

Deacon IVICA ČAIROVIĆ, ThD, Assistant Professor
Faculty of Orthodox Theology of the University of Belgrade
Belgrade, Republic of Serbia
icairovic@bfspc.bg.ac.rs

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THE ROLE OF VICAR BISHOP DOSITEJ (STOJKOVIĆ) AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH SCHISM IN MACEDONIA IN 1958

ABSTRACT: *This article deals with the Church schism in the People's Republic of Macedonia after World War II, on the basis of historical sources from the Archives of Yugoslavia and the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), with special attention devoted, within a broader context, to the roles of Patriarchs of SOC Vikentije and German in the resolution of the Church schism in PR Macedonia. The first part of the paper presents a chronological review of Church conditions in this southern Yugoslav federal unit after World War II, while the second analyzes the role of the Serbian Patriarch's vicar bishop, Bishop of Toplica Dositej (Stojković), and his activity connected with the church-national assembly held in Ohrid in October 1958, followed by his participation in the establishment of a new hierarchy in PR Macedonia and the creation of the Church schism.*

KEYWORDS: Serbian Orthodox Church, communist authorities in the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, Patriarch Vikentije, Patriarch German, "Metropolitan" Dositej (Stojković)

Introduction

Church schisms have existed from the very beginnings of the formation of a hierarchical structure in Christ's Church due to various historical events – but exclusively on account of the human factor. The historical reality of schisms necessitated the formulation of many canonical-disciplinary canons at local and ecumenical councils, which shows that the Church hierarchy saw schisms as one of a major Church problem and something that should be resolved quickly, so as to prevent the spread of non-canonical conditions and dysfunction within the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. At the very beginnings, schisms mostly arose from wishes of individuals to put themselves above the community

or impose themselves as authorities in their own Church hierarchy, without catholic decision-making, in accordance with their own personal interests. Schisms have occurred all over the world, from the earliest days to modern times. During the 20th century, a century of wars and changing regimes and governments in Eastern Europe, as well as various other kinds of social turmoil, the Serbian Orthodox Church has experienced a renaissance, but also several problems that were dealt with in various circumstances. This research paper will deal in greater detail with the first stage of the schism in the People's Republic of Macedonia (PR Macedonia), which came about after World War II, within the context of a political regime change and new social aspirations in the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY).

A historical analysis of the situation in Vardar Macedonia (territory in the Kingdom of Serbia and Kingdom of Yugoslavia roughly corresponding to today's FYRM) and the latter PR Macedonia during the middle of 20th century has yielded hypotheses from which conclusions may be drawn regarding the activity of the vicar bishop of Toplica, Dositej, in the context of the imposed Church schism in PR Macedonia, a federal unit of FPRY. In 1958, hierarchy outside of SOC was formed in PR Macedonia, under the leadership of Dositej, a former vicar bishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC). This paper will present an account of the relevant events that took place during that year, which was in many ways significant for the history of the SOC, for several reasons: the change on the Patriarchal throne, the self-proclaimed church-national assembly in Ohrid and the non-canonical decision of naming the Serbian Patriarch's vicar bishop as the primate of *de facto* schismatic hierarchy, and the meddling of communist politicians in a schism within a canonical Christian Orthodox hierarchy. The sources used for proving the hypotheses and forming the conclusion that the Church schism in PR Macedonia was, in fact, politically motivated and that it had nothing to do with Church dogma and canons, are archival documents of the SOC: Holy Synod of Bishops and Holy Assembly of Bishops (with the letter of the former vicar bishop of Toplica Dositej (Stojković) that he personally sent to the Holy Synod of Bishops after the church-national assembly in Ohrid being of the utmost importance), archival documents of the Federal Commission for Religious Questions (FCRQ) from the Archives of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, as processed by Radmila Radić, contemporary magazines and newspapers, and the collection of records from meetings of the Commission for Religious Affairs of PR Serbia.¹

The above mentioned historical sources strongly suggest that ethnophyletism, condemned as a heresy by the Orthodox Church,² lies at the root of this

¹ *Записници са седница Комисије за верска питања НР и СР Србије, 1945–1978*, приредили Радмила Радић и Момчило Митровић (Београд: ИНИС, 2012).

² After liberation from centuries of Ottoman rule, the Balkan peoples equated national identity with religious life. The term "ethnophyletism" was coined at the Holy and Great pan-Orthodox Synod in Constantinople in 1872, which was convened in order to resolve the conflict between the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the Patriarchate of Constantinople of the beginning of the second half of the 19th century. The Bulgarian clergy demanded that all Greeks holding ecclesi-

20th century schism within the SOC.³ Namely, the resolution of the question of the *Macedonian nation* after World War II, in accordance with the creation of a new spirit within the communist FPRY, assumed the creation of a self-proclaimed church administration – the so-called Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC), which was *de facto* a schism. Thus, the topic of this research is to show how the new Yugoslav authorities, by reviving the idea of forming a Macedonian nation, in the context of political tensions between the FPRY, Bulgaria and the USSR, influenced the formation of an ethnophyletist church hierarchy that acted in parallel with the SOC hierarchy and, thus, divided its flock by way of schism.

The ecclesiastical order in Vardar Macedonia in the first half of the 20th century

After the liberation of Vardar Macedonia, i.e., the entire Old Serbia,⁴ from centuries of Ottoman rule (the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913) and its unification with the Kingdom of Serbia, official negotiations began with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople regarding the incorporation of the region's dioceses into the Metropolitanate of Belgrade. The successfully initiated negotiations soon had to be put on hold due to the outbreak of World War I in 1914. They were resumed at the end of the war in 1918 and were concluded by an agreement calling for the transfer of jurisdiction over the said dioceses from the Patriarchate of Constantinople to the SOC, which restored its full canonical unity in 1920, in the form of a Patriarchate.⁵ At that time, diocesan administrations

astical functions in dioceses throughout Bulgaria be replaced with Bulgarians and that the Bulgarian language be used in divine worship. At a Synod meeting held on August 10, 1872, ecclesiastical racism, or ethnophyletism, was condemned, with the argument that it violated the teaching of the Gospel and the holy canons of the Holy Fathers of Christ's Church. In condemning ethnophyletism, the Synod of Constantinople of 1872 defined the position of the Church and Holy Tradition regarding a basic problem facing Orthodoxy in the modern world. Cf. *For the Peace from Above: An Orthodox Resource Book on War, Peace and Nationalism*, eds. Hildo Bos, Jim Forest (Orthodox Research Institute, 2011), 22–26.

³ It is argued by contemporary authors: Jure Zečević Božić, *Die Autokephalieerklärung der Makedonischen Orthodoxen Kirche* (Wurzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1994); Jovan Belčovski, "Stranškite istraživači za Ohridskata arhiepiskopija do krajot na vtorata svetska vojna (1945)", u: *Otkrivanjeto i proučavanjeto na Makedonija vo evropskata nauka do formiranjeto na Makedonskite državni institucii* (Skopje: b. i., 2009); Borče Ilievski, *Makedonsko-srpskite crkovni odnosi 1944–1970* (Skopje: Filozofski fakultet, 2011); and supported in Jovan VI, Archbishop of Ohrid and Metropolitan of Skopje, *Brief History of the Ohrid Archbishopric* (Ohrid: Archbishopric of Ohrid and Metropolitanate of Skopje, 2007).

⁴ Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (the father of the modern Serbian language, 1787–1864) was the first to use this term, referring to Prilep as a city in Old Serbia in his Serbian Dictionary of 1852. Cf. Вук Стефановић Караџић, *Српски Рјечник Истумачен њемачкијем и латинскијем ријечима* (Беч: Штампарија јерменскога наместира, 1852), 54, 118, 592, 737. According to Vuk, besides Prilep, Serbs also lived in Veles, Debar and Tetovo. Geographically speaking, Old Serbia encompassed regions that had been populated by Serbs for centuries: Raška, Kosovo and Metohija and Vardar Macedonia.

⁵ According to Đoko Slijepčević, negotiations with the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople were concluded on March 18, 1920, when blessing was given for the liberation of ecclesiastical units from the authority of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and their union with

were reorganized on the territory of Vardar Macedonia, with four dioceses being formed in 1920: Skoplje, Ohrid, Bitolj and Zletovo-Strumica. A new reorganization was undertaken in 1931, on the basis of the new SOC Constitution, according to which the Ohrid and the Bitolj dioceses were unified into a single Ohrid-Bitolj diocese, while the Zletovo-Strumica diocese was reaffirmed, with its seat in Štip.⁶ This organization stayed in place until the outbreak of World War II in Yugoslavia, in 1941.

After World War I, the Balkan Communist Federation,⁷ which was a part of the Communist International, was formed.⁸ In 1924, the Comintern⁹ adopted its *Resolution on the National Question in Yugoslavia*. Article 7 of the resolution provides for the secession of Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia from Yugoslavia and their establishment as independent republics.¹⁰ However, even several years after the resolution was passed, the position of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) was still not totally clear. The Fourth Congress of the CPY called for aiding all struggle for an independent and unified Macedonia. According to Sima Marković (a high ranking Serbian communist functionary), the Macedonian national question would be resolved with the formation of an autonomous Macedonian republic, whose borders were to be decided by plebiscite.¹¹ In 1933, Dimitar Vlahov (a leftist Macedonian politician and nationalist) participated in several talks with top Comintern leaders. As a result, in 1934, a Comintern resolution was adopted in the form of a political document, which, as noted by Duncan Perry, was the first time that an international organization dealt with the existence of the Macedonian nation and Macedonian language.¹² In the years leading up to World War II, there were several historians and sociologists that claimed the existence of

the autocephalous and united Serbian Orthodox Church. In addition to a canonical letter, a tomos on the incorporation of dioceses that were previously under the jurisdiction of the Church of Constantinople was issued and signed on February 19, 1922. Ђоко Слијепчевић, *Историја Српске православне Цркве, III* (Келн: Искра, 1986), 558–560.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 566. According to the SOC Constitution (Article 14), paragraph 13 refers to the Zletovo-Strumica diocese, seated in Štip, while paragraph 16 refers to the Ohrid-Bitolj diocese, seated in Bitolj. Cf. *SOC Constitution - Vemač СПЦ* (Београд: Свети архијерејски Синод, 1947), 10.

⁷ Branko Nadoveza, *Balkanski socijalisti i Balkanska federacija* (Београд: Zadužbina Andrejević, 1997).

⁸ *Istorija Saveza komunista Jugoslavije* (Београд: Komunist, Narodna knjiga, Rad, 1985).

⁹ The Communist International (Comintern), known also as the Third International (1919–1943), was an international communist organization that advocated world communism. The Comintern was founded at a Congress held in Moscow March 2–6, 1919. The Comintern held seven World Congresses in Moscow between 1919 and 1935. After three World Congresses, in 1924, the Comintern adopted its Resolution on the National Question in Yugoslavia. Bulgarian Communist leader Georgi Dimitrov headed the Comintern in 1934 and presided until its dissolution. It is very important for the resolution of the question of the Macedonian nation after World War II, in accordance with the creation of a new spirit within the communist FPRY and tensions between Bulgaria and FPRY.

¹⁰ Вељко Ђурић Мишина, *Летопис Српске православне Цркве 1946–1958, књига 3, Време Патријарха Гаврила (1946–1950) и Викентија (1950–1958)* (Книн-Београд: Зора, 2002), 1306.

¹¹ Сима Марковић. *Национално питање у светлости марксизма* (Београд: ЦО НРПЈ, 1923), 123.

