

## How antisemitic was the political Catholicism in Croatia-Slavonia around 1900?

by Marija Vulesica

### Abstract

*Before the Croatian-Slavonian parliamentary elections in 1897, two oppositional parties formed the so called United Opposition which was backed by large segments of the clergy. Afraid, variously, of liberalism, the Hungarian church reforms, the ideas of social democracy and the demands for secularization, the United Opposition chose antisemitism as a political means. Supported by the Catholic paper (Katolički list) and its editor in chief Stjepan Korenić, who openly called for the clergy to organize politically, they blamed Jews for all the putative threats of the modern world. For the first time an election campaign in Croatia-Slavonia had open antisemitic traits. The author shows the impact of antisemitic ideas within some parts of the Croatian opposition since the 1880s, including political Catholicism and the United Opposition, down to the turn of the century. The paper considers in addition the role of the Catholic newspaper and the press in general in the antisemitic campaign in 1897, as well as in the distribution of antisemitic ideas in the 1880s and 1890s in the Habsburg crownland Croatia-Slavonia.*

“If somebody answered to the question, should the clergy deal with politics, they should not, this somebody would condemn them to watch quietly and with entangled hands how the politics destroy the foundation pillars of the society and family, how the state suppresses the church, how the parliaments vote for all kinds of unchristian laws”<sup>1</sup>

This attitude, expressed in the leading article of the Catholic newspaper (*Katolički list*)<sup>2</sup> in early May 1897, described the self-image of a part of the Croatian clergy whereupon it had to be politically active to protect and save the fundamental pillars of society and family. Modern politics, this was the implication of these lines, would threaten the Christian basis of society. The clergy should therefore remove its “entangled hands” and act politically. This article appeared in the organ of the Zagreb Archdiocese shortly before the parliamentary elections which took place from the 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 1897. The Croatian clergy was neither organized as a movement nor as a political party at that time. Yet it was an important and influential political force in

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<sup>1</sup> *Katolički List* (Catholic paper), May 8, 1897. From now on *KL*.

<sup>2</sup> *Katolički List* was first established in 1849 as *Katolički List Zagreba* i. It is not known how high its circulation was, nevertheless it was one of the most important journals in Croatia and Slavonia and was read by most clergymen. Vlasta Švoger, “Das kroatische Pressewesen”, *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, Vol. III/2, eds. Helmut Rumpler, Peter Urbanitsch, (Wien: VÖAW, 2006): 2149-2176.

Croatia and contrary to the claims of the Catholic newspaper, it had been fighting actively and successfully for its interests for years.<sup>3</sup>

Political fortunes of the Croatian parties have been decisively influenced by the priesthood in the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Reasons for the influence of the clergy are to be found among others in the socio-cultural nature of the Croatian-Slavonian society.<sup>4</sup> Social advancement and education of the general population was virtually impossible. Most young men, therefore, became priests, because this profession offered economic safety and the possibility of political participation for the clergy had the right to vote, which was very limited otherwise. Clergymen were thus organized in political parties across the country, held some of the leading positions and formed an important group of voters. A politicization of Catholicism seemed for many years yet unnecessary, as no serious and profound conflicts between Church and State arose.<sup>5</sup>

Around the mid-1890s a change occurred in the political consciousness of some of the Croatian ministers of religion and new voices came forward, demanding and promoting just that politicization and an explicitly Catholic political movement. The Catholic Church in Croatia found itself and its principles threatened in 1894 by the liberal legislation, which was implemented in Hungary. It also rejected the ideas of social democracy and the demands of the younger generation of politicians for secularization.<sup>6</sup> Although the latter two factors had no power, the clergy felt challenged by several doctrines that were opposed to its position. Inspired by the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 and by the parties set up with an explicitly Christian program like the Christian Social Party in Austria and the Catholic People's Party in Hungary, within a part of the Croatian ministers of religion the intention stirred to organize themselves politically as Catholics and to meet the *new things*, such as social and political challenges.

The motor of political Catholicism in Croatia-Slavonia was the priest Stjepan Korenić, who became the chief editor of the *Katolički list* in 1896.<sup>7</sup> And while the Catholic newspaper claimed in the early 1890s neither to belong to any

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<sup>3</sup> On the position and history of the Catholic Church in Croatia: Ivan Vitezić, "Die Römisch-katholische Kirche bei den Kroaten", *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, Vol. IV, eds. Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, (Wien: VÖAW, 1985): 332-398.

<sup>4</sup> Croatia and Slavonia, institutional precursors of today's Republic Croatia, were crownlands of the Habsburg monarchy until 1918. They have been under the Habsburg or Hungarian supremacy since the Middle Ages. In 1868 a Compromise between Croatia, Slavonia and Hungary was achieved, which granted Croatia and Slavonia autonomy over internal affairs, justice and matters of religion and education. Croatia and Slavonia were ruled by a Ban (viceroy). Until the demise of Austro-Hungarian Empire, the political relations between the Croats and Hungarians were tense, not least because of the Hungarian policy of the so called Magyarization. Branka Magaš, *Croatia through history*, (London: Saqi, 2007); Ivo Goldstein. *Croatia. A history*, (London: Hurst, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Mario Strecha, *Katoličko Hrvatsvo*, (Zagreb: Barbat, 1997), 57.

<sup>6</sup> Strecha, *Katoličko Hrvatsvo*, 58f.

<sup>7</sup> Mario Strecha, "O procesu politizacije katolicizma u Banskjoj Hrvatskoj potkraj 19. Stoljeća," *Bosna Franciscana* 26 (2007): 113.

political party nor to support any particular political movement, the Archbishop of Zagreb, Juraj Posilović, the publisher of the paper, called to the clergy in the spring of 1894 not to support the politicians who defended the liberal legislation.<sup>8</sup> With a call to the clergy to be politically active, he of course held off. Korenić, on the contrary, purported already in the first edition of the Catholic newspaper under his aegis that Christianity was threatened, that the Christian nations should unite against the impending danger and that they should confront with this threat.<sup>9</sup> Right at the beginning of his term the paper called to the clergy. “On your feet, priests and laymen! [...] At the work that lies ahead of you in your time and in your country. Do not worry about the old morals of the dead, not even about the criticism of the living. Fight anytime, anywhere courageously and persistently for the right thing, then you will gain this century for the Church of God.”<sup>10</sup> The message was clear. The clergy and the laity should fight for the interests of the church and ignore the old standards by which the church was to stay out of political life.

