

The Relationship between the Religious Communities in Albania and the Foreign Christian Religious Communities



Religious Studies

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Denald Prifti

University of Tirana, History and Philology.
Department of History, Albania-Tirana.

Abstract

This article provides a brief synopsis of the relationship between the religious communities in Albania and the foreign Christian religious communities around the world. This study aims to provide an answer to a major question which is widely discussed below. Taking into consideration that the countries of the East Block connected with the politics of the Soviet Union, which tended to come closer together and share experiences between each other, we think it's appropriate to discuss another problem in this field. In the achieved documents we find many materials which are connected with the religious internal organization and their relationship with the state, taking into consideration the different countries in the Eastern Europe.

Introduction

After the Albanian liberation and the division of Europe into two main blocks, our country was affected mostly from the East block which was directed from the Soviet Union (SU). As a result even the relationship between the religious communities was oriented from the SU and other people democratic nations. At this time it was noticed a separation between the Albanian religious communities in reliance with the religious communities abroad. As an example, if the orthodox community mainly was related with the orthodox communities in the East, which mostly were autocephalous (autonomous) and few of them were dependent from the Istanbul Patriarchate, the catholic community had only one abroad relation, which was Vatican, the center of Catholicism were depended all the catholic communities in the world. The situation was much different with the Muslim communities because there was no centralized center, beside the pilgrim of Mecca where are gathered together the people from all over the world, and the Bektashi community whose center is in Albania after the 1924.

But, in order to treat the relationship between the Albanian communities with the other communities we need to take into consideration the draft decree with Nb. 743, date 26 November 1949, approved by law Nb. 773 date 16.1.1950³, "On the religious communities" which controlled the activity of these religious communities in our country. By this law, the state controlled the selection of the board direction in the religious communities, could dismiss or hire any cleric who did not fulfilled the criteria's established in the draft decree⁴; it controlled their financial activity and their budget should be approved initially from the Council of Ministers⁵ etc.

³ "Official Gazette", Nr 8, Tirane, 23 February 1950.

⁴ Dekretligji Nr 743, "Mbi komunitetet fetare", neni 15.

⁵ Dekretligji Nr 743, "Mbi komunitetet fetare", neni 16.

Meanwhile the Act 25 of this draft decree banned the religious communities to keep relationship with other religious communities, institutions, organization or official representative whose address was outside the borders of Albania, in this case it was needed firstly an authorization from the Council of Ministers. But even in the cases where the authorization was given, the correspondence will pass only through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs⁶. At the same time the state should be notified for all the public announcement or published news of the religious communities and the Council of Ministers had the right to ban the publishing of such information, their press and delivery if they were not conform the law⁷.

Another restriction was presented in the Act 27 of this draft decree. According to which the religious communities could not receive nor sent presents or material gifts from the other countries without taking firstly the permission from the Council of Ministries. A concrete example for this act is as follow. On June 16 1950 The World Council of Churches in Geneva had sent 200 dollars, as a symbolic gift from an American for the Albanian Orthodox Church. This amount is returned together with a thank you note (according to the higher instruction), on 15.1.1951 where it was written, “..... And we want to inform you as well that the Church (The Albanian Orthodox Church) helped from the government of the People Republic of Albania as far as its mission does not need financial help to fulfill its goals, considered not to take the amount of money...”⁸.

So, on 21.1.1953, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent toward the Republic of Hungary an information for the relation between church-state prepared from our embassy in Budapest. The material consist of 8 pages and it shows all the maneuvers of the Hungarian government to restrict religion, to ban it from school etc.⁹ On 1954 there are sent two information regarding the church situation in RDGJ and in Polonies, compiled from our embassy offices in Berlin and Warsaw, and prepared with the help of the respective authorities in each country¹⁰. Meanwhile on 1955 it is prepared a report about the cults in Romania where are described all the religion beliefs, their relation with the state etc.¹¹

The clergy who directed in our country were all approved from the Albanian state based on some features presented from the Clergy Committee Affairs, which was responsible to select the candidates who should fulfill some conditions” They must come from the poor society of the country... they should have fought against the fascism occupation; they should have fought for the National Liberation War They must have agreed and comply with the reforms of the people power...”¹². Based on these rules, it is understandable that even the selected candidates on this post should comply with politics followed from the Albanian state. This is most noticeable in the

⁶ Dekretligji Nr 743, “Mbi komunitetet fetare”, neni 25.

