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PERSECUTION
OF RELIGION
IN RUMANIA



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THE RUMANIAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT

General (Nicolae Radescu), *Former Prime Minister*

MEMBERS

(Cornel Bianu), *Former Member of the Rumanian Parliament, Member of the National-Peasant Party*

(Nicolae Caranfil), *Former Minister for Air and Navy*

(Alexandru Cretzianu), *Former Rumanian Minister in Ankara*

Mihail Farcasanu, *President of the Rumanian Liberal Youth Organization, Member of the National-Liberal Party*

Grigore Gafencu, *Former Foreign Minister*

Augustin Popa, *Former Member of the Rumanian Parliament, Member of the National-Peasant Party*

(Constantin Visoianu), *Former Foreign Minister*

(Iancu Zissu), *Member of the Independent Socialist Party*

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INTRODUCTION

Religious persecution is a phenomenon alien to the otherwise troubled history of Rumania. The people of Rumania, while deeply religious, have always displayed a large degree of tolerance in matters of religion. It would be difficult to find instances of local rulers of the past, and even of regimes imposed from without, in the course of centuries of successive invasions and of varying degrees of foreign domination, that have systematically practised persecution of religion.

It is all the more deplorable therefore to find in Rumania of today, in the middle of the twentieth century and in time of formal—if not real—peace, that relic of barbarity: persecution of religion.

Yet it is not the people of Rumania who bear the guilt for the deeds we shall have to disclose in the pages that follow. It is a puppet government, imposed and maintained in power by the armed might of an imperialist power, a government alien to the Rumanian people, that is the culprit.

It is that government, and the Kremlin whose tool it is, who stand accused before God and mankind of the wholesale enslavement of an innocent people.

Disregarding the formal provisions of a peace treaty whose signatories they both are, the government of Bucarest and that of Moscow have done away with religious liberty in Rumania, as, in effect, they have done away with all other human rights and fundamental liberties.

In the present survey, the Rumanian National Committee brings to the attention of the world a series of incontrovertible facts, constituting full evidence of the persecution of religion in Rumania. The reader may find similar evidence of a broader and more diversified scope in the volume entitled "Suppression of Human Rights in Rumania," likewise published by the Rumanian National Committee.

Here is but one chapter—assuredly not the least—of that tragic story.

1. GOVERNMENT ACTION AGAINST THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Bucarest government, in its desire to eliminate all possibilities of organized resistance against its policy to communize the country, decided to begin a relentless fight against the Catholic Faith. This is a phenomenon common to all the so-called satellite countries.

Certainly, Catholicism, by its international character and by the Western conception it represents, constitutes, not only a close and constant bond with the free world of the West, in spite even of the "Iron Curtain," but also a significant rallying point for an important proportion of Rumania's population, desirous to maintain intact the moral values threatened by Communism.

The Catholic persuasion is represented in Rumania by the Roman Catholic Church which, according to the census of 1930, for the area then belonging to Rumania, numbered 1,250,000 souls, and by the national Greek Catholic Church which, according to the same census figures, numbered 1,430,000 faithful. It represented therefore a very real force, well and truly organized, which did not mean to allow itself to be subjugated without opposing resistance.

That this was so was officially recognized by an important member of the government, (Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej), who, in his statement of February 22, 1948, did not scruple to confess that the Catholic Church constituted one of the few forces in Rumania able to stand up to Communism.

Hence, the goal aimed at by the Bucarest government is precise: the weakening of the Catholic Church in Rumania in order to render it inoffensive. To attain this end, the communists are proceeding in accordance with a well-established plan, comporting several steps. In the first place comes an action of a general character, aimed at the severe reduction of the Catholic Church's means of manifestation, striking at its very organization and subjecting to the most rigorous control the exercise of its attributes. A second phase is aimed at nothing less than the suppression of the Uniate (Greek-Catholic) Church.

In the pursuit of this destructive work, the authorities are making full use of the classic means available to totalitarian regimes. The opening shots were a propaganda campaign, cleverly amplified, carried on parallel with an action of intimidation based on abusive and vexatious steps directed against the hierarchy and patrimony of the Catholic Church. The moment the proper "atmosphere" was judged to have been created, legislative measures followed, setting up the "legal" framework of the initial project.

a) PROPAGANDA

The slander campaign against Catholicism began discreetly, with certain sly insinuations like those made by Petru Groza on the occasion of the visit to Rumania of Patriarch Alexei of Moscow in May and June of 1947. It continued afterwards, gaining momentum and widening in scope and intensity,

by various statements issued by several members of the government; it culminated in a concerted press attack.

Among the government's oratorical manifestations we must cite the declarations of Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej before the National Assembly, on the occasion of the passing of the Constitution (April 1948), and those of Stanciu Stoian, Minister of Cults, on the occasion of the election of the new Patriarch, on May 24, 1948.

In the course of a broad examination of the international horizon, Gheorghiu-Dej said, among other things: *"The Pope will undoubtedly find occasion to assail our constitution because it does not tally with the Vatican's tendencies, which are to interfere in the internal concerns of various countries under the pretext of evangelizing the Catholic faithful."* *"Who knows,"* added the orator, *"whether the Vatican will not consider anathematizing us on the pretext that our constitution does not provide for the submission of our fellow countrymen of Catholic persuasion to the political directives of the Vatican, or because we do not allow ourselves to be tempted by America's golden calf, at the feet of which the Vatican would bring its faithful."*

Stanciu Stoian, for his part, contended that *"world reaction is trying to make especial use of two religious instruments: the Roman Catholic Church and the Oecumenical Movement. The Vatican's action can not leave us indifferent when it attempts to interfere with and to pass judgment upon our democratic regime. Nor can we remain indifferent when the so-called Oecumenical Movement desires to annex (Greek) Orthodoxy to the other weapons of Anglo-Saxon imperialism."*

By that time (end of May 1948) the campaign against Catholicism had taken new aspects, gaining in scope. Part of the hierarchy of the Rumanian Orthodox Church had seen fit to enter the arena and take a hand in a struggle whose political character was undeniable. The new Patriarch, Justinian, was launching appeals, inviting Greek Catholics to "rejoin" Orthodoxy. On the occasion of his enthronement, Patriarch Justinian alluded—on June 6, 1948—to the Concordat *"imposed upon our people by the Pope of Rome with the connivance of the former regimes, whereby the popish see was awarded greater rights than our own Church."*

In order to understand the intervention of certain Orthodox prelates in this question, we should recall that the upper hierarchy of the Rumanian Orthodox Church had previously undergone an extensive "purge." The following annotation from the communist paper *Universul* of August 28, 1948, is enlightening: *"The guidance of the country's destinies having been taken up by the hands of the working class and of democratic organizations, special attention is being given to the renewal of the high cadres of the Church. This was evidenced by the elections which took place in November 1947, when three hierarchs of the people entered the Synod. This concern of the working class for the destinies of the Church culminated on May 24, 1948, when the new Patriarch of the Rumanian People's Republic was elected in the person of His Holiness Justinian."*

b) DIRECT ACTION

Alongside this propaganda action, and precisely in order to enforce its effect,

creating the propitious atmosphere of terror, a whole series of administrative abuses were launched throughout the country, aimed both at the personnel and the patrimony of the Catholic Church. Thus in a single diocese, in the course of a few months—May 1947 to January 1948—no less than twenty-two priests were arrested. By March 1948 their number grew to 92, of which 41 were set free again after a short time. The rest, numbering 51, are still in jail at the time these words are being written.

Particular mention must be made of the unlawful arrest of the French Ascensionist monks, headed by Father Laurent, who were conducting an institute for Byzantine studies in Bucarest (Fall, 1947).

Instances of the manner in which the administration interfered in exclusively religious concerns of the Catholic Church must include the cases of the prefects of Turda and Hunedoara, who, at the time of the trials rigged against Iuliu Maniu and other leaders of the National Peasant Party, summoned the representatives of the clergy and requested that they demand the death penalty for Maniu in their sermons (November 1947).

Yet another form of abuse was the requisitioning of Church-owned buildings. Thus, in Timisoara the building that housed the Catholic Seminary was taken over by the authorities on October 30, 1947, and assigned to the Medical School. It was only after long and tedious protests that a part of the building was put at the disposal of the seminary; the greater part, however, passed under the administration of the medical school.

In line with the persecutions directed against the Catholic clergy must be considered, too, the decree issued by the Ministry of Cults, dismissing from service and depriving of their living a large number of priests, whose names appeared on a list published in the Official Monitor for March 31, 1948.

