

OF MIDDLEMEN AND INTERMEDIARIES
NEGOTIATING THE STATE CHURCH RELATIONSHIP IN COMMUNIST
ROMANIA
THE FORMATIVE YEARS

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Abstract

The Church in Romania was pushed aside by the modern state in its endeavour to modernize the society. The Church was stripped of its social functions and left with ceremonial roles that served to legitimate the state. It was no longer an autonomous body but through economic, legal, cultural and social ties it became a dependant of the state. This put a dent in the much looked after doctrine of *caesaro-papism* since the Church had no longer a sufficiently strong status to challenge the state and negotiate its position in society. There were periods after 1918 when this situation was reversed by the Church. At the end of the Second World War a status quo characterized the relationship between the Romanian state and the Church. Much of its hierarchy was publicly outspoken in social, educational, political matters. While economically still dependant on the political administration politically it became an important factor in public life.

The change of regimes after the Second World War brought about an increase in the new regime's interest in the Church and its position in society. The communists acted on a pre-existing soviet model already tested in the regulation of the Soviet Union religious life. Policies were drafted following this model regarding the role of the Church, if and how it could have been replaced and by what. It was one of the few steady attempts to reform institutional religion to fit the role designed for it by the state.

This research focuses on the church – state relationship as defined in the early years of Romanian communism (1948-1960). Through the lens of three case-studies it attempts to uncover the *subversive factors* (lack of trained cadres, an overlap between trying to use the religious denominations and trying to relegate them and so on) that compromised the “orthodox” model of relationship that came from the soviets or was fabricated by Party policy makers and introduced new regulations and ultimately a different/new model of relationship. Thus I show how the blueprints and policies regarding the regulation of religious life in communist Romania were challenged when put into practice from inside the central communist administration, from outside the political administration (by the Church) and from below.

The research is organized into five parts, a theoretical and methodological overview, an introductory one that looks at the relationship between state and church in Romania and lays out the context of the regime change, followed by an analysis of three case-studies, all pointing out how internal and external factors influenced the relationship and changed the model and is concluded by a draw up of what the practiced mechanism looked like.

To my father

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During the long and intricate research process I have been counselled, taught, talked to/down to, involved, appreciated, menaced, discussed, and praised by a long line of people. Most of them brought valuable input to the research enterprise. I would like to thank those that facilitated my access into the archives: His Excellency Archbishop Andrei, Metropolitan of Cluj, Alba, Crişana, and Maramureş on whose personal recommendation I was granted access into the Archives of the Patriarchal Administration of the Romanian Orthodox Church, the State Secretary for Religious Denominations in Bucharest Romania, and that of the Romanian Orthodox Church Archbishopric of Alba Iulia, Fr. Constantin Pârvu, Administrative Vicar of the Romanian Patriarchal Administration, on whose acceptance I had access into the Archives of the Patriarchal Administration, Mr. Adrian Lemeni, State Secretary in the Ministry for Culture and Religious Denominations, Ms. Mona Muscă, former Minister for Culture and Religious Denominations, and Senator Eugen Nicolăescu. My co-option into the Presidential Commission for Analysing the Communist Dictatorship in Romania has rounded up my understanding of the state church relationship in communist Romania. I would like to thank Professor Vladimir Tismăneanu and Dr. Cristian Vasile for including me as an expert in the commission.

To my interviewees that have accepted to be represented and quoted in the thesis I owe a great deal. I would also like to thank those that for various reasons declined to appear in the final version of the thesis. Their insights into the relationship between state and church in communist and post communist Romania were extremely valuable in the economy of the thesis.

Along the years I benefitted from the exceptionally generous institutional support of several foundations and individuals to study the subject comparatively. I would like to express my gratitude to His Excellency, Archbishop Antonio Matiazzo of Padova, Italy, the Institut für Europäische Geschichte, Mainz, Germany, and the New Europe College in Bucharest, Romania for supporting periods of work on this research project.

My professors and my reviewers have shaped my research and guided my work. I particularly benefited from the advice and suggestions of Mr. Sorin Antohi, professor Balazs Trencsenyi, professor Gianpaolo Romanato (Padova University), professors Anne Deighton and Peter Clarke (University of Oxford), professor Marsha Siefert. This thesis owes multiple debts to many friends and colleagues. My colleagues helped with advice and at times with a sympathetic ear. Many of the hypotheses tested during the research process were discussed and debated with Cristian Vasile, Valentin Săndulescu, Ionuţ Biliuţă, Narcis Tulbure, Răzvan Pârâianu, Raluca Cimpoiăşu, Marian Zăloagă and many others.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Nadia Al-Bagdadi who has supported my undertaking and offered assistance in moments of confusion. I thank her deeply for the patience and understanding she showed in the long process of researching and writing the thesis. Her thoughtful comments and feedback were those of a specialist, her encouragements were those of a friend.

Finally, I would like to thank my father. He was my advisor, confidant, and supporter. He encouraged and helped me finish this undertaking. A countryside priest in the 1980s, his was the experience I relied most when writing my final chapter. His strive for normality in an abnormal situation was what best defined the struggle of the church during the communist period.

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Introduction

In the months after December 1989, the story goes that the family of Tankó Árpád visited several churches to find a priest willing to perform the Christian burial for the recently deceased inspector for religious denominations in Tîrgu-Mureş. They were turned away from all. Unitarians, Roman Catholics, Protestants and even Orthodox, each refused the family on various grounds. The cautionary tale of the communist cadre who controlled and supervised religious life in the small Transylvanian town, this urban legend of the middleman compromising everything to be the intermediary between the communist administration and the religious denominations including his passage to the kingdom of heaven was among the first sermons I have heard when undertaking this research. The conclusions of the story were double folded depending on the audience. On the one hand this incident spoke of the difficulties met by clergymen during the communist period. Their response to the inspector's family was supposedly built upon resentment, the inspector having authority over the practicing of their religion. The incident spoke of the state's involvement and control over religious life. On the other hand the story had a moral teaching, that of the victory of religion. The communist functionary returned to God by wanting to be buried with a Christian burial and this spoke of the resilience of religious beliefs in face of adversities, the victory of the good over the evil.

The middleman and the insider/outsider were the two characters that impacted defined the construction of the relationship between state and church in communist Romania. They functioned as *the conveyor belt* of this complicated mechanism. Sometimes congruent, the middleman also the insider, the inspector/ communist functionary also a member of the church, paradoxically joining two seemingly incompatible positions to speak both for the communist state and for his religious institution, sometimes incongruent, two different positions in the state administration, one being endowed with authority over the religious life, one only administering authority, both go-

between the church and the state administration. In defining the relationship between politics and religion in communist Romania these two positions that one finds at their intersection became the subject of the present research.

The influence that religion could exercise over the field of politics of communist Eastern Europe generally was discarded by scholarship and others as insignificant, with few exceptions to prove the point such as the case of the Catholic Church in the late 1970s Poland, Stalin's recuperation of the Orthodox Church during the Second World War, Cardinal Mindszenty's fight against communism with implications for Hungarian foreign policy, human rights activism of Neo Protestant groups especially after the 1975 signing of the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The Romanian Orthodox Church influence on the politics of the communist regime is connected to the 1960s independence movement of the Romanian Communist Party from Moscow and their appeal to nationalist policies to win over public support. It is in the 1960s that the Church's nationalist discourse is altered and adopted by the communist administration, when personalities of the Church were involved in carrying out this nationalist discourse to the Diaspora and the historical pantheon of the church, its history and tradition were gradually recuperated in the national canon. My thesis argues that this association between the Church and the State is inherited from the interwar period. It exists during the first years of the installation of the communist regime and is redesigned in the late 1950s to serve a new political goal of the Romanian communist administration.

The thesis looks at the meeting points between church and state during the communist regime. It intends to uncover the mechanism of the relationship between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the state with regards to the options that both parts had and took, to safeguard their own interests: for the Church to continue its functioning and for the new State to take advantage of its functioning and in the same time to force a diminishing of the role of religion and of the church in society. The main focus is the interaction between the church of the hierarchy and various groups inside the church and the regime both at central and at local level. The research argues that the model negotiated by the church hierarchy and the state administration was an *associationist* one.

The main focus of the research concentrated on the initial phase of Romanian communism, from 1948 to the end of the 1960s since I argue that the specific characteristics of the relationship between the Romanian church and state developed during the late 1940s and early 1950s. It is then that rules and norms were interiorised and the relationship between the two gained routine. During the 1960s the mechanism of relationship remained unchanged until the end of communism and, arguably, is preserved after 1989. I have selected the period since much of the negotiations, exchanges, compromises, regulations, practices, were defined in this first decade and a half of Romanian communism, the years that followed only replicating a routinized pattern of behaviour. Moreover, considering the methodology used, researching this period in the archives allowed for a clearer depiction of the relationship since the process was recorded vigilantly with painstaking attention for details and the self

censorship for the person recording, observing, informing, creating the material was in early stages.¹

1. Research Questions and Hypotheses

At the installation of the communist regime in 1947 both state and the Orthodox Church had an array of options for their future cohabitation. The communist central administration in Romania had to manage the religious arena of the country based on a precedent: that of the Soviet model. However the result was very different from the Soviet one. Their attempt to impose a model of collaboration (associate the religious denominations with the regime) came simultaneously with the state's attempt to exert its control over the religious denominations with the expressed desire to downsize their influence in the public space. From this paradoxical situation where the state was forced into trying to associate the religious denominations and banish them at the same time, the Romanian Orthodox Church gained sufficient strength to negotiate its position both in the relationship with the state and in the relationship with the other religious denominations in the country.

The Orthodox Church could have followed three models of behaviour for designing its relationship with the state: opposition (the Catholic Church model), submission and

¹ In a casual conversation with a former inspector for religious denominations I was warned about this particular process that I termed – the closing of the archives. He told me that most of his reports for the ministry were written before the priest conferences/ religious services/ meetings with hierarchs or religious communities and so on that he attended. He carefully selected what could and could not be sent to the centre and controlled the information flow closely. Yet he admitted that in the first years of his job his reports were written post factum and were more relevant to the case he reported.

retreat (the Russian Orthodox model), and the model of “compromise”² or “association.” Out of the three options one is completely excluded following the research materials I have seen. Contrary to the Russian Orthodox Church the Romanian Orthodox Church did not retreated from society in response to state pressures and demands. The church adopted the other two variants: association and opposition in constructing its relationship with the communist state.

Most researchers persist and insist in treating the Romanian Orthodox Church as a cohesive body, speaking in one voice thus entering in an either or type of explanation of the Church – State relationship.³ The existence of more than one church inside the Orthodox Church is natural. First the Romanian Orthodox Church, as it functions in 1948, was established late thus there were at least two, if not three regional orthodox communities segregated and context dependent that functioned sometimes independent of each other, with different agendas, different interactions with the state and different positions in society. Then there is a church of the hierarchy different than the church of the community of believers. How much one influenced the other and how much their potential clashes influenced their position towards the state is yet to be determined. And finally the “church of the hierarchy” was rarely, usually only when forced by external actors, acting as a cohesive group. There are factions, groups of influence, and various clans inside the hierarchy, played one against the other by the state administration (see the penetration in the decision making body of the so-called “legionary group”).

² Olivier Gillet, *Religion et nationalisme. L’ideologie de l’Eglise Orthodoxe Roumaine sous le regime communiste*, (Brussels: Editions de l’Universite de Bruxelles, 1997).

³ See Pedro Ramet for a counterargument to treating churches as monoliths in *Cross and Commissar The politics of Religion in Eastern Europe and the USSR*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 178.

Why was the Orthodox Church treated by researchers as a *cohesive* (monolithic) institution? The patriarchate of Justinian Marina (1948-1977) is a period of over centralization of the Romanian Orthodox Church – brought about by inner necessity or enforced by state. At first look one could argue that the chain of command functioned well, that the policy making body was strictly concentrated at the highest level of the hierarchy and that from that level the policy reached the most humble of the priests. The factors that contradict this theory are most of the time explained through a state intervention like the creation of the double hierarchy.

On the other hand it is easier to explain the Romanian Orthodox Church's relation to the state by treating it as an institution with one voice. It is more facile to argue either its collaboration or its opposition when looking at the church as a monolith. Few researchers in their attempt to prove the “Orthodox Church suffered as well” theory first came close to treating the church as made up of a multiplicity of voices but never finalized a cohesive research on the topic. In this line of interpretation one must place the ambiguity in treating the *Burning Bush movement* (Rugul aprins), the elimination of various subjects, persons, and situations from research because they did not fit the pattern – opposing when the rest collaborated and the other way around.

The present research is structured into two major parts: one that looks at the state and its view on the Romanian Orthodox Church as an institution and on religious denominations altogether. Here I integrate an overview of the state apparatus, mechanism of interaction and the policies towards the religious denominations. This part of the analysis is based on the idea that the communist party state was “forced” to accept functional religious institutions in the public space either as legitimating

institutions, because of its inability to do away with religion or simply because of implementing the soviet model of church state relations functional from 1943. Thus the characteristics of the state policy were context dependent and revolved around limiting the force of religion by intervening in its activity, controlling it on three levels: organizational, economic and ideological instead of banning the church altogether (though this was a viable option for some party policy makers until being confronted with the failure of the Greek Catholic solution). This was a solution that was based on the possibility to infiltrate the religious denomination, suffocating it with rules and regulations it had to obey, subordinating it economically to the state and brutally eliminating any opposition that might arise. This was accomplishable on a central level leaving aside “the masses.” This relationship of the state with the administrative and decisional centre of the religious denominations was one of the reasons why the Romanian Neo-Protestants were forced in early 1950s by the state to organize a central administration. And not foreseeing the failure of such demand for the Neo-protestants was the reason most policies failed when applied to these denominations while succeeding in the denominations with a centralized organization. The state recognized two different churches functioning in the same time: a church of the hierarchy and one of the communities of believers but by making the hierarchy responsible for believers, clergy, and even oppositional groups the state created the appearance of one church. The exceptions demanded special policies.

In deciphering the make-up of the state apparatus involved in coordinating the religious organizations and activities in the country a special part is devoted to the recuperation of the so-called “legionary group” inside the Department for Religious Denominations. I argue under the label of “blackmail potential” that these

personalities of the Orthodox and, probably, Greek Catholic Church were drawn up into collaboration with the regime and played an important role in defining the state policy towards religious denominations and if they did not construct the church policy entirely, at least they provided the justifications for most of the actions. Finding for instance Rev. Professor Liviu Stan or Rev. Professor Spiridon Cârdeza on the payroll of the Department during the 1950s Stan in charge with justifying canonically the relationship with the state, Cârdeza in charge with the Greek Catholic problem and the nationalist discourse of the Church. All of them can be traced back to the legionary movement with more or less open adhesions. They have created a network that was preserved until late in the 1960s and 1970s that introduced various positions inside state policy similar to those had in the interwar.

Another part of the research was devoted to analysing the options and the solutions adopted by the Romanian Orthodox Church in its relationship with the state. This part will go between two attitudes adopted by the “church” – opposition and association. The research will focus on defining the characteristics of the networks inside the hierarchy, under the assumption that a fight for legitimating the new hierarchy between the new Patriarch and the old hierarchy created one of the first internal reasons for association with the state. The state preserved both actors tipping the balance for the newly appointed Patriarch but in the same time creating a core of oppositional voices inside the Department for Religious Denominations many of them penetrating the hierarchy at one time or the other ensuring the Patriarch’s cooperation (see the nomination of Iustin Moisescu as Metropolitan at Jassy).

State involvement in the activity and organization of the Church was made easier once they succeeded doubling the existing hierarchy with supporters of the regime and subordinating economically the church to the state. The way the Church hierarchy fought against this subordination (economic and organizational) I consider a way of masked opposition inserted in the overall attitude of collaboration. The measures taken and the mechanisms developed allowed a preservation of a status quo expressed in the number of believers, clergy, or church buildings.

The way in which the relationship between state and church functioned at local level is analyzed via a case study: the construction of a church in the late 1970s early 1980s Transylvania. The syncope in the implementation of the rules and regulations at a local level and the re-arrangements of the state religious policies were followed via this particular example.

2. The structure

The research is structured into five chapters and a conclusion. The thesis begins with a review of the main theoretical and historiographical approaches and hypotheses that are used to develop the argument. This is followed by an overview of the structural changes brought about by the installation of the new regime and traces the relationship between the state and the church back in the interwar period. Three case-studies show how the model is put to practice. The thesis ends with depicting the existing mechanism of state – church relations as different from the imported Soviet model or the model sought after by Party policy makers.

The second chapter: Remnants of the past, problems of the present (a historical overview) is an introductory chapter that discusses the history of the relationship between state and church looking comparatively at the interwar and communist period. I argue that the communist mechanism of state church relations does not severally disrupt the state church relationship as set in the interwar period. Remains of the problems that the church was confronted with in the interwar period like the lack of administrative unification in the Orthodox Church, decentralisation, or weaknesses in its relationship with the state make the transition to the 1950s. All of these problems were added to the chaotic first years of the communist regime with its hierarchical shifts, open terror and a steady increase in the state's interference and control over religious life.

The following chapter on the administration of state authority by specialists coming from within the church environment argues for the changing of state central policy on religion and religious institutions from within the political administration. It looks at the paradox the communist administration was faced with when trying to apply the Soviet model of state church relationship functional since 1943. While in the Soviet Union the complete subordination of the denominations to the state preceded their co-optation, in the Romanian case, the imposition of a model of collaboration with the regime occurred at the time with the state attempt to exert its control over the religious denominations. Understaffed, lacking specialists and acknowledging that the Soviet blueprint might not fit to the letter the Romanian situation the communists used right wing/ fascist ideologues *turned* communist policy makers to administer the political control over the church – trained in the interwar, insiders in the life of the Church, part

of the Church they were used to design and implement the state policy over religious life.

The forth chapter discusses the response of the Church to the state attempts of control. The reactions to the state policies that go from various negotiation techniques, blackmail, bribes, isolating the collaborators, hiding behind Church regulations, using the believers and so on allow the church to maintain a certain *status quo* in the number of priests, believer and church places and less state interference in religious practice. How orthodox is the communist administration? How un-orthodox is the deal-making process?

The final chapter, *Central policy into practice – Building a Church in the 1980s Transylvania* verifies whether the top-down model of church state relations is working, and whether central policy is different when put into practice by local state administration. The chapter focuses on the analysis of a different layer of decision making by localising the relationship. I argue that, while the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the communist regime was negotiated at a central level, it was renegotiated at the level of the community of believers when put into practice with significant results in changing the policy altogether and influencing the relationship as negotiated at central level. How the legal framework was bypassed at a local level through negotiations between church members/ clergy and hierarchs and the local communist administration and how the results triggered a response at central level reflected in the modification of state policy when it came to building and renovating churches or parish houses.

3. Sources and methodology

The research is based on archival material from the Ministry of Culture State Secretary for Religious Affairs,⁴ the Romanian Orthodox Church Patriarchal See⁵ and the Alba Iulia Orthodox Archbishopric archives⁶ to which the case study of Cerghizel belonged administratively. The image over the dynamics of the relationship with the state as surfacing from the documents in the archives of the Ministry of Culture State Secretary for Religious Affairs is one sided and corrupted. The reports, notes from informants and policy documents are to be taken with caution since the influence of the authors is present. A process of censorship and self censorship takes place from the author of the document, the influence the person the document is designed for has on the outcome of the document, in some cases the invented situations that the documents describe, not to mention the numerous hands in which these documents have been at one point or another they all impact the way in which the document has to be read by the researcher. In chapter four I offer a closer look into the creation of the document by the inspector for religious denominations and offer several ways to supplement the written document (oral interviews, diversifying the sources and the types of archives).

