

## INTERPRETAZIONI E RASSEGNE

### POPE JOHN PAUL II'S VISIT TO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY (15–19 NOVEMBER 1980): INSIGHTS FROM A CONFIDENTIAL YUGOSLAV REPORT ON MIGRANT WORKERS AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

The document published here was prepared by the Directorate for Workers Abroad of the Federal Secretariat for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) on the occasion of Pope John Paul II's<sup>1</sup> visit to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG, West Germany) between 15 and 19 November 1980. This report is preserved in the holdings of the State Archives of Montenegro (SAM), within the documentation of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Montenegro (CCLCM). The document bears the classification *confidential*, indicating the sensitive and significant nature of the data and information it contains.

Monitoring and reporting on Pope John Paul II's visit to the West Germany formed part of the League of Communist of Yugoslavia's (LCY, the Yugoslav Communist Party) assigned tasks to Yugoslav state representatives at a broader international level. The reasons for such activity lay in the necessity of suppressing the activities of the so-called *hostile political émigré community*, 50% of which consisted of members of the so-called *Ustaša* movement—an organization defeated alongside the Nazis in the Second World War.<sup>2</sup> In fact, *Ustaša* forces had notably intensified their activities in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with, according to Yugoslav security services, assistance and support provided *inter alia* by the Catholic Church. The Croatian Catholic émigré community was particularly active and organized in its opposition to the Yugoslav socialist state, a distinct feature compared to other émigré groups.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope John Paul II (1920–2005), of Polish origin, served as the head of the Vatican City State from 1978 to 2005.

<sup>2</sup> S. DOMANKUŠIĆ, M. LEVKOV, *Politička emigracija [Political Emigration]* (Beograd, Vojnoizdavački zavod, 1974), p. 79.

This activism was rooted in both historical and ideological factors. In the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, unresolved disputes over centralization and the demand for Croatian autonomy created a persistent sense of grievance that was never fully reconciled.<sup>3</sup> These cleavages were violently magnified during World War II, when parts of the Croatian population became associated with the Ustaša regime<sup>4</sup> and its collaborationist structures, while others joined the Partisan movement, leaving a legacy of anti-Yugoslav sentiment. After the war, Croatian émigrés, often supported by elements of the Catholic Church, maintained strong transnational networks spanning North America, Western Europe, and Australia, enabling coordinated propaganda, lobbying, and even clandestine operations against the socialist federal state. In socialist Yugoslavia, these historical legacies continued to shape political dynamics, as federal authorities sought to suppress any manifestation of Croatian particularism while émigré elites invoked historical grievances to legitimize demands for greater autonomy. Organizations such as the Croatian National Council (HNV) and the Croatian Revolutionary Brotherhood (HRB) were central to these efforts, promoting nationalist agendas and, in some cases, preparing armed actions aimed at destabilizing the Yugoslav state.<sup>5</sup>

This should also be understood within the broader context of Yugoslavia's federal system and its attempt to balance diverse national identities within a socialist framework. Religious affiliation often overlapped with ethnic identity: Croats were predominantly Catholic, Serbs predominantly Orthodox, Slovenes mostly Catholic, Muslims concentrated in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while Montenegro and Macedonia had mixed populations with Orthodox, Muslim, and Catholic communities. Yet this overlap was far from absolute. The relatively high proportion of atheists and nonreligious—over half of the population in Montenegro (54.0%) and Vojvodina (52.1%), and more than a quarter in

<sup>3</sup> SANDACHE, Cristian, *The Clash of Nationalisms: Croats and Serbs in Interwar Yugoslavia*, in «Acta Universitatis Danubius. Relationes Internationales», IX, 2016, 2, pp. 1–20.

<sup>4</sup> In line with Ognyanova-Krivoshieva, during the war-time period of 1941–1945, the Ustašas, with the support of Hitler, established the Independent State of Croatia (ISC) and pursued an extreme anti-Serb agenda aimed at avenging two decades of perceived subjugation and repression in the interwar period, while seeking to make the idea of Serbo-Croatian coexistence unthinkable. I. OGNYANOVA-KRIVOSHIEVA, *Croatian Nationalism in Communist Yugoslavia*, in «Etudes Balkaniques», 2004, 4, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> R. LAZIĆ, *Delovanje jugoslovenske neprijateljske emigracije u Australiji 1965–1980*, in «Istorija 20. veka», god. XLI, 2/2023, pp. 417–434; P. ĐRAGIŠIĆ, *Hrvatska politička emigracija i Jugoslavija početkom osamdesetih godina. Pripreme za završni obračun*, in «Istorija 20. veka», god. XXXVIII, 2/2020, pp. 203–218.

Slovenia (27.0%) and Croatia (27.4%)—illustrates how socialist secularization policies and broader social change complicated the straightforward overlap between religion and ethnic identity. According to estimates from 1987, the share of Catholics within the Yugoslav republics varied considerably, ranging from 68.4% in Slovenia and 64.9% in Croatia, to only 2.1% in Montenegro and 4.8% in Serbia, while at the federal level Catholics made up 23.8% of the total population.<sup>6</sup> The Croatian émigrés' persistent advocacy for an independent Croatian state reflected both a continuation of historical grievances and the unresolved tensions between Croatian nationalism and the Yugoslav federation. These groups leveraged historical memory of wartime allegiances, exploiting the legacy of camps, occupations, and collaborationist associations to legitimize their political claims and mobilize support abroad. The Yugoslav state perceived these efforts as a direct threat to federal cohesion, prompting intensive monitoring, intelligence operations, and preventive measures, highlighting how the historical, religious, and ideological background of Croatian émigrés amplified their distinctiveness and intensity within the broader anti-Yugoslav émigré movement

