

# HISTORICAL ROOTS OF SLOVENIAN CHRISTOSLAVIC MYTHOLOGY

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*History is what hurts.*<sup>1</sup>

## I. INTRODUCTION

In past months, an exhibition has been set up in Ljubljana, entitled *The Dark Side of the Moon B The History of Totalitarianism in Slovenia 1945-1990* where the methods, ways and the extent of the political and police repression of the socialist regime in that period were shown. This exhibition was well prepared and more than necessary because it dealt with one very tabooized period of our history. In contemporary Slovenia, the 20<sup>th</sup> century history of our country is seen as the clash of three different totalitarisms: Italian Fascism, German Nazism and Socialism after WW2. And even earlier, the regimes of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Hapsburg's Empire which included Slovenian lands were far from democratic. But I think another *dark age* or problematic past of Slovenians must be remembered and investigated: namely, the religious monopoly or more precisely, the monopoly of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and related (political) groupings and institutions on different fields of Slovenian society. In different periods of Slovenian history it took various forms: the most appropriate name for it is "ARoman Catholic integristm".

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<sup>1</sup> Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*. (Cornell University Press, 1981), 102. See bibliography at the end of this article for many Slovenian publications to which the author refers throughout this paper.

At the end of our century, all these totalitarisms, integrisms or authoritarianisms seem defeated. But on the other hand, there are some clear signs of renewed efforts by some groups for the re-installment of the last mentioned, namely religious integrism. In this article I intend to analyse the historical foundation of such politics, i.e. of Political Catholicism - namely, the Slovenian religious-national or Christoslavic mythology. This was and still is a highly controversial and delicate issue among the Slovenian social-scientific and political community with many opposing views, many of which are highly emotionally charged. For this reason it is sometimes very difficult to establish discourse on these issues at a serious analytical level, especially with the non-academic public and older generations (i.e. with the contemporaries, marked by some of the traumatic historical events).

## II. RELIGIOUS-NATIONAL MYTHOLOGY

Religious-national mythology is an organized, coherent and dynamic system of different myths, beliefs, stereotypes, symbols and images about ourselves and about others, concerning one specific field: national and religious issues. In other words, on one hand we can speak about mythological construction and perception (i.e. how we see others) and on the other hand about mythological self-construction and self-perception of reality (i.e. how we see ourselves). As any other mythology, religious-national mythology consists basically of two types of myths: traditional (that are oriented backward) and ideological (oriented toward the future). As such, mythology has three main functions, even in contemporary societies: integrative (or social), cognitive (explanatory) and communicative (mythology is a medium of communication). So, mythology has some very practical functions and goals to achieve in society.<sup>2</sup> Mythology is always a political view on a certain matter, although being told in a poetic way; if I may use German philosopher Ernst Cassirer's terminology, it brings the *poetization* as well as the *politization* to the world (Cassirer, 1967, 183-184).

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<sup>2</sup> more detailed in Velikonja, 1996, 19-30; 1998, 14-16.

Although being a universal religion (see for example Apostle Paul's letter to Galatians 3, 29), Christianity in practice acquires many local, regional or national characteristics. In other words, it often becomes "acclimatized", "domesticated" or "nationalized". "Christoslavism" is a well-chosen neologism of an American sociologist of religion Michael A. Sells, used in his analyses of religious-national mythologies among some South Slav nations that were involved in one way or another - in recent wars in the Balkans: Serbs, Croats and Montenegrins (Sells, 1996). According to Sells, Christoslavism is a dominant kind of religious-national mythology of these nations. Each of these nations developed its specific form of Christoslavism. Two basic assumptions, relevant for analysis of Slovenian Christoslavism, are firstly that Slavs are, can, and must only be Christians (i.e. *being Slav means being Christian, Slavs are racially Christians, Christianity is the only right religion for them*). Secondly, those among the Slavs who reject Christianity, are traitors not only of their faith, but also of their race (there is a popular belief that if you are not Christian, you somehow are not qualified to be a true Slav: *they are not real Slavs, there is something wrong with their national identity, they betrayed their ancestors* etc.). The immediate conclusion that emerges from that kind of thinking is that something has to be done about this, most often expulsion, reconversion or annihilation. Before discussing the Slovenian type of Christoslavism I would like to describe the most important episodes of Slovenian religious history, which form the basis for Slovenian Christoslavism.

### III. SHORT REVIEW OF SLOVENIAN RELIGIOUS HISTORY

Christianization of the ancestors of contemporary Slovenians, Charantanians<sup>3</sup>, was early (already in 8<sup>th</sup> century) and traumatic (there were three fratricidal wars between Christian and "pagan" sides in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century). The poetic reflection of these historic developments can be found in one of the most popular epics of France Prešeren, the most important Slovenian Romantic poet: *The Baptism at Savica*.

