

Religious Resistance: Forms, Sources and Collections

After World War II, the communist regimes which were being established gradually in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe belonging to the Soviet Union's sphere of interest considered the religious communities not merely ideological but also political opponents. As religious communities played an important social role, they could become a refuge and reference point for alternative social structures which were independent of the regime. In the dichotomic perspective of the regime—independently of the communities' intentions and points of view—each and every ecclesiastical-religious activity which aimed at preserving values and a way of life different from the logic of the system was seen as a sign of resistance. Therefore, the concept of religious resistance is an idea made up by the regime. The members of religious communities never necessarily believed that their activities went beyond keeping up a way of life based on their faith, which demanded certain risks. This specific feature of religious resistance was especially well described by Ödön Lénárd, a Hungarian Piarist priest and teacher who was in prison for 18 and a half years: "the concept of the specifically Christian resistance is [...] different from the usual political one. Christian resistance has a religious, moral, and ideological character, thus, unlike political resistance, it is something positive. Political resistance wants to harm opponents, whereas Christian resistance means that, despite the prohibitions and persecutions, it is doing what it should not do: it is definitely building Christianity despite the risks it may come across."¹

Major Forms of Christian Resistance

Christian resistance cannot be limited to "illegal activities": the official framework of the Churches—in a most controlled way—included numerous possibilities to pass on Christian values and strengthen religious life within the church. Without providing a comprehensive list, one can say that it would include all the activities of the "legal" ecclesiastical institutions that went beyond the restrictions ordered by the state. On the other hand, and for the same

1 Lénárd, *Só*, 12.

reason, these activities originated in Christian conduct fully aware of the possible risks. As it will be demonstrated in the case study by Mateja Režek and Jure Ramšak, some activities of the “peace priests” loyal to the state can also be considered dissent, if they criticized the discriminative politics of the state regarding religion.

Although resistance was not an exclusive characteristic of the catacomb Church, special attention should be paid to the “underground” or “illegal” initiatives. Mostly, they were part of the legal Church structures in a way, but they took up responsibilities the official Church did not want to or could not take up. In several cases, the activities did not aim at new responsibilities, but rather represented a continuation of a vocation despite the limitations imposed by secular laws. It was Christian resistance *per definitionem* when the members of the monastic and religious orders disbanded by state laws, the jurisdiction of which was not accepted by the Church, did everything to live their monastic lives even under the new conditions.² Or, it was “illegal” resistance *ipso facto* when a parish priest who had not been given permission by the state to do so, continued his vocation and thus worked as a member of the “illegal” network of the Church hierarchy, which was established to a different extent in different parts of the respective countries.³

The pastoral activity reaching beyond the frameworks of the church constituted a special field of religious resistance. Youth pastoration, i.e., the formation of an “anti-elite” with the help of “illegal” religious education and community life, was considered especially dangerous by the regime.⁴ The regime also attacked the adult groups and communities that were usually formed around a priest or monk, as these groups provided the most efficient way to establish and preserve deep, personal faith. They defined themselves as “the small circles of freedom,” and they often prepared samizdat publications, including fiction or spiritual literature on Christian values, for themselves or for a limited audience. They were therefore also part of the “resistance.” Other special forms of opposition included the compilation of documents on religious persecution and the distribution of these documents in the country and abroad, where relationships with the emigrant communities played an important role.

2 See e.g. the second section of the volume: Fiamová and Jakubčín, *Prenasledovanie cirkví – Persecution of Churches*, 98–191.

3 See e.g. for Czechoslovakia: Fiala and Hanuš, *Verborgene Kirche*; Birtz and Kierein-Kuening, *Voices from Ecclesia Militans*. For Hungary: Fejérdy, “Progetto abbandonato.” For Ukraine: Bociurkiw, *Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church*; Serhiychuk, *Neskorena Tserkva*.

4 See also Mezey, *Hittán a katakombákban*; Wirthné Diera, “Katolikus hitoktatás és elitképzés”; Tabajdi, “Illegális ifjúsági munka.”

Types of Sources

The dearth of sources on religious opposition is a consequence of the fact that the members of the resistance rarely documented their activities. As secrecy is a feature of resistance, communication among people working on the borderline of illegal, semi-legal, or legal fields was mostly verbal. They did not want to leave behind evidence against themselves, and furthermore, they wanted to live their Christian faith above all, and documenting the frameworks and the content of their lives was important only if it helped them lead their personal and congregational religious lives. Despite the basically verbal character of the culture of resistance, there are contemporary and subsequent sources in various archives and collections with the help of which the major outlines of Christian resistance can be revealed.⁵ A group of contemporary sources consists of the documents prepared by non-ecclesiastical, i.e. state or communist party-based organizations. There are a lot of sources among the documents of the organizations of the one-party state dealing with the Churches, primarily the organizations of the Ministry of Interior, the judicial bodies, and the State Offices for Church Affairs, which are indispensable to the study of the history of Christian resistance, even if these organizations tended to distort the facts. A basic feature of the sources preserved in state collections, mainly in the archives of the state security organizations, is that according to the preconceptions based on the dichotomic perspective of the regime, they document the framework of Christian resistance, especially its structure, network, and functions.

State archives—especially the collections including investigation materials and court records—contain another type of important contemporary source. Some of the dissenters' notes and other congregational documents (such as samizdat literature) were obtained by the state organizations as a result of searches and seizures, and they were attached to investigation materials. Such documents can be found in the court file on the “Black Ravens” case (Hungary, 1960–61)⁶ in the collection of manuscripts of the Stasi.⁷ The copies of the samizdat journal entitled *The Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church*⁸ and other samizdat publications confiscated by the KGB⁹ and now held in the in the collection of the Sixtiers Museum in Kiev also comprise part of this group of documents. Unlike the documents prepared by the regime

5 See the collections described at: COURAGE: Collecting collections (registry). Accessed September 20, 2018. <http://cultural-opposition.eu/courage/>

6 See Wirthné Diera, *Katolikus hitoktatás és elítélés*.

7 See COURAGE Registry, s.v. “CNSAS Confiscated Manuscripts”, by Cristina Petrescu, 2018, Accessed: September 20, 2018. (forthcoming).

8 *The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*. Accessed September 20, 2018. <http://www.lkbkronika.lt/index.php/en/>

9 COURAGE Registry, s.v. “Sixtiers Museum collection”, by Orysia Maria Kulick, 2018. Accessed: September 20, 2018.

describing the organizational structures of the resistance, these specific ecclesiastical sources give us important information on the spiritual teachings of a given community.

