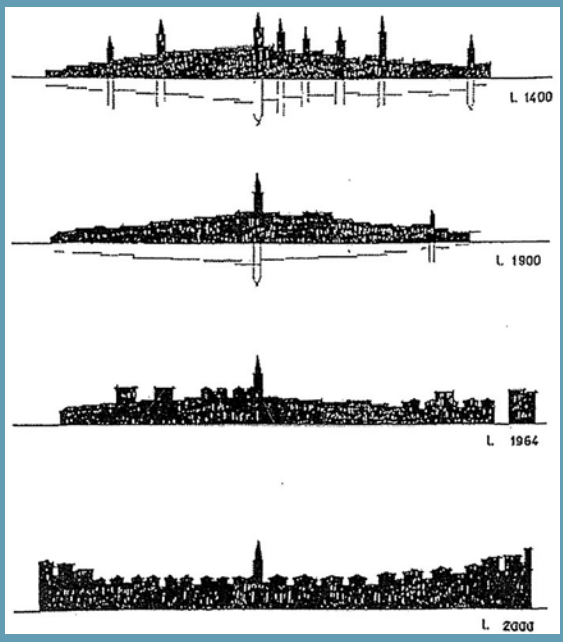

International Conference

RELIGIOUS CONVERSIONS AND ATHEIZATION IN 20TH CENTURY CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Koper, 22–24 April 2024

PROGRAMME AND ABSTRACTS

SCIENCE AND RESEARCH CENTRE KOPER
Institute for Historical Studies

ZNANSTVENO-RAZISKOVALNO SREDIŠČE KOPER
Inštitut za zgodovinske študije

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ANNALES ZRS

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ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

Using a broad-based understanding of religious conversions which includes atheization and religious revival, the conference aims to address the issues related to religious transformation in Central and Eastern Europe in the 20th century and different types of religious agency that transcend established norms, legal frameworks and cultural expectations. The speakers will go beyond the usual concept of religious conversion as an exclusively individual, voluntary spiritual phenomenon and will examine conversions that embody the myriad motives, forms, and socio-political particularities which condition the changes of worldviews as a process that frequently encompasses obstacles, pragmatism and profound life alterations. The conference will contribute to wide-ranging but – especially in Central and Eastern Europe – largely unexplored topics from a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms that drive religious change and religion-state relations.

Religious conversions, atheization (deconversion), and religious revivals of non-dominant and dominant religions (reconversion) – often linked to ethnicity and migration – lead to a redefinition and reshaping of the boundaries of religion resulting from interreligious interactions, political disagreements, and national religious policies. Central and Eastern Europe, and the former Yugoslavia in particular, provide a fitting context for a debate on the individualized perceptions of the right to choose one's religion, coerced (de) conversions, and the controversies surrounding freedom of religion and freedom from religion. The aim of the conference is to bring together scholars involved in the study of religion and atheism in Central and Eastern Europe and/or the concept of religious conversion in order to stimulate debates from a comparative and transnational perspective.

Taking into account new research perspectives, scholars from the fields of history, anthropology, study of religions, ethnology, sociology, theology and political science will provide new insights into the following topics:

- religious conversions as mechanisms for personal gain, coercive tactics and the (gradual) disestablishment of religious institutions;
- state-imposed atheization processes;
- religious upsurges of (non-)dominant religions, relations between religion and state, and the (re)shaping of religious policies in practise.

CONFERENCE ORGANISED BY

Science and Research Centre Koper, Institute for Historical Studies, Slovenia

PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

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Mateja REŽEK, Science and Research Centre Koper
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Kinga POVEDÁK, Hungarian Academy of Sciences

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Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency

PROGRAMME

International Conference

RELIGIOUS CONVERSIONS AND ATHEIZATION IN 20TH CENTURY CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Koper, 22–24 April 2024

Centre for Humanities (Science and Research Centre Koper, Slovenia)

MONDAY, 22 April 2024

9.30–10.00
Opening remarks

10.00–11.00
Keynote lecture
James A. Kapaló (University College Cork): *Shifting 'Sacroscapes' – Survival, Revival and Coerced Conversion in Communist Eastern Europe*

11.00–11.30
Coffe break

11.30–13.30
Chair: **Aleksandra Djurić Milovanović**
Stefanos Katsikas (University of Cyprus): *Muslim Conversions to Eastern Orthodox Christianity in the Modern Balkans: The Case of Greece (1821–1862)*
Todd H. Weir (University of Groningen): *Marx or Haeckel? Comparing Working-Class Conversions to Secular Worldviews in Germany from 1845 to 1945*
Gašper Mithans (Science and Research Centre Koper): *Conversions in Interwar Slovenia and the Question of (Dis)Loyalty*
Christine Bischoff (University of Hamburg): *Conversion without Religion: Change of Belief in Different Communities*
Discussion

13.30–15.00
Lunch

15.00–16.30
Chair: **Kinga Povedák**
Klaus Buchenau (University of Regensburg): *Conversions to and within Orthodox Christianity – Comparative Reflections on Case Studies in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Germany and Ukraine (20th–21st Centuries)*
Anca Şincan (HUN-REN Research Centre for Humanities, Budapest): *Fashioning the Orthodox: State Involvement in Converting the Greek Catholics after Enforcing the Union with the Romanian Orthodox Church*
Aleksandra Djurić Milovanović (Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts): *The Influence of Religious Conversion on the Emigration of Neo-Protestants in Socialist Yugoslavia*
Discussion

16.30–17.00
Coffe break

17.00–18.30
Chair: **Christine Bischoff**
Marko Galić (Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts): *Navigating Faith: Conversion to Seventh-day Adventism and Meaning-Making in Post-War Bosnia and Herzegovina*
Lana Peternel & Nikolina Hazdovac Bajić (Institute for Social Research in Zagreb): *Orthodoxy as an Invisible Identity in Croatia and Abandoned Sacred Places*
Branko Sekulić (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich): *Sleep Now in the Fire: Decoding Ethnoreligiosity Dynamics in the Ex-Yugoslavian Post-Communist Transition*
Discussion

19.30
Dinner

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9.00–11.00
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Filip Škiljan (Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies Zagreb): *Religious Conversions from Orthodox Christianity to Roman Catholicism during the NDH Era*
Milosav Đoković (Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts): *The Reaction of the Holy See to the Question of the Conversion of Serbs to Catholicism in the Independent State of Croatia*
Jože Pirjevec (Science and Research Centre Koper): *"The Sole Catholic Church Allied with Nazism": The Ljubljana Diocese during World War II*
Julian Sandhagen (German Historical Institute Rome/Humboldt University of Berlin): *Publish or Perish and the Weaponization of Relief: Pope Pius XII, Bishop Joseph P. Hurley and the Strategies in the Face of Communist Repression*
Discussion

11.00–11.30
Coffe break

11.30–13.30
Chair: **James A. Kapaló**
Johannes Gleixner (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich): *Constructing an Atheist Worldview by Conversion: Non-Religion in Early Soviet Russia*
Jared Warren (Leibniz Institute for European History): *Lev Gillet's "Great Object of Intercession": Ecumenism and Conversion between France and Ukraine*
Nadezhda Beliakova (Bielefeld University): *Conversions to the "Evangelical Faith" and (Re)Conversions Within "Free Churches": The Changing Religious Landscape in the Late USSR (1960s–1970s)*
Teo Benussi (Ca' Foscari University of Venice): *Wither Conversion: Exploring Histories of Conversion to Islam in Povolzhye through Different Theories of Truth*
Discussion

13.30–15.00
Lunch

15.00–16.30
Chair: **Nadezhda Beliakova**
Heléna Tóth (University of Bamberg): *Between Political Exigency and Humanitarian Service: Catholic (Non-)Converts in the Shaping of Socialist Funeral Culture in Hungary, 1970–1989*
Kinga Povedák (Hungarian Academy of Sciences): *Christian Popular Musicking in Hungary: Religious Revival during the Years of Forced Atheization*
Slavica Jakelić (The Honors College of Valparaiso University, USA): *On Atheism in Atheist Regimes: Methodological, Normative, and Political Implications of Seeing More than One Atheism*
Discussion