¹² Duncan Perry, “The Republic of Macedonia: finding its way”, in: *Politics, Power and the Struggle for Democracy in South-Eastern Europe*, eds. Karen Dawisha, Bruce Parrot (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 228–229.

a Macedonian nation and, within its majority Slav population, a pro-Bulgarian ethnic element and a Macedonian regional identity.¹³ In his memoirs, Vlahov also claimed the existence of a Macedonian nation.¹⁴ According to Palešutski, this new concept was in accordance with the view that the Macedonian region would be the scene of a future imperialist war. Thus, the Comintern sought a way to resolve all conflicts between the states that had claims to this region, and, in its view, the way to resolve that problem was for the Comintern to recognize the Macedonian nation.¹⁵ In his memoirs, Vlahov wrote that the Comintern sought to quickly resolve the Macedonian question, and that they informed him that that would indeed happen, after consultations. The committee leadership also conducted talks on the Macedonian national question and requested the Balkan secretariat to propose a draft resolution. The conclusion of this resolution, which Vlahov claims was published in *Македонско дело*¹⁶ in 1934, recognized the existence of a Macedonian nation.¹⁷ All this was happening on the eve of World War II.

In April 1941, Bulgaria attacked the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, in accordance with the plan of the Tripartite Pact allies. As part of these military operations, the Bulgarian Communist Party sought to subordinate the Provincial Committee of the CPY for Macedonia, which had broken its allegiance to the CPY Central Committee, since the communist authorities in the southern regions of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia saw the occupation as a liberation of Macedonia from Serbian oppression, but perhaps also because the president of the CPY Provincial Committee, Metodij Šatorov-Šarlo, identified himself as a Bulgarian. It was only thanks to the Comintern's intervention in August of 1941, that the Provincial Committee remained a part of CPY, since it was important that Macedonia remain a part of Yugoslavia for practical reasons.¹⁸ During 1941, Bulgarian occupation forces expelled the canonical Orthodox bishops from South Serbia, Bishop of Skoplje Josif and Bishop of Zletovo-Strumica Vikentije, together with the clergy and numerous civilians. Clergy from the Bulgarian Orthodox Church was brought in to replace the SOC clergy that did not accept the new order.¹⁹ On October 15, 1943, the General

¹³ *Region, Regional Identity and Regionalism in Southeastern Europe*, eds. Klaus Roth, Ulf Brunnbauer (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2010), 127; Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), 107–112.

¹⁴ Cf. *Мемоари на Димитар Влахов* (Скопље: Нова Македонија, 1970), 356–357.

¹⁵ Костадин Палешутски, *Югославската комунистическа партија и македонскиот въпрос 1919–1945* (Софија: Издателство на Българската Академия на Науките, 1985), 223.

¹⁶ From January 1926, the *Македонско дело* newspaper became an official organ of the VMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) party, headed by an editorial board consisting of Dimitar Vlahov, Pavel Šatev and Vladimir Poptomov.

¹⁷ Cf. *Мемоари на Димитар Влахов*, 365–367.

¹⁸ Cf. В. Ђурић Мишина, *Летопис 3*, 1307.

¹⁹ Veljko Đurić Mišina points out that, during the years of Bulgarian occupation of the southern parts of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the situation was unfavorable for the formation of a new ecclesiastical hierarchy, due to the activity of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. During the first months of occupation, Bulgarian forces expelled 45 priests and 11 monks from the Skoplje Metropolitanate, which was under the jurisdiction of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Only priests that accepted the Bulgarian hierarchy remained. Cf. В. Ђурић Мишина, *Летопис 3*, 1308.

Staff Headquarters of the communist Partisan army named Velja Mančevski, a priest who was a Partisan soldier during World War II, as officer in charge of religious affairs.²⁰ Soon thereafter, the Partisan General Staff Headquarters for Macedonia and the Religious Administrative Office organized a meeting of clergy in the village of Izdeglia on Lake Ohrid, which was attended by eleven of the thirteen priests that had formed the first deanery on the territory controlled by Partisan forces.²¹ On that occasion, Antonije Popović, the parish priest for Slatina, a priest of the SOC who had submitted to the Bulgarian hierarchy,²² was elected as the first dean.

Since the initiative for naming the dean did not originate with the canonical bishop, it was null and void as far as Church law was concerned. And since it was not canonical, the decision that was adopted at this clerical meeting could be considered as representing the first step in the creation of the phenomenon defined in Church history as a schism. The clerics that participated in the meeting expressed a desire to form a new Orthodox Church unit, which would be proclaimed as the successor of the historical and canonically recognized Ohrid Archbishopric, in which the liturgical language would be Macedonian and the clergy would be exclusively Macedonian.²³ Serbian historian Veljko Đurić Mišina has written, referencing Macedonian historians, that the decisions adopted at this clerical meeting organized by the communist Partisan administration, marked the *beginning of the resolution of the Macedonian church question on a Macedonian basis, and the beginning of the end of the Macedonian people's centuries-long struggle to gain its own Macedonian church*,²⁴ without offering the necessary accompanying interpretation. The question that needs to be asked is: what is the Macedonian church question and when was it first posed, in the World War II or earlier? Also, what are the arguments, i.e., historical sources, underlying the claim of the existence of a centuries-long struggle of the Macedonian people to gain its own, Macedonian church [*sic*].

On August 2, 1944, the conference of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Macedonia recognized and accepted the ecclesiastical organization of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church imposed by Bulgarian occupation forces, a nonsensical act that recognized the ecclesiastical organization of

²⁰ Нестор Поповски, “Вељо Манчевски, протојереј”, у: *Удружење православног свештенства Југославије 1889–1969*, ур. Душан Штрбац, (Београд: Главни савез удруженог православног свештенства Југославије, 1969), 196. Popovski points out that Mančevski appealed to the Macedonian Orthodox clergy to separate itself from the occupying hierarchy of other churches. This clearly indicates the Partisan attitude regarding the SOC hierarchy on the territory of PR Macedonia.

²¹ Cf. В. Ђурић Мишина, *Летонус* 3, 1308.

²² Antonije Popović assumed a different name, and thereafter became known as Antim Popovski, while the surnames of the other clerics that attended the meeting: Tomo Popovski, Kiril Stojanovski, Zafir Jovanovski, Risto Ristovski, Risto Tasevski, Lambe Popovski, Matej (surname was not recorded), and Siljan Ristevski – all originally ended with the suffix -ić, which is characteristic of Serbian surnames. People were renamed by their own will. Cf. В. Ђурић Мишина, *Летонус* 3, 1308.

²³ *Ibid.*, 1308–9.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

the losing side in the war, against which the Partisan movement had itself fought. Thus, as Veljko Đurić Mišina concluded, *the Yugoslav communists accepted the organization of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and negated the Serbian Orthodox Church.*²⁵ When the Bulgarian army finally withdrew from occupied territories in Yugoslavia on September 9, 1944, the Bulgarian clergy remained and continued to spread Bulgarian propaganda. At the same time, the Partisans were working on organizing a new, independent church territory. In October 1944, in the village of Vranovci, near Veles, Macedonia, five clergymen: priests Velja Mančevski, Pande Popovski, Spira Damevski and Ivan Gelev – “Priest Šačo”, and deacon Metodij Gogov,²⁶ founded the Initiative Committee *for the Organization of Church Life in Macedonia.*²⁷ On October 31, 1944, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the SOC²⁸ issued an appeal for all bishops and clergy to return to their former places of service.²⁹ On November 13, 1941, the members of the Initiative Committee *for the Organization of Church Life in Macedonia* entered Skoplje with Partisan forces as it was liberated, and promptly opened the churches of the SOC Skoplje Metropolitanate.³⁰ Professor Predrag Puzović underlines the perfidious way in which the new communist authorities³¹ partook in the process of preventing the return of the canonical clergy to PR Macedonia, thus directly interfering in Church matters.³²

The first Macedonian church national assembly³³ was held in Skoplje on March 4, 1945, the main topic being the idea of restoring the Ohrid Archbishopric in a new form and under a new name (*St. Kliment's Ohrid Archbishopric*), with a

²⁵ *Ibid.* For example, according to Veljko Đurić Mišina, it was decided at the conference at the Prohor Pčinjski monastery that help should be provided for the officials and clergy of the Skoplje-Veles Metropolitanate, which was called the Skoplje Metropolitanate within the jurisdiction of the Serbian Orthodox Church, while the Skoplje-Veles designation was applied during the Bulgarian occupation. Thus, the terminology itself is not in accordance with the SOC administration but, rather, with that of the Bulgarian Church.

²⁶ Deacon Metodije Gogović worked as a religious teacher in Užice until the start of the war in 1941, when he moved to Skoplje and remained there until the end of the war. Cf. Ђ. Слјепчевић, *Историја*, 3, 169.

²⁷ В. Ђурић Мишина, *Летопис* 3, 1310.

²⁸ The perview of the work of the SOC Holy Synod of Bishops is to maintain dogmatic and canonical unity (Article 70. of *SOC Constitution*). Cf. *Устав СПЦ*, 33.

²⁹ Архив Светог архијерејског Синода СПЦ (Archive of Holy Synod of SOC) – Синбр. 1522, 31/18. October 1944.

³⁰ В. Ђурић Мишина, *Летопис* 3, 1310.

³¹ Edict and decision and the formation of the constitutional assembly of PR Macedonia, *Службен весник*, год. II, бр. 32, 25. ноември 1946, 389–390.

³² Предраг Пузовић, *Раскол у Српској Православној Цркви – македонско црвено питање*, (Београд: Свети архијерејски Синод СПЦ, 1997), 5.

³³ According to the SOC Constitution (Article 10), the Church-hierarchical and self-governing authorities are the following: Patriarch, Holy Assembly of Bishops, Holy Synod of Bishops, Great Ecclesiastical Court, Patriarchal Council, Patriarchal Board of Directors, eparchial Bishop, Eparchial Ecclesiastical Court, Eparchial Council, Eparchial Board of Directors, Dean, parish priest, Church-Community Council, Church-Community Board of Directors, prior, and monastery brotherhood. The convocation of the church-national assembly violated the SOC Constitution. Cf. *Устав СПЦ*, 7.

domestic episcopate (the highest ranking Macedonian bishop would carry the title of “*Archbishop of Ohrid*”) and clergy.³⁴ Among the speakers at the assembly were priest Kiril Stojanov, theologian Levko Arsov and others. Four days after the assembly in Skoplje, the Initiative Committee *for the Organization of Church Life in Macedonia* sent a letter to the SOC Holy Synod of Bishops, *requesting the proclamation of a “Macedonian Orthodox Church” and the prompt establishment of the “Ohrid Archbishopric.”*³⁵ In response to the letter, a meeting of those SOC bishops that could attend was held on March 12, 1945, at which the Skoplje assembly was proclaimed as non-canonical and the competent bishop, Metropolitan Josif (Cvijović) was asked to travel to Skoplje, inform himself of the situation on the spot and undertake all that was necessary to protect the interests of the SOC in the newly formed PR Macedonia.³⁶ Despite several attempts, Metropolitan of Skoplje Josif and Bishop Vikentije were not able to return to their dioceses even as late as 1947, and Metropolitan Josif himself was exiled from Vranje to Belgrade, together with the Ecclesiastical Court.³⁷

The state authorities’ patronage over the self-proclaimed ecclesiastical territory came to light on July 25, 1945, when the presidency of the Government of PR Macedonia sent Metropolitan Josif a letter with the conclusions of the Initiative Committee *for the Organization of Church Life in Macedonia*³⁸ regarding attacks on it due to its activities. As a result, the SOC Holy Synod of Bishops sent a letter to the clergy and the faithful in PR Macedonia, calling for them to respect the ecclesiastical order.³⁹ Thus, the canonical bishops resorted to the sole means at their disposal at the time, appealing to those under the protection of the organs of state in order to restore the status quo ante within the territory and the jurisdiction of the SOC. It can, thus, be concluded that the representatives of the Church hierarchy recognized the fact that it was the new authorities that were responsible for the creation of the non-canonical hierarchy and the secession of an administrative part of the SOC, and that they could only turn to state organs for help. The SOC Holy Synod of Bishops did not turn to its sister Churches, neighboring states or individuals responsible for the schism, but to the state leadership.