Special attention was given by the government to the Catholic press, which was progressively suppressed until, by May 1948, but one magazine, the *Children's Paradise*, remained in publication. This magazine too, edited by the Jesuits of Bucarest, saw its pages reduced from the usual 24 to the heavily censored material barely sufficient for 8, before being completely suppressed at last, in May 1948.

Following this drive of intimidation, carried on upon such an extensive and intense scale, the Bucarest administration considered the first stage of the initial plan accomplished, and it was decided to proceed to transform the legal basis itself in this domain. The liberal legislation on the books was replaced with a new regime of Cults.

e) LEGISLATIVE MEANS

Before proceeding with the envisaged reforms, the Bucarest regime had to repudiate such obligations of an international character as existed in this field. Under the Concordat between the Vatican and the Rumanian State, of May 10, 1927, ratified in 1929, the statutes of the Catholic Church in Rumania and its relationship with the State authorities were defined in great detail. On July 17, 1948, a communique of the Council of Ministers made known that, *"in order to accomplish the constitutional provisions relating to the untrammelled liberty of religion, the Council approves the abrogation of the law of June 12, 1929, concerning the approval of the Concordat with the Vatican;*

the denunciation of that Concordat; and the cessation of the application of the provisions contained in that Concordat, as of the date of its denunciation."

We need not insist upon the validity, from the point of view of international law, of the argument brought forward by the Bucarest regime to justify this step. It is well known that modern principles in this domain agree fully that the law of nations has complete priority as against provisions of a domestic character. It must, however, be stressed that the decision of the Bucarest regime is in fact a flagrant violation of the provisions of Article 23 of the Concordat itself, which recognizes the right of the contracting parties to denounce the accord, but calls for a six months' notice in such an event.

The abusive haste displayed by the administration in the abrupt termination of the application of the Concordat's provisions is to be explained when the contents of that accord are broadly examined. The Concordat, in addition to clauses concerning the organization and the functioning of the Catholic Church (Articles 1 through 10), contains certain dispositions concerning confessional teachings (Art. 19) and referring to diocesan seminaries (Art. 16), as well as some relating to the administration and general conduct of welfare organizations, foundations, hospitals, convents, etc., functioning under the direction of the Catholic Church of Rome (Art. 14). In each of these fields the organs of the church enjoyed full freedom of action, initiative, and leadership, within the general framework of existing legislation, and in harmony with the attributions of control and directives that belonged to the various government departments.

The unilateral denunciation of the Concordat was the signal for the opening of a violent press campaign against the Vatican. Caricatures of an exceptional vulgarity appeared. For instance, the official communist paper, *Scanteia*, showed the Sovereign Pontiff, with an American flag in his tiara, bowing down and kissing the hand of Secretary of State Marshall. Articles began to pour out praises for the "liberating action" of the government and to denounce alleged interferences of the Holy See in the internal affairs of various countries. The Patriarch Justinian himself, upon returning from the Moscow congress, in August 1948, declared that "*the political interests pursued by the Vatican are alien to the very spirit of our Christian faith. Hence the patriarchs and representatives of all Orthodox Churches hailed with joy the Rumanian government's decision to eliminate completely the possibility of the Vatican's interference in the internal concerns of the Rumanian Popular Republic.*"

In this artificially created atmosphere, which lacked all real acceptance in Rumanian public opinion, the government proceeded in the shortest possible time to promulgate two laws destined to lay the bases of the new regime of cults and schools. Of course, these two decrees signified at the same time a heavy blow struck at the independence and at the possibilities of manifestation of Catholicism in the Rumanian Popular Republic. Without entering into a detailed analysis of these decrees, we must examine here the dispositions that have bearing upon the problem which makes the object of this study, and the application that was given to these provisions.

THE LAW FOR THE REFORM OF SCHOOLS AND TEACHING

The decree which appeared in the Official Monitor for August 3, 1948, transfers to the exclusive conduct and control of the state the entire system of schools defined as "lay teaching" (Art. 1). All private and denominational schools, many of which belonged to the various Catholic communities, become state institutions (Art 35). The application and enforcement of this law, as the Minister of Public Instruction himself testified, was designed and elaborated "upon instructions from the Central Committee of the Workers' Party." It took immediate effect throughout the country. Commissions appointed to this end by the Ministry of Public Education first proceeded to close and seal the buildings of all private schools, and then made inventories of their entire patrimony, which was to be transferred to state ownership. This procedure gave rise to innumerable and serious abuses. For instance, buildings that housed both schools and other religious establishments were considered by the authorities to belong in their entirety to the school, with the sole exception of rooms reserved exclusively to actual religious practices. At one such institute, Notre Dame de Sion, the nuns were allowed to retain the use only of the chapel and of their personal cells. And while the inventory was being drawn up, no one was allowed to leave the buildings of the institute. The nuns were even prevented thus from accompanying the funeral procession of one of their own number. When the inventory was finally drawn up, the nuns were allowed to leave the premises only after submitting each time to a close personal search.

Such taking of inventories provided a pretext for instituting against Catholic personnel divers court proceedings, and numerous illegal arrests followed as a matter of course. We may cite the case of Mother Clemence de Sion, the principal of the Bucarest institute, who was subjected to a severe investigation, together with several other nuns of the institute, on the pretext that they had destroyed the archives of the school (August 11, 1948). Father Arion Trifas, former principal of the Catholic Seminary of Iasi, was likewise arrested for having allegedly attempted to conceal a part of the seminary's patrimony (August 26, 1948).

The wave of arrests of Catholic priests continued throughout the months of August and September. At the same time, the Ministry of Cults dismissed from their posts a large number of priests, especially former teachers of Catholic seminaries. We cite the case of Fathers Maximilian Simonic and Ion Farcas, parish priests in the Timisoara district, who were accused of "anti-democratic attitude," and indicted on September 8, 1948.

The reform of the schools, as we shall presently show, not only had the role of abolishing all activities of the Churches in the field of teaching, but also provided occasion for numberless abuses and acts of terrorism.

THE LAW ON CULTS AND ITS APPLICATION

Together with the reorganization of schools, new rules were provided for the general regime of cults, in the decree issued by the Presidium of the National Assembly, published in the Official Monitor of August 4, 1948.

The new law, although it asserts from the very outstart that it "guarantees freedom of conscience and religion" (Art. 1), in fact goes on to curtail most

drastically all means of manifestation of the divers faiths, striking at their organization, and subjecting them to a rigorous administrative and police control. Starting from the premise that all denominations, with the exception of the Orthodox Church, "*in order to organize themselves and to function, must have previous recognition by decree of the Presidium of the Grand Popular Assembly*" (Art. 13), the law goes on to state that "*in certain well motivated cases*" such recognition may be withdrawn in the same way.

Once this basic principle established, the conditions in which the various Churches may organize themselves administratively are set forth. The criterion is provided in Article 22, which says that "*for the creation and functioning of any denomination, an average of 750,000 faithful shall be considered as constituting a see.*" Thereby, the Roman Catholic Church which in the terms of the Concordat was guaranteed six sees (the archbishopric of Bucarest, the bishoprics of Iasi, Alba-Iulia, Timisoara, and Oradea, and the Gherla bishopric of Armenian rite), must submit to a considerable reduction in the number of its dioceses.

The law also provides for the abolishment of seminaries (Art. 53) and reduces to one the number of Theological Institutes of university rank of the Catholic Church and of other denominations in Rumania. At the same time, religious instruction in the army is eliminated, the function of army chaplain being abolished altogether.

Once the principles of organization disposed of, the law proceeds to regulate the conditions in which the various denominations may function in the country. Their entire activity is subjected to the most thoroughgoing administrative control, reaching from inscriptions, symbols, seals, and stamps, through ritual books and pastorals, all the way to congresses and meetings of prelates. At the same time, the law forbids all relations that are not strictly "*of a religious nature*" between the country's denominations and foreign countries. Such ties are thenceforth placed under the "*control and approval of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs*" (Art. 40).

It should be stressed that under the previous regime the Concordat all communications of the Catholic sees, clergy, and faithful with the Vatican were completely free.

