



**Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia**

# **THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE NEW SERBIAN IDENTITY**

**Belgrade, 2006**

**This Study is a part of a larger Project "Religion and Society," realized  
with the assistance of the Heinrich Böll Foundation**

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## **Historical Confusion**

At the turn of the penultimate decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the last, the world was shocked by the (out-of-court) pronouncement of the death verdict for an artist, that is, an author by the leader of a theocratic regime, on the grounds that his book insulted one religion or, to be more exact, Islam and all Muslims. Naturally, it is the question of the famous Rushdie affair. According to the leader of the Iranian revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, the novel "Satanic Verses" by Salman Rushdie was blasphemous and the author deserved to be sentenced to death by a fatwa. This case - which has not been closed to this day - demonstrated in a radical way the seriousness and complexity of the challenge which is posed by the living political force of religious fundamentalism(s) to the global aspirations of the concept of liberal capitalist democracy, whose basic postulates are a secular state and secular society.

The fall of the Berlin Wall that same year (1989) marked symbolically the end of an era in the international relations and the collapse of an ideological-political project. In other words, the circumstances that had a decisive influence on the formation of the Yugoslav and Serbian society in the post-World War II period were pushed into history. Time has told that the mentioned changes caused a tragic historical confusion in Yugoslavia and in Serbia, primarily due to the unreadiness of the Yugoslav and, in particular, Serbian elites to understand and adequately respond to the challenges of the new era.

In the light of this "historical confusion" one should also look at the fact that, on 31 May 1990 already, Serbia had its own "Rushdie affair" or, to be more precise, the first aggressive interference of the clerical circles in the sphere of artistic freedoms, as well as on the broadest cultural plane. Namely, the drama "Saint Sava", written by Siniša Kovačević and directed by Vladimir Milčín, which was performed by the Zenica National Theatre at the Yugoslav Drama Theatre in Belgrade, was violently interrupted by a group of mostly young people, who identified themselves in public as theological students and activists of the Serbian Youth Bloc, and who were led by the archpriest of the Serbian Orthodox Church Žarko Gavrilović and Vojislav Šešelj, a high official of the Serbian Renewal Movement at that time.<sup>1</sup>

As soon as this guest performance was announced, the archpriest Gavrilović publicly requested its cancellation. He said: "We will not allow the besmirching of our sanctities by various perverted and sinful people."<sup>2</sup> The playwright Siniša Kovačević, the actor Žarko Laušević, who played the role of Saint Sava, and Jovan Ćirilov, the then director of the Yugoslav Drama Theatre,

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<sup>1</sup> The incident at the Yugoslav Drama Theatre led to a split between Vuk Drašković and Vojislav Šešelj and the latter's expulsion from the Serbian Renewal Movement.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from the website [www.srpskinacionalisti.com](http://www.srpskinacionalisti.com).

complained about being threatened by unknown persons, but the performance was not cancelled.

The scandal at the Yugoslav Drama Theatre was without precedent in the second Yugoslavia. On that occasion, the SOC also displayed its new ambitions and its power acquired in the years of the “happening of the people”. The fact that the SOC participated in this scandal or, at least, looked at it with sympathy, and that this was not just an independent action by one of its archpriests, was confirmed by the public reaction of Amfilohije Radović, the then Bishop of Banat, who became the Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Littoral the next year already.

*“It is not difficult to turn Zenica into a ‘spittoon’ (as said by Antonije Djurić) on Saint Sava’s Day. It is a success to carry that spittoon to the base of the Temple itself, to the Yugoslav Drama Theatre, where a flower is still blooming from the burnt relics of the Saint. They say that the lovers of the fine art of spitting and besmirching were so excited that they decided to place new spittoons throughout Serbia, so that Serbs can spit at their father to their heart’s content! After all, they learned this trade from their teachers and the new bringers of happiness for fifty years. And since all this time is devoted to preparations for accession to the European Community, they have something that will recommend us: let Europe and the world see who we were, on what foundation we have built and what we are (...)*

*So, our portrait has finally been made. Oskar Davičo revealed gonorrhea in Stefan Nemanja instead of myrrh-flowing. Mimica revealed an inquisition in Lazar’s time through “Banović Strahinja”, while Bulajić revealed the filth of hell behind the sanctity of Saint Petar Cetinjski. In his book “Vidovdan i časni krst” (“Saint Vitus’ Day and the Holy Cross”), Miodrag Popović reveals to us that we have never been Christians, while the film “I Even Met Happy Gypsies” is spreading the fame of the Serbian priest, drunkard and rake all over the world. And all this is done in the name of art and its freedom.*