Particular attention of the Yugoslav state was given to the activities of political émigrés directed toward Yugoslav workers temporarily employed in West Germany. To address this issue, special commissions were formed at the federal, republican, and provincial levels to monitor these developments, while the League of Communists of Yugoslavia established representative offices in countries with significant numbers of workers. Moreover, party cadres were appointed to oversee the life and work of temporary labor migrants abroad. In the case of the FRG, this was of particular relevance, as it hosted the largest concentration of Yugoslav workers. By the early 1970s, more than one million Yugoslav citizens lived abroad, with approximately two-thirds residing in the FRG. The number of Yugoslav citizens going abroad increased rapidly, from 57,000 in 1968 to 127,000 in 1969 and 240,000 in 1970, underscoring Germany's role as the primary destination for Yugoslav Gastarbeiter throughout the decade.<sup>7</sup>

Yugoslav labour migration to West Germany during the Cold War represents a complex interplay between economic necessity, ideological tension, and

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<sup>6</sup> R. HENKEL, *Religions and Religious Institutions in the Post-Yugoslav States between Secularization and Resurgence*, in «Acta Universitatis Carolinae – Geographica», I–II, 2009, p. 51. [https://karolinum.cz/data/clanek/9159/geographica\\_1-2\\_09.49-61.pdf](https://karolinum.cz/data/clanek/9159/geographica_1-2_09.49-61.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> U. BRUNNBAUER, *Yugoslav Gastarbeiter and the Ambivalence of Socialism: Framing Out-Migration as a Social Critique*, in «Journal of Migration History», V, 2019, p. 424, <https://brill.com/jmh>

transnational identity. Historians, sociologists, and anthropologists have examined position of *Gastarbeiter* (“guest workers”) in the FRG through lenses of labour market integration, social marginalization, transnational ties, and the contradictions between socialist self-management and capitalist labour regimes.<sup>8</sup> As Brunnbauer has shown, the mass exodus of workers—especially during the 1960s and 1970s—functioned both as a safety valve for unemployment and as a public acknowledgment of domestic shortcomings, with youth protests criticizing out-migration as a consequence of inequality and alienation in the country. Le Normand’s recent work<sup>9</sup>, further demonstrates how the Yugoslav state sought to maintain influence over its diaspora through media, education, and cultural outreach, seeking to craft a cohesive socialist identity abroad despite rising ethnic fragmentation and exposure to Western ideologies. Other analyses address the legal, political, and socio-economic conditions of Yugoslav guest workers in West Germany, focusing on labor agreements, state control, and the regulation and influence of migrant communities.<sup>10</sup> Additional studies highlight the roles of migrant networks and the Yugoslav state’s bureaucratic efforts to monitor and reintegrate workers,<sup>11</sup> while others examine West Germany’s response to Yugoslavia’s attempts to exert political and cultural influence over its guest workers through institutions like Yugo Clubs.<sup>12</sup> Together, these works depict Yugoslav labour migrants as both agents of economic survival and symbols of a socialist project grappling with its internal contradictions and global entanglements.

The Yugoslav system of socialist self-management, introduced after the 1948 Cominform Resolution<sup>13</sup>, was shaped by the country’s rupture with the

<sup>8</sup> S. CASTLES, G. KOSACK, *Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1973); BRUNNBAUER, *Yugoslav Gastarbeiter...*, cit.

<sup>9</sup> B. LE NORMAND, *Citizens Without Borders: Yugoslavia and Its Migrant Workers in Western Europe* (Toronto, Toronto University Press, 2021).

<sup>10</sup> K. SHONICK, *Politics, Culture, and Economics: Reassessing the West German Guest Worker Agreement with Yugoslavia*, in «Journal of Contemporary History», XLIV, 2009, 4, pp. 719–736; S. MIHAJLOVIC, *Yugoslav Gastarbeiter: The Guest Who Stayed for Dinner*, in «North-western Journal of International Law & Business», VIII, 1987, 1, pp. 181–196.

<sup>11</sup> A. HOFGRÄFF, M. SELNIK, *The Emigrant Regime of Socialist Yugoslavia/Croatia 1945–1973*, in «Časopis za suvremenu povijest», LIII, 2021, 1, pp. 130–150, <https://doi.org/10.22586/csp.v53i1.13224>

<sup>12</sup> C. A. MÖLNAR, *The Cold War and Return Migration: The West German Response to Yugoslavia’s Efforts to Influence its Workers Abroad*, in «European History Quarterly», LII, 2022, 1, pp. 87–113, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02656914211067154>

<sup>13</sup> The Cominform (Communist Information Bureau), was established in 1947 to foster cooperation among European communist parties—including those from the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, France, and Italy—and to coordinate

Soviet Union and its search for a new political and ideological framework.<sup>14</sup> This system combined federalism and republicanism, recognizing the autonomy of six republics and two provinces, while promoting a model of self-managed socialism that emphasized local decision-making and citizen participation. The LCY, employed comprehensive ideological and political indoctrination to shape the population according to socialist principles. Through propaganda in media, educational materials, cultural and artistic production, historiography, and sports, the Party sought to create a “new socialist man” who internalized socialism as a quasi-religious ideology. Central to this effort were five core political ideals—socialism, brotherhood and unity, labor, new social forces, and revolution/liberation struggle—which were instilled as unquestionable dogma.<sup>15</sup> Institutions such as the Agitation and Propaganda Department (Agitprop) of the Central Committee of the LCY, along with subordinate organs at all levels of government, were established to oversee political-ideological education, including for Yugoslav workers temporarily employed abroad. The structured and pervasive nature of this indoctrination highlights how state-controlled reporting and documentation could reflect strong political bias, shaping both domestic perception and the interpretation of events by external observers.

