

Yugoslav Press On Religion

Contemporary Christian News Service (Aktualnosti Kršćanska Sadašnjosti).

AKSA is a weekly Catholic news service published in Croatian in Zagreb by the organisation "Contemporary Christianity". It includes reports on items in the Yugoslav secular press.

Religion and Youth

The substantial hold which religion enjoys over young people continues to exercise the authorities, particularly in so far as it is linked with dissent or nationalism. Professor Zdenko Roter of Ljubljana, commenting on the Catholic Church in Slovenia, sees the increased interest taken by the young in religion as an expression of protest rather than a sign of genuine religious revival, indicating a desire on the part of the Catholic Church to have some say in the power structure (*Duga Belgrade*, 19.4.86). The War Veterans' Association criticises the church for using International Youth Year to indoctrinate young people and to sow "the seed of an unjustified hatred" (*Cervrti Jul*, 29.10.85), while another instance of the church's alleged exploitation of dissatisfaction is provided by *Oslobodjenje* (Sarajevo, 5.11.85), which reports an attack on the church for concentrating its activities for young people on Duvno, an area of high unemployment in the Bosnia and Hercegovina region. An article in *Dnevnik* (5.3.86) further analyses the abuse of religion for political purposes, claiming that the churches seek to regain their social and political position by changing, rather than adjusting to, the system. A particular concern is the number of young people who take part in public religious activities. The article is an

example of a move towards analysis of religion as a sociological phenomenon and in the context of political and cultural developments. (AKSA 18.4.86, 6.12.85, 8.11.85, 21.3.86.)

Direct links between religion and youthful nationalist fervour are identified in many articles. For example, disturbances after a football match in Split are blamed on clergy and nationalists, but writers do point out the need to distinguish between such political activists and the mass of believers. (*Borba*, (Zagreb) 5.11.85, *Politika* 6.11.85.)

Vecernje List ((Zagreb) 2.12.85) goes further, and seeks the church's cooperation in the fight against nationalism amongst the young, as the church, as well as school and family, should play its part in ensuring that people do not regard others as evil. (AKSA 8.11., 6.12.85.)

The official press ponders why young people should find religion so appealing, and criticises society for not providing adequate counter-attractions. From debates at its 12th Congress, it was clear that the Association of Socialist Youth fell far behind the church in providing what young people wanted, e.g. disco clubs and football pitches. (*Novosti* 31.10.85, *Polet* 6.6.86, AKSA 8.11.85, 27.6.86.)

Ideological education is also scrutinised, and some confusion emerges. The "subtle methods" used by the church to spread religious awareness among the young (*Komunist* 20.12.85, AKSA 10.1.86) stand in contrast to the sectarian attitude displayed by many atheist lecturers. On the one hand, more

concentration on the teachings of Marxism on religion is prescribed as an antidote, on the other, there is a feeling that if young people are left to develop their own opinions, the commitment to religion will appear less attractive. Meanwhile, at a conference of the Central Committee section for ideological activity, one participant suggested that the church's offerings of "bacchanalias, mysticism and nationalism" must be countered with something more than "dull lectures on Marxism". (*Vjesnik* 26.11.85, *Nedeljni Vjesnik* (Zagreb) 24.11.85, *Vjesnik* 20.11.85, AKSA 28.11.85, 22.11.85.) A speaker at a discussion meeting in Kumrovec warned that atheism should not be identified with a progressive political stance, because this alienates young believers, while elsewhere there is condemnation of those who do not accept that believers can be good socialists as failing to understand the essence of socialism. (*Vjesnik* 6.12.85, *Polet* 1.2.86, AKSA 13.2.86.)

NIN (2.2.86) continues this theme, suggesting that it is wrong to think that any religious inclination is "unsuitable" and that socialism is necessarily atheist. It applauds a recent theological and pastoral course for priests in Zagreb for its serious approach to problems and good selection of topics, and castigates atheists for failing to offer any similar seminars. (AKSA 7.2.86.)

Meanwhile, the director of the Salesian Catechist Centre in Ljubljana claimed that although only ten per cent of young Catholics attend religious instruction classes in the big cities, the figure rises to 95 per cent in the villages, making an average of sixty per cent. Front page news in the Islamic paper *Preporod* (1.10.85) was the opening of a new religious secondary school in Priština (AKSA 6.6.86, 11.10.85.), and Moslem events in Kumanovo have occasioned

some discussion. During the month of Ramadan, a group of five hundred Albanian women regularly attended lectures given by two 14-year-old girls in the mosque. (*Intervju* (Belgrade 20.6.86) and *Nova Makedonija* (Skopje 9.6.86) submit that it is contrary to local custom for women to go to the mosque, and that permission should be obtained for lectures. The president of the Islamic community in Macedonia denied that it was unusual for women to attend the mosque, and asserted that there were no political implications in the affair. (AKSA 27.6.86.)