Aside from the control of religious ties with abroad, Article 42 provides that "*assistance and gifts received from abroad by various religious denominations in the country, or those sent by the latter abroad, shall be controlled by the state.*"

The law gives prominence to dispositions governing the passing from one faith to another. Thus, Article 27 provides that when 10% of the faithful of one community pass to another cult, a proportional part of the patrimony of that denomination passes into the property of the other. Should a simple majority of the faithful of one denomination pass to another, then the local buildings and other annex possessions of the community, together with the church itself, become the property of the other. Finally, in cases where 75% of any community become converted to another faith, the entire local property of the abandoned denomination becomes the property of the second. All instances mentioned above "*shall be controlled and solved by the local popular courts.*"

We shall mention, finally, the provisions of Article 36, which call for the transfer to the property of the state of all the patrimony of "*such denominations as may disappear or whose recognition shall be withdrawn.*" The whole of the law's final portion will be found to constitute a powerful and far-reaching weapon for the governmental abolishment of the Greek Catholic Church.

In connection with the application of the law on denominations, a decree which appeared in the Official Monitor of September 18, 1948, established the number of Roman Catholic sees at two, and that of Greek Catholic sees at two, likewise. As the result of this decree, and on the basis of the law No. 166 of 1947, the Roman Catholic Archbishop Alexander Cisar of Bucarest, and Bishop Augustin Pacha of Timisoara, as well as the Greek Catholic Bishops Traian Frentiu, Alexander Rusu, and Ion Balan, were summarily ousted from their high offices, being "retired" by governmental action.

As a matter of fact, the communist press had long been carrying on a heated campaign against Bishop Pacha, as instanced by the newspaper *Luptatorul Banatean*, of August 15, 1948, which accused this high prelate of having consistently maintained a "*clearly anti-democratic attitude.*" Another Catholic prelate, Mgr. Ion Scheffler, the Apostolic Administrator of Oradea and Satu-Mare, had been suspended from his post some days before that (Official Monitor of September 16, 1948).

Whereas the law on education completely ended all possibilities for the Catholic Church to manifest itself in the field of education, the law on cults regulated the organization of the Church itself, reducing it considerably and subjecting it to a rigorous control by the state in all its specifically religious activities. In addition, a new decree concerning the nationalization of all medical institutions was designed to eliminate the servants of the Church from yet another field: that of health care.

THE LAW FOR THE NATIONALIZATION OF PRIVATE HEALTH INSTITUTIONS

The Official Monitor of November 3, 1948, published the decree for the nationalization of all private health institutions, which "*pass into the property of the state as common possessions of the entire people, free of all encumbrances and charges, under the administration of the Ministry of Public Health.*"

This decree nationalized, among others, the following Catholic hospitals and Sanatoria: St. Vincent de Paul and St. Joseph, in Bucarest, St. Joseph in Oradea, the hospitals of the monks of the Order of Charity of St. John the Divine, in Oradea, Satu-Mare, and Timisoara, St. Anne's hospital in Timisoara, St. Vincent's hospital of Miercurea Ciucului, the Maternity hospitals of Targul Mures and of Cluj, etc., etc.

As a result of these measures, the Roman Catholic Church of Rumania was deprived of the services of a large number of its highest prelates and of many members of its religious orders. Two bishops remained in function: Martin Aron and Anton Durcovici, themselves under constant attack from the communist press. Thus *Scanteia* of December 9, 1948, in an article by Csiko Nandor, a member of the political secretariat of the Magyar Popular Union, concerning

the activity of that party, denounced Bishop Aron as a reactionary leader. Part of the members of the monastic orders who were of foreign nationality, and who were in the country in the exercise of their pastoral mission, were forced to leave the country. Among these, we may cite the nuns of Notre Dame de Sion and those of the Bavarian Order of Englischer Freudens, numbering some two hundred and more, who arrived in Salzburg at the beginning of 1949, expelled from Rumania.

From all the above, we may see that the action of the communist government of Bucarest against the Catholic Church of Rome has already succeeded in curtailing most of its prerogatives, diminishing it considerably in its organization and restricting its field of activity to an absolute minimum.

In carrying through to the end this action of imposing administrative control upon the Catholic Church of the R. P. R., the Bucarest government soon reached the point of open conflict in matters involving basic tenets of dogma and canonical rules. This was occasioned by the submission by the Catholic Episcopate, for the requisite ratification by the Ministry of Cults, of the draft statute for the organization, conduct, and functioning of the Catholic Church in the Rumanian People's Republic. In accordance with the disposition of Article 14 of the Law on Cults, the draft statute was forwarded on October 27, 1948, for "*examination and approval.*" The proposed statute contained 46 articles, which referred, not only to the Roman denomination, but also to those of Greek and Armenian rites. It included, of course, the act of faith of the Catholic Church as well as the traditional norms of organization. The modalities of internal functioning and the specific attributions of the several ecclesiastical authorities were set forth in detail, in accordance with the established canons of the Church. In other words, the authors of this draft statute showed clearly that they fully meant to respect and comply with the legal dispositions of the R. P. R., in so far as these did not infringe rules and tenets established by canon law.

In the reply of the Ministry of Cults, issued after much delay in January, 1949, the administration recommended nothing less than the radical modification of 42 articles, and went to the length of even requiring the suppression of certain of them.

According to the Ministry of Cults, all dispositions bearing on the following issues had to be abrogated:

- 1) The general dogmatic position of the Catholic Church;
- 2) The Papal dogma and the canonical attributes of the Holy Father;
- 3) The norms applicable to the Greek Catholic Church;
- 4) "*The right to give religious instruction . . . in all schools.*"

In general, the Ministry displayed especial susceptibility even in matters of terminology, reacting unfavorably to every term used in the draft statute that might seem disrespectful toward the laws of the R. P. R., or even of a nature to run counter to the official atheistic views. Thus, the expression "*the community of the faithful*" was found unsuitable and it was recommended to be changed to "*the faithful,*" in the text of Article 30.

In his reply, dated February 24, 1949, Bishop Aron Marton of Alba Iulia, after expressing his "*deepest sorrow to find that the Greek Catholic bishops*

are prevented from expressing their opinion" concerning the draft statute, firmly refused to reach any compromise whatsoever on points connected with the primacy of Papal jurisdiction, with the exclusive right of the Holy Father to appoint bishops and to establish the number of dioceses, and with the liberty of relations with Rome, all of which constitute fundamental elements of Catholic dogma.

It was this exchange of correspondence that marked the sharpening of the conflict between the state authorities and the Catholic episcopate.

One of the first spectacular results of this difference was the decision of the Ministry of Cults, published in the press on May 29, 1949, whereby Bishops Aron Marton and Anton Durcovici, three canons, and 132 priests and administrative officials of the Roman Catholic Church of Rumania were struck out of the budget retroactively, that is, as of February 1, 1949, for "*anti-democratic attitudes.*"

Scanteia of May 29, 1949, justified this measure in a lengthy article, showing "*that the regime of popular democracy cannot and does not tolerate the enemies from within and without the country to take advantage of any of our democratic liberties to mask their actions directed against public authority, against peace, independence, and liberty, against the united struggle for socialism carried on by the working people.*"

Finally, the two Roman Catholic Bishops were arrested, on June 20 and 26, 1949. Their real offense was—as Cardinal Tisserant testified before the Eucharistic Congress of Nancy—that "*they refused to accept arbitrary state control over the Catholic Church and its organizations.*"

In recounting this last phase of the conflict between the Roman Catholic Church and the Bucarest government, we have simply followed its main line: that which concerned the protagonists. In fact, however, the persecution exerted against Catholicism went much deeper. We have mentioned the measures decreed against various churchmen, and the abuses practised against many members of the monastic orders. Things did not stop there by any means. We might cite, for instance, the letter under No. 41622/1948, whereby the Ministry of Cults requested Bishop Aron Marton to issue the necessary instructions to the Provincials of the Orders and Congregations of his diocese, for the "timely" execution of a series of measures, aimed at nothing less than the summary evacuation by the numerous monks and nuns of the premises belonging to their Orders. It should be stressed that these premises had been expressly left to the Orders, when the state, following the educational reforms of August 1948, and the nationalization of health establishments of November 1948, had seized abusively innumerable buildings belonging to the Catholic Church.

In his reply, dated November 29, 1948, the Bishop of Alba Iulia stated that this disposition—unjustified by any existing legislation—ran counter, not only to the internal rules of the various monastic Orders, but also to "*the freedom of conscience and religion, guaranteed by the R. P. R. Constitution and by the Law on Cults, and was even in manifest contradiction to those fundamental and inalienable human rights and liberties enjoyed by every citizen under any form of government, according to the general opinion of mankind.*"

Alongside these administrative abuses and chicaneries, the government continued the system of arresting members of the clergy. According to a Vatican estimate, by the beginning of July 1949, there had been arrested in Rumania no less than six hundred priests and members of religious Orders, since the advent to power of the Communists. (*Le Figaro*, July 2/3, 1949.)

