

*Routledge Religion, Society, and Government in Eastern Europe  
and the Former Soviet States*

# **COMMUNISM, ATHEISM, AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ALBANIA**

**COOPERATION, SURVIVAL, AND  
SUPPRESSION, 1945–1967**

Artan R. Hoxha



# Communism, Atheism, and the Orthodox Church of Albania

This book examines the relations between the Albanian communist regime and the Albanian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (AAOC) from 1945, when the communists came to power, to 1967, when Albania became the only atheistic state in the world, and religion of all kinds was completely suppressed. Based on extensive archival research, the book outlines Orthodox Church life under communism and considers the regime's strategies to control, use, and subordinate the Church. It argues against a simple state oppression versus Church resistance scenario, showing that the situation was much more complex, with neither the regime nor the Church being monolithic entities. It shows how, despite the brutality and the constant pressure of the state, the Church successfully negotiated with the communist authorities and benefited from engaging with them, and how the communist authorities used the Church as a tool of foreign policy, especially to strengthen the regime's ties with their East European allies.

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**I dedicate this book to my grandparents:**

**Naun Naçi & Aneta Çuçi**

**Selim Hoxha & Ferasete Rexhepi**



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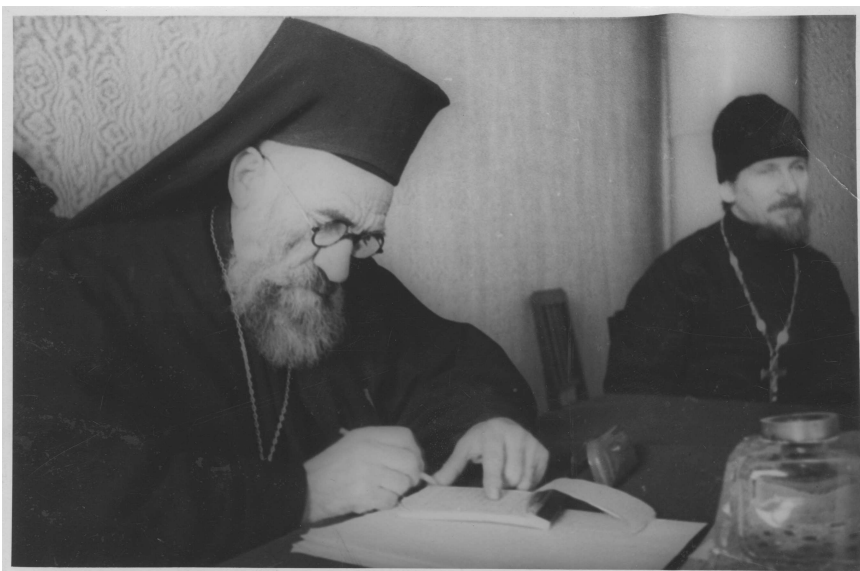
*Photo 1* Under Stalin's shadow. At the center on the right, Paisi Vodica; at the center on the left, Damian Kokoneshi.



*Photo 2* At the center on the right Paisi Vodica; at the center on the left, Damian Kokoneshi.



*Photo 3* Paisi Vodica pointing at the Gospel. Besides the cross, on his chest hang two decorations granted to him from the communist regime.



*Photo 4* Paisi Vodica taking notes.



*Photo 5* Moments from the visit of the AOCA delegation in the USSR.



*Photo 6* Participants of the III Pan-Orthodox Congress of AOCA.