⁷ Dekretligji Nr 743, “Mbi komunitetet fetare”, neni 18.

⁸ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1950, d. 2207, fl. 2; 10.

⁹ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1953, d. 1187, fl. 1-8.

¹⁰ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1954, d. 1121.

¹¹ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1955, d. 1304.

¹² Azem Qazimi. “Procesi i asgjësimit të fesë në komunizëm”, Tiranë, 2012, fq. 36-37.

letters and telegrams sent from the directors of the religious cults who traveled abroad for the international problems encountered in that period. It should be mentioned that all these materials were previously sent toward the Albanian government for taking the approval. Here we are mentioning only some of them. On 1950 the world grandfather informs all the religious Bektashi followers for the Ashura Day. Initially this material was sent near the institution of Prime Minister for a pre-scanning process and later to be transmitted from Radio Tirana and ATSH¹³. The most “collaborative” in the process of sending letters and telegrams were the chiefs of orthodox communities, those of the Bektashi community and Muslim community, meanwhile the chiefs of catholic communities were much more reserved. The chief of the catholic Church Bernardin Shllaku sent a telegram to Gamal Abdel Naseer of Egypt where he criticize the English-French-Israel aggression against Egypt.¹⁴, or Ernest Çoba, the chief of Catholic Church where on August 21, 1957, sends to the OKB secretary a letter where he protests against the usage and proofs of the nuclear weapons.¹⁵

As described above the relationship between the religious communities in Albania with those of the Soviet Union are treated in the above paragraphs, we will continue describing the relationship of the Albanian religious communities with the other religious communities in the other states. In order to be comprehensible for every reader we will treat each community on itself until we reach the period where in our country were destroyed all the churches and the mosques and the religious propaganda was banned by law.¹⁶

The Albanian Autonomous Orthodox Church

It was understandable that the Albanian Orthodox Church would have a stronger relation with the autonomous churches placed in the East countries. Taking into consideration that the politics were oriented to build relationship with the SU and the so-called democratic states it is understandable that the Albanian religious communities would have the same orientation. Beside the relation with the Russian Orthodox Church, which is treated in a specified chapter, the Autonomous Albanian Orthodox Church had relation with other orthodox churches as well of the Eastern countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia etc.

This was followed openly from the archbishop Paisi on August 25, 1949, where he was chosen as the Archbishop of the Orthodox Church in Albania. During his coronation speech he said;

“...We will enforce the relationship with the other similar orthodox churches, especially with the Big Russian Church...”¹⁷.

After the liberation it is well know that the relation was stronger with the Yugoslavia. Especially in the economic and military field. But what is more impressing is the fact that these

¹³ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1950, d. 2221, fl. 3.

¹⁴ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1956, d. 1206, fl. 9.

¹⁵ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1957, d. 1261, fl. 2.

¹⁶ Azem Qazimi. Procesi i asgjësimit të fesë në komunizëm. Tiranë, 2012, Instituti i Studimit të Krimeve dhe Pasojave të Komunizmit. fq. 32-34.

¹⁷ Andrea Llukani, “Kisha në diktaturë”, Botimet “Trifon Xhagjika”, Tiranë, 2012, fq. 20.

relations were not stronger in the religious field. This is well known even from the archived Russian documents. In 1946 the Metropolitan Nichol of Russia paid a visit in Yugoslavia to participate in the working Slavic Congress where he met with his patriarch Gavril of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Between many conversations held in this meeting between 3 -11 December, the Serbian patriarch expressed that: ...11. With the Albanian Church we have normal canon relation¹⁸.

Just considering that the Serbian patriarch said “now”, refers that in general the relations between our churches were not quite normal. Actually, the Autonomous Albanian Orthodox Church had relation with the Serbian Orthodox Church because Visarion Xhuvani is coronate in Yugoslavia from Russian archbishops with the silent approval of Serbian Patriarch.

