



Erfurter Vorträge  
zur Kulturgeschichte des Orthodoxen Christentums  
13/2015

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From “Merciful Angel” to “Fortress Europe”: The Perception of Europe  
and the West in Contemporary Serbian Orthodoxy



Religionswissenschaft (Orthodoxes Christentum)

Erfurter Vorträge  
zur Kulturgeschichte des Orthodoxen Christentums, 13/2015  
ISSN 1618-7555  
ISBN 978-3-9815490-0-3

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## **Preface**

It is well-known that, both in the past and at present, predominantly Orthodox cultures in Eastern and South Eastern Europe have had various and even serious problems with Western Europe and, more broadly, with the West. Initially and historically, this had mostly to do with the gradual religious estrangement between East and West in Europe, a process that finally led to the separation of the two Christian Churches, which still exists until today. It is about the Orthodox anti-Westernism, a phenomenon with many facets and far-reaching consequences. Yet, this entire centuries-old process exhibited many other aspects beyond the strict religious sphere, such as political, social, linguistic, and cultural. All this took place first in the context of the Byzantine (East Roman) Empire and its opposition to the Latin West. Both these worlds played a role, each in its own way and with different intensity, to this inter-Christian distancing, alienation, definitive breakup and tenacious hostility. Later on, this development played a key role among the peoples who joined the broad community of Orthodox Christians, especially the Eastern Slavs. It is thus characteristic that Orthodox anti-Westernism has historically flourished in East European cultures generally – naturally, in numerous local variations and with many concomitant idiosyncrasies. Due to their continuous alienation from Western Europe many Orthodox Christians felt at times even closer to Islam, which had its own particular problems with the West, as well. Interestingly enough, this long tradition of Orthodox anti-Westernism often turned into an anti-Europeanism, given that for many reasons numerous Orthodox had identified “Europe” with the West. It is thus quite interesting to observe such critical attitudes even nowadays among countries that have since long joined the European Union (e.g., in Greece).

A predominant Orthodox country and culture with a strong anti-Western tradition of its own is Serbia. Last, but not least, this became evident during the consequent wars in the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia, which led to its final disintegration. In this context, especially the Serbian Orthodox side was portrayed both by the international media, but also by a part of the academia, in quite negative colors, namely as being responsible for the genesis and the exacerbation of the conflicts and as nationalist, intolerant, anti-modern, irrational and chauvinistic. Furthermore, the passage from a communist period to that of a democratic, liberal social order and free market economy was

thought to be quite difficult and uncertain for ex-communist Orthodox countries – not least according to Samuel M. Huntington’s notorious theory about the “clash of civilizations” after the end of the Cold War. In addition, the very fact that the Western alliance in the form of the NATO actively intervened in the above military conflicts sparked a great deal of anti-Western sentiments in Serbia, which left their strong mark on the years to come. Even if today the country is attempting to come to terms with the legacy of these wars and establish closer contacts with the European Union, there are still many obstacles indicating that this will not be an easy process.

The thirteenth issue of the *Erfurter Vorträge zur Kulturgeschichte des Orthodoxen Christentums* is devoted to the above situation in Serbia, which has not lost at all its actuality and significance since the 1990s. It contains the contribution of a Serbian scholar, Dr. Vladimir Cvetković, who, aside from his other research interests (e.g. in Patristic studies), is quite familiar with Serbian Orthodoxy and its particular historical path. In the following text, he attempts to deal with the issue of Serbia’s relations to Europe and the West from a broad perspective, drawing in detail on historical and contemporary sources and events, although his main focus clearly lies on recent developments and their significance. His intention is to show the multiple parameters and aspects of the present issue and thus to avoid essentialist and negative categorizations of Serbian Orthodoxy, have often been the rule in the past few decades. Hence, it turns against the widespread “Balkanist” and “Orientalist” perspectives on Serbia, which have presented and propagated a rather one-sided and distorted image of this country. At the same time, and despite his “insider” perspective, Cvetković remains self-critical and is ready to acknowledge the various faults or deficits of the Serbian side.

In a shorter form, the present text goes back to a lecture given at the University of Erfurt on 27 June 2014 in the context of the Graduate Colloquium on the Cultural History of Orthodox Christianity. My thanks go to my assistant, Dr. Sebastian Rimestad, who was entrusted with formatting the present issue of the *Erfurter Vorträge*, as well as to my secretary, Annett Psurek, who took care of various other formalities.

Erfurt, September 2015

Vasilios N. Makrides

# From “Merciful Angel” to “Fortress Europe”: The Perception of Europe and the West in Contemporary Serbian Orthodoxy

Vladimir Cvetković

## 1. “Merciful Angel” and “Fortress Europe”: Towards a Clarification of the Terms

My aim in the present study is to offer a comprehensive perception of Europe and the West in the Serbian Orthodox Church (referred further in this study as the SOC) since the NATO bombardment of Serbia in 1999 to nowadays. The terms “Merciful Angel” and “Fortress Europe” are two illustrious historical references for framing this period of the last quarter-century. The expression “Merciful Angel”, at least in Serbia, refers to a NATO military operation against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (consisting of Serbia and Montenegro until 2006) that lasted from 28 February until 11 June 1999. The term “Fortress Europe” is not employed in its modern sense as the state of immigration to European Union (EU), but rather as a reference to the contemporary situation of Serbia, which shares most of its borders with EU member states. Thus, the walls of this metaphorical fortress become the common walls protecting both sides one from another. These two terms do not have just one point of reference, as they occur in some statements of the Serbian Church representatives with multiple meanings. The fact that the NATO military action against Yugoslavia in 1999 is known only in Serbia under the name “Merciful Angel”, while the NATO calls the same operation “Allied Force” and later from June 1999 “Joint Guardian”, shows immediately the problem with the different points of reference. In an attempt to elucidate the origins of this term in his article “On the Name of the NATO Aggression Against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and on the Notion ‘Merciful Angel’”<sup>1</sup> in the daily newspaper *Danas* from the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 2008, Bishop Jovan (Ćulibrk) of Pakrac and Slavonia (in Croatia) argued that the term has been coined by Slobodan Milošević’s regime in order to mobilize and motivate people to defend themselves from NATO. The bishop mentioned Goran Matić (then Minister without portfolio running the Federal Secretariat for Information and former representative of CNN for Yugoslavia) and Aleksandar Vučić (then Minister of Information in the Serbian Government and now Serbian Prime Minister) as possible originators of this negative

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<sup>1</sup> Protosindel Jovan (Ćulibrk), “Merciful Angel”, *Danas*, April 9, 2008, available in Serbian at the website of *Peščanik*: <http://pescanik.net/2008/04/milosrdni-andeo/> (accessed on June 23, 2014).

expression that even today stirs Serbian people against NATO and the West. Subsequently, Bishop Jovan Ćulibrk drew two conclusions: first, that it is unacceptable to ascribe to enemies anything that is untrue and derogatory, even if they have caused plenty of evil; second, that if the Serbian people get rid of this term, they would have at least one problem less in the way to re-establish peace in Kosovo.

The second term “Fortress Europe” appeared in recent public addresses of the Metropolitan of Montenegro Amfilohije Radović with its original meaning “Festung Europa”, referring to areas of Europe occupied by Nazi Germany. On several occasions, Metropolitan Amfilohije compared the NATO troops with the Nazi forces during the WWII. In 2011 as an administrator of the Kosovo diocese, Radović informed the German general Erhard Drews, the NATO Commander of Kosovo, that in regard to human rights most of the Serbian people consider the conditions in Kosovo worse than during the “Nazi-fascist occupation”.<sup>2</sup> In another public address in 2013, Radović portrayed the Brussels normalization agreement between Serbia and Kosovo as “the continuation of the Nazi-fascist occupation” of Kosovo and as the German breakthrough towards the East. The Patriarch of Serbia Irinej Gavrilović immediately reacted to Radović’s statement, clarifying that this is neither his position nor the position of the Synod or of the Serbian Church in general.<sup>3</sup> Radović’s comparisons of NATO with the “Fourth Reich” were not only triggered by NATO’s involvement in Kosovo,<sup>4</sup> but also, as Radović points out, by NATO’s “dividing and conquering” policy, which has been also applied to Ukrainians and Russians living in Ukraine.<sup>5</sup> However, Radović argued that Europe has the possibility to cease being the Nazi “Festung Europa” provided that NATO ends its existence in Europe.<sup>6</sup> In turn, according to Radović, all European nations, including the Balkan nations, could contribute to this unity and benefit from it.

The clarification of these two terms already suggests that in Serbia, Europe and the West are nowadays largely perceived through the lenses of Kosovo and the NATO bombardment. From the previous examples, it becomes

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<sup>2</sup> “Not in the EU without the head, i.e. Kosovo”, *B92*, October 19, 2012, available in Serbian at: [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2011&mm=10&dd=19&nav\\_id=550801](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2011&mm=10&dd=19&nav_id=550801) (accessed on March 13, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> “The Patriarch distanced himself from Bishop Amfilohije”, *Politika* May 11, 2014, available in Serbian at: <http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/tema-dana/Patrijarh-Irinej-seogradio-od-vladike-Amfilohija1.lt.html> (accessed on March 13, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> “Amfilohije: NATO is the Fourth Reich”, *Večernje Novosti Online*, June 30, 2013, available in Serbian at: <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/planeta.300.html:441555-Amfilohije-NATO-pakt-je-Cetvrti-rajh> (accessed on March 13, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> “Neo-fascism dividing Ukrainians and Russians”, *B92*, May 13, 2014, available in Serbian at: [http://www.b92.net/eng/news/region.php?yyyy=2014&mm=05&dd=13&nav\\_id=90294](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/region.php?yyyy=2014&mm=05&dd=13&nav_id=90294) (accessed on March 13, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> “Amfilohije: NATO is the Fourth Reich”.

evident that both the NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia and the rights of Serbian minority in Kosovo are in the focus of the two Church hierarchs just mentioned. Therefore, the remainder of this study on the reception of the West and Europe will be structured around these two issues, which prevail in every discourse of Serbian Church members about Western and European values. I will refer to this topic as *The SOC, Kosovo, NATO and the EU* and deal with it in chapter 2 of this study. I will not only refer to the present situation in Kosovo, but I intend to offer an account of the role that the Serbian battle with the Ottomans in 1389 in Kosovo and the subsequent Kosovo testament play in the Serbian collective memory (section 2.1. *Kosovo and Metohija – A Culture of Remembrance*), combining it with a brief historical survey of the Serbian Church in Kosovo from medieval times up to the end of the 1980s (section 2.2. *Kosovo’s Past and Present*). As Milica Bakić-Hayden pointed out, the interplay between the so-called “myth” of Kosovo and the “true” history of Kosovo could give a much better view on the Kosovo problematic than the attempts to distinguish between these two.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, without considering the role that Kosovo, both as metaphor and historical reality, played in creating Serbian collective identity, one cannot understand the recent confrontation of Serbs with the West on this issue. In the section 2.3. *The Period of Crisis and the Disintegration of Yugoslavia*, the focus is diverted from the situation in Kosovo to the themes of Yugoslavia’s historical breakup and the role the Western governments have played in it. The next section 2.4. *The SOC and Western Policy in the Balkans* deals exclusively with the reaction of the episcopate of the Serbian Church to the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the subsequent wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. For understanding namely the present perception of the West and Europe in the Serbian Orthodoxy, one has to take into account the way in which the West interfered in the Yugoslav crisis during the 1990s. Section 2.5. *Kosovo in the Shadow of Ecumenism* brings another important element in the Serbian Church’s dealing with the West that is not linked to the Western official policy in the Balkans, but to the participation of the SOC in ecumenical organizations. The last two sections, 2.6. *Relations with the EU and NATO: Cooperation or Confrontation?*, and 2.7. *Memory and History: The Heavenly Kingdom vs. EU Integration* attempt to describe the contemporary attitude towards the West that prevails in the Serbian Church, as well as to offer some answers to the present dilemmas of Serbian people between EU and Kosovo.

Chapter 3: *The SOC and the Great European Paradigms: Democracy, Communism and Neo-liberalism* focuses on a different set of issues dealing not with history and geography, but rather with modern political and economic

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<sup>7</sup> Milica Bakić-Hayden, “National Memory as Narrative Memory: The Case of Kosovo”, in: Maria Todorova (ed.), *National Memory in Southeastern Europe*, London: Hurst & Co., 2004, 25–40, here 26–27.



ideas and practices. The ongoing transition of Serbian society from one political and economic system to another has gained considerable attention within the SOC. Since the implementation of the system of parliamentary democracy and the neo-liberal capitalist model were set as the necessary requirements for Serbia's further integration in the EU, the handling of these issues is closely linked to the perception of the West and Europe. The final chapter *The SOC and European Cultural and Family Related Values* deals with a broad range of modern and in many respects controversial issues, such as abortion, homosexuality and children upbringing. Some of them (e.g., LGBT rights to marriage and children adoption, surrogate motherhood, abolishing the corporal punishment of children) are presented in Serbian society as necessary steps in complying with the EU legal tradition and norms, yet they are fiercely opposed by the SOC and hence require our closer attention.

## 2. The SOC, Kosovo, NATO and the EU

### 2.1. Kosovo and Metohija – A Culture of Remembrance

Western media, and partly Western scholarship, usually maintain that the Kosovo myth impedes the Serbian recognition of Kosovo as an independent state.<sup>8</sup> This is a coarse simplification both of the Christian character of Prince Lazar Hrebeljanovic's sacrifice and the battle of the Serbian army against the Ottomans in 1389, and of this historical event's subsequent usage or misuse in view of national mobilization or self-aggrandizement. Without any doubt the Serbian collective memory linked to the Kosovo battle plays an important, if not crucial role in the understanding of Serbian Kosovo. In order to better evaluate the relationship of the Serbian Church to Kosovo, we must bear in mind the symbolic significance that the battle between the Serbian and the Ottoman army at Kosovo Polje (meaning Blackbird field, near Pristina), which took place on St. Vitus' day (15/28 June) in 1389 has for Serbian collective memory. This memory is expressed in three forms: a. through oral tradition, which is reflected in folk songs, recited in decasyllable, b. in the Church memory of the liturgical celebrations of Serbian warriors as saints and martyrs, and c. more recently through the poems, philosophical and theological writings of Petar II Petrović Njegoš (1813–1851), Prince-bishop of Montenegro, Nikolaj Velimirović (1881–1956), Bishop of Žica and Ohrid, and Justin Popović (1894–1979), archimandrite and spiritual director of the monastery of Ćelije near Valjevo. The battle of Kosovo Polje occupies a

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<sup>8</sup> Anna Di Lellio, "The Missing Democratic Revolution and Serbia's Anti-European Choice: 1989–2008", *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 22/3 (2009) 373–384, here 373.

central place in the overall oral poetic tradition.<sup>9</sup> In several editions of collections of Serbian folk songs, Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (1787–1864) divides the entire oral oeuvre into three main periods or cycles: the Pre-Kosovo cycle, the Kosovo cycle and the Post-Kosovo cycle. The Kosovo cycle consists of the songs that are directly related to the preparation for the battle of Kosovo Polje, as well as of the descriptions of the events that took place after the battle. The songs draw strong parallels between the biblical events of Christ’s Last Supper, the betrayal of Judas and the subsequent Christ’s sufferings on the Cross, with the Prince Lazar’s last supper with Serbian nobility,<sup>10</sup> the betrayal of a Serbian nobleman and military commander, Vuk Branković,<sup>11</sup> and the subsequent sufferings and deaths of Prince Lazar and of the entire Serbian aristocracy. The analogy with Christ’s resurrection is absent in the literal sense, but the poems clearly show that Lazar’s sacrifice is conscious expressing his and his army determination for the Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>12</sup> However, although Lazar’s Christian determination and martyrdom are glorified, at the same time the poems lament over the lost empire. The post-Kosovo cycle of poems describes the further suffering of Serbian nobility, who fell victims to the invasion of the Ottoman army. Their individual destinies are often described in the fashion of the martyrdom of the Apostles and of early Christian martyrs. Similarly to the Old and New Testaments, which first explain God’s covenant with the Jewish people, and then God’s covenant with the entire humanity through Christ’s death on the Cross, the Kosovo Testament is seen as a covenant of the Serbian people with God through the sacrifice of Prince Lazar and his warriors; it is also a

<sup>9</sup> Jovan Deretić, *Istorija srpske književnosti* [The History of Serbian Literature], Belgrade: Prosveta 2004, 375–379.

<sup>10</sup> “Prince’s Last Supper”, in: Vojislav Djurić (ed.), *Antologija narodnih junačkih pesama* [The Anthology of Popular Epic Poems], Belgrade: SKZ, 1969 (digital edition: Belgrade: Faculty of Education 2009), 207–209.

<sup>11</sup> The poem “The Collapse of the Serbian Empire”, in: Djurić (ed.), *Antologija narodnih junačkih pesama*, 211–214. Atanasije Jevtić claims that this name of the song is of a recent date, and that the song might have been previously called “The Kosovo Testament”, or “Prince Lazar’s Consent to the Kingdom of Heaven”, emphasizing rather the testimonial nature of Lazar’s determination, than the fact of the historical defeat (see the lecture of the hieromonk Atanasije Jevtić, “Kosovski zavet” [The Kosovo Testament], given at the University of Toronto, and later published in the *Voice of Canadian Serbs*, September–October 1985, available (in Serbian) at: <https://svetosavlje.org/od-kosova-do-jadovna-putni-zapisi/36/> (accessed on January 6, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> The poems “Czar Lazar’s Consent to the Kingdom of Heaven” and “The Collapse of the Serbian Empire”. Miloš Djurić *Vidovdanska etika* [Vidovdan Ethics], Belgrade: Vihor 1914, and Marko Marković, *Kosovo u ranama* [Kosovo in the Wounds], Belgrade: Hrišćanska misao 2005, particularly emphasize the parallels with the Gospels. Being a classicist, Djurić goes a step further by establishing an analogy between the Kosovo battle and the ancient tragedies.

testament and signpost to future generations of Serbs of how to gain the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus, Kosovo becomes the axis around which Serbian collective memory rotates and is formed.<sup>13</sup> The Kosovo Testament represents the gateway out of history into the transcendent or eschatological realm.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, it laments over the disastrous fate of the entire Serbian nation fallen under the Ottoman rule and conveys an acute sense of blame for the defeat of Kosovo.

In his lecture “Njegoš as a Tragic Hero in the Thought of Kosovo”, given in 1934 at the Kolarac University in Belgrade, the Nobel laureate Ivo Andrić (1892–1975) points specifically to this latter component. He draws attention to the powerful impact of the “Kosovo Testament” in Montenegro. When talking about Kosovo, the Montenegrins felt the Serbian defeat in the Kosovo battle, as if it were their own destiny and personal tragedy.<sup>15</sup> Andrić writes:

The entire destiny of people was marked and guided by such a vow. As in the most ancient legends, which always represent the greatest human reality, each one personally felt a historical curse that turned “lions” into “farmers”, planting in their soul the “tremendous thought of Obilić”, and forsaking them to live torn between their wretched reality and the knightly Obilić’s thought.<sup>16</sup>

The elements Andrić highlights, such as the responsibility of each person for Kosovo’s defeat and the removal of the curse from themselves by following the knightly determination of Obilić for sacrifice, probably came to the fore later, as an incentive for the uprising against the Ottoman rule in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, these elements are completely absent in the early Church services and hymns dedicated to Prince Lazar, such as “The Narration on Kosovo Fighters” and “The Confessions of the Dead Prince Lazar” of Patriarch Danilo III (1350–after 1396), the “Encomium to Prince Lazar” by the nun Jefimija (Helena) Mrnjavčević from 1402, the “Service”, the “Encomium” and the “Prayer to Prince Lazar”, the “Cry for Prince Lazar”

<sup>13</sup> Vladimir Cvetković, “The Serbian Tradition”, in Augustine Casiday (ed.), *The Orthodox Christian World*, London: Routledge, 2012, 130–140, here 134.

<sup>14</sup> Žarko Vidović, *Njegoš i Kosovski zavjet u novom vijeku* [Njegoš and the Kosovo Testament in Modern Times], Belgrade: Filip Višnjić 1989, 14; Atanasije Jevtić, “Kosovski zavet”.

<sup>15</sup> Ivo Andrić, “Njegoš kao tragični junak kosovske misli” [“Njegoš as the Tragic Hero in the Thought of Kosovo”]. The lecture was first printed in *Srpski knjizevni glasnik* [Serbian Literary Gazette] in 1935. It has been reprinted and quoted in the weekly magazine *Vreme*, no. 1154, from 24 January 2013: <http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1094285> (accessed on January 5, 2014); slightly revised English translation by Bratislav Kršić: Episcopal Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America, *Christian Heritage of Kosovo and Metohija. The Historical and Spiritual Heartland of the Serbian People*, Alhambra: Sebastian Press 2015, 622.

