

**Bishop**  
**Nikolaj Velimirović**  
**Old Controversies in Historical**  
**and Theological Context**

*Edited by*  
Vladimir Cvetković  
and Dragan Bakić

BISHOP NIKOLAJ VELIMIROVIĆ:  
OLD CONTROVERSIES IN HISTORICAL  
AND THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT



# BISHOP NIKOLAJ VELIMIROVIĆ: OLD CONTROVERSIES IN HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

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# Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović as an “Enemy of the People”<sup>1</sup>

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## Some introductory remarks

Nikolaj Velimirović (1881–1956) was someone who remained a mystery and was incomprehensible to many of his contemporaries.<sup>2</sup> After his death, he was largely forgotten, and his legacy continued to be respected by a few admirers in Serbia and by a larger group in exile. Many of his works were published in Western Europe and the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. Since the mid-1980s, his presence has grown, and controversies have been escalating around him. Even though he has been the subject of countless biographies and essays, none has satisfactorily addressed his contradictory heritage.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This research was supported by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, No. 7731836 “The Multi-ethnic State and National Identities: The Serbian Experience in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century–SERBIE20.”

<sup>2</sup> Radmila Radić, *Život u vremenima: patrijarh Gavrilo (Dožić) 1881–1950*. Drugo prošireno i dopunjeno izdanje (Beograd: PBF, 2011), 171.

<sup>3</sup> In 23 volumes, the complete writings of Saint Nikolaj Velimirović have been published by the Valjevo publishing house *Glas Crkve*. Here we list some publications and books that deal with him, but we have not cited them directly in the paper: Veselin M. Vukićević, “Jedan lažan apostol,” *Nova Evropa* (November 11, 1921): 306–311; Veselin M. Vukićević, “Književna kronika. Nikolaj Bogomoljac – pesnik,” *Nova Evropa* (October 26, 1926): 226–229; Tomas Bremer, *Vera, kultura i politika* (Niš: Gradina/JUNIR, 1997); Chrysostomus R. Grill, *Serbischer Messianismus und Europa bei Bischof Velimirovic (1956)*. (St. Ottilien: EOS-Verl, 1998); Velibor Džomić, “Prilozi za biografiju Sv. Vladike Nikolaja u II svetskom ratu,” in *Sveti Vladika Nikolaj Ohridski i Žički*, ed. Atanasije Jevtić (Kraljevo: Sveti Manastir Žiča, 2003), 426–440; Jovan



Like most of his predecessors or contemporaries, Nikolaj Velimirović was not educated in Russia. In addition to studying at the Old Catholic Theological Faculty in Bern, he spent some time in London and Oxford.<sup>4</sup> In 1909, he returned from studying in Europe and took a monastic vow. Following that, he went to Russia in January 1910 to “orthodoxize” on the recommendation of Metropolitan Dimitrije. He returned to the Kingdom of Serbia in May 1911 and was appointed as a trainee teacher at the Theological Seminary of St. Sava.<sup>5</sup> In 1912, he was appointed court priest by royal decree due to his close relationship with King Peter I Karađorđević. The Belgrade press sometimes called him “Salon Monk Rasputin,” a mocking term that persisted even after the war.<sup>6</sup> Although he was criticized in the early years of his ministry, Velimirović was viewed as a progressive theologian, an Anglophile sympathetic to Protestantism, a liberal within the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), and someone who would lead the Church into a modern era.<sup>7</sup>

During World War I, Hieromonk Nikolaj was a spokesperson for Serb national interests in England and the United States, and he advo-

Radosavljević, *Život i stradanje Žiće i Studenice pred rat, pod okupacijom i posle rata (1938–1945)* (Novi Sad: Beseda, 2003); Jovan Byford, “From ‘Traitor’ to ‘Saint’: Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović in Serbian Public Memory,” *Analysis of Current Trends in Antisemitism*, no. 22 (2004): 1–41; Vladimir Dimitrijević, *Najveći Srbin posle Svetog Save* (Čačak: Legenda, 2006); Vladimir Dimitrijević, *Oklevetani svetac, Sveti vladika Nikolaj i srbofobija* (Gornji Milanovac: Lio, 2007); Klaus Buchenau, *Auf russischen Spuren: Orthodoxe Antiwestler in Serbien, 1850–1945* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011); Jovan M. Jovanović Pižon, *Dnevnik (1896–1920)* (Novi Sad: Prometej; Belgrade: RTS and Arhiv Jugoslavije, 2015); etc.

<sup>4</sup> Aleksa Ilić, *Moji doživljaji sa dr. Nikolajem Velimirovićem i dr. Vojom Janićem* (Beograd, 1938), 9–10; Bogdan Lubardić, “Nikolaj Velimirović 1903–1914,” in *Srbi 1903–1914. Istorija ideja*, ed. Miloš Ković (Beograd: Clio 2015), 328–357; Slobodan G. Markovich, “Activities of Father Nikolai Velimirovich in Great Britain during the Great War,” *Balkanica*, no. 48 (2017): 143–190, 148; Urs von Arx, “Bishop Nikolaj Velimirovic (1880–1956) and his studies in Bern within the context of the old Catholic–Serbian Orthodox relationship,” *Serbian Studies* 20, no. 2 (2006): 307.

<sup>5</sup> Klaus Buchenau, “Just as Real-life Brothers. Serb–Russian Contacts in the Ecclesiastical Academy of Kyiv (1850–1914) and Orthodox Schools of Interwar Yugoslavia (1920–1941),” *Tokovi istorije*, no. 3–4 (2005): 54–67; Markovich, “Activities,” 143–190.

<sup>6</sup> Radmila Radić, *Vojislav Janić (1890–1944) sveštenik i političar* (Beograd: INIS, 2018), 35.

<sup>7</sup> Radić, *Život u vremenima*, 169.

cated the idea of a South Slavic national and spiritual union. In his essay “Religion and nationality in Serbia,” published as both a pamphlet and in an edited volume, *The Soul of Serbia* (1916), Velimirović expresses strong pro-Yugoslav sentiments. He said Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes one nation due to their language, blood, destiny, aspirations, and desire to break free from the Habsburg yoke. However, in private, he held a deep aversion to Catholicism, which he saw as “the most conservative of the western denominations.”<sup>8</sup>

Due to his cooperation with the Anglican Church, Velimirović was nominated for an honorary Lambeth Doctorate of Divinity, but he did not receive it because he was not a British citizen or a priest of the Anglican Church.<sup>9</sup> Instead, a specially designed pectoral cross and chain were given to him by the Archbishop of Canterbury on St. George’s Day (23 April) 1919 as a symbol of brotherly love, commitment to ecumenical unity, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup>

According to some sources, after assuming the office of the Bishop of Žiča in 1919, Nikolaj Velimirović had a good chance of being elected patriarch of the unified SOC at the time.<sup>11</sup> Instead, he was transferred to the Ohrid diocese at the end of 1920. He traveled to Athens, Constantinople, the Holy Mountain, England, and America on several national and religious missions. Nikolaj also attended ecumenical church gatherings and pan-Orthodox consultative forums. However, the war and the Bolshevik Revolution influenced his perceptions and actions. In Ohrid, the bishop had a profound spiritual experience and transformation. Afterwards, he launched into a sharp critique of modern Eu-

<sup>8</sup> Nikolaj Velimirović, *The Soul of Serbia* (London: The Faith Press, 1916), 56; Dragoljub R. Živojinović, *Vatikan, Srbija i stvaranje jugoslovenske države 1914–1920* (Beograd: Nolit, 1980), 145–148; Radovan Bigović, *Od Svečoveka do Bogočoveka: Hrišćanska filozofija vladike Nikolaja Velimirovića* (Beograd: Društvo Raška škola, 1998), 25, 35; Milan D. Janković, *Episkop Nikolaj. Život, misao i delo*. Three vols. (Valjevo: Eparhija Šabačko-valjevska, 2002–2003), I/39.

<sup>9</sup> Markovich, “Activities,” 143–190; Muriel Heppell, *George Bell and Nikolaj Velimirovic. The Story of a Friendship* (Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 2001), 12–13.

<sup>10</sup> “The Anglican and Eastern Churches: A Historical Record, 1914–1921,” *Project Canterbury*, accessed January 4, 2022, [http://historical\\_record1921.html](http://historical_record1921.html); Lubardić, “Nikolaj”, 328–357.

<sup>11</sup> “Izbor srpskog patrijarha,” *Zastava*, 63 (March 30, 1919).

rope, which he said rejects God and worships idols.<sup>12</sup> After the early 1930s, he gradually lost interest in concerns about Yugoslav unification and the ecumenical movement, although he maintained contact with Anglican Church representatives and some ecumenical organizations. His attention focused on the God Worshipers Movement (hereinafter “Worshippers”), an evangelistic network of Orthodox Christians.<sup>13</sup> In the 1930s, Velimirović elevated *svetosavlje* to the status of a principle unifying state, nation, and church.<sup>14</sup> Once again, he became bishop of Žiča in 1936, and in 1936/7 he was a leading voice against the signing of the Concordat between Yugoslavia and the Vatican. Despite reconciliation between the state and church in the second half of 1937, he remained at odds. For about three years, he boycotted Holy Synod and SOC Assembly meetings and avoided communication and reconciliation with state officials.<sup>15</sup> He had complicated and often strained relationships with many of his contemporaries outside and inside the church. He was officially reconciled with Patriarch Gavriilo Dožić in 1940, but their relations remained complex. There was a conflict between Nikolaj and Dionisije Milivojević, the future American-Canadian bishop, over the leadership of the Worshipers. In 1933, Bishop Nikolaj was expelled from Mount Athos due to activities related to the introduction of communal or coenobitic monasticism (κοινόβιον) instead of self-regulated or idiorhythmic monasticism (ιδιορρυθμία), in the Hilandar Monastery, which the Ecumenical Patriarch did not recognize.<sup>16</sup> Bishop Platon Jovanović

<sup>12</sup> Bigović, *Od Svečoveka*, 39–40.

<sup>13</sup> Dragan Subotić, *Episkop Nikolaj i Pravoslavni bogomoljački pokret* (Beograd: Nova Iskra, 1996); Jovan Byford, *Denial and Repression of Antisemitism* (New York: Budapest: CEU Press, 2008), 19–76; Radmila Radić, Aleksandra Djurić Milovanović, “The God Worshiper Movement in Serbian Society in the Twentieth Century: Emergence, Development, and Structures,” in *Orthodox Christian Renewal Movements in Eastern Europe*, eds. Aleksandra Djurić Milovanović and Radmila Radić (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 137–172.

