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CONTEMPORARY RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH (RCC) AND THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (SOC)

ABSTRACT

The issue of *primacy* divides Roman Catholic (RCC) and Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) in theological field. Painful historical heritage from Second World War is also the great obstacle. Yugoslav atheistic state supported development of inter-church relations in acceptable proportion that would increase national relations in Yugoslav federation. It's fear related to possible "common front" against ideological system. Regional inter–church relations were initiated by Vatican and Pope Paul II, while SOC accepted it particularly in social field. Both agreed on common responsibility for *evangelization* of atheistic society. The variety of institutional forms of cooperation was also agreed, Common Commission for dialogue of SOC Council and Yugoslav Bishop Conference, and Theological Faculties Conferences in Post Second Vatican Council period. In post-conflict Balkan Societies, RCC and SOC agreed to continue common activities towards post-conflict rehabilitation and evangelization.

Key words: SOC, RCC, Yugoslav State, Inter-Faculty Symposia, Joint Commission for Dialogue between SOC's Assembly and the Bishop's Conference of Yugoslavia (BCY), dialogue, cooperation, barriers.

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INTRODUCTION

Historical mission of the SOC implies the testimony and application of original evangelic principles in given circumstances and time. Such approach has general social, political, individual and psychological character, encompassed in the concept of *Svetosavlje* as a philosophy of life.[2] One of the most significant determinants of Svetosavlje is *national*, which represents, above all, the framework and instrument for preservation of the church, cultural and political identity and self-importance of Serbian nation. From today's perspective, it could be defined as qualitative factor of the universal concept of *pluralism*. It is of utmost significance to emphasize that national in this context is based, above all, on spiritual and ecclesial. The Roman Catholic theologists testify that Saint Sava was church and political missionary and peacemaker.[3]

On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) is characterized by unificational and subjectivistic conception (*dogma on papal infallibility or inerrancy*) and more prominent hierarchical and organizational structure, whose factors are the other Christian churches.[4] Its ecclesiology is of critically universalistic character, thus it logically tends to be applied at universal level. For the RCC, the Balkans is *terra missionis* and *antemurale christianitatis*, which in the historical context crucially influence the quality of its relations with the SOC. The Vatican generally acts towards the "outside" world guided by church strategy of "dialogue in concentric circles" (with Christians, other religions and atheists), by using "potentials" of given political situations.

With the above outlined theological issue, the most sensitive points in relation between the SOC and the RCC today are the events from the Second World War, in which one part of the Roman Catholic clergy in "the Independent State of Croatia" (ISC) participated in crimes towards clergy and believers of the SOC, but also towards Roma, Jews and Croats unloyal to pro-fascist regime, undoubtedly with the knowledge and approval of the Vatican.[5] Painful events and heritage place in front of the two Christian churches the request for overcoming the problem through acknowledgment, repentance and forgiveness, with necessary demarcation of roles and responsibilities on the basis of universal "truth and justice". Then we could speak of *the true inter-church dialogue* with major results in a broader interdisciplinary sense.

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[2] Јустин Поповић, *Православна црква и екуменизам, Светосавље као философија живота*. Београд, Манастир Ћелије код Ваљева, Наследници Оца Јустина, 2001, p. 32.

[3] The titular Bishop of Bosnia Ivan Tonko Mrnavić (XVII century), Aleksandar Donković, Friar Andrija Kačić-Milošić, Ivo Pilar, PhD and Josip Smoldak (XX century), etc.

[4] *Dogmatska konstitucija o Crkvi Lumen Gentium*, Dokumenti Drugog vatikanskog koncila, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 1970, pp. 91–205.

[5] Marco Aurelio Rivelli, *L'Arcivescovo del genocidio*, Kaos Edizioni, Milano, 1999, p. 35.

THE YUGOSLAV STATE, RCC AND SOC

The Church "management" and "melting pot" of the socialist (communist) Yugoslav state generally implied control and instrumentalization of religious for political purposes. In its relations with its religious communities, the state was guided by atheistic and secular premises, trying to exploit their peacemaking potential, in order to solve the national issue and gain credibility for its ideological position.[6] By using repressive methods (pressures, blackmails and intimidations), and with the generally conciliatory attitude of the SOC, immediately after the World War II the Yugoslav state established "cooperative" relationship with the SOC. In this regard, the RCC initially advocated the extremely conflict position, by criticizing the state ideology and its atheism. Generally, both churches had a marginal and secondary position and role in Yugoslav society. The Yugoslav state supported the establishment of inter-church cooperation, afraid from the possibility of creation of "joint church front" that would threaten its ideological system.

With the *Protocol on Regulation of Relations between Yugoslavia and Vatican* in 1966, and with the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1975 on personal initiative of the Pope Paul VI, the relations between Yugoslavia and the RCC was increasingly gaining the form of cooperation and gradual achievement of the Vatican interests.[7] Tito wanted the support from the Vatican in promotion of the state at international level, while Rome has sought a strategic expansion of religious and social influence of the RCC in Yugoslavia.[8] The Yugoslav state was aware of that, with the tacit approval. From the strategic point of view, it is obvious that political interests had a secondary significance in relation to the church interests. In addition, in relation to the events in "ISC", the Yugoslav state acted in a "managerial" way and irresponsible, *de facto* supporting the attempt of the RCC to relativize the historical events and put them *ad acta*, in the name of achieving the common vision of the future.

