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UDC 322(497.17)

## POLITICAL IMPACT AND “MACEDONIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (MOC)” IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

**Abstract:** After World War II, multi-religious and multi-national socialist Yugoslavia faced the need to resolve the complex national issue or actually to bring it into accord and make closer to the internal, but also to the international goals and interests of the Yugoslav state. Its atheistic-secularist nature basically conditioned its relationship to the religious communities in the state, whose “potentials” should be controlled, directed and used in a desirable way. The state, actually, supported the secular (non-church) principle by which every nation should have its own Church, striving in time directly, consistently and firmly to exert influence on its application in practice as such. Taking such activities, it disregarded the church reasons and needs, what particularly made a negative impact on the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC). The Roman Catholic Church (RCC), as the second church (religious) community in the country by the number of its believers, recognised that its interests coincided with such endeavours and activities of the state. It discretely supported the political process of gaining of “autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church” (MOC).

*Key words:* Yugoslav State, atheism, Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), “Macedonian Orthodox Church” (MOC), Roman Catholic Church (RCC).

### Introduction

The gradual, but deep relativisation of moral and social values in former Yugoslavia (FPRY and SFRY) logically resulted from its secularist-atheistic nature, the attempts to revise the painful historical facts and the unprincipled position of the state to its religious communities. The direct “management” of the state even in the religious field in time had shaped the social assumptions in such a way that after the break-up of the state and

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its ideological system they led to the open social and war conflict.<sup>2</sup> *De facto*, communist Yugoslavia discredited in public and marginalised the social position and influence of the religious communities, its representatives and believers in the name of ideology. In its acting, it only looked out for its own interests behaving in a manipulative way and neglecting the basic church and pastoral reasons and needs of the religious communities. In that sense, the state pursued a repressive policy that in time gained most varied manifestation forms (tacit neglect of the obligations it had taken, threats and blackmailing, pressures and impelling to the establishment of co-operation, murders). It had not changed basically and conceptually until the final collapse of former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. Actually, all the time it strove towards taking control over the activities of the religious communities and of aiming their acting in the direction that suited it. The state considered the religious communities a significant instrument of influence, shaping and resolving of the national issue in its territory.

### The relationship of the state to religious communities

In spite of the Law on Religious Communities that had formally treated them equally the Yugoslav state took an unprincipled position not treating all religious communities equally. In that regard, the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) had especially negative experiences, which for this fact was in a rather unenviable social position. The state mostly neglected its vital needs and interests striving to influence “inside” the relationships within SOC, especially through the established Priest Associations as the main instrument for separating the church “leadership from the common people” with the aim of strengthening its ideological influence. On the other hand, in spite of very difficult personnel and financial conditions under which it had existed and acted after World War II, assuming Christian ideals, pastoral needs and the vision of social peace and co-existence SOC took a clear co-operative position to the state. This resulted from its conscious determination, but also from the rather repressive policy of the state. The first misunderstandings and differences in their mutual relations resulted from the political decision of the state leadership to proclaim “the Macedonian Orthodox Church” (MOC) autocephalous in July 1967 as well as from neglecting of some requirements that were of vital importance for SOC (not making possible building of the Saint Sava Church at Vračar for many decades, tacit disregard of the pressures and unlawful acts against SOC in Croatia and Kosovo and Metohija). In spite of that, SOC served as an example to all other religious communities in Yugoslavia how to regulate their relationships with the state. It tolerantly accepted its difficult position for the purpose of establishing co-operation with the state that would serve to achieve the vision of general social well-being. On the other hand, e.g., at first, representatives of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) in the country had taken an opposed and conflicting position to the state justifying

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<sup>2</sup> Николић Марко, *Екуменски односи Српске православне и Римокатоличке цркве од 1962–2000. године*, Службени гласник, Београд, 2011, стр. 646.

it by the need to criticise its atheistic and ideological nature. In that period, they also faced with a very repressive policy of the state. However, after the initiative from the Vatican in the late 1960s and in the mid-1970s, which accepted the then state and political leadership the two factors conducted a more intensive dialogue arranging their mutual relations and finally establishing concealed co-operation, which in time implied making more and more concessions to RCC. For example, in the mid-1970s the Yugoslav state enabled the Vatican to totally independently from it make decisions on some church issues, which even had to do with the state sovereignty. In this way, the state gave up the principles of the policy it had applied until then to the religious communities. One can recognise in this a compromise that was made and in some sense a kind of “religious and practical partnership”. In the similar case, for instance, the state acted in a different way when the Greek Church opposed to gaining of autocephaly by MOC, since it treated it as a matter of internal policy.