*And so, in the name of that same ‘artistic freedom’, the brave S. Kovačević pilloried both Saint Sava and that rotten Nemanjić sort. And we all are the Nemanjići (...)*

*The two devil’s pumpkins of our times are: the ‘freedom of art’ and ‘democracy’. The ‘freedom of art’ also meant social realism and ‘democracy’, to which millions were sacrificed, Stalinism.”<sup>3</sup>*

In fact, Amfilohije Radović deprives art of something that is immanent to it – to deheroize history and expose its protagonists. There are countless works of art which are based on the idea that *there are no heroes of history*.<sup>4</sup> Radović’s criticism comes from a position of mythical consciousness and the mythologization of history.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ekspres politika*, June 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Katarina Vešović, *Polja*, No. 424, Novi Sad, 2003.

As can be seen, in the text whose parts have been quoted, a high church dignitary not only finds himself to be competent to laconically disqualify Kovačević's drama (he also calls it a "lie-drama"), but also some of the most significant works and exponents of 20<sup>th</sup> century Yugoslav film and literature (Aleksandar Petrović, Davičo...). Moreover, he also provides the farther-reaching guidelines regarding the value system that should be adopted by Serbia and the Serbs being at the turning point in history and facing the need for a new social and political system.

Therefore, Radović's sarcasm about Europe ("all this time is devoted to preparations for accession to the European Community) and democracy, "the devil's pumpkin of our times", which have been sophisticatedly equated with Stalinism, is much more indicative than his anticommunism (and paraphrasing of the famous slogan "Tito, that's what we all are!" – "We all are the Nemanjići!"). That sarcasm was displayed at the moment when the bloody war drama in the former Yugoslavia still did not begin, when the reform-minded federal government was led by Ante Marković and when the process of accelerated modernization of the Serbian society and its inclusion in the European integration processes seemed to be possible.

The quoted text shows that this possibility was actually regarded as a threat by Amfilohije Radović – whose authority in the SOC was very strong at that time and was to become increasingly stronger – realizing that a chance for the Church's increasing influence on the society and more important role in designing the new, desirable collective identity of the Serbian people lied in different circumstances.

In the study published in 2004, Smiljka Tomanović and Suzana Ignjatović state: *"Contrary to the trends towards detraditionalization, which characterize the lives of individuals in societies in late modernity, Serbia has been undergoing the process of retraditionalization in various spheres of social life over the past fifteen years."*<sup>5</sup>

### **Anticommunism, Philetism and Fear of Globalization**

There is no doubt that the SOC has made a great contribution to that retraditionalization process and that the benefit derived from it is also great. For years now, all public opinion surveys have been showing that the SOC is the institution that enjoys the greatest confidence in Serbia. That benefit certainly does not end with the high reputation of the Church among the citizens. At the end of 2005, the Croatian printed media disclosed the data that the Roman Catholic Church in Croatia ranked among the five richest business groups and that, among other things, it differed from other successful corporations due to the fact that only its operations were not transparent.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> "The Young People in Transition: Between Family of Origin and Family of Orientation", Center for Policy Studies, Belgrade, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> *Glas Istre*, Pula, 22 December 2005.

The economic power of the SOC is shown by the fact that, according to the data disclosed on the website of the Orthodox Pastoral Councelling Centre of the Archbishopric of Belgrade and Karlovac, currently underway is the building of eight new churches in the territory of Belgrade, while building land and building documents for another nine churches are being prepared.<sup>7</sup> The SOC also uses its increasing influence to exert pressure on the government bodies for the restitution of its nationalized property, presenting the state as “God’s debtor”.<sup>8</sup> Its claim includes 70,000 hectares of land and 1,181 buildings.<sup>9</sup>

It turned out, however, that in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century democracy and Europe did not pose a “real” threat to the Serbian national being due to the war politics being in the service of the aim formulated by the slogan “All Serbs will live in a single state!” Allegiance to Orthodoxy and the Serbian church was an important theme of the wartime Serbian folklore.<sup>10</sup> By blurring the essential nature of the wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, the regime propaganda machinery was emphasizing, inter alia, the religious character of those wars, which also made the SOC one of the pillars of national homogenization.

In fact, this homogenization around the Church during the armed conflicts meant the continuity with the SOC’s efforts in the second half of the 1980s, which is regarded as the period of preparations for war. Since the Serbian regime was attacked by a large part of the opposition during the 1990s for its continuity with the previous system rather than for Greater Serbian nationalism and opting for war as instrument of solving political problems, the SOC not only retained its social and political status after the 5 October changes, but even managed to strengthen it in the new constellation of relations.