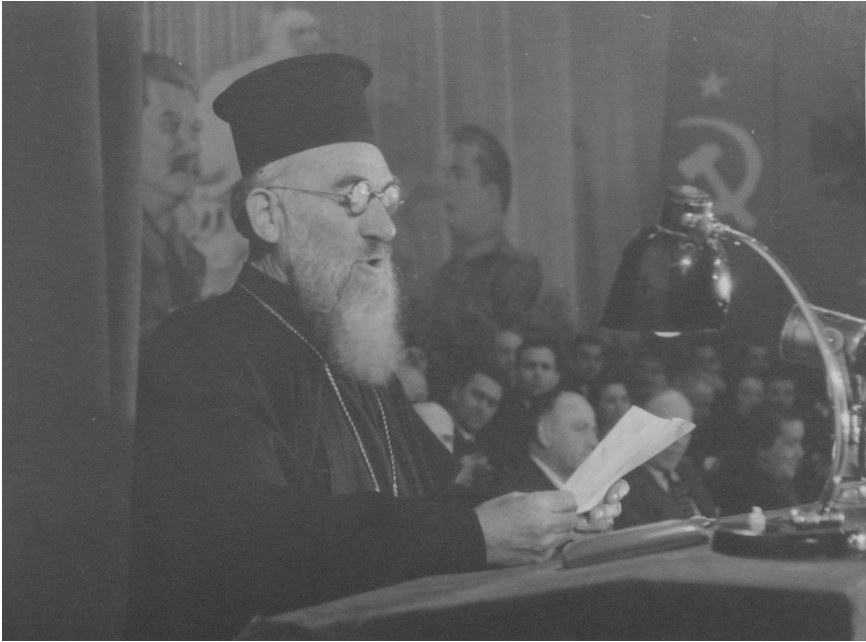
*Photo 7* Meetings of the AOCA's leadership. On the wall, in the left side hangs the photo of Alexey I, the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia.



*Photo 8* Meetings of the AOCA's leadership. On the wall, in the left side hangs the photo of Alexey I, the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia.



*Photo 9* The Conference of the Voluntaries of Peace (1952). At the end of the third row, left, Archbishop Vodica. (At the centre, front row, Nexhmije Hoxha, the wife of Enver Hoxha). In the banners are visible the posters of Enver Hoxha and Stalin.



*Photo 10* Paisi Vodica speaking in the Conference of the Voluntaries of Peace.



*Photo 11* Moments from the funeral of Paisi Vodica (1966). In the centre is visible Damian Kokoneshi with representatives of the other religious communities.



*Photo 12* The end of an era. Wreaths of the Albanian Labour Party's Council of the district of Kolonja, the birthplace of Paisi, on the grave of the defunct archbishop.

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This book has been a work in progress since 2011, when I started my PhD studies at the University of Tirana. In 2014 I successfully defended my dissertation on the relations between the Albanian communist regime and the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania from the communist takeover in late 1944 until 1967, when the Albanian Stalinist strongman proclaimed the nation to be atheistic. “Kisha Ortodokse nën komunizëm: KOASH-i dhe regjimi diktatorial shqiptar, 1945–1967” (*The Orthodox Church under Communism: AOCA and the Albanian Dictatorial Regime, 1945–1967*) was published in Albania in 2017 by the European University of Tirana Press (UET Press). The present book that comes to English-speaking readers is a heavily revised and updated version of that monograph. I acknowledge and thank the UET Press for its permission to translate the text. I want to thank the translators, both Genti Gjikota (who translated the Introduction through Chapter 5) and David Hosaflook (who translated Chapters 6 and 7 and the Epilogue). I want to express my gratitude to Susan Delacroix, who copyedited with high professionalism and dedication part of this book. I am indebted to my colleague and dear friend, Shannon Woodcock, for reading the entire manuscript and giving precious suggestions and advice. Besmir Buranaj Hoxha assisted in the first steps of the preparation of the manuscript. The exchanges between me here in Tirana, Albania, and him in Houston, Texas, in the United States, proved to be extremely helpful. Thanks go to Mary Neuburger, Konrad Clewing, and Fatmira Rama who provided helpful suggestions and feedback. I am also indebted to the archivists Isa Xhaferri, Eda Qazolli, Elena Sallaku, Rudina Turkeshi, and Endrit Musaj for assisting me tirelessly during my research at the Albanian Central State Archive. I want to express my gratitude to Kastriot Dervishi, who gave me full support in researching through the Archive of the Ministry of Interior. Olta Shehu, who has been close to me since this study was conceived, has left her imprint on the finished product in many invisible ways. Words cannot adequately express my gratitude to Fatime Hoxha, for without her help this work would have not reached the quality to which I aspired. Lastly, I wish to thank my parents, Raimonda and Roland, and my sisters, Arlinda and Genta, whose staunch support allowed me to write and rewrite this study throughout the past decade.



