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ON THE FIELD OF CONFLICT: POWER RELATIONS AMONG CATHOLICS, SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS, MUSLIMS AND STATE AUTHORITIES IN THE KINGDOM OF YUGOSLAVIA

Theoretical introduction

In the contribution, I would like to apply Bourdieu's account of modernity as a process of increasing differentiation of "fields"[1] to the context of interwar Yugoslavia. In the case study, I will analyse the relations among major Yugoslav religious communities, political parties and State authorities in the time of Concordat crisis. Therefore I will firstly define some of the main concepts which I will draw upon.

Due to modernization, economic, religious, political, artistic, bureaucratic, etc. fields separate and become increasingly monopolized by competing professional groups, each deploying its own forms of capital to maximize its material and symbolic interests[2]. Each of these fields competes to impose its particular vision of the social world on society as a whole. Bourdieu posits that human existence is essentially conflictual; agents act strategically (unconsciously rather than consciously), since their social existence is bound up in the relational production of

[1] A field is according to Pierre Bourdieu a setting in which agents and their social positions are located, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London: Routledge, 1984. In other words, it is a network, structure or set of relationships which may be intellectual, religious, educational, cultural, etc; see also Zander Navarro, "In Search of Cultural Intepretation of Power", in: *IDS Bulletin*, Brighton, 2006, vol. 37, no. 6, p. 18.

[2] Alan Scott, "We are the State. Pierre Bourdieu on the State and Political Field", in: *Rivista di Storia delle Idee*, Palermo, 2013, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 165–170.

difference. But this conflict can take many forms, depending on the kinds of "capital" that agents possess[3]. In the sphere of politics, this heightened differentiation takes the form of a shift from the "dynastic state", in which the basic unit and organizing principle is the (royal) house, to the modern state, in which the house has been displaced by the bureau, and private interests of the monarch by the "reasons of state"[4].

In the case of interwar Yugoslavia, one can observe the intertwining of the "dynastic" rule and the modern state apparatus, so the differentiation was still in process. The royal power had, over a decade that the new state had existed, even increased, when in the wake of a serious internal crisis King Aleksandar Karadjordjević introduced a dictatorship (1929-1934). However, over that period, religious laws and constitutions for most of the recognized religions were enacted and the concordat was initialed. Legislation for religious communities shows, on the one hand, differentiation from the State and, on the other, the will of the State to control religious communities and meddle in their affairs. Another important indicator of the ongoing differentiation was the overlapping of religious and political fields, which can also be identified as slow secularization of the State (e.g., registers were still maintained by religious communities) and clericalism (Catholic as well as Serbian Orthodox).

Further, I will analyse two fields in particular: political and religious. The political field is "a field where 'political products' are formed through the competition between political agents in creating political ideas, programs and concepts. The citizen then has to choose among these products, reducing the status of the citizen to that of a 'consumer'"[5]. Wacquant points out that "the analysis of the functioning

[3] Rodney Benson, "Shaping the Public Sphere: Habermas and Beyond", in: *The American Sociologist*, 2009, vol. 40, Springer Science + Business Media, pp. 175–197, in: https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/uploads/006/243/Benson%202009%20American%20Sociologist%20FINAL.pdf.

[4] Alan Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

[5] Pierre Bourdieu, "Political Representation: Elements for a Theory of the Political Field", in: *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson, Cambridge, USA: Harvard University, 1991, pp. 171–202.

of parties and parliaments discloses that "the political field is one of the privileged sites for the exercise of the *power of representation or manifestation* [in the sense of public demonstration] that contributes to making what existed in a practical state, tacitly or implicitly, exist fully, that is, in the objectified state, in a form directly visible to all, public, published, official, and thus authorized"[6]. Whereas the religious field is a competitive arena, the structure of which determines both the form and the representation of religious dynamics[7]. While Bourdieu considers the competition between religious specialists for religious power to be the central principle informing the dynamics of the religious field[8], it is important to point out the role of laypeople, members of religious communities who may accumulate and wield religious capital even though they do not produce it[9].