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<sup>3</sup> In the Slovenian language, *Karantanci*; their state was Charantania (*Karantanija*).

Centers of Christianity emerged nearby, in Salzburg and in Aquileia. As in the majority of cases, the Christianization of the Charantian pagans went in parallel with their subjection by the stronger neighboring country – first Bavarians and then Franks. During the Middle Ages and through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, priests were one of the few literate and educated Slovenians: indeed, many prominent scientists, linguists, poets, political writers, etc. were Roman Catholic priests or monks. But there were almost no Slovenians among higher clergy and prominent personalities of the RCC. The nobility, aristocracy, and high bourgeoisie were of German or Italian origins.

Slovenians actually enjoyed religious pluralism only during the period of the Protestant Reformation from the 1530s to 1630. It is difficult to estimate, but large segments of Slovenian population became Protestant. A provincial Church organization, *Slovenian Church*, was established. Lutherans were living predominantly in towns and in some parts of the country; they were prevalent also among nobility and among the German population. Radical Protestant sects – first of all Anabaptists – who were popular among peasants in some regions, were condemned and persecuted by both the Lutheran and Roman Catholic side. In other regions, peasants mostly remained Roman Catholic. Protestantism played an important role in Slovenian history. It had not only religious, but also significant cultural and national dimensions. The first books in modern Slovenian were written and translated by Protestants, including the Bible in 1584. Then, there were attempts to establish an educational system in every parish, and the name *Slovenians* itself emerged in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century from a Protestant writer and pastor Primož Trubar.<sup>4</sup> Other protagonists of the Protestant Reformation in Slovenian lands were Sebastjan Krelj, Jurij Dalmatin, Adam Bohorič, and Felicijan Trubar.

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<sup>4</sup>see also ZS, 1979, 259-269, 288-298.

The Counter-Reformation won in the Central European Hapsburg lands. This happened also in Slovenian lands, where the RCC successfully attacked and reversed the gains of the Reformation. It succeeded because of well organized political and military efforts of the Hapsburg rulers and pressures from the RCC, including the introduction of the Jesuit order. In other words, religious uniformity was imposed because the Hapsburg state possessed relatively strong central executive authority and enjoyed full support of the the RCC. The Counter Reformation was systematic, but B with some exceptions - not bloody as in other Central European countries (during the Thirty Years War) or as in France (during Huguenots wars). However, it was very cruel. Protestants living in Slovenian lands were expelled or reconverted to Roman Catholicism, their churches and graveyards were destroyed, almost all Protestant books were systematically traced and publicly burned (except the Bible). Indeed, many of the most educated and wealthy Slovenians left Slovenian lands. This process was intensified and completed during the first three decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> The only remnant from that time is a small Protestant community in the extreme east part of Slovenia (now ca. 20.000 believers), formerly in the Hungarian part of the Hapsburg Empire, which was more tolerant concerning religious issues. In a cultural and national sense, the next 150 years meant a certain stagnation or even regression for the Slovenians, compared to the era of the Reformation.

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<sup>5</sup>see also ZS, 1979, 299-311.

Until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Roman Catholic clergy were almost the only educated social group in Slovenian lands. That situation changed at the moment when different groups of Slovenian lay intellectuals appeared and began to assume their role in some fields. Typical Latin polarization and confrontations (among Catholic and those who were a-Catholic or anti-Catholic) took new forms. Generally speaking, the RCC had a strong impact on politics in Slovenian lands during that time, it was clearly involved in the politics. Catholic integrism (called *Clericalism* by its opponents) was one of the strongest currents in Slovenian political life of that time. For these politicians and theologians, the vision of Slovenian society was corporate.<sup>6</sup> Roman Catholic priests were very often taking active part in the political life in Slovenian lands: in fact most powerful political leaders from the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1941 were priests. Three Roman Catholic priests played an outstanding role in the most important Slovenian political party, *Slovenian People's Party*, Dr. Janez Evangelist Krek (1865-1917), Dr. Anton Korošec (1872-1940) and Dr. Franc Kulovec (1884-1941). The first two were very charismatic and enjoyed great popularity among the people and the last two were also the leaders of this party. This political option was supported by a diverse set of social groups, societies, institutions, journals, economic, sports and cultural organizations.<sup>7</sup> The political and cultural engagement of the RCC was highly problematic because priests acted in an exclusivistic way, denying any other ideology than Catholic (they followed B in Latin B *aut-aut* logic, developed by the theologian and Bishop Dr. Anton Mahnič /1850-1920/). They (and of course related politicians, writers etc.) spread hatred against Liberals, Christian Socialists, and Liberal Catholics (specifically in the 1920s and 1930s against Edvard Kocbek's circle, then against Andrej Gosar and Janez

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<sup>6</sup> See among others, Dragoš, 1998. In the editorial article *The Whole Man!* of the right-wing young extremists journal *Strah v viharju* (*Guard in the Storm*) on April 28, 1938 one could read: "Only the totalitarian, active and the whole man pervading Catholicism can save mankind, because it is able to save the whole man, his soul and his body from the evil and distress."

