more modern topics, such as the modern transsexual community in North America. In 1999, Ramet edited another important contribution to the literature on human rights. This time, the main topic was gender politics in Yugoslavia. The authors of the chapters analyze various aspects of the life of women in the Western Balkans. Most importantly, the writers not only broach the topic of political subjects (women's participation in the political system), but also cover sociocultural topics, such as gendered orders, identities, poverty, etc. This volume was groundbreaking, as the topics covered by the authors had previously often been ignored or treated only in passing. This book proved to be the ideal springboard for further research on this understudied topic. Throughout the 2000s, Ramet focused on researching the concept of civic values in the Balkan countries. Civic values promote tolerance and the equality of individuals regardless of their ethnic, religious or other identity, whereas uncivic values are those that have a detrimental impact, and stifle the progress of individuals in the wider society. Uncivic values are most often related to nationalistic ideas that exclude individuals who do not subscribe- or cannot subscribe to this political orientation. During the years 2006–2024, working in collaboration with other scholars, Ramet brought out 10 edited volumes on civic and uncivic values, published by the Central European University Press, the Cambridge University Press, Routledge, Palgrave and Longo Editore. Among these volumes was a book on Serbia, which she co-edited with her close colleagues Ola Listhaug and Dragana Dulić (following previous volumes devoted to Slovenia and Croatia).¹⁷ In this volume, one can find information based on quantitative and qualitative research on many poignant topics, such as corruption, the role of the media, the process of transitional justice, the interpretation of history, etc.

¹⁷ Ola Listhaug, Sabrina Ramet, Dragana Dulić, *Civic and Uncivic Values: Serbia in the Post-Milošević Era* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2011).

Like in many other cases, the book received many positive reviews and endorsements.¹⁸ The fourth volume in the series on civic and uncivic values was published in 2013, with this book covering the Republic of Macedonia (renamed North Macedonia in February 2019).¹⁹ Here, the compilation of chapters covers interesting topics, including the comparison of values between ethnic Macedonians and Albanians, the political system, civil society, ethnic minorities, media, education, etc. In the same spirit, an edited volume on Bosnia and Herzegovina was published the same year.²⁰ Ramet managed to assemble an impressive variety of writers from different backgrounds. Her sixth book in the civic and uncivic values series was published in 2015, and covered the often ignored subject of Kosovo.²¹ A well-balanced historical perspective on the struggle for the emancipation of the Kosovar Albanians is available in this volume, alongside some thought-provoking comparative chapters on values in Kosovo penned by Kristen Ringdal, Albert Simkus and Shensi Krasniqi. The seventh volume in the series is: *Building Democracy in the Yugoslav Successor States: Accomplishments, Setbacks, and Challenges since 1990*, co-edited with Christine M. Hassenstab and Ola Listhaug, and published by Cambridge University Press in 2017. Most of the volumes in this series include chapters on religion.

Ramet has also penned numerous scholarly articles that have been published in many prestigious academic journals, such as the *Nationalities Papers*, *East European Politics and Societies*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Journal of Church and State* and *Slavic Review*. She has also been interviewed by various magazines and newspapers, including *Nacional* (Zagreb), *Mladina* (Ljubljana), *Der Standard* (Vienna) and *Newsweek* (Serbian edition). Ramet has received a number of prestigious awards, including a Fulbright-Hays Fellowship, an IREX fellowship and a Kennan Institute Research Grant, as well as being named a Foreign Visiting Scholar at Hokkaido University in 1993–1994. In addition, in 2000–2001, she was a Woodrow Wilson Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

18 See, for example: Marko Zivkovic, "Civic and Uncivic Values: Serbia in the Post-Milosevic Era, Ed. Ola Listhaug, Sabrina P. Ramet, and Dragana Dulic. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011. xviii, 457 pp. Notes. Indexes. Illustrations. Photographs. Figures. Tables. \$55.00, hard bound," *Slavic Review*, 71 (2) (2012): 451–3.

19 Sabrina P. Ramet, Ola Listhaug, Albert Simkus, *Civic and Uncivic Values in Macedonia, Value Transformation, Education, Media* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013).

20 Sabrina P. Ramet, Ola Listhaug, *Bosnia-Herzegovina since Dayton: Civic and Uncivic Values* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2013).

21 Sabrina P. Ramet, Albert Simkus, Ola Listhaug, *Civic and Uncivic Values in Kosovo: History, Politics and Value Transformation* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2015).

Ramet has also organized and hosted more than a dozen scholarly conferences. These were attended by some of the most well-known contemporary scholars and experts in the pertinent fields, such as Ivo Banac, Dennison I. Rusinow, Dubravka Stojanović, Stefano Bianchini and Ivo Goldstein. Ramet also has extensive foreign research experience, having made more than three dozen research trips in the course of her long career. She visited the Soviet Union in 1983, the German Democratic Republic in 1988 and Socialist Yugoslavia multiple times between 1978 and 1989. Since then, her research has taken her to Poland, the Czech Republic and several Yugoslav successor states. Moreover, Ramet has delivered many keynote speeches and public talks at prestigious institutions, such as the University of Oxford, the University of Cambridge, Harvard University, Yale University, Stanford University, Cornell University and UCLA. In 1986, she testified before the Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Organizations of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (U.S. House of Representatives).

In addition to her writings, Sabrina Ramet was an inspiring teacher and mentor for many doctoral students. She has had a profound impact in the field of Slavic Studies through her training of- and lectures for undergraduate and graduate students. She has been able to instill a sense of interest in the pertinent fields not only with her lectures, but also with the rich literature that she collected for her pupils. Between 2012 and 2015, I was enrolled in her courses at the Department of Sociology and Political Science. In 2012, I attended “East European Politics since 1740,” and in 2013 I enrolled in the course “The Soviet Union and Russia since 1917.” Ramet’s lectures were always comprehensive, detailed, well-structured and interesting. Her unique style of speaking and her demeanor held the attention of even the most skeptical and otherwise distracted students. No lecture was ever boring, and no question remained unanswered. She was always able to hold the attention of students with her lectures and, from time to time, would sing songs relevant to the given class (such as a song about Lenin and Trotsky, set to the tune of “Davey Crockett”). She also boasted an extensive network of friends from academic circles and helped organize a number of valuable guest lectures.

