

Miroslav Akmadža, *Crkva i država: dopisivanje i razgovori između predstavnika Katoličke crkve i komunističke državne vlasti u Jugoslaviji. Sv. IV. (1965.-1968.)* [Church and State: The Correspondence and the Talks between the Representatives of the Catholic Church and the Communist State Government in Yugoslavia, Volume IV., 1965-1968], (Zagreb: Društvo za povjesnicu Zagrebačke nadbiskupije "Tkalčić" and Hrvatski institut za povijest – Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, 2017)

Summary

The period between 1965 and 1968 discussed in this book, was marked by extremely significant events in the life of the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia and in its relationship to the communist government. At issue are the period at the end of the Second Vatican Council and the first years of the implementation of its decisions, the end of the negotiations between Yugoslavia and the Holy See with the signing of the *Protocol* on the improvement of relations as well as the exchange of special envoys and the preparations of a complete restoration of diplomatic relations. It was a period marked by the sudden and mysterious return of Krunoslav Dragano-



vić to Yugoslavia and the appointment of Cardinal Franjo Šeper as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. This period was also marked by increased activities of the Church in the building of new churches as well as by disputes within the Church concerning the new spatial organization of the Church in Yugoslavia, particularly the establishment of the headquarters of the new metropolis in Dalmatia and also by conflicts between the Franciscans and secular priests in Herzegovina concerning the redistribution of parishes.

The Second Vatican Council announced the opening up of the Catholic Church to dialogue with atheists and atheist societies, thus facilitating negotiations between the Yugoslav government and the Holy See. In spite of difficult and enduring negotiations, due to the fact that neither the Yugoslav government nor the Catholic Church, particularly the Bishops, were inclined to

deviate from their principles, the Holy See - although Cardinal Franjo Šeper and the bishops were not inclined to do so - decided to sign the *Protocol* on the improvement of relations with Yugoslavia in 1966. The Holy See decided to do so because it was of the opinion that the signing of the *Protocol* would open the possibility of easier dialogues with other communist regimes in Eastern Europe, whereas by not signing it, the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia would be in an even worse position.

After the *Protocol* the policy of the state government towards the Catholic Church became more moderate, and accordingly the bishops took advantage of the situation to solve certain problems of the Church, particularly those concerning the construction of new churches. Exacerbated relations were not convenient for the government because its objective was a complete restoration of diplomatic relations with the Holy See in order to strengthen its international reputation, which it was attempting to push through the Non-Aligned Movement. Likewise, the Holy See favoured a renewal of diplomatic relations in order to implement its "Eastern Policy", i.e. a breakthrough in the states of the Eastern Bloc. Out of mutual interests, they avoided any kind of serious conflict, hence in the light of that interest, the Yugoslav government dropped the prosecution of Krunoslav Draganović after his mysterious return to the country in 1967. Both Yugoslavia and the Vatican were anxious to resolve Draganović's position as quickly and as painlessly as possible. For the Yugoslav side it was very important to restore diplomatic relations with the Holy See as quickly as possible in order to strengthen its international reputation. It did not suit the Vatican side either to have this case in the public eye, for that would open up certain unresolved issues, such as the nature of the Holy See's support for Draganovic in some of his post-war activities.

In order to expedite the regulation of relations between the Church and the state, the Communist government softened its policy about the Church by not imposing tough measures on Church activities concerning the opening of new facilities. The demands of the Catholic Church, particularly of Cardinal Franjo Šeper, for the construction of new churches became more frequent. Although the construction of new churches did not suit the government, it could not take any very decisive measures to prevent construction; all it could do was to delay the issuance of building permits, so that the negotiations between the Holy See and Yugoslavia would not be affected. Under these circumstances, Cardinal Šeper, with the support of all bishops, undertook the construction of new churches and therefore established the Pope John XXIII Fund.

Even at the time of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI noticed the abilities of Franjo Šeper as one of the most active Council participants. This was why in 1965 the Pope appointed him Cardinal and in 1968 he became the Pope's closest associate, i.e. the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of

the Faith. Thus Šeper became the highest-ranking Croat, concerning leadership, in the history of the Catholic Church. With Seper holding this position, the Church in Yugoslavia acquired a reliable protector of its interests. The Yugoslav government, aware of Šepers opportunities to acquaint distinguished persons all over the world with the position of the Church and the overall circumstances in Yugoslavia, had to be even more considerate towards Šeper and the Church.

Cardinal Šeper believed that an organic and effective implementation of the Council's renewal required a deeper knowledge on the Council's ideas, efforts and tendencies. He was of the opinion that in order to achieve this goal, it was necessary to put more effort into research, into the documentation of the Council's ideas and problems and to allow a wider scope for information about them. Accordingly, on February 22, 1968, Šeper established the Church Institution *The Christian Present - Centre for Conciliar Research, Documentation and Information* issuing, among other things, journals, bulletins and other occasional and ad hoc printed editions of a documentary, illustrative, research or creative and informative character within the scope of the Council's restoration and its duties, in particular for the purpose of sincere dialogues among Christians and with the modern world and culture.

The Second Vatican Council ordered the re-examination of the borders of ecclesiastical provinces, and requested the provinces under the jurisdiction of the Holy See to either unite into a new ecclesiastical province or to unite with the closest or most appropriate province. Accordingly, the Episcopal Conference of Yugoslavia sent a proposal for a new organisation of ecclesiastical provinces in Yugoslavia to the Holy See. However, right before the decision on the new organisation was made, disputes within the Church, regarding the issue of whether Zadar or Split was to be the seat of the Dalmatian metropolis, occurred. The Bishop of Split, Frane Franić, waging a tenacious struggle for Split to become the centre of the new metropolis and also seeking support from the government, was particularly concerned about this, and accused Šeper of supporting Zadar. The main argument against Zadar as the seat for the new metropolis was Italian irredentism, although there was no evidence for this; on the contrary, if Zadar had become the new seat, it would undoubtedly have been in the same position as other archdioceses in the former Yugoslavia, but as the dispute was solved in favour of Split, only the Zadar archdiocese remained under the direct jurisdiction of the Holy See.