

Orthodox in Croatia after 1990. (Empirical Research Findings)

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1. Introduction

The first part of this article provides a historical survey of ecumenical events in the republic of Croatia which, until 1990, was a part of the Yugoslav federation.

Croatia has a rather long ecumenical tradition. The decisions of the Second Vatican Council were a turning point concerning interaction between Christians: not only had the ecumenical efforts been intensified, but they had brought certain results as well. However, the efforts were abruptly interrupted by the disintegration of the multinational and multi-confessional Yugoslav federation at the beginning of the 90's which resulted in the war in Croatia and then in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The central part of the article consists of an analysis of two socio-religious studies conducted in Croatia and partly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In these two studies, the theme of ecumenism was included.

In the first research project, for the period between 1991 and 1995,¹ **the methodology applied was content analysis of *Glas Koncila***. (*Glas Koncila* is an official publication of the Roman Catholic Church in Croatia).

Since it took place in wartime, the research concentrated on the writings in *Glas Koncila* around two basic categories - war and peace, but the category of ecumenism was also included in the research. The study assumed that religious publications as well as secular publications play a significant role not only in the evaluation of everyday life, but its specific approach to reality in critical situations is of major importance in the process of creating public opinion. This has been particularly stressed after the Second Vatican Council, which marked a new era in the acceptance of the role and the place of religious publications in modern societies (Gabel, 1967:24).

In the second research project, conducted in 1997, **the survey method** was used. Six questions about ecumenism were isolated from the comprehensive questionnaire.

The main purpose of this paper is to show, by analyzing the results of the two studies, whether and to what extent ecumenical dialogue and interaction did exist between Christian communities during the 1990's within the Republic of Croatia. Particular attention is given to the interaction between the Roman Catholic Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church. Ecumenical relations between the Catholic Church and Serbian Orthodox Church as the two most influential Christian communities in the area studied, will be treated extensively.

2. Historical Survey of Ecumenical Events in Croatia: Obstacles and Incentives

Generally speaking, ecumenism is a movement whose essential purpose is to bring Christian communities together. Although not easy, ecumenism is a process that in the end should result in Christian unity between Christian churches.

¹The city of Zagreb is the main publishing center in Croatia, where several publishers produce a great number of books, journals and magazines. The official publisher of *Glas Koncila* is the Archiepiscopal Spiritual Circle. Prior to becoming a weekly in 1985, *Glas Koncila* was a semiweekly. It is the best-selling magazine of the Catholic Church. It was released for the first time in 1962 (that is immediately after the beginning of the Second Vatican Council). On the occasion of the release of the 1000th issue in 1993, Cardinal Franjo Kuharić stated the major principles guiding its reporting: the magazine had to be put at the service of truth and of the believers' consciousness, it had to contribute to the moral recovery of the nation and spread the teaching of the Church, and finally it had to be put at the service of the social activities of the Church. It was also pointed out that the magazine wished to encourage dialogue not only within the Church, but with other Christians and Christian churches as well as with all other people who do not belong to either the Catholic Church or any other denomination. (Boeckh, 1995:204).

As a global movement, modern ecumenism developed among Protestants and Anglicans, later joined by some Orthodox churches. Having been organized in 1948 as the *World Council of Churches*, the movement became institutionalized (Šagi-Bunić, 1969:224).

Catholicism took a significant step toward ecumenism when Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council and subsequently founded the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity.

The historic importance of the Second Vatican Council was not only reflected in the improved overall activity of the Catholic Church in the modern world but in the fundamental changes that occurred in the sphere of ecumenism. This new orientation towards ecumenism as one of the main goals of the Council was defined in the Council Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis reintegratio*, published in 1964². The Decree also stressed the importance of the integration of all Catholic believers in the sphere of ecumenism. (UR 1, 4) To bring about the integration--the realization of Christian unity--the Decree suggests ways and means which should help in this process.

The successor of John XXIII, Pope Paul VI contributed considerably to the promotion of the ecumenical ideas by encouraging bilateral ecumenical reunions in which, by that time, the Catholic Church had been officially involved.³

The incumbent Pope John Paul II plays a significant role in the promotion of ecumenism: he consistently supports both the realization of the conciliar ideas and other guidelines on ecumenism that were previously defined by his predecessors John XXIII and Paul VI in their

²As in other spheres of Church life, the Second Vatican Council was a turning point in the sphere of ecumenism as well. Since the literature on this subject is quite extensive, we will single out only the major conclusions of the Council, the conclusions that influenced the revival of the ecumenical ideas in general, and also within ex-Yugoslavia. In the Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* the main principles of the present and future ecumenical activities were given. The major points of the Decree are as follows: a definition of the Catholic principles of ecumenism, the definition of the general principles which should be followed by Catholics in order to contribute to the ecumenism, and finally, the discussion about the specific relations between the Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox Churches and the western church communities - Anglicans and Protestants (T. Šagi-Bunić, 1969:224). The Decree is imbued with the spirit of tolerance, open-mindedness and the wish for the realization of the Christian unity, which would contribute to the effective proclamation of the Gospel all over the world.