A few days previously. *Osservatore Romano* (June 29, 1949) could state: "By now, we are in an extremity. It is obvious at this time that the Rumanian persecutions have taken proportions that set them above all others . . . against the Catholic Church." The reference is, of course, to the persecutions suffered in the other so-called "satellite" states.

In analyzing the various phases of religious persecution against Catholicism in Rumania, we showed that the beginning was marked by an intense propaganda action. This propaganda action is not absent from the latter stages which we have outlined above. Indeed, the entire press, literature, and even the plastic arts were called into action to assail the Catholic Church. Thus, to quote but a few random instances, the annual state exhibition of the plastic and decorative arts, held in June 1949, occasioned great admiration for the quality of certain cartoons exhibited. One, a series of drawings which showed the Pope eating macaroni that assumed the shape of the Dollar sign, was decreed by *Flacara* (June 25, 1949) to be "a model of caricature realization."

The same issue of *Flacara* also carries what is described as "The song of the Catholic missionary," from the pen of the poet Radu Teculescu:--

*I say unto you, "Peace to you," and I enter the city
With a machine-gun hidden in my bag
And with a cross in my right hand. . . .
I say unto you, "Peace to you! Strike out at sin
"Alongside our American brethren engaged in the great crusade.
"What matter if they command?
"What matter if some of you must fall?
"It is a law God-given to this world:
"Some with the deed and sacrifice,
"Others with dollars and the Word."
There!
I have unmasked for you the Catholic missionary.
Behold his words. Comrades.
Comrades, wherever you may meet him,
Spit him in the eyes
As you would a slobbering, honeyed beast.
And let your hands grip deep his throat,
And, wordless, smite him to the ground!*

This, at the lower end of the scale. At the highest, let us quote the words of the R. P. R. Patriarch Justinian Marina himself:

". . . The Vatican is the center of the oldest imperialist tradition, which has not hesitated in the least to use every means of the capitalist system to commercialize holy things, with the help of the 'Bank of the Holy See' and of other enterprises that have common interests with Anglo-American financial circles. To that end, Pope Pius XII does not hesitate to use any means what-

soever, even though it be contrary to the letter and spirit of Holy Writ."
(*Informations Roumaines*, Bulletin of the R. P. R. Legation in Paris, August 26, 1949.)

It is needless to go on with a detailed examination of the available evidence. Everything points to the sad conclusion that, at the present time, the Roman Catholic Church in the so-called People's Republic of Rumania has been left headless in the throes of the most bitter persecution. Official propaganda points it out as the principal enemy of the very concept of "*popular democracy*." Yet the Catholic Church continues to live in Rumania, carrying on with the doggedness inspired by confidence in its mission. It is no less true, alas, that the Communist government of Bucarest may well consider the Catholic Church officially out of action—a "*vanquished enemy*," swept away in the "*struggle for building socialism in the people's democracy*."

It may well be said, therefore, that one step of the program has been accomplished. We shall now examine the other phase of the government plan: the fight for the total suppression of the Greek Catholic Church. By its very character, this policy may rightly be expected to be even harsher than the other, its victims even more numerous and hard hit. It will, indeed, be seen clearly to present all the recognizable marks of a full-blown religious persecution, such as history is so drearily familiar with.

2. THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF THE UNIATE CHURCH

The Greek Catholic, or Uniate Church, which, ever since the end of the 17th century (1698), played an essential role in the cultural, political, and religious development of Rumanians in Transylvania, established, by the end of the 18th century, direct relations between Rumanians and the cultural centers of the West, especially with Rome. It determined thus a strong and significant western current in Rumanian literature, known as the Transylvanian School. This in turn was instrumental in the development of national sentiment, not only in Transylvania, but also in the Rumanian Principalities, throughout the 19th century. Following the union of Transylvania with Rumania, in 1918, the Uniate Church continued as an enlightened center of patriotism and high moral values.

According to the figures for 1938, there were 1,725 Greek Catholic churches, served by 1,594 priests, 34 canons, and 75 prelates. The faithful numbered at the time of the 1930 census, 1,430,000. Since then they grew to exceed one and a half million souls.

The organization of the Uniate Church, as it was guaranteed by the Concordat, was as follows: a metropolitan see at Blaj, titled, in order to maintain the historic tradition, the Metropolitan See of Alba-Iulia and Fagaras; four suffragan bishoprics—of Oradea Mare, of Lugoj, and of Gherla, with the residence at Cluj, and of Maramures with the residence at Baia-Mare.

In order to suppress this important and venerated organism of the country's national life, the government undertook a vast program. We shall have to distinguish two distinct phases in the development of events: the first, beginning with the appeals made to the faithful of Uniate denomination to pass to Orthodoxy, starting in May 1948, and leading to the Congress of Cluj, on October 1, 1948; the second, including the events which followed that Congress and which led to the de facto and de jure suppression of the Greek Catholic Church of Rumania.

a) FROM THE APPEAL OF BLAJ (MAY 15, 1948) TO THE CONGRESS OF CLUJ (OCTOBER 1, 1948)

The Centennial of the meeting of the Field of Liberty, held on May 15, 1848 (when Rumanians under the leadership of the Orthodox Bishop Saguna and of the Uniate Bishop Lemeny demanded the recognition of their rights as a nation), saw the launching of a formal appeal inviting all Greek Catholics to join the Orthodox Church. "Today," said the appeal, "*when the Rumanian Popular Republic guarantees equal rights, political, cultural, and religious, to all, no matter what their creed or race might be, to persist in the spiritual disunity which stemmed from the grave jeopardy in which the Rumanians of Transylvania found themselves in 1700, means to desert the united front of the new destinies that our working people are creating for themselves in the dawn of the future.*"

It is not necessary to stress the feeling of profound sorrow and concern aroused among Transylvanian Rumanians by this appeal, couched in the

terms of a fatherly call. All realized that it was the opening shot of the coming struggle, all the more so as it came precisely on the occasion of the centennial of an event that marked the real unity then existing among Transylvanian Rumanians, notwithstanding their differences of creed. And indeed this true character of the appeal was shortly to be made quite manifest, when the administration and police began a huge campaign to ascertain the views of all Greek Catholic priests in the matter of passing to Orthodoxy.

The appeal was renewed on the occasion of the enthronement of Patriarch Justinian Marina, on June 6, 1948, when the new Patriarch stated, among other things: "*What separates us at this time? Nothing but the faithful submission you still give to Rome. Give back this loyalty to the Church of our nation, the Church of our forefathers and of yours.*"

"The energies we have all spent up till now in defending the national and religious identity of our nation let us henceforth spend—under the paternal protection of the Rumanian state, of the Popular Republic of Rumania—only in consolidating the sovereignty and the national independence of our democratic state.

"The widest prospects open before us and before our future activity, once we no longer work in isolation, abandonment, and persecution as we have in the past . . ."

These appeals were given the widest publicity, the press devoting numerous and lengthy articles to the event. When, in reply, the Uniate Episcopate attempted to argue against these official theses, and to answer the appeals with its own views, it was simply prevented from doing so. Administration and police authorities prohibited all circulars and pastorals in this question. Thereupon, the Uniate leaders proposed to address a collective pastoral to their faithful, setting forth the official position of the Greek Catholic Church. "*The government censor's office refused approval for the printing of the pastoral, although it had not the least polemic and still less political character*" (Memorandum of the Uniate bishops, addressed to Petru Groza, on October 7, 1948).

In step with this press campaign, which went to the length of uttering threats against the Uniate churchmen, the political organizations began to attempt to interfere in the purely religious affairs of the Greek Catholic Church. Thus, in the most abusive and illegal manner, an attempt was made to replace the Church's personnel with "*members belonging to parties of the government bloc, and eliminating our priests from the administration of the Church's parish properties*" (Memorandum cited above).

We have to register with regret that several high Orthodox prelates saw fit to take a part in these agitations. Thus Bishop Emilian Antal, in *Semnalul* of June 21, 1948, after relating the conditions in which the Greek Catholics of Galicia passed to Orthodoxy, an event which took place in April 1946, exclaimed: "*Will our people too know this joy? It is our conviction that it will, even though we may have to wait until October 7, 1948, when the 250th Anniversary of the Act of Union of Alba-Iulia will be celebrated . . ."*

When the leaders of the Uniate Church saw themselves refused all possibility to broadcast by any and all means their reply to these appeals and to the press campaign that had been launched against their Church and themselves, they had to resort to sermons and canonical visits, in order to enlighten

their faithful personally. Particularly active in this direction was the Reverend Ion Suciu, the vicar of the Blaj Metropolitan See. The results were not long in appearing. On September 3, 1948, a decree of the government put an abrupt end to the Reverend Father's mission, suspending him from his high office.