### State influence and support to MOC

The religious conditions in Macedonia during the 1960s were characterised above all, by the attempt to make schism within SOC, which was mostly caused by the Yugoslav state leadership. Taking as a starting point the national criterion it initiated the question of “making MOC independent” being quite aware of the fact that SOC could not accept it.<sup>3</sup> The presence of the state could particularly be noticed during the Church-Public Meeting in Ohrid in October 1958. Then, it had been decided to restore the Ohrid Archdiocese and autonomy of the “Macedonian Orthodox Church” (MOC). The Synod of SOC agreed with such a decision in May 1959 since “MOC has retained unity in canon law with SOC recognising Serbian Patriarch German as its own”.<sup>4</sup> It is of vital importance to mention that SOC, assuming the church principle of “iconomy” (indulgence based on “love”), agreed with the mentioned “autonomy”, although it was not fully in accordance with the canon law criteria.<sup>5</sup> From this historical distance, it can be said that the political factor abused its principally well-intentioned, tolerant and pluralist position, what was not an excuse for SOC itself to be partly responsible for its own naiveness. Some theologians would say that it logically resulted from the deviation from purely theological postulates. Metropolitan of Dabro-Bosnia Nektarije pointed out that the autonomy of “MOC is an internal matter”, while the question of its autocephaly goes beyond state borders and requires the agreement of other Orthodox churches.<sup>6</sup> He alluded to the

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<sup>3</sup> „Однос између Српске и Македонске Цркве—Кратак историјски преглед“, Информације Савезне комисије за верска питања, СИВ, 22. март 1966, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 100, архивска јединица 639.

<sup>4</sup> „Забелешка о разговору председника Мораче са члановима Архијерејског Сабора СПЦ“, Савезна комисија за верска питања, СИВ, поверљиво, бр. 208/66, 20. мај 1966, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 95, 1966, стр. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

pressure made by the Yugoslav state. Metropolitan of Zagreb-Ljubljana made clear that SOC “has always kept in mind the development of brotherhood and unity of our peoples” taking this into account also when the decision was made in 1959, while “MOC” did not respect those principles. Like Metropolitan of Montenegro-Primorje Danilo, he was of the opinion that “MOC should openly say what it wants and not to make its Constitution even six times”.<sup>7</sup> Within SOC, an opinion prevailed that it should meet the nature and interests of the political system, by which it obviously expected reciprocity. Bishop of Žiča Vasilije pointed out that when he had talked to Macedonian Metropolitan Dositej he had an impression that “MOC does not want to keep the unity with SOC”, while Bishop of Zahum-Herzegovina Vladislav believed that “MOC behaves like an autocephalous church” asking that other Orthodox churches should be informed about that by sending a “peace letter”.<sup>8</sup> Bishop of Braničevo Hrizostom remarked that “the autonomy of MOC” was accepted by the decision of the Synod of SOC, while Patriarch German tried to observe this problem through the prism of “good relations” with the Greek Church and Constantinople Patriarchate, which should not be endangered for this problem. As the representatives of the Yugoslav government confirmed he pointed out that most of the Serbian Bishops were willing to agree that “MOC” should gain autocephaly, by which, after this, it should “not have anything in common with SOC”.<sup>9</sup> The credibility of this statement should be considered with reserve, especially keeping in mind the fact that this affected “the interests of the state”.<sup>10</sup> It is important to stress that then President of the Federal Commission for Religious Issues Milutin Morača made attempts to convince the Serbian Bishops that the state would not permit “MOC to go over to any other Church” pointing that SOC should above all, focus on the problem of “expansion of RCC in the areas where SOC has been dominant”.<sup>11</sup> One can also see here that the attention of SOC should be focused on another problem recognising its principally manipulative approach to SOC. By all this, it should be pointed to the fact that the representatives of the state made pressure on the Synod of SOC to make a decision recognising that “MOC” had brought into accord its Constitution with the recommendations adopted by the Synod of SOC in 1959. Some Serbian Bishops opposed to this considering it a “precedent”.<sup>12</sup>

In May 1966, the Synod of SOC stated that “the Synod of MOC has accepted the recommendations of the Synod of SOC from June 1959 and has brought into accord its Constitution” with them, by which “MOC has made arrangements concerning its

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, стр. 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, стр. 5.