The resolution of the Initiative Committee in Skoplje for the organization of an independent so-called Macedonian Church was not published until November. Members of the Holy Synod of Bishops reacted by meeting the

³⁴ The resolution from the first Macedonian church-national assembly can be found in В. Ђурић Мишина, *Летопис 3*, 1310. The text of the resolution was sent to the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, signed by priests Nikola Apostolov and Kiril Stojanovski, who participated in the first meeting of the clergy in the Ohrid village of Izdeglia and one of the speakers at the first Macedonian church-national assembly, as well as Deacon Metodij Gogov.

³⁵ *Гласник СПЦ*, no. 10, Београд, 1946, 92.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 93. On March 17, 1945, the Ministry of Internal Affairs informed Metropolitan Josif that it could not approve his trip to Skoplje. Акт бр. 173/а (Document no. 173/а), March 17, 1945.

³⁷ В. Ђурић Мишина, *Летопис 3*, 1312.

³⁸ According to the SOC Constitution (Article 12), the SOC is episcopal in character; thus, its administrative division into dioceses is carried out in a church-hierarchical and church-administrative manner. Cf. *Устав СПЦ*, 8.

³⁹ В. Ђурић Мишина, *Летопис 3*, 1312.

Minister of Internal Affairs Vladimir Zečević on December 10, 1945 and demanding that the State Commission for Religious Affairs put a stop to the work of the Initiative Committee,⁴⁰ which was non-canonical and in opposition to the ecclesiastical discipline prescribed by the canons of the Orthodox Church.

Another church-national assembly was held in Skoplje in mid 1946. In addition to repeating the demands of its predecessor, it served as a launching pad for a new, very interesting theme – the formation of an “Orthodox Church of Yugoslavia,” comprising the Orthodox Churches from all the constituent federal units/republics, which would be equal in rank, and whose representatives would be the members of the new Synod. The decisions from this church-national assembly indicated that the Macedonian precedent was being used as an example for the other Yugoslav federal units and their populations to emulate, i.e., to split off from the centuries-old Patriarchate that was recognized by the rest of the Orthodox ecumene. That would indeed be a precedent in the history of all Orthodox Churches.

Since the state authorities arrested and sentenced some of the members of the Initiative Committee for the Organization of Church Life in Macedonia for engaging in enemy activity, a new Initiative Committee was formed. Its first contact with the Holy Synod of Bishops came at a meeting held on September 22, 1947, at the Palace of the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade.⁴¹ The representatives of the Macedonian Initiative Committee: Milan Smiljanić, Nestor Popovski and Boris Stankovski, proposed the formation of an autonomous Church within the Patriarchate, which would be in canonical unity with the SOC and would canonically elect domestic bishops. They also proposed that the Serbian Patriarchate change its name into the “Yugoslavian Patriarchate”. This leads to the conclusion that, while the state authorities in PR Macedonia had changed their rigid stance regarding the Orthodox Church in PR Macedonia, the idea of a “Yugoslavian Church” was, in fact, the primary one, and had remained unchanged. For his part, Patriarch Gavriilo requested that the state of affairs be restored to that existing in April 1941, and, in the Christian spirit, proposed the election of a bishop who would be appointed to the vacated Bitolj diocese. However, the meeting did not bear fruit. Thus, when the Initiative Committee sent a letter to the Holy Assembly of Bishops in 1948, it was not even considered, the conclusion being that all the organs formed in Macedonia were illegitimate and inevitably leading toward a schism. Nevertheless, Patriarch Gavriilo was prepared to make certain concessions, such as allowing the liturgical use of the Macedonian language⁴² and the election of bishops – but adamantly refused to discuss such matters with the Initiative Committee. However, Patriarch Gavriilo died in 1950. His funeral was attended by members of the Macedonian Initiative Committee, who also subsequently attended the election of the new Serbian Patriarch.⁴³

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² According to Article 4 of the SOC Constitution, the official language of the SOC is Serbian, and the official script Cyrillic. Cf. *Устав СЦЦ*, 4.

⁴³ В. Бурић Мишина, *Летопис* 3, 1313.

Patriarch Vikentije (1950/1958) and the Church question in PR Macedonia

There is no proof that Patriarch Vikentije gave any kind of promise to the authorities that he would resolve the Macedonian church question. However, during his time on the throne of the Serbian Patriarchs, the issue became an increasingly frequent topic. As historian Đoko Slijepević noted, as soon he was enthroned, Patriarch Vikentije stated for the state news agency TANJUG that he “hoped that the Macedonian church question would also be resolved.”⁴⁴ According to historian Radmila Radić, the first serious discussion the state authorities conducted with Patriarch Vikentije regarding the issue of a potential schism in PR Macedonia occurred at a meeting hosted by Yugoslav president and communist leader Josip Broz Tito, when it was suggested that the question of use of Macedonian language in liturgy should be postponed, as it entailed the translation of numerous liturgical books, as well as that one bishop should be appointed, while the other two candidates should be Macedonian.⁴⁵

Not long after his election as vicar bishop to the Serbian Patriarch in 1951, Dositej (Stojković) became involved in negotiations regarding the resolution of the controversial ecclesiastical issues in PR Macedonia. At the end of 1951, representatives of the Initiative Committee from Skoplje asked Patriarch Vikentije to move the Metropolitan of Skoplje, Josif (Cvijović), who hadn't been allowed to visit his diocese for years, to another post, and to have him replaced by the newly elected vicar bishop Dositej. And, although the requests were not met, they would be repeated in the following years, with the increasingly conspicuous support of the regime.⁴⁶

The Initiative Committee for the Organization of Church Life in Macedonia sent a letter to the League of Associations of Orthodox Clergy (LAOC) on August 7, 1950, in which it requested information regarding Archimandrite Dositej (Stojković). Thus, the Initiative Committee received the decisions made at the meeting and promptly acted in accordance with what had been agreed there with representatives of the SOC. The Committee asked for an account of Archimandrite Dositej's behavior during the occupation and after liberation, his stance regarding the national and the church question in PR Macedonia, the resolution of the national question in FPR Yugoslavia, and his view regarding the SOC bishops who refused to discuss the Macedonian church question.⁴⁷ Dositej was elected and ordained as an SOC vicar bishop in 1951, with the intention of being appointed as a bishop in Skoplje. However, the authorities refused to allow a Serbian bishop to come to PR Macedonia.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Ђоко Слијепчевић, *Македонско црквено питање* (Минхен: Искра, 1969), 52.

⁴⁵ Radmila Radić, *Verom protiv vere: Država i verske zajednice u Srbiji 1945–1953* (Beograd: INIS, 1995).

⁴⁶ Предраг Пузовић, “Раскол у Српској православној цркви – македонско црквено питање”, *Вардарски зборник*, 1, (1999), 163.

⁴⁷ В. Ђурић Мишина, *Летопис* 3, 1314.

⁴⁸ As cited in: *Yugoslavia – Political Diaries 1918–1965, vol. 4, 1949–1965*, ed. Robert L. Jarman (Slough: Archive Editions 1997), 725. Radmila Radić points out that the British considered Dositej

The first meeting between Patriarch Vikentije and representatives of the Initiative Committee, on the topic of resolving the problem of the Church in PR Macedonia and regulating its relationship with the SOC, was held on November 6, 1951. Also, in attendance were Bishops of SOC: Venijamin, Makarije, Vasilije and Nikanor. The Patriarch was pleased with the meeting and promised that the said issues would soon be discussed. However, even though the Patriarch repeated this sentiment before members of the Main Board of the LAOC, while also expressing readiness to have the problem in PR Macedonia discussed at the SOC Holy Assembly of Bishops, the Assembly of Bishops categorically rejected any kind of compromise in the resolution of the so-called Macedonian church question.⁴⁹

At the SOC Holy Assembly of Bishops in 1953, many bishops opposed the appointment of bishops from Macedonia, as they lacked the necessary qualifications for that, the most important Church position. The leading proponents of such a view were Bishops Vasilije (Kostić) and Simeon (Stanković), while vicar Bishop Dositej (Stojković), offended for being recommended for the Štip diocese, attacked the proposed candidates for episcopal sees in PR Macedonia for being nominated in an artificial way unbecoming of SOC tradition, one that would cause harm to the Church, as it would discredit itself among the people and lose autonomy in running its own affairs.⁵⁰

As negotiations between the Patriarch and SOC Synod members, on one side, and members of the Initiative Committee, on the other, increased in frequency, so did the meddling of other religiously related factors, including LAOC. An illustrative example is a joint train trip to Skoplje taken in early November 1954, by archpriest Mića Petrović, a LAOC official traveling to a meeting of the Main Board of the Association of Clergy of PR Macedonia, and vicar Bishop Dositej, who was traveling to Dečane Monastery (in Kosovo and Metohija) at the behest of the Patriarch. During the course of the trip, they talked at length about the state of the Church on the territory of PR Macedonia. Dositej pointed out that everything could be resolved with just a bit of good will on the part of the bishops. Thus, while only a year before Bishop Dositej was explicit on the question of establishing an episcopate in PR Macedonia, now he was saying that the SOC bishops should relent. Nevertheless, he distrusted the intentions of the Macedonian clergy, considering them to be *Bulgarophiles*.⁵¹

A month after the conversation on the train, Bishop Dositej attended a meeting hosted by Patriarch Vikentije and initiated by the Initiative Committee for the purposes of trying to resolve the church problem in PR Macedonia. The clergy from that Yugoslav federal unit were demanding the establishment of a

to be a well-meaning but insufficiently strong man, who went to PR Macedonia without Patriarch German's permission only to avoid conflict within the Church, and certainly not to cause a schism.

⁴⁹ This position was articulated in a letter to the Initiative Committee, no. 165/54, of September 30, 1954.

⁵⁰ For the report of the Federal Commission for Religious Questions written after the conclusion of the Holy Assembly of Bishops, 1954, see B. Ђурић Мишина, *Летоник* 3, 1315–1320, especially on the view of Dositej Stojković – 1319.

⁵¹ Радмила Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, Vol. 2 (Београд: ИНИС, 2002), 210.

Church formed out of the dioceses of the SOC, which would carry the national name, with native bishops, and guaranteed use of the Macedonian language. In the course of the meeting, they agreed with the organization of the ecclesiastical bodies, but only if they carried national prefixes.⁵² The Holy Synod refused to accept the name “Macedonian Orthodox Church,” but did concede the use of the designation “PR of Macedonia – Orthodox Church N. in N.” on the official seal.⁵³

The whole issue stood in place for several years, despite increasing pressure from the authorities. Finally, for the sake of stabilizing the situation, at the regular gathering of the Holy Synod of Bishops in 1955, the bishops accepted the two main demands of the Macedonian Initiative Committee: 1) the appointment of Macedonian-born bishops to head the three Macedonian dioceses, and 2) the use of the local dialect (*Macedonian language*) in internal administrative affairs. Despite this concession, the schismatics could not offer competent candidates for the episcopal cathedras.⁵⁴ The attempted act of good will on the part of the canonically recognized Church failed, and the state of schism continued.