There is an ongoing war over the archives and the access I was granted in some of them came after numerous interventions, personal favours and recommendation letters. Most of these archives remained closed today to the researcher. My access in some was limited and

⁴ I have researched in the Archives of the State Secretary for Religious Affairs in April 2003, January 2005- February 2006

⁵ I have researched in the Archives of the Romanian Orthodox Church Patriarchal See in April 2003, February – April 2005

⁶ I have researched in the Archives of the Alba Iulia Romanian Orthodox Archbishopric in May 2005

controlled. In the archives of the Romanian Patriarchate where I had access because of personal relations and a number of reference letters I was allowed only to collections that the archivist thought that presented no danger. The decision rested with Mr. Vasilescu, the archivist, after an initial discussion he had with the personnel at the secretary of the Patriarchate that most probably laid the initial grounds on what I was about to see. I have seen archival materials from the church foreign affairs collection, economic collection and the briefs of the Holy Synod meetings. I was allowed copies and for some time these copies I made were read through when I left the archives. After a while the control loosened and becoming a familiar I had casual conversations that turned into interviews with some of the Patriarchate Secretary personnel. They helped me with various details that the archival materials did not preserved (hierarchical politics, the feuds in the central administration of the church, personal habits of the hierarchs, their likes and dislikes, personal relationships of all sorts, the policy of employment and so on). My research in the Patriarchal Archives was done over a period of several weeks. It stopped after I was granted access to the State Secretary for Religious Affairs Archives and was able to round up my research. Most of the materials preserved in the Patriarchate Archives can be found in the State Secretary ones.

My access into the State Secretary Archives was granted on similar conditions. The key factor was having someone to vouch for what I was to use the archival materials for (or against). It took in this case as well a period of time until I was allowed a less controlled access. The archives have been tempered with. The materials from the year 1948 and the forced union of the Greek Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church are no longer in archives. The files on the hierarchs and leadership of the religious denominations are either missing or tampered with. Large parts of the archive

materials are not processed in the archive and can be found in piles in the basement of the State Secretary. All these created extensive problems in research.

Access is currently granted by the minister or the secretary for religious affairs only to a selected number of researchers and their direct request and their ability to prove the need to study in these archives.⁷ A important part of the archival materials is not organized and cannot be cited properly, entire periods are missing and the sections that are not currently used by the present ministry personnel is still placed in piles in the building's basement. This is the case with the files on the foreign affairs of the religious institutions during the communist period, the files that the inspectors sent to the ministry and were considered by the ministry personnel as unimportant (around 2 linear kilometres of archival files).

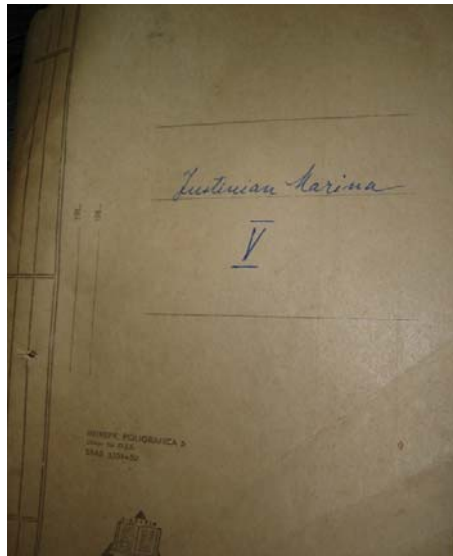


Illustration 1 Example of file cover from the Direction for Studies dealing with the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church – not processed in the archives⁸

⁷ My access in the Archives of the State Secretary for Religious Denominations was granted by the Ministry Mona Muscă as response to my request for access sent to the Ministry via the senator Eugen Nicolăescu, than senator of Mureş Electoral College.

⁸ Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, File Patriarch Justinian, not processed in the archives, vol.5, 1962-1965, 579 pp., Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania

The organized files belong to the economic section, to the section that dealt with religious patrimony, secretarial section that dealt with internal paperwork in the ministry and correspondence and the sections of studies (Direcția Studii) that has the policies, documents on which the policies were based, historical, cultural, social religious studies on various problems the ministry was confronted with (examples go from the study on the Orthodox monastic life compared with the Roman Catholic monastic life, the study on the Orthodox saints, the study on the characteristic of Neo Protestant denominations, evaluations of the number of members, tables with the number of priests, monks, nuns and so on).

As a personal estimation the archives contain around 10 to 20 linear kilometres of files but there is no official estimation on number of files in the ministry archives. These files have been numbered and archived in the communist period and that is preserved today. Nothing is computerized and thus research means flipping through the entire file (tens to thousands of pages per file). There is a guiding title of the file, the year the documents were produced in and a number. The numbers are indicative of the denomination (83-87 – the Romanian Orthodox Church, over 100 the Neo Protestant Communities, 90 – 97 Traditional Protestant communities). The numbers can also indicate specific problems – the number 70 is where one can find issues related to proselyte activities.

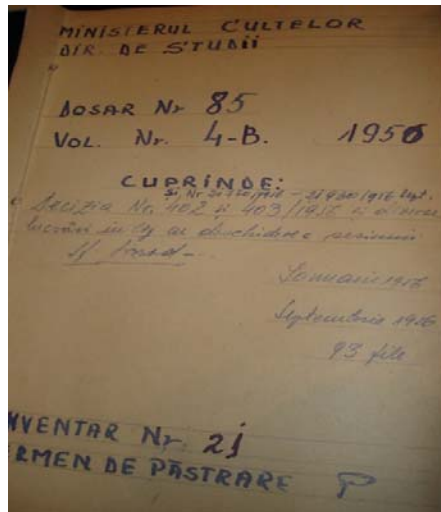


Illustration 2

Example of file cover from the Direction for Studies dealing with the Romanian Orthodox Church – catalogued⁹

The majority of the files were never read but there is hardly any way in which to find out who was the previous reader of the file. Because of the problematic and temporary nature of the documents I have made photocopies to most of the documents I use in my research and I have only cited those I have photocopied. I have given extensive information in my citation about the source also because of this organisational problem these archives have. Mainly because I was one of the few researchers to use these archives I have published/ offered for publication in specialised journals and collections of documents several documents I considered seminal for my research.¹⁰

The Archives of the Romanian Orthodox Church Patriarchal See and Alba Iulia Orthodox Archbishopric comprise the administrative and sociological data I needed to contextualize

⁹ Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii, Documents related with the meeting of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, file 85, vol.4b, 1956, 73pp, The Archives of the State Secretary for Religious Denominations, Bucharest, Romania.

¹⁰ Several documents were published in the collection of documents Mihnea Berindei, Armand Goșu, Dorin Dobrinu eds., *Istoria comunismului din Romania Documente + Perioada Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (194-1965)* (The History of Communism in Romania Documents of the Gheorghe Gheorghiu – Dej period (1945-1965), (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2009).

the case studies chosen. The archives held documents comprising the number of the churches built, the characterizations of the priests, archpriests and bishops building them, the sums of money spent and the sources for the financing (state, central Church administration, community of believers). The Church archives while not open to the lay researcher are more organized than those of the State Secretary for Religious Denominations, the documents were processed and catalogued and special personnel is hired. Together with the archives of the Department for Religious Denominations these archives are an extremely valuable source for the researchers.

To round up my research and verify the information preserved in the archives I have conducted several interviews with priests and hierarchs, believers, religious community representatives, communist representatives in the region, inspectors both regional and central of the department for religious denomination in territory, and other local state representatives. The passage of time, a tendency of the interviewee to portray him/herself as a central character in the story, an aura of resistance to the communist regime, and on the other hand a tendency from the part of the official local representatives of the communist regime to minimize or maximize their role in mechanism of the relationship with institutional religion characterizes these interviews. These testimonies represent bits and pieces of a puzzle, each with its own truth and each with its own interpretation, and were compared to and contrasted with archival documents and party policy.

Being co-opted into the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania in 2005 to write, together with historians Cristian Vasile and Dorin Dobrinicu the chapter on the church state relationship under the communist

regime I had the chance to complete my archival research. Our access to the State Secretary for Religious Denominations Archives, the National Archives and the National Council for the Study of the *Securitate* Archives was opened by presidential decree and extended for the duration of the existence of the Commission.

The conclusions of our chapter¹¹ that talked about a tacit collaboration between the communist administration and most religious denominations and various compromises that the denominations made during that period stirred a stiff debate online and in the media. They were followed by articles defending the Orthodox Church, by articles defending the conclusion of the commission, by attempts, direct or indirect to change the conclusions of the chapter and even by slander or menacing articles. Wrote in accusatory style these last articles accused me and my colleagues to negligence, stupidity, being sold out to foreign institutions with the goal of destroying the church and the Romanian people. A counter report wrote by historians associated with the Orthodox Church called us heretics and proceeded to bring arguments (both theological and historical) against our conclusions. This report was circulated online, was never printed and did not become an official position of the church. One position in particular, that of theologian Adrian Gabor, printed both online and in the Yearbook of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Bucharest¹² referred to my contributions to the chapter and brought into the argumentation my personal background. As a daughter of an Orthodox priest, with administrative functions in the

¹¹ See Cristian Vasile, Anca Șincan, Dorin Dobrinu, “Regimul comunist si cultele religioase,” (The communist regime and the religious denominations) in *Raportul Final al Comisiei prezidențiale pentru analiza dictaturii comuniste din România* (The Final Report of the Presidential Commission for Analysing the Communist Dictatorship in Romania), (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2006).

¹² See Adrian Gabor, *Note de lectură asupra raportului Tismăneanu* (Notes on Tismăneanu report) at http://civicmedia.ro/acm/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=372&Itemid=1, Internet accessed on November 5th, 2009.

Church, member in the Romanian Orthodox Church National Assembly I was not supposed to write such things about the Church. My access to the archives of the Romanian Patriarchate was placed under scrutiny and in less direct terms my father was accused of collaborating with the communist regime. After this article my access to the archives was closed. The persons that vouched for my access were reprimanded and a number of my interviewees that made up a large part of the research called and asked not to be quoted in the thesis. I have rewritten parts from my third chapter and redesigned the last chapter to accommodate their request while maintaining the hypothesis and conclusions even in the cases where further research was necessary to bypass not being able to use the initial interviews.

The politics of remembrance in present day Romania and the lingering communist behaviour make a strong argument for the hide behind documents of my fellow researchers when writing about the state church relationship. Writing contemporary history is a complicate undertaking. The researchers have to distance themselves from a past that they had firsthand experience of. Their position towards the research subject has to account themselves and the inner reflection about the subject and thus is complicated by what the researcher knows or thinks he/ she knows what they remember or think they remember.¹³ Even more complicated is this positioning towards subjects that still create a fierce public debate in post communist Romania. We lack the necessary distance from not just one past but two (communist and fascist), and are faced with the constant return to a golden age of the interwar and the transformation the communist experience in the negative counterpart for that idealized period of time that it replaced. This complicates even further the researcher's rapport

¹³ Richard Ned Lebow, Wolf Kansteiner, Claudio Fogu, eds., *The politics of memory in postwar Europe*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 1-16.

with the subject he/ she investigates. The nuances that the research brings forth, the alterations in the public perception over the two near pasts that the research might bring are frowned upon by a public that still has not come to terms with its own pasts.

Finally, writing the history of the church in its encounters with the communist or fascist regimes raises ethical questions for the researcher that is placed in the position of High Inquisitor by his or her background. Policing the institution that should be the depositary of the *universal truth* in an effort to reform it is not uncommon. The demands of verticality that the public and researcher ask from the men of God leads either to the idealization of the institution and its behaviour during the communist period or to the demonization of the very behaviour. Navigating this complex web of entanglements that constantly transforms the researcher in an actor in his/ her research is confusing and complicated and most researchers respond by transforming themselves into archivists or data collectors.

CHAPTER I

Historiographical and theoretical overview

The theoretical and empirical literature that informs on the situation of religion in the communist regimes of East Central Europe is abundant. This literature is part of a wider area of research that of the interplay between religion and politics. Chronologically it can be structured into two main parts: pre and post 1990 with particularities for these two periods that range from themes of research to method of investigating. This chapter scrutinizes the literature that informs on the Romanian case, discusses the particularity of the Romanian case as addressed by researchers, the comparison with the Russian case and offers a look into the Romanian post 1989 historiography on the relationship between state and church during the communist regime. The research was also informed by theoretical works that pertain to the field of fascist and communist studies, religious studies, sociology of religion and this chapter brings forth several keywords that were used to analyze the empirical data.

I. 1 The use of the Russian case as base for asymmetric comparison

Several issues and hypotheses in the literature on church state relations in Soviet Russia have shaped the discussion on the Romanian case. When treated comparatively the situation of the Orthodox Church under communism one of the conclusions that surfaces is the considerably superior situation that the Romanian Orthodox Church enjoys in its rapport with the state as compared with the rest of the Orthodox Churches and especially with the Russian Orthodox Church. In its *History of the Orthodox Church*, Timothy Ware opposed the situation of Romanian Orthodox Church

communist state relations to the Albanian case calling these two examples the two extreme situations, one positive and the other negative. He attributes this in part to the work of the Romanian Patriarch Justinian and his good relations with the new communist leadership.¹ The special situation enjoyed by the Romanian Orthodox Church was noted by Pedro Ramet² as well. In discussing state co-optation of the church he remarks: “for the Russian and Bulgarian churches co-optation, the price of survival, has meant legal impotence and institutional weakness. [...] In Romania, by contrast, co-optation has given the Orthodox Church not merely fiscal security but even the basis for a flourishing theological life.”

Another characteristic that comes out in comparison between the situation of the Russian Orthodox Church under communism and that of the rest of the Orthodox Churches in the communist Eastern Europe is related to the steps taken by the Russian Orthodox Church to protect itself faced with the actions of the communist regime. The retreat and lack of reaction of the Church faced with the changes in society brought by the access to power of the new regime and its complete subservience to the communist state were noted by several researchers.³ The actions taken by the Russian Orthodox Church were discussed and argued by researchers as the Church’s own strategy of protection in front of the restrictions and regulations imposed on its activity by the communist state. In similar background other Orthodox Churches behaved

¹ Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, (London: Penguin, 1993), pp. 145 – 171.

² Pedro Ramet, ed. *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twentieth Century*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988), p. 13.

³ See for instance William C. Fletcher, “Backwards from reactionism: the de-modernization of the Russian Orthodox Church” in Dennis J. Dunn, ed., *Religion and Modernization in the Soviet Union*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977), p. 206; Max Hayward and William C. Fletcher, Eds., *Religion and the Soviet State. A Dilemma of Power*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), p. 84; Jane Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church. A Contemporary History*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), pp. 261 – 262.

differently,⁴ others were offered better conditions by the respective communist regimes as in the case of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

I argue that the difference in the design of the church state relations between the Russian case and the Romanian one is contextual and comes as I have already asserted from the chronology of the installation of the communist regime in Soviet Russia vis-à-vis the installation of the communist regimes in East Central Europe. Most researchers agree in the chronology of the relationship between the Soviet state and church. They place emphasis in the changes in state policy towards the religious denominations at the beginning of Stalin's era, during the Second World War, and during Khrushchev's period.⁵ The installation of the communist regime in East Central Europe coincided with the repositioning of state church relations in Soviet Russia after the Second World War. The co-option of the Russian Orthodox Church by the Soviet State influenced how the relationship between state and church was designed in the rest of communist East Central Europe. The strain in state – church relationship during the Khrushchev period produced a repositioning of state church relations in Romania⁶ that suggests the mirroring of the Soviet policies in the East Central Europe communist regimes.

⁴ See for instance the case of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Timothy Ware, 1993, pp. 145-171.

⁵ See Jane Ellis, 1988; Philip Walters, "A survey of Soviet religious policy" in Sabrina Ramet, ed., *Religious policy in the Soviet Union*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 3 – 30; Max Hayward and William C. Fletcher, 1969; Tatiana A. Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia: Russian Orthodoxy from World War II to the Khrushchev years*. (New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc), 2002.

⁶ The late 1950s was a period when several policies were drafted to better control the monastic life in Romania following a decade of opposition coming from within the Orthodox monasteries. As a result a law was passed in 1958 that closed most Orthodox monasteries in Romania and forced the monks and nuns to enter secular life, offered jobs and sometimes forced into marriage.

Mirroring the Soviet policies is not the only issue I traced in using the Soviet case comparatively. I looked closely at the institution and policies that the Romanian communist regime adopted and adapted in order to regulate the religious life in the country according to the Soviet blueprint. Some Soviet solutions were not implemented by the Romanian communist regime. For instance while in the Soviet case the Party attempted to decentralize the church and weaken its hierarchy empowering the local and especially the lay members of the church in the Romanian case the reverse action is taken, the ministry putting an emphasis on enforcing a system of checks and balances built upon a hierarchical chain that translated in over-centralization. I also looked at the institutions that mediated this relationship, the Council for Russian Orthodox Church Affairs, the soviet cadres in charge with supervising and regulation the religious life.⁷ The evidence brought forth by researchers like Tatiana Chumachenko that a system of trial and error was functioning⁸ in the early stages of the implementation of an institutional forum for the regulation of the religious life in Soviet Russia relates to the situation met in the 1950s Romania in the make-up and functioning of the Ministry for religious denominations. I also use Sheila Fitzpatrick's argument of the institutional functioning of the Soviet system with the help of specialists trained by the former regime⁹ unacquainted with communist orthodoxy but capable to decipher the mechanisms in play in the construction of church state relationship for instance.

⁷ Tatiana A. Chumachenko, 2002, pp. 15-36; Dimitrij V. Pospelovskij, "Stalin e la Chiesa. Il Concordato del 1943 e la vita della Chiesa Ortodossa Russa alla luce di documenti d'archivio" in Kirill di Smolensk, S.S. Averincev, B. Bobrinskoy, *La notte della chiesa russa*, (Comunita di Bose: Edizioni quiqajon), 2000, pp. 58-59; Otto Luchterhandt, "The Council for Religious Affairs" in Sabrina Ramet, 1993), pp. 55-83.

⁸ Tatiana A. Chumachenko, 2002, p. 19.

⁹ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

I.2 On the particularity of the Romanian case

The relationship between the communist state and religious denominations was structured in most cases on a Soviet paradigm. In the early period of the installation of the communist regime legal provisions, measures, policies, mechanisms and even institutions were exported from the Soviet Union and enforced in the communist countries of Eastern, South Eastern and Central Europe. This was the case with the relationship between state and institutional religion in Romania. It was moulded on the legal framework existing in the Soviet case. Policies developed especially in the late Stalinist period in the Soviet Union were copied, parallel institutions were put in place, and the corpus of state functionaries that controlled the religious denominations mirrored to great extent the Soviet one. These measures (policies, institutions, nomenklatura, and functionaries) that constituted the framework for the construction of the relationship between state and religion in the Soviet Union were implemented in Romania by the Ministry for Religious Denominations with different results. Recent studies that focus on this relationship between state and church in communist Romania have imposed several research hypotheses to explain the way in which, with few exceptions (that of the destruction of the Greek Catholic Church for instance) the religious denominations succeeded in the communist period to safeguard a functional religious life and a *status quo* in the number of believers, clergy and places of worship that was distinct from the Soviet case.