16.30–17.00
Coffe break

17.00–19.00
Chair: **Klaus Buchenau**
Eva Guigo-Patzelt (CéSor Research group, Aubervilliers/Paris): *Speeding up Atheization in the GDR: Research Serving Worldview Change*
Mateja Režek (Science and Research Centre Koper): *Shifting Paradigms: Atheization of School Education in Socialist Slovenia*
Jure Ramšak (Science and Research Centre Koper): *Depoliticisation of Religious Interest? The League of Communists of Slovenia and the Ambiguities of Its Religious Policy during the Final Decades of Yugoslavia*
Boris Vukićević & Todor Lakić (University of Montenegro): *The Dynamics of Atheization and Conversion in the Second Half of the 20th Century Montenegro*
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19.30
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Sara Hajdinac (Science and Research Centre Koper): *Religious Identity as the State's Tool in Modification of Public Space and its Identity: The Yugoslav Concept of the Two Squares*
Zorica Kuburić (University of Novi Sad): *The God Worshipper Movement of 1918–1941*
Petar Dragišić (Institute for Recent History of Serbia): *Serbian Press and Eastern Orthodoxy in Serbia in the Eighties*
Discussion

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Chair: Slavica Jakelić
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Nadja Furlan Štante (Science and Research Centre Koper): *The Revival of Goddess Religions*
Luka Trebežnik (Science and Research Centre Koper): *Christianity as a Constant Process of Atheization*
Milan Tomašević (Institute of Ethnography, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts): *The Anti-Cult Movement in Serbia at the Turn of the Millennium: Discourse, Contextualization, and Valorization of Attitudes towards New Religious Movements*
Discussion

14.00–14.30
Final discussion

15.00
Lunch

ABSTRACTS

MUSLIM CONVERSIONS TO EASTERN ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY IN THE MODERN BALKANS: THE CASE OF GREECE (1821–1862)

Stefanos KATSIKAS
University of Cyprus

This presentation aims to delve into the little-researched field of religious conversions in the Balkans in modern times, with emphasis on the conversion of Muslims to Eastern Orthodox Christianity (Orthodox Christianity). The Greek case is not the only case in the modern Balkans where Muslims converted to Orthodox Christianity. Pomaks, Bulgarian-speaking Muslims, were subjected to forcible conversion during the Balkan Wars (1912–1913) and in the 1940s, whereas in the Cold War era, the Bulgarian communist authorities initiated programmes for the religious and ethnic assimilation of Pomaks and Turkish-speaking Muslims. Conversions of Muslims to Orthodox Christianity also occurred in Serbia, Romania and elsewhere in the Balkans. Yet, while Balkan historiography has focused on the Islamization of Christians in the region during the Ottoman period, it has paid little attention to the inverse process of the Christianization of Muslims in the age of nationalism.

The presentation will mostly focus on the conversion of Muslims to Eastern Orthodox Christianity and will explore the conversion of Muslims to Orthodox Christianity during the Greek War of Independence and the lives of converts during the war and in the first three decades of the post-independence years (1821–1862). It will build on Stefanos Katsikas' recently published scholarly monograph *Proselytes of a New Nation: Muslim Conversions to Orthodox Christianity in Modern Greece* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022). The presentation will seek to answer questions such as the following: Why did many Muslims convert to Orthodox Christianity? What did conversion mean to the converts? What were their economic, social and professional profiles? And how did the conversion affect the converts' relationships with their Muslim relatives in Greece and the Ottoman Empire?

Since Sharia law and the Ottoman legal system could keep Muslim apostates from inheriting family property, the presentation will examine the ways in which conversion complicated family relations and often led to legal disputes. It will also discuss the methods used by the Greek authorities to

adjudicate legal disputes on property issues between converts and their Muslim relatives.

The presentation will maintain that religious conversion in the era of nationalism was far more consequential for the converts, their family and their social relations. Converts received not only communal but also national attention. Depending on their religious affiliation and nationality, converts were regarded as either "traitors" or "heroes". Against this sociopolitical backdrop, conversion had a more drastic impact on the social fabric of communities than in the pre-modern era and more frequently led to violence and conflict.

MARX OR HAECKEL? COMPARING WORKING-CLASS CONVERSIONS TO SECULAR WORLDVIEWS IN GERMANY FROM 1845 TO 1945

Todd H. WEIR
University of Groningen

A unique attribute of many of the social and political movements that flourished in Germany between the 1840s and the 1940s was their self-conscious identification with a concrete "worldview". New adherents did not just join the movement, they very often spoke of their "conversion" to its worldview. While there is a growing interest in the study of political worldviews, like national socialism and socialism, as well as philosophical worldviews like idealism and monism, little attention has been given to the category of worldview as a whole. In this paper, I will focus on conversion experiences in the autobiographies of socialist workers, which very often followed an overarching narrative built around the transition from exploited worker to class-conscious fighter, and they pivoted around a moment of conversion, described as an emotional confrontation of the "old" and "new" worldview. Yet, the precipitating event of this conversion was generally not a confrontation with capitalism, but rather the break with Christianity. Furthermore, the worldview to which socialists initially converted was more often to the monistic naturalism of Ernst Haeckel rather than to the historical materialism of Karl Marx. Reflecting on these two issues will allow us to better understand the relationship of conversion to atheism to the field of religion and the place of a culture of worldview secularism within it. I will draw examples from my new book *Red Secularism: Socialism and Secularist Culture in Germany 1890 to 1933*. I will end with some speculative reflections on the metahistory of secular conversion and of worldview. Does the possibility of conversion to worldview point to an epistemic integrity of the century between the 1840s and 1940s? What were the conditions under which conversion to worldview became possible as a widespread cultural and political phenomenon and did these conditions find an endpoint? What happens to secular conversion in postmodernity? What is the relationship of secular conversion to religious secularization?

CONVERSIONS IN INTERWAR SLOVENIA AND THE QUESTION OF (DIS)LOYALTY

Gašper MITHANS
Science and Research Centre Koper

Conversions, particularly those deemed as apostasies, were scrutinized by the dominant majority religions and often characterized as "aberrant" phenomena posing threats to national unity. This discourse had also spread to politics and manifested itself in oppressive measures, particularly against proselytization by religious minorities, and fuelled mistrust of converts within religious communities. However, the rhetoric of national/ethnic loyalty was also exploited by the propaganda of liberal politicians who favoured conversions from Catholicism to Serbian Orthodoxy as a means of adopting an imagined Yugoslav national identity. Similarly, some Slovenian Catholics from the border region of Venezia Giulia (slo. Julijska Krajina), annexed by Italy in 1920, turned to Orthodoxy to protest against the Holy See's perceived indifference to the fascist policy of forced assimilation, which culminated in the forced resignation of bishops who sympathized with the Slovenian and Croatian minorities.

The main ideologue of Slovenian political Catholicism, Anton Mahnič, claimed in the late 19th century that "only a convinced Catholic can be a true Slovenian", thus marginalizing followers of non-Catholic religions, liberals and non-religious alike. Conversely, the Lutherans of the German minority on Slovenian territory contended that "to be a German means to be a Lutheran" and actively recruited German Catholics to strengthen their ranks and consolidate themselves as a singular national and religious entity.

Another facet of the perceived foreignness of faiths other than Roman Catholicism among Slovenians is reflected in reconversions to Catholicism. While Catholic critics viewed "apostates" who left Catholicism as unsatisfactory adherents who would not necessarily become exemplary members of their newly adopted religion, Orthodox priests claimed that many Slovenian converts were not truly dedicated to the cause, only reluctantly embracing Orthodox customs and remaining Catholics "at heart". This entrenched view emphasizes the inhospitable environment surrounding the exercise of a reli-

gious choice. In addition, compounded by pragmatic conversions of Catholics to Serbian Orthodoxy and Islam, which often lacked sincere commitment or integration into the newfound faith.

CONVERSION WITHOUT RELIGION: CHANGE OF BELIEF IN DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES

Christine BISCHOFF
University of Hamburg

Religious conversions are still often equated with abrupt proselytizing. In scientific and popular literature, as well as in media representations in general, it is first and foremost described as an individual's journey in dramatic stages, and the conversion itself is seen as the culmination of a radical turn towards a new religious conviction. This equation is also indirectly confirmed when reference is made to religious communities such as Hinduism, which are unfamiliar with the concept of conversion.

They are used as examples to show how religions accept entire communities into their ranks without expecting conversion or erasing identities.

The contribution to the conference assumes that, empirically conversions are very often not – or at least not exclusively – motivated by theological and religious considerations. Rather, the practices of conversion are determined by the various cultural, social, and political contexts in which they take place. Religious conversion not only stands for the individual's new faith and not only for a new, individual self-design, but it also means a change and the acceptance of new cultural heritage, and other stories as well as the separation from, but also the acceptance of family and social network structures – in short: for reorientation in a new collective system of meaning. Conversions are therefore particularly relevant to the question of the relationship between culture and religion.