This essay has thus far focused on Professor Ramet’s academic legacy. However, I would lastly like to give a brief description of her non-scholarly writings. These volumes are humorous works that sometimes cover sociopolitical topics (such as her verse, “What if the mayor was a pigeon”). In these writings, Professor Ramet gives many of the most salient political phenomena a satirical twist quite successfully. I consider these writings very valuable, especially

for readers outside academia. For example, in 2008 the *Pets of the Great Dictators & Other Writings*²² was published. There, Ramet makes a parody of the lives of some of the most notorious dictators such as Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Hitler and Mussolini. The writings are truly hilarious, and I highly recommend this book to any reader who loves reading satire. In 2008, Sabrina Ramet brought out her first absurdist novel, *Café Bombshell: The International Brain Surgery Conspiracy*, in which a cabal of brain surgeons carried out a series of lobotomies on unsuspecting weasels (yes, weasels). The novel nonetheless had a serious undertone, with Ramet providing the reader with a sophisticated critique of the corporate thirst for power and the worrisome destruction of our planet's ecosystem and other salient topics. She also provides a hilarious review of the most common trademarks of conspiracy theories and the people who put forth such absurd beliefs.²³ Following the publication of these books, Ramet continued writing absurdist humor. For example, as sequels to *Pets of the Great Dictators & Other Writings*, she brought out *Cheese Pirates: Humorous Rhymes for Adult Children*²⁴ and the *History of Russia & the Soviet Union in Humorous Verse*²⁵—both published by the New Academia Publishing house. In addition, Sabrina Ramet penned another satirical volume entitled, *Make Marzipan, not War*, and this time she employed her vast knowledge of various philosophical doctrines in writing verse that humoristically takes on important past and contemporary political ideas and movements. *Make Marzipan, not War*²⁶ is a 269 pages long read that is refreshing, witty and pleasant for all those who enjoy absurdism. Later, in 2017, Sabrina Ramet brought out what is probably one of the most hilarious satirical volumes ever—her absurdist *Curse of the Aztec Dummy: A Nebraskan Chronicle*

In this novel, she successfully presents a very humorous critique of everyday America, including the rise of populism and political amateurism, and to describe the thinking of ordinary people in rural America obsessed, in her account, with Aztec gold and okra. This time, the main character in the story is Professor Wolf Romulus, who cons the citizens of Nebraska into voting for him and elect-

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- 22 Sabrina P. Ramet, *Pets of the Great Dictators & Other Works* (Washington D.C.: Scarith, an imprint of New Academia Publishing, 2008).
 - 23 Sabrina P. Ramet, *Café Bombshell: The International Brain Surgery Conspiracy* (Washington D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2008).
 - 24 Sabrina P. Ramet, *Cheese Pirates: Humorous Rhymes for Adult Children* (Washington D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2011).
 - 25 Sabrina P. Ramet, *History of Russia & the Soviet Union in Humorous Verse* (Washington D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2014).
 - 26 Sabrina P. Ramet, *Make Marzipan, Not War: Crazy Rhymes for Crazy Times* (Washington D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2013).

ing him their governor. In order to win the elections, he presents the electorate with a faux Aztec object and, as governor, took Nebraska into a war with Utah.²⁷

In 2019, Sabrina Ramet retired, and is currently Professor Emerita at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and a Research Associate of the Science and Research Center of the Republic of Slovenia at Koper. She lives in Trondheim (Norway) with her partner Chris and her pet cat, and spends her days reading and writing books. She is also an excellent and reliable copy writer, who offers outstanding services that are always delivered on time. Last, but not least, Ramet has been blessed with a wide network of friends and close colleagues with whom she maintains cordial relations. Her life is a story of success, very hard work, passion, empathy and dedication, and Ramet will always be an inspiration for scholars in the wide area of Slavic Studies. Knowing her so well is nothing short of a high honor.

CONCLUSIONS

Although now retired, Sabrina Ramet has left a significant legacy: To begin with, she wrote four critically acclaimed books about Yugoslavia, and edited or co-edited a dozen books about Yugoslavia and its successor states. In the course of these collaborative volumes, she gave senior scholars venues for their work, while also giving younger scholars a chance to break into print. Second, her work on religion and politics in Russia and Eastern Europe (two monographs and nine edited or co-edited books) proved to be nothing short of pioneering, helping to shape the field as it is today. Third, her work on rock music and politics, based in part on interviews with rock musicians in the ex-Yugoslavia, Poland and Czech Republic has inspired a number of scholars. Her 1985 article for *Survey*, “Rock Counterculture in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union,” was in fact the first comprehensive analysis of the subject, while her edited volume, *Rocking the State: Rock music and politics in Eastern Europe and Russia*, is considered a classic, and was recently reissued by Routledge.²⁸ And fourth, through a series of volumes beginning with *Social Currents in Eastern Europe* (first edition, 1991; second edition, 1995),²⁹

²⁷ Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Curse of the Aztec Dummy: A Nebraskan Chronicle* (Washington D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2017).

²⁸ Sabrina P. Ramet, ed., *Rocking the State: Rock music and politics in Eastern Europe and Russia* (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1994 / London and New York: Routledge, 2019).

²⁹ Sabrina P. Ramet, *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: The Sources and Consequences of the Great Transformation*, Rev. & expanded ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995).

and culminating in *Alternatives to Democracy in Twentieth-Century Europe*, she has consistently defended liberal democracy, while analyzing the strategies, destructive capacities and debilities of totalitarian and authoritarian systems. She is a rare scholar, who is able to connect the dots from different fields, and weave a beautiful and readily comprehensible narrative. On top of that, her zeal for academia, her creativity and her unparalleled energy will surely be cherished by many who share her (vast) interests. Professor Ramet has managed to provide tutelage to many students—both undergraduates and graduate students—I am certain that they will have benefited from Ramet's classes. Nor is Professor Ramet finished; indeed, in December 2020, Palgrave published her 15th monograph, *Nonconformity, Dissent, Opposition, and Resistance in Germany, 1933-1990*,³⁰ and in 2023, she brought out *East Central Europe and Communism: Politics, Culture, and Society, 1943-1991* (London: Routledge, 2023). I hope that this essay has given the reader some insight into Professor Sabrina Ramet's academic contributions, values and personality.

³⁰ Sabrina P. Ramet, *Nonconformity, Dissent, Opposition, and Resistance in Germany, 1933-1990: The Freedom to Conform* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

Conclusion

Frank Cibulka

It does not seem to be advisable to write a long Conclusion at the end of a massive manuscript which has been a decade in the making. In addition, all the contributors' chapters have been insightfully summarized by my co-editor Zachary Irwin who has also produced a very convincing attempt at providing the volume with a conceptual approach. Of equal importance is the fact that Sabrina Ramet's life and career achievements have been brilliantly captured by Aleksander Zdravkovski in his chapter. Still, I want to make a few comments about the volume.