Another not well-known fact is that of the bishop Viktor (Mihajllloviç) in Shkodra, borne in Montenegro in Seoce village. On June 18, 1922 he was coronate as vicar bishop of Shkodra where he had the noble duty to “serve” (**okormljat**) to the Serbian in Albania”¹⁹.

On 1929 Viktor together with Visarion Xhuvani appointed three Albanians hierarch.

. This was made without the initial approval of Constantinople, which required to the Serbian Patriarch to take serious precautions against the bishop Victor, but this request was not considered. The bishop Victor was persecuted from the Albanian and Italian authorities as well as Vatican. He left from Albania and was placed in the Deçan monastery where he died on 1938.

Another interesting fact shows that the Serbian Orthodox Church had no interest in the conditions of the Albanian Orthodox Church. On January of 1948 The Great Britain Embassy in Belgrade was interested near the authorities of the Orthodox Church in Yugoslavia for the Archbishop of KOASH-it, and surprisingly they answered: “they (the Peja Patriarch Authorities) believed that the Orthodox Archbishop in Albania is still Kristofori, the surname of which they do not know”²⁰.

Even though it is a little bit strange that in the time where the state relation with the Yugoslavia was very strong the religious boundaries were not developed in the same level. This might be due to the fact that after the liberation war in Shkodra as a bishop was the Yugoslav priest Llazar Popoviç, who had sympathized the liberation movement and was persecuted from the invasive authorities. Popoviç bishop “argues that the actual regime in Albania is very good”²¹ and has been a member of the delegation in the Albanian Orthodox Church who had visited Moscow.

¹⁸ “Pushteti dhe Kisha në Evropën Lindore 1944-1953”, volumni I 1944-1948 (Власть и церковь в Восточной Европе 1944-1953. Т. I. 1944-1948. Москва, 2009, РОССПЭН). fq. 364.

¹⁹ Wikipedia, Viktor (Mihajllloviç). (Materialet për peshkopin Viktor janë marrë nga wikipedia).

²⁰ Artan Hoxha, Marrëdhëniet midis regjimit komunist dhe KOASH në vitet 1945-1967. Tiranë, 2014, fq. 28-29.

²¹ “Pushteti dhe Kisha në Evropën Lindore 1944-1953”, volumni I 1944-1948 (Власть и церковь в Восточной Европе 1944-1953. Т. I. 1944-1948. Москва, 2009, РОССПЭН).fq. 498.

Until the state relation with Yugoslavia were good, so until 1948, between the two countries is not registered any incident, but after the disrupting of relations it had started the struggle even in the religious field. The Yugoslavian authorities always tried to make it difficult for the Albanian delegation when they passed through their territory to go in another state. So in 1950 for Moscow would leave a delegation from the Orthodox Church “but the Yugoslavian Embassy did not allowed the visa to be taken so the delegation was not allowed to travel”²².

The Serbian Orthodox Church after the breach of relationship on 1948, had shown some attitudes against the Albanian Orthodox Church. So the Serbian patriarch Vikenti pretended that Vicariate of Shkodra is under the jurisdiction of Peja patriarch and the Serbian church should be allowed to its activity in Shkodra. For this on November 27, 1954 “Russian Mitropolit Nikolai informed the archbishop about the claims of the Serbian church for hierarch of Shkodra”²³.

But all it pretends are refused form the archbishop Paisi in his response to Metropolitan Nikolay on 20.4.1955²⁴.

On 10 of February 1956 the secretary of the Yugoslavian representative in Tirana (Milash) had been in the presidency of the Orthodox Church of Albanian and was interested to know if there were Yugoslavian cemeteries and if there were Yugoslavian names registered in the church. He requested to search for them and if it was possible to raise a common monument and searched for the possibility to be financially maintained”²⁵. Even though in the respective file there was no notice and on the cover of the file it was written “The information and refusal of Yugoslavian representative”.

The relationship with the other states belonging to the democratic nations was quite different. From the archived documents we could see that the stronger relationships were with the orthodox churches of Romania and Bulgaria, mostly due to the fact that in both these countries we have a considerable number of Albanian communities who had migrated a long time ago.