*“Considering itself as the greatest victim of the communist regime, the Serbian Orthodox Church puts the universal messages from the Gospel in parentheses in an attempt to assume as an important position among the leaders of the national struggle as possible, thus falling into philetism, which was proclaimed a heresy by the church fathers themselves. The national struggle was also encouraged by the demonstration of the SOC’s increasing power by organizing, for example, the procession of the relics of Prince Lazar, the central figure of the Kosovo myth, just in those regions in which the fiercest armed conflicts were to break out.”<sup>11</sup>*

The above quotation also points to two crucial characteristics of the activities of the SOC towards the building of the new Serbian identity – anticommunism and philetism. As already mentioned, the SOC was presenting itself as the

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<sup>7</sup> [www.ppsc.spc.yu](http://www.ppsc.spc.yu).

<sup>8</sup> *NIN*, No. 2513, “Država Božji dužnik”, Belgrade, 1999.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Ivan Čolović, “Bordel ratnika”, Biblioteka XX vek, Belgrade, 2000.

<sup>11</sup> Nebojša Popov, “Srpska dramedija”, *Republika*, No. 155-156, Belgrade, 1997.

greatest victim of communism, proclaiming the system of the second Yugoslavia, in a Manichean way, as the ultimate evil, which was primarily directed against the Serbian people. At the same time, it was suppressing its own opportunism vis-à-vis the Broz regime. It should be noted that during Broz's life the Serbian Patriarch German and most of the bishops were trying to avoid any misunderstanding or conflict with the authorities as much as possible.<sup>12</sup>

The way in which the SOC reacted to Broz's death is also interesting. The front page of *Pravoslavlje*, the journal of the Patriarchate of the SOC, carried the unsigned text in which it was stated that *the citizens were greatly upset to learn about the death of the man who was leading our homeland and our people through all storms and tempests for four decades and who will be remembered in history as an uncompromising fighter for brotherhood and unity. Although he was an atheist from the very beginning of his struggle, he created the state in which there had to be room for religion, believers and their desires and inspirations. During the past 40 years there were also misunderstandings between the Church and the state, but we hold that their source was not in the thoughts and deeds of this extraordinary man'. It was also emphasized that under the SFRY Constitution 'profession of religion is free' and that only the abuse of religion and religious activities for political ends is unconstitutional, so that the Church had no reason to disagree with this constitutional provision. At the end of this text it is stated that the Orthodox people of Yugoslavia parts from Josip Broz, expressing their gratitude to him for enabling them to live in freedom.*<sup>13</sup>

During the 1980s and 1990s, great popularity in Serbia was won by the thesis, which was also advanced by the extraecclesiastical circles, that communism in the former Yugoslavia had the most disastrous effect on the Serbian people and Serbian national interest, since atheism and anational ideology spread especially among the Serbs. Such a simplified perception provided a basis for the belief that - for redefining the national identity, primarily in the sense of its "purification" from the consequences of the communist ideology - a return to religion, tradition and, naturally, to the church, as the "natural" and most reliable guardian of those values, is of utmost importance.

In the fervour of retraditionalization, numerous modernization achievements in the development of the Yugoslav society after World War II, whose origins are not in the communist ideology, began also to be disputed. The entire process of retraditionalization was primarily in the service of Serbian nationalism and cannot be considered outside the context of the expansion of Serbian nationalism. The SOC is an active participant in that process, but is also some kind of "profiteer" - time will tell whether this will be over a short or long term - in the concurrence of circumstances which were created by other power holders, primarily the Serbian political and cultural elites.

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<sup>12</sup> Milorad Tomanić, "Srpska crkva u ratu", Medijska knjižara Krug, Belgrade, 2001.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

*“The values of the West European civilization - individualism, the rule of law and lawful state, are incompatible with the aims of Serbian nationalism. Relying on Russia, as the centre of Orthodoxy and the Slavic civilization, Serbian nationalism has always been committed to equality, conciliarity and the people’s state, which is the same as its society.”<sup>14</sup> For the Serbian nationalist elite, the epoch-making changes in the world have become a question of life or death. No technological advancement, modern ideologies and information can bring progress if mythical consciousness is maintained as the desirable state of the ‘national being’.”<sup>15</sup>*