During the year 1896, the Catholic paper published over and over again articles which aimed to mobilize the clergy for the political action.<sup>11</sup> Besides, antisemitic attitudes and views were expressed more frequently. Support and admiration was declared for the Austrian and Hungarian antisemites. The paper had already positioned itself in the early 1880s towards the rising antisemitism in Europe. Although it held back with antisemitic articles quantitatively until the mid-1890s, its editors made clear their antipathy towards the “Jewish press” and the supposed large influence of Jews.<sup>12</sup> In even stronger terms the Catholic newspaper positioned itself against liberalism and the introduction of civil marriage, considering the Jews as carriers and representative of both these ideas.<sup>13</sup>

### **The hostility of the Church towards Jews**

In 1873 the Croatian Parliament approved the Emancipation Act, granting equal rights to the Croatian Jews.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the representatives of the

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<sup>8</sup> Strecha, “O procesu politizacije,” 105.

<sup>9</sup> *KL*, January 1, 1896.

<sup>10</sup> *KL*, January 9, 1896.

<sup>11</sup> *KL*, April 9, 1896, August 6, 1896, October 8, November 19, 1896. For the perception of the Dreyfus Affair in Croatia-Slavonia in this period see, Ljiljana Dobrovšak, *Hrvatska javnost prema Židovima krajem 19. Stoljeća. Za vrijeme Dreyfusove afere od 1894.-1899* (The Croat Public Opinion and the Jews at the End of the Nineteenth Century. The period of the Dreyfus-Affair 1894-1899), Master’s thesis University of Zagreb 2002.

<sup>12</sup> *KL*, March 20, 1890; July 2, 1891, November 21, 1895.

<sup>13</sup> *KL*, February 2, February 11, 1892; March 2, 1893; May 17, 1894; July 11, July 18, July 25, August 1, August 8, August 15, August 22, 1895.

<sup>14</sup> Jews were present in the Croatian lands at least since the end of the 18th century. Their legal status changed several times during the next decades. Since 1873, when the Emancipation act was passed, Jews were to be found in all important branches of the political and economic life. In 1900 about 20.000 Jews lived in Croatia, mostly in the bigger cities like Zagreb or Osijek.

Church did their best to resist against the full emancipation and integration of the minority. Nevertheless, the representatives of the Church prevented full legal equality. In 1877 the Bishop of Đakovo, Josip Juraj Strossmayer, one of the most respected and influential figures in Croatia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for example, acted strongly against a Jewish teacher who was installed in a public school. By turning to government and politics and by threatening to mobilize the parents to keep their children away from school, he finally achieved the removal of the Jewish teacher.<sup>15</sup> He interpreted the appointment of the Jewish teacher as “death and destruction of our people.”<sup>16</sup> The church shall not allow Jews to educate the youth because this would lead to a loss of their Christianity.<sup>17</sup> Strossmayer took similar efforts in 1884, when Jewish-Christian marriages were debated in Croatia. The Croatian government in April 1884 declared that Jews were to be seen as equal to Christians and therefore Christians would be able to convert to Judaism and to marry Jews.<sup>18</sup> Strossmayer and other senior clerics protested against this decision. He even intervened with the papal nuncio in Vienna, Serafino Vannutelli.<sup>19</sup> In his letter dated 29<sup>th</sup> of September 1884 he justified his intervention by saying that there was in fact the principle that the clergy should not meddle in politics, but this principle was a device formulated by the Jews and Freemasons in order to “secure their gains” and to harm the Catholic Church. He continued by claiming that the Croatian government wanted to remove the church from “the heart of men,” so that Freemasons and rabbis could work with governmental assistance on the destruction of the Church.<sup>20</sup> The agitation of the clergy and circles close to the Croatian Independent National Party, which was opposing the government, eventually caused the withdrawal of the governmental statement concerning the Jewish-Christian marriages.<sup>21</sup> Conversions to Judaism in general and marriages between Christians who converted to Judaism outside the Croatian lands and Jews remained impossible in Croatia until the collapse of the monarchy. The agitation of the clerical circles showed that they did not accept the full equality

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Croatian Jews were in comparison with the non-Jews highly literate. In 1900 42 per cent of Croatian Jews claimed German as their mother tongue. Ljiljana Dobrovšak, “Emancipacija Židova u Kraljevini Hrvatskoj, Slavoniji i Dalmaciji u 19. Stoljeću”, *Radovi*, 37/1(2005), 125-143; *Dva Stoljeća povijest i kulture Židova u Zagrebu i Hrvatskoj*, ed. Ognjen Kraus (Zagreb: Židovska općina Zagreb, 1998).

<sup>15</sup> Ferdo Šišić, *Korespondencija Rački- Strossmayer*, Vol. I., (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija, 1928), 75-84.

<sup>16</sup> Šišić, *Korespondencija Rački- Strossmayer*, 75.

<sup>17</sup> Šišić, *Korespondencija Rački- Strossmayer*, 76.

<sup>18</sup> *Narodne novine* (National paper), April 18, 1884.

<sup>19</sup> *Korespondencija Strossmayer-Vannutelli 1881-1887*, ed. Josip Balabanić, Josip Kolanović (Zagreb: Hrvatski državni arhiv, 1999), 327, 347, 349, 351, 353, 359; Mario Strecha, „To je na svaki način pravi škandal”, Zbornik Mirjane Gross, ed. Božena Vranješ-Šoljan, (Zagreb: Filozofsky Fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 1999), 223f.

<sup>20</sup> “Strossmayer – Vannutelli”, 361.

<sup>21</sup> Mario Strecha, “To je na svaki način pravi škandal”, 235.

of Jews. Their success demonstrated as well the great political influence that the clergy had in Croatia.