On the basis of case studies, the presentation aims to provide answers to in what sense, for example, so-called marriage or family conversions, conversions to atheism, or religious changes to communities that do not require a renunciation of other religions (e.g. Hinduism, Buddhism) can be regarded as "forms of conversion without religion". In addition, the effects of these forms of conversion are analysed both on the religious communities to which people convert and on the communities from which they turn away. The temporal focus of the case studies presented here lies in the second half of the 20th century.

CONVERSIONS TO AND WITHIN ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY – COMPARATIVE REFLECTIONS ON CASE STUDIES IN YUGOSLAVIA, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, GERMANY AND UKRAINE (20TH–21ST CENTURY)

Klaus BUCHENAU
University of Regensburg

My presentation will be based on my own historical case studies from interwar Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, but also on observations from today's Germany and Ukraine. Although I will mainly talk about conversions from Protestantism, Catholicism and Uniatism (Greek Catholicism) to Orthodoxy, I will also pay attention to changes of jurisdiction from one Orthodox church to another – the latter being an important issue for Ukraine today and for various other regions of Eastern and Southeastern Europe in the past. I will categorize my cases along the following dividing lines: individual vs. collective conversions, religious vs. other motivations, voluntary vs. forced conversions. My hypothesis is that in the regions traditionally dominated by Eastern Orthodoxy, non-religious motives and the use of pressure were a dominant phenomenon in the imperial times and afterwards, while the religiously motivated, individualized conversions are more typical of Western societies. This East–West difference makes conversion a rather neutral cultural question in Western Europe, but a contested, if not contaminated one in Eastern Europe. It seems that this split might be overcome in the not so remote future, but not in a way as modernization theorists and transitologists would expect: migratory flows from Eastern to Western Europe as well as the recent turmoil in societies such as France and Germany might lead to a politicization of conversion in western societies as well.

FASHIONING THE ORTHODOX: STATE INVOLVEMENT IN CONVERTING THE GREEK CATHOLICS AFTER ENFORCING THE UNION WITH THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Anca ŞINCAN
HUN-REN Research Centre for Humanities, Budapest

In 1948, the communist regime imposed a solution on the religious market to centralize the denominations, similar to the Soviet solution in Ukraine two years earlier, by enforcing a union with the Greek Catholics with the help of the Romanian Orthodox Church and subsequently making the Romanian Greek Catholic Church illegal. However, just signing a document attesting they were now Orthodox did not make the former Greek Catholic believers Orthodox, as the Romanian Orthodox Church was soon to discover. Thus began a process of conversion to the Orthodox Church, marred by the volatility and instability of the groups of former Greek Catholics that were now nominally Orthodox. For a time, the state left it to the Romanian Orthodox Church to devise its own ways for converting these new members, which translated many times in allowing them to continue to be nominally Orthodox and disposing of the most visible traces of what was thought of as Greek Catholic (iconography and statues, mention of the Pope at services, introduction of new religious books). It shows how the state brutally intervened in the life of the Romanian Orthodox Church two decades after unification when it was confronted with a Greek Catholic petitionary movement that proved that the Orthodox Church mismanaged the conversion and that Greek Catholics were surviving underground. The presentation offers a look at the various definitions put forward by the state and the Orthodox Church of what it meant to be Orthodox for the Greek Catholic "converts".

THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS CONVERSION ON THE EMIGRATION OF NEO-PROTESTANTS IN SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA

Aleksandra DJURIĆ MILOVANOVIĆ
Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts

Religion frequently emerges as a key element in migration debates, whether we are talking about the migration journey or the arrival in host societies. This paper discusses the nexus between religious conversion and emigration among neo-Protestant communities in Yugoslavia. The increased number of emigration of members of several neo-Protestant communities, mostly Nazarenes and Seventh-Day Adventists, has been the result of socialist policy towards pacifist religious groups and harsh treatment through long and repeated prison sentences. This policy resulted in an increased number of escapes and illegal border crossings. Members of religious minorities were considered anti-communist, disloyal citizens and their existence was seen as illegitimate. Religious minorities in Yugoslavia were severely controlled by the state, especially because of their international and transnational networks as well as their missionary work. Alongside "nation" defining religions in Yugoslavia, religious minorities (usually multi-ethnic in structure) were perceived as subversive and dangerous to society. The paper is based on mixed methods of archival research and ethnographic research on the emigration of religious minorities and includes their conversion experiences.

NAVIGATING FAITH: CONVERSION TO SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM AND MEANING-MAKING IN POST-WAR BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Marko GALIĆ
Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts

The nexus between religious conversion and personal crises has been a focal point of research since the seminal work of the late William James. Numerous scholars have emphasized tension and traumatic events as integral components in the conversion process, particularly conversion to Protestant and neo-Protestant groups. When placing this research in the context of the post-socialist transition in the former Yugoslavia, it is crucial to acknowledge the growth experienced by various neo-Protestant communities, including Evangelical and Baptist groups, as well as Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses, during the 1990s. As in neighbouring countries, religious minorities, such as the Adventist Christian Church, gained visibility in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the war. Confronted with the crises arising from social anomie, individuals sought viable coping mechanisms in religion. For some, the Adventist Christian Church, as a non-national religious community, proved to be an appealing choice compared to major ethno-confessional religious groups. This paper, grounded in the analysis of 10 collected narratives, explores how conversion to Adventism facilitated individuals in constructing meaning after enduring both personal and collective losses in the post-war period.

ORTHODOXY AS AN INVISIBLE IDENTITY IN CROATIA AND ABANDONED SACRED PLACES

Lana PETERNEL & Nikolina HAZDOVAC BAJIĆ
Institute for Social Research in Zagreb

In recent Croatian history, we have witnessed massive changes in social, political, cultural and religious domains. Catholicism as the dominant religious position intertwined with political ideas, at the same time reinforcing specific Croatian ethnic identity and providing social cohesion, pride and a value system for the majority of the population. On the other hand, these processes provoked a redefinition of religious/non-religious boundaries as well as dominant/majority religion. In this paper, we would like to contribute to the discussion on the statuses of minority religions, especially the Orthodox, by discussing the public visibility of Orthodox identities and the fate of many Orthodox churches in isolated and border areas that have fallen into disrepair, been destroyed, desecrated and abandoned. Observing Orthodox religion in two distinct, yet related ways – as material objects and (invisible) social identities – we argue that Orthodoxy as a religious identity in Croatia is privatized, that in many places devastation of sacred sites affects historically rooted memory, and that, due to the state neglect, Orthodox minority in many remote areas is prevented from practicing religion due to state neglect and faces cultural and social disappearance. The analysis is based on ethnographic field research, in-depth interviews and visual analysis of archival photographs.

SLEEP NOW IN THE FIRE: DECODING ETHNORELIGIOSITY DYNAMICS IN THE EX-YUGOSLAVIAN POST-COMMUNIST TRANSITION

Branko SEKULIĆ
The Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich

This paper deals with the intricate and multifaceted relationship between religion and politics, aiming to elucidate this interplay's profound influence on sociopolitical dynamics. Our primary focus centres on the Croatian Catholic and Serbian Orthodox communities, whose identities underwent a significant transformation during the tumultuous post-communist transition period characterized by ethnonational and religious upheavals. Central to this historical context is the resurgence of a distinctive politico-religious form, a key driver in the emergence of a new identity politics in the Balkans.

On a global scale, the phenomenon aligns with the broader resurgence of political religions. Within the post-Yugoslav context, it takes the form of ethnoreligiosity, a complex fusion of ethnicity and religious identity. While ethnoreligiosity shares specific characteristics with the broader concept of political religion, it stands out as a distinct and indispensable phenomenon for comprehending the intricate dynamics of ethnonational and religious issues in the Balkans, particularly in the former Yugoslavia.

This exploration goes beyond merely shedding light on the ongoing challenges related to identity in the sociopolitical and socioreligious landscapes of the region. It underscores the imperative of a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted dynamics at play. In doing so, we aim to contribute to a more comprehensive comprehension of the evolving sociopolitical tapestry in the Balkans and its broader implications.

In extending our inquiry, it becomes evident that this politico-religious dynamic not only shapes the immediate sociopolitical context but also reverberates globally. By examining the specifics of the Croatian Catholic and Serbian Orthodox experiences, we gain insights into universal patterns of how the intertwining of religion and politics can influence the trajectory of societies. This expanded perspective invites reflection on the broader implications for global political and religious landscapes, highlighting the need for nuanced approaches in addressing similar challenges elsewhere.