³For more extensive reading see: Glazier, Michael; Monika K. Hellwig (1998) **Suvremena katolička enciklopedija**. Split: Laus, pp.244-255.

encyclicals and other documents. In our opinion, an exceptional incentive for the development of the ecumenical idea was given by the Pope's recent calling for forgiveness for negligence and mistakes made by the members of the Catholic Church in the past.

Some Christian authors had already found the first traces of ecumenism in the Croatian spiritual and cultural sphere in the 17th century when the first theological attempts were made to bring divided Christians together. The reasons for these attempts were political; their main purpose was the realization of Slavic unity, or, in other words, bringing all Slavs together in a unique political community. The first task was the creation of a cultural and religious unity, which was promoted by the so-called Slavonic ecumenists, especially by the Croatian theologian *Juraj Križanić* (Kolarić, 1985:182). The most significant contribution to the development of ecumenism in Croatia was made by bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer (1815-1905). In his diocese of Djakovo as well as in the Croatian Catholic Church, he paved the way for the spirit of ecumenism and open-mindedness. His ideas about reconciliation between Catholics and Orthodox Serbs are hard to separate from his political views directed towards the realization of Southern Slavic unity (Šanjek, 1991:333).

Amongst other historical events, one that deserves to be singled out is "the gathering" of Slovenian and Croatian ecumenists around the magazine symbolically called *Balkan*, which took place at the end of the 19th century.

The ecumenical *Movement of Saints Cyril and Methodius*, established by Croatian and Slovenian intellectuals, took place between the First and the Second World War. One of its objectives was bringing together Roman Catholics and Orthodox Serbs by following ecumenical principles. However, the efforts were difficult and then completely interrupted due to the unsolved national problems in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia which later led to the multinational conflicts that took place during the Second World War (Kolarić, 1985:182). When the Independent State of Croatia was founded, both the Serbian population and the Serbian Orthodox Church went through a perilous period and it took twenty years to reestablish ecumenical activities.

New incentives for the revival of the ecumenical movement in Croatia appeared in the 1960's, that is, just before the Second Vatican Council was held. To be accurate, it was in the year 1964 when the bishop of Djakovo, *Stjepan Baurlein*, established in his diocese the so called Diocesan Committee for the Unity of Churches, consisting of six priests.

The next important step in the sphere of ecumenism was made by the archbishop of Split, Franje Franić. He organized an ecumenical prayer meeting which is considered as the first of its kind in ex-Yugoslavia. Another important event for the development of ecumenism was the formation of the Bishops' Commission for Ecumenism by the Yugoslav Bishops Conference (YBC) in 1967, which in 1970 developed into the YBC Council for Ecumenism.

The Orthodox Church met the challenges of the Second Vatican Council by organizing three All-Orthodox Conferences held on the island of Rhodes between 1961 and 1964. One of the major conclusions of these conferences that concerns our subject, is the one that allowed each local Orthodox Church to embark upon dialogue with the Catholic Church at its own risk and on its own behalf (Perić, 1993:14).

These initiatives triggered different forms of ecumenical approaches at all levels between the Catholic churches in ex-Yugoslavia. The first important meeting, initiated by the archbishop of Zagreb, Franjo Šeper, was held on June 26, 1968, in Srijemski Karlovci. There he met with Patriarch German of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The meeting was not only given great attention by the public, but also met with popular approval. Meetings of this kind were occasionally held at the highest level until the 1990's, but they were gradually transformed into "occasional courtesy calls" that didn't have any significant impact on everyday life, especially when considering mounting tensions in society (Kolarić, 1985:189).

Ecumenical developments took place in many other spheres of the Church, that is, of religious life. Ecumenical themes were treated with significant interest in the Catholic press, in the weekly *Glas Koncila*, in the journals and magazines like *Svesci*, *Crkva u svijetu*, *Obnovljeni Život*, *Veritas* and in other similar publications.

