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**“Religious” and “Secular” in Socialist
Bosnia-Herzegovina
1945-1980s**

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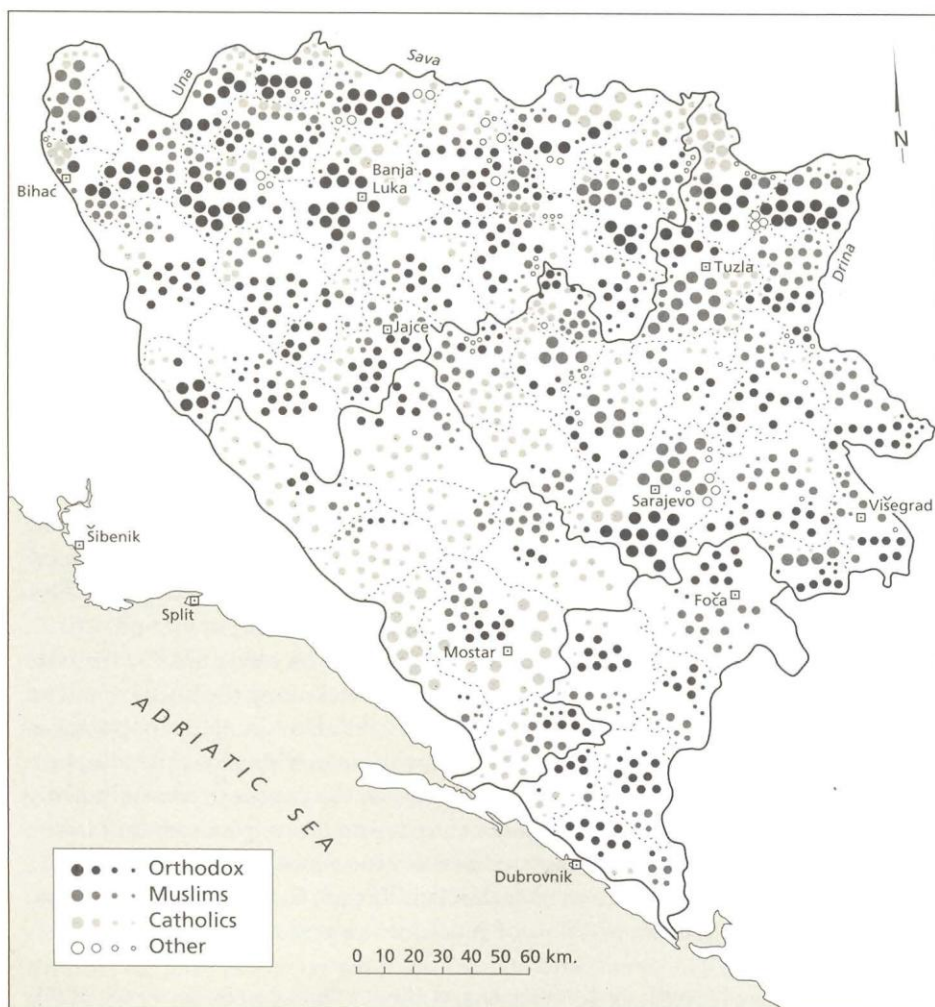
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Map 5. The Confessionally Intermixed Population of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1931

Map taken from Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941 – 1945*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 480

Introduction

The Families of the victims ask the hardest... of questions:
How is it possible that the person I loved so much lit no spark of humanity in you?¹

“This is the only life that there is,” concluded an anguished survivor of political conflict in J.M Coetzee’s *Disgrace*.² At the heart of her statement was a rejection of particularistic morality, whether “secular” or “religious,” and an acceptance of a single life shared by all humanity. And yet the problem of defining the peripheries of co-existence and tolerance in heterogeneous societies retracts deep into the annals of time. It questions how the “self” constitutes itself in relation to perceptions of alterity; how human interactions within a shared space can escalate into instances of cruelest brutality, expelling any possibility of heterogeneity from the idea of “freedom.” This study looks towards the essence of the secular, i.e. the idea of pertaining to the temporal world as opposed to any religious after-world, as an ideal of co-existence, a negotiation of different sensibilities in a common space. Often in the tragedies and travesties of human life, the ideal fades, leaving only an empty shell to be invoked and reified in political processes. This narrative by no means provides an answer to the realization of this ideal. But I hope that it does encourage some reflection on how to understand the scope and limits of communal boundaries, whilst keeping the ideal alive.

This narrative picks up from a particular time and place in Southeastern Europe. It begins amidst the ravages of the Second World War in the former Yugoslavia, from the fascist and totalitarian mechanisms that had splintered various

¹ Antjie Krog, *Country of my Skull: Guilt, Sorrow and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa* (Random House Inc, 2000), 67

² J.M Coetzee, *Disgrace* (Penguin, 2000).

communities, enveloping them in a web of perpetrators, victims, collaborators and bystanders. It stops forty years later, towards the end of Titoist regime, when multi-national Yugoslavia was on the brink of collapse. The intermediary phase was that of Communist Yugoslavia. This relatively stable time was characterized not simply by the coercion of the Communist state, but also by a strong, often idealistic, commitment to cultural diversity, the “brotherhood and unity” of the various “nationalities” in Yugoslavia.

The territories that once constituted Yugoslavia included Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, Slovenia and Montenegro, the borders of which were drawn in accordance with “ethnic” and historical principles. This project focuses on Bosnia-Herzegovina within the broader context of Socialist Yugoslavia. The territories that once constituted Yugoslavia carried a deep confessional legacy. They were a battleground for Catholicism and Orthodoxy in the medieval period, the Anatolian jewel of the Ottoman Empire in the early modern period, and a constitutional experiment of “nationalities” by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy during the modern period. The term “South Slavs,” here, refers particularly to the inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina, conjoined by a common regional identity and a language, and divided into three confessional communities: Orthodox Christians, Catholics and Muslims. To the east of Bosnia-Herzegovina was the Republic of Serbia, dominated by “Serbian” Orthodox Christians, identifying with the patron St. Sava. To the North and West was the republic of Croatia, inhabited by Catholic Christians who looked towards the Apostles Cyril and Methodius, who had preached Christianity in the Balkans in the 9th century. Despite being

linguistically identical, Serbian and Croatian are now considered separate national languages based on the varying ekavian (eastern/Cyrillic) and ijekavian (western/Latin) dialects. Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina speak Serbo-Croatian, but have created a different dialect, Bosanski, incorporating Turkish words. Once inhabited collectively by members of the different confessional communities, Bosnia-Herzegovina now stands shattered in the wake of ethnic cleansing, and with little possibility of change. Why and how did social interactions take such a dramatic turn, dissolving into an abyss of violence? What were the contradictions in the efforts to forge an integrated “civic” Yugoslav unity? How could the celebration of cultural diversity unleash such antagonisms at the collapse of Yugoslavia?

A famous Yugoslav novelist and Nobel Peace Winner, Ivo Andric, characterized the spirit of Bosnia in fictionalized chronicles published after the Second World War. Amidst political upheavals and even natural disasters, he found that the only sense of permanence in Bosnia was the constancy of human interactions within a common territory. In Bosnian towns, different confessional communities were deeply intermingled; each confession recognized the other, but lived in its own compartmentalized world, and held a separate historical consciousness. Andric’s writings, which later served as a sort of Bible in Communist Yugoslavia, were marked with contempt for the public expression of religious difference. In the aftermath of the Second World War, many Communist intellectuals and idealists shared Andric’s contempt for ultra-nationalist *as well as* confessional divisions. Andric’s writings, nonetheless, evoke what can often be a

reality in heterogeneous societies; individuals may live side by side and affirm their separate customs, but with little real empathy. Even now, instances of brutal ‘ethnic’ cleansing and social exclusion call to mind the danger of exclusionary social perspectives. This essay explores the Communist period in Yugoslavia, and seeks to complicate the dilemma of identity and difference. It raises the following questions: how can differences be accommodated? Which ones? And more importantly, to what end?

In contrast to Andric’s picture, the Communist period can, perhaps, be characterized as intimate integration and socialist homogeneity, but without empathy. Communist Yugoslavia sought to restructure society through secular and socialist reforms, and to simultaneously instill values of “civic” patriotism in people. Religious institutions were significantly marginalized, and religious expression forbidden in public and political life. The new regime attempted to achieve considerable social integration through state institutions such as public schools, factories, and village councils. New property laws restricted private ownership, often leading to urbanization and to residential integration, such that a Muslim lived in close proximity with a Christian, a tradesman with a professional. Almost in a manner of *Kafkaesque* absurdity, individuals under the Communist regime were intimately connected. The public expression of religion, a primary mark of differentiation, was prohibited. “Ethnic” differences, instead, were institutionalized in a top-down fashion. But what did “ethnic” differences entail in Socialist Bosnia? The extent of homogeneity among the inhabitants of Bosnia can

be glimpsed in a narrative by Dusan Kecmanovic, Prove You're a Serb.³ In post-socialist Yugoslavia, Kecmanovic recalls an encounter with a woman of “a strong Zagreb dialect” who wishes to seek psychiatric help. The patient pauses in Kecmanovic’s office, eager to determine her doctor’s *surname* and nationality. When Kecmanovic reveals that he is a Serb, the patient, with skepticism, demands evidence. Kecmanovic reveals that “objective” characteristics such as language, accents and even looks were “unreliable guides in determining ethnic affiliation.”⁴ Whilst portraying the intense “ethnicization” of social life in post-socialist Yugoslavia, the narrative also indicates that the determination of “ethnic identity” was a difficult enterprise. One can imagine, then, the dilemma of determining “who was who” amidst the homogenization of public life during the Communist regime.⁵ An answer was often sought in the private household, through the tracing of genealogies.

In a famous satire, Names (1966), Erih Kos, a Serbian intellectual who was later imprisoned by the Communist regime, raises the Shakespearean ontological dilemma of identity: “What is in a name?”⁶ In his depiction of a closely structured society, a disgruntled editor, Mihailo Milic, seeks economic advancement and is routinely jealous of his superiors. Frustrated in all efforts, Milic becomes obsessed with the meaning of names. In Names, we can see the Communist

³ Dusan Kecmanovic, *Ethnic Times: Exploring Ethno-nationalism in the Former Yugoslavia: Prove You're a Serb*, (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), 157-158

⁴ Ibid

⁵ I am grateful to Professor Jeremy King for sharing his recent draft: “Group Rights in Liberal Austria and the Dilemmas of Equality”, Article 2009, and “Who is Who? Group Rights in Liberal Austria and the Dilemma of Classificatory Procedure,” Article, Draft June 2007. His other writings have also informed my work:

“Nationalization in East Central Europe: Ethnicism, Ethnicity and Beyond”, in *Staging the Past*. e.d by Nancy Wingfield and Maria Bucur, (Purdue, 2001)

⁶ Erih Kos, *Names*. (New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966.)

Yugoslav society at play. After a painful journey, Milic finally realizes the futility of understanding names, divorced as they are from the lives that carry them.

I have attempted to answer my questions and to contextualize the violence in post-socialist Yugoslavia, especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina, from a particular angle. This is, however, only one piece of a complex tale explaining why and how the collapse of Yugoslavia unleashed antagonisms, often ahistorically termed “ancient hatreds.” This research primarily focuses on the dilemma of “the separation of Church and State” in Socialist Yugoslavia alongside the accommodation of “nationalities” in the socialist political framework. I pay close attention to the repression of religious differentiation in the social realm as well as to latent confessional dynamics in Yugoslavia. I explore how the discursive categories of the “religious” and the “secular” were formulated by the Communist regime in response to socio-political dynamics⁷, and how these socially inscribed understandings could inform political processes, as well as vice versa. In Socialist Bosnia, “confessional” communities were, by no means, internally homogenous. In the presence of religious institutions, however, they were often organized around daily religious practices, invocations, social habits and customs. The Communist regime, opposing the public presence of religion and accepting “ethnic” characteristics, lent a seismic quality to the question of identity and difference in this region. What were the implications of the “separation of Church and State” in multi-confessional Bosnia? How did the “ethnic” and the

⁷ Here I would like to acknowledge Talal Asad’s writings: *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam and Modernity*, (Stanford: Stanford Un. Press, 2003). In this book, Asad delves into the anthropology of the “secular” concept, as well as the practices and political formations of “secularism.”

“confessional” categories relate to each other, and to the concept of territoriality? And more importantly, how did the process of secularization complicate the ascriptive categories of Orthodox Christians, Catholics, and Muslims, as well as the concomitant process of “nation” building in Socialist Bosnia-Herzegovina?

Benedict Anderson defines “nations” as “imagined communities” in which the notion of a “horizontal comradeship” with fellow members is constructed, reified and perpetuated in the consciousness of individuals.⁸ He argues that nationalism aligns itself, “not with self consciously held political ideologies, but with the cultural systems that preceded it, out of which—as well as against which—it came into being.”⁹ Rogers Brubaker complicates Anderson’s thesis by highlighting the social practices of reification “through which the political fiction of the nation becomes momentarily yet powerfully realized in practice.”¹⁰ He focuses on “nationhood” and “nationness” as a “practical category, an institutionalized form and a contingent event.”¹¹ In Bosnia, religion was a primary but not exclusive, mark of differentiation, contributing to the existence of parallel subcultures. In the words of Mark Baskin, religion as a form of differentiation defined “the character of historical experience,” by determining the “group’s cosmologies, patterns of daily life, and affective orientations.”¹² Secularization policies in the Communist regime, however, contested the very presence of the latent subcultures within society. But to what extent could the Communist regime

⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin & Spread of Nationalism*. (Verso, 1991)

⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰ Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 15

¹¹ *Ibid*

¹² Mark Baskin. "The Secular State as Ethnic Entrepreneur: Macedonians and Bosnian Moslems in Socialist Yugoslavia."

construct “nations” which were “secular” in content, though “confessional” in form? Or rather, how could the Communist regime accommodate “national” categories for confessional communities, given that the very nature of the “national” was an abstraction?

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Communist Party took the position of an outside arbiter of nationalist tensions, seeking to build “nationalities” in accordance with a “secular” and more egalitarian principle. “Ethnic” boundaries, being divorced from subjective differences of faith, were believed to be more fluid. Under the Communist regime in Yugoslavia, the notion of socialist internationalism gave way to socialist patriotism, with a strong territorial allegiance to the South Slavic lands. Unable to part with the cultural and confessional legacy encapsulated within the territory, the Communist regime soon became a prison of its own making. This research shows how the Communist regime derived the notion of secular “ethnicity” from the modernist understanding of a “community of language and culture” within a territory and imbued it with a forward-looking socialist character. Conceptions of the “ethnic” vis-a-vis the confessional, then, were often mapped onto the “modern” versus the “traditional.” With religion serving as a primary mark of difference in Bosnia-Herzegovina, however, the legitimacy of an “ethnic” nation came to hinge on secularized religious differences as well as the question of *which* religion was territorially and ethnically Slavic.

Edward Said describes “Orientalism” as an “idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary that has given [the Orient] a reality

and presence in and for the West.” Said writes from the vantage point of Western colonization of the East, and the subsequent production of knowledge and discourses characterizing the “East” as an “enterprise.” Furthermore, he locates the roots of Orientalist thinking in the encounter of Christian Europe with non-Christian “others.” Islam served as a real provocation: “it lay uneasily close to Christianity, geographically and culturally. It drew on the Judeo-Hellenic traditions, it borrowed creatively from Christianity.”¹³ “Orientalist” discourses in the Balkans, with Eastern colonization of the West, had a different character. They emerged as an expression of anti-imperialism and a sense of post-colonial disorientation. The efforts to manage “nationalities” in Socialist Yugoslavia were compounded by an attempt to construct a civic “Yugoslav” nation, at once novel in its socialist character and continuous with the historical unity of the South Slavs. With the Communist Party deriving its legitimacy from an anti-imperialist and patriotic stance, it soon endorsed the notion of a secularized Christian norm or culture in an attempt to promote ‘brotherhood and unity’ and to resurrect an age-old concept of South Slavic unity. The Ottomans, characterized by the Communist regime as a Turkish, “Asiatic” empire disrupting the unity of the South Slavic lands, were at the forefront of condemnation. Through a complex set of negotiations between the notions of the “secular” ethnic and the “religious,” the “Slavic” and the foreign “Other,” this narrative called ever more attention to the Bosnian Muslim Community, and to what ultimately became a tragic liminality.

This study, however, conveys a symptomatic tale and resists arguments of inevitability. Despite a pervasive understanding of religion as a temporary

¹³ Edward Said, *Orientalism*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 74

phenomenon, the Communist Party as well as “secular” Serb and Croat nationals were continually engaged with the presence of religion. While Serbian and Croatian national discourses often enveloped religion, they were simultaneously shaped and radicalized by the enduring presence of an “anational” Muslim category. When in 1968, the Communist Party introduced the category of a Muslim “nationality,” and secular Muslim elites asserted their own historical development, the character of Serbian nationalism in response to Muslims also changed. Muslims were no longer “ethnic brethren” to be assimilated, but virulent “race-traitors.” In a Serbian novel, *Knife* (1982), the author Vuk Draskovic uses the metaphor of a knife to describe the South Slavic identity. Serbian ethnic kinship in relation to Muslims is like two blades of a knife, intimately connected, and yet a source of great violence. Amidst the Orientalist conception of Islam in the Communist regime, the introduction of a “Muslim” status in the political framework was a contradiction in form. With regard to Bosnian Muslims, therefore, the very categories of the “ethnic” and the “confessional” as the basis of nationhood were contested. In Socialist Yugoslavia, “nationalities” not only served as substitutes for semi-autonomous and quasi-civil confessional communities, but also for other forms of political representation. In many ways, the treatment of Bosnian Muslims by the Communist regime represented the dilemmas of “nation-building” amidst secularization. With the concept of territoriality extricated from confessional communities and allocated to “ethnic” communities, Bosnian Muslims were left in a particularly precarious position on the eve of Yugoslavia’s disintegration. On one hand, therefore, this

research is a particularistic narrative of the dilemmas of secularization in Socialist Yugoslavia and its implications for Bosnian Muslims. At the same time, it also raises a broader question of the place of religion within society and politics, as well as of confessional categories amidst “national” politics.

The three sections are organized thematically and chronologically. Section One begins with a Prelude, “Community and its Limits in Ordinary Bosnian Life,” and provides a snapshot of social interactions and relations across and within Muslim, Catholic and Orthodox Christian communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The prelude seeks to portray social interactions outside state institutions, formed on the basis of a shared living space. How are social interactions shaped by confessional boundaries? And what limits do these boundaries impose in the forging of a cohesive heterogeneous community in ordinary life? Following the prelude is Chapter One, “The Creation of a Secular Narrative.” It provides a context for secularization policies and the marginalization of religious institutions in the immediate post-war period through the trial of Archbishop Stepinac of Croatia. As the highest functionary of the Catholic Church in Croatia, Stepinac was held responsible for the complicity of Catholic priests in atrocities against Orthodox Christians during the Second World War. This section questions the place of religious institutions within society, through the perceptions of new Communist elites and of religious authorities. This section complicates what is often a neat overlap between confessional and national communities. Instead, it shows how religious institutions in the early decades of the Communist regime became instruments of national myth making not merely through engagement

with the “national,” but also, ironically, through disengagement with it. The absence of Muslims in this section is significant, and primarily a consequence of limited sources (both primary and secondary). The Young Muslims’ Trial in 1949 has received only cursory treatment in the secondary literature. On another level, however, the absence of Bosnian Muslims from the earlier narratives of the Communist regime is crucial in highlighting the lack of significance of Bosnian Muslim for the Communist regime. The early years were a theatre for managing and tempering Serbian and Croatian nationalisms.

The prelude of Section Two picks up the thread from the first prelude and depicts “the New Socialist Community,” the altered interactions of individuals within Socialist Yugoslavia through the re-structuring of social life, secularization, educational and cultural reforms. In the new Socialist Yugoslavia, educational institutions emerged in parallel to older religious institutions. In Chapter Two, “The Voice of Thy Brother’s Blood Crieth unto me from the Ground,” I focus on the effort to promote “brotherhood and equality” through school curricula and cultural works endorsed by the Communist regime. I explore the texts of two literary icons, Ivo Andric and Petar Njegos, whose works were made mandatory in school systems, and the Communist rendition of the conflict between Christianity and Islam as expressed in these texts. This section covers the time period in Socialist Yugoslavia after its break from the Soviet Comintern in 1948 to the mid 1960s.

Section Three turns to the Bosnian Muslim community and explores the dilemmas of secularization reforms, and the contradictions of separating the

“secular,” ethnic and cultural, from the religious. This section shows how some of the social understandings of the “religious” and the “secular” (as portrayed in the previous section) were implemented on a political level, particularly in regard to Bosnian Muslims. The opening prelude, “The ‘Ottoman’ City in Socialist Bosnia,” describes the architectural re-fashioning of an Ottoman *Bascarsija* (marketplace) in Sarajevo. The architectural re-formulations serve as a metaphor for Bosnian Muslims in Socialist Yugoslavia, and prepare the ground for the narrative that follows. Chapter Three, “Who *were* the Bosnian Muslims?” finally focuses on the constitutional accommodation of “ethnicity” in Socialist Yugoslavia, the interaction of the “ethnic” and the “confessional” categories in the political framework, the liminality of Bosnian Muslims and their fragmented self understandings. It ends with an intensification of politics as the “anational” and confessional category of Muslims was granted “national” status by the Communist regime. This section begins from the early fifties, and ends with the political trial of a Bosnian Muslim activist, Alija Izetbegovic, in 1983.

During the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s, national libraries, cultural archives, and artifacts were systematically targeted by the ethnic cleansers. The Sarajevo National Library was destroyed. The violent collapse of Yugoslavia brought much scholarly attention to this region, as academics sought to understand the reasons for the failure of a multi-national state. Prior to this, Communist Yugoslavia had received little scholarly attention. The constraints of an undergraduate work could not allow for a thorough regional focus on Bosnia- Herzegovina. My work, therefore, situates the region within the larger context of post-war Yugoslavia,

moving between a narration of the broader trends, and an analysis of the more particular implications for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Communist periodicals such as *Borba*, *Politika*, and *Novosti*, remain untranslated. I was fortunate to have spent some time researching in the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in University College of London in the summer of 2009, and browsing through an entire section of the library devoted to Yugoslavia and its successor states. The language barrier, however, was a major obstacle, and continued to remain so after I continued my project at Mount Holyoke College.

In my work, I particularly focus on the Bosnian Muslim community and their liminality in the Yugoslav context. Despite their precarious position within Socialist Yugoslavia and their ultimately tragic fate, very little attention has been given to them in scholarly literature. The writings of many Bosnian Muslim intellectuals are also in Serbo-Croatian. The two texts of Alija Izetbegovic used in this research, Islamic Declaration and Islam Between East and West, with the former being republished in the 1990s, largely feature in politicized narratives of the Yugoslav Wars. Working on the Bosnian Muslim question has been tricky. I have tried, instead, to focus on them through their categorizations in Serbian, Croatian and Yugoslav literature, before giving them a voice in my third section. Tracing cultural and intellectual history through historical fiction, poetry and philosophical writings has been my primary methodology. For my broader question of the place of religion within society, my work would have benefited from an access to religious periodicals, such as *Glas Koncila* and *Glasnik*. These periodicals, however, also remain untranslated. In order to show the interplay

between the 'ethnic' and the 'religious' within a larger theoretical question of secularization and its dilemmas, I have tried to portray varying perceptions. The Communist perspective is threaded through the work, and can be found particularly in the politicized narrative of the Stepinac trial and the works of Ivo Andric. Interspersed within the Communist narrative are also "Serbian" and "Croatian" nationalist perspectives. A counter-narrative in the Stepinac trial, however, seeks to represent the voice of religious authorities under the Communist regime. The texts of Bosnian Muslim philosopher and activist Alija Izetbegovic explore the relationship between politics and religion from the perspective of Islamic thought.

In the prison of ideas that was Communist Yugoslavia, marginalized individuals were left dismembered, their voices and narratives lost in translation. While the rhetoric of "Brotherhood and Unity" ultimately served at the hands of power-seeking Communist elites, it was also an ideal that drew many idealistic individuals and philosophers to the forefront of politics. But what became of the "Yugoslavs", those individuals who truly transcended "ethnic" and "religious" differences amidst the "ethnicization" of political life? In 1968, a movement of students and intellectuals was a rare embodiment of the true Yugoslav spirit. United in the face of social divisions, they called for economic and social justice in an increasingly bureaucratic regime. The movement was soon crushed. In the writings of Mesa Selimovic, a Communist writer from a Muslim milieu, we can see glimpses of disillusionment experienced by previous adherents of the regime. Individuals like Mesa Selimovic were left in a limbo, belonging neither to the

Communist regime nor to a Slavic ethnicity, or even to a Muslim faith. Some were silenced, and some turned to “national” autonomy as a path to freedom.

Section I

A Prelude:

Community and its Limits in Ordinary Bosnian Life¹⁴ *1920s to 1940s*

A bird's eye view of Sarajevo in the early twentieth century exposed tall, gleaming minarets of Turkish mosques next to the magnificent domes of a Greek Orthodox Church, a Roman Catholic Church, and a Synagogue. The mosque was the focal point of the Muslim community, as the Churches were for the Orthodox and the Catholic communities. Here in the Bosnian capital, the bazaar or the marketplace (*carsija*), was evocative of the integrated influence of the Byzantine and Ottoman empires. It was more reminiscent of the Ottoman period than any place in Turkey itself since the secularizing reforms of Ataturk. A cascade of small quarters, each standing independently in an interwoven pattern, threaded through the city. In the city, they were called the living quarters, and in the villages, the *mahalas* or hamlets. For a Bosnian villager, the city, with its often

¹⁴ In order to write this piece and construct a picture of ordinary life in Bosnia in the pre-socialist years and early socialist period, I have consulted anthropological sources, memoirs and accounts of Bosnian History. These include: Robert S. John: *The Silent People Speak*, (Doubleday Press, 1948), Munevera Hadzisehovic, *A Muslim Woman in Tito's Yugoslavia*, translated by Thomas J Bulter and Saba Risaluddin, (Texas A&M University Press, 2003), William Lockwood, *European Moslems: Economy and Ethnicity in Western Bosnia*, (Academic Press 1975), Tone Bringa, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way: Identity and Community in a Central Bosnian Village*, (Princeton: N.J Princeton University Press, 1995) and Noel Malcom, (*Bosnia: A Short History*, Macmillan London Limited, 1994).

Robert S. John, an American journalist, provides a journalistic account of his interactions with people in Bosnia-Herzegovina after the Second World War, their perceptions of ordinary life in the current period and pre-socialist Yugoslavia. Munevera Hadzisehovic provides a unique and intricately descriptive account of her family history and social life in Yugoslavia from the First World War to the early 1970s. The anthropological sources by Bringa and Lockwood are useful in their details and are largely representative of the socialist period. They suffer, however, from some drawback in their lack of *specific* historical context and seemingly timeless nature. The quotes and specific incidents that I draw from these sources have been corroborated with historical accounts and I have verified the quintessential continuity of the customs and attitudes from these sources in the earlier periods.

dispersed and intermingled confessional residences, represented a more universal space, which could sometimes even merit a certain disregard for dress codes being in accord with one's confessional community. In the villages, matters stood differently.

In many of the mixed villages in Bosnia, different confessional groups, either Muslims and Orthodox Christians or Muslims and Catholics, settled in clearly demarcated *mahalas*, with houses usually built in clusters and occupied by extended families. Individual communities were largely based on kinship and residence, which in turn preserved their different subcultures. The household, or the *zadruga*, was a crucial unit in the domain of relationships, characterized often by a high regard for "descent" and an emphasis on tracing familial genealogies, particularly among Christian peasants.¹⁵ Where confessional residences existed side by side, architectural differences in rural Bosnia demarcated one house from another, the Muslim homes being square, like the village mosque, and Catholic ones, rectangular. In her memoirs, Munevera Hadzisehovic describes life in Yugoslavia before the Second World War; "societies lived together for centuries, side by side. There were mutual influences, passing from one side to another," alongside a consciousness of territorial delimitations.¹⁶ Although hospitality and coffee visits among friends were an intrinsic aspect of rural life, dietary

¹⁵ "Zadruga," a term used to connote 'household' in early ethnographic literature was later co-opted by the Communist government and used to denote the village community, or the council elected by the Communist government.

William G. Lockwood, "Converts and Consanguinity: The Social Organization of Moslem Slavs in Western Bosnia". *Ethnology*. 11 (1): (1972) 55-79 and William G. Lockwood, *European Moslems: economy and ethnicity in western Bosnia*. (New York: Academic Press., 1975) and Tone Bringa. *Being Muslim the Bosnian way: identity and community in a central Bosnian village*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹⁶Hadžišehović, *A Muslim woman in Tito's Yugoslavia.*, 55

restrictions often interfered in social visits. Since it was considered rude to refuse any food offered by the host in Bosnian social customs, sometimes Muslims were uncomfortable visiting their Catholic neighbors. Nonetheless, Muslim, Orthodox, and Catholic children played with one another, and young girls and boys spent time together. Men rarely met outside the carsija or the market district. Members of each religious group interacted with standard, public greetings of dobar dan [good day] and dovidenja [goodbye], whilst reserving specific religious greetings for their religious compatriots.¹⁷ Formal visits between Muslim, Catholic and Orthodox Christian neighbors occurred on occasions of significant import, such as marriages, birth, death or illness. Hadzisehovic writes of the importance of religious figures, or Hodzas, who wrote “special notes in ink: for healing, for success in business, and to counteract evil spells. These notes were worn around the neck in a special locket, or sewn into the inside pocket of a shirt or braided into the hair. Even Christians came to the hodzas for help, just as Muslims visited monasteries for assistance.”¹⁸ Sometimes during Ramadan, Hadzisehovic describes that Orthodox Christians would not eat in the public carsija out of respect for Muslims. Nonetheless, religious celebrations and rituals during events also served as moments of demarcation between different groups, through their inclusion of some members of the village and exclusion of others.