Patriarch Vikentije continued to show eagerness to resolve the Church problem in Macedonia on his visit to the Archbishopric of Athens, expressing the desire to also visit PR Macedonia, which he emphasized in his letter to the Initiative Committee. His proposal divided the clergy in PR Macedonia, with some saying that his visit could contribute to the resolution of the church problem on their territory, and others claiming that the Patriarch’s opinion on the issue was already formed and that his visit would, thus, yield nothing new.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, on his return from Greece, the Patriarch visited Skoplje, which was the first post-WW II visit of a Serbian Patriarch to PR Macedonia. In his statement to the press, the Patriarch said that his visit would be meaningless without a discussion of the burning Church question in PR Macedonia, and expressed hope that it would be resolved.⁵⁶ An incident occurred at the reception organized by the Initiative Committee, as the Macedonian priests gave a vague response to the question of

⁵² *Ibid*, 213.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 214.

⁵⁴ At its meeting of June 10, 1958 the Assembly of Bishops voted to postpone the decision regarding the appointment of domestic bishops, since none of the proposed candidates fulfilled even the most elementary canonical conditions for appointment to the episcopal cathedra.

⁵⁵ The second group of clergymen argued that Patriarch Vikentije had included Cvetko Krstevski, a priest from Prilep, in the delegation that visited the Archbishopric of Athens, without the consent of the Initiative Committee, and that the Patriarch used the occasion to award him the right to don a red belt. *Ibid*, 217.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 217. Interestingly, during preparations for the next day’s divine service, together with priest Nestor Popovski, Patriarch Vikentije made a plan regarding what he would emphasize during his sermon: he would mention the liberation of Skoplje, the struggle of the Macedonian people, the church question and domestic bishops. However, in his sermon at the Church of Saint Mina, the Patriarch mentioned neither the Macedonian people, nor domestic bishops, nor the church question itself, to the displeasure of the clergy and some of the faithful. At the lunch held at the Metropolitanate building, Nestor Popovski raised the toast. With nary a mention of the Patriarch’s sermon, he stressed that the resolution of the church question in accordance with the demands of the Initiative Committee and the promises of the Patriarch and the bishops would contribute to the unity of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

whether or not they considered Patriarch Vikentije to be the administrator of the dioceses in PR Macedonia, as well as regarding the further work of the Initiative Committee.⁵⁷ On the following day, at a meeting with members of the clergy, Patriarch Vikentije said that he did not wish to meddle in politics and did not understand Macedonian statements claiming that they had lived in subjection during the interwar period. He also refused to discuss the formation of a new church hierarchy, emphasizing instead that there were three SOC dioceses in Macedonia, with domestic clergy and the use of the Macedonian language. According to Radmila Radić, the visit caused a rift among the members of the PR Macedonia Initiative Committee, as a result of Nestor Popovski's previously mentioned controversial toast.⁵⁸ Additional proof of division among the Macedonian clergy was their split regarding the arrival of an Archbishopric of Athens delegation to PR Macedonia in September 1956. The visit itself, however, passed without incident or unpleasantness. In December of that year, a decision was made at a plenary session of LAOC of the FPRY that a delegation of the League should visit the Patriarch and demand a prompt resolution of the Macedonian question. During the talks held at the Patriarchate, the Patriarch said that, if the Initiative Committee were to recognize him as the administrator of the dioceses on the territory of PR Macedonia, he would secure the election of bishops from PR Macedonia to the dioceses under his administration at the next scheduled Holy Assembly of Bishops. At the same time, the Patriarch promised that he would not send Serbian vicar bishops to PR Macedonia, specifically having Dositej (Stojković) in mind. However, at a meeting with representatives of the Federal Commission for Religious Questions (FCRQ) in February 1957, the question of the Orthodox Church in PR Macedonia was adjudged to be an insurmountable problem in the relations between the Church and the state.⁵⁹

In synchronization with the attempts of the FCRQ to resolve the question, the Initiative Committee accepted the decisions of the SOC Holy Assembly of Bishops regarding use of language in administration, the names of the dioceses in PR Macedonia and the seal, together with approving Patriarch Vikentije's administration, but on the condition of limiting it to a maximum period spanning two gatherings of the Holy Assembly (or two years at the most). The Initiative Committee requested Patriarch Vikentije the following: to make it his first priority to resolve the question of the election of domestic bishops from among the candidates proposed by the Initiative Committee – Dositej (Stojković),⁶⁰ Nestor Popovski, T. Dimovski, Spiro Popovski and Vlado Jovanovski; to ordain priests for parishes on the territory of PR Macedonia during his administration; and that the Initiative Committee continues to function.⁶¹ Only two days after submitting

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Although the Patriarch had promised that he would not send his vicar bishop to the dioceses in PR Macedonia, the Initiative Committee was now proposing just that to the Patriarch and the SOC Assembly – that they nominate the vicar bishop himself as an episcopal candidate for PR Macedonia.

⁶¹ Letter no. 476, of April 8, 1957. Cf. *Ibid.*, 219.

these demands, members of the Initiative Committee visited the members of the SOC Holy Synod, at which time deputy bishops, members of ecclesiastical courts and other representatives of ecclesiastical bodies provided for by the SOC Constitution were named for all three dioceses of PR Macedonia.

In his Paschal Message for 1957, Patriarch Vikentije expressed joy that Church unity was achieved in a lawful way.⁶² The May 1957 gathering of the Holy Assembly of Bishops brought progress as compared to earlier decisions.⁶³ After the conclusion of the Assembly, on July 3, 1957, Metropolitan of Skoplje Josif (Cvijović) died in Vavedenje Monastery in Belgrade.⁶⁴ In light of the fact that the Metropolitan had refused to voluntarily withdraw from the Skoplje cathedra, it can be said that this marked the end of the first stage in the process of attempting to resolve the Macedonian question.⁶⁵ Symbolically, on December 4, 1957, Vavedenje's Patron Saint's Day or Slava, the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple, Patriarch Vikentije ordained three priests⁶⁶ and promoted Nestor Popovski to the rank of archpriest⁶⁷ at that same monastery.⁶⁸

Church-related activity in PR Macedonia in 1958

The first event that indicated the direction in which the resolution of the Macedonian question would go in 1958, occurred on January 9, 1958, when the Executive Council of the PR Macedonia Commission for Religious Questions sent to the FCRQ a list of candidates for new bishops of the dioceses on the territory of PR Macedonia: Archpriest Nestor Popovski, Archpriest Toma Ristov

⁶² Гласник СПЦ, 5, (1957), 99.

⁶³ At one of the meetings of the Assembly (27/14. May, 1957. no. 19, 20 and 21/49) the decision was made to allow the use of the Macedonian language in administration and sermons in dioceses on the territory of PR Macedonia, but that Church-Slavonic should remain as the liturgical language, and that the Macedonian language should be used on seals. All other questions would be subject to further discussion once the SOC Assembly receives a report on how the organization of Church administration was carried out. Cf. P. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 219–220.

⁶⁴ Unpublished *Analls of the Monastery of Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (The Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple) in Belgrade*, 8–9. Bishop Dositej (Stojković) served a six-month parastos to the Metropolitan Dositej in the Monastery. *Analls of the Monastery of Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Belgrade*, 10.

⁶⁵ Епископ Сава Вуковић, *Српски јерарси од деветог до двадесетог века* (Београд, Подгорица, Крагујевац: Евро, Унирекс, Каленић 1996), 263.

⁶⁶ Yugoslav magazines *Политика* and *Борба*, 5. 12. 1957. It is important to emphasize that ordination for priest in the Orthodox Church can be done only on one candidate during one Liturgy. Cf. Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (ODCC), 3rd ed. Oxford 2005, 1188–89. The question arises, how did not know the Patriarch of SOC?

⁶⁷ Historian Radmila Radić writes that Popovski was ordained on December 11, 1957, with three other priests from PR Macedonia, in Vavedenje Monastery, or seven days after the Monastery's Patron Saint's Day, which is a mistake. Radić emphasizes that, what is true, however, is that this was the first ordainment of a priest in PR Macedonia after World War II. Cf. P. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 221, footnote 719.

⁶⁸ It is not recored in the unpublished *Analls of the Monastery of Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Belgrade*.

Dimovski, Vladimir Zafiro Popovski and Spiro Dimkov Popovski – all married priests with close ties to the Communist Party.⁶⁹ It was evident that the Yugoslav state was in a hurry to resolve the question of the hierarchy in PR Macedonia. Patriarch Vikentije pointed out that the main problem with the proposed candidates was the fact that they are married. Also problematic was the fact that the Initiative Committee had not prepared a single candidate to enroll in the Theological Faculty of SOC since the end of World War II, so that they could take their vows and become ordained as bishops in PR Macedonia. In other words, instead of prepared canonical candidates, the nominees were practicing priests who were compelled to become episcopal candidates.

Together with the members of the Holy Synod, the Patriarch visited the FCRQ on March 26, 1958,⁷⁰ on which occasion FCRQ president Dobrivoje Radosavljević stressed to the Patriarch that the prolonging of the resolution of the Macedonian question has resulted in its taking on a political character, as the Macedonians were starting to turn to the Bulgarians and the Russians, and that the problem would further escalate if the foot-dragging were to continue at that year's gathering of the SOC Holy Assembly of Bishops.⁷¹ Representatives of the Synod of SOC also raised the issue of the state's as yet unpaid financial assistance to the Church but received no assurances in that regard. In Radmila Radić's view, this was a clear sign that the future relations between the SOC and the state hinged on Patriarch Vikentije's visit to Macedonia. During the same meeting, Radosavljević offered the following solution: in the case that the five proposed candidates were deemed unsuitable by the next gathering of the Holy Assembly of Bishops, a selection should be made from among the 300 priests currently serving in PR Macedonia, where one new bishop would be Macedonian, the second could be vicar Bishop Dositej (Stojković), while the third cathedra would not have to be immediately filled. Finally, Radosavljević concluded that it was better to elect one Macedonian as bishop than to have the entire project fail, after years of preparation.⁷² It should also be noted that, in parallel with this visit, another SOC delegation was visiting the Soviet Union (Moscow and Leningrad).

Two days later, on March 28, accompanied by Bishops: Hrizostom, Jovan and Dositej (Stojković), Patriarch Vikentije set off on a ten-day visit to PR Macedonia, the first canonical visit to that federal unit since World War II.⁷³ On

⁶⁹ Р. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 222, footnote 723.

⁷⁰ Headed by Serbian Patriarch Vikentije, members of the SOC Holy Synod of Bishops paid a visit to the FCRQ, which was represented at the meeting by Commission president Dobrivoje Radosavljević, Isa Jovanović, FCRQ member and president of the Religious Commission of the People's Republic of Serbia, and Miloje Dilparić, FCRQ secretary. Archive of the Holy Synod (AHS) – no. 1321/290 for 1958.

⁷¹ Р. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 223.

⁷² AHS (no. 1321/290 for 1958).