A concept that is commonly used, but rarely reflected on in historiography, is *power*. While Foucault sees power as "ubiquitous" and beyond agency or structure, Bourdieu sees power as culturally and symbolically created, and constantly re-legitimised through an interplay of agency and structure. People often experience power differently, depending on which field they are in at a given moment[10]. However, the object of this study is, principally, institutions. But the way these institutions correspond to their "subjects", how they maintain their power and control, is essential to comprehending their functioning and relations towards other institutions and communities. To analyze *power relations* between religious communities, I will point

[6] Loïc Wacquant, "Pointers on Pierre Bourdieu and Democratic Politics", in: *Constellations*, Oxford, 2004, vol. 11, no. 1, p. 4.

[7] Pierre Bourdieu, "Legitimation and Structured Interests in Weber's Sociology of Religion", in: *Max Weber: Rationality and Modernity*, ed. Sam Whimster and Scott Lash, London: Allen and Unwin, 1987, p. 121.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Cf. Bradford Verter, "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu against Bourdieu", in: *Sociological Theory*, 2003, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 157–158.

[10] John Gaventa, *Power after Lukes: An overview of power since Lukes and their application to development*, 2003, first draft, in: http://www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/power_after_lukes.pdf [2013-09-05].

out conflictual interests and affinities, the interaction between one party and "the Other"[11].

Political Background of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes/Yugoslavia

In the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, known as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia since 1929, three major religious communities coexisted: Serbian Orthodox Christians (46.6%), Roman Catholics (39.4%; mostly Slovenes and Croats) and Muslims (11,2%)[12]. In the nascent South Slav State, the relationships among religious institutions had been aggravated by unresolved national questions and past conflicts[13].

As the state's initial name suggests, only three "tribes", which presumably formed one Yugoslav nation, were recognized: the Serbs, the Croats and the Slovenes. Even among the "naming" nations, differences formed political programs, especially regarding interactions between the Croats and the Serbs, consequently also the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC). The Croats and the Slovenes expected the kingdom to be a federal state, but their representatives at the negotiations for the creation of the state left that question open. In practice, that meant that they agreed to a centralised system in which the biggest group prevailed. So the Serbs, in spite of having only a relative majority in terms of national composition of the kingdom[14], controlled the state apparatus from beginning to

[11] Cf. Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power", in: *Critical Inquiry*, Chicago, 1982, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 777–795.

[12] According to the 1921 population census see Juraj Kolarić, *Ekumenska trilogija: istočni kršćani: pravoslavni: protestanti*, Zagreb: Prometej, 2005, p. 893.

[13] As Radmila Radić states, the three religious institutions never in 70 years of the existence of Yugoslav state(s) established a genuine cooperation, see Radmila Radić, "Religion in the multinational state: the case study of Yugoslavia", in: *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed idea*, ed. Dejan Djokić, London: Hurst&Company, p. 196; Paul Mojzes, *Yugoslavian Inferno: Ethnoreligious Warfare in the Balkans*, New York: Continuum Publishing Company.

[14] The national composition of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (1921) was: Serbs and Montenegrins 38,8 %, Croats 23,9 %, Slovenes 8.5 %, Muslims

end, i.e., they had a majority in the National Assembly, dominated the Government[15] and the army.

Muslims from Bosnia and Herzegovina, being a part of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs[16], agreed to the unification with the Kingdom of Serbia and the Kingdom of Montenegro, but, as pre-1918 Yugoslavism was essentially a Serbo-Croat-Slovene idea, they were in many aspects overlooked. Besides, their autonomist movement (neo-*bošnjaštvo*) had not emerged before the 1930s[17]. Their party politics, however, had started to develop in the last years of Austria-Hungary and resumed in the 1920s as the Yugoslav Muslim Organisation, which was closely tied to the Islamic religious community[18].

Much more injustice was done to the Macedonians, the Montenegrins and minorities like the Albanians which also caused more turmoil[19]. Macedonia (referred to only as Southern Serbia) and Kosovo (with an Albanian majority) were annexed by force. The Kingdom of Montenegro united with the Kingdom of Serbia, but not to form a confederation

6.3 %, Macedonians 5,3 % and minorities: Germans 4,3%, Albanians 4,0 %, Magyars 3,9 %, Romanians 1,6 %, Turks 1,2 %, Italians 0,1 %, other Slavs 1,6 %, others 0,3 %, see: Sabrina P. Ramet, *The three Yugoslavias: state building and legitimation, 1918–2005*, Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 45; Juraj Kolarić, *op. cit.*, p. 893.

