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ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF SPIRITUAL-RELIGIOUS CORRELATION – IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GENERAL REVIEW OF THE SERBIAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS IN THE CURRENT SOCIAL MOMENT AND THE PAST

Abstract: The importance of the spiritual-religious correlation can be discussed, especially illustratively and argumentatively, on the example of the Serbian-Russian relations, which have exceptional semantic depth and historical foundation. Among other things, the similar representations of New Israel with the Serbs and Holy Russia and Third Rome with the Russians point to related patterns that essentially influenced the formation of Serbian and Russian collective consciousness. Likewise, the pronounced and firm Russophilia among the Serbs is a specific phenomenon that relates to the above-mentioned conceptual patterns. In this Article – in a form of a concise and illustrative review, a special emphasis is placed on the current Serbian-Russian relations, as well as the importance of their cooperation and mutual understanding

Key words: spiritual-religious connection, Serbian-Russian relations, New Israel, Holy Russia and Third Rome, the necessity of cooperation and understanding.

Introductory digression review. In this Article¹, special attention is paid to the importance of spiritual-religious connection and relations based on Orthodox-Christian religious and civilizational foundations. They rely on Slavic linguistic, ethno-cultural and genetic connections. The emphasis was placed on the understanding of the role of Orthodox-Slavic reciprocity and civilization in the past and today, whereby particularly distinguished are the concepts of New Israel (in the case of the Serbs), that is closely related to the Third Rome and the Holy Russia (in the case of the Russians)².

¹ The Article is the result of work on the project of the Institute of Ethnography SA-SA no. 177028: “*Стратегије идентитета: савремена култура и религиозност*” (“Strategy of Identity: Contemporary Culture and Religiosity”), funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

² В. Благојевић 1994; Bogdanović 1984; Тодоровић 2010; Тодоровић 2015а. Compare and a comparison of “Serbian Messianism” with the Russian in: Марковић 1998b: 27–30. On the other hand, about the different interpretations of the term Holy Russia, see: Лепахин 2002; on the relation between the terms of the Holy Russia and

In regard with the above, we also look at the basic matrix of contemporary mutual expectations and relations, with an emphasis on the Serbian observer perspective. Although at first glance this may seem far from our topic – for the reasons of their distinctness, paradigmatic and illustrative nature – we shall start by recalling the circumstances and character of the crimes against Serbs in the so-called Independent State of Croatia, which are among the most monstrous in the world and are so horrible that it's hard to read about them – with numerous testimonies of the mass slaughter of Serbian children, rapes and planned extermination of a whole nation (see: e.g. Зиројевић 2017; Крестић 2009; Страњаковић 1991). These crimes took place with the direct participation of Germany and the Vatican, but also with the support of other countries and nations, as well as entire civilizations. As most educated people should know, although multiple genocides over Serbs are continuously glossed, there are a large number of documents that testify and report on various episodes of Croatian, but also other genocides committed against Serbs (compare: *Страдање и геноцид* in Срби 2008; Зиројевић 2017: first see page 128–129), which is a phenomenon that takes place alongside the global spread of anti-serbism.

An uninformed reader might be able to conclude: “Anyway, it's gone!” However, it did not come to pass. The descendants of surviving Serbs, relatively recently, formed the Republic of Serbian Krajina (*Republika Srpska Krajina*) in the 1990s, in the territory they inhabited for centuries, but with the direct help and leadership of NATO, the Croats managed to completely ethnically cleanse this area, i.e. to expel and / or kill the Serbian population (see Република Српска Крајина 2008: 948; Срби у Хрватској 2015: first see page 398–444), whereby the Croatian occupation was “supported by the international community, including the ethnic cleansing of the Serbian people” (Дакић 2015: 444). Also, lately it could be clearly heard from Croatia, even that Russia during the 1990s directly supported and helped the Croats in their war against the Serbs³. Something similar is even written in Serbian encyclopedias, i.e. in recent historical syntheses⁴. In the meantime, the territory of Kosovo and Metohija was also occupied, and crimes against Serbs are practically continuously enforced, with the continued application of ethnic engineering (i.e. artificial *unserbing*) in different parts of

Third Rome, see on page 163–165. According to Lepahin, “one can assume (...) that the idea of the Third Rome, at the very beginning for its core, had the idea of Holy Russia, as an older, more common, widely known in all layers of people” (Лепахин 2002: 164). According to him, during the history there were open conflicts “between the Holy Russia as the new Jerusalem and the Third Rome” (Лепахин 2002: 165).

³ See e.g. <http://mondo.rs/a960430/Info/Ex-Yu/Rusi-su-za-vreme-rata-u-Hrvatskoj-naoruzavali-Hrvate-protiv-Srba.html>; <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/svet/hrvatima-od-rusa-90-tih-stizale-tone-oruzja-a-sta-je-dobila-srbija/d6pfy5g>.

⁴ According to one of these syntheses, “Russian Federation led by B. Yeltsin became one of the levers of Western pressure on Serbia during the 1990s” (Руско-српски односи 2008: 970). Compare e.g. Бјелановић 2015.

the Serbian ethnic-ethnogenetic area⁵. Above all – as can be concluded on the basis of titles and texts in numerous media – the Serbian people await daily, while the country is emptied of people, that Albanians, Croats and Islamists, jointly with NATO and other countries in the region, finally resolve “the Serbian problem”. The Serbian public once upon again, as in the 1990s, as in all of these past years, asks one key question: “Will Russia again allow the Serbs to perish massively?”, what would this time – in line with the circumstances – really signify the definitive end of “the Serbian problem”.