The Yugoslav secret services, established immediately after the Second World War, constituted a central instrument of political control, repression, and strategic surveillance in socialist Yugoslavia. Their development began with OZNA (Department for the Protection of the People) in 1944, tasked with ensuring security and suppressing political opponents, and after the war, it was reorganized into civil and military components, resulting in the creation of UDBA (State Security Administration) and KOS (Counterintelligence

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their activities in opposition to Western influence during the early Cold War. It served as a tool for the Soviet Union to assert control over Eastern European communist parties, ensuring their alignment with Moscow’s policies and directly influencing political strategies and actions within member states. The Cominform Resolution of 28 June 1948 accused the leaders of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia of “embarking on a path of secession from the unified socialist front against imperialism, betraying the cause of the international solidarity of the working people, and shifting to positions of nationalism.” Rezolucija Informacionog biroa komunističkih partija o stanju u Komunističkoj partiji Jugoslavije (Bukurešt, 28 jun 1948), in *1948: Jugoslavija i Kominform – pedeset godina kasnije* (Beograd: Fakultet političkih nauka, Pravni fakultet, Arhiv Jugoslavije, Službeni list SRJ; Podgorica: Istorijski institut Crne Gore), p. 294.

<sup>14</sup> D. JOVIĆ, *Uvod u Jugoslaviju [Introduction to Yugoslavia]* (Novi Sad, Akademska knjiga, 2024); M.-J. CAVIC, *A History of Yugoslavia* (West Lafayette, Purdue University, 2019); B. PETRANOVIĆ, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918–1978* (Beograd, NOLIT, 1980).

<sup>15</sup> A. PREKIĆ, *Crvena ideja Crne Gore* (Podgorica, Matica crnogorska, 2020).

Service).<sup>16</sup> UDBA was responsible for internal security and combating political adversaries of the regime, while KOS oversaw military security under the direct supervision of the Yugoslav People's Army.

These services employed a wide array of methods, including wiretapping, infiltration, intimidation, physical abuse, and even assassinations, often operating under confidential regulations that allowed considerable operational freedom but also facilitated abuses.<sup>17</sup> A particularly illustrative example is the document from the State Archives of Montenegro: *Security Issues Related to the Stay of Our Citizens Working Temporarily Abroad, RSUP SR CG, Služba DB/RSUP SR Montenegro, State Security Service, 6 March 1973, Titograd*<sup>18</sup>, which demonstrates how authorities monitored and assessed the influence of political émigrés on Yugoslav workers abroad. This document shows that surveillance was not solely a domestic matter but was closely connected to international politics and Cold War strategy, reflecting concerns about potential opposition and the impact of the diaspora on maintaining state stability and Yugoslavia's independent position within the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)<sup>19</sup>. Consequently, the role of the secret services extended beyond domestic security, integrating internal control with foreign policy strategy in a bipolar global order, with their reports and assessments directly informing decisions on safeguarding the country's sovereignty and managing relations with the labor diaspora.

As it is obvious, this period must be understood in the broader Cold War context, during which the world was divided into two blocs dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union. Yugoslavia, seeking to maintain independence from both powers, pursued a non-aligned foreign policy<sup>20</sup> that

<sup>16</sup> M. ADAMOVIĆ, *Titovi obaveštajci špijuni i agenti: dokumentarne priče* (Beograd, Čigoja štampa, 2024).

<sup>17</sup> C. A. NIELSEN, *Yugoslavia and Political Assassinations: The History of the Yugoslav State Security Service's Campaign* (London, Bloomsbury, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> *Neki bezbjednosni problemi vezani za boravak naših građana na privremenom radu u inostranstvu / Certain Security Issues Related to the Stay of Our Citizens Working Temporarily Abroad*, RSUP SR CG, Služba DB / RSUP SR Montenegro, State Security Service, 6. mart / March 1973, Titograd / Titograd, DACG – CK SK CG / SAM – CCLCM, f. 377/1/ file 377/1.

<sup>19</sup> The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was established in 1961 at the Belgrade Conference by key leaders of newly independent and decolonizing states, including Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Sukarno of Indonesia, and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana.

<sup>20</sup> J. ČAVOŠKI, *Yugoslavia's Experience with the Non-Aligned Movement: Reconciling Formal Participation and Non-Bloc Policies*, in *On the Fault Lines of European and World Politics: Yugoslavia between Alliances and Neutrality/Non-Alignment*, Srđan MIČIĆ, Jovan ČAVOŠKI (eds.) (Beograd, Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2022), pp. 141–216.

balanced East and West, while navigating military, economic, and ideological pressures from both sides. The establishment of NATO<sup>21</sup> in 1949 and the Warsaw Pact<sup>22</sup> in 1955 exemplified the bipolar global order, in which Yugoslavia attempted to assert a degree of strategic and political autonomy. The self-management system was thus not only a domestic experiment but also a means of ensuring Yugoslavia's sovereignty and stability within the tense and ideologically charged environment of the Cold War.

Pope John Paul II's 1980 visit to West Germany unfolded against the backdrop of the Cold War and the shifting fortunes of the NAM, whose "golden age" of détente-era diplomacy was undermined by the failure of the NIEO (New International Economic Order) and growing dependence on Western economic models. At the same time, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, U.S. anti-communist escalation, and internal divisions among NAM members signaled the onset of the "Second Cold War," exposing both global instability and the weakening cohesion of the movement.<sup>23</sup>

During the 1970s and 1980s, the relationship between Yugoslavia and the Vatican was characterized by cautious diplomacy and mutual recognition of each other's sovereignty. In 1970, Yugoslavia became the first socialist country to establish diplomatic relations with the Holy See<sup>24</sup>, a significant step that marked a departure from the earlier period of estrangement following the 1952 rupture<sup>25</sup> over the Aloysius Stepinac affair<sup>26</sup>.

Namely, after World War II, the LCY, guided by its atheistic ideology, targeted religious communities—particularly the Catholic Church, which it

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<sup>21</sup> NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), established in 1949, is a military alliance of Western countries created to provide collective defense against aggression, particularly from the Soviet Union, during the Cold War.

<sup>22</sup> The Warsaw Pact (1955–1991) was a military alliance of the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, East Germany, and Albania, created to coordinate defense and maintain Soviet control in response to NATO during the Cold War.

<sup>23</sup> J. ČAVOŠKI, "I Posle Tita... Niko. Jugoslavija i Kriza Pokreta Nesvrstanih Početkom Osamdesetih Godina 20. Veka", in «Istorija 20. Veka», god. XLII, 1/2024, pp. 235–238.