[15] In 37 governments and 13 different prime ministers in the period of 1918–1941, there was only one non-Serb prime minister, a Slovenian politician and head of Slovene People's Party Anton Korošec (27. 7. 1928 – 6. 1. 1929), but even then the majority of the ministers in the government coalition were Serbs.

[16] This formation, composed of the South Slavs territory of former Austria-Hungary, existed about a month, until 1st of December 1918.

[17] See Xavier Bougarel, "Bosnian Muslims and the Yugoslav Idea", in: *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed idea*, ed. Dejan Djokić, London: Hurst & Company, pp. 100–105.

[18] There existed also other less influential political parties, in mid-1930s however, *Muslim Organisation* emerged, a political party that defeated Yugoslav Muslim Organisation (then part of Yugoslav Radical Union) in 1938.

[19] Several paramilitary formations broke out in the kingdom (1918–1941): some were separatist (e. g. Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, Ustaša Movement in Croatia), other Yugoslav "unitarists" (e. g. Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists (ORJUNA), Chetniks) with a more or less all strong Serbian sentiment.

as it had been planned. Serbia had liberated Montenegro, occupied by the Axis Powers, and took control over the unification. The resolution by which Montenegrin King Nikola I Petrović-Njegoš was deposed and the decision to unite with the Kingdom of Serbia under the House of Karadjordjević and later join the state of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, was adopted while the assembly building was encircled by a detachment of the Serbian army. Soon afterwards, a civil war broke out between zelenaši (the Greens), who demanded a complete autonomy for Montenegro, and the pro-unification forces bjelaši (the Whites)[20].

In brief, expectations for what so culturally, ethnically and historically diverse country should bring were too high.

The "democratic chaos" in parliament in Belgrade[21], which included shooting on Stjepan Radić, the leader of the biggest Croatian political party, the Croatian Peasant Party, in 1928 and the general political crisis were used as a pretext for King Aleksandar Karadjordjević to introduce the 6 January dictatorship in 1929. In this "traditional autocratic dictatorship"[22], all political parties were dissolved, although it was possible to establish a political party without any religious, "tribal" or regional character nor opposition to national unity and integrity of the state[23]. Ironically, the new regime brought all the main political parties together for the first time – the "clerical" Slovenian People's Party[24], the Croatian Peasant Party, the Yugoslav Muslim Organization and two largest (mostly) Serbian parties: the National Radical Party and the Democratic Party – but in opposition. Within a short period of time, a large number of new laws was adopted in order to endorse

[20] See Sabrina P. Ramet, *op. cit.*

[21] 11 governments changed in the period of approximately ten years (1918-12-01 – 1929-01-06).

[22] See Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nacije in nacionalizem po letu 1870*, Ljubljana: Založba, 2007, p. 107.

[23] See Jure Gašparič, *SLS pod kraljevo diktaturo. Diktatura kralja Aleksandra in politika Slovenske ljudske stranke v letih 1929–1935*, Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2007, p. 123.

[24] Former Slovene People's Party had joined the dictatorial government (Yugoslav Radical Peasants' Democracy) but moved to opposition in 1931 while they again adopted the autonomist program.

integral Yugoslavism as the official state ideology[25]. As Troch states, "it is clear that it [Yugoslavism] was designed to be a synthesis of Croatian, Slovenian and Serbian symbolic resources into a Yugoslav whole. However, the particular way in which the regime applied this national ideology very much discredited the idea of Yugoslavism itself. Precisely because the regime proclaimed Yugoslavism as the cornerstone of its authoritarian politics, opposition against the regime was also expressed as opposition against Yugoslavism. The Yugoslav idea, which had previously been a progressive idea, popular among intellectual circles in all parts of Yugoslavia and certainly not incompatible with Slovenianism, Croatianism or Serbianism, was more and more interpreted as a conservative, authoritarian, anti-national idea."[26] Bringing "order" to parliament[27] did not solve anything; on the contrary, it generated more problems and opposition had more support. The final "result" of violating human rights was the assassination of "the porcelain dictator"[28] in Marseille in 1934 by Ustaša – the Croatian Revolutionary Movement and the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization.

In the case study, I will focus on the period when Milan Stojadinović was the head of the government (1935–1939), while the regime to some extent liberalized. If this was a period of stability (as Stojadinović was the only prime minister who managed to last his entire term), it was surely the time of the gravest conflicts between the two major churches in Yugoslavia. Besides, it was also the time of the financial crisis and crucial "turnovers" in foreign policy with

[25] See Pieter Troch, "Yugoslavism Between the World Wars: Indecisive Nation-Building", in: *Nationalities Papers*, Gent, vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 227–244.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 235.

