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## Social Thought and its Influence in Slovenia<sup>1</sup>

### *Zusammenfassung*

In Slowenien ist der christlich-soziale Gedanke seit dem Ende des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts bis heute mit sehr unterschiedlicher Intensität präsent. Hinsichtlich der 45-jährigen Herrschaft des kommunistischen totalitären Systems, das den christlich-sozialen Gedanken aus der Öffentlichkeit verdrängte, kam es nach den Gesellschaftsveränderungen im Jahr 1990 zu einer Wiederbelebung in Theorie und Praxis. In den letzten fünf und zwanzig Jahren schwankt seine Präsenz im öffentlichen und akademischen Leben. Sowohl materielle Voraussetzungen als auch personelle Bedingungen für sozialetische Forschung und die Verbreitung der Sozialethik in der gesellschaftlichen Praxis sind nicht günstig. Die slowenische Gesellschaft braucht jedoch sozialetische Reflexion sowohl in Hinsicht auf ihre Vergangenheit als auch hinsichtlich der gegenwärtigen gesellschaftlichen Herausforderungen im eigenen Land, in Europa und in der globalen Welt.

### *Introduction*

Christian Social Thought has been present in Slovenia from the end of the 19th century until today with differing intensity. While Christian Social Thought was excluded from the public sphere during the 45 year dominion of the totalitarian communist system, it was revitalised after the system change in 1990 in theory and practice. Its public and academic presence swayed during the last 25 years. Material as well as personal resources are not convenient to intensify social ethical research and spread Christian social ethics in social practice. Nonetheless, there is a need for social ethical reflection in Slovenian society concerning past and present social challenges in Slovenia, Europe and around the globe.

In Slovenia, social thought has been present since the end of the 19th century or since *Rerum Novarum* (RN, 1891). Up until the First World War, it was represented mainly by Janez Evangelist Krek (1865–1917), who can be regarded as Slovenian Ketteler or Vogelsang. The centenary of his death is celebrated in 2017.

Between the two World Wars, different views emerged within the Christian community, mainly regarding the position of Church authority on issues of social change and the question of how to justify the presence of Christians in society. Some insisted on a neo-scholastic understanding

1 The author of the article lectures about the Social Teaching of the Church at the Faculty of Theology of University of Ljubljana within the framework of Moral Theology as its distinct applied part.

of natural law as the rational basis for social questions. This approach put the Church into the position of a final arbiter in social and political questions. Under the influence of existentialism and personalism on the one hand, and Marxism on the other, some scholars, however, pursued an inductive path of argumentation, and emphasized the role of the human being as a free, autonomous layperson. This polarization among Christians had fatal consequences during the Second World War when one side rejected any cooperation with the communists, while the other – the so-called “Christian Socialists” – supported them uncritically (cf. Štuhec 2010; 2017; Juhant 2008).

The Communist rule after the Second World War completely marginalized all Christians (both groups of Christians) and put them at risk of moral and physical liquidation. A new dialogue within the post-war generation only began in the 1960s, and during the 1970s and the 1980s, a gradual liberalization of the political climate made it possible for Christians to re-enter the social discourse. Both individual Christians and the Church as an institution with its leadership – especially with the Archbishop of Ljubljana, Alojzij Šuštar – played an important role in the creation of a plural social space during the independence of the Slovenian state.

## 1 The place of the Social Teaching of the Church in Slovenian Society

Within the Church and social discourse, the term “socialni nauk Cerkve” (“Social Teaching of the Church”) has been adopted. Since the publication of collected social encyclicals from *Rerum Novarum* to *Centesimus annus* (CA) in 1991, the term “družbeni nauk Cerkve” (DNC) (“Social Teaching of the Church”) has been used.<sup>2</sup> This notional change was made