### Political Catholicism and its antisemitism

Korenić demanded right in the first edition of the Catholic paper under his leadership that the Christian nations should unite against the impending dangers and asked them to confront themselves with these dangers too. One of the means for achieving this could also be antisemitism. Although warning about the errors of “modern antisemitism,” like the claims, that everything connected to Judaism, like the Bible, should be removed from public life,<sup>22</sup> he proposed that antisemitic forms may well be applied to solve the “social question” if they comply with Christian moral principles.<sup>23</sup> The new editor distinguished between a good and useful antisemitism and a poor and dangerous one for Christianity.

During the year 1896, the Catholic paper published several articles, which aimed to mobilize the political clergy.<sup>24</sup> In addition, antisemitic attitudes and views were expressed more frequently and the Catholic paper declared its support and admiration for Austrian and Hungarian antisemites. In this sense, in early May of 1896 the editorial article “Dr. Karl Lueger and antisemitism” was published. Lueger was initially praised as “a Catholic and a patriot.” Then it was said that the antisemitic movement had to be discussed in the Catholic newspaper as a “social phenomenon and because of its socio-religious aspect”. The paper declared that antisemitism was an ancient phenomenon which initially had a religious character. The guilt of the Jews for the death of Jesus, their *speculation* and usury had been the reasons for their expulsions. But “modern antisemitism” (“moderni antisemitizam”) was no longer religious, “it is an expression of outrage against the Semitic tribe because of the exploitation and the monopoly of big business, which is largely in Jewish hands.” It further stated that “patriotic groups” would sympathize with antisemitism, because the major European newspapers were in Jewish hands and this alleged “Jewish press” would “falsify” the public opinion. This “Semitic press”- stated the article- abuses and twists everybody’s freedom under the disguise of liberalism. This kind of journalism which was accused to be at the orders of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* was a crime against ethics and justice. Lueger, the Christian parties and their antisemitism were directed against this “pseudo-liberalism” and against the Jews who dominated the big business and the press. The paper rejected the “vulgar antisemitism” of Herman Ahlwardt<sup>25</sup> and Eugen

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<sup>22</sup> KL, January 1, 1896. ‘

<sup>23</sup> KL, January 9, 1896.

<sup>24</sup> KL, April 9, 1896, August 6, 1896, October 8, November 19, 1896.

(21) Hermann Ahlwardt, 1846-1914. He appeared as an antisemitic speaker and publicist since the 1890s. His antisemitic rhetoric was directed primarily against the alleged dominance of Jews in the financial world and in the press. He then unfurled a “Sozialdemagogie” which was directed against big business. Ahlwardt also demanded the expropriation of the Jews and their

Dürring.<sup>26</sup> It stated that it supported only Christian antisemitism as a reaction to Judaism, which was ruling over the Christian peoples in the economic, journalistic and political fields. “That’s why we are happy and we welcome Lueger’s victory, like the entire Christian press in and outside of the monarchy, as a victory over the false liberalism and Freemasonry.”<sup>27</sup>

The orientation of the Catholic newspaper was thus clearly defined. In numerous articles during the years 1896 and 1897 there was a talk about “Jewish liberalism” which threatened the Church in Hungary and Croatia.<sup>28</sup> Liberal or pro-governmental newspapers were described automatically as “Jewish” and the *Agramer Zeitung*, a German-speaking Croatian newspaper whose editors were Jewish, was called with the derogatory term *Ćifut*, an expression which has no equivalent in English.<sup>29</sup>

At least since the 1880s liberalism embodied in the eyes of the Croatian clergy a great danger for the Church. In a series of articles in the summer of 1895, the “anti-Christian meaning” of atheism and liberalism was denounced. Liberalism was pictured as being directed against religious dogmas, as promoting religious indifference, as wanting to remove people from God and installing civil marriage and secular schools.<sup>30</sup> In short, liberalism stood for all the evils and dangers that threatened the Catholic Church. It required no longer deliberations to identify liberalism with the Jews, whose rise into the middle of society was related to the liberal ideas and policies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After 1895, the connection between Jews and liberalism in the minds of Catholic political parties became indissoluble.

In 1896 the Catholic paper closely watched the elections in Hungary and did not make a secret of its support and admiration for the Hungarian People’s Party. In September 1896 it wrote about the People’s Party “it has to contend with so much suffering and difficulties which were caused to her by the Jewish liberalism.” In the same issue it was said: “Jewish liberalism, which is responsible for today’s religious-political situation in Hungary has begun to falter.”<sup>31</sup> In the edition of the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 1896 a correspondent’s report from *Medjimurje* appeared. This region on the Croatian-Hungarian border with a majority of Croat population politically formed a part of Hungary, but in canonically matters it belonged to the archdiocese of Zagreb. The election for the Hungarian parliament was held here in the fall 1896. About the outcome of

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expulsion. Christoph Jahr, “Hermann Ahlwardt”, *Handbuch des Antisemitismus. Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Vol. 2/1, ed. Wolfgang Benz, (Berlin – München: De Gruyter Saur, 2009), 7; Thomas Gondermann, “Vom politischen Antisemitismus zum politischen Antiamerikanismus. Der Wandel sozialer Demagogie bei Hermann Ahlwardt,” *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 17 (2008): 198-203.

<sup>26</sup> Werner Bergmann, “Eugen Karl Dürring, 1833-1921,” *Handbuch des Antisemitismus*, Vol. 2/1, 188-191. Dürring must be seen as a mastermind of racial antisemitism.

<sup>27</sup> *KL*, May 7, 1896.

<sup>28</sup> *KL*, September 24, October 8, 1896.

<sup>29</sup> *KL*, October 1, 1896.

<sup>30</sup> *KL*, July 11, July 18, July 25, August 1, August 8, August 15, 1895.