The limits of community and interaction between Catholics, Orthodox Christians and Bosnian Muslims were ultimately maintained through a tradition of endogamy. In the words of a woman in the village of Dolina: “we respect their

¹⁷ Tone Bringa, 56

¹⁸ Hadžišehović, *A Muslim woman in Tito's Yugoslavia*, 25

Catholic holidays, their churches, their prayers and see it as a sin to blaspheme against their sacred symbols, but we do not marry them.” Another one stated, “we get along well and we have a good time together, but this is one thing. It is another to have somebody from a different religion together with you in the kitchen. When two people who prepare different foods and keep different holy days share the same house many problems arise.”¹⁹ When, on one occasion in the town of Dolina, a Catholic man brought home a Muslim bride, he was threatened with excommunication. The bride had to leave. Earlier, he had brought home an Orthodox Christian woman, who was also rejected because “they cross themselves with three fingers and we with five.”²⁰ Intermarriages were considered a threat to the integrity of a household unit, a space reserved for an exclusive and un-negotiated expression of one’s religious and social customs. According to Islamic tradition, Muslim men were permitted to marry “People of the Book” (Christians and Jews), whilst Muslim women were prohibited from doing so. Although trespassing religious frontiers caused offence to Orthodox and Catholic compatriots (and in the case of Muslims, particularly with regard to women), discreet proselytism frequently operated beneath the surface, often with the assistance of religious figures. Incidents of conversion through marriage attracted public attention, gossip and controversy.²¹ Despite such lines of separation primarily derived from religious and social customs, confessionally mixed

¹⁹ Tone Bringa, 80

²⁰ Ibid. 149-151

²¹ Malcolm, *Bosnia A Short History*, 145

In 1892, an incident of proselytism and intermarriage resulted in a brief public controversy. A Catholic Archbishop Stadler was accused of assisting and hiding a Muslim woman who had crossed religious barriers and intended to marry. After public petitions by the Muslim community, she was located by the government and returned to her home where she became a Muslim again.

communities alternated in their expression of unity and difference, and in their identification and separation with the “others.”

I) Historical Background- 1920s to 1940s

On April 10th 1941, Ustasha authorities, supported by the Axis powers, proclaimed the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) in territories covering modern day Croatia, portions of Serbia, and all of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The political beginnings of the Ustasha Party can be traced to the disillusionment of "Croatian" party members with electoral processes during the interwar Kingdom of Serbs, Slovenes and Croats.²² Croatian nationalists believed in the historical right of the Croatian state, and resented Serbian dominance of electoral politics during the 1920s. This was further aggravated in 1928 when Stepan Radic, the leader of the Croatian People's Peasant Party, was assassinated by a member of the Serbian Radical Party. Instead of diffusing the crisis, King Alexander responded by suspending the constitution and imposing a more unitary political system. Yugoslavia was partitioned into new units, or banovinas, each under governors appointed by the government. Both Croatian and Muslim leaders were dissatisfied with the division, which relegated them to a minority status in every banovina.²³ At this juncture, some younger members of the Croatian Peasant Party, particularly the ones exposed to Frankist and Catholic Clericalist ideology, became dedicated and militant fighters for an independent state of Croatia. In 1930, Ante Pavelic, a former member of the Yugoslav Parliament and the

²² Malcolm, *Bosnia A Short History*; Jozo Tomasevich, *War and revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: occupation and collaboration*. (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2001), 15-27

²³ Ibid

Croatian Party of Right, established the Croatian Liberation Movement (Ustashe). A small number of Croatian nationalists reached out to the Italian government for assistance in subverting "Serbian" dominance in electoral politics. Italy had vested interests in the Balkans, and had earlier issued a proposal to the Croatian Peasant Party which would render Yugoslavia an Italian Protectorate.²⁴ After the assassination of King Alexander in 1934, the centralist system under Prince Regent Paul was relaxed. Negotiations began between the Croat Peasant Party Leader, Macek, and the Serbian Minister, Cvetkovic, regarding a federal solution to the question of "Croatian" representation in electoral politics. In the meantime, Hitler was advancing on Czechoslovakia, and the new Yugoslav government felt increasingly pressured to follow a policy of conciliation. In June 1940, Italy began preparations for military action against Yugoslavia, and scheduled the assault for September after its entry into the war with France. Acting on behalf of Mussolini, Hitler began pressing Yugoslavia to join the Tripartite Act, and on March 25, 1941, he managed to convince Prince Regent Paul to submit.²⁵ A few days later, a Yugoslav coup de etat was carried out by the army and the old Serbian parties installed a new government of national unity. The new political prospect temporarily shattered the aspirations of the Ustashe authorities to gain any control in the region. Their hopes, however, were rejuvenated with the invasion of Yugoslavia by the Axis Powers ten days later.²⁶

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*.173

²⁶ Ibid, 173

With the backing of the Axis Powers, but little internal support, Pavelic installed a regime which borrowed ideologically from Frankist Croatian Nationalism, Nazism, and Fascism, Catholic Clericalist Authoritarianism, and the Croatian Peasant Party. The Ustashe regime co-opted youth groups, parts of the "Croatian Catholic" Movement and other sub-groups supported by the Catholic Church.²⁷ During the Kingdom of Serbs, Slovenes and Croats, the Catholic Church had harbored grievances against the growing influence of the Orthodox Church, which was traditionally considered the Church of the Serbian people for its territorial organization and historical legacy. The Kingdom of Serbs, Slovenes and Croats was not a religious monarchy per se, but a subtle battle for power raged between religious institutions due to the preferential treatment of the Orthodox religious community. Soon after its establishment, the Ustashe regime acceded to demands of Catholic religious authorities in order to win their support. It abolished abortion and Freemasonry, prohibited pornographic publications, and issued decrees against cursing. Furthermore, the Ustashe government promoted religious education in schools, and charitable activities of the Church, and also increased financial aid to seminaries, religious institutions and the clergy.²⁸ It was only a matter of time, however, until the religious concessions granted by the Ustashe regime turned against Orthodox Christians. The Independent State of Croatia attempted to undermine what they considered "Serbian" national influence by prohibiting the Cyrillic script, and closing down primary and secondary

²⁷ Tomasevich, *War and revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*: Chapter 8: The Independent State of Croatia: Internal Problems and Policies, 336-356

²⁸ Tomasevich, *War and revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*: Chapter 12: The Churches during the Occupation and Revolution. 511-568

schools run by the Orthodox community. Furthermore the Julian calendar was abolished and the term 'Serbian Orthodox' was forbidden and replaced by 'Greek-Eastern Church.' Policies towards the Orthodox Christian community escalated and in June 1941, the Ustashe authorities signed an agreement with the German authorities for the deportation of "Serbs" from Croatia. This was followed by a policy of forced conversions of lower-class Orthodox Christians, and extermination of the intelligentsia.²⁹

Bosnia-Herzegovina was of particular import to the Ustasha regime. It was a politically delicate terrain due to its intermingled population of Catholics, Orthodox Christians and Muslims. At the time of the Ustashe regime, 44% of the inhabitants of Bosnia were Orthodox, 30.9% Muslim and 23.6% Roman Catholic.³⁰ Historically, Bosnia-Herzegovina had served as a military frontier province under the Ottoman rule, and it had also witnessed a mass conversion of its population to Islam. In the heyday of nationalism under Austro-Hungarian rule, the Orthodox Christians of Bosnia-Herzegovina were claimed by Serbs in Belgrade, who looked towards an Independent Serbia, and the Bosnian Catholics by Croats in Zagreb, who espoused a greater union with Croatia-Slavonia. The Bosnian Muslim community lay on the fringes of Serbian and Croatian nationalists, claimed by both sides as they attempted to assert a majoritarian claim in Bosnia Herzegovina.³¹ In the 1940s, the ultra-nationalist Ustashe regime revitalized with full force the claim that Bosnian Muslims were *Islamized Croats*.

²⁹ Ibid; Stella Alexander, *The triple myth: a life of Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac*. (East European monographs, no. 226. Boulder: East European Monographs 1987)

³⁰ Pejanovic, *Stanovništvo Bosne I Hercegovine*, pg. 54, census cited in Tomasevich, 481

³¹ Tomasevich, "The Independent State of Croatia: The Bosnian Muslims," in *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*. 466-488

This assertion that the forefathers of Bosnian Muslims were "Croatian" and Catholic, however, was disputed by Serbian nationalists, who emphasized that Bosnian Muslims were "blood brothers".

In an attempt to incorporate Bosnia-Herzegovina under the Ustasha dominion, the Independent State of Croatia declared itself to be a state of Catholicism and Islam. On 25 April 1941, Pavelic sent a representative to the Bosnian Muslim representative, Fehim Spaho, assuring him of the "equal rights" granted to Muslims.³² In carefully carved out posts, Bosnian Muslim leaders were promoted on an administrative level. The Imam of the Muslim community in Zagreb, Ismet Muftic, who had taken part in the proclamation of the Croatian state, was given a position in the Croatian State Leadership. It was soon evident, however, that the Ustasha regime operated entirely outside the rule of law. For the most part, Muslims were not accommodated in the government, but recruited into Ustashe militias against the Orthodox community. This tactic later caused many Muslims to abandon the Ustashe, particularly because of their precarious role as pawns in the struggle between "Serb" and "Croat" nationalists. The superficial nature of 'equality' extended to Yugoslav Muslims was soon to become evident. The confidence of Muslims in the NDH faded as they realized that no authentic Muslim concern was accommodated by the government. Despite their overt inclusion into the Ustashe government, they were treated as second-class citizens. Orthodox Christians and Jews who converted to Islam in order to save their lives were discriminated against by the Ustashe regime. When the Muslim Reis-ul-

³² Malcolm, Noel. *Bosnia: a short history*. pg. 184; Tomasevich, *War and revolution in Yugoslavia*: Chapter 11: The Independent State of Croatia: The Bosnian Muslims, 466-488

Ulema complained about discrimination against converted Muslims, the Ustashe government responded with the claim that conversion was only allowed to a legally represented Christian religion³³. Soon members of the Bosnian Muslim community began to resist the imposition of a Croatian national identity, and organized their own militias for self-defence. By May 1941, widespread acts of terror began against Orthodox Christians and Jews, resulting in organized resistance movements by Serbs nationalists.³⁴ Many rabid Serb nationalists (Cetniks) also retaliated against their Muslim compatriots on the basis of 'Muslim' collaboration with the Croatian authorities.

Historian Jozo Tomasevich argues that collaboration of the civilian population with the Ustashe authorities was primarily a consequence of how the "national" and "religious" populations had been governed during the interwar period. The internal instability created during the interwar period further disintegrated during the occupation of the Ustashe regime. The reasons for civilian participation in violence against Orthodox Christians were widespread and varied. While numerous Croatian nationalists, including some Catholic priests, were directly complicit in atrocities against the Orthodox population in an effort to 'solve' the Serbian problem, economic incentives and the socio-political dynamics of occupation also played a role. Protection of land was a primary factor motivating peasants to side with different belligerent forces.³⁵ The Ustasha's terroristic

³³ Tomasevich, *War and Revolution*, 379

³⁴ Ibid, 402-3; Enver Redzic, *Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Second World War*. (London: Frank Cass, 2005)

³⁵ For more information: Melissa Katherine Bokovoy, *Peasants and communists: politics and ideology in the Yugoslav countryside, 1941-1953*. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh press, 1998.).

policies soon alienated some segments of the Catholic hierarchy, but many, facing the odds of Partisan retribution or Serbian Cetnik domination, continued to maintain their alliance. The participation of Muslim Slavs in crimes against Orthodox Christians stemmed in part from their precarious and liminal position during the interwar period. After World War I, Bosnian Muslims had held their own set of grievances against the government primarily due to the agrarian reforms, which expropriated land from Muslim landlords. In her memoirs, Munevera Hazisehovic, a Muslim woman, recalls that Muslims during the collapse of the second Yugoslavia were

not particularly saddened by the news, just as one would not be grieved by the news that a person who had not done any good in his lifetime had died. While not celebrating, one was not likely to feel sorry for him. In his passing, there would be seen, above all, a sign that everything has its end, that everything ends up the way it's supposed to be.³⁶

In the words of Hadzisehovic, it was a "simultaneous feeling of belonging and alienation," of "non-freedom [.....] in the land where we were born" that characterized the situation of Muslim Slavs in the Balkans since the decline of the Ottoman empire. Many Muslim politicians, intellectuals, religious and business leaders in 1941 openly identified with the Ustashe regime, while others remained neutral or indifferent in the initial years of the Ustashe regime. By the end of 1941, however, some members of the Muslim community shifted from their alliance with the Ustashe regime, and wrote a memorandum to Muslim ministers in the government, expressing their outrage at the atrocities against Orthodox Christians

³⁶ Hadžišehović, *A Muslim woman*, 53

and apprehensions of eventual retribution.³⁷ While some sought refuge with the Partisans or the Italian authorities, a group of Muslims reached out to the pro-Nazi Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. The memorandum in fall 1942 highlighted their grievances against the Ustashe regime, and pressed for an autonomous region under the direct supervision of the Wehrmacht.³⁸ Consequently, a Bosnian Muslim SS Division was established by Himmler, with its ideological development entrusted to imams who would receive instructions from the Grand Mufti and the SS Office. After Croatian efforts to subvert a "Muslim division," the *Handschar* division was created and trained with 23,200 Muslims and 2,800 Croats.³⁹ By 1944, the *Handschar* began to disintegrate⁴⁰; Muslims, for the most part, had realized that their fortunes under the Ustashe regime remained largely unchanged. In the meantime, the Chetniks had also formed a Muslim Chetnik division, led by the former member of the Yugoslav National Party, Mustafa Mulalic. But even as the fabric of Balkan society under Ustashe occupation disintegrated, pitting different individuals against each other, co-operation in the face of adversity did not cease. Memoirs describing life under occupation are a testament to how social identifications often diminished in the face of a common crisis. One memoir describes a moment between a Cetnik soldier and a Muslim Slavic woman:

³⁷ Tomasevich, *War and revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*: Chapter 11: The Independent State of Croatia: The Bosnian Muslims. (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press). 466-488; Enver Redžić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Second World War*.

³⁸ German armed forces from 1935 to 1945.

³⁹ Tomasevich, 497

⁴⁰ In order to recruit Bosnian Muslims into armed militia, a Turkish word, *Handschar* (derived from the Arabic word *Khanjar* خنجر, for dagger) was adopted. It was also taken to represent Bosnia and Islam

She finished her prayer as quickly as she could and turned toward the voice of a suffering, moaning man. It was a wounded Chetnik. Nanna hesitated to move to help him, but his words, 'Sister-in-God, please help me' drew her toward him.⁴¹

Amidst the chaotic events of the war, the Partisan Party, led by Josif Tito, stood out in its call for national unity against foreign aggression despite having no clear agenda on the national question.⁴² Meanwhile, the "South Slavs" had suffered immensely during the Second World War. The Ustasha regime had discredited the Croatian Peasant Party, as well as the Catholic community at large. Orthodox Christians by far suffered the most under the Ustashe regime, and their wounds remained fresh in memory for many years to come. Yugoslav Muslims, on the other hand, had come to realize under the Ustashe occupation that protection was not forthcoming from either "Serbian" or "Croatian" politicians. Their liminality within this conflict was recognized and taken for granted by the Partisan Party. By April 1945, Yugoslavia was liberated by the Partisans. Now an "ethnic" cartography became the prerogative of the Partisans, and was meant to cleanse the landscape of the "nationalisms" of the previous era. The Communist regime therefore, became an arena for managing and reining in "Serbian" and "Croatian" nationalisms.

⁴¹ Hadžišehović, *A Muslim woman in Tito's Yugoslavia*. 77

⁴² Paul Shoup, *Communism and the Yugoslav National Question*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968) and Aleksa Djilas

Chapter One

The Creation of a Secular State Narrative 1945-1953

It is the lot of Levantines to be poussiere humaine, human dust, drifting drearily between East and West, belonging to neither and pulverized by both. They are men who know many languages but have no language of their own.

They are victims of the fatal division of mankind into Christian and non-Christian, eternal interpreters and go-betweens, who nevertheless carry within themselves so much that is unclear and inarticulate. They are a little subsection of humanity, staggering under a double load of original sin: they need saving and redeeming a second time, but no one can see how or through whom it can be done.⁴³ – Ivo Andric- 1959

⁴³ Ivo Andric, Yugoslav Nobel Peace Prize Winner
Ivo Andrić, and Joseph Hitrec. *Bosnian chronicle*. (New York: Arcade Publ. 1993), 286

After the Second World War, the transition to a Communist political system in Yugoslavia was infused with discourses espousing a religious versus secular dichotomy, often conflated with distinctions between pre-modern traditionalism and modern socialism. Discursive understandings of the “religious” and the “secular” categories stemmed not only from Marxist thought, but also from the Partisan Party’s ‘epic’ victory in the Balkans. Through the experiences and political turmoil of the Second World War, the Partisan party developed a rigidly anti-imperialist and patriotic character. The “National War of Liberation,” as it was termed, brought to the forefront of politics a group of highly idealistic writers, revolutionary philosophers, and intellectuals, disillusioned with particularistic understandings of freedom. There were even some who exhibited no strong commitment to revolutionary Marxism. Instead, some were merely attracted by the anti-Fascist and anti-imperialist stance of the Partisan Party or by the prospect of attaining power. The surge of philosophers and writers into Yugoslav politics, nonetheless, cast the new political system as a philosophical seismograph, one in mutual conversation with ideas of human alienation, social justice and the relationship between the self and the community.

The Communist Party derived its legitimacy from its break with a religious past; it attempted to symbolize ‘Progress’ amidst stasis, and in doing so, eternalized the preceding period. As John Fabian writes: “if it is true that Time belongs to the political economy of relations between individuals, classes and nations, then the construction of an anthropology’s object through temporal concepts and devices is

a political act; there is a “Politics of Time.”⁴⁴ The historical legacy of the Byzantium millennium, followed by Ottoman rule, had left deep cultural, religious and institutional imprints on the Balkans. More recently, the memory of Catholic Habsburg rule and Ustasha occupation figured as foreign incursions in the South Slavic consciousness. Perhaps most riveting of all, though, was the invasion by the Ottoman East, which had left a living imprint in the form of a population of native Slavs who had converted to the Islamic faith. The conceptual “secular” space yielded by the separation from pre-Communist Yugoslavia presented, in the words of Kathleen Davis, a retroactive “homogenization of cultural forms.” In the context of Socialist Yugoslavia, the concept of the “religious” was mapped along geo-political configurations of the “Ottoman East” and the “Bourgeois” West⁴⁵. From an anti-imperialist perspective, the Communist regime portrayed religion, particularly in its “Oriental” Islamic dimension, as a product of the East on the one hand, and a means of exploitation by the West on the other hand. As an alternative, the new Yugoslavia, in a liminal space betwixt and between, sought to redefine the place of religion in a manner commensurable with socialist patriotism. The major affinity of Socialist thought with religion lay in the idea of faith, extricated from the notion of “Divinity” and located within the processes of dialectical materialism. Religion was perceived to be a temporary phenomenon, prevailing as long as men believed “that various ills arise out of

⁴⁴ Kathleen Davis. *Periodization and sovereignty: how ideas of feudalism and secularization govern the politics of time*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press., 2008), 2

Kathleen Davis explores the narrative of secularization, hinged on a periodic divide between a ‘modern’ historical consciousness and the ‘religious’ Middle Ages. According to her, it is the association of sovereignty with this periodic divide that governs major world debates today, and often emerges as a legitimizing discourse.

⁴⁵ Ibid

something supernatural.”⁴⁶ As Milovan Djilas, a Communist official and philosopher, stated: “we [Communists] were taught something far greater: to expect paradise in this world, not too far in the future.” Man was “the link between the eternal and the momentary, a moment of eternity. Man was and will be a fighter, according to the immutable law of his existence.”⁴⁷ The concept of the “secular” was not merely predicated on liberating education and rationality from the normative claims of religious doctrines. At the heart of secularization policies was the idea of untying the knots that divided the South Slavic community. As Tito proclaimed in a speech in 1945:

Our most important principle is the equality and brotherhood of peoples. Recognizing the full autonomy and freedom of all peoples, we shall at the same time fight against any attempts at separatism and nurture the feeling of affection for the new Yugoslavia.⁴⁸

Rogers Brubaker defines “groupism” as “the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogenous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis.” According to him, organizations such as schools and churches can “empower or authorize certain forms of groupification, but even when this is the case, organizations cannot be equated with the ethnic groups.” Before the Second World War, religious institutions in the Balkans fulfilled a dual role as sites of worship and of religious groupifications.⁴⁹ Often social action was organized around the different religious institutions, with

⁴⁶ Tito. *Selected speeches and articles, 1941-1961*. (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1963), 409

The future of mankind lies in peaceful active co-existence and in co-operation within the framework of the united nations: communism is not a religion—but religion, too, is limited in time. July 1954

⁴⁷ Sulzberger, C. L. 1989. *Paradise regained: memoir of a rebel*. (New York: Praeger, 1989), 35

⁴⁸ Tito. *Selected speeches and articles, 1941-1961*. (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1963), 12

⁴⁹ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without groups*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004)

separate rituals and forms of religious practice inculcating a sense of solidarity among members. After the establishment of Socialist Yugoslavia, the state apparatus was geared significantly towards the diminution of the social function of religion and the homogenization of interests and values in the public sphere. If inter-confessional boundaries exemplified the saying: “Good fences make good neighbors,” Communist secularization sought exactly the opposite. The separation of Church and State, or the separation of religion from territorial authority, translated into the diminution of religious institutions as corporate entities in order to reduce the political power of religion in the public sphere. In the immediate post-war period, religious institutions struggled with the Communist regime in an attempt to retain their confessional and often ultra-montane loyalties over and above the civic Yugoslav state.

Instead of confessional differentiation, socialist relations were to guide interactions between individuals in the public sphere. In addition to uniform material relations, subjective “non-etatist” nationalities were to function, as in the words of Ernest Renan, “like water and oil. They mix but they do not dissolve.”⁵⁰ Whilst delegitimizing the concept of religious differentiation, Socialist Yugoslavia legitimized an “ethnicity” predicated on cultural and historical differences. The notion of secularization promoted a movement from primordial, “religious” categories to fluid “ethnic” ones, with the latter being politically endorsed in the form of “ethnic consociationalism.” The early pioneers of “ethnic consociationalism” predicated their model on the separation of church and state.

⁵⁰ Fritz W Hondius, *Yugoslav community of nations*. (Mouton De Gruyter, 1968), 23

Just as religion was separated from territorial authority, different “ethnic” categories were to be administered as fluid cultural beings through their extrication from immediate territoriality.⁵¹ An irony of the model, however, was that the process of secularization itself reified the concept of territoriality, or a “civic” nationhood. In Socialist Yugoslavia, “ethnic chauvinism” was to be tempered through secularization and an allegiance to socialist patriotism. Simultaneously, national solidarity, the legitimizing rhetoric of the Partisan Party, allowed for the preservation of the diverse “ethnic” character of Yugoslavia.

What, then, became of the so-called “non-national” or confessional categories? In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the most multi-confessional republic of Yugoslavia, the implications of secularization were manifold. The concept of secular ethnicity merged with the notion of dialectical materialism, whereby historical, cultural and linguistic groups evolved with time, disentangling themselves from their religious roots in pursuit of material factors. Bosnian Muslims, as Slavs who had converted to Islam in the Ottoman period, were only accorded a confessional status, with no political legitimacy. A foreign Ottoman incursion was held to have thwarted their development as a historical people. Against a backdrop of strong confessional legacies embedded in the Balkans, religious discourses continued to operate beneath the surface as neutralized sensibilities in cultural and literary life, subject to re-interpretation in accordance with changing political dynamics. The Communist regime, for its part, vacillated

⁵¹ See Chapter 2, “State and Nation” by Karl Renner in *National Cultural Autonomy and its Contemporary Critics*, ed by Ephraim Nimni (London; New York: Routledge, 2005).

between paradigms of discrete, externally bounded religious groups and fluid ethnic categories in its treatment of Orthodox Christians, Catholics and Bosnian Muslims. Did such schizophrenic treatment by the Communist regime signal a conflation of confessional and ethnic differences or a dilemma of secularization and “nation” building itself?

~The Trial of Archbishop Stepinac~

In September 1946, the Communist Party in Yugoslavia held a political show trial of Cardinal Aloysius Stepinac and set the stage for a “secularization” narrative for the newly established Socialist Yugoslavia. Cardinal Stepinac was the leading Archbishop of Croatia during the existence of the Independent State of Croatia from 1941 to 1945. The Partisan (Communist) Party had emerged victorious after a long battle for territory and power, but opposition was still widespread. The narrative of the Stepinac trial sought to portray the excesses of politicized religion through the convergence of the "confessional" and the "ethnic" or "national". Religious influence was emphasized as one of the primary factors enabling a sustained collaboration of Catholic Christians with the nationalist Ustashe regime. Although Cardinal Stepinac was the Archbishop of Croatia, the narrative of his trial held Stepinac to be a representative of the Catholic Church, conferring responsibility on him not only for his diocese, but also for Bosnia-Herzegovina and Dalmatia. At least overtly, the narrative of this trial enabled the Communist regime to navigate its way through the interwoven presence of "ethnic" groups and religious beliefs in the South Slavic Lands. In the ensuing secularization reforms led by Josif Tito, religious practice was pushed to a

"private" sphere routinely invaded by the Communist regime. Simultaneously, Tito promoted the idea of a "Slavic" territorial affiliation, over and above other loyalties.

The responsibility of Stepinac for the Ustasha atrocities has been a subject of heated debate, and is complicated further by Stepinac's determined reticence during the course of the trial. Refusing to appoint himself a lawyer for a trial which he perceived as politically biased, Stepinac stated: "You can shoot me, you can bring me to the foot of the gallows, but I will not answer you."⁵² The Public Prosecutor in the trial, Jakov Blazevic, read out an early excerpt from the religious press which praised Pavelic, and put forth the following question: how could Stepinac have prayed for such a criminal? To this, Stepinac replied with much reserve: "it was his sacred duty to pray for all men without distinction."⁵³ In the ensuing years of Communist censorship and agit-prop regarding religious freedom, the defense of Stepinac in the trial stands out as one of the few public instances of religious opposition towards the Communist state. Stepinac's official and public acceptance of the Ustasha state was accompanied by more private objections to Ustashe policies of extermination and forced conversion of the Serbian Orthodox population. His role during the Independent State of Croatia, therefore, lies in the ambiguous zone of collaboration or acceptance, through an absence of public resistance. While his attitude during the Ustashe regime was one of passivity in the face of brutality towards a non-Catholic population, his

⁵²B 572 quoting VD, as cited in Stella Alexander, *The triple myth: a life of Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac*. (East European monographs, no. 226. Boulder: East European Monographs 1987), 144

⁵³ Sudjenje p 225, as cited in Alexander, *The Triple Myth*, 150

later stance towards the Communist regime demonstrated that Stepinac was capable of embracing a more active role in public affairs.

A closer analysis of Stepinac's personal exchanges during the Ustashe regime demonstrates a naive faith in being able to reform his Catholic spiritual community. At the heart of Stepinac's actions from the Second World War to the Communist regime was his allegiance to a religious community over and above other conceptions of community. In that, perhaps, lay the biggest dilemma of the Communist regime. The Party held Stepinac and the religious institutions responsible on the basis of their "ethnic" affiliation, so to speak. What they mistook as Stepinac's defiance of the Yugoslav state was, perhaps, a protest against the conflation of the Croatian "ethnic" or "national" with the Catholic "confessional". Despite this blunder, the Communist Party remained committed to separating "Church from State" whilst endorsing "national" categories in its constitutional framework. In other words, it was committed to emptying "religion" from the "national" or the "ethnic", so that the latter could serve as a more egalitarian basis for managing cultural diversity and "brotherhood and unity." Religious institutions, on the other hand, were co-opted by the Communist state, and religious practice was pushed into a "private" sphere which was systematically invaded by the Communist regime.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Partisan Party faced the task of re-constituting state structures and political institutions that would cater to the Communist ideal. The call for "national" solidarity and civic patriotism in opposition to imperialism did much to attract support from disenchanted war

survivors, but the Party had yet to address the internal adversaries of its political legitimacy. Religious institutions, despite their decimation during the course of the war, continued to exist as organizations with still considerable social cohesion and political voice. Although religious institutions were locally embedded, often forming the basis of a quasi-civil society, they served as a threat due to their opposition to the Communist regime. Furthermore, their "transnational" ties beyond the Yugoslav territories served as a point of departure from Yugoslav patriotism in the post-war period. The Catholic Church in the Balkans, for instance, held close ties with the Vatican, and the Orthodox Church with its larger Orthodox Christian community. The affiliation of Yugoslav Muslims with the Muslim *ummah* beyond Europe was perhaps even more daunting. The immediate post-war period witnessed large scale persecution of Catholic, Orthodox Christian and Muslim religious authorities, administered largely under the guise of punishing Ustashe criminals and fascist elements in society.⁵⁴ Religious figures and clergymen, particularly those belonging to the Catholic Church, were rounded up and tried in military courts without due process of law. Others were simply murdered or brutally harassed. Churches were destroyed, and monasteries, convents and seminaries were closed down. Courts of Islamic law were suppressed, and brought under the jurisdiction of Communist authorities, with many mosques turned into museums or warehouses. Islam, with its endorsement of social practices in the public sphere, was viewed with great caution.