<sup>24</sup> POPE PAUL VI, "Address of His Holiness Pope Paul VI to the Ambassador of Yugoslavia to the Holy See" (Vatican, 12 November 1970), [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1970/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_spe\\_19701112\\_ambasciatore-jugoslavia.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1970/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19701112_ambasciatore-jugoslavia.html)

<sup>25</sup> M. AKMADŽA, "The Reasons for the Cessation of Diplomatic Relations Between Yugoslavia and Vatican in 1952", in «Croatica Christiana Periodica», 27, br. 52 (2003), pp. 171–202, <https://hrcak.srce.hr/11909>

<sup>26</sup> Aloysius (Alojzije) Stepinac (1898–1960) was the Archbishop of Zagreb and a prominent Catholic leader in Croatia. He became internationally known for his controversial role during and after World War II: he was accused by the Yugoslav communist authorities of collaborating with the fascist Ustaša regime, though many historians argue that he also helped protect Jews and other persecuted groups.

accused of collaborating with the Ustaša regime. This led to arrests and killings of clergy, restrictions on religious education, confiscation of church property, and suppression of religious publications, prompting Archbishop Stepinac and other bishops to resist and issue a critical pastoral letter in September 1945.<sup>27</sup> Tensions escalated after Stepinac was made a cardinal in 1952, resulting in the Yugoslav government severing diplomatic relations with the Vatican and intensifying its campaign to control the Church.<sup>28</sup>

Although relations between Yugoslavia and the Vatican began to enter a phase of cautious diplomacy and mutual recognition in the 1970s and 1980s, underlying tensions persisted. While the Vatican's *Ostpolitik*<sup>29</sup> sought to promote religious freedoms and influence ecclesiastical affairs, the Yugoslav government endeavored to maintain strict control over the Church and restrict its political involvement. These dynamics were evident when Pope John Paul II's proposed visits to Yugoslavia in the 1980s were declined by authorities,<sup>30</sup> who cited political and economic instability, reflecting the delicate balance between religious diplomacy and socialist sovereignty.

Pope John Paul II played a crucial role in supporting anti-communist and anti-socialist movements in Eastern Europe, most notably through his moral and spiritual backing of the Polish Solidarity (*Solidarność*) movement in the 1980s. Among others, his pastoral visits to Poland in 1979, 1983, and 1987<sup>31</sup> symbolically reinforced opposition to communist authorities and inspired local populations. By publicly advocating for human rights, religious freedom, and freedom of assembly, he implicitly challenged regimes that enforced atheistic

<sup>27</sup> The bishops' pastoral letter openly criticized the communist regime, highlighting the killings and arrests of priests, control over youth education, confiscation of Church property, and restrictions on Catholic institutions, while demanding full freedom for the Catholic press, schools, religious instruction, associations, and charitable activities. The letter was read on September 30, 1945, in churches across the country, making a strong impact domestically and abroad, with Archbishop Stepinac ensuring that the authorities learned of its contents only after it had been read. M. AKMADŽA, "The Reasons for the Cessation of Diplomatic Relations...", cit., pp. 175–176.

<sup>28</sup> M. AKMADŽA, "The Reasons for the Cessation of Diplomatic Relations...", cit., pp. 171–202.

<sup>29</sup> Vatican's *Ostpolitik* was a diplomatic strategy during the Cold War aimed at engaging with Eastern European socialist regimes to protect the Church's interests, promote religious freedoms, and maintain influence over ecclesiastical matters under communist governments. J. RAMŠAK, "The Crumbling Touchstone of the Vatican's *Ostpolitik*: Relations between the Holy See and Yugoslavia, 1970–1989", in «The International History Review», XLIII, 4/2020, pp. 852–869, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2020.1819859>

<sup>30</sup> M. AKMADŽA, *Neostvarena nastojanja pape Ivana Pavla II. da posjeti Jugoslaviju*, in *Croatia Christiana Periodica*, XLI, 2017, 79, pp. 141–158, <https://hrcak.srce.hr/182511>

<sup>31</sup> VATICAN, *Events in the Pontificate of John Paul II*. [https://www.vatican.va/beatificazione\\_gp2/documents/pontificato\\_gp2\\_en.html#1983](https://www.vatican.va/beatificazione_gp2/documents/pontificato_gp2_en.html#1983)

policies and exercised strict control over religious institutions, including that of Yugoslavia.<sup>32</sup>

Regarding the activities of the Catholic Church in the host countries of Yugoslav labor migrants, the communist authorities noted that in West Germany alone, the Croatian Catholic Church maintained 42 missions<sup>33</sup> with more than 70 priests, substantial financial resources, work premises, and transportation facilities.<sup>34</sup> The total number of clergies—Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, and others—surpassed that of consular officials and social workers in the FRG.<sup>35</sup> According to Yugoslav reports, the Church was particularly active in factories and large enterprises where workers were concentrated. It served as a refuge for those facing numerous difficulties in their daily lives and, through such functions, provided a point of contact with émigré circles.

The manner in which party cadres and other representatives of the Yugoslav state and its ideological-political doctrine monitored the movements and activities of the Croatian labor émigré community is most clearly reflected in the content of the *Information on Certain Aspects of the Pope's Visit to the Federal Republic of Germany Relating to Migrant Workers*. This report notes the significant presence of Yugoslav workers at the Pope's public appearances and masses (approximately 20,000 workers attended the mass in Munich), alongside believers who had traveled from Yugoslavia and neighboring countries such as Austria, France, and Switzerland.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> G. CHAMEDES, *A Twentieth-Century Crusade: The Vatican's Battle to Remake Christian Europe* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2019); P. H. KOSICKI (ed.), *Vatican II Behind the Iron Curtain* (London, Routledge, 2016).