<sup>31</sup> *KL*, September 24, 1896.

the election, which had to be repeated in this region, the correspondent wrote: “[...] These elections have shown that all this is a Judeo-Magyars ‘švindl’ (German: Schwindel, dizziness, MV) and a lie.” Later in that report the author accused “Judeo-Magyar liberalism” to corrupt and to loot the Croats. “Jews, they are a misfortune for this nation,” the author concluded.<sup>32</sup> The resemblance to Heinrich von Treitschke’s phrase “The Jews are our misfortune” from 1879 was certainly not by chance.<sup>33</sup> In reference to the renowned German historian who had made antisemitism “socially acceptable” in Germany, the Catholic paper wanted to underpin the correctness of its own anti-Jewish attitude. The report also stated that the Jewish journal “Muraköz” (Hungarian: *Medjmurje*) promoted the destruction and demoralization of the people and that it would ridicule the faith and the priests. Furthermore, according to the correspondent, on the Election Day Jews had insulted the priests and bribed voters with money.<sup>34</sup> The detailed report from *Medjmurje* gathered all the accusations that were raised by Croatian antisemites. The drawing of such a picture in view of the upcoming elections fitted into their political strategy. They insisted that the Jews would manipulate the elections and determine the nation’s policy by corrupting the minds of the people and by stimulating agitations against the church and the clergy.

In the same issue the Catholic paper celebrated the victory of the Christian Social Party in Lower and Upper Austria. “The Jewish and Masonic liberalism had poisoned and sucked the Christian element in Austria into the political, economic and educational field for years.” But Lueger and the Christian idea dealt them a decisive blow, the magazine continued. In Vienna and Leopoldstadt, “the Jewish island,” Jewish liberalism was about to crash. “The truth,” said the paper, “which was kicked and suppressed over the decades in the Jewish press has finally triumphed.”<sup>35</sup>

In the following editions the Catholic paper alleged repeatedly that Jews stood behind liberalism.<sup>36</sup> The Catholic paper furthermore stoked fears with the

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<sup>32</sup> KL, November 12, 1896.

<sup>33</sup> The historian Heinrich von Treitschke broke in 1879 with his essay “Our prospects”, in which the above mentioned rate fell, the so-called Berlin Antisemitism Controversy: *Der ‘Berliner Antisemitismusstreit’ 1879-1881. Eine Kontroverse um die Zugehörigkeit der deutschen Juden zur Nation. Kommentierte Quellenedition*, ed. Karsten Krieger (München: K.G.Saur, 2003); Karsten Krieger, “Heinrich von Treitschke”, *Handbuch des Antisemitismus*, Bd.2/2, 838f; Ulrich Wyrwa, “Heinrich von Treitschke. Geschichtsschreibung und öffentliche Meinung im Deutschland des 19. Jahrhunderts”, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 51 (2003): 781-792. Ulrich Wyrwa, “Genese und Entfaltung antisemitischer Motive in Heinrich von Treitschkes ‚Deutscher Geschichte im 19. Jahrhundert‘”, *Antisemitische Geschichtsbilder*, eds. Werner Bergmann, Ulrich Sieg, (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2009), 83-101. The sentence “The Jews are our misfortune” could be read on every front page of the Nazi newspaper “Der Stürmer” since 1927. To the importance of this momentous antisemitic slogan: Jacob Katz, “Die Juden sind unser Unglück”. Reflexionen über ein antisemitisches Schlagwort”, Jacob Katz, *Zwischen Messianismus und Zionismus. Zur Jüdischen Sozialgeschichte*, (Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Verlag, 1993), 108-118.

<sup>34</sup> KL, November 12, 1896.

<sup>35</sup> KL, November 12, 1896.

<sup>36</sup> KL, November 19, 1896.

debate around the interconfessional laws which aimed to allow a conversion from Christianity to Judaism. At the end of November 1896 the paper declared it had to be particularly attentive, because Christianity experienced a “capitulation to Judaism,” making reference to the Hungarian situation.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the paper referred to this issue so that Croatia should not be surprised at such legislative proposals.

At the beginning of 1897 the Catholic paper expressed its satisfaction with the victory of the antisemites in Austria, but over the next few months any rhetoric related to elections stopped. Although anti-Jewish remarks appeared over and over again, they did not appear in connection to the parliamentary elections in Croatia. Reasons for this were that the government of Banus Khuen-Hédévary officially disapproved the interference of the Church in politics. The pro-governmental press condemned such attempts as well. Secondly, the highest ranking members of the Croatian clergy, led by the Archbishop of Zagreb, Posilović, tried to deny the participation of the Church and the clergy in politics. The reluctance of the Catholic paper concerning open intervention in the May elections was linked to this official line of the Church in Croatia.

Although the Catholic paper avoided direct attacks against Jews during the election campaign, there nevertheless appeared articles which were meant to instruct the Catholic voters indirectly. In the spring of 1897 a series of articles entitled *Christianity and Liberalism* was published. Their aim was to refer to the dangers which threatened the Church and Catholicism. Hence liberalism stood for attacks on Rome, it was an enemy of the Church, which promoted religious indifference in the society and disseminated disbelief in the schools and families.<sup>38</sup>

The fear of a loss of religion was the most important issue in the clergys’s campaigns. Liberalism was identified as the greatest threat and the readers had been informed in detail in the previous year that its representatives were the Jews. The organ of the Catholic Church in Croatia had therefore dispensed with open antisemitic propaganda during the campaign. But in the months after the election antisemitic remarks were expressed loudly again. In mid-June 1897 it was said in conjunction with Social Democracy:

“It is known that the most important founders of socialism were Jews. [...] It is also proven that Jews are even now in some countries at the forefront of social democracy. [...] With good cause we hope that the Jews are going to be the first to distribute their money to the poor, if a socialist state is to be established.”<sup>39</sup>

And at the beginning of July an editorial article praised Lueger’s antisemitism. It also blamed a Jewish capital and the *Alliance Israélite* to dominate the legislation with the help of the press and of a false liberalism.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *KL*, November 26, 1896.

<sup>38</sup> *KL*, March 11, 1897; March 18, 1897; April 1, 1897.

<sup>39</sup> *KL*, June 17, 1897.

<sup>40</sup> *KL*, July 8, 1897.



An abusive antisemitic language which occurred again after the election suggests that the chief editor of the Catholic paper abandoned it during the election campaign only in order to present the Catholics as apolitical. But after the encouraging election results he went ahead with the old arguments.<sup>41</sup> Although political Catholicism in Croatia was in 1897 neither organized as a political movement nor as a party his ideas and goals celebrated a first major success in the parliamentary elections. Why was that the case?