VATICAN AND SOC

In the development of relations with the SOC, the Vatican undertook the multidimensional initiative and activities. As for war crimes, French Cardinal

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[6] *Информација о односу Католичке цркве и државе у СР Хрватској*, Савезна комисија за верска питања, поверљиво, Архив Југославије, Фонд 144, 24. јануар 1967, ф. 102, ком. 655, бр. 48.

[7] *Депеша ДСИП и Амбасади у Риму, Италијанска реферада*, Савезна комисија за верска питања, поверљиво, Архив Југославије, Фонд 144, 14. октобар 1965, ф. 87, бр. 333.

[8] *Забелешка о разговору Ивана Лазића и поречко–пуљског бискупа др Драгутина Нежића*, Републичка комисија за верска питања Хрватске, поверљиво, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, 25. мај 1965, бр. 08–112/1.

Eugenio Tisserand and Bishop of Banja Luka Alfred Pihler have personally admitted the involvement and responsibility of the RCC.[9] However, the RCC has not officially distanced itself and condemned the actions of one part of its members, which represents a great obstacle for the SOC. From the RCC's perspective, a very important "mediating" role in the development of relations with the SOC belongs to *the Greek Catholic Church* ("Catholic Church" of Eastern Rite or the "Uniatic" Church).[10] It is important to know that the GCC acknowledges *the primacy of the Pope and the ecclesiastical jurisdiction* of the RCC. The SOC, primarily from the theological and historical reasons, such its position and role sees as an obstacle for improving the relations with the RCC.

In the period after the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the two churches, however, shared a common consensus about the missionary activities in the global secular and atheist regional circumstances, with a readiness for dialogue and cooperation. In that sense, the Vatican supports the idea of supranationality and gradual global integration of churches through joint social activities (with the aim of *evangelization*), while the SOC to larger extent was and still is theologically and "nationally" directed, insisting on church criteria of dialogue and cooperation.

During consideration of the issue related to the establishment of the dialogue with the RCC in the early 1960s, the Serbian church had in mind the position of the Patriarchate of Constantinople as "the first in honour" in the structure of the Orthodox Church. That is why it firstly initiated the dialogue with the Patriarchate of Constantinople, in order to achieve the principal consensus on the principles of dialogue with the RCC. The SOC was of the opinion that dialogue must be based on respect for fundamental principles of the Orthodox Church.[11] After that, it has also established the direct dialogue with the RCC, whose emissary the Bishop Johan Bilebrands visited Belgrade five times between 1963 and 1969. During these meetings, all essential issues were addressed related to relations between the two churches - the papal primacy, postulates and outcomes of the dialogue, appointing observers from the SOC to the Council, "decentralization" of the RCC, etc.[12] On that occasion, the Vatican sent a direct

[9] In early 1960s, Cardinal Tisserand visited Yugoslavia and its state leaders, and faced ignoration by representatives of the RCC in Croatia. In his *Christmas Epistle in 1963*, Bishop Pihler called the SOC for forgiveness of certain RCC's actions, and proposed to his believers rapprochement with the SOC.

[10] *Dekret o ekumenizmu i Istočnim katoličkim crkvama*, Dokumenti Drugog vatikanskog koncila. Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 1970, pp. 205–257.

[11] *Писмо Патријарха Германа Патријарху Атинагори*, Савезна комисија за верска питања, поверљиво, Архив Југославије, Фонд 144, 28. април 1960, ф. 64, ком, 512, бр. 30.

[12] *Дилпарић посетио Патријарха Германа на Његово тражење*, Савезна комисија за верска питања, Архив Југославије, Фонд 144, 1962, ф. 64, ком. 492.

invitation to the SOC to appoint an observer to the Council, although it continued to favour the Patriarchate of Constantinople as the main "partner", which encouraged the "rivalry" among Orthodox churches. The Assembly of the SOC held on 10 May 1963 passed a principal decision to send its observers to the fourth session of he Council, based on previous pan-Orthodox approval, authorizing the Synod of the SOC to make the final decision on this matter.[13] The SOC had in mind that Greek Church held irreconcilable attitude toward the RCC, as well as that observers from the Russian Church had already been at the Council. By observing the decisions of the Rhodos Orthodox conferences (1961-1964), the SOC thought that each orthodox church should be left with a possibility to deicide whether it will send observers (lower clergy and worldly theologians), which would not oblige the other Orthodox churches.[14] In this sense, in May 1965, the Synod of the SOC obtained the final positions of other Orthodox churches and the Yugoslav state.[15] After that, the Synod authorized Dr. Dusan Kasic and Professor Lazar Milina to attend the fourth session of the Vatican Council as representatives of the SOC.[16] They passed on the SOC's position to Cardinal Bea, according to which the main obstacle for the improvement of relations between the two churches was the spread of the RCC's influence ("Uniatism") at the SOC's expense in the contiguous areas (above all in Croatia).[17] Kasic and Milin concluded that convergence of the two churches in the theological field can not be expect in the near future, but that their dialogue was useful in the broader social, socio-charitable and peacemaking terms, given the secularist global tendencies.