There is an interpretation, put forward by historians,¹⁰ that links this survival of the religious denominations with a weak communist party, insufficiently inserted and accepted by the society, the lack of charismatic communist elite that would promote such a brutal act as the suppression of religious institutions and the impossibility of promoting a different world view to replace the religious one. The establishment of the one-party system in Romania after 1948 followed the Soviet type of totalitarian system. The transformation of economy into centrally planned state owned one, collectivisation of agriculture and destruction of civil society, the opposition parties, the press through police actions and violence, annihilation of “genuine intellectual life” and the reinterpretation of cultural tradition so as to fit the new communist requirements, disposing of the cultural works that were considered under the label of decadent all followed the coming to power of the communists in 1948.¹¹ Yet there were specific solutions implemented with regard to religious life derived from the characteristics of Romanian communism. The traditionalism and conservatism of the population, massively rural¹² and having its universe centred on the church prevented the new regime to enforce its authority on the religious denominations by banishing them.¹³ This argument was brought forth successfully by researchers like political

¹⁰ See for instance Stelian Tănase, *Elite si societate. Guvernarea Gheorghiu – Dej, 1948-1965* (Elite and society. The Gheorghiu-Dej governing, 1948-1965), (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998); Dennis Deletant, *Romania sub regimul communist* (Romania under communist regime), (Bucharest: Fundatia Academia Civică, 1997).

¹¹ Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for all Seasons. A political History of Romanian Communism*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 107-110.

¹² Over 70% of the population lived in rural areas. This, argues Stelian Tănase, paradoxically both helped and hurt the Romanian Communists. On the one hand traditional institutions like the church ensure their survival to the opposition that this rural population could have mounted faced with its destruction. On the other hand this 70% rural population was a wide enough pool for human resources for the Party, to mobilize in the process of modernizing the country. Stelian Tănase, 1998, p. 26.

¹³ See Stelian Tănase, 1998, pp. 82-84.

scientist Stelian Tănase¹⁴ and historian Dennis Deletant¹⁵ to demonstrate the paradoxes of the design of state church relationship in Romania.

This interpretation of the weakness of the Romanian communists¹⁶ is supported by several policy documents from the ministry for religious denominations. These policies were drafted so as to implement a state church relationship that would not compel the ministry functionaries dealing with the religious life or the Secret police to fight the opposition coming from within the religious communities on too many fronts. The political context of the end of the 1950s has influenced the negotiations for the position of the religious institutions in the new regime. A weak communist party resulted in small number of qualified specialists that adhered to the orthodoxy of the new regime leading, as in the early stages of the Soviet communism, to a division between *reds* and *specialists*.¹⁷ This division had also had an impact on the new relationship between state and religious denomination since many of the specialists that the ministry employed to design the policy, impose authority and control the religious scene of the country came from within the religious denomination's rank and file. The insufficient strength and the lack of trained and allegiant cadres can be regarded as part of a series of factors that have influenced how the relationship between church and the new regime was constructed in the final years of the 1940s.

¹⁴ Stelian Tănase, 1998

¹⁵ Dennis Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate. Coercion and Dissent in Romania 1965 – 1989*, (London: C. Hurst and Co. Ltd, 1995).

¹⁶ Vladimir Tismăneanu states that in 1994 when the Communist Party resurfaced from the underground “there were only 80 members in Bucharest and fewer than 1000 throughout the country. And while the numbers grew rapidly the faithfulness of the new members was difficult to monitor. See Vladimir Tismăneanu, 2003, p. 87.

¹⁷ See Sheila Fitzpatrick's distinction between reds and specialists in Sheila Fitzpatrick, 1992, pp. 149-183.

There are various ways in which one might discuss the relationship between state and church during communism and several other characteristics that have impacted the specificity of the Romanian Orthodox Church and state relationship but also common traits that characterise the relationship between church and state during the communist period in East Central Europe. A number of concepts prove particularly useful to characterize this relationship. Several central principles that determine the special character of the Orthodox Church are of relevance in shaping the theoretical base under which the relationship between church and state was analyzed: *caesaro-papism* or *symphonia*, *autocephaly*, and *autonomy*.

An interpretation that argues for the particularity of an Orthodox model of state church relationship involves an explanation related to a specificity of the Orthodox Church namely *caesaro-papism*.¹⁸ It is argued by some researchers¹⁹ that the compromise that allowed the survival of the Orthodox Church is inscribed in its age old tradition. This allows the researchers on the one hand to see the Orthodox Churches as a monolithic bloc with only minor distinctions when it comes to their relationship with the communists and on the other hand to argue for a pre-existent behavioural pattern in the case of the Orthodox Church that leads to its association with the state. The argument goes further and it has been debated that in the case of Romania this compromise between the state and the Orthodox Church based on the latter's tendency to associate with the state was afterwards expanded by the state in a policy that encompassed all religious denominations – a policy of compromise with

¹⁸ The term *caesaro-papism* came to characterize a specific relationship between the secular and the religious world. "Caesaro-papism [...] argues Jose Casanova, is the world's control and use of religion for its own purposes, most frequently to legitimate political rule and to sanctify economic oppression and the given system of stratification." Jose Casanova, *Public Religion in the Modern World*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 49.

¹⁹ See for instance Herve Hasquin, "La liberte religieuse en regime communiste," *Eglise et societe d'aujourd'hui* (Brussels: Ed. de l' Universite de Bruxelles, 1986).

the religious denominations, of infiltrating and using them as *port-parole* of the communist state.²⁰ The model, put forward by Olivier Gillet draws heavily on various articles and studies published by theologians and hierarchs on caesaro-papism during the communist period.²¹ Yet, the usage of this concept must be carefully examined since the extensive use of the term and subsequently of the term *symphonia* to characterize the state church relation during communism by canon law experts, church historians and hierarchs might be related to a justificatory tendency of church officials. Olivier Gillet's thesis is also contested by researchers since it is structured on a cultural explanation of the compromise leaving aside other factors that relate to economic or social reasons to explain the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the communist regime in power.²²

The *caesaro-papism* argument is advanced by political scientists²³ to make a case for ideal type behaviour of religious denominations in their position towards the state. It states that there is a distinct way in which a denomination deals with the state. The Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Churches, the Neo Protestant Churches,²⁴ or

²⁰ See Olivier Gillet, *Religion et Nationalisme. L'Ideologie de L'Eglise Orthodoxe Roumaine sous le Regime Communiste*. (Brussels: Editions de l'Universite de Bruxelles, 1997).

²¹ For an overview of the discussion see Liviu Stan, "Relațiile dintre Stat și Biserică. Studiu istorico juridic," (Relationship between state and church. A historical juridical study), in *Ortodoxia*, (Orthodoxy), Issue 3-4, (1952), pp. 353-461; "Despre autonomia bisericească," (About the church autonomy), *Studii Teologice* (Theological studies), Issue 5-6 (1958), pp. 376-393.

²² See Cristian Vasile's critique of Olivier Gillet in Cristian Vasile, *Între Vatican și Kremlin Biserica Greco-Catolică în timpul regimului comunist*, (Between Vatican and Kremlin, The Greek Catholic Church during the communist regime) (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2003), p. 208.

²³ Herve Hasquin, 1998; Daniel Philpott, Timothy Samuel Shah, "Faith, freedom and federation: the role of religious ideas and institutions in European political convergence," in Timothy A. Byrnes, Peter J Katzenstein, Eds. *Religion in an Expanding Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 47.

²⁴ I am using the terminology by which these denominations were and still are known in Romania. The Neo Protestant denominations are the protestant denominations that do not come directly from the Reformation and were thus named to distinguish them from the traditional Hungarian and German protestant churches from Transylvania. The recognized

the Orthodox Churches have specific ways in which they have constructed their relationship with the communist states in East Central Europe.²⁵ One of the most compelling and complex research models describing the types of invalid and prejudicial interpretations on the behavioural patterns of the religious denominations in East Central Europe is constructed by Pedro Ramet. In his book *Cross and Commissar* he warns among others against the tendency of church historians to explain the relationship between state and church during communism by introducing the characteristics pertaining to Byzantium. He calls the description of the “Orthodox tradition” strictly in terms of Byzantium, “excluding the accommodations made in the Ottoman Empire and Tsarist Russia” a fallacy of interpretation.²⁶ In research related to the Orthodox Church’s relationship with the communist regime the concept is brought forth to explain a so-called predisposition of the former to a compromise with the regime. Another rebuttal of this ideal type approach comes from Thomas Bremer. In his introduction to the book *Religion and the conceptual Boundary in Central and Eastern Europe* he states that

there is not only a different attitude of each religious tradition towards the issues of state and nation, but also differences within the respective community. There is nothing like ‘the’ Catholic or the ‘Orthodox’ position towards state or nation. Some common elements can be identified, but historical, political and societal circumstances seem to play a very important role, sometimes more important than confessional traditions.²⁷

I agree with the interpretation of both Pedro Ramet and Thomas Bremer as applied to the Romanian case. The association and collaboration with the new regime is not restricted to the Orthodox Church. Traditional protestant denominations in

Neo Protestants were: Baptists, Pentecostals, Evangelical Christians, and Seven Day Adventists.

²⁵ See Pedro Ramet, *Cross and Commissar The politics of Religion in Eastern Europe and the USSR*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 178-183.

²⁶ Pedro Ramet, 1987, p.178.

²⁷ Thomas Bremer, ed., *Religion and the Conceptual Boundary in Central and Eastern Europe. Encounters of Faith*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 7

Transylvania opted in the first decades of the communist period to collaborate with the regime for various reasons. Also factions from the Orthodox Church behaved differently towards the state, either choosing open opposition or retreat when faced with the demands of the new policies and regulations.

The research makes use of Olivier Gillet's hypothesis that the relationship between state and Orthodox Church existing in the interwar Romania is similar to the one that was functional after 1948. In using his continuity argument I also avoid what Pedro Ramet termed "the ahistorical fallacy [...] a pitfall into which political scientists and journalists are prone to slip. This fallacy entails treating the present configuration of church-state relations in abstraction from its historical roots and thus ignores factors anchoring relations to a general configuration."²⁸ Even though I use Gillet's hypothesis I place lesser value on the importance of the theological explanation of *caesaro papism*. First I argue that the *caesaro papism* model was hardly functional in modern Romania. It is thus more important to look at the formations of the national state and of the national church in the mid- and late nineteenth century rather than turn back to Byzantium for an explanation of the characteristics of state church relations during the communist regime. The way the state church relationship was designed in modern Romania determined the way in which it was designed by the communists and the adaptations made by the new regime.

The autocephalous characteristic of the Orthodox Churches was related by the historiography concerning the Orthodox Church to the concept of national church, since an autocephalous church would presumably be able to impose a national

²⁸ Pedro Ramet, 1987, p. 179.

hierarchy and clergy and the vernacular language in the liturgy,²⁹ an important step in a future correlation between a particular ethnic population and the Orthodox Church and building of the national identity.³⁰

Several researchers that employ a direct correlation between ethnicity and religion during the communist period note how these traits were used both by the church and state policy. Vjekoslav Perica's study on the religious life in post Second World War Yugoslavia extends the concept of national church to characterize the religious denominations and their interrelation with the nationalities of the federation.³¹ A similar attempt to relate nationality and religion was attempted in communist Romania. This almost complete overlap³² had a double connotation. On the one hand it made it more difficult for the communist state to do away with religion,³³ especially in the case of ethnic minorities that viewed religion as seminal to the preservation of their identity. On the other hand, once the communist state administration was able to co-opt these denominations, a more facile contact between the state representatives and various ethnic minorities was accomplishable through the medium of religious institutions.

²⁹ Pedro Ramet, 1988, p. 5.

³⁰ "The autocephalous church figures as an authentication of national identity. The establishment of national patriarchates in Bulgaria and Serbia, in particular, figured as part of the state building process and was closely associated with the assertion of national identity." Ramet, 1988, p. 7.

³¹ See Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkan Idols. Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

³² The religious denominations that escaped this relation with one ethnic base were either forced into segregating – see for instance the separation of Hungarian and Romanian Baptist Churches in Transylvania, they were forcefully united – case in point the Greek Catholic Church that had a Romanian believer base and was united with the Romanian Orthodox Church so as to have one church speak for most Romanians, or, in the case of the Roman Catholic Church, where this segregation, coupled with an attempt to separate the Church from its hierarchical centre in Rome, failed a double hierarchy was imposed – Romanian for half of the country, having Bucharest as centre and Hungarian for Transylvania, having Alba Iulia as centre – two different policies being drafted for the two different ethnical Roman Catholic Churches.

³³ See Pedro Ramet, 1987, p. 13.

The link between nationalism and religion as discussed in the Soviet case applies to the Romanian as well. In the Soviet case Pedro Ramet looks at the nationalism of the church as “supportive of regime aims” like in the Romanian and Bulgarian cases. He also argues that nationalism is an inherent characteristic of the Orthodox churches: “the nationalism of Eastern churches involves them in the politics of their respective societies and enters into the calculus of church state relations.”³⁴ It is this involvement in politics that is speculated in the Soviet case to have “weaken[ed] the church’s [...] inhibitions in relation with the regime” as Bohdan Bociurkiw stated. Russian nationalism according to the same author weakened fundamentalist attitudes towards religion working at both ends – the communist regime and the church in influencing the construction of their relationship.³⁵

The relationship between state and the Romanian Orthodox Church during the communist period was based on the connection between ethnicity and religion, the involvement of the church in political matters as *port parole* of the regime, being elevated to a privileged status among the other religious denominations, emphasizing its political trait at the expense of the religious and in all this time maintaining a direct economic, legal, institutional and political dependency to the regime in power. This dependency permitted the state administration to have its strong input in matters related to the organization, structure and hierarchy of the church. I thus chose a different chronological marker than the Byzantine period, in arguing for an associationist model of church state relations, a chronological marker that begins with

³⁴ Pedro Ramet, 1988, p. 6.

³⁵ Bohdan R. Bociurkiw “Church-State relations in the USSR”, in Max Hayward and Willian C. Fletcher, Eds, 1969.

the formation of the modern state in East Central Europe that allows for a wider comparison with other cases – the Protestant Churches and their relationship with the communist state, the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Hungarian communists, the position of the Serbian Orthodox Church in its relationship with the Yugoslav state.

The particularity of the Romanian case comes also from the context in which the state church relationship was constructed in the early years of the communist regime. The historiography of the subject talks about an imitation of the Soviet model of the relationship between state and church that was in functional in the moment of its adoption by the communist states in Eastern, South Eastern and Central Europe. The relationship with the religious denominations of the soviet regime in the 1940s is fundamentally different from the one promoted in the interwar period. Thus the researchers which favour an explanation of the *imitatio dei* type talk about adopting a soviet model of compromise and instrumentation of the Church in solving the national problem, the use of the Church as port-parole of the state's policies, that was functional in the 1940s and not the Stalinist model that was functional before the Second World War that suppressed the church and religious life, dismantled the religious institutions and decimated its clergy. It is this model of “compromise” that will be adopted by the new “people's democracies” with variations that respond to specific contexts.³⁶

The process of defining the relationship between the Soviet state and the church underwent several stages along more than 20 years, from the installation of the regime

³⁶ See the interpretation in Tatiana A. Chumachenko, 2002, pp. 15-86.

to the Second World War. Along this period the rather fundamentalist views “opposed to any form of cooperation between church and state” intertwined with those more pragmatic that would be in favour of “utilizing the churches’ influence at home and abroad.”³⁷ Researchers that have designed a chronology of behavioural patterns of the Russian Orthodox Church in its relationship with the soviet regime describe the stages going from an initial period of overt hostility, one of withdrawal from political activities and a final one of “commitment to unconditional loyalty to the state and positive support of its policies” by the Second World War.

In the Romanian case the model of association functioned all throughout the communist period. Its chronology situates the stages that lead to the achievement of the status-quo inside a short period of time between 1946 - 1952/53. however this was not a one-way compromise. It is surprising that most of the literature so far was interested in a position of the religious denomination towards the communist state that would situate them in a collaborationist or oppositionist side depending on where they were situated regarding an association with the regime.

This is also a compromise of the communist state that induced a situation where institutions that came in direct contradiction with the communist atheist doctrine were not just functional, but in various cases they influenced the public sphere by imposing their own model and discourse on various issues. A paradoxical hybrid relationship was created, where the state allowed the functioning of the religious denominations and their controlled access in the public sphere to instrument them for its own

³⁷ Max Hayward and William C. Fletcher eds., 1969, p. 83.

policies. Thus religion that should have been at best sent to the private sphere if not relegated altogether was present in the public sphere in its institutional form.

There are several researches that argue that religion has not left the public sphere during the communist regime but in few exceptional cases. Institutional religion preserved a public role of either opposing the state as in the case presented by Jose Casanova of the Polish Catholic Church³⁸ or as an institution associated with or co-opted by the state as described by Pedro Ramet.³⁹ Using the associationist model in which the state co-opted the Orthodox Church and thus brought it into a controlled public sphere as a state institution I argue that the model proposed by Emilio Gentile of the emergence of political religion, a common religion of the authoritarian state to replace traditional religion that was relegated to the private sphere does not apply to the Romanian case study.⁴⁰ Instead I use Pedro Ramet's argument from *Cross and Commissar* on religious denominations co-opted by the communist regime where he included the Orthodox Church. This co-optation meant that "church leaders serve as surrogate spokesman for the regime's foreign policy and defenders of its internal policies. Co-optation has meant that, in contrast to other churches, the Romanian [...] Orthodox Church has enjoyed a sufficiency of institutions and publications [...]. In each case what the church was able to offer the regime was its nationalism; in each case, the price of co-optation was submission to a degree of control by the regime."⁴¹ I dispute Pedro Ramet findings only when it comes to the chronology of the co-option. Ramet argues that in the Romanian case the church state relationship was

³⁸ Jose Casanova, 1994, pp 92-114.

³⁹ See for referral Pedro Ramet, 1988; Pedro Ramet ed., *Religion and nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989).

⁴⁰ See the definition of political religion in Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 139-142.

⁴¹ Pedro Ramet, 1987, p. 27.

redesigned in the early 1960s when due to the independent course of Romanian communism nationalist policies were revived and with them the Orthodox Church's greater input in the internal and foreign stances of the communist regime. I argue that this co-option was already functional and was preserved in the state church relationship via several shortcomings in the initial stages of the new regime. The nationalist stance of the 1960s was only one of the moments when the church assumed the public position that was asked from her.

According to Emilio Gentile's definition

A political religion is a form of sacralization of politics that has an exclusive and fundamental nature. It does not accept the coexistence of other political ideologies and movements, it denies the autonomy of the individual in the relation with the collectivity, it demands compliance to its commandments and participation to its political cult and it sanctifies violence as a legitimate weapon in the fight against its enemies and as an instrument of regeneration. In the relation with traditional religious institutions, it either adopts a hostile attitude and aims to eliminate them or it attempts to establish a rapport of symbiotic coexistence by incorporating the traditional religion into its own system of beliefs and myths while reducing it to a subordinate and auxiliary role.⁴²

Instead of political religion I argue that the state brought in traditional religion to use. Totalitarian states with one religion monopoly over the spiritual beliefs of the nation deal differently with religion than the ones that rule over a variety of religious denominations serving the spiritual needs of the people. Emilio Gentile went so far as to say that it is more difficult for a totalitarian regime to develop a political religion when there is mono religious denomination predominance. It is easier, and therefore more common to use the existing religious denomination rather than trying to substitute a secular religion for it. This seems to be the case with communist

⁴² Emilio Gentile, 2006, p. 139.

Romania. The party was aware of the stronghold of institutional religion and of the rather long period of time the Party state would need for relegating it from the public space.

I.3 On “Church” versus “churches”

The public/ private dichotomy in characterizing religion has been used to differentiate between a religion of the group and a personal, individual religion, a religion for social cohesion in which one is born into and one responding to a community’s need to interiorize a religious message, a religion of choice and finally a religion that is associated with the world of politics (no matter the rapport of the two forces) and one that is not.