As to contemporary Church sources, the documents of the official Church administration reveal the practice and characteristics of Christian resistance only indirectly: the scattered data on dispositions, religious education, and disciplinary procedures can be valuable only together with or compared to other sources.¹⁰ More systematic source groups on religious resistance can be found among communities with a certain institutional background. There are some unique sources on Christian resistance. For example, the leaders of the Jesuit Order, who were forced to work underground, prepared circulars to unite and strengthen the scattered monks.¹¹ Mónika, a member of the “underground” female Cistercian community formed in 1955 in Hungary, wrote the spiritual diary for her superior, who was in prison at the time.¹² Or one could mention the diary entries of Julijans Vaivods, the first cardinal of the Latvian Catholic Church.¹³ Alongside the contemporary inner Church sources, correspondence, teachings in written form, samizdat literature, and the very few surviving diaries, photos are a special kind of source. Although like most written sources, the photos are personal and were not taken to be “documents,” they nonetheless provide essential information on the lives and activities of various communities. For example, there is a private collection documenting the programs of the Calvinist youth group in Pasarét,¹⁴ or one can study Zwbigniew Galicki’s photos on the life of the Mistrzejowice parish in Krakow¹⁵ or some pieces of the unique Fortepan collection shared online, which documents the history of twentieth-century Hungary.¹⁶

Due to the one-sided opinions found in the state documents and the limited number of contemporary inner Church documents, it is necessary to use retrospective sources. In many cases, the memoirs written by the participants and the leaders of Christian resistance or the different kinds of interviews done with them are considered the only sources in order to get information on the different aspects of contemporary events. The sources of *oral history* have becoming more and more valuable as the people who shared their experiences in the 1990s or in the 2000s are no longer alive, or because of their age or health are less and less able to pass on their memories.

10 See Mózessy, “Állami Egyházügyi Hivatal.”

11 Bánkuti, *Jezsuiták*. 77–80.

12 Monika, *Zeugnis*.

13 Vaivods, *Biskapa Julijana Vaivoda dienasgrāmata*.

14 See Erdős, “Református ifjúság élet,” 116–25; COURAGE Registry, s.v. “Collection of Calvinist Youth Congregation of Pasarét”, by Kristóf Erdős, 2018. Accessed: September 20, 2018.

15 COURAGE Registry, s.v. “Zbigniew Galicki Photographic Collection”, by Maciej Melon, 2018. Accessed: 20 September 2018.

16 Fortepan online photo archives. Accessed September 20, 2018. <http://www.fortepan.hu/>

The Typology of the Collections

As this short outline shows, the sources on Christian opposition were preserved in archives and collections with different profiles. Some of the specific collections regarding Christian resistance activities are the result of organic development. For example, collections the corpus of which was created, collected, and preserved by the resisting community or person fall into this category, such as the “missionary archives” of Ferenc Nádosy described in one of the case studies. There are similar collections, including the spiritual legacy of a charismatic person whose teachings were collected and passed on in Hungary and abroad. One example of this kind of collection is the collection of the writings of Lutheran bishop Lajos Ordass.¹⁷ A separate group includes the collections created abroad documenting the activities of the Church in the world, the international (Church) organizations, and the émigré community. Like the Keston Archives described in the first case study, some of these considered it a priority to document the situation of persecuted Christians as extensively as possible: one of them was the UKI, which was run by Hungarian Jesuits in Vienna,¹⁸ or the documents belonging to the private collection of the Estonian Karl Laantee, who worked for Voice of America.¹⁹ Others, such as the Polish Dominican Book Institute²⁰ and the Hungarian Opus Mystici Corporis publishing house in Vienna, focused on strengthening the activities of the persecuted Churches,²¹ so they published religious samizdat literature, and others, such as the organization Kirche in Not – Ostpriesterhilfe, which was founded by the Dutchman Weerenfried van Straaten, gave financial and other kinds of aid to persecuted Churches.²²

A very frequent type of collection on Christian resistance is the one that was formed as a result of academic research. The COURAGE Registry includes contemporary collections, such as the material collected by the Hungarian István Kamarás in the course of his scholarly work on religious sociology,²³ as well as ones compiled later, such as the Eastern Archive of KARTA

17 Terray, “Ordass Lajos.”; COURAGE Registry, s.v. “Collection of Ordass Lajos”, by Katalin Mirák and Zoltán Pál, 2018. Accessed: September 20, 2018.

18 Borbándi, *Nyugati magyar*. 230; COURAGE Registry, s.v. “Archives of the Jesuit Order Hungary”, by Béla Mihalik and Zoltán Pál, 2017. Accessed: September 28, 2018, doi: 10.24389/10677.

19 COURAGE Registry, s.v. “Karl Laantee Collection at the Estonian Cultural History Archives”, by Koppel Taavi, 2018. Accessed: September 20, 2018.

20 COURAGE Registry, s.v. “Dominican Book Institute”, by Yveta Kajanová, 2018. Accessed: September 28, 2018, (forthcoming).

21 Borbándi, *Nyugati magyar*, 279–80.

22 Straaten, *Sie nennen mich Speckpater*; See also the chronology at the website “Kirche in Not” at <http://www.kirche-in-not.de/wer-wir-sind/geschichte>, Accessed: September 28, 2018.

23 COURAGE Registry, s.v. “Religious Sociological Collection of István Kamarás”, by István Kamarás, Zoltán Pál, and Péter Apor Accessed: September 20, 2018.

in Poland²⁴ and the documents collected by the Bulgarian project entitled *Everyday Life in Southwest Bulgaria in Socialism*.²⁵ Almost all researchers investigating the history of the Church in this era have a collection of mostly secondary documents regarding a very specific field or a broader perspective, the most important parts of which they have already published.

The history of Christian resistance is relatively rich in sources, but the sources are random and they are rarely kept in specific collections. From the perspectives of future research and the preservation of the documents, the fact that most specific collections are private and have no institutional background constitutes a serious challenge. If the collectors/owners die, the professional preservation of the documents can only be ensured if a reliable institutional background is created.

The Keston Archive and Library

Two Babushkas from Pochaev

In 1964, two old women from Western Ukraine started their long journey to Moscow. In their luggage, Feodosia Varavva and Anastasia Pronina were hiding a letter they had written. It was an account of the persecutions against the Pochaev Lavra, one of the biggest Orthodox monasteries in Ukraine. The Lavra was under extensive pressure from the Soviet authorities, who aimed to close it down. Its land and some of its buildings had been confiscated, the monks brutally evicted, and some of them sent to psychiatric clinics. In Moscow, the two babushkas looked for a foreigner who could smuggle the letter to the West and spread the word about religious persecution.