RELIGIOUS CONVERSIONS FROM ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY TO ROMAN CATHOLICISM DURING THE NDH ERA

Filip ŠKILJAN
Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies Zagreb

In this work, the author addresses the issue of religious conversions in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) in the period between 1941 and 1945. Before the outbreak of the Second World War, there were tensions between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church. The conflicts between Croats and Serbs intensified after the death of Stjepan Radić and, subsequently, after the death of King Aleksandar Karađorđević.

Following the Nazi and fascist occupation of the Kingdom, the Independent State of Croatia was established in 1941, a newly formed wartime entity that the Holy See did not formally recognize. As part of their ideology of the "final solution to the Serbian question", the Ustasha considered the Serbian Orthodox Church as the bearer of the national identity of the Serbs in Croatia. Consequently, the Orthodox priests were the first to face the wrath of the Ustasha authorities.

For the purpose of denationalization and assimilation, the conversion of Orthodox believers to Roman Catholicism or Greek Catholicism was planned, anticipating their Croatization. The NDH government decided that those converting must declare themselves Croats. The mass conversion from Orthodoxy to Roman Catholicism, colloquially referred to as "rebaptism", concluded in the spring of 1942 when the Croatian Orthodox Church was established.

In a report by Archbishop Stepinac to Pope Pius XII in 1943, a figure of 240,000 converts to Roman Catholicism is mentioned. The author's research in the Archdiocese of Zagreb revealed 67,708 individuals who converted from Orthodoxy to Roman Catholicism, although it is evident that the actual number was much higher. Requests for conversion varied from individual to family, collective, and mass conversions, even occurring without this formal requirement.

The majority of collective requests and mass ritual conversions took place in the Slavonian, Banian, and Kordun regions of the archdiocese. Serbs in the Archdiocese of Zagreb submitted petitions in the hope of preserving their employment, their homes, their property and ultimately their lives – a hope that in many cases was not fulfilled. The outcome of the conversion campaign from Orthodoxy to Roman Catholicism and Greek Catholicism, following the establishment of federal Yugoslavia, was unequivocal: all religious conversions were annulled.

THE REACTION OF THE HOLY SEE TO THE QUESTION OF THE CONVERSION OF SERBS TO CATHOLICISM IN THE INDEPENDENT STATE OF CROATIA

Milosav ĐOKOVIĆ
Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts

The paper discusses the conversion of Orthodox Serbs to Catholicism in the Independent State of Croatia, the position of the Catholic episcopate, and the decisions of the episcopal conference on this issue. The paper also presents the information that was received in Rome by the Yugoslav legation to the Holy See from the apostolic visitor Abbot Giuseppe Ramiro Marcone, as well as the letters of certain bishops and priests.

Emphasis is placed on the reaction of the Holy See to the problem of the conversion of Orthodox Serbs, especially of the Secretariat of State headed by Cardinal Luigi Maglione as well as of the Congregation for the Eastern Church. Furthermore, the paper discusses the issue raised by Rome as to which rite the converts should belong to – the Latin or the Eastern – as well as Cardinal Tisseran's stance on the matter.

"THE SOLE CATHOLIC CHURCH ALLIED WITH NAZISM": THE LJUBLJANA DIOCESE DURING WORLD WAR II

Jože PIRJEVEC
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With the words quoted in the title of the presentation, Friedrich Rainer, the Carinthian Gauleiter, characterized the conduct of Bishop Gregorij Rožman and his Catholic clergy during the Second World War in the Province of Ljubljana. This paper endeavours to fathom the underlying motivations behind this political alignment, which triggered a violent civil war in occupied Slovenia in 1941 that tragically tore the Slovenian nation apart – a legacy that can still be felt today. To comprehend the mindset of the Slovenian clergy, it is essential to look at the historical role of the Catholic Church in shaping Slovenian national and cultural identity throughout the 19th and first half of the 20th century. In a predominantly agrarian society, the Catholic clergy assumed multifaceted roles, encompassing spiritual, educational, political and economic functions, underpinned by the conviction that they were the sole interpreters of the nation. To be a true Slovenian was equated with being Catholic. With the beginning of the occupation and the partitioning of Slovenia among the aggressors – Germany, Italy and Hungary – in 1941, the emergence of a Liberation Front, led by the Communists was perceived by the Church in the Province of Ljubljana as a direct challenge to the established social order. Deeming this emerging movement as the paramount adversary of both God and the nation, Bishop Rožman opted to fight it, even if it entailed forging an alliance with fascist Italy and later the Third Reich. This paper will delve into the intricacies of this dynamic process, including the role of the Vatican in its evolution.

PUBLISH OR PERISH AND THE WEAPONIZATION OF RELIEF: POPE PIUS XII, BISHOP JOSEPH P. HURLEY AND THE STRATEGIES IN THE FACE OF COMMUNIST REPRESSION

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The end of the Second World War presented a complex situation for Pope Pius XII. Rome remained relatively untouched and the Holy See was rejuvenated and focused on peaceful reconstruction. However, there was also the unsettling reality of new communist regimes in former Catholic strongholds. A new socialist Yugoslavia emerged just a short ferry ride from mainland Italy, and the Church, for its part, faced oppressive religious policies that included violence, the imprisonment of clergy, the occupation of Catholic institutions and the conviction of notable figures such as Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac.

Recent access to sources from the Vatican apostolic archives allows us to gain a better understanding of the strategies used by the Holy See, the allies it sought, and the individuals who played a role in shaping Vatican policies in response to the challenges faced by the Catholic community under the communist regime in Yugoslavia. In the immediate post-war period, a pivotal figure was the American Bishop Joseph Patrick Hurley. He assumed the role of regent in the nunciature after the war and played a central role in shaping the Vatican policy towards the Yugoslav regime. While he certainly adhered to the overarching directives from Rome, it's worth noting that he also had his own ideas and strategies for dealing with the complex situation.

My current research therefore focuses on two key initiatives he championed: using the media to generate international pressure and harnessing Catholic war relief programs for strategic purposes. Hurley recognized the importance of a strategic media approach that extended beyond conventional Catholic channels. He aimed to create public pressure globally and gain strong support from allies such as the United States. The Florida Bishop advocated for highlighting cases of repression in ways that would appeal to non-Catholics and reach secular and evangelical audiences. Additionally, from his early days in Belgrade, Hurley worked to establish a Catholic relief program. This program aimed to involve the Catholic Church in the post-war reconstruction efforts and, importantly, to support the local clergy as well.

CONSTRUCTING AN ATHEIST WORLDVIEW BY CONVERSION: NON-RELIGION IN EARLY SOVIET RUSSIA

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When does someone start to be an atheist and does this person have to "convert" to an atheist worldview? What is an atheist worldview anyway? What is currently being hotly debated topic in the field of sociology and secular studies is not a new problem. In my presentation, I would like to focus on the early Soviet experience highlighting how non-religious experts and activists came to define unbelief and atheism as something one had to convert to.

Although there are many scholarly studies on atheism in the Soviet Union, its reception among the population is still an elusive topic, especially during the inter-war era. While the revolutionary state was relatively successful in combating the former state church in its institutionalized form, the Bolsheviks struggled to establish an atheist worldview at the individual level, not least because "non-religion" was notoriously hard to define.

In my talk, I would like to show that therefore the act of conversion (or de-conversion) away from religion came to be constitutive for an atheist worldview in itself.

I will look at two sources of conversions to atheism in order to combine both discourse and empirical data on early Soviet atheism: On the one hand, there are autobiographical texts by leading Bolsheviks that can be analysed as narratives of conversion that constructed revolutionary identities. Interestingly enough, in these cases, conversion to atheism tended to predate a conversion to communism. On the other hand, I evaluate empirical surveys amongst Moscow workers from the years 1929/1930, which attempted to assess the religiosity of the urban population. An important part of these surveys were questionnaires in which respondents for how long they had been atheists and if they could point out the exact time they became non-religious.

Both these sources share a common topic in that they convey atheism as something one had to convert to. They were defining a liminal stage in time

and making atheism tantamount to the act of conversion, without any regard to the actual substance of unbelief as a worldview.

Both sources also retroactively reconstruct an act of atheist conversion that took place a long time ago, more often than not from childhood or adolescence. The emerging discourse strengthened the idea of atheism as something one had to reach on an individual level, rather than something that could be taught directly. But this meant in turn that political measures could only contain religion as a public institution, not as a belief system.