A group of distinguished Catholic priests and theologians who worked for the theological society *Kršćanska sadašnjost* and promoted the ideas of the Second Vatican Council deserves to be singled out. The most distinguished in the group were Josip Turčinović, Tomislav Šagi-Bunić and Vjekoslav Bajsić. Numerous articles on Ecumenism were published in Catholic publications, especially in *Crkva u svijetu* (articles by F. Franić, J. Kolarić, T. Ivančić, R. Perić, J. Barišić), *Bogoslovska smotra* (articles by I. Golub, A. Kusić) and *Obnovljeni Život* (articles by S. Schmidt). An outstanding series of articles on ecumenism was also written by Juraj Kolarić in the Catholic magazine *Veritas*. Furthermore, interaction in the biblical, pastoral

and humanitarian sphere started to develop between the churches, and special attention was given to the education of priests, seminarians, and lay people in the spirit of ecumenism.

Significant progress was noticed among Christian theologians, especially during the famous faculty meetings⁴ organized between Croatian and Slovenian Catholic theologians on the one hand and Orthodox theologians on the other hand. These meetings began in September 1974, and by 1990, nine meetings had been held. The meetings were of a scholarly character and were held in different locations in Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia. Topics such as the sacraments and the eucharist, evangelism, the churches in the modern world, spiritual life, the mystery of the Church and the ecclesiastical service were discussed. An atmosphere of friendship and tolerance prevailed during the meetings, which had a very positive impact on the whole ecumenical movement. Political events at the beginning of the 1990's however, had a negative effect on this form of Christian interaction.

A group of Orthodox bishops⁵, most of whom had dioceses in Croatia, issued a statement in September 1990 according to which the Catholic Church of Croatia and the Croatian government were held responsible for the sufferings of the Serbian population in Croatia. The official publication of the Roman Catholic Church in Croatia, *Glas Koncila* was singled out as the means for anti-Christian propaganda against Serbs. The Catholic Church immediately responded in *Glas Koncila* to the accusations, stating that it was Croats who were actually in peril, who by that time had been under a sort of Serbian occupation. On September 20, 1990, the Theological faculty from Zagreb sent a telegram to the Theological faculty in Belgrade which was in charge of organizing the meetings, requesting cancellation of the meetings due to defamation and offenses caused by the highest representatives of the Orthodox Church (Perić, 1993:206-207).

⁴The meeting was organized by *Teološka fakulteta* from Ljubljana, *Katolički bogoslovni fakultet* from Zagreb and *Bogoslovski fakultet SPC* from Belgrade.

⁵The announcement was written in the Croatian town of Pakrac, on September 13, 1990, and signed by metropolitan of Zagreb and Ljubljana Jovan, Dalmatian bishop Nikolaj, bishop of Srijem Vasilije, bishop of Slavonia Lukijan, bishop Moravički and the administrator of the eparchy of Bačka Irinej, and by five other Orthodox priests. Two days later (September 15, 1990) it was published in the Belgrade daily *Politika*.

This severe verbal conflict resulted in the absence of the representatives of the Zagreb Theological faculty from the Ninth Conference on Ecumenism that was eventually held in Serbia in September 1990. The Conference was attended only by Serbian and Slovenian theologians. National and political conflicts once again resulted in the rupture of ecumenical interaction.

After the first democratic elections were held in 1990, Croatia proclaimed independence which subsequently resulted in the armed rebellion of one part of the Serbian population in Croatia. The rebellion was followed by armed aggression upon Croatia by the Yugoslav National Army and by Serbian and Montenegrin paramilitary units. The tragedy of the war, together with massive destruction and a huge number of civilian casualties, called for a completely new approach to reality. Both Churches responded to the peril. Therefore, the first meeting between the highest representatives of both Churches was held in May 1991, in Srijemski Karlovci.

Cardinal Kuharić and Patriarch Pavle issued a mutual statement according to which Christians should not let their lower instincts prevail over reason and human dignity.⁶ The second meeting was held in August 1991 in Slavonski Brod, and it was then that the highest representatives of the two Churches concluded that their appeals for peace and against the war were merely “a useless cry for help”.⁷ Further meetings were held in September 1992 in Bossey near Geneva and in May 1994 in Sarajevo. The latter meeting was attended by Cardinal Kuharić, Patriarch Pavle and the Patriarch of Moscow and all-Russia, Alexey II. In January 1992, in the midst of the war, the first meeting of the Commission for Contact and Dialogue, organized by the Sacred Ecclesiastical Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Croatian Catholic Bishops Conference was held in St. Gallen.

The next important meeting was held in Geneva, in September 1992, where Cardinal Kuharić and Patriarch Pavle issued a joint statement. All of these meetings during the war were not characterized by discussions about theological problems: their main topic was the current situation, that is, war and peace (Perić, 1993:30). However, these statements alone and similar calls for peace by the religious authorities could not stop the war and create a just peace in ex-Yugoslavia.