<sup>33</sup> Croatian Catholic missions are ecclesiastical communities established abroad to minister to members of the Croatian diaspora. Their role extends beyond the provision of regular religious services: they serve as key centers of cultural preservation, transmitting the Croatian language, traditions, and collective identity through pastoral care, educational initiatives, and community activities. According to Vladimir Stanković's article published in 1986—thirteen years after the 1973 report of the Montenegrin State Security Service—the scope of these missions had expanded considerably. By that time, Croatian pastoral care in Western Europe encompassed 112 missions with 146 priests, 100 social workers, and 123 catechists (nuns). The vast majority were located in West Germany (81), followed by Austria (8), Switzerland (6), France (4), Sweden (3), Belgium (2), and one mission each in Norway, Denmark, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Italy, Luxembourg, and Spain. V. STANKOVIĆ, *The Catholic Church and the Croatians in Foreign Lands*, in «Bogoslovska Smotra», LVI, 1-2/1986, pp. 73–98, <https://hrcak.srce.hr/clanak/54622>

<sup>34</sup> Neki bezbjednosni problemi..., f. 377/1, str. 17 / file 377/1, p. 17.

<sup>35</sup> Neki bezbjednosni problemi..., f. 377/1, str. 17 / file 377/1, p. 17.

<sup>36</sup> *Informacija o nekim aspektima posjete pape SR Njemačkoj koji se odnose na radnike migrante*/Information on Certain Aspects of the Pope's Visit to the FR Germany Relating to Migrant Workers, Uprava za radnike na radu u inostranstvu Saveznog sekretarijata za inostrane poslove/Directorate for Workers Abroad of the Federal Secretariat for Foreign Affairs,

According to the *Information*, following the announcement of the papal visit, propaganda efforts immediately commenced on the part of “representatives of chaplaincy missions”<sup>37</sup> with the aim of gathering more than 50,000 Catholic Yugoslavs and arranging for the Pope to receive a so-called “delegation of Croatia.” This initiative involved Caritas social workers, as well as all Catholic and charitable associations, particularly the Croatian Catholic community and other religious organizations. The primary gathering places for believers were churches, a development perceived extremely negatively by the Yugoslav state.

Between 27 and 31 October 1980, a conference of representatives of Croatian Catholic missions from Western Europe was held, attended by 120 priests, along with representatives of church organizations from Zagreb, the Vatican, and the Catholic Church in the FRG. On this occasion, it was agreed, among other things, that “the faithful should act as a cohesive national group, displaying national flags, traditional costumes, and so forth.” Moreover, these activities involved the participation of hostile émigré circles, with plans reportedly made for one of their members—identified in the document as “Father Cecelja”—to deliver a petition to the Pope during his visit to Mainz.<sup>38</sup>

During the Pope’s visit, flags of émigré organizations bearing the chequered pattern<sup>39</sup> were visible, and at the solemn mass approximately fifty nationalist flags were observed, one of which displayed the date “30 April 1945”<sup>40</sup> together with the letter “U”<sup>41</sup>. Large banners were also noted, bearing slogans such as “Croats Greet the Greatest Son of Poland”<sup>42</sup> and “Freedom for Poland and Croatia.”<sup>43</sup>

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br. 3-273/1 / No. 3-273/1, od 8. 12. 1980. / dated 8 December 1980, DACG – CK SK CG / SAM - CCLCM, 1975–1981, f. 677, str. 1 / file 677, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> The term chaplain (*dušebrižnik*) is employed here in an explicitly pejorative sense.

<sup>38</sup> *Informacija o nekim aspektima posjete pape SR Njemačkoj* / Information on Certain Aspects of the Pope’s Visit to the FR Germany, br. 3-273/1, 8. 12. 1980., DACG – CK SK CG, f. 677, str. 2 / No. 3-273/1, 8 December 1980, SAM – CCLCM, file 677, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> The *šahovnica* (chequerboard) is a symbol of an independent Croatian state, whereas at that time Croatia formed part of the SFRY and did not feature such an emblem on its flag, which instead bore the red star as a symbol of communism and socialism.

<sup>40</sup> 30 Aprile 1945 refers to the day on which the Third Reich decided to withdraw from Croatian territory, effectively marking the end of the puppet quisling government of the NDH (Independent State of Croatia).

<sup>41</sup> The Latin letter “U” was a well-known emblem of the Ustaša movement and appeared on the caps of Ustaša soldiers during the Second World War.

<sup>42</sup> The reference is to Pope John Paul II, who was the first non-Italian pope since the mid-16th century, specifically since 1523.

<sup>43</sup> *Informacija o nekim aspektima posjete pape...*, f. 677, str. 2-3 / file 677, pp. 2–3. Such slogans conveyed a dual message: on one hand, they called for freedom for Poland from communism and socialism; on the other, they advocated freedom for Croatia from the Yugoslav federation, that is, the attainment of independence from the SFRY and the abolition of the socialist system.

Analyzing this report, several key aspects emerge concerning the role of Yugoslav migrant workers, the interactions between church and political organizations, and the strategic objectives pursued by various groups during the papal visit.

The political and ideological involvement of the Yugoslav authorities and church organizations is particularly evident. The report notes that Yugoslavia, through its diplomatic network and security services, closely monitored the Pope's visit, particularly regarding the gathering of Yugoslav migrant workers. In this context, a central component of the report concerns the engagement of the Directorate for Workers Abroad of the Federal Secretariat for Foreign Affairs, which was responsible for organizing and directing migrants participating in masses and other events related to the papal visit.

Furthermore, the report emphasizes that a significant number of Catholics from Yugoslavia, as well as from other countries, were mobilized to attend the Pope's masses. This illustrates the Yugoslav authorities' attempts to observe and control the political and religious activities of their migrant workers, within the broader context of state policy addressing emigration and potential political and ideological actions that could threaten Yugoslav interests or challenge the domestic socialist order.