Through a French schoolteacher of Russian origin coming to Moscow on holidays, the letter reached Paris and then London, where a young Anglican priest, Michael Bourdeaux, received it. By that time, Bourdeaux had completed university degrees in Russian and French, and he later completed a degree in theology. He had spent some time in Moscow as an exchange student. He was particularly interested in religious life in the Soviet Union, gathering information about the persecution of Christians, and by that time he had completed the first draft of his book *“Opium for the People.”* The letter from the two Ukrainian babushkas triggered his search for more evidence of religious persecutions. He managed to travel to Moscow again. Miraculously, while visiting the ruins of a recently destroyed Orthodox church in Moscow, he

24 COURAGE Registry, s.v. *“Eastern Archive of the KARTA Centre”*, by Melon Macej, 2017. Accessed: September 20, 2018.

25 COURAGE Registry, s.v. *“Everyday Life in Southwest Bulgaria in Socialism”*, by Anelia Kasabova, 2018. Accessed: September 20, 2018.

encountered some Orthodox believers. Among them, he found the two *babushkas* from Pochaev. They gave him an updated account of the Pochaev persecutions and asked Bourdeaux to be their voice and to speak for them.²⁶ This encounter changed the course of his life, as Bourdeaux understood it as a divine calling. He responded to this call by dedicating his entire life to collecting, processing, and disseminating information on religious life in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

In 1969, Reverend Canon Dr Michael Bourdeaux, along with political scientist Peter Reddaway, diplomat and writer Sir John Lawrence, and Soviet historian Leonard Schapiro, set up the Center for the Study of Religion and Communism, later known as Keston College and the Keston Institute. It soon grew into a widely known British human rights organization and a recourse center, unique in a way, as its field of expertise focused on church-state relations and persecution of religious believers behind the Iron Curtain. From its foundation, Keston had as one of its primary aims the creation and development of an archive of documents. Nowadays, the Keston Archive and Library is a unique collection of primary-source material on religious life and religious persecution in socialist countries, containing, among other materials, the world's most extensive collection of religious *samizdat*. In the history of religion in socialist countries, the Keston collection fills an important gap between state historical records and official church histories, giving voices to ordinary believers in their everyday struggles to express their faith freely.

Cold Warrior

Keston College is often mentioned as playing an important role in drawing the world's attention to religious persecution in the Soviet Union.²⁷ Keston was a child of the Cold War—as Bourdeaux himself admits²⁸—serving at its “religious frontline.” Its work reflected the political climate of human rights activism of the 1970 and 1980s.²⁹ When the Soviet dissident movement became a major political concern in the West, the increasingly important politics of expertise, what Mark Hurst³⁰ calls, “the rush to expertise,” allowed Keston to gain international authority in the representation of religious dissidents. Keston supplied the international media with news and analytical reports on religion in socialist countries, and it provided advice for policy makers. Keston activists advised Jimmy Carter, Harold Wilson, David Owen, and Margaret Thatcher. Although they never organized public campaigns, Keston ran a special news service and organized conferences, public talks, and lectures in or-

26 Bourdeaux, *Risen Indeed*, 2–10; Robertson, *Be Our Voice*; Shlikhta, *Kak uchredit'*.

27 Hurst, *British Human Rights Organizations*; French, “Michael Bourdeaux i Tsentri”; Luehrmann, *Religion in Secular Archives*.

28 French, “Michael Bourdeaux i Tsentri,” 240.

29 Hurst, *British Human Rights Organizations*.

30 *Ibid.*, 179.

der “to improve the speed and efficiency of news items and information from Keston College to churches, individuals and the media.”³¹ They published an international journal, *Religion in Communist Lands*, a bi-monthly glossy magazine, *Frontier*, and produced more than thirty books. Undoubtedly, Keston made effective use of smuggled material, widely popularizing it. As Sonja Luerhman³² points out, their dissemination system and public news releases fueled an emerging field of human rights activism for religious freedom.

Yet, the optics through which Keston saw religious life in “communist lands” shaped the image the West was getting as a result. Although Keston College was established as an independent non-denominational organization, aimed to further the objective study of church-state relations in the communist world, its activism reflected the religious and political principles of its founders. Guided by the hand of God, as he saw it, Bourdeaux served the Church in Eastern Europe—a novel missionary destination in the 1970s. For him and his colleagues, Keston College was an extension of their faith, a witness for the Church, and part of a mission “to be the voice of the voiceless.”³³ This attitude made the Keston collection a sort of martyrology of Soviet-era churches. What fascinated Keston leaders (and hence enriched the collection) was cases of open resistance to Soviet authorities, which they translated in religious terms. In the focus of their interests were mainly religious minorities and marginal dissident groups within mainstream churches, who were in open conflict with the socialist regime. Persecuted believers were depicted as heroes, martyrs, and even prophets,³⁴ struggling against both an atheist state and official church hierarchies oftentimes positioned in the Keston collection as collaborators or betrayers.

Similar to other human rights organizations of the Cold War period, Keston expressed distinctive anti-Sovietism and anti-communism, and its leaders had the fullest sympathy for the Soviet dissident movement.³⁵ Religion and communism, for Keston’s activists, were incompatible and conflictual notions, with no room for dialogue. This had further politicized implications. Keston’s policy recommendations called for turning from Western governments’ political neutrality and non-interference in Soviet affairs towards active advocating for repressed religious groups.³⁶ Bourdeaux publicly criticized the World Council of Churches for silencing the issue of religious persecution in the Soviet bloc.³⁷ His tough statements against the Russian Orthodox Church hierarchy and a too rigorous (as believed by the WCC) criticism of the Soviet regime triggered further tensions between Keston College and the

31 Robertson, *Be Our Voice*.

32 Luehrmann, *Religion in Secular Archives*, 135.

33 Robertson, *Be Our Voice*; French, “Michael Bourdeaux i Tsentri,” 237.

34 Bourdeaux, *Patriarch and Prophets*; Bourdeaux, *Risen Indeed*.

35 Hurst, *British Human Rights Organizations*.

36 French, “Michael Bourdeaux i Tsentri,” 239.

37 Bourdeaux, *The Russian Church*.

WCC, to the extent that, at a later stage, Bourdeaux was dismissed from participation in international ecumenical processes.³⁸

Chronicle of Religious Martyrdom

The documented evidence of religious persecution in socialist countries, which the Keston center had been collecting over the course of more than 50 years, developed into what Sonja Luehrmann calls a counter-archive “engaged in a kind of documentary arms race.”³⁹ The collection sought to give a contrasting perspective on religious life in communist lands, deconstructing official historical records. The selection of materials and the design of the record-keeping system, Luehrmann continues,⁴⁰ shape the logic of the collection and creates a new context within which the documents will be read. “(T)he catalogue reads like a list of grievances against the state,” writes Luehrmann, giving an example of rubrics within one subcategory: “Oppressive practices” (SU12/6): it contains folders on harassment, physical assault, fines, interrogations, trials, state interference in church affairs, interference in parish life, discrimination in employment and in education, misuse of psychiatry, and a loss of parental rights.⁴¹

With its selective material (representing mainly voices of marginalized religious minorities and dissident groups) and shifted perspective towards religious dissent as political protest, the Keston collection produces an alternative narrative. It demonizes the communist atheist state, undermines official church hierarchies, and shifts reader’s attention towards grassroots religious revival, bottom-up religio-political opposition, and reform movement (the extent of which perhaps is exaggerated in the collection). The heroization and politicization of religious dissent were expressions of Keston’s explicit bias and the rather simplistic dichotomy to which it ascribed between “the supreme moral virtue of the Christians and the bloodthirsty villainy of the Communists.”⁴² This perspective, however, neglects wider patterns of everyday religious practices and other forms of religious non-conformism that was not always expressed in political terms. It gives no room for compromise, circumvention, “defiant compliance,”⁴³ and other non-confrontational challenges to political regimes, which different religious groups developed over time. The collection is similarly blind to different modes and the “functional ambivalence” of Soviet religious policies,⁴⁴ shifting frontiers of secularism, and often the blurred line between state agents/informers and victims among

38 French, “Michael Bourdeaux i Tsentri,” 222.

39 Luehrmann, *Religion in Secular Archives*, 137.

40 *Ibid.*, 141.