⁶*Glas Koncila*, May 19, 1991.

⁷*Glas Koncila*, November 1, 1991.

Besides the peacemaking efforts by the religious authorities, many other civilian associations and individuals in Croatia contributed to antiwar ecumenical activities. The Croatian branch of the *World Conference on Religion and Peace* (WCRP) that publishes a magazine for a culture of nonviolence and peace *Mirotvorni izazov [The Challenge of Peace]*, in which ideas of reconciliation, tolerance and cooperation between religions have been constantly promoted, contributed significantly to the antiwar activities.⁸ The Orthodox priest, Father Jovan Nikolić, deserves our respect and attention since he lived in Zagreb during the war and, until his death, worked hard for ecumenical interaction between religions in Croatia.

The end of the war and the subsequent political and social stabilization in Croatia and its immediate neighborhood contributed to the creation of improved conditions for the resumption and promotion of ecumenical dialogue at all levels. However, this article will restrict itself to analyzing the interaction between the Catholic Church and Serbian Orthodox Church in the tumultuous period between 1991 and 1997 a complete review of all the important events and changes in the sphere of ecumenism will be addressed by similar research in the future.

3. The Results of Content Analysis of the Religious Publications

3.1. Introduction⁹

This research concentrates on the conception of the communicational processes in relation to the Catholic Church and the religious publications. Altered relations between the Church and the press, which was noticeable especially after the Second Vatican Council, were taken into consideration. Hypothetically speaking, it is assumed that the content analysis and the approach to the problems of Ecumenism in the religious press are significantly defined by the war events that took place in the period between 1991 and 1995. *Therefore one of the working hypotheses was that the religious press assumed a very delicate role as a certain catalyst and a helping hand in the realistic conception of the specific social situation, namely war.*

⁸Many religious people from Croatia and ex-Yugoslavia published articles in *Mirotvorni izazov*. The most distinguished were lay people Ljiljana Matković-Vlašić, Vera Fischer, Ljiljana Pavletić, Željko Mardešić, Mihael Montiljo, and many others. Without their enthusiasm the magazine would not have been published regularly.

⁹Only that part of the findings of content analysis of the religious press between 1991 and 1995 is presented in the text, namely that referring to the theme of ecumenism.

The primary content analysis method applied to the research was to perceive the basic categories of war and peace. These terms were articulated in the materials analyzed as two inseparable polar opposites. The analysis also concentrates on the conception of the role and scope of the ecumenical problem within the context of interaction during times of war and peace.

3.2. The Sample and the Variables of the Research.

Overall, 260 issues of *Glas Koncila* published between 1991 and 1995 were analyzed in the research.¹⁰

Table 1: The basic pattern of the content analysis (in frequencies):

	GLAS
YEAR	KONCILA
1991	52
1992	52
1993	52
1994	52
1995	52
TOTAL	260

The research sample is defined as simple and random and is determined by the selection of units at regular intervals. The basic unit of the analysis consists of either one paragraph or of the newspaper section, that is, of one meaningful conceptual entity in the sense of substantiality. *War and peace are treated as independent variables, whereas the theme of ecumenism is treated as dependent variable.*

3.3. System of Categories for Content Analysis.

The theme of war:

a) activities of antiwar movements in the world (inspired by the Gospel); b) the aid of the Croatian Diaspora to the native country (appeals, the aid as humane and religious act); c) depoliticization of ecumenism based on the principles of Christianity (dialogue, cooperation,

¹⁰Only that part of the analyzed sample referring to *Glas Koncila* is presented in the text. For the period mentioned another two Catholic publications, *Veritas* and *Kana*, were analyzed as well.

ecumenical meetings and reunions); d) antiwar activities of the Catholic Church (Papal speeches and other activities; e) activities of Serbian Orthodox Church (praying for peace, etc).

The theme of peace:

a) Supporting of religious freedom; free choice of religion and religious views, bringing together different churches; b) ecumenical peacemaking movement, promotion of values such as integrity, love, faith in God, kindness of all people; c) pointing out the international character of the Catholic Church; d) articles about churches of other Catholic parishes (meetings, pilgrimages, etc.); e) negative reactions from Churches, lack of tolerance.

3.4. Articles on War Having Ecumenical Relevance

Altogether 612 contributions in *Glas Koncila* were analyzed. **60.4%** of the contributions referred to the problem of war, whereas only **39.6%** referred to the problem of peace.