<sup>7</sup> On aspects of the Catholic-Liberal A-cultural struggle" in Slovenia see Rupel, 1987, 261-291.

Janžekovič), against Jews, and of course against Communists.<sup>8</sup> But the RCC in pre-WW2 Slovenia was not only the political, cultural, and social factor, it was also one of the greatest landholders.

Slovenia as small nation, bordering with Italy, and always a part of some larger state, enjoyed no special attention from the Holy See. But we can speak about another important dimension of the political involvement of Slovenian clergy, namely patriotism. Nationally minded Roman Catholic priests in late 18<sup>th</sup>, in 19<sup>th</sup> and in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century actively defended and emancipated Slovenian national rights, culture, and language against the pressures from ruling nations, that is, against systematic Germanization and Italianization. Some of the most important figures were Anton Martin Slomšek (1800-1862), bishop from Maribor, future first Slovenian saint, the author of the saying *Protect two most precious things for Slovenians: the holy Catholic faith and Slovenian language*"; Matija Majar Ziljski (1809-1892), one of the founders of first Slovenian political program in 1848; and an archetypical figure from Slovenian literature, *Chaplain Martin Čedermac* (created by the novelist France Bevk), who resists the pressures of Italianization during the Fascist period.<sup>9</sup> Also, the first Slovenian secondary school (gymnasium) was established by Church authorities (under the Bishop of Ljubljana, Anton Bonaventura Jeglič /1851-1937/).

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<sup>8</sup> see also Stella Alexander, 1979, 45.

<sup>9</sup> First published in 1938 by Slovenska Matica in Ljubljana.

During WW2, Slovenia was partitioned by Italian, German and Hungarian forces. The reactions of the Roman Catholic clergy varied. Priests from the German part of divided Slovenia were persecuted and expelled. Some Slovenian priests especially from the coastal region - actively supported the partisans, others sympathized with the liberation movement<sup>10</sup>, while some of them stayed out of politics. But in the Italian occupied *Province of Ljubljana* from April 1941 to September 1943 and then while occupied by German forces from September 1943 to May 1945, the RCC offered and stimulated complete functional, ideological, and also military collaboration with the occupiers. The head of the RCC, the ardent anti-Communist Bishop of Ljubljana, Dr. Grigorij Rožman (1883-1959) publicly welcomed Italians in April 1941<sup>11</sup>. He also helped to form Anti-Partisan Slovenian forces under Italian and then under the German high-command<sup>12</sup>. At the end of the war, 275 Roman Catholic priests and seminarians (including Rožman) left the country.<sup>13</sup> On the other side, the Slovenian Liberation Front was supported by the

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<sup>10</sup> Some of the most prominent Roman Catholic priests on the Partisan side are enumerated by Alexander, 1979, 45, 46.

<sup>11</sup> In a special statement, he and some politicians thanked Italians for the conquest of that part of Slovenia and promised absolute loyalty to occupying forces. Then, he celebrated masses for the Italian troops, took part in ceremonies of the oath of allegiance of Slovenian collaborating forces to the German regime, etc.

<sup>12</sup> There were two major types of military units collaborating with the occupiers: *Voluntary Anti-Communist Militia*, named by Partisans as *White Guard* (until the capitulation of Italy) and *Home Guards, Domobranci* (from autumn 1943 to May 1945). The latter formed a special SS unit and swore solemnly to *Fuhrer, Great Germany*, and fought for *New European Order* against all anti-Fascist Allies. These forces stimulated as they said as *Crusade against godless Communism and Partisans*. They were told that they were *Christ's soldiers*, that they are fighting *in the sign of Christ and Cross*, etc. Partisans were insulted (also from the pulpits) by different pejoratives such as being *red wolves*, their mothers were labeled as *the mother-wolves*; any collaboration with the Partisan Liberation Front was condemned as *mortal sin*. One of the Home Guard slogans was: "*In the name of the wounds of Christ, you, partisan, must die*". Christian Socialist writer, poet and one of the leading figures of the Partisan movement Edvard Kocbek wrote in January 1943, that "It is terrible that national treachery is carried out under the symbol of Christianity". (see also Alexander, 1979, 41-44).