My thesis uses all three type of theoretical dichotomising for a comparison between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the other religious denominations in the country in arguing a public role of the Orthodox Church in the communist state. Thus I differentiate between a “national”/ ethnic religion⁴³ – a religion one is born into if the right ethnicity and denominations that draw out their believers base from other traditional denominations. A religion of the small community that is brought together by a specific religious message and that holds religion to have just this meaning. And finally one can distinguish in the position the Orthodox Church has towards the communist state and the one held by the Neoprotestant denominations for instance, a

⁴³ I argue that the Hungarian Protestant Churches in Transylvania, the German Lutheran Church behave similarly to the Orthodox Church in relation to the communist state.

difference between one religious denomination associated to the communist state and one trying to separate itself from the state as much as possible.

In the same time, while my focus is on the history of the institution of the Orthodox Church during the communist regime, I tried to avoid what Pedro Ramet has termed the monolithic fallacy, “a tendency to treat both church and state as monoliths [and ...] gloss over complexities of intrachurch and intrastate factionalism.”⁴⁴ The institution of the church, its organization, its hierarchy and its function within the confinements of this new political environment, were of particular interest. The relationship between the church and the state was negotiated at this institutional level but the different positions had by different factions both from within the church and from within the communist administration have influenced the way in which this relationship functioned. The challenges to the mechanism of state church relations coming from local Orthodox communities, from hierarchical factions inside the Orthodox Church, from oppositional movements from within the church have impacted the relationship.

In what concerns the state Bohdan Bociurkiw established a distinction between the Party’s attitude towards the church and that of the state in Lenin’s Russia.⁴⁵ While the Party was committed to antireligious propaganda the state stand was of a “standard social democratic position favouring constitutional guarantees of freedom of conscience, separation of church and state, secularization of education [...]”⁴⁶ Both positions underwent tremendous change and the distinction lost substance and in the 1918’s legal framework provisions were brought to “surround the activities of

⁴⁴ Pedro Ramet, 1987, p. 179.

⁴⁵ Max Hayward, William Fletcher, 1969, p. 73.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

religious groups with an ever tightening network of administrative and police control and to involve the state agencies increasingly in the internal affairs of churches and sects.” In communist Romania this distinction is less noticeable. One could look at the Soviet Union as being a segregate entity that had an input in designing the relationship between the new regime and the religious denominations. The Romanian Communist Party created and put into practice their regulatory provisions on the religious life via the Ministry of religious denominations, an entity that shared with the *Securitate* the safeguard of these regulations. “Through the new state apparatus the Party also assured itself of a monopoly of political power and brought under its control every element of social life [...] The Church was no exception, as it, too, was obliged to accept a subordinate role in the new totalitarian system” noted Keith Hitchins.⁴⁷

After the new regime came to power the need for a public institutional religion, sanctifying the role of the state and legitimating the communist regime appeared futile, as one can trace in various state policy documents. Yet the complete banish of religion was not attempted much because of the weakness of the new regime. Religion was privatised by denying its entrance in public sphere, denying its social function, secularizing the educational system, segregating it to the family and the community, denying it the role it had until then – opinion formative, nation building, community cohesion, and social – these were no longer required from institutional religion in the public sphere. Association with the state should cease and if, for a complete relegation the state is not prepared, a complete segregation of religion should be possible.

⁴⁷ Keith Hitchins, “The Romanian Orthodox Church and the State,” in Bohdan Bociurkiw, John Strong, eds., *Religion and Atheism in USSR and Eastern Europe*, (London: Macmillan, 1975), p. 315.

While this could be termed separation of church and state, according to Giovanni Codevila, this is not the traditional understanding of church state separation. In the classical sense a regime of separation between state and church would adhere to three principles: “The recognizing of the State and of the Church as two distinct sovereign powers whose existence is equally justified; the distinction between political and religious affairs and the emancipation of the state from all religious influence in the political affairs; the freedom of the citizen to chose and perform its own religious faith.”⁴⁸ In the Soviet state these principles do not apply. The Church is merely tolerated, while the state is emancipated from the religious influence in their political affairs the reverse is not true, and while inscribed in the legal framework, the third principle hardly applies.⁴⁹

The state decided for a solution that would push the church out of the public sphere in hope that a relegation of religion to the private sphere of the family and the small community would causally lead to a drop in the number of believers. The state would address its citizens directly without the church legitimizing its discourse.

Several events triggered the need for the state to bring the church back into a public space controlled by its authority. There was first of all a concentration of the opposition to the regime inside the religious institutions. The failure of the solution of suppression of the Greek Catholic Church and its unification with the Orthodox one and the concentration of a strong oppositional group inside the society forced the state to reassess the problem of institutional religion. But the most important problem of the state authorities was their failure to reach the citizens and to need an intermediary, one

⁴⁸ Giovanni Codevila, *Stato e Chiesa nell Unione Sovietica*, (Milan: Jaka Book, 1972), p. 287.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 288.

that would be invested with more leverage over the population it spiritually administered – the church. It is around the early 1950s when the state controlled the return of the church in the public sphere as a transmitter of the party state discourse and as a legitimizing institution.

Thus the church is forced to act as transmission belt, a conveyor of state political interests. Help pass the constitution, help with the nationalization of land and property, with developing the anti Western and pro Russian policies. However this meant a weakened position for the state as well, for although severely controlled by the authorities of the state, the public sphere was subject to various transformations due to the impact of the church policies (especially the nationalist discourse used in the 1960s also by the state to round up national communism). If for the initial period of the communist regime the religious denominations managed but their mere survival, later on they developed mechanisms of negotiation with the regime that allowed them to intervene in various issues connected to human rights, national canon and so forth.

I. 4 Prior Research on the subject

Writing the history of the relationship between the communist state and the church in 20th century Romania is subject to a difficult context. First there is no dominant historiographic school devoted to the study of state – church relationship that would be capable to train the specialists. The theology departments in the Romanian Universities inherited the church history departments of the communist period when this track in the theological institutes was subjected to severe restrictions. The

curriculum in the church history departments is unchanged and little time is devoted to the life of the church in communism. Then there is reticence on the part of researchers, usually trained in the History Departments of the University, to enter this subject, since it invariably leads to a controversial public debate on the Church behaviour during the communist regime.

When state – church relationship was the focus of research an obsession towards the institutional history of the church could be noted (where church is mistook for its hierarchical body), less an interest for social history, rarely a look into local history, microhistory. Motivated by a fascination for facile revelations these works bore tribute to a market that thrives on sensational and on conspiracy theories. This thrive is perpetuated through *works* that limit historical research to uncovering documents that can shock the public. With little to no comment by the author these archival materials are rarely integrated in larger research structures, left bare in the public space, with chaotic responses from the public they were directed towards. Among the themes the *researchers* focused were the involvement in the fascist movement of various hierarchs, the collaboration with the communists of various church personalities.⁵⁰ This was hardly restricted to the Romanian Orthodox Church.

The *secular* historiography on the Church during the communist regime contains a scarcity of interpretations on the characteristics of church-state relationship. Even fewer are the studies that offer a global perspective on the phenomenon of religious life under the communist regime. Most of the writings that focus on church history

⁵⁰ One of the incidents brought forth by this type of facile archival revelations was release to the press of a document about the alleged homosexuality of the late Patriarch Teoctist. Without any critical filter the document was taken at face value and defended as true by the *historian* that found it in the archives.

specialize in analysing archival documents. Usually concerned with church personalities or events in the life of the church that triggered the special attention of the state these short articles⁵¹ highly focused on events make up a significant part of the historiography. Editing volumes with primary sources and archival material is also connected with this historiographical trend.⁵² Though important for uncovering a number of valuable primary sources this type of scholarship fragments the historical discourse and leads to a lack of cohesion.

The importance given to the written document, the reticence in offering an interpretation, an explanation and to putting the event in context is common for much of the post 1989 historiography on the communist period. The positivist attachment to the document (mostly the written, but slowly the oral as well) and the hide behind it in making inferences on aspects of the history of communism has explanations.

The Romanian historian had a constant need to cover his/ her back for the disturbing “facts” that he/she reveals. There is also a battle over the archival materials in an

⁵¹ See Ștefan Iliaie, Paul Caravia, and Virgiliu St. Constantinescu, *Mărturisiri de după gratii. Slujitori ai Bisericii în temnițele comuniste*, (Confessions from behind bars. Church people in communist prisons) (Cluj-Napoca: Supliment al revistei *Renașterea*, 1995); Ștefan Iliaie, “Slujitori ai Bisericii Ortodoxe în temnițele comuniste sau despre cum poate suferi o majoritate” (Orthodox Church people in communist prison, or about how can a majority suffer), *Analele Sighet Anii 1949-1953 mecanismele terorii*, (Bucharest: Fundația Academia Civică, 1999), pp. 92-95; Liviu Grigorescu, “Politica de laicizare a slujitorilor bisericii și a credincioșilor” (The laicization policy of the clergy and believers) in *Analele Sighet 7 Anii 1949-1953 Mecanismele Terorii*, (Sighet Annals The years 1949 – 1953, The mechanisms of terror) (Bucharest: Fundatia Academia Civica, 1999); Eugen Toma, “Persecutia anticrestina din Romania – martiraj și distrugere de lăcașuri sfinte” (The anti Christian persecution in Romania – martyrdom and demolishing of holy sites), in *Analele Sighet 10 Anii 1973 – 1989, Cronica unui sfarsit de sistem*, (Sighet Annals, The years 1973 – 1989: The chronicle of the end of the system) (Bucharest: Fundatia Academia Civica, 2003).

⁵² See Paul Caravia, Virgiliu Constantinescu, and Flori Stănescu *The imprisoned church in Romania, 1944-1989*, Bucharest: National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism, 1999; Cristina Păiușan, Radu Ciuceanu, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română sub regimul comunist*, (The Romanian Orthodox Church under the Communist Regime), (Bucharest: Institutul National pentru studiul totalitarismului, 2001).

effort of constant reinvention of the wheel. Monopole over one archive or another can situate the historian or even the dilettante in a position of superiority. What is lacking though in the document analysis is ... the analysis itself. There is no source criticism, little questioning of the document, there is no distancing from it and even less verification of the “truth” of it.

Few historians have managed to professionally look into this subject. Among those who succeeded is Cristian Vasile in the book *Between Vatican and Kremlin*.⁵³ A history of the Greek Catholic Church in communist Romania this book is important for several reasons. First it proposes a question and a hypothesis. Then this hypothesis is tested comparatively on the situation of the Greek Catholic Churches in the communist East Central Europe. Thirdly it involves thorough archival research, oral interviews and a vast secondary literature. And fourthly, it involved the author personally. The book speaks of the repeated efforts made by the Greek Catholic Church to avoid its complete disappearance during communism, opposing the regime and the Romanian Orthodox Church, fighting from the underground against the forced unification with the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Characterised by an attachment to documents the historiography on the church state relations in communist Romania is devoid of analysis and interpretations. The few exceptions that indeed make the transition for being merely commentaries of documents belong again to Cristian Vasile⁵⁴ and to professor Ovidiu Bozgan with his

⁵³ Cristian Vasile, *Între Vatican si Kremlin, Biserica Greco-Catolică în timpul regimului comunist* (Between Vatican and Kremlin, The Greek Catholic Church during the Communist Regime), (Bucharest: Curtea Veche Publishing House, 2003).

⁵⁴ Cristian Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română în primul deceniu comunist*, (The Romanian Orthodox Church in the first communist decade), (Bucharest: Curtea Veche Publishing House, 2005).

studies of the relations with the Vatican of the Romanian state.⁵⁵ Several studies surfaced abroad belonging to Lucian Leuştean integrating the history of the Romanian Orthodox Church⁵⁶ into a larger historiographical and theoretical framework and offering an overview of the church state relations in communist Romania.

Even fewer projects are dedicated to the post communist situation of the religious denominations and the influences their recent pasts had upon their functioning. One such endeavour is of the two professors Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu, a book on the state and church relationship in post communist Romania.⁵⁷ Faithful to the idea that the way this relationship is constructed in post-communism relates extensively to the recent pasts the authors placed it in a rich historical context and traced contemporary positions of the church hierarchy to specific historical insights.

The book discusses next the influence of the remains of the communist past on the Romanian Orthodox Church after 1989. It is probably one of the most personal essays in the book. The author becomes an authority, at times a moral one,⁵⁸ offers judgements and questions the behaviour of the institution of the church. We find how

⁵⁵ Ovidiu Bozgan, *Romania versus Vatican, Persecuția Bisericii Catolice din România comunistă în lumina documentelor diplomatice franceze* Bucharest: Editura Sylvi, 2000; *Cronica unui eșec previzibil. România și Sfântul Scaun în epoca pontificatului lui Paul al VI-lea*, (București: Curtea Veche, 2005)

⁵⁶ See for instance Lucian Leuştean, *Orthodoxy and the Cold War: Religion And Political Power In Romania, 1947-65*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); “Constructing communism in the Romanian People’s Republic. Orthodoxy and State, 1948-49”, in *Europe-Asia Studies*, 59:2, pp. 303-329; “There’s no longer spring in Romania, it is all propaganda: Orthodoxy and sovietisation, 1950-52”, in *Religion, State and Society*, 35:1, pp. 43-68; “The Political Control of Orthodoxy in the Construction of the Romanian State, 1859 – 1918”, in *European History Quarterly*, 2007, 37, pp. 61-80.

⁵⁷ Lavinia Stan, Lucian Turcescu, *Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Romania*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁵⁸ For instance when talking about the former Patriarch Teoctist’s faults during the communist regime the two authors mention that “Rather, the patriarch seems guilty not for what he did but for what he failed to do. This is not necessarily reflected in the Securitate archival documents and is not punishable by the Romanian legislation in force today.” Stan, Turcescu, 2007, p. 73.

the Romanian Orthodox Church tried to first control the information that was brought to the public by the state institutions set up to research and hold the archives of the *Securitate* and then to publicly justify their actions when the information about collaboration surfaced. This type of behaviour, by no means singular or particular to the Orthodox Church extended a grey area of blackmails and negotiations both inside the institution of the church and external to it well captured by the two authors.⁵⁹ The focus is on the Romanian Orthodox Church disregarding other religious denominations that behave similarly (the Transylvanian Protestants). Some of the positions that the Romanian Orthodox Church supported regarding the opening of the *Securitate* files were shared by the Roman Catholic Church in Romania and other denominations.⁶⁰ By comparing the various attitudes towards the recent past of the religious denominations in Romania the authors could have gone beyond the *exceptionalism* that characterises their interpretation.

The book had a cold reception in Romania where several articles and reviews challenged it in several points. While the book could have used from a comparative framework that would have taken the subject out of exceptionalism the negative reception constitutes a trend, most of the research projects and books on the subject *benefiting* from similar reviews. The subject is regarded as controversial and is prone to provoke intense debates.

Yet the importance of this subject was acknowledged by the vast historiographical material developed in the West on this particular topic – the Church and State during

⁵⁹ Stan, Turcescu, 2007, pp. 85-88.

⁶⁰ The two authors remark briefly, in the end of the chapter, the commonalities with the behaviour of the members of religious minorities for instance Stan, Turcescu, 2007, p. 89.

communism. An analysis of the Church life during the communist regime is multifaceted. Some researchers used a comparative approach to address the problem of religion in the countries of the Eastern European bloc. This attempt has its shortcomings since South Eastern and Central European communist countries possess a diversity of religions and each country dealt with the problem of religion in its specific ways.⁶¹ The historiography developed during the communist period when Western researchers had little or no direct access to material has a particular tendency to resemble fact sheets. In a few pages, the researcher attempts to offer a complete overview of the situation of religious denominations in one country during the communist period, therefore reducing the research to a number of dates, names and figures with little interpretation given.⁶² Moreover, the information rests at a general level due to the lack of research material.

Other researchers, especially after 1989 when material became more available, presented case-studies of one religious denomination in its encounters with the communist state, or the situation of religion in one particular country of the Eastern communist bloc.⁶³ Olivier Gillet's contribution to the study of church state relations in Romania is a case in point. He was interested in how the Romanian Orthodox Church was able to survive under the communist regime and, if this survival was the result of a church-state compromise, how did the church explain and motivate this accord with

⁶¹ Pedro Ramet's attempt to create such an overall picture of religion and communism in South Eastern and Central Europe and the various ways in which these countries and religious denominations have settled the religious issue but rather than comparatively, the book presents each country with its own history of the relationship between Church and communist State, see Pedro Ramet, *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989).

⁶² See Janice Broun, Grazyna Sikorska, *Conscience and captivity: Discretion and valour: religious conditions in Russia and Eastern Europe*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).

⁶³ See Gillet, 1997; Sabrina Ramet, "Kirke og stat i Romania før og etter 1989" (Church and State in Romania before and after 1989), in *Nordisk Ostforum*, Issue 3, 2003.

the communist state. The shortcomings of the book, acknowledged by the author, arise from the nature of the sources he employed. Gillet used editorials from the religious journals published by the Romanian Orthodox Church in the period to round up the church's ideology during the communist regime. His critics argued that using the editorials from state-controlled and censored religious journals to bring forth the discourse of the church and militate for a specific tradition of subservience to the secular power of the Orthodox Church when arguing for a state – church compromise was discarded as method.⁶⁴ Though more systematic and inclined to use theory to explain the state of religion in totalitarian regimes, these studies suffer from a similar lack of archival material. This type of research usually uses communist period information as an introduction to discussing the post 1989 religious situation in Romania.

One seminal theoretical approach on this issue is that Pedro Ramet enveloped in his book *Cross and Commissar: the Politics of Religion in Eastern Europe and the USSR*. This book highlighted several of the approaches to the study of church–state interrelations during communism. Pedro Ramet, an advocate of history as a social science,⁶⁵ strives to apply theory and labels to the corpus of historical research on the subject. Taking into consideration several layers of how the subject can be studied, country-by-country or by studying separate religions in the area and their particular interactions with the communist bloc, Ramet creates a hierarchy of methods and theories applicable to the study of church-state relations from simple hypothesis lower

⁶⁴ Gillet, 1997.

⁶⁵ Pedro Ramet, 1987, p. 177.

range theory to what he calls geneticism-monism.⁶⁶ Ramet asks whether there is a theological substratum to the interaction between church and state and what is the relationship between nationalism and religion and sets these two questions in a theoretical framework, attempting to find paradigms in the communist bloc. I have selected these particular questions from a wider range developed by Ramet on the structural, procedural, legal, and cultural interactions between church and state since they seemed to fit the pattern of the relationship between the Romanian state and the religious denominations.

The methodological approaches to the study of the history of the Romanian Orthodox church during communism range from anthropological studies⁶⁷ to rather positivist enterprises that treat the subject chronologically and focus on events.⁶⁸ Such a tendency can be noted also in comparative studies on the Church in communist countries undertaken especially before 1989 by Western researchers.⁶⁹ This research focused on the history of the institution of the church in its encounters with the local and central state administration. Rather than giving a chronological account it focuses on the positions taken towards the state by the Church's central leadership, by the local Orthodox community, or by Church factions as the group that was associated by the Ministry for Religious Denominations.

⁶⁶ Geneticism-monism refers to the attempt of explaining certain attitudes of the Church in its relation with the communist state by going back in history to early currents in the Christian Church. It can be labeled as a teleological explanation, see Pedro Ramet, 1987, p. 179.

⁶⁷ See Katherine Verdery, *The Political Life of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 55-94.

⁶⁸ See Ovidiu Bozgan, 2000.

⁶⁹ See the chapters dedicated to Romania in the 3 volumes *Christianity under Stress* edited by Pedro Ramet. Also see Kurt Hutten, *Iron Curtain Christians The Church in Communist Countries Today*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1967), pp. 385-399.