<sup>12</sup> „Информација о раду редовног заседања Архијерејског сабора СПЦ од 11. до 23. маја 1966. године“, Савезна комисија за верска питања, СИВ, поверљиво, бр. 261/1, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 95, 1966, стр. 3.

organisation keeping unity with SOC through the Serbian Patriarch.<sup>13</sup> In this way, in practice, the Patriarch remained the only connection between SOC and "MOC". It is of special importance to point out that the principle that "MOC" could not change its Constitution without an agreement of the Synod of SOC had been affirmed and accepted by both parts.<sup>14</sup> However, immediately after that the Synod of "MOC" expressed its discontent with the fact that its demand for autocephaly was rejected.<sup>15</sup> The Yugoslav state acted this time in an unprincipled way emphasising that SOC was "forced" to make such a decision so to not to "cause separation" recognising also that "MOC got its national Church gaining almost fully independence", which was reflected in "all autocephalous rights" of the Macedonian Metropolitan and the Synod of MOC, which were limited by Patriarch German as the supreme head of both churches.<sup>16</sup> It temporarily respected the canon law fact, since SOC, as the mother church was "the only one authorised to grant autocephaly to MOC" as well as that all other Orthodox churches should agree with that. However, as early as in the second half of 1966 in the talks with Patriarch German the Yugoslav state kept on insisting on the "Macedonian reality" by which "SOC and MOC have nothing in common" emphasising "the fact" that SOC "would lose nothing" by granting autocephaly to "MOC".<sup>17</sup> Patriarch German and Bishop of Šabac-Valjevo Jovan pointed to the authorities that the Synod of SOC would and could not agree with the autocephaly of MOC persisting that "the autonomy of MOC" was the only acceptable solution, which was also in "the interest of ecumenism" that strove to bringing churches close together and not to their "separation".<sup>18</sup> The authorities were, however, persistent in their position that "MOC has the right to make this demand because it had its clergy, language and the national characteristic, by which the "hard" position of SOC "only harms its reputation in the Orthodox world".<sup>19</sup> As for the negative reactions of the Greek Church concerning the autocephaly of "MOC", the authorities pointed out that "nobody has the right to interfere in church affairs off the religious communities in the country".<sup>20</sup> They obviously kept this right for themselves, disregarding the church reasons. On the other hand, in comparison with such acting of the state, the Vatican and the Roman Catholic Church was gradually enabled to take interdependently from the state some decisions concerning appointments of higher clergy. In this way, in practice, the state abandoned

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>18</sup> „Забелешка о разговору са Патријархом Германом“, Савезна комисија за верска питања, СИБ, поверљиво, бр. 379, 26. октобар 1966. године, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 95, 1966.

<sup>19</sup> „Забелешка о разговору Петра Шегвића са епископом шабачко-ваљевским Јованом“, Савезна комисија за верска питања, СИБ, поверљиво, бр. 390/66, 5. новембар 1966, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 95, 1966, стр. 2.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem.*

the legal principles of the Law on Religious Communities that had been implemented in the country until then.

On 8 November 1966, at the celebration of the October Revolution in the Soviet Embassy in Belgrade Patriarch German met with Macedonian Metropolitan Dositej who was in white "gown."<sup>21</sup> He wished to leave the celebration but did not do this because he did not want "to make any incidents".<sup>22</sup> This event also proves great tolerance shown by SOC. However, the Patriarch "reproached the Russians" for inviting Metropolitan Dositej at the reception because he was not head of an autocephalous church, and especially because the invitation was not sent through the Serbian Patriarchate.<sup>23</sup> It was on this occasion too, that the representative of the Yugoslav authorities persistently asserted that "MOC" should be granted autocephaly suggesting to Patriarch German to do so in order to prevent convening of the Synod of "MOC and unilateral proclamation of its autocephaly".<sup>24</sup> The Patriarch asked for not taking any hasty decision that would make SOC initiate a church-disciplinary action against MOC and inform about all this other Orthodox churches. He stressed that "the separation was neither suitable for the Church nor for the state". By all this, he characterised "the autonomy of MOC" as appropriate and justified, pointing out that the issue of autocephaly is "the one only the church should deal with".<sup>25</sup> He took the same position in early 1967.<sup>26</sup> It can be concluded that Patriarch German believed that all factors in the whole process could in time become willing to respect the canon law norms of the Orthodox Church and that this was an open, tolerant and compromise approach. The alternative is the assumption that he was forced to do that. One should also know that the representatives of the republic authorities in Croatia principally supported their Macedonian colleagues in their demand for autocephaly of "MOC" taking into consideration only some possible political consequences that could be caused by the schism between SOC and "MOC".<sup>27</sup> Within this context, in 1967, President of the Federal Executive Council (FIC) Petar Stambolić stressed that SOC should, like RCC, "adjust" to the contemporary social trends, what would in this case mean "taking a more flexible