Taking the contributions about the war into consideration, one will notice that only **17.4%** of them deal with an ecumenical theme (the others concentrate on the problem area of family life (20.9%) and the relations between the Church and the state (22.1%).

Table 2: Articles about the war in *Glas Koncila* in which ecumenism is treated:

Categories	f	%
a	202	27.2
b	26	3.5
c	141	19.0
d	310	41.7
e	65	8.6
Total	744	100%

Key:

- a) Antiwar activities around the world (inspired by Christian evangelism)
- b) aid of the Croatian diaspora to the native country (appeals, the aid as humane and religious act);
- c) depoliticization of ecumenism based on the principles of Christianity (dialogue, cooperation, ecumenical meetings and reunions);
- d) anti-war activities of the Catholic Church (Papal speeches and other activities)
- e) activities of the Serbian Orthodox Church (praying for peace, etc).

Of the 17.4% contributions about the war that deal with ecumenism, most frequent are articles about the antiwar activities of the Catholic Church, Papal speeches, and other similar activities. The speeches of Pope John Paul II as the highest authority and the head of all the Catholics stand out, which has a powerful integrated meaning with a positive influence on the enhancement of the positive perception of the contents thus presented. The year 1994 was very significant: the Pope paid a visit to Croatia at that time, which was elaborately commented upon by *Glas Koncila*.

The contributions in *Glas Koncila* dealing with the activities of antiwar movements around the world are represented by 27.2%, which is rather surprising since that was the period of the war in Croatia. Rather, it was expected that the contributions mentioned would discuss current events, that their attention would be directed towards the promotion of ecumenical and peacekeeping activities in Croatia rather than towards similar activities abroad. The articles about *depoliticization of ecumenism* constitute 19.0% and deal mainly with the necessity of promoting interaction, as well as with some other important meetings and reunions.

The problem of both ecumenism and the interaction between religions becomes more distinctive if the variable of the territorial definition of the content is taken under consideration. Aside from contributions dealing with Bosnia and Herzegovina (9.4%), only 2.6% referred to the remaining countries of ex-Yugoslavia, **which brings us to the conclusion that all the activities concerning the promotion of ecumenical interaction were almost completely suspended.**

Articles on the Serbian Orthodox Church are represented by 8.7%. The discrepancy between the proclaimed commitment of the Catholic Church to ecumenism (which is an important part of its activities, as stated in many official documents of the Church) and the actualization of the ecumenical ideas is evident. The main reason for the discrepancy was the war that caused the rupture in all forms of interaction.

3.5. Articles on Peace with an Ecumenical Character.

The attention of *Glas Koncila* is less directed towards articles about peace: they are represented by only 39.6%. Once again the stress is put on discussing the relations between the Church and the state (23.1%) and on family life (11.9%). Ecumenical themes are given the least attention and are represented by only **4.6%**.

Table 3: **Articles on peace with an ecumenical character**

Categories	f	%
a	24	12.1
b	13	6.5
c	40	20.1
d	84	42.2
e	38	19.1
Total	199	100%

Key:

- a) Support of religious freedom; free choice of religion and religious views, bringing together different churches;
- b) Ecumenical peacemaking movement, promotion of values such as integrity, love, faith in God, kindness to all people;
- c) Pointing out the international character of the Catholic Church;
- d) Articles about churches of other Catholic parishes (meetings, pilgrimages...);
- e) Negative reactions from Churches, lack of tolerance.

Contributions dealing with ecumenical themes in the context of peace are the least represented in *Glas Koncila* - **4.6%**. In this frame of reference the most represented are the contributions dealing with *churches of other Catholic parishes* (meetings of the Catholic believers, mutual celebrations, meetings of the young, etc), which has a strong integrated potential (42.2%).

Stressing the international character of the Catholic Church takes second place (20.1%), which means that significant attention is given to broadening of connections and the integration of the Church at the universal level, the Church that assembles Catholics from the whole world. Somewhat less space is given to articles that treat other churches in negative manner, such as articles about the Serbian Orthodox Church (19.1%).

Ecumenical movement for peace is given a relatively little space (6.5%). In the period analyzed, the Catholic Church was not very concerned about future actions of that kind. However, one thing should be taken into consideration, and that is the fact that a considerable amount of time needs to pass before the whole situation is viewed more objectively.

Survey Results: The Believers' Views on Ecumenism and Christian Interaction.