⁵⁴ See Malcolm, *A Short History*; Alexander, *The Triple Myth, 193-197*, Francine Friedman, *The Bosnian Muslims : Denial of a Nation*. Boulder, (Westview Press, 1996)

Under the Communist regime, religious institutions were equally marginalized from society, but nonetheless faced an unequal allocation of post-war guilt. The conflation of ethnicity and religion by the Communist regime was one factor accounting for the disparity. The Communist regime in the Balkans had emerged from a chaotic transition in which Croatian nationalists had co-opted religious discourses for national purposes. From the same premise, the Communist regime proceeded towards its treatment of individuals within the religious milieu. Religious institutions, therefore, soon became a means of balancing the antagonisms between "Serbs" and "Croats". In the early years the Catholic Church was treated with particular severity due to the collaboration of its clergy with the Croatian state. Meanwhile, the Communist regime chose to overlook the involvement of members of the Serbian Orthodox Church with Serb Cetnik forces. The unequal 'assault' on religious institutions also stemmed from the varying strengths and organizational capacities of the different institutions, of which perhaps the Catholic Church was the strongest. With religious institutions serving as quasi-representatives of civil society, the position of each confessional community during the war also affected the stances taken by the institutions during the Communist regime. The Islamic Religious Council, for instance, offered initial opposition to the Communist regime before settling down for a more conciliatory stance in order to obtain financial support and to continue religious and spiritual activities.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Zachary T Irwin, "The Islamic Revival and the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina," *East European Quarterly* 17, no 4 Jan 1984, 440

Nonetheless, the widespread persecution of religious authorities in the immediate post-war period antagonized members from the religious milieu and also ignited national sentiments, particularly among exiled emigres. A Serbian emigre publication, the *Voice of the Serbian Community* in London, led by Dr. Milos Sekulich, bemoaned the fate of the Serbian Cetnik leader, Draza Mihailovich, who had been convicted by the Communist authorities, and regularly defended the Serbian Orthodox Church.⁵⁶ *Mladi Muslimani*, an organization founded in 1939 with the aim of disseminating Islamic education among young Muslims, was banned. Many of its members during the war undertook charitable and social work, while others joined with Ustasha and fascist elements. In the post-war period, it continued to operate underground and to carry out its activities discretely. But perhaps the strongest reaction to religious persecution was voiced by Catholic hierarchies abroad, particularly the Vatican. Amidst preparations of the Allied Forces for negotiations with Italy on the territory of Trieste, the Vatican began to mobilize support, particularly in the U.S, against the persecution of Catholics. At the end of September 1945, the Pope sent a direct memorandum to the American government, complaining of the situation in Yugoslavia as well as the impossibility of any communication between the Catholics of Croatia and the Holy See.⁵⁷ Within Yugoslavia, pastoral letters were issued, complaining about restrictions on the practice of religion through harassment of nuns, the removal of

⁵⁶ Dr. Milos Sekulich, "Conspiracy Against the Serbian Orthodox Church by Tito's and Patriarch Guerman's Hierarchies", MS, [n.d]Voice of the Serbian Community, Emigre Publications, no 54, 1964, SEK Archives, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College of London

⁵⁷ Peter C. Kent, *The lonely Cold War of Pope Pius XII: the Roman Catholic Church and the division of Europe, 1943-1950*. (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press ,2002), 161

crucifixes from schools and offices, the treatment accorded to cemeteries, as well as the banning of religious marriages.

Amidst this anti-Catholic campaign, Tito opened negotiations with the Catholic religious authorities, particularly Archbishop Stepinac. In January 1945, the new Constitution of the Socialist People's Republic of Yugoslavia had enunciated the principle of the separation of Church and State. Freedom of religion, conscience, and thought were guaranteed, with the qualification that the law did not permit democratic freedoms to be abused by "fascist" elements.⁵⁸ With elections drawing close, Tito remained conciliatory towards the Catholic authorities. At this juncture, political tensions between "Serb" and "Croat" nationalist were still high, and the wounds inflicted on the Orthodox Christian population by the Ustashe state had not healed. In "Serbian" consciousness, Tito's Catholic and Croatian upbringing was not lost. In fact in the early months of the Communist establishment, the myth of an 'impostor' Tito was prevalent in many Serbian villages; Tito was deemed an "Croat imposter" who had been installed by the Russians after the real Tito had died during an airborne attack in 1944.⁵⁹ Although born to a Croatian family with a fairly religious upbringing, Josef Tito himself clearly did not adhere to the Catholic faith. It is unclear whether Tito's stance in taming Catholic hierarchies stemmed also from a desire to court "Serbs" or to deny his own "Croatian" roots. Nonetheless, the connection between Catholicism and Croatian nationality surfaced in a lapse by Tito during his

⁵⁸ Yugoslavia's New Constitution, United Committee of South Slavic Americans, 465 Lexington Avenue, New York 17, N.Y., 1946

⁵⁹Hadžišehović, *A Muslim woman*, 109

conversation with the Catholic clergy. In his memoirs, Milovan Djilas, a former Communist official, describes Tito's first meeting with a delegation of Catholic priests from Zagreb in 1945. While criticizing the conduct of the clergy, he let slip the phrase, "I, as a Catholic..." According to Djilas, his choice of words triggered a frenzied response within the Communist bureaucracy, which tracked down all transcripts of the meeting so as to delete the phrase.⁶⁰

When members of the Catholic Higher Clergy met with Josif Tito in June 1945, they expressed the hope that the mission of the Church would be protected in the new state; this entailed the freedom of the Church to propagate its mission freely, the provision of religious education in schools, the maintenance of religious high schools, Catholic Action and other religious associations in the publication of newspapers and journals without interference.⁶¹ They admitted the participation of some clergymen in Ustashe atrocities whilst protesting against collective retaliation. To this, Tito responded, "That is right, [...] some or few priests have made mistakes, but they are considered as a moral whole."⁶² In a pastoral letter of September 20, 1945, Catholic bishops expressed that they did not wish to provoke a clash with the government, but could not dispense with the position that the Holy See had jurisdiction in ecclesiastical matters and in

⁶⁰Milovan Djilas, *Rise and fall*. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.,1985), 38

⁶¹Richard Pattee, *The Case of Cardinal Aloysius Stepinac*. (Milwaukee: Bruce Pub. Co., 1953), 419

Pattee's foreword and analysis precede the primary source documents that he provides in his book, which is partial to Archbishop Stepinac. I have corroborated the evidence in the translated documents with a secondary source, *The Triple Myth* written by Stella Alexander and by another primary source document: Yugoslavia. Poslanstvo (United States). *The Case of Archbishop Stepinac*. Washington:1947

⁶² *Ibid*, 423

relations of the Church with the State. Even earlier in June, the Clergy's reply to Marshal Tito had stated:

for us priests and Catholic faithful, we are bound to the Holy See in matters of religious dogma and disciplines, while in our national and social activities we are completely free. [...] As for the Slav idea, in that the Holy See places no obstacle. That is seen from the fact that, in a special way, he has proclaimed Sts. Cyril and Methodius, the Slav apostles, as our patrons, that in their honor he has given us a ritual for a special Mass and feast day; that he has published Missals in the language.⁶³

The clergy also insisted that the Vatican had not accepted the Independent State of Croatia de jure, and had refused to allow any changes in the jurisdiction of the Croatian bishops in regions annexed by Italy. In his negotiations with Tito, therefore, Stepinac responded that the best way to establish a co-operative relationship between the Church and the State would be through a concordat with the Holy See, or a *modus Vivendi* along the lines of the Czechoslovak model.⁶⁴

Meanwhile, the Vatican continued its campaign, protesting the persecution of Catholics in the Balkans. Reports were sent to American cardinals, particularly apostolic delegate Amleto Cicognani, with the request that the issue be publicized to the general public. Consequently, a speech was made in the U.S House of Representatives by John McCormack, in which he expressed that 'the present religious terrorism in Yugoslavia called for dynamic defense by dynamic leadership throughout the decent world, both church and state.'⁶⁵ Back in Yugoslavia, Tito's position had been secured in the elections, and the new establishment moved to further consolidate its position by eliminating all

⁶³ Ibid, 420

⁶⁴ Ibid, 424

⁶⁵ Excerpt from *Congressional Record* for the 79th Congress, speech of Hon, John W Cormack in the House of Representatives, 27 July 1946, as cited Kent, *The lonely Cold War of Pope Pius XII*, 160-161

opposition. When the government turned a deaf ear to complaints from religious authorities, Cardinal Stepinac launched a campaign, denouncing the separation of the church and state and calling the clergymen to defy the government authorities by continuing their religious mission.⁶⁶ But what did it mean to separate the “Church” from the state? The Communist Party and the religious authorities had come to a deadlock on the precise meaning of this separation. Or perhaps, they were simply talking past each other. Milos Sekulich, a prominent ‘Serb’ writer, articulated this dilemma in his emigre publication in 1964: “In the statements by the State and Church representatives it is frequently stressed that the relations between the Serbian Church and the State are “good”...Are they as good for the Church as they are for the State?”⁶⁷ For Stepinac, the “separation of Church and State” implied submission to the state and its policies of persecution of religious authorities in the immediate post-war period. The Communist Party, for its part, maintained its commitment to salvage “brotherhood and unity” by de-politicizing religion. On 18 September 1946, Archbishop Stepinac was arrested on charges of treason and complicity with forced conversions and atrocities against the Serb population.

From its inception, the Communist government conflated religious organizations with the religious category as a whole. Although some religious organizations had been mobilized during the occupation, the irony of the trial was

⁶⁶ In his interrogation during the trial, Stepinac declared that he recognized the people’s courts, and the people’s government--he did not seek extra-territoriality, and recognized the Constitution as long as it respected the moral principles of the Church.

⁶⁷ Dr. Milos Sekulich, “Conspiracy Against the Serbian Orthodox Church by Tito’s and Patriarch Guerman’s Hierarchies”, MS, [n.d]Voice of the Serbian Community, Emigre Publications, no 54, 1964, SEK Archives, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College of London

that it charged an Archbishop, much respected and venerated, who had no explicit complicity in the Ustasha terror. In the post-war period, such turning of tables and projection of collective guilt on the Catholic clergy was consequential in cemented the identification of Croatianness with Catholicism. The trial seemed to hold Catholicism on trial for its connection with Croatian ethnicity. The conviction of Stepinac was a blow not only to Catholic religious authorities, but also had a profound impact on Croatian national consciousness. But to what extent did Archbishop Stepinac's loyalties lie with his Croatianness *and* Catholicism? Where did the boundaries between Catholic confession and Croatian nationalism diverge?

While the Communist regime was able to map out the convergence of Catholicism with Croatian nationality during the Second World War, it remained blind to its point of divergence. At the establishment of the Croatian state, the Archbishop had undoubtedly expressed joy, despite his political reservations with the Italians and their claims on Trieste. Symbolically, the establishment of the Croatian state on the 1300th anniversary of Croatia's first connections with the Holy See had been of particular significance to Stepinac. In a sermon in 1941, he had conferred his blessings of peace on the new state:

The Catholic Church which has been the spiritual leader of the Croatian people for 1300 years in all its difficult, painful and joyful days now accompanied the Croatian people in these days of the establishment and renewal of its independent state, to strengthen it so that it can bring in justice, general well being and progress...the church is certain that there are objective and subjective conditions to fulfill God's words.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ KL 16(92) 21.4.41, pg 195, as cited in Alexander, *The triple myth*, 60

It was implicit in Stepinac's initial sermons that religious institutions, particularly the Catholic Church, would enjoy full freedom under the Croatian state⁶⁹. On the question of what "freedom" actually entailed, the Ustashe state and the Catholic Church were soon to be at odds. Stepinac's earlier correspondences with Pavelic had been marked with caution. He refrained from outright criticism of Ustasha atrocities, emphasizing instead humane treatment of Orthodox Christians: "I am convinced that these things have been happening without your knowledge and that others may not dare to tell you about that, so I am all the more obliged to do so myself."⁷⁰ It was not until May 22, 1941 that Stepinac began to reproach the government:

to take away all possibility of existence from members of other nations or races and to mark them with the stamp of infamy is a question of humanity, and morals. Neither notorious adulterers or even prostitutes are marked with visible signs.⁷¹

Unable to alter the decision of deportation, Stepinac subsequently recommended arrangements for the families prior to the deportation, provision of food and healthcare, necessary comforts for the deportees and suitable means of communication with their families.⁷²

Major discord emerged between the Croatian State and the Church on the issue of forced conversions. According to canon law, the process of conversion to Catholicism was voluntary, and required the approval of superior church authorities as well as adequate religious instruction. The acquisition of property

⁶⁹ An argument made by historian Stella Alexander, through her analysis of his earlier correspondences and speeches.

⁷⁰ B 406 f quoting from archdiocesan archives, as cited in Alexander, *The Triple Myth*, 71

⁷¹ Pattee, *The Case of Cardinal Stepinac*, 301

⁷² *Ibid*

owned by another religious denomination was also prohibited, unless a great majority of members from another denomination had entered the Catholic Church.⁷³ In the absence of a stance by the Vatican on procedural changes for religious conversions, Ustasha authorities took matters into their own hands, sending out priests and missionaries through a number of agencies. Stepinac condemned the forcible seizure of Orthodox Church property and conversions, insisting that canonical rules had to be observed until in good time “all the Orthodox will return to their original Church.”⁷⁴ In other words, Stepinac emphasized that religious proselytism was guided by a set of principles and predicated on an individual’s subjective decision. Under the Ustashe regime, however, the concept of religious conversion was usurped for political and nationalist ends. While Stepinac maintained a private opposition to “forced conversions,” his stance took a dramatic turn when people began to enter the churches as refugees, pleading to be admitted in order to save their lives. In March 1942, Stepinac asserted that in the case of “secondary motives” for conversion, if they were honorable, the “door was open” to receive them.

According to the Defense Counsel, the jurisdiction of Stepinac’s diocese was subordinate to the political maneuverings of the Ustashe regime. The Defense Counsel argued that Stepinac had held only a nominal position as the military vicar, and during the course of the occupation, Ustashe priests had acted on the orders of the regime. It also defended Stepinac’s actions as legal according to the Hague convention of rules for inhabitants under a state of occupation.

⁷³Pattee, *The Case of Cardinal Stepinac*, 233

⁷⁴Ibid

Furthermore, the Counsel cited *Solicitud Ecclesiarum*, proclaimed by Pope Gregory XVI in 1831, whereby representatives of the Church had to establish relations with persons with *de facto* authority.⁷⁵

Stepinac was pronounced guilty on all counts. The narrative was in line with the anti-imperialist rhetoric of the regime and emphasized that religious ideology laid the foundation for internal collaboration with the imperial powers and the Ustashe authorities. Not only were the socio-political dynamics under the state of occupation ignored in the narrative of the Prosecution Council, but several times, the Defense Council was prevented from presenting evidence in the court. The Public Prosecutor, Jakov Blasevic, stated that the “collaboration developed and assumed different forms during the war [...] according to the instructions of the Vatican.”⁷⁶ He blamed Stepinac for endorsing the State of Croatia and abusing the “character of religious holidays, converting them into political rallies.”⁷⁷ He added that Stepinac had celebrated a “solemn Mass every April 10 in the honor of the NDH,” and held a Te Deum in which he invited people to offer “their prayers to God for the Independent Croat State, the Poglavnik [Pavelic] and for the return of peace to the world, to the end that Croatia may be more prosperous for the temporal and eternal profit of her children.”⁷⁸ Another major charge against Stepinac by the Prosecution Counsel was that he had neglected to direct the forces under his jurisdiction in a manner conducive to peace, especially as an appointed military vicar of the Ustasha regime. The Counsel emphasized Stepinac's position

⁷⁵ Pattee, *The Case of Cardinal Stepinac*, 196

⁷⁶ *Ibid*

⁷⁷ Pattee, *The Case of Cardinal Stepinac*, 158

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 165-66

as military vicar to link Stepinac to the Ustashe, stating that the "military chaplains were well selected Ustasha priests whose job was to run fanatical, backward, misled and primitive men into the perpetrators of the Ustasha crimes."⁷⁹ The Prosecution Counsel extended Stepinac's religious influence beyond his diocese, by labelling him the highest Catholic functionary in Yugoslavia. It accorded Stepinac responsibility for fascist religious periodicals published in Sarajevo, and also those belonging to other religious denominations such as the Jesuits, the Conventuals, and Franciscans.

The dilemmas of holding a representative institution accountable for atrocities during the Ustashe period translated in the dispersion of guilt merely by association to the religious category. Stepinac's moral ambiguity was not representative of the clergy or the Catholic institution as a whole. Numerous priests and religious figures had indeed mobilized during the Second World War and were complicit in atrocities towards Orthodox Christians. Archbishop Stepinac, for his part, was a partisan supporter of his Catholic community who felt more obliged to protest the Communist crackdown on the Catholic Church than the atrocities committed against the Orthodox Christian community. His refusal to recognize the Communist government amidst a policy of religious persecution indicated that his interests were, above all, self serving, devoted only to the protection of his dioceses and the spiritual interests of the Catholic community.

⁷⁹ Pattee, *The Case of Cardinal Stepinac*, 171-83

How did the conflation of Catholicism and Croatianness through the Stepinac trial affect confessional and ethnic politics? Through the narrative of the trial, religious institutions suffered the full brunt of Communist retaliation in the aftermath of Ustasha occupation. Meanwhile “Croatian” and “Serbian” national myths were revitalized as religious institutions gave them a rallying point for protesting national victimization. Communist publications presented the Roman Catholic Church as defying the norms of Church and State relations, which had been accepted by the Serbian Orthodox and the Muslim community.⁸⁰ Outside Yugoslavia, the Serbian Diaspora and the Orthodox religious community alike picked up pieces of the narrative, using them to assail the Roman Catholic Church. Prominent members of the Serbian diaspora illuminated the consequences of religion in the public domain and commented on the ‘religious dictatorship’ and the political power of the Vatican, whilst tacitly endorsing the mission of the Serbian Orthodox Church to protect the “Serbian” national community. Dr. Milos Sekulich, a partisan supporter of the Yugoslav government in exile and of Draza Mihailovic, was one of them. In a Yugoslav panel held in London, Dr. Milos Sekulich played the “religious” card and articulated:

one of the fundamental tenets of the Catholic Church [wa]s that all Catholics must obey the Pope in religious matters. A Catholic is not compelled to obey him in political matters. Yet, in practice, when the Pope follows a certain policy, Catholics, as members of the Catholic Church, must comply with the Vatican policy, thus indirectly obeying the Pope as their political leader.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Rastko Vidić, *The position of the church in Yugoslavia*. (Beograd: Jugoslavija. 1962)

⁸¹ Dr. Sekulich, Avro Manhattan and General Mirkovic, *The Ustashi Massacres: An Appeal to all Yugoslavs to witness the truth, 1951*, Baker Street, 20th May 1951, Classic Restaurant, SEK Archives/5/3, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College of London.

Emigré publications led by Dr. Milos Sekulich shaped public opinion abroad, deeming the Church to be “continuing the legacy of the Spanish Inquisition” and condemning the Church as “totalitarian, undemocratic and tyrannical.”⁸² Both Serbian and Croatian nationalists assaulted the religious institutions of their adversary, whilst exalting their own. Croatian nationalists in exile strongly identified with the Catholic Church in order to further the process of self victimization. In New York, a campaign was carried out to build a school named after Archbishop Stepinac. He was hailed as “one of thousands of martyrs of every faith whom corrupt, ruthless dictators daily betray and befoul.”⁸³ In Socialist Yugoslavia, this wound was brought back into public memory only later, by Croatian Communist liberals seeking to obtain further national autonomy. Stepinac’s sentence drew much attention. For the time being, however, national politics ignited by the assault on religious institutions were pushed into exile. Internal and external opposition, nonetheless, continued to exist as a potential threat to the legitimacy of Socialist Yugoslavia.

Conclusion:

Narrowing of Parameters

Through the narrative of the Stepinac trial, the Communist regime portrayed a fusion of religion and nationhood, whereby the former perpetuated social exclusion through a particularistic conception of the cosmos. The Party also indicated that the intermingling of the “religious” and the “national” was a threat

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ Press Release, 29 September 1946, NCWC, box 9, Communism: Jugoslavia: Stepinac: 1946-48, cited in Kent, *The lonely Cold War of Pope Pius XII*, 170

to the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. The “confessional” and the “national” categories, however, did not map on to each other as neatly as the regime imagined. Priests and other religious figures were members of a disintegrated, war-torn society as much as they were of their respective institutions. Nonetheless, the narrative of the trial served as a useful counterpoint for tackling the opposition from religious organizations that was yet to come. In the post-war period, one could either be a Partisan (and by extension, an anti-fascist) or a fascist collaborator with the Axis powers. Between 1949 and 1950, for instance, several hundred members of Mladi Muslimani (Young Muslims) were arrested, including Alija Izetbegovic, who later became a spokesman for Bosnian Muslims. The Young Muslims organization had been formed during the interwar period to promote the education of Islam among Muslim youth. Under the disintegrative mechanisms of the Ustashe occupation, individual members of Mladi Muslimani had been recruited into a German SS Division to fight Orthodox Christians. In the post-war period, the Communist crackdown on religious institutions spurred many members of Mladi Muslimani to protest the Communist regime. The Party retaliated with widespread arrests and deemed Mladi Muslimani a hostile, religious organization that had collaborated with the Fascist occupiers.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the diminution of political authority and administrative capacities of the different religious institutions in Yugoslavia was uniform. Emigre publications by exiled leaders voiced concerns for their respective communities, portraying the often concealed situation on the ground. In an article published in London, a Serbian nationalist, Miodrag

Urosevic, expounded on the betrayal of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Yugoslavia, decrying the “newly-made” Patriarch Guerman, “put into the holy office by the Communists.”⁸⁴ The article refuted the image of a “liberal” and egalitarian Yugoslav Communism, promoted by the regime through a recent visit of Tito’s Ambassador, accompanied by Patriarch Guerman, to London. The article revealed that Patriarch Guerman lacked the statutory qualifications for his position, and had been appointed against canonical laws by the Commission for Religious Affairs. Furthermore, Guerman was accused of staging an ecclesiastical trial to condemn the previous Patriarch, Dr. Vurdelja, in 1964, and of endorsing Bishop Nikola Trajkovski, “a layman and Communist [.....] [who] lacked the constitutional requirements that bishops can only be those who have a theological degree.”⁸⁵ Urosevic also highlighted the Communist effort to induce rivalry between the Macedonian and Serbian Orthodox Churches.⁸⁶

The disenchantment reflected in the writings of exiled Serbian leaders served as a commentary on wider policies towards religious authorities in the early years of Communist Yugoslavia. In 1953, Tito put an end to the physical persecution and harassment of religious figures that had prevailed in the immediate post-war period. The Communist regime continued to regulate religious institutions intensely, often at the cost of violating the internal autonomy promised to them. The “Law Concerning Religious Communities,” adopted by the Federal Assembly

⁸⁴ Miodrag Urosevic, “The Betrayed Serbian Church”, MS, [n.d], 29th May 1968, Press Release: The Foreign Affairs Circle, issued by Public Relations Officer, “Church House”, Petersham, Surrey, Richmond 2885, ALEX Archives, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College of London

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ Ibid

in 1953, delineated the rights and duties of the Yugoslav authorities vis-a-vis religious communities. It was implicit in the laws that religious institutions would either be financially bankrupt and dependent on the Communist administration, or simply exist as hollow structures, overtly “religious” but “Communist” from within. As Urosevic pointed out in The Betrayed Serbian Church, the Commission for Religious Affairs served as “a means of supervision, pressure and espionage in the church for the benefit of the regime⁸⁷.” The new decree also stated that material assistance to “religious” communities rested on the discretion of the state, since they had been “receiving this assistance for a number of years.”⁸⁸ Religious institutions were required to submit an application outlining the specific purpose for assistance. Priests were excluded from social insurance and other benefits extended to other Yugoslav citizens. Their access to social welfare could only be obtained through a series of complex negotiations between the administrative organ of the religious community and the respective state authority. On the whole, religious institutions became entirely dependent on voluntary donations, and priests were allowed to accept monetary reward from individuals in return for their services in church or home.⁸⁹

While agrarian reforms targeted the physical space occupied by religious institutions, educational reforms drastically narrowed the parameters of a “spiritual” community. Education was separated from the tutelage of the Church,

⁸⁷ Miodrag Urosevic, “The Betrayed Serbian Church”, MS, [n.d], 29th May 1968, Press Release: The Foreign Affairs Circle, issued by Public Relations Officer, “Church House”, Petersham, Surrey, Richmond 2885, ALEX Archives, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College of London

⁸⁸ Vidić, Rastko. *The position of the church in Yugoslavia*. (Beograd: Jugoslavija, 1962)

⁸⁹ Ibid

thereby depriving the religious communities of perhaps their most significant role and function in society. In the pre-war era, schools had served as primary sites for the assertion of religious influence. Local Muslim councils had opened Mektebs, where children of pre-school age, under the guidance of imams, would learn to pray, read the Arabic alphabet and recite the Quran.⁹⁰ Madrassahs would provide religious instruction with a restricted curriculum, lasting ten or more years.⁹¹ Similarly, the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church exercised strict influence over youth through state schools, and other organized nursery schools. According to the new “Law on Religious Communities” promulgated in 1953, a pupil was free to attend religious instruction in churches or other premises with the approval of his parents, and religious communities were free to manage their own schools.⁹² This was qualified by a clause stating that no one could be compelled to become a member of a religious community. Furthermore, religious instruction, which primarily served as a vocational training center for priestly activities, was forbidden during school hours, and was only open to those pupils who had completed eight years of elementary school. Religious beliefs were a private matter for the citizens, and could not impinge in the public sphere. Although mosques and churches remained open, they were rarely attended by professionals, government officials and even tradesmen. A Communist who visited a mosque or a church could be expelled from the Party, and a government official from his job.⁹³

⁹⁰Hadžišehović, *A Muslim woman.*, 64

⁹¹Vidić, *The position of the church in Yugoslavia.*

⁹²Ibid

⁹³Ibid

As a consequence of Communist secularization, religious practices receded to the household unit. Under the Communist state, however, even the “private” sphere or the household unit, was closely regulated and soon to be re-determined. Apart from a regulation of religious and nationalist elements within Yugoslavia, the initial years of the Communist regime also witnessed massive purges of individuals, writers and intellectuals after the break with the Comintern in 1948. In the film, When father was away on a Business Trip, the film-maker Abdullah Sidran provides a snapshot of the early Communist period and how it affected the household unit.⁹⁴ The story of Mesa, the father, who is sent to an anti-Stalinist prison camp after being framed by a jealous mistress and her future husband, is evocative of the various intrigues and espionage that permeated social life in Communist Yugoslavia. The parameters of community life were in flux. The slogan of “Brotherhood and Unity” now signified a system of *selective* inclusion of some members and exclusion of others.

⁹⁴ Sidran, Abdulah, Emir Kusturica, Moreno D'E Bartolli, Miki Monojlovic, Mirjana Karanović, Mirza Paišić, Mira Furlan, and Pavle Vujisić. 2005. *When father was away on business / Forum [and] Sarajevo Film*. NY: Koch Lorber

Section II

A Prelude

The New Socialist Community 1945 to early 1950s

“The story of a family can also portray the soul of a land. The life of the family reflects the life of the broader community of kin, and through it of the entire land,”⁹⁵ wrote Milovan Djilas in his memoirs, Land Without Justice, published in 1958. Such was the perception in many Yugoslav families, as they traced long genealogies of kinship and recited “ten generations without knowing anything in particular about them.”⁹⁶ Family names carried a history. Often stories of ancestors and their instances of struggle and endurance under the Ottoman regime were handed down through generations in Orthodox and Catholic families. When faith and practice faded, bonds of kinship could still claim individuals into confessional communities on the basis of “shared” experiences lived by earlier generations. Within Muslim families, stories from older generations often reminisced of the days of aristocracy and “landed estates.”⁹⁷ In the new Yugoslavia, even as the social ethos and the structures changed, the stories often endured.

With land reforms limiting ownership of property to twenty hectares in Socialist Yugoslavia, it had become a norm for men to break away from their extended families in search of jobs. The privacy of a single family unit was

⁹⁵ Milovan Djilas, *Land without justice*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1958), 3

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 6

⁹⁷ Adil Zulfikarpasic, Milovan Dilas, and Nadezda Gace. *The Bosniak*. (London: Hurst.,1998)

replaced with close-knit communal apartments, where the question ‘who is who’ was no longer valid.⁹⁸ Where once “the various faiths and origins placed their stamps on the town,” there was now a sense of social homogeneity.⁹⁹ In a more symbolic way, the notion of *zadruga*, a Slavic term for communal living with kin, had expanded. It now denoted a village council which operated in accordance with the Yugoslav “self-management system” and allowed for greater social interaction.¹⁰⁰ The officials in the council were appointed by the Communist government and in turn elected by the village community. The council was responsible for overseeing the residents of the community, and supervising socialist institutions in order to encourage greater interaction within the villages and its various sectors. Peasants were forced to enter into collective farms and work alongside their neighbors. In the small village of Dolina in Bosnia, only two Muslim households owned a horse, and two Catholic households owned a tractor. In agricultural work, Muslims and Catholics would co-operate with each other to do their job.¹⁰¹ A president of a local workers’ council in Bosnia enthusiastically expressed in 1948:

“Look at us. Turks and Christians. We work together. We eat together. We fought together. It doesn’t make any difference about the color of our skins or our religions or our nationality or anything else. There is no hatred in Yugoslavia today. That alone is worth all the suffering we have had.”¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Hadzisehović, *A Muslim woman*. Chapter 7: The People and the regime, 109-118

⁹⁹ Djilas, *Land without justice*, pg 3

¹⁰⁰ A principle of self government which relegated decision-making to a localized level of an individual producer, or citizen

¹⁰¹ Bringa, 70-74

¹⁰² St. John, *The silent people speak.*, 88

The new socio-economic structure also changed a frequent patriarchal dominance in the household; now women could discard their traditional, guarded positions within the household and work alongside men in professional fields. Veiled women were rarely sighted in public, particularly after a law was passed in 1950 forbidding the veiling of women. The regime introduced child and health care for all; an egalitarianism of a kind coupled with social homogeneity characterized socialist life. With the initiation of small scale enterprises, many employment opportunities also opened up for ordinary peasants. Before the Second World War, three-fourths of the population had lived in villages.¹⁰³ Now, towns expanded, and villages began to empty.