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<sup>21</sup> White gown is worn only by head of a church.

<sup>22</sup> „Забелешка о разговору Петра Шегвића са Патријархом Германом“, Савезна комисија за верска питања, СИБ, поверљиво, бр. 421/66, 17. новембар 1966, Београд, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 97, 1966, стр. 1.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, стр. 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, стр. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Белешке из разговора председника СИБ Петра Стамболића са Патријархом Германом и члановима Синода СПЦ, Митрополитом црногорско–приморским Данилом и Епископом далматинским Стефаном“, Савезна комисија за верска питања, СИБ, поверљиво, бр. 120/67, 7. март 1967, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 103, 1967.

<sup>27</sup> „Записник са седнице Комисије Хрватске 22. децембра 1966. године“, Републичка комисија за верска питања Хрватске, СИБ, поверљиво, бр. 08–219/1–1966, Загреб, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 102, архивска јединица 655, 1967.

position to MOC".<sup>28</sup> From the present aspect, his position looks outrageous when he said that the Yugoslav state "did not interfere in the dispute that was harmful for both Churches" as well as that FIC "could not influence" the political leadership of Macedonia in this matter.<sup>29</sup> It should be qualified as hypocritical.

Although the Synod of SOC had rejected the demand for autocephaly of "MOC" at its meeting which took place on 23 May 1967, at the new Church-Public Meeting in Macedonia it was unilaterally proclaimed as early as from 17-19 July 1967.<sup>30</sup> Patriarch German explained that SOC had to reject the demand of "MOC" since conditions provided by the canon law were not fulfilled for gaining of its autocephaly. For this reason, the Synod of SOC would pronounce it a schismatic church.<sup>31</sup> Regardless of the unambiguous and irrefutable church-canon law arguments, President of the Commission for Religious Issues of FIC responded that the "demand of MOC was justified" emphasising that the whole issue was not only a church but a political one with significant implications for the national relations in the country.<sup>32</sup> The positions taken by Bishops of SOC in the newly-created situation differed not only methodologically but substantially, too. Bishop of Šumadija Valerijan thought that SOC should act "tolerantly" and that its Synod would not make a decision on "canon law dismissal" of its schismatic part in Macedonia. Bishop of Braničevo Hrizostom, who was characterised as the "most progressive" by the authorities was of the opinion that the Synod of SOC would support the decision of "MOC", while Bishops of Žiča Vasilije and of Timok Emilijan, respectively, together with Patriarch German remained consistent in their position that was taken by SOC.<sup>33</sup> Also, Bishop of Raška-Prizren Pavle and Bishop of Srem Makarije were "resolutely against granting of autocephaly to MOC".<sup>34</sup> Bishop of Niš Jovan believed that in spite of the unilateral decision of "MOC", schism would probably not occur, while Bishop of Šabac-Valjevo Jovan pointed out that "MOC" should wait for "a better moment" after the appointment of the Greek Archbishop.<sup>35</sup> Bishop of Banat Visarion inclined to recognising autocephaly of MOC, emphasising that no one could expect from the Synod

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<sup>28</sup> „Белешке из разговора председника СИВ Петра Стамболића са Патријархом Германом и члановима Синода СПЦ, Митрополитом црногорско-приморским Данилом и Епископом далматинским Стефаном“, *ibidem*.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, стр. 5.

<sup>30</sup> „Забелешка председника Савезне комисије за верска питања Мила Јовићевића“, СИВ, поверљиво, бр. 299/67, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 104, 1967.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>32</sup> „Забелешка о разговору председника Савезне комисије за верска питања са Патријархом Германом, Митрополитом црногорско-приморским Данилом и Епископом сремским Макаријем“, 1. јул 1967, СИВ, Београд, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 104, 1967.