41 *Ibid.*, 141.

42 Scanlan, *Book Review*, 443.

43 Wanner, *Communities of the Converted*, 81–86.

44 Ramet, *Cross and Commissar*, 51.

the faithful in socialist histories. Keston's main contribution, however, was in drawing close attention to internal conflicts within churches in Eastern Europe, which Keston's activists saw as a positive symptom of people's religious revival and the struggle for religious freedom. The Keston collection looks more deeply into the heterogenous religious landscape of the socialist countries and adopts the perspectives of ordinary believers who often faced double marginalization from both state organs and official church structures.

An Outline of the Collection

The letter written by the two Pochaev women laid the foundation of the Keston collection. Soon, the abundance of various samizdat documents from different religious groups in the Soviet Union and later all countries of the Soviet bloc began to reach Keston. The center then scrupulously filed, translated, and analyzed materials and published the most important items in the Keston News Service. At the peak of its work, Keston's staff included twenty-five specialists, who organized material in twenty languages.⁴⁵

Over fifty years later, the Keston collection holds more than 4,000 items of *samizdat* material documenting religious life in the Soviet era, including correspondence, petitions, pamphlets, trial transcripts, symposia, and memoirs. The collection represents different religious groups—Baptists, Adventists, Jews, Pentecostals, Orthodox, and Roman Catholics—from Russia, Ukraine, and other republics of the former Soviet Union (roughly 40 percent of the collection), Romania (15 percent), Poland (15 percent), the Czech Republic (15 percent), and other countries of the Soviet bloc (15 percent).⁴⁶ It includes unique material on some widely known religious activists and dissidents, including Georgi Vins, Gleb Yakunin, Aleksandr Men', Alexander Ogorodnikov, Nikolai Eshliman, Pavel Adelheim, Anatoli Levitin, Aida Skripnikova, Nijole Sadunaite, Gheorghe Calciu, and many others. It also has a collection of newspaper cuttings, newspapers, and journals published in Eastern Europe. Keston's audio-visual collection consists of 3,000 rare and one-of-a-kind photographs, along with 150 videotapes, 500 sound recordings, a few paintings, and 50 original Soviet anti-religious posters. After the fall of the USSR, Keston also obtained copies of nearly 500 documents from the Russian state archives (KGB archives and Council for Religious Affairs regional archives). The collection is also enriched by a unique library consisting of approximately 10,000 books and 200 periodicals relating to religion and politics in Eastern Europe.

After the collapse of the Soviet bloc, Keston underwent a major crisis. It did not succeed in its attempts to integrate itself into the academic life of Oxford University, and it had to terminate most of its projects (including Keston

45 Hillman and Seago, *Alive and Available*; Bourdeaux, *Pioneering Religious Freedom Advocacy*.

46 Percentage according to Daniel, *The Keston Archive*, 10.

News Service) and gradually reduce its staff. However, unlike other human rights organizations of the Cold War period, Keston survived and tried to adapt to a changed world. In search of new directions for its activities, the Keston centre tried to widen its research focus and geographical range, including monitoring religious freedom in the newly-formed countries on the post-socialist landscape, Europe in general, and North Korea and China.⁴⁷ But eventually, it narrowed its perspective on historical analysis and contemporary surveys of religious liberty in the former Soviet Union and made it a priority to concentrate its resources on preserving the Keston collection.⁴⁸ In 2007, in order to sustain the integrity of its archive and library, the Keston Institute moved its collections to the J. M. Dawson Centre at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, where it became part of the newly established Keston Center for Religion, Politics, and Society. There, the collection is being carefully conserved, re-catalogued, and digitized. Researchers can receive unlimited access to the Keston Digital Archive, which, by 2016, included 7,500 files from the Keston archive, including 1,000 photographs.⁴⁹ Several scholarships for researchers to visit Baylor and work in the Keston Archive and Library are available from the Keston Institute, UK.

The Missions Archives of Ferenc Nádosy and Sources on the Illegal Distribution of Documents in the Scientific Collections of the Reformed College of Sárospatak

It is a major task—maybe even the most important task—of the Church to preach. This covers much more than just sermons on Sundays. In addition to preaching in the congregation, the mission is also part of this profession, which, according to the terminology of the Reformed Church, means telling people about the crucifixion and redemption of Christ and inviting them to join the faith. In practice, this normally includes the renewal of congregational life by adding Prayer Days, evangelizations, and the search for people who have drifted away from the Church. To organize missions to other countries is a special area of activity, during which missionaries introduce people living far away to the Christian faith.⁵⁰

While there was a serious revival movement in Hungary following World War II, missions both in the country and abroad became more and more obstructed after 1945. The elimination of social and ecclesiastical associations and movements began on July 4, 1946, with a regulation by the Minister of

⁴⁷ Peterlin, *An Analysis of the Publishing Activity*; Stricker and Sawatsky, *Postscript*.

⁴⁸ Bourdeaux, *Ringing the Changes*; Peterlin, *An Analysis of the Publishing Activity*; Dennen, *Letter from the Chairman*.

⁴⁹ Dennen, *Letter from the Chairman*.

⁵⁰ Kádár, *Ekkleziasztika*, 89–91.

Interior. The next step was taken on October 5, 1949, when the Ministry approved the proposal made by the Universal Convent of the Reformed Church of Hungary aiming to disband the 14 most important associations.⁵¹ Meanwhile, mission work became impossible, especially after Albert Bereczky sent his letter to the deans on January 8, 1952 and the Mission Regulation came into force on March 1 of the same year.⁵² After this, the Reformed Church limited its activity to preaching. During the period in which the Church leadership faced legal restrictions and limitations, many formerly public activities went on illegally. Prayer Days, evangelizations, and youth events were organized under cover, and typographical copies of Christian records were circulated as samizdat literature.