On October 1945, in Bucharest of Romania was kept a congress of the democratic priest league in which were invited to participate many delegates. In the A. Hoxha thesis related with this congress it was written “the Presidency of the Orthodox Church in Albania wanted to send its representative But the invitation toward the presidency of this church was sent too late – only on 11 October. For this reason, it was chosen an Albanian representative from Romania to represent KOASH in this congress”²⁶.

Meanwhile in the Russian archived document related with this congress it was stated that: ... In this congress had participated also many foreign delegation – Bulgarian delegation directed by Petrovin, Yugoslavian delegation directed by the Serbian Minister of Agriculture Smiljaniç,

²² AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1950, d. 2204, fl. 14.

²³ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1954, d. 1116, fl. 10.

²⁴ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1955, d. 116, fl. 18-21.

²⁵ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1956, d. 1218, fl. 1.

²⁶ Artan Hoxha, Marrëdhëniet midis regjimit komunist dhe KOASH në vitet 1945-1967. Tiranë, 2014, fq. 28.

Albanian delegation directed by Piro Bukis ... In the yesterday session spoke the Bulgarian representatives, those of Yugoslavian and Albanian also the representative from the orthodox churches of Rumania, reformation, Lutheran, Armenian, Hebrew and Muslims representative ...²⁷.

The relation with the Orthodox Church of Romania was developed mostly because in our country there was a Romanian orthodox community. On 1956 from the Romanian church had withdrawer books related with “Shipcka Church, one of the 8 orthodox Romanian communities in Albania”²⁸. Related to this on October 28, 1957 the Albanian student Athanas Papapano, who was studying in the Theology Institute of Bucharest sent a letter to the Albanian archbishop. Even Romania was visited from many delegation of the Albanian Orthodox Church invited to participate in different celebrations. So in 1948 was sent a delegation compound from Archimandrite Dhimitër Kokoneshi and Iconom Stavrofor Spiro Veli²⁹, or in January 29, 1950, where The Albanian Orthodox Church had to organize its congress and have asked for approval to invite in this congress the delegation from the Russian, Bulgarian and Romanian churches.³⁰

The relation with the other east orthodox churches was not so strong. So, at the end of 1951, in December Prague was visited from a delegation of the Orthodox Church directed from the archbishop Paisi and the secretary Niko Cani to participate in the formation of the Autonomous Church of Czechoslovakia³¹.

On March 1953 Mitropolit Plovdivit of Bulgaria had invited the delegation of the Albanian Orthodox Church to participate in the coronation of the Patriarch of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, for which has been a correspondence between the Albanian institutions³².

It is important to emphasize that with all the Orthodox Churches of the East Countries is maintained a certain correspondence and are exchanged different telegrams especially for greeting during the celebration feast, national feast and New Year’s Eve.

On the other hand the relationships with the Greek Orthodox Church and the Istanbul Patriarch were very harsh. It well-known that the autonomous Orthodox Albanian Church was declared on the “Great Council of the Christian people” of 10-12 September in 1922, which was held in Berat under the direction of hierarch Vasil Marko (St Vasili)³³. His decision was immediately recognized from the Albanian state. On February 1929 was founded the Saint Synod, while on June 29 was approved “The Status of the Albanian Orthodox Church “which declared the national character of the Orthodox church. In that period the church was directed from the Visarion Xhuvani.

²⁷ “Pushteti dhe Kisha në Evropën Lindore 1944-1953”, volumni I 1944-1948 (Власть и церковь в Восточной Европе 1944-1953. Т. I. 1944-1948. Москва, 2009, РОССПЭН). fq. 218.

²⁸ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1956, d. 1219, fl. 1.

²⁹ A. Llukani, Kisha në Diktaturë, Botimet “Trifon Xhagjika”, Tiranë, 2012, fq. 89.

³⁰ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1950, d. 2204, fl. 4-5.

³¹ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1951, d. 1899, fl. 7-8.

³² AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1953, d. 1169, fl. 3.

³³ www.agionoros.ru Athanasij Zoitakis, Historia e ortodoksizmit në Shqipëri (Афанасий Зонтакис. История Православия в Албании).

The patriarch of Constantinople refused to accept these anticanonical actions, but admitted to give the autonomy to the Albanian Christians and allowed that the language used during the Christian preaches and religious education was Albanian. After many arguing, at least it was retreated the bishop Visarion and for a better relation with the World Patriarch it was decided to held in Korca on May 1936 the Council of clergy and non-clergy, and with the participation of the representative from the Albanian territories.