<sup>14</sup> Maria Falina, “Svetosavlje. A Case Study in the Nationalization of Religion.” *SZRKG* 101 (2007): 505–527.

<sup>15</sup> Miloš Mišović, *Srpska crkva i konkordatska kriza* (Belgrade: Sloboda, 1983); Radić, *Život u vremenima*, 277–315; Radmila Radić, *The Mission of the British Young Men’s Christian Association in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia* (Beograd: INIS, 2019), 254, 255, 263.

<sup>16</sup> Radić, *Život u vremenima*, 257–259.



Bishop Nikolaj delivers a sermon for the late Patriarch Varnava in the Cathedral in Belgrade, Source: *Vreme*, 27 July 1937, 1



Bishop Nikolaj, the exiled King Peter II Karadorđević and Bishop Dionisije (Milivojević) in London (Courtesy of The Royal Family of Serbia, Internet source: <https://royalfamily.org/hm-king-peter-ii-of-yugoslavia-gallery/>)

of Ohrid and Bitola, later Bishop of Banja Luka, sharply attacked Bishop Nikolaj in 1939, accusing him of heresy, sectarianism, a schism within the SOC, not being Orthodox, and hating Tsarist Russia.<sup>17</sup>

The SOC, including the patriarch Gavrilo Dožić and Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, backed the putsch that annulled the treaty between Yugoslavia and the Axis in March 1941. The putsch attracted considerable public support in Serbia. Nikolaj Velimirović is believed to have written, or at least inspired, the famous patriotic speech, which patriarch Gavrilo read on national radio.<sup>18</sup> Both patriarch Gavrilo and bishop Nikolaj were branded Anglophiles and interrogated for aiding the March 1941 coup by German occupiers. Like the patriarch, Bishop Nikolaj was interned during the war. After their transfer to Germany in September 1944, they spent two months at Dachau as “honorable prisoners” (Ehrenhaft).<sup>19</sup> As a result of a deal between Serbian collaborators and the German envoy in the Balkans, Hermann Neubacher, Velimirović, and Dožić were freed from prison in November 1944. They remained under surveillance until they were released on May 8, 1945, in Kitzbühel by soldiers from the US 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in Tyrol.<sup>20</sup> According to some sources, Gestapo agents demanded that the patriarch and the bishop write an epistle to the Serbian people asking them to fight against the communists. The patriarch was also offered to form a new Serbian government or a broad national committee based in Ljubljana to assist the Germans in defeating the partisans. However, neither of these proposals had any effect. Furthermore, the patriarch refused to preside over the Orthodox Council of refugees from Russia, Bulgaria, Poland, and other countries.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Radić, *Vojislav Janić*, 360.

<sup>18</sup> Atanasije Jevtić, “Kosovska misao i opredeljenje Episkopa Nikolaja,” *Glas crkve*, no. 3 (1988): 24; Artemije Radosavljević, “Životopis Svetog Vladike Nikolaja,” in *Sveti Vladika Nikolaj Ohridski i Žički*, ed. Atanasije Jevtić (Kraljevo: Sveti Manastir Žiča, 2003), 329–340; Byford, *Denial*, 19–76; Radić, *Život u vremenima*, 348–356.

<sup>19</sup> Rastko Lompar, “Zatočeništvo patrijarha Gavrila i episkopa Nikolaja Velimirovića u Dahauu 1944. godine,” *Studije istorije Ilarion*, no. 3 (2018): 9–29.

<sup>20</sup> Radić, *Život u vremenima*, 439–440.

<sup>21</sup> Radmila Radić, *Država i verske zajednice 1945–1970*, I–II (Beograd: INIS, 2002), I/91; Radić, *Život u vremenima*, 445, 449.

In mid–August 1945, Gavriilo Dožić left Kitzbühel, and Bishop Nikolaj had already left for Salzburg.<sup>22</sup> The two met again in London for the christening of Crown Prince Alexander of Yugoslavia, the son, and heir of King Peter II. Patriarch Gavriilo and Bishop Nikolaj were granted British visas under the condition that they refrain from political activities. The patriarch gave a sermon at the request of the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association and appealed to the British to provide help and protection to the people of Yugoslavia, where there was no freedom. He returned to Europe on a train in a special compartment in the following days.<sup>23</sup>

The ship “Queen Elizabeth” brought Bishop Nikolaj to the USA from Southampton, England, on January 9, 1946. The SOC Canadian–American Bishop Dionisije Milivojević signed his guarantee to enter the USA. Transit passenger records indicate he had a number 27 arriving from Dachau, Germany.<sup>24</sup> When Velimirović first came to America, he lived at the St. Sava Monastery in Libertyville. The monastery also housed bishops, Dionisije and Irinej Đorđević.<sup>25</sup> Bishop Dionisije asked the former ambassador of the Yugoslav Kingdom, Konstantin Fotić,<sup>26</sup> to arrange Nikolaj’s visa. Fotić was informed on May 7, 1946, that Nikolaj had no intention of returning to Yugoslavia.<sup>27</sup> As a monarchist loyal to the Karađorđević dynasty and an anti-communist, he probably believed that he would be more successful in fighting the new authorities if he remained abroad. At the end of 1951, Nikolaj moved from the monastery in Libertyville to the monastery of St. Tikhon.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Radić, *Država*, I/91.

<sup>23</sup> Radić, *Život u vremenima*, 477.

<sup>24</sup> Nemanja Andrijašević, “George Radin on Bishop Dr. Nikolaj Velimirovich and the Serbian Orthodox Church in America,” *Nicholai Studies* I, no. 2 (2021): 369–394, 379.

<sup>25</sup> From 1931 to 1952, Irinej Đorđević (1894–1952) served as bishop of the Dalmatia SOC Eparchy. In 1941, he was captured by the Italians and held until they capitulated. He left Italy in 1945 to become a parish priest in Steubenville, Ohio. He returned to England in 1949 and worked at the University of Cambridge until he died in 1952.

<sup>26</sup> Konstantin Fotić served as a Yugoslav envoy from 1935 to 1942 before becoming the first Yugoslav ambassador to the United States of America. He remained in the United States after retiring in 1944, closely involved with Serbian emigration circles.

<sup>27</sup> Stanimir Spasović. *Istorija Srpske pravoslavne crkve u Americi i Kanadi 1941–1991* (Beograd: Istočnik, 1997), 29–38.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

In June 1946, Columbia University in New York bestowed on Velimirović an honorary Doctorate of Theology. He wrote and published several books and essays while living in the United States.<sup>29</sup> He lectured at various Orthodox seminaries and institutions in the United States and provided material assistance to Serbian Orthodox monasteries in Yugoslavia.<sup>30</sup> On March 5, 1956, he died at St. Tikhon Monastery in South Canaan, Pennsylvania, and was buried on March 27 at St. Sava Monastery in Libertyville. He was returned to Serbia on May 12, 1991, and buried at his endowment, the monastery church of Lelić. The SOC included him in the list of recognized saints in 2003.<sup>31</sup>

### Enemy creation

Exclusive political systems have similar characteristics, such as power rationalization, enemy definition, and predetermined goals. The Bolsheviks and Lenin adhered to the Jacobin principle that a political community could only have two parties: the people and their enemies. Individuals and entire groups of political opponents were terrorized, sometimes just for expressing a view contrary to the dominant ideology. A monopoly of power and ideological cohesion were the primary objectives of inciting hatred toward the enemy.<sup>32</sup> In Yugoslavia (Serbia), communism was defined by statehood and the unique ideological interests of all the “working people” who lived there. Both internal and external opposition, whether political or class opponents, were seen as enemies of the state. Presumptions about ideologically defined groups like “bourgeoisie,” “citizens,” “intellectuals,” “kulaks,” “speculators,” and “remnants of pre-war political organizations,” among other ex-

<sup>29</sup> Between 1949 and 1953, Nikolaj Velimirović published: *The Faith of the Saints, The Universe as Signs and Symbols*, a book in Serbian called *Zemlja nedođija* [*The Nevercoming Land*], *The Life of Saint Sava, Žetve Gospodnje* [*The Harvests of the Lord*], *Kasijana* [*Cassiana*], and *Divan* [*Conversations*]. *Jedini čovekoljubac* [*Only Lover of Mankind*] was published posthumously in 1958.

<sup>30</sup> Heppell, *George Bell*, 87; Byford, *Denial*, 19–76; Sava Vuković, *Izabrani bogoslovsko–istorijski radovi* (Kragujevac: Kalenić, 2011).

<sup>31</sup> Arx, “Bishop Nikolaj”, 307.

<sup>32</sup> Kosta Čavoški, *O neprijatelju* (Beograd: Prosveta, 1989), 165, 173, 178, 183, 212, 225.

amples developed prejudices about “oneself” and “others.”<sup>33</sup> The phrase “enemies of the people” was defined by various laws, notably the May 1944 *People’s Courts Decree* and the 1945 *Law on Crimes Against the People and the State*.<sup>34</sup>

However, some sort of opposition is always present in any political order. The opposition takes many forms, from multiparty democracies to the timid defiance of loyalists to one-party systems.<sup>35</sup> Yugoslavs disagreed with the communist rule for many reasons (personal and political freedoms, communist economic policies, and the national question). Despite anti-communist sentiments in Serbia, the opposition was weak, uncoordinated, and mostly individual. Following the war, thousands of people perished in Serbia, including Nazi supporters and potential class rivals.<sup>36</sup> Some of the Communist Party’s opponents emigrated from Yugoslavia, forming a significant outside opposition force. Some of them, like bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, belonged to the SOC.

In official documents, as well as texts written about his activities after the Second World War and even after his death (1956), Nikolaj Velimirović was referred to as an “enemy of Yugoslavia” (1954; 1968);<sup>37</sup> a “servant of American imperialism”; an “enemy of all the achievements of the National Liberation Struggle”; a “mercenary of foreign capital”; an “instigator”; a “traitor”; a “cancer on the body of the SOC”; a “conspirator against the interests of his country,” etc.<sup>38</sup> He was accused of collecting reactionary migrants to advocate hatred toward

<sup>33</sup> Olivera Milosavljević, “Izbor ili nametanje tradicije,” *Republika*, 281, accessed January 4, 2022, [http://www.yurope.com/zines/republika/arhiva/2002/281/281\\_16.html](http://www.yurope.com/zines/republika/arhiva/2002/281/281_16.html).