<sup>16</sup> Ivo Andrić, “Njegoš as Tragic Hero in the Thought of Kosovo”.

of an unknown monk from the Ravanica monastery from the second half of the fourteenth century or early fifteenth century, as well as “The Inscription on the Kosovo’s Pillar” of Despot Stefan Lazarević (1377–1437). These early Church services and encomiums primarily emphasize the Christian virtues of Prince Lazar, and simultaneously with mourning for him they celebrate his martyrdom and raise prayers to him. This religious tradition of the Battle of Kosovo and of the Serbian warrior saints had been already established in the first decades after this battle. The monks took over the body of Prince Lazar and buried it first in the church of Ascension in Pristina. In 1391, Lazar’s uncorrupted relics were transferred to his endowment, the monastery Ravanica near Ćuprija.<sup>17</sup> Atanasije Jevtić claims that the oral literature about the Battle of Kosovo grew out of the Church liturgical experience and the perception of Prince Lazar’s Kosovo sacrifice originated within monastic communities.<sup>18</sup>

The synthesis of, on the one hand, the rich oral tradition that has not been presented only through poetic expression, but was also embodied in a Christian ethics of sacrifice, and on the other hand, of the liturgical and devotional veneration of the warriors of Kosovo as Christian martyrs is more than evident in the writings of the aforementioned three authors, Petar Petrović Njegoš, Nikolaj Velimirović and Justin Popović. In order to highlight the importance of Kosovo and of the Kosovo battle in Njegoš’s thought, it is often stated that the word “Kosovo”, next to the word “God”, is the most mentioned word in his poem *The Mountain Wreath* (1847). Unlike Andrić’s vision of Njegoš as a tragic hero of Kosovo’s thought, crucified as his people between wretched reality and knightly thought, Žarko Vidović considers the Montenegrin Metropolitan a savior of the Kosovo covenant from oblivion and a restorer of the Christian determination of the Serbian people for sacrifice and the Heavenly Kingdom.<sup>19</sup> Njegoš confirms the truth according to the Gospels that resurrection requires a cross through the following words:

Your destiny it is to bear the Cross  
of the fierce fight against brothers and foes!  
The wreath’s heavy, but the fruit is so sweet!  
Without death there is no resurrection.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Ravaničanin, “Žitije Svetog Kneza Lazara” [“The Life of St Prince Lazar”], in: Milica Grković (ed.), *Spisi o Kosovu* [Writings on Kosovo], Belgrade: Prosveta 1993, 122–129, here 129. Cf. also “Žitije Svetog Velikomučenika Lazara, cara srpskog” [“The Life of St Great Martyr Lazar, the Serbian Emperor”], in: Justin Popović, *Žitija Svetih za jun mesec* [Lives of the Saints of the Month of June], Valjevo: Manastir Ćelije kod Valjeva 1996, 339–367, here 361.

<sup>18</sup> Jevtić, “Kosovski zavet”.

<sup>19</sup> Vidović, *Njegoš i Kosovski zavjet u novom vijeku*, 8.

<sup>20</sup> Petar II Petrović Njegoš, *Pjesme, Luča mikrokozma, Gorski vijenac*, Matica srpska – SKZ, Novi Sad – Beograd 1969, 236. The English translation of *The Mountain Wreath*, [Unabridged Internet Edition] by Vasa D. Mihailovich, available at Rastko, Internet

This evangelical readiness for martyrdom and the cross, and by consequence for resurrection lies at the very core of Njegoš's Kosovo Testament. Prince Lazar, Miloš Obilić and other Kosovo's martyrs confirm by their intentional sacrifice the collective or catholic (*saborno*) determination for the Kingdom of God. This represents a dominant feature in Njegoš, which later on also occurs in Nikolaj Velimirović and Justin Popović.

In his book *The Czar's Testament* from 1933, Nikolaj Velimirović, or Saint Nikolaj of Žiča and Ochrid, as he is considered today by the SOC, describes how Prince Lazar, after being defeated and captured by the Ottoman army, reflects on whether it is fair to lead his whole army and the people into death in Kosovo: "If I had the authority to choose death instead of life for myself – who gave me the authority to make the same choice for the whole nation?"<sup>21</sup> However, an angel of God, accompanied by Lazar's patron-saint Amos, immediately appeared in front of him comforting him by saying that he had made a good choice, handing down a salutary Testament to his people. The angel further confirms that Prince Lazar's glorious words, said before the battle that "the earthly kingdom is transient whereas the heavenly kingdom lasts forever and to the ages of ages" are really true.<sup>22</sup>

Velimirović writes that the angel, who appeared in front of Prince Lazar, not only confirms that the Prince's determination was right, but also points to the importance of the cross of Prince Lazar and Kosovo for following generations:

Like the pillar of fire led the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery, the cross lifted from the field of Kosovo to the heavens will lead your people through the wilderness of slavery. It will illuminate them, it will lead them, and it will bring them to the promised land of freedom – yet not only to the earthly, symbolic and temporary freedom, but also to the true, eternal and angelic freedom.<sup>23</sup>

A disciple of Velimirović, Justin Popović, or Saint Justin the New of Čelije, similarly to his teacher, reflected on Prince Lazar's choice and testament, drawing a parallel between Prince Lazar and the first Serbian Archbishop and founder of the Serbian Church, St Sava Nemanjić:

Prince Lazar chose in Kosovo for himself and for the people the same thing, as long before him, Saint Sava chose for himself and

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Library of Serbian Culture: [http://www.rastko.rs/knjizevnost/umetnicka/njegos/mountain\\_wreath.html](http://www.rastko.rs/knjizevnost/umetnicka/njegos/mountain_wreath.html) (accessed on February 2, 2015).

<sup>21</sup> Nikolaj Velimirović, "Carev zavet" [The Czar's Testament], in: Episkop Nikolaj, *Sabrana dela u 13 knjiga* [The Collected Works in 13 volumes], vol. 5, Šabac: Manastir Svetog Nikole 2014, 143–174, here 149.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 169.

for the people in the monastery of Chilandar. What did he choose?  
He chose Christ the God and his Gospel.<sup>24</sup>

According to Popović, the medieval state of the Nemanjić dynasty began with saints and ended with martyrs. This was because according to the law of evangelical life one has to undergo martyrdom for attaining heavenly justice. For Popović, the ethics of St Vitus’ day as the ethics of evangelical martyrdom protects the Serbian people from European relativism and nihilism and their precursors, such as atheism and materialism. At the same time, Popović continued, if this suffering for the Kingdom of Heaven weakens and the people fall into selfishness proclaiming it as the supreme deity, then such a nation, as a human-eating machine, would destroy itself.

Another important component that still dominates the discourse on Kosovo in the Serbian Church and which is emphasized in the works of Njegoš, Velimirović and Popović is the view on Kosovo’s sacrifice as atonement for the sins of the people. Exactly as Jesus Christ took upon himself the sins of the mankind, Prince Lazar, his holy warriors and all subsequent bearers of the Kosovo covenant suffer for the sins of the Serbian people. Njegoš begins his poem *The Mountain Wreath* (1847) with the words, “God is angry with the Serbian people, because of their many mortal sins,”<sup>25</sup> by listing the sins of Serbian people committed primarily by their national leaders. Then, the Jeremiah of Kosovo, as Njegoš is sometimes called, through the voice of a Montenegrin nobleman laments over Kosovo, “O Kosovo, the site of the Judgment Day, may Sodom burst into flames on your field!” Thus, Njegoš associates the sins of the Serbian people with the fate of Kosovo under the Ottoman rule, which is here identified with the Old Testament city of Sodom.

One may find various parallels in Velimirović’s works. In his poem *The Heavenly Liturgy*, he describes a conversation between God and St Sava in the Kingdom of Heaven. Saint Sava says to God: “Serbs are not as good as they were. They are worse now than before Kosovo,”<sup>26</sup> so that God sends numerous calamities to the Serbian people. In his novel *The Czar’s Testament*, Velimirović describes the dialogue between Prince Lazar and the angel of the Lord, in which Lazar raises the question of why God allows the non-Christians to come to Kosovo. The angel replies: “When the Christian spoil the cross by

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<sup>24</sup> “The Ethics of St Vitus Day regarding the Heavenly Kingdom on the Eve of our 600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St Vitus”, the homily first uttered on Radio Belgrade in 1939; repeated in the Belgrade Church of the Holy Rose (*Svete Ružice*) in 1942; published in the Venerable Father Justin, *Setve i žetve: Člani i manji spisi* [Sowing and Harvesting: Articles and Minor Writings], Belgrade: Monastery Chelie 2007.

<sup>25</sup> *The Mountain Wreath*: [http://www.rastko.rs/knjizevnost/umetnicka/njegos/mountain\\_wreath.html](http://www.rastko.rs/knjizevnost/umetnicka/njegos/mountain_wreath.html) (accessed on February 2, 2015).

<sup>26</sup> Nikolaj Velimirović, “Nebeska liturgija” [Heavenly Liturgy], in: Vladika Nikolaj Velimirović, *Sabrana dela* [Collected Works], Düsseldorf: Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Western Europe, 1978, vol. 2, 592–599, here 595.

their iniquities, the all-seeing God allows then to non-Christians to spoil it more.”<sup>27</sup> Velimirović argues here that the Serbian people lost Kosovo, the land where Prince Lazar made a covenant with God through blood sacrifice and commitment to the Kingdom of Heaven, as a penalty for their sins. According to Velimirović, these sins are also reflected in the unwillingness of twentieth century Serbs to take the cross of Lazar’s martyrdom and follow his guidance and determination.

In recent times, one can hear similar accounts regarding the sins of the Serbian people. Thus, at the memorial service for Bishop Nikolaj in 1966 in Lelić, Justin Popović compared the Serbian people with ticks, who blinded by European culture cannot see the Sun of Christ and the other lesser sun of Bishop Nikolaj. According to Popović, the entire life of Bishop Nikolaj reflected the “legacy and testament of Saint Sava and of Kosovo, that is, to sacrifice everything for Christ, and Christ for nothing.”<sup>28</sup> The same year, in his homily on St Vitus Day, Popović said:

The Holy Serbia did not die in Kosovo! No, it has continued its way through terrible slavery, the path of the eternal Serbian Church, struggling through history in the way of the Holy Serbia, and to this day – until our days, the Holy Serbia!<sup>29</sup>

Justin argues here that the Heavenly and Holy Serbia affirms itself only through martyrdom, which is the essence of the “Gospel of Kosovo” and which many Serbs regrettably attempt to cast out from their souls and to bury.

In his homily given at the funeral service of Justin Popović in 1974 at the monastery of Čelije, hieromonk (now Metropolitan) Amfilohije Radović compared the deceased with Prophet Jeremiah, because he had been pointing for thirty years to the sins of his people, but also of Europe and the world. Radović asked the deceased, who was already regarded by many as a saint, to pray to God for the forgiveness of the sins of the Serbian people, who did not preserve the sacred borders of the Serbian lands, who did not keep intact the *chiton* (garment) of St Sava’s church (an allusion to the Schism within the SOC), whose faith extinguished at St Lazar’s Kosovo and St Sava’s Montenegro, and who expelled Christ from and crucified him in the Serbian

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<sup>27</sup> Velimirović, “Carev zavet”, 169.

<sup>28</sup> “The Second Homily at the Memorial Service for Bishop Nikolaj”, in: St. Justin the New of Chelie, *Collected Homilies*, vol. 1 (Collected Works of St. Justin the New – vol. 1), Belgrade 2003, available in Serbian at: <https://svetosavlje.org/sabrane-besede-3/76/> (accessed on January 9, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> “The Homily Uttered on St Vitus Day in the Monastery of Chelie in 1966”, in: St. Justin the New of Chelie, *Collected Homilies*, vol. 1, available in Serbian at: <https://svetosavlje.org/sabrane-besede-3/43/> (accessed on January 9, 2015).

schools and universities.<sup>30</sup> By drawing allusion to Njegoš’ verses about Kosovo as a trial of the Serbian people for their sins, Radović connected on several occasions the recent developments in Kosovo with this divine judgment to the Serbian people. In his homily uttered after the prayer to the Serbian people on February 21, 2008, a day after the declaration of independence of Kosovo from Serbia, Radović repeated the claim that the events in Kosovo are a trial not only of the Serbian people, but also to the Albanian, American, English and French people.<sup>31</sup>

These examples indicate the role and the symbolic meaning that Kosovo, the Kosovo Battle and the Kosovo Testament play in the collective memory of the Serbian people, which is expressed either through oral or written means from the 14th century onwards up to the present. In the following section I will try to show to which extent such a perception of Kosovo matches the contemporary political and social realities, or how the Serbian people in Kosovo live their Kosovo Testament.

## **2.2. Kosovo’s Past and Present**

The three-month bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) by NATO in 1999 has largely aroused the interest of the international scholarship for the historical situation in Kosovo, and this resulted in a series of books on the topic of coexistence between Serbs and Albanians there. In the next lines I do not intend to give a new version of the Kosovo crisis, but rather to present the attitude of the Serbian Church, spoken out by its members (clerics and laics) about the condition of the Serbian people and the Church in Kosovo. The Western media most vigorously covered the severe persecution of the Albanian population by the Serbian army and police during the NATO bombing. Yet, there was an exodus of Serbian population from Kosovo in fear of reprisal from the Albanians following the signing of the Kumanovo Agreement on the withdrawal of Serbian armed forces from Kosovo (June 9, 1999) between the representatives of NATO and the Yugoslav Army. The Western media only incidentally covered this mass migration of Serbian people from Kosovo. However, it seems that this migration is not an exception, but the last one in a long series of migrations from the seventeenth century onwards.

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<sup>30</sup> Homily given at the funeral of Father Justin, in Atanasije Jevtić (ed.), *Čovek Bogočoveka Hrista* [The Man God-man Christ], Belgrade: The Heirs of Father Justin and the Monastery of Tvrdoš, 2003, 227–234, here 233–234. The homily is available at: <http://kulturakv.blogspot.de/2010/05/blog-post.html> (accessed on January 9, 2015).

<sup>31</sup> Metropolitan Amfilohije, “Kosovo is our Holy City of Jerusalem”, Report of Tanjug agency, available at: [http://www.spc.rs/sr/mitropolit\\_amfilohije\\_kosovo\\_je\\_nas\\_sveti\\_grad\\_jerusalim](http://www.spc.rs/sr/mitropolit_amfilohije_kosovo_je_nas_sveti_grad_jerusalim) (accessed on January 9, 2015).



In 2010, after the forced retirement of Bishop (now monk) Artemije Radosavljević from the Diocese of Raška-Prizren and Kosovo-Metohija requested by the Holy Synod of the SOC, the retired Bishop Atanasije Jevtić was appointed the administrator of the diocese. In a series of homilies given in the few months of his tenure, Jevtić has been frequently repeating the verses of the folk song describing the ability of Serbian outlaws under Ottoman rule “to come, to escape and to persist in the place of danger”<sup>32</sup> and applying them to the Serbs in Kosovo. Jevtić emphasized that historical circumstances in Kosovo often forced the Serbs to leave the area, yet they should return to Kosovo and try to subsist there, although this carries a serious risk for the safety of their lives and properties.<sup>33</sup>

In general, migrating from Kosovo always survived in the collective memory of the Serbs and of the Serbian Church. The Great Migration of Serbs under Patriarch Arsenije Černojević in 1690, and another migration, on a smaller scale, under Patriarch Arsenije IV Jovanović Šakabenta after 1739, happened out of fear of Turkey’s retaliation for the Serbian participation in the wars against the Ottoman Empire on the Austrian side. These two large-scale migrations emptied Kosovo significantly of Christian population. During the migration of 1690 Serbian monks carried the relics of Saint Prince Lazar first to Belgrade and Szentendre before finally settling in 1697 in the monastery Vrdnik on Fruška Gora. The figures on the number of Serbian migrants vary, but the first migration is estimated to have included between 30,000<sup>34</sup> and 37,000 families<sup>35</sup> (which, according to some sources, may amount to approximately half a million people<sup>36</sup>). These migrations changed the demographic structure of the population in Kosovo, which was stable throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth century and consisted of 97% Christians (Orthodox and Roman Catholic) and 3% Muslims.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Slightly adapted translation of “How Starina Novak became a Hayduk”, in: *Heroic Ballads of Serbia*, (transl. into English verse by George Rapall Noyes and Leonard Bacon), Boston: Sherman, French & Company, 1913, 194.

<sup>33</sup> The sermon of Bishop Atanasije given at a liturgy held on March 14, 2010 in the newly renovated church in Belo Polje near Peć.

<sup>34</sup> According to the written testimony of Patriarch Arsenije from 1690. Cf. Noel Malcolm, “The ‘Great Migration’ of the Serbs from Kosovo (1690)”, in: Oliver Jens Schmitt und Eva Anne Frantz (Hrsg.), *Albanische Geschichte. Stand und Perspektiven der Forschung*, München: Oldenbourg, 2009, 238.

<sup>35</sup> Based on the data of Hieromonk Stefan of Ravanica, recorded in a manuscript from the Šišatovac monastery. Cf. Ljubomir Stanojević (ed.), *Stari srpski zapisi i natpisi* [The Old Serbian Records and Inscriptions], vol. 3, Belgrade 1905, 94.

<sup>36</sup> August Émile Picot, *Les Serbes de Hongrie*, Prague, 1873, 75.

<sup>37</sup> Olga Zirojević, “Vučitrnski i prizrenski sandžak u vreme vladavine Sulejmana Veličanstvenog” [“Sanjak of Vučitrn and Prizren during the Reign of Suleiman the Magnificent”], *Istorijski časopis* 19 (1972) 263–275.

The Serbian migrations from Kosovo were not only inflicted by Ottoman persecution, but were also caused, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, by the growing conflict with the Islamized population. In his *Book of Kosovo*, Dimitrije Bogdanović notes that the conflict between Serbs and Albanians, who had lived in peace for many centuries, was due to “the new religious and social differentiation of the Turkish, Ottoman feudal system.”<sup>38</sup> However, in the mid-nineteenth century, the Serbian population in Kosovo and Metohija still outnumbered the respective Albanian one. The majority of population consisted of both Christian and Islamized Serbs, while Albanians, Muslims and Catholics made up only one-sixth of the total population.<sup>39</sup> One may assume that the Serbian Church did not have much interest in the Islamized Serbian population. According to Bogdanović, the process of homogenization of Kosovo and Metohija as an Albanian-Muslim territory occurred after the Congress of Berlin in 1878, principally due to the Albanian migration from the mountainous regions of Albania and Metohija to the north. The Muslim population, which together with the Ottoman administration had withdrawn from the newly Serbian territories, also settled in Kosovo.<sup>40</sup>

Attributing to Albanians a significant role in defending the legitimacy of the Ottoman Balkans, in the second half of the nineteenth century the Serbian state-building policy was oriented against them. Despite the emergence of the Albanian liberation movement from Ottoman rule, including the League of Prizren (founded in 1878), Serbia did not change its policy, which, in turn, had negative effects on the condition of church buildings and the Serbs of Kosovo. Thus, in a letter from 1860, addressed to the Sultan Abdul-Aziz, but also to European governments, the abbot of the Dečani monastery, Serafim Ristić, complained about the unbearable situation of the Serbs and their suffering caused by Albanian Muslims in Kosovo and Metohija, or, more precisely, in the district of Peć.<sup>41</sup> This document corresponds on many points to the letters that were sent to the Western governments by bishops, abbots and abbesses of Kosovo and Metohija’s monasteries after 1999 in order to be protected from the eruption of Albanian violence. One may find similar testimonies on the life of the Serbian people in the last decades of the nineteenth century in Kosovo and Metohija in the reports and letters of the Russian consuls in Bitola.<sup>42</sup> It is an interesting fact, which greatly resembles the present-day

<sup>38</sup> Dimitrije Bogdanović, *Knjiga o Kosovu* [The Book on Kosovo], Belgrade: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1985, 92.

<sup>39</sup> According to the ethnographic examination of Joseph Miller, available in Vladimir Stojančević, *Južnoslovenski narodi u Osmanskom carstvu od Jedrenskog mira 1829. do Pariskog kongresa 1856. godine* [South Slavic Peoples in the Ottoman Empire from Adrianople Peace in 1829 to the Congress of Paris in 1856], Belgrade, 1971, 328–330.

<sup>40</sup> Bogdanović, *Knjiga o Kosovu*, 138–139.

<sup>41</sup> Serafim Ristić, *Plač Stare Srbije* [The Cry of Old Serbia], Zemun 1864.

<sup>42</sup> Афанасий М. Селищев, *Славянское население в Албании*, София, 1931, 7.

reality in Kosovo regarding the obstruction of the investigation of crimes against the Serbs, that 126 Christians had been killed only in the Peć district from 1876 to 1879, and that the killers not only remained unpunished, but have not even been arrested.<sup>43</sup> The circumstances that lasted from the late nineteenth century until the beginning of the First Balkan War affected the mass migration of, according to some sources, around 400,000 people, predominantly Christian Serbs from Kosovo and Northern Macedonia to Serbia.<sup>44</sup> Either through diplomatic channels or by directly arming the Serbs in the area and sending armed troops, the Serbian Government tried to stop the violence, but these measures only provoked further confrontations. In 1914, the Serbian social democrat Dimitrije Tucović (1881–1914) warned of the harmfulness of such a state policy of Serbia towards the Albanian population:

By the conquering policy towards Albanian people the Serbian government created such relations on the western border of Serbia, that in the near future peace and regular situation can hardly be expected.<sup>45</sup>

Even after the Balkan Wars and the First World War and the emergence of new states in the Balkans, such as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and Albania, the policy of the new Kingdom towards Kosovo and Albanians remained a conquering one, as Dimitrije Tucović noted some years earlier. The Albanian population in Kosovo and Macedonia, which also became a part of the new Kingdom, could not identify with the new state neither in linguistic nor in cultural terms. Yugoslavia was created on the basis of fellowship among Slavic peoples from the area and included the idea of “integral Yugoslavism”, which became a major political platform of King Aleksandar I Karadjordjević (1888–1934) in the late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>46</sup> This notion is based on the assumption that Serbs, Croats and Slovenes are in fact one and the same ethnic group that had simply followed a different development under various foreign rules.<sup>47</sup> The idea about the union not only of the southern Slavs, but of Slavs in general had its conceptual roots in the Russian Slavophile movement, but it

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 46–47.