The household unit was divided, not merely physically, but also often ideologically. Members of the older generation were often wary of the widespread disregard for old traditions. On the other hand, “youth” was the symbol of the New Yugoslavia and more accepting of change. The Communist school in the 1950s and 60s emerged as a primary site for the creation of Yugoslav citizenship and socialist personality. Large scale educational reforms implemented in 1944-45 made schools a property of the state, followed by a massive campaign for the eradication of illiteracy and the promotion of cultural life.¹⁰⁴ The rustic culture of the countryside was now teeming with movie theatres, libraries, and reading

¹⁰³ Ildiko Erdei, “The Happy Child: As an Icon of Socialist Transformation: Yugoslavia’s Pioneer Organization,” *Ideologies and national identities the case of twentieth-century Southeastern Europe*, edited by Lampe, John R., and Mark Mazower. (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004)

¹⁰⁴ The First Reforms made the schools a property of the state. The Second Reforms in 1958 allowed for more autonomy and greater decentralization. U.S Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education, “The Educational System of Yugoslavia,” Institute of International Studies, by Nellie Apajasewicz, 1970

rooms. In order to bridge the rural-urban divide, the League of Communists arranged regular incentives, competitions and prizes to encourage the peasant population and workers to participate in artistic and cultural work.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, the government announced the Five Year Plan in 1949 which undertook to build six times as many grammar schools as in the years of inter-war Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁶

Prior to the implementation of school reforms, education had served as the primary means through which religious authorities asserted their influence. It was “as though we were being trained for priesthood,” Djilas comments in his memoirs.¹⁰⁷ In the post war period, changes in curriculum were designed to “bring education closer to socialist life,” and a considerable emphasis was placed on the study of social sciences from elementary school in order to promote a uniform social consciousness.¹⁰⁸ Bosnia-Herzegovina was particularly highlighted for work on the elimination of illiteracy, as one news article described: “before the war, this republic was known as one of the most culturally backward parts of Yugoslavia.”¹⁰⁹ The emphasis on *modernity* and its link with *socialism* was pervasive, with courses such as “The Life of Modern Man,” “Modern Culture,” and “Modern Yugoslavia—Free Land of Socialism” were offered regularly in schools. Religious education was removed from the school curriculum and replaced with a strict indoctrination of atheism and Marxist-Leninist thought, much to the chagrin of the religious communities in Yugoslavia. Apart from the

¹⁰⁵ “Short Cultural News,” *Yugoslav Fortnightly*, June 15, 1949, vol 1, no 6, pg 6

¹⁰⁶ “Five Year Plan of 1951,” *Telegraphic Agency New Yugoslavia*, Sept 2, 1949, no 30

¹⁰⁷ Djilas, *Land without justice*, 209

¹⁰⁸ John Georgeoff, “Social Studies in Yugoslav Elementary Schools”. *The Elementary School Journal*. 66 (8): (1966) 432-437.

¹⁰⁹ “Short Cultural News,” *Yugoslav Fortnightly*, June 15, 1949, vol 1, no 6, 6

teachings of Marx and Engels being routinely taught at all levels, history was also interpreted through a Marxist lens. The National War of Liberation during World War II was featured extensively in history textbooks, and the chronology of the world was divided into four epochs: slavery, serfdom, capitalism and social-communism. The school curriculum was also filled with patriotic emblems, songs, folklore and lyrical ballads venerating members of the Partisan Party as legendary heroes.¹¹⁰ The study of philosophy was also included in the last few years of school and in universities. Occasionally, Sunday newspapers, as well as radio and television stations, also published philosophical writings. In philosophical symposiums and seminars, frequent topics of reflection included: “Man Today,” “The Meaning and Perspective of Socialism,” “What is History,” and “Culture and Progress.”¹¹¹ In consistency with the modernization theories of its age, both at home and abroad, the entire school curriculum, therefore, reinforced the idea of a “modern” Yugoslav intellectual and citizen.¹¹²

Schools alone were not enough for the socialist transformation of the child. They were complemented by Pioneer organizations and youth groups designed to inculcate patriotism and adulation for Tito, the head of the Communist Party. These organizations were closely integrated with the schooling system and often entailed special procedures for admission and preferential treatment of children. Above all, they ensured a constant immersion of children in socialist ideals, at the expense of other activities, even beyond school hours. At the university level, the

¹¹¹ Svetozar Stojanovich, "Contemporary Yugoslavian Philosophy". *Ethics*. 76 (4): 297-301(1966), 300-01.

organizations allowed for preferential employment opportunities, as well as free health care, housing and scholarships. They not only provided direct work experience with Communist officials in City Committees, but they also served as espionage agencies regulating the conduct of their members and non-members in various aspects of life. Munevera Hadzisehovic, herself a victim of an espionage University Committee, relates an incident describing the culture of denunciation that had come to exist alongside increased social interaction. One of the frequent topics at the University Communist Committee was the congregation of Muslim youth in the courtyard of a mosque during Ramadan evenings, as well as the religious influence exercised over youth at the Gazi Husrev Beg Medressah in Sarajevo. Members were designated to infiltrate the medressah gatherings and organize a Communist youth chapter.¹¹³ Hadzisehovic describes her subsequent expulsion from the University Committee, which deprived her of economic self sufficiency in her later years. A member of the University Committee, Ibrahim, leveled accusations against her, quoting sentences from her conversations with foreigners. She narrates:

My accusers gave different meaning to every sentence. It was clear I had not only been speaking to my colleagues: there were spies among the women students in our dorm rooms. They were not good students and had probably agreed to spy on us in the hope that after graduation they would find jobs in Belgrade.¹¹⁴

Despite the homogenization and intimacy of socialist integration, different religious and social customs continued to be preserved by families in the household unit. Much to the surprise of Communist elites, the post-war regime

¹¹³Hadzisehović, *A Muslim woman*, 152

¹¹⁴Hadzisehović, *A Muslim woman*, 153

witnessed little change in religious beliefs and traditions. A census poll in 1968 indicated that 51% of all Yugoslavia admitted to a belief in God, while others simply adhered to religious and cultural traditions more than religious faith.¹¹⁵ The incidence of religious belief and customs in rural areas was greater than in urban areas, because the Bosnian rural setting was still primarily endogamous. Cultural and religious traditions, adjusted to new changes, continued to be preserved in the family unit. Rusinow paints a picture of a typical Serbian feast during a visit in Socialist Yugoslavia in 1966,

For the *slava*, the new house had had its annual spring cleaning and the walls were bright with fresh whitewash. In former times a *slava* lasted for three days. Now, although the feast itself is confined to one day and perhaps part of the next, preparations are necessary, begun a week in advance.¹¹⁶

The private sphere in the household and the public sphere, however, were not mutually exclusive. Often individuals were in tune with socialist ideas of the age whilst maintaining their traditions amidst a tide of modernization. As one father of a Serbian family said about the future of his child:

I do not want him to spend his life as my father and I have done, slaving all day for enough to eat and a little for the market. The future will be different and will belong to those who prepare for it. That is what we must do for our children.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵David Dyker A. "The Ethnic Muslims of Bosnia: Some Basic Socio-Economic Data". *The Slavonic and East European Review*. 50 (119), (1972) 55-79

¹¹⁶Dennison I. Rusinow, and Gale Stokes. *Yugoslavia: oblique insights and observations*. (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), 8

¹¹⁷*Ibid*, pg10

Chapter 2

~ What hast thou done? The voice of thy *brother's blood* crieth
unto me from the ground~¹¹⁸

Here lyeth
Gorchin solider
In his own lande
In a straungers'
Demesne¹¹⁹

I dissolved
And streamed
Now here I am
Now here I am
Without myself
Bitter
How can I go back
To Whence I Sprang?¹²⁰
Mak Dizdar

¹¹⁸ Genesis, 4:10

¹¹⁹ Dizdar 1999:139, as cited in Amila Buturovic, "Reasserting Authenticity: Bosnian Identity, Religion and Landscape in the Poetry of Mak Dizdar", in *Mapping the sacred: Religion, Geography and Post-colonial Literatures*, e.d J.S Scott and P Simpson- Houseley, (Amsterdam [u.a.]: Rodopi, 2001), 390

¹²⁰ Dizdar 1999:57, as cited in Butrovic, "Reasserting Authenticity," 392

Written from the vantage point of Communist Yugoslavia, the poetic verses of a famous Bosnian poet, Mehmedija Mak Dizdar, express an introspective quest for authentic Bosnian identity under the taint of colonial domination. At the heart of Dizdar's poetry was a post-colonial sense of dispossession from historical anchorage, and a subsequent disorientation of the self. Dizdar turned to medieval landscape, stone cemeteries and ancient burial sites to locate an identity that surpassed external influences of the pre-modern and the modern period. In his philosophical reflections, Dizdar once wrote:

For hours on end I stand in front of the stecaks [tombstones] of this land, located on the brink of primeval forests. At night I am haunted by the notes scribbled on the margins of ancient manuscripts whose phrases weep with questions of apocalypse. In him [ancestor], I recognize myself, yet I am not certain that I can ever remove the veil from his mystery.¹²¹

Dizdar's retrospective turn to the past in order to ascertain the "original" territorial identity of the Bosnians was evocative of larger efforts of the Communist government to resurrect the idea of a South Slavic community. Whereas epic tales of the National War of Liberation served as a starting point for the narrative of South Slavic unity, the Communist government soon felt the need to culturally entrench the concept of a supranational entity. After Yugoslavia's break with the Comintern in 1948, socialist internationalism gave way to socialist patriotism and Yugoslav Communists sought to realize their goal within the South Slav territories. In the post-war reconstitution of historical "truth," therefore, the emphasis on cultural and literary works was significant. According to the Yugoslav Communists, literature was "a companion of mankind's evolution, as

¹²¹ Durakov, 1979, 108, as cited in Butrovic, "Reasserting Authenticity," 389

well as a portrait, a documentation of social development.”¹²² Literary works were designed to inculcate a “scientific outlook of the world, life and society, and prepare [...] for the fulfillment of all objectives in the building of socialism.”¹²³ With the birth pains of early statehood and the dilemmas of defining cultural policy, the Communist Party felt it necessary to develop a national literary canon, which would underline common cultural affinities and historical traditions. In order to ensure the ideological commensurability of earlier South Slavic literature with socialist thought, the Communist regime undertook a campaign of regulation and censorship. Simultaneously, other works that incorporated socialist ideas were highlighted and made readily accessible to the public. The predominant theme in literary works gradually shifted from a glorification of Partisan heroism to the supranational identity of a Socialist Yugoslavia, situated between “East” and “West.”¹²⁴

The Communist attempt to “build” a Yugoslav nation divorced from the latent religious subcultures could only succeed to an extent. The notion of South Slavic unity, as promoted by the Communist government, was primarily constructed in opposition to the “foreign” other. But as Amila Butrovic describes, the colonial experience in Europe was “informed by a long history of internal othering,

¹²² Osnava nastava u FNRJ (Belgrade, 1948), 110 (Pavlovic, 121), Cited in Andrew Wachtel, *Making a nation, breaking a nation: literature and cultural politics in Yugoslavia*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 1998),. 138

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Wachtel, “Supranational Yugoslav Culture: Brotherhood and Unity,” in *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*, 146-172

domination and mythologization.”¹²⁵ Historically, Bosnia-Herzegovina occupied a unique space in Europe, as a land usurped by the “Orient” during the Ottoman period and retrieved by the “Occident” during Habsburg colonization. Often, the divide of the Orient versus the Occident manifested itself as a conflict between Christian civilization and Islamic empire. By tapping into historical and cultural archives of the South Slavs, in order to resuscitate the idea of Brotherhood, the Communist regime inevitably stumbled upon internal perceptions of *alterity*, generated through the years of colonial domination. In an address at Zagreb on October 31, 1946, Tito stated:

‘the Slavic peoples of the Balkans have a glorious tradition as fierce and stubborn fighters for their cultural and religious heritage as well as for national independence. [...] Germany and Austria were particularly eager to exploit and capitalize on religious differences between the Serbs and Croats. We want to create a community of South Slavs in which there would be Orthodox and Catholic, who must be closely linked with other Slavs.’¹²⁶

His speech displayed a characteristic lapse on the part of the Communist Party, in terms of their equation of Serb and Croat *ethnic* categories with their former *religious groupings*. Any historical legitimacy of a union of Serbs and Croats rested on an antagonism between Christian Slavdom and the Islamic Empire. The idea of an authentic resurrection of Yugoslavian identity from the past, therefore, could not evade “old” divisions. Consequently, the articulation of a “secular” and “united” Yugoslav identity entailed a complex set of cultural processes that aimed to separate the “religious” from the “cultural,” reifying the modernist transition

¹²⁵ Amila Buturovic, “Reasserting Authenticity: Bosnian Identity, Religion and Landscape in the Poetry of Mak Dizdar”, in *Mapping the sacred: Religion, Geography and Post-colonial Literatures*, ed J.,S Scott and P Simpson- Houseely, 381- 401, (Amsterdam [u.a.]: Rodopi, 2001)

¹²⁶ *Vjesnik* 3.6.45; *SVNZ* 5.10. 45 , as cited in Stellar, *Triple Myth of the Archbishop*, 118

from faith to culture. Although the Communist regime had significantly marginalized religious institutions and faith based discourses from public life, it soon endorsed a territorially-inscribed Christian culture. In the domain of literary and cultural life, an anachronistic appropriation of cultural icons from a period of pre-modern “religiosity” only caused a fleeting disturbance. As a solution to this glitch, in the imagination of a South Slavic community, the Communist Party engaged in a rigorous re-interpretation of historical texts by depleting them of their essence, and selectively supplying them with new socialist referents. The Ottomans, as a representation of the “pre-modern,” became a favorite theme. Not only did the Ottomans offer a common point of contention for Serbian and Croatian nationalism, but they also contributed, conveniently, to the anti-imperialist legitimacy of the Communist regime.

A classic example of this new semiotic culture can be seen in the incorporation of the Montenegrin Poet and Bishop, Prince Petar Petrovic-Njegos, into the Communist literary oeuvre. Often remembered as the Shakespeare of the Serbian nation, Petar Njegos was a Serbian Orthodox priest who became the ruler and the prince of Montenegro in the early nineteenth century. His writings were famous for depicting the conflict of Montenegrin Serbs with the “Turks,” settled in the neighboring areas.¹²⁷ Despite his position as a bishop, Njegos’s views on religion were incongruous with his time in that they did not presuppose a distinction between the religious sphere and the “secular” domain of political administration. Communist interpretations of Njegos, therefore, were quick to characterize him as a figure who aimed to transform the Serbian theocracy into a

¹²⁷ Milovan Djilas, *Njegos : Poet, Prince, Bishop*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966)

“secular” state.¹²⁸ On June 7, 1947, an oversized portrait of Njegos as well as excerpts of his play, The Mountain Wreath, appeared on the front page of the Communist newspaper, *Borba*, published in Montenegro, Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹²⁹ It was the one-hundredth anniversary of Njegos’s publication, The Mountain Wreath, which also coincided with the first cultural exhibition held by the Communist Party. Historian Andrew Wachtel writes: “Considering Tito’s fondness for oversize pictures of himself, such a layout was indeed a rarity.”¹³⁰ The creation of a Communist Petar Njegos, however, did not come without its share of problems. In an already sensitive political environment, with tension between Serbs and Croats, Njegos’s explicit orientation towards Serbdom was problematic. As was his revered position in the Serbian national canon and his antagonist stance towards *Islamized Serbs*. What, then, drove the Communist regime to make Njegos such an important literary icon? Perhaps, the influence of Milovan Djilas, a high ranking Montenegrin Communist, in the early years of the Communist regime, may have been one of the reasons. As Djilas also writes in his memoirs, he carried The Mountain Wreath as his Bible and his ancestors were also close acquaintances of Njegos.¹³¹ Nevertheless, the Communist Party seized on Njegos’s Montenegrin *national* identity as a solution to the Serb-Croat division. But above all, the fact that Njegos had been long dead was very advantageous to the Communist government. Now, his entire literary oeuvre was in the clutches of Communist propaganda. His writings were not only

¹²⁸ Wachtel, *Making a Nation*, 142-143

¹²⁹ Wachtel, *Making a nation, breaking a nation*, 143

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Djilas was also an outspoken advocate of the Montenegrin republic.

made available to common peasants and workers, they were also made mandatory in school systems.¹³²

In a powerful series of dialogues and interior monologues, Njegos's historical play, *The Mountain Wreath*, glorifies the struggle of Montenegrin Serbs against Turkish warriors. Based on the *Inquisition of the Turkicized*,¹³³ a somewhat contested historical event in the seventeenth century, the play depicts in its denouement the extermination of *Islamized Serbs* by the Montenegrin Serbs. In a monologue at the very outset of the play, Bishop Danilo captures sentiments of Montenegrin Serbs, lamenting the spread of Turkish power and the futility of Serbian resistance.

See the Devil with seven red robes,
Great-grandchild of the Turk with Koran
On the throne you sit unjustly
and boast of your blood-stained scepter
Insult God from the holy altar
and build mosques on desecrated churches!¹³⁴

Although resentful of Turkish domination, Bishop Danilo is pessimistic of any escape from the current predicament. In horror, he contemplates the military might of the Islamized Turks and the inevitability of a conflict where “brothers will massacre brothers/All murderous and equally violent.”¹³⁵ The note of pessimism expressed at the outset of the play, however, is soon tempered by

¹³² Wachtel, *Making a nation*, 141-150

¹³³ *Inquisition of the Turkicized* is a contested historical event in which Muslim Slavs (and perhaps, even foreign ‘Turks’) were exterminated in Montenegro during the 17th century. Njegos’s play is supposedly based on this historical event.

¹³⁴ I have consulted two different editions: Petar Petrovic Njegos, *Mountain Laurel*, Translated from Serbian by D. Mrkich, (Commoner’s Publishing, 1985), pg 8, and Njegos, *The Mountain Wreath*, Translated by J.W. Wiles, (London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, Museum Street).

¹³⁵ Njegos, *The Mountain Laurel*, 8

collective reflections on the Serbian predicament. The eventual conclusion is that their subordination is a punishment from God for internal disunity; “Dear God was angry with the Serbs/A Seven headed monster came forth/and destroyed the entire Serbdom/Both betrayers and the betrayed.”¹³⁶ The Battle of Kosovo in 1389, when Serbian Prince Milos Oblicic was defeated by the Turks, is highlighted as a turning point in the fortunes of the local Montenegrins. The environment of aggressive militarism and anticipated warfare in The Mountain Wreath is nonetheless interspersed with episodes that evoke the serenity of the Montenegrin landscape. The Mountain Wreath extols the Montenegrin culture of “freedom and justice,” that is lost due to the Ottoman invasion.

Towards the end of the play, a series of earthquakes and “omens” foretell the extermination of the “Mohammedan” population. The Montenegrin characters are visited by recurring dreams that portend the coming victory of the Christian civilization over the Turks. “Let me tell you what I saw in a dream,” exclaims a character called Obrad, “a great crowd of people had risen / and they took the ladder, and up the church / climbed to the very top of the apse / and thereon fixed a golden cross/and all the people stood up and/bowed to the honorable cross.”¹³⁷ The play ends on a jubilant note with the victory of the Montenegrin Serbs and the massacre of *Islamized Turks*:

And now for thee throughout our parts
Is not a trace of e’en one single Turk—
At least thou’It find not any Turkish ear---
Bodies headless, ruins, ashes views man here!¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Ibid, 13

¹³⁷ Ibid, 36

¹³⁸ There are two slightly varying translations of this text. The edition by D. Mrkich has the following lines: ‘Now there is no more in our country/ Even a trace of the Turkish ear/ Except for

In an ironic reversal to the Communist understanding of “brotherhood,” The Mountain Wreath, too, is permeated with the concept of “brethren.” Here, however, the denunciation of *a particular* religious faith tears this concept at its seams. At one point in the narrative, Njegos writes:

A bitter curse fell on a renegade
From distress a mother cursed her son
He turned his back on Christ’s faith
And the heroic Crnojevic clan
He took the faith of the bloody foe
And thirsted for his kindred *blood*¹³⁹

For the Montenegrin Serbs in the play, the military strength of the Turks is threatening, but perhaps even more so is the diminution of Serbian national customs through the prevalence of Islamic faith. A religious narrative is not only woven into the text of the play, but also strongly linked with cultural and racial identifications. The chief antagonists are the Turks, who betray the *linearity* of Serbian *race* in terms of their identification with Christianity. Religious *Conversion*, therefore, marks the juncture where considerations of faith depart, and enter the racial realm. In the Mountain Wreath, therefore, tension between the Turks and the Montenegrins heightens when a Serbian woman leaves with a Turkish man, evoking the rage of the local people and a call to destroy “the seed within the womb.”¹⁴⁰ *Islamized Turks* are depicted as traitors of their race by assimilating into a foreign creed, and disrupting the Serbian blood tie. Although language, as an objective marker, remains the same, “foreign” rituals and

corpses and ruins’, pg 72 The quotations above are taken by the James W Wiles edition, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, The Mountain Wreath, 216

¹³⁹ Ibid, 7

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 8

behind literary, metaphorical analyses.¹⁴² In a biography of Njegos published in 1966, Milovan Djilas began with a passionate defense of The Mountain Wreath, providing an in-depth literary analysis commensurable with the “absolute laws of nature.”¹⁴³ Echoing the official stance of the Communist Party, Djilas stated that all previous interpretations of The Mountain Wreath emerged from “national myths” and were not able to “distinguish between the essence [...] and the common place, between myth and actuality.”¹⁴⁴

The conflict in The Mountain Wreath was not a religious struggle; instead, it was a purely economic struggle whereby “the destruction of Turkish rule was tantamount to pushing back Islam, ending serfdom, and restoring the ancient, now national and civil, state.”¹⁴⁵ Denying the historical authenticity of the massacre, the central action of the play, Djilas dwelled instead on its symbolic value. Praising the “poetic and even a humanistic motif” such as the massacre, he expressed that “even though it did not take place, it meant much more to the Montenegrin spirit—the breaking of a bond.”¹⁴⁶ The metaphor of a divided brethren in Njegos was ironically embraced by the Communist regime and portrayed to be a consequence of defying the eternal laws of socialism. It could not be a consequence of religious conversion because as Djilas stated, the “blood

¹⁴² Wachtel, *Making a nation, breaking a nation*, 102

¹⁴³ Milovan Djilas, and Michael Boro Petrovich. *Njegos: poet, prince, bishop*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966)

In the introduction by Petrovich, he states that Djilas’s commentary on Njegos “synthesizes better than any other work both the traditional and the most recent research on Njegos by specialists in history, literature and philosophy.”

¹⁴⁴ Djilas, Milovan, *Njegos: poet, prince bishop*, 371

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 313

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 319

tie was still stronger than any other.”¹⁴⁷ Djilas also imbued the dominant metaphor of blood with a figurative meaning, i.e. a symbol of “man’s survival and the bond with his brotherhood and people.”¹⁴⁸ Similarly, another expression with strong racial connotations, “destroy the seed in the bride,” was portrayed to signify an “extermination of friendly brotherhood.”¹⁴⁹ Communist concerns for the maintenance of territorial integrity, therefore, morphed racial categories with socialist thought in a manner that was evidently incommensurable with the core of Marxist thought. In almost a tripartite structure, solidarity within a “class” category was the strongest bond, followed by that of blood. Religious solidarity featured at the bottom of the pyramid.

In what can now only be regarded as uncanny, Communist re-interpretations of The Mountain Wreath bore a resemblance to the structure of the play itself, which unfolded as a steady build-up to the ultimate, conclusive extermination of Islamized Turks. Indeed, Communist literary analysts did not neglect to link the past, as imagined by Njegos, to the present Communist reality. A great amount of space in the analysis was devoted to the ubiquity of the struggle between “good” and “evil,” and the continuity of this struggle from the time of Njegos to the present reality. At one instance, Djilas writes, “the massacre was long in the making, with all the forces and circumstances that led to the liberation and creation of our own state. It was a social and spiritual event---even

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 312

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 370

He says, “In Njegos’s diction, it does not simply denote a sticky red liquid and life and misfortune, but the very essence of man’s survival and the bond with his brotherhood and people. [...] This is the kind of blood on which Turks and evil men feed, the blood that has a fatal power and force, the blood that will come out of their ears—the blood that one cannot translate without entering into Njegos’s thought and imagery.”

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 370

if it never happened.”¹⁵⁰ By linking the massacre, in its symbolic essence, to the Communist struggle in the Balkans, Djilas shifted attention to the contemporary Communist struggle because the importance, in his words, “lies not in itself—but precisely in that preparation, in the heightening of the crisis.”¹⁵¹ Imbued with a universal significance, Njegos was hailed as an “antecedent” to Communist thought throughout Socialist Yugoslavia. The religious strand of racial concerns was simultaneously included and excluded in Communist thought. Since racial discourses were couched in “religious” terms, they were immediately dismissed as an offshoot of class struggle. As Salko Nazecic concluded in his edition of *The Mountain Wreath* in 1947:

“Many people have, incorrectly, purposely, and in various (always dark and reactionary) ways tried to twist Njegos’s thought, applying it to today’s situation---as if in *The Mountain Wreath* Njegos was defending religious unity in today’s situation.”¹⁵²

If *Njegos* served as a literary icon from the past, the Communist party also needed contemporary literary figures, who by virtue of their literary imagination would confirm the validity of Communist Yugoslavism. Among the more prominent intellectuals representing socialist themes was Ivo Andric, a recipient of the 1961 Nobel Prize for literature, who was also hailed as the Yugoslav “national” poet. A Croat and a Roman Catholic who defined his identity purely

¹⁵⁰Ibid, 319

Djilas also writes: “Njegos’s massacre was the first, or at least among the very rare, to be a poetic and even a humanistic motif, one in which the very deed is magnified. What is new is the light he casts on this deed, the demonstration of its inevitability and justice, and above all, its poetic expression. Njegos was the first to experience passionately and to give expression to a massacre as an aspect of human destiny, as a higher ordinance. Herein lies its originality and greatness.”

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 319

¹⁵² S. Nazecic, introduction to Petar Petrovic Njegos, *Gorski vijenac*, (Sarajevo, 1947), cited in Wachtel, *Making a Nation*, 15

through his connection with Bosnian landscape and culture, Andric's own life echoed his commitment to a more representative social identity, detached from the insularities of race and religion. In his youth, Andric was part of the *Mlada Bosna* Movement, and greatly influenced by the ideas of popular liberal socialism. After the Second World War, Andric served as an active member of the League of Communists and participated in numerous literary and cultural councils, which aimed to foster a strong sense of Yugoslav unity. His texts were made compulsory in the high school curriculum alongside the works of Njegos.¹⁵³ In the immediate post-war period, Andric became an influential member of the Yugoslav Committee of Intellectuals for Defence of Peace, and his literary reviews and interviews were featured in the cultural section of the Yugoslav Fortnightly. In one interview, Andric emphasized the increased contemporary significance of literary works in the post-war years, expressing that the "deep post war changes have made literature and the arts in general accessible to the broad masses of the people."¹⁵⁴

Andric's texts focused primarily on the culturally intermingled social fabric of Bosnia-Herzegovina, its hybrid culture through the influence of the East (Ottoman) and the West (Byzantine), and the conflict between Christianity and Islam. Andric was both a historian and a novelist, blending history with fiction, Bosnian myths, folklore, and constant allusions to the present Partisan regime. The personal, in Andric's work, was quintessentially political and the object of his inquiry; his texts, therefore, demonstrated how ordinary social interactions

¹⁵³ Wachtel, *Making a Nation*, 156-61

¹⁵⁴ *Yugoslav Fortnightly*, Belgrade, March 1949, pg 1, Vol 1, no 3

between Catholics, Orthodox Christians and Muslim, together with the intricacies of their personal lives, had become representative of the collective aspirations and tragedies of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Of all his works, Andrić's novels, Bosnian Chronicle (1959) and The Bridge on the Drina (1959) acquired the greatest acclaim, the latter being the basis for his Nobel Peace Prize. Both novels have been described as exquisite historical and "archaeological" novels, not only in their historical development of Yugoslavia, but also in the imagination of a future Yugoslav community. The Bridge on the Drina comprises a series of chronicles detailing the lives of conflicted and alienated characters over the period of four hundred years, through foreign Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian domination, and the rise of European nationalisms. The stone bridge over the river Drina, in the small town of Visegrad, on the western edge of Bosnia-Herzegovina, is the metaphor around which all action is organized. It is a symbolic link between East and West. Even as the world in Visegrad changes with time, the bridge remains a permanent entrenchment, weathering the various floods that mark the history of the town, and uniting the people. As the river Drina rises, the bridge brings "all these men together and bridge[s], at least for this evening, the gulf that divided one faith from the other, especially the rayah (explain) from the Turks."¹⁵⁵ At the end of the novel, the famous bridge over the River Drina, treasured by the Bosnians as the sole representation of progress, is destroyed by nationalist tensions in World War I.

¹⁵⁵ Ivo Andrić, and Lovett F. Edwards. *The bridge on the Drina*. 1959, 77

'Rayah' were the Christian Peasants. The word 'Turks' denoted Muslim Slavs of Bosnia-Herzegovina during the Ottoman period. It was taken as a mark of religious affiliation.

The characters are left handicapped, deprived of their sole anchorage in the permanence and symbolic stability provided by the bridge. In his second major novel, The Bosnian Chronicle, Andric delves into the liminal space occupied by the South Slavic lands, precariously positioned between Oriental East and West. The city of Travnik in Bosnia is a battleground for power and influence for Napoleonic France and Imperial Austria, and the novel is narrated predominantly from the perspective of two Western consuls, the French man Daville and the Austrian Josef von Mitterer. In the eyes of the foreigners, who compete in order to gain the favor of the Turkish viziers governing Bosnia, the land is steeped in “backwardness” and “ignorance.” Soon, even the foreigners are infected by the “Eastern poison.” As the narrator describes, they succumb to restlessness, irritation and degenerate character. The trajectory of the novel changes, however, when a young French assistant to Daville, Desfosses, arrives from France and resists accepting the stereotypical image of the Bosnians. By immersing himself in interactions with ordinary Bosnians and more importantly, archaeological sites, he seeks to understand their current predicament and unravel their original character, tainted and disguised by years of colonial experience. Nevertheless, Bosnia, as portrayed by the narrators, is static and immune to change. The prologue of Bosnian Chronicle depicts an indolent scene at one end of the Travnik Bazaar, where a group of “Beggars,” or Bosnian Muslims, are conversing about the anticipated entry of foreign consuls. Wary of the idea, they soon dismiss the rumor and assert the unchanging nature of their town, which they embrace with much satisfaction. At the end of the novel, with the Austrian and French consuls

ready to depart from Bosnia, the story comes full circle with the musings of Begs under a tree. The final pronouncement of Hamdi-Beg is as follows: “And everything will again be as, by God’s will, it has always been.”¹⁵⁶ As the novel heads towards its denouement, however, the wheels of history are turning. The departure of the French consuls from Bosnia serves as a premonition for the decline of the Napoleonic Empire, the Crimean War and the expulsion of the Ottomans by Austria-Hungary.