At that moment, the action against the Catholic clergy and congregations had already become considerably more precise and systematic. The authorities of state distributed throughout Transylvania so-called "delegations" which the members of the Greek Catholic clergy were required to sign in blank. These were to designate the names of two churchmen for each administrative district, who, though they might be unknown to the signatories themselves, were to represent the latter at a meeting called in Cluj on October 1, 1948, a meeting whose purpose was, as the document stated, "*the return of the Greek Catholic Church to the Orthodox Church.*"

In order to obtain these blank signatures, the authorities resorted to acts which went all the way from promises of material advantages to the most direct threats. These were followed up with mass arrests. In order the better to give a picture of the behavior of the police authorities in this action, we shall quote from the note of protest handed by the Apostolic Nuncio on October 2, 1948, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Rumanian Popular Republic:

"The priests were in many instances brought by force to the local prefectures. In the offices of the Sigurantza (state security police) they were intimidated, threatened with imprisonment, with separation from their families, with deportation, and even with death. Those who resisted the initial acts of violence were thrown in underground cells, ill-treated, subjected to exhausting questioning, and finally set free only when, broken down by the inhuman treatment of their jailors, they accepted to sign." The note adds that "these offenses, knowledge of which soon spread throughout the country, . . . were confirmed by officials of the Bucarest Patriarchate and by members of the so-called 'Congress for Union with the Orthodox Church' of Cluj. Some of the latter themselves displayed visible marks of the duress they had suffered."

It should be noted that these things started and developed at a moment when the Uniate prelates were busy trying to comply with the formalities required by the law concerning cults, of August 4, 1948, of which we have written above, in view of the legal recognition of the Greek Catholic Church of Rumania.

As we have indicated and as the memorandum of the Uniate bishops quoted above asserts, "*the immediate agents of this campaign . . . did not scruple to confess that this is an action by the government for the abolishment of the Rumanian Uniate Church--something that might not be believable, had they themselves, deputies, inspectors of security, etc., not amply proven it by the coercive measures resorted to, and the impunity this wave of illegalities clearly enjoys, in pursuit of an obvious goal. The fully conclusive evidence in our possession leaves no margin for doubt.*"

The campaign reached paroxysmal heights toward the end of September. Between September 26 and October 1, the emissaries of the Ministry of Cults, local authorities, and the agents of the Directorate of the People's Security (the new form of the state security police, established by decree on August

28, 1948) stepped up their activities in the attempt to bring the Uniate clergy to sign the delegations. On the other hand, acts of terrorism multiplied. The case of Bishop Suciú may be cited in this connection. This reverend gentleman, on the morning of September 27, "following the consecration of the church of Copacel (District of Fagaras), was roused before daylight and taken by the organs of the security police to an unknown place, where he was held for two days in a cellar, in order to prevent him from getting in touch with the clerics and the faithful." And to show the treatment meted out to other priests, we may consider the case of the Reverend Canon (Tamaian), of Oradea, and of his colleagues (Barbul and Ghilea), who were tortured by the police authorities, endlessly questioned under strong spotlights; held in underground cells, subjected to torture by electric apparatus, and so forth, in an attempt to make them sign their adherence to the fateful decisions scheduled to be taken at Cluj. Even Bishop Iuliu Hossu of Cluj was confined to his house, from September 30 to October 4, and thus prevented from getting in touch with the clergy and faithful under his pastorate. In addition, some thirty priests and laymen of Cluj were jailed because, unaware of the measures taken against their bishop, they attempted to see him at his residence.

Similar abusive and utterly illegal measures were taken against the delegates themselves, as is indicated in the Apostolic note cited above. Thus the Reverend Father (Ion Florea), one of these delegates, was reported to have told a friend of his in Bucarest how certain delegates were taken from their homes by the police, without being allowed to take even a change of clothes, taken to Cluj, and from there to Bucarest, where they were held incommunicado at the Athenee Palace hotel.

Such was the atmosphere in which the Congress of Cluj met on October 1, 1948, to decide the passing of the Uniate clergy and faithful to the Orthodox Church.

b) THE CONGRESS OF CLUJ: DE FACTO AND DE JURE SUPPRESSION OF THE UNIATE CHURCH OF RUMANIA

On October 1, 1948, in the hall of the Gh. Baritiu school in Cluj, thirty-eight prelates, canons, and priests, "delegates" of the "more than 400 churchmen of Transylvania, the Banat, Crisana, and Maramures," met in order to decide and put into effect the issue of passing to the Orthodox Church. It is to be noted that the number of delegates (38) was the same as that of the Protopopes who came together at Alba-Iulia on October 7, 1698, headed by the Metropolitan Athanasius Anghel, in a synod which drew up the manifest declaring the union with Rome. Likewise to be noted is the fact that the number of priests who were alleged to have signed the "delegations" is given variously in the several articles signed by the participants themselves and in the lists annexed to official texts of the Congress. This explains in part the methods used in gathering these signatures, as well as the numerous protests that were immediately forthcoming from churchmen who had been fraudulently represented as signatories or who had been terrified into signing.

The Congress, "after several hours taken up with the elucidation of the problem's positions" (Universul, October 15, 1948), resolved "unanimously and with great enthusiasm . . . the re-entry into the bosom of the Rumanian

Orthodox Church and the definitive severance of the ties with Papal Rome." The debates were presided by Protopope Traian Balascu, who launched an appeal addressed to all Greek Catholics in the country, saying: ". . . Aware of the workings of destiny that herald a shining future for our people, we have approached, trembling with divine awe, the problem of the imperious need to reclaim the spiritual unity of the Rumanian nation. . . . We, the undersigned, churchmen answerable before God and the conscience of our people, met together in divine spiritual concourse, upon this first day of October . . . resolve and effect our return into the bosom of our mother, the Orthodox Church.

"With unlimited love for you, clerics and laymen of the Rumanian Greek-Catholic Church, we beseech you to follow our example, and we most earnestly urge you to do likewise in all confidence, thus showing yourselves to be true and worthy servants of the people and real sons of God." There follow 423 signatures of Uniate priests who passed to Orthodoxy.

The following day, the delegation arrived in Bucarest and was met at the station by the Capital's clergy, headed by the Protopopes and Counsellors of the Patriarchate.

On Sunday, October 3, the synodal session took place, at which the delegation presented the proclamation voted at Cluj. Divine service was celebrated subsequently in the church of St. Spiridon-the-New.

On this occasion was read the synodal act accepting the proclamation of "return" to Orthodoxy, setting forth the re-establishment of unity of faith and the reception into the bosom of the Rumanian Orthodox Church of all who should desire to break with the Church of Rome.

The list of delegates who signed the proclamation is as follows: Protopopes Traian Belascu, Aurel Drumboiu, and Nicolae Jangalau, and the priests: P. Vascu, V. Moldovan, Z. Hentia, P. Madincea, Laurentiu Pop, I Onisor, I. Cristean, P. Pop, Z. Borzea, Al. Stupariu, E. Colceriu, S. Santoma, E. Muresan, Cornel Cernescu, T. Ploscariu, I. Vatu, C. Puscasu, V. Tr. Pop, Mircea Filip, Cornel Pop, Roman Nemes, V. Ienciu, Octavian Gherasim, Sabiu Trutia, Vincent Torutiu, A. Coman, G. Zagrai, I. Florea, I. Andrasiu, V. Negrea, V. Plesug, Al. Farcasiu, I. Pop, and D. Glodean.

As early as October 2, 1948, Mgr. Gerard Patrick O'Hara, the Apostolic Nuncio in Bucarest, protested by verbal note, under No. 2130/1948, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs against this "carefully prepared action, cleverly coordinated . . . against the Catholic Church of Greek rite." The Note after invoking the argument of the international obligations undertaken by Rumania in Article 3, Section 1 of the Peace Treaty, and the guarantees set forth by the government of the Rumanian People's Republic in Article 27 of the Constitution, and Articles 1 and 2 of the Law on Cults, refers to "the action undertaken, not merely by certain irresponsible elements, but by the civil authorities themselves." It goes on to state that, "faced with this unqualifiable attitude" of government organs, the Papal Nunciature, "on behalf of the Holy See and in the name of the entire Christian world, protests with all the energy demanded by the circumstances against such procedures, unworthy of a civilized state."