I.5 Conceptual base

The research uses key concepts like modernisation, secularisation/ enforced secularisation, national religion/ ethnical religious affiliations, privatization, de-privatization of institutional religion, centralization – de-centralization, center/ local, compromise or association to highlight and characterize the relationship between the church and the state and between the local and central positions to the conflict.

I looked at the secularization of the discourse of the Romanian Orthodox Church when arguing its availability and suitability for becoming a *national church*. The discourse involved historical arguments, linguistic one, ones related to foreign policy. However religious arguments are scarce in the discourse of the church building up its relationship with the state. Religion was disregarded in the argumentation developed by the church elite. I argue that the understanding of religion is closer to that of civil and secular religion as defined by Emilio Gentile, that nation as a concept was sacralised and used to define adherence to a belief.

Understanding secularization as relating to the diminution in the social significance of religion⁷⁰ a step forward from Marcel Gauchet's *sortie de la religion* - the exit of religion from a world that was defined by religion⁷¹ I use the concept as enforced or imposed secularization. The measurements taken by the Ministry for Religious Denomination related to church attendance, participation to the life of the church cannot speak accurately for a loss in significance of religion for the believer. The

⁷⁰ Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 149.

⁷¹ Marcel Gauchet, *La religion dans la démocratie, Parcours de la laïcité*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), p. 11-17.

“unchurching” of the Romanian society can be the result of force and perceived punishment for the potential church goer as much as a result of education, state policies, urbanization. A separation between state and church is difficult to argue when the Romanian Orthodox Church functions at times as a department of the state.

The research makes use of the concepts center/local, centralization and decentralization in the way they were described by Arfon Reese⁷² to account for the top down enforcement of policies and regulation and the “centrifugal forces that were pulling power away from the centre” in an effort to renegotiate the decisions from the centre – be it a religious centre (the Patriarchate or the hierarchical centres in Romania) or a political centre like the ministry for religious denominations.

Ethnic/ national religion as I stated earlier is a mark of the Orthodox Church. When employing the term “national” church, I am not referring only to the same ethnic background the believers of a specific denomination share but also to the contributions that a church has in preserving the cultural, historical, and political traditions of their believers. With two exceptions the spiritual patronage of the churches in Transylvania was directed towards specific nationalities. The Unitarian Church administered Hungarian believers, as did the Reformed and the Evangelical Synod Presbyterian Churches. The Evangelical Augustan Confession Church (Lutheran) administered the German believers.⁷³

⁷² Arfon Reese Ed., *Centre – local relations in the Stalinist state, 1928 - 1941*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 1-8.

⁷³ With regard to the two Evangelical confessions the documents found in the Archives of the Department for Religious Denominations noticed that the two Churches are different only in the language they practice their confession in (Hungarian or German). Still these two Churches in Transylvania have a separate

In describing the relationship between state and church during the communist regime I use the terms compromise and association. The term compromise was applied to the relationship between state and church in communist Romania first by Olivier Gillet⁷⁴ and later was adopted by other researchers⁷⁵ with the meaning of accommodation – the accommodation of the church to the Party requirements in order to ensure its survival. In using this term I argue the compromise went both ways. While agreeing that the church accommodated Party demands and Ministry policies I also state that the Party accommodated the church. Pedro Ramet called this co-option and I explained earlier what he understands by it. I call it association, understanding the institution of the church also as an autonomous partner for negotiation.

The research uses asymmetrical comparison⁷⁶ comparing the Romanian case study with neighboring cases (Russian, Polish) in an effort of surmounting the perils of exceptionalism that result from the overemphasis on the singularity of the research case study but also to highlight several common features. The comparison is extended to East Central Europe the state church relationship with regards to the involvement of religion in everyday life during communism.

hierarchy and administration. They are also structured differently and in the 1960's they even split their educational centres.

⁷⁴ Olivier Gillet, 1996.

⁷⁵ See Cristian Vasile, 2005.

⁷⁶ See Jurgen Kocka, "Asymmetrical Historical Comparison: the Case of the German *Sonderweg*." *History and Theory*, Vol. 38, Issue 1, (February 1999), pp. 40 – 50.

CHAPTER II

Remnants of the past, problems of the present - a historical overview

The design of the church state relationship during the communist period was based on key elements that characterized this relationship in the 19th and early 20th century. The creation of the modern Romanian state in the mid 1800s brought forth the first *redefinition* of the relationship between the state and Orthodox Church. From then on several imported, adopted and adapted models of church state relationship were imposed from above onto the Church. They were fought by the church, were addressed, were accepted and adapted. The mid 19th century reassessment of the church state relationship brought forth by the advent of the national state and by the ideas of the French Revolution led to the association by the state of the Orthodox Church in the process of nation building, role that it preserved until the Second World War when the communist state kept this association using the church as transmission belt, conveying the message of the party to the masses.

This chapter looks briefly onto the previous status in the relations between the state and the Orthodox Church adhering to the hypotheses brought forth by Olivier Gillet, who argued for continuity in the way in which this relationship was constructed during communism. It continues with underlining the options the new regime had when designing the church state relationship and the legal framework developed in the early years of the communist period.

I argue that the point of departure in discussing church state relationship in Romania is mid 19th century. It is but the Orthodox historians that start discussing this relationship

from the early Roman days arguing for a millennia old continuity in the relationship between Orthodoxy and the Romanian people¹ and use as second chronological marker/ break the year 1885 when the Romanian Orthodox Church separated from the Patriarchate in Constantinople,² thus reducing the role played by the 1848 generation of the revolution and especially the role played by Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1859-1866) in defining the role of the church in the new modern Romanian state.

The secular historiography agrees in making the model of church state relationship brought forth by Prince Cuza the first redefinition of the position of the church in the new state a position that remained unchallenged and was enforced in the new Kingdom at the end of the 19th century after obtaining the autocephaly. Also while 1848 revolution stands as one marker in the redefinition of state church relations in the Old Kingdom the influence that the Transylvanian model of church state relationship had upon its design is highly significant and thus will be introduced into the discussion. A later argument that the biography of the policy makers inside the Ministry for Religious Denominations had had an impact on the regulation imposed on religious life during communism is served from this look on the specificity of the Transylvanian case. A large percentage of these specialists were Transylvanian, belonged to the Transylvanian Orthodox Archbishopric or were educated in the

¹ This type of argument was defined by the church historians in the period of national communism but bares resemblance with the thesis supported by the interwar church historians that argues for an ontological link between Orthodoxy and the Romanian people. See Ionuţ Biliuţă, 'Nichifor Crainic and "Gîndirea". Nationalism and Ortodoxism in Interwar Romania' (I). in *Historical yearbook* Romanian Academy "Nicolae Iorga" History Institute, Volume IV (2007), pp. 86-96.

² See the latest general history of the Romanian Orthodox Church whose volume on the modern period starts in 1885, Alexandru Moraru, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română între anii 1885-2000. Biserică, Naţiune. Cultură*, (The Romanian Orthodox Church between 1885-2000. Church, Nation, Culture). Vol. III/1, 2, (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2006).

theological school of Sibiu and, familiar to the characteristics of the state church relationship in Transylvania this influencing the design of the relationship.

II. 1 From the 1848 revolutionary to the *associationist* model of state church relationship

Secularization following the French model that the 1848 revolutionary elite favoured in designing the relationship between the new modern Romanian state and the Orthodox Church failed. It was quantified in an administrative and canonical unification of the two separate Metropolitan Sees of Jassy and Bucharest followed by a direct involvement of the secular ruler in the selection and election of hierarchs, a secularization of land estates and a school reform inside the theological learning system,³ endorsing the Romanian as liturgical language and changing from the Cyrillic to the Latin script⁴ created the premise of a cooption and control of the church by the state. The separation of the state from the church was never carried through. The state maintained a notable presence in the activity of the church. The new reform led to the co-option of the Orthodox Church defined by Pedro Ramet as the tendency of the government to view the church as an agency of the state.⁵

The state made attempts to centralize the Orthodox Church, to strengthen the authority of the hierarchy, downplay the role of the monasteries and via the secularization of the land estates economically control the Church. The reform of the Church, as researcher Lucian Leuştean noted, was limited only to those characteristics that were in the

³ Alexandru Moraru, 2006, p. 16.

⁴ Lavinia Stan, Lucian Turcescu, *Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Romania*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 19.

⁵ Pedro Ramet, ed. *Eastern Christianity And Politics in the Twentieth Century*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988), p. 11.

“state’s political interest.”⁶ The control was exercised via a Ministry for Religious Denominations. These were the first steps to associate Orthodoxy in the process of constructing the nation under the direct control of the state. Stripped of its economic independence the Orthodox Church was offered a primary role as identity marker of the Romanian people.

This process was continued by Prince Karl of Hohenzollern Sigmaringen, the future king of Romania. His conversion to Orthodoxy “validated the Orthodox Church as a legitimizing factor for [future] political leaders”⁷ Obtaining the autocephaly from the Patriarchate of Constantinople at the end of 19th century created a clearer link between nation and religion and associated the Orthodox Church to the state.

The political activity of the Romanian churches in Transylvania, both the Greek Catholic and the Orthodox was far more visible than the one carried on by the Orthodox Church in Wallachia and Moldavia and later in the unified Romanian Principalities. The Romanian political institutions were missing in Transylvania and the churches took up this role. Their engagement, more in the case of the Greek Catholic Church than in the Orthodox, in the petitionary activity for social, cultural, religious, economic and political rights and the birth from its midst of an involved elite have placed the two religious institutions in the forefront of the national struggle of the Transylvanian Romanians in the end of the 18th century. With the advent of a new generation of intellectuals attracted by the liberal ideas and rationalism the role of the Romanian churches in Transylvania was redefined. They kept for the church a

⁶ Lucian Leuştean, *Orthodoxy and the Cold War: Religion And Political Power In Romania, 1947-65*, (London:Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 27.

⁷ Stan,Turcescu, 2009, p. 20.

nation building role but also thought of transforming it into an instrument of social change. To achieve this goal they militated for reforms that would allow a more present involvement of the laymen in the leadership of the church.⁸

After the First World War, Romania was a new entity that doubled its territory and its population adding several provinces at the expense of neighbouring countries with the help of the Western allies. However between artificial creation of a country and it's functioning as a coherent body there was an important break that created challenging problems to the new national elites. It was not only the increase in cultural diversity that posed a problem (minorities went from 8 to 28%, religious monopole of the Orthodox Church was lost to a larger pallet of religious denominations) but also the "Romanian" majority was not used to function as a united body. The various new provinces came with their own problems and agendas to the mother country. From the infrastructure to the political culture and even economic models everything was distinct and chaotic.

Moreover, the interwar period was not exactly conducive of leniency towards minorities: organicisms of all sorts, eventually developing into full-blown isolationistic corporatisms and violent fascisms, seemed to be the only alternative to the already brutal political philosophy of the nation-state. The latter, as we have come to realize during the twentieth century, can only function as a producer and manager of homogeneous populations, and sooner or later turns against any form of local identity, be it a regional variant of the normative majority identity or a minority identity; it took long decades for checks and balances to be devised for the taming of the modern nation-state, and their implementation is still contested today.⁹

Two models were put forward by the post war generations in order to ensure the transformation of until then segregated entities into a cohesive body. A modern

⁸ See Keith Hitchins, *Romanians 1774-1886*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 198 – 231.

⁹ See Sorin Antohi, "Romania and the Balkans From geo-cultural bovarism to ethnic ontology", *Tr@nsit online*, Nr. 21/2002, Internet accessed June 1st, 2007.

Romania, young and ready to be shaped into an ideal country was proposed on the one hand by a generation that looked toward the West and mediated the import of institutions, cultural values, mores and behaviours. These promoters of “Westernization” argued for the European model that would extract Romania from the Balkan and Byzantine mores and from the traps of its geographical position and would place it in the vicinity of “civilization”. Promoted by the liberal elite of the old kingdom this type of solution was contested and opposed by a new generation that offered a different input for the development of Romania into a nation state.

The second model comes in response to “Westernization.” Its success was demonstrated in its preservation throughout the interwar period, its influence for the policies of the state during the Second World War, its resurgence in the 1960s in the form of national communism and even in its resurgence in the public discourse of post communist Romania. *Autochthonism* proposed as solution to the difficulties of developing into a nation state had its bases in the linguistic, ethnologic, cultural and religious traditions shared by the Romanian majority.¹⁰ The nation was sanctified, the people became chosen and the young and energetic elites promised a country that would bring the kingdom of heaven on earth. The fascist credo of the legionary movement promised a country as the sun in the sky under the watch of God. Exchanging the French model of citizenship for the German model of nation state, this discourse of the elite involved and attracted the Romanian Orthodox Church that found itself fulfilling its traditional role: that of identity making, keeper of the cohesion of the community, in short the Church became national.

¹⁰ Hitchins, Keith, *Rumania 1866–1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Romanian translation (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1994), chapter 7 *Marea dezbatere*, (The Great Debate).

The Romanian Orthodox Church was a young institution in the form it had in the 1930s. It was established as a Patriarchate in 1925 half a century after receiving its autocephaly. It grew in size after the First World War into one of the most powerful Orthodox Churches in the East Central Europe by its unification with the Orthodox communities from Transylvania, Bessarabia and Bukovina. As with the new country, there were different factions inside the Church, each Bishopric came with an agenda of its own, context and history dependant. The state church relations needed to be refined and defined. The Orthodox Church had competitors on the new religious and national market, religious denominations other than the Orthodox were central to the national project. The Greek Catholic Church was also the only state recognized competitor for the position of national church with the Orthodox Church. Thus the nationalist discourse developed in the Old Kingdom that connected nation with religion and linked Romanian with Orthodox and vice-versa was extremely successful within the hierarchical ranks of the Transylvanian Orthodox Church.

The followers of autochthonism and its ideological development members in the Iron Guard placed the Orthodox belief and tradition at the core of the definition of the soul of the nation. This was immediately taken up by the Orthodox priesthood that adhered in masses to the legionary movement in the mid 1930s. Estimates of percentages of priests involved directly in the movement go from 20 to 50%, yet the sympathisers were more in numbers.¹¹ The doctrine of renewal, of creating the “new man” that would act as the *Saviour* of the *Nation*, a nation regenerated connected with and defending the Christian (Orthodox) ideals that was promoted by the leaders and masterminds of the legionary movement was extremely appealing to the ordinary

¹¹ See Bănică, Mirel. *Biserica Ortodoxă Română, Stat si Societate în anii '30*, (The Romanian Orthodox Church. State and Society in the 1930s), (Jassy: Polirom, 2007), pp. 99-109.

Orthodox priest. Romanian priesthood, especially in Transylvania, was deeply involved in educating the masses it spiritually administered, thus this entire movement promoting the same ideals that were until that moment left to the countryside priests and teachers came as a natural ally.

The high hierarchy often discouraged¹² these alliances with the extreme legionary discourse and disassociated itself from its extremist actions, yet there was a strong reason behind the support for the fascist movement. In the 19 century the Romanian Orthodox Church had been places under the political influence of liberal elite that disregarded its functions in society, considered it backward and traditional. The liberal ideal was a modernized and secularised Romania where religion would be relegated to the family and privatized. Economically dependent on the state since the 19 century when its estates were secularised the Church witnessed in the interwar period a constant involvement of the political elite in its functioning and a decrease in its public role. Therefore an ideology and a movement that brought the Orthodox doctrine in centre stage and offered a re-entry in the political life of the nation for its clergy was successful in attracting the Orthodox clergy it addressed. An alliance, though never admitted at the hierarchical levels of the Romanian Orthodox Church, was natural.

The reform remained though at the level of discourse. Administrative reform in terms of centralization and de fractionalization, of increasing the authority of the church central hierarchy, the unification of the learning system, a unification of the

¹² Mirel Bănică, 2007.

administration of the Church were not achieved though attempted by a theological elite closely connected to the Romanian fascist movement was left on paper.

II. 2. The Church and the Communist Regime

The relationship between the state and religious denominations in Romania initially entailed three types of solution to the problem of religion and the religious denominations. The same behavioral patterns and types of solutions appeared in the Soviet Union in the process of forming the relationship between the state and the Church. Although, in theory, religion, as part of the superstructure, was supposed to wither away with the advent of socialism, in practice, the Soviet regime never had the 'patience' to test this Marxist hypothesis, and adopted extreme measures to advance the development of atheist society. The duality of the policies against religious denominations, in the phase of legal regulation,¹³ as well as in the phase of the forceful imposition of hierarchical allegiances, was characteristic to the Romanian case as well as to the Soviet one.

One document dealing with the problem of monastic life in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches exemplifies the pragmatism of the state and enhances our understanding of the situation. This document, drafted between late 1947 and early 1948, reveals the activity of the state and summarized its possibilities in confronting the spread of religion in its institutional form. According to the specialist who drew up this policy guideline, the state had three options in dealing with religion: non-interventionism, the complete banning of religious activities and religious denominations, and

¹³ Jane Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church A Contemporary History*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 253-256.

interventionism. The first option meant the toleration of the church's activity 'hoping that in time and with the country's transition to socialism which would bring about a raising of the cultural level of the masses, its [the Church's] power will weaken'.¹⁴ The specialist never considered this option seriously. He compared this option to 'the peaceful integration of the bourgeoisie into socialism', and claimed that the state would encounter 'surprises' if it left the denominations uncontrolled before socialism had succeed in disposing of them naturally. Nevertheless, the presences of such an option in a policy document formulated by a state representative reveals the complexity of the situation in which the new regime found itself. The government always considered the Soviet example, but remained realist at the same time, and realized that the transition to 'socialism' would not come naturally and the state would have to intervene.

The second option was also discarded. It was described in the document as the ideal solution, although the word 'ideal' was eventually cut from the draft.¹⁵ The implementation of the proposal, however, would have been a strategic mistake that the new regime could not afford to make. The banning of the religious denominations would have meant opening Pandora's Box, and the extending the scope of the 'fight' from the denominations themselves to the mass of the population.¹⁶ The document envisaged the church as a distinct entity, separated from the mass of believers. The double meaning of 'church' should be noted here. It was described as a hierarchical and centralized

¹⁴ Departamentul Culte, *Direcția de Studii: Monahismul ortodox în paralelă cu cel catolic în țara noastră*, (The Orthodox versus the Catholic monastic life in our country) file number 85, volume 11, 1948, p. 2, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁶ The specialist considered the example of the Greek Catholic Church while drafting the proposal. Some of the documents testify to the attempt of the state to ban the Greek Catholic Church before the 'unification' of the Greek Catholics with the Orthodox Church. Departamentul Culte, *Direcția de Studii: Referat privind unirea greco-catolicilor cu biserica ortodoxă română*, (Study on the unification of the Greek Catholics with the Romanian Orthodox Church) file number 80, volume 10, 1948, p. 141, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania

institution, and, at the same time, as a diffuse organization which could reach the most remote corners of the country.

Since religious organizations live and are powerful because of the adherence of the masses, any radical measures directed against them would raise the dissatisfaction of the masses, dissatisfaction that would be used to trouble the waters, for enemy actions of a political type.¹⁷

This measure would have had more negative effects for the state than the granting of permission for the denominations to function.

