NOTE: UNRESTRICTED
An interview with Father Mateja Matejic by Professor Leon Twarog, February 5, 2003

Twarog: I just want, for the record, to say that this is the interview, this morning, February 5, at nine in the morning and I am Leon Twarog and talking with Father Mateja Matejic, who was one of the principals involved in the Hilandar Research Project and Hilandar Room, and we’re going to comment on both the written statement that Father Matejic did back in February of…I think it was 2001, and then some consequent questions that I have about that statement and other responses as we go through some of this to try to get as complete a picture as possible of what happened in the very early stages, because when we’re gone there will be nobody else to get at these things. So, I think the … I’ll just stop on some of these first pages of the materials and I think, Mateja, your one, two, and three items, you know, on why you came and so forth are perfectly fine but they’re very brief and I think there’s one thing that ought to be made clear is that you did come and we talked to you in 1967, and I remember there were some people from Columbus came to see me in the department and asked about, you know, the possibility of having you come to join our department, and I said: “What? No, we have a regular process, we don’t have anything in Serbian right now, but we are going to have a Russian literature…” And he said, well, you [Mateja Matejic] have a degree, and so forth, and I remember then there was the application and we had a session and as a matter of fact I remember that we then had dinner at the old Ohio Stater Inn, I think, all the literature faculty, and they grilled you in various ways because there was some suspicions of people in Columbus wanting to get a priest in, so they could build a church. And, I think that whole thing was dispelled when people felt very comfortable with you, and we made you an offer, which you then accepted. And I think the
other thing is, though, that hearing your statement, you know, when you say that you came and so forth, you were available to your parishioners more because you’d been traveling back and forth from Cleveland once a week. On the other hand, in a sense, you were operating with two full time jobs and I want to state for the record that never in this whole process or as a faculty member did you shirk your university duties, that you did as much or more as other faculty members and then in addition to that you took on this particular project. Now, as I understand it, and then … I understand that actually as far as the church is concerned that you did that in a sense, as a kind of volunteer, is that correct? Did you get a salary there?

Father Mateja: No, I did not have a salary. When I was commuting from Cleveland, they used to give me 15 dollars, which my wife put back on collection plate. I did not have salary – I did not have anything.

Twarog: So, what this really means is that when you, when the church purchased land, and when the church was built, that in many ways it was built with the money that was saved by not giving you a salary.

Father Mateja: Well, they were willing to give, but not really able and I knew that. We were going to build church. They could not have paid me and built the church. So, I had enough, thank God, for my family and I was able to tell them no. They were giving me about 35 dollars when I moved to Columbus. 35 dollars a week, and that was just enough to cover my car expenses, gasoline, but no salary. No benefits whatsoever.
Twarog: Well, I think it ought to be here in the record when we talk about this because it is important, in my point of view as a sense of your character, and the way you operate and what you do. And from my point of view the church was built with the money they didn’t pay you, and stands there as a monument to Mateja Matejic, although maybe people don’t acknowledge that in quite the same way. In any case I think that ought to be in there.

Father Mateja: Thank you for that.

Twarog: So, that’s the first thing I had, the matter of that. And, as I say, your contribution to the department served 100% and more. Now, the next page, page two, we come to the part where you’re in the hospital, you had a gall bladder operation, and I visited and so forth and here at this top of the page it says: “As soon as it was physically possible, I left for Greece,” but you didn’t say what “physically possible” meant. So, how soon was that physically possible?

Father Mateja: I think it was a few weeks, because humanly possible - it meant I had to recover from my surgery, and we had to find, you had to find a bit of money, which you did, so that is what I meant “physically possible,” but it was, I think, two or three weeks after my surgery.

Twarog: Yeah, it wasn’t any more than that, ‘cause I remember, and some people questioned that and that I should have allowed you to go and I said, well, you wanted to go, and we all felt that somehow you felt that you could do it, and so we have to understand that
this particular thing people should know, that this project was not one that you know, was just easily done. There were all kinds of difficulties that we had. So, all right, now, the other question that I have, you know, then, we have a description of what happened, how you eventually get helped. The elders found out at the monastery that you didn’t have money, you couldn’t get the boat, and so they arranged for it.

Father Mateja: Yes.

Twarog: Then the two of you were in the boat, and you got into shore, as I understand it, the captain would not take the boat in because the water was too rough. Is that correct?

Father Mateja: That is correct.

Twarog: And so what happened then?

Father Mateja: We were very close to the shore, I knew that it could not be very deep water, and he said: “We are going back.” I said: “Well, you go back,” and I jumped and Paitsi, who was also with me, jumped, and we were up to the waist in the water, and Father Mitrofan was waiting on the shore. And that is how we reached the Holy Mount.

Twarog: So they gave you your suitcases or whatever it is, the baggage you had…

Father Mateja: Yes, yes…we had one case each.