During the 1980s, Patriarch German maintained permanent contacts with the representatives of the Nunciature in Belgrade. He also had a meeting with the Vatican State Secretary Cardinal Casaroli in early 1985, when they agreed on starting the dialogue between the two churches *at regional level* in Yugoslavia. The later establishment of *the Joint Commission for Dialogue between the BCY and the SOC Synod,* as regional form of transformation of global "dialogue of love" into theological dialogue, should be considered as a consequence of this principal agreement.

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[13] *Документ Архијерејског Сабора СПЦ*, 1963, 20/зап. 57.

[14] *Забелешка о пријему митрополита Дамаскина и епископа Фрушића код председника Моме Марковића*, Савезна комисија за верска питања, поверљиво, Архив Југославије, Фонд 144, 23. новембар 1964, ф. 77, бр. 519.

[15] *Информација о пријему Патријарха Германа од стране председника Милутина Мораче*, Савезна комисија за верска питања, поверљиво, Архив Југославије, Фонд 144, 23. септембар 1965, ф. 86, бр. 295.

[16] *Депеша ДСИП и Амбасади у Риму, Италијанска реферада*, Савезна комисија за верска питања, поверљиво, Архив Југославије, Фонд 144, 14. октобар 1965, ф. 87, бр. 333.

[17] *Италијанска реферада–Текст депеше амбасади СФРЈ у Риму*, Савезна комисија за верска питања, поверљиво, Архив Југославије, Фонд 144, 25. новембар 1965, ф. 87, бр. 362/1.

In the period of Patriarch Pavle (1990-2010), despite the socio-political crisis and the war in former Yugoslavia, the SOC continued to insist, above all, on respect for universal Christian principles. Rome invited its representatives to the Synod of European Roman Catholic Bishops at the end of 1991, in order to examine the issues related to evangelization of the continent in the changed social, political and economic circumstances. At the same time, the Pope John Paul II and the RCC have, through the Yugoslav state authorities, started an initiative for establishing *the direct dialogue between the Vatican and the SOC*.[18] Although the SOC's Synod "persuaded" its two representatives to travel to the Synod in Rome, the SOC's Assembly, on its extra session in November 1991, decided that "for now" the dialogue with the RCC should be postponed, stating as reasons the war between Croats and Serbs, the positions of the Zagreb Cardinal Franjo Kuharic and certain members of the RCC in Croatia on causes of the war, proselytistic actions of "Uniates" in Orthodox countries, as well as principal positions of the Pope John Paul II on all presented issues.[19] The position of the SOC had theological and ethical basis, but it also represented the diplomatic "defeat" in terms of direct presence and testifying its own positions.

In war circumstances, both churches have instigated a number of peace initiatives, with mutual consent that war is not a religious, but political category. However, they differed in terms of understanding of the causes of war, especially in terms of desirable political forms for overcoming the conflicts. Undoubtedly, the RCC has supported the dissolution of Yugoslavia, advocating the respect for the principle of self-determination of its nations, above all in terms of gaining independence of republics within their existing borders. On the other hand, the SOC firstly supported the idea of preservation of Yugoslav Federation, and when it was no longer possible, for the respect for universal right of all its citizens to self-determination, regardless of borders that were set up by the authoritarian atheistic regime. In this context, it was noticeable that the RCC tended to build "the future", while the SOC expected all declarative principles that were advocated to the Pope and the RCC to be fully implemented in practice.

Despite the fact that the SOC delegation did not arrive in Rome, Patriarch Pavle stressed that it didn't mean it was rejection of the dialogue with the RCC, pleading Pope John Paul to receive the Episcopal delegation of the SOC for "immediate, fraternal, inter-church dialogue on all presented issues".[20] He

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[18] *Писмо Амбасадора Социјалистичке Федеративне Републике Југославије др Ивице Маштруко Његовој Светости Патријарху српском Господину Павлу*, Архив Синода СПЦ, 30. мај 1991, бр. 1111.

[19] *Писмо Патријарха српског Господина Павла Његовој Светости Папи Јовану Павлу II*, Архив Синода СПЦ, 26. новембар 1991, бр. 2865.

[20] Ibidem.

wanted to directly confront the essence of the problem related to the development of the dialogue, while the RCC remained faithful to the universalistic approach, according to which there was not much space for regional problems. There were extremely negative reactions within the SOC regarding the development of the dialogue with the RCC, especially by some episcopes and the Church's "basis".

Due to theological and political reasons, representatives of the SOC did not attend prayer meetings in Assisi in 1986 and 1993, whose "patron" was the RCC, because of the presence of representatives of numerous world religions. Yugoslav state has, through the academic Stipčević and president of the FRY, Mr Dobrica Ćosić, tried to influence the SOC in terms of an urgent meeting between Pope and Patriarch.[21] Therefore, in March 1993 the SOC's Synod "persuaded" Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Littoral Amfilohije and Episcope Irinej of Bačka to visit Pope John Paul II.[22] The meeting took place in early April the same year, which was the first meeting between high representatives of the SOC and the Pope in the last 700 years. On that occasion, a principal agreement was reached to establish a direct contact through *a permanent representative of the SOC in Rome*. It was also agreed to organize a meeting between Pope and Patriarch, based on the decision of the SOC's Synod and the approval of other Orthodox churches.[23] Cooperation between the two churches in cultural field was defined as important aspect and contribution to the development of new European relations.[24] It is important to know that the RCC was not directly requesting a meeting between Pope and Patriarch, but mostly indirectly, through the Yugoslav state. Through eventual meeting of the two primates, the Vatican wanted to gain broader Christian legitimacy of its actions, while the Yugoslav state asked for the Vatican's support in promotion of its difficult position in international relations (lifting of sanctions against FRY). Patriarch Pavle approached this issue based on the consent of all Orthodox churches (Decision of the Orthodox Primates in 1992), taking into account the positions of both the SOC's episcopes and believers and Yugoslav state.