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# Introduction

In the spring of 1967, as soon as the last school bell for the day had rung, Raimonda Naçi, a seventh-grade elementary school pupil living in the southwestern Albanian town of Fier, heard that the Eastern Orthodox Cathedral of St. George was being destroyed. Surrounded by lines of cypress trees, St. George's was *the* great church of the city; it had been the central symbol of Fier's townscape since the end of the 18th century, when the town was first founded. The walls of this great church were covered with exceptional post-Byzantine paintings rendered by the hands of the Çetiri brothers—famous artists from southern Albania who, at the turn of the 19th century, decorated the main churches in the southwestern part of the country with remarkably executed frescoes and icons. Driven by curiosity, Raimonda and her classmates ran over to see what was occurring. The image that appeared before her eyes etched itself in her memory. The front courtyard of St. George's was entirely filled with broken, crystal shards from the cathedral's shattered chandeliers. An army APC (armed personnel carrier) was trying to pull down the bell tower with a steel cable. After several failed attempts, the "volunteers of atheism" called in the military to help them destroy this great temple of faith built in 1782. For almost two centuries, this sanctuary had been the bedrock of the Orthodox community in Fier. Following the relentless blows of pickaxes and sledgehammers, and the brute force of the army's motorized vehicles, the cathedral was finally laid to waste. Under a cloud of dust and debris upthrust by its demolition, along with the precious frescoes, 185 years of history collapsed.

Crowds of onlookers gathered to comment on what was happening. Raimonda joined them. She does not remember anyone either weeping or protesting about the shrine's destruction. The only thing that caused a stir among the numerous spectators watching the frenzied spectacle of the cathedral's demolition was the news that the bell of St. George's would be reinstalled in the main clock tower in the southern city of Gjirokastra, the birthplace of Albanian leader, Enver Hoxha. The bell's fate moved the attendees to a heated discussion, some in anger, over such an anomaly; according to them, it should have remained in Fier. For what reason was the bell being sent to Gjirokastra? A clock tower could be built in the middle of

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their city, with the bell duly placed there. By 1967, for these residents, the bell heralding the hours of the day and the performance of religious rituals no longer represented one of the symbols of church life. In their minds, the bell had been completely separated from any association with Christianity, with the Eastern Orthodox Church, the way of life it implied, and its social identity.

When Raimonda returned home, her parents, both members of the ruling communist Albanian Labor Party (ALP), did not talk about the demolition of the church or, for that matter, the destruction of all the other shrines taking place at that time in villages and cities all over Albania. They ate their customary lunch then continued with their daily routine. The end of two thousand years of history passed in complete silence for a family with long ties to the ecclesiastical life of the Orthodox Church. The many strands that tied the present with the past had permanently unravelled, and life for Raimonda's family continued in a new key, which had become such a dominant model that even the destruction of the material culture of history did not leave an impression. In fact, the past had long vanished for the Naçi family.

Raimonda is my mother. From the very first moment she told me this story, I had the urge to explain this event. For a family of centuries-old Christian Orthodox descent, how could the end of a religion's institutional life in a land where Christianity was sacred and apostolic *not* be a passing topic of conversation? After hearing about the discussions taking place back then among those watching the military vehicles tearing down the church, it is easy to understand a similar sort of reticence and indifference occurring on a much wider social scale. Of course, there were many other people who mourned the demolition of St. George's Cathedral along with all the other shrines destroyed during Albania's 1967 Cultural Revolution. There certainly would have been others who expressed their pain in solitude or in the privacy of their homes, hidden away from the eyes and ears of the regime. Sociologist Erving Gofman has argued that individuals behave differently in public and private in every society.<sup>1</sup> However, in communist regimes, the gap between what Gofman called the stage and the backstage, between acting for others and withdrawing into oneself, becomes enormous. Nonetheless, my mother's narrative makes it clear that the Orthodox Church had indeed lost support from many broad social segments of Albanian society. For no matter how harsh and ruthless Enver Hoxha's regime was, it would have been quite difficult for the regime to destroy most places of worship and suppress religion if Albanian society had been more closely aligned with its religious communities.

Questions arise: how did the Albanian communist regime—which has, along with the Romanian dictatorship, been described as the harshest of post-Stalinist Eastern Europe—manage to create such a wide schism between the Church and its flock? What happened to the Orthodox Church in communist Albania? How did Enver Hoxha's regime erode social support for the Orthodox Church, which had been the pivot of social and intellectual

life for the Christian community of the Eastern rite in the Albanian territories for centuries, even millennia? Did the communist regime use violence against the Orthodox Church to achieve its goals? Did the Albanian communist leadership have a distinct policy towards the religious communities in the country or did its communist-atheistic vision develop over the years? In what manner were the religious policies of the communist regime implemented, particularly those aimed at the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania?