<sup>13</sup> Dolinar, 1998, 224. According to Roman Catholic authors, from 1940 to 1962, 237 Slovenian Roman Catholic priests, seminarists, monks and nuns were killed: 186 because of the

majority of population. From late April 1941 to February 1943 it was pluralistic (consisting of Communists, Christian Socialists, left and patriotic intelligentsia and members of the patriotic sport organization *Sokol /Falcon/* and some other groupings). From 1943 on, Communists took all the leading positions. But it must also be emphasized that the majority of Partisan troops consisted of Roman Catholics. Beside national liberation, Communists had a second goal - a socialist revolution, which they started with the terror of their secret police right at the beginning of the armed resistance. Except in its most eastern part, Slovenia was liberated in May 1945 exclusively by Slovenian partisan forces with the help of partisan forces from other parts of Yugoslavia.

National liberation was at the same time also a socialist revolution. As in all countries where Communists took power, they began to eliminate political and ideological adversaries and opponents. The attitude of the Yugoslavian and Slovenian socialist regime to the RCC and religion in general was clearly unfavorable. In the first decade, we can speak of surveillance, persecution of some priests and also violence against them<sup>14</sup>, then there was antireligious propaganda, confiscation of property and land, destruction and profanation of some religious objects, etc.<sup>15</sup> Confessional religious instruction was banned from public schools from 1953 onward. Beside these pressures, the RCC Slovenia was deeply compromised and lost a lot of its reputation among the population because of the prewar predominantly integristic and conservative positions and because of the inter-war collaboration of some parts of the clergy with the occupiers. In socialist decades, the RCC in Slovenia concentrated its activities in the private sphere, strictly on religious and moral issues.

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Communist violence and 34 by German and Italian occupiers and Serbian and Croatian collaborationists (Palme mučeništva, 1994, 445-447).

<sup>14</sup> After the war, 250 Roman Catholic priests were arrested and imprisoned (Palme mučeništva, 1994, 10).

<sup>15</sup> see some documents in Jančar, 1998, p. 677-709.

Communists separated the Church and its affairs from the state for the first time in Slovenian history. So, the RCC gained an independent position in society and compared to some churches in other socialist countries also toward the state. Turning from totalitarianism to authoritarianism in 1960s, the church-state relationship improved, the period of conflicts was succeeded by a period of compromises and even accommodation.<sup>16</sup> Although very far from being democratic, the Yugoslavian type of *Self-Managing* socialism, strengthened by the cult of personality of Marshal Tito and the myths of *brotherhood and unity* and of the *heroic National Liberation War*, was more liberal, open to the influences from the West, and there was a better standard of living than in other socialist countries. In the process of Slovenian democratization in the 1980s, the RCC did not play an outstanding role.<sup>17</sup> The major factor of democratization was *civil society*: different civil society movements, journals, clubs, associations, intellectuals, writers, youth organization, punk subculture, etc.<sup>18</sup>

In Slovenia and in many other post-socialist societies, the collapse of socialism was seen for some social groups - as the possibility for the return of the prewar situation, a kind of conservative revolution. According to George Schopflin, the contradictory role of religion in East Central Europe is that on the one side it contributed to the process of democratization, but on the other it behaved as an undemocratic force, especially in Catholic countries. Due to reasons noted earlier, the RCC does not hold a dominant position in present Slovenian social, cultural, and political life.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, there are obvious indicators of aspirations and even

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<sup>16</sup> Roter, 1976, 276-283; Dolinar, 1998, 227-230. According to Slovenian sociologist of religion Marjan Smrke, this change in relationship was at least 15 years ahead of the democratic turnover among the less conflicting in Socialist countries (Smrke, 1996, 171; for a short review of state-church relations see also p. 128-131).

<sup>17</sup> This was also the opinion of the Slovenian Catholic theologian Dr. Anton Stres in November 1989, quoted in Kerševan, 1996, p. 43, 44.

<sup>18</sup> Quite different situation than in for example in Poland, where the RCC was one of the two most important centers of democratic opposition.

<sup>19</sup> Schopflin, 1993, 520, 521. See among others, Roter, 1992, 635, 636; Mojzes, 1994, 192,

attempts of some circles of the RCC hierarchy to regain its prewar position in society. According to some public statements and actions, it seems that their intention is to promote the RCC not only as the leading spiritual or religious institution, but also as the most important social and economic force and moral authority, strongly connected with politics. This reorientation of the RCC in Slovenia coincides mainly with the arrival of the new Archbishop, Dr. Franc Rode, in April 1997 who replaced the moderate one, Dr. Alojzij Šuštar.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Who enjoyed sympathies also among the non-Catholic population of Slovenia. Paul Mojzes (1994, 193) described him as *mild-mannered* and *unpretentious*.