<sup>34</sup> Momčilo Mitrović, “Narodni i državni neprijatelji u Srbiji posle Drugog svetskog rata,” in *Dijalog povjesničara–istoričara* 6 (Zagreb: F. Naumann Stiftung, 2001), 249–245.

<sup>35</sup> Leonard Schapiro, “Introduction,” *Government and Opposition* 1, no. 1 (1965): 1–6.

<sup>36</sup> Dejan N. Zec, “Communist Action, the Perception by the Serbian Urban Elite and Anti-Communist Resistance in Serbia,” in *Violent Resistance. From the Baltics to Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe 1944–1956*, eds. Michael Gehler and David Schriffl (Brill–Schöningh, 2020), 353–72.

<sup>37</sup> *Zapisnici sa sednica Komisije za verska pitanja NR/SR Srbije 1945–1978*, eds. Radmila Radić and Momčilo Mitrović (Belgrade: INIS, 2012), 864.

<sup>38</sup> *Zapisnici*, 919; Jovan Byford, *Potiskivanje i poricanje antisemitizma: Secanje na vladiku Nikolaja Velimirovića u savremenoj srpskoj pravoslavnoj kulturi* (Beograd: Helsinški odbor, 2005), 36–41.



Yugoslavia.<sup>39</sup> The Federation of Orthodox Priest Associations (hereinafter “Priest Association”) of the FPRY, an organization of Orthodox priests under government control, oversaw “fighting against the most reactionary bishops through the press, conferences, and assemblies”, especially against bishops living in exile. *Vesnik (Gazette)*, the magazine of this association, published regular articles about Velimirović.<sup>40</sup>

Bishop Nikolaj experienced criticism, particularly for emigrating to the USA and supporting imperialism, but also for his anti-communism,<sup>41</sup> support for Draža Mihailović’s movement,<sup>42</sup> and contacts with Dimitrije Ljotić and members of his movement Zbor [Rally],<sup>43</sup> and cooperation with Serbian political exiles in the diaspora. According to Jovan Byford, during the 1940s and 1950s, Velimirović had a reputation as a collaborator rather than a fascist. The broader ideological backdrop of postwar reconciliation and Cold War divisions was more suitable.

<sup>39</sup> “Šta je u Americi govorio i radio episkop Nikolaj?,” *Politika* (August 4, 1968).

<sup>40</sup> *Vesnik*, no. 1 (1949); no. 3 (1949); no. 4, and no. 5 (1949); no. 15 and no. 23 (1949); Radić, *Država*, I/321.

<sup>41</sup> In a series of his works during his stay in exile, he sharply attacked communist ideology and the regime in Yugoslavia. For example, the books *Zemlja Nedođija* and *Žetve Gospodnje*, articles such as “I’m talking about the conflict between the ideology of light and darkness” [Nikolaj Velimirović, *Sabrana dela*, XIII (Himelstir: Srpska pravoslavna eparhija zapadnoevropska, 1986), 563] and others.

<sup>42</sup> General Dragoljub Draža Mihailović, Yugoslav Army (Chetniks) leader, nationalist and royalist movement established after Germany invaded Yugoslavia in 1941. Between January 11, 1941, and August 1944, he was Minister of the Army, Navy, and Air Forces of the Yugoslav government-in-exile. He was convicted of high treason and war crimes after the war and executed on July 17, 1946. See more from Walter R. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies: 1941–1945* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: DUP, 1973); Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941–1945: The Chetniks* (Stanford: SUP, 1975); Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Hitler’s New Disorder: The Second World War in Yugoslavia* (New York: CUP, 2007); Kosta Nikolić, *Istorija ravnogorskog pokreta*, 1–3 (Beograd: Srpska reč, 1999).

<sup>43</sup> Dimitrije Ljotić (1891–1945) was a right-wing politician, the Minister of Justice of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, a lawyer, the leader of the movement Zbor, and a German collaborator during the occupation of Yugoslavia and Serbia in the Second World War. In Slovenia, Velimirović blessed the volunteers of Dimitrije Ljotić. Ljotić was killed in a car accident on April 23, and Bishop Nikolaj gave a speech at his funeral. For more, see: Rastko Lompar, *Dimitrije Ljotić–učitelj ili farisej. Zbor, hrišćanstvo i verske zajednice 1935–1945* (Beograd: Catena Mundi, 2021).

Patriarch Gavriilo, who returned to the country in 1946, was named a hero by the government and the SOC. However, the patriarch and Bishop Nikolaj both supported the putsch, and they spent most of the war together. Nevertheless, Velimirović’s opponents emphasized the differences between him and Dožić as much as possible, while ignoring the similarities.<sup>44</sup>

The FPRY’s Public Prosecutor’s Office submitted on April 10, 1947, to the Public Prosecutors of the Republics a list of banned books it deemed to falsify history, slander the USSR, preach darkness, fascism, religious and racial hatred, chauvinism, incite crime, etc. The inspection of all bookshops and the seizure of confiscated books took place during that month.<sup>45</sup> Nikolaj’s were among them. The FPRY Ministry of Internal Affairs revoked bishop Nikolaj Velimirović’s citizenship on September 27, 1951.<sup>46</sup> The SOC did not receive official notification of Bishop Nikolaj’s citizenship revocation until October 1954.<sup>47</sup>

Since the 1960s, Bishop Nikolaj has increasingly become a symbol not only of anti-communism but also of Serbian nationalism and fascism. Significant protests occurred in 1968 after Velimirović’s sermon appeared in the official SOC newspaper, *Pravoslavlje*. In 1969, the Federal Commission on Religious Affairs (FCRA) stated that he was a “well-known collaborator of the occupiers,” who wrote “nationalist and even racist articles.”<sup>48</sup> Moreover, *Politika* published additional articles on Velimirović that emphasized his praise of Hitler in the 1935 speech,<sup>49</sup> and affirmative references to Draža Mihailović in some of his

<sup>44</sup> Byford, *Poricanje*, 36–41; Byford, *Denial*, 19–113.

<sup>45</sup> Zdenko Radelić, *Hrvatska u Jugoslaviji 1945–1991: od zajedništva do razlaza* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2006), 156–157.

<sup>46</sup> The decision was based on the Law on Deprivation of Citizenship of Former Yugoslav Army Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers Who Will Not Return to Their Homeland, Members of Military Formations Who Served the Occupier and Fled Abroad, and Persons Who Fled After Liberation (article 1, paragraph 2). *Službeni list DFJ*, 64/45; *Službeni list FNRJ*, 86/46.

<sup>47</sup> Radić, *Država*, I/365.

<sup>48</sup> *Zapisnici*, 879.

<sup>49</sup> On Orthodox Sunday, March 4–17, 1935, Bishop Nikolaj gave a speech at the Kolarac University about St. Sava. He saw a follower of the Serbian saint in the actions of the “German Leader.” Nikolaj Velimirović, *Nacionalizam Svetog Save* (Belgrade: Pravoslavlje, 1935); Lompar, *Učitelj ili farisej*, 245–249.

post-war writings.<sup>50</sup> The press also criticized the SOC for attempting to publish Velimirović's book, *Religija Njegoševa* (*The Religion of Njegoš*), in 1969.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, Justin Popović, a dissident monk, preached occasionally during the sixties and seventies in praise of Velimirović. This provoked additional criticism against Popović and Velimirović. Bishop Nikolaj was even accused of waging a fratricidal crusade against his people to benefit foreign intelligence agencies.<sup>52</sup>

Because of the resurgence of the Worshipers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo's daily media attacked the SOC's rising clericalism as the legacy of "war criminal" Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović. During those years, Nikolaj was commonly referred to as a "war criminal," even though he was never charged.<sup>53</sup> After hearing Bishop Nikolaj's sermon at a Worship Movement session in Bijeljina, members of the movement went to jail for being nationalistic.<sup>54</sup> The newspaper *Pravoslavlje* tried to protect the Worshipers, but a few months later, another attack occurred.<sup>55</sup>

According to the journal *Bezbednost* (Security), published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia in 1982, "their attempts [a reference to the representatives of religious communities] to impose themselves as political partners on the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and other organized political forces, then attempt to rehabilitate some proven enemies of socialist Yugoslavia (RCC Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac, SOC bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, etc.),<sup>56</sup> and other sim-

<sup>50</sup> *Politika* (July 25, 1968), 6; (July 7, 1968), 7; Byford, *Denial*, 19–76.

<sup>51</sup> *Nedeljne novosti* (October 5, 1969): 6; Byford, *Poricanje*, 36–41; Byford, *Denial*, 19–76.

<sup>52</sup> Justin Popović, *Besede na parastosu Vladici Nikolaju Lelićkom* (Valjevo: Manastir Čelije, 1998); *Nedeljne novosti* (May 23, 1976), 4.

<sup>53</sup> *Oslobođenje* (July 5, 1981), 3; (July 7, 1981), 3; (September 18–21, 1981), 7; Predrag Ilić, „Političko–bezbednosni aspekti delovanja bogomoljačkog pokreta Srpske pravoslavne crkve,” *Bezbednost* 24, no. 5 (1982): 407–419, 417.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 407–419.

<sup>55</sup> Atanasije Jevtić, “Kome služi uravnilovka?” *Pravoslavlje* (August 1, 1981): 4; Ilić, „Političko–bezbednosni,” 417; Byford, *Denial*, 19–76.

<sup>56</sup> Ilić, „Političko–bezbednosni,” 407–419. Alojzije Stepinac, the Archbishop and head of the RCC in the so-called Independent State of Croatia, and Serbian Orthodox Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović were here openly connected, perhaps for the first time. The major difference between their fates during the Second World War was

ilar phenomena clearly show the counter-revolutionary nature of their plans and goals. They still want to turn the wheel of history and re-establish relations between the state and religious communities on some long-forgotten tracks.”<sup>57</sup> The author of this article, Predrag Ilić, attacks the revival of the God Worshipers Movement in the country. According to him, it is impossible to make a final judgment on the Worshiper Movement because detailed research is necessary. But despite the lack of research, he concludes that “probably the vast majority of worshipers were on the side of the counter-revolution,” although there were some opposite examples. He supports his claim by citing data on the behavior of several prominent members of the movement and those who served in Chetnik’s or Ljotić’s troops or opposed the regime after the war. He writes that the Worshiper Movement leadership “sided with domestic traitors and attempted to prevent the People’s Liberation Movement and socialist revolution.” Accusing Nikolaj Velimirović as one of the key leaders of the God Worshipers Movement, Ilić claimed that the Nazis wanted to use him because of his anti-communism and sympathies for National Socialism.<sup>58</sup> In one later text, the same author described Nikolaj Velimirović as “one of the most prominent representatives of Serbian Orthodox clericalism in the twentieth century.”<sup>59</sup>

The connections between Bishop Nikolaj and Dimitrije Ljotić, the right-wing Zbor movement, and his pro-Nazi beliefs,<sup>60</sup> have received

ignored, since the only thing that linked them was their resistance to the communist regime after the war. The communist regime sought to establish something of a balance between Stepinac’s and Velimirović’s conduct during the war in line with their balancing act between the Roman Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs. Later, in the 1990s, during, and after the breakup of Yugoslavia, this discourse developed further.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ilić, „Političko–bezbednosni,” 411–412, 414, 417; Predrag Ilić, “Pravoslavlje i klerikalizam: kritika teze o nepostojanju pravoslavnog klerikalizma,” *Bezbednost* 28, no. 6 (1986): 534–556. The same text was published in: *Religion and the Modern World* (Beograd: Centar za marksizam univerziteta, 1987), 103–111.