<sup>44</sup> Jovan Jovanović, *Južna Srbija od kraja XVIII veka do oslobođenja* [South Serbia since the late Eighteenth Century until the Liberation], Belgrade, 1941, 39–41.

<sup>45</sup> Dimitrije Tucović, “Serbia and Albania”, in: Dimitrije Tucović, *Collected Works*, vol. 8, Belgrade 1980, 17. Cf. also <http://pescanik.net/skenderbeg-je-srbin/> (accessed on March 22, 2015).

<sup>46</sup> Lubodrag Dimić, “Integralno Jugoslovenstvo i kultura 1929–1931” [“Integral Yugoslavism and Culture in 1929–1931”], in: Hans-Georg Fleck and Igor Graovac (eds.), *Dijalog povjesničara/istoričara* [Dialogue of Historians], vol. 3, Zagreb 2001, 315–333.

<sup>47</sup> Pieter Troch, “Yugoslavism between the World Wars: Indecisive Nation-Building”, *Nationalities Papers* 38 (2010) 227–244.

was developed as a political concept of Pan-Slavism in the Habsburg monarchy in the second half of the nineteenth century, first by the Czechs and the Poles and later adopted by the southern Slavs.<sup>48</sup> One of the greatest proponents of this idea among the Serbian clergy was Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, who, especially in the period before and during the First World War, wrote a series of books and articles and gave plenty of lectures and sermons on the theme of the integral unity of the southern Slavs. In advocating the integral Yugoslavism in the interwar period, King Alexander I Karadjordjević aspired to strengthen state centralism by creating a unitary Yugoslav national consciousness. Aleksa Djilas notes that King Alexander tried to solve the national question simply by abolishing it.<sup>49</sup> The very idea of the unity of the southern Slavs and integral Yugoslavism excluded Albanians as non-Slavic people. Therefore, they opposed the Yugoslav idea and the centralism promoted by the new state from Belgrade. The immediate consequences of this opposition was the emergence of numerous *kachak* (outlaw) armed movements of Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia, as well as the mass migration of Albanians from Kosovo. According to some data, about 12,000 Albanians were killed,<sup>50</sup> and about 40,000 Kosovo Albanians had moved into Albania until 1921, while the number of migrations to Turkey until the 1930s amounted to 45,000 people.<sup>51</sup> The Yugoslav Government and the General Staff had developed a plan of settling Slavic, predominantly Serbian, population in Kosovo in order to ensure stability and security in the area, but this plan was never realized.<sup>52</sup> Just in the period from 1918 to 1931, the new state had to pay the maintenance of peace and security in Kosovo with the lives of 1400 policemen (gendarmes).<sup>53</sup>

The Second World War merely opened the old wounds. Only in 1942 around 60,000 people moved from Kosovo to Serbia due to the armed violence

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<sup>48</sup> Diana Mishkova, “In Quest of Balkan Occidentalism”, *Tokovi istorije* 1–2 (2006) 29–62, here 37–39.

<sup>49</sup> Aleksa Djilas, *The Contested Country: Yugoslav Unity and Communist Revolution*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991, 80.

<sup>50</sup> Sabrina P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the War for Kosovo*, Oxford: Westview Press 2002, 311.

<sup>51</sup> Živko Avramovski, “Prilog pitanju italijansko-albanske iredentističke propagande na Kosovu I Metohiji u vreme Minhenske krize i okupacije Albanije” [“A Contribution to the Question of Italian-Albanian Irredentist Propaganda in Kosovo and Metohija at the Time of the Munich Crisis and the Occupation of Albania”], *Istorijski glasnik* 2–3 (1964) 124–125.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>53</sup> Vladan Jovanović, “Kačaci na Kosovu” [Kachaks in Kosovo], *Peščanik*, April 25, 2013: <http://pescanik.net/kacaci-na-kosovu/> (accessed on January 13, 2015).

of *kachaks*.<sup>54</sup> Atanasije Jevtić states that the total number of displaced Serbs from Kosovo during the Second World War was between 70,000 and 100,000.<sup>55</sup> The partisan war reports informed that the German occupation authorities forced Serbian migration from Kosovo and that Albanians appropriated the properties of the displaced Serbs.<sup>56</sup> By the end of the war, the communists came to power in Yugoslavia. Instead of the hoped peace and stability, the suffering of the Serbian Church and people of Kosovo only continued in the newly emerged political situation, because they were equally targeted by Albanian nationalists and communists. First, on March 6, 1945, the National Assembly of the Republic of Yugoslavia took a decision prohibiting Serbs, who had been expelled from Kosovo, to return there. Then, by the Law on Agrarian Reform and Resettlement from August 1946, the new Yugoslav Government expropriated from the Serbian Church over 70,000 hectares of land,<sup>57</sup> while solely in Kosovo this figure amounted to 5,255 hectares.<sup>58</sup> In addition, the attempts of the communist authorities to establish law and order in Kosovo and to prevent possible armed uprisings by searching the houses and confiscating arms, turned into a real terror against Albanians. The most responsible for this policy towards the Albanian population in Kosovo was Aleksandar Ranković (1909–1983), the interior minister in the Yugoslav Government and the chief of the Yugoslav secret service (the Department for Protection of People – *Odjeljenje za zaštitu naroda*, or OZNA). Sabrina Ramet remarks that Ranković was a supporter of the policy of the “integral Yugoslavism” aimed at developing a common Yugoslav consciousness and at the same time at ensuring the smooth functioning of the political and administrative centralism.<sup>59</sup> The policy of Ranković was not only based on the pre-war policy of King Alexander I Karadjordjević, but it also clearly favored the Serbian element in the creation of this new Yugoslav consciousness. Unlike interwar Yugoslavism, which favored only Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the new policy lifted Macedonians, Montenegrins and Muslims (mostly known as Bosniaks today) to an equal constitutive status

<sup>54</sup> Slobodan Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941–1945 godine* [Refugees and Displaced Persons in the Territory of Occupied Yugoslavia, 1941–1945], Belgrade 1981, 51–54.

<sup>55</sup> Jevtić, *From Kosovo to Jadovno*, 9. See also Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 312.

<sup>56</sup> *Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o Narodnooslobodilačkom ratu jugoslovenskih naroda* [Collective Volume of Documents and Data on the National Liberation War of the Yugoslav Peoples], vol. 19, Belgrade 1969, 514 (no. 117).

<sup>57</sup> Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 107.

<sup>58</sup> The Statement of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, “Restitution of expropriated land to SOC in Kosovo is exclusively within the jurisdiction of the Republic of Serbia”, from June 13, 2008, available at: <http://www.srbija.gov.rs/vesti/vest.php?pf=1&id=89648&url=%2Fvesti%2Fvest.php%3Fpf%3D1%26id%3D89648> (accessed on January 24, 2015).

<sup>59</sup> Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 110.

with “the ancient nations”. Albanians in Kosovo could not obtain the status of such a constituent nation, but only the status of a nationality, because Albania was considered to be their home country. This status allowed them, first by the constitutional amendment of 1971 and later by the new Yugoslav Constitution of 1974, the possibility of institutional and political decision-making through the Assembly and the Executive Council (Government) of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo. Albanians gained these rights, because the political concept of decentralized Yugoslavia prevailed. This new concept, which Ramet calls “organic Yugoslavism” recognized the ethnic and cultural differences among the Yugoslav population. Its mastermind and chief advocate was the Slovene communist Edvard Kardelj (1910–1979).<sup>60</sup> Kardelj’s concept promoted the “multinational and six-republican character of the Yugoslav Federation and the pluralism of socialist self-management interests” and became the state policy after the adoption of the new Yugoslav Constitution in 1974.<sup>61</sup> Although in the 1950s this almost confederal model seemed to be impossible, in the early 1960s it managed to gain numerous supporters among the party leaders, especially from Croatia as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina. Such tendencies led to Ranković’s removal from office in 1966 and a change of Yugoslav policy towards Kosovo. The large rally, which occurred in Pristina on November 28, 1968, the Flag Day or Albanian Independence Day, was initiated by the Albanian students from the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Pristina. It aimed at introducing greater autonomy to Kosovo, as well as the right to education in their own language. These demands were subsequently accepted by Yugoslav authorities through constitutional amendments.

The new policy that acknowledged the political interests of Albanians in Kosovo had various negative consequences, mostly reflected in retaliation against the Serbs. The price of the repressive communist policies of Belgrade towards Kosovo during the 1950s was mostly paid by the local Serbs and the Serbian Church. 35,000 Serbs were displaced from Kosovo and Metohija from 1966 and Ranković’s removal from office, to 1971.<sup>62</sup> A large number of incidents against Serbs and the Serbian Church, which took the form of systematic and organized persecution, were recorded in the detailed reports from 1957 to 1990 by the Bishop of Raška and Prizren (later Patriarch) Pavle Stojčević (1914–2009). Thus, in his report from May 1960, Bishop Pavle

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Dejan Jović, “1989: godina koja nam se nije dogodila” [“1989: The Year that we did not Experience”], *Politička misao*, December 7, 2014, available at: <http://politickamisa.com/1989-godina-koja-nam-se-nije-dogodila/> (accessed on January 24, 2015).

<sup>62</sup> Atanasije Jevtić (ed.), *Memorandum on Kosovo and Metohija by the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church*, Belgrade: The Holy Synod of Bishops of the SOC, 2004, 51.

records the demolition and burning of the church in Kačanik and of the monastery of St. Mark, as well as the destruction of Serbian cemeteries in seven villages, mostly around Orahovac.<sup>63</sup> The number of displaced Serbs from Kosovo drastically increased in the following period, so that from 1966 to 1981, 220,000 Serbs emigrated from Kosovo and Metohija.

After the death of the longtime Yugoslav president, Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980), the Albanian question was opened once again in Yugoslavia, now with the request for a change of the status of Kosovo from an autonomous province within Serbia into the seventh Yugoslav Republic. On several occasions during March 1981, mass rallies of students and citizens erupted in Pristina, which initially had social demands, but then acquired political and national dimensions. The protesters demanded the status of republic for Kosovo, as well as the unification of the Albanian lands. Patriarch Pavle states in his reports that 1980 and 1981 were the most difficult years of his Episcopal ministry in Kosovo.<sup>64</sup> The church of St. John the Baptist in Samodreža (Samadrexha) was desecrated in 1980, and on March 16, 1981 the Serbian monastery of the Patriarchate of Peć, which is the historical seat of the Serbian Patriarchs, was set on fire. This event may be perceived as a turning point, because it attracted the attention of the Serbian public to events related to the Serbs and the Serbian Church in Kosovo. Prior to this event, every attempt of the SOC to highlight the plight of the Serbs in Kosovo was regarded by the authorities as an expression of Serbian nationalism and as an attack on the “brotherhood and unity” of the Yugoslav nations and nationalities. This event caused a strong reaction on the part of the Serbian society close to the SOC. In the “Appeal for Protection of Serbian People and its Holy Shrines in Kosovo”, dated from April 1982 and signed by 21 priests and monks of the SOC, including the professors from the Faculty of Theology of the SOC (now bishops) Amfilohije Radović, Atanasije Jevtić and Irenej Bulović, it was pointed out that the action against the security of Serbs, the Serbian Church and their property, including the attempted arson of the Peć Patriarchate Monastery, represented a “deliberately premeditated genocide” by the Albanians.<sup>65</sup> The appeal was addressed to the Presidency of Yugoslavia, the Presidency of Serbia, the Serbian Parliament and to the Holy Synod of the SOC, while it was sent to some Belgrade daily newspapers. Although there had been such appeals to the authorities earlier, the media did not pay much attention to them. In this sense, the appearance of the 1982 appeal in print

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<sup>63</sup> Bishop of Raška and Prizren Pavle, *Izveštaji sa raspetog Kosova* [Reports from Crucified Kosovo], Belgrade: Publishing Foundation of the Archbishopric of Belgrade and Karlovac and the Patriarch Pavle Foundation, 2013, 248–249.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> “Appeal for Protection of Serbian People and its Holy Shrines in Kosovo”, *Pravoslavlje*, May 15, 1982. Available in Serbian at: <https://svetosavlje.org/od-kosova-do-jadovna-putni-zapisi/> (accessed on January 25, 2015).

signified the return of the Serbian Church as the guardian of Serbian interests in the media and in the public sphere.

In addition to certain members of the SOC, Serbian communists, as well as communist dissidents, have taken advantage of this moment to open the so-called “Serbian question”. Shkëlzen Maliqi remarks that the unitary and revanchist movement within the Communist Party in Serbia that occurred in connection with the “Kosovo question” and brought Slobodan Milošević to power was in fact the consequence of the trauma suffered by Serbian communists because of Ranković’s removal from power and because of the adoption of the 1974 Constitution.<sup>66</sup> This movement among Serbian communists took advantage of the plight of Serbs in Kosovo to open the “Serbian question”, which not only related to the particular problems of the Serbian population in Kosovo, but also to the status of the Serbian people in Yugoslavia. In addition, there was another movement that brought largely ex-communists and dissidents together, led by the writer and academician Dobrica Ćosić (1921–2014), which also involved politically engaged intellectuals from the Belgrade wing of the international journal *Praxis*, such as Mihajlo Marković, Svetozar Stojanović and Ljuba Tadić. Already in his inaugural speech on the occasion of his admission to the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU) in 1977, Ćosić reflected on the place of the Serbs in Yugoslavia, warning about the harmful effects that the Yugoslav state had for them.<sup>67</sup> Later in 1985, an official document of SANU called *Memorandum on Current Social Issues*, which was largely an elaboration of Ćosić’s national ideas,<sup>68</sup> was offered as a solution for the Serbian national question.

There is a tendency in contemporary research to view these three movements as a single monolithic expression of Serbian nationalism. However, although there is certainly some common ground among them, in my opinion they represent three different perspectives on the Serbian people. It is thus possible to identify three paradigms that shaped the Serbian national consciousness during the 1970s and the 1980s. Two paradigms were traditional: integral Yugoslavism, which was in decline, and the Serbian national idea, which was attracting a stronger public support. Besides these two, there was a third option, which was the program of Serbian liberals, whose solution to the “Serbian question” included the building of Serbia as a

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<sup>66</sup> Shkëlzen Maliqi, *Shembja e Jugosllavisë dhe rrëfime të tjera politike: dialog i Shkëlzen Maliqit me Baton Haxhiun*, Tiranë: UET Press, 2011. The Serbian translation Skeljzen Malići, *Kosovo i raspad Jugoslavije* [Kosovo and the Breakup of Yugoslavia], Belgrade: MostArt, 2014, 250–255. The chapter “On Normality” is available on the website of *Peščanik* at: <http://pescanik.net/o-normalnosti/> (accessed on January 13, 2015).

<sup>67</sup> Sonja Biserko, *Kovanje antijugoslovenske zavere* [Forging anti-Yugoslav Conspiracy], vol. 1, Belgrade: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, 2006, 22.

<sup>68</sup> Biserko, *Kovanje antijugoslovenske zavere*, vol. 1, 33.



modern state within the Yugoslav Federation defined by the Constitution of 1974.<sup>69</sup> One has to distinguish among Church intellectuals, dissidents and Serbian communists, based on their approach to the Serbian national question. The intellectuals from the SOC alone looked at the “Serbian question” exclusively as the cultural issue of the Serbs in Yugoslavia, because the ecclesiastic jurisdiction of the SOC was extending beyond the borders of the Republic of Serbia, and the Church showed no particular interest in dealing with administrative issues. They built their national platform starting from the facts on the ground, such as the life conditions of the Church and the Serbian people in Kosovo.

For the dissidents, the “Serbian question” was cultural, but also institutional and legal. However, they built a political platform based on certain political ideas that were included in the program of state policy in which the Serbian people had a leading role. For the Serbian communists, no matter whether they were pro-Yugoslav, pro-Serbian or liberal, the “Serbian question” was exclusively legal and institutional, and not a cultural issue. In the 1970s political and social issues dominated the Serbian political scene, which was marked by a conflict between liberal and conservative-minded communists, while in the 1980s the national issues prevailed over social ones. Maliqi states that “Serbian nationalism wasted nine years for the subjugation and reoccupation of Kosovo”.<sup>70</sup> The period from the large rallies in Pristina in 1981 to the emendation of the Constitution of Serbia and the abolition of Kosovo’s autonomy in 1990 was marked by the conflict of Serbian and predominantly Albanian Kosovo’s communists, as well as by the different currents within the Serbian state and party apparatus. The conflict between Serbian and Albanian communists had again negative effects on the Serbian Church, which became a target of Albanian irredentism. The safety and property of the Serbian Church and the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija were not only endangered by individual and isolated attacks, but also by the official Albanian policy in the province. According to Patriarch Pavle, then Bishop in Kosovo, the aim of such Albanian policy was to “ethnically clean” or to Serb-free Kosovo. In his report from 1987, Bishop Pavle informed the Holy Synod and the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the SOC that the Albanian authorities registered the Serbian churches and monasteries from Kosovo in the deed books as mosques and houses.<sup>71</sup> Slobodan Milošević emerged as a winner

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<sup>69</sup> Olga Popović Obradović, *Kakva ili kolika država? Ogledi o političkoj i društvenoj istoriji Srbije XIX–XXI veka* [What Kind of State or How Large is State? Essays on the Political and Social History of Serbia of 19<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> Century], Belgrade: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, 2008, 443.

<sup>70</sup> Malići, *Kosovo i raspad Jugoslavije*, 16–30. The chapter “The Albanians in Belgrade” is available on the website of *Peščanik* at: <http://pescanik.net/albanac-u-beogradu/> (accessed on January 13, 2015).

<sup>71</sup> Pavle, *Izveštaji sa raspetog Kosova*, 429.

from the conflict between the differently oriented currents within the Serbian state leadership. Although during the 1980s Milošević was not interested in the fate of the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, beginning with 1987 and his visit to Kosovo Polje, he opened the question of the status of the local Serbs. The focus on the Kosovo Serbs that led to the change of the Constitution of Serbia and the abolition of Kosovo’s autonomy in 1990 was the backbone of Milošević’s state policy in this period.

The relationship of the SOC towards Milošević, who presented himself as a protector of the Serbian people, was at least skeptical. Not only his communist past, but also a few concrete steps through which he intended to take advantage of the Serbian Church for the purpose of his state and national politics, created a deep mistrust in the SOC towards him. The celebration of the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo in 1989 was a good example of his intentions. Independently from the liturgical celebrations, by which the SOC traditionally marks the St Vitus Day (28<sup>th</sup> of June), Milošević organized a large rally at Gazimestan, the field where the historic battle between Serbs and Ottomans had occurred. Although numerous people from Serbia headed to the monastery of Gračanica, where the central Church celebration of the anniversary took place, the police rerouted the buses and cars to Gazimestan in order to support Milošević, who gave a speech there.

### ***2.3. The Period of Crisis and the Disintegration of Yugoslavia***

In November 1989 the Berlin wall fell symbolizing the collapse of the communist political and social system in Europe. The citizens of East Germany, who confronted their communist government with the slogan “We are the people” (*Wir sind das Volk*), immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall, changed their slogan into “We are one people” (*Wir sind ein Volk*), as a call for the re-unification of Germans separated by the different political systems in one nation-state. The international community allowed Germany’s re-unification invoking the “right to self-determination”,<sup>72</sup> but it stressed that this is a “unique case”.<sup>73</sup>

Slobodan Milošević, who came to power by mobilizing the people, transformed the Communist Party of Serbia into the Socialist Party of Serbia. On the occasion of the first parliamentary elections in Serbia after the fall of communism in December 1990, he was elected the President of Serbia at the presidential elections, and his party won the majority of seats in the Parliament at the general elections. However, one may argue that, as President of Serbia, Milošević believed that he was entitled to be the protector of all Serbs in

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<sup>72</sup> Dejan Jović, “Evropa i raspad Jugoslavije” [“Europe and the Disintegration of Yugoslavia”], *Politička misao* 50/1 (2013) 207–218, here 216.

<sup>73</sup> Jović, “1989: Godina koja nam se nije dogodila”.