Twarog: One case each?
Father Mateja: Yes.

Twarog: You carried it on your head or in your hands?

Father Mateja: We were carrying in our hands.

Twarog: In your hands. All right.

Father Mateja: When we jumped, and then we put … I put mine on my chest

Twarog: Yes. All right. Now, was the Paitsi, was he with you all the time there?

Father Mateja: No, he was just a few days – he has family in Athens and he just stayed to see Hilandar, because that was his first time also, and then he left.

Twarog: Then he left.

Father Mateja: Yes. And I was sick from the water and cold, and Angelis, a Greek, was putting on my back…

Twarog: Hot packs?

Father Mateja: Yes.
Twarog: Hot packs.

Father Mateja: Yes.

Twarog: Did they give you aspirin?

Father Mateja: No, there was no aspirin. And I cannot take aspirin; I’m awfully allergic to aspirin.

Twarog: Yeah, I see…

Father Mateja: But, you know, I recovered and I started then taking pictures to bring those pictures as a proof that I do have the permission of the monks to photograph.

Twarog: Once you told me that there was a man… this was a very important thing, how you never told anybody about this. I heard about it maybe, it must have been a rumor about ten years or so after you’ve been there, and I’m sorry we didn’t give you enough money for everything …

Father Mateja: You didn’t have it!

Twarog: …we had not estimated it properly, you know, and didn’t know of all the things that might happen.
Father Mateja: Leon, in order to understand why the funds were short, I had first to go to
Istanbul, to receive, to obtain permission from the Ecumenical Patriarch and I spent there
sleeping in hotels, then I had to have a ticket from Istanbul to Athens, and from Athens I
didn’t have money for airplanes, so Paitsi paid for the train. We went with a train from
Athens to Thessaloniki.

Twarog: Yep, all right. So and then, okay, very good. Then, here it says on page four of this,
we have the question of photographing in the first trip. They photographed 139 complete
Slavic manuscripts, number of edicts. And …

Father Mateja: That is with Craig.

Twarog: Yes, with Walt Craig. And then later on, the next summer with…

Father Mateja: Predrag.

Twarog: …with Predrag. Now how was this photographing done? Was there any automatic
equipment you had, or anything, or what happened, how did you photograph these
manuscripts?

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1 This and subsequent notes added by Predrag Matejic on August 9, 2004. In addition to all the permissions
that every visitor to Mt. Athos must obtain, an Orthodox priest must also receive the permission of the
Ecumenical Patriarch (Patriarch of Constantinople) in Istanbul. This is because Mount Athos is under the
ecclesiastical jurisdiction of this patriarch and so visiting clergy must have his permission.
2 Walt Craig, in 1970 assistant professor of photography at The Ohio State University.
Father Mateja: We had a table on the balcony where we had the most light. We did not have any sophisticated equipment; we had a Nikon, which we bought thanks to you, and we would start as soon as the liturgy was over, because I had to attend liturgy, and film all day long. I was turning the folia or leaves. Predrag was very fast, he is the fastest photographer I have seen in my life. And then we would just stop for lunch, and then continue, and then stop again when vespers service started, around five o’clock in the afternoon. So we worked every minute that we were able to because we never knew whether we would be able to come back. We had to finish the job right then.

Twarog: All right, so that was first, second… So, this was all done sort of outside in the sunlight, turning pages and photographing.\(^3\)

Father Mateja: Yes.

Twarog: Now, I understand that you even wore out the operating mechanism on one camera.

Father Mateja: Yes, that is true. We had, fortunately, two cameras. So, one was worn out. We started the next one.

Twarog: All right. So, that was the question about the photographing I think, as to how this was done. So these are rolls of 36 exposures, 35 mm film?

\(^3\) Virtually all the work was done on a balcony on the third floor of Hilandar Monastery.
Father Mateja: Yes, Leon. And I have to explain why we used 36 [exposures] instead of 100 feet. On Mount Athos, there are no stores there is no possibility to repair if something is wrong. And if you lost 36 [frames], that’s OK, but if you lost 100 feet [of film], then it would have ruined our work. That is why we used 36 [exposure rolls]. Then later we had to splice each roll to the next one, but that was the only way offering some assurance that we will do the job best, in the best possible way.

Twarog: Now, all right, so, now, let’s go to the question, you know this second trip and the problems you had. Don’t you think it’s sort of unusual that the ambassador, the American ambassador in Athens would call you …?

Father Mateja: No, that was our American ambassador.

Twarog: Oh, the American ambassador in Greece?

Father Mateja: Yes.

Twarog: The American ambassador in Greece called you directly, not one of his secretaries or somebody else, the ambassador himself…

Father Mateja: He introduced himself over the phone: “I am American ambassador in Athens”
Twarog: And what did he say exactly?