It is possible to give many examples that illustrate very well the problem about which the historian Latinka Perović was speaking in the preceding quotation. *“There are former Serbs who say that the road is wrong, that the so-called mythical consciousness must finally give away before the so-called information consciousness, whose adoption, as they say, will take the Serbs into the real world, the Partnership for Peace, the World Bank, the NATO, the International Monetary Fund, the European Union and other conclaves of the post-modern West. They say that we will live ‘like all normal people’ only in that way. They regard Saint Vitus’ Day as the recidivism of mythomaniac bigotry, while the normal world is the one which bombed Belgrade seven times in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which spends more money on narcotics than on drugs, which is biologically dying out, while spiritually it is already dead.”<sup>16</sup>*

The “mixing” of cultures and the openness to the influences which were weakening the Serbian Orthodox identity is also criticized by the clerical circles. *“The consequences of the communist dictatorships for the Orthodox peoples are almost catastrophic. The national, Orthodox identity has almost been lost. The only guardian of self-consciousness was the Church. In the case of our people, we know that the isolated Church was unable to do what it was doing for centuries: to be the mainstream or artery of the being and, thus, the culture of its people. Thus, the matrices of other cultures and religions were entering that empty space.”<sup>17</sup>*

Such a view unambiguously advocates the autarchy of Serbian culture and identity. In addition, the laying of emphasis on the permanent ties between Orthodoxy and the Serbian national identity is just the argument used in the criticism of the SOC’s falling into the heresy of philetism,<sup>18</sup> as a form of church nationalism. In criticizing the philetism of the SOC in his book “Srpska crkva u

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<sup>14</sup> Latinka Perović, a word at the presentation of the book by Olivera Milosavljević “U tradiciji nacionalizma” (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia), Belgrade, 2001. [www.helsinki.org.yu](http://www.helsinki.org.yu).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Srdja Trifković, “Vidovdan kao delikt mišljenja”, the Saint Vitus’ Day address in the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Milton, Canada, 2002, quoted from the journal *Istočnik*, No. 54.

<sup>17</sup> Hieromonk Nikodim (Bogosavljević), “Pravoslavna kultura i Zapad”, [www.vidovdan.org](http://www.vidovdan.org).

<sup>18</sup> Giving precedence to the national idea over the unity of religion is called philetism (from the Greek word *phile – tribe*). This tendency was condemned as a heresy at the Orthodox Council in Constantinople in 1872.



ratu” (“The Serbian Church in War”), Milorad Tomanić says that “some of them commented that the sequence of the words in the name of the Serbian Orthodox Church reflects the sequence of the values prevailing in the SOC, i.e. Serbdom comes first, then Orthodoxy and, finally, if there is still some room, Christianity (as the faith shared with other, non-Orthodox churches).”

The intellectuals of Orthodox Christian provenance, who are close to the Church, also point to the danger of philetism. Vladeta Jerotić, for example, points out that until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Serbian Orthodox Church was “more often called the Orthodox Serbian Church” and concludes that it can and should “find its place not only in the future harmonious community of all Orthodox churches, but also in its mission of the ‘golden bridge’ between East and West as presumed by the spiritually enlightened minds of Serbia.”<sup>19</sup>

Jerotić also speaks about the need for “Christing”: “Due to insufficient work, or the absence of such work, with its people by the Orthodox clergy, which is mostly insufficiently educated, this people - especially in the Balkans, with the exception of Greece and Romania - is insufficiently church-minded, that is, it is tied to the church primarily through old, mostly pagan customs and rituals; in its conscious and subconscious life the people is much more preoccupied with the magic-animistic-traditional patterns of thought and life than is acquainted with the essence of Christianity. After all, the problem of Christing the eternally pagan soul of people is the problem of all three Christian churches, but is probably the greatest in the case of the Orthodox Church.”<sup>20</sup>

How to understand the remark that the people is “insufficiently church-minded” at the time of a mass return to religion and the church, the retraditionalization and desecularization of the society and in view of the fact that the SOC is the institution that enjoys the greatest public confidence?