Yugoslavia. The idea of creating national states on the territory of Yugoslavia on the basis of peoples' right to self-determination, used already in the German case a year earlier, was not only appropriated by Milošević, but was also shared by the political representatives of other Yugoslav peoples, such as the Slovenian president Milan Kučan and the Croatian President Franjo Tuđman (1922–1999). In contrast to the attempts of the Federal Government of Ante Marković to maintain Yugoslavia as one state and to bring it into the European Community, the common policy of Slovene, Croatian and Serbian authorities had led to its disintegration. On the referendums held first in Slovenia on December 23, 1990, and then in Croatia on May 19, 1991, the majority of the population of these two republics voted for leaving Yugoslavia. Milošević also encouraged the departure of Slovenia and Croatia from Yugoslavia.<sup>74</sup> This is visible from the fact that Milošević and Tuđman, at the meeting held on March 25, 1991, in Karadjordjevo (Western Serbia), agreed on a potential partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina between Serbia and Croatia.<sup>75</sup> During the early summer the Slovenian Territorial Organization troops began a series of armed attacks on the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA). On July 7, 1991, the Presidency of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia voted for the withdrawal of the JNA from Slovenia and thus recognized the Slovenian secession from Yugoslavia. The fact that Milošević controlled more than a half of the Yugoslav Presidency members supports the thesis that he basically wished the end of Yugoslavia.<sup>76</sup> According to Jović, by this Slovenian-Serbian agreement Yugoslavia ceased to exist, despite the opposition of the European Community.<sup>77</sup> "The right of peoples to self-determination" in the case of the ethnically homogeneous Slovenia did not create a problem, because the majority of the Slovenian citizens tended to leave Yugoslavia. However, the greatest problem was the realization of these "rights" in the mixed multiethnic communities. Democracy was understood in the Yugoslav republics not in a liberal, but in a majoritarian sense. Thus, the national majority held all rights, while minority rights were left unprotected, because a

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<sup>74</sup> Borisav Jović, *Poslednji Dani SFRJ* [The Last Days of Yugoslavia], Belgrade: Politika, 1995, 477–478. This was the attitude of Milošević according to the notes of Jović, who was the President of the Presidency of Yugoslavia from 26 March to 28 June 1990.

<sup>75</sup> "Never to the Full Truth. Dossier: Two Decades of Meeting Milošević-Tuđman in Karadjordjevo", *Politika*, March 28, 2011, available in Serbian at: <http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/172007/Nikada-do-pune-istine> (accessed on January 27, 2015).

<sup>76</sup> Out of the eight members that represented the six republics and the two autonomous provinces of Yugoslavia, Milošević had 4 votes under his control: from Serbia proper, the two provinces, and Montenegro. Slovenia and Macedonia additionally voted on the ballot for the withdrawal of the JNA from Slovenia, whereas Bosnia and Herzegovina abstained and Croatia voted against it. See Jović, "Evropa i raspad Jugoslavije", 212.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

mechanism for their protection simply did not exist.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, in the eyes of Milošević and of the Croatian Serbs, Slovenia in its entire territory could leave Yugoslavia.

Croatia, on the other hand, was a completely different story.<sup>79</sup> The number of Serbs amounted to about 12% of the whole population, and their majority was located in the area known as Vojna Krajina (the Military Border or *Militärgrenze*).<sup>80</sup> At the Council of Krajina, on July 25, 1991, the local representatives of Serbs in Croatia issued a declaration of autonomy and sovereignty of the Serbian people in Croatia, with reference to the right of the Serbian people to self-determination up to secession. This led to the outbreak of the armed conflict between the Croatian Government and the local Serbs. Milošević took the side of the Serbs in Croatia and used the JNA troops that were located on Croatian territory against the newly formed Croatian National Guard (*Zbor Narodne Garde – ZNG*). The SOC realized the gravity of the situation regarding the Serbian people and the Serbian Church in Croatia and at its extraordinary session held on January 18, 1992, the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the SOC issued a number of important decisions. Most importantly, the Holy Assembly of Bishops denied Milošević the right to be the representative of all Serbs in Yugoslavia:

No pact – not with the Serbian authorities, who have no mandate to represent the whole of the Serbian people, nor with the institutions of the Yugoslav federation, nor with the command structure of the Yugoslav army – can bind the Serbian people as a whole without the approval and the blessing of its spiritual Mother, the Serbian Orthodox Church.<sup>81</sup>

In his epistle issued on Saint Sava day (January, 27 1992), Patriarch Pavle denounced Milošević’s usage of JNA in Croatia, pointing out that “a nation-state does not go as far as the sword can go; but a sword must go only to the extent of a nation-state, and if we allow the state to extend as far as the sword can reach, then the state ceases to be a nation- state, ceases to be a homeland and becomes an empire”. This is because it loses from a moral point of view, although it has territorial gains.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Jović, “1989: godina koja nam se nije dogodila”

<sup>79</sup> Jović, *Poslednji Dani SFRJ*, 478.

<sup>80</sup> Dušan Stojanović, “Tension Increasing as Serbs in Croatia Vote on Secession”, *Associated Press*, May 12, 1991.

<sup>81</sup> *Bulletin of the SOC*, January 1992. The English translation from Radmila Radić, “The Church and the ‘Serbian Question’”, in: Nebojša Popov (ed.), *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis*, Budapest: Central European University Press 2000, 247– 273, here 262–263.

<sup>82</sup> Radmila Radić, “The Rule Similar to Broz’s”, (in Serbian), *Večernje novosti*, December 29, 2005, available at: [http://www.novosti.rs/додатни\\_садржај.524.html:277506-Vlast-ka0-Brozova](http://www.novosti.rs/додатни_садржај.524.html:277506-Vlast-ka0-Brozova) (accessed on January 27, 2015).

Some scholars see in the decisions of the Bishops' Assembly of the SOC from January 1992, especially in the non-recognition of the boundaries between the Yugoslav republics as the borders of the newly emerging states, the expression of its nationalistic and militant tendency.<sup>83</sup> The Bishop's Assembly of the SOC declared the internal, inter-republic boundaries artificial and illegitimate, by indicating that they were first introduced by the German Nazis while dismembering Yugoslavia during the WWII, and then taken over by Tito's communists, against the will of the Serbian people.<sup>84</sup> This statement of the SOC was a reaction to the decision of the European Community from January 15, 1992, to recognize Slovenia and Croatia in the existing republic boundaries. The European Community made this decision at Germany's insistence and by following the recommendations of the Arbitration Commission led by the French lawyer Robert Badinter. The Arbitration or the Badinter Commission, established to provide legal advice to European and American mediators in resolving the Yugoslav conflict, proposed that the boundaries between the Yugoslav republics should be considered as the territorial demarcation between the newly recognized republics. The Commission made use of the principle *uti possidetis*, previously applied in post-colonial conflicts proclaiming the former colonial administrative boundaries as the boundaries of the new decolonized states.<sup>85</sup> For the SOC, the boundaries between republics were artificial, because they were not set up in accordance with ethnic divisions, and consequently they did not support the people's "right", but rather the "right" of the republics for self-determination. In such circumstances, the Bishops' Assembly of the SOC warned, and it turned later to be true, that the newly-established republics were not such monolithic structures, as the Badinter Commission indicated, as they also began to crack and fall apart along ethnic boundaries leading to further conflicts.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Branimir Anzulović, *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide*, New York: New York University Press 1999, 123.

<sup>84</sup> *Bulletin of the SOC*, (in Serbian), January 1992.

<sup>85</sup> David N. Gibbs, *First Do No Harm: Humanitarian Intervention and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*, Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press 2003, 97–98.

<sup>86</sup> Jović, "1989: godina koja nam se nije dogodila".

## 2.4. The SOC and Western Policy in the Balkans

The early 1990s were a milestone in the SOC's attitude towards the Western policy in the Balkans. In fact, the relations between the SOC and the West escalated from mistrust to outright accusation that the West used the wars in Yugoslavia to extend its sphere of influence. Some recent studies claim that representatives of the SOC, like Atanasije Jevtić (who was bishop of Zahumlje and Herzegovina during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995) had spun the facts when accusing the West for being the main enemy of the Serbs and attributing to Croats and Bosnians the role of being minor allies of the West.<sup>87</sup> However, recently published data attest to the role that first Germany and later the United States played in the breakup of Yugoslavia, thus confirming to a certain extent the position of Jevtić. The hidden support of the German secret service to the project of the Croatian secession from 1990 onwards<sup>88</sup> and the German arms delivery to Croatia,<sup>89</sup> followed by open diplomatic support,<sup>90</sup> suggest that Germany was actively involved in the breakup of Yugoslavia. David Gibbs convincingly argues that while Germany played a major role in the project of independent Croatia and Slovenia, the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo was masterminded and backed by the USA.<sup>91</sup> The use of the NATO air strikes against Bosnian Serb positions in 1994 and 1995 during the war in Bosnia, the engagement of the agency “Military Professional Resources Incorporated”, founded by retired US generals in the planning and execution of the Croatian military operation “Storm” in August 1995 against the Serbs in Krajina, and the subsequent massive exodus of Croatian Serbs (between 150,000 and 200,000) from the Croatia, who filed a related lawsuit before an US court, clearly indicate the active participation of the US Government and its military or paramilitary structures in the Yugoslav wars. During the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the SOC was confronted not only with the suffering and persecution of its members, but also with the complete destruction of 212

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<sup>87</sup> Klaus Buchenau, “Orthodox Values and Modern Necessities: Serbian Orthodox Clergy and Laypeople on Democracy, Human Rights, Transition, and Globalization”, in: Ola Listhaug, Sabrina P. Ramet and Dragana Dulić (eds.), *Civic and Uncivic Values: Serbia in the Post-Milošević Era*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011, 111–142, here 118–119.

<sup>88</sup> Marko Milivojević, “Croatia's Intelligence Services”, *Jane's Intelligence Review*, September 1994, 409; Gregory Copley, “FRG Helps Develop Croatian Security”, *Defense and Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, February–March 1994.

<sup>89</sup> General Pierre M. Gallois, “Balkans: La Faute Allemande”, *Le Quotidien de Paris*, January 28, 1993.

<sup>90</sup> Warren Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe: Yugoslavia and Its Destroyers – America's Last Ambassador Tells What Happened and Why*, New York: Times Books, 1996, 146.

<sup>91</sup> Gibbs, *First Do No Harm*, 106–108.

churches and monasteries and 111 properties of its own, as well as with the demolition of 367 churches and monasteries and 107 church buildings.<sup>92</sup> The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina ended by the peace agreement, concluded in the US military base in Dayton on November 21, 1995, among the presidents of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, Alija Izetbegović, Franjo Tuđman and Slobodan Milošević. In an interview from August 29, 1996, Bishop Atanasije Jevtić accused the Americans and Europe, together with the communists Milošević, Tuđman and others, of being the main culprits for the war. Jevtić claimed that the policy of the United Nations Organization, the EU, the UN Security Council and the European Parliament in Bosnia resulted in “a real war and a fake peace”.<sup>93</sup> This remark of Jevtić may be seen either as an exaggerated reaction to the disastrous consequences of the war, or as an anticipation for later good relations between Serbs, Croats and Bosnians, because it did not blame the Yugoslav people, but solely the international community. However, apart from some isolated voices among the SOC representatives,<sup>94</sup> there are also some scholars,<sup>95</sup> who consider the West and the Western policy in general as responsible for the breakup of Yugoslavia and the war in Croatia and Bosnia.

The mere fact that the “Kosovo issue” was not dealt with at the Dayton negotiations, which were considered as the conclusion of the Yugoslav crisis, caused frustration among the Albanian population in Kosovo, who were not satisfied with their status in the new Serbian-Montenegrin federation called the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Being discontent with the pacifist policy towards the Serbian authorities promoted by Ibrahim Rugova, the president of the largest Albanian political party, the Democratic League of Kosovo, various strata of Kosovo’s society began to advocate a more radical solution. In mid-1997 this tendency led to the establishment of the Kosovo Liberation

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<sup>92</sup> Slobodan Mileusnić, *Spiritual Genocide: A Survey of Destroyed, Damaged and Desecrated Churches, Monasteries and Other Church Building During the War 1991–1995*, Belgrade: Muzej Srpske Pravoslavne Crkve, 1997.

<sup>93</sup> Atanasije Jevtić, “A Worse than Any Other War”, in: Radoš M. Mladenović and Jovan Ćulibrk (eds.), *Jagnje Božije i Zvijer iz bezdana. Filosofija rata. Zbornik sa drugog bogoslovsko-filosofskog simpozijuma* [The Lamb of God and the Beast from the Abyss: Philosophy of War], Collected Papers from the Second Theological-Philosophical Symposium held during The Days of Saints Cyril and Methodius, Cetinje: Svetigora 1996.

<sup>94</sup> Patriarch Pavle, Interview “Milosevic is not a Christian”, *Slobodna Bosna*, Sarajevo, July 24, 1999. The interview is available (in Serbian) at: <https://svetosavlje.org/put-uzivot/> (accessed on February 20, 2015).

<sup>95</sup> Jović, “1989: godina koja nam se nije dogodila”.

Army (KLA)<sup>96</sup> considered at that time both by Yugoslav authorities and the US Government a terrorist organization.<sup>97</sup>

Since his installation on the throne of the Bishop of Raška and Prizren (and Kosovo and Metohija) in 1991, Artemije Radosavljević warned about the unbearable situation of the Serbs and the Serbian Church in Kosovo, caught between Milošević’s repressive state apparatus on the one hand, and the oppressed and resentful Albanian majority on the other. At the forum held in Valjevo on February 19, 1992, Bishop Artemije accused Milošević of terror against Albanians, stressing that Kosovo serves as his last trump card for remaining in power.<sup>98</sup> On the same occasion, he added:

And when it comes to the armed conflict in Kosovo between – now I do not even know which this army will be, I know that this is not Serbian, it might be Yugoslav, I really do not know which one – when it comes to these conflicts the war might last three or five days, the peace keepers will come to separate the confronting sides, to establish peace, and then, at the order of the international community, the Serbian army should withdraw from the Serbian Kosovo as an occupying army. And our Kosovo, our holy shrines in Kosovo and few of our people that remain there will be left at the mercy of Kosovo Albanians. This is what we can expect in Kosovo, and the officials claim that it should be so.

Radosavljević did not assume that Milošević’s repressive apparatus would withdraw from Kosovo after the bombing by NATO. On several occasions Radosavljević was one of the members of the delegation of the Kosovo Serbs representatives who informed the foreign, mostly Western governments and media about the situation in the province. During February and March 1998, a delegation led by Radosavljević visited first France and next the United States, where they had meetings with state representatives. At these meetings, high American officials let them know that the US opposed an independent Kosovo, but that this was also against maintaining the *status quo*.<sup>99</sup> Already in 1998 the KLA attacks on the Serbian people were so frequent that the police was unable to control the territory of Kosovo. This situation required the engagement of the Yugoslav Army troops and their immediate presence in the province, in order to restore territory control. At the extraordinary convocation

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<sup>96</sup> Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 318.

<sup>97</sup> John R. Foulton, “NATO and the KLA: How the West Encouraged Terrorism”, *Global Security Studies* 1/3 (2010) 131–140.

<sup>98</sup> The transcript and audio record of the forum held in Valjevo on February 19, 1992 is available at: <http://pastirdobri.com/2010/10/31/19021992/> (accessed on February 20, 2015).

<sup>99</sup> Bishop Artemije, “The report to the Holy Synod on peacekeeping mission of the Kosovo Serb in visit to France and the United States”, *Saint Prince Lazar* 21 (1998) 3–7, here 5.



of the All-Serbian Church National Assembly (*Svesrpski Crkveno-Narodni Sabor*), composed of representatives of the SOC and political movements of the Serbs in Kosovo, held on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1998, the delegates equally condemned Albanian bigotry aimed at the realization of the idea of “Greater Albania” and the totalitarian rule of the Serbian Government.<sup>100</sup> During the summer of 1998, the Western governments and humanitarian organizations alike condemned the KLA attacks and the excessive use of force by Yugoslav authorities (the Yugoslav Army and the Serbian Ministry of Interior). However beginning with autumn, in response to the large number of displaced Albanians, they started to condemn only Milošević’s policy. In November 1998, several rounds of negotiations between Milošević and the US envoy Richard Holbrooke took place. Milošević was forced by the US administration, under the threat of bombing, to agree to the withdrawal of a number of army and police troops from Kosovo. At an international peace conference held in February 1999 in Rambouillet near Paris, a peace plan drawn up by the US administration was proposed to the Serbian and the Albanian delegation.<sup>101</sup> The Serbian delegation entered the negotiations under the threat of bombardment announced by the highest representatives of the US administration.<sup>102</sup> The Serbian delegation accepted all political points, with the exception of the military annex which proposed that the NATO military forces have the right to move freely with their weapons and equipment on the entire territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia without any restrictions.<sup>103</sup> The Serbian delegation understood this annex as an attempt to undermine the state’s national sovereignty and as an act of military occupation of NATO.<sup>104</sup> After the negotiations failed, the NATO bombing began on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March 1999.

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<sup>100</sup> “The declaration of the extraordinary session of the All-Serbian Church National Assembly held on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1998 signed by both Bishop Artemije and Momčilo Trajković”, *Saint Prince Lazar* 22 (1998) 16–18.

<sup>101</sup> Kevin Cullen, “A Call for Limits on ‘Hyperpower’ US at Kosovo Talks, French Aide Urges Blunting of Nation’s Will”, *The Boston Globe*, February 9, 1999.

<sup>102</sup> Secretary of State Albright, “Briefing Following Contact Group Meeting, February 14, 1999”, in: Marc Weller (ed.), *The Crisis in Kosovo, 1989–1999*, Cambridge: Documents and Analysis Publishing, 1999, 431.

<sup>103</sup> “Appendix B: Status of Multinational Military Implementation Force”, in: Weller, *The Crisis in Kosovo*, 468–469.

<sup>104</sup> On January 15, 2015 Serbia signed with NATO the *Individual Partnership Action Plan*, which allows NATO troops free transit through Serbian territory, the usage of the Serbian infrastructure without any payment and it secures diplomatic status for NATO troops, which exempts them from any legal responsibility to Serbian law. The document has been approved by the Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, who was the Minister of Serbian Government that rejected this annex in 1999, and signed by the Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dačić, who as the spokesman of Milošević’s Socialist Party of Serbia in 1999 fiercely opposed the annex as an attempt of occupying Serbia. The *Individual Partnership Action Plan* signed between NATO and Serbia is

In his Easter encyclical to the people of Kosovo and Metohija from the 27 March 1999, Radosavljević incriminated NATO bombing as an unreasonable and law-breaking act, counting it as one of the evils, besides the evil of Serbian Government and of Albanian terrorism, which was aimed against the Serbian Church and the people of Kosovo. However, Radosavljević indicated that the Serbs should be careful not to awaken the greatest evil, the evil in them and to turn it against their Albanian neighbors.<sup>105</sup> This was an appeal of Radosavljević to local Serbs not to join the Serbian police in terror against the Albanians. Deeply believing that the problem of Kosovo could be solved through the process of democratization, he urged the Western governments to stop employing force in Kosovo, because that would just strengthen Milošević’s regime and further radicalize Albanian militant groups such as the KLA.<sup>106</sup> In spite of the Serbian Church appeal, NATO continued the bombardment of Kosovo and Serbia until the 10th of June 1999. The NATO bombardment ended when the commanders of the NATO forces and the Yugoslav Army signed the Military Technical Agreement, which included also the withdrawal of Yugoslav Army from the province. The agreement known also as the Kumanovo agreement (it was signed in Kumanovo) made possible the return to Kosovo of about 850,000 Albanian refugees, who escaped to Albania and Macedonia during their persecution by Serbian authorities.<sup>107</sup> At the same time an exodus of Serbian population began. They were apprehensive of retaliation from the KLA and withdrew with the army and police to Serbia.<sup>108</sup> Less than two months after the bombardment more than 160,000 Serbs emigrated from Kosovo.<sup>109</sup> According to *The Sunday Times*’ journalist Tom Walker between 4,000 and 6,000 Serbs and non-Albanians were killed until February 2000.<sup>110</sup> After the withdrawal of the

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available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/images/ipap/ipapeng.pdf> (accessed on April 15, 2015).

<sup>105</sup> Bishop Artemije, “The Easter Proclamation to the Serbian People of Kosovo and Metohija”, (in Serbian), *Saint Prince Lazar* 25 (1999) 5–7, here 6.

<sup>106</sup> Bishop Artemije, “The Letter to the Presidents, Governments and Parliaments of the United States of America and Western States”, (in Serbian), *Saint Prince Lazar* 26 (April 1999) 5–8, here 7.

<sup>107</sup> Tim Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002, 241.

<sup>108</sup> Bishop Artemije, “The Contemporary Situation of the Orthodox Church in Kosovo and Metohija”, Lecture given at the 14<sup>th</sup> theological conference held from the 22 to 24 June 2004 in Moscow, (in Serbian), *Saint Prince Lazar* 45 (2004) 7–17, here 10.

<sup>109</sup> Bishop Artemije, “The Cross on which Kosovo was Crucified is Made in Belgrade”, Introductory talk at the promotion of the book *Crucified Kosovo*, (in Serbian), *Saint Prince Lazar* 27 (1999) 21–23, here 22.