I would like to end my presentation with some preliminary remarks on the differences between early and late socialist/Soviet atheism as a practice: Early Soviet atheism and "godlessness" focused mainly on eliminating religion, thus upgrading conversion from religion almost to the very essence of the atheist worldview as such. In contrast, scientific atheism in socialist countries from the late 1950s onwards focused much more on ritual building, therefore establishing atheism not as an exclusive (but strangely under-determined) worldview, but rather as a meta-narrative of Soviet civics that was hostile to religion, but not its complete opposite.

LEV GILLET'S "GREAT OBJECT OF INTERCESSION": ECUMENISM AND CONVERSION BETWEEN FRANCE AND UKRAINE

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"The reunion of Russia and the Slavic countries to the Church, principally by means of the Greco-Slave rite, is my great object of intercession," wrote Lev Gillet to Andrey Sheptytskyi in the early 1920s. At the time, Gillet (1893–1980) was a Roman Catholic novice; he had recently met Sheptytskyi, metropolitan of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in interwar Poland. For much of the 1920s, Gillet maintained regular correspondence with the Ukrainian; during this decade, Gillet would convert twice among three different Christian confessions: from Roman Catholicism to Greek Catholicism, and from Greek Catholicism to Russian Orthodoxy. Both conversions were also motivated by Gillet's perceptions of a given church's ecumenical potential. Yet the Frenchman's personal ties to Eastern Christianities predated his encounter with Sheptytskyi: drafted into the French military during the First World War, he was captured as a POW by the Germans at the Battle of the Vosges and was held alongside Russians, from whom he learned to speak fluent Russian. Gillet's varied conversions and his historical activities were a decades-long working out of his traumatic experiences during the Great War.

This paper analyses Lev Gillet's conversions through his correspondence with Andriy Sheptytskyi, contextualized against the histories of interwar Catholicism and European religious history, the history of ecumenism, the Bolshevik revolution, and the history of emotions – all critical tools to understand how Gillet presented and came to terms with his conversions. Even after his 1928 conversion to Orthodoxy, he did not understand his conversion as a rejection of Catholicism, or indeed of its repudiation. Instead, like many religious converts, Gillet emphasized the continuities of his belief. Yet his conversion to Orthodoxy distanced him from Sheptytskyi and, as this paper suggests, reflected a shift in his political expectations from Eastern Europe. Thus, what Gillet seems to have abandoned in his reception to Orthodoxy was not creedal ties to Catholicism, but his political and personal ties to Ukrainian Galicia.

While the analysis here focuses narrowly on the individual biography, Gillet's conversions speak to multiple aspects of interwar history, not least as the secondary literature on Gillet is primarily theological. Thanks to his writings and as the first priest of a French-speaking Orthodox parish, Gillet has had an outsized impact on Western perceptions of Eastern Orthodoxy; after his conversions, he continued to actively shape twentieth-century Christian ecumenism, and his texts are still given to potential Orthodox converts in North America.

CONVERSIONS TO THE "EVANGELICAL FAITH" AND (RE)CONVERSIONS WITHIN "FREE CHURCHES": THE CHANGING RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE IN THE LATE USSR (1960s–1970s)

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The policy of atheization, which went hand in hand with the disestablishment of religious institutions in the USSR, was accompanied by deconversion. However, it also had unexpected effects. The focus of the report will be on the narratives of those who converted (became members) to religious communities of religious minorities – primarily Evangelical Baptists and Pentecostals. I intend to examine the changing "religious map" in the various republics of the USSR during this period and to show the growth of evangelical (free churches or late Protestant) communities. Due to the violent policy of uniting different currents with different theological and ritual foundations, practices of re-conversions emerged. My focus will be on the specifics of re-conversions within the forcibly united evangelicals (especially the Baptists and Pentecostals). The source base includes oral narratives and ego-documents (letters and memoirs) of believers from different republics of the former USSR.

WITHER CONVERSION: EXPLORING HISTORIES OF CONVERSION TO ISLAM IN POVOLZHYE THROUGH DIFFERENT THEORIES OF TRUTH

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One of the things that make the idiom of "conversion" slippery, albeit still irreplaceable, is that in its vagueness, it risks conflating disparate and incommensurable things: for example, the f/act of crossing the boundaries of communally defined systems of meaning and the f/act of embracing new, transformative, transcendental truths. This paper seeks to probe the limits and possibilities of the "conversion" terminology by looking diachronically at how differently religious shifts have been conceptualised and experienced in the Muslim-majority but religiously diverse Eurasian region of Povolzhye (present-day Tatarstan and Inner Russia) and interpreting the differences in the light of two different strands of critical theory, stemming from Ludwig Wittgenstein and Alain Badiou respectively. Historical sources, life histories, and ethnographic observations suggest that the Povolzhye Tatars have "converted" to Islam in different ways over the past century and a half. In the late Imperial times, millenarist Islamic revitalisation movements spurred whole Turkic-speaking villages to seek salvation by embracing the spiritual visions of the Sufi reformers.

By contrast, in the Soviet era – after decades of state-enforced "scientific atheism" – many ostensibly secular Tatars sought solace and consolation in a low-key, theologically threadbare Islamic devotionalism that became available as people retired from public and productive life and drew closer to death. Later still, the post-Soviet era, ushered in a phase of vigorous spiritual commitment and cosmopolitan scripturalism, especially visible among urban youth. While the category of "conversion" may legitimately be applied to all these instances, this paper asks how such terminology can be sharpened to achieve greater historical nuance and anthropological insight. In all conversion stories, communal ties play an important role in the subjective spiritual vicissitudes of individuals as they try to figure out what it means to be a believer, a member of a group, and a human striving toward the Divine.

However, the interplay of community, cosmology and selfhood can play out in different ways according to the different historical contexts. To account for these differences, the present paper draws on Wittgensteinian and Badiousian theories of (religious) certitude, doxa and truth. Wittgenstein's and Badiou's philosophical stances are at odds with each other – even seemingly, incompatible. On the one level, this paper's empirical materials confirm the tension between the two approaches. On another, however, it shows how concrete experiences of conversion may possess both Wittgensteinian and Badiousian aspects, albeit combined in different guises and measures.

BETWEEN POLITICAL EXIGENCY AND HUMANITARIAN SERVICE: CATHOLIC (NON-)CONVERTS IN THE SHAPING OF SOCIALIST FUNERAL CULTURE IN HUNGARY, 1970–1989

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Starting in the 1960s, the Hungarian state invested time and energy into the development of a specifically socialist funeral culture as part of a new phase in the "struggle against the religious world view". Funerals for ordinary citizens represented a new territory for the creators of socialist culture, who had been familiar only with state funerals up to that point. Focusing on the biographies of two figures in this field, Ödön Rátkai and Rezső Papp, the proposed paper explores the role of Catholic (non-)converts as shapers of a socialist culture of grief.

Rátkai was a Catholic priest, who joined the "peace priest" movement in the early 1950s. The movement was part of a broader, coordinated effort within the Soviet sphere of influence to pit the various levels of the Catholic clergy's hierarchy against each other. "Peace priests" represented an important legitimizing asset for the state as they were cited as evidence of Hungary's respect for the freedom of religion. Within the Catholic Church, the position of the "peace priests" was complex, just as were their motivations for joining this movement. Not converts in the traditional sense of the word, "peace priests" in the 1950s were nonetheless officially excommunicated and many of them eventually left the church. One such priest was Ödön Rátkai, who, in the 1970s, reinvented himself as the director of an Institute for the Organization of Celebrations, and his secular funeral speeches were printed and distributed as examples for other funeral orators to follow.

Rezső Papp, in contrast, was never an official member of the clergy, but a practising Catholic. A journalist by training, Papp became one of the most vocal proponents for the promotion of cremation in Hungary and for elevating the standards of funerary culture. He published numerous articles in Hungarian and participated in international networks for the promotion of cremation across the Iron Curtain. After the fall of communism, it became public that Papp had been a regular contributor to a Catholic newspaper.

Comparing and contrasting the two biographies, the paper sketches the development of socialist funeral culture in Hungary and argues that though not converts in the classical sense of the word, Rátkai and Papp represent two modi of mediating between a Catholic habitus and socialist culture in the last two decades of communist rule.

CHRISTIAN POPULAR MUSICKING IN HUNGARY: RELIGIOUS REVIVAL DURING THE YEARS OF FORCED ATHEIZATION

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Christian popular music emerged relatively early in communist Hungary, namely in 1967, when the first "Beat Mass" was performed in Budapest. Due to the political circumstances, both the state authorities and the Catholic leadership handled the new religious musical style with suspicion. Secret agents followed and monitored the members of the Christian youth choirs and the priests who patronized their activities. During the era of state-imposed atheism, Christian popular music spread underground. Therefore, the social dimension of this music was an underground religious subculture that was often prohibited by Church leaders as well. Nevertheless, despite the efforts of the agents, Christian popular music played a pivotal role in Hungary's religious revival from the late 1960s onwards.