The Council apologized to the World Patriarch and was open for discussion which was held in Athens on March 1937³⁴.

Finally, Tomosi Sinodal Patriarchian “The blessing of Autonomous Albanian Orthodox Church”, on April 17, 1937 was given from the Constantinople Church and archbishop was chosen Kristofor Kisi. Since this time the Albanian Orthodox Church was depended from the Istanbul Patriarch.

But after the liberation period the Albanian Orthodox Church was connected with the Russian Orthodox Church and since it had no relation with the Istanbul Patriarch, it must find a relation with the other Orthodox Church in the world. Especially this was very important at the initial stage because the Orthodox Church was not able to choose the Holy Synod because it was not possible to have four bishops from four regions of the country. And this problem was solved with the help of the Orthodox Russian Church.

On 1948 in Moscow was held the 500 years of the autonomous Russian Orthodox Church where between many participators took place the delegation sent from the Constantinople Patriarch with three members, a delegation of the Greek Church with two members. **We do not have any record** if these foreign delegations have met or discussed with the delegation sent from the Albanian Orthodox Church.

It is with wide interest even another fact presented in the archived Russian document. On February 11, 1948, the Council had sent a letter to Kliment Voroshilovit informing him about the problems in the Russian orthodox church where he wrote: “If the delegation compound from two bishops and two proto hierarch will come [in Albania] this will strengthening not only the relation with the Albanian Church but also will create make it more independent from the Constantinople impact and especially from the Greek Church³⁵”.

On 1951 the Constantinople patriarch Athinagora wanted to organize a meeting before the World Council was gathered, meanwhile the Archbishop of Alexandria wanted to gather firstly The World Council between the highest hierarchy of the orthodox churches in the world.

³⁴ www.agionoros.ru Athanasij Zoitakis, Historia e ortodoksizmit në Shqipëri (Афанасий Зойтакис. История Православия в Албании).

³⁵ “Pushteti dhe Kisha në Evropën Lindore 1944-1953”, volumi I 1944-1948 (Власть и церковь в Восточной Европе 1944-1953. Т. I. 1944-1948. Москва, 2009, РОССПЭН). fq. 636.

In this case the Russian Orthodox Church prepared the plan to be presented to Athinagora where as a pre-condition was stated the request to recognize the autonomy and the recognition of the chiefs of the orthodox church of Polonies, Albania and Czechoslovakia”³⁶. The same proposal would be presented even to the Alexandria Patriarch who had required the meeting of the World Council³⁷.

The biggest problem that the Autonomous Albanian Orthodox Church had was with the dependence from the Albanian Church in USA. On January 1950 in Tirana was held the Christian Congress of the Orthodox Church, where above other themes it was discussed “that the Albanian orthodox communities which were located abroad should be encouraged to become part of the Albanian Orthodox Church, as had been previously presented their will to do so”³⁸ and for this reason on 10.02.1950 it was sent a letter to Fan Noli in the USA. Also at the same date the Congress had approved a resolution to this problem where it is stated: “The church Congress ... express its passionate and unanimously willing that the Albanian Orthodox Church in USA should be connected with the main Autonomous Orthodox Church in Albania”³⁹.

But on 27.10.1950 the political department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed from our embassy in Paris, informs the prime ministry that “Marko Lipe is assigned from Istanbul as bishop for the Albanians living in USA. This person is ... a Greek bishop. Fan Noli had started its campaign against the Greek bishop Marko Lipe Because the Diocese directed by Fan Noli is well-known and is depended from our church and the church itself should not recognize the bishop Marko”⁴⁰.