This book's purpose is to explore what meant for the many people who carried out religious duties while living under communism. The answers to these questions clarify the history of the Orthodox Church during the period 1945–1967, and illuminate how the Albanian communist regime executed its religious policy. An exploration of the relationship between the Albanian communist regime and the Orthodox Church provides an understanding of how this Soviet-type regime in the Albanian capital, Tirana, established its relations with the various religious institutions in the country. The book also analyzes how the regime gained social support to the point of declaring Albania the only atheist country in the world by 1967. This study analyses the strategies which the communist regime used to paralyze and eliminate Albania's largest Christian religious community. It is important to note that Christian Orthodox believers in Muslim-majority Albania were not the dominant religion in the time of communist rule or, indeed, today. Thus this research into the history of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania (AOCA) during the communist period is also an investigation of the relations between a communist state and a minority religious community.

This book demonstrates that the relations between the Albanian communist regime and the Albanian Orthodox Church were not static but in constant flux. Correspondingly, both the AOCA and the communist establishment were not monolithic entities, but complex organizations whose activities over the years could not be easily defined or explained by simplistic formulas. The relationship between these two vast bodies was carried out on many levels, involved many people, and was defined by a polyphonic stance both at the top and at the base of each organization. Accordingly, my purpose in this book is to first make these individual voices from Albania's Orthodox Church heard and secondly, to overcome the reductive dichotomy of *oppression vs. resistance*, which has long been shown to inaccurately structure understandings of life in Soviet-type systems.

Focusing on Czechoslovakia, the historian Paulina Bren rightly argues that the communist regimes were not structures that only oppressed; they also provided care for their country's citizens. The majority of people were not united in unrelentingly resistance against their own governments; the attitude of most individuals was guided not so much by political goals as by an attempt to improve the material conditions of their lives.<sup>2</sup> Albanian Orthodox clergymen were no different in their attitude from their countrymen or their peers in the other peoples' democracies of the East Bloc.

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Historian Lucian Leustean has similarly shown that the Orthodox clergy in Romania cooperated, resisted, exploited, as well as were subject to persecution from the Romanian communist regime.<sup>3</sup> This book highlights the complexity of the Albanian communist regime's religious policies while outlining a detailed history of the Albanian Orthodox Church during the Cold War period. To achieve this, I analyze the official line expressed by the regime, the addresses of the Orthodox Church authorities, and focus specifically on the practices of the regime in exercising its power and the various reactions it provoked. Comparing these practices with their official statements, major discrepancies emerge between what was said and what was done, between the official words and the factual deeds.

The deconstruction of the complex history of relations between the communist regime and the Albanian Orthodox Church during this period requires avoiding exactly those kinds of generalizations/essentializations that build linear narratives, which all too often rely on a simplistic cause-and-effect mechanism. More than the why this book seeks to answer the question of how. Instead of considering the communist regime's policy towards the AOCA as a series of calculated steps which generated clearly defined consequences, this book presents a more complex historical overview. This book will narrate a story with many voices along with a varied number of actors operating within the Albanian clerical, state, and party structures, whose interaction created fluctuating dynamics, not at all predetermined by any clear vision, which guided the policy of the communist regime towards the country's Orthodox Church.

The analysis in this book shifts between four different geographical tiers. The macro-scale of the international Cold War environment influenced the Albanian communist regime's approach towards the AOCA, while the national scale enables us to contextualize the policies of Albania's Marxist-Leninist authorities within their nation-building aims. From the third tier, the regional one, this work traces the interactions between regime functionaries and the Orthodox ecclesiastical hierarchy at the regional and district level, and the final scale tracks local dynamics, analyzing the impact of the policies and initiatives of the local leadership on a micro-scale. Utilizing these four different levels of analysis enables a reconstruction of the complex historical relationship between the AOCA and the Albanian communist authorities.