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[21] *Писмо Никше Стипчевића, члана САНУ и управника Библиотеке САНУ Његовој Светости Патријарху српском Господину Павлу 26. децембра у 8 сати ујутру*, врло хитно, Архив Синода СПЦ, 29. децембар 1992, бр. 4244.

[22] *Седница Светог Архијерејског Синода СПЦ 25. марта 1993*, Архив Синода СПЦ, 1993, бр. 974/зап. 693а.

[23] „Делегација Српске православне цркве разговарала са поглаваром Римокатоличке цркве Папом Јованом Павлом II—Папа изразио жељу да се сусретне са нашим Патријархом", *Православље*, свес. 627, 1. мај 1993, стр. 1–3.

[24] *Документ Архива Синода СПЦ*, 13. септембар 1993, бр. 2111/зап. 2011.

SOC AND RCC IN YUGOSLAVIA

The quality of relations between the two churches in Yugoslavia was significantly conditioned by the fundamental theological disagreements (papal primacy), painful historical heritage and strong influence and guidance of the Yugoslav state. In this case also, the RCC was undertaking open initiative, while the principal reservation of the SOC was a result of its difficult personnel and financial position. It was additionally burdened by "uncooperative" acts of the RCC and Yugoslav state, especially in Dalmatia, Slavonia and Macedonia.

In accordance with the guidelines of the Second Vatican Council, through *the Decree on Ecumenism* from 1974, the Yugoslav bishops have requested the improvement of relations with the SOC, based on common denominators and respect for differences. However, the declaratively promoted tolerance, coexistence and "equality" have not been properly implemented in practice.[25] In this fact, the SOC saw an insincere intention, so the SOC's Assembly passed the decision in 1964 by which the contact with the RCC could be maintained only through its authorized church representatives. However, through the state influence, some higher and lower representatives of the SOC did maintain contact with the RCC, on which the SOC's top management was not informed. In the period after the Council, representatives of the RCC in Yugoslavia sought solely "clarification" of the dogma of papal "infallibility" and the primacy of the Roman jurisdiction. They further affirmed their position by appointing Archbishop of Zagreb Šeper for Cardinal in 1965. In Yugoslavia, they were highly active in pastoral, socio-charitable, educational and publishing activity. They used the "deductive-theological" and organizational-institutional approach, establishing Ecumenical Commissions on the level of the Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia (BCY) and certain dioceses.

In regional relations, the Serbian Church maintained to insist on solving of all issues on the basis of original Christian values and principles, within the framework of *theological dialogue*. The subject of its criticism was the dogma on papal primacy and Roman jurisdiction, as well as the RCC's tendency for expanding its influence at the expense of the SOC.[26] However, it remained faithful to "friendly" dialogue with the RCC, due to pastoral reasons and promotion of Christian values in social life.[27] That is why its approach can be called a form of *church policy of missionary character*. The RCC also wanted the similar things, through principal conciliation and promotion of the common

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[25] *Информација о односу Католичке цркве и државе у СР Хрватској*, Савезна комисија за верска питања, поверљиво, Архив Југославије, Фонд 144, 24. јануар 1967, ф. 102, ком. 655, бр. 48.

[26] Владимир Дакић, *Како се на Западу замишља поновно уједињење Цркава*, Савезна комисија за верска питања, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, 1962, ф. 64, ком. 516.

[27] *Документ Архива Синода СПЦ*, 10. септембар 1963, бр. 2842.

future based on Christian responsibility, with full respect for its "dogmatic-pyramidal" conception of the Christian Church's structure. In May 1968, the SOC's Assembly passed the decision that the SOC "would not be able to accept the dialogue with the RCC before the RCC in practice demonstrate that it has renounced its former relationship and methods towards the Orthodox Church, especially in the implementation of the Uniatism".[28] In that period, priority for the SOC was the dialogue with Anglicans, Old Catholics, Lutherans and pre-Chalcedonian churches.[29] Moreover, the SOC's top management was facing the need to bridge the gap between the readiness to dialogue with the RCC and the reserved attitude of its church "base". The Vatican and the Pope Paul VI have also maintained the "parallel" connections with "the Macedonian Orthodox Church" (MOC), which represented a serious obstacle for the SOC.

In Yugoslavia, the RCC has initiated contacts between higher and lower clergy of the two churches, especially in inter-religious and multinational environments, most often during church holidays.[30] Therefore, in May 1966, the SOC's Assembly "warned" its priests about "the increased activity of the RCC among Orthodox population", emphasizing that official positions on relations between the SOC and the RCC are only those presented by the authorized high representatives of the SOC.[31] In this context, the ban imposed by the SOC's Synod should be understood, by which priests cannot, without its approval, "until further notice" maintain contact with the RCC.[32] The Yugoslav authorities were stressing that the lower clergy of the SOC comes into contacts "spontaneously", while the RCC does the same thing knowing exactly what it wants to achieve.[33] The SOC's reserved attitude was largely causing the direct interference and pressure by the Yugoslav state.