Eighteen scholars from roughly a dozen countries, five of them women, have written chapter case-studies dealing with relevant aspects of 14 different countries of Central and East Europe. The volume deals with religion, state and society over the past four decades with emphasis upon the mavericks or dissidents within their religious establishments.

The volume's content covers a period of great change in which the collapse of the communist regimes and the resulting democratization have provided a space for a revival of its Christian Churches, yet this process has been constrained by the phenomenon of progressive secularization and atheization. The decline of religion in Europe has relatively deep roots, but in Central and Eastern Europe it has been greatly accelerated by the forty years of repressive communist rule as well as by the materialism subsequently arising out of the prevalent values of the consumerist post-communist society. This has been true especially in case of the Catholic Church, while the countries with dominant Eastern Orthodox Churches, although not completely immune to the trend, have seen far greater resistance to secularization.

In the interest of clarity of the above-mentioned concepts, I would like to provide their definitions. I believe that *secularization* can be primarily found in two forms. The narrow interpretation of the concept denotes the retreat of religion from the public sphere in general and the separation of Church and state in

particular. The broader and more commonly used form of the concept denotes a comprehensive movement of societies away from religious beliefs, values and practices and toward non-religious moral values. The less frequently and somewhat awkward term *atheization* refers to the process through which society becomes non-religious and lacking in belief in God. It denotes loss of faith and it appears to be a progressive and irreversible process. The term *religiosity* is a sociological concept which employs numerical measures to establish the scope and intensity of religious beliefs.

There is a strong intellectual current which charts or predicts a decline and eventual demise of religion in the modern world. This trend toward secularization is already visible in the industrial West and can be traced to the Enlightenment era and has been accelerated after the Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries due to the rapid progress of scientific knowledge and increase in human security and quality of life. Friedrich Nietzsche's often misunderstood statement that "God is dead," contained in 1883 in his volume *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, has become a symbol of religious decline. This was stated bluntly in our time by the iconic scientist Stephen Hawking, who in his final book *Brief Answers to the Big Questions*, wrote just before his death in 2018 that: "We are each free to believe what we want and it's my view that the simplest explanation is that there is no God. No one created the universe and no one directs our life."¹ A few years earlier, he explained the issue of answering key existential questions in his volume *The Grand Design* in this way: "Philosophy is dead. Philosophy has not kept up with modern developments in science. Scientists have become the bearers of the torch of discovery in our quest for knowledge."² I believe that we could replace the term "philosophers" with the word "theologians." After all, it is modern cosmology that has increasingly provided humankind with the vision of the Universe around us and with the attempt to explain its principles. Curiously, while that vision is fundamentally dissimilar to Abrahamic religions, it shares an astonishing resemblance to the almost 4,000-year-old Hindu cosmology of the sacred text Rig Veda. But one major difference arises when the theoretical physicists and cosmologists become the new prophets. Their theories lack any moral dimension or teaching. And that will eventually have a profound impact upon Europe's post-Christian societies.

¹ "There is no God: no one directs our fate says Stephen Hawking in final book", *The Economic Times/Panache*, October 18, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/theres-no-god-no-one-directs-our-fate-says-stephen-hawking-in-final-book/articleshow/66273272.cms>.

² Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design* (New York: Bantam Books, 2010).

Much of the loss of religiosity has been affecting Christianity in general and the Roman Catholic Church in particular. The retired Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord (George) Carey, once the head of the worldwide Anglican Church, stated in November 2013 that “The Church of England is just one generation away from extinction.”³ Regarding the status of contemporary Christianity, the future Pope Benedict XVI, as professor of theology at Tübingen University Joseph Ratzinger, in his 1968 seminal volume *Introduction to Christianity*, made the following astonishingly harsh assessment of its reality:

The catholicity of the Church seems just as questionable as her holiness. The one garment of the Lord is torn between disputing parties, the one Church is divided into many Churches, every one of which claims more or less insistently to be alone in the right. And so for many people today the Church has become the main obstacle to belief. They can no longer see in her anything but human struggle for power, the petty spectacle of those, who, with their claim to administer the official Christianity seem to stand most in the way of the true spirit of Christianity.⁴

Clearly, however, the predictions of the impending worldwide demise of religion are not consistent with our current reality. Islam and Hinduism continue their dynamic growth, aided by the demographic factor of high fertility of developing areas. Eastern religions, such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism and Shinto, have so far retained their traditional places in their respective societies, while Chinese folk religion in particular has experienced dramatic resurgence with the end of Maoist religious suppression. Christianity continues to be the world’s largest religion with 2.4 billion adherents and roughly half of them are baptized members of the Roman Catholic Church. Christianity still thrives in Latin America and experiences an explosive growth in Africa. But in the United States, in spite of the political power of the Christian right, religiosity has been declining. And finally, outside the areas where Eastern Orthodoxy prevails, Christianity has been experiencing a profound crisis in many countries of both Western and Central Europe, with the Czech Republic and Estonia singled out as the most atheist countries.

³ Steve Doughty, “Church is on the brink of extinction: Ex-Archbishop George Carey warns of Christianity crisis,” *Mail Online*, November 19, 2013, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2509379/Church-brink-extinction-Ex-Archbishop-George-Carey-warns-Christianity-crisis.html>.

⁴ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco: Communio Books, Ignatius Press, 2004), 340.

And here comes into view the contribution made by the *Festschrift*. Its focus is on Christianity in its various denominations. It explores the changing role of religion in various societies of Central Europe and Eurasia as they respond to the demise of the communist dictatorships and the coming of freedom and some measure of pluralism, and, in the case of Russia, with the return to authoritarianism. It, at the same time, examines how the various religious institutions respond to the acceleration of secularization in their countries. This response of Christian Churches and especially of the Catholic Church under the leadership of Pope Francis, has resulted in deep divisions and even dissent within these religious institutions. As they struggle to respond to the challenge of modernity and as they, in some cases, become embroiled in political issues, the Christian Churches produce dissidents such as the theologian priest Tomáš Halík in the Czech Republic, winner of the prestigious Templeton Prize, who has become a dissident from the mainstream Roman Catholic Church because of his efforts to modernize and thus subsequently save the Church from complete oblivion. And this aspect has been the primary focus of the *Festschrift* volume and is discussed in numerous chapters. The uniqueness of the volume rests both in its focus and in its scope of countries covered, the variety of themes and the depth of its analysis.