To this note, which, though severe in substance, maintains correct diplo-

matic form throughout, the Bucarest government answered with unusual violence and in a style entirely alien to the customary language of chancelleries.

After describing the protest of the Nuncio as "*an interference in the domestic affairs of the Rumanian Popular Republic and an attempt to attack freedom of religion,*" the Bucarest government "*rejects the manifest calumnies contained in this note*" and states that "*these defamatory assertions are a new proof of the antagonistic attitude systematically adopted by the Apostolic Nunciature toward the Popular Republic of Rumania and toward its reforms and realizations in democracy.*"

The reply further notes that "*the Apostolic Nunciature, being but the diplomatic representative of Vatican City, cannot take upon itself to speak 'on behalf of the entire Christian world,' as it does in its Note.*" Finally, after "*denouncing . . . the attempted blackmail embodied in the threat that the alleged violations of religious freedom in the Rumanian People's Republic 'will presently alienate the world's public opinion,'*" the reply states that "*this is in line with the campaign carried on by the imperialist circles and their agents against the democratic achievements of the Rumanian People's Republic,*" and concludes: "*The government rejects in the most determined manner this Note . . . both as to its form and as to its contents, considering it to constitute an act of provocation against the Rumanian State and people.*"

Let us see now what was the attitude of the Greek Catholic Bishopric in the face of the events described above. On the one hand, the high prelates excommunicated the churchmen who had abandoned the Uniate Church; on the other hand, they addressed a memorandum to prime minister Petru Groza. This memorandum, dated October 7, 1948, contains an indignant protest against the persecution carried out against the Greek Catholic clergy, and a categorical declaration in which the Uniate bishops assert they "*are firmly determined to remain the pastors and sons of the Church of Jesus Christ, undivided from Catholic unity . . . firmly persuaded that in this Catholic Church, to whose service we are dedicated in life and in death, we serve the people and the country, as we have unwaveringly done hitherto.*"

Patriarch Justinian appointed Thursday, October 21, to be the day for the celebration in Alba-Iulia of "*the reintegration of the Rumanian Church of Transylvania.*" On that occasion a motion was voted wherein those present declared: "*. . . We break for ever our ties of all nature with the Vatican and with Papal Rome . . .*

"We incorporate ourselves with our whole being to the Rumanian Orthodox Church . . .

"From this day on, all Rumanians are united . . . in loyal obedience to the demands for a new life of our beloved Rumanian People's Republic . . . To the members of the High Presidium of the Rumanian People's Republic and to the country's government, we bring our devoted thanks for the liberties assured to all the sons of the people, liberties which have rendered possible the achievement of unity within the Rumanian Church."

Dr. Coriolan Tatar spoke in the name of the intellectual laymen who passed from the Uniate to the Orthodox Church.

The solemnities ended with the consecration of the Orthodox Cathedral of

Alba-Iulia as "*the Cathedral of Reintegration of the Rumanian Church of Transylvania.*"

In the meanwhile, the Congress of Cluj set off such violent attacks against the clerics who remained loyal to the Greek Catholic Church, that the campaign turned into a veritable religious persecution. At the same time, the strongest administrative pressure was brought to bear upon the Uniate faithful to make them adopt the Orthodox faith. The primary goal was, of course, to bring about the legal conditions provided by the Law on Cults for the transfer of Uniate properties and churches to the Orthodox Church.

Faced with the stubborn resistance of the Greek Catholic clergy, the authorities resorted to mass arrests. Thus, during the night of October 27, Bishop Suciū was once again seized. The following night, Bishop Valeriu Traian Frentiu of Oradea, together with his secretary, P. Foisor, was apprehended. Bishop Frentiu, an old man of 74, was seriously ill at the time. Shortly thereafter, the arrest of other prelates followed: Bishop (Ion Balan) of Lugoj, (Iuliu Ratiu), the Vicar of Timisoara, (Curator Ladislau Taglasiu), Protopope (Ion Deliman) of Arad, (Nicolae Branzeu), Canon of Lugoj, and the Rev. (Josif Vezog). At the same time, Bishop Hossu and the Reverend Aftenie, who were in Bucarest for the formalities in connection with the presentation of the statutes of the Uniate Church, were likewise taken by the police. Finally, the last of the Uniate bishops, Alexandru Rusu, was taken into custody.

Available data show that during the month of November, 1948, some 600 Greek Catholic churchmen were under arrest.

Scenes of a rare savagery marked this campaign of violence. For instance, the Reverend Father Hyeronimus Susman, a distinguished graduate of the theological academy of Blaj, who had finished his studies in 1948 and had been ordained that same year, preached an impassioned sermon in the village of Asnip, not far from the city of Aiud, exhorting the faithful not to abandon their Church and to refuse to sign any form of apostasy. He was thereupon surrounded by the police and, when he attempted to escape, was shot down.

In Blaj, the Institutul Recunostintei, belonging to the congregation of nuns of the Order of the Immaculate Virgin, saw scenes of unprecedented barbarity when the local authorities arrived to evacuate the buildings and take them over.

The dissolution of the religious community at the Monastery of Bixad, in the district of Satu-Mare, center of the Basilian Order, was likewise marked by acts of appalling cruelty.

To buttress the campaign of abuses and persecutions, the government took official measures designed on the one hand to encourage passage from the Uniate to the Orthodox Church, while on the other hand punishing attempts of resistance. A decision of the Ministry of Cults announced that Greek Catholic clergymen would receive their salaries upon embracing the Orthodox Church, the moment their names were communicated to the Department by the Church authorities. This constituted a new and very strong means of exerting pressure upon Uniate churchmen. Yet many not only abstained from answering all appeals to embrace Orthodoxy, but also, when they were signed by fraud and forgery on the lists of adherence, voiced their protest with the utmost courage and in spite of all personal risks involved. It was not long, in the face of such determined opposition, before the government press had to

renounce publishing lists of Uniate priests who had allegedly passed to Orthodoxy.

Resistance was equally strong in the ranks of the laity. Such Greek Catholic churches as remained open were filled to overflowing. Parishioners protected their incumbents as best they could, defending and hiding them from the authorities with every available means. Faced with this resistance, the Ministry of Cults took the decision on October 18 to alter the manner of computing the number of those passing from the Greek Catholic to the Orthodox faith. Thenceforth, only the heads of families were counted, in order to determine the proportion of converts to those adhering to the Uniate Church. In this way the task of the authorities was considerably lightened, as it was much easier either to forge the signature of only the head of a family or else to obtain it under threats, than to secure the signatures of the entire family in each case. Thus, by fraud or violence, the procedure required by the law concerning cults for the transfer of patrimony from one denomination to another was carried out with an outward show of legality.

The cathedrals and churches in the principal centers of the Uniate Church were first closed, then handed over to the Orthodox clergy for their own use.

Presently, according to such reports as continue to come out of Rumania, it would seem that the Greek Catholic bishops are being held under guard in various monasteries. It appears that several were held for a time at Dragoslavele.

At last, the Official Monitor for November 8, 1948, published the decision of the Council of Ministers whereby an end is put to the mission of Bishop Iuliu Hossu. Thus the last of the Greek Catholic bishops was ousted from his post. The other three, Bishops Rusu, Frentiu, and Balan, had been pensioned off on September 18 of that year.

In order to end the de jure existence of the Rumanian Uniate Church, the decree No. 358, of December 1, 1948, issued by the Presidium of the Grand Assembly, declared null and void all dioceses, chapters, and religious communities, as well as all other institutions of the Greek Catholic Church (Art 1). The decree provided (Art 2) that all properties pass immediately to the state, with the exception of parish buildings and other similar edifices, which were attributed to the Orthodox Church. This measure is legally based upon the provisions of Article 13 of the Law of Cults, and not upon the argument of the "return" of Uniate parishes to the Orthodox Church. Here is Article 13, mentioned above:

"Religious cults, in order to organize themselves and to function as such, shall previously be recognized by a decree of the Presidium of the Grand Assembly, issued upon recommendation by the government, on the advice of the Minister of Cults.

"In well motivated instances, this recognition shall be withdrawn with the observance of the same forms."

Thus, a new phase—the most painful—in the fight of the communist government of Bucarest against the Catholic Church comes to a close. It is, however, but a step in a far broader action which the present regime of Rumania is pursuing against religion itself.