Throughout this process, the RCC saw itself as a corrective guide of joint activization of the two churches, with obvious, but cautious affirmation of its religious principles.[34] It pointed to the mutual responsibility of the two

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[28] *Документ Архијерејског Сабора СПЦ*, 1963, 20/зап. 57.

[29] *Документ Архива Синода СПЦ*, 22. децембар 1968, бр. 3474/зап. 759.

[30] *Одјек Концилских идеја у земљи*, Републичка комсија за верска питања Хрватске, поверљиво, Архив Југославије, Фонд 144, 5. март 1966, ф. 93, бр. 94.

[31] *Информација о раду редовног заседања Архијерејског сабора СПЦ од 11. до 23. маја 1966*, Савезна комисија за верска питања, поверљиво, Архив Југославије, Фонд 144, 1966, ф. 95, бр. 261/1.

[32] *Информација о односу Католичке цркве и државе у СР Хрватској*, Савезна комисија за верска питања, поверљиво, Архив Југославије, Фонд 144, 24. јануар 1967, ф. 102, ком. 655, бр. 48.

[33] *Информација о неким аспектима стања и деловања верских заједница у Југославији*, Савезна комисија за верска питања, Архив Југославије, Фонд 144, 13. јануар 1970, Савезна скупштина, Одбор за унутрашњу политику, ф. 120, бр. SL.

[34] Frane Franić, „Progresizam ili revizionizam u Crkvi", *Glas Koncila*, sves. 496, sv. 1, januar 1983, str. 1–4.

churches for inadequate "ecumenical" results, relativizing only the theological approach. It affirmed "universalistic melting pot" of various factors (theological, social and political). Political guidelines of the RCC, which were of de-ideologizing character and the later support to the disintegration of Yugoslavia, should be understood within this context.

CROATIA AND SLOVENIA

The painful historical heritage and subtle attempts to "convey" the SOC's believers into the RCC, with the passive observation of the Yugoslav state, have determined the quality of the post-Council relations between the SOC and the RCC in Croatia. The Roman Church defended its "expansionism" with the need for joint fight against atheism. Given its very difficult situation regarding personnel and finances, the SOC could find its "ally" only in the Yugoslav authorities, which can explain its affirmative and cooperative relation with the state. The SOC expected the support in accomplishing the proclaimed principle of church pluralism, and improvement of its difficult position in Dalmatia and Slavonia.

The RCC again used its centralistic and "deductive-educational" approach in improving relations with the SOC, especially in the Diocese of Đakovo (Bishop Bauerlein). A more open and closer relation between Bishop and Episcope was achieved in Istra. Very significant contribution to the development of relations between the two churches was the meeting between Patriarch German and Cardinal Šeper in Sremski Karlovci in April 1968, which was initiated by Pope Paul VI, guided by the need for mutual social engagement of churches.[35] Even then, the SOC's "basis" observed such tendencies in the relations between the two churches with a dose of reserve. During the meeting of the Archbishop of Zagreb (later Cardinal) Kuharić and Patriarch German in Belgrade in November 1975, the convergence of the two churches was generally agreed, on the basis of common theological denominators, through socio-charitable activity, for the purpose of evangelization of society. For a longer period of time, the key guideline in improvement of relations will be the sentence by Patriarch German in Jasenovac in September 1984: "Brothers, we must forgive, but not forget". This message was obviously left as a guideline to the SOC and its believers, to live within the spirit of tolerance with members of the RCC, indirectly appealing to the conscience of masterminds and executors of crimes in "the ISC". Since then, the SOC has continued to insist on respect for Christological criteria and

[35] „Сусрет српског патријарха Германа са кардиналом Шепером—трећим човеком Римокатоличке цркве", *Православље*, свес. 27, април 1968, стр. 1–4.

development of relations, while the RCC was putting a greater emphasis on reducing problems to social level.

The opposing positions of the two churches were particularly evident at political level in the early 1990s, which caused the "credibility" of theological discrepancies. Pressures, intimidations, threats and murders during the 1990s, have largely influenced the representatives of the SOC to understand the war in Croatia as *existential and defensive*, which could in practice ensure respect for the principle of self-determination also in case of Serbian people in Croatia.[36] This SOC's position was largely influenced by both Croatian regime and benevolent attitude of the major part of the RCC in Croatia towards its nature and actions. At the session of the Synod of European Bishops in Rome in 1991, Croatian bishops in one-sided way presented the causes and the consequences of the conflict in this republic, which proved to be a new obstacle to dialogue between the two churches. In that period, joint activity of the two churches was reduced to peace initiative of Patriarch Pavle and Cardinal Kuharić during their two meetings in Slavonia and Sremski Karlovci in 1991. Both churches have advocated for finding a "fair" solution, but did not to the same extent act in accordance with their principal agreement.[37] Normalization of relations was achieved by Patriarch Pavle's visit to Zagreb in March 1999, when the significance of evangelizational engagement of both churches was brought back to attention, especially in the post-conflict societies.[38] However, the SOC in Croatia has continued to face the strong influence of Croatian state and *existential* challenge (situation in Dalmatia Eparchy, attempt to revive „the COC"), which, above all, go in favour of the RCC's interests.