This paper delves into the intricacies of religious revival within the confines of the state socialist regime in Hungary during the 1970s and 1980s. Departing from oversimplifying narratives of religious persecution, the study aims to elucidate the nuanced processes through which religious revival transpired within an inherently state-atheist regime.

The investigation is twofold. By encompassing an analysis of political and party narratives that elucidate their perspectives on the "threatening desecularizational tendencies" of this new musical revival, I give an overview of the institutional responses (state authorities, churches) and the private reactions of individuals who were connected to these authorities (priests, collaborators, secret police informers). In addition to examining the political discourses, this research introduces a novel perspective by focusing on this grassroots phenomenon. The study explores how participants in the emerging grassroots movement forged a new spirituality intricately intertwined with the evolving genre of Christian popular music. The transformative power of this novel musical genre and its associated spirituality led to the

formation of communities, culminating in the organization of a semi-clandestine Christian festival from the mid-1970s onwards.

This paper seeks to unravel the subtle yet influential ways in which Christian popular music contributed to a religious revival in Hungary during the 1970s and 1980s. By examining both political perspectives and the grassroots dynamics, my paper seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intricate interplay between the religious revival and the state-imposed atheization processes.

ON ATHEISM IN ATHEIST REGIMES: METHODOLOGICAL, NORMATIVE, AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SEEING MORE THAN ONE ATHEISM

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The study of communist societies in 20th-century Central and Eastern Europe calls for a nuanced understanding of atheism – not only for the examination of the state atheization policies but also for the inquiry into the complex kinds of atheist subjectivities that arose even under the most atheist of regimes.

In this paper, I focus on the historical context of communist Poland to highlight the examples of the Polish secular Left, the intellectuals and activists who critiqued and opposed the regime, ended up in its prisons, and in so doing disclosed rather than legitimized the powers of the secular state. I especially attend to the ideas and actions of the secular activist and public intellectual Adam Michnik, as expressed in his book The Church and the Left, which he published just before the rise of the Solidarity movement. Maintaining that the concepts and strategies that had been used to explore relations between the Left and the church in Poland had to be revised, Michnik had a pragmatic interest in starting a religious-secular dialogue. The church had to be made an ally, he argued, because only as an ally the church would not be isolated and in its isolation, opposed to modernity. But while Michnik's proposals reveal his pragmatism, the most striking features of his book were not his strategic points, but his critique of the Left and his praise of the humanist turn in the Polish Catholic Church. Michnik condemned the anti-clericalism of the Left unable to see the church that was the only public institution in Poland to speak bravely on behalf of freedom and the rights of every human being. Moreover, Michnik contended that not only did the Polish secular Left need to reject the obtuse, primitive and harsh atheism of the communist states; its "search must go deeper. It must touch the very roots of that oh--so-haughty conviction that it is we... who really do know the true path of progress and reason."*

* Adam Michnik, "Mutual Suspicions," in *The Church and the Left,* Chicago&London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993, 128.

With Michnik's articulation of a reflexive and restrained, open and humanistically oriented atheism, I consider the methodological, normative and political implications of uncovering many atheisms under communism, including the importance of the latter perspectives for our understanding of "the return of religion" in the 1990s.

SPEEDING UP ATHEIZATION IN THE GDR: RESEARCH SERVING WORLDVIEW CHANGE

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In the Soviet occupation zone and the German Democratic Republic, religious affiliation fell from 94 % in 1946 to around 28 % in 1990. These statistics partly reflect a generational change, as young people were already growing up as non-religious. But many East Germans also turned away from religion. Such an evolution, on the personal and societal level, was not only favoured by the official anti-religious discourse but by pressure exerted on party members, workers, and all those willing to take some responsibility in professional or public life. The worldview change has also been closely followed, empirically examined, and theorized by a group of academics working in the field called "scientific atheism". Established at Jena university in the 1960s, the East German variant of this Soviet discipline included and even emphasized a sociology not only of religion but also of atheism. Field research and surveys were to reveal the mechanisms of institutional disaffiliation and changes in personal worldviews. These two dimensions, called "churchliness" (Kirchlichkeit) and "religiousness" (Religiosität), were the main indicators to assess an individual's position on an ideal-typical course. Rather than a binary divide, the scholars conceptualized a continuum with inescapable dynamics. In a "sequence of stages" (Stufenfolge), a person was to first lose personal faith but "still" hang on to the Church. He or she had to be made conscious of this "inconsistency" (Inkonsequenz) in order to overcome church affiliation and reach a higher level of atheism; and, in the end, "Marxist-atheistic thinking and behaviour, [which] is the qualitatively most highly developed form of non-belief and non-churchianity."*

In East Germany, freedom of religion and non-religion was a constitutional principle, and due to domestic and international political considerations, church membership or religion has never been forbidden. How to make people turn away from religion and become ever more accomplished athe-

*Berliner Institut für vergleichende Staat-Kirche-Forschung, collection Kaul, box 13 Gottschling, Thesen zur Dissertation, October 1969, p. 1. This communication will be based on extensive archival research and interviews carried out for my PhD on scientific atheism in the GDR (Sorbonne university, Paris, 2021).

ists thus was a serious question left mainly to propaganda and education. The scientific atheists recommended which categories of people were most receptive and what the propaganda had to look like in order to be most effective. They gradually gave up aggressive vocabulary and confrontation with religion and increasingly wondered about the "positive" aspects of atheism able to attract people and about the philosophical support they might need on their way.

SHIFTING PARADIGMS: ATHEIZATION OF SCHOOL EDUCATION IN SOCIALIST SLOVENIA

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The paper delves into the instruments of the atheization of school education in Socialist Slovenia, drawing from an analysis of school curricula, textbooks, archival sources, and public debates on religious policy. The atheization of society in Slovenia was a gradual process that developed in the awareness that most of the population was religious and that prior to the Second World War, the Catholic Church had played a key role in Slovenian society. Similarly, yet in line with the specifics of the different regions of the Yugoslav state and the respective predominant religions, the process of atheization took place elsewhere in Yugoslavia as well. The Yugoslav constitution guaranteed freedom of religion and respect for religious rights, but defined religion as a private matter, thus rendering it irrelevant and invisible in the public sphere. At the same time, non-religiosity and atheism as the official stances of the ruling Communist Party were mediated through all areas of social life. The dialectical materialism developed into the only recognized "scientific" way of explaining the world and coping with the "ultimate questions", while religion was considered a sign of ignorance, an illusion, and the alienation of people. The education system served as a pivotal conduit for disseminating the new ideology. On the one hand, religious education faced constraints and rigorous oversight in public schools until its removal in 1952. On the other hand, the introduction of the new school subject Moral Education emerged as the most obvious mechanism for promoting atheization within the school system.

DEPOLITICISATION OF RELIGIOUS INTEREST? THE LEAGUE OF COMMUNISTS OF SLOVENIA AND THE AMBIGUITIES OF ITS RELIGIOUS POLICY DURING THE FINAL DECADES OF YUGOSLAVIA

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The fact that progressive theologians and Marxist-humanist sociologists of religion had publicly displayed a significant level of mutual understanding and reached notably similar conclusions regarding Church-state relations by the early 1990s cannot obfuscate the controversies within the sphere of societal life in Yugoslavia that remained least affected by the principles of socialist self-management democracy. On the surface, the relationship between the Catholic Church and the state authorities in Slovenia, the northernmost and predominantly Catholic republic of Yugoslavia, appeared fairly peaceful and cooperative throughout the late socialist period. Furthermore, as this paper illustrates, Slovenian religious policy was proposed as a sophisticated model for the inclusive life of believers in a modern socialist society and presented to Vatican diplomats, international experts, and foreign journalists. Nonetheless, during that period, the more independent intellectuals, Catholic and Marxist alike, who warned that the Slovenian Catholic Church was departing from the course of the Second Vatican Council and that the Communist Party should abandon its orthodox Marxist-Leninist understanding of religion to foster genuine dialogue, were marginalised. Instead, there were lengthy debates focusing on whether certain social activities of the Catholic Church encroached on the domain designated for initiatives of the League of Communists and the Socialist Alliance of Working People. With a mounting crisis and increasing public pressure, some public religious manifestations were allowed in the second half of the 1980s, but the fundamental problems remained unaddressed. Although the liberalization of public discourse in Yugoslavia's final years brought to the fore issues such as freedom of religion and freedom from religion – both of which were integral to the contested programme of the ruling Communist Party and the type of socialist secular society the Slovenian reformed Communists sought to establish –, there was not enough time to rework the entrenched religious policy that had alienated many religious citizens.