About the primary importance of the Serbian-Russian relations (from the Serbian perspective). Pursuant to the foregoing, it should be emphasized clearly and without any equivocation that today the Serbian lands, their survival and prosperity depend primarily on Russia, and that the cultural-civilization and historical relations between the Serbian countries and Russia, regardless of what happened at the end of the 20th century, are still unique worldwide. In other words, from a Serbian point of view, the consideration of Serbian-Russian relations in the past and today⁶ is of special and priceless significance, since the geopolitical position, as well as the civilizational affiliation of the Serbs, are of such a nature that their existence depends primarily on Russia and its support; so it was in the past⁷, and – bearing in mind the different historical experiences and the current general international context – that is, perhaps more than ever before, even today. These unique Serbian-Russian relations are distinguished by their mutual foundation on the identical religious and ethno-genetic forms, which are expressed through very widespread and strong Russophilia among the Serbs (see, for example, Терзич 2010). Moreover, one can freely say that the Serbs are probably the most pro-Russian (*Russophilia*) nation in the world, as could be confirmed by appropriate public opinion polls. Traditions, beliefs, mythical perceptions of the past, as well as the eschatological and consecrated projections of the future, are often similar or permeated to both nations. Also, the conceptual and structural connection between Russophobia and

⁵ See e.g. characteristic examples in: Ђурковић 2013: 115–152; Трифуноски 1995; Терзић 2012. Compare the popularly written text on essentially very similar parallels with the Russians: Ишћенко 2017.

⁶ See: for example, articles in the scientific anthology Россия и Сербия 2010 (first see especially interesting articles Гуськова 2010; Живанов 2010; Терзич 2010; Лещиловская 2010; Гаврилович 2010; Попович 2010); Српско-руски односи 2011 (first see Nikiforov 2011; Živanov 2011); Руска дијаспора 2007; see mandatory: the latest corpus regarding Serbian-Russian relations: Вместе сквозь века 2017. Also see for example Бјелановић 2015; Јовановић 2012. In the articles from mentioned corpuses and studies we are referred to – by leading experts, mostly historians – to extensive literature on Serbian-Russian relations in the past and in recent times.

⁷ Among other things, the fact has been emphasized in the public was that everything that Serbia during the First World War “did with itself and future Yugoslavia – would certainly look significantly different that the revolutions of 1917 did not separate Russia from its great history”.

anti-serbism in the past and today is obvious, and can be shown on a large number of examples⁸. It should be noted that other nations, even civilizations, in a qualitatively / essentially identical or very similar way approach to Serbian and Russian ethnos, as well as to their countries (sometimes having the similar type of hostility, originating from the same source; compare ЖИВАНОВ 2011: 373–374).⁹

It is of particular importance to emphasize that the formulation primarily depends on Russian-Serbian relations – the formulation of Orthodox-Slavic civilization (as former, as well as contemporary), or its historical mission, in the center of which is – most explicitly stated – primarily the idea of the Theandros (God-Man) and the mission of the global expansion of the Christian messages, along with the accompanying ideals of freedom and justice¹⁰. In direct relation with this, the already mentioned conceptual matrix of the Serbs as New Israel (the ideology of Middle Ages, Nemanjić dynasty's Serbia, which has been entangled to date by numerous contents) can in many respects connect with the mentioned, complementary notions of *Holy Russia* and Russia as the *Third Rome*¹¹. [In this sense, the Serbian concepts of the *Kosovo Covenant / Myth*, which are directly related (and supplemented) with the ideas about New Israel, have special significance¹².] We shall pay

⁸ See a study of the famous Serbian historian M. Ekmečić, which is primarily dedicated to the direct relations between anti-serbism and anti-semitism, (see *Srbofobija i antisemitizam* in: Екмечић 2002).

⁹ For example, in a book titled “Српска апологија Русије” (“Serbian Apologia of Russia”) – which, in two volumes, was published precisely in 1998 and 1999, when the NATO intervention occurred – Marko Marković emphasized his view that “the leaders of the New World Order took on themselves the mission of destroying Orthodoxy, only this time doing it directly, from small to larger, from Serbs to the Russians”, and “for the destruction of Serbs, the two most important levers in the Balkans were used again: Islam and the Vatican”, taking into account that these civilizations continuously systematically create conditions for the destruction of Serbs (Марковић 1998a: 240–241). In any case, numerous Serbian and Russian authors (but also politicians and officials) have stressed many times that the Serbian and Russian fate is connected, that representatives of other civilizations perceive the Serbs and the Russians in an essentially identical manner.

¹⁰ When it comes to the Russians, the frequent ideas are “that the Russian people one who bear God (in their heart)”, and “that as such have the call to save Europe, and through it the world”, that is, “in a sense, the Messiah – it is the Russian people itself”, “the Messiah by the fact that he carries the Christ in his heart and his Christ is declared to all nations, but also the Messiah as the medium of salvation, because this time, through him, the universal salvation is performed” (Марковић 1998b: 28). The researchers of this phenomenon note that Russian messianism is very complex (Марковић 1998b: 28).

¹¹ See reference 2.

¹² See directly and more extensively in: Тодоровић 2010. [Pursuant to one very illustrative view, “representing the collapse of the empire, Kosovo is a foreshadowing the doom of today's Christian civilization, in the East and the West, but also the promise of salvation”, and “in the twentieth century, all our planet turned into a

attention to precisely this issue, in the context of our work and its basic intentions, in the following part of the article.