There is an extremely rich collection of records and documents like the one in Sárospatak, the Ferenc Nádósy collection, which is one of the biggest collections of sources regarding Hungarian Protestant resistance between 1945 and 1989. The handwritten documents consisting of around 5,500 pages, the nine archival boxes—around 3139 documents—containing the so-called “mission archives,” and also the two archival boxes of the material of the Mission traveling exhibition were given to the Scientific Collections of the Reformed College of Sárospatak by Nádósy in several instalments after 1981.⁵³ In many cases, the collections even include additional copies, most of which were obtained from pastoral legacies. The collection of documents presents a detailed picture of the illegally operating reformed and evangelical organizations during the communist dictatorship, with particular emphasis on the missions to other countries.

A Biographical Sketch of Ferenc Nádósy

Ferenc Nádósy was born in the city of Zólyom on September 28, 1907, the son of an evangelical couple, Ferenc Nádósy, a newspaper editor, and Márta Korcsek.⁵⁴ He studied medicine at the Faculty of Medicine at Pázmány Péter University. He graduated in 1934.⁵⁵ After that, he worked as a researcher and practiced in several hospitals in Budapest. He was a medical officer in World War II from September 1944 to May 1945, where he was captured and taken to Tecuci, where he worked in the hospital of the Soviet prison camp.⁵⁶ After returning home, he started to work as a local practitioner in the village of

51 Kollega, *Magyarország a XX. században*. Vol. II. 425–26.

52 SRK TGY Levéltár, R.E. VIII. 6/5, 19/1952.

53 SRK TGY Kézirattár, An. 4739. Nádósy Ferenc, “A régi tragédia az Akikazen I. Molnár Mária halálának körülményei”; SRK TGY Kézirattár, Kt.d. 7372, Nádósy Ferenc, *Nyílt levél egy lelkész-testvéremhez*, 16.

54 Lutheran Church register, Zvolen, Slovakia. Accessed October 16, 2017. <https://www.family-search.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9T94-4LP?i=43&cc=1554443>

55 Molnár, *Pázmány Péter Tudományegyetem*, 154.

56 SRK TGY Kézirattár, An. 12360, Nádósy Ferenc, “Prognózisok és információk,” 3.

Tótvázsony in Veszprém County. He described the communist takeover as follows: "I approved of the economic, industrial, and social changes of the new regime in many respects, but I rejected most of the intellectual conclusions of its ideology." The confrontation between Ferenc Nádosy and the communist state was predictable. His samizdat-authoring and publishing activities also started in 1946.

First, the communist state attempted to "re-educate" Nádosy in an ideological sense. A brigade of workers visited him on a weekly basis and tried to persuade him—without any success. The first open clash between him and the communist regime took place at the time of the elections in 1949. Despite being aware of the possible consequences of such an act, Nádosy and his wife both openly voted against the People's Front in front of the counting committee during the open polls election in Tótvázsony. A police investigation was started against Ferenc Nádosy shortly afterwards because of alleged malversation, but it was closed because the authorities could not find anything against him. A few weeks later, he was dismissed from his medical post.⁵⁷

Since the communist state authorities never tolerated Ferenc Nádosy's activities, during his time in Litér he was repeatedly subjected to police interrogations, house searches, and harassment by his boss, who made sure that Nádosy was overwhelmed with work. The main aim was to make him stop his missionary service. In addition, he was constantly monitored by the communist state security forces: many reports were submitted on him in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and his name frequently came up during investigations regarding the "translation and dissemination of religious propaganda."⁵⁸

Ferenc Nádosy's Missionary Work and Activity as a Samizdat Author

The correspondence regarding the missions to other countries and the related samizdat literature are the most important part of the work of Ferenc Nádosy among the documents in Sárospatak. According to his contemporaries, Nádosy's missionary work began at the most urgent moment. Shortly after the communist takeover, in 1949, the leaders of the Reformed Church in Hungary eliminated the Hungarian Reformed Association for Missions, which provided the institutional background for missions to foreign countries. According to László Draskóczy, one of the most outstanding representatives of mission work, people occupied with missions became psychologically paralyzed. This was when Ferenc Nádosy's letter arrived, in which he asked about the work of Mária Molnár, a missionary who was killed by the Japanese on the Admiral Islands during World War II, and the addresses of the Liebenzell mission and the mission to Manus Island. Nádosy then contacted these institutions via post. During his mission work, Ferenc Nádosy managed to contact even more

⁵⁷ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁸ ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-12348/1, Nádosy Ferenc; ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-12049/9, "Hitvallók."

institutions. According to a source from before 1956, he was already communicating with the mission in Truk Lagoon (Caroline Islands) and a missionary working in Japan, and he had already acquired information on Billy Graham's evangelization trips, the mission work in China, and the revival movements in Brazil, France, and Italy.⁵⁹

Ferenc Nádós published the news he collected through his continuously expanding network of contacts and through his extensive correspondence in the form of samizdat. He edited papers between 25 and 30 pages in length entitled *Missziói levelek* (Mission letters) from June 1955 to March 1956, *Missziói lapok* (Mission papers) from 1956 to 1958, and *Misszió* (Mission) from June 1958 to February 1963. He then continued his work by entitling it *Külmissziói körlevél*, *Missziói Körlevél* (Mission circular) in the 1970s and the 1980s.⁶⁰

There was already a kind of working community functioning with the samizdat mission journal of Ferenc Nádós at its center in the 1950s. There are 15 people who are known to have been authors of the 23 published volumes of *Misszió*⁶¹ who used their own names, and an additional four names were involved with production and reproduction in the 1950s. Nádós managed to distribute the papers by post. With a typewriter, he was able to produce several copies simultaneously, and he used separate identifiers for each. He then sent them to his correspondents and readers. Due to the limited number of copies available, Nádós used a technique he called "ring-connection," which meant that several recipients would read the same copy in a specified order.⁶² In other cases, he asked his readers, in writing, to send the documents back after two or three weeks.⁶³ We have very little information about his readers. According to his circular from December 1983, the group of his readers included a young priest, a public prosecutor, a psychologist, a psychiatrist, a parish priest, and an elderly ecclesiastical leader.⁶⁴

The missionary work of Nádós consisted of more than just contact and information networking. According to his correspondence, he also took part in organizing relief efforts. According to a letter from 1976, within the framework of the handwork action of the Danubian Baptists and Nádós's mission community, they sent a donation of 9,000 forints to India through the Basel Mission before 1969. This money was enough for a village to build a well. There was another relief action of which this letter from 1976 gives an account. The mission community and the Danubian Baptists contributed to the dona-

59 SRK TGY Kézirattár, Kt. 8168, Nádós Ferenc, *Missziói lapok*, 27–28.

60 *Ibid.*, 26.

61 SRK TGY Kézirattár, Kt. 8164, Nádós Ferenc, *Misszió*, 1.

62 SRK TGY Kézirattár, An. 4932, Nádós Ferenc, "A yokohamai hadbírótság tárgyalása / Molnár Mária halálának körülményei"; SRK TGY Kézirattár, An. 4936, Nádós's letters on theological topics 1.; SRK TGY Kézirattár, An. 12370, Nádós's letter to György Benke; SRK TGY Kézirattár, An. 12371, Nádós's letter to the circle of Józsefné dr. Harasztli.