Through the chronicles of everyday interactions, Andric suggested that religious beliefs divided an otherwise unified Bosnia in a manner that was insurmountable. It was no wonder that the Communist government, amidst the process of secularization, seized on the writings of Andric as emblematic of Yugoslavia. Communist secularization policies sought to equalize the people of Yugoslavia by inculcating in them a uniform set of values. A strong adherence to territoriality was one of them. That different communities adhered to separate notions of the “Heavens,” each professing their own laws and dogmas, was incompatible with Communist thought and the notion of co-existence. With his writings, Andric struck at the core of Communist thought. Andric’s literary oeuvre displayed an appreciation of diversity, punctured with a regulated contempt for inter-faith divisions. In so doing, Andric seemed to distinguish social differentiation based on subjective beliefs from that based on culture. As long as uniform allegiance to a “civic citizenship” prevailed over religious loyalties, differences of habits and constitutions added to the richness and diversity of a shared social experience. Situated in pre-Communist Yugoslavia,

¹⁵⁶ Andric, *Bosnian Chronicle*, 462

Andric's stories, therefore, carried a sense of foreboding, and an inevitability of conflict in a society divided by religious differences.

Andric begins with the very ordinary, even the trivial, in the discourses of his characters. At the beginning of The Bridge On the Drina, Andric depicts the polarization of religious beliefs among children through contesting claims made by Serbian and Muslim children on Bosnian myths:

For the Serbian children, these were the prints of the hooves of Sarac, the horse of Kraljevic Marco, which had remained there from the time when Marko himself was in prison up there in the Old Fortress [...]. But the Turkish children knew that it had not been Kraljevic Marco, nor could it have been (for when could a bastard Christian dog have had such a strength or such a horse!) any but Djerzelez Alija on his winged charger which, as everyone knew, despised ferries and ferrymen and leapt over rivers as if they were watercourses.¹⁵⁷

These claims made on mythic heroes in an attempt to glorify one's history are also accompanied by rejections of others who do not fit in the equation. The easiest way of doing so, Andric seems to point out, is to question the authenticity of "conversions." In Andric's narrative, a school master, Hussienega rejects the conversion of Tahirpasha Stambolija, a Vezir in Travnik, whom he describes as "Christian in his soul" because of his decision to impose an army on the town without popular consent.¹⁵⁸ Andric, therefore, insinuates the "weakness" of identity claims that are premised on religious conversion. For him, subjective claims of faith are *constructed* differences, as opposed to the more natural ones based on a lived culture. Time and again, Andric portrays the limits of community between the Christians and Muslims of Visegrad in The Bridge On the Drina. Even during times of co-existence, he describes how "Moslems and Christians

¹⁵⁷ Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, 179

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, pg. 131

alike, had taken their place in it with many definite reservations, but these reservations were secret and concealed.”¹⁵⁹ From these very ordinary beginnings, it is only a matter of time before tensions are unleashed, moving past localized, individual experiences to a more collective and colossal damage. Similarly, in his short story, A Letter from 1920, Andric takes a stance on religion through his portrayal of a Bosnian traveler escaping his country. Beneath the religious and cultural mix of Bosnia-Herzegovina, he asserts that there lies a latent hatred, with “the rifts between the different faiths [...] so deep that hatred alone can sometimes succeed in crossing them.”¹⁶⁰ He describes:

the clock on the Catholic cathedral strikes the hour with weighty confidence: 2 a.m. More than a minute passes by, but a piercing sound does the Orthodox Church announce the hour, and chime its own 2 a.m. A moment after it the lower clock on the Bey’s mosque strikes an hour in a hoarse, faraway voice, and that strikes 11, the ghostly Turkish hour, by the strange calculations of distant and alien parts of the world.¹⁶¹

According to the disenchanted traveler, differences in religious beliefs and practices only accentuate divisions between people who share a commonality of rituals and habits, i.e. they “awake, rejoice and mourn, feast and fast,” but in “four different ecclesiastical languages” and according to “four different antagonistic calendars.”¹⁶²

Andric also depicted the peripheral space occupied by Bosnia, on the borders of Eastern and Western culture, as akin to the contemporary position of Communist Yugoslavia. His writings often voiced Western European “Orientalist”

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 175

¹⁶⁰ Andrić, Ivo, and Celia Hawkesworth. *The damned yard and other stories*. (London: Forest Books.1992), 118

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Andric also includes the small number of Jewish population in Yugoslavia which was targeted by the Nazis during the Second World War.

discourses which characterized the Balkans as a cultural backwater due to its Ottoman and Byzantine legacy. At the time of his writing, the ideological divide cast by Communism in the post-war era had further perpetuated the East-West dichotomy within Europe. Instead of rejecting this dichotomy, however, Andric sought to render this liminality more acceptable. In so doing, Andric's writing engaged in a form of introspection regarding the collective predicament of Bosnians. Not unlike Communist discourses on "brotherhood and unity," Andric's writings also routinely evoked Ottoman rule as inhibiting the path to progress. His derision of the Ottoman setting also raised the question of how the Ottoman legacy, and by extension Bosnian Muslims, could be best incorporated within the socialist context.

Andric's writings, for the large part, depict the dichotomy of a Christian versus Islamic civilization. Unlike Njegos, however, Andric writes from a perspective that is detached from any considerations, or rather personal affiliations with faith. In a poignant section in The Bridge on the Drina, Andric blends historical fact with Bosnian folklore in his depiction of the Bosnian Vezir from the Ottoman Period, Mehmed Pasha Sokolovic, and the Slavic epic figure, Rade the Mason.¹⁶³ In Andric's narrative, the Bosnian Muslim Vezir, Mehmed Pasha, is described as a Christian boy from a peasant family who was abducted by the janissaries on the command of Rade the Mason, as a form of "blood tribute."

¹⁶³ Rade the Mason is known from the South Slavic epic song, "The Building of Scutari". The search for the children Stoja and Stojan, the mother, her milk that flows from the walls, are derived from the epic song in which the young wife of Gojko Mrnjavcevic was walled into the foundation with an opening left for her by Rade the Mason to nurse her baby son Jovo. Tatyana Popovic. *Folk Tradition in the Storytelling of Ivo Andric*. 1995
Wayne S Vucinich. *Ivo Andric revisited: the bridge still stands*. (Berkeley: International and Area Studies, 1995)

Separated from his mother, Mehmed Pasha is taken to Istanbul, the headquarters of the Ottoman Empire, converted into a Muslim and trained to rule over the Christian Slavs and Turks in the South Slavic lands. In a yearning for his Christian past, the fictitious Mehmed Pasha constructs a bridge to connect the East and the West. His effort, as the story later proves, is futile; with the advent of time, the people of Visegrad realize that the “road across the bridge [was] no longer what it once had been: the link between the East and the West.”¹⁶⁴ The Muslim and Christian communities continue to treasure separate myths and folktales of common archaeological sites. But as the novel indicates, the Christian myths contain greater verity than others. Andric, therefore, implicitly denotes a Christian norm disrupted by a foreign influence. Christianity, however, is taken not as a set of beliefs and dogmas, but as neutralized culture and traditions. Indeed, in his doctoral dissertation dated 1924,¹⁶⁵ Andric explicitly wrote:

The fact of decisive importance for Bosnia was that it was, at the most critical stage of its spiritual development, when the fermentation of its spiritual forces had reached a culmination, invaded by an Asian warrior people whose social institutions and customs meant the negation of Christian culture and whose faith—created under different climatic and social conditions and unfit for any kind of adjustment—interrupted the spiritual life of a country, degenerated it and created something quite strange out of it.¹⁶⁶

Although Austro-Hungarian colonization is also criticized in The Bridge on the Drina, the Ottoman Empire, as the only non-Christian civilization in the Balkans, stands out in its corruption of the land. Immersed in a different culture,

¹⁶⁴Andric, *The Bridge On the Drina*, 214

¹⁶⁵ It was not published in Serbo-Croatian until 1975 and he chose to keep the manuscript in the University of Graz Library

¹⁶⁶Ivo Andric, and Zelimir B. Juricić. 1990. *The development of spiritual life in Bosnia under the influence of Turkish rule*. Durham u.a: Duke Univ. Press, 51

all foreigners in Travnik are unable to maintain their identity, facing loss of character and an incorporation of “lower” Oriental traits. It is

An environment that first wrecks the Westerner, then makes him pathologically irritable, and [...] during the course of many years, completely changes him, bends and finally kills him with silent indifference long before he actually dies.¹⁶⁷

The worst victims of the “Eastern Poison” are Bosnians, and even the Turkish viziers from Constantinople cannot help but comment on the “uncivilized” nature of their subjects. A major section of The Bridge on the Drina deals with representing Ottoman or “Islamic” colonization of “Christian” South Slavic lands, highlighting particularly the various instances of domination and brutality experienced by the Christian “rayahs” or peasants by the “Turk” landlords. Andric implies that it is precisely because of the recent conversions that the “older persons who followed the law of Islam were openly indignant and turned their backs on this chaotic mass of workers.”¹⁶⁸ Radisav, the peasant, on the other hand, belongs to one of the only families in a small village which did not convert to Islam and subsequently forfeited the material benefits of doing so. As a sole voice of opposition to this economic exploitation, Radisav is captured and brutally tortured by the Turk authorities, and consequently entrenched in Serbian myth as a “Christian martyr.”¹⁶⁹

Differing attitudes towards Ottoman [Eastern] colonization and Austro-Hungarian [Western] colonization of the Balkans are particularly evident in the musings of Desfosses, a young French assistant to the consul, and of Giovanni

¹⁶⁷ Andric, *Bosnian Chronicle*, 97

¹⁶⁸ Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, 31

¹⁶⁹ Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, 18

Mario Cologna, a young doctor and philosopher in Travnik – two characters who often represent Andric’s own voice in the novel. During a conversation with Desfosses, Cologna delivers a passionate monologue on the Bosnian predicament, emphasizing the commonality of a Christian historical culture with the West and appealing for deliverance from Ottoman rule:

These are frontier folk, spiritually and physically, from those black and bloody lines of division which through some terrible, absurd misunderstanding have been drawn between man and man, God’s creatures, between whom there should not and must not be any such division. They are the shingle between the sea and the land, doomed to eternal rolling and disquiet. They are the ‘third world’ on which has descended the whole of the curse which followed the division of the earth into two worlds. We are heroes without fame and martyrs without a crown. But you at least, our fellow believers and kinsmen, you people of the West who are Christians under the same salvation as ourselves, you at least ought to understand us and cherish us and lighten our lot.¹⁷⁰

In Andric’s reconstruction of history, therefore, local Christians, both Catholic and Orthodox, looked towards the Austro-Hungarian empire and Russia respectively as a consequence of the Ottoman influence. The “transborder” loyalties of Orthodox and Catholic Slavs, therefore, were not inherent. Instead, they were forged out of political exigency, as opposed to subjective beliefs that seemed to govern the converted Muslim Slavs.

Characterized by the West as the cultural “Other,” the Balkans nonetheless exhibited their own internal “Orientalist” discourses, in which the Bosnian Muslims of the past featured as static caricatures rather than multi-dimensional figures. In his association of “Islamic civilization” with Ottoman colonization, Andric described the nature of “Balkan Islam” as a static and

¹⁷⁰ Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, 286

“backward force” in a period of flux and change, used by the Turks to maintain the status quo and their former glory. In the Bridge on the Drina, this particular conceptualization of Balkan Islam surfaces in a dialogue between students at a time of awakening national consciousness in Europe. Andric depicts the conceptualizations of “Muslim Slavs” by other confessional groups, as well as their own self-understandings. A socialist-minded student expresses to Bahtijarevic, a Muslim student: “Your love for everything oriental is only a contemporary expression of your ‘will to power’; for you the eastern way of life and thought is very closely bound up with a social and legal order which was the basis of your centuries of lordship.”¹⁷¹ In response, Andric depicts Bahtijeravic as a representative of Muslim youth, “who carry their philosophy in their blood and live and die according to it,” and conveys his thoughts: “the foundations of the world and the bases of life and human relationships in it have been fixed for centuries. [...] the very idea of the change of these centers is unhealthy and unacceptable.”¹⁷²

The fusion of blood and philosophy in a mixed metaphor was not uncharacteristic of the Communist regime, where emphasis on the ideological transformation of the child extended into and beyond the family. Similarly, in the Bosnian Chronicle, the Bosnian Muslims are depicted as being the worst infected by the “Eastern” poison. From the very beginning of the novel, they are portrayed as the “greatest zealots of their faith,” and the image remains constant throughout the novel. Their hostility extends not only to their compatriots, but to the Turkish

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 242

¹⁷² Ibid

sultans, particularly the ones who make any attempt to mingle with Westerners. It is at this point, ironically, that the writings of the Communist Andric and the Serbian national poet, Njegos, converge, despite the ideological chasm.

Commenting on the The Mountain Wreath by Njegos, Andric once wrote:

Nowhere in the poetry of the whole world nor in the destiny of nations have I found a more terrible battle cry. Yet without that suicidal absurdity, without that stubborn negation of reality and the obvious, no action would be possible, or any thought of any action against evil.¹⁷³

The emerging Communist literary oeuvre shared the condemnation of *Islamized Turks* as exhibited in earlier nationalist writings such as that of Njegos. The problem for Communist literary analysts, however, was not their change of faith, but the collaboration of Bosnian Muslims with foreign invaders. And even as the generations changed, Andric writes that they transmitted to another

not only a peculiar personal heritage of body and mind, but a country and a religion; not only a hereditary sense of what is right and fitting [...], but also an inborn aptitude for knowledge of the world and of men in general.¹⁷⁴

In nationalist literature such as The Mountain Wreath, different cultural and social customs of *Islamized Turks* were derided and characterized as a product of “racial” assimilation with the Turks. In Andric, however, these objective markers of differences did not signify “racial” assimilation, but an absence of socialist transformation. Through these writings, Yugoslav Communists insinuated that the only way to break out of the “habits” of foreign invaders was to accept the socialist ideal. It also called for an introspective search for an original territorial

¹⁷³Djilas, *Njegos: Poet, Prince, Bishop*, 339

¹⁷⁴Andric, *Bosnian Chronicle*, 18

identity, disguised in the ruins and wreckages of the past, perhaps only fleetingly visible in archaeological ruins. As Cologna in the Bosnian Chronicle pointed out, while looking at the wall of the New Mosque:

And if you look a little closer at the stones in the old wall, you will see that they come from Roman Ruins and gravestones. Who knows what else may be hidden deep down under these foundations? Who knows whose work may be buried there or what vestiges may have been wiped out forever?¹⁷⁵

Conclusion:

Turning the Tables

In writing on his concept of History and Progress, Walter Benjamin uses an analogy of an angel whose face is turned backwards. The angel sees

one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet. He would like to [...] piece together what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise, it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned. That which we call progress, is this storm.¹⁷⁶

Gazing back on the history of the South Slav lands and peoples, the Communist Party portrayed a series of catastrophes culminating in the Second World War. Yugoslav Communists insinuated that any notion of progress and advancement in the pre-Communist period was short-lived and self-defeating, much like the treasured bridge in Andric's novel, which is destroyed by nationalist tensions. As the disenchanted traveler from Andric's short story

¹⁷⁵ Andric, *Bosnian Chronicle*, 288

¹⁷⁶ Walter Benjamin, Thesis on History,
<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm>

conveyed before his death, the hatred in Bosnia would continue to thrive “until the material and spiritual life in Bosnia are altogether changed.”¹⁷⁷ It was this last vision which struck a deep chord with the Partisan government in the Socialist People’s Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and represented the underlying philosophy of the new regime.

Indeed, the post-war regime witnessed a significant development in areas of education, culture, literacy. The Communist school was not only a site for socialist transformation of the child, but allowed a thorough intermixing of children previously claimed by religious institutions. Despite the agitation and propaganda carried out by the regime, however, the Communist Party could not transform individuals into outright Marxists. Even as endogamous structures declined, many individuals, including Communist members, continued to place great emphasis on descent and lineage. Often individuals selectively incorporated socialist ideals by finding common ground with their own values.

Communist Yugoslavism also did not exist in a historical void. It was dynamic and responsive to its historical and political circumstances, and had emerged, in the wake of its creation, as avowedly “secular” and patriotic. In the initial years, therefore, the Communist regime related to the mosaic of different communities by reifying the integrity of South Slavic territory. In an effort to differentiate modern socialists from others, however, it banked heavily on the “homogenization of cultural forms.” Here was the irony of “brotherhood and unity,” as it existed uneasily alongside an explicit differentiation of cultures and

¹⁷⁷ Andric, Ivo Andric, *The Damned Yard and other Stories: A Letter from 1920*, 118/119

traditions. In everyday public life, an expression of religious differentiation was prohibited; at the very least, it was not without costs. At the same time, there emerged a parallel discourse of differentiation in the very institutions that served as sites for socialist change. The Communist regime did not consciously endorse racism, but the appropriation of “racial” images from historical fiction and their presentation in a new socialist light was ominous – akin to granting them legitimacy. Of particular relevance were the Bosnian Muslims, closely associated with the Ottoman legacy whilst being upheld as a symbolic representation of Yugoslavism in the initial years of the Communist regime. The recovery of an “original” Yugoslavia legitimated the notion of a secularized “Christian Slavdom,” casting the articulation of a Bosnian Muslim identity in a unique dilemma. Attempts to forge “brotherhood and unity” in the literary field often converged on the Ottoman identity. With the Communist endorsement of Njegos, a Serbian national writer, and of Andric, a Croatian Communist writer, “Yugoslav” literature, in many ways, became a melting pot of Serbian and Croatian sensibilities. But what became of Bosnian Muslims? Until the 1960s, Bosnian Muslims continued to protest the treatment and depiction of Muslims in Andric’s writings and popular folklore. These protests were to no avail.¹⁷⁸ Under the Communist regime, Bosnian Muslims were given a “non-national,” or a purely confessional status. Since the Communist regime sought to eliminate religious differentiation and *believed* in that inevitability, the metaphorical extermination of *Islamized Turks* in The Mountain Wreath was also a non-issue. On the other hand,

¹⁷⁸Mushin Rizvic, ‘Bosnanski muslimani u Andricevu svijetu,’ *Sveske zaduzbine Ive Andrica* 13, 1997, 159-78, cited in Wachtel, *Making a Nation*, 272

the incorporation of Muslim writers into the canon of Yugoslav literature was judged in accordance with their distance from the Ottoman past.

The power of language, as it reified and constructed power discourses whilst delegitimizing others, cannot be underestimated in Communist Yugoslavia. With radio stations, educational institutions, artistic centers and even music ensembles enveloped under Communist agitation-propaganda, there was a monopolized source of language in post-war Yugoslavia: the Communist Party. And yet as John Milton elucidates in his famous Paradise Lost, a fall of man causes a fall in the language of God. At the beginning was the Word and the word was “God.”¹⁷⁹ Now at the hands of men, it lost its original signifiers and became corrupted. In Socialist Yugoslavia, the Communist Party emerged as a “sovereign” authority in accordance with the “laws of nature.” Although the Party constructed the dichotomies of the “traditional” versus the “modern,” and the “religious” versus the “secular,” it could not retain sole authority over the deployment and manipulation of these categories. Such a trend could be seen in the “prison literature” of the Communist regime, i.e. the works of exiled and imprisoned writers, and in the political arena, particularly after disenchantment with the regime began to surface.

While the Communist state undermined the social function of religion in the post-war period, it simultaneously deployed rituals and symbols as secularized “re-invented traditions” to reify the concept of a “civic” nationhood. The “secular” in post-war Yugoslavia did not represent a break from the authoritarian,

¹⁷⁹ Milton, *Paradise Lost*.

legitimizing discourses of organized religion, but its substitution in a different form. Both were adherents and victims of the Communist Party. Two literary figures, Mesa Selimovic and Borislav Pekic, became inspired by the inversion of the “religious” and the “secular” categories, and depicted the internal inconsistencies of the regime through their literary imagination. A Serbian writer, Borislav Pekic was sentenced to fifteen years of prison after being accused of belonging to a secret organization in 1949. It was during his time in prison that Pekic formulated most of his ideas, particularly for his novel, The Time of Miracle, published in 1965.¹⁸⁰ After his imprisonment, Borislav Pekic led a life in exile and published more works devoted to Serbian national identity. Mesa Selimovic, on the other hand, was a Communist from a Muslim milieu, whose brother was executed by the Communist Party on charges of alleged theft. His brother’s execution became the subject of his first novel, Death and the Dervish, published in 1966. In many ways, Selimovic’s novel was a manifestation of his inner conflict with the Communist regime. Nonetheless, Selimovic’s overt condemnation of Ottoman Bosnia earned him great fame and respect among his Communist counterparts.¹⁸¹

In the Time of Miracles, Borislav Pekic used biblical stories in a satirical mode. But the object of satire was not merely Christianity. Instead, Pekic distorted myths with clear allusions to the present regime in order to reveal its arbitrariness and internal contradictions. Pekic begins with a sarcastic foreword:

¹⁸⁰ Borislav Pekic, *The time of miracles: a legend*.(New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976)

¹⁸¹ Mesa Selimovic, Bogdan Rakic, and Stephen M. Dickey. *Death and the Dervish*. Evanston, Ill.: (Northwestern University Press, 1999) and Borislav Pekic, *The time of miracles: a legend*.(New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976)

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And God created man in his image: male and female and there was morning and there was evening. And there was crime. Who knows on which day. He [Jesus] came during the reign of Octavian Augustus. And it was evening and it was morning. and it was Joshua ben Josef, Jesus the Nazarene, Savior of the world.¹⁸²

From the very beginning, Pekic casts doubt on the historical authenticity of the figure of “Jesus” as well as the ideal of man in the image of God. In the seven stories that follow, “Jesus” is portrayed as an ordinary man who acquires his elevated and prophetic status through the misfortunes of people. His disciples, on the other hand, are dogmatic, opportunists, competing amongst themselves to gain the favor of their leader. In the story, Miracle at Jabneel, “Jesus of Nazareth,” accompanied by his disciples, approaches Elga, a woman expelled from Old Jabneel after becoming infected with leprosy. Separated from her husband in a segregated colony, New Jabneel, Elga finds her affections engaged by another man, Uriah. But yearning for her husband one day, she leaves the town, only to be approached by “Jesus of Nazareth” and his disciples. Here Pekic paints a comical caricature of a man who follows “the written word” in order to fulfill a pre-ordained destiny of his “prophethood” and “salvation,” not unlike the overt adherence amongst Communist elites to Marxist ideals in post-war Yugoslavia. He persists in finding out how he can help Elga, while the latter, in her misery, stubbornly refuses to engage in any conversation. At one point, Elga shrewdly asks, “who do you want to help, me or yourself.” Momentarily distracted, “Jesus” turns to his companion, Judas, for assistance. His companion replies: “it is written

¹⁸² Ibid

that you'll heal a wretched person upon leaving Copernaum."¹⁸³ Irritated, Elga hurls retorts at Judas. The exchange that follows is this:

'Jesus': 'Forgive me for annoying you, Elga. And don't find fault with my men. They are born men.'

Elga: And you?

'Jesus', sighing: That's a complex matter. But I will try to explain why your role is essential and irreplaceable. [...] I never know what I am or when [God or man], until, having wrought some miracle, I again usurp my divine nature.'¹⁸⁴

In the end, "Jesus" ends up healing Elga. Jubilant to meet her husband, Elga greets her town members. But they reject her after performing their own set of rituals to test her "cleanliness." Devastated, Elga returns to Uria and faces dejection once again from the leper colony, for she is no longer a part of them. The miracle of "Jesus" backfires. Now Elga is afflicted with even greater misfortune. The last scene of the story depicts an elderly Elga sleeping by the stone at the border of the two colonies, while Jesus and his disciples deliberate on how they can best help her.

Latent in this distortion and re-construction of biblical myths was the notion of a secular sovereign, almost in a Schmittian sense,¹⁸⁵ who establishes himself through "decisionism" analogous to the miracle of a sovereign God. Undoubtedly, the arbitrariness and dogmatism of the new regime were the primary targets of Pekic's dark humor. One cannot miss the allusion to Tito in his portrayal of a man who, under a misguided notion, hopes to attain "salvation" for his promised land, whilst increasing his own power. Indeed Josif Tito, the President of the

¹⁸³ Pekic, *The Time of Miracles*, 33

¹⁸⁴ Pekic, *Time for Miracles*, 36

¹⁸⁵ The sovereign is the person who "decides" an exception from the norm. Carl Schmitt, "Political Theology"

Communist Party, was known for his sensational speeches, recollecting the suffering of the pre-Communist period. In 1942, for instance, Tito proclaimed:

We possess, so to speak, nothing. Our country is devastated; our people are enduring terrible sufferings and misery, hungry, naked and barefooted, exposed to the bestial terror of the Ustasha , and the invader. But we have one thing,—the unswerving firmness and faith of our afflicted people that victory will be theirs!¹⁸⁶

By depicting competition among disciples in an effort to secure the attention of their leader, Pekic also made references to Tito's cult of personality and his excessive adulation in the post-war regime. By virtue of this analogous representation of Tito and the Communist elites, the "miracle" of brotherhood and unity was short-lived, and perhaps a harbinger of greater misfortune. Here the premise of "Brotherhood and Unity," arising primarily from the horrors of the war, began to crumble. But while Pekic ridiculed the dogmatism of Communist ideology, he didn't spare religious ideological opponents. This can be seen in his story "Miracle at Bethany," in which Jesus resurrects the figure of Lazarus, only to see him killed again by religious members of the town.

Selimovic's Death and the Dervish, on the other hand, delved into the problem of political authority and complicated the Communist exaltation of "sovereignty" vested in men who follow historical processes. Instead, it served as a *Nietzschean* rejection of the binary between good and evil, projected by Ottoman Bosnia and later the Communist regime. Written in a *Kafkaesque* style, Death and the Dervish portrays the turbulent psychological journey of the

¹⁸⁶ Tito, Selected Speeches, 36

protagonist, Ahmed Nuruddin, the sheikh of a *tekke*¹⁸⁷ and a dervish of the highest order. In many ways, the hostile landscape of a ‘religious’ Ottoman Bosnia in Death and the Dervish serves as a foil to the Communist regime, iterating the Communist break from an era of dogmatic religiosity. Much of the action takes place in darkness; even during the daytime, guarded and muted conversations occur in dimly lit rooms. A constant sense of foreboding permeates the setting; at night a “terrible drone” of insects floods over them, while “white and gray vapors drift [...] like at the very beginning of the world.” When the morning turns roseate, “without the tortures of the nights spent half awake,” Ottoman Bosnia, “falls into a deep sleep, like a well.”¹⁸⁸ Much like Andric’s depiction of Ottoman Bosnia, there is an aura of changelessness that governs the period. But Selimovic does not share Andric’s optimism for the socialist period, and instead uses his depiction of Ottoman Bosnia as a subtle commentary on the present regime. In the novel, the fears and doubts of Ahmed Nuruddin crystallize into bitter disillusionment. His disenchantment, however, is not merely with the political order, but with the very beliefs and doctrines that maintain the structures. It stems primarily from his sense of guilt from an inability to save his brother, executed by the Ottoman regime. It is later revealed that Nuruddin’s brother accidentally stumbled upon evidence of the silencing of dissidents through fabricated charges of heresy. In his prologue, Nuruddin reveals his apostasy:

My name is Ahmed Nuruddin. [...] *Light of Faith*. How am I a light? And how have I been enlightened? By higher teachings? By the true faith? By freedom from

¹⁸⁷ The Dervish Order or Gatherings of Sufi Brotherhood

¹⁸⁸ Selimovic, *Death and the Dervish*, 244

doubt? Everything has fallen from me, like a robe or a suit of armor, and all that remains is what was at the beginning, naked skin and a naked man,¹⁸⁹

Even before finding out the truth about his brother's execution, Nuruddin finds himself drawn to a rebel, Is-haq and is tempted to free him despite his position as a dervish. But Is-haq is not an ordinary rebel. Fleetinglly depicted by Selimovic, Is-haq becomes a recurring motif that symbolizes Nuruddin's own doubts. Tied at the execution stand, he possesses a stoic acceptance of his fate. For he neither condemns death nor wishes to escape it. Instead he finds his anchorage in being able to see past a system that enshrouds everyone else.

Perhaps what unsettles Nuruddin the most is the betrayal of his comrades, who despite the knowledge of Harun's innocence, neglected to save him. In the second half of the novel, Nuruddin conspires to incite a rebellion against the corrupt regime by framing Haji Sinaa-uddin, a much respected religious figure who fails to save his brother. Soon Nuruddin becomes part of the corrupt political order himself. His conspiracy backfires, incriminating his loyal friend, Hasan. Nuruddin is given a brief window to save his friend. He must choose between death and betrayal, and he chooses the latter. In the end, Nurruddin is consumed with angst, and changed forever. At the heart of the novel is the idea of human alienation and the insignificant space occupied by an individual within an authoritarian regime, whether religious or secular. For Ahmed Nuruddin, this helplessness finds an anchorage in religious faith, but soon, even this ground slips from beneath his feet. In many ways, the text reads like an autobiographical account by Selimovic depicting his inner conflict with both religious faith and

¹⁸⁹Selimovic, *Death and the Dervish*, 4

the Communist regime. The injustice of his brother's execution by the Communist regime is reflected in the angst experienced by Nuruddin. While Nuruddin, as a dervish, is a protector of religious faith, his brother Harun is portrayed as a character often flippant on the matter of religion. At a brief juncture in the novel, Selimovic's portrayal of Nuruddin's inner turmoil extends as a wider commentary on the Bosnian Muslims, caught between their religious and secular identity, as the "most complicated people on the face of the earth."