The notions of the Serbian and Russian historical mission (in the context of the perception of common ideological roots). Heretofore, it has been repeatedly and from different angles – although still quite insufficiently (compare Живанов 2010: 287 et cetera) – written about Serbian-Russian connections in the past, as well as on how much these relations were mutually significant¹³. Here we shall, getting straight to the point, focus on the relation that is, from the point of view of our approach, of utmost importance and determinative significance. In fact, it can be said, as already hinted, that as a matter of fact the Serbian-Russian (both ideological as well as overall, historical and other) relations in the initial sense were responsible for the emergence of Orthodox-Slavic civilization, based on Orthodox Christianity, as well as of the idea of establishing a kind of Theandric (divine-mankind), that is, the constant testimony of Christ's path and message at the level of the nation and the country. According to Justin Popović (St. Iustin Popović), "Dostoyevsky attributes the theandric role to the Russian people, not because it is Russian but Orthodox. For, as Orthodox, they preserve the image of Christ in a holy and pious manner, which gives them the blessing of God's love and the forces of spiritual unity with all peoples and for the joyful gospel service to all people" (Поповић 1995: 308). Likewise, the diverse specific notions of the special importance of Serbs, as well as the particular role of this people in global historical events, are based on prototype patterns defined many centuries ago. Namely, what is meant by the *Serbian idea* and *Serbian ethnic / national being* was then formulated. In regard, for example, the famous Serbian scientist Dimitrije Bogdanović writes about the essential and fundamental historical significance of the notion of the Serbs as "the people of God", i.e. "the people who are the subject of a special care of God's providence", unambiguously making it clear that "all old Serbian sources seem to speak about it, and in that spirit" (Bogdanović 1984: 28). Later, this has been clearly shown and proved by academic, historian Miloš Blagojević and other authors¹⁴.

giant Kosovo", whereby "the entire Slavic world is crucified, the entire Orthodoxy is crucified" (Марковић 1998b: 31). Namely, "in front of this all-encompassing Kosovo, the world also needs to hear the lore and message of the Serbian Kosovo: *The one crucified with Christ, shall resurrect with Christ.* Therefore, not only does Serbian Kosovo have a universal meaning, but the world is at peril if it does not understand the lessons of Kosovo in a timely manner, even if the Kosovo is unknown to it. For the situation is worse in the world today than in the time of the Battle of Kosovo and the fall of Constantinople. At that time, despite the disagreement of the Christian peoples, there was, however, some kind of Christian solidarity that no longer exist" (Марковић 1998b: 31).]

¹³ See reference 6 and 9.

¹⁴ First see a study of exceptional significance: Благојевић 1994. In this context, see

At the very root of the emergence and shaping of the notions about the Serbs as New Israel, the second and last chosen people of God, are the personalities of St. Sava and his father Stefan Nemanja, i.e. St. Simeon the Myrrh-streaming. Namely, “the stay of the St. Sava and St. Simeon on the Holy Mountain (Mount Athos) presupposes their thorough preparation for the missionary activity in their fatherland, with the intention of finally bringing the Serbian people to Christ and that the people experience their spiritual renewal”, i.e. “only after being restored by the Holy Spirit the Serbian people will at the same time become the *new* people, and after that they will be able to call themselves: *the second new Israel*, or the second and the new chosen people” (Благојевић 1994: 19). All in all, already in the Middle Ages the propagation of Old Testament symbolism and key biblical events to the immediate level of Serbian reality was carried out consistently and comprehensively. This is done in accordance with the faith in the historical necessity and the metaphysical veracity of different events (described in the works of Domentijan the Hilandarian, Teodosije the Hilandarian, etc.), as well as the analogy between the Holy Land and Serbia, i.e. between the Old Testament Israel and the Serbian people in the sense of a new, but more authentic, chosen people, with a special eschatological predestination and a historical mission¹⁵.

[More precisely, “in many ways, in the Middle Ages, the Serbian people developed a special notion of their continent and spiritual homogeneity, which covered the idea of the ‘people of God’ precisely to the extent that in its social and spiritual being it hold the ideal of the church, as ‘convocation’ and as ‘plenitude’. (...) One such view on the nation, in which all social functions and divisions would be consciously subordinate to the goals of the future, which can be reached only through the most difficult integration of the social organism, could explain many features and paradoxes of

Bogdanović 1984; Поповић 2006: see for instance page 19, 21, 41–73. etc; Тодоровић 2015a: 243–286.

¹⁵ For example, according to Domentijan (in Доментијан 2001), “another or new Israel (i.e. the Serbian people) has taken the primacy over ‘the first’ Israel, for it has in full accepted the Orthodoxy” (Благојевић 2011: 171). Namely, “the reasoning that the Serbian nation gained the right to be called a ‘new Israel’ or the ‘chosen people’, raised the national self-esteem up to the highest possible height, taking on the sacred character”, and “this conception was not limited to Domentijan” but he, as can be presumed “was just the best interpreter of those opinions, which were pleaded by the spiritual elite of the time, primarily the official Serbian church” (Благојевић 2011: 171). In other words, according to this conception, “‘the new’ or ‘the newborn Israel’ is equalized with the ‘Serbian state’ i.e. the country of Serbia”, and “in ‘the newborn Israel’ the Orthodox Serbs live as ‘the chosen people’” (Благојевић 2011: 171). Thus, among other things, in the *Hagiography: Life of Stefan Dečanski*, it is quite directly stated that “the was (the tsar) of the great and most famous people – the Serbs” (Цамблак 1968: 205). Namely, in context of the hagiography Serbian people, as chosen one, is viewed above the old testament Israelis and other peoples (see Цамблак 1968: 224).