While I believe that the volume itself represents a major intellectual achievement and contribution to the academic fields of study of religion and of Slavic studies, it is equally important that it is a *Festschrift* for Sabrina Ramet, a homage to one of the greatest minds of our time. It celebrates her great contributions to multiple disciplines over a period of almost forty-five years. While we are honoring her with a volume dealing with religion and society, her scholarly contributions have been so much more varied: including her legendary work on the former Yugoslavia, her writings on Europe's post-communist culture, on extreme Right intolerance, on historical fascism, on democracy and its civic values, as well as her seminal writings on rock music and politics. Her work has been strongly multidisciplinary, embracing history, political science, sociology and culture studies. The sheer volume of her writings has been astonishing and will in all likelihood remain unmatched by the current generation of scholars. In spite of the volume of her writings, Sabrina Ramet's body of works stands out also through its uncompromising quality. Furthermore, Sabrina Ramet been guided by a strong moral compass and her values are reflected in her writings, especially in her commitment to liberal democracy and its values, to societal tolerance and to LGBT community causes. Yet, she has always been able to achieve a balance between her scholarship and her beliefs and, while her works often offer moral

guidance, they do not preach and she has always retained her scholarly objectivity. Uniquely, she herself does not participate in organized religion, yet she towers intellectually over the field of the study of religion, state and society. Part of the reason for that may be that she retains deep inner spirituality.

It has been a great privilege to co-edit this Festschrift as Sabrina has been my mentor and friend for the past three decades. But it may well be that this Festschrift is premature because it is published in 2024, the year in which Sabrina Ramet celebrates her 75th birthday. It will come as her intellectual vitality continues to be undiminished and while she is passionately involved in a multitude of challenging planned projects. She will continue to make major contributions to the field of Slavic studies for years and perhaps decades more to come.

Sabrina P. Ramet's Publications

BOOKS

- Author of: *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1963–1983* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1984), 299 pp.
- *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962–1991*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1992), 346 pp.
- Author of: *Cross and Commissar: The Politics of Religion in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1987), 244 pp.
- Author of: *The Soviet-Syrian Relationship since 1955: A Troubled Alliance* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990), 290 pp.
- Author of: *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: The Sources and Meaning of the Great Transformation* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991), 434 pp.
- *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: The Sources and Consequences of the Great Transformation*, 2nd ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), 598 pp.
- Author of: *Balkan Babel: Politics, Culture, and Religion in Yugoslavia* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992), 230 pp.
- *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to Ethnic War*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996), 354 pp.
 - *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the War for Kosovo*, 3rd ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1999), 374 pp.
 - *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milošević*, 4th ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2002; hardback reissued by Routledge in 2019), 426 pp.
 - Published in Croatian translation under the title, *Balkanski Babilon: Raspad Jugoslavije od Titove smrti do Miloševićeva pada* (Zagreb: Alinea d.o.o., 2005), 488 pp.
 - A Macedonian translation of the 4th edition was published by Ars Studio publishing house, Skopje, in 2015, 423 pp.
- Author of: *Whose Democracy? Nationalism, Religion, and the Doctrine of Collective Rights in Post-1989 Eastern Europe* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 231 pp. Named an Outstanding Academic Book for 1997 by *Choice magazine*.
- Croatian translation: *Čija demokracija? Nacionalizam, religija, i doktrina kolektivnih prava u srednjoj i jugoistočnoj Europi* (Zagreb: Alinea Publishers, 2001), 223 pp.

- Author of: *Nihil Obstat: Religion, Politics, and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), 424 pp.
- Author of: *Thinking about Yugoslavia: Scholarly Debates about the Yugoslav Breakup and the Wars in Bosnia and Kosovo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 328 pp.
- Author of: *The Three Yugoslavias: State-Building and Legitimation, 1918–2005* (Bloomington, Ind. & Washington D.C.: Indiana University Press & The Wilson Center Press, 2006), 819 pp.
- Croatian translation: *Tri Jugoslavije: Izgradnja države i izazov legitimacije, 1918.-2005.* (Zagreb: Golden Marketing tehnička knjiga, September 2009), 812 pp.
 - German translation: *Die Drei Jugoslawien: Eine Geschichte der Staatsbildungen und ihre Probleme* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2011), 907 pp.
- Author of: *Religija i politika u vremenu promene: Katolička i pravoslavne crkve u centralnoj i jugoistočnoj Evropi* (Belgrade: Centar za ženske studije i istraživanja roda, 2006), 220 pp.
- Italian translation: *L'Europa Centro Orientale tra religione e politica. Cattolici, Ortodossi e nuovi ordini missionari dopo il 1989*, trans. by Francesca Marri and Dominika Stojanoska (Bologna: Longo Editore Ravenna, 2008), 208 pp.
- Author of: *The Liberal Project & the Transformation of Democracy: The Case of East Central Europe* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 178 pp.
- French translation: *Le Projet Liberal et la Transformation de la Democratie: Le Cas de l'Europa Centrale et Orientale*, trans. by Anne-Helene Kerebiriou (Quebec: Les Presses de l'Universite Laval, 2008), 224 pp.
 - An updated version of Chapter 6, “Three Models of Church-State Condominium”, was posted in *Michigan Comparative and Interdisciplinary Papers on Europe*, online at <http://ii.umich.edu/ces-euc/events/lecture/mipaper?&pubID=2123>, with the kind permission of Texas A&M University Press.
- Author of: *Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia at Peace and at War: Selected Writings, 1983–2007* (Berlin & Münster: Lit Verlag, 2008), 288 pp.
- Author of: *The Catholic Church in Polish History: From 966 to the present* (Basingstoke and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 332 pp.
- Author of: *Alternatives to Democracy in Twentieth-Century Europe: Collectivist visions of modernity* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2019), 477 pp.
- Author of: *Nonconformity, Dissent, Opposition, and Resistance in Germany, 1933-1990: The freedom to conform* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 279 pp.
- Author of: *East Central Europe and Communism: Politics, Culture, and Society, 1943–1991* (London & New York: Routledge, 2023), 358 pp.
- Croatian translation: *Srednja i istočna Europa i komunizam: politika, kultura, i društvo, 1943.–1991.* (Zagreb: Plejada, publication projected for 2024).
- Co-author (with Torbjørn L. Knutsen) of: *German Moral and Political Philosophy, 1785–1908: A concise introduction* (Washington D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2023), 215 pp.
- Co-author (with Lavinia Stan) of: *East Central Europe since 1989: Politics, Culture, and Society* (London: Routledge; publication projected for March 2025).
- Co-author (with Torbjørn L. Knutsen) of: *Key Thinkers of the English, Scottish, and American Enlightenments: from Locke to Madison* (Cham: Springer, 2024), 143 pp.
- Editor of: *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1984), 282 pp.: Includes three chapters by the editor: “The Inter-