What was left was the last solution: the limitation of the power of religion by intervening in religious activity at three different levels: organizational, economic and ideological. This solution meant infiltrating the religious denominations, *i.e.*, suffocating them with rules and regulations. The denominations should be subordinated to the state from an economic point of view, and any opposition should be brutally suppressed. This could be accomplished at a central level, leaving ‘the masses’ aside. Through legislative measures, the state gradually limited the number of priests and pastors.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the state would provide the salaries for a limited number of personnel, forcing the denominations, which were no longer self-sufficient, to go to extreme lengths to preserve the number of clerics. Two-thirds of the priest in the Orthodox Church received a salary from the state in 1948. Instead of reducing the number of priests, the church negotiated with the regime to keep the priests and fund them from the parish budget. This system was preserved throughout the communist period.¹⁹ All these measures were protected by regulations

¹⁷ Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii: *Monahismul ortodox in paralelă cu cel catolic in țara noastră*, (The Orthodox versus the Catholic monastic life in our country) file number 85, volume 11, 1948, p. 4, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

¹⁸ One of the first measures that the state implemented decided on the restriction of the number of theology students.

¹⁹ Departamentul Culte, Direcția de Studii: *Extras din decizia nr 22562/1960 cu privire la reîntregirea salariilor preoților si diaconilor* (Excerpt from 22562/1950 decision regarding

that the denominations were obliged to respect. Intervention in the administration of the religious denominations could become coercive whenever the state felt threatened by their activity – as was the case with the Greek Catholics, the monastic life of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches, or the proselytizing activities of neo-Protestant denominations. In most cases, however, this relationship was based on constant compromises from both sides.

To characterize the relationship between the Romanian communist state and the religious denominations in the country, one has to relate to several events in the late 1940's and the beginnings of the 1950's. In the short period between August 1944 and December 1947 the country witnessed a number of changes that ranged from political to cultural. The quasi-pluralist political system was abolished after falsified elections and the Romanian Worker Party spread its authority with the help of Moscow²⁰ and Petru Groza's government. The year 1948 started in a febrile atmosphere: a friendship and collaboration treaty with Russia was signed in February, and the Constitution of the Romanian People's Republic was adopted in April.²¹ "The deconstruction of the liberal democratic institutions of the old regime spread to all the levels: justice, press, education, church, administration, and army."²² Cleansing the cadres from the administrative apparatus, importing Soviet type institutions, issuing of a large number of decrees and laws characterized the situation of 1948 in Romania. In this changing climate, when one notices attempts to subordinate the democratic institution to the

rounding up the priests and deacons' salaries) file number 85, volume 6, 1950, p. 1, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

²⁰ The Soviet Army remained on the Romanian territory until 1958.

²¹ Mihai Bărbulescu et al., *Istoria României* (The History of Romania), (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998) p. 492.

²² Stelian Tănase, *Elite şi societate. Guvernarea Gheorghiu – Dej, 1948-1965* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998) p. 83.

Party and through it to the Soviet Union, the Church was seen as one of the last remaining obstacles by the new regime in imposing the Soviet model.

Confronted with a regime whose ideology stressed atheism as a policy, the religious denominations in Romania found themselves facing two options: collaboration with the regime or its rejection. Faced with these possibilities, the religious denominations in Romania divided into two unequal groups: on the one hand, there were those that accepted a compromise with the regime to ensure their survival, and in some cases the survival of their believers. This group was comprised of religious denominations whose activity was accepted by the Romanian communist state²³ upon their submission of a status of faith.

On the other hand, there was the Roman Catholic Church that *enjoyed* a special position. The awkwardness of their situation came from a preexisting accord between the Romanian State and the Vatican regulating the life of the Roman Catholic Church in Romania. The Concordat with the Vatican was signed by the Romanian State in 1929 and represented for two decades the guidelines upon which the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Romanian state was defined. The communist government noticed the potential destructive role such an accord had in tying a religious denomination inside the country to an outside administrative body and set out to denounce the Concordat. The Romanian State was supported largely by

²³ The group is formed by the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Evangelical Church (Augustan Confession), the Evangelical Church (Synod Presbyterian), the Unitarian Church, the Reformed Church, the Armenian Gregorian Orthodox Church, the Christian Baptist community, Brethren, Pentecostal, the Seventh Day Adventist Church, the Jewish community and the Muslim community.

the Romanian Orthodox Church hierarchy²⁴ that took it upon itself to promote and justify this action in extended research articles in their religious journals. In Romania, the large majority of Roman Catholics that were protected by the Concordat were of Hungarian origin but this act protected the Romanian Greek Catholics that were also under Vatican jurisdiction. Some of the articles denounced the Concordat by stating that it was unjust towards the Romanian Orthodox Church, giving numerous privileges to minority churches.²⁵

Subject to the newly issued Law for religious denominations that stated, each denomination upon recognition by the state had to submit a *status of faith*,²⁶ the Roman Catholic Church attempted to comply by submitting a status. The initial status of faith submitted was in flagrant disaccord with the Law of religious denomination promoted by the state. They still recognized the advent of the Pope over the organization and the administration (spiritual and economical) of the Roman Catholic Church in Romania thus in disagreement with Article 41 of the Law for religious denominations that stipulated: “The jurisdiction of the religious denomination of the

²⁴ It is believed that behind this movement of denunciation of the Concordat were the Orthodox hierarchs from Transylvania that had not ceased to believe that by signing the Concordat in 1929 the Romanian State had placed the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Catholic Church on a position of superiority in regard to the other religious denominations in Romania especially in regard to the Romanian Orthodox Church. For more information on the involvement of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the denunciation of the Concordat see Ovidiu Bozgan, *Romania versus Vatican, Persecutia Bisericii Catolice din Romania comunista in lumina documentelor diplomatice franceze* (Romania versus Vatican The Persecution of the Roman Catholic Church in Communist Romania), (Bucharest: Editura Sylvi, 2000), pp. 22-26.

²⁵ Olivier Gillet, *Religie şi naţionalism Ideologia Bisericii Ortodoxe Române sub regimul comunist* (Religion and Nationalism, The Ideology of the Romanian Orthodox Church under the Communist Regime), (Bucharest: Compania, 2001), p. 24.

²⁶ Decree No 177 Establishing General Regulations for Religious Denominations, Article 14. In order to be recognized, each religious denomination shall submit, through the Department for Religious Denominations (Departamentul Cultelor) for examination and approval, its charter of organization and operations including its organization, management and administration accompanied by a status of faith. *Monitorul Oficial*, Issue 178, Bucharest, (August 4, 1948).

country cannot be extended outside the territory of the Romanian People's Republic and in turn no foreign religious denomination [would] exercise its jurisdiction over members within the Romanian State."²⁷ Thus their status being rejected the Roman Catholic Church's relationship with the State remained unsanctioned by any legal provision and at the total latitude of the state.

The question that arises refers to why the Orthodox and the Protestant Churches chose to submit their status of faith declarations thus submitting to the state's requests issued in the Law for religious denominations? The law proved extremely prejudicial to the religious life of the Romanian believers and to the life of the church as an institution in Romania. It was a law²⁸ that restricted the liberties of the religious denominations forcibly centralizing them and directing all the activities of the religious denomination under the control of a special organized body that closely controlled the religious denominations in their appointments of priests and hierarchical changes. According to this law, the hierarchy was appointed only with the approval of the Presidium of the Grand National Assembly and upon recognition they had to take a special oath²⁹ of allegiance before the Ministry for Religious Denominations (article 21, chapter 2).

The historiography on the subject has various explanations for this compromise between the state and church. The context it is agreed by all to have played a decisive

²⁷ *Monitorul Oficial*, Issue 178, Bucharest, (August 4, 1948).

²⁸ The 1948 Law for religious denomination is, with minor adjustments, still valid today. The State Department for religious denominations in Romania is presently working at a new law for religious denominations to sanction the present situation regarding the religious denominations in Romania.

²⁹ As a servant of God, a man and a citizen, I swear to be faithful to the People and to defend the Romanian People's Republic against enemies, foreign and domestic; I swear to respect and to cause my subordinates to respect the laws of the Romanian People's Republic; I swear that I shall not allow my subordinates to undertake or to take part in, and that myself shall not undertake or take part in any action prejudicial to the public order and integrity of the Romanian People's Republic. So help me God. *Monitorul oficial*, Issue 178, (August 4, 1948).

role. A state paid salary in a situation where the Romanian Orthodox Church has ceased all its patrimonial assets to the state and most of the other religious denominations lost to the state a good part of their material resources meant an economic subordination of the church to the state. This was relevant for all religious denominations recognized by the state. A strict control was exercised through the salary system:

The authorities, through the mediation of the Department for religious denominations that was the administrator of the pay funds for the religious denominations have pressed the Roman Catholics since the beginning of 1949 ... [Marton Aron] answered in February 26 1949 to the religious denominations minister Sanciu Stoian that the sum set for the Roman Catholic Church, the Latin and Armenian denominations was not sufficient but for 25 to 33 % of the active Catholic priests.³⁰

Not only economic pressure was exerted on the religious denominations, but political and moral pressure. The means of the regime to enforce this submission of the religious denominations were varied; imprisonment of the priest hierarchy was only one example. For some religious denominations (especially those responsible for the spiritual administration of specific ethnic group), the compromise with the communist state meant the survival of their group of believers to whom the priest hierarchy exerted not only a spiritual leadership but also a cultural and political one. Most of the religious denominations found themselves in the impossibility to respond to the state in another way than by accepting its conditions. An interesting excerpt from a document that relates the history of the Unitarian Church from Transylvania found in the archives of the Romanian State Secretary for Religious Denominations presents the impossibility to respond to the awkwardness of the situation of the religious institutions under communism in other way than by subtle irony:

³⁰ Ovidiu Bozgan, 2000, p. 30.

For two decades now the life of the Church was set on new bases. The educational task once entrusted to the Church is today entirely fulfilled by the State: the priests are thus more capable to fully focus their energy in directing the spiritual life of their believers.³¹

The religious denominations have tried to explain this state–church relationship at the beginning of the 1950’s in different ways. In the case of the Romanian Orthodox Church a term was employed in explaining their relationship with the State. Going back to the Byzantine tradition in explaining the relationship between the secular power and the religious one, the Romanian Orthodox Church used *caesaro-papism* to justify its actions in relation to the state.³² One of the *theoreticians* of the church-state relationship, the Orthodox theologian, canon law specialist Liviu Stan describes how the secular and religious power should interact:

The Church existing inside the State could not and should not have disregarded the types and forms of State, the realities of State’s life, the fight between old and new in the State’s life. Thus the Church could not connect itself with one particular type of State since the Church could not situate itself on the line of an anachronistic traditionalism in regard to its relationship with the State but instead it had to adapt itself to the particular context of the time.³³

³¹ Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii: *Studiu asupra cultului Unitarian* (Study on the Unitarian Church) file number 71, volume 6, 1964, p. 10 Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

³² In the 1950’s, the religious journals published extensively on this problem, explaining not only the terminology but also the difference in approach between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church with regards to the matter of caesaro-papism. See for instance Ion Coman, “Organizarea sinodală a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române în comparație cu cezaro-papismul catolic” (The synod type of organization of the Romanian Orthodox Church in comparison with the Roman Catholic caesaropapism), *Studii Teologice* (Theological Studies), Issue 1-2, (January-February 1950): pp. 40-64; Vasile Grecu, “Bizanțul și catolicismul în trecutul nostru îndepărtat” (The Byzantium and the Catholicism in our distant past), *Studii Teologice* (Theological Studies), Issue 9-10, (November-December 1950): pp. 187-196; Teodor M. Popescu, “Cezaro-papismul de ieri și de azi” (Caesaro-papism – yesterday and today), *Ortodoxia* (Orthodoxy), Issue 4, (October – December 1951): pp. 253-267.

³³ Liviu Stan, “Relațiile dintre Biserică și Stat – studiu istorico – juridic” (The relationship between Church and State – a historical and juridical study), *Ortodoxia* (Orthodoxy), Issue 3-4, (July – December 1952): p. 363.

This relationship, according to Liviu Stan, refers to the Church in the situation of autocephaly. It is obvious for the writer that in the case of the Catholic Church for instance such a relationship with the State is difficult, if not impossible, since the Catholics respond to a central organization outside the nation state thus superseding state borders. Liviu Stan goes on to argue that the Church and the State should collaborate since they serve the same community of people and both strive for its well-being either spiritually or materially. Except for its status of faith and its theological dogmas that cannot be changed the Orthodox Church was, in the writings of the hierarchy, in the position of adapting itself to the conditions present at that moment in the country.³⁴

In this theological background the writings of Patriarch Justinian supporting collaboration between church and state involving the church in the social life of the country by advocating to the community of priests to comply with the new realities existing inside the country come natural. The writings of Patriarch Justinian are comprised in ten volumes released during the two decades since 1948. *The Social Apostolic Work (Apostolatul Social)* comprised the official line of church teachings for educating the priesthood. The compromise and the alliance with the state set on the background of caesaro-papism and Byzantium traditions copied the Soviet model and represented the ensemble of the discourse of submission of the Romanian Orthodox Church to the Communist State.³⁵

Evidently the *caesaro-papism* formula suited the Church's historiography in explaining and justifying an act that became prejudicial in the post communist period.

³⁴ Stan, 1952, p. 362.

³⁵ Gillet, 2001, p. 37.

Yet it was not just the Church historiography that attempted to explain the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the Communist State by employing this term. An entire body of research³⁶ accentuated the importance of tradition and of the historical context on influencing the decisions of the Orthodox Church in relating to the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. But the political context did play tremendous role in the design of the state church relationship.

The lack of charismatic leadership and communist elites capable to impose on a traditional society, rural in its majority and centred around the Church a radical communist transformation is, according to Stelian Tănase,³⁷ one of the reasons the state adopted such a conciliatory attitude towards the Orthodox Church. Similar is the interpretation of the British historian Dennis Deletant. He states:

The Romanian Communist Party did not follow *ad litteram* the soviet solution. Both the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Greek Catholic or Uniate Church from Transylvania had an essential role in preserving the feeling of cohesion and national identity along 18th and 19th century, both benefiting of the fidelity of millions of Romanians. If these churches could have been manipulated to serve the goals of the regime there was no point in their being destroyed.³⁸

In Olivier Gillet opinion, the Romanian State subordinated and used the Orthodox Church that enjoyed a leading role in Romanian society, going in line with both interpretations stated above. The Churches were used as an intermediary between the

³⁶ See for instance Rene Remond, *Religion and Society in Modern Europe*, (Malden: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1999); Herve Hasquin, “La liberte religieuse en regime communiste,” *Eglise et societe d’aujourd’hui* (Brussels: Ed. de l’ Universite de Bruxelles, 1986).

³⁷ Tănase, 1998, p. 84.

³⁸ Bărbulescu et al., 1998, p. 450.

state institutions and the population. This also provided continuity with the past and proof of stability and normality.

The policy of the Romanian state towards the religious denominations was shaped by each denomination's characteristics. In the case of the Romanian Orthodox Church, the policy considered two characteristics of this church in Romania. It is obvious that the size of the church presented an important factor in the way it was treated by the State. As the spiritual administrator of the majority of the population, the Romanian Orthodox Church has propelled itself with the help of the state into an informal leader of the religious denominations in the country. Organizers of conferences that brought together all the recognized religious denominations for the first time in the history of the country,³⁹ the Romanian Orthodox Church had the initiative in many of the ecumenical and party required activities. For the 1950's, there were the peace conferences that they organized following the Moscow pattern. It was a give and take activity between the Communist State and the Orthodox Church as documents from the period reveal:

In the new Constitution, our Orthodox Church enjoys total freedom. The support our socialist state offers our Orthodox Church is complete: paying the salaries and even increasing them for our clerical employees, restoring the Churches and guaranteeing complete freedom in practicing our religious practices. From this comes the duty to be in the front lines of fighting for peace ... for all our priests.⁴⁰

³⁹ In the discourse of the Romanian Orthodox Church the conferences in 1948 and 1952 organized by the Department of Religious Denominations and the Orthodox Church the stress is placed on the novelty of such an enterprise in the history of the relations between religious denominations in Romania.

⁴⁰ *Actele adunărilor eparhiale* (Acts from Bishoprics yearly meetings) Fond Administratie II 23/ 1965, File number 55, 1965, p. 20, Arhiva Administrației Patriarhale (The Patriarchal Administration Archives) Bucharest, Romania.

This “total freedom” that the article discusses came at a price and although in the 1960's the strain of the system on the religious denomination was less noticeable it still influenced the religious life in the country. What one could call liberalization of the system was most probably the Church's way of learning how to deal with demands, the routinization of a relationship, and how to produce a speech that would prove satisfactory to the party state. Paying lip service⁴¹ to the state and especially to the Department for Religious Denominations and avoiding conflict situations was a way of coping with the new regime. Learning the practices was an important step in the attaining a status quo in the relationship between the state and the religious denominations. The rules and regulations referred to all the aspects in the life of the denomination, from sending letters⁴² and contacting a different denomination to hiring priests and organizing conferences. At the same time, the control of the state maintained the organizational formulas of the 1950's. The Ministry for Religious Denominations managed to create a wide network of informers by the end of the

⁴¹ From a document submitted by the Sibiu Archbishopric I have extracted the parts which provide the small talk, the lip service that almost all official documents had meant, in most cases, for the Department's eyes: “We are extremely happy that in all our Church activities we were and are supported with wide understanding by the Honorable Department of Religious Denominations led with wisdom and care by professor Dumitru Dogaru Secretary General – thing for which we bring him our outmost appreciation and we ask him to trust in the potential of our Church and our believers to be there in the great causes of our dear country...” *Actele adunărilor eparhiale* (Acts from Bishoprics yearly meetings) Fond Administratie II 23/ 1965, File number 55, 1965, p. 20, Arhiva Administrației Patriarhale, Bucharest, Romania.

⁴² In the archives of the Romanian Patriarchy and the Secretary of State for culture, it is noticeable the idiocy of the requests, rules and regulations to which the denominations were subject. Responding to a letter from abroad meant sending the original letter with the translation and the response of the Department for religious denominations. These were returned to the denomination with corrections. After correcting the letter it reached back the Department and was send by them to the respective address. This process was time consuming and produced frustration but was preserved like most of the regulations until the end of the regime. *Actele adunărilor eparhiale* (Acts from Bishoprics yearly meetings) Fond Administrație II 23/ 1965, File number 55, 1965, p. 20, Arhiva Administrației Patriarhale, Bucharest, Romania.

1950's that have infiltrated and controlled the religious life in the country. Talking⁴³ with several churchmen that remembered the situation in the 1970's and 1980's, the situation did not change. From the countryside priest to the Bishop the churchmen felt the presence of the state⁴⁴ in most of their activities.

II. 3. Conclusion

The Orthodox Church was co-opted in the mid 19th century by the new Romanian State in its endeavour to modernize the society. This association to the national state is typical for the Orthodox Church in the Balkans and brought along significant changes for the Church. The church was gradually stripped of its political functions and left with ceremonial roles that served to legitimate the state. The state had a strong influence over the hierarchical appointments, formation of clergy, and organization of the religious community. The Church was no longer an autonomous body but through economic, legal, cultural and social ties it became dependant on the state. This put a dent in the much looked after doctrine of *caesaro-papism* since the Church had no longer a sufficiently strong status to challenge the state and negotiate its position in society.

There were periods after 1918 when this situation was reversed by the Church. On the one hand this reversal came in alliances with movements that would need the Church in their strive for reforming the society (the Iron Guard – the Romanian fascist

⁴³ The talks held with different members of the Church hierarchy were informal. Reticent to open up in front of a subject like this they maintained distance towards a formal oral interview. Moreover the discussions were held only with members of the Romanian Orthodox Church thus a one-sided view might surface from them.