During this period had started an intensified correspondence between the Albanian Orthodox Church and Fan Noli. On October 4 1950, Fan Noli had published a declaration at “Dielli” and “Lirija” magazines where he escalate the activity of the Istanbul Patriarch against the Albanian Orthodox Church⁴¹ meanwhile the Albanian archbishop is very interested to know how is the real situation in the Albanian Church of USA. At the same time in the defense of the Albanian Orthodox Church and against the assignment of Marko Lipe from the Istanbul Patriarch had fought even the Russian Orthodox Church. On September 10, 1950 the Russian patriarch Aleksey sent a letter to Paisi where he sustain and congratulate the opposition of the Albanian Orthodox Church against the assignment of Marko Lipe, where he emphasize as well that the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church took a decision in favor of the Albanian Orthodox Church.⁴²

³⁶ T. Çumançenko, Në binarët e politikës së udhëheqjes staliniane: Kisha Ortodokse Ruse dhe Patriarkanat e Lindjes së Afërt. Vitet 1943-1953/ Lajmëtar i univeristetit shtetëror të Çeljabinskit, Nr 22, viti 2014, fq. 146. (Т. А. Чумаченко, В русле внешней политики сталинского руководства: Русская Православная Церковь и Патриархаты Ближнего Востока. 1943–1953 годы // Вестник Челябинского государственного университета. 2014. № 22, История. Вып. 61. С. 146).

³⁷ Po aty, fq. 146.

³⁸ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1950, d. 2205, fl. 8.

³⁹ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1950, d. 2205, fl. 10.

⁴⁰ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1950, d. 2205, fl. 2.

⁴¹ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1950, d. 2205, fl. 5.

⁴² AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1950, d. 2205, fl. 3-4; 20-24.

Conclusions

The relations between the Istanbul Patriarch and the Greek Orthodox Church were continuously tensioned and very harsh. Keeping in mind this, when the Greek Church organized the jubilee of Pavel the Apostle in 1951, it did not invite representative from the Albanian Orthodox Church. For this there is a telegram in which is written even from Metropolitan Nicholai of the Russian Church whom on 10.04.1951 had written: “We require from your Highness to notify us if you have took the invitation from the Church of Greece for the jubilee of Apostle Pavel on June of this year and how your Highness is going to respond to this invitation”⁴³

Actually, the Greek Orthodox Church continuously has tried to direct the Albanian Orthodox Church. This is shown even in the following event which is worth to mention. On 29.09.1959 the Greek lawyer Taqis A. Konstandopulos sent toward the archbishop a letter together with a copy of the book which he had write and had included the churches in the state democracy. The book was given to the Albanian chief of the Red Cross who was in Greece. While describing the Albanian church the author wrote: “the archbishop together with its bishops is Greek by origin”. The Albanian Archbishop responded to the Greek lawyer where he refused all his pretends.⁴⁴

It is interesting the fact that during all the time as the archbishop of the Albanian Orthodox Church was Kristofor Kisi, but he was not allowed to go abroad even though he took much invitation from East and West. On July, 1948 Kristofor Kisi took an invitation from the Anglican Church where the archbishop John find low invited him to participate in a periodic meeting with the highest church level and representative from the Brittan Ministry of Foreign Affairs even though the ministry did not approve his participation because “he supported a government which was responsible for the death of 40 British marines”⁴⁵.

The Albanian catholic church

The Albanian Catholic Church, as well-known, is depended from Vatican which is also the center of world Catholicism. As a right presumption or not, the Catholic Church have been always seen as an enemy against the interest of the Albanian people and it have worked for the interest of the foreign. This kind of mentality existed even after the country liberation. This is expressed in the words of Koco Tashko said to Molotov on April 29, 1946 in his credential letters “... at the same time, the catholic have a harsh attitude toward the government”.⁴⁶ After the nation liberation some of the catholic priests were united with anti-communism groups who were fighting against the communist regime.

⁴³ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1951, d. 2204, fl. 26.

⁴⁴ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1959, d. 1270, fl. 9; 10; 13-14.

⁴⁵ A. Hoxha. Marrëdhëniet midis regjimit komunist dhe Kishës Ortodokse Autoqefale e Shqipërisë në vitet 1945-1967, Tiranë, 2014, fq. 66.

⁴⁶ “Evropa Lindore në dokumentet e arkivave ruse 1944-1953”, Vol. I, 1944-1948, Moskë – Novosibirsk, 1997, fq. 422, Dokumenti Nr 145. (Восточная Европа в документах российских архивов 1944-1953”, Том I 1944-1948, Москва – Новосибирск, 1997).