- play of Religious Policy and Nationalities Policy in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe", "Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslavia", and "Conclusion"
- *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics*, 2nd ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1989), 516 pp.: Includes four chapters by the editor: the three listed in the first edition together with "Christianity and National Heritage among the Czechs and Slovaks"
- Editor of: *Yugoslavia in the 1980s* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1985), 354 pp.
- Includes four chapters by the editor: "Apocalypse Culture and Social Change in Yugoslavia", "The Yugoslav Press in Flux", "The Dynamics of Yugoslav Religious Policy: Some Insights from Organization Theory", and "Contradiction and Reform in Yugoslav Communism"
- Editor of: *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1988), 471 pp.
- Includes three chapters by the editor: "Autocephaly and National Identity in Church-State Relations in Eastern Christianity: An Introduction", "The Albanian Orthodox Church", and "The Serbian Orthodox Church"
- Editor of: *Catholicism and Politics in Communist Societies* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), 454 pp.
- Includes two chapters by the editor: "Catholic Tradition, Hierarchy, and the Politics of Coexistence under Communism: An Introduction" and "The Catholic Church in Yugoslavia, 1945–1989"
- Editor of: *Adaptation and Transformation in Communist and Post-Communist Systems* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992; reissued by Routledge in 2020), 326 pp.
- Includes three chapters by the editor: "Processes of Decay, Engines of Transformation: An Introduction", "Adaptation and Transformation of Religious Policy in Communist and Post-Communist Systems", and "When Systems Collapse: Toward a Theory About the Relationship between System Decay and Civil Strife"
- Editor of: *Protestantism and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia: The Communist and Post-Communist Eras* (Christianity under Stress, II), (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992), 441 pp.
- Includes three chapters by the editor: "Protestantism and Communism: Patterns of Interaction in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union," "Protestantism in East Germany, 1949–1989: A Summing Up," and "The New Church-State Configuration in Eastern Europe"
- Editor of: *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 361 pp.
- Includes two chapters by the editor: "Religious Policy in the Era of Gorbachev" and "Epilogue: Religion after the Collapse"
- Editor of: *Rocking the State: Rock Music and Politics in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994; reissued by Routledge in 2019), 317 pp.
- Includes three chapters by the editor: "Rock – The Music of Revolution (and Political Conformity)", "Rock Music in Czechoslovakia", and "Shake, Rattle, and Self-Management: The Yugoslav Scene"
 - Includes one chapter co-authored by the editor: "The Soviet Rock Scene"
- Editor of: *Gender Reversals and Gender Cultures: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 231 pp.

- Includes one chapter by the editor: "Gender Reversals and Gender Cultures: An Introduction"
- Editor of: *Eastern Europe: Politics, Culture, and Society since 1939* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1998), 426 pp.
 - Includes three chapters by the editor: "Introduction", "Yugoslavia", and "Democracy, Tolerance, and the Cycles of History"
- Editor of: *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States* (University Park, Pa.: Penn State Press, 1999), 343 pp.
 - Includes two chapters by the editor: "Introduction" and "In Tito's Time"
- Editor of: *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989* (University Park, Pa.: Penn State Press, 1999), 383 pp.
 - Includes two chapters by the editor: "Defining the Radical Right: The Values and Behaviors of Organized Intolerance" and "The Radical Right in Germany"
- Editor of: *The Independent State of Croatia, 1941–45* (London: Routledge, 2007), 113 pp.
 - Includes one chapter by the editor: "The NDH – An Introduction"
 - An expanded edition was published in Croatian translation under the title, *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska 1941–1945*. (Zagreb: Alinea d.o.o., 2009), 248 pp.
- Editor of: *Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 563 pp. *For the second edition, see below (co-edited)*.
 - Includes three chapters by the editor – "Introduction", "Politics in Croatia since 1990", and "Serbia & Montenegro since 1989" – and one chapter co-authored with F. Peter Wagner – "Post-socialist models of rule in Central and Southeastern Europe"
 - Polish translation: *Polityka Europy Środkowej i Południowo-Wschodniej po 1989 roku* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 2012), 589 pp.
- Editor of: *Religion and Politics in Central and Southeastern Europe: Challenges since 1989* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), 336 pp.
 - Includes two chapters by the editor: "Religious Organizations in Post-Communist Central and Southeastern Europe: An Introduction" and "The Catholic Church in Post-Communist Poland: Polarization, Privatization, and Decline in Influence"
- Editor of: *Orthodox Churches and Politics in Southeastern Europe: Nationalism, conservatism, and intolerance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 267 pp.
 - I wrote the introduction.
- Editor of: *Interwar Eastern Europe, 1918-1941: The failure of democracy-building, the fate of minorities* (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 340 pp.
 - I contributed the introduction and co-authored the chapter on Czechoslovakia (with Carol Skalnik Leff).
- Co-editor (with Ljubiša S. Adamovich) of: *Beyond Yugoslavia: Politics, Economics, and Culture in a Shattered Community* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995; reissued by Routledge in 2020), 502 pp.
 - Includes five chapters by this editor: "The Roots of Discord and the Language of War", "The Serbian Church and the Serbian Nation", "Slovenia's Road to Democracy", "The Macedonian Enigma", and "The Yugoslav Crisis and the West"
- Co-editor (with Donald W. Treadgold) of: *Render unto Caesar: The Religious Sphere in World Politics* (Washington, D.C.: American University Press, 1995), 463 pp.