Father Mateja: He said that he understands that I am about to leave for Athens and he would like me not to come, because I will be arrested at the airport. And I asked him: “Why?” He said: “I cannot discuss that, but I cannot help you, so please don’t come.” And I told him I’m coming. The best way to see what is wrong is for me to face those who have anything against me.

Twarog: All right. So, I think myself that it is sort of unusual that the ambassador himself would call and without passing this through the State Department in Washington, you know, to have them notify or something, this seems awfully very urgent in this case to do it this way. And they must have felt that there were some, you know, there were real problems involved. In any case you went through this, and we have a description that you give of all these things that happened. And then I had a question about the “important colleague,” that’s on page six, it would be in this particular text. As you have the American ambassador and then after that you say that you had to see a colleague now, who was going to make some, help out or not…

Father Mateja: No, before that, Leon, before that the secretary of the embassy who met Predrag and myself at the airport and was very angry why we came when we were told not to, and I told him: “Well, I have nothing to do with you, I am a professor of The Ohio State University and I am here on the assignment that they gave me, not you.” He said: “Oh, you are wrong. We are involved too. Tomorrow you are going with me to the Minister of
Religion’s Office.” It was Kalimidas. And we went together, and I have in the written part that we could not use diplomatic entrance, which upset him immensely, and we went in a waiting room. What we saw there – a woman pushed, almost fell down, and then we went to Kalimidas who was director of religious affairs, and he told me he cannot, he had a fight about this big or there were denunciations, the most important one from, I will name him now, Athanasios Angelopulos, who was a student in Belgrade, Greek student, and who was sent by Patriarchal, Patristic Institute in Solun to Denver, where I had a lecture, and showed some slides, and…

Twarog: What was his name again? I think you ought to spell it so that the typist will be able to type it in properly or write it out so we can spell it.

Father Mateja: It was … A.A. He was a student of theology in Belgrade and he was sent to Denver to attend my lecture, because already, there was an article in ATSEELL[^4] about my trip and they didn’t like some of my statements so they already prepared to block me. And Athanasios was sent and what was in his denunciation? One of the professors, I’ll name him, Bariša Krekić, from California, after I ended my presentation, said: “Oh, I know where I am going to spend my vacation. I’m going to take my Cadillac and go to Mount Athos.” And I explained to him, number one, there are no roads for Cadillac, number two, he has to have permission. And in order to show how uneasy it is to get the permission I mentioned the case of some Macedonian laborers who came from Macedonia to install parts… from the mountain to bring water to Hilandar, and they needed just a few hours to finish the job, but they were not permitted. Now, that was used by Angelopulos that I worked for

[^4]: Association for Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages and Literatures.
Macedonia. Number two, I showed some *kelia* – cells of the monks, destroyed, and someone asked: “Why is Greek government doing nothing to repair this?” My answer was: “The Greek government can rebuild the walls but not monasticism, because that has to come different way.” And the third, someone asked me about the attitude of monks toward death. And I told them: “Oh, they make fun of it.” There is this Angelis who was working on me. When a monk dies, they don’t use coffins. The cassock is put over the head together with … and it is sewn, and they make fun of each other: “Oh. You’re the next one to…Angelis has to sew you.” Now that was… Angelis, no, not Angelis, Athanasios said that I was making fun of monks, that I was criticizing Greek government for not rebuilding the kelias and so on. And then I asked Kalimidas: “Do you know that I am an Orthodox priest?” He said: “I do.” “Do you believe this?” He said: “No. But it is written, it is a document, and I cannot help you. Your colleague…you have, because the colleague was one who was trying to stop me, you have to go and see him in Thessaloniki.”

Twarog: So, the question is who was that colleague?

Father Mateja: The colleague was P.C.

Twarog: Ah, P.C. was the colleague…

Father Mateja: Yes. He was, at that time Minister of Education in the government of Northern Greece, because Northern Greece has government. The president was , and P.C. was Minister of Education. And he was director of the Patristic Institute that was very much interested in microfilming and regarding Mount Athos as his private property.

Twarog: I see. That was a problem. So then, earlier he was in the United States, he was teaching at the seminary in Brookline.
Father Mateja: He was before…probably he was teaching before, I don’t know.

Twarog: Well, it must have been because he talked to Father Sarris and I remember the statements he made; he told Father Sarris he wasn’t a very good student. And he remembers all the students, you know. So, he was then Minister of Education for…

Father Mateja: Northern Greece.

Twarog: … for Northern Greece. And, you know, it’s like in the Soviet Union where they have the Caucasus where all the anthropologists want to go, because you have the migration of all the people, the crusaders, people that stopped in certain valleys and never got out. And, for anthropologists it’d be a gold mine, but I remember the Soviets wouldn’t allow anybody from outside the Soviet Union to come in, because their anthropologists said this is our territory. Even though they couldn’t explore it, they kept others from it.