<sup>110</sup> Tom Walker, “West Abandons Dream of a Unified Kosovo”, *The Sunday Times*, February 13, 2000. This information is contestable, because the Human Rights Watch’s Report from 2001 deals with the number of one thousand Serbs and Roma who have been murdered or have gone missing for a two-year period. The large discrepancy between the figures of these two sources forces one to challenge Walker’s

Yugoslav army, including the Serbian administration from Kosovo, Radosavljević, as the only representative of the Serbian people, continued his efforts to establish a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo. He pledged Bernard Kouchner, the UN representative in Kosovo to make conditions for the return of the Serbian people displaced from Kosovo, for legal trials of crimes against Serbs, and for the restoration of destroyed Serbian cemeteries and churches.<sup>111</sup>

Radosavljević supported also the removal of Slobodan Milošević from office, believing that if it comes to the change of the regime in Belgrade Kosovo will be saved, meaning that the Serbs will not be forced to leave it.<sup>112</sup> The UN Security Council resolution 1244 from 10 June 1999 guaranteed that Kosovo and Metohija would remain within Serbia, but already in October 1999 Albanians controlled all the institutions, so that the principle of building a multiethnic Kosovo existed only on paper.<sup>113</sup> Radosavljević allied with the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS). One of the first meetings of Bishop Artemije with the leaders of the DOS took place ten days after the bombing ended, in June 1999 in the monastery of Gračanica, when the DOS delegation led by Zoran Djindjić paid a visit to the representatives of the international missions in Pristina. At this meeting the outlines of the DOS policy towards Kosovo were set for the first time. The DOS won the first presidential and then parliamentary elections in 2000–2001 against Milošević, and it begun to implement the necessary steps in the process of the democratization of Serbia.

In the meantime, the number of appeals of Radosavljević,<sup>114</sup> but also of Patriarch Pavle and the Serbian Church Synod to the UN, the USA and European representatives to ensure basic safety for Serbian minority in Kosovo in the process of building a multiethnic Kosovo remained mostly ignored. Therefore, Radosavljević abandoned cooperation with foreign, mostly Western authorities in Kosovo, and by travelling to the USA and Western Europe, he intended to make aware the Western audience about the state of affairs in Kosovo. In his report about the life of Serbian minority from 2003, Radosavljević referred to 250,000 Serbs and 30,000 Non-Serbs exiled from Kosovo, to 1,300 killed Serbs and the same number of kidnapped Serbs, to 35,000 Serbian houses that were destroyed and 70,000 that were taken from

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data. See HRW, *War Crimes in Kosovo: Executive Summary* available at: <http://pantheon.hrw.org/reports/2001/kosovo/undword.htm> (accessed on March 13, 2015).

<sup>111</sup> Bishop Artemije, “The Letter to Bernard Kouchner from the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 1999”, (in Serbian), *Saint Prince Lazar* 27 (1999) 12–13, here 13.

<sup>112</sup> Artemije, “The Cross on which Kosovo was Crucified is Made in Belgrade”.

<sup>113</sup> Artemije, “The Letter to Bernard Kouchner from the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 1999”, 12.

<sup>114</sup> Bishop Artemije, “The Letter to Hans Hækkerup from the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 2001”, *Saint Prince Lazar* 35 (2001) 5–7.

exiled Serbs, as well as to 113 destroyed monasteries and churches.<sup>115</sup> The bleak reality of the Serbs in Kosovo did not have much impact on the Western public opinion, but it slowly changed the perception of the Serbian public about the West. Numerous Serbs considered the NATO bombardment as wrong, but they justified it as a necessary step to overthrow Milošević and hoped for Western help in the process of the democratization, not only of Serbia, but of Kosovo too. The attempts of the pro-Western Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić (1952–2003) in January 2003 to open the question of Kosovo’s democratization and its final status were equally disregarded by his Western partners.<sup>116</sup> The assassination of Djindjić in March of the same year and the growing dissatisfaction with the ruling coalition because of the slow process of political and economic integration into EU, determined the majority of people in Serbia to vote for the nationally-oriented policy of Vojislav Koštunica’s Democratic Party of Serbia. It seemed that the Western treatment of Serbia and Montenegro did not improve. On the contrary, it worsened in comparison with the time of Milošević’s regime. A chief parameter for people to measure the progress of Serbia’s integration to EU was in regard to the EU travel requirements. Due to the enlargement of the EU to the Balkans and the application of EU visa policy by neighbouring countries, Serbian citizens were able to travel only to Bosnia and Macedonia without visa. The Council of Europe (whose member had already been Lukashenko’s dubiously democratic Belorussia) decided to admit Serbia and Montenegro into membership only after Djindjić’s assassination, although there has been a request in this sense from the part of the Serbian Government dating back to 2001. This is a good example of the duplicity of Western policy towards the Serbian Government, which demonstrates that the democratization of the country played not an important role in this decision.

The eruption of Albanian violence against Serbs in Kosovo on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2004, when 20 Serbs were killed, 850 injured, over 4,000 Serbs forced to leave their homes, and 600 Serb houses and public facilities as well as 35 Orthodox churches and monasteries were destroyed,<sup>117</sup> disillusioned everybody in Serbia that the mandate of NATO and international missions in Kosovo is to secure safety. Several incidents with soldiers from the German contingent within NATO’s Kosovo force (KFOR) gave impetus to some speculation about the role of Germany in Kosovo. The reports mentioned that

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<sup>115</sup> Bishop Artemije Radosavljević, “Talk at the Exhibition on the Suffering of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija in Paris”, June 2003, (in Serbian), *Saint Prince Lazar* 43 (2003) 152–154, here 152.

<sup>116</sup> Zoran Čulafić, “Djindjić Launches Battle for Kosovo”, *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, September 6, 2005, available at: <http://iwpr.net/report-news/djindjić-launches-battle-kosovo> (accessed on March 9, 2015)

<sup>117</sup> Bishop Artemije, “The Letter to the Holy Synod of Serbian Orthodox Church”, (in Serbian), *Saint Prince Lazar* 46 (2004) 7–21, here 9–10.

the German soldiers, unlike for example the Italian, who preserved Serbian medieval monastery Visoki Dečani from ignition, not only refused to protect Serbian churches and monasteries (including the destroyed medieval monastery of Holy Archangels near Prizren),<sup>118</sup> but they later obstructed the return of the monks at the site of fire and prevented the restoration.<sup>119</sup> In light of the previously mentioned accusations against the German supply of the KLA with weapons and the training of the KLA fighters by German instructors,<sup>120</sup> should be considered the statement of Bishop Atanasije Jevtić that the German secret service knew about the preparation of pogroms that occurred on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2004, and that it supported Albanians both in Kosovo and in Macedonia.<sup>121</sup> Jevtić also draws parallels between the German military presence in the region, saying: “Who came to visit us on the tanks in 1914? Europe. Who came in 1941? Europe. Who came in 1999? Europe.”<sup>122</sup>

After the pogroms in Kosovo the SOC and numerous Serbs from Kosovo became increasingly aware of the fact that the return of Kosovo under the Serbian rule, as well as the equal status of Serbs with Albanians is not an easily attainable goal. By drawing parallels between the significance of Kosovo for Serbs and the role that Jerusalem plays for Jews, who returned there after many centuries, Serbian hierarchs placed the goal of returning to Kosovo in a distant future.<sup>123</sup> A good example of this new tendency is one of the prayers for Kosovo in the SOC, which has the direct association to Jerusalem in Psalm 137, 5: “If I forget you, Kosovo, and you Metohija, may my right hand be forgotten!”<sup>124</sup>

Regardless of the promises of international missions ruled over Kosovo that the level of security would be increased in the province, the crimes directed against the Serbian population remained often not interrogated. In this sense, the status of Serbs in the period since the arrival of NATO in Kosovo can be compared with the period of the last decades of the Ottoman rule in Kosovo. Radosavljević took a hardline approach to NATO for not protecting the Serbian minority. In December 2004, he filed a lawsuit in the European

<sup>118</sup> Sava Janjić, “Pogrom in Kosovo and Metohija. March 2004”, in: Atanasije Jevtić (ed.), *Memorandum on Kosovo and Metohija by the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church*, Belgrade: The Holy Synod of Bishops of the SOC, 2004, 114.

<sup>119</sup> “Germans Prohibit Monks to Return to the Monastery of Archangels”, available at: <http://www.spc.rs/old/Vesti-2004/03/26-3-04-e01.html#ger>

<sup>120</sup> Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 318 (on the basis of BBC News, June 10, 1998).

<sup>121</sup> The talk show “Why do People Whisper in the Church?”, the first part, *Peščanik*, May 2005. Transcript of all three parts is available at: <http://pescanik.net/zasto-se-u-crkvi-sapuce-full/> (accessed on February 2, 2015).

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Artemije, “The Contemporary Situation of the Orthodox Church in Kosovo and Metohija”, 8.

<sup>124</sup> Nativity encyclical 2012, available in English at: [http://www.spc.rs/eng/nativity\\_encyclical\\_2012](http://www.spc.rs/eng/nativity_encyclical_2012) (accessed on March 9, 2015).

Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg against Germany, Italy, France, and the United Kingdom for the damage done to his congregation.<sup>125</sup> The Synod of the Serbian Church immediately reacted forcing Radosavljević to withdraw the charges filed in Strasbourg.<sup>126</sup> This created a rupture between Radosavljević on the one hand and the Holy Synod of the Serbian Church on the other hand over the Church politics in Kosovo. Radosavljević refused further cooperation with the representatives of the international mission in Kosovo regarding the reconstruction of the destroyed churches and monasteries, and the return of Serbian population. Therefore, in May 2005 the Bishops' Assembly of the SOC issued a Memorandum of Understanding, which outlined general principles for the reconstruction of Serbian Orthodox religious sites in Kosovo and Metohija, and began to implement it in Kosovo through a member of its Committee for Kosovo and Metohija, the auxiliary Bishop of Lipljan Teodosije Šibalić, the abbot of the monastery of Visoki Dečani.<sup>127</sup> He was authorized by the SOC to cooperate with the international missions in Kosovo, including the Council of Europe and UNESCO regarding the restoration of Serbian churches. This has further created a rift not only between Bishop Artemije and the Bishops' Assembly of the SOC, but also within the Raška-Prizren Eparchy regarding the relations towards international, mostly Western missions in Kosovo.

### ***2.5. Kosovo in the Shadow of Ecumenism***

The negative attitude of the SOC towards the West and Europe was directly caused by the Western foreign policy towards the conflict in Yugoslavia, and specifically by the policy of Western military and political mission in Kosovo. However, one of the important elements in the relations of the SOC with Western Europe and the West relates to the perception of Western Christians. From the mid-twentieth century there has been an initiative to reestablish the unity of the divided Christendom through participation of Churches in the Ecumenical Movement. Radosavljević has harbored a highly critical attitude towards the participation of the SOC and other Orthodox Churches in the Ecumenical Movement. In the eparchial journal *Saint Prince Lazar*, Radosavljević attacked several times the Patriarch of Constantinople

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<sup>125</sup> "Serbian Church sues over Kosovo", *BBC*, December 9, 2004, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4083005.stm> (accessed on March 9, 2015).

<sup>126</sup> "Serbian Orthodox Church to withdraw charges (RTS)", January 25, 2005, Kosovo.net, available at: [http://www.kosovo.net/news/archive/ticker/2005/January\\_25/files/1106671916\\_fbsvllztry\\_ms30917-1.txt](http://www.kosovo.net/news/archive/ticker/2005/January_25/files/1106671916_fbsvllztry_ms30917-1.txt) (accessed on March 9, 2015).

<sup>127</sup> Press release from the regular convocation of the Holy Assembly of Bishops held in May 2005, the Information Service of the Serbian Orthodox Church, available at: [http://www.spc.rs/sr/saopstenje\\_zajavnost\\_sa\\_redovnog\\_zasedanja\\_svetog\\_arhijerejskog\\_sabora\\_maj\\_2005\\_godine\\_0](http://www.spc.rs/sr/saopstenje_zajavnost_sa_redovnog_zasedanja_svetog_arhijerejskog_sabora_maj_2005_godine_0) (accessed on March 9, 2015).

Bartholomew for his ecumenical policy either by supporting the anti-ecumenical policies of Athonite monks,<sup>128</sup> or by his direct condemnation of Constantinople's ecumenical steps.<sup>129</sup> The consequence of these attacks was Radosavljević's ban in 1996 from entering Mount Athos, which is under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.<sup>130</sup> Since 1995 and his report to the Bishops' Assembly of the SOC regarding the Ecumenical Movement, Radosavljević sought on several occasions the withdrawal of the SOC from the World Council of Churches. On its convocation in May 1997, the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the SOC officially decided to withdraw, however, this decision has never been implemented in practice.<sup>131</sup>

Radosavljević based his criticism of Ecumenism on the alleged anti-ecumenical attitude of his spiritual father, Justin Popović.<sup>132</sup> However, other spiritual disciples of Popović, the already mentioned Metropolitan Amfilohije Radović and the Bishops Atanasije Jevtić and Irenej Bulović, did not adopt such radical views about Ecumenism. On the contrary, Radović and Bulović, in particular, participated in a large number of ecumenical encounters. The conflict that arose between Radosavljević and other bishops, disciples of Justin Popović, was triggered by their different interpretations of this important Orthodox theologian of the twentieth century. Atanasije Jevtić, the editor of Popović's *Collected Works*, claimed that Radosavljević monopolized Popović considering himself to be the only true interpreter of Popović.

The anti-Ecumenism of Justin Popović remains debatable. Scholars usually point to Popović's work *Orthodox Church and Ecumenism*, published in Greek in 1974, as a convincing proof for his anti-ecumenical stance. In my opinion, there are two historical moments in Popović's stance against cooperating with the Western Churches. The first moment relates to the criticism of the ecumenical policy of Meletios IV Metaxakis, the Patriarch of Constantinople and the organizer of the First Pan-Orthodox Congress in Istanbul in 1923. In the journal *Christian life*, Popović severely criticized Metaxakis, considering his willingness to make dogmatic concessions and plans for the union of the Orthodox Church with the Anglican Church as expressions of Greek nationalism. The latter was mostly expressed by the Greek "Great Idea" (*Megáli Idéa*), namely a plan to revert Constantinople,

<sup>128</sup> "Report of the Committee of Sacred Community of Mount Athos concerning the Dialogue of Orthodox and Non-Chalcedonians", (in Serbian), *Saint Prince Lazar* 7 (1994) 21–30.

<sup>129</sup> Artemije, "Serbian Church against Ecumenism", *Saint Prince Lazar* 47 (2004) 29–46.

<sup>130</sup> Zoran Čvorović and Vladimir Dimitrijević, "Prevlast u SPC stižu đaci ekumenističkih perjanica grčkog bogoslovlja" ["The Students of the Ecumenical Plumes of Greek Theology Dominate the SOC"], *Orthodox Point*, November 17, 2012, available at: <http://fakti.org/orthodox-point/prevlast-u-spc-sticu-djaci-ekumenistickih-perjanica-grckog-bogoslovlja> (accessed on March 9, 2015).

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Artemije, "Serbian Church against Ecumenism", 29–46.

then held by the British Empire, to the Greek rule.<sup>133</sup> Popović’s critique of the Ecumenical Movement, i.e. the World Council of Churches (WCC) at the beginning of the 1970s, can be understood as a reaction to the type of Orthodox political Ecumenism, characterized by inclinations to doctrinal concessions that had prevailed among the Orthodox Churches from the Third General Assembly of the WCC (New Delhi 1963) onwards. This political Ecumenism was equally attacked by Popović’s great friend, the Russian-American theologian Father Georges Florovsky, who was one of the founders of the WCC and an active participant in its work throughout the years. In support of the re-examination of Popović’s stance towards Ecumenism, Jevtić published recently Popović’s notes on this subject from 1972, gathered in the volume *Notes on Ecumenism*.<sup>134</sup> One may see in these notes a much more balanced and even, one could say, positive attitude towards Ecumenism, which is primarily theologically, not politically motivated.

## ***2.6. Relations with the EU and NATO: Cooperation or Confrontation?***

The policy of confrontation with Western governments over Kosovo, advocated by Radosavljević, together with his anti-ecumenical attitude, was slowly gaining a large number of followers in Serbia. A number of far-right movements and organizations, such as *Obraz* (Honor), *Dveri Srpske* (Serbian Gates), 1389, or *Naši* (Ours), that previously existed as marginal groups, began to gain publicity.<sup>135</sup> Some of these organizations received funds from the Serbian Government led then by Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica. During this period, divisions in public discourses emerged in the way Serbia was portrayed. On the one hand, there was the official Serbia, based on the traditional values of the Serbian people and dedicated to the preservation of national identity; on the other hand, there was the liberal Serbia, directed towards the West and Western values and determined for European integration.

In early June 2006 after a referendum held on independence, Montenegro became an independent state. This raised again the issue of the borders in the

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<sup>133</sup> Justin Popović, “Sa uredničkog stola” [“From the Editorial Desk”], *Christian Life* 11 (1923) 526. See also Justin Popović, “The letter addressed to Bishop Jovan of Šabac and the Serbian hierarchy on May 7, 1977 on summoning the Great Council of the Orthodox Church”. The letter is available in English at: [http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/stjustin\\_council.aspx](http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/stjustin_council.aspx) (accessed on April 1, 2015).

<sup>134</sup> Sveti Ava Justin, *Zapisi o ekumenizmu*, (prir. A. Jevtić), Manastir Tvrdoš, 2010 (English translation: St Abba Justin, *Notes on Ecumenism*, Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2013).

<sup>135</sup> Klaus Buchenau, “The Serbian Orthodox Church”, in: Lucian N. Leustean (ed.), *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twenty-First Century*, London: Routledge, 2014, 74–75



Balkans, but also the issue of the canonical jurisdiction of the SOC. The political movement for the independence of Montenegro perceived the presence of the Metropolitan See of the SOC in Cetinje as an expression of Serbian hegemony. A direct consequence of such a perception was the support by Montenegrin state-run media of the canonically unrecognized Montenegrin Orthodox Church, which claimed ownership of the churches in the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the littoral of the SOC. After Montenegro's independence, the question of the relations with Kosovo became one of the most important political issues in Serbia. Although Kosovo was legally part of Serbia, the Serbian Government did not have any control over the political life in the province. The representatives of the EU and the UN played an active role in both the supervision of the Montenegrin referendum and the independence of Kosovo from Serbia. Miroslav Lajčák was the EU envoy in Montenegro and Martti Ahtisaari was the UN representative for Kosovo. The involvement of Western diplomats created suspicion once again that the outcome of these processes would have negative consequences for the unity of the Serbian people in Montenegro and Serbia, including Kosovo.

Prime Minister Koštunica tried to establish a national consensus on the issue of Kosovo and to ensure the further status of Kosovo within Serbia. Around the end of 2006 at the suggestion of his Government, the Parliament of Serbia adopted the new Constitution, in whose preamble it was stated that Kosovo and Metohija were an indivisible part of Serbia. The Holy Assembly of Bishops of the SOC had wholeheartedly supported this decision of the Serbian Government and the Serbian Parliament.<sup>136</sup> In another appeal of the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the SOC from May 2007 to the UN and other relevant institutions, it was repeated that the separation of Kosovo from Serbia would jeopardize not only the multi-ethnic character of the province, but also the Christian identity of this part of Europe.<sup>137</sup>

The declaration of independence proclaimed by the Parliament of Kosovo in February 2008 and the following recognition of Kosovo as an independent state by the United States and most EU countries had been received with great disapproval by the SOC, which pointed out that “it will never agree to the

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<sup>136</sup> Press release from the regular convocation of the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the SOC from October 2006, The Information Service of the SOC, available at: [http://www.spc.rs/sr/saopstenje\\_za\\_javnost\\_sa\\_redovnog\\_zasedanja\\_svetog\\_arhijerejskog\\_sabora\\_oktobar\\_2006\\_0](http://www.spc.rs/sr/saopstenje_za_javnost_sa_redovnog_zasedanja_svetog_arhijerejskog_sabora_oktobar_2006_0) (accessed on March 9, 2015).

<sup>137</sup> Message of the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church of Kosovo and Metohija from May 27, 2007, available at: [http://www.spc.rs/sr/poruka\\_svetog\\_arhijerejskog\\_sabora\\_srpske\\_pravoslavne\\_crkve\\_o\\_kosovu\\_i\\_metohiji\\_0](http://www.spc.rs/sr/poruka_svetog_arhijerejskog_sabora_srpske_pravoslavne_crkve_o_kosovu_i_metohiji_0) (accessed on March 13, 2015).

lawless violent seizure of Kosovo and Metohija”.<sup>138</sup> Although it took a very harsh attitude towards the Western policy in Kosovo, at the same convocation in May 2008 the Assembly of the SOC welcomed the Orthodox-Roman Catholic agreement from Ravenna and concluded that the agreement was not at the expense of the Orthodox Church. This attitude of maintaining good relations with Western states and Church institutions, but at the same time disagreeing with and criticizing some decisions of these institutions has prevailed in the following years. An example of this policy can be seen in the visit of the US Vice President Joseph Biden to the monastery of Visoko Dečani in Kosovo in May 2009. Bishop Artemije Radosavljević at first refused to welcome Biden, but the Holy Synod reacted immediately and suspended this decision, inviting the US Vice President to visit the monastery. The long-lasting rupture between Radosavljević and the Holy Synod of the Serbian Church over the Church politics in Kosovo finally led in 2010 to the deposition of Radosavljević from the Eparchial throne of Kosovo. The newly elected Patriarch Irinej (Gavrilović) of Serbia, who succeeded Patriarch Pavle on the patriarchal throne in January 2010, explained that by considering the situation in Kosovo as his own personal problem, which he set out to solve in his own way, Bishop Artemije neglected the position of the entire Serbian Church.<sup>139</sup>

The issue of Kosovo, however, not only remained one of the most important issues for the SOC in its relations with Europe and the West, but also became the subject of church-state and inter-church controversies. One of the latest examples is linked to the signing of the Brussels agreement on the normalization of relations between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Government of Kosovo in April 2013, which implies, among other things, the integration of northern Kosovo, mainly inhabited by Serbs and controlled by Belgrade, in the institutions under the control of Pristina. After the signing of the agreement on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2013, the Serbs from Kosovo organized a rally called “We remain in Serbia” in Belgrade, in which the bishops Amfilohije Radović and Atanasije Jevtić addressed the audience. Radović, who held a prayer for the Serbian people in Kosovo, said that this payer is also a *requiem* for the Serbian Government and the Serbian Parliament because they signed the agreement. Jevtić condemned Prime Minister Ivica Dačić for accepting only the *Realpolitik* and “terrestrial Serbia”, and for his lack of interest in “celestial Serbia”, drawing a parallel between

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<sup>138</sup> Public communiqué from the regular convocation of the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the SOC held in Belgrade from 15 to 21 of May 2008, available at: [http://www.spc.rs/eng/public\\_communique\\_from\\_the\\_regular\\_convocation\\_of\\_the\\_holy\\_assembly\\_of\\_bishops\\_of\\_the\\_serbian\\_orthod](http://www.spc.rs/eng/public_communique_from_the_regular_convocation_of_the_holy_assembly_of_bishops_of_the_serbian_orthod) (accessed on March 13, 2015).