Serbian history, and not only of that age but also later times" (Bogdanović 1984: 28). In the Serbian tradition, the idea of the "christocentricity of the great celestial Serbia" is clearly defined, that is, the synonymosity of the path and the suffering of the Serbian people and Jesus Christ (Велимировић 2001: 247), as well as the identity of the Serbian people and the old Israel (Велимировић 1999: 68). According to one scientific synthesis, "in contrast to Byzantine universalism, the Serbs saw themselves as 'the people of God' or as 'the new Israel' and Serbia, or more precisely Raška with Kosovo and Metohija, as the 'heavenly Jerusalem' on earth" (Грчић 2011: 191). In regard, the notion "about the determination of the emperor Lazar of Serbia for the 'heavenly kingdom' or the metaphor of the Serbs as a 'heavenly nation' symbolize the struggle for justice and peace, and therefore for the 'Kingdom of God', for where there is no justice and peace, there is no God" (Грчић 2011: 191).]

Similarly, on the other hand, with the Russians, in folk traditions we encounter the ideas "about the patron holy land and royal saints, of national greatness and of a special historical mission" (Грчић 2011: 191). Thereby, the related notions and motives in the collective consciousness of the Russians are directly linked to the Serbian prototype. For example, according to Billington, during its golden age under Stefan Dušan, 1331–1355, the Serbian kingdom was largely a general rehearsal of the pattern of rule that will emerge in Muscovy (Billington 1988: 79). In other words, quickly and boldly, Dušan took the title of Tsar and Emperor of Romans; declared himself as the heir of Constantine and Justinian, and called the assembly in order to establish a special Serbian Patriarchate. In short, he tried to replace the old Byzantine empire with a new, Slavic-Greek one (Billington 1988: 79). After the fall under the Turkish rule – during the fifteenth century, people and ideas have moved north into the Russian country and this contributed to instill a new sense of historical calling (Billington 1988: 79). In other words, it is through the Serbs that the key Byzantine ideas came to Russia, conveying the notion of historical (Billington 1988: 80), and this, all together, encouraged the Russians to think of themselves as the heirs of Byzantium (Billington 1988: 80). Encouraged by these ideas, similar to ancient Israel, medieval Muscovy prophetically interpreted slavery and humiliation, believing in God's special care for its fate and developing the Messianic expectations of deliverance as the foundation of national solidarity (Billington 1988: 99). Thus, Russia – similar as Serbia – is called "Jerusalem" and "New Israel", as well as "Third Rome" (Billington 1988: 100). Consequently, nothing less than the Jews¹⁶ (and we can add here also – completely analogous to the primary constant of the Serbian understanding of the historical mission and the corresponding basic forms of the collective psyche of the Serbs)

¹⁶ In a qualitative sense, similar to that of the Serbs and the Russians, the messianic idea has been "gradually, during a very long period of time, shaped in the Jewish people" (Kindić 2009: 49).

the Russians sought a just remnant that shall survive persecution and temptation to bring the salvation of God's chosen people (Billington 1988: 100).

At this point, it should be emphasized that the above mentioned circumstance – concerning the number and rootedness of Serbian and Russian notions about the significance of their role, i.e. past and historical missions – did not arise without concrete reason and cause, and can not be explained in a simplified way, simply by renouncing and ignoring the obvious facts that testify in support of its importance and complexity (compare with the contents presented in: Тодоровић 2015a; Тодоровић 2005). Namely, the basic postulates of the idea of the Holy Serbia, but also of the Holy Russia – along with similar patterns – overlap with relevant, objective counterparts from historical, geographic, as well as theological and cultural contexts, further aggravating and complicating the understanding of various real facts from the perspective of scientific paradigms with an emphasized atheistic view (see Тодоровић 2015a). To illustrate, from the theological perspective that is presented by the bishop Saint Nikolaj Velimirović, “truly our destiny is foretold in the Bible”, because “many of the words spoken by the Lord in it to the people of Israel, as if were spoken to Serbian. It is the way our fates coincide” (Велимировић 1996: 200). On the other hand, it can be seen here that, in many respects, they coincide with the sufferings of the Russian people through history. Among other things, the St. Nikolaj Velimirović writes the following: “Therefore I say: read the Bible in order to understand the history of Serbs” (Велимировић 1996: 202), and “the fate of the Serbian people resembles a fate of much-suffering Job, more than a fate of any nation in the Christian world” (Велимировић 1996: 257), that is, it is like the suffering (but also resurrected) way of Jesus Christ, as emphasized by various authors.¹⁷ Similar (more similar compared to any other nation), however, was the fate of the Russian people¹⁸, who – along with the Serbian people – shed the most blood for survival and freedom (or, one can freely say, for the freedom of mankind).

Serbian countries and Russia today: an illustrative overview of the most common questions (in anticipation of the right answers). In the previous chapter, we have focused on the past (from the conceptual point of view), and in the ensuing continent we shall try to illustrate and summarize – in accordance with the space available to us – take a look at the present and

¹⁷ The aforementioned notions and ideas in a particularly referring way are also presented by the above mentioned bishop Saint Nikolaj Velimirović, when speaking of the “Serbian people as Теодул” (Велимировић 2001).

¹⁸ See the collection of texts Голгота Христове Русије 1999. In general, only the most basic facts about the sufferings of the Serbs and the Russians (starting from the of data presented in percentage, up to the way of devastating peoples and individuals) are almost difficult to comprehend, in the context of the fact that these ethnoses after all succeeded to survive and to develop further. This is, in any case, another of the topics that require a separate space.

the future of the Serbian-Russian relations. All in all, it is of great importance to analyze some of the contemporary (Serbian-Russian) misunderstandings and mutual expectations, primarily in the circumstances of the struggle for the survival of the Serbian people (in parallel with the struggle to preserve the appropriate / corresponding ethno-cultural code). Namely, there are numerous and very specific expectations of the Serbs in relation to the Russian people and Russia, while on the other hand there is a very complex spectrum of indicators of the Russian attitude towards the Serbian people and countries (which is a problem that definitely requires a separate space); see e.g. ЖИВАНОВ 2010.¹⁹

As already indicated, in the next part of the article (but also in the next research period), it is necessary to focus as closely as possible on the most important issues and problems concerning the Serbian-Russian relations, in order to further emphasize the importance of spiritual-religious connection/correlation, but also (appropriate, applicable) urgent solution to accumulated dilemmas and problems, as well as the return of Serbian-Russian relations to their – in the historical context *usual* – level.