<sup>33</sup> „Информација о разговорима са Епископима СПЦ обављеним пред заседање Сабора по питању односа између СПЦ и МПЦ“, Републичка комисија за верска питања Србије, СИВ, строго поверљиво, бр. 10, 26. мај 1967, Београд, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 104, 1967.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*.

of SOC to do such a thing. Bishop of Bačka Nikanor was indeterminate and uncertain taking a similar position.<sup>36</sup> Patriarch German remained resolute that SOC “must respect the canon law” pointing out that if “MOC” proclaimed autocephaly by itself this could lead to “a religious war”.<sup>37</sup> He proposed that the whole problem should be resolved by the highest representatives of the two churches, stressing that when the state interfered in church affairs “the church ceases to be a church”.<sup>38</sup> President Jovičević responded that in that case “this was not the question of interference but of co-operation”.<sup>39</sup> It was obvious that the autonomy of MOC was the maximum concession SOC remained willing to give, by which such a position had its strongpoint in church and canon law reasons and arguments. On the other hand, the Yugoslav state remained persistent in its formally “partnership” relationship with SOC, which was actually hypocritical and hostile.

In late August 1967, Patriarch German repeated to the President of FIC Mika Špiljak that according to the canon law no Orthodox church could recognise the church that had seceded as an autocephalous unless “the mother Church agrees with that”.<sup>40</sup> Before the meeting of the Extraordinary Synod of SOC in 1967 Bishop Emilijan, together with Bishops Valerijan and Nikanor, respectively, managed to persuade most bishops of SOC to take a “moderate” decision, unlike Bishops of Žiča Vasilije and of Dalmacija Boca, who advocated the idea that bishops of “MOC” should be stripped of their ranks and that MOC should be proclaimed a schismatic church.<sup>41</sup> “A moderate decision” was supported by Bishops of Slavonija Simeon, of Braničevo Hrizostom, of Raška-Prizren Pavle, of Zvornik-Tuzla Longin, respectively, and Metropolitan of Dobro-Bosnia Vladislav, who made a “sketch” that was adopted by the Synod of SOC.<sup>42</sup> On that occasion Bishop Boca pointed to the “interference of the state in this matter” and to the committed “error” since “in a state, there can exist only one autocephalous church.” He confirmed that “for the time being” SOC had made a decision “not to deteriorate the existing situation” taking into consideration the interests of the state as well.<sup>43</sup> On this occasion too, the Serbian

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>37</sup> „Забелешка о разговору председника СКВП Јовићевића са патријархом Германом“, Савезна комисија за верска питања, СИБ, поверљиво, бр. 257, Београд, 10. јун 1967, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 104, 1967.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>40</sup> „Забелешка о разговору председника СИБ Мике Шпиљка са Патријархом Германом“, Савезна комисија за верска питања, СИБ, поверљиво, бр. 318/67, 29. август 1967, Београд, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 104, 1967, стр. 3.

<sup>41</sup> „Забелешка о разговору Ивана Лазића са епископом пакрачким Емилијаном Мариновићем“, Републичка комисија за верска питања Хрватске, СИБ, поверљиво, бр. 08–61/1–1968, 9. мај 1968, Загреб, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 110, 1968.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>43</sup> „Забелешка о разговору са епископом шибенским Боцом на дан 14. јула 1968. године“, Републичка комисија за верска питања Хрватске, СИБ, поверљиво, бр. 08–197/1–1968, 25. септембар 1968, Загреб, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 112, 1968, стр. 2.