“If we read our (Serbian) leading theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, whose thoughts have been integrated into our official theology, we will observe a few crucial things. First, in our Nikolaj Velimirović, the ethnic, national identity is a very important element in understanding the Church as a human society. Therefore, it is no wonder that our Church has always been engaged very much on a national plane, so that it often expressed much greater concern for political topics than for theological ones. Suffice it to look at ‘Pravoslavlje’ and ‘Glas Crkve’ (the Valjevo Diocese) in the 1990s and realize how much the Church was preoccupied with the state politics of the day and was involved in many situations.”<sup>21</sup>

How much is the SOC capable of performing the mission of the “golden bridge between East and West” and is it committed to that mission at all if it regards democracy as “the devil’s pumpkin of our times”, if it is afraid of Europe and “the matrices of other cultures and religions”? “The present-day cultures of

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<sup>19</sup> Vladeta Jerotić, “Vera i nacija”, Ars Libri, Belgrade, 1999.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Marko P. Djurić, “Od odgovorne do mirovne Crkve”, [http://bocs.hu/chp/osijek/marcodjuric\\_sr.htm](http://bocs.hu/chp/osijek/marcodjuric_sr.htm).

*Europe and America are the product of the centuries-long development of the spirituality of Western Christianity. It is a question of the process of secularization of the Church, which began with the distortion of the authentic theology and ended with the transformation of the Vatican into a state.*<sup>22</sup>

What is the response of the SOC to the challenge of globalization? This response is all the more important in the situation when the Serbian public is intellectually dormant and when the SOC and the circles close to it were among the first to recognize the challenge of globalization and the significance of a debate about that topic, as well as the scope being provided for the criticism of liberal capitalism and corporate globalization strategies. In the intellectual circles in Serbia it is also known very little about the concept of alterglobalism and the increasing power of that heterogeneous movement in the world has not yet been felt in Serbia to a greater extent. Naturally, whether retraditionalization, autarchy, desecularization, as well as clericalization will remain Serbia's only responses to the numerous challenges of our times or not should not depend only on the Church.

It is a fact that the promoters of retrograde ideologies are trying to increase international influences through the criticism of globalism. Daniel Goldhagen speaks about globalized antisemitism as a phenomenon which is present in many countries and subcultures, and available in many variations to anyone *who dislikes international influences, globalization or the United States.*<sup>23</sup> *“Rambo Jew has largely supplanted Shylock in the antisemitic imagination. The sly and stealth corrupting Jew of the first two eras of antisemitism, now armed with his new military and political power, has become the subjugating, brutalizing and killing Jew, either doing the dirty work himself, as in Israel, or employing others to do it for him...”*<sup>24</sup>

The SOC also did not avoid being suspected of its contribution to the expansion of antisemitism in Serbia, which gained momentum after the fall of the Slobodan Milošević regime. In this connection, the role of various rightist movements and organizations (Obraz, Justin Popović, Dveri srpske, Nomokanon...), which act in public with the blessing of the SOC and frequently in close cooperation with it, is especially disputable. However, the trends towards the glorification of the Orthodox theologian, Ohrid and Žiča Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović (1880-1956), which is directed both from the ecclesiastical and extraecclesiastical circles, is also disputable. The Holy Assembly of Bishops of the SOC canonized Nikolaj Velimirović on 19 May 2003.

In Bishop Nikolaj's biography, Bishop Artemije (Radosavljević) of Raška and Prizren<sup>25</sup> emphasizes that Nikolaj *“pushes away various foreign customs and superfluous Westernism from him and his people. He is entirely imbued with the warm currents of Orthodoxy; he is excited at and captivated with Christ's*

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<sup>22</sup> Z. Vidović, “Suočenje pravoslavlja sa Evropom”, [www.vidovdan.org](http://www.vidovdan.org).

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, “The Globalization of Antisemitism”, May 2003, [www.forward.com](http://www.forward.com).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> At the time of writing this biography, he was a protosyncellus.

*magnificent and salutary image and Saint Sava's church and people related activities.*"<sup>26</sup> The views of Nikolaj Velimirović on antisemitism, as well as on Adolf Hitler are controversial.

In his lecture on "The Nationalism of Saint Sava"<sup>27</sup> Nikolaj Velimirović says: *"One must still show respect for the present German leader who has realized, as a simple artisan and a man of the people, that nationalism without faith is an anomaly, a cold and insecure mechanism. And so, in the twentieth century, the idea of Saint Sava came to him and he, a layman, took on the most important work for his people befitting only a saint, a genius and a hero. And that work for us was done by Saint Sava, the first among the saints, the first among the geniuses and the first among the heroes in our history."*

If there was any answer from the clerical circles to the questions concerning such a view of Nikolaj Velimirović, his sympathy for Nazism was refuted by the statement that he himself was its victim. Nikolaj Velimirović was imprisoned in the Dahau concentration camp from September to December 1944. Without entering into the controversies about his status in the concentration camp, the fact is that he openly expressed his antisemitic views just in the book "Govori srpskom narodu kroz tamnički prozor" ("Addresses to the Serbian People Through the Prison Window"), which was written in Dahau.