Somewhat better climate in relations between the two churches in Slovenia was a result of positive historical heritage, above all, support that was provided to Slovenian people by the SOC and its believers in the First and the Second World War. The SOC again remained consistent with its theological-deductive approach, and the RCC to a greater extent to its social-inductive approach. Again, the major point of disagreement was the Roman Catholic concept of papal primacy. Qualitative contribution to the progress in improving relations between the two churches at the regional level was an agreement between Patriarch German and Archbishop of Ljubljana Pogačnik in 1968 on the establishment of cooperation between *religious press*.[39] They have reached

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[36] „Саопштење са редовног заседања Светог Архијерејског Сабора Српске Православне Цркве од 9. до 24. маја", *Гласник Српске Патријаршије*, 1991, стр. 110–111.

[37] *Порука јавности Светог Архијерејског Сабора СПЦ*, Сабор СПЦ, мај 1995, бр. 70.

[38] Момир Лечић, „Патријарх српски Павле у посети Епархији загребачко–љубљанској и целе Италије", *Гласник Српске Патријаршије*, 1999, стр. 65–68.

[39] Радомир Ракић, „Српског Патријарха посетио љубљански надбискуп", *Православље*, свес. 39, новембар 1968, стр. 1.

agreement in terms of significance of joint information and educational activities, above all cooperation between the editorial boards of religious journals (annual meetings), which have established cooperation with both the Bishop's Conference of Yugoslavia (BCY) and the SOC's Assembly Commission. In this way, a certain regional and institutional "ecumenical network" was created, which would later result in establishment of cooperation between the Theological Faculties n Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Inter-church relations had a special significance in the multi-confessional and multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is why the Yugoslav state paid a special attention to them, encouraging the improvement of relations. Again, the RCC has launched the initiative in relation to the SOC, which in this case responded in somewhat "more open" way.

An example of the best relations between the representatives of the two churches in Yugoslavia were Episcope of Banja Luka Andrej Frušić and Bishop Alfred Pihler.[40] In his *Christmas Greeting in 1964*, the Bishop called the RCC's believers to reconcile and unite with the SOC, acknowledging the responsibility of one part of the RCC for war crimes. He asked and asked the SOC and its believers for forgiveness.[41] The Bishop was actively involved in providing certain financial aid from Rome for the construction of the Orthodox Church in Banja Luka. At theological level, he too was unrelenting, insisting on joint social action of the churches, for the purpose of evangelization of Bosnian society. However, he was more "flexible" regarding the interpretation of the concept of papal primacy.[42] Over time, the SPC's Metropolitans Nektarije and Vladislav of Dabar-Bosnia have established good relationships with their Roman Catholic colleagues. The same partially stands for episcopes and bishops in Herzegovina.

The socio-political crisis and war have influenced the deterioration of relations between the two churches. The two churches were dived by a different understanding of the causes of war and ways to overcome it. In 1992 and 1993, Bosnian bishops even asked their colleagues in the world for support for military intervention of the international community against Bosnian Serbs. Representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church, however, considered that

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[40] *Информација о организацији и стању односа са СПЦ у СР БиХ*, Републичка комисија за верска питања БиХ, поверљиво, Архив Југославије, Фонд 144, 1969, ф. 118, бр. 04–127/1.

[41] *Božićna poslanica biskupa banjalučkog Pihlera*, Biskupski ordinarijat Banjaluke, 1963, br. 1269.

[42] Alfred Pihler, „Katolici i Pravoslavni–sjedinjenje ili zajedništvo?", *Glas Koncila*, knj. 14, sves. 434, jul 1980, str. 14–17.

call for war cannot bring peace.[43] Patriarch Pavle, Cardinal of Zagreb Kuharić and Cardinal of Sarajevo Puljić signed *the Sarajevo Declaration* in 1994, requesting from all parties in the conflict to cease the war immediately. High representatives of both churches in Bosnia and Herzegovina were continuously stressing that the war was not religious but political, with indisputable presence of religious elements. The cooperation between the two churches in the post-war period was institutionalized within the framework of *the Inter-Religious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, which promotes reconciliation and establishment of the rule of law and affirmation of the principle of religious pluralism. It represents a body of *consulting* character, which by now has had the declarative results. Also, episcopes and bishops met on regular basis in the period from 1998 to 2000 (Tuzla, Banja Luka and Sarajevo), promoting reconciliation, return of displaced persons, the need to establish the rule of law and the practical realization of the concept of "unity in diversity" as a primary objective of inter-church dialogue in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[44]

SERBIA, MONTENEGRO AND MACEDONIA

The ideal of proclaimed church pluralism and "equality" was achieved in Serbia owing mostly to the position of the Yugoslav state and the tolerant attitude of the SOC towards the RCC. Here, unlike the other parts of Yugoslavia, a certain reserve of the RCC caused by its minority position was noticeable. Lower clergy of the SOC was showing a reserve in terms of the final results of relations' development, not questioning the importance of the social cooperation. The problem was the affirmation of the Greek Catholic Church's position by the RCC, which has appointed the Greek Catholic Prelate Bukatko to the position of the Archbishop of Belgrade. For the SOC, that was an open obstacle for the improvement of relations.[45]

Representatives of the churches wanted primarily to meet and get to know each other, in circumstances when in the mid-1980s Rome decided to carry out the territorial reorganization of the RCC in Serbia. Dioceses of Subotica and Zrenjanin entered the newly formed Metropolitanate of Belgrade. In multi-

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[43] *Писмо православне српске Митрополије загребачко–љубљанске Светом Архијерејском Синоду СПЦ*, Митрополија загребачко–љубљанска СПЦ, 1. март 1993, Загреб, бр. 48.