### The parliamentary elections in 1897

In the 1897 elections, the Independent National Party and the Party of Right for the first time acted together as a closed group. They formed the United Opposition, which was backed by large segments of the clergy. At the beginning of 1897 the Catholic paper gradually announced its support for the united opposition.<sup>42</sup> The Independent National Party had always been closely connected to the clergy, the Party of Right had its supporters also among the clergy.

Since the early 1890s, the Croatian opposition had been weak so that it could hardly offer any resistance to the so called Magyarizing policy of Banus Khuen-Hédervary. Aware of their weak position, the Independent National Party formed a coalition with the Party of Right.<sup>43</sup> These two political parties found common ground in their rejection of "Hungarian" liberalism, of the Hungarian church reforms and in their hatred of Jews. The voices of the clergy, which had called for greater political participation and influence in the wake of the "culture war" in Hungary, got a hearing within the United Opposition.

At the same time the United Opposition leant on the moral and financial power of the clergy to mobilise voters.<sup>44</sup> With the help of the clergy, the United Opposition won one-third of all mandates (29 of 88 seats).<sup>45</sup> For the first time an election campaign was dominated by religious issues. Particularly a fear of repression of Catholicism by the liberal legislation, by secularism and by the Social Democracy was fomented.<sup>46</sup>

While the Catholic paper as an organ of political Catholicism held back with antisemitic rhetoric during the campaign, the three organs of the United

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<sup>41</sup> For the election campaign and the results of the election of 1897 see, Marija Vulesica, *Die Formierung des politischen Antisemitismus in den Kronländern Kroatien-Slawonien 1879-1906*, Ph.D. Technische Universität Berlin 2011; forthcoming publication..

<sup>42</sup> *KL*, January 28, 1897, February 4, 1897, February 25, 1897, Strecha, "Katoličko hrvatstvo", 62-65.

<sup>43</sup> Jaroslav Šidak, Mirjana Gross, Igor Karaman, Dragovan Šepić, *Povijest hrvatskog naroda 1860-1914*, (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1968), 155f; Mirjana Gross, *Povijest Pravaške ideologije*, (Zagreb: Sveučilište u Zagrebu, 1973), 313-316; Strecha, "O procesu", 101-103.

<sup>44</sup> Stjepan Matković, "Afirmacija Khuenove autokracije. Izbori za Hrvatski sabor 1897," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 29, 3(1997): 478; Strecha, "O procesu", 106f.

<sup>45</sup> Stjepan Matković, *Čista stranka prava 1895-1903*, (Zagreb: Hrvatski Inst. za Povijest, 2001), 88f.

<sup>46</sup> Matković, "Izbori", 478; Strecha, "O procesu", 107f.

Opposition, *Obzor* (Horizon, organ of the Independent National Party), *Hrvatska Domovina* (Croatian homeland, organ of the Party of Right) and the paper of the workers wing of the Party of Right, *Hrvatski Radnički Glas* (HRG, Croatian workers voice) made use of direct antisemitic propaganda and attacks. *Obzor* at the beginning of 1897 attacked the “pseudo-liberalism” or “Semitic liberalism” which allegedly prevailed in Hungary.<sup>47</sup>

The political opponent, the Pure Party of Right was defamed as a “Jewish-liberal party” and its organ, *Hrvatsko pravo* (Croat Law), as an organ of Judaism. The Pure Party of Right was designated as the representative of the Jews and their interests.<sup>48</sup> A large part of the Croatian Jews actually gave their vote to the ruling National Party or to the Pure Party of Right, which was led by Josip Frank, a converted Jew. Therefore the United Opposition and its organs accused the Jews to serve the Hungarians. If non-Jews gave their vote to the ruling parties, the National Party or the Pure Party of Right, it was said that they had sold themselves out to the Jews.<sup>49</sup>

This motif was most frequently used by the United Opposition. Equating the political opponent with Jews and Judaism was an expression of the convinced antisemitism of some members of the United Opposition. By staging this accusation they tried to insinuate that their political opponents would not fight for Croatian interests and the interests of the Catholic Church, which in the eyes of the United Opposition were identical. This attitude of *Obzor* had already been apparent in recent years, with the upcoming election it gained in political explosiveness.

In addition to the attacks on liberalism as the root evil of government and society, *Obzor* in the months before the elections published plenty of antisemitic news. The range of accusations was wide. Jews would mock the Christian traditions,<sup>50</sup> proliferate rapidly,<sup>51</sup> corrupt politics<sup>52</sup> and as a ‘state within a state’ support liberalism and social democracy in all countries, enrich themselves and fight against Christianity.<sup>53</sup> Antisemitism was seen as a necessary resistance, as a means to combat Jewish influence.<sup>54</sup>

*Obzor* reproduced the most antisemitic notes from foreign newspapers. The paper enlisted these international phenomena, not uncommon in the absence of local news, as a proof for the Jewish nature worldwide. It communicated that Jews were the same everywhere and were a threat to every nation. At the same time the paper held that everywhere in Europe various actors and movements were about to stand up against the Jewish threat. *Obzor*’s intention was to stir up fear of Jewish power and to present the Independent National

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<sup>47</sup> *Obzor*, January 16, 1897.

<sup>48</sup> *Obzor*, January 18, 1897.

<sup>49</sup> Ljiljana Dobrovšak, *Hrvatska javnost prema Židovima krajem 19. Stoljeća*, 88f.

<sup>50</sup> *Obzor*, January 5, 1897.

<sup>51</sup> *Obzor*, January 13, February 1, 1897.

<sup>52</sup> *Obzor*, January 19, March 3, March 6, 1897.

<sup>53</sup> *Obzor*, February 3, March 13, March 17, March 19, April 1, 1897.

<sup>54</sup> *Obzor*, March 31, 1897.