<sup>60</sup> Velimirović’s pro-Nazi views were supported by the fact that Nazi Germany awarded him a civilian medal in 1934 for his contribution to the restoration, in 1926, of a German cemetery from the Great War in Bitola, Macedonia. Velimirović received the award at a high-profile ceremony at the German Embassy in Belgrade, attended by representatives of the Yugoslav government and the patriarch. (Byford,

widespread attention since the mid-1980s. Nikolaj was accused of not publicly criticizing Ljotić, of supporting him during his 1940 imprisonment, and of speaking at his 1945 burial.<sup>61</sup> But 1985 marked a turning point for Nikolaj Velimirović. In that year, his most controversial work, *Reči srpskom narodu kroz tamnički prozor* [*Words to the Serbian People Through the Dungeon Window*], was published in West Germany, first independently and then in his collected works. According to the editor, Velimirović wrote the manuscript in the Dachau concentration camp between September 15, 1944, and May 8, 1945. Nikolaj abbreviated German terms to avoid detection by guards.<sup>62</sup> Then Velimirović came under attack in waves. Bishop Velimirović's anti-Semitism became central to the controversy over his legacy and credibility because the text had

*Denial*, 19–76) Nevertheless, his critics left out arguments that did not support this thesis. At the beginning of June 1936, at the consecration of the church iconostasis in the village of Grivec, Bishop Nikolaj stated: "Let your path in life be the path of the middle. Never go left or right. Never be an extreme leftist or rightist. The far left is communism, and the far right is fascism." In the late 1930s, he openly criticized the Third Reich and Hitler. While giving a lecture at the "Tanasko Rajić" falconry home on April 17, 1938, he sharply attacked Germany and Italy for arming and intending to kill millions of innocent people. (Milan Koljanin, *Jevreji i antisemitizam u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji 1918–1941* (Beograd: ISI, 2008), 341; Milan Koljanin, „Srpska pravoslavna crkva i jevrejsko pitanje”, *Istorija 20. veka*, no. 1 (2010): 23–40). On October 21, 1939, P. H. Sitters, National Advisory Secretary and Director of YMCA in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, wrote in one letter that the Bishop of Gibraltar, and he, believed that the Patriarch and the Bishops of Niš, Jovan, of Bačka Irinej, and Žiča, Nikolaj, were not Germanophiles, but very sympathetic to England. (Radić, *The Mission*, 266–267).

<sup>61</sup> Miloš Martić, "Dimitrije Ljotić and the Yugoslav National Movement, ZBOR, 1935–1945," *East European Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (1980): 219–239; Mladen Stefanović, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934–1945* (Beograd: Narodna Knjiga, 1984); Mihailo Konstantinović, *Politika sporazuma – dnevničke beleške 1939–1941: londonske beleške 1944–1945* (Novi Sad: Prometej, 1998), 299, 623–626; Predrag Ilić, "Srpska pravoslavna crkva i tajna Dahaua" – Mit i istina o zatočeništvu patrijarha Gavrila i episkopa Nikolaja Velimirovića u Dahauu (Beograd, 2006): 100; Byford, *Denial*, 19–113; Željko Z. Jelić, *Nepoznata pisma Svetog Nikolaja srpskog* (Beograd: Zavod za unapređivanje obrazovanja i vaspitanja, 2009), 103–105; Lompar, *Učitelj ili farisej*, 215–216, 308–320.

<sup>62</sup> Episkop Nikolaj, "Govori srpskom narodu kroz tamnički prozor (iz logora Dahau)," *Sabrana dela*, XIII (Himmelstir: Srpska pravoslavna eparhija za Zapadnu Evropu, 1986), 183–350.

allegedly emerged at the time when he had to be aware of the true nature of Nazism and its consequences.<sup>63</sup> He was described as a “virulent antisemite,” the “darkest individual in Serbian history,” a symbol of “classic fascist anti-communism and antisemitism<sup>64</sup> and even someone who “wholeheartedly supported the ideology of Jewish extermination.”<sup>65</sup> These remarks prompted a series of responses from Atanasije Jevtić in *Pravoslavlje* (September–November), beginning the “memory wars” over the Bishop’s reputation.<sup>66</sup> Several questions remain without answers quite apart from the text’s content.<sup>67</sup> Nikolaj remained in the camp from early October to early December 1944, not September 15 to May 8, 1945. Did the editor extend Nikolaj’s stay on purpose, or was he unaware of this? Was the book written during these two months or later? Why did he not publish it himself? Why did it appear so long after his death? There is only a single page of the original manuscript

<sup>63</sup> Byford, *Denial*, 19–113; Jovan Byford, Michael Billig, “The Emergence of Anti-semitic Conspiracy Theories in Yugoslavia During the War with Nato,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 34, no. 4 (2001): 51–63; Mirko Đorđević, “Povratak propovednika,” *Republika* 8, no. 143–44 (July, 1996): 1–10; etc.

<sup>64</sup> Nenad Ivanković, “Što se zbiva u SPC?” *Danas* (August 5, 1986): 24–25. A series of articles by journalist Pero Simić in *Večernje novosti* in September and October 1986; Byford, *From ‘Traitor’ to ‘Saint’*, 12.

<sup>65</sup> Laslo Sekelj, “Obračun kod Davidove zvezde,” *Borba* (August 24, 1991).

<sup>66</sup> Byford, *Poricanje*, 36–41.

<sup>67</sup> According to Milan Koljanin, for Bishop Nikolaj, the biblical tradition was the basis for interpreting history, and it is in that dogmatic framework that his attitude toward Jews should be understood. Nevertheless, one can observe an evolution in the criticism of the Jewish religion, from anti-Judaism to modern anti-Semitism, as part of the criticism of liberalism, materialism, and modernity. Because of his attitude towards Jews, Nikolaj had a controversy with the Supreme Rabbi Alkalaj in 1928. On July 16, 1936, he described three great evils that threatened the internal and external development of the country, the second of which was “Jewish Judaism, because Jews work cunningly and wisely like snakes to destroy faith in the true God.” However, in some other texts, written about the same time, he pointed out that it would be “ridiculous to accuse the Jews as the main culprits and causes of modern apostasy from God and Western neo-paganism.” In his Epistle for Christmas to the Orthodox people of the Diocese of Ziča in November 1939, the bishop called on the people to fast for one day for the Serbian Orthodox people “and for all people living in Yugoslavia,” including Jews. The *Židov*, the Jewish newspaper in Zagreb, pointed out this on December 22, 1939. Koljanin, *Jevreji*, 341.

published, which is unclear. There is no other evidence of the original manuscript. Authentication is impossible. Can we accept the editorial notes as accurate and deem the manuscript authentic? These and other comparable concerns are not new,<sup>68</sup> and theologian Srećko Petrović has already addressed some of them in his persuasive research.<sup>69</sup> There are still open questions, however.

### **Actions and responses**

The origins of the attacks on Nikolaj Velimirović are clear, but what were the real reasons behind them? Before consolidating power, the Yugoslav authorities were lenient with religious communities. Yugoslavia wanted to build an image as a progressive and tolerant state, and accusations of religious oppression would tarnish that reputation. Therefore, the authorities tolerated religion but gradually removed it from public life, keeping as much of it as possible under state control regarding churches as sources of instability. Religions divided Yugoslavia, and their dogmas stood at odds with the League of Communists' materialist theories. The SOC was regarded with suspicion because it was more than a religious institution. It was regarded as the sole defender and protector of the Serbian people, national values, and traditions.<sup>70</sup> In the general re-socialization of society, all symbols of the past had to be replaced with the new ones and separate identities associated with nationalism, the church, the monarchy, and the like had to be abolished.

Due to its traditional dependence on the state, the SOC could not oppose the new regime, unlike the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). Although the SOC frequently protested, public defiance was sporadic and local. In several cases, clergymen and bishops were harassed or

<sup>68</sup> Vladimir Cvetković, "The Freedom from Passions and the Freedom for All: St Nikolaj Velimirović on Democracy," *Nicholai Studies* I, no. 1 (2021): 53–80.

<sup>69</sup> Srećko Petrović, "Is Nicholai Velimirovich the author of the book *Words to the Serbian People Through the Dungeon Window?*" *Philotheos* 20, no. 2 (2020): 260–303.

<sup>70</sup> Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *The Improbable Survivor: Yugoslavia and its problems 1918–1988* (London: Hurst & Co., 1988), 96; Radić, *Država*, II/645.

intimidated.<sup>71</sup> When the constitution was enacted in 1946, the state and schools were separated from the church, and faith became a private matter. The economic foundations of the church were undermined in order to reduce its power, and the SOC’s dependence on state subsidies increased. State funding was contingent on the regime’s goodwill and measured through churches’ contributions to socialism. Furthermore, authorities established rival powers within the church, causing internal divisions. The first step in this direction was the formation of the state-sponsored Priest Association. The SOC was constantly under pressure to recognize this association of priests. Separating autonomous churches from the SOC was a further step in weakening its internal structure. Although the process was supposed to be much more extensive at first, it eventually came down to establishing an autonomous Macedonian Orthodox Church and requesting SOC recognition. Third, state authorities pressured the SOC to neutralize the actions of bishops in the diaspora.