[44] Niko Ikić, *Ekumenske studije i dokumenti—Izbor ekumenskih dokumenata Katoličke i Pravoslavne Crkve s propratnim komentarima*, Sarajevo, Vrhbosanska katolička teologija, 2003.

[45] *Информација о посети Изасланству др Габријела Бикатка, надбискупа београдског, на дан 9. септембра 1969. године*, ССИП, Изасланство СФРЈ при Светој Столици, поверљиво, 12. септембар 1969, бр. 179.

confessional Vojvodina, particularly active was the Diocese of Subotica, with substantial support from the Apostolic Nunciature in Belgrade. It particularly insisted on cooperation in *the cultural field*.[46] Patriarch German and the SOC supported the launching of *the Commission for dialogue of the BCY and the SOC's Assembly*, because the theological dialogue has remained the focal point of their inter-church relations.

In war period, the RCC in Serbia faced certain pressures and threats, however, not even close to those faced by the SOC in Croatia. The RCC was mainly trying to preserve its own position, receiving *comprehensive support from the SOC* (the case of occupied RCC's parish in Šabac, mediation of Patriarch Pavle and the SOC in finding the imprisoned Franciscan priest in Bosnia etc.) and high state authorities, such as Dobrica Cosić's support to Archbishop Perko.[47] In the post-war period, during the initiated theological dialogue, all the differences came to the surface, but they did not deteriorate the very good relations between the clergy of both churches, and the RCC was pointing out that it was satisfied with its social and legal status in Serbia.[48]

In the case of Montenegro, it can be concluded that the relations between the two churches were positively influenced by a specific social climate and historical heritage, in terms of positive contribution of the tradition. After the Council, the RCC advocated too "open" approach to the SOC in some places, which caused the SOC's reservations. Especially good relations were established in Boka Kotorska, where clergy and believers met on almost every holiday-related occasion.[49] At theological level, the RCC's approach was also very consistent and centralistic. An example of the existence of two churches with two altars in Sutomore, in which believers often encountered, remains the highest level of "theological and practical" cooperation between the two churches in the former Yugoslavia. Again, the SOC continued to insist on theological criteria for improvement of relations with the RCC.

In Macedonia, the Vatican has had an objective interest to support the "autocephality of the Macedonian Orthodox Church" (MOC) as a precondition for expanding its influence in this Republic. Bishop of Skopje Čekada has established a direct relationship with Metropolitan Dositej only when Metropolitan became an open actor of the schism with the SOC, which indicates that the RCC *de facto* supported "the separation of the MOC" from the canonical

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[46] *Информација о посети проте Веселина Петровића Комисији Војводине*, Комисија за верска питања АП Војводине, поверљиво, Архив Југославије, Фонд 144, 3. мај 1968, ф. 110, бр. 179.

[47] Франц Перко, „Овде нема будућности", *Вечерњи лист*, 25. септембар 1993, str. 25.

[48] Belgrade Archbishop Perko has publicly emphasized this.

[49] *Депеша ДСИП и Амбасади у Риму, Италијанска реферада*, Савезна комисија за верска питања, поверљиво, Архив Југославије, Фонд 144, 14. октобар 1965, ф. 87, бр. 333.

structure of the SOC.[50] This fact represented a significant problem for the SOC. In fact, the Yugoslav state played the key role by representing the "link" between Pope Paul VI and high representatives of "the MOC". At the same time, the Vatican was hiding all contacts and meetings with the representatives of the "MOC" from the SOC.[51] Rome obviously thought that the separation process of the MOC should start "from below", where the crucial role was given to the political factor, above all the Yugoslav state. Yugoslavian bishops were entirely following the Vatican's position and approach.

INTER-FACULTY THEOLOGICAL SYMPOSIA (1974-1990)

Since the mid-1970s, the two churches have established cooperation between the Theological Faculties as a form of educational and institutional attempt to review the most important theological issues, with the aim of creating a basis for a common practical and pastoral activity in Yugoslav society. Again, the SOC stayed loyal to its own "theological-deductive" approach, and the RCC to its unificational-integrative and social approach.[52] The faculties' cooperation represented *the regional-educational aspect of theological dialogue* between the two churches. In this context, communal prayers were practiced, where participants at Symposium met and became acquainted with each other. The initial "ecumenical enthusiasm" of the RCC in the early 1980s has evolved into seeing the differences "in the essentials", whereas the political factor began to crucially influence the course of theological dialogue. Political disagreements in the early 1990s caused the Theological Faculty in Zagreb to leave the active inter-faculty cooperation.[53]

JOINT COMMISSION FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE SOC'S ASSEMBLY AND THE BISHOP'S CONFERENCE OF YUGOSLAVIA (BCY)

The most significant level and form of cooperation between the SOC and the RCC is certainly the attempt of the two churches' leaders in the late 1980s

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[50] *Информација о контактима Митрополита Доситеја са представницима Католичке цркве*, Републичка комисија за верска питања Македоније, поверљиво, Архив Југославије, Фонд 144, 19. јануар 1965, ф. 84, бр. 21, ДБ.