Between 1945 and 1947, the Albanian communist authorities did not have any clear policy towards the several religious communities in their own country, including the recently established AOCA. In this same period, Yugoslavia had increasing influence over Albania's domestic affairs. The Albanian communists only enacted systematic terror on the Catholic Church in Albania in this period, due to the Catholic Church's anti-communist stand and its cooperation with the occupying Italian and German authorities during the Second World War. The Albanian communists only carried out selective interventions in other religious communities. During this period, Albania nearly became Yugoslavia's seventh republic, a fate narrowly avoided due to

the 1948 split between the Yugoslav leader, Josip Broz Tito, and the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin. However, it would be a mistake to think that the religious policies of the Albanian communist authorities were defined solely by instructions given by their Yugoslav patrons.

The persecution of the Catholic Church was the only point on which Tirana and Belgrade agreed. Their policies differed regarding the treatment of the other religious institutions. While the Yugoslav communists punished both the Serbian Orthodox Church as a result of its support of Draža Mihailović's nationalist Serb forces, and the Muslim community because of their support for Bosnia's collaborationist forces, the Albanian communists preferred a moderate approach, a methodical elimination of the clergy within each community that publicly opposed the new regime. This policy also included the AOCA. The communists spared the life of Archbishop Kristofor Kissi, who had associated with the fascist and quisling authorities during the years of Albania's Italian occupation. Although the regime's espionage apparatus had described Kissi as a questionable character, the Archbishop's willingness to cooperate with the communist authorities saved him from persecution. On the other hand, a number of higher and low-ranking Orthodox clerics throughout the country who had been critical of the communists were severely punished by the regime. The selective interventions against the Albanian Christian Orthodox clergy, especially in the provinces, were not part of a coordinated central plan, but often the result of particular initiatives carried out by local administrative bodies.

Along with actual physical punishment of the clergy, the communist regime also fully supported friction within the Orthodox Church itself. By supporting lower-ranking clergymen, along with a group of young theologians within the church, a number of communist officials aimed to incite something akin to a class war, a generational clash within the AOCA which would weaken the authority of the upper Orthodox hierarchy. Additionally, through the Agrarian Reform Law of 1945, the communist authorities inflicted heavy damage on the finances of the Orthodox Church, increasing its economic dependence on state subsidies. At the same time, the state abolished religious education from all school curricula, further isolating the church from its flock and reducing their interaction to religious services. To this effect, the communist policy towards the Orthodox Church included control of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the limitation of its economic independence, and the domination of the public space by the state. Even though their aim wasn't to completely suppress religious communities and extinguish all faith, the communist authorities sought to neutralize the influence of Albania's sacred institutions in shaping both individual and group identities. Simultaneously, the Albanian communists aimed to marginalize religion as a component of social and cultural life. The chief priority of the communist leadership during the initial years after the end of the Second World War was to consolidate its own power, showing no particular interest in reforming the state's relations with the main religious denominations in

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the country. However, the lower echelons of the communist apparatus and its branches in the periphery were often much harsher on religious communities than the Party leadership in Albania's larger urban areas.

In 1947 and through 1948, the communist leadership began to show a deeper interest in the Orthodox Church of Albania due to the Soviet Union's interest. During these years, which coincide with the outset of the Cold War, Stalin began conceiving a plan to create a united front of Autocephalous Orthodox Churches in Eastern Europe allied against the Vatican, who, for its part, had already begun cooperating with the US in its crusade against both communism and Soviet hegemony in the socialist bloc. In addition, the Soviet dictator was aware that only Marxist–Leninist ideology and his firm control over the communist leadership of Eastern Europe was not enough to consolidate Soviet power in this part of the continent. Thus, Stalin sought to find other historical links that would legitimize Moscow's dominant position. For the Soviet leader, the Eastern Orthodox Church would serve as the mortar to bind and hold the individual bricks of the people's democracies in a single bloc.

Moscow's interest in creating an alliance of Eastern Orthodox Churches in communist countries under the leadership of the Patriarchate of Moscow suddenly turned the AOCA into a valued asset for the Albanian communist leadership to further strengthen its ties with the Kremlin, which, until 1948, mainly went through the intermediation of Belgrade. Enver Hoxha and his supporters in the Albanian Communist Party were ready to use any means necessary to bypass Yugoslav tutelage. The Soviets pressed the Albanian communist leaders to replace Kissi and appoint another archbishop, one loyal to the communist regime, quite aware of Kissi's strong ties with the Patriarchate of Constantinople (which, for its part, had sided in this strategic alliance with the anti-communist forces). Hoxha and his supporters were also aware of Kissi's past after he had been elected archbishop in 1937. From this time on, when Albania had been an Italian-backed monarchy and then occupied by the Axis, Kissi had found common ground with the political forces that had ruled the country and which the communists had fought against.