The source of data about the believers' relation to ecumenism is socio-religious research carried out in April and May 1997 in seven Franciscan provinces in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a sample of **498** persons (believers), who were all above the age of 18. The data was collected using a survey questionnaire that consisted of 125 questions: 4 questions in 125 were directly and 2 were indirectly related to ecumenism and inter-Christian dialogue. Univariate statistical analysis was used, which means that distributions of the relative frequencies were given for every variable researched (Duvnjak, 1999:142-146).

The first question relating to ecumenism dealt with the believers' views about other Christian churches, that is, regarding their specific way of implementing the principles of the Gospel.

Table 4: Do other Christian churches, in your opinion, implement the principles of Gospel?

They do much more than the Catholic Church	3.8%
They do to the same extent as the Catholic Church	14.1%
They do, to a lesser extent than the Catholic Church	19.1%
They don't implement them at all	1.4%
I'm not acquainted with other Christian churches	58.8%
No answer	2.8%

N=498

The table shows that the majority of believers (more than a half of subjects questioned or 58.8%) is not sufficiently acquainted with other Christian churches. This fact is significant and points out the current state of ecumenism in Croatia, at least when the Catholic believers are considered. That is, aside from recommendations and wishes expressed by the representatives of the Catholic hierarchy for informing not only priests but lay people as well about other Christian communities, it seems that no particular results were achieved in that direction.

The above facts show that the efforts directed towards ecumenism, noticeably intensified after the Second Vatican Council and suspended at the beginning of 90's due to the war, did not obtain significant results among believers. Therefore it is necessary that the efforts be resumed and promoted with greater determination than before. In the same sense, the fact that every second Catholic believer is not well acquainted with other Christian communities, points out the

necessity of educating them. The education should be directed towards learning more about other Catholic communities and different aspects of their activities ranging from theological, doctrinal and ritual to institutional and organizational. That is the first step to be made towards the revival and further development of the ecumenical movement.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that almost every fifth believer (19.1%) speaks in favor of the Catholic Church, thinking that the other Christian churches (communities) implement the principles of Gospel to a lesser extent. On the other hand, 14.1% of the believers do think that other Christian churches implement the principles of Gospel to the same extent as the Catholic Church.

The above facts are not very encouraging regarding the future of ecumenism in the researched area and therefore - - as it has been already pointed out - - it is the responsibility of the officials of the Catholic Church to provide the believers with more information about other Christian communities. The most important part of this project is a personal contact between the members of different Christian communities. The contact might be realized by organizing meetings at lower levels as well as other forms of education such as lectures, printing thematic books, forums etc.

The next question referred to the problem area of inter-religious dialogues and closer contacts as the two major conditions for the survival and intensification of ecumenism.

Table 5: What is your view on inter-religious dialogue and closer contacts?

I definitely support them	22.9%
I support them with caution	38.2%
I don't think there are any	9.4%
I don't think there should be any	2.6%
I'm not acquainted with it	25.7%
No answer	1.2%

N=498

The believers' views on inter-religious dialogues and closer contacts are rather uneven: the majority of believers support the activities mentioned, but at the same time think that the activities should be met with caution (more than every third subject or 38.2%). As in the

previous question, a significant number of believers (25.7%) are not acquainted with the basic forms of inter-religious interaction, which confirms our view on the necessity for a better education of believers. Believers should be informed not only about other Christian communities, but also about the true nature and concepts of ecumenism, as well.

On the other hand, one fact that should not be neglected is that more than 1/5 of the believers surveyed definitely supports inter-religious dialogues and closer contacts. Another fact is to be pointed out is that only 2.6% of the believers are opposed to interaction, thinking that there should not be any inter-religious interactions and closer contacts at all. So, although there is some suspicion and caution present, the number of believers who are explicitly against ecumenism is very small.

The third question is directly related to the previous one, and it should help us with finding out about the level at which possible inter-religious talks are to be conducted.

Table 6: At what level, in your opinion, should inter-religious talks be conducted?

At its highest level	47.6%
At the level of religious institution of higher education	14.3%
At the level of parishes	3.8%
At the level of believers	9.2%
At the level of laymen	1.2%
No dialogue necessary	1.2%
I don't know	21.5%
No answer	1.2%

N=498

Almost half of the subjects surveyed (47.6%) think that the inter-religious talks should be conducted at the highest level, that is at the level of Church leadership. Such distribution of answers might lead to several conclusions. One of them is related to the answer to the previous question: 38.2% of the subjects surveyed, support dialogues and closer contacts between the religious communities but with a certain amount of caution. So, the believers see inter-religious dialogue as a rather delicate activity and they leave the responsibility to the church hierarchy in order to avoid possible mistakes regarding the rapidity and the ways of establishing contacts.