The regime targeted enemies, but it also received inducements for doing so. Bishop Dionisije led a delegation of American Serbs to protest the allies’ recognition of the Tito–Šubašić agreement.<sup>72</sup> On May 5, 1945, Bishop Dionisije appealed to Stanoje Simić, Yugoslavia’s ambassador, for the recognition of SOC rights in the country. Following the victory in Europe, Bishop Dionisije spoke at St. John the Baptist Cathedral in San Francisco, calling the new Yugoslav regime totalitarian. In the same month, he wrote to President Truman requesting protection of Yugoslavia from “enemies, aggressive atheism, and international communism.”<sup>73</sup> The Diocesan Board stated on May 30, 1945, in a circular

<sup>71</sup> Dragoljub R. Živojinović, *Srpska pravoslavna crkva i nova vlast 1944–1950* (Beograd: Hrišćanska Misao, 1998).

<sup>72</sup> Radić, *Država*, I/363; Spasović, *Istorija*, 89. The Serb national organizations and the eparchy in the USA submitted a memorandum to President Roosevelt against the government of Tito–Šubašić in March 1945. Archives of Yugoslavia–AY, Embassy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the USA–Washington, 371–81–744.

<sup>73</sup> Spasović, *Istorija*, 88. In a letter dated September 13, 1944, Bishop Dionisije pleaded with Churchill and Roosevelt to give the Serbs in Yugoslavia help and the freedom of their own choice and not to discard General Draža Mihailovich. (AY, Sava N. Kosanović, 83–5–981). On October 24, 1944, he wrote to Sava Kosanović, a member of the Yugoslav government in exile in London, asking for protection for



letter delivered to the clergy and church communities of the Serbian Orthodox Diocese of the USA and Canada, that any future aid from the Yugoslav government would end and advised that Yugoslav representatives would not be allowed into church gatherings in the future. In June, Bishop Dionisije submitted a memorandum to the UN requesting aid for the SOC and the Serbian people.<sup>74</sup> In the following months, protests continued.<sup>75</sup> The Ministry of Interior affairs demanded that the Synod of the SOC hold the American–Canadian Bishop accountable and prevent him from committing acts against the new Yugoslavia. In response, the Synod said that bishops should follow the judgment of the higher ecclesiastical authority only in matters of faith and canonical discipline. In the absence of post-war order, “individual arbitrariness appears only in another form within our homeland, which may be encouraged by reflection at various assemblies and religious meetings.”<sup>76</sup> However, the Synod asked Bishop Dionisije not to engage in political debates and everyday political issues on November 25, 1945.<sup>77</sup>

Furthermore, on March 27, 1946, a few months after arriving in the USA, Bishop Nikolaj wrote to Winston Churchill, requesting that he intercede on behalf of Draža Mihailović (shortly after his arrest). Ten days earlier, on March 15, he wrote to former American President Hoover, who was planning a trip to Europe, begging him to visit Yugoslavia, where “food, freedom, justice, and security have become

the rights of the SOC against those who were taking over Yugoslavia. (AY, Sava N. Kosanović, 83–5–270). On January 17, 1945, priest Strahinja Maletić telegraphed Sava Kosanović, stating that the Diocesan Plenum, in collaboration with the Serb national organizations in America, had petitioned the highest authorities for intervention in Yugoslavia. As reported by Maletić, on December 14, the Bishop sent a letter to Serb parishes declaring the eparchy was against Tito’s regime. According to the same source, the Bishop also hired a lawyer to separate his eparchy from the Belgrade Patriarchate. AY, Sava N. Kosanović, 83–5–375.

<sup>74</sup> Radić, *Država*, I/362.

<sup>75</sup> Dionisije Milivojević, „U odbranu prava Srpske pravoslavne crkve”, *Američki Srbobran* (September 18, 1945): 1. The speeches of Bishop Dionisije, Konstantin Fotić, and others were held on 19 August, against the persecution of the SOC in Yugoslavia. „Detroitski četvrti Dražin dan bio je najuspeliji do sada”, *Američki Srbobran* (September 11, 1945).

<sup>76</sup> *Glasnik SPC* (October 1 / September 18, 1945), 2.

<sup>77</sup> Spasović, *Istorija*, 94–95.

luxuries.”<sup>78</sup> In his 1946 Christmas Epistle, Bishop Dionisije asked for the redemption of the Serbian Orthodox people from “madmen who wish to convert humanity into a menagerie.” In July 1946, Bishop Dionisije issued a proclamation calling on the clergy to perform mourning services for Draža Mihailović; following the incident with American planes near the Yugoslav border,<sup>79</sup> the Bishop wrote to President Truman requesting that the USA cut ties with Yugoslavia. He also called for an end to UNRRA’s support for Yugoslavia. Bishop Dionisije lost his Yugoslav citizenship in 1946 but earned American citizenship shortly after.<sup>80</sup>

In January 1945, Bishop Dionisije wrote to the priest Živojin Ristanović<sup>81</sup> in England regarding the removal of “red” priests from the church in the diaspora.<sup>82</sup> Vojislav Gaćinović, one of these priests, returned to Yugoslavia in 1946 and criticized Bishop Dionisije for his anti-canonical actions, urging the SOC Assembly to replace him.<sup>83</sup> On October 12, 1946, the Belgrade *Borba* published additional assaults on the American–Canadian bishop Dionisije and the SOC, which did nothing to remove the bishop seen as an enemy.<sup>84</sup> On November 12, 1946, the British Embassy in Belgrade transmitted a report to London

<sup>78</sup> Jelić, *Nepoznata pisma*, 10–13, 18–19.

<sup>79</sup> Two American planes were shot down over Slovenia in August 1946 by the Yugoslav air force for violating Yugoslav airspace during the Cold War. Lorainne M. Lees, *Keeping Tito Afloat: The United States, Yugoslavia, and the Cold War, 1945–1960* (Penn State University Press, 2010), 15–16.

<sup>80</sup> At the request of the Embassy of the FPRY in Washington, Strahinja Maletić wrote a memorandum in 1947 entitled “Political Work of Bishop Dionisije in America against the People of Yugoslavia between 1941 and 1946.” Maletić details how bishop Dionisije launched a “Branch of the pro-fascist policy of the émigré Greater Serbia reaction” from the Serbian diocese in America. Radić, *Država*, I/363.

<sup>81</sup> The Yugoslav government in exile wrote to Bishop Dionisije, requesting that he send a priest to take care of the religious needs of the Serbian community in London. Archpriest Živojin Ristanović arrived in London in 1942 and served there until March 1945. On October 31, 1945, Patriarch Gavrilo designated the priest Miloje Nikolić as a parish priest of London and, a little later, the bishop’s deputy and SOC representative to the Archbishop of Canterbury. Radić, *Država*, I/367.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Politika* (June 20, 1946), 5.

<sup>84</sup> Spasović, *Istorija*, 90–92.

concerning Metropolitan Josif's meeting with a member of the Embassy. The Metropolitan requested assistance from the British Embassy regarding the case of American-Canadian Bishop Dionisije, as FPRY authorities had requested his excommunication for anti-national acts.<sup>85</sup>

Yugoslav authorities accused Bishop Dionisije of organizing a congress of *Srpska narodna odbrana* (Serbian National Defense) in 1947.<sup>86</sup> In the same year, bishops Nikolaj, Irinej, and Dionisije were invited to join the SOC Assembly. Bishop Dionisije responded that he could not obtain the required travel passports at such a short notice. In Yugoslavia, the Foreign Ministry questioned whether visas should be issued. According to the Interior Ministry, invitations to the Synod should be sent to each bishop by the Foreign Ministry, but visas should not be issued.<sup>87</sup> In a conversation with members of the American Episcopal Church on August 3, 1947, Marshal Josip Broz Tito accused Bishop Dionisije of being hostile to communist Yugoslavia. He asked the Synod and the patriarch to resolve the issue. It was no coincidence that during that year, Bishop Dionisije received major financial aid from the American Episcopal Church for the Patriarchate in Belgrade.<sup>88</sup>

In May 1948, the SOC Assembly judged it necessary to again propose to the Synod that bishops and Assembly members overseas refrain from political engagement. The press continued to target bishops in the diaspora.<sup>89</sup> In the early half of 1948, Bishop Irinej Djordjević requested official authority over the diocese in England. Patriarch Gavriilo in-

<sup>85</sup> Radić, *Država*, I/241.

<sup>86</sup> Mihajlo Pupin founded the Serbian National Defense (SND) in 1914 in New York City. Following the Second World War, it provided material aid and brought thousands of displaced people to the USA in cooperation with the Serbian Orthodox Diocese and Serbian Fraternal Aid. The SND sponsored a Serb Congress in Chicago in 1947 when the Serbian National Committee was formed, led by Konstantin Fotić. At another conference in Akron, Ohio, in 1949, the Serbian National Council was founded, and Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović attended. Bosiljka Stevanović, "Serbian Americans: Major Immigration Waves," accessed January 23, 2022, <https://www.everyculture.com/multi/Pa-Sp/Serbian-Americans.html>.

<sup>87</sup> During each subsequent session of the Assembly, the Synod renewed the request for visas, but they were never approved. Radić, *Država*, I/363.

<sup>88</sup> Spasović, *Istorija*, 74.

<sup>89</sup> *Politika* (October 24, 1948); (March 5, 1949).

formed the British envoy in Yugoslavia that was not possible since the priest, Živojin Ristanović, was already appointed. The Patriarch further stated that the Bishop was a *persona non grata* in the eyes of the Yugoslav government and that he was under pressure to remove him. In March 1950, state representatives again criticized Bishops Nikolaj, Irinej, and Dionisije’s activities in a conversation with Patriarch Gavriilo.<sup>90</sup>

Patriarch Gavriilo died unexpectedly on May 7, 1950. On May 8, the FCRA President visited the Patriarchate to notify the episcopate that all bishops from the diaspora and a few local ones could not be considered when selecting a new patriarch.<sup>91</sup> The main page of *Vesnik* included an item headlined “What Should the Characteristics of the Future Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church Be?” At least five bishops with at least five years of service were named, with the condition that the future patriarch could not be chosen on seniority but must be capable of protecting SOC unity. The article concluded with excerpts from a wartime journal regarding certain bishops’ cooperation with the occupiers.<sup>92</sup>

On July 1, Bishop Vikentije Prodanov was elected patriarch by the SOC Assembly. Bishop Irinej sent a congratulatory message to the patriarch, while Bishop Nikolaj remained silent.<sup>93</sup> State authorities’ tactics changed after the election of the new patriarch, but their goal remained the same. Given the changed circumstances in the Patriarchate, the FCRA believed the Priest Association should engage the Patriarch more delicately. “As the association has so far been used to attack reactionary bishops, it will surely be necessary to exert pressure in the future and, in this way, help the patriarch,” said the FCRA. The FPRY and FCRA presidencies agreed that the Priest Association should be involved in

<sup>90</sup> Veljko Đurić Mišina, *German Đorić: Patrijarh u obezboženom vremenu* (Beograd: Manastir Svetog prvomučenika i arhiđakona Stevana, 2012), 595–645.