Church-State Relations

Greater cooperation between believers and the state has been advocated by the Catholic hierarchy. In his Christmas message, Archbishop Frančić of Split and Makarska appealed to believers to work for the progress of the nation and society, as non-involvement is contrary to the teachings of the Gospel. Christians should identify with the communities in which they live, but, he added, they want to be accepted as friends and equal partners. Furthermore, those atheists who genuinely believe in mankind and in the nation can, if they listen to their consciences, come near to the Kingdom of God. (AKSA 27.12.85.) The Bishop of Krk also appealed for cooperation with the authorities in their efforts to resolve the country's economic problems, and warned that it was in no-one's interest to exaggerate difficulties and point only to negative phenomena. (*Okružnice* No. 1, 1986, AKSA 10.1.86.)

In similar vein, *Glas Istre/Novi List* (12/13.10.85) had earlier pleaded that communists should support attempts to increase the involvement of non-communists and believers in the country's social and political life. Even priests should be

allowed to participate if they wish. The moral and political fitness of any individual to assume responsibility should not be dependent on party membership. *NIN* (16.2.86) quotes several examples which it sees as evidence of a more tolerant attitude on the part of the Catholic Church (among them the public statements of Franić and Kuharić), and *Dnevnik* (1.4.86) reports a March meeting of the Serbian Socialist Alliance Committee for Religious Committees, where it was noted that the religious press was engaging much less in polemic with the official press and in vulgar criticism of Marxism and atheism. (AKSA 1.11.85, 21.2., 11.4.86.)

Mutual criticism is still alive, however. The Bishops' Conference expressed concern at recent press attacks:

These attacks do not serve the interests of good relations and harm the peaceful coexistence of the citizens of Croatia and Yugoslavia. They also offend and seriously worry our believers.

Cardinal Kuharić told Kathpress that church-state relations had improved, but added that the church seeks full freedom of conscience and cannot be silent if this is not granted. (AKSA 18.4., 22.1.86.)

Stepinać Debate Continues.

Controversy over the case of Cardinal Stepinać shows no sign of abating. A review in *Kommunist* (7.5.86) of a new book on the Cardinal by Ivan Cvitkoyić points out that the subject cannot be forgotten while the Catholic Church seeks to rehabilitate and eventually canonise him. (AKSA 16.5.86.)

Dnevnik (Novi Sad) (AKSA 10.1.86) serialised an interview with the federal public prosecutor at the time of Stepinać's trial, who states

that Stepinać would never have been prosecuted if he had been willing to cooperate with the new authorities, and admits that "there was a lot of propaganda accusation, the indictments were designed rather more for publicity than for legality". In another series, however, the same paper sets out to prove that close links existed between the Catholic Church (with Stepinać at its head), and Pavelić's war-time fascist state. Stepinać is singled out as responsible for the slaughter of many thousands of Serbs (AKSA 7.3.86). The debate is fuelled by the republication of Victor Novak's *Magnum Crimen* (an all-out attack on the Catholic Church and the Vatican), and by the trial of Andrija Artuković, Minister of the Interior in the war-time *ustasa* government, recently extradited from the USA. *Glas Koncila* has refused to report the trial, describing it as "political". *OKO* (Zagreb 22.5-5.6.86) comments that the church could not help but be aware of the crimes committed by Artuković and his colleagues, and should now deliver its verdict. Several papers report Artuković's claim that he and Stepinać were very close, and that he acted as intermediary between Stepinać and Pavelić (AKSA 31.5.86, 4.4.86). A Catholic priest, replying in *Danas* (27.5.86) to attacks on the church's silence over this matter, called Artuković's claim that he had acted according to the principles of the Catholic Church blasphemous, and *Večernje List* (5.5.86) pays tribute to priests who baptised Serbs and Jews to save them from the *ustasa* terror (AKSA 30.5., 9.5.86).

A blot has been removed from the authorities' record of the Catholic Church's war-time actions with the admission in *Vjesnik* (26.1.86) that the Catholic hierarchy in Croatia were not responsible for the crimes committed by a young Fran-

ciscan monk, Miroslav Filipović-Majstorović during the war. [This case had often been used as an example of the church's misdeeds — *Ed.*]

Clergy Arrested

The arrest of two Catholic priests in Banja Luka and Jajce, Filip Lukenda and Ilija Djeno, was reported in *Novosti* (27.2.86). Both were arrested for extreme nationalism, and in Djeno's case, literature, photographs, and tapes which were offensive to the state had been found. *Večernje Novosti* (10.3.86) attacked *Glas Koncila* for "lying about the mistreatment of Fr Lukenda", asserting that he was quite well, had not suffered bleeding, and had not complained or asked for medical help. Lukenda has since been sentenced to four years' imprisonment for inciting national, religious, and racial hatred — a sentence which

aroused "amazement and sorrow" at the Bishops' Conference. On the day of Lukenda's sentencing, a district court in neighbouring Zenica sentenced the Imam Halil Mahtić, also for inciting national and religious intolerance. (AKSA 14.3., 11.4., 27.6.86.)

Fr Savo, head of the Orthodox Liplje Monastery in Bosnia was imprisoned for twenty days, his third term of imprisonment. This time he had taken a service of communion and confession in a private house without the authorities' permission. Reporting this, *NIN* (3.8.85) points out that in law it is not necessary to have official permission to perform religious rites of a family nature at the request of the family. The local population are said to have been furious at the sentence. New legislation aimed at controlling the observance of religious ceremonies in private dwellings and inadequate premises has been announced in Croatia. (AKSA 8.8.85, 24.1.86.)