2 The central works from this field show the development of social thought in their titles: in 1901, J. E. Krek published a monograph titled *Socializem* (*Socialism*). During the War, A. Ušeničnik wrote about social issues. A. Gosar used the notion Christian socialism and wrote a monograph *Za nov družbeni red* (*For a New Social Order*) (1933/35). After the War, A. Stres titled his review work of the Social Teaching of the Church as *Oseba in družba* (*A Person and the Society*) (1991). J. Juhant and R. Valenčič (1994) published the Slovenian translation of social encyclicals under the title *Družbeni nauk Cerkve*.

to emphasize that the so-called social encyclicals are not only about social but wider societal issues. The term social ethics as such has not been adopted in Slovenia. In interdisciplinary attempts before the Second World War, philosopher Aleš Ušeničnik used the term “sociologija” (“sociology”) as a synonym for the term DNC. In his manual *Za nov družbeni red* (1933) (*For a New Social Order*), Andrej Gosar, a lawyer by education, tried to integrate economic and social theories into the Social Teaching of the Church. After the Second World War, there were no more serious similar attempts. Today the term DNC is generally used. It is the translation for the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church and the title of the lectures at the Faculty of Theology on the subject of Moral Theology.

Since Slovenia's independence in 1991, the Social Teaching of the Church was realized in practice mainly through negotiations with the state about freedom of religion and the position of the religious communities in the new, democratic and pluralistic state. *Caritas* and its social institutions, and similar institutions run by other organizations – like rehab facilities for drug addicts, custodial institutions for people with special needs, homes for the elderly and educational institutions – constitute a new presence of the Church in contemporary society. At the Faculty of Theology of Ljubljana, a single-year specialisation programme with elements of the social teaching of the Church for the Caritas workers has been offered since the academic year 2015/16.

On the theoretical level, several publications ranging from the strictly scientific to the professional and popular were issued. The first review of Social Teaching of the Church was published in 1991 authored by Dr. Anton Stres. The author of this article and Dr. Stres organized education for laypersons within the framework of *Rerum Novarum* which later changed its name to “Social Academy” and still operates as a civil educational institution. Dr Stres also authored a review of political philosophy titled *Svoboda in pravičnost* (*Freedom and Justice*) (1996).

In 1995, a softcover encyclopedia of core concepts of the social teaching of the Church by three authors from Austrian Carinthia (Dr. Edeltraud Buchberger, Dr. Walter Suk and Mag. Vinko Ošlak) was published. Legal scholar and former constitutional judge, Dr. Lovro Šturm, and his colleagues published the book *Sveto in svetno* (*The Sacred and the Earthly*, Šturm u. a. 2004) in which legal aspects of the freedom of religion are discussed. In 2014, the translation of the book *Catholic Social Teaching and the Market Economy* by Philip Booth was published by the Catholic Institute, which presents an inception of the newly created Catholic University of Ljubljana.

The retired Professor of Philosophy at the Faculty of Theology, Dr. Janez Juhant, authored several works in the field of social philosophy: *Krekovo berilo* (1989) (*Krek Reader*); *Globalisierung, Kirche und post-moderner Mensch* (2005) (*Globalization, Church, and the Postmodern Human*); *Im Feuer der europäischen Ideenzüge: Slowenien* (2008) (*In the Fires of the European Movement of Ideas*); *Idejni spopad: Slovenci in moderna* (*Fight of Ideas: the Slovenians and Modernism*) (2009); *Idejni spopad 2, Katoličani in revolucija* (*Fight of Ideas 2, The Catholics and Revolution*) (2010).

Between 2004 and 2007, the author of the article led the project *Leksikon krščanske etike* (*Encyclopedia of Christian Ethics*) with ten long entries on the social teaching of the Church. In 2002, comments in several Slovenian journals and newspapers appeared under the title *Družbene presoje* (*Social Judgements*). In 2005, the monograph *Cerkev sveta in prekleta* (*The Church – Sacred and Cursed*) was published. It discusses the role of the Church in modern Slovenian society. In the same year, discussions and comments titled *Smer – osvobodjena dežela* (*Direction – Free Land*) appeared and in 2012 a monograph of lectures and comments titled *Veter v megli* (*Wind in the Fog*) were published. These books among other things demonstrate that social thought was present in all media from the left to the liberal and the centre-right. But over the last ten years, this trend has changed into an increasing blocking by the ideologically monolithic media.