Father Mateja: Leon, it’s not just this gentleman, Panagiotis Christou, but the members of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts also considered that as their personal property, and were awfully upset that we had a permission to do. But, we will come to that later.

Twarog: This is where I’ll try to also to bring out with some of these other questions, because it’s a very strange thing, the amount of drama that’s involved in these…you know
people don’t realize, you have stuffy manuscripts and so forth, and here all this intrigue that goes on over it. All right, so I wanted just to check on that. So, that was Christou to begin with. OK. Then, so, did you see him at that time?

Father Mateja: Yes, Predrag and I went to Patristic Institute, and he was very cold. I’m surprised that he admitted us at all. And, I asked him if he was going to help us. He said: “Well, I cannot help you, and, you know, you cannot go.” And, you know, I have a bad temperament. I said: “OK, thank you very much. Finally you’re untying my hands.” He said: “What do you mean, ‘untying your hands’?” I said: “I know what is being done, you know I have been already on Mount Athos, I know that Orthodox priests, especially if they are Serbian cannot go, while others can. That’s one thing. And I was quiet until now. From now on, I’m going, when I attend conferences, I am going to tell the truth about Mount Athos.” He said: “Well, there is no truth, you cannot…” I said, “And another thing. I had Lantern where I was interviewed before my departure, … so look at this, this journalist will wait for me, to interview me after my return, and I will tell him that I, as an Orthodox priest and a professor of the Ohio State University, was not allowed to go there.” And I showed him this. He read and said: “Wait, wait, I didn’t say I cannot. We have to go to see the Prime Minister of the government of Northern Greece. He is the only one who can give you permission.” Ok, we went there, oh, I got such nasty looks from people in the offices, because I was already branded as some, I don’t know what, and when we came to mister Vovos, he was also very cold, we did not shake hands, did not say even ‘hi,’ and P.C. said, well, he would like to go to Mount Athos to film. “No! He cannot go!” Then he turned to me: “Do you have the permission of the Ecumenical Patriarch?” I said: “Not this time, but I
already had one from late Athenagoras.” “No, you cannot go,” and P.C. was whispering something to him, and then he said aloud: “Well, that is my relative, I’ll call him on the phone.”

Twarog: Who, who was he going to call?

Father Mateja: P.C. was going to call the Ecumenical Patriarch on phone. He is supposedly his relative. And he was dialing something, I don’t know what. And he said: “Oh, he says it’s OK.” And Vovos said: “No, I don’t want to.” Then he whispered again, and said: “Do you have that paper with you?” I said: “Yeah.” I gave him Lantern, he looked at that what was in, he said: “OK, you can go for six days, but you cannot film, you cannot do anything.” And P.C says: “And you have to have one of my students with you, because monks don’t like you, and he’s going to be your protection,” which is a lie. Professor Tachiaos from Thessaloniki told to Richard Pope: “Before you reach Mount Athos, you use my name. Once you reach Mount Athos, you use Professor Matejic, because he is their....” So, it wasn’t true, but it didn’t matter because it was sixty drachmas a day, which is one dollar, and we didn’t mind. This student did come with us, but before that we were in the police, waiting for hours and losing patience. I have to tell that Predrag was the one who saved that mission that time, because I was going to give up completely and return, but he always said: “Tata (‘father’), we have an important work to do. Pipe down!”

Twarog: And always the same thing – ‘tata’.

Father Mateja: So, we finally reached Mount Athos.

Twarog: Now, what happened to that young scholar? Is he prominent in this area?

Father Mateja: You mean Athanasios?
Twarog: Yeah.

Father Mateja: No, he sent me his dissertation, published. I don’t know… but, I would like to mention that, when we were in Denver, he was my guest, I accepted him and treated him, and I told him next time I come, he had at that time a daughter, a little daughter, I said I am going to bring her a doll. And after I went in Thessaloniki, I was seen by our people and by Greek, who knew what’s going on. But then I decided, and they told me who did [the denunciation], so I went to his house. When I knocked on the door, and he opened. When he saw me he was pale like the wall. And I said: “Athanasios, why did you do this to me, you know that’s a lie?” He said: “Well, Father Matejic, Greece is a poor country. They wanted me to find reasons to stop you. Even if they paid my trip from Thessaloniki to Athens, I had to do it. But they paid from Thessaloniki to Denver, and I had to find reasons.” “But it’s a lie.” He said: “Well…” And I turned and left.

Twarog: All right. So, we’re back here. How much filming did the Serbian team do when they were there? You have these three Serbs on the second trip.

Father Mateja: There were three Serbs, all members of the … no, one of them wasn’t a member, at that time. 

Twarog: So, there were two members of the Academy.

Father Mateja: And the third one who later became a member and died, I don’t want to mention their names. But they had also a photographer, who also died in meantime, Moma
Djordjevic, and he was working, I don’t know…. They… before we started our filming, they were working for years and I don’t think that they photographed or microfilmed as many manuscripts in a number of years, that we did in three months. In one month, not three months.