<sup>91</sup> The conversation focused on, among other things, the activities of Bishop Dionisije. Radić, *Država*, 1/315.

<sup>92</sup> *Vesnik*, no. 28 (June 7, 1950).

<sup>93</sup> Bishop Nikolaj refrained from commenting on the reports that the government selected the new patriarch, pointing out that in such a scenario, the patriarch would have to submit to their authority “as a state official.” “Razgovor sa episkopom Nikolajem,” *Sabrana dela*, XIII (Himelstir: Srpska pravoslavna eparhija zapadnoevropska, 1986), 143–144.

selecting and preparing priests to go to dioceses overseas and conduct a campaign against bishops in the diaspora. The Priest Association's journal, *Vesnik*, acted as a conduit for this "war" between the SOC and state authorities. A trio of Serbian bishops, including Nikolaj, found themselves at the top of a list of those considered traitors. He and other bishops were viewed as "clerical nationalists" and "socialist opponents."<sup>94</sup> This did not stop them from opposing the Yugoslav regime. Bishop Irinej accused priests in London who cooperated with the church in Yugoslavia of being pro-Communists, although they were under SOC jurisdiction.<sup>95</sup> In an article published in the *American Srbobran* and the *Glas kanadskih Srba (Voice of the Canadian Serbs)* in December 1950, Bishop Dionisije pleaded on behalf of jailed Metropolitan Josif and Vicar Bishop Varnava.<sup>96</sup>

Bishop Nikolaj was supposed to receive a medal from Archbishop Lang when he was in London in 1946, considering his merits from before the war. Patriarch Gavriilo's presence prevented the award. During Canon Herbert Waddams's (the secretary of the Church of England Council on Foreign Relations)<sup>97</sup> visit to Yugoslavia in May 1951, he brought up the issue with Patriarch Vikentije again. According to the Anglican Church, awarding the decoration would benefit the unification of SOC communities in England and the USA. Miloje Dilparić, President of the FCRA, advised Patriarch Vikentije to refuse the decoration.

<sup>94</sup> Radić, *Država*, I/263–338.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, I/364.

<sup>96</sup> In 1947, Vicar Bishop Varnava Nastić, the administrator of the Dabro-Bosnian Diocese in Sarajevo, was arrested and tried for crimes against the people and the state. The judge sentenced him to eleven years in prison with hard labor and three years of loss of civil rights. In the first public accusation and trial of a member of the SOC episcopate, the state warned those who continued to oppose state policy towards religious communities. (More in Radmila Radić, "Episkop Varnava Nastić – prilog za istoriju Srpske pravoslavne crkve," *Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis*, no. 1–2 (1996): 123–134). During the election of the new patriarch in 1950, Metropolitan Josif was removed from Belgrade, and several other bishops suffered abuse. The Metropolitan was interned at the monastery of Ljubostinja. His release came in November 1951. Radić, *Država*, I/318.

<sup>97</sup> Herbert Montague Waddams (1911–1972), Canon of Canterbury Cathedral. From 1945 until 1959, the Rev. Canon Waddams was the general secretary of the Church of England's Council on Foreign Relations.

## Diaspora splitting

As the 1940s ended, the question of the SOC's future in the diaspora began to be raised. Bishop Nikolaj proposed for the first time in 1948 that Bishop Varnava Nastić, an American citizen, was the right man to serve as Bishop Dionisije's vicar in the USA. In his letter to Patriarch Gavriilo, Bishop Dionisije officially publicized the idea, i.e., the 1948 SOC Assembly. He indicated that he required an assistant because of his many responsibilities and that bishops Nikolaj and Irinej were unwell and unable to help. The *American Srbobran* ran a text written by Nikolaj Velimirović on May 7, 1951, concerning the need to form a foreign episcopate in the USA and Canada. In a letter to the Assembly in 1951, Bishop Dionisije broached the issue of appointing a vicar once more. For fear of losing his position, he now opposed the idea. These actions frightened the Patriarch since he believed they intended to tarnish his dignity and destroy the unity of the church. Bishop Dionisije's letters to him raised further doubts about how elements of the emigration were conspiring to split the church. A curious fact is that Bishop Velimirović offered to resign in 1951, but his resignation was rejected. After the Patriarch reported to the Assembly on Dionisije's activities, he was almost condemned. To prevent further escalation and to support the "weaker" bishop, the Patriarch prevented a conviction.<sup>98</sup>

The memorandum from Bishop Nikolaj came to the Patriarchate after the Assembly's meetings. It recommended that as many bishoprics abroad be established as possible, along with a Great Church Court, a newspaper, and a printing house. Bishop Dionisije informed him later that the SOC had rejected his recommendations. Bishop Nikolaj then wrote confidentially, on August 27, 1951, to Bishop Dionisije about his idea of an independent Orthodox Church in America and Canada. Nikolaj reminded him that they had written to Patriarch Gavriilo about establishing an episcopal seat in Canada. Continuing, he stated that the Serbian Church in the USA needed more bishops, "for the sake of more intensive work and representation with as much power as the Holy Synod of Bishops from Belgrade has given them. The support of these bishops, even if modest, would not be impossible." In response to

<sup>98</sup> Radić, *Država*, I/365.

the news that Anglican and Episcopal Church representatives gave some advice to the SOC, Nikolaj stated that he was not aware of that fact and that the SOC should avoid foreign influence. He continued that “all Orthodox priests in America are watching the day-to-day tendencies of their youth towards an autonomous Orthodox Church. That autonomy may come in the next 20–30 years. We Serbs want to push it as far as possible in the future. But, anticipating this, all other Orthodox churches are slowly and wisely preparing for this transition, to be carried out with the blessing of their mother churches and not revoltingly (books, sermons, and chanting in English, for example).” He strongly denied the accusations from Yugoslavia that he was seeking power and a higher salary.<sup>99</sup> Bishop Dionisije rejected splitting the American-Canadian Diocese.<sup>100</sup>

The Patriarch accepted the state authorities’ idea of sending a delegation to Europe and America to gather information about church life in the diaspora.<sup>101</sup> The Synod of the SOC debated whether or not to dispatch a delegation in January 1951. When it was discovered that Bishops Nikolaj and Dionisije disagreed, it was believed that this was necessary. Upon receiving the report of the delegation, the Patriarchate should decide what steps to take next to reorganize the church in the Diaspora. The delegation (Father Hranislav Đorić, and Professors Dušan Glumac and Blagota Gardašević) were briefed about Bishop Dionisije’s work at the FCRA. They received a study on what to do and who to contact during their stay in America. The purpose of the planned trip was to strengthen connections between the SOC and its dioceses abroad damaged by the conflict and to secure material aid from the World Alliance

<sup>99</sup> Velimirović, *Sabrana dela*, XIII, 768–769; Nikolaj Velimirović, “Istočna pravoslavna crkva u Americi i njena budućnost,” *Sabrana dela*, XIII, 565–579.

<sup>100</sup> Spasović, *Istorija*, 34–35.

<sup>101</sup> On August 17, 1950, Ambassador to the USA Vlada Popović informed the Yugoslav authorities that emigrants of the Orthodox faith were interested in the new patriarch’s attitude toward SOC representatives in the USA. The patriarch’s representative should travel to America to gain a better understanding of the situation. Miloje Dilparić conveyed the idea to the patriarch, and they decided to include vicar bishop Hranislav Đorić and Professor Dušan Glumac in the delegation. The patriarch promised to summon members of the Synod to decide on the delegation’s departure with “eminent authority.” Radić, *Država*, I/366–7.

of Churches. Bishop Dionisije sent a memo to the American Department of State warning it about possible propaganda conducted by visitors in support of the communist state, which caused the postponement. After that, USA visas could not be obtained for the trip, but diplomatic activity and meetings between the Patriarch and the American ambassador to Belgrade, George Allen, resulted in permission being granted on March 6, 1951.<sup>102</sup> The government paid the expenses. On September 6, the Synod accepted Patriarch Vikentije's proposal to send a delegation, and they left on September 11, 1951. The church delegation met with bishops Dionisije, Nikolaj, and Irinej and members of the Serbian diaspora. Dionisije was initially sceptical about the delegation's arrival, believing their purpose was to gather evidence against him.<sup>103</sup> The delegation stayed until December 9, 1951, and by that time, Dionisije's attitude had changed. According to the FPRY Embassy in Washington, the visit was a big success.<sup>104</sup> Despite his previous criticism of the Patriarch for cooperating with the government, Dionisije started to praise him for his demonstrated leadership abilities.<sup>105</sup> After the delegation left, the split between him and Bishop Nikolaj was almost officially declared.

At the end of November 1951, the embassy in Washington reported that Konstantin Fotić, Bishop Nikolaj, and Bishop Irinej were trying to bring Bishop Varnava Nastić to the USA. In that case, four bishops

<sup>102</sup> Radić, *Država*, I/366; Spasović, *Istorija*, 39–46; Đurić, *German*, 595–645.

<sup>103</sup> In April 1951, an American Embassy official in Belgrade asked Hranislav Đorić, then a referent of the Synod and later a patriarch, if that institution could replace Bishop Dionisije. See Radić, *Država*, I/367; Đurić, *German*, 595–645.

<sup>104</sup> On January 15, 1952, Miloje Nikolić wrote to Patriarch Vikentije that the delegation had made a favorable impression in England. However, there were concerns that the SOC was taking over the authorities' desire to bring migrants back home. (Radić, *Država*, I/367) Tvrtko Jakovina mentions the visit, specifically Budimir Lončar's contacts with Bishop German, but gives the wrong year (1953) and claims they were supposed to meet with "Patriarch" Nikolaj Velimirović. [Tvrtko Jakovina, *Budimir Lončar. Od Preke do vrha svijeta* (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2021), 102]. On November 21, 1951, Nikolaj Velimirović wrote to a priest that he had met Bishop German and Dušan Glumac, and that they had made an impression on him. Velimirović, *Sabrana dela*, XIII, 665.