[51] *Документ Републичке комисије за верска питања Македоније*, поверљиво, Архив Југославије, Фонд 144, 11. јул 1966, ф. 94, бр. 02–130/1.

[52] „Први симпозијум православних и римокатоличких теолога Југославије", *Православље*, свес. 182, 15. октобар 1974, стр. 8–11.

[53] Niko Ikić, *Ekumenske studije i dokumenti—Izbor ekumenskih dokumenata Katoličke i Pravoslavne Crkve s propratnim komentarima*, ibidem, str. 243–244.

to institutionalize contacts and meetings through the Joint Commission for Dialogue between the SOC's Assembly and the BCY. Again, the initiative came from the BCY and its representative Cardinal Kuharić, and was accepted by the SOC and Patriarch German as "evangelical imperative".[54] The SOC has openly and sincerely presented to the RCC all obstacles to the dialogue: responsibility of one part of the RCC for the events in war, new discrimination of the SOC in Croatia, as well as partiality of the RCC in terms of events on Kosovo and Metohija and situation with "the MOC".[55] The RCC's answer to all these was diplomatic and pragmatic, with an open tendency for relativization of historical for the purpose of turning to the future. Besides insisting on the need for evangelization in Yugoslavia, there were no clearer counter-arguments.[56] Such, for the SOC, largely ignorant position of RCC's regarding the most important issues, has caused the resistance of some episcopes of the SOC and postponement of the scheduled session of the Joint Commission. During the war, the Commission was not active.

Its first meeting (this time between the SOC's Assembly and the Bishops' Conference of Croatia and Slovenia) was held in Zagreb in November 1998, and the second one in Novi Sad in February 2000, when it was generally agreed that cooperation between the two churches should be based on mutual respect for identity and freedom, with a strong pastoral-missionary responsibility and the need for a joint socio-charitable social approach.[57] Agreement was reached on a joint contribution to the return of displaced persons (especially in Croatia), as well as the need to engage in the field of mixed marriages.[58]

CONCLUSION

The issue of *papal primacy* (his infallibility or "inerrancy") and Roman jurisdiction at theological level, and painful historical heritage from the World War II at practical level, represent the key obstacles in the process of improvement of relations between the RCC and the SOC. Therefore, they are aware of existential significance of their cooperation in social field. In the post-

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[54] *Писмо Светог Архијерејског Сабора СПЦ Председнику Бискупске конференције Југославије др Фрањи Кухарићу*, Архив Синода СПЦ, 9. новембар 1989, бр. 2804/зап. 1312.

[55] Ibidem.

[56] *Pismo katoličke Biskupske konferencije Jugoslavije i njenog predsjednika Kardinala Franje Kuharića, nadbiskupa zagrebačkog, Njegovoj Svetosti Patrijarhu srpskom Germanu*, Biskupska konferencija Jugoslavije, Zagreb, 30. listopad 1989, br. 323.

[57] „Сусрет Комисија за дијалог Светог Архијерејског Сабора СПЦ и Хрватске бискупске конференције", *Гласник Српске Патријаршије*, 2000, str. 62.

[58] Ibidem.

Council period (1962-65), the Yugoslav state has encouraged the improvement of their relations, starting from the interest of overcoming national antagonisms in the Yugoslav Federation. At the same time, the Yugoslav state was trying to achieve the full control over the inter-church cooperation, afraid of the possible creation of a "joint church front" against its ideological system. Over time, its policy was increasingly "going in favour" of the RCC's interests.

The establishment of regional relations between the two churches in Yugoslavia was initiated by the Vatican and Pope Paul VI, as an important aspect of the global "dialogue of love" between the two churches, which was expected to evolve into *theological dialogue*. In circumstances of theological disagreements, painful historical experience and atheistic environment, the RCC and the SOC have managed to agree on the need for joint social action, aiming at *evangelization of the society*. The evangelization implied the pastoral and the socio-charitable activity and responsibility. The RCC displayed the initiative again, often relativizing the theological and the historical for the purpose of improving relations. The SOC's approach remained primarily theological, as well as socially responsible, taking into account the pan-Orthodox, international and domestic political factors.

The most important form of institutionalized cooperation between the two churches in Yugoslavia is the Joint Commission for Dialogue between the SOC's Assembly and the BCY, formed in late 1980s. In this regard, of great importance was the educational cooperation between Theological Faculties in Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade (1974-1990), with joint activities related to religious press in the country.

The war years have significantly jeopardized all the results achieved through inter-church activities. *Political factor* from the early 1990s caused the more open disagreement between the two churches in terms of viewing the causes of the war and concrete proposals for overcoming conflict. Cooperation between the churches became more intensive in the post-war period, in which they openly demonstrate responsibility and initiative in terms of improving relations, in order to contribute qualitatively to overcoming the negative legacy of the past and the region's "true" integration.

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