[27] In 1931 semi-parliamentary system was installed and elections were held but only parties that ran in all electoral districts and enjoyed the support of the new political elite could take part, plus new Constitution (decreed by the King in the same year) and election laws ensured that the winner party would surely dominate the parliament. Thus only governmental list Yugoslav Radical Peasants' Democracy (in 1933 renamed to Yugoslav National Party) was participating at the elections.

[28] Mussolini called King Aleksandar Karadjordjević "the porcelain dictator", see Jože Pirjevec, *Jugoslavija 1918–1992: nastanek, razvoj ter razpad Karadjordjevićeve in Titove Jugoslavije*, Koper: Založba Lipa, 1995.

significantly increased economic cooperation with the Third Reich and improved relations with Fascist Italy.

To summarize: "The kingdom functioned in its first decade as a non-consensual quasi-parliamentary system and subsequently first as a royal dictatorship (1929–1934), then as a police state (1934–1939), and eventually as a Serb-Croat condominium (1939–1941)."[29] That was the last attempt to improve relations between the Serbs and the Croats by giving the latter more autonomy. However, it was already too late and World War II was close.

Yugoslav Concordat and the "Other"

Religion is based on "the Other"[30]. The question of "the Other", however, is not confined to relations between only two actors, such as Christians and non-Christians as is often the case; I will analyse relations among all most important religious and political actors in the context of the conflict over the ratification of the Concordat, where religious identity plays a crucial role.

While referring to "the One" and to "the Other", it is essential to note that the concept is fluid: one can be seen as "the Other" in religious terms, but as an ally ("the One") in political terms, he/she may be "the Other" in national terms but is a citizen of the same state (e. g. Croat as opposed to Serb, but both Yugoslavs). Therefore, I will analyse separate fields – religious and political – and their overlapping, as well as consider the national and the state level.

The climax of interreligious tensions in interwar Yugoslavia was the so-called Concordat crisis[31] in 1937 (1936–1938), therefore it will be used as a case study. As nearly all bigger conflicts in the aftermath of

[29] Sabrina P. Ramet, "Vladko Maček and the Croatian Peasant Defence in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia", in: *Contemporary European History,* Cambridge, 2007, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 215–231.

[30] Michel de Certeau, *Bela ekstaza: izbrani spisi o krščanski duhovnosti*, Ljubljana: KUD Logos, 2005, p. 18.

[31] See Ivo Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion in Yugoslav States*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 17–19.

the Great War, it was nationally, politically and religiously motivated. The protagonists in this struggle were the government of the Yugoslav Radical Union led by Stojadinović, the Catholic Church, the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Yugoslav National Party ("Free-Masons"), as well as the former Croatian Peasants' Party and the Islamic religious community that were neutral.

The dictatorial government and the King introduced a number of laws that violated religious rights, however, it would be a shallow argument to say that their policies were anti-religious in general. They certainly wanted to limit political activities of religious institutions. For example, King Aleksandar demanded that an article be added to the Concordat proposal prohibiting the active clergy to engage in politics. He keenly insisted that this limitation be broadened to all recognized religions in Yugoslavia[32]. However, it was only after the death of King Aleksandar Karadjordjević that the relationship between the State and the Serbian Orthodox Church deteriorated[33], because the latter thought the government favoured the Catholic Church[34].

The King's priority during his personal dictatorship was also to regulate relations among the religious communities themselves. Therefore, in 1929-1930 religion laws and religious constitutions were concluded with the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Christian Reformed Church, the Islamic religious community and the Jewish religious community. Only the legal status of the Roman Catholic Church, second largest religious institution in the kingdom, remained unresolved. Preparations for the Yugoslav concordat started already in 1922, and King Aleksandar was eager to finally close that chapter too. Therefore, to escape public pressure and the interference of the Yugoslav Catholic Church, the

[32] Engelbert Besednjak at the audience by the King Aleksandar Karadjorjdević [report], Belgrade, 1933-10-28, in: Slovenia, *The Private Archive of Engelbert Besednjak*, b. 120.