⁷³ Patriarch Vikentije wanted to resolve the Church schism in Macedonia, in which context, together with three bishops, he visited the dioceses in South Serbia from March 28 to April 6, 1958. The people received him sincerely, while he himself offered messages of peace and understanding, and avoided saying anything that might be misconstrued. On the other hand, the members of the Initiative Committee wanted the Patriarch to give them a date when they would

the following day, the Patriarch met with the president of the National Parliament, Lazar Koliševski,⁷⁴ who pointed out that increasing interest for the Church question in PR Macedonia was being shown by Bulgaria, which was offering to send three archimandrites for future bishops by way of the Russian Orthodox Church.⁷⁵ Koliševski also asked the Patriarch to use his influence in order to speed up the resolution of this problem, due to the additional fact that the Macedonian diaspora was increasingly turning to the Bulgarian Church.⁷⁶ Finally, in a rather menacing tone, Koliševski concluded that *the issue had to be resolved urgently, for otherwise the Macedonian clergy would resort to another solution, regardless of how that might affect others.*⁷⁷

Patriarch Vikentije wanted a quick resolution to the Macedonian question, but in a canonical manner. Thus, on May 12, 1958, he sent the act of the Ecclesiastical Court of the Skoplje diocese containing the list of proposed candidates, dated January 15, 1958, to the Holy Synod of Bishops. In response to the Patriarch's request for additional information, they also submitted elaborations regarding the episcopal candidates for bishops of dioceses in PR Macedonia: Nestor Popovski, Toma Dimovski, Spiro Popovski and Vlatko Zahirovski.⁷⁸ Near the end of May, members of the SOC Assembly were received the president of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, to whom Patriarch Vikentije promised the resolution of the Church question in PR Macedonia.⁷⁹

The gathering of the SOC Holy Assembly of Bishops, the last in which Patriarch Vikentije partook, began on May 26 of that year, with one of the items

be granted independence. On the last day of his visit, the Patriarch said something very important: "By our visit, myself and my Most Eminent brother bishops seek to strengthen what had weakened, to raise what had fallen and to fortify what had faltered. The peace and unity of our Church have been legally established. But all shall be in vain if our hearts are not united." Cf. *Гласник СПЦ*, 5 (1958), 86.

⁷⁴ On March 29, 1958, at 11 o'clock, Serbian Patriarch Vikentije was received by Lazar Koliševski, the president of the Parliament, at the National Parliament of PR Macedonia. In addition to the Serbian Patriarch, the delegation also included Bishops Jovan of Niš and Hrizostom of Braničevo, and Vicar Bishop Dositej (Stojković). The host repeated to the Patriarch and the bishops his wish for the quickest possible resolution of the Church schism, which was taking on ever broader political dimensions. He noted that great interest in this regard has been shown by the Macedonian diaspora in America, Canada and Australia, which had been turning to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church until the publication of the New Testament in the Macedonian language, after which the diaspora sought to distance itself from Bulgarian influence. At the end of the meeting, Lazar Koliševski emphasized that responsibility towards one's community is something that should always be born in mind. Cf. AHS – Notes from the Reception of Vikentije, Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, March 29, 1958.

⁷⁵ Р. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 224.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* Koliševski emphasized that the Gospel in the Macedonian language had turned the situation around in the diaspora, and that now an increasing number of its members wished to separate from the Bulgarians and organize their own Church.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 224–225.

⁷⁹ Tito stressed the urgency of this problem, due to the deterioration of relations with Bulgaria and the fear of Yugoslav state organs that the Bulgarians might react in Macedonia. Cf. Р. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 225.

on the agenda being: Statement of the dioceses in PR Macedonia regarding the proposal of domestic candidates for bishops of dioceses in PR Macedonia, no. 1368/289, AC6p. 15 (AHS, no. 15). During the gathering of the Assembly, on June 4, members of the Holy Synod were invited to a meeting with FCRQ president Dobrivoje Radosavljević, on which occasion he warned them that the bishops for the three dioceses in PR Macedonia must be elected from among the candidates, and that the Assembly members needed to make a *small sacrifice*, since all the candidates are married. On the following day, Radosavljević organized a reception in honor of the Patriarch and the bishops of the SOC, as had become customary during Holy Assembly gatherings.

At the June 10 Assembly session, the question of filling the three dioceses in PR Macedonia was discussed, resulting in the following decision: The SOC Holy Assembly of Bishops is not opposed to the election of domestic bishops to dioceses on the territory of PR Macedonia, but the proposed candidates cannot be ordained because they are married, thus the Holy Synod is tasked to continue studying this question; the Assembly requests the Patriarch, in his capacity as administrator, to propose other persons as episcopal candidates and to inform the clergy and the faithful regarding the Assembly's decisions.⁸⁰ It was a compromise decision, as some of the bishops did not want to discuss the Macedonian question at all, while, on the other hand, an agreement was even reached to the effect that Dositej (Stojković) and Trajkovski should be elected as bishops in Macedonia. However, Trajkovski reneged at the last moment, just before the beginning of the

⁸⁰ П. Пузовић, *Раскол у Српској Православној Цркви*, 45. Radmila Radić writes that, on June 25th, in the name of the FCRQ, Miloje Dilparić sent to the Executive Council of PR Macedonia a report on the activities at the gathering of the Holy Assembly of Bishops, along with three proposed options for an eventual resolution of the problem: 1) the convening of a new, extraordinary SOC Assembly, at which the bishops would be elected; 2) putting pressure on the SOC to establish an autonomous Church in Macedonia; 3) total secession from the SOC and the creation of an autocephalous so-called Macedonian Orthodox Church. All three options were elaborated in detail, with provisions being made for the convening of a church-national council, the election of a church-national committee that would replace the *Initiative committee*, manage ecclesiastical life by way of diocesan bodies, and prepare and convene a new church-national council. Three options were given for the election of bishops: a) that another autocephalous Church conduct the ordainment through its Patriarch and two bishops, on the condition that it was neither the Russian, Bulgarian or Romanian Church (probably due to the state of relations between FPR Yugoslavia and these countries) but, rather, either the Church of Constantinople, Antioch or Alexandria; b) that an elected bishop be ordained somewhere else; c) compelling Dositej (Stojković) to agree to be elected as bishop of one of the dioceses by the church-national council in PR Macedonia, so that the two bishops could then ordain the third. From this it is evident that this idea originated with Miloje Dilparić, secretary of the SVRP, who had also prepared several other options for the resolution of the Macedonian problem. Additional documents from June 28th of that year outline the procedure of the proposed resolution: deputy bishops from Macedonia were to visit the ailing Patriarch and request the decisions from the gathering of the Holy Assembly of Bishops; immediately thereafter, they would return to Macedonia and convene a clerical assembly, at which it would be decided to abrogate the agreement of April 1957, and a new body would be elected, which would then present a memorandum to the SOC Holy Synod. That would be a sort of ultimatum, for it was emphasized that, in case the Holy Synod did not convene an extraordinary Assembly, the process of establishing an autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church would begin (Р. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 229).

Assembly meeting. According to Radmila Radić, Dositej (Stojković) was unhappy for not being elected to an episcopal cathedra, as well as for being excluded from all SOC delegations that had traveled abroad.⁸¹ In the midst of all this, Patriarch Vikentije fell ill and died⁸² in Belgrade on July 5th, under mysterious circumstances,⁸³ soon after the conclusion of the regular gathering of the Holy Assembly of Bishops at which, despite strong pressure, the existence of a so-called Macedonian Orthodox Church was not recognized.

The death of Patriarch Vikentije was followed by the election of new Patriarch – German, and a new turn in the resolution of the *Macedonian schism*. During 1958, the communist authorities were quite generous in regard to the SOC. The state paid for one half of the social security for the clergy and granted the SOC a substantial subsidy for covering its budget deficit.⁸⁴ However, all this was done only in order to justify the coming unilateral act of the Initiative Committee to convene a church-national assembly in Ohrid. On July 20 of that year, a meeting⁸⁵ was held at the FCRQ offices regarding the question of the future so-called Macedonian Orthodox Church. Among other things, it was concluded that Mato Radulović was to speak with Dositej (Stojković) regarding his being one of the bishops that were to be elected at the church-national assembly in PR Macedonia.⁸⁶

In those extraordinary circumstances, as an archimandrite and without the blessing of the SOC Holy Synod of Bishops, Dositej (Stojković)⁸⁷ went to

⁸¹ P. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 227, footnote 739.

⁸² He was visited in Belgrade's *Dr. Dragiša Mišović hospital* by Bishops Hrizostom and Vladislav and also vicar Bishop Dositej (Stojković). Cf. P. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 227.

⁸³ In his letter regarding Patriarch Vikentije, Bishop Sava stressed that his death was not natural. Cf. Епископ Сава, *Српски јерарси*, 79.

⁸⁴ Cf. *Гласник СЦП*, 1–2, (1959), 2.

⁸⁵ Dobrivoje Radosavljević, Miloje Dilparić, Strahil Gigov, Done Ilijevski and Mićo Rapajić from the FPRY State Secretariat for Internal Affairs (DSUP) attended the meeting.

⁸⁶ The following was concluded: to hold an expanded plenum of the Initiative Committee; to conclude that the Holy Assembly of Bishops did not resolve the question of the Church in PR Macedonia in a satisfactory way, and that a decision has been made to convene a church-national assembly of all the three dioceses on that territory, where the three candidates for the election of new bishops are to be presented; the expanded plenum would submit its decisions to the SOC Holy Synod; a previously prepared press release would be delivered to the central media after the conclusion of the expanded plenum; to ensure the participation of Macedonian delegates in the Elective Assembly for the new Patriarch; to secure the blessing of the Patriarch for the holding of the church-national assembly; that assembly would restore the Ohrid Archbishopric, which would be in a personal union with the SOC (with the constitution being written by Dilparić); after the conclusion of the assembly, to work on having the new bishops ordained by SOC bishops; the elected bishops should enter prominent monasteries in Serbia where they would take their vows, for which purpose a Serbian bishop should be prepared (did they have in mind Vicar Bishop Dositej!); all the autocephalous Churches in the world should be informed regarding the decisions of the church-national assembly. Cf. P. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 230.

⁸⁷ Dositej, born as Dimitrije Stojković on December 7, 1906, in Smederevo, Northern Serbia, of parents Lazar and Sofija, née Vildović, Macedonians by descent who settled in that town on the Danube. Although born in Smederevo (the town 45km from Belgrade), he attended and completed primary school and the Gymnasium in Belgrade. He enrolled in the Theological School in Sremski Karlovci in 1922, but did not complete his theological education until 1937, in Theological Seminary of St. John in Bitolj. In between, he resided in various monasteries, seeking

Macedonia and served the Divine Liturgy in the Macedonian language. It was the first recorded instance since the end of World War II of an SOC priest holding a church service in Macedonia, and it came as a great surprise to the Holy Assembly of Bishops. On the other hand, it was met with approval in Macedonia and, especially, by the FCRQ.

The Initiative Committee for the organization of the Orthodox Church in Macedonia informed the Holy Synod of SOC in writing of the decision made at the expanded meeting of the Initiative Committee, in the presence of deputy bishops of dioceses in PR Macedonia, members of Ecclesiastical Courts, deans and members of city clergy, on July 23, 1958 – to convene a church-national assembly in Macedonia, at which the restoration of an “Ohrid Archbishopric,” which would be in canonical unity with the SOC through the Serbian Patriarch, would be announced, as well as to elect the bishops for the dioceses in PR Macedonia. In its July 25, 1958 edition, the Communist Party daily *Borba* announced the convocation of a church-national assembly at which decisions regarding the resolution of the church question in PR Macedonia would be made. The same article also contained a news item from the Initiative Committee meeting, according to which the SOC Assembly did not fulfill its obligations from the mutual agreement regarding the election of domestic bishops to head the dioceses in PR Macedonia.⁸⁸ All this shows that the communist authorities sought a very quick resolution of the church schism in Macedonia and pressured the Church authorities towards that end.