Additionally, significant element of the report concerns the presence of the Croatian Catholic émigré community, which maintained ties with so-called hostile émigré groups opposed to the Yugoslav state. The report specifically notes that Croatian Catholic missions from Western Europe were highly active in organizing gatherings of Catholic believers. Here, the political dimension is evident: nationalist émigré groups planned to congregate around the Pope and publicly demonstrate their national affiliation with Croatia.

At the conference of Croatian Catholic missions, it was agreed that the faithful should appear as a cohesive national group, indicating the presence of political motives in the organization and visual presentation of these gatherings. National flags, traditional costumes, symbolic imagery, and the overall display of gestures and symbols connecting participants to Croatia underscore the ideological and nationalist character of these events.

One key moment involved the plan for *Father Cecelja*, a member of the émigré group, to present a petition to the Pope. This petition is assumed to have carried a political dimension, likely aiming to draw attention to the nationalist aspirations of the Croatian émigré community, specifically advocating the creation of an independent Croatian state and the dismantling of the socialist order.

The most significant political moment highlighted in the report was the display of flags and slogans during the Pope's masses, which clearly reflected

the historical and political context of the nationalist aspirations of the émigré community. Slogans such as “Freedom for Poland and Croatia” conveyed explicit political messages regarding the struggle for Croatian independence and the prevailing political attitudes of the period. This indicates that the papal visit was experienced not solely as a religious event but also as a political demonstration advancing specific nationalist objectives, with Yugoslav authorities perceiving the Pope’s influence as potentially mobilizing anti-communist sentiment among their diaspora, similar to the effect he had in Poland the previous year.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the Pope’s decision to address Croatian and Slovenian migrants in their native languages during his Mainz sermon demonstrates a deliberate effort to establish a personal and direct connection with these communities. This gesture not only acknowledged their distinct ethnic and cultural identities but also symbolically reinforced their sense of belonging and solidarity within transnational Catholic and diaspora networks.

The Yugoslav state closely monitored these events, as the activities of the Croatian émigré community were perceived to conflict with the country’s official policy. It is likely that Yugoslav services sought to prevent any political initiatives by these groups, recognizing them as a potential threat to the state’s internal stability.

As it is noted, the Yugoslav report highlights nationalist symbols, petitions, and mass gatherings among Yugoslav workers abroad, consistently framing these activities as potential political threats. Yet the analytical reliability of such assessments was constrained by the ideological assumptions discussed earlier: the Yugoslav security apparatus tended to conflate religious practice and cultural expression with subversive mobilization, with the potential to exaggerate the scale and intent of émigré initiatives. The report’s selective emphasis on Croatian émigrés—while downplaying or ignoring other migrant groups—mirrors the priorities and anxieties of the state rather than offering a balanced assessment. Still, the document provides valuable insight into how the authorities interpreted propaganda, organizational capacity, and diaspora influence, even as it silences the perspectives of workers themselves and overlooks the Vatican’s pastoral motives.

In comparative perspective, this report fits a wider pattern of Cold War Yugoslav intelligence, which prioritized the detection of political threats over nuanced sociocultural observation. Its silences—on the everyday experiences of migrant laborers, the diversity and fragmentation of émigré networks, and

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<sup>44</sup> Pope John Paul II’s successful return to Poland in 1979 demonstrated his capacity to mobilize national and religious identity, leading socialist and Eastern Bloc authorities—including Yugoslavia—to perceive him as a transnational political actor.

the Vatican's strategic objectives—are analytically revealing, exposing the assumptions and ideological framing that shaped state security analysis. By contrast, contemporary Western intelligence, such as the CIA's May 1980 memorandum on "Yugoslav Emigre Extremists,"<sup>45</sup> adopted a narrower but less ideologically colored lens. This juxtaposition underscores the different institutional priorities: Yugoslav intelligence overinterpreted symbolic and religious activity as existential threats to socialist unity, while the CIA risked underestimating the softer, long-term impact of Catholic and émigré networks. Taken together, these divergent readings highlight both the limitations and the utility of intelligence reporting, reminding us that omissions, exaggerations, and emphases are themselves critical evidence of how states constructed and managed the perceived dangers of transnational religious and political activism.

Despite the limitations described, the key significance of this report lies in its demonstration of how the Pope's visit symbolically reinforced Catholic and national identities across Western Europe, thereby implicitly challenging the ideologically controlled realities of socialist states such as Yugoslavia; simultaneously, it highlights the role of the Church and émigré communities as transnational actors, which raised concerns for the Yugoslav communist authorities regarding their potential political influence and propagandistic impact.

In conclusion, the document under discussion is significant not merely as an isolated archival record but as a lens through which broader patterns of Cold War-era church-state relations and political mobilization among diasporic communities can be examined.

First, it illustrates how socialist states perceived and responded to transnational actors, in this case, the Catholic Church and Croatian émigré networks, highlighting the interplay between ideological control and the soft power of religion. This provides concrete evidence of the mechanisms by which the Yugoslav authorities monitored and sought to influence their citizens abroad, contributing to our understanding of state surveillance and the management of migrant populations during the Cold War.

Second, the case sheds light on diaspora political mobilization, demonstrating how émigré communities coordinated transnational networks to maintain cultural and religious identity, engage in political lobbying, and assert influence across borders. This aligns with and extends existing scholarship on labour migration, showing that migrants were not simply passive labourers but also active participants in broader political and ideological struggles.

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<sup>45</sup> CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, *Yugoslav Emigre Extremists*, Memorandum (Washington, DC, CIA, 29 May 1980), CIA Document Number CIA-RDP85T00287 R000101220002-6.

Finally, by juxtaposing the Yugoslav authorities' perceptions with the Church's activities, the document challenges simplified narratives of socialist control or migrant passivity. It confirms that tensions between national authorities and transnational religious institutions were both ideologically and practically significant, while also revealing the limits of state power in managing diasporic communities.

In short, this case illuminates broader processes of transnational political and religious engagement, state surveillance, and ideological negotiation in a Cold War context, providing insights that extend beyond the intrinsic interest of the single event.