- Includes five chapters by this editor: "Sacred Values and the Tapestry of Power (An Introduction)," "What is Religion? What is Politics?" "Spheres of Religio-Political Interaction: Social Order, Nationalism, and Gender Relations," "Concerning the Subject of Religion and Politics," and (reprinted from the preceding collection) "The Serbian Church and the Serbian Nation"
- Co-editor (with Christine Ingebritsen) of: *Coming in from the Cold War: U.S.-European Interactions since 1980* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 244 pp.
- Includes one chapter by this editor: "The United States and Europe: Toward Greater Cooperation or a Historic Parting? – An Idealist Perspective"
- Co-editor (with James R. Felak and Herbert J. Ellison) of: *Nations and Nationalisms in Eastern Europe, 1806-1948: A Festschrift for Peter F. Sugar* (Bloomington, Ind.: Slavica Publishers, 2002), 283 pp.
- Includes two chapters by this editor: "Controversies Concerning Nation and Nationalism: An Introduction" and "Ante Starcevic: Liberal Champion of a 'Citizens' State'"
- Co-editor (with Gordana Crnkovic) of: *Kazaaam! Splat! Ploof! The American Impact on European Popular Culture since 1945* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 264 pp.
- Includes three chapters by this editor: "Americanization, Anti-Americanism, and Commercial Aggression against Culture: An Introduction", "Shake, Rattle, and Self-Management: Making the Scene in Yugoslavia, and After" and "UFOs over Russia and Eastern Europe" – the latter two are revised versions of articles originally published in journals
- Co-editor (with Vjeran Pavlaković) of: *Serbia since 1989: Politics and Society under Milošević and After* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 440 pp.
- Includes three chapters by this editor: "The Politics of the Serbian Orthodox Church", "Under the Holy Lime Tree: The Inculcation of Neurotic & Psychotic Syndromes as a Serbian Wartime Strategy, 1986-1995" (reprinted from *Polemos*), and "The Sirens and the Guslar – An Afterword"
- Co-editor (with Danica Fink-Hafner) of: *Democratic Transition in Slovenia: Value transformation, education, and media* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2006), 384 pp.
- Includes two chapters co-authored with Danica Fink-Hafner: "Values, norms, and education ("An Introduction" and "Slovenia since 1988: Building democracy and liberalism"
- Co-editor (with Davorka Matić) of: *Democratic Transition in Croatia: Value transformation, education, and media* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 432 pp.
- Published in Croatian translation, under the title, *Demokratska tranzicija u Hrvatskoj: Transformacija vrijednosti, obrazovanje, mediji* (Zagreb: Alinea d.o.o., 2006), 336 pp.
- Includes one chapter by this editor: "What's Love (of Country) Got to Do with It: An Introduction"
- Co-editor (with Konrad Clewing and Reneo Lukic) of: *Croatia since Independence: War, Politics, Society, Foreign Relations* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2008), 483 pp.
- Includes one chapter by this editor ("Politics in Croatia since 1990") and one chapter co-authored with Marius Søberg ("Challenges Facing Croatia since Independence: An Introduction")
- Published in Croatian translation under the title, *Hrvatska nakon osamostaljenja: Rat, politika, društvo, vanjski odnosi* (Zagreb: Golden Marketing tehnička knjiga, 2013), 477

- pp., with an additional chapter by Sabrina P. Ramet and Reneo Lukic, "Hrvatska nakon Sanaderove ostavke", pp. 463-472
- Co-editor (with Ola Listhaug and Dragana Dulić) of: *Civic and Uncivic Values: Serbia in the post-Milošević era* (Budapest & New York: Central European University Press, 2011), 468 pp.
- Includes three chapters by this editor: "Serbia's corrupt path to the rule of law: an introduction"; "Dead kings and national myths: Why myths of founding and martyrdom are important"; and "The power of values (a conclusion)"
 - Serbian translation: *Gradjanske i negradjanske vrednosti u Srbiji* (Belgrade: Žene u crnom, 2011), 381 pp.
- Co-editor (with Ola Listhaug) of: *Serbia and the Serbs in World War Two* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 344 pp.
- The volume contains two chapters by this editor: "The Collaborationist Regime of Milan Nedić" (co-authored with Sladja Lazić) and "Introduction"
- Co-editor (with Marko Valenta) of: *Bosnian Diaspora: Integration in transnational communities* (Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate Publishers, 2011), 356 pp.
- The volume contains two chapters co-authored by the two editors: "Bosnian migrants: An introduction" and "Changing places, changing identities: A conclusion"
- Co-editor (with Ola Listhaug and Albert Simkus) of: *Civic and Uncivic values in Macedonia: Value transformation, education, and media* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013), 368 pp.
- Includes two chapters by this editor: "Introduction" and "Civic virtues, liberal values, and the civic culture"
- Co-editor (with Ola Listhaug) of: *Bosnia-Herzegovina since Dayton: Civic and uncivic values* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2013), 430 pp.
- Includes one chapter by this editor: "Bosnia-Herzegovina since Dayton: An introduction"
- Co-editor (with Albert Simkus and Ola Listhaug) of: *Civic and Uncivic Values in Kosovo: History, politics, and value transformation* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2015), 448 pp.
- Includes one chapter by this editor, "Civic and Uncivic Values in Kosovo: An introduction", and one chapter co-authored with Albert Simkus, "The Roots of Instability and the Prerequisites of Stability in Kosovo: A Conclusion"
- Co-editor (with Christine M. Hassenstab) of: *Gender (In)equality and Gender Politics in Southeastern Europe: A question of justice* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 380 pp.
- Includes one chapter by this editor: Conclusion
- Co-editor (with Kristen Ringdal and Danica Fink-Hafner) of: *Small States, Big Challenges: Norway and Slovenia in comparative perspective* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag, 2016), 346 pp.
- Includes two co-authored chapters by this editor: "Comparing two small states, Norway and Slovenia: An introduction" (with Kristen Ringdal Danica Fink-Hafner) and "The Norwegian Church: From the Reformation to partial disestablishment" (with Christine M. Hassenstab)
- Co-editor (with Marko Valenta) of: *Ethnic Minorities and Politics in Post-Socialist Southeastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 322 pp.
- Includes two chapters by this editor: "Situating ethnic minorities in post-socialist South-eastern Europe: An Introduction" (with Marko Valenta) and "Afterword: A few thoughts about autonomy and separatism"

- Co-editor (with Irena Borowik) of: *Religion, Politics, and Values in Poland: Continuity and change since 1989* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 341 pp.
- Includes two chapters by this editor ("Sources of the Strength of the Church in Poland – An Introduction" and "Controversies in the social & political engagement of the Catholic Church in Poland since 1988")
- Co-editor (with Christine M. Hassenstab and Ola Listhaug) of: *Building Democracy in the Yugoslav Successor States: Accomplishments, setbacks, and challenges since 1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 472 pp.
- Includes two chapters by this editor ("The challenge of democratization: an introduction" and "Macedonia's post-Yugoslav reality: corruption, wiretapping, and stolen elections") and one chapter co-authored with Alenka Krašovec ("Liberal democracy in Slovenia: from seventh heaven to the lobby of hell in only two decades")
- Co-editor (with Kristen Ringdal and Katarzyna Dośpiał-Borysiak) of: *Civic and Uncivic Values in Poland: Value transformation, education, and culture* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2019), 370 pp.
- Includes three chapters by this editor "Civic and Uncivic Values – an introduction" and "Rock music and politics in Poland: Lyrics of protest and resistance" and "Past and Present in the Battle for Polish Democracy – a postscript"
- Co-editor (with Christine M. Hassenstab) of: a second edition of *Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 638 pp.
- As before, I have contributed the chapter on Serbia; I have also co-authored the chapter "Post-socialist models of rule in Central and Southeastern Europe"; but, for the second edition, I brought on board co-authors for the introduction and the chapter on Croatia.
- Co-editor (with Vladimir Đorđević and Christine M. Hassenstab) of: *Civic and Uncivic Values in the Czech Republic: Value transformation, politics, education, and gender equality* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 257 pp.
- I contributed "The Czech Republic: a flawed democracy – an introduction" and coauthored (with Vladimir Đorđević) "The Importance of Civic Culture – a conclusion"
- Co-editor (with Egon Pelikan and Jože Pirjevec) of *Antifascism in European History: from the 1920s to today* (Budapest & New York: Central European University Press, 2023).
- I contributed "The Anti-Fascism of Hans and Sophie Scholl: Intellectual Sources of the White Rose" (co-authored with Christine M. Hassenstab) and co-authored, with Professors Pirjevec and Pelikan, "What is Anti-Fascism? Its values, its strength, its diversity" (an introduction)
- Co-editor (with László Kürti) of *Civic and Uncivic Values in Hungary: Value transformation, politics, and religion* (London and New York: Routledge, publication projected for August 2024).
- I contributed the conclusion.