63 SRK TGY Kézirattár, An. 12,367, Nádós's letter to György Benke.

64 SRK TGY Kézirattár, Kt.d. 7371, Nádós Ferenc, "Decemberi mindenfélé" (Circular letter), 3.

tion made by the Red Cross of Szentendre to Ethiopia by donating 30,000 forints.⁶⁵ There is another source from 1976 according to which an aid package was sent by Nádósy to the Soviet Union with the permission of the Hungarian National Bank.⁶⁶ Nádósy also tried to send money to the Carmel Evangelical Mission in West Germany in 1978,⁶⁷ and later, in 1980, he started to organize aid for flood victims in Békés County.⁶⁸

In addition to the literature which grew out of his mission work, Nádósy also composed a number of texts about society and Christianity. His works include *Spiritualismus und materialismus* (Spiritualism and materialism) from 1948, *Krisztusi magatartás szovjeturalom alatt és a nagygazdagok hatalmában* (Christlike conduct under Soviet rule and the rule of the wealthy) from 1951, *Kiút a materializmus tévedéseiből* (Way out of the blunders of materialism) from 1954, and *Materializmus, idealizmus, keresztyénség* (Materialism, idealism, christianity) from 1969. After 1970, he also wrote about beat, hippies, sexuality, hooligans, bums, and drugs. His work covers these topics until the 1980s. He then began to write global political studies and essays on the reconciliation of theology and the natural sciences. The former texts include topics like the nuclear threat, terrorism, and, after the decade had come to an end, *glasnost*. He introduced the dissemination strategy used for these texts in a publication at the end of 1989 entitled *Messzelátó* (Field glasses/Farsighted). According to this publication, he shared his political and politico-futurological writings with many people working in the government and the fields of diplomacy, science, and mass media.⁶⁹ There are many clues in his work leading us to this. In his circular of December 1983, he mentioned that he had sent his text entitled *Érett észsel, józanul* (With a mature mind, sanely) to an editor of a weekly magazine in Budapest. Although he was aware of the fact that they would not publish his article, he still hoped that some of his thoughts would affect the journalist.⁷⁰ In another one of his personal letters, he made the same wish for politicians and diplomats.⁷¹ He also forwarded his letters to them after the end of the 1980s. He had a study on foreign policy that he even sent to the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, the Patriotic People's Front, the Hungarian Young Communist League, the Secretariat of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and the British and Soviet Embassies.⁷²

65 SRK TGy Kézirattár, An. 4488, Answer of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences to the study of Nádósy entitled "Az Ötdimenziós kontinuum."

66 SRK TGy Kézirattár, An. 4735, Nádósy Ferenc, Circular letters on the mission abroad.

67 SRK TGy Kézirattár, An. 4940, Circular letter of Nádósy on the inner mission.

68 SRK TGy Kézirattár, An. 6101, Circular letter of Nádósy on the aid for the flood victims.

69 SRK TGy Kézirattár, An. 12363, Nádósy Ferenc, *Messzelátó*, 7.

70 SRK TGy Kézirattár, Kt.d. 7371, Nádósy Ferenc, "Decemberi mindenféle" (Circular letter), 11.

71 SRK TGy Kézirattár, Kt.d. 7372, Nádósy Ferenc, "Nyílt levél egy lelkésztestvéremhez," 2–3.

72 SRK TGy Kézirattár, An. 12360, Nádósy Ferenc, "Prognózisok és információk," 1; SRK TGy Kézirattár, An. 12364, Letters of Nádósy.

The Significance and Impact of the Collection

During his mission work, Ferenc Nádósy successfully established relations beyond the iron curtain and organized the routes of information processing. He did this in a period when each of these activities was forbidden. According to inventory lists and archive records, it seems that his works have been read.⁷³ His legacy surely deserves the attention of researchers, but the documents kept in Sárospatak also show the unique details of the process of his work. Here one can find his correspondence next to the manuscripts of his finished works, the samizdat publications, and many of the replies, as well. The Nádósy legacy is thus an exceptional documentation of the daily work done by a Christian samizdat author and his efforts to establish a network of contacts. It also contains information concerning the organization of the missionary working group, and it introduces the processes according to which the documents were distributed, foreign communication, and the process of samizdat production, as well.

Religious Dissent in Socialist Slovenia

It is difficult to offer a historiographical overview of religious dissent in Slovenia, as is the case with any form of public criticism, due to the specific self-management system and position of this northern republic within Yugoslavia. During the period of socialism, a distinctive *modus vivendi* formed between the Catholic Church and Communist Party hierarchies in the Slovenian, virtually mono-religious Catholic environment.⁷⁴ Between the first post-war decade, when relations between the state and the Catholic Church were extremely tense, and the end of the 1970s, this relationship improved to such a degree that the Head of the Cabinet of the Vatican Secretary of State and former rapporteur for Yugoslavia Pier Luigi Celata described it as stable and cooperative.⁷⁵ In the Catholic press, Slovenian Catholic journalists frequently criticized and accused government officials of a negative attitude towards the church, while in Croatia that could not have been done, as religious expert Paul Mojzes observed.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, up to the end of the 1980s, even in Slovenia the attitude of the state authorities towards churchgoers still reflected a Leninist understanding of religion as defined in the 1958 program of the League of Communists of Yugo-

73 MREZSL. 89. László Draskóczy's legacy, Box 8, "Ti mikor kezditek el...?" Interview with Gyula Brebovszy Accessed March 4, 2018. <http://www.evelet.hu/archivum/2009/45/25>

74 In 1953, 85 percent of the population in Slovenia declared themselves religious; by the beginning of the 1980s the share had decreased to less than 50 percent (Roter, *Vernost in nevernost*).

75 SI AS 1211, Box 3, Folder 1979, Memo about the conversation between the First Secretary of the Embassy P. Kastelic with Pier Luigi Celata, December 31, 1979.

76 Mojzes, *Religious Liberty*, 369.

slavia (LCS).⁷⁷ Although the introduction of socialist self-management was supposed to make the Communist Party take a step back from direct authority and only preserve its position as an alleged vanguard in the realm of ideas, its ideological starting-points remained the foundations of regulation and everyday practice in relation to believers at all times. Disagreement with the status of second-class citizens, to which the religious population felt relegated in the atheist school system, discrimination in employment, distorted representations of religion in the media, and the prevention of charitable activities were the key engines of public criticism by individual Catholic intellectuals. With the anti-Communist core of the Slovenian clergy mostly situated abroad and the members at home pressured into silence, it was mostly highly-educated theologians who exposed themselves in these controversies, learned people who were no strangers to socialism and Marxism and who were often part of the mechanisms of "self-management democracy," one way or another. Critical interventions by Catholic theologians and, to a lesser extent, laymen were most frequent in times of anti-religious campaigns, with the circumstances of their activities and places where they could express their views changing significantly between the post-war era of the 1950s, which was marked by belligerent political atheism and the suspension of diplomatic relations with the Holy See, and the 1960s and 1970s, when Yugoslavia renewed its diplomatic contacts with the Holy See and gradually developed a more tolerant attitude towards religion.