Below is the original text of the document in Serbo-Croatian titled "Informacija o nekim aspektima posjete pape SR Njemačkoj koji se odnose na radnike migrante," followed by its English translation under the title "Information on Certain Aspects of the Pope's Visit to the Federal Republic of Germany Relating to Migrant Workers."

## APPENDIX

INFORMACIJA O NEKIM ASPEKTIMA POSJETE  
PAPE SR NJEMAČKOJ KOJI SE ODOSE NA  
RADNIKE MIGRANTE

Savezni sekretarijat za inostrane poslove  
Uprava za radnike na radu u inostranstvu

Pov. br. 3-273/1  
8. decembar 1980. g.

**Original [A]:** Državni arhiv Crne Gore, Centralni komitet Saveza komunista Crne Gore, fascikla 677 (1975–1981)

U periodu od 15. do 19. novembra 1980. godine u SR Njemačkoj se u zvaničnoj posjeti nalazio rimokatolički poglavar papa Jovan Pavle II. Papinoj posjeti i raznovrsnom i posebno pripremanom programu boravka u svjetskoj štampi je dat širok publicitet.

Značajan dio svoje aktivnosti papa je posvetio problemima života i rada stranih radnika u SR Njemačkoj. Na više mjesta, tokom posjete, papa je ukazivao na stavove rimokatoličke crkve u odnosu na “gastarbajtere”, politiku integracije, probleme druge generacije migranata i dr.

Trećeg dana posjete papa je u Mainzu govorio stranim radnicima. Pred više desetina hiljada stranih radnika papa je održao govor o nekim gledanjima katoličke crkve na život i rad stranih radnika i članova njihovih porodica u SR Njemačkoj.

Među mnogobrojnim stranim radnicima, ne samo na misi u Mainzu, nego i na drugim javnim nastupima pape, zapaženo je i značajno prisustvo naših radnika. Najviše ih je bilo na misi u Minhenu, gde ih se okupilo oko 20.000. takođe, veliki broj naših građana primijećen je i na misama u Mainzu, Altotingu, Osnabricku i u drugim mjestima, koja je papa posjetio. Svečanim papinim misama u SR Njemačkoj je prisustvovalo i nekoliko hiljada vjernika iz Jugoslavije, koji su posebno zbog toga doputovali iz naše zemlje ili iz susjednih zemalja Austrije, Francuske i Švajcarske.

Sa pripremanima u vezi sa posjetom papae, u okviru svih vjerskih struktura, započelo se odmah po objavljivanju vijesti o papinoj posjeti SR Njemačkoj.

Predstavnici dušebrižničkih misija pokrenuli su veoma intenzivnu propagandu među našim građanima i u pripreme je uključen veliki broj vjernika. Sirene su vijesti da će papinim misama prisustvovati više od 50.000 katolika-Jugoslovena, da će doći na desetine hiljada vjernika iz zemlje, da će papa primiti delegaciju Hrvata i sl.

U crkvenu propagandnu mašineriju uključeni su svi dušebrižnici, socijalni radnici 'Caritasa', sva katolička i milosrdna društva koja se bave našim građanima. Najveći dio priprema je vršen preko "Hrvatskih katoličkih zajednica" ili drugih vjerskih organizacija. U crkvama i drugim mjestima okupljanja vjernika vršene su značajne pripreme u cilju obezbjeđenja što većeg prisustva papinim misama i govorima.

Od 27. do 31. oktobra 1980. godine u Vierzehnheiligenu je održano savjetovanje dušebrižnika hrvatskih katoličkih misija iz Zapadne Evrope, na kojem je, u prisustvu 120 sveštenika, djakovičkog biskupa i drugih crkvenih velikodostojnika iz Zagreba, kao i predstavnika Vatikana i Katoličke crkve u SR Njemačkoj, bilo govora o propagandi, organizaciji i drugim aspektima posjete pape SR Njemačkoj u odnosu na vjernike iz Jugoslavije. Zaključeno je da se vjernici tom prilikom trebaju da manifestuju kao kompaktna nacionalna grupacija, sa nacionalnim zastavama, narodnim nošnjama itd. Bilo je takođe govora i o tome da ne bi trebalo dozvoliti da ove manifestacije dobiju karakter političkih demonstracija, iako je prihvaćena mogućnost da će takvih demonstracija ipak biti.

Neprijateljska emigracija se aktivno uključila u akciju koju je vodila crkva, nastojeći da iz svega izvuče što veću korist. Posredovanjem jednog dijela dušebrižnika vršen je pritisak na Vatikan da se u zvanični program pape uvrsti i prijem "hrvatske" delegacije a vršene su i pripreme da pop Cecelja /poznati pripadnik ekstremne neprijateljske emigracije/ uruči peticiju papi za vrijeme njegove posjete Mainzu.

Prisustvo neprijateljske emigracije zabilježeno je na većem broju skupova. Na misi u Altotingu emigracija se pojavila sa dvije emigrantske zastave sa šahovskim poljem, a na svečanoj misi i propovijedi u Minhenu primijećeno je oko 50 nacionalističkih zastava od kojih je jedna bila sa datumom "30.4.1945" i dvije sa slovom "U". Zapažene su i dvije poveće parole "Hrvati pozdravljaju najvećeg sina Poljske" i "Sloboda za Poljsku i Hrvatsku".

Na velikoj propovijedi u Mainzu papa se posebno obratio stranim radnicima iz Španije, Italije, Hrvatske i Slovenije govoreći im njihovim jezikom.

INFORMATION ON CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE  
POPE'S VISIT TO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF  
GERMANY RELATING TO MIGRANT WORKERS,  
8 DECEMBER 1980

Federal Secretariat for Foreign Affairs  
Directorate for Workers Abroad  
Confidential No. 3-273/1

**Original [A]:** State Archives of Montenegro, Central Committee of the League of Communists of Montenegro, file 677 (1975–1981)

Between 15 and 19 November 1980, Pope John Paul II, the head of the Roman Catholic Church, undertook an official visit to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). The Pope's visit, along with his carefully prepared program, received wide coverage in the international press.