Party or the United Opposition as the sole defenders of Croatian interests and as patrons of Christianity. To substantiate this position several news stories were published at the end of March 1897 where Jews were accused to have mocked the Christian religion during the Purim festival.<sup>55</sup>

The culmination of such a slanderous antisemitic campaign was the accusation that Jews had baptized a cat during the Purim celebration in the town of Sisak. This note, which first appeared in the local paper *Banovac*, was taken over by the organs of the United Opposition, who marked this rumor as an evidence for the “Jewish insolence.”<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, the rabbi or the cantor of Sisak, joined by a group of Jews, had trapped a cat, wrapped it in a pillow “like a child is wrapped for baptism,” stole baptismal water from the Catholic Church and christened the cat. The maid of Cantor Heller was said to have observed this play and reported the incident to the parish priest and to the police.<sup>57</sup> The Catholic paper reproduced this note and finally asked rhetorically how such an insult could not cause antisemitism.<sup>58</sup> A few days later *Hrvatska Domovina* announced that the prosecutors had filed charges against the Jews.<sup>59</sup> In fact, not Jews but the editors of the papers *Banovac*, *Obzor*, *Hrvatska Domovina* and the maid Ana Rudančić had to stand trial. The maid was sentenced to fourteen days and *Obzor*’s chief editor Josip Pasarić to four months in prison for defamation. Vjekoslav Fleišer, editor in chief of *Hrvatska Domovina*, was acquitted.<sup>60</sup> At the end of July the chief editor of *Banovac*, Dragutin Benko, was sentenced to 14 days in prison, the sentence was commuted to a fine and a corrective statement.<sup>61</sup>

The trials against the editors took place only after the elections. But the note about the baptism of a cat in the pre-election campaign was taken by the United Opposition as welcome election propaganda. Not only direct antisemitic notes and articles which aimed to fuel anti-Jewish resentment and a fear of the Jews, but also the direct appeal to voters and the clergy secured a considerable gain of votes to the United Opposition. The plea to the Croats to vote for “true Croats” only, and not for the pro-government “Magyars” and certainly not for Jews brought the United Opposition one third of all mandates.<sup>62</sup>

Even more than *Obzor* the organ of the Party of Right, *Hrvatska domovina*, agitated against Jews during the campaign. Their main target was the leader of the Pure Party of Right and converted Jew Josip Frank.<sup>63</sup> The former political

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<sup>55</sup> *Obzor*, March 23, 1897.

<sup>56</sup> *Obzor*, March 29, 1897.

<sup>57</sup> *Obzor*, March 29, 1897, *HD*, March 29, March 30, 1897.

<sup>58</sup> *KL*, April 1, 1897.

<sup>59</sup> *HD*, April 1, 1897.

<sup>60</sup> *HD*, December 10, 1897; *AZ*, December 18, 1897.

<sup>61</sup> *HD*, July 3, 1897.

<sup>62</sup> Matković, “Izbori za Hrvatski sabor 1897”, 483.

<sup>63</sup> Josip Frank (1844-1911) converted most likely in 1874 to Catholicism in order, as he claimed, to secure social and economic opportunities for his children. Matković, *Čista stranka prava*, 23.

comrade became the object of hatred within the Party of Right which was led by Grga Tuškan and David Starčević. They took Frank's Jewish origins as an pretext to start an antisemitic campaign against him, his political allies and the Jews in general.<sup>64</sup> His party was assumed to be under the influence of the *Alliance Israélite*.<sup>65</sup> *Hrvatska Domovina* furthermore claimed that Jews had no feelings for a homeland and therefore could not serve Croatia as their homeland. They were seen as strangers who did not want to learn and adopt the Croatian language.<sup>66</sup> The organ of the Party of Right stoked specifically and deliberately fears of the "foreign elements".<sup>67</sup> It distributed a national threat scenario which putatively came from Vienna and Pest, "the heart of the Judeo-Magyar" and would menace the Croats.<sup>68</sup>

In April 1897, *Hrvatska Domovina* published a special Easter edition, taken from the magazine *Hrvatski narod* (Croat People), where various poems and folk songs were printed. The folk song "Marija and the Jews" was about the Virgin Mary who attempted to protect her child Jesus from the Jews. But the Jews stole the child and tortured it. In addition to that, the story about the alleged baptised cat in Sisak was reproduced once again.<sup>69</sup>

The emphasis on Christianity, the religious feelings of the people and the anti-Jewish sentiments were used to elicit a religiously based aversion. Thus secular political antisemites exploited traditional religious anti-Judaism during the election campaign to gain votes and finally win the elections.

Another magazine, closely connected to the United Opposition, was the antisemitic *Hrvatski Radnički glas* (HRG, Croatian worker's voice). The paper was first edited at the beginning of 1897. From its start it agitated openly against Jews in general and Josip Frank in particular.<sup>70</sup> Shortly before the elections took place in May 1897 the paper focused its coverage almost exclusively on attacks against Frank and the Jews. It called upon voters to vote for Tuškan as a Croatian and Christian candidate, whose ancestors were already real Croats and who had fought earlier against Croatian enemies like the Turks.<sup>71</sup> The aim was to defame Frank not to be a genuine Croat, as a "Croatian enemy," who was only supported by the Jews. "Who goes with Jews is against the Croatians, against us." The magazine continued that in case of a Jewish victory they would dominate Croatia as they already dominated the whole world. And furthermore stated that they would buy the needed votes to introduce civil marriage in Croatia, as they already did in Hungary.<sup>72</sup> The antisemitic propaganda during the campaign was fed by crude attacks and

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<sup>64</sup> *HD*, January 5, January 12, March 20, 1897.

<sup>65</sup> *HD*, January 9, 1897.

<sup>66</sup> *HD*, February 5, 1897.

<sup>67</sup> *HD*, February 24, March 5, March 6, March 15, April 14, April 15, 1897.

<sup>68</sup> *HD*, February 16, 1897.

<sup>69</sup> *Hrvatski narod* (Croatian people), April 15, 1897.

<sup>70</sup> *HRG*, February 1, February 15, March 15, April 1, May 1, 1897.

<sup>71</sup> *HRG*, May 15, 1897.

<sup>72</sup> *HRG*, May 15, 1897.

provoking fear. The anti-Jewish agitation of the United Opposition undoubtedly led to Tuškans success in Sisak. He won the mandate.