3. ATTITUDE OF THE GOVERNMENT TOWARD THE RUMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Because the Bucarest government saw fit to start its fight against the various denominations—against religion itself—by oppressing the Roman Catholic Church and by striking down the Uniate Church, this action should not be understood to imply a persecution of certain denominations with the purpose of protecting or of favoring others. The action—and this cannot be sufficiently stressed—is aimed against religion as such. Its actual development is merely a matter of opportune tactics.

The Groza regime, notwithstanding its reiterated benevolent declarations and in spite of all reassuring appearances, never in reality ceased its policy of subjugating the Rumanian Orthodox Church to its own ends. In this field as in others, it proceeded systematically, in accordance with a well-laid plan.

An initial phase was marked by mass purges of the Orthodox hierarchy and clergy—similar to the purges carried out in other bodies (army, magistrature, education, etc.). In this manner, the administration secured control of leadership, by the installation of sure and devoted elements in all key positions. It was only the second phase that was marked by the introduction of a new legal regime, which gave the Rumanian Orthodox Church the modified standing that tallied with Communist interests. This new standing and organization could, obviously, not stop short of reducing the religious and educational role of the Orthodox Church to an absolute minimum. This, in turn, could lead only to a gradual transformation of that Church into an instrument of propaganda and, finally, into a mere tool of the administration's basic policy: the ultimate communization of Rumania. It is obvious, too, that the third phase must necessarily follow: the rulers of the Rumanian People's Republic, following the example available in the Soviet Union itself, must seek to assign to the Orthodox Church a place similar to that which it has in the U. S. S. R.

We shall proceed to analyze the policy of the Groza government, in its action aimed at the subjection of the Rumanian Orthodox Church, in the light of available evidence, passing in review the three stages we have indicated above.

THE PURGES

The first concern of the Communist regime was to secure the compliance of the entire Orthodox clergy, from the highest prelates to the last village priest. It was hoped that the prestige of the Church might be used on behalf of the government's aims without resorting to spectacular legislative measures that could not fail to dismay public opinion.

A first step in this direction was an appeal addressed to the clergy, inviting them to adhere politically to the new dispensation. The so-called "Union of Democratic Priests," however, failed to gain much of a following, in spite of all high-sounding promises, and in spite of the presence of one of the principal promoters of that "Union," the Reverend Burducea, as Minister of Cults in the Groza government.

Faced with the fruitlessness of this action, and seeing that the clergy as a

whole showed a marked aloofness to political blandishments, the government decided to take direct steps, ousting resistance by wholesale purges. Means had to be found to get rid of the highest prelates themselves.

Investigations were initiated against some, obliging the victims to resign their pastorates in sheer desperation. Such was the case of the Metropolitan Bishop Irineu Mihalcescu, Archbishop of Iasi and Suceava (July 22, 1947).

In March 1947, the then Minister of Cults, Radu Rosculetz, a member of the Liberal dissident group under Tatarescu, made known his decision to submit to Parliament two draft laws. The first concerned the pensioning of priests; the other was aimed at a redistribution of sees and set up new rules for episcopal assemblies.

The first became law (No. 166/1947) in short order. It provided an age limit of seventy years for all clergy. Exceptions might be made, upon advice from the Minister of Cults, in favor of such prelates as "have had an exceptional activity." Clearly, this provision gave the government a free hand to rid itself, with a show of legality, of any resistance in high quarters. And indeed the Metropolitan of Oltenia, Nifon Criveanu, and Bishops Lucian Triteanu, of Roman, Cosma Petrovici, of the Lower Danube, and Gheronte, of Constantza, were ousted almost immediately.

Then, in view of the Episcopal and Metropolitan elections scheduled for November 1947, the second draft law announced by the Minister of Cults was carried through and put into effect. Up till then, episcopal assemblies had been elected by the faithful, who delegated their members for a three years' period. Now, in the terms of the new law, these assemblies were to be made up with a de jure majority, for they had to comprise members of parliament, ministers of state, and state under-secretaries belonging to the diocese. Thus, both in these assemblies and in the National Church Congress, which likewise had to include members of parliament and of the government, the regime in effect obtained a free hand.

The significance of the episcopal elections was underlined in no uncertain fashion by the Communist press. For instance, *Universul* of August 28, 1948, stated:

"... The conduct of the country's destinies falling to the hands of the party of the working class and of the democratic parties and organizations, special attention was given to the renewal of the upper cadres of the Church, in the elections that took place in November 1947, when three hierarchs of the people entered the synod."

These "popular" prelates were: Firmilian, Metropolitan of Oltenia, (Sebastian Rusan), Bishop of Maramuresh, and Justinian Marina, Metropolitan of Moldavia. We must dwell a moment upon the personality of the last-named. A simple priest in the Ramnic eparchy, Justinian Marina had been closely connected with the dissident "peasant" formation headed by Anton Alexandrescu, who had dropped out of the National Peasant party. He succeeded in becoming at one stroke Metropolitan Bishop of Moldavia, without having shown the least prominence or especial merit as a churchman. On May 24, 1948, he was elected Patriarch of the R. P. R. Orthodox Church, succeeding the late Patriarch Nicodemus. As Patriarch, Justinian Marina, who had by

then asserted himself publicly as a devoted partisan of the regime, was certainly the right man in the right place, in the eyes of the Groza government. Already he had illustrated himself by the pastoral of March 14, 1948, in which he glorified the draft constitution of the R. P. R. From his latest and most exalted throne, he has rendered yeoman services to the regime, both by his words and by his deeds. No more devoted tool could a Communist dispensation find anywhere.

Thus, on the occasion of his enthronement, on June 6, 1948, Patriarch Justinian not only appealed to the Uniate (Greek Catholic) faithful, urging them to pass to the Orthodox Church; but he thundered against the Concordat, denouncing loudly the alleged inequality set up among denominations by that accord with the Holy See. The new Patriarch, it should be noted, has also shown himself to be a fanatic partisan of the closest possible ties with the Orthodox Church of the Soviet Union.

Yet, in spite of all these things, notwithstanding the legislative reforms and the foreseeable results obtained at the episcopal elections of November 1947, and May 1948, the government continually put off the elections provided by law, for appointments to fill vacant eparchies. Awareness of a continued resistance among the clergy led the government to prefer resorting to an intermediary system, that of doing without titulars and assuring the conduct of episcopates on a provisional basis, through vicars and lower ranking prelates delegated to this effect.

It was only to be expected that a new stage was to follow: that of legislative regulation.

THE NEW REGULATION OF CULTS

We have already spoken of the decree regulating the denominations anew, published in the Official Monitor of August 4, 1948, when we dealt with the tribulations of the Roman Catholic Church. That decree formally established a privileged *de jure* situation for the Orthodox Church, by comparison with the other—minority—denominations. In practice, however, the Orthodox Church was to be subjected to the same drastic limitations and controls as the other cults, in its organization and functions.

Article 22, which provided that "*for the creation and functioning of eparchies (dioceses, superintendencies, etc.), an average of 750,000 faithful shall be reckoned for each such eparchy,*" provided thereby also a legal basis for a new incorporation of Orthodox eparchies. And, indeed, this new measure was carried out by the decree No. 244, published in the Official Monitor No. 217, of September 18, 1948. This decree abolished the Metropolitan See of Suceava and the Episcopal See of Maramuresh, and set up a single eparchy instead: the Archbishopric of Suceava and Maramuresh. A second decree, published in the Official Monitor of February 5, 1949, set forth the new bases for the "*economic-administrative organization of the Orthodox Cult,*" and at the same time once again redistributed the Orthodox eparchies. As a result of these two decrees, through a reshuffling of eparchies, the Bishoprics of Husi (established as early as 1598), of Caransebesh, and of Maramuresh were in fact abolished.

Finally, the Law on Cults, whose Article 58 abrogated "*the provisions of*

the law No. 68, of March 19, 1937, for the organization of the corps of army chaplains," abolished at the same time (Articles 59 and 60) the Orthodox Military Episcopate whose seat was at Alba Iulia. Aside from these dispositions of a general "organizational" character, this law set up in great detail a thoroughgoing control over the entire activity of the hierarchy and clergy. Its provisions were to be put into effect either directly by the Ministry of Cults or by the local authorities. How that control was regulated, we have indicated above, at the chapter concerning the Roman Catholic Church.