Twarog: One month.

Father Mateja: One month.

Twarog: Well, I think this is a…. What’s happened to their collection? Did they ever complete it or anything of that kind?

Father Mateja: I don’t know if they completed it, but I think I should mention this. You know, at that time I had nothing to do [with], I had no connections with scholars in Serbia, and while we were together we never talked. We passed each other without even greeting, and then, one day one of them, I don’t want to mention his name, because he is now…. Twarog: Yeah.

Father Mateja: And he came to me and said: “Who gave you permission to work here?” I said: “Ecumenical Patriarch, Office of Religious Affairs, Police, in Karyes we received diamonitirion, that is permission, so we had all…” “But you didn’t ask us!” I said: “I don’t know who you are, who do you represent?” “We are Hilandar Committee of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences.” I said: “I’m sorry I did not know I need your permission.” Then he put his fist close to my face and said: “We’ll do EVERYTHING to stop you!” OK,
after three days, we are ready to go, they are ready to go, another comes, who became my very close friend later, you know him, and he said: “Professor Matejic I came to ask you a favor.” I said: “Ask.” He said: “You do have permission for your filming?” I said: “Yes.” “What are you doing with your films, how many you have?” I said: “Six thousand.”

“What are you doing?”

“We are taking to Thessaloniki and then send by air to Columbus.’

He said: “I would like to ask you … we were working here without anybody’s permission. And we understand, we are informed that we’ll be searched at the frontier, and all our films will be taken away from us. Would you, please, take our films with you to Columbus and then ship to us?” I said: “No.” “Ah,” he said, ”I was a fool even to ask.” I said: “Wait a minute. I’m not going to take the films to Columbus. We are going to take your films to Thessaloniki. We are going to ship our films. We are going to Munich from here, and I’ll pay Predrag trip from Munich to Belgrade to take your films, but on one condition. I want a receipt from there.” So he did. Predrag and I went to Munich; Predrag went to Belgrade, took their films and gave them. The person who received them was a member of Academy, Irina Grickat, and she signed the receipt. Because, they were also throwing stones in our direction all the time. Even now, during the 5th Conference.

Twarog: Well, this is…. Somehow, I get the impression that their collection, because they didn’t take care of it, is sort of disintegrated and is not of much value.

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5 The number of rolls was closer to 3,400. We had over 60 kilograms of rolls of film.
Father Mateja: I don’t know about that… But they did, it was in a newspaper “Politika” during the 5th Conference that “it is evident that Hilandar Committee of the Academy consider us as their rivals, as their competition.”

Twarog: That was actually put in the paper?

Father Mateja: Yes. It was in September, last year [2002].

Twarog: Yeah. This is very weird. Here you have the leading academic organization getting involved in something …, but it just points out all these things that we’ve had happened, and all the various kinds of pressure that go on. So, right now I guess the question I have now; maybe you’ve explained, you have these three monasteries – the Slavic ones, Zograf is the…

Father Mateja: Bulgarian

Twarog: …Bulgarian one. Then you have a Russian one.

Father Mateja: St. Panteleimon.

Twarog: St. Panteleimon, and then the Serbian one.

Father Mateja: Hilandar.

Twarog: Then the rest are Greek?

Father Mateja: Yes. Well, according to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Greek government in general, all monasteries are Greek because they are on the Greek territory.

Twarog: Yeah.
Father Mateja: That is bad. We, in our slide show in the Hilandar Room, we say historically they were three Slavic: St. Panteleimon, Hilandar, and Zograf, which they don’t like at all. But historically they are. Hilandar was built by Serbian ruler, Stefan the First Crowned, his father, Simon, previously Stefan Nemanja, and Sava, previously Rastko. St. Panteleimon was populated with hundreds of Russians, and it is a Russian monastery in that sense, historically and traditionally. That it is on the Greek territory …

I would like to use comparison. If you have a stable where there is a horse and a cow, you won’t say, because it is a horse stable, cow is also a horse. Cow is cow. But, they are very sensitive to that question of nationality. By the way, all the monks have to be officially Greek citizens, even if they are Serbs, even if they, whatever they are. They have to be Greek citizens in order to stay on Mount Athos. But, it is a question that is not very old. At the beginning Mount Athos was primarily an Orthodox, and they called themselves Hagiorites, not Russian, not Serbian, not Bulgarian, Hagiorites, agion oros in Greek means Holy Mount. Hagiorites is a citizen or inhabitant of the Holy Mount.

Twarog: Would you spell that? The typist will need to know…

Father Mateja: Which, Hagiorites?

[Back and forth with the spelling.]

Twarog: OK. Fine, very good, we just needed to have it when the typist types this up, you know. Now, as for all the other monasteries outside of the three, are really Greek, so Great Lavra monastery is…

Father Mateja: The oldest.
Twarog: It is the oldest, and because you have some manuscripts….