A significant portion of his activities was devoted to issues concerning the life and work of foreign workers in the FRG. On multiple occasions during the visit, the Pope addressed the Catholic Church's positions on "Gastarbeiter" policies, integration, the challenges faced by second-generation migrants, and related matters.

On the third day of his visit, the Pope spoke in Mainz to tens of thousands of foreign workers, delivering a speech on the Catholic Church's perspectives regarding the lives and labor of foreign workers and their families in West Germany.

Among the numerous foreign workers present—not only at the mass in Mainz but also at other public appearances—Yugoslav workers were prominently visible. The largest concentration was at the mass in Munich, with approximately 20,000 attendees. Substantial numbers of Yugoslav citizens were also observed at masses in Mainz, Altötting, Osnabrück, and other locations visited by the Pope. Several thousand believers from Yugoslavia traveled specifically for these events, as did others from neighboring countries including Austria, France, and Switzerland.

Preparations for the papal visit began immediately upon the announcement of his itinerary to the FRG.

Representatives of the chaplaincy missions launched an intensive campaign among our citizens, involving a large number of believers in the preparations. Reports circulated that more than 50,000 Catholic Yugoslavs would attend the Pope's masses, that tens of thousands of worshippers would come

from the country, and that the Pope would receive a Croatian delegation, among other things.

All chaplains, Caritas social workers, and all Catholic and charitable associations working with our citizens were engaged in the Church's propaganda apparatus. Most of the preparations were carried out through the "Croatian Catholic Communities" or other religious organizations. Extensive preparations were undertaken in churches and other places where the faithful gathered, with the aim of ensuring the largest possible attendance at the Pope's masses and addresses.

From 27 to 31 October 1980, a conference of pastoral workers from Croatian Catholic missions in Western Europe was held in *Vierzehnheiligen*. Attended by 120 priests, the Bishop of Đakovo, other high-ranking clerics from Zagreb, representatives of the Vatican, and the Catholic Church in the FRG, the conference addressed propaganda, organization, and other aspects of the Pope's visit in relation to Yugoslav believers. It was concluded that the faithful should present themselves as a cohesive national group, displaying national flags, traditional costumes, and so forth. The possibility of political demonstrations was acknowledged, although it was officially discouraged.

Hostile émigré groups actively participated in the Church-led initiatives, seeking to maximize their influence. Through certain pastoral intermediaries, pressure was applied on the Vatican to include a reception for a "Croatian" delegation in the Pope's official program. Preparations were also made for *Father Cecelja*, a known member of the extreme émigré opposition, to present a petition to the Pope during his visit to Mainz.

The presence of hostile émigrés was recorded at numerous gatherings. At the mass in Altötting, the émigré community displayed two chequered flags, while at the solemn mass and sermon in Munich, approximately fifty nationalist flags were observed, including one with the date "30 April 1945" and two bearing the letter "U." Two large banners carried the slogans "Croats Greet the Greatest Son of Poland" and "Freedom for Poland and Croatia."

During a major sermon in Mainz, the Pope addressed foreign workers from Spain, Italy, Croatia, and Slovenia in their native languages.

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**Abstract**

*Questo articolo analizza un rapporto confidenziale jugoslavo concernente la visita di Papa Giovanni Paolo II nella Repubblica Federale di Germania (RFG) dal 15 al 19 novembre 1980, conservato presso l'Archivio di Stato del Montenegro. Redatto dalla Direzione per i Lavoratori all'Estero del Segretariato Federale per gli Affari Esteri della Repubblica Federale Socialista di Jugoslavia (RFSJ), il documento offre un contributo significativo alla comprensione delle pratiche di sorveglianza e monitoraggio dei lavoratori migranti jugoslavi, nonché degli obiettivi politici e ideologici perseguiti tanto dallo Stato quanto dalle comunità dell'emigrazione. L'analisi evidenzia il duplice ruolo della Chiesa cattolica, intesa sia come istituzione religiosa sia come veicolo di mobilitazione politica degli emigrati, in particolare tra i migranti cattolici croati legati a gruppi nazionalisti. Episodi rilevanti — quali l'esposizione di bandiere e slogan nazionalisti durante le celebrazioni papali, le forme di organizzazione dei lavoratori migranti e le iniziative volte alla presentazione di petizioni al Pontefice — illustrano come la visita fosse percepita non esclusivamente come evento religioso, ma anche come spazio politico per l'articolazione di aspirazioni nazionaliste. Il rapporto mette inoltre in luce gli sforzi compiuti dallo Stato jugoslavo per osservare, contenere e contrastare potenziali attività ostili all'ordine statale nelle comunità dei migranti, rivelando le tensioni tra le politiche socialiste interne, l'attivismo politico dell'emigrazione e la dimensione internazionale dei rapporti con la Santa Sede.*

*This article examines a confidential Yugoslav report on Pope John Paul II's visit to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) from 15 to 19 November 1980, preserved in the State Archives of Montenegro. Prepared by the Directorate for Workers Abroad of the Federal Secretariat for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), the report provides insight into the surveillance and monitoring of Yugoslav migrant workers, as well as the political and ideological objectives pursued by both the state and émigré communities. The analysis highlights the dual role of the Catholic Church as both a religious institution and a conduit for émigré political activity, particularly among Croatian Catholic migrants linked to nationalist groups. Key events, including the display of nationalist flags and slogans at papal masses, the organization of migrant workers, and plans for petitions to the Pope, illustrate how the visit was perceived not only as a religious event but also as a political arena for the expression of nationalist aspirations. The report further underscores the Yugoslav state's efforts to observe, control, and counter potential anti-state activities among migrant communities, revealing tensions between domestic socialist policies, émigré political activism, and the international dimension of relations with the Vatican.*

**KEYWORDS**

*Pope John Paul II*

*Catholic Church*

*Croatian émigrés*

*Yugoslav migrant workers*

*Federal Republic of Germany*