He says:

Not on anyone else has history played the kind of joke it's played on us. Until yesterday, we were what we want to forget today. But we haven't become anything else. With a vague sense of shame because of our origins, and guilt because of our apostasy, we don't want to look back and have nowhere to look ahead of us.¹⁹⁰

On a broader level, the novel raises the idea of human conscience and its uneasy allegiance to the "law" (in this case, religious) and the political "order." The only way to break out of the cycle, Selimovic implies, is to stoically overcome the fear of death, of which his protagonist is tragically incapable. The last lines of the novel serve as a final pronouncement of Nuruddin's internal agony under the Ottoman rule:

Fear is flooding over me, like water. Teach me, dead ones, how to die without fear, or at least without horror. For death is senseless, as is life.

In an ironic twist, the final letter read out by Nuruddin in the Ottoman setting of the novel is dated: 1962-66.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Selimovic, *Death and the Dervish*, 408

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*

Section III

A Prelude

The ‘Bascarsija:’ An Ottoman City in the Socialist Era An Architectural Dialogue between Islam and Modernity

While the Communist party may have overtly succeeded in separating the discursive category of the “religious” from the “secular”, an extrication of the “modern” and the “cultural” from the “Islamic” proved to be a more daunting task. Not unlike pre-socialist South Slavic literature, the aesthetics of architecture, too, became trapped in the cultural polemics of the age. Situated in the heart of Sarajevo, Bascarsija was one of the first building projects undertaken by the Ottoman regime in 1462. It was a mosaic of commercial and public buildings, interspersed with mosques, expansive water fountains, burial chambers (turbes), centers of Islamic learning (mektebs), and hostels for young dervishes (hanika). Funded by the *vakuf*¹⁹², Bascarsija evoked religious intermingling at the very heart of the city. Within its horizontally oriented civic center, one could see a kaleidoscope of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian religious institutions. The great mosque of Husrev Beg at the center symbolized the dominance of Islamic law.¹⁹³

¹⁹² religious state fund

¹⁹³ Dijana Alic, and Maryam Gusheh. "Reconciling National Narratives in Socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Bascarsija Project, 1948-1953." *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 58, no. 1 (1999): 6-25; Francisco Passanti, *The Vernacular, Modernism and Le Corbusier*, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol 56, No 4, (Dec 1997), Zeynep Celik, *Le Corbusier, Orientalism, Colonialism, Assemblage*, No 17, (April 1992), Andre Raymond, *Islamic City, Arab City: Orientalist Myths and Recent Views*, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol 21, No 1, (1994), Maxmilian Hartmuth, *Negotiating Tradition and Ambition: Comparative Perspective on the “De-Ottomanization” of the Balkan Cityscapes*, in *Urban Life and Culture in Southeastern Europe: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*, *Ethnologia Balkanica* 10, Vol 10, (2006), Edin Hajdarpasic, “Out of the Ruins of the Ottoman Empire:

In the post-war socialist regime, Bascarsija was a relic of the Ottoman millet system and its religious legacy in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was one of the very few districts, or “Ottoman towns”, that had escaped the process of “Westernization” into “European” cities during Habsburg rule. In the socialist context, this architectural association of the Bascarsija with religious determinism of the Ottoman period was formidable. But even more so was its precise location within the public marketplace of Sarajevo, a space closely governed and regulated by the Communist regime. As an embodiment of public life, the *carsija* or the marketplace represented socialist values of production and exchange, an equalization of labor obligations, as well as uniformity in material relations amongst its participants. Here in the Bascarsija, individuals from various confessional communities interacted as traders, craftsmen, buyers, and sellers, transcending local affiliations in pursuit of common interests and economic interdependency. The territorial imprints signifying the public presence of religion not only intruded on the “secular” and universalistic character of the socialist *Bascarsija*, but also posed a threat to competing “Serbian” and “Croatian” nationalist claims. For the latter, nationalization had superseded religion, and an enduring presence of the “Islamic” faith only served to restrict a potential expansion of their respective national categories. In its symbolic representation and re-interpretation, the *Bascarsija* in many ways served as a metaphor for a socialist Bosnian Muslim community.

A territorial refashioning of *Bascarsija* between 1948 and 1953 played a communicative role, expressing a neutralization of religious sensibilities in the public sphere and a transformation of the Ottoman heritage into one that was uniquely Bosnian. In the initial years of secularization, the Party responded to this architectural dilemma by demolishing parts of the ancient marketplace, claiming that it was a fire hazard and held no intrinsic value. The local community protested at the destruction of small shops, but to no avail. The Tito-Stalin split in 1948 marked a turning point in the attitude of the Party. Driven by a newfound urgency to secure legitimacy, the Party revised its policy. In so doing, it also pacified possible “Serbian” and “Croatian” nationalist sentiments present in Socialist Yugoslavia. The new project of *Bascarsija*, spearheaded by a Croat-German architect, Juraj Neidhart, envisioned a reformulation of the “Oriental Islamic” identity of the marketplace in a manner commensurable with western influences and the ‘progressive’ socialist age. A former student of Le Corbusier, the French urbanist renowned for the development of “Islamic” Algerian cities, Neidhart was inspired by Le Corbusier’s exploration of Islamic “Orientalist” architecture through the prism of ‘modernity’. His early efforts to secularize the *Bascarsija*, therefore, borrowed heavily from the modernist tradition of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. According to this tradition, a strict separation of commercial and residential districts in the “Islamic” city reflected an isolation of the private realm from the public sphere in a manner that imposed a sense of stasis in the community. In contrast to the autonomous and integrated urban structure of the “Occident”, this segregation of the public and the private

realms portrayed a lack of civic spirit. Furthermore, modernization was an important correlative of urbanization, symbolizing a process of “de-Ottomanizing” or disentangling from religious determinism.¹⁹⁴ In his initial proposal for the project, therefore, Neidhart set out to refashion the *Bascarsija* in an attempt to unite the “irrational” and the “sensual” of the “Oriental” with the “modern” and the “rational.” He endorsed a replacement of Ottoman symbolism with “modernist” architectural design, with careful emphasis on the principles of “hygiene” and “pragmatic design.” Observing the architecture of the *Bascarsija*, Neidhart stated:

What is the Charm of the Orient that starts in Sarajevo and that Westerners can't resist? Here there are no planned actions that would come from rational thinking. It is all a matter of improvisation, the result of ad hoc ideas and temporary needs. Here everything displays the need to please a human. [...] For the Oriental the most important are [gentle] emotions. Because opposites attract, it is not a coincidence that Orientals are so attracted to technology and Westerners to Eastern architecture.¹⁹⁵

Nevertheless, the religious landscape of the *Bascarsija* continued to rear its head to the Communist regime. Accordingly, Neidhart sought to isolate the religious buildings in *Carsija* by demolishing the civic structures in their immediate vicinity. Now expansive parks and wide pathways surrounded the Gazi Husref Beg Mosque, the Synagogues, and the old Catholic and Orthodox Churches. They were remnants of a bygone era, frozen in time. Around them, it was as if history followed a natural course and the activity of the *Carsija* blurred with the pace of the socialist age.

¹⁹⁴ Mariia Nikolaeva Todorova. *Imagining the Balkans*. (New York: Oxford University Press. 1997)

¹⁹⁵ Grabrijan and Neidhardt, "Sarajevo i njegovi tra- banti," 211, as cited in Alic, *Reconciling National Narratives*, 10

Within the context of a secular ‘Yugoslav’ narrative, Neidhart’s vernacular also changed, emphasizing the unique *Bosnian-ness* of the remaining architecture of the *Bascarsija*. “By all means,” he exclaimed, “it [architecture] has developed under the influence of the Orient, its elements are not simply brought here, but grew out of our people and our soil.”¹⁹⁶ His new thesis did not entail a replacement of Oriental architecture with modern architecture, but an emphasis on the “modern” aspects within the Oriental. Neidhart took great pains to highlight the spacious aspects of the architecture as elements of Western influences. “Is Carsija not a source of modern architecture?” he now questioned. “Why do we look for inspiration elsewhere, continuously getting it from second hand sources, when we are at its origins? Aren’t *musandere*¹⁹⁷ like modern built-in wardrobes? Aren’t *secije*¹⁹⁸ like modern built-in couches and modern low furniture?”¹⁹⁹ Through this discovery of the “modern” within the “Oriental,” Neidhart extricated the *Bascarsija* from its Ottoman legacy, and established the ascendancy of its unique territorial identity, shared by an inclusive Bosnian community. While the emphasis on the *Bosnian-ness* of the marketplace pacified Serbian and Croatian claims to the territory, the major implication for Bosnian Muslims of their liminality within the Socialist framework was not lost. The split between *modern Bosnian* and *religious Ottoman* within a single cultural heritage signified boundaries of inclusion and exclusion for the Bosnian Muslim community. While

¹⁹⁶ Karlic-Kapeta- novic, Juraj Najdhart, 121-122, as cited in Alic, Reconciling National Narratives, 14

¹⁹⁷ *Musandere*, according to a Bosnian friend, is a Turkish word for attic rooms with large windows.

¹⁹⁸ Turkish word for a “couch”

¹⁹⁹ Ibid

secularization of the “public space” aimed to negate the public presence of religion, the concomitant negation of Ottoman culture implicated both religious and non-religious Bosnian Muslims. Symbolically, it tied them to a purely “civic” identity based on the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In other ways, the “secular” and *anational* vernacular of Bosnian-ness played into the hands of Serbian and Croatian nationalist discourses with the negation of an Islamic confessional element. The “*anationalness*” of the Bosnian vernacular was, at best, a delicate transcendence.

Chapter 3

~Who were the Bosnian Muslims? ~

Like a tributary whose course has been diverted from its river by a flood,
and no longer has a mouth or a current;
it's too small to be a lake, too large to be absorbed by the earth.²⁰⁰

–Mesa Selimovic [1966]

²⁰⁰ Mesa Selimovic's description of the Bosnian Muslim community in Death and the Dervish, pg 408.

Milovan Djilas perhaps best expressed the matter, when in 1946 he called the question of Bosnian Muslim representation within Socialist Yugoslavia a “theoretical problem.”²⁰¹ The Bosnian Muslim community had inherited its liminal status from the interwar period, during which they were claimed by Serbian and Croatian nationalists alike. Djilas now stated that Bosnian Muslims, as a confessional community, “had not yet reached the point of national differentiation, and that under the new conditions, would most likely affiliate with Serbs or Croats.”²⁰² By diminishing the authority of local religious representatives, secularizing reforms of Socialist Yugoslavia further problematized and expanded the question of representation. Who would now politically represent the confessional category of Bosnian Muslims, or for that matter, the Catholic and the Orthodox Christians of Bosnia-Herzegovina? In Socialist Yugoslavia, an equalization of interests and values in the “public” sphere was accompanied by a steady “ethnicization” of the political framework.²⁰³ In 1952, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia renamed itself the League of Communists, and shifted the political framework towards greater decentralization. The 1953 constitution expanded the jurisdiction of the Yugoslav republics, granting them autonomy in cultural, economic, educational affairs. The catalyst for initial decentralization, ironically, emanated from democratizing discourses of socialist self-management which emphasized localized control and decision-making by individual citizens.

²⁰¹ Adil Zulfikarpasic, In Dialogue with Milovan Djilas and Nadezda Gace: The Bosniak, (Zurich: Bosniak Institute, 1996), 80

²⁰² Ibid

²⁰³ Ćimić, Esad, and Stipe Grgas. "Religion and Culture". *Synthesis Philosophica*. 4: (1989), pg 30
 Cimic writes: “The possibilities for both believers and atheists are made the same in modern society. No matter if it be the question of success or failure, dignity or its loss, or especially, social or premature death—large groups of people find themselves before the same trials, permeated by anxiety in the futile search for meaning and intimate happiness.”

With the constitutional endorsement of “ethnicity,” however, these discourses inadvertently paved the way for increasing democratization in collective, “national” terms, whilst eliminating possibilities for alternative political competitors. Annual census categories not only indicated the diversity of peoples in Yugoslavia, but often underpinned an “ethnic” quota system for professional and administrative positions. The process of secularization under the Communist period had undermined the role of religious institutions as representatives of a quasi-civil society. Instead, individuals as members of “national” communities now took charge of resource allocation, representing the greater economic and political interests of their communities.

Secularization reforms alongside an “ethnicization” of political life had particular implications for the Bosnian Muslim community. In 1945, the Islamic Religious Council (IZV) was the only formal representative body for Bosnians of Muslim faith.²⁰⁴ Being considerably marginalized as a religious organization under the Communist regime, it could only promote the community’s spiritual welfare, and was disempowered from politically representing. With the emergence of discourses on “socialist” self management in the 1950s, the new Reis ul Ulema²⁰⁵, on behalf of the Bosnian Muslim community, affirmed his patriotism towards the state. Hadzi Suleman Kemura drew on this new socialist rhetoric to reorganize Islamic Councils in Sarajevo, Pristina, Titograd, and Skopje, thereby expanding the spiritual activities of the Muslim community in compliance

²⁰⁴ Zachary T Irwin, “The Islamic Revival and the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina,” *East European Quarterly* 17, no 4 Jan 1984, 440

²⁰⁵ Leader of the Muslim Religious Community

with the law.²⁰⁶ Nonetheless, Bosnian Muslims as a collective could not exercise control or decision-making power over the republic in the same manner enjoyed by Orthodox “Serbs” and Catholic “Croats.”²⁰⁷ The absence of Bosnian-Muslim legitimacy was clear in the census categories of the early socialist period. Alongside “Serb” and “Croat” ethnic categories, the Communist government created an “ethnically undetermined” category. In the 1948 census, many Bosnian Muslims had declared themselves as “ethnically undetermined” in order to escape categorizations as “Muslim-Serbs” or “Muslim-Croats.” In 1948, 89% of Muslims of Slavic origin in Bosnia declared their nationality as “undecided”, while 8% declared themselves as Serbs and less than 3% declared as Croats.²⁰⁸ The “Muslim” category denoted a confessional group and held no connection with the “national” category. Even as late as 1955, academics continued to question the “ethnic” origin of Yugoslav Muslims. Kulisic, a historian questioned in his study in 1953, “Were the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina of Slavic origin? If so, were they of Serbian or Croatian origin? Were they Bogomiles? Or were they possibly Turkish colonists from Africa and Asia?”²⁰⁹ In 1953, the introduction of a more neutral “Yugoslav” category helped ease some of the quandaries. It attracted not only Orthodox Christians and Catholics who envisioned a more universalistic outlook,

²⁰⁶ Freidman, *Denial of a Nation*, 153

²⁰⁷ Orthodox “Serbs,” here, denote members of the Orthodox Community adhering to a “Serb” ethnic status, and likewise for the Catholic “Croats.”

²⁰⁸ Savezni Zavod za Statistiku, Nacionalno sastav stanovništva p opstinama, Statistical Bulletin No 727 (Belgrade 1972), pg 1, as cited in Steven L Burg, *The Political Integration of Yugoslavia’s Muslims: Determinants of Success and Failure*, Paper No. 203, 1983, The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies, Russian and East European Studies Program, University of Pittsburgh, 21

²⁰⁹ Spiro Kulisic, "Razmatranja o porijeklu Muslimana u Bosni i Hercegovini," *GZM*, n.s., VIII (1953), 145-58, cited in Wayne S Vucinich, *The Yugoslav Lands in the Ottoman Period: Post-War Marxist Interpretations of Indigenous and Ottoman Institutions*, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol 27, No 3, Sept 1955, 296.

but also Bosnian Muslims, who sought to dissociate themselves with their cultural heritage. Over 93% of those who declared themselves adherents of Islam also recorded themselves as “undetermined Yugoslavs.”²¹⁰ The 1953 census also recorded the religious affiliation of the population. In the early 50s, the Yugoslav government stepped up its efforts to promote a notion of “socialist Yugoslavism” as a supranational identity surpassing the regional identities of the republics. To reconcile this simultaneous juxtaposition of “national” autonomy with “socialist patriotism,” Tito hailed the diverse nature of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a symbol of a united Yugoslavia. The “anationalness” or liminality of Bosnian Muslims became linked to the “supra-nationalism” of secular Yugoslavia. But what was the precise nature of this “anationalness”? Or to put it differently, what was the nature of the “national” recognized by the Yugoslav Communist regime?

Yugoslav “nationality” policy borrowed much of its theoretical underpinning from the Hegelian notion of dialectical history, and even more so from Stalin’s definition of nations, based on Austro-Marxism.²¹¹ Stalin defined a nation as “a historically evolved stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological makeup manifested in a community of culture.”²¹² Stalin’s definition was largely derived from the Austro-Marxist thinker Karl Renner, who described a national community of individuals to be one

²¹⁰ Burg, *Political Integration*, 21

²¹¹ Pedro Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1963-1983*, (Indiana University Press, 1984), 46

Ramet writes: “Indeed the Yugoslavs spend more time with the texts of these exegetes than with the few original Marxist discussions of the national question. Yugoslav nationalities policy can only be understood as a reaction to, development of, and repudiation of the various ideas carried forward by Renner, Bauer, Lenin and Stalin.” 46

William E. Conklin, *Hegel’s Laws: the legitimacy of the modern legal order*, Stanford, 2008

²¹² Vladimir Lenin, *Marxism and Nationalism*, (Resistance Marxist Library, Resistance Books, 2002), 197

in which “mutuality is based in the [...] expression of thought and feeling” expressed through national language and literature. Renner’s primary thesis was that there was no essential connection between “a territory and a consciousness of a nationality.”²¹³ In Hegel’s conception of history, every new thesis would advance over an antithesis, with each contradiction being essentially progressive until the endpoint was reached. Hegel’s conception of ethno-genesis echoed an evolutionary pattern through which ethnic forms in their embryonic stage would develop into the highest forms of civilized society, i.e. ethnic nation. In other words, “ethnic” characteristics formed the basis of national communities as political entities. In order for the state to survive, Hegel asserted that legal form could not be derived from a plurality of nations. After the development of the “historical peoples,” Hegel ultimately proposed a civic, secularized nation which would “lessen disharmony” with its “universal rationality.”²¹⁴

Based on the Hegelian model and Austro-Marxism, the Communist regime classified the Yugoslavs into “ethnic nationalities,” based not on different lifestyles, or practiced social customs, but on differences in literariness, or cultural development, *Kulturnost*. In the dialectical vision of Yugoslav Communism, religion as a mark of “ethnicity” was primordial, and it had to be removed from the “ethnic” in order to render the latter in a pure form. The latter was believed to be a more “politically anodyne” and fluid category.²¹⁵ Although Austro-Marxism envisioned a separation of “nationality” from the territorial principle, much like

²¹³ Nimni, Ephraim. *National Cultural Autonomy and its Contemporary Critics*. London; New York: Routledge, 2005.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ See also Larry Wolf, “Revising Eastern Europe: Memory and the Nation in Recent Historiography,” Boston College

the separation of Church and State, the translation of this theory into practice was not so simple. The model required “nations” to have institutions through which they could express and preserve themselves. Decentralization reforms paved the way for a greater expression of ‘ethnic’ diversity within the school systems and cultural institutions.²¹⁶ Although the Party still maintained a central control over the core school curricula, the “literature of the Yugoslav peoples” was made “national” in form, whilst remaining “socialist” in content.²¹⁷

Ironically, though, the very ethno-linguistic differentiation that formed the basis of Serb and Croat “national” status emanated from a historical schism in Christianity. In the field of literature, Serbian and Croatian linguists stressed the peculiarities of each language, and the ascendancy of one over the other. Two Croatian linguists, Petar Guberina and Kruni Krstic, published a Linguistic Treatise on the Croatian Language in 1940, emphasizing the “morphological, syntactic and phonetic differences” between written and spoken Croatian and Serbian languages. These differences were quantified---there were “ten thousand common [ordinary] words,” “tens of thousands scientific terms,” “eighty five phonetical rules” and “two hundred cases of word formation.”²¹⁸ They claimed that the differences were caused by the two alphabets and the specific cultural and religious histories after the schism between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox

²¹⁶ John Georgeoff, “Social Studies in Yugoslav Elementary Schools,” *The Elementary School Journal*, Vol 66, No 8, May 1966. Noah W Sobe, *U.S Comparative Education Research on Yugoslav Education in the 1950s and 1960s*, *European Education*, Vol 38, no 4, Winter 2006-7, John Georgeoff, “Nationalism in the History Textbooks of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria,” *Comparative Education Review*, Vol 10, No 3, Oct 1966

²¹⁷ Wachtel, 140

²¹⁸ P Guberina and K Krstic, *Razlike imedju hrvatskoga I srpskog knjizevnog jezika* (Zagreb, 1940), as cited in Vladimir Nazor, Antun Nizeto, “Differences between the Croatian and the Serbian Literary Languages,” *Journal of Croatian Studies*, 1984-85, 108

Christian Churches. The Serbian language and literature could be traced back to the Old Church Slavonic language, developed under Byzantine influence, when numerous ecclesiastical texts were transcribed into Cyrillic and invoked in liturgical practices. The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, used the Roman alphabet, and according to Croatian linguists, it continued to develop under the influence of Catholicism. Bosnian Serb historians such as Milorad Ekmecic also affirmed that the advent of Christianity in the Balkans was the beginning of an “acquired” writing and literary language.²¹⁹ From the “secular” and nationalized perspectives of Serb and Croat linguists, however, the “religious” origin of the respective dialects and alphabets only proved an alignment of “religion” with national concerns. They interpreted the religious schism of the medieval period in a teleological fashion, whereby the loss of language now signaled a loss of age-old heritage and “national” identity. As a famous Croatian poet, Vladimir Nazor wrote in 1942:

In this common crash of destruction,
The Croat knows that his language is his fate--
With it he must live, with it he must die²²⁰

From the perspective of Yugoslav Communists, the recognition of national categories predicated on confessional boundaries implied the modernist notion of a “transition from faith to culture.”²²¹ Keeping with the spirit of Socialist patriotism, however, the Communist Party attempted to emphasize the unity

²¹⁹ Vladimir Dedijer, Ivan Bozic, Sima Cirkovic, Milorad Ekmecic, *History of Yugoslavia*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974

²²⁰ “Vladimir Nazor,” by Ante Kadic in the *Journal of Croatian Studies*, XVII, 1976, as cited in Antun Nizeto, “Differences between the Croatian and the Serbian Literary Languages,” *Journal of Croatian Studies*, 1984-85

²²¹ See Ernest Gellner’s theories of modernization.

between the Serbian and Croatian languages. The Novi Sad agreement of 1954 endorsed “Serbo-Croatian” as one language with two dialects (ijekavian and ekavian) and two alphabets (Cyrillic and Latin), eliciting varied responses from Serb and Croat linguists. The latter in particular considered the appellation as a sign of Serbian assimilationist tendencies, and as an attempt to portray the Croatian language as an inferior variant of Serbian. On the other hand, Serbs, as the majoritarian “ethnic” group were more open to a joint Serbo-Croatian appellation, which would implicitly portray Serbian as the standard from which the Croatian variant emerged. Milorad Ekmecic decried the religious basis to national differences, emphasizing instead the ascendancy of a secular linguistic community. According to him, religious intolerance could only be surpassed through the implementation of a uniform language encompassing Catholics, Muslims and Orthodox Christians.²²² But while “Serb” and “Croat” linguists competed to place their language as the ‘standard’ of the lesser variant, the Bosnian Muslim community lay at the periphery of the “national” in prevalent discourses. They neither had their own “national” institutions expressing a distinct culture, nor a republic. Perhaps their position as a contested territory for Serbs and Croats and their own dispersed self-understandings further exacerbated this liminality. Their ‘benign’ inclusion within Serbian or Croatian ethnic frameworks was piecemeal. Assimilationist claims on Bosnian Muslims often stemmed more from a contest for power between “Serbians” and “Croats.” And even as speakers of “Serbian” or “Croatian” languages, Bosnian Muslims were divorced from the Christian cultural heritage that had formed the essence of *Kulturnost*.

²²² Dedijer, *History of Yugoslavia*, (McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974)

Their connection to the Ottoman legacy cast them as ‘hybrids’ within national categories. In the perceptions of their compatriots, Communists and nationalists alike, the intrusion of Ottoman culture had left them insufficiently “nationalized.”

~Bosnian Self-Understandings~

Amidst such liminal categorizations of Bosnian Muslims, there also existed fragmented self-understandings among the Bosnian Muslim milieu. In 1966, Mesa Selimovic, the author of Death and the Dervish, articulated the liminality of Bosnian Muslims in the following words:

We belong to no one, we are always in a twilight zone, always used as dowry for somebody else... We live in the frontiers of different worlds, at the periphery of different cultures. We’ve lost our face without being able to fake someone else’s. We are abandoned without being adopted. The waves of history break against us, as waves break against a cliff. We are revolted with those in power, so we’ve created virtue out of our misery and become noble out of defiance.²²³

Among Bosnian Muslims, a marginal number identified as “Serbs” and “Croats”. The Ottoman legacy, nonetheless, was an intrinsic yet often deeply contested and troubled part of Bosnian Muslim consciousness. A sequence of artistic paintings by Mersad Berber from the 1960s depicts a transition of the Ottoman to the modern; the former, evoked through scenes of minarets against a gloomy and grey landscape, fades into sketches of illuminated, modernist architecture.²²⁴ Berber, much like Mesa Selimovic, who relates an agonizing tale of a dervish caught under an oppressive Ottoman state apparatus in Death and the Dervish, represented one end of the spectrum in the Bosnian Muslim milieu, characterized by a forward-oriented Communist identification. But even as ‘secular’ Muslims

²²³ Selimovic, *Death and the Dervish*, 330

²²⁴ Muhamed Karamemedovic, Mersad Berber, (Jugoslovenska knjiga, Beograd, 1985)

sought to extricate themselves from the Ottoman past, many cultural practices of Bosnian Muslims, which had developed during the Ottoman period, continued to resonate in their literature.

A famous Bosniac singer, Hamdija Sahinpasic, relies on an Ottoman cultural heritage in his portrayal of Bosnian culture and traditions. His repertoire of 300 songs, published in 1967, explores the yearnings of lonely lovers, their greetings and partings, within the historic and social setting of the Ottoman period. Preserving old Bosnian traditions, the songs often relayed major historical events, with a mix of celebration and criticism of the Ottoman cultural heritage in Bosnia. The song “Stono cvili u Mramorju gradu” (Such Wailing in Mramorje Fort) recalls a heroine who was compelled to adopt another faith against her will; another song, “Odmetnu se odmetnica” (Mara the Outlawed), depicts a young girl who is captured by a group of brigands and decides to give up her life instead of renouncing her faith. In another song “Kad masina iz Mostara dode” [When the Locomotive Comes from Mostar], Sahinpasic recalls the Bosniac²²⁵ struggle under Austro-Hungarian rule in the early 20th century to protect religious educational and vakuf autonomy. The song extols Ali Fehmo Dzabic (1853-1918), a mufti of Mostar who taught in the madrassahs of Mostar, and weaves a narrative around his absence from the country.²²⁶ Such delicately woven narratives predicated on the Ottoman legacy, however, could be easily undone through claims of religiosity by Serb and Croat intellectuals. In Yugoslav historiography such as “The Beloved Land” (1961) for instance, Vladimir Dedijer wrote that the

²²⁵ Bosnian Muslim Struggle

²²⁶ Munib Maglajlic, “The legacy of singer Hamdija Sahinpasic in Bosniac Oral Literary Tradition,” *Traditiones*, 231-41, 2005

“Turks were a nation of warriors” who left many Bosnians “the philosophy of kismet, the belief that none can escape from the predestined will of Allah. They left many other things, including oriental indolence, laziness and a tolerance of bribery.”²²⁷ Muslim historians always remained on guard, repudiating their categorization as foreign “Turks,” and emphasizing instead their loyalty to the Bosnian homeland. The Bosniac struggle under Austro-Hungarian rule remained a contested historical incident. For Serb intellectuals, it represented disillusionment and anger on the part of Bosnian Muslims as a response to their loss of privileges with the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Conversely, Muslim historians asserted that the struggle was quintessentially patriotic and anti-imperialist in the face of Austro-Hungarian rule.²²⁸

Other members of the Bosnian Muslim milieu sought alternatives to define their cultural uniqueness and to reconcile their religious identification with Bosnian patriotism. Pulled by assimilationist forces of both Serbian and Croat nationalism, prominent Bosnian Muslim intellectuals emphasized a non-Oriental historical basis derived from Bogomilism as a mark of their Bosnian cultural identity. The emphasis on Bogomils, a Christian heretical church, also represented an attempt to place Bosnian Muslim identity within Europe. During the medieval period, Bogomilism as a schismatic Manichean Christian faith in Bosnia had been persecuted by the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. In popular Communist and nationalist literature, the en masse conversion of a significant portion of the Bosnian community to Islam after the establishment of Ottoman rule was often

²²⁷ Dedijer, *The Beloved Land*, (Simon & Schuster, 1961), 32/33

²²⁸ Mark Baskin, "The Secular State as Ethnic Entrepreneur: Macedonians and Bosnian Moslems in Socialist Yugoslavia."

attributed to the disintegration of the Bogomil Church.²²⁹ Among such intellectuals was Mehmedija Mak Dizdar, a poet born to a Muslim family in Stolac (Herzegovina) in 1917. His writings were more philosophical than political, and were informed by a strong Marxist orientation. His poetry frequently employed images of stone cemeteries from medieval Bosnia, as well as lapidary motifs to emphasize the medieval landscape as the heart of the Bosnian national identity. In his set of poems, Stone Sleeper, Dizdar articulates an idealistic nationalist sentiment that is historically predicated on an experience of shared living and intimacy among confessional, economic and social groups.²³⁰ Dizdar used Bogomil defiance and non-conformity in the face of Christian schisms as a metaphor for a regional Bosnian identity. Unlike his contemporaries within the Muslim milieu, Dizdar used the Bogomil motif to articulate an identity that also encompassed Catholics and Christians within Bosnia. His texts emphasized above all the Bosnian landscape, and conveyed a certain detachment from particularistic assertions of identity. In his poem, A text about a text, he describes the discovery of a medieval text, which is given contesting interpretations by the discoverers.