Inspired by the electoral successes of the Christian Social Party in Austria and the founding of the People's Party in Hungary, the United Opposition formed a Christian front against the government and against everybody, who according to its point of view was undermining a Christian dominated society. Jews appeared to them once more as the appropriate target. For the first time an election campaign in Croatia had antisemitic traits.

### Reactions to the antisemitic campaign

Croatian Jews reported to Dr. Blochs *Österreichische Wochenschrift*, a magazine based in Vienna which claimed to stand for Jewish interests, about the antisemitic campaign in Croatia. In the issue of 5<sup>th</sup> March 1897 a Zagreb correspondent, who called himself Argus, marked *Obzor* as “an antisemitic baiting-organ” that uses “brutality and dispraise” against the Croatian Jews.<sup>73</sup> The same issue published a report written by rabbi Kaufman from Virovitica, a town in Slavonia, in which he in fact doubted that the Croatian people would be receptive to antisemitism, but he nevertheless referred to the current political situation. “Now we see what unfortunately cannot be denied that there is within the opposition party, (...) which previously worshiped the liberal principles and condemned the clerical antisemitism of the Obzorpartei in the strongest terms, an antisemitic flow which shall not be underestimated [...]”<sup>74</sup>

In the following issue of the *Wochenschrift* another report from Zagreb appeared. The anonymous author disagreed with Kaufman and claimed that antisemitism was absolutely about to fall on fertile ground. “Especially within the ordinary population antisemitism will take roots and the ‘black robe men’ who agitate daily in their baiting-organs *Obzor*’ and ‘*Katolicski List*’ add to that honestly.”<sup>75</sup> Responsible for the antisemitic campaign, the report continued, was the United Opposition and the clergy. “(...) at the forefront of the agitation there are the often mentioned leaders of the clerical Party. But who is this antisemitic party in Croatia? The clerical *Obzor* and David Starcsevics Party which are about to decrease. (...) The government must make an end to this party, because she causes the biggest inconvenience to this country with the help of the label antisemitism and she is harming the Jewish citizens in provincial towns with her hateful articles.”<sup>76</sup>

The government did not act against the United Opposition or rather against its antisemitism in a special way. Although there were trials against individuals who agitated in an antisemitic manner,<sup>77</sup> the government did not make an

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<sup>73</sup> Dr. Blochs *Österreichische Wochenschrift*, March 5, 1897.

<sup>74</sup> Dr. Blochs, March 5, 1897.

<sup>75</sup> Dr. Blochs, March 12, 1897.

<sup>76</sup> Dr. Blochs, March 12, 1897.

<sup>77</sup> HD, October 14, 1897; HDA, PRZV 1897-1899, Dok.-n.. 233, Kiste 527.

explicit statement in which it condemned the antisemitic campaign. Not even the press which supported the regime's line like *Narodne Novine*, the german-speaking newspapers *Die Drau* (The Drava, name of a tributary of the Danube) or the *Agramer Zeitung* (Newspaper of Agram) to the antisemitic campaign of the clergy. That can only be explained by their fear of making antisemitism more popular than it already was. In the main, the reaction of the Croatian Jews to antisemitism was to marginalize it, to emphasize the peaceful and tolerant coexistence between Jews and Christians in Croatia and Slavonia, and to emphasize their own merits for the welfare of the country.<sup>78</sup>

### How antisemitic was political Catholicism now?

Although in 1897 political Catholicism in Croatia was neither a movement nor a party its ideas and goals gained major success in the parliamentary elections. This was due to the presence of the United Opposition which was supported by the Catholic paper since early 1897.<sup>79</sup> But in the years after 1897 the Catholic paper did not publish programmatic statements and explanations about its antisemitism. This did not mean that its antisemitic articles and notes did not appear. In different reports it blamed over and over again the “liberal-Jewish press” or the “false Jewish liberalism” for political and social grievances.<sup>80</sup> Actual attacks against Croatian Jews were not explicitly encouraged nor as an endorsement of a political antisemitism communicated directly. Nevertheless, Jews were still associated with perceived negative effects and dangers like the press which had been critical to the Church, or the Social Democrats, whose leaders were said to be Jews.<sup>81</sup> Significantly, the paper did not introduce the Polish priest and politician Stanislaw Stojalowski in detail. At a same time it called him in March 1898 a “darling of the people” who is going to protect the people and the faith.<sup>82</sup> Stojalowski, who was an advocate of Christian social policy and an antisemite<sup>83</sup> must have been known to the readers of the Catholic paper. In 1898 his open hatred against Jews was generally known. That he was mentioned by the Catholic paper so benevolently meant that it agreed with his anti-Jewish views. Although the paper did not take a stand to antisemitism openly, the organ of political Catholicism found ways and means to disseminate its views indirectly. At the beginning of 1899 it solicited a brochure written by an author called J. Seidl

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<sup>78</sup> Marija Vulesica, “...dieses Pfäfflein erlaubte sich von der Kanzel herab die Bevölkerung unseres ruhigen Städtchens gegen Juden und Serbenaufzuregen. Die Reaktion der kroatischen Juden auf den Antisemitismus“, *Einspruch und Abwehr. Die Reaktion des europäischen Judentums auf die Entstehung des Antisemitismus (1879-1914)*, ed. Ulrich Wyrwa, (Frankfurt, Campus Verlag, 2010), 230-247.

<sup>79</sup> *KL*, January 28, 1897; February 4, 1897; February 25, 1897; Strecha, “Katoličko hrvatstvo”, 62-65.

<sup>80</sup> *KL*, April 14, 1898; April 28, 1898; November 10, 1898; February 2, 1899.

<sup>81</sup> *KL*, May 5, 1898.

<sup>82</sup> *KL*, March 3, 1898.

<sup>83</sup> *Handbuch des Antisemitismus*, Vol. 2/2, 802f.

and published in Graz with the title *The Jew of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or why we are antisemites?*<sup>84</sup> Without commenting on the specific contents of the booklet, it recommended “this very interesting book” explicitly.<sup>85</sup> In May 1899 the organ of the *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* (Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith), *Im deutschen Reich* (In the German Reich), informed that this “antisemitic diatribe” sold about 6.000 copies until the end of April when it was confiscated.<sup>86</sup> Certainly the editors of the Catholic paper knew exactly what goals the antisemitic pamphlet pursued. Even if the paper had not described the content, but solicited and recommended it, this was enough to express its affirmative attitude toward antisemitism. This method of indirect support for antisemitism was familiar to the Catholic paper since the 1870s. The indirect communication of anti-Jewish views was a deliberately chosen means which could be interpreted by the political and Church circles without difficulty.