⁴⁴ In the 1960's, the Department for Religious Denominations was under the supervision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

movement), on the other hand the reassessment of the public role of the Orthodox Church came as part of the nation building process (a coherent definition of ethnicity involved allusions to confession with the Orthodox Church having the spiritual command of the majority of the Romanian population). At the end of the Second World War a status quo characterized the relationship between the Romanian state and the Church. Much of its hierarchy was publicly outspoken in social, educational, political matters. While economically still dependant on the political administration politically it became an important factor in public life.

The change of regimes after the Second World War brought about a focus on defining the Church's position in the public realm, a concern over the construction of the relationship with the new regime. The communist administration acted on a pre-existing soviet model already tested in the regulation of the Soviet Union religious life. Policies were drafted following this model regarding the role of the Church. It was one of the few steady attempts to reform institutional religion to fit the role designed for it by the state after the second half of the 19th century. While at first the communists attempted (at least on paper) to terminate institutional religion either by relegating it to the privacy of one's home (favouring the non traditional protestant denominations' – Baptists, Seven Days Evangelicals, Pentecostals or Adventists - non-involvement in public life has been argued as an attempt to privatize religion), or by banishing it all together (the case of the Greek Catholic Church) at the beginning of the 1950s it became clear that these solutions were impossible to sustain by the communist state. Too weak to fight the numerous fronts opened by the dissenters⁴⁵

⁴⁵ The dissenting groups counted the Greek Catholic Church that went underground after its suppression in 1948, the active proselyte activities of the Neo Protestant denominations, the various oppositional splinter groups coming from within the Orthodox Church – The Lord's Army

against the state on religious motivation and too weak as to control denominations that were given liberty to grow by their very privatisation,⁴⁶ the new regime had to find a way to accommodate the Church, to co-exist.

The relationship resulted from what I term compromises that both the communist central administration and the church (hierarchical, midlevel and rank and file) did. These compromises resulted in over centralization, and forced cooperation for the Romanian Orthodox Church that in turn managed to secure the number of priests at over 10000 while receiving a small contribution towards their payment from the state, two Theological Institutes in Sibiu and Bucharest and six seminaries to train its clergy.⁴⁷ Several religious journals continued regular publication. Starting from the early 1960s the new hierarchical and professorial elite of the Romanian Orthodox Church had access to important educational centres in the West. Clerical opposition to the communist regime was silenced by either the communist central administration or by the higher church's administration whose aim it was to protect the compromise. As a result a different type of opposition developed, in which the administration of the Orthodox Church strove to protect the new mechanism of church state relationships and fought against the changes that threatened the status quo obtained in the early 1950s.

⁴⁶ The Neo Protestant groups that became legal after 1948, having no hierarchical centre and being spread thin all over the country have produced major problems for the apparatus of inspectors that had to supervise and control their activity providing ample rationale to redefine the relationship between the state and religious denominations. The four Neo Protestant denominations were united under a central administrative hierarchy heavily controlled by the communist administration.

⁴⁷ See a larger description in Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, (The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church), vol III, (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Biblic si de misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1981), pp. 480-495.

CHAPTER III

Administering authority: changing central policy from within the political administration¹

When describing the communist regime, Milovan Djilas spoke of several of its paradoxes. In general coming to power for a class, social strata or party is considered as the final event that results from the formation and development of this group attaining power. In the case of the communist regime this class was formed only after the change in regime.² From this paradox came some of the most pressing problems that communist authorities met in the very beginning of the regime. The lack of a bureaucratic apparatus and of specialists trained not just in the technical demands of the country's administration but faithful to the ideological demands of the new regime and its imposed dogma, specialists that would accomplish the transition from one system to the other imposed a model for resolving problems with the help of force and seldom compromise.

¹ Part of the sources I had for this chapter consisted in oral interviews taken to specialists, former functionaries inside the Department of Religious Denominations in the communist period but also functionaries inside the central administration of the Romanian Orthodox Church. The findings in the archives supporting an argument that the group of intellectuals close to the Iron Guard, helped draft and implemented the policies of the communist regime that defined the relationship between state and church in the communist period in the late 1940's and early 1950's came after these oral interviews. Some of these oral sources I no longer was able to use because the interviewees no longer agreed to be quoted in the thesis for reasons I explained in the introduction. I have tried to compensate this loss of material with archival information and still support the thesis that the involvement of the right wing intellectuals in drafting policies of the communist period came well before the 1960s and national communism and the model of state church relationship designed in the communist period, not only had influence from the interwar period but was partly designed and implemented by specialists of the interwar period, theologians, hierarchs and priests.

² Milovan Djilas, *The New Class. An Analysis of the Communist System*, (London, Thames and Hudson, 1957), p. 38.

From the initial stages of the installation of the communist regime in Romania one could note a series of controversial positions taken by the new administrations in dealing with the religious denominations. Frequent appearances in public of communist officials together with church hierarchy and clerics, encouraged from within the high ranks of the communist party,³ the association of the communist administration with religious institutions to transmit their message to the remotest communities, the overt opposition was carefully and quietly handled, outspoken hierarchs were only gradually removed and some managed to preserve their positions even if their allegiance to the former regime was well known to the communists.⁴

The Soviet blueprint for dealing with the religious denominations, especially with the church that served spiritually the majority of believers was rather new dating from the Second World War and its implementation problematic in the new regime. The presence of the state administration in the life of the religious denominations was in the first couple of years after the installation of the new regime less perceived. The control and supervision over the religious denominations was enforced by insiders, church members or former members, clergy, seminary and theology professors, whose allegiance to the policies of the new regime was constantly challenged, contested, bought, negotiated, or forcefully imposed. Some specialists that designed the policies towards the religious denominations of the new regime and adapted the Soviet model to the Romanian realities came from within the denominations themselves other

³ Ana Pauker is quoted with an admission of the use of priests for achieving power in Cristian Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română în primul deceniu comunist*, (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2005), p. 52.

⁴ This is the case of archbishop Nicolae Bălan, Metropolitan of Transilvanian one of the voices of the “opposition” inside the Orthodox Church that not only was maintained in the Archbishopric See but also was entrusted with the administration of the “Greek Catholic unification,” in many ways a “payment/ reward” for his toning down his arguments against the regime.

functionaries of the ministry for religious denominations maintained the positions they had inside the ministry in the interwar period. This chapter describes the activity of the Ministry for Religious Denominations and that of the specialists trained in the interwar, insiders in the life of the Church, that were preserved inside the Ministry after 1948 and were part of designing and implementing the state policy over the religious life in the period of installation of the new regime. They were the specialists that adapted the design of the new relationship between state and church negotiating and justifying an *associationist* model of state church relationship with prolongations from the interwar and implemented some of the church reforms they drafted in the early 1940s.

The centralization of the church administration, the increase in authority for the high hierarchs, the presence of the lay people in the leadership and administration of the church, making the theological learning system cohesive and uniform, reforming the monastic life, finalizing the both discursively and administratively via the integration into the Orthodox Church of the Greek Catholics the concept of one church, one nation and turning the Orthodox Church in the “church of the nation” were all on the agenda of an elite of the Church in the interwar period. The co-option inside the ministry in the new regime of these interwar specialists brought about the means to implement this agenda adapted to the requirements of the new regime insinuating it in a larger agenda of the state.

III. 1. Overview of the Ministry for Religious Denominations

The activity profile of the Ministry for Religious Denominations did not change once the communist regime came to power. The change was gradual and lasted until well in

the 1950s around the time when the communist specialists were formed and integrated in the system. Until 1952 the Ministry for Religious Denominations was constructed and performed similarly to the interwar ministry for religious denominations, inheriting not only the mentality and practices of the interwar but also the personnel, the way in which it is trained and promoted inside. The Ministry for Religious Denominations remained the institution that went between the state and institutional religion, *de jure* inside the state administration, *de facto* still implanted into the administration of the church, especially the Orthodox Church where from the ministry drafted most of its functionaries.⁵

The hierarchs, theologians, church insiders were co-opted by the new regime as specialists inside the ministry for religious denominations and preserved their positions creating a second hierarchy that was used by the ministry to replace the disobedient and the uncooperative one.⁶ These ministry specialists preserved their positions inside the church either as professors, priests, hierarchs all throughout the period they worked for the ministry, some of them went on to become hierarchs (like Bishop Valerian Zaharia of Oradea and the Archbishop, later Patriarch Iustin Moisescu), some returned to their full time position when the collaboration with the ministry ceased like theologian Spiridon Cădea.

In the tripartite structure of the Ministry for Religious Denominations these specialists worked in the studies and foreign relations section and were hired as inspectors. The first section that dealt with the supervision and control of religious denominations and

⁵ Cristian Vasile, 2005, p. 154.

⁶ Dudu Velicu, *Biserica Ortodoxă în anii regimului comunist, însemnări zilnice, 1948-1959*, (The Orthodox Church in the period of sovietization in Romania. Daily notes, 1948-1959) vol II, (Bucharest: Arhivele Naționale ale României, 2005).

managed the local and regional inspectors was entirely populated with communist cadres. A third section directed the secretarial and financial problems of the institution. The direction for studies read and reviewed the reports received from the local inspectors and on the bases of those reports made requests for new directions of research and collections of data but also summarized these reports for the leadership of the ministry and drafted the first responses in terms of policy based on the problems in territory. The functionaries in the direction for studies overviewed the larger picture of the Romanian religious life and drafted policy documents based on the data provided by the local inspectors.

The authorities that control and legitimate the activity of the religious denominations were from the late 1940s the Ministry, the Council of Ministers, the Party authorities, and the *Securitate*. They all become the superior instances for the religious denominations. “The Ministry for Religious Denominations was subordinated to the Central Committee of the Romanian Worker’s Party, namely to the Political Administrative section [...] The Political Administrative section had 4 departments, one dealing with religion.⁷ Collaborating with the Ministry/ Department for Religious Denominations became mandatory for the legally recognized religious denominations in matters that in previous years were not of the Ministry/ Department’s attributions (matters related to internal reform, appointments, dogma, religious calendar, economic administration).⁸ The Denominations become dependent on the state, under the strict and direct control of the state administration. Gradually the ministry/ department become the highest authority inside the denomination.

⁷ Cristian Vasile, 2005, p. 211

⁸ Among the most intimate decisions the Ministry took part in for the Orthodox Church was its decision over whom to be sanctified, the distinct way in which a Greek Catholic priest could become Orthodox, or the length of the religious service.

The Ministry for Religious Denominations, later the Department for Religious Denomination of the Ministry for Internal Affairs, supervised the activity of the religious denominations. It functioned according to the same precepts as the Council for Religious Affairs in the Soviet Union. Its duties included mediating between the state and the religious denominations, and monitoring the denominations' activity. As the Council for Religious Affairs the Ministry for Religious Denominations had in its administrative attributions a section that was dedicated to the affairs of the Orthodox Church, one that covered the activity of the rest of the denominations recognized by law, special cadres have tasks related with foreign affairs, legal, and economic.⁹ In its supervision task, the collection of data, monitoring and control, the Ministry was also assisted by the Secret Services. The administrative center in the ministry centralized financial activities, imposed rules and regulations, monitored their application, and, in general, supervised the state's policy towards religion and religious institutions.

Based on the selection of ministers and after 1957 when the Ministry was transformed in a department inside the Ministry for Internal Affairs I distinguish four stages in its organization. A first stage, described by Cristian Vasile in his book on the history of the Romanian Orthodox Church from the late 1940s to the early 1950s, is that of the minister Constantin Burducea, an Orthodox priest.¹⁰ This is a period of transition for the Ministry but also for the Party. A second period is that of ministers Stanciu Stoian, Vasile

⁹ The administrative apparatus of the council has seven department, a general one, one directing Orthodox affairs, another for Islamic and Buddhist religions, one for Catholic, Protestant, Armenian Churches, Jewish Religion and Sects, legal, accounting and foreign affairs in Otto Luchterhandt, "The Council for Religious Affairs" in Sabrina Ramet, ed., *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 60-61.

¹⁰ Cristian Vasile, 2005, p. 53.

Pogăceanu and Petre Constantinescu Iași, a period that extends to 1957 when the ministry is transformed into a department subordinated to the Ministry for Internal Affairs. Good relations were maintained with the Patriarchate and the specialists drafting policy were coming from the rank and file of the Romanian Orthodox Church.¹¹ From the moment the ministry was turned into a department the directors were chosen from inside the department – Dumitru Dogaru, Gheorghe Nenciu.¹² This selection from within the department's specialists ends in 1977 with the dismissal of Gheorghe Nenciu in a scandal that involved several hierarchs of the Romanian Orthodox Church that were asked for money by Gheorghe Nenciu to ensure their election in the hierarchy of the Romanian Orthodox Church.¹³ Promotion from within the department was not an option on charges of corruption and the new director Ion Roșianu was brought from the Foreign Affairs Ministry to replace Nenciu and reform the department.

During the first three phases the Ministry for Religious Affairs counted among its second rank specialists theology professors and clergymen, members of various religious denominations. They drafted the policy of the department. They received directions from the Council of Ministers or from the Ministry, and they responded to problems raised at

¹¹ Regarding the good relations these ministers had with the Patriarchate one could consider the fact that Stanciu Stoian while minister placed his brother in the Patriarchal administration as councilor. His brother graduated from the Theology faculty, see Dudu Velicu, 2005, p. 79.

¹² The heads of the Ministry and later Department: Ministers: Constantin Burducea (March 6th 1945 – November 11th 1946), Radu Roșculeț (December 1st 1946 – December 29th 1947), Stanciu Stoian (December 30th – April 23rd 1951), Vasile Pogăceanu (April 23rd 1951 – June 2nd 1952), Petre Constantinescu Iași (January 28th 1953 – March 19th 1957); Department directors: Dumitru Dogaru (1957-1975), Gheorghe Nenciu (1975- February 4th 1977), Ion Roșianu (February 4th 1977 – May 7th, 1984), Ion Cumpănașu (May 7th 1984 – January 18th 1990), Secretariatul de Stat pentru Culte, *Viața religioasă din România*, (Religious life in Romania), (Bucharest: Paideia, 1999), p. 97

¹³ Gheorghe Nenciu was dismissed from the department, his Communist Party card was taken away on charges of bribery, abuse of power. Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, Nenciu Gheorghe, Departamentul Cultelor (Nenciu Gheorghe, Department for Religious Denominations) (not processed in the archives), 1977, p. 1, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

regional and local level by the local inspectors, the second and third layer of the structure of the Ministry. The implementation of the policy depended on the urgency of the matter.¹⁴ At local and regional levels, the ministry had functionaries who were dependent on the centre and whose latitude was also restricted by local authorities.

The ministry had an insidious way to infiltrate between the church authority and the clergy and became intermediaries in a dialogue that until then did not belong to the state administration. This was a quiet way to control the activity of the religious denominations to its finest details with limited personnel that was substantially reduced in the 1970s when the ministry goes through an internal reform. In the early stages the necessity of controlling the religious denominations is reflected in the high number of policies directed towards ensuring the administration of the religious life.

III. 2. On hierarchs and hierarchies

In the transition period of the new regime the relationship between the state administration and the church remained at the level of the hierarchy. The Ministry, until mid 1950s preferred using the over centralized structure of the Orthodox Church to impose the regulations, legal provisions and policies onto the local religious communities. Some researchers argue that the relationship between the apparatus of inspectors for religious denominations and the religious denomination remained one

¹⁴ Some of aspects of the policy guideline give the impression that the specialists, who drafted the document, came from within the church and considered the institutional needs of the Orthodox Church while devising the proposal for instance a hard line solution to the problems raised by the Orthodox monastic life (increase in number of monks and nuns, connection with the Legionary Movement, part in the resistance movement against communism) was postponed until mid 1950s because of policies in accordance with the Patriarchate line + transformation of the monasteries in units of production. Only after 1955 with the string of problems created by several Orthodox monasteries, Râmeţ, Antim or Vladimireşti the policy of the Ministry hardens.

that involved the hierarchies of the denominations and not the lower clergy or the members of the denominations:

Regarding the methods used by the long arm of the Ministry for Religious Denominations [inspectors] we need to understand the way in which these worked. The inspectors never contacted the priests directly but the bishop, at best the archpriest. The Ministry guided the inspectors with the phrase “let’s fight the reaction through the hierarchy” this being the best solution to eradicate any opposition manifested against the regime.¹⁵

My findings contradict this statement and the next chapters describe the process in details. Especially the case study on church construction in the village community of Cerghizel will illustrate the close interactions between the local inspectors and the religious communities in some cases by passing the hierarchy of the church completely. The hypothesis of Nicolae Petcu is helpful when investigating the relationship between the ministry and the hierarchy in the first decade after the installation of the communist regime in Romania. A look inside the hierarchical make up of the Romanian Orthodox Church allows us to decipher the methods used by the church to negotiate its position with the state administration and how the Party attempted to control the Orthodox Church by creating a double hierarchy inside the Ministry used to blackmail the official hierarchy of the church into collaborating with the new regime.

III. 2. a. The Patriarch Justinian – a historiographical overview

The literature regarding Patriarch Justinian Marina is rich. It consists of firsthand accounts from close aides and patriarchal administrative councilors,¹⁶ theologians and

¹⁵ Nicolae Petcu “Ministerul Cultelor şi slujitorii altarelor în anii “democraţiei populare,”” (The Ministry for religious denominations and the servants of the altars in the years of people’s democracy) in *Pro Memoria*, Issue 3-2004, p. 318

¹⁶ See for instance the book wrote by the personal doctor of Patriarch Justinian, George Stan, a hagiographical account of the life and activity of the Patriarch, George Stan, *Părintele*

hierarchs¹⁷ that were close to the Patriarch, many of them owning their professional career to him, their physical and economic security during the communist period. This primary literature that is personal and subjective is only a facet of the writings concerning the life of the Patriarch. Several important historians have focused on the life of the Patriarch either in biographies or research studies dedicated to the patriarch specifically¹⁸ or integrating characterizations of Justinian in larger narratives on the life of the Orthodox Church during communism.

Several interpretation themes arose from the secondary literature on the life of the Patriarch. First there is a chronological distinction. The literature on the relationship between state and church before 1989 was written by western historians, specialists in the relationship between state and church in East Central Europe based on materials provided by members of the Romanian Diaspora, refugees from the Eastern block and printed materials coming from the Romanian Orthodox Church that made part of the communist propaganda directed towards the West.¹⁹ The interpretation on the hierarchy of the church and especially Patriarch Justinian is unilateral. He is labelled *the red patriarch*, a patriarch that achieved a compromise with the communist power, compromise quantified in the support given by the Orthodox Church to the communist

Patriarh Justinian Marina, (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă, 2005); also along the same line of interpretation is Fr. Constantin Pârvu's book one of the first

¹⁷ A moving and personal rendition of the Patriarch comes from the late Archbishop Bartolomeu Anania. In his book of memoirs but also in conferences and short newspaper pieces he offers an insight into the creation of the patriarchal administration in the early 1950s and his relationship with the patriarch. See Valerian Anania, *Memorii*, (Memoirs), (Jassy: Polirom, 2008).

¹⁸ Adrian Gabor, Nicolae Petcu, "Biserica Ortodoxă și puterea comunistă în timpul patriarhului Justinian", (The Orthodox Church and the communist power during Patriarch Justinian's time), in *Anuarul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă "Patriarhul Justinian"*, (The yearbook of the Orthodox Theology Faculty), (Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2002), pp. 93-154; George Enache, *Ortodoxie și putere politică în România contemporană*, (Bucharest: Nemira, 2005), pp. 15-156.