[33] Radmila Radić, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

[34] Annie Lacroix-Riz, *Vatikan, Evropa i rajh: od Prvog svetskog rata do hladnog rata*. Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2006, pp. 121, 354–355; cf. Charles Loiseau, "Deux conversations avec le roi Alexandre sur le Concordat yougoslave", in: *L'Europe nouvelle*, Paris, 1935, no. 903, p. 14.

King started secret negotiations for the concordat in 1933. On the Yugoslavian side, they were conducted by Nikola Moscatello, while the Holy See's representative was Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, the Secretary of the State. After approximately two years of coordination of viewpoints, the treaty was finally signed on the 25 July 1935[35].

All Yugoslav governments wanted to conclude the concordat for several reasons, such as the need for regulation of the legislation of the Catholic Church (there were six different "acting" legislations for the Catholic Church), governmental intentions to enhance Yugoslav international reputation, political pressures of France[36], the strengthening of the Catholic Church in the fight against Communism[37] and its potential effect on the resolution of the national question; above all, they hoped the concordat would diminish the Croats' demands for broader autonomy[38]. However, they had to face serious obstacles and interferences which resulted in prolonged negotiations. These were the consequences of tactical delaying by the Yugoslav government, of interventions and complaints by the Yugoslav episcopate, Italian opposition to the Yugoslav concordat, indifference towards the concordat

[35] See Gašper Mithans, "Vloga tajnega pogajalca pri sklepanju jugoslovanskega konkordata", in: *Acta Histriae*, Koper, 2013, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 1–16; Gašper Mithans, "Sklepanje jugoslovanskega konkordata in konkordatska kriza leta 1937", in: *Zgodovinski časopis*, Ljubljana, 2011, vol. 65, no. 1–2, pp. 120–151; Igor Salmič, *Le trattative peri l concordato tra la Santa Sede e til Regno dei Serbi, Croati e Sloveni/Jugoslavia (1922–1935) e la mancata ratifica (1937–1938): Estratto della disertazione per il dottorato nella Facoltà di Storia e Beni Culturali della Chiesa della Pontificia Università Gregoriana*, doctoral dissertation, Rome: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2013.

[36] Peter C. Kent, *The Pope and the Duce: the international impact of the Lateran Agreements*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981, p. 157.

[37] Also Mussolini saw the Catholic Church as a defender against Communism, see Richard J. Wolff, "Italy, Catholics, clergy, and the Church", in: *Catholics, the State and the European Radical Right 1919–1945*, eds. Richard J. Wolff, Jörg K. Hoensch, New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, p.142.

[38] Rhodes, *The Vatican in the Age of the Dictators 1922–1945*, London, Sydney, Auckland, Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973, p. 157; Stella Alexander, "Croatia: the Catholic Church", in: *Catholics, the State and the European Radical Right 1919–1945*, eds. Richard J. Wolff, Jörg K. Hoensch, New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, p. 37.

by the "political representative" of the biggest Catholic nation in the state – the former Croatian Peasant Party – and sluggish engagement of the former Slovene People's Party[39].

So the first major task of the next government of the Yugoslav Radical Union (YRU) was the signing and then the ratification of the concordat in parliament and the senate. The "postdictatorial" government was called also the government of Stojadinović-Korošec-Spaho after its "founders": the first (also the prime minister) represented the Serbs and Serbian Orthodox Christians; the second, the Slovenes and Catholics (as a leader of the former Catholic political party, the Slovene People's Party); and the third, Muslims (as a president of the former Yugoslav Muslim Organization)[40]. Also, this government roughly followed the political line of previous governments regarding the concordat as a means to strengthen their domestic and foreign political situation.

The Concordat on Religious and Political field

Collaboration of the Serbs with small political parties such as the Slovene People's Party or the Yugoslav Muslim Organization was nothing new, in fact it was of significant importance also regarding the Concordat and the "religious balance" in the state. It is significant, though, that both "smaller" partners in this coalition wanted changes in the religious legislation; one succeeded, the other not, but came close.

In the religious field, the coexistence of so many religions among peoples who were historically used to a system of a state religion or a religion that dominated was difficult to come to terms with. The more political capital religious institutions had, the better off they were. Thus

[39] See Gašper Mithans, *Urejanje odnosov med Rimskokatoliško cerkvijo in državnimi oblastmi v Kraljevini Jugoslaviji (1918–1941) in jugoslovanski konkordat*, doctoral dissertation, Koper: Univerza na Primorskem, 2012.