Especially since then, Slovenians have been faced with intensive, radical and systematic attempts by some circles of the RCC to regain the dominant role in society. Such attempts are B if for no other reason - in clear contrast also to the decisions of the Second Vatican Council. Here are some of the most recent examples. They wish to interfere in the transformation of the Slovenian educational system which they regarded as being "objectively harmful for the Slovenian nation and for the Slovenian state".<sup>21</sup> There are voices against Article 7 of the Slovenian Constitution which ensures the separation of church and state as something "wrong, unnecessary" or "out-of-date"; and also against Article 55 which permits abortion. Then, there are signs of direct political aspirations.<sup>22</sup> The RCC also wants to regain all the large landholdings and forests that were nationalized by the socialist regime and are now state property. By this, it would become again an important economic force in Slovenian society, the second largest owner of the forests. As a part of a wide project of re-Catholization (or *new evangelization*) of some post-socialist countries,<sup>23</sup> there are plans to increase the number of Roman Catholic dioceses in Slovenia from three to eight. Further, there are demands to rewrite Slovenian history and to reevaluate the works of some of the most prominent Slovenian writers (for example

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<sup>21</sup> In a public lecture in Koper on January 18, 1999, Archbishop Rode condemned the Slovenian school system as "training for German shepherds" (' sort of dogs, MV). At that occasion, he also said that: *Awe will break down this school system in democratic way as soon as possible; if necessary, we will wait for five, ten or fifty years*". Some circles of the RCC are disturbed by the educational legislation which prohibits the presence of confessional instruction in public schools. We can infer this from some demands, addressed to Slovenian parents, for example: "Dear parents, don't let the memory of Christianity be erased from your children's hearts." (*Pastoral Letter* of September 3, 1998)

<sup>22</sup> For example: the role of the higher ranks of the RCC in the affairs of the *Ministry of the Interior of the RS* in February 1999 or the blessing of the Slovenian Embassy in Switzerland by a priest in the same month. Archbishop Rode stated that "after the programmes of political parties will be acceptable for the Church, and after we settle the relations with the state and the Holy See, the Church will withdraw from any kind of party politics and will show no preferences toward any party" (*Mladina*, January 25, 1999).

<sup>23</sup> Their number increased in Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and in Croatia.

Ivan Cankar). Then, there is the evident demonization of the socialist era as the only problematic period of our history, whereas there is a complete lack of criticism of its own history, which was also undemocratic and intolerant.<sup>24</sup> Every critical opinion toward these problematic statements and actions of some segments of the hierarchy of the RCC is immediately condemned as “*an attack against the Church*”.<sup>25</sup> All this reminds me of the attitude of two other “untouchable” institutions no less than ten years ago toward its critics, namely, the Yugoslav League of Communists and the Yugoslav People's Army.

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<sup>24</sup> It is emphasized that “*the Slovenian nation fell into the culture of death*” (*Choose Life*, document for Slovenian Synod, 1998) or that Slovenia itself is as “*an atheistic island*”.

<sup>25</sup> The Bishop of Koper, Metod Pirih, stated that “*the situation now is in this respect similar to the period immediately after the WW2*” (*Delo*, April 4, 1998).

At the end of this short historical review, I want to point out three important features of Slovenian religious history. First, using Paul Mojzes' and Zdenko Roter's four-fold typology of state-church relations regarding religious liberties<sup>26</sup>, the Slovenian situation is a classical example of "ecclesiastical absolutism".<sup>27</sup> This means that not only the religious but also the social and political life of the Slovenians until WW2 was influenced - and in some periods of history even dominated - by the RCC. In other words, during most of the periods of Slovenian history there was a complete religious monopoly by the RCC, religion was more a matter of politics and power than intimate faith. But in clear contrast to other South Slav nations, religion was not the main factor in the Slovenian nation building process. The main factors were of course language and cultural heritage. Secondly, it played a rather ambiguous role in Slovenian history. On the one hand it doubtlessly helped to build (or to emancipate) Slovenian national identity, but on the other, it generated some very profound conflicts among Slovenians and, as in WW2, acted clearly against Slovenian national interests.<sup>28</sup> Thirdly, there was always special attention given in Slovenian history to the problem of conversion: from Old Slavonic polytheism to Christianity, from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism, from Protestantism back to Roman Catholicism, from Roman Catholicism to non-Catholic ideologies (to Liberalism, Socialism or Atheism).<sup>29</sup>

#### **IV. SLOVENIAN CHRISTOSLAVISM**

After this quick review of the predominantly monoreligious and intolerant Slovenian religious history we turn to the most important features of Slovenian

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<sup>26</sup> Mojzes, 1992, 7-10; Roter, 1976, 125-154.