Father Mateja: Yeah, we have from Lavra and we have from Iviron. 6 Iviron used to be Georgian monastery, but it is now Greek because … when there are only at last seven monks in a monastery, it is taken over by Greeks.

Twarog: All right. So, that one… this is where you get some manuscripts from there. Now, you made three trips, is that right, or there were four trips that you’ve made?

Father Mateja: We made three trips altogether for the project. 7

Twarog: For the project. Now, because, somewhere in this text you mention 1985, it probably means 1975. The last time you were…

Father Mateja: No, the last time I was in the ’85, but not for the project. I just visited Mount Athos.

Twarog: Ah. OK, I guess that’s not clear somewhere. So, you just went on a visit to Mount Athos?

Father Mateja: Yeah. That was the last time I was visiting.

Twarog: That’s the last time. But, for the project it was…

Father Mateja: ’75.

Twarog: Yea, ’75 was the last one and Predrag was there with you, and he stayed for about a month, and then you stayed on and did watermarks.

Father Mateja: Yes.

Twarog: That’s correct. Yeah. OK, now, we have the matter of the manuscripts that we got then from Andrija Jakovljević, and he is formerly from the School of Music, and why did he leave Ohio State, do you remember? Or what were his connections?

Father Mateja: He could not acclimatize here because he has lived and still lives now in Cyprus, in Greece, so much that he is mentally and in every sense, he is a Greek now. And

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6 Microfilms of manuscripts from these two monasteries on Mount Athos.
7 There were four trips on behalf of the project: January 1970 (exploratory), 6 weeks in the summer of 1970 (1st photographic expedition, with Walt Craig), 6 weeks in the summer of 1971 (2nd photographic expedition, with P. Matejic), and Fall of 1975. A later trip, in 1985, was for the most part private.
he just could not stay away from Greece. But he had some problems, of a personal nature, and then he was expelled from Greece, and went on Cyprus, and he is now director of an institution that is doing similar things that we are doing, microfilming and so on. But, on Cyprus only.

Twarog: Yeah, that’s the only place. So, I just wondered, because then you comment on the fact that he probably got the manuscripts that he sold to us…

Father Mateja: No, microfilms.

Twarog: Oh, microfilms. Microfilms. Sold microfilms to us that may have come from the Patristic Institute.

Father Mateja: I believe so; I believe so, because it was obvious that they were not original films but copies of films. Then, he had a very close relationship with the Patristic Institute, and it was much easier to pay a small amount. And some of these microfilms, not microfilms, but we did not get the complete manuscripts on microfilms, so, I’m sure that he bought it, not microfilmed it. But he did microfilm in Iviron for us.

Twarog: He did.

Father Mateja: Yeah. And in Lavra. He did.
Twarog: So, it’s good. You got the Greek, [that is] the Slavic manuscripts\(^8\) out of those monasteries. Do we have all the Slavic manuscripts on Mount Athos? You think they are now in the Hilandar Room?

Father Mateja: No, no. I don’t think so because we had no access to other Greek monasteries and there is a possibility that they also have some Slavic. Because, in addition to some Slavic scribes in these monasteries, it is quite clear from the manuscript 525 that monks of Hilandar sometimes had to borrow money from other monasteries and they used manuscripts as security, gave them manuscripts as a security that they will repay them back.

Twarog: Pay them money back.

Father Mateja: That is the case with so-called *Andronicus Gospel*, which has golden initials and it is in the manuscript 525. So, I believe that some monasteries have Slavic manuscripts from Hilandar as a warranty, as a…

Twarog: Money that was never paid back.

Father Mateja: Yeah. And so they may have it. But we had no access.

Twarog: Yeah. Well, I think it’s interesting this whole business of using that as a security, you know, as a collateral…in the _____ sense of that term.

\(^8\) Not manuscripts, of course, but microfilms of manuscripts.
Father Mateja: Yeah, collateral, that’s the word

Twarog: But here is the Slavic manuscript as a collateral. Fine, so I think I just wanted to clear up that particular point. I’d like to move on to, since you have a description of most of these things and equipment, and how some of these things started, and then get to the first conference at the dedication, which was in 1978. And I think, as I remembered, one thing that we did, that was unusual is that we had all the faculty members in academic gowns, which never happens here, it happens only at commencement. We made this “show” I suppose so the faculty had long robes like the bishops. And, in any case, I think it was a good kind of thing to do at that time, and so in any case I think and you describe all of this and I think we have programs and various other things and you can tell how much money was raised and so forth. I think the other thing is we had Father Mitrofan. Wasn’t he a childhood friend of yours?

Father Mateja: Yes. Yes. Father Mitrofan was my childhood friend, and we were together in Italy, then we were together in Germany, but he was in Munich and I was in, first in Lingen, then other cities as chaplain, but we kept in touch all the time.