[40] Stojadinović had in the speech before the Committee for the assessment of the Concordat Proposal on July 8 1937, two weeks before the voting in the National Assembly, used Boccaccio's Tale of the Three Rings to illustrate the relationship between the Serb Orthodox, the Catholics and the Muslims in Yugoslavia as three brothers, see Dragoljub R. Živojinović, Dejan V. Lučić, *Varvarstvo u ime Hristovo*, Beograd: Nova knjiga, 1988, pp. 426–436.

Catholics were disadvantaged because Yugoslav governments associated Catholics with the Habsburg Monarchy (and therefore considered them "latently separatist") on the one hand and with the Croatian opposition to Yugoslavism on the other. The Serbian Orthodox Church had always legally[41] and otherwise enjoyed the privileged position, with the exception of the concordat crisis when its relationship with the state was critical. As Banac highlights, the unitarists and Great Serbs viewed Orthodoxy as native and national, whereas Catholicism was condemned as anti-Slavic[42]. The "linkage" to the Vatican was considered suspicious by critics of the Concordat as well.

The situation of Muslims was very specific. The Islamic Religious Community, Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was deprived of vital religious rights by the religious law and the religious constitution of the Islamic Religious Community that the dictatorial government introduced in 1930[43]. According to that legislation, all Muslims in Yugoslavia formed one religious community with a seat of *reis-ul-ulema* (Grand Mufti) in Belgrade. *Reis-ul-ulema*, members of *Ulema-medžlis* and muftiate were named by the king according to the proposal of the minister of justice and in consensus with the prime minister. The Islamic Religious Community could manage its religious property (*waqfs*), but only under state supervision. The dissatisfaction of Muslims grew so large that Stojadinović, trying to reconcile them, offered the former Yugoslav Muslim Organization a place in the government coalition. As signing the concordat approached, the conflict between the State and Muslims

[41] Since the introduction of the Constitution in 1921 all acknowledged religions had an equal status, however, according to Perica, the Serbian Church in the mid-1920s obtained a special law by which it became the de facto state religion, see Ivo Perica, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

[42] Ivo Banac, *The National in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984, p. 411.

[43] In 1909 Islamic community in Bosnia and Herzegovina after long struggle ensured religious autonomy in Austria-Hungary, the religious and *waqf* management were chosen democratically, the shariat courts were acknowleged. Reis-ul-ulema Čaušević didn't succeed in his fight against centralism and had resigned – retired in 1930, see Ivan Mužić, *Katolička crkva u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji*, Split: Crkva u svijetu, 1978, pp. 33–36.

worsened. Mehmed Spaho, the leader of the former Yugoslav Muslim Organization, accepted the position of the minister of transportation under the condition of new legislation for the Islamic community[44]. The new religious Constitution for the Islamic community was adopted in 1936 with assurances that Muslims would not interfere with the concordat ratification. The promise was kept and they remained the "loyal" coalition partner. Fehim Spaho, Mehmed Spaho's brother, became the new *reis-ul-ulema* and, according to the new constitution, the seat of *reis-ul-ulema* moved back to Sarajevo and the system of muftiships was cancelled. Particularly important was one article, stating the equality of recognized religions and that should any other religion be granted more rights, the same rights would be granted also to the Islamic community. This article was added because conflicts over the concordat were escalating, but this way, the Islamic community had no reason to engage in the conflict[45].

For the concordat to come into force it had to be ratified in parliament and the senate. Following the signing of the concordat in July 1935, the process dragged on over more than two years of political tactics and, after November 1936, also open protests. Massive demonstrations erupted in 1937, led by the former government party – the Yugoslav National Party – and the Serbian Orthodox Church, joined by almost all political parties in the Serbian part of Yugoslavia, except the fascist Ljotić's Zbor and the Communist Party. In the arena of conflicts fuelled by religious tensions, nationalism and lust for (political) power, mostly Serbian Orthodox public was mobilized into mass protests against the concordat.

The question of "the Other" is always linked to social boundaries, usually cultural, religious, national and political; it may be all of them together. The Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina were part of Austria-Hungary since 1878, they spoke "Serbo-Croatian" language, they were culturally fully integrated, but in Yugoslavia they lost important rights that they had succeeded to secure after a long battle. Their pragmatism,

[44] Mehmed Spaho should firstly become Minister of Justice but as that minister was assigned to go to sign the concordat in Rome, Spaho was substituted due to his religious affiliation with a Catholic Ljudevit Auer.