Thus, an open agitation in favor of antisemitism declined in the Catholic paper after 1897. On the one hand the view prevailed that antisemitism had done its duty with the electoral success of 1897. On the other, the paper ceded its antisemitism to the organs of the United Opposition, and here especially to the organ of the Christian social wing of the Party of Right to go on with antisemitic rhetoric. Besides that, a vouch for political Catholicism or a demand for Catholic political organization declined. In 1896 and 1897 the momentum for a Catholic political movement was set in Croatia-Slavonia. For the founding of an explicitly Catholic party, however, the time seemed not yet ripe enough. Firstly, the politically active clergy was already organized in the existing parties. Secondly, the higher circles in Church did not give their blessing to a Catholic party because they saw their interests already represented by the United Opposition. And for the third Korenić himself rejected the foundation of an explicitly Catholic party, because in his view a Croatian National Catholic movement should have worked as an integrative ideology across party lines.<sup>87</sup>

To Korenić's efforts for a Catholic political movement Pope Leo XIII also paid tribute. In early April 1900 he praised Korenić's dedication to the interests of the Catholic Church and encouraged him and his followers to continue in this sense.<sup>88</sup> Korenić's commitment towards a political Catholicism culminated in the First Croatian Catholic Conference which took place in Zagreb in 1900.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> In the directory of the Austrian National Library the brochure titled “The Jew of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, or why are we antisemitic” is to be found. Here too, the first name of the author is given only as “J”.

<sup>85</sup> *KL*, January 12, 1899.

<sup>86</sup> *Im deutschen Reich*, May 1899.

<sup>87</sup> Strecha, “Katoličko hrvatstvo”, 68-71, 74.

<sup>88</sup> Strecha, “Katoličko hrvatstvo”, 132.

<sup>89</sup> Strecha, “Katoličko hrvatstvo”, 129-168; Mario Strecha, “Prvi hrvatski Katolički kongres – korak naprijed u afirmaciji političkog katolicizma u Bansknoj Hrvatskoj”, *Hrvatski Katolički*

This meeting of the Catholic clergy and laity, supported by Archbishop Posilović and Bishop Strossmayer, was accompanied by an extensive coverage and great enthusiasm in *Obzor* and *Hrvatska Domovina*. *Obzor* claimed that the congress was about to express the will of the Croatian people for independence. Furthermore, it should illustrate the fight of the Croatian clergy against the “so-called liberalism” and religious indifference. Beyond that it should symbolise the unity of the Church in Croatia.<sup>90</sup>

The congress lasted for three days and was divided into several sections. During the sections on “Catholic press” and the “Social question” anti-Jewish rhetoric was propagated. Ivan Ružić, the editor in chief of *Hrvatski narod*, a journal related to the United Opposition, broached the issue of a Jewish controlled press in his lecture on media inquiries. He swore to have nothing against the Jewish people, but stated that their press would “poison” the opinion of millions of people. Their “godless press” had damaged humanity, it would loot the Christian people and do harm to small traders and workers. Ružić explained that a Catholic press which would defend the Church and the homeland was necessary.<sup>91</sup> Following his lecture, a debate was held on the necessity for a Catholic press and on the suppression of the “godless press” instead. None of the subsequent speakers expressed antisemitic views.

Things were very different, however, in the section dedicated to the “Social question.” The speaker Juraj Vrbanić said that this issue was very important and urgent, but that in Croatia-Slavonia it was not as “pointed” as elsewhere. While he neither mentioned Jews nor antisemitism in his talk, the second speaker Grga Tuškan pointed out that Jews stood behind all grievances and social tension in Europe. “Cherchez les Juifs,” he exclaimed, earning applause and shoutings of approval from the audience.<sup>92</sup> As he made the workers question into a Jewish question, the chairman Matija Oršić advised him to stick to the issue of the resolution. Tuškan replied: “We are all anxious, in parliament and in society. If the Jews are allowed to talk then I must also say that it is not right for me that this is not mentioned in the resolution.”<sup>93</sup> After another critique by the chairman, he ended his run. Two following speakers agreed with Tuškan and said that while there was of course the Christian principle of charity, the Jews were now a threat to which it was necessary to respond.<sup>94</sup> In the final resolution Tuškans claims and observations were ignored, although they had received wide approval.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, the Congress to

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*pokret, Zbornik radova*, published by Zlatko Matijević, (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 2002), 171-183.

<sup>90</sup> *Obzor*, August 31, November 19, 1900.

<sup>91</sup> Stjepan Korenić, *Prvi Hrvatski Katolički Sastanak* (PHKS), (Zagreb: C. Albrecht, 1900), 99-106.

<sup>92</sup> Korenić, “PHKS”, 136.

<sup>93</sup> Korenić, “PHKS”, 137.

<sup>94</sup> Korenić, “PHKS”, 138f.

<sup>95</sup> Korenić, “PHKS”, 163-169.



which the higher Catholic circles pinned big hopes did get much attention. Practically, however, it had very few consequences. Antisemitic statements were expressed during the Congress, but they did not find a place in the final resolution.

The impetus of Catholics to organize themselves politically arose only in the mid-1890s in Croatia-Slavonia. The mental connection between the Croatian national cause and the development of outspoken Christian movements within the empire was obvious. To speak in an antisemitic way meant to oppose everything that could hurt the supremacy of the Catholic Church and hereby inevitably the interests of the Croatian nation, which were seen as being closely connected. Liberalism, secularism, disbelief, Hungarians and Germans and the press which acted in opposition to the Church, all these were perceived as being embodied by Jews. For the clergy and the constituent political Catholicism in Croatia it was not difficult to secularize the traditional dislike of Jews as traitors and murderers of Christ into a modern political program. It was made easier for them by the fact that they found successful role models in their immediate surroundings.

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