The church-national assembly in Ohrid (1958)

On September 22 of that year, the Initiative Committee informed the newly elected Serbian Patriarch German, as well as the SOC Holy Synod of Bishops, about the decisions of the expanded plenum of July 24, and the convo-

his own spiritual peace. He took his vows in the Sveta Prečista Monastery near Kičevo in 1924. Thereafter, all the way up to 1932, he was a monk of the Hilandar Monastery brotherhood. In that time, he was liberated from the army troops (Document from the Dossier of Bishop Dositej in Archive of St. Synod of SOC / Army document no. 919, from 13 March 1932.). Upon returning from Mount Athos, he became a brother at the Gračanica Monastery in today's Kosovo and Metohija. He was ordained to the ranks of hierodeacon and hieromonk in 1934. In 1942, he graduated from the Theological Faculty in Belgrade. He became a synkellos in 1945, and an archimandrite three years later. Between 1937 and 1947, he was an administrative official in the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church. After that, he was appointed as the head of the Patriarchal Palace in Sremski Karlovci, which was the post he held when he was elected Vicar Bishop of Toplica in 1951 (Document of the Holy Assembly of SOC no. 49/68 from 30 May 1951, and Document of St. Synod no. 2024/547, from 9. July 1951). At the church-national assembly in Ohrid in 1958, he was elected as the primate of the so-called Macedonian Orthodox Church. At the Holy Assembly in 1959, Dositej was elected Bishop of Skoplje (Document of the Holy Assembly of SOC no. 34/62 from 6 June 1959) with the title of Metropolitan, and his seat was in Skoplje. But this document wasn't use in practise. He died on May 20, 1981 in Skoplje, as a schismatic. Cf. Епископ Сава, *Српску јерарсију*, 176–177; Dossier of Bishop Dositej in Archive of St. Synod of SOC.

⁸⁸ *Borba*, 25. 7. 1958.

cation of a church-national assembly in PR Macedonia, scheduled for October 4.⁸⁹ Support for the scheduled assembly also came from the third regular conference of LAOC (September 24-25), at which Dobrivoje Radosavljević of FCRQ spoke and explained why the state had involved itself in the resolution of the church question in PR Macedonia.⁹⁰

Patriarch German received a five-person delegation of the Initiative Committee at the Patriarchate in Belgrade, which invited him to the church-national assembly. He replied that there was no need for the existence of the Initiative Committee since Church life had already been organized in the dioceses in PR Macedonia and that the holding of the church-national assembly and establishment of an Ohrid Archbishopric was contrary to the unity of the SOC. He also added that he had nothing against the proposal that the bishops in the dioceses on that territory should be of domestic origin, and that he wanted the question to be resolved urgently but that he did not wish to participate in the scheduled assembly. The same day, Patriarch German met with Miloje Dilparić at the Federal Executive Council and discussed his talks with the representatives of the Macedonian clergy, telling him that their demands were impracticable.⁹¹

On September 29, 1958, the *Borba* daily ran an article entitled “The Ohrid Archbishopric Will Be Renewed,” announcing the holding of a church-national gathering in Ohrid on October 4-6. The Initiative Committee for the organization of the Macedonian Orthodox Church had already prepared the agenda for the three-day gathering, including the election of a metropolitan and two bishops.⁹² Following these announcements and the clearly expressed views of the non-canonical hierarchy in PR Macedonia, a meeting of the Holy Synod of Bishops was convened, to which the vicar of the Serbian Patriarch, Bishop of Toplica, Dositej (Stojković) was invited. At the meeting, the Patriarch asked Bishop Dositej to recount in front of the bishops his meeting at the FCRQ on September 27, 1958, when he was also invited to attend the announced church-national assembly in Ohrid. Bishop Dositej said that he had been invited to the FCRQ and that he talked with the secretary, Miloje Dilparić, and Strahilo Gigov, a representative of the Religious Commission in PR Macedonia. It was then that Gigov invited Bishop Dositej to attend the church-national assembly in Ohrid on behalf of the president of PR Macedonia, Lazar Koliševski. He was also told that he was a candidate for one of the dioceses in PR Macedonia, and that the unity between the SOC and the Orthodox Church in Macedonia would be preserved through his person. Another important thing was also said at that time, which has since almost fallen into oblivion: after mentioning the name of the second candidate for the episcopal cathedras – Nikola Trajkov, a jurist from Bitolj – Gigov said that, should the SOC proclaim a schism, Bishop Dositej would be sufficient by himself. Thus, they were assuming that Bishop Dositej

⁸⁹ Р. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 231.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 231–232.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 232.

⁹² *Борба*, бр. 247, 29. 9. 1958.

would agree to become a bishop in PR Macedonia. In addition, Dilparić proposed to the Holy Synod of Bishops to name Bishop Dositej as the administrator of the dioceses in PR Macedonia. Finally, at the end of his report to the bishops of the Holy Synod, Bishop Dositej quite openly said that there were other things said at the meeting, about which he could not speak: “Whether I want to or not, I have to go. I am aware of all the consequences, but I plead with you to understand me. I gave my consent and there is no going back”.⁹³ The Patriarch replied that he did not agree with his going to PR Macedonia and that he was forbidding him to go. The other members of the Holy Synod, Bishops Hrizostom, Emilijan and Vladislav, agreed with the Patriarch that Bishop Dositej must not attend the assembly in Ohrid. He went anyway. Following this unpleasant turn of events, the Holy Synod of Bishops of SOC appealed to the FCRQ to try to prevent the holding of the assembly in Ohrid, as it would constitute a violation of the SOC Constitution.⁹⁴

Once the announcements were made, the Holy Synod of Bishops requested a meeting with the FCRQ president, at which SOC bishops would state their case for cancelling or postponing the assembly in Ohrid.⁹⁵ FCRQ president Dobrivoje Radosavljević replied that he could receive only the Serbian Patriarch, on September 29, at 18:00 hours. The Patriarch went to the meeting, where he related to Radosavljević⁹⁶ the Holy Synod's view that the holding of the announced assembly in Ohrid would result in a split in the SOC and other serious consequences for the faithful in PR Macedonia. Radosavljević replied that he was well acquainted with the problem of the Church in PR Macedonia, that the problem had been evident since 1947, that the decisions of the Holy Assembly of Bishops from 1954 had given hope that the problem would be re-

⁹³ AHS of SOC – Letter of the Archbishop of Ohrid and Metropolitan of Skoplje, no. 15, of September 22, (October 5) 1958, Ohrid.

⁹⁴ AHS of SOC, no. 2721/656 (Синбр. 2721/зап.бр. 656). Referring to a document of the FCRQ from the Archive of Yugoslavia, Radmila Radić mostly agrees with the account of this meeting between Bishop Dositej (Stojković) and Patriarch German, but also challenges the tendentious claim put forth in Ž. Stefanović's study, that Dositej went to Ohrid on the orders of Patriarch German Cf. Живан Стефановић, *Српска Црква под комунизмом – Црквени расколи* (Чикаго: а. и., 1988), 15.

⁹⁵ At the same time, there was also extensive foreign coverage of the events in PR Macedonia (*The Times*, *The New York Times* (very interesting articles published by *The New York Times*: “Macedonians Hunt Own Identity In Complex of Balkan Peoples”; “National Impulse Persists in Area of Bulgar, Greek and Serb Contacts” and “Quake Contributes to Sense of Macedonian Nationhood” from a later period, all of which provide a picture of socio-political relations in Macedonia during the 1950s), *The Manchester Guardian*), which were portrayed as activities conducted with the aid of the authorities, as a response to Bulgarian and Albanian pressure vis-à-vis PR Macedonia, instigated by the USSR (Cf. P. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 231).

⁹⁶ Miloje Dilparić raised the possibility of the convening of an extraordinary SOC Assembly, but Patriarch German replied that it would be an unpopular move. Nevertheless, the Synod informed all the bishops about the current situation and polled them on whether or not they supported the convening of an extraordinary Assembly. In their replies, the SOC bishops supported the Patriarch's position, with all of them opposing the convocation of an Assembly, while a number of them also held the view that Vicar Bishop Dositej (Stojković) should be informed regarding the eventual consequences of his ill-considered actions Cf. P. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 233.

solved, but that the prelates had failed to resolve the issue in a favorable way after the Assembly. His biggest disappointment, however, were the decisions of that year's Assembly (1958), which directly caused the convocation of the church-national assembly in Ohrid. For his part, the Patriarch reiterated his and the Synod's position regarding Bishop Dositej's attendance at the Ohrid assembly, underlining that it would be harmful for the entire matter, and particularly for Bishop Dositej, as his disobedience would violate the canons and could, thus, separate him from the canonical ecclesiastical community. The Patriarch concluded by pointing out that Dositej's attendance was in any case not necessary, as the assembly had already set its agenda, which Dositej could not influence.⁹⁷

On October 1, 1958, Bishop Dositej unilaterally decided to go to the FCRQ and inform Radosavljević that he had decided to accept the invitation and attend the assembly in Ohrid. He added that Patriarch German has exerted extreme pressure to dissuade him from going. For his part, Radosavljević offered Dositej all the help he needed.⁹⁸ The motives behind Dositej's act have remained unclear, but they can be inferred from the letter that he sent to the Synod after the Ohrid assembly. Right before leaving for PR Macedonia, Bishop Dositej attended the Third Federal Association of Orthodox Clerics Congress in the name of Patriarch German, but left for PR Macedonia after that, without the Patriarch's blessing and the Synod's permission.⁹⁹

On October 4, 1958, at the non-canonically organized church-national assembly in Ohrid, without a single SOC bishop in attendance, Dositej was elected the metropolitan-primate of the so-called Macedonian Orthodox Church, *by acclamation*. Having left all the duties and service entrusted to him by the SOC Holy Assembly of Bishops and the Holy Synod, he became the leader of a schismatic organization. A total of 220 delegates participated in the work of the Ohrid assembly, but none were representatives of the SOC Holy Synod. The *Nova Makedonija* and *Politika* newspapers of October 5, 1958, published extended *Tanjug* – state news agency – reports from the assembly. The assembly was held in the hall of the “Orce Nikolov” trade union vacation resort. According to the report, the assembly was opened by archpriest Nestor Popovski, who also submitted a report on the work of the Initiative Committee. The assembly was also greeted by Strahil Gigov, vice-president of the Executive Council of the People's Parliament of Macedonia and president of the Commission for Religious Questions of the Executive Council of Macedonia; Asparuh Kanevče, president of the People's Committee in Ohrid; and Milan Smiljanić, president of the Federal Association of Orthodox Clerics. Also in attendance were, among others, Ratko Jelić, secretary of the Fed-

⁹⁷ AHS of SOC, no. 2725/658 (Синбр. 2725/зап. 658).

⁹⁸ Р. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 233.