Orthodox Church remained consistent in its position that with its spirit of reconciliation it would make the state change the course and accept a compromise. At the Extraordinary Meeting of the Synod of SOC that took place on 14 and 15 September 1967 the bishops agreed “that MOC arbitrary and in a way which was not in accordance with the canon law seceded from its Mother Church turning into a schismatic organisation.” For this reason, it was decided “to cease religious and canon law communication” with its clergy authorising the Synod of SOC to “bring charges against those guilty for the schism”.<sup>44</sup> It is important to emphasise that on this occasion it was decided that SOC “would not cease communication with the faithful people from Macedonia” and that students from this Republic could keep on enrolling at the Faculty of Theology of SOC.<sup>45</sup> After the Synod of SOC had submitted a report the Synod of the Greek Church very severely condemned “the act of proclaiming autocephaly of MOC”, after which on 19 March 1968 the Synod of SOC made a decision to initiate a church-disciplinary actions against the highest representatives of “MOC”. Bishop of Žiča Vasilije was appointed the prosecutor.<sup>4</sup> Since it had no other choice SOC decided to take disciplinary measures considering high church representatives in Macedonia schismatics and not believers. The position of the Greek Church exerted a great influence on taking such a position. The lower clergy of SOC from the diocese of Dalmacija and Slavonija thought that the Orthodox Church should not be “divided” at the time when Christian churches promoted “ecumenism and unity”. They were of the opinion that the bishops of “MOC” should be striped of their ranks.<sup>47</sup> It is particularly important to point to the statement made by Patriarch German during his talks with high official in Serbia Đurica Jojkić in May 1968 – “I wish to die, you don’t understand that you are doing injustice to us”. Jojkić responded that “the autocephaly of MOC is unavoidable and the matter is

<sup>44</sup> „Одлука Архијерејског Сабора СПЦ по питању проглашења аутокефалности МПЦ од 15. септембра 1967. године, Патријарх српски Герман Савезној верској комисији“, Савезна комисија за верска питања, СИБ, поверљиво, бр. 335/67, 19. септембар 1967, Београд, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 104, 1967.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>46</sup> ДСИП, Амбасада у Атини, поверљиво, бр. 527, 15. септембар 1967. године, Београд и „Информација о телефонском разговору проте Веселина Петровића из Новог Сада са председником Комисије Србије Гуцуња Костом“, Републичка комисија за верска питања Србије, СИБ, поверљиво, бр. 148, 8. април 1968, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 110, 1968.

<sup>47</sup> „Забелешка о разговору Недић Илије са свештеницима далматинске епархије Антонијем Пинчетићем, архијерејским намесником, и Стеваном Мрђењом, свештеником из Книна, Јаковом Мандићем, председником епархијског удружења из Ђеврске, Ратком Добротом, свештеником из Шибеника, Павлом Козлицом, игуманом из манастира Крупе, и Петром Олујицом, свештеником из Врлике“, Републичка комисија за верска питања Хрватске, СИБ, поверљиво, бр. 08–104/1–68, 24. април 1968, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 110, 1968; и „Забелешка о разговорима Илије Недића са православним свештеницима Јованом Балићем из Нове Градишке, Жарком Касићем из Славонског Брода, Душаном Јеловцем из Винковаца, Петром Самарџијом из Осијека и Стеваном Новаковићем из Вуковара“, Републичка комисија за верска питања Хрватске, СИБ, поверљиво, бр. 08–105/1–1968, 24. април 1968, Загреб, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 110, 1968.

closed”.<sup>48</sup> The Patriarch stressed that he would “do his best to avoid the worst” keeping in mind “stripping of rank of Bishop Dionisije” “for which even now he suffers and regrets”.<sup>49</sup> It seems that till the end the Patriarch believed that the position of the authorities in this case could be changed.

Trying to find a solution in January 1969 Bishops of Srem Makarije and of Banat Nikanor, respectively, visited “MOC” on behalf of the Synod of SOC.<sup>50</sup> However, after that meeting the two parties retained their positions. Makarije confirmed that in that regard SOC had not other choice stressing that the Patriarchs of other Orthodox churches as well Pope Paul VI “suggested that MOC should go back under the wing of SOC”.<sup>51</sup> This confirms again that the main to be blame for the schism was the Yugoslav state, while the Vatican acted in two directions and in a diplomatic way. In mid-1969 all bishops of SOC in Croatia openly expressed the opinion that the autocephaly of “MOC” had resulted from personal ambitions of some bishops and the interference of the political leadership, after which “they were advised not to intensify the matter. It was obvious that the pressure of the state had kept on being made.