Hoxha, determined to seize every opportunity to strengthen ties with the Kremlin, paid close attention to the Soviet request and prepared for Kissi's dismissal. In his place, Hoxha set about appointing Paisi Vodica, the father of one of the highest-ranking members of the Albanian communist leadership. Despite an inadequate ecclesiastical education, Paisi Vodica was placed on the throne of the AOCA due to his unquestionable loyalty to the communist regime. For a period of five years, from 1948 until the death of Stalin in 1953, the AOCA enjoyed a privileged position. As I will explain in the book, the AOCA received the highest state subsidies, exceeding even those of the Muslim community, despite the fact that at least 60% of the Albanian population identified as Muslim, compared to only about 20% claiming to be Christian Orthodox.

Stalin's death in 1953 marked the end of the Orthodox Church's privileged position. After the Soviet dictator's passing, the new leaders in the Kremlin no longer attached the same degree of importance to maintaining an Eastern Orthodox alliance against the Vatican. With the end of the AOCA's function as an instrument of communist Albania's foreign policy, the Tirana regime began to reduce its subsidies towards the Orthodox Church. The visits of Albania's high hierarchs abroad became more rare, and Enver Hoxha, ignoring Soviet, personally intervened to prohibit Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic clergy attending religious schools and institutions outside Albania. Chapters 4–7 of this book will argue that only from the mid-1950s, the Albanian communist leader began to crystallize in his mind an increasingly clear idea about his ensuing religious policy. While gaining increased autonomy from the Soviet Union, Hoxha begun implementing a policy that aimed at asphyxiating Albania's religious communities.

From the middle of the 1950s, the communist regime began to increase financial pressure on the Albanian Orthodox Church, reducing subsidies and expropriating Church properties and lands as often as possible. The Tirana authorities accompanied this economic grip with a systematic attempt to prevent young men entering the priesthood and revoke the right to a religious education. The main purpose of this prohibitive policy was to shrink the foundations of the Orthodox Church, as well as the bases of other faiths, draining these religious institutions of their energy and social prestige. From the mid-1950s on, there was a growing correspondence between the vision of Albania's Party leadership and the actions of its substructures in the outer regions and districts. If, until then, the Party leadership had been more offhand than the branches at the grassroots level towards its clerical institutions, by then there was a noticeable increase in the severity of its policies towards religious communities *en bloc*. Nevertheless, it should be noted that even though synchronicity of vision was gaining traction, not all of Albania's communist leadership was in line with Hoxha's increasing harshness toward religious communities.

While Hoxha's personal attitude grew increasingly harsh against religion in general, Albania's Prime Minister, the *de facto* number two of the regime, Mehmet Shehu, was less doctrinaire. Shehu often intervened on behalf of the Orthodox Church in order to alleviate its financial constraints and to discourage abuses initiated from local party-state structures and apparatchiks. Apart from routine cooperation with the state—necessary for the very survival of the AOCA—the Orthodox clergy simultaneously began to enact passive resistance against the regime's policies. Nonetheless, social support for religious practices, especially among young people, rapidly declined. By restricting the Orthodox Church's reliance on its older generation of clergy, who the communists had stripped of any authority in the eyes of the Albanian society, the AOCA was increasingly isolated from its traditional sustenance, gradually becoming marginalized as a social presence.