Twarog: That’s interesting, because how much often depends on this personal relationship. Now, when you were photographing, for example, you didn’t have, at Hilandar, you didn’t have monks standing next to you.

Father Mateja: No.

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9 Lingen Ems, (West) Germany
Twarog: You went in, you got the manuscripts and used one and brought one out and so forth?

Father Mateja: No, that is the usual way, but they trusted us so much that we would take immediately five, eight, ten, depending on the size of the manuscript, and then …because librarian had some other things to do and it was even easier for him. But normally, in Zograf when bishop Hrisostom and I microfilmed, there was the monk all the time standing there, when we finish one manuscript he takes it, takes in the library, brings another we tell him.

Twarog: Yeah.

Father Mateja: But not in Hilandar. We were trusted.

Twarog: Well, you had a childhood friend, you were also a priest, you know, this whole thing makes a big difference and sort of entree into something of this kind. It’s a matter of trust. So I just wanted to check on that. All right. Then, do you think … another point I think, way back on page 26 and so of this thing, we go forward because you have all of this information in here…. One thing is the Father Mitrofan, who was here for the celebration and the …. We need to stop right now.

This will be the other side….

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10 Father Hrisostom was librarian at Hilandar Monastery in the early 1970s. Later he became a bishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church. At this time he was a monk (hieromonk) only.
And the other thing I think is a question and close to the end of these various pages, well, page 26 I have…or so… And I think also again on page 25 statement that the “last time Predrag and I visited Mount Athos, that was “1985,” that was 1975.

Father Mateja: ’75.

Twarog: ’75. But when you went in ’85, you went on a visit all by yourself.

Father Mateja: No, no ’75 definitely.

Twarog: So, the major visits are those at that point. Now the other thing is I think on that page we ought to identify some of the people. Now, we have Professor Fol, 11 who at that time was minister of education.

Father Mateja: ____?

Twarog: Professor Fol

Father Mateja: Ah, Professor Fol. Yes, he was a professor of education

Twarog: Minister of education…. 

11 Alexandr Fol was Minister of Education of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria during the 1980s. By profession he was a professor of archeology.
Father Mateja: In Bulgaria.

Twarog: In Bulgaria. Because, I remember when I talked to him, that’s how we started the Paissi professorship.

Father Mateja: Yes.

Twarog: Because, someone, and it must have been professor Dinekov or maybe someone else arranged for me to have lunch with him. I remember I was going into the Soviet Union and stopped on the way. And I left at the airport. I was taking a copying machine to Moscow. I left it in a big bag, suitcase at the airport, but I had lunch with him and we talked about Bulgarian studies in the United States, and I said: “You know, you have four to six students average a year. That’s all officially listed. There are more studying, but we don’t have any record of it.” So I told him how, if he established a professorship, we would have Bulgarian taught at OSU forever. And he said: “I like the idea, we’ll do it.”

B SIDE OF THE TAPE

Twarog: So, we were talking about professor Fol, and to see what happened. And so we’ve tried. I wanted to touch a bit on C. ‘s visit when he came [to Columbus]. It seems to me, of course he’s the one who way back when was a … you had problems with him, who called the Patriarch himself and so forth and teaching at Brookline, a very powerful man, seems to be all over the place. But he came to visit, whether he came on his own or wanted to come -

12 Pet’r Dinekov, member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.
I seem to think that you invited him or he sort of called or something he wanted to come and to see what was happening with all the materials that have been gathered. I think he did visit the Hilandar Room. He was going to fly back the same night and this is when you said or Father Sarris said that the people are waiting for you, you know, they want to see you, and that’s why he stayed overnight and we went to Fishermen’s Wharf restaurant, where I remember all the waiters sang, and the candlelight…

Father Mateja: Yes, you know his visit was related to Father Sarris, who was his student at one time and who was his acquaintance at least if not friend, But, once in Columbus it is quite possible that Father Sarris told him something, and then… whether he was in Hilandar Room I don’t know, I wasn’t there.

Twarog: I think he was.

Father Mateja: I don’t know, but we did have supper together, Father Sarris, you, professor Christou, and I, in Fisherman’s Wharf.

Twarog: I remember he came because he wanted to see what happened with all these microfilms. What was the result, I mean, he followed this… for all those years in many ways and when he came in, he wanted to check on things, but he was going to go back same day. I don’t think he gave a lecture or anything; he just came for a visit, it seems. To check on things. Then I think it was Father Sarris that said that people wanted to see him and that they had a big breakfast plan for him and so forth and so on, and he warmed up a little bit
and then in Fishermen’s Wharf he warmed up quite a bit, so it shows what a little bit of wine can do sometimes; it’s good for diplomatic efforts. But again, it shows the kinds of problems that get connected with anything touching the Europeans, as to how they feel about things and how we feel about things, and every European country remembers when they were great, I remember the Poles, they remember when they were from the Baltic to the Black Sea as if this was the greatest thing that ever happened. If they all figured the greatest expansion when there was greater this or that or the other is the most important thing, I don’t know where would we be in the world. But, I think he came and saw it, and this was the visit that he had. I think the last item that we have is the question of the boycotting of that, the fifth congress by the Serbian segment of the Academy of Sciences.