And when we saw this script we'd never seen before
 In front of our very eyes from far off times
 A long silence fell between us

The stillness was broken by a voice that was calm but outspoken

²²⁹ See Ramet, Nationalism and Federalism; Malcolm, Bosnia: A Short History; The Bogomil theory as the defining point of Bosnian Muslim 'origin' had been utilized by both Croatian and Serbian nationalists during the interwar period and continued to be entertained in the intellectual discourses during the Communist regime.

²³⁰ Dizdar's writings remain largely untranslated. Excerpts are found in Secondary literature, for instance, in pg 381

No scribe wrote this text for sure.²³¹

While Dizdar primarily articulated a regional identity extending to all inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina, other members of the Bosnian Muslim community picked up the myth of Bogomilism to emphasize an exclusive sense of patriotism among Bosnian Muslims. Much was in response to Serbian and Croatian nationalist claims, which projected the foreignness of Ottomans onto Bosnian Muslims. An anchorage in ancient Bogomilism allowed such Muslim intellectuals not only to assert their territorial connection with the integrated republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also to invert the *anational* discourses projected onto the Bosnian Muslim community. In the emigre publications *Bosanski Pogledi* published in the 1950s, Adil Zulfikarpasic, a Bosnian Muslim intellectual, frequently wrote about the intrinsic national character of the Muslim community, merging it with ancient Bogomilism.²³² Contrary to Serbian and Croatian nationalism, Zulfikarpasic stated that the ‘civilized’ national character of Muslims embodied the Bosnian spirit, defined by tolerance through the years of regional co-existence:

That the Bosniacs did not manifest their national identity as an aggressive ethno-national conviction and did not demand of their neighbors that they do the same, was not the product of weakness but of a certain national maturity and their acceptance of their country’s plurality.²³³

²³¹ Amila Buturovic, “Medieval Cemeteries as Sites of Memory: the Poetry of Mak Dizdar, in *Islam and Bosnia: Conflict Resolution and Foreign Policy in a multi-ethnic state*, e.d by Shatzmiller, Maya, (Montréal; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 41

²³² Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*; and Sacir Filandra & Enes Karic; *The Bosniac Idea*, Translated from Croatian by Saba Risaluddin, (Nakladni zavod Globus, Zagreb, 2004)

²³³ Interview by Adil Zulfikarpasic in *Poruka slobodne Hrvatske*, 4/1983, also issued as a separate book entitled *Bosanski Muslimani—cimbenik mira između Srba i Hrvata* (The Bosnian Muslims—a factor for peace between Serbs and Croats), as cited in Filandra, *The Bosniac Idea*. 321

According to Zulfikarpasic, the people of the medieval Kingdom of Bosnia had always possessed a regional “Bosniac” identity including both Bogomils and Christians. It was not the Bosnian Muslims who were *anational*, but the Orthodox and the Catholic inhabitants of Bosnia, who had lost their national Bosnian character to the forces of secularization and nationalization sweeping across Europe. His writings, published in the fifties, held “Serb” and “Croat” categorizations as a form of secularized affiliation with Catholicism and Orthodoxy. By extension, these categories represented an unpatriotic and anti-national character. In an interview with Djilas in 1996, Zulfikarpasic recalled: “My Croat and Serb friends, when they look at history, conclude that before the arrival of the Turks, Bosnia was either Croatian or Serbian, i.e. Catholic or Orthodox.”²³⁴ The Bosnian Muslims, however, as converted Bogomils, had “an incredibly profound attachment and sympathy for the pre-Islamic state of Bosnia, towards the bans—the Bosnian kings---and towards the Bogomils.”²³⁵ Drawing similarities between values of tolerance in ancient Bogomilism and Islam, Zulfikarpasic concludes that the Bogomils enjoyed a cultural renaissance during the Ottoman period, but retained their connection with their homeland. Bosnian-ness was at once universal to the inhabitants of the republic and particular to the Bosnian Muslim community. Muslims identifying as Bosniaks, therefore, upheld their regional identity as a negation of more virulent forms of nationalism predicated on particularistic ethnicities. They read *nationally Bosnian* understandings in the official non-national status, and established ties of natality

²³⁴ Zulfikarpasic, *The Bosniak*, 50

²³⁵ *Ibid*

with the culturally integrated territory of Bosnia. What was clear, however, was that any assertion of a distinct cultural identity relied on a previous religious foundation. For Bosnian Muslims, this posed a particular problem. How could they rely on the Ottoman legacy without inviting discourses that would in turn invoke Christian-Islam dichotomy? Conversely, to what extent could ancient Bogomilism, a Christian heretical faith, serve as a platform for expressing Bosnian Muslim identity?

~Muslim Ethnicity Versus Religion~

Until the sixties, the self-identification and recognition of Bosnian Muslim identity oscillated between *religious* Ottoman and *territorial* Bosniac terms. Then, in an unprecedented development culminating in 1968, Tito granted Bosnian Muslims a ‘national’ status, for the first time recognizing a people solely on the basis of religion. Between the “Ottoman” and the “Bosnian,” the Communist regime introduced an intermediary “ethnic” “Muslim” designation. The elevation of the Bosnian Muslims from a *non-national* to a *national* status was a consequence of a number of internal changes within the socialist regime, coupled with Tito’s Non-aligned foreign policy. In many ways, the introduction of a “Muslim” national status in Bosnia-Herzegovina epitomized the Communist dilemma of only “ethnic” accommodation in a multi-confessional community. Not only did this category elicit considerable opposition from Serbian and Croatian members of the Communist Party, but the implications of recognizing a confessional group were soon to pose new challenges to the regime. Having acknowledged the religious basis of the community, the Party could not create secularized “ethnicity” out of Bosnian Muslims in the same way it had created

“Serbs” out of Orthodox Christians or “Croats” out of Catholic Christians. Muslim “ethnicity” in the Yugoslav context inevitably pointed back to Slavic Serb or Croat origins, a defunct Bogomilism, or the much despised Ottomans.

“Ethnicity” was a legitimate political identity in the public realm, and a means of political advancement for Orthodox and Catholic Christians in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Croatian and Serbian “national” consciousnesses did not always converge with their confessional precursors, but in an effort to push for greater decentralization directed against the state, Orthodox and Catholic institutions often found it feasible to align with their respective ethnic representatives in Communist circles.²³⁶ Yugoslav Communism in the early decades had converged with Serbian and Croatian nationalism in upholding the “anational” (confessional) character of Yugoslav Muslims in Bosnia. The introduction of a Muslim nationality on the same level as that of Serbs and Croats was a temporary departure, but inevitably posed the uncomfortable question of the naked force of religion in the political realm. Simultaneously, it mobilized members of the Bosnian Muslim community, paving the way for new discourses on the meaning of a *Muslim* identity as an ethnic or religious marker. For the first time since the fall of the Habsburg Monarchy, Bosnian Muslims were raised to the same level as their Serbian and Croatian counterparts. Their rapidly increasing demographics also granted them a significant degree of political leverage in Bosnia. With the Yugoslav ideal defined in opposition to a previous era of “religiosity,” however, the opportunistic creation of a “Muslim” nationality amidst the secular, ethnic

²³⁶ For details on the Croatian Spring in 1971, see Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia*

sphere was ominous. Almost immediately, it begged the question of legitimacy. How were Bosnian Muslims to be recognized as a distinct, political entity? And how did the competing definitions of Muslim ethnicity and religion challenge the imagined cohesion of a Muslim national community? The liminality of Bosnian Muslims within Yugoslavia did not follow a predetermined path to ultimate negation. But the ascent of Bosnian Muslims to political authority in a volatile multinational state marked the beginning of their downfall.

Intellectual and philosophical discourses in the early sixties were characterized by a sense of ebullience. A new era of Christian-Marxist rapprochement emerged in Socialist Yugoslavia, encouraging open dialogue between liberal theologians and reformist Marxist intellectuals in an effort to promote a better future. A more covert part of this dialogue, however, was to broaden the base for socialism by appealing to the majoritarian confessional base of Yugoslavia. Liberal Marxist intellectuals highlighted Christian social and work ethics to recruit “believers” towards the goal of “self management.”²³⁷ At the same time, philosophical discussions brimmed with Praxis Marxist²³⁸ ideals, which extolled human creativity as the basis of existence. According to Praxis Marxists, a universal “self-creative” activity defined what it meant to be human, and served as the means through which man “created” and “changed” himself and his world.²³⁹ This notion of “praxis” was central not only to an understanding of

²³⁷ A principle of self government which relegated decision-making to a localized level of an individual producer, or citizen

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²³⁹ James Satterwhite, “The Yugoslav Praxis Group in the East European Context,” in *Varieties of Marxist Humanism: philosophical revisions in post-war Eastern Europe*, University of Pittsburg, 1992, 174-192

the human essence, but also to the concept of human alienation arising from the inability of man to realize “historically created human possibilities.”²⁴⁰ Following from this concept of humanity, Communist intellectuals were encouraged to revise their understandings of religion as well as of the role of believers in a Communist society. Religion was no longer considered a phenomenon that would fade away; its omnipresence was recognized as well as the need to reformulate religious philosophy in order to meet the demands of the contemporary age. A major impetus for philosophical revisions also came from the declaration of Pope John XXII and the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, to support a new dialogue with atheists and believers of other religions.²⁴¹ Edvard Kardelj, a leading Communist intellectual, stated: “it would be politically harmful and even incorrect if Communists took up the position that religious beliefs of an individual are in themselves an impediment for him to co-operate and create in a system of socialist governance.”²⁴² While Marxist intellectuals reasoned that “crusading atheism”²⁴³ was detrimental to the socialist cause, and encouraged theological reflections on “self-managing socialism,” they kept the “social” and the “political” distinct. Religious discourses on politics were still forbidden. Although the

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 181

²⁴¹This culminated in an agreement, i.e. the signing of a formal “Protocol” between the Vatican and Yugoslavia on April 25th, 1966. This agreement was the first ever signed between the Vatican and a socialist government.

Paul Mojzes, “Christian-Marxist Encounter in the context of a socialist society,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 9, 1972, 10

²⁴² Ibid, 12

See also, Paul Mojzes, *Christian-Marxist Dialogue in Eastern Europe*, Augsburg Publishing House, 1981, and, Nicholas Piediscalzi & Robert G Thobaben, *Three Worlds of Christian-Marxist Encounters*, Fortress Press (Philadelphia), 1985

²⁴³Edvard Kardelj, *Problemi socijalistické izgradnje*, Vol. III, quoted in Roter, “Politika i religija i društvo, p. 135, as cited in Mojzes, “Christian-Marxist Encounter,” Ibid. 12

Mika Tripalo said: “Crusading atheism does not make sense. On the other hand, I do not think that the League of Communists should change its general policy on the question of the religious attitude of its own members.”

enthusiasm of the Christian-Marxist dialogue eventually subsided by the early 70s, the encounter was successful in establishing commonality between Marxism and Christianity. Both shared the same problem, “a world which is in danger of manifold self destruction unless the two co-operate for the good of mankind.”²⁴⁴

The telos of the Christian-Marxist encounter was not a realization of “national” rights, but that of socialism. The wheels on the political front, however, were turning. As disillusionment with the socialist project began to settle in, the notion of “national” autonomy began to emerge as a means to “freedom” and an alternative solution to human alienation. In 1966, the fall of Alexander Rankovic, the Vice President of the Communist Party and the Head of Security, loosened the centralized state apparatus of the Communist regime and brought “national” discourses to the forefront of politics. But even during the period of a strong central government, political discourses had continued to be characterized by a disguised “ethnic” politics. Due to a Serbian over-representation in the Partisan struggle and later the Communist Party, a centralized “unitarist” Yugoslavism was often labeled Serbian nationalism by Croatian liberals. Trying to balance such competing claims whilst constitutionally endorsing “ethnic” categories, Tito fell into his own trap and expelled Alexander Rankovic on charges of Serb “unitarism.” It is unclear whether Rankovic was truly a partisan Serb or simply a Conservative Communist who preferred a stronger centralized government. His dismissal as “Serbian unitarist” by the Communist Party, nonetheless, was monumental. In the words of historian Audrey Budding, the subsequent

²⁴⁴In the words of Dr Zdenko Roter in the University of Ljubljana. cited in Paul Mojzes, “Christian-Marxist Encounter in the context of a socialist society,” 16

decentralization of Yugoslavia was hailed ironically as the victory of “democratic socialism” over Serbian nationalism. The regime, consequently, moved towards further decentralization. With the constitutional amendments of 1967-1968 and later 1971, Socialist Yugoslavia legitimized a convergence between “national” and territorial rights of the republics.²⁴⁵

Simultaneously, there was a significant degree of religious liberalization in the 60s, particularly since the various republics, as “national homelands,” now defined their own religious policies. As the status of the Communist regime as a “police state” receded, marginalized religious institutions acquired breathing space from espionage networks that had previously regulated their activities. The dismissal of Rankovic, a strong proponent of Yugoslav Muslim *anationalness*, also provided an opportunity for Bosnian Muslim leaders to list their grievances. Simultaneously, Croatian nationalism came to a head, with the publication of the first two volumes of the Serbo-Croatian dictionary in 1967.²⁴⁶ In the official Serbo-Croatian dictionary, Croat linguists claimed that common Croatian vocabulary had been portrayed as a lesser dialect, or a variant from the standard Serbian dialect. In the immediate aftermath of the publication, Croatian linguists and writers convened and signed the “Declaration concerning the Characterization and Status of the Croatian Literary Language” in March 1967. The Declaration demanded the revocation of the Novi Sad agreement, the recognition of Croatian and Serbian as two distinct languages and the usage of Croatian in schools, in the

²⁴⁵ Yugoslav republics were taken as homelands for nationalities

²⁴⁶ see Ramet; A Budding

press, and in professional and public life.²⁴⁷ On another front, the fall of Rankovic also triggered national self-expression among Serbian liberals, propelling them to identify with a particularistic “Serb” category as opposed to a universal “Yugoslav” one. A leading figure in the revival of Serbian national expression was Dobrica Cosic, a prolific Communist writer and a member of the Yugoslav and Serb political establishments.²⁴⁸ As early as 1961, Cosic had begun voicing his disillusionment with urbanization and the “technical” modernization that was sweeping Socialist Yugoslavia. The transformation of a predominantly agrarian society into an urban one had caused considerable social dislocation and unemployment, which was aggravated further by economic stagnation in the early sixties. In 1967, Cosic delivered his famous speech: “*Kako da stvaroma sebe*” (How should we create ourselves?)²⁴⁹ In his speech, Cosic contended that the “backwardness” of Serbian modernization was not only a consequence of Ottoman occupation, but also stemmed from the absence of cultural reformation. Serbia had experienced only a material modernization; widespread differences continued to exist between the inhabitants of cities and villages, due to an absence of cultural homogeneity. In Cosic, one can see that the Yugoslav ideal premised on the socialist project and material relations was gradually giving way to an affirmation of a communal bond premised on ethnicity. Cosic concluded his speech with the Praxis Marxist emphasis on the individual as the basic building

²⁴⁷ Ibid

²⁴⁸ Dukic, Covek, 161 and 163, as cited in Audrey Helfant Budding, "Serb Intellectuals and the National Question, 1961-1991." Ph.D. diss., (Harvard University ; UMI Dissertation Services, 1998).

Audrey Budding describes Cosic’s response to the fall of Rankovic: “such a liquidation of Rankovic would lead to the division not only of the Party, but also of Yugoslavia,” in Serb Intellectuals and the National Question, 42

²⁴⁹ Audrey Budding, Serb Intellectuals and the National Question, 166

block for the realization of cultural unity: “without complete freedom of the individual there is no free community, without a free citizen there is no free people.”²⁵⁰

Meanwhile, Tito’s role as the head of the Non-Aligned Movement shifted the attention of the Communist regime towards its Muslim population. The deep camaraderie between Tito and Gamal Abdul Nasser, President of Egypt, during this period has been described as a rare moment in international politics. As the leader of Pan-Arabism, Abdul Nasser spearheaded a movement which glorified the Arab language and civilization over religion. The Cairo-Belgrade Entente of the sixties was mutually beneficial. For Nasser, the multinational integration of Yugoslavia served as a model for Arab integration. Tito, on the other hand, used Nasser’s friendship to gain favor among Arab and African countries.²⁵¹ In order to further his foreign policy goals, Tito granted Yugoslav Muslims an “ethnic” status in 1961, in an attempt to portray Yugoslavia as home to the second largest Muslim population in Europe and to highlight the equality with which Muslims were treated. The Communist regime, however, continued to have qualms over this official recognition of what they considered a purely confessional community. The impetus for a ‘national’ recognition of Muslims came in 1968, amidst burgeoning Serbian and Croatian nationalism. Croatian nationalists from the neighboring republic had begun to assert claims on the ‘Croats’ of Bosnia-Herzegovina, thereby threatening the political stability of the republic. The Party, for its part, was committed to preserving the “multi-ethnic” character of Bosnia.

²⁵⁰ Cosic, “Kakos a stvaramo sebe?”, as cited in Budding, *Serb Intellectuals*, 169

²⁵¹²⁵¹ Alvin Z Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1970)

Since “Yugoslavism” had transitioned from being a symbol of socialist patriotism to one of multi-nationalism after the decentralization reforms, the status of Bosnia-Herzegovina also moved in the same fashion. Instead of being a polyreligious republic, Bosnia-Herzegovina was home to three burgeoning “nations,” each imagined as a fluid but internally homogenous category. It was no longer an “anational” status but a “national” status for Bosnian Muslims that catered to the preservation of Bosnia as a multi-ethnic republic. Finally on 17 May 1968, the League of Communists of Bosnia-Herzegovina proclaimed:

The practice has shown the harmfulness, in the past period, of the different forms of pressure and injunction, aiming to make Muslims declare themselves nationally as Serbs or Croats, since it has appeared in the past, and it is confirmed by the present socialist practice, that Muslims form a distinct nation.²⁵²

In his emigre publications, Adil Zulfikarpasic objected to the “Muslim” designation in the national census. For him, the use of the ‘Bosniac’ category was commensurable with the secular ideal through its emphasis on a regional Bosniac nationality over religion. The alternative, however, was detrimental to Yugoslav multi-nationalism. A “Bosniac” ascriptive category for Muslims would have denoted an unequivocal regional connection at the expense of those identifying as “Serbs” and “Croats” in Bosnia. The Communist regime therefore actively endorsed a “Muslim” designation, despite its determination to privatize religion. In the initial years, an equal national status for Muslim elicited widespread support among Bosnian Muslims and the enthusiasm of the religious hierarchies.

²⁵²Xavier Bougarel, “Bosnian Muslims and the Yugoslav Idea,” in *Yugoslavism: histories of a failed idea 1918-1992*, e.d by Djokic, (London: Hurst, 2003), 107

With on-going negotiations on the representation of nationalities and the allocation of resources within Bosnia-Herzegovina, Communist Muslims rose to the forefront of elite politics and forged a co-operative relationship with the religious hierarchy. Amidst contesting definitions of Muslim identity as a secular “ethnic” or “religious” marker and the Communist Party’s own latent anxieties over this recognition of Muslims, the unity within the Muslim milieu was fragile. But for the time being, multiple discourses on the nature of Muslim identity continued to flourish with little hindrance.

~Between Religion and Culture~

Is man ever able to overcome this contradiction, this either or between Heaven and Earth, or is he condemned forever to [...] stretching between the two? Is there a way by which science can serve religion, hygiene, piety, progress and humanism? Could the utopia of “Civitas Solis”²⁵³ be inhabited with human beings instead of autonomous and faceless individuals, and have features of “God’s Kingdom” on Earth? Izetbegovic²⁵⁴

A change in the Communist vocabulary, mapping the “national” onto what they had previously designated as the “confessional,” opened up discourses on the relationship between culture and religion within the Muslim milieu. Among theologians, religious and secular philosophers alike, there was a consensus on an intricate convergence of religion and culture. Discourses surrounding the dichotomy of the “religious” and the “secular,” nonetheless, attempted to claim the constitutive ideal. Was it civilization or religion that originated first? Was it the process of civilization that first constructed and then deconstructed religion, with man building his quintessentially spiritual patterns in the way he understood

²⁵³ *Civitas Solis* (The City of the Sun) by Tommaso Campanella

²⁵⁴ Izetbegovic, *Islam Between East and West*, iv

society?²⁵⁵ In other words, did modernity necessarily imply the transition of “faith” to “culture,” as suggested by prominent Communist philosophers such as Esad Cemic? Or was religion the *constitutive* precursor of culture and civilization, an omnipresent ideal that informed all other values even when it ceased to exist in its manifest form?

Amidst ideas of cultural modernization and progress in the late 1960s and early 70s, Communist Yugoslavia witnessed the emergence of a parallel discourse on the relationship between Islam and modernity from within the Bosnian Muslim community. An exploration of Islam through a modernist lens that had been previously employed by Habsburg elites echoed later in the architectural refashioning of the Ottoman *Bascarsija* by Juraj Neidhart. A leading Muslim figure articulating the commensurability of religion and modernity was Alija Izetbegovic, a former member of the *Mladi Muslimani (Young Muslims)*, a Bosniak activist and philosopher. In his memoirs, Izetbegovic recalls the resurgence of faith during his youth: ‘In the Communist propaganda God was on the side of injustice, since the Communists saw religion as the opium of the people. It seemed to me, if not always quite clearly, that the chief message of religion is responsibility.to kings and emperors....Even if they have no fear of the police on this earth, religion tells them that [...] there is no escaping

²⁵⁵As a prominent Marxist sociologist from the Muslim milieu and a professor of the University of Sarajevo, Esad Cemic wrote: ‘Religious ideas never have a value in themselves as philosophical ideas do—therefore, they cannot be analyzed in themselves but only their functions of ideal communities as founders and regenerators.’ According to him, the inherent idealism in religious discourses could be utilized for secular, socialist purposes, even as religious discourses were prohibited from public life. 30

accountability.’²⁵⁶ He also recalls that the ideology of the Young Muslims developed in opposition to fascism and Communism as personified by Hitler and Stalin. Nevertheless, his ideological views did not deter him from identifying himself as a “Serb” in the 1946 census in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This self-categorization was soon to change, when the Communist Party introduced the category of “ethnic” Muslims in 1961, followed by that of a “Muslim nation” in 1968.

In his memoirs, published in 2003, Alija Izetbegovic recalls the intellectual movement of 1968 which formed the immediate context for both his works, Islam Between East and West (1980) and the Islamic Declaration (1970). He began, however, to conceptually frame both texts as early as the 1940s. His writings employed Islamic thought and scriptural interpretations in order to show “some general ideas and some values [...] common to all humanity.”²⁵⁷ According to Izetbegovic, the aim of Islam between East and West, as well as of the Islamic Declaration, was to examine “the place of Islam in the present day world of ideas and facts,” which lay on the peripheries of “Eastern and Western thinking”, much like “the geographical position of the Muslim world.”²⁵⁸ Izetbegovic sought to situate Islamic principles as the “third way out” from the geographical dichotomy of East and West, as well as that of communism and fascism, tradition and modernity. Although his writings addressed a more global audience, highlighting

²⁵⁶ Inescapable Questions: Autobiographical Notes, Alija Izetbegovic, 2002, (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 2002), 13

²⁵⁷ Ibid, 26

²⁵⁸ Ibid

the problems and principles of the Muslim أمة *ummah*²⁵⁹ at large, much of their implicit context derived from the predicament of the Bosnian Muslims in Socialist Yugoslavia.

In his introductory remarks to Islam Between East and West, for instance, Izetbegovic embedded his writing within contemporary politics, echoing the stance of “Non-Alignment” promoted by Tito.

Today we are faced with two worlds divided to the core, politically, ideologically, and emotionally. Still, a part of the world is not affected by this polarization, and the majority of it is in the Muslim countries. This phenomenon is not accidental. Islam is ideologically independent, ‘non-aligned.’²⁶⁰

Amidst pervasive Orientalist understandings of Islam and Tito’s courtship of Arab countries through the Non-Aligned Movement, the Islamic Declaration and Islam Between East and West represented a voice from within the Bosnian Muslim community, articulating the meaning of a religious identity. Although he emphasized the affiliation of Muslims with the spiritual *umma*, Izetbegovic was also careful to highlight continuities between Islamic principles, Christian ethics, and socialist ideas of “progress” and “brotherhood and unity.” Perhaps as a response to the operation of Christian confessional politics beneath an “ethnic” cover, Izetbegovic sought to carve out a place for the religion of Islam, not merely Muslim *ethnicity*, within Yugoslavia. His texts did not call for the substitution of the Orient with the modern, or even a “Western” modernization of the Orient into a hybrid Bosnian category. Instead, they embraced the liminality of Bosnian Muslims and Socialist Yugoslavia, and proposed the integration of the ‘East’ with

²⁵⁹ Muslim spiritual community

²⁶⁰ Alija Izetbegovic, *Islam between East and West*. (Indianapolis, Ind., USA: American Trust Publications, 1984).

the West. The Islamic Declaration in particular decisively affirmed an autonomous Muslim identity in Yugoslavia, and proclaimed that modernization of Yugoslav Muslims would, indeed, occur. The path to modernity, however, would be sought through an interpretation of religious principles.

For Izetbegovic, religion was the origin of culture and civilization. “Culture began with the “prologue in heaven,” he wrote in Islam Between East and West. He elaborated further: “Culture is the influence of religion on man, or man’s influence on himself, while civilization is the effect of intelligence on nature, on the external world. Culture means the “art of being man,” and civilization the art of functioning, ruling and making things perfect.”²⁶¹ Evoking the Praxis Marxist ideal of “man” as a creator of his destiny, the Islamic Declaration called for a spiritual and moral “revival” which would not only cultivate the “self” but also serve as the basis for a political order. Whereas Cosic had emphasized “cultural” emancipation as a form of redemption from still “backward” and incomplete modernity, Izetbegovic highlighted “religious revival” as a means for the Muslim communities to break out of poverty and retrogression. Izetbegovic asserted that the primary purpose of culture was to cultivate a sense of morality, as opposed to preserving customs and traditions for the glorification of the self or the nation. Nevertheless, Izetbegovic emphasized that morality did not always emanate from religion, despite the ideals being derived from the latter: “Morality is religion transformed into rules of behavior, that is, into man’s attitude toward other men in accordance with the fact of God’s existence.”²⁶² He described the movement for

²⁶¹ Izetbegovic, Islam Between East and West, 39

²⁶² Ibid, 98

an Islamic order as one that would “stimulate people morally and represent a moral function which elevates people and makes them better human beings.”

Furthermore, he stated:

Through the assertion of Islamic thought in everyday life, each Moslem experiences the process of self-identification and [...] spiritual liberation as a precondition for [...] social and political liberation.²⁶³

The Declaration described the necessity of beginning with the “internal”, with one’s own life, for “everything that is wished done must first be accomplished in the souls of men.” The spiritual revival preceded the political, and the latter could only be enforced once the former permeated the community in the form of a democratic consensus.²⁶⁴ In Izetbegovic’s words, “there exist unchangeable Islamic principles determining relations between man and man and between man and community, but there exists no unchangeable economic, social or political system.”²⁶⁵ Izetbegovic then moved on to articulate the principle of “brotherhood and equality” in a religious light.

the equality and brotherhood of people is possible only if man is created by God. The equality of men is a spiritual and not a natural physical or intellectual fact. It exists as a moral quality of man, as the human dignity or as the equal value of the human personality. If man’s spiritual value is not recognized—this fact of religious character---the only real base of human equality is lost.²⁶⁶

²⁶³ Alija Izetbegovic, *The Islamic Declaration of Alija Izetbegovic*. S.l.: s.n., 1991. 3

²⁶⁴ Ibid, 18

He states that Islamic revival ‘is always the result of a creative contact, sympathy or internal accord between the conscious, leading elements of a society and the broad strata of the people. [...] the leading group is the will and thought, and the people are the heart and the blood of any profound movement.’

²⁶⁵ Ibid, 24

²⁶⁶ Izetbegovic, *Islamic Declaration*, 26/27

In an era of rigorous secularization carried out by the Communist government, Izetbegovic's call for a resurgence of religion in the political sphere was an anomaly. But how did he define the peripheries of the "religious" and the "secular" concepts in his writings? In many ways, the Islamic Declaration combined elements of religiosity with socialist ideas of progress and modernity. The concept of modernization, however, did not signify the displacement of religion, but a revival and reevaluation of religious thought in accordance with the needs of the age. Izetbegovic wrote, "he who believes in prayer and faith coupled with word and science, temple and factory side by side, belongs to the world of Islam."²⁶⁷ In his conception, the "secular" and the "sacred" were meant to function side by side; the utopia of "Civitas Solis," as he put it, was "to have features of God's Kingdom on Earth."²⁶⁸ At one juncture, Izetbegovic questioned explicitly: "we cannot but ask ourselves who has mistaken the concepts. Are conscience and consciousness part of the real world? Is not belief in man instead of God only a lower form of religion?"²⁶⁹ The concept of the "secular" was manifested in Izetbegovic's writings as an intrinsically religious ideal that not only embodied the unity of science and religion, but also sought common ground with Christian values. He referred to Campanella's The City of the Sun as an example of an earthly utopia that is set against St. Augustine's *Civitas Dei* (The City of God). Izetbegovic emphasized a continuity of religious principles, particularly the Christian ideal of "Love Thy Neighbor", in The City of the Sun despite

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 23

²⁶⁸ Izetbegovic, *Islam Between East and West*, 136

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 111

Campanella's overt opposition to religion.²⁷⁰ Izetbegovic, therefore, wove a lattice of 'secularism' which not only concurred with Christian and Islamic virtues but also the Communist slogan of 'brotherhood and unity.' With the Communist regime laying exclusive claim to the virtues of religious and ethnic tolerance in the public sphere, perhaps what was most riveting to the Communist readership of Izetbegovic's texts was the subsumption of these virtues within Islamic principles.