In other words – in accordance with certain historical facts, which can not be considered at this place in more detail – it could be noted that the Serbian countries and the Serbian people in the course of history developed and (in the statehood sense) circled, i.e. liberated the central part of the Serbian ethnic territory primarily thanks to the Russia and its support; moreover, if there was no support from Russia – the question is whether the Serbs, and how many of them, would have survived at all. On the other hand – going back to the very beginning of this paper – it should be emphasized that the Serbs had recently lost a significant part of its territory (occupation of the territory of the Republic of Serbian Krajina, as well as of Kosovo and Metohija, the inauguration of an anti-Serbian regime in Montenegro, with the use of ethnic engineering in the southern part of the Serbian ethnic territory, the fragmentation of centuries-old Serbian areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina, etc.)²⁰ and suffered real exoduses (starting from around a million killed Serbs in the fascist so-called Independent State of Croatia, to the latest, numerous sufferings and genocide)²¹, reaching the edge of survival precisely because Russia's support was lacking. In fact – as already mentioned

¹⁹ In terms of future research see page 307–308: Живанов 2010.

²⁰ Compare e.g., the territory of the Republic of Serbian Krajina and the Republika Srpska in the period of their territorial rounding in Степић 2001: 346. Compare, in the wider context, and Тодоровић 2015b; Тодоровић и Рајковић 2016. About ethnic engineering in Montenegro see already mentioned text: Ђурковић 2013: 115–152. About ethnic engineering in old and southern Serbia / FYR of Macedonia see Трифуноски 1995; compare Ердељановић 1925; Цвијић 1906: 32–33; Терзић 2012. About the Jasenovac concentration camp in the so-called Independent State of Croatia see for instance Зиројевић 2017.

²¹ See, for instance, *Страдање и геноцид* in Срби 2008: 1039–1040

– is not excessive to conclude that (in a qualitative sense, much like in the past), the whole Serbian current geopolitical-historical, spiritual and existential position is reduced primarily to one basic, but already pointed out question: Will and when will Russia help Serbian countries (?), whereby expectation of this assistance is based precisely on the corresponding unique spiritual and religious cohesion / correlation and an identical ideological matrix (compare Терзич 2010: 142; Екмечић 2002: 292, 299).

In accordance with the foregoing, during our, complexly conceived research we considered a number (written and oral) content, reaching more illustrative questions and concerns, undoubtedly present among Serbs. In accordance with the basic intention of the article and the space available to us, here we will be able to look at some of the aforementioned questions, which themselves sufficiently speak and directly locate the problem, that is, Serbian expectations. In fact, at this time the Serbs, on the one hand, express the multiple expectations of Russia and the brotherly Russian people²², while, on the other hand, often fall into doubt²³ and even despair, when it comes to these relations, with the most frequently asked questions resembling the following ideal-type formulations: 1) *Are the Russians aware of their multiple and essential connections with the Serbs, as well as of the importance of these relations? Do Serbian countries and Serbs have any significance for Russia?*, 2) *Whether Russia can not or does not want to help the Serbs? How is it possible that the biggest and one of the most powerful countries in the world can not help the Serbs?*, 3) *Has Russia lost all interest for the Serbs? How can Russia and the Russian people peacefully observe the occupation and the disappearance of the Serbian countries, with the constant suffering and exodus of the Serbian people (from the constant pogrom of Serbs to the spread of anti-Serbian propaganda worldwide, etc.) as one of the most perished people in world history, and not to react appropriately?*²⁴

²² Namely, in the widespread opinion – “the reliance on Russia and its Eurasian alliance – with relations with Moscow similar to those existing between Tel Aviv and Washington – would enable Serbia to regain its sovereignty, and to leave the historical dead end of increasing decay and dependence on someone else’s will and interest” (Билбија 2013), with the remark that “everyone who, as a counterargument, points out the fact that Serbia does not have a common border with Russia, should ask the question ‘does Israel have a common border with the United States’” (Билбија 2013).

²³ Compare, for instance, one very referring view in: Старац Тадеј Витовнички 2006: 300.

²⁴ On the basic of the questioning that resemble the previous, many others arises, such as, for example, a number of issues which could be ideal-typically, concisely and illustratively (divided into several “sub-thematic frameworks”), formulated as follows: *Why Russia does not raise its voice against the overall promotion of anti-Serbism as the leading form of racism in the modern world, and why does it not speak more loudly about the occupation of Serbian countries and the Serbian people, as well as the numerous genocides committed during the 20th century against Serbs?*

This is, of course, only a small fraction of the questioning (ideal-type framed and for the purposes of this work shaped), whose practical-direct expressions can often be heard during conversation or (in a similar form) read in various texts and contents, in numerous journals, books, websites, forums, etc. Such questions are most often asked by people who can be labeled as benevolent in relation to Russia and the Russian people, i.e. as rusophiles (and such a great majority of Serbs could certainly be classified as mentioned); they are, in fact, often asking "why Russia does not provide any concrete help?", but usually fail to find a rational answer.²⁵ More precisely, given the closeness of Serbian and Russian peoples, i.e. the friendly attitude of Serbs towards Russians and Russia, as well as the strength and size of Russia²⁶, it is obvious and undeniable – from the Serbian point of view – that Russia can do "virtually everything" in the Serbian countries, as well as to help them in the most direct way and once and for all defend