<sup>139</sup> Jelena Jorgačević, “Portret savremenika: Umirovljeni Vladika Artemije – Hajduk Vladika” [“Portrait of a Contemporary: Retired Bishop Artemije – Brigand Bishop”], *Vreme* 1037 (from November 18, 2010), available at: <http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=962144> (accessed on March 13, 2015).

him and the assassinated Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić.<sup>140</sup> Jevtić's comparison of two Serbian prime ministers is similar to the comparison made by Radović in his speech at Djindjić's funeral on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2003 between Djindjić and the Obrenović dynasty, as representing the policy of adhering to Europe and the West.<sup>141</sup> In his speech, Jevtić accused also North-Western Europe of equating itself with the whole of Europe and stressed that he was not "against the true Christian, humane Europe, but against the Europe which bombs and poisons".<sup>142</sup> Jevtić mentioned in his speech the Bishop of Bačka Irinej Bulović, the spokesman of the SOC, accusing him for treason of the Serbian Church and people in Kosovo and Metohija, because he had supported the policy of the Serbian Government in Kosovo. Jevtić finished his speech referring to the Jews, who greeted each other for 1878 years with the words "see you next year in free Jerusalem", when he hailed the rally saying "see you next year in free Kosovo and Metohija".

Patriarch Irinej Gavrilović immediately reacted to this statement, adding that it does not represent the official attitude of the SOC and that the bishops did not have the blessing to speak at the rally in Belgrade. This is just one example that the relationship of the SOC towards Kosovo, or the EU and NATO, is not monolithic, being rather the product of different views and interests within the episcopate. However, one may notice in the statements of the SOC a constant harsh stance towards the representatives of the international mission in Kosovo, accused of tolerating, the so-called "soft terror" of Albanians against the Serbian people in Kosovo, reflected in the destruction of gravestones, murders, attacks on property and everyday threats.<sup>143</sup>

The Serbian Church and its members as well as the majority of the Serbian people consider the US and EU's backing of Kosovo's independence, unilaterally proclaimed in 2008, as a clear violation of international law. For the Serbian people, but also for a considerable number of the international

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<sup>140</sup> Atanasije Jevtić, "Nije pretnja nego vapaj" ["It is not a Threat, but a Cry"], *Radio Svetigora*, May 12, 2013, available at: <https://radiosvetigora.wordpress.com/2013/05/12/епископ-атанасије-јевтић-није-претња/> (accessed on April 1, 2015).

<sup>141</sup> "Amfilohije Radović: ko se mača maši, od mača će i poginuti" ["Amfilohije Radović: who lives by the sword, dies by the sword"], B92, March 15, 2003, available at: [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2003&mm=03&dd=15&nav\\_id=103485](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2003&mm=03&dd=15&nav_id=103485) (accessed on April 1, 2015). Cf. also Popović Obradović, *Kakva ili kolika država*, 443.

<sup>142</sup> The video from the rally is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImJwxRQUCZs> (accessed on April 1, 2015).

<sup>143</sup> Communiqué of the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church from 7 June 2013: [http://www.spc.rs/eng/communiqué\\_holy\\_assembly\\_bishops\\_serbian\\_orthodox\\_church\\_2](http://www.spc.rs/eng/communiqué_holy_assembly_bishops_serbian_orthodox_church_2) (accessed on April 1, 2015).

media,<sup>144</sup> a comparison between the recent events in Ukraine, when the USA and the EU considered the Crimean proclamation of independence “illegal”, and the role they played in supporting Kosovo’s independence, seems to be an application of double standards. In spite of the determination of the Serbian Government to lead the country towards the EU, there has been hardly any internet forum in Serbia, where one could read anything positive about the USA and EU’s involvement in the Ukraine. The readers’ posts and comments have been ranging from accusing NATO of expansionist “dividing and conquering” policy in the Ukraine that has proved successful in Yugoslavia to lamenting over the bleak destiny of Europe under American suppression. However, despite the widespread attitude about the unjust relationship of the US and the EU towards Serbia, the opinion of the vast majority of Serbian citizens is that Kosovo’s independence is inevitable and that instead of insisting on confrontation with the Western powers, it is wiser to close the “Kosovo case”. This could happen at least by a tacit, if not by a factual, recognition of Kosovo as an independent state by Serbia, which lies at the basis of the Brussels Agreement. On the other hand, the SOC, concerned primarily with the safety and welfare of the Serbian people in Kosovo, is not ready to accept Kosovo’s independence, considering it a product of illegal seizure of a part of the sovereign territory of a European country by the Western powers.

## ***2.7. Memory and History: The Heavenly Kingdom vs. EU Integration***

Viewed from the present moment and bearing in mind all the important historical events that represent the most significant points of identity in the collective memory, one may ask the following questions that often arise in Serbian society today: Why do the vast majority of Serbian citizens today accept the illegal secession of Kosovo, while the Kosovo Testament continues to be a central theme of Serbian history and tradition? Why the present Serbia, which spent the last two centuries defending its national independence and sovereignty, now rushes towards the EU, being ready to pay the membership in this organization by relinquishing the independence and sovereignty, as well as its territory?<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Jean-Christophe Buisson, “Kosovo – Crimée : deux poids, deux mesures?”, *Le Figaro*, 17 March 2014, available at: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/monde/2014/03/17/31002-20140317ARTFIG00067-kosovo-crimée-deux-poids-deux-mesures>. (accessed on April 1, 2015).

<sup>145</sup> Miloš Ković, “Znamenja pobjede, uzroci poraza: kontinuiteti i diskontinuiteti u srpskoj istoriji” [“The Signs of Victory, the Causes of Defeat: Continuities and Discontinuities in Serbian History”], in: Svetlana Kurćubić Ružić (ed.), *Ka srpskom stanovištu* [Towards a Serbian Viewpoint], Belgrade: Euro-Giunti, 2014, 153–170, here 156.

Miloš Ković offers convincing answers to these two questions, first by drawing a distinction between the continuous collective memory and the history that emerged as an expression of the discontinuity in collective memory, and next, by pointing to the continuity and discontinuity within the collective memories of the Serbian people and the development of national history.<sup>146</sup> According to Pierre Nora, on whom Ković heavily relies, the difference between “collective memory” and “history” is that memory appears as a link between the people and the eternal present, while history points to the past.<sup>147</sup> In contrast to memory which installs remembrance within the sacred, history abolishes the memory of the sacred by reconstructing the past and binding itself strictly to temporal continuities.<sup>148</sup> Nora’s distinction between collective memory and history is also applicable to the difference between tradition as sacred history that always reaffirms the present as the icon of the eschatological eternal “now” and history that constructs the fragmented past. Tradition looks on past events from the perspective of the end of history and of the Kingdom of Heaven, while history takes a perspective from the present moment. The distinction between tradition and history is evident in some artistic forms as difference between hagiographies and biographies or icons and portraits. Hagiographies and icons depict the people and their deified perspective, as they would appear in the Kingdom of God,<sup>149</sup> while biographies and portraits or photographs attempt to merge a number of past moments, or to identify only one moment from the past.<sup>150</sup> The link to the sacred are the saints, who reveal the world of the sacred, which is later depicted on an icon or appears in a hagiography.<sup>151</sup> History, on the other hand, needs to analyse and to critically “demystify” the sacred, because the experience of the sacred is not universal. Whereas in the realm of memory different historical moments simultaneously exist, in historical scholarship they exist only in the timeline.

Nora points to mass culture, democratization and globalization as key causes in the erosion of collective memory.<sup>152</sup> If we agree with those arguing

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 154–155.

<sup>147</sup> Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire”, *Representations* 26 (Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory) (1989) 7–24, here 8. Nora uses the term “memory” with the same meaning as the German term *Geschichte*, opposing it to history (*Historie*).

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 8–9.

<sup>149</sup> Vladimir Cvetković, “The Reception of Augustine of Hippo in Orthodox Iconography” in: K. Pollmann and M. J. Gill (eds.), *Augustine beyond the Book: Intermediality, Transmediality and Reception*, Leiden: Brill 2012, 39–58, here 47.

<sup>150</sup> Vladimir Cvetković, “Introduction to the Theology of Icons”, *Crkvene studije* 6 (2009) 385–404, here 393.

<sup>151</sup> Gabriel Bunge, *Rublev’s Trinity*, Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2007, 59.

<sup>152</sup> Nora, “Between Memory and History”, 7.

that the greatest opponent of globalization within Serbian society is the Serbian Orthodox Church,<sup>153</sup> then we come to the conclusion that the Church is the best guardian of collective memory and its continuity. In this sense, Saint Sava, Saint Prince Lazar, the Battle of Kosovo, the Kosovo's Testament, and the subsequent suffering of the Serbian people do not only represent the passing from the historical into the transcendent and the clear message of Christian identity, but also represent *lieux de mémoire* for the Serbian people, differentiating them from other Christian and Orthodox peoples. In this respect, the philosophy of Saint-Savaism (*Svetosavlje*) should not be considered as an idea of national romanticism, but rather as an expression of the Orthodox Serbian experience and style. When it comes to the discontinuity of collective memory, these *lieux de mémoire* of collective identity are highlighted. One of the great discontinuities in the collective memory of the Serbian people relates to the destruction of the Serbian medieval state and its transfer under Ottoman rule.<sup>154</sup> Therefore, the oral tradition of folk songs divided into cycles revolving around the Kosovo's battle, is an attempt to overcome this discontinuity. In late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries further elements were added to the Christian elements of the Kosovo Testament that glorify the aristocratic warrior past of the Serbian people before the Ottoman conquest. These new elements aimed at preparing the Serbian people for a rebellion against the Ottomans and to confirm their self-perception as courageous freedom fighters. The migrations of Serbs, beginning with the one that took place under the Patriarch Arsenije Čarnojević, when a large number of Serbs left Kosovo and moved to areas along the Danube and Central Europe, to the latest migration of Serbs from Croatia and Kosovo due to the breakup of Yugoslavia, are expressions of such a discontinuity. However, as Ković remarks, even the migrations and the diasporic character of the Serbs may be seen as forming a continuity and modified into a point of support for collective identity.<sup>155</sup> One may refer here to two kinds of continuity. One is the continuity of the Christian sacrifice, in which such migrations, seen through the perspective of the Kosovo Testament, become expressions of martyrdom. Another kind of continuity refers to the continuity of return and victory, which is closely linked, according to Ković, to another key continuity of Serbian history, namely the Serbian national idea. The Serbian national idea as the idea of national liberation and unification, which began in the nineteenth century, has remained one of the pillars of Serbian identity. The Serbian Church thus deeply embedded the idea of national liberation into the people's collective memory, inspiring them for uprisings against the invaders.

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<sup>153</sup> Buchenau, "Orthodox Values and Modern Necessities", 128.

<sup>154</sup> Ković, "Znamenja pobjede, uzroci poraza", 157.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 168–169.

In addition to the liberation, another objective of the Serbian national idea had been the unification of Serbs. By its all-encompassing nature, the basic role and task of the SOC were to gather its spiritual children wherever these may have been. Sometimes freedom did not imply unification, and sometimes unification happened to be at the expense of freedom. The latter case refers to the creation of the first Yugoslavia and to the second Yugoslavia when the communists came to power. Both events are considered as great discontinuities in the collective memory preserved by the Serbian Church. Although the great Yugoslav idea enabled the union of southern Slavs and therefore the union of the Serbs in the Balkans, it has also led to the degradation of the collective memories of the Serbian people. As the other nations of Yugoslavia did not have the same pillars of collective identity as the Serbian people, this caused inevitably the decline of national consciousness. This is particularly evident in the second Yugoslavia, built on the denial of collective memories, which in some sense helped to preserve the existing unity of the Yugoslav people. An attempt to build the “brotherhood and unity” of a Yugoslav nation not on the shared pillars of identity, such as the common anti-imperialist and anti-fascist struggle, but on the basis of socialist self-management, resulted in the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

Today, when Serbs are scattered in several Balkan countries, the Serbian Church appears to have the same task of preserving the Serbian identity, exactly as in the past when Serbs were dispersed in the Ottoman, Venetian and Habsburg Empires. Hence, the Serbian Church claims rights to defend the legitimate interests of the Serbian people in the Balkans intervening against policies that she deems unjust, although this intervention may be detrimental to the interests of the Serbian state. This is the case with the opposition of the SOC to the Brussels Agreement and its reservations towards European integration. The difference between supporting and rejecting Kosovo’s independence, as well as the one between confidence and scepticism towards the EU, Europe and the West is in fact the difference between two traditions. One is the tradition of continuity of Serbian discontinuities, while the other is the tradition of preserving the tradition of continuity of collective memory in times of discontinuity, such as the fall under Ottoman rule and the communist period. This does not mean that the continuity of Serbian collective memory is always at odds with the basic points of European identity. Quite the contrary! The main pillars of collective identity of modern Europe, such as Christianity, the tradition of the French Revolution and democracy, are grounded in the Serbian collective memory, as we shall see in the next chapter.

### **3. The SOC and the Great European Paradigms: Democracy, Communism and Neo-liberalism**

The next topic I intend to deal with is the Serbian Church's perception of European/Western democracy and economic policy, which for many years has been regarded as the promise of future prosperity. The debate about the choice between communism and liberal democracy, conducted on the intellectual margins of Yugoslav society from the 1970s onwards, ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall and with the tectonic changes that took place in Europe in the 1990s. As democracy and capitalism won over authoritarian communism, the Yugoslav citizens eagerly accepted them as guarantors of their future national well-being. Although the basic principles of a democratic society, such as multi-party system, parliamentary democracy, free elections, increased insistence on respecting the human rights, freedom of media and free flow of information, were accepted already in the 1990s, the change in the ownership of the means of production did not take place immediately. During the 1990s there were still the legally guaranteed public ownership of the means for production along with state-owned and private-owned enterprises. The factories were slowly privatized, but the criteria for their privatization were far from transparent, so that the economic and political elites close to power steadily became owners of factories and public enterprises. While the democratic system brought a large number of new political and civil rights, at the same time the economic and social rights of citizens were called into question. The election process in socialism was characterized by choosing one among several candidates for the position in the party or state without engaging in an ideological debate. With the introduction of parliamentary democracy, the citizens gained the right to choose between different, often conflicting political options. In the Yugoslav socialism, the worker with his/her rights, was the main focus of the system. The right to work was guaranteed, although sometimes in reality this was not easily accomplished. Education and health were fully financed from the public budget. But the 1990s brought economic and social uncertainty. Many people, not being able to realize their still guaranteed right to work in the state or public companies, decided to work in private companies, in which they did not benefit from any legal security. The private companies founded during that time, even though they were privatized public enterprises, were characterized by a type of wild capitalism. In addition to the fact that the workers in private enterprises had lower salaries than those in the public sector, because the profit was not equally distributed and the largest part went to company owners, they often did not have the right to sick leave, holiday entitlement or pregnancy and maternity leave, and at every moment they could be fired without explanation.

The return to religion, either in the form of traditional Orthodox Christianity or in an alternative form, appeared at that time as one of the newly



acquired human rights (freedom of thought, belief and religion), but also as a kind of escape from economic and social uncertainty, as well as the despair of war that engulfed the territory of the Yugoslavia in the 1990s. An awakening of national consciousness among citizens also played a role in the mass return to the tradition of the Serbian Church. The Orthodox churches in Serbia, which during the 1980s were visited by a small number of people, mostly old women and families of clergymen, became during the 1990s the meeting place of a large number of young people who were looking for their own personal and collective identity. Many previously abandoned monasteries of the SOC were also revived by the arrival of young monks and nuns, who were often university graduates. Although thanks to the democratic changes the SOC entered again the public sphere of Serbian and Yugoslav society, spreading its public influence, a large number of churchmen were not happy with the new changes. Thus, some representatives of the SOC, after being vigorous critics of communism, became even more severe critics of liberal democracy. The statement of Archpriest and Professor at the Belgrade's Faculty of Theology Radomir Popović that materialism and secularism represent a greater danger for Orthodoxy than communism had been in earlier times,<sup>156</sup> is just one example of this newly adopted negative rhetoric.

In these statements one may already discern what would become quite obvious after the economic crisis of 2008, namely that capitalism and democracy are not so monolithically connected, as it seemed to be when they both opposed authoritarian communism. This does not mean that every criticism of liberal capitalism by the representatives of the SOC is directed at the same time against democracy.<sup>157</sup> Since the beginning of the nineteenth century democracy in the Balkans was associated with the idea of national liberation and of obtaining national sovereignty. At that time, democracy was similarly perceived in other parts of Europe according to the legacy of the Enlightenment, the American and French Revolutions.<sup>158</sup> Yet, this hardly included the minority rights to which Klaus Buchenau points as one of the main shortcomings of the Serbian democratic idea.<sup>159</sup> The First (1804) and the Second Serbian (1814) Uprisings were not only attempts for national liberation from the Ottoman rule or social revolutions. They also had a

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<sup>156</sup> Cited in Julia Anna Lis, "Anti-Western Theology in Greece and Serbia Today", in: Andrii Krawchuk and Thomas Bremer (eds.) *Eastern Orthodox Encounters of Identity and Otherness*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2014, 159–168, here 160, and previously cited in Klaus Buchenau, "Kleines Serbien, große Welt. Serbiens Orthodoxie über Globalisierung und europäische Integration", in: Vasilios N. Makrides (ed.), *Religion, Staat und Konfliktkonstellationen im orthodoxen Ost- und Südosteuropa. Vergleichende Perspektiven*, Frankfurt am Main 2005, 85–114, here 99.

<sup>157</sup> Buchenau, "Orthodox Values and Modern Necessities", 115.

<sup>158</sup> Ković, "Znamenja pobjede, uzroci poraza", 165.

<sup>159</sup> Buchenau, "Orthodox Values and Modern Necessities", 112–114.

religious component because Christians in the Ottoman Empire were second-class citizens deprived of many basic political and social rights. Therefore, the Serbian Church supported the rebels and the established government over newly liberated territories, whilst the new national ideology, introduced by Dositej Obradović (the first minister of education in liberated Serbia) and Vuk Karadžić, promoted the Enlightenment and Romantic separation from faith and the emphasis on language in the process of building national identity.<sup>160</sup> Although the Serbian national idea was secularly based, it did not hinder the representatives of the Serbian Church to promote national liberation and democracy. One of the main proponents of these ideas was Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović. During the First World War, the Serbian Government sent Velimirović to the UK and the USA to promote the Serbian cause. In a lecture delivered in the Canterbury Cathedral in 1915, he thus praised the British Empire because of its democracy and foundation based on the Christian philosophy of democratic equality and brotherhood. He also urged Britain to protect Serbia and other oppressed European nations from German domination by spreading democracy and Christian values.<sup>161</sup>

At the core of Velimirović's statement was a conviction shared by many Serbian intellectuals, regardless of whether they were Christian or socialist, that democracy should represent a hindrance to the colonial policy of the capitalist states, primarily the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Balkans. Thus, capitalism was seen not only as inconsistent with the realization of democratic aspirations, but also as the main obstacle for building a democratic society. However, democracy began steadily to be distinguished by its secular character, which was regarded by Serbian churchmen, such as Velimirović, as a threat to European societies. Faced with the catastrophic consequences of the Second World War, Velimirović's enthusiasm for the European Christian brotherhood completely vanished. In his lecture given in 1920 at London's Kings College, he stated that Europe has abandoned Christianity as the center of its civilization and that it was doomed to decay unless it returned to Christianity.<sup>162</sup> The Second World War further convinced Velimirović that Europe is sick unto death. By the end of the war, while still being a prisoner in the concentration camp of Dachau and experiencing death around him, Velimirović wrote: "All of Europe smells of death. European universities preach death. European writers describe death. European scientists immortalize death. European politicians work for death ... Modern Europe is

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<sup>160</sup> Ković, "Znamenja pobjede, uzroci poraza", 166; Cvetković, "Serbian Tradition", 136.