## 2 The Social Teaching of the Church at the Faculty of Theology

The social teaching of the Church at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Ljubljana is not an autonomous discipline but an integral part of Special Moral Theology or Applied Ethics. It consists of 30 hours per semester at the first level of studies and 30 hours in the Master's degree. The subject is interdisciplinary and integrated with the sociology of religion under the title *Soočnje religije s sekularizmom in modernostjo v Evropi* (*Confrontation of Religion with Secularism and Modernity in Europe*). In the doctoral programme, it is possible to choose between the subjects *Globalizacija in družbena pravičnost* (*Globalisation and Social Justice*), *Ekološka etika in teologija* (*Ecological Ethics and Theology*), *Globalna politična teologija* (*Global Political Theology*), and *Avtonomija v morali*

*na preizkušnji (Autonomy in the morality being tested)*. The Department of Philosophy also offers elective courses that are related to the topics in the Social Teaching of the Church there are also some elective courses offered by the Department of Philosophy, such as *Dialog (Dialogue)* and *Religija in javno življenje (Religion and Public Life)*.

As far as the development of social teaching of the Church at the Faculty of Theology is concerned, it is affected on staff constraints and the amount of hours, which has been severely restricted for the first two levels of studies in the course of the Bologna reforms. Beside the philosophers – who traditionally discussed social problems in the Faculty of Theology – the author of this article is one of the few who devoted himself to the studies of the Social Teaching of the Church during the last thirty years. This field only received a permanent place within moral theology from 1989 onwards. It is almost impossible to speak about research in the field since personnel and financial support are very limited. For instance, it has been impossible to think realistically about an Institute for the Social Teaching of the Church during the last thirty years.

At the Faculty of Theology, two programmatic groups exist. Moral theologians work in one group with philosophers, who are focusing on the ideological conflicts in Slovenia in the twentieth century. Currently, the research is focused on the topic “victims”. Junior researchers are primarily based at the Department of Philosophy. Within the framework of the programmatic group, it is possible to see an interdisciplinary dialogue, but this largely depends on the individuals and not on a common strategic and methodological concept.

### 3 Social Thought in Higher Education

In higher education, it is almost impossible to speak about a presence of the social teaching of the Church, let alone an interdisciplinary embeddedness. After social changes with the fall of Communistic regimes in 1990, the Faculty of Theology was reincorporated to the University of Ljubljana, from which it had been excluded in 1952. After an initially open and positive atmosphere, which manifested itself through participation in conferences organized by jurists, physicians and historians, the academic space for dialogue and collaboration narrowed and closed down over the last fifteen years.

The *Faculty of Social Work* at the University of Ljubljana is explicitly oriented toward Communist ideology. Under the Communist regime, it was a stronghold for the education of all types of social workers. The Communist regime marginalized the Church and removed individual persons of faith and civil society groups from the field of social work.

Only after independence, Caritas and some other social institutions could resume their activities. In the last 25 years, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour and Family has mostly been under the leadership of ministers from the Social Democratic Party, the successor of the Communist Party of Slovenia. This ministry also decides on the professional status of graduate theologians, which to date has not been resolved and regulated.

In the field of socio-political issues, the Communist regime founded the *Higher School of Policy Studies*. The school was renamed the *Faculty of Social Sciences* in 1991, and it has consistently received significant material support and was able to develop a wide range of programmes. The faculty could today become an independent university. Its primary purpose at the time of foundation was to educate the Communist political elite. In the presentation of the faculty we can read:

“The Faculty of Social Sciences, a member of the University of Ljubljana, is the largest interdisciplinary social-science faculty in Slovenia and also one of major ones in Europe. It was founded in 1961 as the Higher School of Policy Studies, which into the Higher School of Sociology, Policy Studies and Journalism in few years evolved. In 1970, when incorporated into the University of Ljubljana, its name was changed to Faculty of Sociology, Policy Studies and Journalism. Its present name, the Faculty of Social Sciences, was given in 1991, exactly thirty years after the foundation of its predecessor. The Faculty of Social Sciences with its pedagogical and research activity in the field of numerous fundamental and applied disciplines has built the foundation of social science in Slovenia for over four decades.” (Faculty of Social Sciences 2017)