Why Russia does not (because, when it comes to the Serbs, there is nobody else to take a stand for them) more decisively speak – world-widely – of the assimilation and artificial "un-serbing" of Serbs in many countries they live in? Why Russia does not try to prevent a cultural-informative war (against everything that has a Serbian ethno-cultural significance), which has a global character and is imposed and organized in the Serbian countries too? / Why doesn't Russia do for the Serbs at least a tenth of everything that Western and Islamic countries did (and daily do) for Croats, Albanians, Muslims, Slovenes, and others? (The arguments are as follows: they did not only support their own protégés in every way possible, but they openly, directly and lengthily fought against the Serbs, practically destroying the Serbian people and permanently polluting the country where the Serbs live. They, by their own admission, led an informative, cultural, economic and military war against the Serbs, not hesitating of any of the most terrible lies and crimes, beginning with the multiple ethnic cleansing of Serbs from their centuries-old homes.) / Why Russia does not prevent the daily terror against the Serbs? Is Orthodox Russia, which is primarily addressed by Serbs, able to influence Russia in order to prevent (once and for all) the pogrom of Serbs? Is Russia aware that the Serbian people are at a loss and that it is the last moment to change their attitude and start with concrete help – or the Serbs and Serbian countries will no longer be? Does Russia even care? / Do the Russians know that there is nowhere in the world, nor there were in the past, nor shall there be, the greater and more sincere friends and Russophiles than Serbs? Do Russians mixed Serbs with other Orthodox and / or Slavic nations who have repeatedly sided with the Russian enemy (e.g., with the Bulgarians, who – unlike the Serbs who always fought along with the Russians – were almost always on the side of Russian opponents), and did they forget the Serbian and their history? Does entire Serbian history not testify to the lasting friendship between the Serbian and Russian people?

²⁵ Of course, to this particular subject a special study should be devoted, because – on the other hand – there is a whole series of semantic variants of explanations by which 'Russophiles', i.e., the Serbs are trying to explain the lack of concrete Russian assistance or, at least, greater interest in the Serbian issue.

²⁶ In any case, "Russia, after the disappearance of the USSR in 1991, remained the most widespread and the richest country in resources in the world, and remains a superior geopolitical factor in Eurasia" (Степић 2016: 489), but – also – on the global level. Compare Петровић 2007.

them, that is, prevent their disappearance. Because – from the stated point of view, which is very widespread among the Serbs – if the current circumstances are viewed exclusively rationally, the situation is such that “no exit is visible”, and the Serbian media informs daily about the possibility of attacks on Serbia and the Republika Srpska, or various abuses, denials of basic human rights and assimilation of Serbs, as well as the disastrous situation in other Serbian countries and occupied territories. On the basis of the already implied, most frequent Serbian views (which we illustrate here in their idealistic form), Russia, *if interested, without major problems – primarily by the power of its state and military authority, as well as diplomacy – can secure the peace and stability of Serbian countries, i.e. to permanently guarantee its survival and smooth development (in accordance with Serbian identity and cultural tradition, which is in essence an extension of the Russian cultural matrix)*. In fact, it can be summarized in place of the preliminary conclusion, and in the context of the previous chapter and the discussed ideas that connection of the Serbs and the Russians – addressing to Russia (and above all the idea of the Holy Russia / Third Rome) for help, the Serbs primarily address the God for help, expecting of representatives of its forces on Earth to carry out justice, and deliver his chosen people, whose historical mission is constant testimony of Christ’s message to humanity. On the other hand, according to the available facts (the previously stated formulations of Serbian hopes and concerns about Russia are based on), it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that “skepticism” (or “restraint”) towards the Serbian countries and the necessity of providing the help to the Serbs (as a people) to survive and to rise, in fact, at the same time, is “skepticism” of Russia towards itself, that is, in relation to the return to its essential nature and the true / total, primarily spiritual and moral exaltation.

Final observations. In accordance with the previously stated facts (that is, from the point of view of the primary content of Serbian collective consciousness, but also on the basis of a multitude of concrete data), it is difficult, but essentially unrealistic, to regard Serbian historical significance, people, countries and civilization as “a fistful of rice” (syntagm from the popular film “Battle of Kosovo”)²⁷, i.e. as someone who does not deserve much attention. Or, to look at them as an acquaintance whom we remember as “in a fog” and “we pretend to be a fried”, but in fact we are not quite sure who he is (as, approximately, the contemporary relation between the Russians and Serbs is interpreted by one of the most famous Serbian “folk” futuristic projections, the so-called “Kremna Prophecies”).²⁸

²⁷ In the above-mentioned film – based on the drama of Ljubomir Simović, directed by Zdravko Šotra – Miloš Obilić, the greatest Serbian hero, says a sentence to Turkish sultan Murat (who decided to conquer Serbian lands): “Serbia is not a fistful of rice to be pecked by every crow that the wind brings”.

²⁸ See different versions of this “prophecy”, which, among other things, emphasizes the distancing of Russians and Serbs (see Голубовић и Маленовић 1997: 210).