This thing is mentioned even from the soviet government representative P.I. Mançha, where in his material on May 14, 1946 he wrote “... these groups are directed from ex-landlords, ex-old army militaries, ex-policeman, catholic priests, ex-member of fictitious government...”⁴⁷.

The same thing is mentioned even from Kardeli in his conversation with Stalin on 19 April 1947, where he said that “To them [Albanians] during the world period the Catholic Church was against the liberation war and now is against the regime”⁴⁸.

All these have affected even the attitude of the Albanian state toward the Catholic Church. Since 1946 were arrested and sentenced many catholic priests like Gjon Shllaku, Giovanni Fausti, Daniel Dajani, Mark Çuni, Gjergj Bici etc, whom were accused for activity against the regime, connection with the war criminals, printing and delivering of the hostile tract against the regime etc. At this time, the catholic Albanian clergy almost has lost all his connection with Vatican, “even with the representative of Holy See in Albania L.B. Negris”⁴⁹. Negris went to Vatican and after his return to Albania on April 20, 1945 with an American military air, he was forbidden to land ... and forced to exile as unwanted ...⁵⁰. As it seems the purpose of the Albanian church was to create a national Catholic Church.⁵¹

Even though Albania had no official relation with Vatican, the Catholic Church was still connected with it. So, on 1949, the Archdiocese of Shkodra sent toward the Holy Propaganda Congregation Fide a list with names of the catholic clergy and their positions, a list prepared from the priest Bernardin Shllaku⁵².

Even the Russian Orthodox Church saw Albania as a place where it can be developed a propagandist war against the Vatican. In the letter mentioned above sent to Voroshillov from the Council about the problems of the Russian Church it is mentioned “... Beside this, the Moscow Patriarch wants to win a battle in Albania against Catholicism”⁵³.

But as we said, in 1949 it was approved the article which obliged the religious communities to make their own regulations and administrative statutes. For this the Catholic Church raises a commission which would build the draft-statutes. It was developed a strong and long debate between the church and the state for this problem. In the draft-statutes it was strongly emphasized that the Albanian administrative church was directly under the supervision of the Holy See, this was unacceptable from the state due to the “article 13 the law for the religious communities says that: “ all the persons contributing in the religious communities from the chiefs

⁴⁷ “Evropa Lindore në dokumentet e arkivave ruse 1944-1953”, Vol. I, 1944-1948, Moskë – Novosibirsk, 1997, fq. 434-438, Dokumenti Nr 148.

⁴⁸ J. S. Girjenko: “Stalin – Tito”, Moskë, 1991, Shtëpia botuese e letërsisë politike, fq. 310. (Гиренко Ю. С., Сталин — Тито.—М.: Политиздат, 1991. С. 310).

⁴⁹ R. Beqaj. Vepimtaria armiqësore e klerit katolik shqiptar 1945-1971, Tiranë, Shtëpia botuese e librit politik, 1973, fq. 97.

⁵⁰ R. Beqaj. Vepimtaria armiqësore e klerit katolik shqiptar 1945-1971, Tiranë, Shtëpia botuese e librit politik, 1973, fq. 108.

⁵¹ Azem Qazimi. Procesi i asgjësimit të fesë në komunizëm”. Tiranë, 2012, fq.82.

⁵² AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1949, d. 2, fl. 1.

⁵³ “Pushteti dhe Kisha në Evropën Lindore 1944-1953”, volumni I 1944-1948 (Власть и церковь в Восточной Европе 1944-1953. Т. 1. 1944-1948. Москва, 2009, РОССПЭН). fq. 636.

to the last servant must be Albanian citizens, loyal to their country and respectable persons who have all the civil”⁵⁴, so in other words there were not acceptable the foreigners. At the same time in the draft-statues it was emphasized that the clergy was nominated from the Holy See while the article 13 stated: “after being chosen or nominated from the religious competent group, the members of this group must be Albanian citizens and not foreigners”⁵⁵.

Finally the status was approved and in the first article it was written: “The Albanian Catholic Church has a national character, is a juridical person and welcomes all the catholic believers in Albania; it is inspired from the principles of the World Catholic Church founded from Jesus Christ, under the direction of Holy See, descendant of Peter Apostol. It does not have any organization, economic or political relation with the Holy See”⁵⁶. As we can see from this article, the Albanian Catholic Church did not have any relation with the Holy See.