The Islamic Declaration and Islam Between East and West served as an alternative expression of Islamic thought derived from scriptural interpretations, as well as an implicit commentary on the confessional and ethnic overlap in Communist Yugoslavia. The treatment of Christianity in Izetbegovic's texts was telling of the dynamics of a Christian-socialist alliance in Socialist Yugoslavia. In the introduction to Islam Between East and West, Izetbegovic described Christianity and Socialism as diametrically opposed, despite both being geared towards the progress of humanity. "Socialism is inverse Christianity," he writes. "Socialistic values are Christian values with negative signs; [...] instead of religion—science, instead of individual---society, instead of humanism---progress, [...] instead of human rights—social rights, instead of Civitas Dei—Civitas Solis."²⁷¹ Izetbegovic described the spirit of Christianity to be directed inwards, seeking only inner salvation, whereas socialism as a set of values operated in the public sphere. In a similar vein in the Islamic Declaration, Izetbegovic commented on the commensurability of Christianity with 'secularization' in a manner that is not conducive to Islam. Izetbegovic then departed from Christian

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 136

²⁷¹ Ibid,3

values by describing the commensurability of Islam not merely with the private sphere, but more importantly, with the public sphere. In so doing, Izetbegovic implicitly called for an active engagement of Yugoslav Muslims in public and political life whilst affirming the integrity of Muslim consciousness.

For Izetbegovic, the category of a “Muslim” was primarily a religious identification. The imposition of “secular nationalism” in Muslim countries served to erase the Muslim identity by denying the Islamic basis of authentic Muslim traditions. He criticized pan-Arabism for glorifying the language of Arabic (the language of the Koran) as the essence of the Arab civilization, as opposed to that of the larger Islamic civilization.²⁷² Alternatively, Izetbegovic proposed a reintroduction of the religious foundation to the idea of a Muslim “nation” as its allegiance to ‘God’ and the Muslim spiritual community. In Izetbegovic’s overt discussion of the dilemmas of Muslim countries, however, one cannot miss his implicit call to Yugoslav Muslims to embrace their religion as the foundation of their recognition. The extent to which Izetbegovic also proposed an ascendancy of religious identification over that of ethnicity for “Serbs” and “Croats” is unclear. In various instances, Izetbegovic established the connection of “secularization” with the history of the Western civilization, describing it as an “imported” concept in Muslim countries, where the “Islamic” instinct remains the driving force of human action. “Secularization” as a process, however, was different from the ideal of the “secular” in Izetbegovic’s texts. Izetbegovic, for his part, reserved his criticism of the process of secularization for two categories of Muslims; modernists and conservatives, as two ends of a

²⁷² Izetbegovic, Islamic Declaration, 49-53

spectrum, drove secularization reforms, leaving no room for any intermediaries. In the Islamic Declaration, Izetbegovic criticized conservatives and modernists alike. His description of the former evoked the changelessness and stasis of the Ottoman past, as depicted by Yugoslav novelists Selimovic and Andric. According to Izetbegovic, “religious conservatives”

the class of hodjas and sheikhs, who have despite the clear positions on the non-existence of clergy in Islam, organized themselves as a caste unto itself, which arrogated to itself a monopoly over the interpretation of Islam and placed itself in the position of mediator between the Koran and the people.²⁷³

On the other end of the spectrum, Izetbegovic described Muslim “modernists” who believed:

that hodjas and conservatives are Islam, and persuading others to believe the same indiscriminately oppose all that Islam stands for. [...]. Instead of the standard of living, they bring with them a cult of that [Western] standard; instead of developing the potentials of that world, they develop desires, and thus pave the way for corruption, primitivism and moral chaos. They cannot see that the power of the Western world lies not in its way of life, but in its way of work.²⁷⁴

Izetbegovic then turned to the secularization reforms of Turkey as an example of “absolutism” practiced by Muslim modernists. He described the futility of measures, which change the ‘fez’ into a ‘hat,’ but “cannot change what is in people’s minds or ways, and even less that which constitutes their real position.” Religious conservatives and the ‘secular’ modernists were instead caught in a cycle, whereby “those of yesterday who wore the fez or those of today, wearing hats, remain unchanged.”²⁷⁵

²⁷³ Izetbegovic, *Islamic Declaration*, 5

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 7

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 8-9

As a philosophical exploration of the intimacy of faith and politics in Islamic thought, the Islamic Declaration highlighted the religious basis of the Yugoslav 'Muslim' category and simultaneously raised the overarching question of Islam and its commensurability with modernity. The trajectory of modernization in Socialist Yugoslavia had meandered from an emphasis on technological reforms in the immediate post-war period to cultural emancipation with the onset of decentralization. The dichotomous relationship between modernity and tradition, however, was not a socialist invention. In many ways, strands of modernist thought from the period of Habsburg rule in the Balkans were still recurrent in the processes of socialist secularism in Yugoslavia. The writings of Izetbegovic offered an alternative perspective on modernization by separating it from a correlative understanding of secularization. The latter was spurred in response to authoritarian religious structures and the coercive dominance of religion in the public sphere. But as Izetbegovic seemed to claim, the liberation and subsequent modernization of the individual was not contingent on his extrication from religious understandings.

Amidst the widespread association of the Ottoman rule with 'static' Islam in South Slavic consciousness, Izetbegovic sought to preserve the essence of the religious ideal, instead of offering an alternative Muslim "ethnicity." Izetbegovic's unreserved expression of the incommensurable relationship between Islam and Communism was tempered by his accommodation of socialist ideals and Christian ethics within Islamic thought. In a rigidly "secular" age, his texts contemplated a reintroduction of 'confessional' categories and religious

discourses into the public realm. The notion of a state with *recognized* confessional categories, as expressed in the Islamic Declaration, was in many ways a complete inversion of a “religiously *neutral*” state with privatized religious beliefs and public ‘ethnic’ categories.

At the very outset of the Islamic Declaration, Izetbegovic negated the idea of Islam as a religion in a ritualistic sense, defining it instead as a way of life and a form of thinking. In so doing, he extended the role of religion far beyond the aspects of worship and upheld it as the legitimate basis of culture. This articulation of Islam as a form of culture (not merely faith) posed a serious dilemma to the Communist regime, in that it called for an accommodation of religion in public life as opposed to its privatization. Perhaps even more formidable was Izetbegovic’s declaration of Islam as a third way out of ideological dichotomies. Although the vernacular of Islam as a mode of governance and a way of life in the Islamic Declaration applied primarily to the Muslim community, in some instances it also enveloped non-Muslim communities. In his description of Islam as a religion, on the one hand, and as a set of public values, on the other, Izetbegovic kept the boundaries of an Islamic vernacular malleable. Despite the moral precepts and an inclusive Islamic vernacular proposed by Izetbegovic, the sole identification of this language with a *particular* religious group was a problematic notion for his Communist and nationalist readership. The precise position of Izetbegovic as an author of the Islamic Declaration further added to these anxieties. As his writings implied, the attempt to exclude religion from public and political life through the

marginalization of religious institutions had not succeeded. With the strict separation of religion and politics espoused by the Communist regime, how could the regime counter Islamic culture whilst endorsing a Muslim nationality?

Conclusion

The Aftermath

Secularization in Socialist Bosnia-Herzegovina, despite overtly surmounting religion, continued to be informed by confessional foundations. After the Second World War, the Communist regime instituted “ethnic” nations as a “classificatory scheme,” in order to preserve diversity amidst social homogeneity. As Socialist Yugoslavia moved toward decentralization, cultural and literary institutions emerged as *de facto* representatives of ‘national’ communities. “Nationhood” or “nationness,” however, was a “cognitive frame,” reified by intellectuals through the institutions that preserved folklore and cultural traditions of the different communities.²⁷⁶ This social reification of “nations,” however, was in a dynamic engagement with the latent subculture that had developed in Socialist Yugoslavia. Under the Communist regime, the process of secularization had entailed a set of cultural practices seeking to separate “faith” and “religion” from “culture” and “ethnicity,” and the “modern” from the “pre-modern” or “traditional.” The efforts to forge “brotherhood and unity,” nonetheless, endorsed the idea of a *secularized* Christian norm. The Ottoman cultural legacy, linked to the Bosnian Muslims, under the Communist regime, had become associated with “static” religion and pre-modern traditionalism; its “modernization” – or negation – was commensurable with Communist secularism, whilst also catering to Serbian and Croatian nationalism. The emergence of Yugoslav multi-nationalism in the seventies, therefore, posited the following issue:

²⁷⁶ Brubaker, Nationalism Reframed.

which confessional communities could legitimately claim “nationhood”? In part, the process of elimination had been presaged by the Communist regime. The new Muslim category, from its inception, faced a problem of legitimacy. How could Bosnian Communist elites create a secular “ethnicity” that was both Slavic and Muslim? In Socialist Yugoslavia, “ethnicity” was not merely predicated on the distinctness of a culture. The notion rested largely on the linearity of a people as they evolved through processes of secularization and dialectical materialism. The search for Muslim “ethnicity” almost inevitably converged with the question of their “race,” inviting assimilationist discourses from Serbian and Croatian counterparts.

In the immediate post-war period, the treatment of Catholic and Orthodox religious institutions by the Communist regime had revitalized nationalist myths and pushed them into exile. In the seventies, Serbian and Croatian nationalisms began to increasingly align with religious discourses in order to further the momentum of decentralization. During the Croatian Spring in 1971, for instance, nationalists found considerable support among members of the Catholic Clergy who published a “Croatian” prayer for the revitalization and rejuvenation of Croatia. The Serbian Orthodox Church had limited influence on Serbian intellectuals and played a minimal role in the development of Serbian national expression. Similarly, with the eruption of the Kosovo crisis in Albania in the late 70s, members of the Serbian Orthodoxy found themselves rallying alongside

secular intellectuals and raising their voice in the political domain.²⁷⁷ With the introduction of a Muslim nationality, Bosnian Muslims were no longer an “anational” people to be claimed by “Serbs” or “Croats,” but became their potential competitors for authority. Such a change in status radicalized Serbian and Croatian assimilationist claims and simultaneously triggered an aggressive assault on the “Muslim” character.

Serbian literature, for instance, began to racially depict Muslims, who by virtue of their *conversion* to the Islamic faith were imbued with inborn hatred and murderous qualities. In the late 70s, Vuk Draskovic, a self-classified Serbian writer from Herzegovina and the leader of the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO), began to write his novel, *Noz Knife*, which he published in 1982.²⁷⁸ *Noz* became a best-selling novel in Serbia, and has often been characterized by literary scholars as one of the “gospels of hatred.” Set in Herzegovina, this novel reverts to the Serbian tragedy of the Second World War. It relates the story of an Orthodox Christian family, the Yugoviches, who are massacred by their former Muslim neighbors, the Osmanoviches, on Orthodox Christmas day. The novel, in many ways, represents an amplification of the themes explored in Andric’s The Bridge on the Drina, particularly in its rendition of the conflict between Islam and Christianity in an increasingly national fashion. Whereas The Bridge on the Drina focuses on the Ottoman Vizier, Mehmed Pasha, as an abducted Christian boy who is raised as a Muslim, but subconsciously yearns for a Christian past, Knife

²⁷⁷ The relationship of the Serbian Orthodox and Catholic Churches with the Communist regime, on one hand, and with Serbian and Croatian nationalisms on the other hand, would be a relevant topic for the issues raised by this essay. Given the limited scope of this essay, this aspect could not be sufficiently explored.

²⁷⁸ Vuk Draskovic later became the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Serbia.

revolves around a baby boy, who is the only survivor of the massacred family. Knife, considered in tandem with The Bridge on the Drina, depicts an escalation of violence at the hands of Muslims from the time of the Ottoman period to the Second World War. Serbs are not merely subjugated, but massacred. The baby boy, Alija, who is spared by the murderers on the orders of a *hodja*, is inculcated with hatred for Serbs by his new Muslim foster parents.

As a college student, however, Alija is overcome by a desire to search for his true identity. He ultimately discovers the truth of his past through Sikter Efendij, an isolated Muslim figure in the village who had refused to serve alongside the Ustashe during the Second World War. Sikter not only reveals the identity of Alija's true family, the Yugoviches, but also explains that the Osmanoviches themselves were originally Christians. Their ancestors had been threatened to convert to Islam by the Ottomans. Sikter also explains that the Yugoviches and Osmanoviches were branches of the same family. At this juncture, Alija discovers, much to his shock, that his entire Muslim village is full of former Ustashe murderers. Sikter Efendij reveals to Alija:

when blood began to flow in '41, and when envoys from Rome, Istanbul, Berlin and Zagreb started flying around throughout our rocky land, agitating for extermination of Serbs, down to the last one, I prayed to Allah, and I believed that no one, at least from the Osmanoviches, would accept these provocations. But I can tell you that the hodza from Osmanovic was the first to kiss the Ustasha knife, to elevate madness, and to destroy brotherhood and common sense with bloodshed.²⁷⁹

Towards the end of the novel, a manuscript entitled *Noz* (Knife) is discovered, in which the metaphor of a knife is evoked to describe South Slavic identity. The

²⁷⁹ Vuk Draskovic, *Knife*, (NY, The Serbian Classics Press), 330

kinship of he and Osmanoviches are as two sides of a knife: they are closely connected, but this very intimacy is the source of the most horrifying violence. The novel ends with a prospect of reconciliation for Alija, and enormous trepidation for those who refuse to recognize their true identity. But by this time, hatred has accumulated to such an extent that a simple reversion to original Serbian identity cannot resolve the problem. The novel indicates the racialization of religious converts. While it previously served as a premise for assimilationist claims on Bosnian Muslims, it now becomes the basis for their extermination. In the popular acclaim earned by Draskovic, one could see the emergence of a radical national ideology predicated on *Christoslavism*, a belief that Slavs were inherently Christian in nature.²⁸⁰

Communist Party elites, for their part, remained committed to protecting Muslim nationality in the constitutional framework, and thereby maintaining the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a multi-ethnic republic. For all its multiculturalism and egalitarianism, however, the Party's commitment towards the Muslim national category resulted in an intensification of communal boundaries in Yugoslavia. When in 1972, a Bosnian Serb intellectual, Predrag Palavestra, published an extensive review of Serbian literature, *Posleratna srpska književnost 1945-1970* (Post-War Serbian Literature 1945-1970), which included Bosnian writers of Serb and Muslim origin, the greatest outcry against it was heard from the Party elites. On one hand, such a reaction, and perhaps rightfully so, was triggered due to the pervasive "nationalizing" claims of Serbia over the

²⁸⁰ For more on Christoslavism, see Paul Mojzes, *Religion and War in Bosnia*, (Scholars Press, 1998)

inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Within Bosnia-Herzegovina, however, the implications of Communist policies were quite different. What became of “nationally” and even “confessionally” indifferent individuals in Bosnia? During the Palavestra controversy, Mesa Selimovic, the author of Death and the Dervish, wrote to the Communist newspaper, *Politika*: ‘I am from a Muslim family, from Bosnia, but by national affiliation I am a Serb. I belong to Serbian literature as much as to Bosnian, because I respect my origin and my choice equally.’²⁸¹ The regime refused to publish the letter and to admit any dispute on the issue: “anyone who seeks a discussion of this subject...is seeking an open battle with us.”²⁸² Perhaps as a result of this perseverance, the number of people in Bosnia subscribing to the Muslim “nation” continued to grow, even as internal schisms and external antagonisms continued to contest the “Muslim” national category.²⁸³ Adil Zulfikarpasic continued to advocate for a territorially affiliated “Bosniak” category as opposed to a quintessentially religious one. The “national” status of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina, nonetheless, served as an all-encompassing umbrella for contested “Muslim” identifications predicated on territory, religion and socialist “ethnicity.”

²⁸¹ Selimovic’s letter to *Politika*, and the newspaper’s reply, are cited in Radovan Popovic, *Zivot Mese Selimovica* (Belgrade: BIGZ, 1988), 144-147, in A Budding, 240

²⁸² Branko Mikulic (the hard-line Bosnian Croat who became Yugoslav premier in the 1980s), cited in Barjaktarevic, “Sta je Dr. Palavestra hteo?,” as cited in A. Budding, 240

²⁸³ The number of people who declared “Muslim” nationality increased from 1,729,932 in 1971 to 1,99,980 in 1981. Simultaneously, there was a decline in the number of “Yugoslavs” in Bosnia from 275, 883 in 1961 to only 42, 796 in 1971. The number of Serbs or Croats in Bosnia declined between 1971 and 1981.

Savezni Zavod za Statistiku, Nacionalni sastav stanovništva po opstinama, Statistical Bulletin No 1295 (Belgrade, 1982), as cited in Burg, *Political Integration of Yugoslavia’s Muslims*, 49-50

Astonishingly, the “Islamic Declaration,” published in 1970 amidst burgeoning Serbian and Croatian nationalism, escaped the censure of the Communist Party. In the absence of legitimate “national” institutions supporting the Bosnian Muslim community, members of the religious hierarchy also began to take a more active role as spokespersons for the Muslim community. Religious institutions, therefore, emerged as surrogates for ‘national’ institutions.²⁸⁴ But to what extent could religious institutions serve as legitimate representatives of a “national” category that was, in and of itself, an object of dispute? The Communist Party remained anxious to promote a secularized Muslim “nationality.” Despite the initial tolerance of religious hierarchies by the Communist regime, this trajectory of Bosnian Muslim nationalism after 1971 did not follow a linear path whereby nationalism merged with religion. It was not long before tensions emerged between the state and the Islamic Religious Community (IZV), as the latter continued to emphasize the religious foundation of Muslim nationality. Concerted attempts by the Communist elite and the secular Bosnian Muslims at forming a Muslim “ethnicity” were regularly thwarted by discursive incursions of religious institutions, particularly towards the late seventies. While the “Muslim” status invited antagonism from Serbian and Croatian nationalist circles, it also heightened the split within the Bosnian Muslim milieu. Atif Purivatra, a spokesperson for the Bosnian Muslim community, for instance, differentiated the “national” from the “religious”:

²⁸⁴Izetbegovic offered a specific interpretation of the role of Islam in politics. His texts may have encouraged religious authorities to voice their claims in the political front. However, there is no evidence of any systematic relationship (even ideologically) between Izetbegovic and the religious hierarchy.

See Bougarel, “Bosnian Muslims and the Yugoslav Idea, 108

History shows that many other factors contributed to the Moslems constituting themselves as a nation, the religious elements losing their former significance and giving way to other spiritual and material factors, not unlike the process characteristic of other Yugoslav peoples. It is therefore rightly claimed that in the national respect, Moslems differ from Serbs and Croats, for example, to at least the same degree to which Serbs and Croats differ between themselves.²⁸⁵

On another front, Hamidija Pozderac, the sole Muslim member of the LCY (League of Communists of Yugoslavia) Presidium, openly condemned the notion of Islamic revival as well as the “misuse” of religion for political purposes.²⁸⁶ In 1979, he explained that pan-Islamism stood as an obstruction to the national emancipation of Muslims. Pan-Islamism as a supranational and unpatriotic phenomenon, he claimed, would erode the Muslim national identity, and cater to the assimilationist claims of Serbian and Croatian nationalism. Internal divisions within the Bosnian Muslim Community as well as external nationalist antagonisms escalated as the new constitution of 1974 turned Socialist Yugoslavia into a *de facto* confederation.

The public recognition of Islam, nonetheless, remained a point of contention uniting the Communist regime with Serbian and Croatian nationalist elites. The Party’s reserve on the growth of pan-Islamism was short-lived. In the aftermath of Tito’s death in 1980, the arrests of Muslim intellectuals were part of a series of purges and political persecution ensuing from the reversion to a centralized state apparatus.²⁸⁷ On June 22, 1983, Alija Izetbegovic along with twelve intellectuals

²⁸⁵ Atif Purivatra, “On the National Phenomenon of the Moslems in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” cited in Koca Joncic, *Nations and Nationalities of Yugoslavia*, Belgrade, 1974, 313

²⁸⁶ Preporod, September 1, 1978, p. 2, as cited in JPRS, no 72907. Z. Irwin, *Islamic Revival*, 449

²⁸⁷ The twelve other arrests were ad hoc, and as Amnesty International also noted, there was no relationship between the intellectuals who were tried. Amnesty International Report, 1984, 321

was tried on the charges of “hostile activity inspired by Muslim nationalism” and the intention to establish an “ethnically” pure Islamic state in Yugoslavia.²⁸⁸ The ground for a politicized narrative of the trial had been set much before the actual proceedings. The state run press widely announced the arrests of thirteen intellectuals who intended to transform Bosnia-Herzegovina into a Muslim state. The Islamic Declaration was at the heart of the prosecution’s narrative, selectively incorporated in order to emphasize the allegations of “Muslim fundamentalism” against Izetbegovic. The narrative of the trial, however, was not simply a tool at the hands of Serbian and Croatian Communist elites to express their antagonism against the public expression of Islam in Yugoslavia. Instead, the Prosecution Council contained, among others, prominent members of the Party elite from the Muslim milieu. Above all, the trial manifested a deep schism within the Bosnian Muslim milieu, partly characterized by a forward-oriented Communist approach, and partly by a turn to Muslim culture and religion.

The Prosecution Counsel highlighted Izetbegovic’s call to a larger Muslim *ummah*. The relationship between a “Muslim” religious identity and territorial allegiance, however, had been tenuously defined in Izetbegovic’s texts.²⁸⁹ In the Islamic Declaration, he wrote:

Islamic order should and can approach the overtaking of rule as soon as it is morally and numerically strong enough not only to overthrow the non-Islamic rule but develop a new Islamic rule. [...] In the struggle for

²⁸⁸ Aimee Wielechowski, “Galvanizing Fear of Islam: The 1983 Trial of Alija Izetbegovic in Context,” pg 53-79 in *State and Nation Building in East Central Europe: Contemporary Perspectives*, Edited by John S Micgiel, (Institute on East Central Europe Columbia University, NY, 1996

²⁸⁹ Izetbegovic, *Islamic Declaration*, 4

an Islamic order, all means may be used except one---crime. The Islamic community should reassert that justice is one of the founding stones.²⁹⁰

In what then seemed to be a reference to the liminality of Bosnian Muslims within Socialist Yugoslavia, Izetbegovic indicated that the “status of Moslem minorities in non-Islamic communities shall actually always be dependent on the strength and reputation of the Islamic world community.”²⁹¹ Izetbegovic devoted the latter part of the Islamic Declaration to translating the idea of a “spiritual” Muslim *ummah* into a form of a supra-national political entity. Praising the victory of the European peoples over nationalism through the creation of a “European Economic Community,” Izetbegovic addressed the backwardness of Muslim countries and proposed a solution:

it is evident that the Moslem countries are unable to cope with the above problem individually. We can address this situation and make up for the lost decades characterized by our lagging behind and stagnation only by promoting our new quality--unity. Every Moslem country can promote its freedom and well being by promoting simultaneously the freedom and well being of all Muslims.²⁹²

According to the Chief Prosecutor of the trial, Judge Rizah Hadzic, however, Alija Izetbegovic had committed a crime against the principle of “brotherhood and unity” with the publication of the “Islamic Declaration.” Perhaps in part, this was true. Izetbegovic’s texts, indeed, displaced the legitimizing rhetoric of the Communist regime, “brotherhood and unity,” and located the same ideal--within religious discourses. Implicit in this transference was the notion that “brotherhood and unity” was not exclusive to a specific paradigm of governance. In fact, the

²⁹⁰ Ibid, 54-55

²⁹¹ Ibid, 40

²⁹² Ibid, 54/55

concept of tolerance, as purported by Communist secularization, began to serve as a dismantling rhetoric for the Communist regime itself.

The Islamic Declaration affirmed confessional categorizations over secular ethnicities, carrying reverberations of the Ottoman era. In Socialist Yugoslavia, “ethnicity” was a homegrown phenomenon in its linearity, and perhaps by this very nature, it was regarded as more commensurable with patriotism. Izetbegovic’s implicit preference for confessional as opposed to “ethnic” identification was uncomfortable for the Communist regime. Prevalent “Orientalist” discourses in Communist Yugoslavia gave an additional impetus to exclusionary discourses on a religious, Muslim identity. The Prosecution Council, however, was careful to emphasize that the trial was not directed against Islam *per se*, but its use in the political domain. Unlike Archbishop Stepinac who had been accused of venturing outside his “priestly” domain, Izetbegovic was charged as a “secular” politician who intended to use normative, religious ideals in politics, instead of appealing to the rational, material interests of the people. In the Communist “separation of Church and State,” faith-based discourses were largely confined to religious institutions, unless the Communist regime permitted otherwise. Religious institutions were, in turn, marginalized from public and political life. Izetbegovic, however, defined religion as faith *as well as* culture and proposed its accommodation in public life. The Izetbegovic trial did not simply represent a failure of the Communist regime to legally separate religion and politics. For all its attempts, Communist secularization itself upheld empty “ethnic” categories, which were routinely supplied with a confessional foundation. Above

all, the narrative of the trial indicated the dilemma of constructing homogenous “national” categories in order to represent localized religious communities, which themselves lacked the cohesion that the concept of “nations” had ascribed to them.

In the aftermath of the Izetbegovic trial, Muslim Communist elites sought to strengthen their positions by concurring with the politicized narrative of the trial.

As one editorial in the Yugoslavia News Agency narrated

Those occupying the accused bench...were enemies of the community of Yugoslav nations and nationalities, and not believers in a religious faith. No one in this country has ever been convicted for his religious affiliation. But if someone uses religion for political goals, particularly opposed to the interests of the state, he must feel the full force of the law.²⁹³

Multi-nationalism in Socialist Yugoslavia had undermined the legitimacy of the “Bosniac” category with its exclusive territorial connection to the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The political legitimacy of Bosnian Muslims as a group lay in an extrication of their collective identity from the Ottoman past and in their symbolic attachment with socialism. The active participation of Communist Muslim elites in promoting a politicized narrative of the Izetbegovic trial, whilst sidelining competing understandings of the nature of Muslim identity, catered to this goal. In so doing, the fate of the Bosnian Muslim community was chained to the socialist state. For a while, it seemed as if Socialist Yugoslavia had triumphed in the creation of a secular Muslim “nationality” on the same level as Serbs and Croats. Population demographics exhibited in the census categories also favored

²⁹³ Yugoslav News Agency 0224 gmt, Aug 21, 1983, “Comment on Verdict in Muslim Nationalist Trial’, by Mladen Gavrilovic, broadcast by British Broadcasting Corporation on BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Aug 23, 1983, Lexis-Nexis

Bosnian Muslims as never before in the Socialist era. This sense of security, however, was short-lived. Communist Yugoslavia, in the wake of multi-nationalism, had become a prison of the very ideas that it sought to transcend. National politics was soon to unleash, and to bring about the demise of Yugoslavia.

Epilogue

Almost two centuries after The Mountain Wreath was imagined by Petar Njegos, it was enacted on the killing fields of Srebrenica, Omarska, Banja Luka and other Bosnian towns. As the historical play heads to its denouement, the Montenegrin Serbs are visited by a series of premonitions and visions of Milos Oblicic, a Serbian legendary figure killed by Sultan Murat in 1389.

Our dreams let's tell as we proceed!
 I've seen in dream what I ne'er saw before,
 And omen good it may be for my arms!
 This night in vision I saw Oblitich
 As he flew o'er Cetinje's plain
 On his white horse---a vila were not swifter!—
 What vision splendid only God doth know!²⁹⁴

Oblicic rode on a white steed over the Muslim village of Cetinje, prophesying the victory of Christian Serbs over the Turks. In the 1990s, Serb paramilitaries marched into Muslim villages, quoting Njegos's Mountain Wreath. Militia-men were given medals in the name of Milos Oblicic for their victory over Muslims.²⁹⁵ On 11 July, 1995, Serbian General Ratko Mladic entered the city of Srebrenica and announced: "We present this city as a gift. Finally, after the rebellion against the dhajje [local janissary leaders], this time has come to take revenge on the

²⁹⁴ Petar Njegos, *The Mountain Wreath*, James W Wiles edition, 197

²⁹⁵ Michael A. Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia*, Chapter 3: Performing the Passion, (University of California Press, 1996), 71-92

Turks in this region.”²⁹⁶ Bosnian Serb paramilitaries stormed into Banja Luka, destroying all remnants of Ottoman architecture, cemeteries, and mosques—including the famous Ferhadija mosque of the sixteenth century.²⁹⁷ In a small town in eastern Bosnia, Janja, mosques and private libraries containing Islamic manuscripts were burned down. As one survivor put it, “it was as if the proof of my past had been wiped out.”²⁹⁸ When former neighbors, colleagues, and acquaintances became voluntary perpetrators of atrocities, they hid behind masks, transporting themselves back to the Battle of Kosovo in 1389.²⁹⁹ They were no longer acquaintances, but Serb heroes fighting “race-traitors.”

What surfaced in the brutalities of the 1990s was not an “ancient” hatred, but an imagined past preserved and invoked by nationalist elites from the cultural repositories of the Communist regime. Serbian and Croatian elites staged commemorative rituals to reify their respective “nations” and organize political action around these categories. In the aftermath of Yugoslavia’s collapse, Bosnian Muslims were as *bare* lives connected to a territory, stripped of a “national” status in a world where nationhood and citizenship had become synonymous. In 1961, Ivo Andric wrote in A Conversation with Goya :

It is necessary to heed legends, those traces of
collective human endeavor through the centuries, and

²⁹⁶ Mark Danner, Bosnia: The Great Betrayal, The New York Review of Books, March 26 1998, <http://www.markdanner.com/articles/print/55>

²⁹⁷ Supple, Shannon, “Memory Slain: Recovering Cultural Heritage in Post-War Bosnia,” *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*, 1(2), 2005, Permalink: <http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/28c783b6>

²⁹⁸ Mehmedinoic, *Sarajevo blues* (A. Alcalay, Trans.). (San Francisco 1998), pg 66
Lights Books.

²⁹⁹ Michael A. Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia*, Chapter 3: Performing the Passion, (University of California Press) 1996, pg 79

surmise from them, as much as our possible, the meaning of our destiny.³⁰⁰

Amidst the brutalities of the Yugoslav wars, an answer to “the meaning of our destiny” lay not in the legends of an ancient past but in the actions of a recently lived reality; and how those actions gave life to the very legends that we sought to understand--or perhaps, relinquish.

³⁰⁰ Ivo Andric, *Conversation with Goya*, translated by Celia Hawkesworth, Andrew Harvey, (Menard Press, University of London, 1992), 23

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