<sup>161</sup> Nikolaj Velimirović, *Serbia in Light and Darkness*, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1916, 8–9.

<sup>162</sup> Nikolaj Velimirović, *The Spiritual Rebirth of Europe*, London: The Faith Press, 1920, 20.

a synonym for death.”<sup>163</sup> After the war, instead of returning to communist Yugoslavia, Velimirović chose to go to the USA, where he lived until his death in 1956. He visited Europe just once, being briefly in London, but he never again wrote of Europe. Due to Christian determination and democracy, two values that Velimirović highly esteemed, America became for him the land of hope and the new light to the world. Velimirović changed his opinions on numerous occasions, adopting vigorously certain ideas or abandoning them abruptly. However, the constant of his philosophical program was a combination of Christianity permeating every aspect of social and political life with democracy, while he linked both these ideals to Europe and its tradition.

The view on democracy within the Serbian Church remained unchanged after the Second World War. It is still seen as a social ideal, although authoritarian socialism failed democratic hopes. While living in Greece and other European democratic countries, first as students and later as lecturers at theological faculties, the four aforementioned disciples of Justin Popović, Amfilohije Radović, Atanasije Jevtić, Artemije Radosavljević and Irinej Bulović accustomed themselves with the values of democracy.<sup>164</sup> Upon their return to Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1980s and due to their adherence to democratic values, they embarked on a critique of the communist regime, and as professors at the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade they took active roles in numerous dissident fora.

However, the insistence of the Serbian churchmen on democratic values should not be regarded as supporting a capitalist economic system. They were against the unfair distribution of acquired goods and exaggerated materialism and consumerism that are rooted in capitalism. In the interwar period, Justin Popović began to criticize materialism, in both its communist and capitalist modes, by attacking its main cause, which he traced down to humanism. In his Oxford BLitt thesis (then the highest supervised degree issued by Oxford University) on Dostoevsky (1919), Popović was very critical of the Roman Catholic and Protestant role in transforming Christianity into humanism in Europe. In the fashion of the European intellectuals of the interwar period, who maintained that Europe is sick and that needs treatment, Popović gave a diagnosis and prescribed the therapy. The main causes of the illness of Europe were in his view humanism, rationalism and individualism.<sup>165</sup> Drawing on Slavophile ideas, Popović proposed: i) Theo-humanism or the process of human perfection in the God-man Jesus Christ as the cure for Western

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<sup>163</sup> Nikolaj Velimirović, *Sabrana dela* [Collected Works], vol. 13, Himmelsthür 1986, 331–332.

<sup>164</sup> Cvetković, “Serbian Tradition”, 137–138. See also Vladimir Cvetković, “Patristic Studies in Serbia”, *Adamantius* 15 (2009) 357–364, here 359.

<sup>165</sup> Vladimir Cvetković, “Abba Justin Popović, un théologien de synthèse”, *Istina* 65 (2011) 47–62, here 53–54.

humanism, which proclaimed the human being as the supreme value;<sup>166</sup> ii) a process of acquiring integral knowledge by means of faith and love as a cure for the rule of reason;<sup>167</sup> and iii) the ecclesial catholicity (*sabornost*) as the sole remedy for individualism.<sup>168</sup> Although Popović adopted the criticism of Western ideas from the Slavophile movement, he applied them not in a politico-ideological, but rather in an ecclesial way. He also disagreed with Velimirović regarding the implementation of these ideas, namely not by means of a messianic Slavonic race or a revival of the simple religiosity of peasants, but rather through a return to the ascetical tradition of the Desert Fathers. In his works on Macarius of Egypt (his doctoral thesis from Athens 1926) and Isaac the Syrian (1927), Popović suggested the desert, here a synonym for ascetic feat, as a solution to the problems of the European individual in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, similar ideas proposing the ascetic tradition of the Orthodox Christian East to the spiritually devastated Europe circulated among Catholic theologians and thinkers, such as Henri de Lubac, Jacques Maritain and Jean Daniélou – to mention just a few. At the end of Second World War, the Yugoslav communist authorities banned Popović from returning to his previous professorial post at the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade and confined him to the Monastery of Chelie in Western Serbia, where he remained until the end of his life. Popović continued with the same severity to condemn Yugoslav communists for adopting atheistic humanism, rationalism and collectivism as the main social values. He thus deeply inspired the next generation of Serbian theologians in being critical to both Western and communist humanism.

Thus, although supporting Serbia in the struggle for democratic values during the 1990s, Amfilohije Radović, Metropolitan of Montenegro and Littoral, condemned the West for its preoccupation with material values, for its expansionist impulse and its totalitarianism.<sup>169</sup> In his Christmas address from 2012, Radović dealt extensively with the threat of capitalism.<sup>170</sup> For Radović, communism is based on the idea of Christian unity, mutuality and fair distribution of goods, which has been realized throughout the centuries in the Church, and it is realized even nowadays in the monastic communities. The communists, however, set out to achieve this goal by violence and not

<sup>166</sup> Vladimir Cvetković, “Sveti Justin Novi o tajni ličnosti” [“St Justin the New on the Mystery of Personhood”], *Teologikon* 2 (2013) 161–181, here 165–166.

<sup>167</sup> Vladimir Cvetković, “St Justin the New on Integral Knowledge”, *Teologikon* 1 (2012) 149–158, here 152–153. See also Vladimir Cvetković, “Sveti Justin Čelijski kao evandjeoski bogoslov” [“Saint Justin of Chelie as an Evangelical Theologian”], *Crkvene studije* 11 (2014) 147–170, here 154–156.

<sup>168</sup> Cvetković, “Abba Justin Popović, un théologien de synthèse”, 58–62.

<sup>169</sup> Amfilohije Radović, quoted from Ivan Čolović, *The Politics of Symbol in Serbia: Essays in Political Anthropology*, London: C. Hurst & Company, 2002, 40

<sup>170</sup> The Christmas Message of Metropolitan Amfilohije 2011/2012, (in Serbian), *Radio Svetogora*: <http://www.svetigora.com/node/9736> (accessed on March 12, 2015).

through freedom. Contrary to communism, capitalism does not propagate mutuality and just distribution of goods, but being based on pride, envy and egoism, it propagates a seizure of the created world from God and neighbours. Radović draws attention to the devastating consequences of capitalism: the recent impoverishment of the majority of people and the enriching of just a few, both in his Montenegro and in the whole Europe.<sup>171</sup> He concluded that the ideology of contemporary neo-liberal capitalism is rooted in a “wolfish” self-interest (in connection to the proverb *homo homini lupus*).<sup>172</sup> He also pressed the issue further by criticizing the NATO military interventions from Kosovo to the Ukraine as nothing else than robbery, because their only purpose was to provide opportunities for the further enrichment of a few people.<sup>173</sup> At this point, Radović’s criticism of neo-liberal capitalism does not differ much from that of some leftist thinkers, such as Slavoj Žižek, for whom such NATO interventions represent “the shady world of international capital and its strategic interests”.<sup>174</sup> However, Radović and Žižek have completely different points of departure.

Radović is not the only Serbian bishop, who criticizes capitalism. On several occasions, Bishop Ignatije Midić of Požaravac has critically approached capitalism, but from a different angle and with another emphasis. Being in line with the ecological policy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Midić’s critique tackled issues of consumerism, environmentalism and totalitarian (not liberal) capitalism. In his public lecture given at the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Theological Institute in Berkeley, California, in August 2012, Midić grounded his critique of these issues on purely Christian tenets.<sup>175</sup> The direct consequence of consumerism is the rapid exploitation of natural resources because of its belief that nothing is eternal. It is thus in contradiction to the Christian perception of nature as something that God created for eternal life and to the Christian attempts to save everything for future life. Consumerism rejects the perspective of eternal life and challenges the notion of human being as a creator, namely creating everything with the intention to last for eternity. Midić also promotes the idea of environmental

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<sup>171</sup> “Amfilohije: Reality is not a Measure”, (in Serbian), *Radio Television of Serbia (RTS)*, 19 October 2011, available at: <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/125/Dru%C5%A1tvo/975626/Amfilohije%3A+Realnost+nije+mera.html> (accessed on March 12, 2015).

<sup>172</sup> The Christmas Message of Metropolitan Amfilohije 2011/2012.

<sup>173</sup> “Amfilohije: NATO is a Continuation of Fascism and Hitler’s Way!”, (in Serbian), *Pravda*, 28 March 2014, available at: <http://www.pravda.rs/2014/03/28/amfilohije-nato-je-nastavak-fasizma-i-hitlerovog-puta/> (accessed on March 12, 2015).

<sup>174</sup> Slavoj Žižek, “Against the Double Blackmail”, *New Left Review* I/234, (March–April 1999) 76–82, here 77.

<sup>175</sup> Lecture of Bishop of Braničevo Dr. Ignatije Midić, held at the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Theological Institute in Berkeley, California, *Radio Slovoljubve*, available at: <http://slovoljubve.com/cir/Newsview.asp?ID=5332> (accessed on March 12, 2015).

preservation, not from the angle of modern ecological movements sending a political message, but rather from the perspective of the Christian belief that human beings should better elevate nature in order to enter in a relationship with God instead of exploiting it. As a negative example, Midić mentions China's totalitarian capitalism, which in its promotion of a fierce economic competition to produce more goods, rapidly destroys the natural environment. Therefore, for Midić the capitalist exploitation of natural resources is not just a problem of Western neo-liberal capitalism, but it is a global problem closely connected with the survival of the planet.

One would certainly go too far claiming that every member of the Serbian Church exhibits such elaborated awareness of the threats of Western capitalism like the aforementioned bishops. After the collapse of socialism, the dismemberment of Yugoslavia and the subsequent wars that caused economic devastation and the impoverishment of people, the recent global economic crisis deepened the anxiety and disbelief in capitalistic values. However, just by observing the increase in selling fasting food during Lent and other major Christian fasting periods that the market records, it is possible to conclude that a considerable number of people (even larger than the number of frequent churchgoers) in Serbia practice fasting. The occurrence of this ascetic phenomenon may be seen as a response to the growth of consumerism and consolidates the Serbian Church in the same way in which the ascetic Bogomoljci movement one century ago, according to Justin Popović, prepared the Serbian Church to survive under communism.<sup>176</sup>

The question about the favorable political or economic system for the SOC was posed not as an ideological one, but as a question of human dignity. This means that the determination of the Serbian Church towards a particular political and economic system directly depends on the place that the individual human dignity and people's well-being have in this system, as well as on the compliance of this system with the basic Christian fundamentals. The commitment of the Serbian Church to democracy during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was associated with the national liberation from colonial powers and the establishment of social justice. Unlike some West European countries where the relationship between Church and democracy was marked by mutual repulsion, the democratization of the Serbian society during the nineteenth century, as well as of the Yugoslav society during the twentieth century, has been largely in line with the principles proclaimed by the Serbian Church. This does not mean that the Church, including the Serbian Church can identify itself with a particular political or democratic order. The Serbian Church, but also other Orthodox Churches, are often perceived today as non-democratic institutions, not because they do not support democracy, but

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<sup>176</sup> Vladimir Cvetković, "The Reception of St Justin in Recent German Scholarship", *Sobornost: Incorporating Eastern Churches Review* 36/2 (2014) 36–55.

because they are reluctant to be “democratized”; in other words, following the example of some Protestant Churches and beginning to implement democratic instead of “authoritarian” methods in their organization and functioning.<sup>177</sup> Despite these requests that usually come from the outside of the ecclesial setting, democracy is very important for the Church, particularly the Serbian one, because, as the late Rev. Professor Radovan Bigović remarks, democracy provides for the Church “to freely carry out its mission in the world and at the same time it does not allow her to succumb to the temptation of political power.”<sup>178</sup> Therefore, every kind of democratic deficit in post-Yugoslav societies, in which the Serbian Church is historically present (such as in Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Macedonia/FYROM) not only endangers the freedom of Church mission, but also puts it at risk from the inside, tempting its members, both clergy and laity, to replace the Church aims with daily politics.

Although Yugoslav communism introduced a fairer distribution of the means of production and goods in comparison with the earlier political systems, it was unacceptable for the Serbian Church because of its atheistic and anti-religious determination, restriction of the rights to freedom of religion, and the threat to human freedom and dignity due to totalitarian methods by which it tended to implement the new political and economic order. The Serbian Church unabatedly emphasized the negative aspects of such a system, often falling in danger of retaliation. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the victory of Western ideological and political system, the status of political and civil rights in Yugoslavia was drastically improved, and the Churches, including the Serbian Orthodox, regained many rights, including the ownership rights over previously confiscated land and real estates. However, in the period of transition from a socialist to a capitalist order, many citizens have been economically disenfranchised and their prior rights, as the one to free medical treatment or education, have been fundamentally questioned. Subsequently, acquiring a number of new political and civil rights has been accompanied by the questioning of many other rights, such as the right to work, social security, free health care and education. The impoverishment caused by wars and economic problems in Yugoslavia, deepened by the global economic crisis, prompted, first, individual hierarchs and then the Holy Synod and the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the SOC to criticize contemporary capitalism. The Serbian Church was critical of both the corporate capitalism and the “wild capitalism”, which emerged in the wake of the economic and political transition during the 1990s in the Balkans. For the Serbian Church, which considers the human being as created in the image and

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<sup>177</sup> Radovan Bigović, “Orthodox Church and Democracy”, (in Serbian), *Politika*, December 13, 2007, available at: <http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Pogledi-sa-strane/t49225.lt.html> (accessed on March 12, 2015).

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

likeness of God with an unalienable personal dignity, an economic system based on the primacy of profit over the human person is simple incompatible with the core of Christianity.

In the last years, global capitalism is increasingly criticized by Serbian churchmen, not only because of the economic disempowerment of a large part of the world's population, but also because of being the greatest environmental threat to the planet due to the insatiable exploitation of natural resources. Although numerous global movements cannot be culturally or geographically linked to the West or Europe, there is a unanimous opinion within the SOC that the sources of these ideas and practices stem originally from Western Europe and the West, thus the related criticism by the SOC addresses this particular problem. Today, among the clerics in Serbia, one can find extremely rare voices praising and celebrating England and America as bearers of democracy, Christian brotherhood and equality, comparable to what Nikolaj Velimirović was arguing in early twentieth century and before the Second World War.

#### **4. The SOC and European Cultural and Family Related Values**

The question of family values, which are increasingly harmonized with the cultural trends of Europe, became an important question in the Serbian Church, especially in the last decade. Serbia has undoubtedly adopted numerous Western and European cultural and civilizational values. Even in the period of socialist Yugoslavia, when a large number of countries from the communist block had been deprived of the developments and habits of West European and American popular culture, Serbian citizens were able to follow the Western cultural trends propagated through films, music or fashion. The social and cultural life in Yugoslavia had been in many aspects more emancipated than the life of some of its Western or Eastern counterparts. Among the numerous cultural phenomena, I would mention here only the following two: the internationally recognized group of Belgrade's and Zagreb's philosophers called *Praxis*, and the "Black Wave" in film and literature, which gathered renowned artists, such as Dušan Makavejev, Žika Pavlović and Mića Popović. However, not only the aforementioned dissident movements, but also the mainstream Yugoslav communist ideology attempted to emancipate suppressed social and cultural groups. A good example of the emancipating role of the communist ideology is a partisan song from the Second World War that advocated women's rights. The song consisted of several stanzas that describe the deeds of a young partisan woman: she rode a horse, she wore a rifle, she threw bombs and finally she led the *choros* (collective dance), while the refrain went: "Hey people, you should hear, hey people, you should know". All this was in direct contradiction to how a young



woman of patriarchal upbringing should have behaved. Another example refers to Klaus Buchenau's remark about the highly emancipated Russians, who, as the first skinny-dippers on the Montenegrin coast in the interwar period, considered the "Serbs as patriarchal machos and superficial dazzlers, or even as bad Christians".<sup>179</sup> However, one of the largest nudist camps in Europe was later opened at Ada Bojana in south Montenegro. It is certain that what has been achieved with regard to the emancipation of Serbian people during the Yugoslav period, regardless if good or bad, cannot be easily erased. Therefore, the Serbian Church today finds itself in a situation to reassess traditional models, such as the patriarchal family, because they do not match reality, and to search for some creative, yet authentic Church experience to handle the new challenges.

However, this form of emancipation led not only to changes in the patriarchal society at the level of the unwritten social norms, but also to changes in legislation. One of the new legal rights was that to abortion, which was considered by the Serbian Church as infanticide in the mother's womb, the crudest assault to the sanctity of life. The right to abortion, with some restrictions, was positively regulated by law in Yugoslavia already back in 1951, when the Church hardly had the instruments to prevent this decision. Later on, the SOC did not attempt to challenge this legal right by insisting on banning abortion by law, as the Roman Catholic Church did in some countries. Instead, it appealed to parents, teachers and civil servants to oppose "the unconscious cult of death, which is rampant in modern Western civilization".<sup>180</sup> This is evident in the letter of Patriarch Pavle to the Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica from 10 July 2007, in which he urged for the suspension of taxes on baby food and equipment in order to encourage parents to give birth to children and to prevent abortions, which were considered as a consequence of poverty. Although the Episcopate considered abortion not only as infanticide, but also in some way as Deicide (the killing of God),<sup>181</sup> the SOC never advocated directly the change of the law on abortion. However, in its convocation in May 2013, the Holy Assembly of the Bishops of the SOC supported the appeal of Christian doctors and medical staff for banning abortion in Serbia.

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<sup>179</sup> Klaus Buchenau, "Just As Real Life Brothers: Serb Russian Contacts in the Ecclesiastical Academy of Kiev (1850–1914) and in Orthodox Schools of Interwar Yugoslavia", *Tokovi istorije* 3–4 (2005) 54–66, here 62.

<sup>180</sup> Press release of the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church held in Belgrade and Niš, May 21 – June 3, 2013, available at: [http://www.spc.rs/st/saopshtenje\\_za\\_javnost\\_10](http://www.spc.rs/st/saopshtenje_za_javnost_10) (accessed on March 12, 2015).

<sup>181</sup> Nativity encyclical of the Serbian Orthodox Church from December 30, 2008, available at: [http://www.spc.rs/eng/nativity\\_encyclical\\_serbian\\_orthodox\\_church](http://www.spc.rs/eng/nativity_encyclical_serbian_orthodox_church) (accessed on March 12 2015).

In the Easter encyclical of 2008, the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the SOC warned against the violation of the following basic human rights due to the modern globalized environment, which was considered to be based on deformed moral values: “The right of the human being to life; the right of a baby to be born; the right of parents to raise and guide their children; the right of a mother to be a loving and caring mother to her children and a wife to her husband; the right of man to be a man”.<sup>182</sup> One may already anticipate in these lines some of the contentious social issues, such as those of abortion, same-sex marriage or surrogate motherhood, which would trigger public debates in the coming years.

One of these controversial issues, perceived today not only by the Serbian people, but also by many Europeans as an inherent European and Western value, is the tolerance towards sexual minorities. Since 2001, when the first unsuccessful pride parade was planned in Belgrade, the LGBT communities in Serbia have attempted on numerous occasions to organize such events. In every case, though, such initiatives became highly politicized issues that divided public opinion. On the one side, there were the LGBT communities and those admitting their right to publicly express their sexual orientation. On the other side, there were the conservative organizations and movements that propagated traditional family values, whereas, in my view, the majority of the Serbian population took a rather neutral, middle position.

The Government of Serbia incorporated into its bill on prohibition of discrimination from March 2009 the request of the LGBT communities to grant them freedom of expression of their sexual orientation. The SOC together with other religious communities in Serbia, such as the Roman Catholic Church and the Islamic and Jewish communities, strongly protested against this bill. The segment of the bill relating to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation was presented by the Government as an EU requirement for Serbia’s European integration and the abolition of visa requirement for Serbian citizens traveling to the EU. Bishop Irinej (Bulović) of Bačka and Novi Sad opposed the bill’s article by which everyone has the right to publicly express his or her sexual orientation, noting that the same bill, following the Constitution, considers that sexual orientation is a private matter of every individual. He also expressed his disbelief that the adoption of such a “highly liberal” law regarding sexual orientation was a necessary requirement for the European integration of Serbia, because such a legal measure did not exist in any other EU country except in the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> The Pascha encyclical of the Serbian Orthodox Church, 2008, available at: [http://www.spc.rs/sr/vaskrsnja\\_poslanica\\_2008\\_godine](http://www.spc.rs/sr/vaskrsnja_poslanica_2008_godine) (accessed on March 12, 2015).

<sup>183</sup> “Why does Serbia Need a Super Liberal Law”, (in Serbian), *Deutsche Welle*, March 7, 2009, available at: <http://www.dw.de/šta-će-baš-srbiji-superliberalni-zakon/a-4079954> (accessed on March 12, 2015).