But this situation should be presented even to the press, and for this reason on 13.09.1951 “Zeri i Popullit” newspaper sends a letter to the prime-ministry, to the committee member for the religious issues Xhoke Prifti, “where it is required from him to write an article titles “The fallout from Vatican, an important moment for the Albanian Catholic church, where are defined the main topics to be discussed”⁵⁷.

Following the harsh line against the Vatican there are others articles on 17.IX.1951 where Vatican is attacked as a state who sells the interest of the other nations, is pro the war politics and have turned the churches into political tribunes to attack the democratic movement etc.⁵⁸

Conclusions

In this period it was noticed a better relationship between the Catholic Church and the state where some of the confiscated asset were returned to the church, it was approved as well the financial plan without any obstacle from the government, the church employees were paid with salaries etc. But this did not imply that the Catholic Church was able to make connection abroad. The two institutions able to keep such relationships were the Committee of the Clergy affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs approved from the government and all the correspondence should pas initially from these institutions. At the same time the Catholic Church was becoming more independent from Vatican. In 1956, invited from the committee of foreign affairs, near the ministry of foreign affairs, came Alighero Tonari, an Italian who was interested about the funds provided from the state for the catholic and orthodox clergy, how did they lived before the liberation and how are they living now. In his materials we read the message: “If it is possible we

⁵⁴ Azem Qazimi. *Procesi i asgjësimit të fesë në komunizëm*. Tiranë. 2012. fq. 90.

⁵⁵ Azem Qazimi. *Procesi i asgjësimit të fesë në komunizëm*. Tiranë. 2012. fq. 91-92.

⁵⁶ Azem Qazimi. *Procesi i asgjësimit të fesë në komunizëm*. Tiranë. 2012. fq. 94-95.

⁵⁷ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1951, d. 1926, fl. 1-2.

⁵⁸ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1951, d. 1926, fl. 2-3.

want to know how much is the values spend from the state to maintain the catholic and Orthodox Church, every year”⁵⁹.

On June 27, 1957 from Vatican is sent a letter written in Latin where announced the appointment of a new bishop, Anton Fishta⁶⁰, but initially this bishop was approved from the Albanian government.

On April of 1960 the Catholic Church took an invitation where it was requested to send all its saints living in their state. Regarding this invitation was notified the prime-minister on 01.VI.1960, where it was left a notice with hand writing “not approved”⁶¹.

Even though, it is important to emphasize that “the entire priest baptized after the after war years were approved form the Holy See. This means that Vatican accepted the...”⁶². Firstky it was required an approval from the government then it was sent toward Vatican the names of the proposed priest through MFA and the Clergy Committee.

Even the directors of the Albanian Catholic church, under the pressure of the governmental authorities were forced to pronounce their opinion for the important international event, protecting the political line of the Albanian government. They have sent many letters and telegrams. Some of the sent telegrams were favoring the Egyptian government and were against the English-French-Israel aggression or against the usage of the nuclear weapons. Some others were consolation letter for Stalin.⁶³

The telegram sent toward Ernest Çoba OKB secretary, on 21 August 1957, where there is a protest against the usage of nuclear weapons⁶⁴. As in all cases even for this one the telegram is sent firstly for approval to the government⁶⁵. This practice was followed until they were closed all the churches and mosques in our country. So on 25.V.1965, the letter holding the number 63/65 sent from the Catholic Church is against the aggression made to the South Vietnam and RD in the North Vietnam⁶⁶.

⁵⁹ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1956, d. 1205, fl. 6.

⁶⁰ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1957, d. 2, fl. 1.

⁶¹ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1960, d. 1305, fl. 2; 1.

⁶² Azem Qazimi. *Procesi i asgjësimit të fesë në komunizëm*. Tiranë, 2012. fq. 98.

⁶³ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1953, d. 1181, fl. 3.

⁶⁴ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1957, d. 1261, fl. 2.

⁶⁵ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1957, d. 1261, fl. 1.

⁶⁶ AQSh, F. Kryeministria, nr. 490, viti 1965, d. 1010, fl. 5.