<sup>27</sup> The other three are "secularistic absolutism", "religious toleration" and "pluralistic liberty". According to the English sociologist David Martin's well known classification of religious-cultural patterns, Slovenia belongs to the "Latin" (or "Roman Catholic") religious-cultural pattern.

<sup>28</sup> see also Kerševan, 1987, 814, 815.

<sup>29</sup> This *convertibility of Slovenians* is discussed further by Rupel (1987, 81-96, 102-106).

religious-national mythology. Some of them are traditional, i.e. they are part of the so called "folk Catholicism", some reemerged in recent years, and some of them are quite new. At the outset one should mention three features that are not part of Slovenian Christoslavic mythology. First, there are no myths of being an *antemurale Christianitatis* or the outpost of Latin Christendom (as among two other Slavic nations, Croats and Poles); all Slovenian neighbors predominantly belong to the Roman Catholic religious-cultural pattern. Second, there is no religious-national messianism as is the case (among Slavs) with Russians, Poles and Slovaks<sup>30</sup>. Slovenians never perceived themselves as an *elect, sacred, or chosen* nation - there are no constructs such as *Holy* or *Heavenly Slovenia* as is the case among Serbs.<sup>31</sup> And third, there are no mythical explanations for historic developments and important events from the past.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> In Jozef Tiso's perspective; see Hoensch, 1987, 165-166.

<sup>31</sup> Although, in the past, some very similar slogans appeared, like *Mother, Fatherland, God*. On the other hand, we can hear Pan-Slavic religious ethnocentrism in opinions like "Western nations are, indeed, losing the feeling that God speaks with them through things. We Slavs are in this respect in a way richer, we have a kind of general sensibility for the world which other, more rational nations, don't have." (Archbishop Rode, *Mladina*, January 25, 1999).

<sup>32</sup> Dramatic historical events for some nations looked like miracles, for example the Battle of Kosovo for the Serbs or the "intervention" of the Virgin Mary on the Polish side who "saved" the monastery of Jasna Gora from the Swedish siege in 1655; and then she also "helped" the Polish army against the Soviet Red Army on Assumption Day, August 15, 1920 (battle for Warsaw or *the miracle of the Vistula*).

Myths that are *most essential* in Slovenian Christoslavism are the following. First, the premise that Slovenians are by essence a Roman Catholic nation. Therefore, in the Slovenian religious-national mythology, religious identity is national identity, as in the editorial article of the daily *Slovenec* (*Slovenian*) on September 27, 1892: “*Let's be Catholics and only on this basis let's be Slovenians, let's be Slavs*”.<sup>33</sup> The Roman Catholic religion is seen as “*the faith of our grandfathers*”.<sup>34</sup> The so called *Slovenian Church* (which is a Christoslavic synonym for the RCC in Slovenia) is exposed as being the only *historically Slovenian*. Second, besides the mythic *Other*<sup>35</sup>, in the Slovenian version of Christoslavism, there are several *Others* to be “condemned”: Protestants,<sup>36</sup> Muslims,<sup>37</sup> Freemasons, Liberals, Communists, the

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<sup>33</sup> According to Pelikan (1997, 30 and 42), the author of this article is J. E. Krek.

<sup>34</sup> We can hear statements like “*being against the rights of the RCC is being against our own nation*”.

<sup>35</sup> Other South Slav Christian nations have a mythic figure of the traitor of the faith and race B who is obviously a Slavic Muslim (i.e. *Poturica*, who is by definition a degenerate or hypocrite).

<sup>36</sup> A good example is the drama *Turkish Cross* (Katoliško slovensko izobraževalno društvo v Selcih, Ljubljana, 1910) by J. E. Krek who was not only a priest and politician but also a writer. In this piece we find the figure of *Dihur* (*Polecat*). He is an illegitimate child who unsuccessfully preaches Protestant doctrine among Roman Catholic Slovenians. They reject him with pejoratives such as “*fraudulent Martin Luther's and count's bastard*”, “*traitor*”, “*confounded Martin Luther's blackguard*”. Then, he reconverts to the faith of invading Ottomans. Faced with their defeat (they are beaten by Slovenian peasants, lead by a girl holding Maria's flag), he hangs himself. In this short dramatic piece, Protestant doctrine is labeled as “*Martin Luther's gossip*” and *AM. Luther's confusedness*”. Even now, we hear statements that if Slovenians had not reconverted to Roman Catholicism during the Counter Reformation period, we would have disappeared as a nation. In short, that we would have become Germans.