The relations between the state and the Catholic Church were most tense in the first post-war decade.⁷⁸ The revolutionary authorities were determined to break the power of the Catholic Church and contain religion within church walls and the private lives of individuals. Initially, the authorities distinguished between what they referred to as reactionary clericalism and progressive Christians; but as soon as they established supremacy over open political opponents, they focused repressive measures on any potential opposition.

In 1945, all pre-war Catholic magazines had been suppressed, making public expression of the Christian worldview practically impossible. During the first post-war years, relations between the state and the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia were also marked by Tito's attempts to separate the national episcopate from the Holy See and establish an autonomous, national church. Within this framework, but even more so with the aim of internal differentiation of the clergy, the state authorities encouraged the formation of priestly associations. Seeing these as the germs of schism, the Holy See took a hard line against these associations—even handing out excommunications—and church authorities in Yugoslavia, in Croatia especially, met them with open opposition or at least stark reservations.

⁷⁷ *Sedmi kongres*, 479–80.

⁷⁸ Režek, "Cuius Regio Eius Religio."

In Slovenia, there was a priestly association called the Cyril-Methodius Society of Catholic Priests of the People's Republic of Slovenia (CMS),⁷⁹ established in 1949. Around half of the Slovenian priests joined this association, prominent members of which included many intellectuals from the ministerial profession, such as academics from the Faculty of Theology (Stanko Cajnkar, Janez Janžekovič, and Anton Trstenjak), Church historian Maks Miklavčič, writers Fran Saleški Finžgar and Fran Ksaver Meško, former Partisan army chaplain Jože Lampret, and others, while the highest church dignitary who entered CMS was the apostolic administrator of the Goriška archbishopric, Mihael Toroš (though he soon withdrew). In their programmatic documents, members of priestly associations declared their loyalty to the Church and homeland, referred to themselves as “patriotic priests,” and emphasized their anti-clerical orientations, their espousal of socialism, and their efforts towards an agreement between Church and state.

The state authorities promoted membership in priestly associations by offering various benefits, including the possibility for CMS to publish its own periodical. In addition to news about the activities of CMS, its magazine *Nova pot* (New path) published meditative theological, philosophical, and sociological articles, and it spurred questions on the topical issue of the relationship between Church and state. Writings by the contributors to *Nova pot* were tailored to social reality and frequently had the ring of propaganda; but occasionally articles that could not have been more out of tune with the expectations of the regime found their way into the magazine, too, making the authorities soon detect sparks of opposition in the circle of the magazine's contributors,⁸⁰ particularly the threesome of Edvard Kocbek, Stanko Cajnkar, dean of the Faculty of Theology and *Nova pot's* editor-in chief, and Janez Janžekovič, professor of philosophy at the Faculty of Theology. In fact, the archival documents of the State Security Services prove that Kocbek and Janžekovič were put under surveillance by the secret police—the former all the time, the latter occasionally—and suggest that Cajnkar must have been, too.

In 1952, the belligerent political atheism in Slovenia reached its peak. A widespread retaliation against Catholic intellectuals took place, this time aimed at pre-war Christian Socialists.⁸¹ In the eyes of the regime, Christian

79 The archival material of CMS is only fragmentarily preserved, as most documents were destroyed during the relocation of the association in the early 1960s (Kolar, “The Priestly Patriotic Associations,” 248). Some of the CMS materials are held at the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia in the personal collection of Jože Lampret (SI AS 1405), co-founder of CMS and Secretary of the Religious Commission with the Slovenian government. This fond also preserves some documents about the magazine *Nova pot* (New path).

80 SI AS 1589, Box 2, Session of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia (CPS), November 20, 1950, 3; SI AS 1589, Box 1, VII Plenum of the Central Committee of CPS, January 26–27, 1952, 33; SI AS 1405, Box 10, A New Path or the Old One? A General Evaluation of Writings in *Nova pot*.

81 In December 1952, two priests and pre-war Christian Socialists were sentenced to long-term imprisonment at a show trial in Ljubljana. They were Jakob Šolar, a linguist and associate of

Socialism was dangerous, because it competed with Communism with its social postulates, while remaining firmly anchored in religious tradition. The chief Slovenian Communists considered the Christian Socialist clergy even more dangerous than the conservative church leadership.⁸² In 1952, Edvard Kocbek, the last Christian Socialist to occupy a high political position, was forced to resign from all political offices and withdraw from public life. For a decade to follow he was prevented from publishing as well, though he continued to write for *Nova pot*, signing his contributions with initials, usually M. M. and sometimes E. K.

One of the most productive contributors to *Nova pot* was Janez Janžekovič, who published numerous theological and philosophical articles in the magazine, in which he searched for a means of dialogue between Christianity and Marxism, detecting a common point between the two in ethics, where Christianity and Marxism could not only meet but even work together. Janžekovič agreed that “where there is science, there is no place for religion,” but neither is there place for “dialectical materialism or any other worldview,” as each of them contains some extrapolation and each becomes a religion. He wrote: “Lay school has to teach science, real science, all science and all its hypotheses—yes! But to teach a worldview—no!” Introducing a determinate worldview into schools would mean reviving the infamous principle “*cuius regio eius et religio*,” which Janžekovič strongly opposed.⁸³

In the mid-1950s, the momentum of the anti-religious campaign was slowly waning. In October 1956, Slovenian party leaders were already determining that Catholic intelligentsia no longer posed a threat, and they also acknowledged that the policy towards the Catholic Church was not necessarily sustainable and should be relaxed.⁸⁴ The state authorities replaced belligerent political atheism with activist atheism; i.e., providing the conditions when religion, which was said to emerge particularly in circumstances of material underdevelopment, would no longer be socially necessary. The time from the early 1960s onwards can be considered a period of a search for compromises, both on the part of the state and on the part of the Catholic Church, which slowly set out on the path of *aggiornamento* following the Second Vatican Council. This time of more tolerant coexistence also foreshadowed a diplomatic reconciliation between Yugoslavia and the Holy See, while in Slovenia the new era was reflected in the expansion of the Catholic periodical press: in

the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and Janez Fabijan, a professor at the Faculty of Theology (SI AS 1931, Box 80–3).

82 SI AS 1211, Box 54, Opinions and Evaluation of the Policies to Date towards the Clergy and the Church: A Paper by Stane Kavčič, 1957, 2–3; SI AS 1211, Box 53, Folder 124/67, Attitude towards Religious Communities in the SRS, 1967, 2; etc.

83 Janžekovič, “Izkustvena znanost, svetovni nazor, svoboda vesti” (Experiential Science, Worldview, Freedom of Conscience).