In other words, pursuant to Serbian history and cultural matrix, it may be (from a standpoint of a narrowly understood state or civilization egoism) even logical why the countries of Western civilization want to destroy the Serbs,²⁹ or they will no longer exist or their cultural code shall be changed (see Вуковић 2009; Пироћанац 2008; Антонић 2008; Ломпар 2014; Аврамовић 2009) – which essentially comes down to the same (because losing the identity, practically means losing almost everything)³⁰ – but it is hardly understandable why Russia, in disagreement with its basic interests which are directly related to Serbian, is allowing the above mentioned for so long. [After all, the very modern territorial position of the Serbian people – whose state once intertwined onto three seas and whose ethno-genetic core is at the sea and near it³¹, but today (with the exception of Montenegro, where, however, intensive planned unserbing is carried out) it is not allowed to even approach it – represents a difficult to compare geopolitical difficulty, but also one type of offensive paradox, i.e. world curiosity (bearing in mind the unique appearance of the territory of modern Croatia, which emerged at the expense of Serbian countries); however, the territorial issue is – after the occupations, genocide and the accompanying ethnic engineering, and with the continuing spread of anti-serbism – only one of many problems that endanger the survival of Serbian countries and the Serbian people.³²]

On the other hand – as has already been emphasized – in accordance with the available facts, it can be concluded that (from the previously presented “Serbian viewpoint”) the conclusion that restraint towards Serbia, i.e. the necessity of providing assistance to Serbian countries (to survive and to rise), is in fact, at the same time, Russia’s suspicion towards itself, i.e. towards restoring its true nature and essential, primarily spiritual and moral elevation, for the attitude towards the Serbian people and countries

However, with the Serbs (in the national consciousness) eschatological-prophetic contents that associate the liberation of Serbian lands and the revival of Serbs precisely with the Russian assistance are extremely numerous and rooted.

²⁹ Among other things, NATO directly (and with terrible consequences), primarily during 1994 and 1995, attacked the Republika Srpska Krajina and the Republika Srpska, and – later on – the FR Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) in 1999. Namely, NATO forces had “played an important role in ending the war in 1995, bombing the Serbian forces and supporting Muslim-Croat offensive” (Пар у Босни и Херцеговини 1992–1995, 2008: 935), which resulted in the occupation of the Republic of Serbian Krajina (see beginning of work), as well as a significant, forced reduction of the territory of Republika Srpska

³⁰ When it comes to the concept of identity see in, for example, Благојевић 2005: 65–70; Тодоровић 2009: 180–182. See, and Тодоровић 2015a: 246–247.

³¹ See, for instance, Благојевић 2011: 30–31 et seq; compare and maps between page 258 and 259.

³² See, for instance, the studies Степић 2004; Степић 2001; Терзић 2012; Тодоровић 2015b; Тодоровић и Рајковић 2016; Милосављевић 2002. Compare and Срби 2008.

during the 1990s, as well as today, certainly is the greatest moral stain in the glorious history of Russia and the Russian people³³ – what was unambiguously spoken of by many Russians – so direct help to Serbs would be logically, precisely the necessary moral basis and foundation of the Russian general revival.

In any case, *the threshold of endurance* was clearly stated by well-intentioned Serbian intellectuals, and this limit is present now and here “now and here”³⁴, so that the concrete (Russian) help – in this sense – is needed *immediately* in the *essential*, clearly visible and *immediate* level. In doing so, it is expected that Russian aid will be presented continuously, universal and materialized, as well as the Russian spiritual presence; from this point of view – the Serbian people should at all times know that they will always have the protection and unequivocal support of Russia (because otherwise, in the daily expectation of the last “blow” from abroad, it is threatened by danger of falling in complete disappears in the sea of hopelessness and apathy. From the given perspective, at the present time, to all well-meaning Russians and Serbs should be clear that Russia, by improving and protecting the Serbian people and Serbian countries, fully promotes and protects itself. From this point of view, however, this is not the case now – and the Russian people and Russian representatives need to understand that it is not only about idealism, but also about the most practical interests; in other words, the moral position and superiority of Russia – the Russian future

³³ In line with the above mentioned circumstances, sometimes it happened that even the patriotic-oriented and benevolent, leading Serbian intellectuals the expectation that Russia is to help them, conceive as the one of “the greatest Serbian misconceptions of the centuries” (which is, however, rare with Serbs), whereas – in this context – Serbs unreasonably believe that the Russians only need to present their “wistfully expectations”, and “these Serbian pleas shall be promptly met” (Чавошки 2011: 273–274). Respectfully, it is also emphasized that “Serbs living across river Drina truly hoped that Russia would not let them down, and that Slobodan Milosević believed in it when he left Viktor Chernomyrdin in June 1999 to negotiate on his behalf with Ahtisaari, and, in the end, this Russian tycoon, as Elena Guskova recently stated, literally betrayed the Serbs” (Чавошки 2011: 275).

³⁴ It is difficult, and practically impossible, to list the texts and studies of competent authors who over the last few years directly emphasized the importance of the contemporary moment in the Serbian ethnic context. For example, one of the leading Serbian intellectuals, Prof. Dr Milo Lompar, during one of his last public speeches, emphasizes that “the state of the nation is mischievous”, i.e. – among other things – “the Serbian people are occupied in Kosovo and Metohija, deprived of basic rights, what often include the right to live; in Montenegro it is exposed to great political, cultural, linguistic and existential discrimination; in Croatia there is an extension of the established patterns of discrimination of Serbian national rights; the survival of the Republika Srpska – from different centers – is continually being called into question” (see Dr. Milo Lompara’s interview with: Ерић 2017: 26). In addition, Lompar (as well as some of the leading Serbian intellectuals), in his latest interviews, also emphasized that Serbia, at this moment, is essentially “occupied country”.

primarily depends on – are based primarily on the quality of relations with the “dearest ones who were most neglected”, i.e. precisely the Serbian countries and the Serbian people.³⁵