[45] Ivan Mužić, *op. cit.,* pp. 33–37; Radmila Radić, *op. cit.*, pp. 199–200.

demand for new legislation and later agreement to non-interference in the concordat "struggle" was to be expected. Meanwhile, the concordat opponents – the Serbian-Orthodox Church and political opposition – had different motives, all (poorly) disguised under "concerns" for the violation of constitutional and religious rights and presumed huge financial burden for the state.

If Catholics were to get the concordat as a way of compensation for the suppression of their rights – even though that was unlikely because Croats nearly rejected the concordat, calling it the "work of the Serbs" – the government did not offer any compensation to the Serbian-Orthodox Church as it had to Muslims. The Serbian Orthodox Church, obviously, was not satisfied with the position and despite its former approval of the concordat – the secret concordat proposal was shown to the patriarch several times[46], which was certainly a more than unusual practice – demanded the cancellation of the concordat proposal. To achieve that they were "prepared to use any means necessary"[47]. As the government realized their mistake, it was already too late to establish a dialogue with representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The feeling of the Serbian Orthodox Church that it was overlooked was exploited by opposition political parties that desired to overthrow the government.

A concordat deals with religious matters, it is a legal treaty concluded between the Holy See and the highest state authority for the Catholic community in that state. However, the Yugoslav concordat had politically and nationally divided even Catholics (Croats were indifferent) while the perception of the "greedy" Catholic Church and the Vatican as collaborators of the fascist Italy was a tool for inspiring anti-concordat protests among the masses[48].

The main field of the concordat struggle was political. It drew on religious and national antagonisms as well, but – in my hypothesis –

[46] Gavrilo Dožić, *Memoari patriarha srpskog Gavrila*, Beograd: Sfairos, 1990, p. 96.

[47] Orthodox New Year's speech of Varnava, the patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, 1937-01-13, in: *Archive of Yugoslavia*, f. 102: Krakov Stanislav, b. 7, fol. 18.

[48] See Olga Manojlović-Pintar, "Još jednom o konkordatskoj krizi", in: *Tokovi istorije*, Beograd, 2006, no. 1–2, pp. 157–171.

if the struggle had shifted to the national level, the threat of a civil war would have become a reality (due to the overlappings of Croats-Catholics, Serbs-Orthodox). It is no anachronism to speak of this threat, also because the main protagonists of the time – for example, Stojadinović[49] – did mention it in their memoires. Moreover, the engagement of the Serbian-Orthodox Church in the concordat crisis was political in character. A good example of that are the excommunications of the Orthodox members of parliament who voted for the concordat. The struggle was predominantly a political one also because a major defender of the concordat was in fact the government because of the decision of the Bishops' conference of Yugoslavia not to interfere. The appeal of the Archbishop of Zagreb Alojzije Stepinac to Catholics not to engage in the arguments[50] was a decision that probably prevented major mass conflicts. Indifference of the formerly biggest Croatian political party and relative distance of the former Slovene People's Party (the biggest "clerical" – Catholic party) towards the concordat put the government in an even worse position. Protests have even intensified after the confirmation of the concordat in the National Assembly in July 1937 and the death of the Serbian patriarch Varnava the next day. Consequently, ratification of the concordat in the Senate was dropped after a couple of postponements[51]. It could be argued that the government "had to fail" because they lacked symbolic capital – which they could have gotten from the Bishops' conference – and because of a new treaty with Italy which "shuttered" and diminished their political capital.

The political character of the conflict is evident in the case of the Yugoslav National Party. The governmental party in the time of dictatorship was known also by their members' allegiance to the Free-Masons. It can be roughly said that the "Free-Masonic" elements "erupted" in 1930, a matter that was also a subject of correspondence

[49] Milan M. Stojadinović, *Ni rat ni pakt: Jugoslavija između dva rata*, Rijeka: Otokar Keršovani, 1970, p. 477.

[50] "Pomirjevalen razglas nadškofa dr. Stepinca z ozirom na konkordat", in: *Slovenec*, 1938-02-15.