<sup>105</sup> Spasović, *Istorija*, 31–38; Đurić, *German*, 595–645.



could make legal decisions independently of the Patriarchate of Belgrade.<sup>106</sup> The FCRA opposed a foreign synod. The government did not want to lose control over that part of the SOC or Serbian emigration. The Yugoslav government believed that American diplomatic representatives and the Episcopal Church could more easily interfere if a synod was formed in America. In a letter to the SOC Assembly dated January 10, 1952, Bishop Dionisije renounced the request to send him a vicar bishop. After that, Dionisije's clash with some emigrant leaders was inevitable. At the end of 1951, Bishop Nikolaj moved to St. Tikhon's monastery.<sup>107</sup>

On January 24, 1952, the SOC decided that a trusted archbishop should be appointed metropolitan for Australia and Western Europe, overturning Bishop Nikolaj and Irinej's plans. Additionally, it was decided to support Bishop Dionisije and prevent Bishop Varnava Nastić from leaving for America.<sup>108</sup>

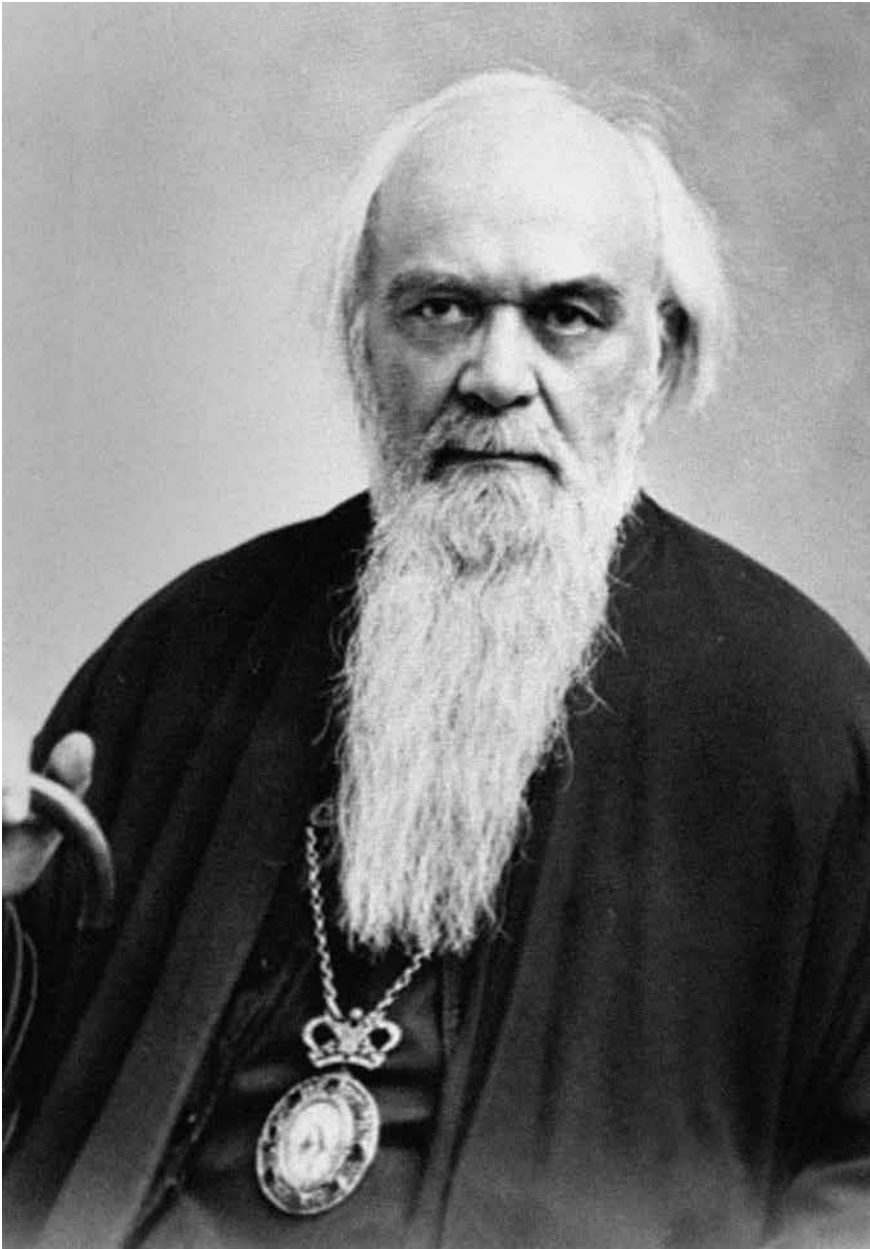
The SOC Synod ordered a commission in October 1951 to investigate which periodicals were attacking bishops and when. A circular against the Priest Association was issued on October 23, 1951. A month later, the Synod sent an act warning the bishops that the Priest Association had to explain its assaults on specific bishops. In December, Metropolitan Arsenije Bradvarević petitioned the Synod against the Priest Association. At the end of December 1951, the Priest Association met and sent threats to the SOC. Consequently, the authorities put increased pressure on the SOC.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>106</sup> The American Embassy in Belgrade and the Anglican Church intervened several times on behalf of Bishop Varnava. He was granted parole on June 26, 1951, at the request of the SOC Assembly. He had to resign from his episcopal office and join a monastery before being released from prison. The Patriarchal Board authorized his retirement on September 8, 1951. When an American senator visited Yugoslavia with regard to the Stepinac issue, President Broz informed him that Bishop Varnava Nastić had been released. This release corresponds with Yugoslavia's proposal to the Holy See that Stepinac should leave the country. The state authorities intended to compensate for the perception that Stepinac would be free. Radić, "Episkop Varnava Nastić", 123–134; Spasović, *Istorija*, 36, 47; Đurić, *German*, 595–645.

<sup>107</sup> Spasović, *Istorija*, 48, 121; Radić, *Država*, I/367.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Radić, *Država*, I/356.



Bishop Nikolaj in the monastery of St. Tikhon  
(Courtesy of the St Tikhon Monastery, South Canaan, Pennsylvania.  
Internet source: <https://sttikhonsmonastery.org/public/ss/gallery.php?ssid=124&s=1>)

At the beginning of 1952, Archpriest Miloje Nikolić warned Bishop German that decisions made by the future SOC Assembly would determine the church's fate abroad. Nikolić also claimed that the Yugoslavian Embassy in London did everything possible to create a schism within the SOC to break up the emigrants. On March 10, 1952, the Patriarch attended a meeting of the FCRA and promised to take over the diaspora at the next Assembly and help bishop Dionisije settle a dispute with Irinej and Nikolaj. At the Assembly in May 1952, the Patriarch had the authority to oversee the diaspora.<sup>110</sup> However, the Assembly of Bishops secretly removed the topic of recognizing the Priest Association from the agenda on June 2, 1952. The emigrants waged an aggressive campaign overseas against recognition of the Priest Association and even against the patriarch before the 1952 Assembly sessions. Bishop Nikolaj was particularly active in the emigrant press. In addition, Bishop Dionsije stated on numerous occasions that the issue of the Priests' Association and the church in Macedonia should not be resolved. In a letter to the Patriarch dated January 5, 1952, Bishop Nikolaj refused to recognize a priestly association because it was organized on state-political principles rather than those of a church organization. According to him, the Priests' Association was too "conscientious and loyal" to respect the state law on religious tolerance in Yugoslavia. Lastly, he told the Patriarch: "I will continue to fight against its destructiveness."<sup>111</sup>

Priest Association members launched a new campaign against the bishops after being denied recognition at the SOC Assembly session of 1952. They also proposed changing the church's constitution. The authorities ceased church funding and publication of *Glasnik*, the SOC's official journal. Controversial matters from the past of the church were published, depicting priests as swindlers and enemies of the people.<sup>112</sup>

The diaspora situation and the relationship between the SOC and the state became increasingly complicated in 1952. St. Sava's Temple was

<sup>110</sup> Đurić, *German*, 595–645. Patriarch Vikentije visited Bishop Varnava in April 1952. The latter informed him of efforts to bring him to the USA. The Patriarch said that those efforts were futile. Radić, *Država*, I/368.

<sup>111</sup> Radić, *Država*, I/329–330.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, I/333.

founded in London in 1952 after an abandoned church was donated by the Anglican Church. In June, Bishop Nikolaj consecrated the shrine during his visit to England.<sup>113</sup> He then attended the remembrance of Draža Mihailović held at the London Temple by the Yugoslav People's Committee on July 13.<sup>114</sup> Parallel to this, a group of priests purportedly inspired by Bishop Nikolaj signed a resolution. Its demands were very similar to those in Nikolaj's 1951 memo. Three bishops from the diaspora were the only recipients of the document. On August 16, 1952, Bishop Dionisije forwarded a copy to the Synod and the patriarch. Also, he recommended the establishment of a diocesan center in Great Britain and the election of a new deputy in London. The Patriarch sent this letter to the FCRA President on September 1, 1952, emphasizing the importance of the proposal.<sup>115</sup>

On October 6, 1952, Bishop Dionisije informed Patriarch Vikentije about the Seventh Church and People's Assembly in Libertyville. Bishop Dionisije was questioned about Nikolaj leaving the monastery in Libertyville. In response, he said that he tried his best to help Nikolaj, but disagreements over the church organization arose. On the same occasion, Bishop Nikolaj once more stressed the importance of dividing the American-Canadian Diocese. One autocephalous Orthodox Church for the whole of America, i.e., the USA, in the opinion of Bishop Nikolaj, was inevitable for the survival of Orthodoxy in that country in the future. That is why he thought that more Serbian bishops were needed (in the USA) who would be engaged in intensive missionary and pastoral work.<sup>116</sup> However, the meeting brought about no changes; the diocese

<sup>113</sup> *Spomenica hrama Sv. Save u Londonu* (London, 1953).

<sup>114</sup> The Yugoslav authorities were also informed about the Anglican Church's plans to establish a Serbian Orthodox Church diocese in England, led by Bishop Nikolaj. Radić, *Država*, I/368.

<sup>115</sup> Đurić, *German*, 595–645.