SHORT MONOGRAPHS

Sadat and the Kremlin, published by the *California Seminar on Arms Control and Foreign Policy*, Rand Corporation, Santa Monica (February 1980), 66 pp.

Eastern Europe and the Natural Law Tradition, The Donald W. Treadgold Papers in Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies No. 27 (Seattle: The HMJ School of International Studies Russian and East European Studies Program, August 2000), 92 pp.

- Croatian translation: *Postkomunistička Europa i tradicija prirodnog prava* (Zagreb: Alinea Publishers, 2004), 96 pp.

The Milošević Regime and the Crisis in Serbia, Davis Occasional Papers No. 84 (Jerusalem: The Leonard Davis Institute of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, November 2000), 43 pp.

The Third Yugoslavia, 1992—2001, East European Studies Occasional Paper No. 66 (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, July 2001), 50 pp.

Sovereign law vs. sovereign nation: The cases of Kosovo and Montenegro (with Vjeran Pavlaković and Philip Lyon), *The Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures & Societies*, No. 11 (Trondheim: PEECS, NTNU, October 2002), 80 pp.

SPECIAL ISSUES OF JOURNALS

Guest Editor of a special section on “Kosovo and Human Rights” for *Human Rights Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (January—March 2000), pp. 67–162, with contributions by Eric D. Gordy, Julie Mertus, Christine von Kohl, James Gow, Paul Williams and Michael P. Scharf, Vjeran Pavlaković, Nafsika Papanikolatos, Sabrina P. Ramet, Ian Williams, and Thomas Cushman, and introduced by SPR

Guest editor of a special section on “The Balkans since Dayton”, for *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook*, Vol. 16/17 (2000/2001), pp. 277–480, with contributions by Janusz Bugajski, Philip W. Lyon, Thomas J. Greene, Vjeran Pavlaković, S. Victor Papacosma, Nina Wichmann, Julie Mertus, Sabrina P. Ramet, Henry F. Carey, and Angelo Georgakis, and introduced by SPR

Guest editor of a special issue on “The Independent State of Croatia (NDH), 1941–45”, for *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 7, Issue 4 (December 2006), pp. 399–502, with contributions by Stanley G. Payne, Ivo Goldstein, Mark Biondich, Mario Jareb, and Nada Kisić Kolanović, and introduced by SPR

Guest editor of a special section on “Vladko Maček and Croatian History”, for *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (May 2007), pp. 199–246, with contributions by Mark Biondich, Sabrina P. Ramet, and Vjeran Pavlaković, and introduced by SPR

Guest editor of a special issue on “Human Rights in Eastern Europe since 1989”, for *Human Rights Review*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (March 2008), pp. 1–151, with contributions by Marta Selinger, Vlad Oprica, Kurt Beurmann, Armend Reka, James Lyon, Vlasta Jalušić and Jasminka Dedić, András L. Pap, Brad K. Blitz, and Lejla Hadžić, and introduced by SPR

Co-editor (with Ted Jelen) of a special issue on “Post-Communist Eastern Europe and the Caucasus”, for *Politics and Religion*, Vol. 3, no. 2 (August 2010), and introduced by the two of us: Ted Jelen and I were co-editors of the journal at the time

Guest editor of a special issue on “Democratic Values and Ethnic Polarization in the Western Balkans”, for *Südosteuropa*, Vol. 58, no. 1 (2010), with contributions by Hilde Katrine Haug, Ola Listhaug, Sabrina P. Ramet, Kristen Ringdal, Maria Elena Sandovici, Albert Simkus, Teuta Starova, Zan Strabac, and Marko Valenta, and introduced by SPR

Guest editor of a special issue on the ICTY for *Southeastern Europe*, Vol. 36, no. 1 (2012), with contributions by Judith Armatta, Eric Gordy, and Jelena Subotić, and introduced by SPR

- Guest editor of a special issue on "Open Issues of Decentralisation in Serbia", in *Südosteuropa*, Vol. 61, no. 3 (2013), with contributions by Sonja Biserko, Jovan Komšić, Aleksander Zdravkovski, and Sladjana Lazić, and introduced by SPR and Ola Listhaug
- Guest editor of a special issue on "Memory and Identity in the Yugoslav Successor States", for *Nationalities Papers* (November 2013), with contributions by Oto Luthar, Vjeran Pavlaković, Nicolas Moll, Sladjana Lazić, and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, and introduced by SPR
- Guest editor of a special issue on "Media and Politics in Southeastern Europe", for *Southeastern Europe*, Vol. 39, Issue 1 (2015), with contributions by Peter Gross, Katerina Spasovska & Iso Rusi, and Izabela Kisić, and introduced by SPR