THE DYNAMICS OF ATHEIZATION AND CONVERSION IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY MONTENEGRO

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Montenegro, one of the former Yugoslav republics, like most of the other Central and Eastern European nations, has undergone a tumultuous process regarding religion. For most of its history before 1944, Montenegro nurtured the image of a bastion of Christianity and Orthodoxy. At the same time, communism as an ideology gained a firm foothold in Montenegro, which until the Second World War was a predominantly agricultural, underdeveloped area with a high percentage of illiteracy (e.g. the illiteracy rate in Slovenia in 1948 was 2.4 % and in Montenegro 26.4 %). Among the fiercest and leading communist ideologues were Montenegrins such as Milovan Đilas, Radovan Zogović, Svetozar Vukmanović Tempo, Veljko Vlahović and many others. The atheization process started instantly after the communists came to power and passed through the militant phase during the immediate post-war years. Atheization was particularly intense among the Orthodox Christian majority, much less so in the Catholic communities of the coastal Croats and the mostly rural Albanians (where the Church remained an important manifestation of national identity). As for Montenegrin Muslims, although mosques were demolished in urban centres under the pretext of urban renewal and the widely promoted removal of the veil, many customs related to Islam were tolerated, because they were practically the only dividing line with the rest of the population, especially since they spoke the same language as the rest of the Montenegrin population. The Islamic community, representing roughly one-sixth of the population of Montenegro in the second half of the 20th century, mostly cooperated with the communist government, while Montenegrin Muslims, along with other Yugoslav Muslims, were among the most secular Muslims in the world. Religion was seen by a large part of the population more as a matter of custom and identity issue rather than being deeply rooted in the classical sense. That may explain the fact that in 1953 Montenegro had by far the largest number of declared atheists of all the Yugoslav republics (32 %). Although the atheization process was state-imposed, the constitution maintained nominal freedom of faith, but

the delimitation between church and state did not go in both directions as the state regularly interfered in church affairs, particularly regarding the election of church dignitaries. While relations between religious institutions and the state somewhat stabilized during the 1960s and 1970s, it was only after the Belgrade-induced overthrow of the old communist guard and the arrival of the echelon of younger pro-Milošević communists that the process of de-atheization quickly set in, resulting in religious institutions and their leaders enjoying the greatest support among the citizens of Montenegro for years.

CONVERSIONS TO ORTHODOXY IN INTERWAR SLOVENIA

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In Slovenia, in the new Yugoslav state, individuals converted to the Orthodox faith for various reasons, primarily because of the possibility of remarriage. Often this was also due to fervent allegiance to the Yugoslav idea, even out of careerism, but least of all out of dissatisfaction and disappointment with the religion in which they were born. In almost all cases, people converted from Catholicism to Orthodoxy. The clerical position on this was that the Catholic Church lost nothing and the Orthodox Church gained nothing by the departure of people who were no longer Catholics at heart. Just as they were never seen in Catholic churches, they will never be seen in Orthodox churches. Liberal newspapers very directly agitated for conversions. At one point, they regularly published the names of individuals who converted from Roman Catholicism to the Orthodox Church. At one point it all seemed like a real media war – clerical newspapers enthusiastically reported on conversions in the other direction. In most cases, these were Orthodox Russians, immigrants who had decided to take this step mainly for practical reasons – often involving marriage. During the period under review, there were 1,036 conversions in Ljubljana, an average of 47 per year. These are very low figures, both in absolute terms and as a percentage. Upon conversion, the new members of the Orthodox faith had to choose a baptismal saint. The data shows that Slovenians most frequently chose traditional Serbian patron saints: St Sava, St Cyril and Methodius, St Nicholas, St George and St Vitus Day. Everyone who converted to Orthodoxy also received a new name according to the Orthodox calendar or a name that was common in the Serbian Orthodox Church. Among the new names chosen, the most common were Dragutin, Jovan, Dušan and Aleksandar for men and Jelena, Jovanka, Marija and Ljubica for women. Particularly stringent rules applied to the conversion of children – due to the General Austrian Civil Code from 1868, which was still in force, the authorities in Slovenia did not allow children between the ages of 7 and 14 to convert to another religion until the collapse of the kingdom. The same code also stipulated the indissolubility of Catholic marriage. Therefore, the reservation of Catholicism remained, even if such a person

converted to another religion – hence, even after converting to Orthodoxy, many had great difficulty asserting their social and other rights, including divorce granted by the Orthodox ecclesiastical court and remarriage according to Orthodox church rites. Marriage law in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (and previously in the SHS) was never uniformly and definitively regulated for the entire country.

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AS THE STATE'S TOOL IN MODIFICATION OF PUBLIC SPACE AND ITS IDENTITY: THE YUGOSLAV CONCEPT OF THE TWO SQUARES IN MARIBOR

Sara HAJDINAC
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In 1934, after several years of struggle, the Orthodox community of Maribor was awarded a lot to construct a new sacral object on General Maister Square (then Yugoslavia Square) in Maribor, at the site of the recently removed monument dedicated to vice-admiral Wilhelm Tegetthoff. The square boasts a rich symbolic history, wherein the very names of the square have clearly indicated the identity of the city through time. The new government sought to modify public space in accordance with the new state – these spaces had to be given not only a Slovenian but also a Yugoslav outlook. The first modification was changing the square's name to Yugoslavia Square, after which a Serbian Orthodox church was built in Serbian national architectural style by the architect Momir Korunović (1883–1969), who designed all three Serbian sacral objects in the province of Dravska Banovina (in Maribor, Ljubljana, and Celje). The Church of St. Lasarus was to be ideologically connected to the monument dedicated to King Aleksandar Karađorđević on Liberty Square, which would provide a clear Yugoslav identity to the city district. However, the construction of said monument was disabled by the beginning of the Second World War, while the church was destroyed by the Nazis in April 1941 and thus erased from local collective memory.

Maribor was the northernmost city of Dravska Banovina and indeed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, yet its public space still failed to reflect a "Yugoslav identity" in the 1930s. Local residents primarily identified as Roman Catholic, while the city was politically predominantly ruled by the Slovenian People's Party which imposed additional difficulties on the process of selecting the new church's location. This paper will, accounting for the city's religious and political climate, present Maribor as a place that obtained one of the biggest and most prominently representative Orthodox sacral objects, despite the fact the Orthodox religion was not dominant in the area. The focus will be on the question of the role and reflection of the unitarian-centralist politics

of Belgrade through religion (Orthodox faith) on public space modification, what factors and agents design such space (and memory of such space) and in what way, by analysing commissions and art styles within the context of public spaces of Maister Square and Liberty Square in Maribor.

THE GOD WORSHIPPER MOVEMENT OF 1918–1941

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The God worshipper movement (serb. bogomoljački pokret) within the Serbian Orthodox Church is still an insufficiently researched phenomenon that requires interdisciplinary research. In this paper, I will present the movement and Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović himself, who was commissioned by the Serbian Orthodox Church to be the spiritual leader of the people who gathered in communities to deepen their faith and live authentically. The God worshipper movement gradually emerged in villages where families voluntarily joined together and gathered regularly on Sundays in churches or in the home of one of them to pray, sing and study the Holy Scriptures. I have obtained authentic sources containing letters, sermons and personal experiences of the members of this movement, which were kept in the family homes. By analyzing the material, we create an experience of the interwar period, when the spiritual climate of the predominantly rural population developed spontaneously. The important question is what status they had in the wider community, and to what extent believers were respected then and now. The influence and significance of spiritual music, devotional songs, missionary work and literature from the time of the movement's activity will be discussed.

The most important person in the God-worshipper movement is Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović. He carried within him centuries of Christianity in authentic religiosity and united the worshipping people on the one hand and the clergy and church hierarchy on the other. This type of leadership should have communicative skills and a sense of collectivity. The discontinuity in relation to the power of religious belief, created by the process of atheism in society and the formation of a scientific worldview in the education system, has contributed to the marginalization of religion in our society and the suppression of the influence of the ecclesiastical intelligentsia in the public space. However, the revitalization of religion has enabled the ecclesiastical intelligentsia to tie together the threads of forgotten beliefs, to draw on tradition and to restore the spirit of forgotten values. If we analyze the content of the statements of religious figures under the contemporary conditions of public speech, we arrive at messages that shape the identity of Orthodox people more than any transient political power.