[51] Gašper Mithans, *Urejanje odnosov med Rimskokatoliško cerkvijo*.

between Yugoslav nuncio Ermenegildo Pellegrinetti and the Holy See[52]. Most party members were free-masons or at least alleged free-masons[53]. The lot also included one of the prime ministers (Milan Srškić) and the minister of justice (Božidar Maksimović), both of whom were responsible for the conclusion of the concordat. However, the same politicians who had successfully concluded the concordat negotiations, became its greatest opponents soon after Regent Pavle Karadjordjević replaced them following unsatisfactory electoral results in 1935; they had only one goal – to govern again.

This "two-faced" stance was criticized, interestingly enough, by the Communist Party. The Communists' anti-concordat sentiments were to be anticipated, though their arguments drew from their distrust of the government and their "traditional" distrust of the Holy See, especially after 1929, when the Lateran treaty was signed, the act interpreted as "the Pope's pact with Mussolini"[54]. Of course, all political parties in the opposition saw this "crisis" as an opportunity to overthrow the government.

The rhetoric of the critics was noteworthy when they emphasized that they did not have anything against Catholics or the concordat *per se*, merely against the concordat proposal in question[55]. Furthermore, they claimed it would not do any good for Catholics either. That is to say, the criticism was directed at the Catholic Church as an institution and the government that supported it, i.e., at politics and not religious belief.

Of course, there was some basis to the criticism. The concordat gave the Catholic Church certain privileges that no other or very few concordats had, but they were all comparable to the rights of the

[52] The letter of Yugoslav nuncio Pellegrinetti to Pacelli, Secretary of the State, subject: Colloquio col Principe Reggente Paolo – Abissinia – Scuole Cattoliche – Concordato, Belgrade, 1935-11-14, in: *Archivio Segreto Vaticano*, f. Archivio Nunziatura Jugoslavia 1209, b. 6.

[53] Well known free-masons were M. Srškić, V. Marinković, S. Švrljuga, D. Kojic, Z. Mazuranic, J. Demetrović, K. Kumanudi, O. Frangeš, M. Drinković, M. Kostrenčić, U. Krulj, A. Kramer and B.Maksimović.

[54] Dragoljub R. Živojinović, Dejan V. Lučić, *op. cit.*, pp. 471–473.

[55] See Manojlović-Pintar, *op. cit.*

Serbian-Orthodox Church[56]. To name but one: Nothing in school textbooks was to offend religious feelings of Catholics[57]. That was nearly the same article as the one in the Austrian concordat (1855) that started the *Kulturkampf* in Austria. The analogy was not missed, as the name Yugoslav *Kulturkampf* soon appeared in newspapers. One way or another, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was still far from a secular state, as, for instance, the registers (of birth, marriage and death) were still maintained by the clergy, civil marriage was possible only in formerly Hungarian parts of Yugoslavia and religious courts had extensive judicial competencies. The "special" article in the Constitution of the Islamic Religious Community (1936) is a presupposition that the concordat included rights that at least Muslims did not enjoy. A similar article was added to the concordat, just reversed – that if there was a right in the concordat that other recognized religious communities did not have, they would get it. Whether the concordat really violated the equality of religious rights is somewhat uncertain, we could only say that Muslims would have probably been satisfied with the same rights as Catholics, while Serbian Orthodox Christians wanted a "deal" as well, to be granted right that would have likely exceeded the religious rights of Catholics, i. e. the rights of any other religious community in the state.

Conclusion

That is how the political game was played out, camouflaged in religion in order to mobilize the support of the masses and with a greater or lesser involvement of religious institutions. But, as it turned out, both sides lost; on the one hand, the government, regency and the Catholic Church did not manage to conclude the concordat and, on the other hand, the political opposition did not overthrow Stojadinović. All was over when the government reconciled with the Serbian Orthodox Church, the only actor who accomplished all that it wanted.

[56] See Gašper Mithans, *Urejanje odnosov med Rimskokatoliško cerkvijo*.

[57] That is the article 27 of the Concordat proposal (1935), see Rado Kušej, *Konkordat: ustava in verska ravnopravnost*, Ljubljana: J. Blasnika nasl., 1937.

What does that tell us about the differentiation of fields in modernity in the case of interwar Yugoslavia? The process of secularization of the state progressed, especially in the dictatorial period. But one conclusion that can be drawn from the concordat struggle is that the Yugoslav government could not function without the support of the Serbian Orthodox Church or, to put it more aptly, while in conflict with it. Still, the religious and political fields were separated but overlapped on many points, as the religious communities still kept much of the authority and competencies that would later be transferred to the state.