Cooperation between the *Faculty of Theology* and the *Faculty of Social Sciences* existed within supplementary education of teachers in Religions and Ethics. But since the subject had the status of a compulsory elective<sup>3</sup> alongside numerous other subjects, it lost significance. Cooperation with

3 The school had to offer the subject, and the pupils could choose it (cf. Gerjolj/Saje 2013).

the *Faculty of Social Sciences* was possible on an individual level and at conferences. The perspectives of the religious scholars from the *Faculty of Social Sciences* and the theologians about the role of religion in Slovenian society and its education system have been always very different. Regarding the interpretation of the religious liberty, the religious scholars from that faculty advocated the principle of the strict separation of State and Church in the spirit of Marxist exclusion and privatisation of religion (Saje 2012). Among current religious scholars, there is not a single one who would accept Habermas' idea of the integration of religion into society. Some professors from that faculty (Dr. Igor Lukšič 21. 11. 2008–10. 2. 2012; Dr. Jernej Pikalo 20. 3. 2013–18. 09. 2014) also became Ministers of Education in left-wing coalition governments. Under the former Communist regime, everything was owned by the public, and the idea still resonates with the Faculty of Social Sciences. One of the fundamental principles, the staff from the *Faculty of Social Sciences* is generally loyal to the state and the struggle against everything private. In all key issues concerning the Catholic Church, the sociologists of religion and religious scholars oppose religious liberties, for example Slovenia is the only EU state which has no form of religious instruction in schools at any level (cf. Gerjolj/Saje 2013). Public discourses between them and theologians, as a rule, ended with polarization.

In this context, it is significant to note that the founder of the institute of sociology at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Dr. Zdenko Roter, was a collaborator of UDBA the secret police of the Communists. After the Second World War, Dr. Roter interrogated and “took care” of imprisoned priests (Griesser Pečar 2003). His colleague, and one of the main regulators of Slovenian public opinion, Dr. Niko Toš, cooperated with Professor Zulehner in research into the role of religion and Church in Central and Southern Europe, but in Slovenia he explicitly supported the old Communist forces.<sup>4</sup> The results of Toš' policy are visible when we look at the list

4 Roter describes in his book *Padle maske* the role of Toš and how he, Kučan and the couple Hribar decided who should be the candidate for the new president of Slovenia (cf. Roter 2013, 656). In his article *Gesellschaften und Kirchen im Übergang nach 1989 (Societies and Churches in Transition after 1989)*, Toš defined his religiological credo as follows: „Ich selbst verstehe Säkularisierung nicht nur als eine Durchsetzung des Laizismus und eine Beschränkung der Kirche im öffentlichen Leben, sondern vor allem als Möglichkeit der Veränderung religiöser und nichtreligiöser Wertidentitäten, als Revitalisierung der Wert- und Religionsorientierungen, als Pluralisierung von Religionspraktiken und anderer

of registered religious communities in Slovenia, which numbered 52 in 2017, compared to 15 in 1991.<sup>5</sup> From this number of registered religious communities, less than half is active. Others mostly exist on paper and are present with an official representative only when it comes to adoption of legislation in the field of freedom of religion, where they can outvote larger and functioning religious communities. In other words, sociology of religion from the Faculty of Social Sciences is in the service of manipulation of religious communities under cover of pluralism and democracy and freedom of the individual. In such an 'academic' context, interdisciplinary cooperation is difficult or impossible, because policy goals are above scientific concerns. The Slovenian academic community must shed its past ideological restraints to be able to freely enter into dialogue. Unfortunately, current developments point in the opposite direction. Of course there are exceptional colleagues, who put academic integrity first. Most dialogue and cooperation has been and is between the sociologists of religion at the Faculty of Arts and at the Faculty of Theology.