<sup>37</sup> Although there is a Muslim religious community in Slovenia (consisting of Bosnian and Albanian immigrants), they still don't have a mosque. A proposal in the mid-1990s for building it in Ljubljana was rejected by some political parties as *Adiscordant with Slovenian Central European culture*.” One can also hear the most absurd statements that *AI would be disturbed if someone would replace churches on our hills with the minarets*” (*Roundtable /Omizje/* in the 1st programme of Slovenian National Television /TVS1/, entitled “*How is the Church perceived in the public?*” December 22, 1998).

adherents of new religious movements (NRM),<sup>38</sup> Jews,<sup>39</sup> and above all, Atheists.<sup>40</sup> According to this mytho-logic, one of the most important recriminations against them is that they are non-national or a-national, in short, that they are against Slovenians as a nation and its interests.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> There are evident scruples on the Roman Catholic side concerning the spread of some new-age movements and new religions in Slovenia. We hear warnings against *false prophets* and *foreign sects*. Archbishop Rode stated that the present Slovenian school system educates in such a manner that *new generations will wander from one sect to another and they will not be able to distinguish between right and wrong* (lecture in Koper, January 1999). Describing the alleged attempts of uprooting Christianity from Slovenia, he states "*But then, different sects will overflow us*" (*Roundtable /Omizje/,* December 1998).

<sup>39</sup> After the decrees of Hapsburg Emperor Maximilian I in 1495 and 1515, Jews were expelled from Slovenian lands. Only a few hundred remained, the majority in the most eastern part of Slovenia, in Prekmurje, which was historically part of the Hungarian Kingdom. Nevertheless, there were antisemitic stereotypes, statements and myths of Jewish conspiracies expressed by political leaders, spokesmen and writers, predominantly from the right wing of the Slovenian political spectrum in the pre-WW2 period. (according to Pelikan /1997, 1997, 135, some of them are quite similar to those from Hitler's *Mein Kampf* or Rosenberg's *Myth of the Twentieth Century*).

<sup>40</sup> I will quote some of the most typical statements, starting from the beginning of this century. Dr. Aleš Ušeničnik (1868-1952), one of most prominent Slovenian theologians, wrote that "*the Slovenian atheist is for us a complete stranger and we can not trust him in anything*" (quoted in Pelikan, 1997, 32). "*Let the atheists not delude themselves that they will create new generations of atheists*", Archbishop Rode firmly stated in his abovementioned lecture. "Ideological violence continues even after the fall of Communism. The system, that brings forth militant atheists is the most anti-natural and most violent movement with far-reaching consequences and so it means the worst sin or sin against the Holy Spirit" (theologian Dr. Jože Krašovec, *Delo*, March 28, 1998). Present generations are often labeled as being "*brainwashed, Godless*", without values, etc. and there are also voices against "*materialistic liberalism, consumer epidemic, the society without the Soul*" etc. So, according to this logic, *We must return to our nation the values that were lost or forgotten*" (Archbishop Rode in Brezje, October 5, 1997).

<sup>41</sup> See an analysis of pre-WW2 ideological and political adversaries of the RCC in Slovenia by Pelikan, 1997, 96-137.

Third, Slovenians are labeled as *Maria's nation*. After the Counter Reformation period, the Marian cult flourished among the Slovenians. In recent years, strong popular devotion to the Virgin Mary is being emphasized. The Virgin Mary is seen as "*Protectress*", "*Mother*", and even "*Queen of Slovenians*".<sup>42</sup> Since 1992, there is a new ritual celebrated on Mary's Assumption Day, when the whole Slovenian nation B including non-Catholics - is consecrated to the Virgin Mary. In the Roman Catholic weekly, *Družina (Family)*, we can read inspiring declarations such as "Slovenian, don't be afraid, your Mother is the best of all!" (*Družina, Supplement /Priloga/, August 16, 1998, p. 11*). Fourth, we can speak of a strong impact of popular Catholicism in forms of many popular folk cults, veneration of the local patron saints, pre-Christian and Christian religious syncretism, devotional practices, pilgrimages, religious plays (*Passions*) etc. which are now restored and renewed.

A fifth expression of the Christoslavic myth is in the form of self-victimization. In the religious press and in the statements of some top representatives of the RCC, Slovenian Catholics are depicted as victims not only during the socialist regime, but also in contemporary Slovenian society. They use expressions like "*persecuted species*" or "*second class citizens*" or "*those standing in the corner*". We hear opinions like "the Church is expelled from public life", that there are "*united attempts of the banishment of faith and the Church from Slovenian public life*" (theologian Dr. Anton Stres, *Delo*, March 20, 1998), that the believers are "*looked askew*", that they are not having equal rights in society; or that the RCC "*has no access to the media*", that there is "*intolerance toward the faith and the Church*".<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Here are some typical slogans: "*Holy Mary, the patroness of Slovenians*"; "*Mary is Christ's and Our Mother*"; she is "*one of the strongest integrative symbols of Slovenian culture*"; "*Slovenian Mary*", "*Slovenian Soul*", "*Slovenian First Lady*" (according to Pope John Paul II. during his visit in Slovenia in 1996). See also the book *Mariji (To Mary)*, Skriptorij KA; Radovljica; 1999.