In the early 1970s, after Metropolitan Dositej had been removed from the position of head of “MOC”<sup>52</sup> Patriarch German asked the representatives of the authorities why this had happened against his own will.<sup>53</sup> On that occasion, he pointed to Jovičević that the Metropolitan had obviously realised that no Orthodox church in the world could obviously recognise “MOC” as an autocephalous. For this reason, he advocated the revision of the earlier decision and “searching for an agreement” with SOC.<sup>53</sup> Jovičević responded that “the Synod of MOC made such a

<sup>48</sup> „Забелешка о разговору председника ИВ Србије Ђурице Јојкића са Патријархом Германом 3. маја 1968. године“, Савезна комисија за верска питања, СИВ, поверљиво, бр. 192, 28. мај 1968, Београд, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 110, 1968, стр. 8.

<sup>49</sup> „Информација о посети владике сремског Макарија Комисији Војводине“, Комисија за верска питања АП Војводине, СИВ, поверљиво, бр. 25, 28. јануар 1969, Нови Сад, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 117, 1969, стр. 2.

<sup>50</sup> „Забелешка о разговору Златка Фрида са загребачким митрополитом Дамаскином, и епископима славонским Емилијаном, горњокарловачким Симеоном и далматинским Стефаном на дан 12. август 1969. године“, Републичка комисија за верска питања Хрватске, СИВ, поверљиво, бр. 08–145/1–1969, 22. август 1969, Загреб, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 119, стр. 2.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>52</sup> Patriarch German pointed out that “he was sent for medical treatment against his will”. In private talks, we found out that after all this, Metropolitan Dositej was willing to “repent” and go back under the wing of SOC, but the authorities obviously did not allow this; in: „Забелешка о разговору Мила Јовићевића са Патријархом Германом на дан 5. фебруара 1970. године“, Савезна комисија за верска питања, СИВ, поверљиво, бр. 29/70, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 124, 1970.

<sup>53</sup> „Забелешка о разговору Мила Јовићевића са Патријархом Германом на дан 28. април 1971. године“, Савезна комисија за верска питања, СИВ, поверљиво, бр. 60/71, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 132, 1971, стр. 4.

decision since Dositej was ill for a long time”.<sup>54</sup> It was obvious that it was only the Yugoslav state that at that moment was not willing to make a compromise refusing to abandon its “secular-national” goal directed towards fragmentation of the organism of SOC. It is important to stress that after all, Constantinople Patriarch Aginagora sent a letter to Patriarch German condemning the arbitrary action of “MOC” by which SOC was openly supported also by the Greek and Alexandria Churches.<sup>55</sup> Orthodox Churches logically remained consistent in the common defence of its canon law order.

### Conclusion

“The autocephaly of MOC” was and has remained above all, a political, non-church issue that was originally initiated by the Yugoslav state. It had the interest and need to direct solving of the national question in Yugoslavia at the moment it found appropriate for itself, in which the policy to religious communities played a significant role. This is credibly shown by the historical fact that after World War II the authorities did not allow the Serbian bishops to return from exile to their seats in Macedonia, although, e.g. before that SOC had appointed and sent on regular basis their bishops to its three episcopates in this republic. One of them, Varnava, was later elected Patriarch of SOC. The facts mentioned above undoubtedly point to the cause of the problem that was later directed only by the political management. In order to overcome the tensions and resolve the problem it is of essential importance to re-affirm the impact of the logical principles by which church issues should be resolved above all, in accordance with the church criteria. This is even more, since today, the need to respect the principle of separation of church and state is more and more openly mentioned. Within this context, it should be concluded that in the communist Yugoslavia the state openly interfered in church affairs, while such heritage is still present in the newly-created Balkan states. The practice of interference of the state in church affairs is a basis for further manipulation of the religious issue and its instrumentalisation for political purposes. RCC undoubtedly discretely supported the initiative of the Yugoslav state towards gaining of “autocephaly of MOC” with various intensities and at various levels. It had an objective interest to do that so, since strategic (church) goals are achieved more easily under the conditions of “regional balance of power” of smaller (and opposed) factors, then in a dialogue with “more powerful” partners.

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, стр. 2.

<sup>55</sup> „Депеше о посети Патријарха Атинагоре“, Савезна комисија за верска питања, председник Мило Јовићевић, СИВ, поверљиво, бр. 387, 27. октобар 1967, Београд, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 105, 1967, стр. 3; и „Забелешка Радосава Петровића о ручку који је Патријарх Герман приредио у част Александријског патријарха Николаоса у Патријаршији“, Савезна комисија за верска питања, поверљиво, бр. 171/69, 9. мај 1969, Београд, Архив Југославије, фонд 144, фасцикла 118.

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