With the Faculty of Arts at the University of Ljubljana and the Faculty of Education at the University of Maribor, the Faculty of Theology also developed double-major programmes,<sup>6</sup> intended mainly for the teachers in secondary schools. In these double-majors the number of teaching hours has been reduced even more than at the single-major programmes, so that the social teaching of the Church is only present where it has been included in moral theology.

Since Slovenia became independent, some private research institutions have emerged, for example the Catholic Institute of Ljubljana. This Institute, within which the Faculty of Business Studies is organized, wanted to establish another Faculty of social studies, but was unable to recruit enough habilitated scholars in Slovenia to run it. This serves to illustrate how any Christian social thought was eliminated from the field of social science after the second World War.

At the international level, the author of this article has been a member of the *Vereinigung für Sozialethik in Mitteleuropa* since the 1990s,

(z. B. ziviler und laikaler) Praktiken und auch als Demonopolisierung religiöser Institutionen" (Toš 2009, 21).

5 For further information: <[http://www.mk.gov.si/si/delovna\\_podrocja/urad\\_za\\_verse\\_skupnosti/register\\_cerkva\\_in\\_drugih\\_verskih\\_skupnosti/#c17927](http://www.mk.gov.si/si/delovna_podrocja/urad_za_verse_skupnosti/register_cerkva_in_drugih_verskih_skupnosti/#c17927)>.

6 Students can choose to study theology and some other humanist or natural science subject.



an academic society especially for Social Ethics. In this context, academic exchange has mostly occurred at the conferences organized by the presidency. In the last six years, an exchange network for students and professors has emerged within CEEPUS (Central European Exchange Program for University Studies).

#### 4 Social Thought in the Slovenian Public

The influence of social thought in the academic sphere is rather marginal, but it is difficult to judge its importance in public discourse. The Catholic Church is the only religious community in Slovenia with academically trained personnel and its own educational institutions. This means that Catholic theologians are welcome interlocutors in public. Public discourse often revolves around topics with an ethical dimension. Thus, the colleagues from the Department of Moral Theology in Ljubljana are frequent speakers in various media outlets. The Commission of Justice and Peace at the Slovenian Bishops' Conference – which was for many years led by Prof. Dr. Anton Stres, now a retired Archbishop of Ljubljana – had an important place in Slovenian society before independence and during the decade after.

The voice of the Commission has always been recognized, but unfortunately, over the last five years, the Commission has been rather quiet, also because its authority was undermined by the financial collapse of the Slovenian diocese Maribor. The unclear and fragmented public explanation of the financial collapse of the diocese – which also had a political background – has had two public consequences: a permanent possibility of manipulation by media and politicians and the feeling of guilt in those who have not taken part in the developments (Neck 2017, 95–105). Due to the financial troubles of the diocese, the entire Church has withdrawn from the public in recent years.

Some younger Christians are entering Slovenian public discourse as autonomous laypersons with new electronic media. Within this context, two online newspapers emerged, *Domovina*<sup>7</sup> and *Časnik*<sup>8</sup>. They engage in critical thinking from within the Church, however, their reach is rather limited.

7 For further information: <<https://www.domovina.je/>>.

8 For further information: <<http://www.casnik.si/>>.

## 5 Priorities in the Field of Social Ethics

I will restrict this summary to five issues which are central to public discourse in Slovenia. One crucial and unresolved issue in Slovenia is the understanding of our history from the Second World War through the communist regime and its aftermath. To date, there are about 700 documented and partially uncovered locations of killings, perpetrated either by members of the communist liquidation units during the war (VOS<sup>9</sup>), Communist military intelligence service at the end of the war (KNOJ<sup>10</sup>), or in continuation of the VOS' methods after the war (UDBA and SDV<sup>11</sup>). This is a spectre haunting Slovenian society. Confrontation with this history, marked by the revolution and fratricidal war is a prerequisite for the purification of the collective memory and for making a positive impact on the nation's history so that every community can develop freely (Rant 2007; Ferenc 2005). For now, there is no consensus in Slovenian society that the three totalitarian systems in the twentieth century (Nazism, Fascism and Communism)<sup>12</sup> show parallels in the way they tried to exercise total control of education, economy, and the media and in their totalitarian demands on people and their hostility to human rights and democracy.