⁹⁹ According to Radmila Radić, the Patriarch and the SOC Assembly would not be opposed to his election, as that would still be a big step in comparison to the previous proposals and solutions regarding the controversial Church question in PR Macedonia but took issue with the way it was done. Especially objectionable was Dositej's enthronement by priests and lay people, which was irregular both from the canonical and the traditional standpoints. Cf. Р. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 234.

eral Association of Orthodox Clerics, Aca Savić and Krstan Bjelac, presidents of the local committees of the Associations of Clergy of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina; Miloje Dilparić, FCRQ secretary; Done Ilijevski, secretary of the Republic Commission; Dragoljub Budimovski, secretary of the Heritage Foundation, and others. Miloje Dilparić read a letter addressed to the assembly by FCRQ president Dobrivoje Radosavljević. The representatives of the FCRQ expressed their understanding for the justified efforts to elect Macedonian bishops and offered their full help in resolving the church question in PR Macedonia.¹⁰⁰

The assembly was proclaimed as a legislative body and an “Orhid Archbishopric” was revived, comprising three dioceses (Skoplje, Prespa-Bitolj and Zletovo-Strumica), whose boundaries coincided with the administrative federal unit borders. The newly established “Macedonian Orthodox Church” was to be headed by a metropolitan with the title of “archbishop of Ohrid and Skoplje” and “metropolitan of Macedonia,” seated in Skoplje. Bishop Dositej (Stojković), who had up to then served as vicar bishop to Serbian Patriarch German, was elected as the first “metropolitan,” in a non-canonical way, in violation of the 15th canon of the First Ecumenical Council and the 17th canon of the Council in Trullo, as well as the 2nd canon of the Council of Serdica, which speaks about this violation in a similar way.¹⁰¹ Nikola Trajkovski – who received the name of Kliment – was elected to the Prespa-Bitolj diocese, and Toma Dimovski – who received the name of Naum – was elected to the Zletovo-Strumica diocese.¹⁰² This was followed by the adoption of the constitution of the so-called Macedonian Orthodox Church, which provided that its primate would swear allegiance to the fatherland and the people’s government, to which he would be loyal.¹⁰³

Telegrams of greeting were sent from the Ohrid assembly to federal and local state organs, as well as to Serbian Patriarch German.¹⁰⁴ Two additional pieces of correspondence also arrived to the address of the Patriarch and the Holy Synod of Bishops – Acts no. 14 and 15, of October 5, 1958, signed by “Metropolitan” Dositej (Stojković), informing the Patriarch and the Synod of his election on October 4, and his enthronement as “Archbishop of Ohrid” in the Church of Saint Kliment in Skoplje on October 5, as the first “Metropolitan” of Macedonia. On October 7, 1958, the *Borba* newspaper published a *Tanjug* news agency report, ac-

¹⁰⁰ For more detailed reports, see newspapers *Нова Македонија* and *Политика* of October 5, 1958.

¹⁰¹ *Acta Conciliorum Œcumenicorum*, éd. Eduard Schwartz, (Berlin-Leipzig, 1927 et ss); Peter L’Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils: The Disciplinary Work of the First Four Ecumenical Councils* (New York: Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2000); Georgios A. Rhallis, Michael Potlis, *Syntagma des saints Canons*, t. I–II, (Athènes, 1852–1859, Athènes, éd. Grigoris 2, 1992); *Васељенски сабори, одабрана документа*, ур. Радомир Поповић (Београд: Академија СПЦ за уметности и конзервацију, 2012); *Свештени Канони Цркве*, превод Еп. Атанасије (Београд: Православни богословски факултет, 2005); Никодим Милаш, *Правила православне Цркве са тумачењем* (Шибеник: Епархија далматинска, Истина, 2004).

¹⁰² Newspapers *Борба*, 6. 10. 1958. and *Весник* 5. 10. 1958.

¹⁰³ Р. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 234–235.

¹⁰⁴ The assembly informed Patriarch German by telegram on October 9, 1958, of the historical decision made on October 4, the renewal of the Ohrid Archbishopric and the election of the first Macedonian metropolitan. П. Пузовић, *Раскол у Српској Православној Цркви*, 56.

ording to which the president of the People's Parliament of Macedonia, Lazar Koliševski, sent the following telegram on the occasion of the election of Bishop Dositej to the office of "Metropolitan" in Macedonia: "On the occasion of the renewal of the Ohrid Archbishopric and Your election as the first Macedonian metropolitan, I send You, and, by way of Your office, the newly elected bishops of Prespa-Bitolj and Zletovo-Strumica, heartfelt congratulations."¹⁰⁵

In his letter of October 5, 1958, Dositej (Stojković) informed the Holy Synod of Bishops of SOC that a church-national assembly had been held in Ohrid, at which he was elected as "metropolitan". At the beginning of the letter, Dositej wrote that he was called upon to help his "place of origin" and the strengthening and fortification of spiritual life and the reinforcement of the holy faith and the Church in those parts. He added that all the members of the eparchial council and ecclesiastical courts, elected priests and lay people from each deanery of the Macedonian dioceses also took part in the assembly. According to him, a total of 219 delegates attended, of which 115 were priests and 104 lay people.

"In its justified and legal desires and aspirations, the assembly turned to my meekness, as its domestic son, to use my feeble forces and help in the realization of the centuries-long aspirations and wishes of the Macedonian people, so that their church could become a true people's church, acquiring its own national, Macedonian attributes and its own independent life. Being well acquainted with all the difficulties connected with the resolution of such a sensitive question, as well as with the mood of the Holy Assembly of Bishops, and having in mind the fact that I had been told more than once by my Eminent brother bishops that I was foreordained to be one of the bishops of the Orthodox Church in Macedonia, while fearing and being most concerned that the entire matter may take an undesired direction, which would cause much evil and damage to our Holy Church – and even threaten it with schism, I listened to the voice of my conscience and the call of God, as expressed by this church-national council, and accepted the arduous and responsible duty of becoming one of the bishops of the Church in Macedonia. In the course of its deliberations, the entire church-national assembly, as the lawful representative of the clergy and the faithful of the Orthodox Church in Macedonia, unanimously expressed its desire for my meekness to assume the primacy of the renewed Archbishopric of Ohrid and Metropolitanate of Skoplje of Macedonia and elected me with 215 votes in the ancient Saint Sofia cathedral, by free and secret ballot, for their first Metropolitan."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Newspaper *Борба*, 7. 10. 1958. According to British reports from FPR Yugoslavia, Lazar Koliševski strongly opposed the Bulgarian ambitions and pressure vis-à-vis PR Macedonia and proponents of Yugoslav brotherhood and unity (*Yugoslavia – Political Diaries 1918–1965*, vol. 4, 732). Related to this is the commentary of Walter Callards from Radio London, who analyzed the new Macedonian Orthodox Church in the context of the existing crisis between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia and placed special emphasis on the fact that Bishop Dositej (Stojković) went to Macedonia without the knowledge of the Patriarch and other bishops, but with the knowledge of the communist authorities in Belgrade (P. Радич, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 235).

¹⁰⁶ AHS of SOC – Letter of the Archbishop of Ohrid and Metropolitan of Skoplje, no. 15, of September 22, (October 5) 1958, Ohrid.

This quote from the letter is very important, as it shows that Dositej did not think that his election as “Metropolitan” was, in fact, a non-canonical act, and that he addressed the Holy Synod of SOC courteously, informing the bishops that only four of the assembly’s participants did not vote for him. Particularly interesting is the following sentence: “It was with the greatest and sincerest wish and aspiration to serve my Church and my people, while preserving the unity of the Church and Her from profound convulsions and trials, that I received that duty, accepted it and took the position of the first Metropolitan of Macedonia.” It is, of course, clear that Dositej was neither speaking nor acting in accordance with Church canons, which prescribe ecclesiastical discipline and all the consequences of departing from or violating it. The question is: how is it possible for a prelate to be ignorant of the fact that the people cannot elect Church primates and enthrone them without the Council of Bishops and the hierarchy of the Church? There followed another interesting sentence: “The Holy Synod of Bishops and all the other Eminent brother bishops, members of the Holy Council of Bishops, are well familiar with my total devotion to our Holy Serbian Orthodox Church, which I do not need to emphasize, as well as the fact that, in all my actions, I have been guided by my utmost love for Her, seeking to serve only Her and Her interests. I have been prepared to lay down my life for the good and the progress of my Church since my earliest youth.” The inconsistency between Dositej’s actions and words is in full evidence here, for a man that respects the canons of the Holy Orthodox Church cannot say that he is putting himself in the hands of schismatics for the love of the Church, or that he is disrupting unity for the sake of unity and becoming a non-canonical metropolitan. Be that as it may, it was the opinion of the Holy Council of the Mother Church – the Serbian Orthodox Church – that took precedence in the case of this particular ecclesiastical discipline problem. Dositej further wrote the following: “In informing the Holy Synod of Bishops concerning this matter, I appeal to the Holy Synod to take into consideration the general welfare and interest of our Holy Church, and to properly discern, understand and evaluate the entirety of my action, and the fact that it was done in the highest interest and for the good of our Holy Church and its unity. I am of the view that my humble person is the best guarantee of that unity.”¹⁰⁷ The communists had repeated such words for years, and now Dositej has been found as the man who would supposedly bridge the gap between the schismatics and the SOC. Obviously, that was not the solution... “I plead, therefore, with the Holy Synod to do everything on its part to find a proper and good path, in the interest and for the greatest good of our united Church. The church-national assembly of the so-called Macedonian Orthodox Church in Ohrid demonstrated its greatest and sincerest wish and willingness to preserve the unity of our Church, in recognizing His Holiness the Patriarch as its primate.” That was Dositej’s assessment of the new state of affairs. The Macedonians granted autonomy to themselves and, as proof of their good will they nominally recognized the Serbian Patriarch. However, that is not the

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

path of Holy Tradition. “On us, the bishops, now lies the great and profound responsibility to preserve the unity of the Church and to prevent Her from undergoing grave disruptions that might leave unimagined and decisive evil consequences. It is, thus, necessary for us to strive to reach the best possible solution in the general interest, for the good, the strengthening, and the progress of both our Holy Church and our dear Fatherland.”¹⁰⁸

These last sentences represent Dositej’s clear admission that what he did was non-canonical. He hides behind his expressed wish to preserve Church unity, shows that he understands what he has done, but that it is too late. Still, he appeals to the Holy Synod of SOC to reach the best solution in the general interest of the Church, but also displays another aspect of having accepted the “metropolitan’s” cathedra – concern for the interest of his dear fatherland, which can also be viewed as a display of ethnophyletism.