The above leads us to conclude that, in the researched area, there are no conditions that would make the inter-religious dialogue at lower levels possible. Lower levels include parishes, believers' associations, lay people, etc. Instead of formality and declarative quality, at these levels, spontaneity and closeness to real life problems and obstacles that inhibit the development of ecumenism in Croatia should be stressed. After all, such have been the answers of the surveyed believers: every tenth subject (9.2%) thinks that the talks mentioned should be conducted at the level of believers, and 3.8% of the subjects think that these talks should be conducted at the parochial level.

Attention should also be given to 14.3% of the believers who think that the inter-religious talks should be conducted at the level of the religious institutions of higher education. Although this percentage is not high, it leads to the conclusion that the meetings of theological faculties, which were previously mentioned in the historic survey of the ecumenical events in Croatia, had a certain influence both on the public and lay people. The number of believers who consider the dialogue between religions unnecessary is, in this case, negligible (1.2%).

The penultimate question is directly referred to the believers' views on ecumenism:

Table 7: Your View on Ecumenism (closer contacts and unity between churches)

It's necessary and many results have been achieved	7.4%
Necessary, but much work remains to be done in bringing together the Christian communities	36.7%
Necessary, but difficult to achieve	21.3%
Unnecessary, because efforts done so far haven't brought any significant results	1.8%
Impossible to achieve in the world as we know it	11.0%
Not familiar with it	20.3%
No answer	1.4%

N=498

The believers views on ecumenism are rather divided: a little more than one third of the subjects surveyed (36.7%) think that ecumenism is necessary, but at the same time think that much more work needs to be done on bringing together different Christian communities. In other words, they think that all the efforts that have been done so far in the domain of ecumenism are

not enough, but they believe in ecumenism and consider it necessary. Then there is a group of believers (21.3%, or a little more than every fifth subject surveyed) who think, just like the previous group, that ecumenism is necessary but is difficult to achieve in everyday life.

So, this part of the sample shows that there is a certain suspicion about the possibility of the implementation of the ecumenical principles. Somewhat similar are the views of believers who are even more skeptical for they consider the implementation of the ideas of ecumenism impossible in the world as we know it (every tenth respondent or 11.0%). Only a minority of believers think that ecumenism is necessary and that there have already been significant achievements in its domain (7.4%).

Once again there are indicators of the problem of insufficient knowledge about the research problem: every fifth person questioned (20.3%) declare that he is not familiar enough with ecumenism. Although in this case this number is smaller than in the previous answers, it is significant and once again points out the necessity for more intense and appropriate education of believers in the spirit of ecumenism. Another pattern seems to be constantly repeated: the number of subjects with negative attitude towards the unity of different churches is small. In other words, only 1.8% of the believers thinks that ecumenism is unnecessary and that the efforts so far have not brought any significant results.

The last question referred to the believers' membership in ecumenical groups.

Table 8: **Are you a member of any ecumenical group?**

Yes	0.8%
No	89.0%
No, but I'd like to be	4.0%
I used to be	0.8%
Without answer	5.2%

N=497

The overwhelming majority of believers are not members of ecumenical groups (89.0%), and only 4.0% of the believers would like to become members of an ecumenical group. Only 0.8% of them are members of ecumenical groups which shows that there is a great potential of organizing various groups and associations of believers that would, among other things, work on the promotion of both ecumenism and Christian unity.

5. Final Remarks on the Result of the Analysis of the Press (*Glas Koncila*)

By its articles in the period between 1991 and 1995, *Glas Koncila* as the official publication of the Catholic Church in Croatia became recognized as one of the active participants and witnesses of our time. It was expected that the reality of war would result in new perspectives on some of the themes, while other themes would be less represented, all of which could be detected in the results of this research.

In the period between 1991 and 1995, war and peace were given much scope in *Glas Koncila*. The analysis has shown that **60.4% of the contributions dealt with war and 39.6% of the contributions dealt with peace.**

With regard to war, **17.4%** of the contributions were also dealing with the theme of ecumenism. The most represented topics were the peacekeeping activities of the Catholic Church, Papal speeches, and similar activities.

Then there were contributions about depoliticization of ecumenism based on Christian principles, and, finally, the contributions about the activities of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which were the least represented. Such results are not surprising: they are due to the war. The attention of editors and journalists was directed exclusively to current problems such as providing for the war victims and helping those in danger, all of which resulted in redistribution of importance given to the specific themes.

In *Glas Koncila* very little attention was given to the real ecumenical themes dealing with peace, that is, only **4.6%**. Such articles dealt mainly with the promotion of Christian dialogue, but only at the level of parishes in Croatia. Then there were the contributions in which the international character of the Catholic Church was stressed, and finally, the contributions of a rather negative character.