In relation to the former, the expectations of Serbs from Russia are very high – because (and despite a variety of political rhetoric), Russia is the only country from which in the Serbian ethnic context, essentially taken, anything can be expected – with an additional, widely conceived and conscious hope that precisely its existence prevents the complete (both moral-spiritual, as well as physically-existential) collapse of mankind.³⁶ Exempli gratia, one of the many (in this sense illustrative) texts written in Serbian ends with the following sentence: “to the Lord Emperor of Emperors, the Lord of all the Empires, we pray for Russia and Serbia not to become part of the empire of the beast, but after many troubles and sufferings for them to help to create a large, sovereign Orthodox empire: the Holy Russia and the Holy Serbia!” (Тажна звери 2009: 94). In numerous texts of a similar character under the *Empire*, a free state that is not under (the spiritual and secular) power of the “globalist dictatorship” is meant, which is – primarily in the perceptions of Orthodox believers, but also wider (essentially very similar, with somewhat changed terminology) – equates with the planned unique, “Kingdom of the Antichrist”.³⁷

The aforementioned book, together with various contents of related type (present in the Serbian ethno-cultural context), can serve as an excellent example of notions that directly opposes contemporary (targeted) processes and futuristic projects of “globalization” with the Western sign and ideas / projects of the Holy Russia and the Holy Serbia.³⁸ (And under the extremely influential Russian authors, the Serbian resistance to contemporary globalism had a “planetary universal character”; Дугин 2009: 8–9; see, e.g., Шаргунов: 103–107). After all, the extent of the current phenomenon of anti-serbism / Serbophobia in global proportions can be explained by the aforementioned ideological-civilization antagonism³⁹ (see Тодоровић 2008:

³⁵ With the aforementioned point of view, for anyone who delves into the issues concerned and available facts, understanding the “semantic equation” should not be a difficulty. For this reason (i.e., the aforementioned syntagms) once more in the idealistic-illustrative formulation presented in the preceding chapter of the text, in which the basic description of the corresponding “Serbian view of the Russian position” (in relation to the Serbs) is presented.

³⁶ Such an experience (role) of Russia and the Russian people with the Serbs is widespread, and its presence can be supported by an extremely large number of examples.

³⁷ Compare, for instance, very referring collection of articles: Не бојте се 2006. In the journalism see a very paradigmatic text by Кнежевић Керн 2016.

³⁸ See collection of articles Пазите на време 2013; when it comes to Russia and the Russian context see, first of all, page 91–258.

³⁹ Various manifestations of the anti-serbism / Serbophobia phenomenon in contemporary circumstances see, for instance in: Пипер 2004: 57–59, 36–37, 41 et seq.; Вуковић 2009; Пироћанац 2008; Vlački 2001. The historical dimension of some

250–253, 260–261; Екмечић 2002: 354 etc.), based on a specific geopolitical structure, but also on the causes that are symbolic, theological and archetypal (compare Тодоровић 2015a; Тодоровић 2016), that is, precisely, of the spiritual-religious character. The same is the case with Russophobia⁴⁰, since the Russian and Serbian people really represent two sides of the same coin of the same civilization entity.

From the point of view of the idealistic expressions of Serbian collective consciousness, these two sides are also linked by invisible, life-giving threads, whose dissolution surely causes mutual death. From this point of view, one who feels that the final solution of the “Serbian problem” (compare beginning of this article) will not at the same time mark the beginning of a definitive resolution of the “Russian problem” is deeply mistaken. On the other hand – in the presented sense – communion and solidarity can lead to mutual, incomprehensible heights whose reach can not be even foreseen.

In any case, when we think and talk about Serbian-Russian relations, above all, we notice the importance of *spiritual-religious connection*, which exceeds by far any economic and spatial mutual dependency / distance which made the mentioned Serbian-Russian relations specific even in the global proportions. Namely, to what extent the basic Serbian and Russian ideological and cultural matrixes are congenial and interconnected, is clearly shown in the third chapter of our article. Although there have been crises during the course of history these relations (among which one of the largest was in the near past), it is hard to imagine their permanent collapse or break (compare Никифоров 2011: 352–353), precisely because of the reasons that are in the sphere *religious identity*, which is the basis of human determination in relation to one’s own existence and its primary, essential goals.⁴¹

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especially important aspects of this phenomenon see in studies: Екмечић 2002; Митровић 1991.

⁴⁰ Compare, for instance, (from the perspective of different disciplinary contexts): Метан 2017; Кјеџа 2016; Шафаревич 1993; Екмечић 2002, see, first of all page 343–365.

⁴¹ In regard, the contemporary (comparative) context of the revitalization of Orthodoxy (in Serbia, but also in Russia) see in: Благојевић 2004; Благојевић 2015.

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**О значају духовно-религијске повезаности – у
контексту општих разматрања српско-руских односа
у актуелном друштвеном тренутку и прошлости**

Апстракт: О значају духовно-религијске повезаности посебно илустративно и аргументовано може се говорити на примеру српско-руских односа, који имају изузетну семантичку дубину и историјско утемељење. Између осталог, блиске представе о Новом Израиљу код Срба и о Светој Русији и Трећем Риму код Руса указују на повезане обрасце који су суштински утицали на формирање српске и руске колективне свести. Исто тако, изражена и веома снажна русофилија код Срба представља специфичан феномен који се надовезује на претходно наведене идејне обрасце. У раду се – у виду сажетог и илустративног осврта – посебан нагласак такође ставља и на актуелне српско-руске односе, као и на значај њихове сарадње и међусобног разумевања.

Кључне речи: духовно-религијска повезаност, српско-руски односи, Нови Израел и Трећи Рим, сарадња и разумевање.

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