The second fundamental social issue, present in all post-communist societies, is the relationship between private and communal property. Decades of choking of private initiative have had twofold consequences. People have suppressed the mindset that it is necessary to take care of themselves and to realize their ideas in a creative manner. Secondly, people who have lived on social property for decades continue to drain state institutions and taxpayer money and maintain their privileged position through the ideology of the so-called 'social state', which in the post-communist context means as much statism as possible (Neck 2017, 95–105).

The third issue concerns the role of religion in a modern, democratic and pluralistic society and with this the question of religious liberty.

9 Varnostno-obveščevalna služba (Security Intelligence Service).

10 Korpus narodne obrambe Jugoslavije (Yugoslav National Defense Corps, 1944–1953).

11 UDBA was created in 1946, when OZNA was divided into civil and military division: civil part – UDBA and military *Kontraobavještajna služba* ("Counter-intelligence Service") – KOS. In 1955 KOS was transformed into Organ bezbednosti (OB), and UDBA in 1966 into Služba državne bezbednosti (SDB), in Slovenia into SDV.

12 Cf. Baberowski/Doering-Manteuffel 2006.

In Slovenia, there is no education about the phenomenon of religion. Today we can talk of true ignorance in this field. Consequently, prejudices towards religious communities, particularly those coming with the refugee crisis, continue to build up. This is reflected in hate speech and in attacks on premises of the Catholic and Islamic communities.

The fourth issue concerns the family. Since 2006, Slovenia has had domestic partnerships for same-sex couples; a specific law has regulated same-sex partnerships, but the lobbies from these circles wanted to achieve more – redefinition of the family. As a consequence, two referenda were held. The first one in 2012, at which 54.55 per cent of 30.31 per cent eligible voters, voted against the proposed changes of the family code. The second referendum in 2015 yielded an even clearer result, since even more voters participated (36.38 per cent), of which 63.41 per cent were against the redefinition of the family. In the build-up to the last referendum, the discussion about gender theory entered the Slovenian public sphere as well.

The fifth issue concerns the future of the EU and the relation between the local and the global world in all areas, from ecology to institutions. The future of the EU has become a particularly salient topic after the economic collapse of Greece, the migrant crisis and after Brexit.

## 6 Conclusion

Social ethics in Slovenia needs to be liberated from the ideological heritage that still prevents interdisciplinary professional activities and work focused on human needs. The refugee crisis of 2015 was a best practice example of the cooperation between the civil society (Caritas, Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations) and the state (Jesenik Jelenc 2017, 154–157). If this model were to be consistently applied to all social levels, we could eventually talk about the end of transition from a totalitarian to a democratic and pluralistic social order. But sadly, most other social processes do not point in this direction. Post-communist states and their societies are confused regarding their values and identity. This is true especially in Slovenia, which can also be seen using the results of Zulehner's research (*Aufbruch*)<sup>13</sup>

13 Further information and literature references about the *Aufbruch*-research can be found here: <http://www.zulehner.org/site/forschung/osteuropa>.

about the religious dimension in post-communist societies. European integration did not result in a fairer economic and financial development. Profit-driven capitalists soon after independence allied with the old Communist rank and file. Transitional capitalists were as a rule former communists and their descendants. Categories such as social, capital, the common good, welfare, the free market are confused and opaque. Consequently, people socialized in democratic cultures often do not understand what is happening in the post-communist world. For these and other reasons, networking in the field of social ethics is urgent and necessary. Conferences, cooperation through Erasmus and CEEPUS, connections between universities, joint applications for projects launched by the European Union and other European institutions, and cooperation in international associations and journals can contribute to this. Perhaps a European office is needed that could collect, distribute and coordinate all initiatives in the field of social ethics. Above all, smaller states tend to struggle with a dearth of academic staff. Not to speak of the local church leaderships, which often do not listen to the social dimension of the Gospel message.

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