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Once the relationship with the Soviet Union was terminated in 1961, releasing Hoxha from bringing the country's policies in line with the rest of the socialist bloc, the Albanian communist authorities further tightened their grip on religious communities. State subsidies were reduced to a bare minimum, while the expropriation and destruction of numerous religious buildings increased. Albania's alliance with the distant communist China provided financial support necessary for the survival of Tirana and allowed Albania to pursue an independent religious policy. On the surface, Hoxha formally aligned Albania's policies with those of Beijing, but in reality, the agenda of the Albanian leader was different from those of his Chinese counterparts. This stark contrast became apparent with the 1967 Cultural Revolution. Whereas Chairman Mao Zedong used the Cultural Revolution to eliminate opposition within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Hoxha, whose power was absolute, used his own brand of the Cultural Revolution as a tool to discipline certain segments of society and to implement his all-encompassing concept for the construction of a truly socialist Albania. By 1967, various factors such as the aging of the church clergy, the loss of social support, financial dependence, and the extraordinary power of the Albanian communist state, allowed the suppression of the AOCA and other religious communities to become almost formal law.

The reconstruction of the history of the AOCA and the religious policies of the Albanian communist regime were made possible with archival documentation obtained from the General Directorate of Archives in Tirana, the Archive of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These archival sources can be divided into two groups. The first includes documents written by the structures in charge of drafting and implementing religious policies. This material includes the annals of the Albanian Labor Party (ALP), which controlled all cultural and ideological policies, as well as the Council of Ministers of Albania. The latter source provided valuable information regarding the financial state of the AOCA, state subsidies, property expropriations, and the tightening of the regime's economic grip on its religious institutions. As far as documents of the Party structures are concerned, I have used the sources of both the governing organizations in the country's capital, Tirana, as well as those of the Party structures in the outlying districts. Because the ALP had the monopoly of drafting cultural policy, including guidelines regarding the dissemination of atheist and anti-religious propaganda, the documentation generated by these structures provides an ability to trace the Albanian communist regime's religious policies, from decisions taken during Politburo meetings, to their implementation and the response from the lower levels of the Party hierarchy.

The archive of the Ministry of the Interior was another vital source in the writing of this book, most especially documents drafted by the Second Division of State Security (known as the *Sigurimi* in Albanian, the equivalent of the Soviet KGB), the organization in charge of the surveillance and

infiltration of the clergy strata. The information that emerges from the State Security documents, as valuable as it is, is problematic, for it often distorts the facts. Much of what is in these documents is misleading. Only a thorough and in-depth knowledge of the context surrounding these events allows for a close reading of these sources. Otherwise, the risk of history being written and (re)-written, corresponding to the interests of those who first drafted these documents, remains quite high. Often, these documents reveal a misperception that the *Sigurimi* had towards the clergy. Yet this is also one of the greatest values we find in these files. In my opinion, the pessimism the *Sigurimi* officials conveyed in these reports did not correspond to the reality of Albanian life at the time. Their alarm was often ratcheted up by the *Sigurimi* in order for its eavesdropping directorate to continue operations without fear of closure. For this reason, many insights found in the reports are not merely the product of subjective lenses but also of cynical, personal calculations. The comparison in approach and application of the methods by the *Sigurimi* officials, contrasted with that of the party organizations and state structures, provides a clearer view of the regime's complex relationship with the AOCA. From a historical viewpoint, these documents allow a better analysis of the inner workings of the communist power structure as well as the differences within its pyramidal configuration.

My goal is to follow the movement of these orders from the top leadership, to its roots in all parts of Albania, the replies and the reports from the ground, as well as the coordination between the different levels of the regime's hierarchy. Viewed in this manner, it becomes quite clear how the bureaucratic and administrative apparatus of Albania's communist regime functioned. To better understand whether the Orthodox Church's ability to maintain contact with its flock and properly perform its religious tasks was compromised or not, I've also provided data charting the state subsidy curve, the number of churches and monasteries, and the appointments and dismissals of Church staff. Other substantial sources which illuminate the nuanced relationship between the Albanian communist regime and the Orthodox Church were found in the archival collections of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Agriculture, the State Planning Commission, the Presidium of the People's Assembly, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs archives.

The second group of sources includes documents found in the archives of Albania's Orthodox Church. In addition to the annals of the AOCA, I have used the archives of the Deputy Metropolis of Durrës and the Holy Metropolis of Korça. These two sources yielded a trove of information about local interactions between the Church and the communist state. In general, the documentation of the regional dioceses and other deputy metropolises can be found in the archival collection of Albania's Orthodox Church. These sources were valuable to both understanding the various voices and opinions within the AOCA, and to fully comprehending the experiences felt in the outer regions by the policies drafted by the communist regime in the capital. The meeting minutes of the Holy Synod, and the