SCHOLARLY ARTICLES & CONTRIBUTIONS TO VOLUMES EDITED BY OTHER SCHOLARS

- "The Soviet Factor in the Macedonian Dispute," in *Survey*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Summer 1979): 128–134.
- "Yugoslavia's Debate over Democratization," in *Survey*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Summer 1980): 43–48.
- "Problems of Albanian Nationalism in Yugoslavia," in *Orbis*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Summer 1981): 369–388.
- "Poland's 'Other' Parties," in *The World Today*, Vol. 37, No. 9 (September 1981): 332–338.
- "Soviet-Yugoslav Relations since 1976," in *Survey*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Spring 1982): 66–82.
- "Jugoslawien nach Tito – zerbrechliches Gleichgewicht und Drang nach Legitimation," in *Osteuropa*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (April 1982): 292–302.
- "The Czechoslovak Church under Pressure," in *The World Today*, Vol. 38, No. 9 (September 1982): 355–360.
- "Catholicism and Politics in Socialist Yugoslavia," in *Religion in Communist Lands*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Winter 1982): 256–274.
- "Self-Management, Titoism, and the Apotheosis of Praxis" (chapter 7), in Wayne S. Vucinich (ed.), *At the Brink of War and Peace: The Tito-Stalin Split in a Historic Perspective* (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1982): 169–194.
- "Kantian and Hegelian Perspectives on Duty," in *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Summer 1983): 281–299.
- "Gleichberechtigung der Geschlechter, Parteipolitik und Feminismus in Jugoslawien," in *Osteuropa*, Vol. 33, No. 7 (July 1983): 539–546.
- "Women, Work and Self-Management in Yugoslavia," in *East European Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (January 1984): 459–468.
- "Yugoslavia and the Threat of Internal and External Discontents," in *Orbis*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Spring 1984): 103–121.
- "Political Struggle and Institutional Reorganization in Yugoslavia," in *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 99, No. 2 (Summer 1984): 289–301.
- "Church and Peace in the GDR," in *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (July/August 1984): 44–57. Also published in Spanish translation in *Problemas Internacionales* (July/August 1984).
- "Moscow and the Revolutionary Left in Latin America" (with Fernando Lopez-Alves), in *Orbis*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Summer 1984): 341–363.

- "Disaffection and Dissent in East Germany," in *World Politics*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (October 1984): 85–111.
- "The Catholic Church and Yugoslav Communism, 1984," in *Südosteuropa*, Vol. 3, No. 10 (October 1984): 553–560.
- "Religious Ferment in Eastern Europe," in *Survey*, Vol., 28, No. 4 (Winter 1984): 87–116.
- "Innenpolitische Determinanten der Sowjetischen Interventionspolitik. Zu den Auswirkungen der Tschechoslowakischen und Polnischen Krise auf den Westen der UdSSR," in *Osteuropa*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (March 1985): 181–197.
- "From Strossmayer to Stepinac: Croatian National Ideology and Catholicism," in *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring 1985): 123–139.
- "Soviet-Libyan Relations under Qaddafi," in *Survey*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Spring 1985): 96–112.
- "Factionalism in Church-State Interaction: The Croatian Catholic Church in the 1980s," in *Slavic Review*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Summer 1985): 298–315.
- "Rock Counterculture in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union," in *Survey*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Summer 1985): 149–171.
- "Primordial Ethnicity or Modern Nationalism: The Case of Yugoslavia's Muslims," in *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Fall 1985): 165–187. This article was selected by Florian Bieber, editor of the journal, as one of 20 articles to be made available free of charge at the journal website to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the journal in 2012.
- "The Soviet-Syrian Relationship," in *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 35, No. 5 (September–October 1986): 35–46; and (in an earlier draft), in *Kennan Institute Occasional Papers* (December 1986). Also published in Spanish translation in *Problemas Internacionales*.
- "The Evangelical Church, the State, and the Peace Movement in East Germany," in *Crossroads*, No. 22 (1986): 31–48.
- "The Limits to Political Change in a Communist Country: The Yugoslav Debate, 1980–1986," in *Crossroads*, No. 23 (1987): 67–79.
- "The Soviet-Syrian Treaty of Friendship," in Helena Cobban (ed.), *Military Dimensions of Soviet Middle East Policy* (Center for International Security Studies at Maryland, School of Public Affairs, University of Maryland, 1988).
- "The Rock Scene in Yugoslavia," in *Eastern European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Spring 1988): 396–410.
- "Soviet Relations with the Developing World," in Lawrence W. Lerner and Donald W. Treadgold (eds.), *Gorbachev and the Soviet Future* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988): 247–270.
- "Gorbachev's Dilemmas in Eastern Europe," in *Ibid.*: 226–246.
- "Gradualism in International Confrontation: The Soviet-Yugoslav Crisis of 1947–51," in *Ukrainian Quarterly*, Vol. 44, Nos. 3–4 (Fall–Winter 1988): 238–252.
- "Die Muslime Bosniens als Nation," Andreas Kappeler, Gerhard Simon, and Georg Brunner (eds.), *Die Muslime in der Sowjetunion und in Jugoslawien* (Cologne: Markus Verlag, 1989): 107–114.
- "Gorbachev's Reforms and Religion," in Eugene B. Shirley, Jr., and Michael Rowe (eds.), *Candle in the Wind: Religion in the Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1989): 279–295.
- "Kosovo and the Limits of Yugoslav Socialist Patriotism," in *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, Vol. 16, Nos. 1–2 (1989): 227–250.
- "Yugoslavia's Troubled Times," in *Global Affairs*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Winter 1990): 78–95.

- "The Soviet Rock Scene" (with Sergei Zamascikov), in *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Summer 1990): 149–174; and, in an earlier version, in *Kennan Institute Occasional Papers*, No. 223 (February 1988).
- "Islam in Yugoslavia Today," in *Religion in Communist Lands*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Summer 1990): 226–235.
- "Serbia's Slobodan Milošević: A Profile," in *Orbis*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Winter 1991), 93–105.
- "The Breakup of Yugoslavia," in *Global Affairs*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Spring 1991), 93–110.
- "The Decomposition of Federal Systems: Lessons from the Yugoslav Case," in Allen L. Kagedan (ed.), *Ethnicity and the Soviet Future: Aspects of Centre-Republic Relations in the USSR* (Ottawa, Canada: Carleton University, 1991): 17–35.
- "The New Church-State Configuration in Eastern Europe," in *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Spring 1991): 247–267.
- "Religion and Politics in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union," in George Moyser (ed.), *Politics and Religion in the Modern World* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1991): 67–96.
- "Primordial Ethnicity or Modern Nationalism: The Case of Yugoslavia's Muslims, Reconsidered," based on my earlier (1985) article for *Nationalities Papers* and republished in *South Slav Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 1/2 (Spring–Summer 1990): 1–20; and also in Andreas Kappler, Gerhard Simon, Georg Brunner, and Edward Allworth (eds.), *Muslim Communities Reemerge: Historical Perspectives on Nationality, Politics, and Opposition in the Former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994): 111–138.
- "Priests and Rebels: Christian Churches' Contributions to the Revolutions in Eastern Europe," in *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Fall 1991): 96–110.
- "The Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia, 1948–91," in *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (December 1991): 377–393.
- "Protestantism in East Germany, 1949–1989: A Summing Up," in *Religion in Communist Lands*, Vol. 19, Nos. 3–4 (Winter 1991): 160–196.
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