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E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: SHUM RD PGOV PINS SCUL
SUBJECT: SENATOR HUFF'S CALL ON THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTS

1. C-ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: THE NEW HEAD OF THE GOR'S DEPARTMENT OF CULTS, ION CUMPANASU, TOLD VISITING KENTUCKY STATE SENATOR EUGENE HUFF THAT GOR POLICIES TOWARD RELIGIONS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTS ARE CONSTANT AND HAVE NOT CHANGED AS A RESULT OF HIS ASSUMPTION OF LEADERSHIP. CUMPANASU STATED THAT ALL CHURCHES MUST RESPECT THEIR CHARTERS AND HAVE DIRECT CONTACTS WITH CULTS WHICH DO NOT REQUIRE HUFF'S INTERVENTION. DIRECTOR ION POPESCU STATED THAT BIBLES ACCEPTABLE TO PROTESTANTS ARE BEING PRINTED AND THAT ALL CHURCH CONSTRUCTION SHOULD RESPECT ROMANIAN LAW. BAPTISTS HAVE ONLY BEEN ALLOWED TO FUNCTION FREELY SINCE WORLD WAR II AND THEIR NUMBERS HAVE INCREASED GREATLY. CUMPANASU EMPHASIZED THAT "FAIT ACCOMPLIS" WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED BY THE CHURCHES IN TRYING TO IMPOSE THEIR WISHES ON THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTS. END SUMMARY.

3. KENTUCKY STATE SENATOR EUGENE HUFF ACCOMPANIED BY TWO FELLOW PENTECOSTAL MINISTERS AND BY AN EMBOFF PAID A CALL, JULY 5, ON ION CUMPANASU, PRESIDENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTS. CUMPANASU WAS AIDED BY DIRECTOR ION POPESCU AND INSPECTOR GENERAL VIRGIL CONSTANTINESCU WHO SERVED AS TRANSLATOR. HUFF OPENED BY STATING THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO INTERFERE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF ROMANIA BUT CAME IN A CONSTRUCTIVE SPIRIT DUE TO HIS CONCERN FOR HIS CO-RELIGIONISTS.

4. CUMPANASU STATED THAT THE POLICIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTS DO NOT CHANGE FROM DAY TO DAY AND THAT ITS FUNCTION IS TO APPLY THE POLICIES OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE CHURCHES. HE SAID ALL CHURCHES MUST RESPECT THE LAW AND ANY PROBLEMS ARE DEALT WITH IN A FORTHRIGHT MANNER WITH THE OFFICIAL LEADERS OF EACH DENOMINATION. HE SAID THAT CULTS IS NOT CONCERNED WITH NON-OFFICIAL RECALCITRANS OR UNOFFICIAL PROBLEMS AND THAT THERE IS NO NEED FOR OUTSIDERS TO MEDIATE SINCE ALL THE FAITHS HAVE DIRECT CONTACTS WITH CULTS.

5. CUMPANASU RESPONDED TO HUFF'S SPECIFIC QUESTIONS BY SAYING THAT IF A CHURCH WALL IN RESITA HAD BEEN TORN DOWN DUE TO AN ENLARGEMENT WITHOUT A PERMIT, IT

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WAS A QUESTION HANDLED EXCLUSIVELY BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES. HE NOTED THAT ALL PERSONS NEED BUILDING PERMITS BEFORE ANY CONSTRUCTION MAY BEGIN. BOTH HE AND POPESCU SPOKE AT LENGTH ON THIS POINT AND EMPHASIZED NO SPECIAL TREATMENT WOULD BE GIVEN TO RELIGIOUS BELIEVERS WHO VIOLATED CONSTRUCTION LAWS AND THAT RETRIBUTION SUCH AS THE TEARING DOWN OF WALLS WAS STRICTLY DECIDED ON THE LOCAL LEVEL. THEY FURTHER CLAIMED THAT SUCH INCIDENTS PLACES CULTS IN THE EMBARRASSING POSITION OF MEDIATOR BETWEEN THE CHURCHES AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES, AND THAT IF THEY CONVINCED LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO IGNORE CONSTRUCTION LAW VIOLATIONS IT SIMPLY ENCOURAGES THE CONSTRUCTION OF MORE UNAUTHORIZED BUILDINGS AS THE AUTHORITIES APPEAR TO BE WEAK. "FAIT ACCOMPLIS" ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE SAID CUMPANASU. POPESCU CLAIMED THAT NEW BIBLES ACCEPTABLE TO THE BAPTISTS AND PENTECOSTALS ARE CURRENTLY BEING PRINTED (COMMENT: THE LEADERSHIP OF THE TWO RELIGIONS SAY NOT AS YET) (SEPTELS) AND THAT ALL PUBLICATIONS MUST MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE PRINTING LAWS OF ROMANIA. THEY CALIMED ALSO THAT THE NUMBER OF BIBLES TO BE PRINTED IS STRICTLY UP TO THE RELIGIONS. (COMMENT: THE BAPTIST LEADERSHIP SAYS THE MAIN PROBLEM IS OBTAINING CULTS APPROVAL ON A FIGURE. END COMMENT)

6. CUMPANASU CLOSED BY SAYING THAT RELIGION IS NOT PERSECUTED IN ROMANIA AND THAT RELIGIONS SUCH AS THE BAPTISTS DID NOT HAVE PERMISSION TO FUNCTION BEFORE WORLD WAR II. HE SAID MEMBERSHIP HAD GROWN 2 OR 3 TIMES SINCE THEN. HE CRITICIZED THE MOTIVES OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE WRITTEN NEGATIVELY ABOUT ROMANIA ON RELIGIOUS QUESTIONS SAYING THAT HE UNDERSTANDS WELL HOW THE PRESS FUNCTIONS. HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT HUFF WOULD PAINT A REAL PICTURE OF THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION HERE.

7. COMMENT: CUMPANASU AND POPESCU DEFENDED THE POSIITIONS OF THE GOR STRONGLY AND ACCEPTED NONE OF THE SUGGESTIONS OF CRITICISM FROM HUFF. POPESCU IN PARTICULAR IS VERY ADEPT AND HARD-HITTING IN MAKING HIS POINTS. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT SOME BAPTIST DISSIDENTS COMMENTED AT THE JULY 4TH RECEPTION THAT THEY FIND POPESCU EASIER TO DEAL WITH THAN ANYONE ELSE IN CULTS. WE HAVE NO FEEDBACK YET ON CUMPANASU ALTHOUGH NO ONE IS EXPECTING CHANGES. BOTH SPOKE IN THE BEST TRADITION OF ROMANIAN JOURNALISTIC ACCURACY. END COMMENT. FUNDERBURK
END OF MESSAGE

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