By summing up all the results, it becomes possible to single out the underlying messages appearing in the major categories of analysis. Therefore, **the basic ecumenical messages within the problem area of war** are as follows: dedication to the promotion of the basic principles of the Catholic ecumenism even under war conditions; promotion of peace and forgiveness; encouraging the promotion of co-existence; a wish to organize as many ecumenical meetings as possible; working hard against intolerance between different Christian groups; promotion of dialogue and the interaction with Serbian Orthodox Church; insisting on the fact that for peace, besides good will, joint hard work is needed; the view that foreign countries could have helped

Croatia more during the war; not much interest shown for the events taking place in the other countries of ex-Yugoslavia.

The **major ecumenical messages in *Glas Koncila* within the problem area of peace** are as follows: working hard on the promotion of religious freedom; promotion of ecumenism by organizing prayer meetings; stressing the international character of the Catholic Church as the one and only Church for all Catholics around the world; pilgrimages and visits to different places which is important for the promotion of interaction and dialogue with other churches not only in Croatia, but around the world as well; stressing the importance of the Catholic Church in the promotion of values that encourage harmonious coexistence and dialogue: in that sense the Catholic Church points out that encouraging intolerance between different Christians is not compatible with its principles.

The major conclusion derived from the results of the content analysis is as follows: it was due to the war that in *Glas Koncila* ecumenical themes were not given as much attention as might have been expected. The war caused a thematic redistribution - themes that were related to the promotion of ecumenical interaction and dialogue, had to be temporarily disregarded.

6. Final remarks on the survey results.

The analysis of the survey results shows the views of lay people, who belong to the Franciscan parishes, on the modern ecumenical movement in Croatia. Several major features as well as problems of the believers' conception of ecumenism may be singled out from the obtained results:¹¹

The majority of believers are neither acquainted enough with the basic principles of ecumenism nor with the ways of its realization in the specific conditions that exist in Croatia. It is also important to mention that more than half of the subjects surveyed are not familiar enough with other Christian churches, which is considered as an obstacle for further development of ecumenism in Croatia.

Despite insufficient knowledge of other Christian communities and of basic principles of the ecumenical movement, the majority of believers support the ecumenical movement, but with

¹¹The results are significant **only for that part of the believers under the spiritual guidance of Franciscan monks** and not for the overall population of the Catholic believers in Croatia.

a certain amount of caution and skepticism present when the realization of the ecumenical objectives is considered.

The results have shown that there are two small, polarized groups of believers. The first and somewhat bigger one consists of the extremely optimistic believers who absolutely support all ecumenical efforts. The second and noticeably smaller one consists of believers who are absolutely against bringing closer and uniting separated Christian communities.

Amongst the believers surveyed, there is a small number of those belonging to the ecumenical groups, whereas, at the same time, there is a certain number of the believers surveyed who would like to become active members of the ecumenical groups. This shows that believers need to be more informed about the possible activities of ecumenical groups.

In conclusion: the results of the survey show that, in general, despite suspicion and the obstacles present, the positive attitude towards ecumenism prevails amongst the Catholic believers. The research has also shown that the Catholic believers should be more informed not only about other Christian churches and communities, but also about the basic ideas and principles of ecumenism.

The results of these two researches point to the constant presence of ecumenism as one of the most important activities of the Catholic Church. However, the catastrophic situation of the war resulted in the redistribution of the importance given to certain themes. Both researches pointed to the two key characteristics of modern ecumenism in Croatia (and partly in Bosnia and Herzegovina). The first one is the marginalization of the ecumenical dialogue, which resulted in giving much more importance to the themes of war. The previously mentioned religious communities assumed the political role by taking care of “their own people”-- an attitude similar to the one of the power elites. On the other hand, it is absolutely clear that both the Catholic Church and Serbian Orthodox Church, which was in accordance with their principles, provided for the war victims and organized various forms of spiritual and material help. The second characteristic that we wish to point out is the presence of the ecumenical potential, the spark that was not completely extinguished in the period of war. In other words there still exist certain prerequisites for the resuscitation of the dialogue as well as for other forms of ecumenical interaction. What is extremely encouraging is the fact that there is a significant number of believers who support the ecumenical ideas, whereas the number of those against them is negligible.

Therefore we might conclude that the meeting between Cardinal Kuharić and Patriarch Pavle, which took place in Switzerland, resulted in the resuscitation of the ecumenical dialogue which has produced the first significant achievement for the period of the past few years.

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