*"Over the centuries those who had crucified the Messiah, Lord Jesus, Son of God, made from Europe the main battlefield against God and for the devil... All modern European slogans were drawn up by Jews who had crucified Christ: and democracy and pacifism, and a universal revolution, and capitalism and communism. All these are the inventions of Jews, that is, their father – the devil. And all this is done with intent to humiliate Christ, to annihilate Christ and to place their Jewish messiah on Christ's throne, without knowing to this day that he is Satan himself, who is their father and who bridled them with his bridle and whipped them with his whip ..."*<sup>28</sup>

### **The New Image, Old Messages**

Despite the fear of Westernism and Western culture, which has been crystallized as the essential element of the Church's attempt to design the new Serbian identity, there appeared some currents within the SOC which recognized the need for the "diversification" of the Church's image and planning of new approach strategies, adjusted to those target groups (especially to the urban population, young and younger middle generations) whose identity was formed under the strong influence of contemporary popular culture which, naturally, comes from the West. An example of such efforts is the project entitled "Songs Above East and West", a music album on

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<sup>26</sup> Artemije Radosavljević, "Život svetog vladike Nikolaja Velimirovića", "Novi zlatoust", Parish of Lelić and Čelije Monastery, 1991.

<sup>27</sup> The lecture was delivered in 1935, at the Kolarac Adult Education Centre in Belgrade, during the Week of Orthodoxy.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted from M. Tomanić, "Srpska crkva u ratu".

CD which was released in April 2001, as the joint edition of PGP RTS and Radio-Svetigora.<sup>29</sup>

The basic aim of this project was also to popularize the words and thoughts of Nikolaj Velimirović. The project gathered a great number of popular pop and rock musicians who composed and performed music to Velimirović's verses. This CD had a significant media coverage even before its release. It was presented as a "symbiosis of rock 'n' roll and Orthodoxy", "Orthodox rock 'n' roll", etc. According to the official information, the project was conceived and realized by Hieromonk Jovan (Ćulibrk), according to the idea of Eminence Metropolitan Amfilohije (Radović).

*"Just as Studenica took the language of the West of that time and transformed it into the note of Orthodoxy, Bishop Nikolaj took the popular songs of his time and transformed them into folk songs. Something similar happened to our project, which represents a long process of grafting Orthodoxy on to pop music. The basis is Bishop Nikolaj's verses which, like Njegoš's, have entered the colloquial language and the people are not even aware of that. Pop culture has emerged as a revolt against the Western world which has changed. However, these rebels turned from seemingly authentic ideologists into profiteers within a short time. The participants in our project are authentic rebels and not business people like Madonna or U2",* said Jovan Ćulibrk in one of his numerous interviews.<sup>30</sup>

On some other occasion, Ćulibrk, who is undoubtedly well acquainted with pop culture, said: *"I sincerely think that Serbian culture experienced some holocaust in the mid-1980, because all of a sudden there appeared something that is called irresponsibility because, can you imagine, after Bebi Dol's cooperation with Howard Devoto and Rip Rag & Panic and Vivian Goldman's participation in the Idoli album, our scene became completely a peasant one at the beginning of the 1990s. I am not a supporter of conspiracy theories, but I am afraid that it is the question of a very clear political programme which was destroying Serbian pop culture. Due to its absence, we were unable to tell the truth about what was going on here to the world in its language, at the beginning of this unfortunate war."*<sup>31</sup>

However, it is more likely that in the state of "historical confusion" Serbia did not understand what was happening to it when the Church began to curtail artistic freedoms and anathematize artists, spread fear of progress and democracy, bless weapons, threaten those who eat sausages at the time of fasting with hell... The modern world understands such a language, that is, such phenomena very well.

In the situation when there is almost no criticism of the SOC, its strategies and practice of spreading its influence from any social segment, and when the political parties, government institutions, media, universities, cultural public

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<sup>29</sup> *Radio-Svetigora* has been operating under the auspices of the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral since 1998.

<sup>30</sup> "Pravoslavni rokenrol", *NIN*, No. 2564, Belgrade, 2000.

<sup>31</sup> "Muzički projekat iznad Istoka i Zapada", *Magazin Reporter*, No. 95, Banjaluka, 2000.

and the like are practically competing in ingratiating themselves with the Church and are mostly hesitating to criticize any of its moves or the moves of its officials, it is difficult to expect that any force will emerge from the SOC which will plead for its “reform” or will, at least, have a different view of its role in society.