The law likewise abolished theological seminaries (Art. 53) of secondary grade, as well as certain schools of university rank (theological academies), allowing to subsist only two theological university institutes. In order to gain a clear picture of the significance of this measure, we must point out that up to that time, there had existed at least a seminary at each Metropolitan and episcopal center, while the seats of the Eparchies in Transylvania had as a rule also a theological academy.

Reduced from the point of view of the actual means of religious manifestation, by the suppression of component eparchies (four out of eighteen) and by the heavy blow struck at theological education, with its prestige gravely diminished by mass arrests of the clergy of all ranks and by their replacement with men devoted to the regime, the Rumanian Orthodox Church was left in a sorry state, following the abusive reforms to which it was subjected by the government.

It is clear, under the circumstances described above, that the apparently privileged position of the Church in comparison with the Roman Catholic and the Uniate Churches is but a mask for a very dismal reality.

THE NEW ATTITUDE OF THE GOVERNMENT

Certain available indications allow the belief that the official policy of the regime toward the Orthodox Church has already entered a new, considerably harsher, phase.

Thus, at the inauguration of the Orthodox Theological Institute of Cluj, on December 5, 1948, the Minister of Cults, Stanciu Stoian, attempted to minimize, in his address, the role played by the Orthodox Prelates who had acted in favor of the "return" of the Greek Catholics to Orthodoxy. He asserted that "*the people itself desired its own spiritual reintegration; the people alone freed itself from the oppression of the act of 1700.*" This was the first time such an official attitude was evidenced; before that, the regime had never ceased underlining the significant contribution of Patriarch Justinian and of other high churchmen to the "*act of reintegration.*"

It is certainly not irrelevant to recall that this same Stanciu Stoian saw fit to appoint as personnel director of the Ministry of Cults a communist worker named Dobogan, underlining the significance of this appointment "*in a department where the most reactionary spirit used to reign.*"

Finally, at the opening of the courses of the University Theological Institute of Bucarest, on January 30, 1949, the official addresses indicated that one of the Institute's main tasks was to give special attention to a new training and orientation, pastoral and social, for the clergy, to guide the latter "*in the service of the people and of peace.*" Special courses of missionary guidance

were inaugurated, which all priests were invited to attend. The significance of these new courses was stressed by the Communist press. Thus, *Universul* of February 26, 1949, wrote: "*The need for these courses had been felt lately, in the first place, because a new and proper orientation of the clergy had become necessary in all directions in which popular democracy seeks to raise the masses of the people.*"

The innovation aroused grave concern and fear among the clergy, particularly because an examination was provided at the close of the courses, in order, as *Universul* of February 26, 1949, put it, to "*qualify and evaluate . . . calling some to higher posts, reducing others to lower places.*" The same paper further indicated what was expected of the new priests: "*Today the social order is different, and the outcasts of yesterday are now at the head of public affairs. We must not expect their compassion . . . It is entirely dependent on ourselves to remain in the responsible jobs we have.*"

In line with these alarming manifestations, we must assuredly place, too, an article in *Scanteia* of February 22, 1948, entitled "*In the Matter of Religious Liberties.*" That article set forth the official position of the R. P. R. with regard to religious freedom, indicating that "*our clergy has before it the example of the Orthodox clergy of the Soviet Union.*" It observed, moreover, that the party of the working class could not "*remain indifferent to the various prejudices and mystic views cultivated in the ranks of the workers by the bourgeois-landowning regime.*"

In view of the understandable emotion these manifestations produced in the country, Patriarch Justinian found it expedient to call to Bucarest some five hundred priests, and, on the occasion of a solemnity which took place on February 27, 1949, to assert: "*The regime of popular democracy in our country . . . assures us full freedom of organization and action, without interfering in the least in religious concerns of the Church.*" And he exhorted the attending churchmen to abstain from what he described as "*hampering the activity of our state.*"

But the state of uneasiness among the Orthodox clergy was not allayed. There was even talk of certain high prelates who had been placed under enforced domicile. As in all epochs of religious persecution, in Rumania, too, about this time, rumors concerning certain supernatural phenomena began to circulate. People spoke of divine signs and even of instances of miracles. These things may very well be taken to correspond to that "*religious thirst of the people,*" which Patriarch Justinian himself acknowledged in his pastoral of February 27, 1949. In any event, there can be no doubt that a very real spiritual force still inspires the resistance of the Orthodox clergy as a whole. It is reflected in the very pastoral that we have just mentioned, and which was intended precisely to quench it.

4. THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY WITH REGARD TO THE OTHER DENOMINATIONS

While the Groza government was doing its utmost to subject or else to suppress the Churches that represent the overwhelming majority of the Rumanian people, it was also carrying out systematically a parallel action against the other denominations represented in the R. P. R. Against the latter, too, a similar method is discernible. The weapons used come under the same two general headings: measures of fact on the one hand, and legislative dispositions on the other.

Thus, the law for the reform of education (August 3, 1948) abolished without discrimination all denominational schools. The law on cults (August 4, 1948) put the same controls and thoroughgoing regulations upon every manifestation of religious life, whatever the denomination. Lastly, the decree of November 3, 1948, by nationalizing all health and sanitary institutions, invaded and took over a broad and very important field of activity that had belonged to the various denominations.

In order to convey an idea of the degree of supervision to which all religious denominations are subjected, we shall quote the text of the decree No. 37, for the organization of the Ministry of Cults, published in the Official Monitor of February 5, 1949. Here is the part relating to the department's attributions:

"The Ministry of Cults is the public service through which the State exercises its right of surveillance and control guaranteeing the use and exercise of freedom of conscience and of religion.

"To this effect—

"It supervises and controls all religious cults and their institutions—communities, associations, orders, congregations, and foundations of a religious nature, whatever their kind may be;

"It supervises and controls the special religious education of the personnel of all religious denominations;

"It approves the founding of new religious communities, parishes, and administrative units, the creation of new personnel posts, and the appointments, whether they are paid by the state or not, in the services of the various denominations;

"It supervises and controls all funds and possessions, whatever their origin and nature may be, of the religious cults;

"It assures the task of watching over the relations and correspondence between the cults of the country and those abroad;

"It has various other tasks in connection with religious cults."

Churchmen of the various denominations who refused to submit to the measures introduced by the government were obliged to withdraw. Some who could still do so, sought refuge abroad. One such case is provided by Grand Rabbi Safran, who left the country and presently is a professor at the University of Geneva.

If it were still necessary to cite instances of the manner in which freedom

of religion is understood and applied in the so-called Rumanian People's Republic, volumes could be written.

The situation of the various lesser denominations and religious sects in Rumania is no less deplorable. What the official attitude is in their respect, may best be gathered from the following quotation from *Scanteia* of February 22, 1949:

"An especially harmful part is being played by the various religious sects, which, behind the screen of religious faith, hide their ties with divers imperialist officines of reactionary propaganda and espionage."

CONCLUSION

The atmosphere of suppression and terror, we feel, has been made sufficiently evident by the examples we have presented in the foregoing pages. Under the circumstances, what sinister irony is provided by the joint motion which the heads of the Orthodox, Calvinist, Lutheran, Jewish, Unitarian, Armenian Gregorian, Lipovan, and Moslem Churches were forced to sign on the occasion of their meeting of June 23, 1949! For here is what that piteous joint motion proclaimed:

"The regime of popular democracy of the Rumanian People's Republic . . . translates into fact the provisions of the R. P. R. Constitution, and guarantees in an effective manner freedom of conscience and freedom of religion throughout the country, by assuring to the various denominations the right to organize themselves in accordance with their own rules, in conformity with their own teachings, canons, and traditions." (Documentation Catholique, July 17, 1949.)

It cannot, of course, be denied that in Rumania, as elsewhere behind the Iron Curtain, religion was an effective, organized obstacle to the communization of the country. Unfortunately, it is no less undeniable at the present time that the communist government of Bucarest, like the rest of the Kremlin's puppet formations, has to a large extent succeeded in eliminating—or at least in crushing—that obstacle.

This deliberate and ruthless action of a government, imposed from without and repudiated by the people of Rumania, has had and has, as we have amply shown, the undeniable character of a systematic suppression of religious freedom.

It is hardly necessary to add that this action constitutes at the same time a flagrant violation of the Rumanian Peace Treaty. It is, moreover, but one chapter of an entire series of such acts that run directly counter to the letter and spirit of that Treaty.

Like all other fundamental liberties and human rights, freedom of religion is a thing of the past in the so-called Rumanian People's Republic. This is a state of affairs that cannot conceivably be countenanced by the conscience of the civilized world. It is a problem that cannot fail to be of the deepest concern to the United Nations.