Father Mateja: Yes. Well, the third conference was in Belgrade, and it was with the Academy of Sciences. I suggested that the fifth be held not in Belgrade, not in a big city, but in Raška, which is the cradle of Serbia, and Miroljub Joković made outstanding arrangements from the comments that we had from participants, they think that it was the best ever conference they attended. The good thing is that we held it not in a city, we held it on the top of the mountain Kopaonik, very high. There were no other attractions, and that is why the attendance of the conference was 100%. People did not have any place to go to shop or see. We had sixty participants from nine countries with one of the bishop of that area, bishop Artemije who was every day there: the first one to come, the last one to go. Also, the people saw monasteries. It was excellent. However, everybody noticed that the number of Serbian scholars participating was the smallest, just a few from Novi Sad, none
from Belgrade.\textsuperscript{13} I learned from some people who were witnesses of that, that member of the Academy of Sciences, I don’t know if that is true, but it appears that it is, Dimitrije Stefanović, who was often a guest of our Hilandar Room and for whom we did a lot, was…

Twarog: Is he the one who asked me that famous….

Father Mateja: Yes, they are the same, that he organized boycott. The reason he organized boycott is that \textit{(restricted)}.

Twarog: Well, it seems very sad in many ways, but it just points out again,… all these people they claim to, you know, various aspects of this particular project and now we have, I think as you probably notice, in connection with the football championship, that there was a full page advertisement in the Dispatch listing other areas in which Ohio State excelled. And one of them, a fifth or sixth item on the list is the fact that the OSU Library is twelfth or thirteenth on the list of the National Research Libraries in standing, and the two things mentioned specifically were: first, the fact that the Hilandar Research Library has the largest collection of Slavic manuscripts on microfilm in the world.

Father Mateja: Yes.

Twarog: That was one thing, and the other was the discussion of the cartoon collection as a special collection. But I think what’s interesting is when we talk about the library, what’s

\textsuperscript{13} There were, in fact, two librarians from the National Library of Serbia, in Belgrade.
unusual about it and what has standing, not only in this country but all over the world, it turns out to be The Hilandar Research Library.

Father Mateja: I would like to…Still I don’t remember the name of the dean who was in Spain at the conference.. When he came back he said: “Well, Mateja, you put OSU on the world map.” I said: “I don’t know what you mean?” He said: “I was at the conference and I was talking to the colleague and I said ‘Well, I’m from the Ohio State University, you don’t know about it.’ He said ‘Oh, I do know, you have Hilandar Room’”
Yea, it is now definitely a name in the world scholarship.

Twarog: Something that started small that we had hoped that would improve, and I think this is where your efforts and Predrag’s…

Father Mateja: And yours.

Twarog: …and you were taking over afterwards… Mine was spacing things, but you know the matter of getting these things depended on you and Predrag, so it was a team effort, and I’m happy I could manage to help with funds or trying to get space and things of that kind. So, we each did what we can do, best in I think the team, without being jealous of each other, and simply working for the good of the whole project.

Father Mateja: And I think you know, you do realize that ‘cause we have something from this; it puts us on a higher level, but the world has something. You realize that Mount Athos
is inaccessible to women scholars, and now they have it here. The other important thing: suppose a scholar is working on his subject and there is one manuscript in Sweden, one on Sinai, another in Jerusalem, another in Belgrade, another on Mount Athos. He has to go to all these places. Now we have all that here in one room, and it is an enormous help for scholarship.

Twarog: Well, there’s no question about it, and I think…so, we trust this is going to continue, and I think this is probably all we need because we supplied so much information you know in the written reports and in our previous discussions and the questions and answers. So, I think we can conclude this at this point and you’ll get a transcript of the text, and can correct and fill in the names or whatever is necessary.

Father Mateja: OK

Twarog: And then we can do some editing, it might be necessary, little bit here of some spelling things and things of that kind even that’s not the most important….

Father Mateja: And these dates have to be corrected.

Twarog: Yea, those dates and so forth. But, I think that’s a minor thing. What is important that we get this kind of information down so people in the future don’t think that: so Father Matejic and Predrag went to Mount Athos, they photographed and came back and have all these manuscripts.

Father Mateja: That’s it.

Twarog: As if, you know, anybody who wants to, any time, to do it, and it simply is not so.
Father Mateja: It wasn’t easy.

Twarog: And I think this is why…this is all so very important.

OK, well thanks very much for coming in today Mateja.

Father Mateja: Thank you Leon, thank you very much.