84 SI AS 1589, Box 7, Session of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of LCS, October 29, 1956, 1.

1965, the pre-war scientific journal of the Faculty of Theology called *Bogoslovni vestnik* (Theological quarterly) resumed publication.

In the early 1970s, a new controversy involving the civil rights of believers arose because of the adoption of a new constitution which sought irrevocably to establish the principles of socialist self-management. In October 1973, the Catholic weekly newspaper *Družina* (Family) published a press release by the Bishops' Conference of Yugoslavia, which—as evidenced by the documents of the Commission for Religious Affairs⁸⁵—the Slovenian bishops somewhat mitigated. While the communication of the Yugoslav diocesans covered all controversial points in the state's stance towards believers, the Slovenian bishops separately addressed the republic constitutional commission with similar demands: equal treatment of worldviews, prohibitions against anti-religious propaganda, freedom to express religious beliefs, extension of the right to attend religious schools to laymen, and the right of parents to have a bearing on the worldview education of their children in schools.⁸⁶

The state security apparatus ascribed authorship of these demands to Franc Perko, a Catholic theologian and one of the leading members of the Slovenian Priestly Society, which in 1970 succeeded CMS. Perko had published a series of critical articles in *Znamenje* (Sign), a progressive theological journal of the period, in which he did not so much problematize the leading ideological role of the Communist Party, but rather expressed discontent with the latter “advocating a certain worldview as a political force and associating it with a certain type of politics.” At the same time, he demanded that the new constitution preserve the current clause prohibiting the abuse of religion and religious activities and add to it a clause on the unconstitutionality of restricting religious freedom.⁸⁷ He also recalled the already known requests for the abandonment of the “atheist worldview foundation” of Marxism and demanded that the Communist Party rise from the level of political dogma,⁸⁸ for only after the abolishment of the atheist worldview as a criterion for joining

85 The Religious Commission of the Presidency of the Slovenian National Liberation Council (SNOS) was established within the framework of the Partisan movement in 1944. After the war, a separate religious commission also operated with the Presidency of the Government of the People's Republic of Slovenia (PRS). In 1953, both commissions were abolished and in their place the Religious Commission of the Executive Council of PRS was established. In 1965, it was renamed the Commission of SRS for Religious Affairs. It operated under this name until 1975, when it changed its name again to the Commission of SRS for Relations with Religious Communities, a name which it kept until its dissolution in 1991. The materials of the religious commission are preserved at the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia in the fond SI AS 1211, which—owing to the administrative and advisory character of this body—represents the key source for the study of the dynamics of relations between the state and religious communities under socialism.

86 SI AS 1931, A-21-29, Newsletter Security Situation in the July–August Period, September 10, 1973, 191.

87 Perko, “Ob osnutku nove ustave” (On the draft of the new constitution), 290, 294.

88 Perko, “Svoboda vernih v samoupravni družbi,” 2.

the ranks of the party could Christians start living in complete and constitutionally guaranteed equality.⁸⁹

Occurrences of religious dissent that the state authorities prevented in some way or another from being published can be found in the archival documents of the aforementioned religious commission, the public prosecution, a mass organization called the Socialist Alliance of Working People, and in particular the Central Committee of the LCS, which occasionally dedicated whole sessions to topics of this kind. One such case was the merciless article by theologian Franc Rode entitled “Resnično krščanstvo” (True Christianity), which Rode intended to publish in 1979 in *Zbornik predavanj s Teološkega tečaja o aktualnih temah za študente in izobražence* (Proceedings from a theology course for students and intelligentsia); i.e., in a collection of public lectures in Ljubljana and Maribor. At these widely attended lectures,⁹⁰ theologians Franc Rode, Franček Križnik, Tone Stres, Rudi Koncilija, and other intellectuals, including Dušan Pirjevec, delivered a good deal of sharp criticism at the expense of party hegemony. In this sense, but also in that of the incompatibility of Marxism and Christianity, Rode raised a question in the aforementioned “voluntarily” withdrawn article: “How can a Christian become engaged in a society that takes him for a simpleton and plans as well as expects him to lose his purpose in life?”⁹¹

There were other intellectuals who also showed themselves to be sensitive to discrimination against the faithful, among them Vinko Ošlak, one of the few Slovenian intellectuals whose independent views and ways of life met the criteria of a classic Eastern European dissident. In 1972, when the door to one of the major sociological journals, *Teorija in praksa* (Theory and practice), was still open to him, he wrote stridently against the prevalence of atheism in public schools,⁹² and he presented even harsher views later⁹³ in the pages of the cultural magazine *Dialogi* (Dialogues). That same year he addressed a letter to the main Slovenian daily *Delo* (Labor), in which he claimed that opting for any non-Marxist philosophical view was a fatal political decision for an individual, as not even “fanatical” fighters for workers’ rights among the religious population could find employment in public administration; but his letter — as one would have expected — was not published.⁹⁴

From the late 1970s onwards, the younger, more liberal generation of party leaders already started acknowledging the legitimacy of some grievances of Catholic criticism, such as the polemics triggered by a dogmatic representation of history and the anthropological substance of religion in a primary school

89 Perko, “Slovenski kristjan v samoupravni družbi,” 185–86.

90 AJ 837, Folder II-5-d/103, Information of the State Security Services, January 6, 1975, 6.

91 SI AS 1589, Box 547, Folder 5734, Rode, “Resnično krščanstvo danes in jutri.”

92 Ošlak, “V odgovor tovarišu Kejžarju.”

93 Ošlak, “O neangažirani šoli.”

94 SI AS 1592, Box 9, Folder 57/1974, Ošlak, “Malleus maleficarum,” November 24, 1974.

textbook for social education and ethics.⁹⁵ This was a significant departure from the practice of previous years, when complaints by the faithful would *a priori* have been labelled clericalist attacks and party ideologists would mainly have devoted their energies to preventing “unacceptable” public interventions by the faithful rather than focusing on the contents of complaints. In truth, they would resort to repressive and administrative measures only in exceptional cases,⁹⁶ but they were all the more eager to encourage “differentiation” among Christians. In late socialism, the Communist Party started leaving public discussions to highly educated and ideologically open-minded Marxist theoreticians, which contributed significantly to a more tolerant dialogue between Marxists and Christians and gradually, though never definitely, allowed for a vision of a more democratic socialism, open even to believers, to emerge.⁹⁷

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95 SI AS 1589, Box 557, Folder 5847, On the Present Occurrences in the Relations between Socialist Self-Management Society and the Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia, February 7, 1980.

96 SI AS 537, Box 1103, Folder 1140, Report on the Work of Public Prosecutors in the Field of Religious Press, October 2, 1974; SI AS 353, Box 30, Folder 31, Information on Relations between Self-Managed Society and Religious Communities (the Roman Catholic in Particular) in Slovenia and Ljubljana in the Period 1974–1978, October 7, 1974.

97 Ramšak, “Between Ideology and Pragmatism.”

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