<sup>43</sup> Allegedly, the "*state is behaving toward the Catholics as if they are a kind of game (wild animals, MV) which anyone can shoot*" (Stres, *Delo*, March 15, 1999) or "*it seems like the believers*

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*fell (to Slovenia, MV) from space” (Dr. Borut Košir, Professor of the Theological Faculty).*

And finally, sixth, is the argument of majority. Being the Church of the majority of Slovenians, the hierarchy of the RCC demands special status in regard to the state. It operates with the nominal fact that more than 70 % of the Slovenian population is baptized. But only 20.5% to 23.1% of Slovenians are actually attending Sunday masses at least once a month (Smrke, 1996, 174). In public surveys carried out from the late 1960s, the self-declared religiosity of Slovenians reached its peaks in 1968 with 67.8% and in 1973 with 66.4%, then receded in 1978 to 45.3% and in 1983 to 47.7%, and stabilized in late 1980s and 1990s - in 1988 with 56.3%, in 1990 with 60.7%, in 1992 with 60.2% and in 1993 with 60.8%. The share of Slovenians who regularly attend religious rituals at least once a week, moved from 21.7% in 1968 and 17.7% in 1973 to 11.8% in 1978, 11% in 1983, 12.4% in 1988, and then increased to 13% in 1990, to 22.7% in 1992 and 13% in 1993.<sup>44</sup>

## V. CONCLUSION

At the end I'm returning to the beginning, to the story of the *dark sides* of Slovenian history. At the end of the century, we are faced with slogans like the "the RCC is the embodiment of the most exalted and ancient ideals of the Slovenian nation", "the Church is the bulwark of freedom" or even descriptions of the Church as the sole uniting institution of the Slovenians,<sup>45</sup> accompanied by the logic that "all have come and gone, only the Church seems to go on forever". All this implies the Christoslavic notion that the Roman Catholic religion and church are the only possible choice for the different aspects of the existence of the Slovenian nation in the future. The hidden intention of such myths is obvious: strong attempts by some structures of the RCC to regain its former positions in different fields, including those concerning definition of the nation (i.e. make Catholicism B no matter what was its role in the past - an exclusive touchstone of national identity for the future). As

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<sup>44</sup> Flere, Kerševan, 1995, 161, other significant data from empirical researches are on pages 160-175; see also Roter, 1992; and Smrke, 1996, 174, 175.

<sup>45</sup> See for example Archbishop Rode's speech in Brezje, August 15, 1997.

such, these extreme ambitions of some parts of the RCC hierarchy B and not of the RCC in Slovenia or Slovenian Catholics as a whole, although they are trying to speak in their name - seem to me one of the most dangerous threats to the democratic and plural development of Slovenian society. Attempts at the Catholicization of the concept of the Slovenian nation by using renewed versions of a Slovenian Christoslavic mythology - despite the abovementioned fact that the religious factor itself was not decisive in the Slovenian nation-building process B we criticized by some intellectuals, academics and journalists; and some graffiti concerning these problematic issues has also appeared.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Some of these graffiti are undoubtedly rude, like "Rode - Roman Distrainer"; "The Church Sucks", "Hypocrites"; "Clergy Steals"; "Clergy is not Fair"; "Clergy Steals Forests"; "Robbers"; "Abort Your Rode"; "The Church is Mafia", etc.

The very distinguished Polish publicist and ex-dissident Adam Michnik sees the real danger for the democratic development of his country in extremes: in "nationalistic populism", in "stone-age" (or "Neanderthal", as he also calls it) "anti-Communism" and in some very evident Catholic neo-integristic aspirations (or the belief of some circles of the RCC in Poland to become "the Church without borders".<sup>47</sup> This is quite true also in the Slovenian case. Slovenians now have a unique opportunity in our history - to finally live in a pluralistic and democratic society, without the dominance or privileges of any institution, party or social group; in other words, without any kind of political, ideological, or religious monopoly. Different institutions and groups must finally face and respect the irreversible complex social, cultural and spiritual situation in contemporary Slovenia. It is my sincere hope that Slovenians - irrespective of their political, religious and cultural orientations and preferences - will be able to preserve this historically unique plurality.

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<sup>47</sup> Michnik, 1997, 265-268, 280, 299.

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