SERBIAN PRESS AND EASTERN ORTHODOXY IN SERBIA IN THE EIGHTIES

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In the last decade of the Cold War, there was a noticeable revival of religiosity in Serbia. This resurgence of religiosity sharply contrasted with the still-dominant Marxist dogma in Serbia and the entire former Yugoslavia. However, Eastern Orthodoxy gradually penetrated Serbian society, primarily attracting the younger generation, who turned to the faith thus protesting against their parents' generation. According to many scholars, this was a superficial religiosity limited to accepting and practicing certain religious rituals. Simultaneously, the hierarchy of the Serbian Orthodox Church strengthened its social presence in an attempt to attract new believers and enhance its influence in Serbian society.

The presentation focuses on how the Serbian press of the 1980s dealt with the phenomenon of the rise of Eastern Orthodoxy in Serbia. The research will include an examination of daily, weekly and monthly newspapers and magazines in Serbia from 1980 to 1990. A key aspect of the study will be an attempt to determine the prevailing stance of the Serbian press and, consequently, the attitude of a dominant portion of Serbian society towards the resurgence of religiosity in Serbia in the 1980s. The study will explore how Serbian editors and journalists interpreted the causes of the noticeable revival of religiosity in Serbia and how the Serbian press perceived the most important facets of this phenomenon.

Furthermore, the study will focus on the extent to which the state-controlled press was able to impartially deal with this topic, i. e. the extent to which the position of the press in this regard was aligned with the dominant party line in socialist Serbia.

THE LAW ON THE PROHIBITION OF WEARING THE VEIL AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN THE GORANI COMMUNITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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In this paper, the application of the law banning the wearing of the veil as an attempt to atheize a part of the Muslim population in the territory of the Republic of Serbia in the mid-20th century. The Law on the Prohibition of Wearing the Veil (Zar and Feredža) came into force in Serbia in 1951. Its implementation involved discontinuing the use of clothing items that covered women's heads and bodies. This law had far-reaching effects on the clothing practises of Muslim women. The Gorani community represents one of the Muslim (minority) communities in the Republic of Serbia, with its native territory located in the region of Gora. Gora is the name of a mountainous area that stretches between the peaks of the Šar Mountain, Koritnik and Korab administratively includes the town of Dragaš and 18 rural settlements. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, the Gora region belongs to the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija.

The implementation of the Law on the prohibition of wearing the veil can be seen as an extremely radical move by the communist authorities in the mid-20th century. It promoted two ideals of the socialist political system – the emancipation of women and the realisation of gender equality. The interpretation of the law and its implementation can vary depending on the context of observation. According to studies by anthropologists, sociologists, and religiologists, the application of this law represented a significant turning point in the lives of many women, especially Muslim women. According to Gorani recollections, the ban on veiling led to very traumatic experiences for Gorani women. The law primarily disrupted the continuity of the centuries-old tradition of wearing clothing items (headscarf and terlik) that expressed the marital status of women within the Gorani community.

The paper assumes that the ban on women's veiling is not only a form of restriction of religious freedoms but also a strategy to promote secular political ideologies. The Law on prohibiting the wearing of the veil is ana-

lyzed not only as a ban on the application of traditional religious rules but also in the context of the state-imposed processes of atheization in the local community (the Gora region) in the second half of the 20th century.

THE REVIVAL OF GODDESS RELIGIONS

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The presentation examines the return of the religion of the Goddess (in Western cultures) as one of the most unexpected developments of the late twentieth century. Contemporary awareness and attention to gender difference theory have opened up new dimensions for spiritual expressions and spiritual practises, encouraging the development of new forms of female spirituality and the formation of new religious representations from a feminine perspective.

Traditional forms of spirituality are clearly dualistic at their core, with the material world, physicality, and femininity on one side and transcendence, spirituality, and masculinity on the other. However, the tendency of modern forms of spirituality is to seek the sacred through and in solidarity, interdependence and holistic integrity.

From this perspective, the Goddess movement, the revival of lost women's folk religiosity and female pagan cults, thealogy and various other movements of women's spirituality are analysed as a tool for reconstructing the past from a feminist perspective and in the process of transforming collective memory and current religious conceptualization. For the symbols and rituals of the Goddess religions bring the paradigm of the deep interconnectedness of all people and all beings in the web of life.

CHRISTIANITY AS A CONSTANT PROCESS OF ATHEIZATION

Luka TREBEŽNIK
Science and Research Centre Koper

In his Deconstruction of Christianity, the contemporary French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy described Christianity as "the exit from religion and the expansion of the atheist world". Inspired by this assertion, we will reassess the traces of atheism in Christianity and its secular supplements.

We will examine the broad context of Christianity and some seemingly external factors such as the Enlightenment and the development of science. Several features of Christianity, such as the emphasis on spirituality, individual faith, and the deinstitutionalization of religious experience, have prepared the ground for the rise of atheism. First, Christianity, most clearly in the Protestant denominations, places great emphasis on the inner spiritual experience of the believer, the conscience as the inner presence of God. The subjective personal relationship with God and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit are central tenets of Christian theology. However, this emphasis on individual, private spirituality can inadvertently lead to a devaluation of external religious structures and communal rituals and even pave the way for atheistic isolation. Moreover, throughout its history, Christianity has repeatedly produced its own critics, movements that have challenged institutional authority and hierarchical structures within the church. From the Hussites to the Protestant Reformation to today's movements advocating spiritual autonomy, the goal has always been to decentralize religious authority, separate it from worldly powers (secularization) and empower individual believers. While this deinstitutionalization is certainly meant to promote a more authentic and personal faith that is closer to God's will, it can also create room for doubt and scepticism, which in turn can lead to atheism. Furthermore, Christianity has grappled more than other religions with the tension between faith and reason, two completely different areas of our relationship with reality and the world. This relationship has completely changed with advances in science and philosophy, as traditional religious doctrines and supernatural explanations are increasingly challenged and even rendered obsolete. The struggle to reconcile faith and reason has led some people to the practical solution of rejecting religious faith altogether in favour of a purely

secular worldview. We should also mention that even the pervasive influence of Christianity on Western culture may have inadvertently facilitated its own decline. Because Christianity is deeply embedded in societal norms, people who have grown up in Christian cultures may take their faith for granted, not as something out of the ordinary, but as something normal, leading to complacency or indifference toward religious beliefs. Over time, this cultural familiarity with Christianity can erode the foundations of religious belief and eventually contribute to the rise of atheism. Given this internal dynamic, it is clear that Christianity itself has played a crucial role in its own atheization. This paper will highlight some of the key features of Christian atheism and one of its most notorious examples, socialist atheization.

THE ANTI-CULT MOVEMENT IN SERBIA AT THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIUM: DISCOURSE, CONTEXTUALIZATION, AND VALORIZATION OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

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The anti-cult movement represents a collective of individuals and organizations whose work is focused on opposing and deconstructing the activities of new religious movements, sects, or cults. It is mainly found in the United States, France and Russia, but such phenomena and practices are present throughout Europe. Situated amidst significant concepts and processes such as globalization and multiculturalism, secularization and resacralization, consumer society and religious market, extreme secularism and religious fundamentalism, the anti-cult movement emerges as a bearer of the paradigm of the interrelationships between the individual, society, and state, as well as politics, religion and culture that dominate the post-industrial world we live in. On the other hand, by presenting itself as an opposition to the new religious movements, their symbolic universes, their constructions of reality and the ideas and beliefs that legitimize power relations, providing a meaningful order and offering ultimate meaning to believers, the anti-cult movement positions itself in a way that actually resembles and makes them similar to the groups it opposes. Much like new religious movements, the anti-cult movement satisfies a range of needs of its members and activists by legitimizing actions, providing beliefs and hopes, interpreting experiences, and offering comfort and meaningful answers. The contemporary anti-cult movement in Serbia began to develop in the mid-1990s alongside the transformation of society from a communist to a capitalist one, as an expression of the crisis of national identity. In the process of society's resacralization and the rise of power of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the proselytism of new religious movements was perceived as an attack on the religious-national body of Serbian society, and an individual's conversion was treated as an act of betrayal and abandonment of the church to which they "belong". In this context, the anti-cult movement emerged as a collection of groups and individuals that adopted the conventional practices of similar organizations

worldwide in criticizing the work of new religious movements, as well as in the procedures of "deprogramming" or "treating" converts. This presentation is dedicated to presenting the discourse and practices of the anti-cult movement in Serbia at the turn of the millennium, placing this action within a broader cultural-political context and evaluating it in the light of contemporary trends in Serbian society.

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