<sup>116</sup> In the episcopo-centric structure of the Orthodox Church, the Eucharistic and dogmatic aspects remain unchangeable, while other organizational structures that emerged through history are changeable. Since in the last two or three centuries, the principle of geographical ecclesial jurisdiction coincided with political and administrative organization of the state, it evolved the principle of strictly "national" organization of the Church. It was accepted by autocephalous churches that gained their autocephalous status in recent times, but it was rejected by the old pa-

remained in canonical unity with the SOC. But, according to Milutin Devrnja, the editor of the *American Srbobran*, this was the beginning of the future independence, autonomy, and eventually autocephaly of the American-Canadian Diocese. Dionisije steadfastly opposed it, explaining his position in letters to Patriarch Vikentije, the Synod, and many bishops.<sup>117</sup>

In late 1952, diplomatic relations were severed between Yugoslavia and the Vatican, and Marshal Tito was preparing a visit to Great Britain. When the Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, presided over the annual conference of the Assembly of Christians and Jews in London in December 1952, he issued a statement condemning religious persecution in Yugoslavia, stating that Tito should protect religious freedom.<sup>118</sup> *Borba* soon received a letter from Patriarch Vikentije in

triarchates. It is not acceptable for the the old patriarchate that every Orthodox Church, as autocephalous (that is, with “national” origins), claims “universal jurisdiction” over its believers throughout the world on the basis of their “national affiliation”. However, they accepted only for the purpose of mission and only temporarily that Orthodox Diaspora (especially America) might be a missionary area. The Orthodox churches thus accepted the existence of several ecclessial jurisdictions on the same territory, being at the same time aware that this situation cannot last forever. Orthodoxy does not have “national faith,” nor “national Church,” and by becoming “national” the Church would renounce its universal mission and its identity. The Diaspora contributed to the replacement of the ancient Eucharistic-episcopal ecclesiology with a new “national-autocephalous” ecclesiology. Therefore, some Orthodox theologians argued for the need to return to traditional ecclesiology so that the Diaspora be organized locally, on the principle: “One Bishop in one city”. Atanasije Jevtić, “Savremeni eklisiološki podsetnik (O američkom raskolu: Uvod–O dijaspori),” in *Zagrljaj svetova: eseji o čoveku i crkvi*, ed. Atanasije Jevtić (Srbinje: Pravoslavna duhovna akademija Svetog Vasilija Ostroškog, 1996), 153–168.

<sup>117</sup> Spasović, *Istorija*, 121; Đurić, *German*, 595–645.

<sup>118</sup> “Tito should protect the freedom of churches, says Dr. Fisher,” *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* (December 11, 1952); *Bradford Observer* (December 17, 1952). British and French Catholic papers expressed displeasure at the British authorities’ courtship of Marshal Tito and their decision to invite the “red leader” and the “Yugoslav dictator” officially to London. Aside from the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Geoffrey Fisher, other public protesters included Cardinal Bernard Griffin, Archbishop of Westminster, and others. Protests in Parliament have revealed the growing disgust of many British Christians over Marshal Tito’s visit to Britain during the Churchill administration. HCWC News Service (Foreign), “Brit-

which he denied this statement. He also sharply criticized the behavior of the RCC in an interview published in *Politika*. The Patriarch said that the relationship between the SOC and the state was improving gradually and continuously.<sup>119</sup> The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the FPRY praised the attitude of the SOC in a December 18, 1952, speech announcing the severance of relations with the Vatican. In late 1952, Bishop Nikolaj wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury to prevent Tito from visiting Great Britain. The visit did, however, proceed as planned in March 1953, and a photograph was published in which Tito cordially shook hands with the Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>120</sup>

However, this did not stop bishops from the diaspora and emigrant leaders from criticizing the regime and the SOC leadership. In March 1953, Bishop Dionisije published an article that attacked the new *Law on Religious Communities* in Yugoslavia in the *American Srbobran*. Bishop Nikolaj wrote to the Patriarch on April 19, 1953, that despite his authority over the diaspora, the SOC leader was unable to meet their needs for the time being.<sup>121</sup> After Canon Waddams arrived again in Belgrade just before the Assembly of Bishops in 1953, the Patriarch and Synod received a letter from Professor Slobodan Jovanović (Prime Minister of the Royal Yugoslav government-in-exile in London between Janu-

ish Catholic Papers Critical of Government’s Invitation to Tito,” (October 13, 1952), *Catholic Research Resources Alliance*, accessed January 28, 2022, <https://thecatholicnewsarchive.org/>; “Cardinal Sees Tito’s Visit Chance to Aid Victims,” *The St. Louis Register*, vol. 12, no. 51 (December 19, 1952), *Catholic Research Resources Alliance*, accessed January 28, 2022, <https://thecatholicnewsarchive.org/>; “Words to Yugoslavia,” *The Living Church*, vol. 126 (January–June, 1953): 3, 10; Catholic News Service–Newsfeeds (February 2, 1953), “Demands British Government Dissociate Self from Tito Persecution Before Visit,” *Catholic Research Resources Alliance*, accessed January 28, 2022, <https://thecatholicnewsarchive.org/>.

<sup>119</sup> Bishop Varnava Nastić told a British Embassy official that most bishops were disappointed that the Patriarch gave a completely incorrect response to the statement of the Archbishop of the Anglican Church. As Bishop German told a representative from the British Embassy, Marshal Tito sent a car to pick up the Patriarch and explained to him personally that he needed to issue a statement. Radić, *Država*, I/368.

<sup>120</sup> “Politics – President Marshal Tito – London,” Image ID: G8oK95, accessed January 28, 2022, <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-politics-president-marshal-tito-london-108194609.html>

<sup>121</sup> Đurić, *German*, 595–645.

ary 1942 and June 1943).<sup>122</sup> According to him, the Patriarch's actions and statements indicated that the SOC had reached an agreement with the regime. It would be "in the interest of the Christian community" for relations between the SOC and RCC not to deteriorate, he added.<sup>123</sup>

Metropolitan Arsenije Bradvarević, Chair of the Assembly's Legislative Committee, drafted a report to the Assembly of Bishops in 1953, accusing the Priest Association's members of launching a new campaign against the bishops (after being denied recognition at the SOC Assembly session of 1952).<sup>124</sup> Despite heavy pressure from the authorities, the Priest Association was again unrecognized by the Assembly in 1953. The state attributed the rejection to external influences on the bishops. The conflict ended in a break in communication between the SOC leadership and the state authorities. Consequently, bishops could not perform their regular duties. Canonical visits to dioceses could not occur, and subsidies were unpaid. In some parts of Yugoslavia, protest rallies against Orthodox bishops began at the end of August. Two bishops suffered physical attacks, resulting in their expulsion from dioceses. A new president of the FCRA met with the members of the SOC Synod on September 1, 1953, and conditioned subsidies and better relations on the recognition of the Priest Association. The lack of progress led to the arrest of four priests from the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral. The head of this diocese, Metropolitan Arsenije was sentenced to jail shortly afterwards.<sup>125</sup>

Bishops Nikolaj and Dionisije participated in the World Council of Churches meeting in September 1954, despite the SOC Synod's wishes.<sup>126</sup> Bishop Nikolaj delivered a sermon, and Bishop Dionisije wrote an

<sup>122</sup> Canon Waddams stayed in Yugoslavia between April 20 and April 26, 1953, as a guest of the Patriarchy. Although he brought a letter from Slobodan Jovanović, he later apologized for not knowing its contents. But, the Foreign Affairs Council of the Anglican Church and the British Embassy in Belgrade were aware of what was going on. Radić, *Država*, I/368.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, I/331–332.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, I/382–385.

<sup>125</sup> Radmila Radić, "Suđenje mitropolitu Arseniju Bradvareviću 1954. godine," *Tokovi istorije*, no. 1–2 (1994): 189–203.

<sup>126</sup> Bishop Nikolaj wrote of the meeting in Evanston that no Orthodox church had sent representatives beyond the Iron Curtain. According to a statement issued

extensive memorandum entitled, "Persecution of the Serbian Orthodox Church under Tito's regime."<sup>127</sup> This document was made available to all Canadian newspapers and delivered to Canada's Foreign Minister and Prime Minister. *The Windsor Daily Star* reported that Bishop Nikolaj was participating in the congress in Evanston and working on a resolution opposing religious persecution in Yugoslavia. The FCRA petitioned the Synod on September 24, 1954, urging it to act against the hostile actions of Bishops Dionisije and Nikolaj. Patriarch Vikentije assured the Secretary of the FCRA that Dionisije had done everything at his own risk. The SOC responded to the government protest against the participation of the bishops in the Evanston congress and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First Serbian Uprising in Chicago (June 27, 1954) on October 12, 1954. The Synod reminded the state authorities that in 1948 it had conveyed to Bishops Nikolaj, Irinej, and Dionisije a decision on the need to refrain from political activities and interference in politics in general.<sup>128</sup> The Synod, however, once again asked Bishop Dionisije to keep his activities within church boundaries. Dionisije responded that he was opposed to the establishment of a separate Macedonian Orthodox Church. Additionally, he opposed the autonomy of parts of the SOC in Croatia and Montenegro, the activities of the Priest Association, and the persecution of certain bishops. Towards the end of his letter, he stated that he would continue to stand against anything detrimental to the SOC.<sup>129</sup>

At the beginning of 1955, Bishop Dionisije changed his mind again. On January 21, 1955, he wrote to Patriarch Vikentije about bringing

by the SOC, the Patriarchate was unable to send representatives owing to the circumstances (arrest of Metropolitan Arsenije). Bishop Dionisije and Nikolaj went to thank the World Alliance of Churches for what they had done for the SOC, including material help at home and help to displaced persons through Church World Service. Several clerics joined Nikolaj in Evanston. In the Orthodox Delegates' Declaration, given just before the convention ended, communism received harsh criticism. Nikolaj Velimirović, "Dogadaž u Evanstonu," *Sabrana dela*, XIII, 42–46.

<sup>127</sup> Đurić, *German*, 595–645.

<sup>128</sup> *Zapisnici*, 138–139; Dimšo Perić, "Istupi otvorenog neprijateljstva protiv FNRJ," *Hrišćanska misao*, no. 7–8 (1994): 31–35; Radmila Radić, "Političke akcije episkopa u dijaspori i Srpska pravoslavna crkva," *Hrišćanska misao*, no. 9–12 (1998): 50.

<sup>129</sup> Đurić, *German*, 595–645.



Vicar Bishop Varnava to America. According to him, a delegation had already visited Washington to meet with the American Department of State. Bishop Varnava was expected to arrive soon. Once again, Bishop Nikolaj's plans to appoint the third bishop and thereby separate the diocese from the Patriarchate were started.<sup>130</sup> However, Bishop Varnava Nastić did not travel to the United States, Bishop Nikolaj died in 1956, and Bishop Dionisije continued to follow in Velimirović's footsteps.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

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