Patriarch German and the first attempt to resolve the imposed schism

On October 28, 1958, accompanied by Bishop of Pakrac Emilijan, Serbian Patriarch German visited the vice-president of the Federal Executive Council, Aleksandar Ranković, who received him along with FCRQ member Petar Ivićević. Ranković asked the Patriarch whether the Church was having any problems, to which the Patriarch replied that minor problems and disagreements were appearing throughout the SOC territory, but that the burning question concerned the Church question in Macedonia. Ranković said that he was aware of the existing material problems in Macedonia but emphasized that the Church and the state were there to resolve such questions in the mutual interest. Ranković also stressed that he had no doubt as to the good intentions of the Patriarch and the Holy Council of Bishops. As for the Macedonian problem, Ranković said that what had just happened there was a great state need, and then went into greater detail about the problems that Yugoslavia was having with Albania’s highest state representatives and their territorial demands vis-à-vis our country. The Bulgarians were also working against our state’s integrity, in accordance with the directives of the Soviet authorities and, to illustrate, Ranković provided some examples of hostile activities against FPR Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁹

At the beginning of November 1958, “Macedonian Metropolitan” Dositej sent to the Synod of SOC, the decision of the church-national assembly regarding the renewal of the “Ohrid Archbishopric,” as well as the Constitution of the “Macedonian Orthodox Church” that was established the previous month in Ohrid, whose Article 38 stated that relations between the SOC and “MOC” were regulated through canonical unity personified by the Serbian Patriarch, whom the “Metropolitan” mentions during Divine Liturgy. The reaction of the bishops and the clergy was mostly united, and everyone viewed the situation in PR Macedonia

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Р. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 236.

as being non-canonical.¹¹⁰ For instance, Bishop of Banja Luka Vasilije demanded that “Metropolitan” Dositej and the two Macedonian bishops be brought before the Ecclesiastical Court, where they would be tried as schismatics.¹¹¹

At his meeting with Miloje Dilparić, Patriarch German pointed out that, for instance, Bishop of Banja Luka Vasilije could not even leave his diocese without the permission of an investigative judge,¹¹² and also commented the “MOC” constitution as a document produced by an enemy of both the SOC and the state and expressed regret regarding all the unfortunate events that had taken place.¹¹³

Despite the fact that organs of state were pressuring Patriarch German and even offering money for the clergy’s social security fund in order to secure a definite resolution of the Church question in PR Macedonia, on November 24, 1958, the SOC Holy Synod of Bishops informed the FCRQ that it had named Bishop Jovan of Niš as the administrator of a portion of the Skoplje diocese and the deaneries of Pčinja, Masurica-Poljanica and Bosilegrad.¹¹⁴

Towards the end of November of that year, at a meeting of the Commission for Religious Questions of the PR Macedonia Executive Council, Done Ilijevski spoke about the regulation of the situation in the Macedonian Church. According to him, the “metropolitan” had done his utmost to organize the Church but has encountered great difficulties due to disciplinary problems among the clergy. For his part, Strahil Gigov said something very important for the purposes of this paper – that the renewal of the “Ohrid Archbishopric” was a great political success, for it put an end to the Macedonian national question. This precise statement confirms the hypothesis that it was indeed ethnophyletism, a proclaimed heresy in the Orthodox Church that lay at the root of the schism in the SOC after World War II. In the context of relations between the SOC and “MOC,” Gigov’s view was that any setting of conditions on the part of the SOC would be an obstacle to a resolution of the problem, which must not be left to the Church alone. As for the matter of filling the seats of the other dioceses in PR Macedonia, Gigov thought that it could wait.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Almost all the bishops in Serbia expressed the view that the creation of the “MOC” was carried out non-canonically and that it was causing a split in the SOC, with Bishop of Raška and Prizren Pavle (the future Serbian Patriarch), Bishop of Šabac Simeon and Bishop of Timok Emilijan being especially sharp in their reactions. Cf. *Записници са седница Комисије за верска питања НР и СР Србије, 1945–1978*, 272.

¹¹¹ Радић, Р. *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 236, footnote 772.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 236. In the FCRQ dossier in the Yugoslav Archive (AJ – CKБП 144–24–171) there is a note that Patriarch German also offered his own suggestion, for which he asked to be kept confidential, that “Metropolitan” Dositej should personally ordain Trajkovski as a bishop, or that the Metropolitan of Corfu, Methodius, should be asked to ordain Trajkovski together with Dositej. That is the canonical precondition, after which two bishops could ordain a third. This note is not in accordance with the Patriarch’s known efforts to prevent Dositej from attending the Ohrid assembly and to have the Macedonian Church question resolved in a canonical way, and especially doesn’t agree with his stated position in front of the Synod and the Assembly. The question remains as to whether this note sheds an entirely new light on the relationship between Patriarch German and Vicar Bishop Dositej, and on the resolution of the Macedonian question in general.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Р. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 237.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Since the Macedonian authorities monitored the activity of the “MOC” hierarchy, on December 12, 1958, Done Ilijevski was able to inform the FCRQ secretary that “Metropolitan” Dositej had visited the seats of all the dioceses in PR Macedonia and used the occasions to award the rank of archpriest to a large number of priests, as well as the rank of archimandrite to newly elected bishops Trajkovski and Dimovski.¹¹⁶ Also, the PR Macedonia Executive Council granted “Metropolitan” Dositej an automobile.¹¹⁷

On December 16, “Metropolitan” Dositej thanked Gigov for the financial help, while also complaining about the willful behavior on the part of some members of the clergy (especially emphasizing the case of the Church of Saint Mina in Skoplje). In turn, Gigov informed Dositej of the movement to constitute the “MOC” in America, Canada and Australia,¹¹⁸ from which it was clear that the constitution of the “MOC” in the diaspora was one of the key reasons for the efforts of the PR Macedonia authorities and clergy to form an “MOC” on the basis of a Macedonian national identity. This serves as additional proof of the hypothesis that the ethnophyletist movement in FPR Yugoslavia and abroad, i.e. wherever the diaspora from PR Macedonia lived, took part in the schism.

During his time on the Patriarchal throne, Patriarch German battled to overcome the schism in PR Macedonia, whose forcibly created “MOC” was not recognized by any Orthodox Church in the world.¹¹⁹ In his numerous talks with the communist state officials, the Patriarch emphasized that the formation of new nations on the territory of the FPRY was not a good thing, either from the historical or from the ecclesiastical standpoint, and that he did not support the communist idea regarding the existence of separate Macedonian and Montenegrin nations. He underlined that the SOC never made distinctions among the peoples of Macedonia, and that the entire clergy there had been accepted as canonical (following World War II) and had remained in their parishes.¹²⁰ To reiterate, during his entire term of patriarchal duty, Patriarch German strove to overcome the schism in PR Macedonia.

One should not forget the decision of the the Holy Assembly of SOC on the election of Dositej (Stojkovic) for the Metropolitan of Skopje in 1959 in range of SOC, which noone in PR Macedonia confirmed, even let alone the decision and not done anything in case the unity of the Church and the solution of the problem in PR Macedonia, that is, the Church schism.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ According to the SOC Constitution, promotion to the rank of archimandrite is under the exclusive purview of the Holy Synod of Bishops (Art. 70, Par. 22). Cf. *Устав СПЦ*, 35.

¹¹⁷ Р. Радић, *Држава и верске заједнице 1945–1970*, 238.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Епископ Сава, *Српски јерарси*, 135.

¹²⁰ Милан Јанковић, *Патријарх Герман, у животу и борби за Спомен-храм* (Београд: Каленић 2001), 409–412.

¹²¹ At the Holy Assembly in 1959. Dositej was elected Bishop of Skoplje (Document of the Holy Council of SOC no. 34/62 from 6 June 1959) with the title of Metropolitan, and his seat was in Skoplje. This document wasn't use in practise at all.

Conclusion

Due to clarifying the Macedonian national question, the question of the resolution of the problem of the national Church also imposed itself.¹²² In the wake of World War II, the problem of the canonical and non-canonical hierarchy of the Orthodox Church in PR Macedonia, a federal unit of the FPRY, surfaced as a Church-historical problem in both Serbia and Yugoslavia as a whole. Everything pointed towards a schism, i.e., the forcible separation of a portion of territory under the jurisdiction of the SOC, and the proclamation of a new, non-canonical church hierarchy under the name of “Macedonian Orthodox Church.” After many discussions, the Macedonians, organized in the form of an Initiative Committee, and with the wholehearted help of the communist authorities, demanded autocephaly and/or autonomy, depending on the time period and political tactics, for the so-called Macedonian Orthodox Church. Nevertheless, all the Orthodox Churches confirmed the violation of canonical-jurisdictional discipline in the activities concerning the Church in PR Macedonia and refused to recognize any independent ecclesiastical unit outside of the SOC on its territory. The communist authorities in the FPRY clearly and unquestionably took the side of the Initiative Committee, and the pressure rose with each day and each year. In their negotiations with Church prelates, the communist authorities complained about the pressure they were experiencing from the USSR and Bulgaria regarding the lack of resolution of the Church schism in Macedonia. The first “metropolitan,” Dositej (Stojković), previously a vicar bishop of the Patriarch of SOC, was elected by the lower clergy and the people at a church-national assembly, which is canonically inadmissible. It was ethnophyletism, which has been condemned as a heresy in the Orthodox Church that caused the schism within the SOC on the territory of PR Macedonia in 1958, where a new nation was formed within the bounds of a new Yugoslav federal unit/republic.

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¹²² Cf. В. Бурић Мишина, *Летопис* 3, 1307.

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Deacon IVICA ČAIROVIĆ, ThD, Assistant Professor
 Faculty of Orthodox Theology of the University of Belgrade
 Belgrade, Republic of Serbia
 icairovic@bfspc.bg.ac.rs

THE ROLE OF VICAR BISHOP DOSITEJ (STOJKOVIĆ)
 AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH SCHISM IN MACEDONIA IN 1958

Summary

In the course of resolving, i.e., clarifying the Macedonian national question, the question of the resolution of the problem of the national Church also imposed itself. In the wake of World War II, the problem of the canonical and non-canonical hierarchy of the Orthodox Church in PR Macedonia, a federal unit of the FPRY, surfaced as a Church-historical problem in both Serbia and Yugoslavia as a whole. Everything pointed towards a schism, i.e., the forcible separation of a portion of territory under the jurisdiction of the SOC, and the proclamation of a new, non-canonical church hierarchy under the name of “Macedonian Orthodox Church.” After many discussions, the Macedonians, organized in the form of an Initiative Committee, and with the wholehearted help of the communist authorities, demanded autocephaly and/or autonomy, depending on the time period and political tactics, for the so-called Macedonian Orthodox Church. Nevertheless, all the Orthodox Churches confirmed the viola-

tion of canonical-jurisdictional discipline in the activities concerning the Church in PR Macedonia and refused to recognize any independent ecclesiastical unit outside of the SOC on its territory. The communist authorities in the FPRY clearly and unquestionably took the side of the Initiative Committee, and the pressure rose with each day and each year. The death of Serbian Patriarch Gavriilo was followed by the election of Vikentije, from whom the communist authorities expected recognition of the so-called Macedonian Orthodox Church. However, Serbian Patriarch Vikentije dragged his feet with the resolution of the Church schism in PR Macedonia, prompting the communist authorities to end their subsidies to the SOC and demand a quick resolution to the Church question in Macedonia. Interestingly, in their negotiations with Church prelates, the communist authorities complained about the pressure they were experiencing from the USSR and Bulgaria regarding the lack of resolution of the Church schism in Macedonia. As he took the SOC Patriarchal throne, Patriarch German was immediately faced with the existence of an open, parallel hierarchy in the southernmost Yugoslav federal unit and an incipient schism, as the local clergy did not recognize the Serbian Patriarch and SOC bishops, but demanded their own metropolitan for a primate, and their own bishops. The first “metropolitan,” Dositej (Stojković), previously a vicar bishop of the Patriarch of SOC, was elected by the lower clergy and the people at a church-national assembly, which is canonically inadmissible.

It can, thus, be concluded that it was ethnophyletism, which has been condemned as a heresy in the Orthodox Church that caused the schism within the SOC on the territory of PR Macedonia, where a new nation was formed within the bounds of a new Yugoslav federal unit/republic. It was, thus, the resolution of the question of the *Macedonian nationality* that gave birth to a self-proclaimed church – the “Macedonian Orthodox Church.” That state of affairs continues to exist to this day.

KEYWORDS: Serbian Orthodox Church, communist authorities in the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, Patriarch Vikentije, Patriarch German, “Metropolitan” Dositej (Stojković)