In 2009, the police canceled the Belgrade pride parade, because right-wing nationalistic and Orthodox-conservative associations, such as 1389, *Naši* (Ours), *Dveri Srpske* (Serbian Doors), and *Obraz* (Honor), threatened the participants in the parade. The leader of *Obraz* (Honor), Mladen Obradović, was sentenced to ten months in prison for making death threats to the participants in the parade that finally led to its cancellation.<sup>184</sup> After his appeal, the Second-Degree council of the Court of Appeals reduced Obradović's sentence to four months house arrest.<sup>185</sup> In 2010, 127 policemen were injured trying to protect the participants in the Belgrade pride parade from riots. The LGBT communities were not the only target of the hooligans, who also robbed Belgrade's stores, demolished the city's infrastructure, and set the headquarters of the ruling Socialist and Democratic parties on fire.<sup>186</sup> As a result, the Serbian Constitutional Court banned *Obraz* in 2012.<sup>187</sup> On many occasions, the Church leaders gave statements against the organization of Belgrade pride parades. In 2011, Patriarch Irinej called them parades of shame and urged the Minister of Interior Affairs, Ivica Dačić, to ban them, which he did due security assessments indicating severe threats to public safety.<sup>188</sup> The ultra-conservative organization *Dveri Srpske* went so far as to register itself as a political party and to compete in the Serbian parliamentary elections on a family values ticket, yet it did not reach the 5 percent requirement to enter parliament.

In spite of the statements of Church leaders who routinely condemn homosexuality as a threat to traditional family values, it is difficult to argue that intolerance of homosexual rights is widespread in Serbia. The above case of *Dveri Srpske* demonstrates that solely an insignificant number of people, which is even smaller than the predicted number of the homosexual population in Serbia, supports political options based on family values. Most of the Serbian people including churchgoers are rather ambivalent regarding homosexual rights. But they hardly understand the numerous appeals of Western Embassies and EU officials asking for Serbia's commitment to

<sup>184</sup> Dušan Stojanović, "Mladen Obradovic, Far-Right Serbian Leader, Jailed over Gay Threats", *The Huffington Post*, March 27, 2012, available at: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/27/mladen-obradovic-serbian-leader-gay-threats-jailed-n\\_1382769.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/27/mladen-obradovic-serbian-leader-gay-threats-jailed-n_1382769.html) (accessed on March 12, 2015).

<sup>185</sup> "Court of Appeals Sends Right-wing Activist's Case to Retrial", *B92*, February 1, 2013, available at: [http://www.b92.net/eng/news/crimes.php?yyyy=2013&mm=02&dd=01&nav\\_id=84470](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/crimes.php?yyyy=2013&mm=02&dd=01&nav_id=84470) (accessed on March 12, 2015).

<sup>186</sup> "Riots in Belgrade", (in Serbian), *RTS*, October 10, 2010, available at: <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/Politika/777876/Neredi+u+Beogradu> (accessed on March 12, 2015).

<sup>187</sup> Court of Appeals Sends Right-wing Activist's Case to Retrial, *B92*, February 1, 2013.

<sup>188</sup> Aleksandar Vasović, "Serbia Bans Gay Pride March Again; EU Criticizes Decision", *Reuters*, 27 September 2013, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/27/us-serbia-gaypride/idUSBRE98Q1A820130927> (accessed on March 12, 2015).

tolerance and diversity in regard to LGBT communities, while overlooking the rights of other minority groups (e.g., the Roma).

Hence, the statement of Metropolitan Amfilohije Radović regarding LGBT rights was a surprise not only for a liberal audience, but also for Orthodox Christians. Asked by a journalist to comment on the recent floods in the Balkans, Radović said:

Have a look at what is going on. What is the priority in Europe right now? It is this unfortunate woman, or better, this unfortunate man, whose name I do not know, who establishes himself as Jesus.<sup>189</sup>

At first, the journalist could not figure out to whom Radović was referring to, but later he clarified that this person was Conchita Wurst, the winner of 2014 Eurovision song contest. It is usual that Christians, similarly to ancient Jews, attribute natural catastrophes to God and consider them as a divine punishment for their transgressions or signs of a divine warning to avoid sin. Radović explained that the popularization of Conchita Wurst as a model of tolerance and diversity was directed against human nature. In his statement, Radović relied on the Church Fathers, who considered homosexuality a sin against nature. For example, John Chrysostom stated that homosexuality is worse than murder, because murderers can only kill the body, while homosexuals kill both body and soul by perverting the fundamental features of human nature.<sup>190</sup> According to Orthodox canon law, murderers should abstain 14 years from receiving communion as penance for their deeds, whereas homosexuals who repent should abstain 30 years from receiving communion.<sup>191</sup>

Georg Diez’s essay in the *Spiegel* issue from May 2014 entitled “A Continent in Motion: What Conchita Wurst Tells Us about EU Identity” helped me to a certain extent to understand the first sentence of Radović’s statement about Wurst appearing as a new Jesus. By stating that tolerance goes hand in hand with decadence, the author concluded that Wurst in some way epitomizes European identity.<sup>192</sup> It seems thus that Diez and Radović agree that Wurst is a symbol of current European identity. While for Diez Wurst

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<sup>189</sup> “Amfilohije: The Floods are a Divine Warning for the Celebration of Conchita Wurst as Jesus and the Gay Parade”, (in Serbian), *Portal Analitika*, May 18, 2014, available at: <http://www.portalanalitika.me/drustvo/vijesti/146827-amfilohije-poplave-boja-opomena-zbog-slavljenja-konite-vurst-kao-isusa-i-gej-parade-video> (accessed on March 12, 2015).

<sup>190</sup> John Chrysostom, *In Epistulam ad Romanos IV*, PG 60, 417.

<sup>191</sup> Canons 7 and 62 of Basil of Caesarea, in Philip Schaff & Henry Wace (eds.), *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, Peabody, Hendrickson Publishers, 1994, 604 and 608.

<sup>192</sup> Georg Diez, “A Continent in Motion: What Conchita Wurst Tells Us About EU Identity”, *Spiegel Online*, May 23, 2014, available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/what-conchita-wurst-tells-us-about-eu-identity-a-970688-2.html> (accessed on March 12, 2015).

responds to an ongoing inquiry about Europe's identity, for Radović Wurst represents the last phase of Europe's decline, in which Christ, the God-man, is replaced by a human being turning against his/her own nature. Radović also stated that the pride parade organized in Podgorica in November 2014, as a sign of Montenegro's respect for EU gender policy, was in fact Montenegro's enslavement to an anti-Christian Europe.<sup>193</sup>

There are, however, different attitudes towards homosexuality within the SOC, which do not subscribe to this traditional and rigorist canonical position. Bishop Ignatije Midić, one of these voices, interpret homosexuality not in opposition to human nature. In his lectures on Dogmatics at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Belgrade, which were published by the former bishop Artemije Radosavljević attempting to refute them, Midić argued that it is wrong to condemn homosexuality as a sin by comparing it to traditional marriage and family life.<sup>194</sup> For Midić, neither homosexuality nor marriage will exist in the Kingdom of God. By referring to Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor, Midić concluded that any kind of sexual relationship leads to death, whereas solely a loving relationship can save. In this way, Midić's position does not denigrate homosexuals, but levels them to a certain degree with heterosexuals. Further, he offers an evangelical solution to homosexuals within the Church urging them to fight against the passions of fallen nature by means of ascetical deeds without ceasing to love.

Another important issue for the SOC, especially highlighted in the Easter encyclical of 2008, concerns the right of parents to educate, direct and guide their children. This right was not in principle endangered, yet in some governmental bills, inspired by the concept of the specific rights of the child *per se*, it was restricted. The Draft Civil Code, which sanctions all forms of corporal punishment for children, thus triggered a debate on this issue. The far-right political parties, such as the *Dveri* (Doors) movement, which consider itself a guardian of traditional Orthodox family values, denounced the legal proposal. Boško Obradović, a member of the *Dveri* movement's leadership, accused the bill writers for equating corporal punishment with children abuse and considered this law as the state's attack on traditional family.<sup>195</sup> Like Obradović, a senior research fellow at the Institute for

<sup>193</sup> "Amfilohije: Montenegro Becomes Sodom", (in Serbian), *Blic*, December 10, 2014, available at: <http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Drustvo/507480/Amfilohije-Crna-Gora-postaje-Jadogora> (accessed on March 12, 2015).

<sup>194</sup> Episkop Artemije, *Odbrana pravoslavnog ispovedanja vere od krivoverja prof. d. Ignatija Midića, episkopa Branicevskog* [Defense of the Orthodox Confession of Faith from the Heresy of Prof. Dr Ignatije Midić, Bishop of Braničevo], Belgrade: Revnitelj 2014, vol. 3. 27, 169.

<sup>195</sup> Juliana Simić-Tensic and Dejan Ivanović, "For and Against the Ban on Corporal Punishment of Children", (in Serbian), *Politika*, January 15, 2015, available at: <http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Drustvo/Za-i-protiv-zabrane-telesnog-kaznjavanja-dece.sr.html> (accessed on March 12, 2015).

European Studies in Belgrade Miša Djurković argued that the state’s insistence on the rights of the child, but not on child’s obligations, is a form of totalitarianism directed against family.<sup>196</sup> Further, the question of children’s Christian education is much broader than the issue of their corporal punishment and was previously raised among some Church circles. Deacon Nenad Ilić, a director of popular movies on Serbian saints, claimed that this insistence on the rights of the child belongs to the modern Western utopian and ideological projects. He opposed the Western utopian concept of the “uncorrupted child”, underlying the very idea of children’s rights, to the Christian viewpoint on mortality and sinfulness of all human beings including the children and to the experience of the Church in fighting against sin and death.<sup>197</sup> A similar standpoint was taken by Bishop Atanasije Jevtić, who often jokingly insisted that children should rather be beaten in the course of their education.<sup>198</sup> However, this had nothing to do with children abuse, but simply pointed to the fallen state of human nature following the ancestral sin. Setting boundaries to children was not meant to restrict their freedom, but to guide them safely to the fullness of Christian life. Thus, according to Amfilohije Radović, (corporal) punishment has no juridical character at all. It primarily aims at correcting the children’s character so that they may enjoy God’s love.<sup>199</sup>

In a series of articles Ivica Živković, a teacher at the Seminary “Sts. Cyril and Methodius” in Niš, problematized further the concept of children’s rights in an attempt to offer a different perspective. Without restricting himself to a set of proclaimed rights of children that may become part of national legislations, Živković pointed to other such rights, such as those to be loved by God, to deification and to life of the unborn child. He emphasized Christian love as a manifestation of eternal love within the life of the Holy Trinity and the historical manifestation of Christ’s love for the apostles<sup>200</sup> as having supremacy over the technological rationality of purposeful and instructive

<sup>196</sup> Miša Djurković, “How to Defend My Family”, (in Serbian), *Politika*, December 19, 2004: available at: <http://www.politika.rs/pogledi/Missa-Djurkovich/Kako-da-odbranim-svoju-porodicu.lt.html> (accessed on March 13, 2015).

<sup>197</sup> Milan Škulić, Nanad Ilić and Slavoljub Saša Djurdjić, “Cultural Policy: Protecting Children or ‘Bullying’ the Parents?”, (in Serbian), *Nova srpska politička misao*, January 29, 2012, available at: <http://www.nspm.rs/kulturna-politika/zastita-dece-ili-vrsnjacko-nasilje-nad-roditeljima.html> (accessed on March 12, 2015).

<sup>198</sup> Milan Škulić, Nanad Ilić and Slavoljub Saša Djurdjić, “Cultural Policy: Protecting Children or ‘Bullying’ the Parents?”, (in Serbian), *Nova srpska politička misao*, January 29, 2012, available at: <http://www.nspm.rs/kulturna-politika/zastita-dece-ili-vrsnjacko-nasilje-nad-roditeljima.html> (accessed on March 12, 2015).

<sup>199</sup> Amfilohije Radović, *Osnovi pravoslavnog vaspitanja* [Fundamentals of Orthodox Education], Vrnjačka Banja 1993, 228.

<sup>200</sup> Ivica Živković, “Odnosi ljubavi u pravoslavnom vaspitanju” [“The Relationship of Love in the Orthodox Upbringing”], *Crkvene studije* 9 (2012) 125–149, here 125.

upbringing and education.<sup>201</sup> The parental love for the child, regardless if the child responds positively to parents' expectations and satisfies their needs, also constitutes a cure for parental egotism.<sup>202</sup> Relying on the views of the contemporary elder St Paisios the Athonite, Živković emphasized that nowadays children, filled with selfishness, are often resistant to scolding and corporal punishment, and that they can only react to positive examples of parental love.<sup>203</sup>

Although in the last two decades often neglected, the themes of marriage, family and education have entered the public discussion fora in the last few years. The Nativity encyclical of 2014 of the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the SOC states that the Mystery of Christmas reveals three sacred realities of human existence: the sanctity of the father and fatherhood, the sanctity of the mother and motherhood, and the sanctity of the child and childhood.<sup>204</sup> Through this statement, the SOC shifted explicitly its focus from political and economic issues to the question of family and related values. By grounding the family values in the basic principles of Christian Revelation, namely fatherhood in relation with God the Father, motherhood with regard to the Mother of God, and childhood with reference to the birth and upbringing of Jesus Christ, the SOC reacted against the relativization of these roles by some currently propagated family models, especially in Western societies. However, since contemporary Serbian society can hardly return to the patriarchal family values, which had already been challenged under communism, it appears necessary to give a fresh foundation and interpretation of the theological postulates about fatherhood, motherhood and childhood. Herein lies certainly a new creative role for contemporary Orthodox Christians in Serbia, namely to remain in compliance with tradition while attempting to respond in a Christian way to ongoing social changes and challenges.

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<sup>201</sup> Ivica Živković, "Pedagogical Love for the Child and Post-pedagogic Self-love", available at: <http://www.eparhijaniska.rs/богословље-2/педагогија/251> (accessed on March 12, 2015).

<sup>202</sup> Živković, "Odnosi ljubavi u pravoslavnom vaspitanju", 149; idem, "Pedagogical Love for the Child and Post-pedagogic Self-love".

<sup>203</sup> Živković, "Odnosi ljubavi u pravoslavnom vaspitanju", 139–140.

<sup>204</sup> Patriarchal Nativity encyclical 2014, *The Information Service of the Serbian Orthodox Church*, January 5, 2015, available at: [http://www.spc.rs/eng/patriarchal\\_nativity\\_encyclical\\_2014](http://www.spc.rs/eng/patriarchal_nativity_encyclical_2014) (accessed on March 12, 2015).

## **5. In Lieu of a Conclusion**

This study looked at the ways in which the SOC perceives the West and Europe by considering and examining them at three different levels: the historical and geographical, the political and economic, and the cultural and family-related. The issue of history and geography is linked to the role that Europe played in the breakup of Yugoslavia, the bombardment of Serbia and the backing of Kosovo's independence. Every narrative about Europe in the SOC is deeply shaped by the traumatic experience of European and Western political and military interventions in the above cases. This study intended to show that:

First, the importance of Kosovo and its medieval past cherished by the SOC is not of a superficial character, because it has deeply shaped the identity and collective memory of Serbian people. The Kosovo sacrifice and testament are not just memories of a glorious past, but also represent the urge for Serbian survival in Kosovo. In dialogue with the Western official and functionaries, who took important decisions on the destiny of Kosovo, the SOC always insisted on a set of rights. This included human, civic and collective rights, of which Serbs living in Kosovo are currently deprived; the historical rights of the Serbian people in Kosovo, which are endangered by the constant destruction of Serbian churches, monasteries and cemeteries; and the legal rights of the Serbian state over Kosovo, stipulated by many international agreements. Although the Serbian Government tended to compromise some of these rights in exchange for Serbia's faster integration into the EU, the SOC considers the Western nation- and state-building policy in Kosovo legitimate under the provision that it respects the aforementioned rights.

Second, the stance of the SOC in the breakup of Yugoslavia should not be interpreted as a sudden and irrational expression of a militant Orthodox nationalism, but as the continuation of the centuries-old idea about Serbian national liberation and unification. From this perspective, the role that Europe and the West played in the wars and the disintegration of Yugoslavia is perceived by the SOC as an effort of the old and new imperial powers to regain dominance of the region. Many parallels that some Church hierarchs draw between the Austro-Hungarian invasion of 1914 or the German Nazi invasion of 1941 and the recent NATO intervention in 1999 intend to highlight the continuing threat of Western imperialism. On another bent, even the communist regime of Yugoslavia, being aggressively anti-religious by its character, was regarded by the SOC as an exponent of Western humanistic ideals.

Third, although the policies of Milošević and the SOC are often considered as one and the same, namely as supporting Serbian expansionism, they differed much in scope and goal-setting. Milošević played the card of the



Serbian national rights in Yugoslavia in order to strengthen his power, while the SOC attempted to protect the collective rights of the Serbian people, including the right to self-determination, recognized by the West to many peoples in Yugoslavia. From the beginning of Milošević's political career, the SOC felt animosity towards him due to his authoritarian way of governance and his intention to instrumentalize the SOC for his political interests.

Fourth, the views of the SOC towards Europe and West should not be seen as monolithic. The views expressed by some influential bishops in the media or the decisions of some bishops taken without agreement with the Holy Synod or the Assembly of Bishops, do not represent the official position of the SOC. There are plenty of such cases: The charges against NATO countries previously pressed by the Bishop of Kosovo Artemije Radosavljević and later withdrawn by the SOC; the invitation addressed to the US Vice-President Joe Biden to visit the Monastery of Visoki Dečani after Radosavljević banned him the visit; and the recent statement of the Serbian Patriarch Irinej that the attitudes of Radović and Jevtić expressed at the Belgrade rally against the Brussels agreement between Serbia and Kosovo do not represent the position of the SOC. Such disagreements exist not only about political and national issues, but also with regard to pastoral and doctrinal issues, such as the rights of homosexuals.

The Serbian Episcopate largely exploits the theme of Europe's responsibility for the situation in Kosovo, and this issue is mentioned in almost all public addresses and encyclicals of the SOC in the last couple of decades. However, this inclination of the Serbian Episcopate to deal with the national questions, which often force it to enter the political arena, is not always shared by others within the SOC. One may notice that the perception of Europe and the West through the Yugoslav crisis prevails in the Serbian Episcopate and in the Serbian Orthodox monastic environment, yet the lower clergy and laity perceive Europe through a different angle.

Bearing the previous data and analysis in mind, most of the reactions to Europe and the West as symbols of a specific political and economic system come mainly from parish priests. The focus of the lower clergy on political and economic issues rather than on national issues and their ambivalent attitude towards the great national questions is due to two reasons. It is first linked to the scope of their parish work, their immediate concern about the political circumstances in which the SOC operates, and the material and economic well-being of their parishioners. Second, it is simply caused by their sense that such great and complex questions are beyond their dealing capacity.

Given that the West and Europe were cherished during communist times as symbols of individual rights and economic prosperity, the Serbian society, including the SOC, has entered the political and economic transition with high hopes. However, these hopes were soon replaced by a sense of insecurity and disillusionment. The latter came together with the realization that the Western

policy towards the Balkans is not inspired by philanthropy, but by specific Western political and economic interests in the region. The sense of insecurity caused by the new economic situation has driven many people to the Church as a kind of spiritual shelter. In spite of insisting on the practice of Christian asceticism, the Serbian Church did not remain indifferent to the newly propagated Western materialist and consumerist values. Therefore, drawing on personal experience some priests warned about the danger of reconciling Western materialist values with Christian principles. While capitalist values are questioned by the SOC, the democratic principles are positively received. This is because democracy enables the Church to resist involvement in political struggles for reaching goals other than purely Christian, such as regarding the national question of Serbian people (especially in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo) or the legal status of the Serbian Church (especially in Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia).

Finally, Europe and the West are also perceived through the lenses of cultural and family-related issues. If we exclude the question of the rights for homosexual, against which some Church hierarchs fiercely protested, European cultural and family-related values usually concern Orthodox lay intellectuals. They react both as Christians and as parents to certain European models that are presented as the ultimate European values and are implemented through legislation as a prerequisite for Serbia's EU adhesion, including the homosexuals' rights to adopt children, surrogate motherhood, and the ban of corporal punishment of children. The critique of such European cultural and family-related values does not necessarily mean their rejection, nor their unconditional acceptance by the Serbian society in general. Being in drastic opposition with the traditional Christian principles, these legislative proposals are usually fiercely debated or even rejected. However, because such proposals enter the public debate before the Church authorities such as the Holy Synod or the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the SOC have dealt with them, one may encounter a number of varied and quite interesting reflections on such controversial issues from an Orthodox standpoint. Usually written by lay experts, these are published as newspaper's texts, scholarly articles or essays on Orthodox internet fora and approach these controversial issues not from a cultural or national angle, but rather from the Orthodox Christian tradition. In this sense, such and at times quite liberal Orthodox reflections may be regarded as a contribution to the general debate over some European or even considered universal values. Nevertheless, it is quite important that the SOC cannot ignore Europe and specifically the European positions and directives on such issues, regardless if it agrees or disagrees with them. Serbia and its Church are integral parts of European history and their future course and destiny are determined by this fact, despite older and more recent serious problems. Needless to say that this holds true for the other Orthodox Churches historically existing in the European continent.

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Vladimir Cvetković is an honorary research fellow at the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory of the University of Belgrade. He obtained a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Belgrade (2007) and a MA in theology from Durham University (2002). He has previously taught and researched at the universities of Niš and Belgrade (Serbia), Durham and St Andrews (UK), as well as Oslo (Norway) and Aarhus (Denmark), mostly in the fields of Patristics, Byzantine and Serbian philosophical and theological traditions, and modern Orthodox Christianity.

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