¹⁹ Alan Scarfe, "The Romanian Orthodox Church" in Pedro Ramet, (ed.), *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twentieth Century*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988), pp. 209 - 230.

regime in return the Church preserved the number of priests and the majority of the church buildings remained functional. This view of the Patriarch as the dealmaker, the middleman in the new state church relationship being designed or the communist hierarchy was common especially in the Romanian émigré communities in United States.²⁰

Post 1989 literature on Justinian preserved the label of red patriarch but also brought forth other sides to his activity and his patriarchate. We also have here a few directions of research. On the one hand we have those researchers coming from church historians and theologians that try to salvage the activity of the Patriarch. One theme relates to the necessity of the compromise and the actions of the Patriarch in its encounters with the communist administration – this could be characterized by a catch phrase that is used in these researches “befriend the devil so you could cross the bridge”. It offers a justification for the actions of the Patriarch and by and large, the actions of the hierarchy of the church in its relation with the communist administration.²¹ Another theme is that of the subversive Patriarch. The relationship of Patriarch Justinian with the central communist administration and with the Party hierarchical circles spreads over for almost two decades. These decades were formative ones for the new regime. During this period of time the relationship between the state and the church was negotiated, the regulations regarding religious

²⁰ A large activity of propaganda was designed specifically towards the United States to counteract this view of the actions of the Orthodox Church in Romania and of the patriarch. Several close collaborators of the patriarch were sent to the United States as part of this activity (this is the case of Fr. Bartolomeu Anania or Fr. Nicolae Corneanu but also the attempt to send Fr. Teoctist Arăpaşu, the future patriarch to serve as bishop for the Romanian Orthodox bishopric in the United States). Also members of the American Diaspora were in contact with the Patriarchate and most of the requests for priests and hierarchy appointment the communities made were solved favorably by the Patriarchate,

²¹ Fr. Constantin Pârvu, Administrative Vicar of the Romanian Patriarchy, informal interview 26 January 2005, Antim monastery, Bucharest, Romania.

life were put into practice and interiorized by those that were called to enforce them and those that were affected by their implementation. The Patriarch's attitude and actions were not always congruent with what the ministry and the Party solicited from the Orthodox Patriarchate. The documents follow the tension moments carefully and for long periods of time the Patriarch was labelled by the informants, inspectors and *Securitate* officers as hostile element. Based on these archival materials the portrayal of the Patriarch was nuanced and his submissiveness to the new regime was questioned.²² Going further in analyzing the Patriarch's actions to protect several young theologians from the actions of the Securitate, to safeguard the monastic life by opposing the closing of monasteries and the decree that made this legal the authors elevated Patriarch Justinian's status from that of collaborator with the regime to that of opponent of the regime. Emphasis was placed on the Patriarch's early activity, especially that from the interwar and war period. While the biography of the Patriarch explains the fast rise of the widowed priest Ioan Marina to the Metropolitanate of Jassy and later the Patriarchal See by his connection with the communist leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej, whom the future patriarch protected in his parish house when he escaped from prison, authors like Nicolae Petcu, Adrian Gabor or George Enache stress the connections Ioan Marina had with the centre left, namely the Peasant Party. These connections help them conclude that the Patriarch entertained left wing beliefs prior to his protection of the communist leader and thus his ascension can be explained through an inclination toward a democratic left party interested in social security and assistance. This in turn explained the writings of the Patriarch and his inclination towards social assistance.²³ More complicated was to demonstrate that

²² See Adrian Gabor, Nicolae Petcu, 2005; George Enache, 2005.

²³ See the chapter "Patriarhul Justinian and 'apostolatul social'," in George Enache, 2005, pp. 15-156; Adrian Gabor, Nicolae Petcu, 2005, p. 99

the fast ascension to top tier hierarchy of the Orthodox Church was in fact determined by Ioan Marina's competence and suitability for the position. In this case the historians argued only for the canonicity of Marina's election, canonicity that was contested.²⁴

Few historians offered a balanced view of the patriarchate of Justinian Marina. A nuanced portrayal that accounted for the shifts and turns in the relationship between the Patriarch and the Party leaders and high ranking officials in the government was described by Cristian Vasile,²⁵ Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu,²⁶ or Lucian Leuştean.²⁷ His elections was questioned in relation to the the other hierarchical competitors and in relation with the leader group of the Romanian Worker's Party that supported him. His hierarchical activities, his successes and failures in his relationship with the communist administration, the response he had to the monastic problem, his involvement in the forceful unification of the Greek Catholic with the Orthodox Church, the reformation of the patriarchal administration and his policies were traced by these researchers with access to new documents especially from the Securitate and the State Secretary for Religious Denominations Archives. The researchers agree in portraying Patriarch Justinian as a strong leader, with administrative skills, capable to navigate between the pressures of a church hierarchy where he was a new comer in an extremely complicated period for the Orthodox Church.

²⁴ Adrian Gabor, Nicolae Petcu, 2005, p. 96.

²⁵ Cristian Vasile, *Între Vatican şi Kremlin, Biserica Greco-Catolică în timpul regimului comunist*, (Between Vatican and Kremlin, The Greek Catholic Church during the communist regime), (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2004), p. 187.

²⁶ Lavinia Stan, Lucian Turcescu, *Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Romania*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 23-24.

²⁷ Lucian Leuştean, *Orthodoxy and the Cold War, Religion and Political Power in Romania, 1947-63*, (London: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2009), pp. 72-76

III. 2. b. The double hierarchy of the Orthodox Church

The majority of researchers dealing with the history of the Romanian Orthodox Church during communism admit that in ordinary circumstances, in a process of canonical selection, Fr. Ioan Marina would never have become Patriarch.²⁸ Even access into the hierarchy of the church would have been difficult to achieve for the widowed priest from Băbeni Vâlcea.²⁹ But the end of the 1940s was not an ordinary period in the life of the church. Patriarch Nicodim's natural successor and the informal leader of the Romanian Orthodox Church was Archbishop Nicolae Bălan, Metropolitan of Transylvania. His attempt to become patriarch was lost from the start even though he was supported by important members of the communist central administration.³⁰



²⁸ Church historians strove to prove the canonicity of Patriarch Justinian Marina's election. This I do not debate. The election of a widower priest in the hierarchy of the Orthodox Church is canonical according to the 12th Trullan Canon. It is rather the expedience of his hierarchical ascension, the disregard of more logical claims to the patriarchal see like those of Archbishop Nicolae Bălan, Bishop Nicolae Popovici, Bishop Emilian Antal and others and the direct support of the Party in his election that led me to this claim. See the demonstration on the canonicity of the election of the new patriarch in Adrian Gabor, Nicolae Petcu, 2005, p. 96.

²⁹ Patriarch Justinian Marina (1948-1977) graduated from the theological seminary in Râmnicu Vâlcea and the Theology Faculty in Bucharest. He was a primary school teacher in Olteanca Vâlcea and Băbeni Vâlcea and also priest in Băbeni, later director of the Theological Seminary and priest at the bishopric Cathedral in Râmnicu Vâlcea. Widower he was elected vicar in Jassy Archbishopric, from 1947 he was elected Archbishop of Jassy Metropolitan See and in June 6th 1948 he became the Patriarch until his death in 1977.

³⁰ Cristian Vasile, 2005.

*Illustration 3. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the new Patriarch Justinian Marina and Archbishop Nicolae Bălan, 1948*³¹

Archbishop Bălan's activity during the previous regime when he covertly supported the Iron Guard was well known to the new communist administration.³² This together with his status of informal leader of the Orthodox Church contributed to his unsuccessful attempt to head the Romanian Orthodox Church but in the same time protected him from any action that the Party might have tried to take against him. The old Archbishop, well versed in deal makings with the state administration, accustomed with hierarchical and regime changes, attempted to create a parallel hierarchical structure that would have supported him in his attempt to head the Romanian Orthodox Church. He lobbied and succeeded in placing his closest collaborators at decisional levels inside the communist administration. He fought to save as many of his collaborators and succeeded in creating positions and negotiating their safety. At the Archbishopric, Archbishop Nicolae Bălan had a number of theologians that were educated in western theology schools, especially in Germany, that made up redoubtable elite, trained in a strong nationalistic discourse, acquainted with *völkisch* teologie and with the Arian race theory of the Third Reich.³³

These theologians, specialists of the Romanian Orthodox Church, professors at the Orthodox theological institutes were all well acquainted with the characteristics of Transylvanian Orthodoxy, were used with the coexistence, not always peaceful, with the rest of the religious denominations that they knew closely not just because of their

³¹ Lucian Leuştean, 2009, p. 75.

³² On the activity of Archbishop Nicolae Bălan see Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, *Caracterizare a unor eparhii din țară, Notă asupra Mitropolitului Bălan*, (Description of some bishoprics. Note on Archbishop Bălan) file 85 vol. 2 a, 1953, p. 1 - 20 Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

³³ Liviu Stan, *Rasă și religie*, (Race and religion), (Sibiu, 1942).

geographical neighboring but also because of their in depth knowledge of the theology, canon law, and history of the Catholic and Protestant Churches in Transylvania. Their expertise was extremely valuable for the Ministry and the new communist administration. They were hired inside the Ministry during Constantin Burducea's period and survived Burducea's dismissal and the 1950s in the Ministry. Their involvement in policy ranged from designing the policy on the integration of the Greek Catholics into the Orthodox Church³⁴ to drafting the policy on ecumenical relations³⁵ especially that which related to interreligious dialogue and local ecumenism.³⁶

Most of these specialists were closely linked with the Iron Guard in the interwar period which worked paradoxically both for and against them. The state administration used their past to blackmail them into collaborating with the regime but also regarded those specialists that were compromised by their past connections with the Romanian fascist movement as more important than the clergymen that had connections with the communist party. The former felt more inclined towards compromise when their fellow piers were jailed for their connections with the Iron

³⁴ The religious journal *Ortodoxia* voiced throughout 1949 the position towards the integration of the Greek Catholics in the Orthodox Church held by ministry officials like Liviu Stan or Spiridon Căndea. The journal was launched to voice the policy directives of the Ministry/Department for Religious Denominations. The editors belong to the ministry group of specialists coming from Sibiu or connected to the Transylvanian Archbishop.

³⁵ After 1990 the Romanian Orthodox Church acknowledged the usefulness of these contacts that extended over four decades since these were the training ground for several Orthodox scholars such as Ion Bria, Antonie Plamadeala, Liviu Stan and it maintained for several decades during communism the contact with the Western Churches and theology. See Ion Bria, "Condiții ecumenice a ortodoxiei" (The ecumenical characteristics of Orthodoxy), *Ortodoxia* (The Orthodoxy), Issue 3-4 (July – December, 1995).

³⁶ Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, *Raport pentru ședința Sfântului Sinod, alcătuit de Iustin Moiescu, Mitropolitul Ardealului, Episcopul Nicolae Mladin al Clujului și Episcopul Valerian Zaharia al Oradiei*, (Report to the Holy Synod presented by Justin Moiescu, Transylvanian Archbishop, Bishop Nicolae Mladin of Cluj and Bishop Valerian Zaharia of Oradea) file 85 vol. 4b, 1956, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania, p. 83-85;

Guard.³⁷ This is how Rev. professor Liviu Stan, canon law specialist³⁸ or Rev. professor Spiridon Câdea church historian³⁹ both with well known fascist allegiances were integrated into the Ministry for Religious Denominations directed in that period by Constantin Burducea the first director of the Ministry after the war famous for his collaboration with the communists.⁴⁰

In the construction of a new relationship with religious denominations, the fact that the administrators of the state were selected from specialists of the former regime created the first setback in the attempt to enforce complete control over religious denominations. The religious denominations benefited – with few exceptions (the Neo Protestant churches) – from the lack of trained communist functionaries. The state also took advantage of the situation, since it received first-hand information from insiders in the life of the denominations, concerning power struggles, the mechanism of administration and hierarchical deficiencies. The state utilized the functionaries that it inherited from the

³⁷ The episode described by Archbishop Bartolomeu Anania in his memoirs speaks of this paradoxical situation. Jailed for his connections with the Iron Guard he ruminates in his prison cell before being taken to interrogatory about all his colleagues and friends that were allowed to continue their jobs even though their ties with the Iron Guard was of common knowledge. See Bartolomeu Anania, 2008.

³⁸ Rev Professor Liviu Stan is the most appreciated specialist of canon law in the Romanian Orthodox Church. He supported the Iron Guard during the interwar period being one of the intellectuals of the movement. Hired inside the ministry for religious denominations during the Iron Guardist government he preserved his position. He is later integrated inside the ministry when Constantin Burducea was minister for religious denomination and preserved this position until his death while being canon law professor at the Theological Institute in Bucharest. He is credited with the revival of caesaro-papism to legitimate the association and collaboration of the Romanian Orthodox Church with the new regime. His interwar positions to reform the church find their way into ministry policies regarding the Orthodox Church (the lay man in the administration of the church, the education of the clergy, the unification and centralization of the church).

³⁹ Spiridon Câdea is a professor at the Theological Institute in Sibiu and during Archbishop Bălan's life director of the Institute. He is one of the artisans, together with Stefan Lupsa of the historiographical process of rewriting the history of the Greek Catholic Church after its unification. He took part in the initial process of the forced unification of the two churches. His connection with the Romanian fascist movement were used in the 1960s by his colleagues and he, no longer having hierarchical protection is jailed by the communists.

⁴⁰ Cristian Vasile, 2005; Dudu Velicu, vol 1, 2004.

Ministry for Religious Denominations until the end of 1960s. After they had been replaced by communist cadres, the state helped these ministry functionaries to return to their former positions inside the church, where – with a few exceptions – they continued to work for the state. Bishop Valerian Zaharia, for example, who had worked in the department as a consultant until 1952, was later appointed as Bishop of Oradea, after the former bishop had been forced to resign. Bishop Zaharia was the ‘party mole’ in the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church.⁴¹ The theologian Liviu Stan, who worked for the Department of Religious Denominations, also retained his position in the Theology Institute. Patriarch Iustin Moisesescu worked for the Department as an inspector. This was not specific to the Orthodox Church alone. Greek Catholics, Roman Catholics and Protestants also worked for the Department and were later rewarded with important positions in their respective churches.

In the case of the departments that oversaw the activity of churches, the recruitment of personnel was a serious endeavor because of the sensitive affairs that they had to administer. It was thus important for the Transylvanian Archbishop to be able to impose with the help of communist personalities his protégées inside the ministry. However, their status as specialists gave them little decision-making power, their power came gradually after they secured their positions in the ministry and adopted/ internalized the status of state functionaries,⁴² after 1955 when the Archbishop of Transylvania died.

⁴¹ Much of the information of the Synodal meetings that the Ministry had came directly from Bishop Valerian, information on the leadership of the Church and an activity of Party supporter brought about his demise in the late 1950s when Patriarch Justinian replaced him from his position in Oradea. See Bishop Valerian Zaharia, *Unele nedumeriri cu privire la activitatea IPS Patriarh Justinian*, File Patriarh Justinian, not processed in the archives, vol.1, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania, section 12, 28 pp.

⁴² See Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*, (Ithaca / London: Cornell University Press, 1992).

Archbishop Bălan lost the competition to Justinian Marina, but retained the Transylvanian Metropolitan See being among the few hierarchs to safeguard their interwar positions in the hierarchy of the church.⁴³ This is not negligible if one is to consider the influence the hierarch had in the Orthodox Church. The state's involvement in the unification of the Greek Catholic Church with the Orthodox and the position he attained in the process of integrating the Greek Catholics into the Orthodox Church were small but significant satisfactions for the Archbishop. His closest collaborators that the ministry hired as specialists worked on drafting the policy on integrating the former Greek Catholics into the mother church.

III. 2. c. The new patriarchal administration

For the Patriarchal See the communists preferred Justinian Marina. Two communist factions tried to impose their candidate in the Patriarchal See. Archbishop Nicolae Bălan had the support of Prime Minister Petru Groza⁴⁴ and that of a rather nationalist faction in the Romanian Communist Party, support that he directed towards Bishop Nicolae Popovici when he realised that his had only slim chances to win the elections.⁴⁵ The widowed priest Ion Marina's entire hierarchical career was in turn tied with the Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej faction in the Communist Party.

Justinian Marina knew that in spite of the support that the leading communist group offered his position as head of the Romanian Orthodox Church was fragile. The

⁴³ See Vasile Manea, *Preoți ortodocși în închisorile comuniste* (Orthodox priests in communist prisons), (Cluj-Napoca: Patmos, 2001).

⁴⁴ Transylvanian by birth, Petru Groza served in the Church National Assembly in the interwar period as a layman deputy. His connections with the hierarchs in Transylvania were renowned.

⁴⁵ Cristian Vasile, 2005, p. 153.

opposition was generalized inside the church. He bruised important egos, climbed the hierarchical ladder by burning stages, came from outside the monastic life and was relatively less acquainted with hierarchical life and the central administration of the Orthodox Church. His influence in the Holy Synod was limited to the hierarchs controlled by the communists but even in that group he had plenty of enemies that wanted his position and were ready to negotiate obtaining it with the communists.⁴⁶ Finally the new Patriarch had in Archbishop Bălan and his close collaborators fierce opponents.

The first months in the Patriarchal See offer the image of an experienced hierarch that matched Archbishop Bălan's political skills. He used his political leverage often.⁴⁷ He made few hierarchical changes making sure to neutralize his ardent opponents but in the same time not to inflame the rest of the hierarchs and provoke open hostilities.⁴⁸ He made the changes to demonstrate the trust the communists had in his leadership abilities. In the same time his patronage over the Greek Catholic Church comeback to the mother church was restrained. He retreated to leave Archbishop Bălan the control over the events. Archbishop Bălan's familiarity with the problem made him a more suitable candidate to lead the process of inclusion of the Greek Catholics into the Orthodox Church. The upside was that the strenuous process resulted after the *union*

⁴⁶ This is the case of Valerian Zaharia who often complained that his work for the communists was not appreciated at the right value and he was not rewarded with the hierarchical positions that he deserved. File Patriarch Justinian, not processed in the archives, vol.1, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, section 20, p 2.

⁴⁷ The Patriarch is credited by other hierarchs to have had eliminated his direct competition by agreeing to close down one archbishopric and five bishoprics that were later on reopened and friendly hierarchs elected for their sees. File Patriarch Justinian, section 17, *Reînființarea eparhiilor*, (Recreating the eparchies) (not processed in the archives), vol.1, section 17, p 1-4, 1956 Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania

⁴⁸ This was the case of Bishop Emilian Antal who opposed Justinian for the Moldovan Archbishopric See. He remained one of Justinian fierce opponents.

kept Archbishop Bălan involved locally and offered the Patriarch more weight in the decision making process at central level.

His next policy item on the agenda was the monastic life. He took control over the monasteries by negotiating their transformation into production units.⁴⁹ The priest patriarch understood that at the core of his legitimacy problem was the fact that he did not come from the monastic order. Thus he set out to preserve a functional monastic life and protecting the monasteries becomes one of the goals of the Patriarchal Administration. This new policy direction undertaken by Justinian Marina has other implications. His open support for the monastic life can be seen as resulted from different motivations. It can be construed as the new Patriarch's way of defying Archbishop Nicolae Bălan. The Transylvanian Archbishop was not a strong supporter of the monasteries. He was unsuccessful in his attempts to reform the monastic life in Transylvania on an interwar project. Transylvania has noticeably a smaller number of monasteries and about one tenth of the number of monks and nuns,⁵⁰ the innovations in the monastic life, the lack of order, the disobedience, and the lack of education leading back to contesting authority sufficient reasons to justify the reticence with

⁴⁹ During 1949 when the Party decided the destruction of the Roman Catholic monastic life the Patriarch suggested the transformation of the Orthodox monasteries in production units that paid the state taxes. Because the Patriarchy argued that the Orthodox monasteries do not need to be dismantled because of their remote location as opposed to the Roman Catholic urban monastic life. This negotiation delayed the destruction of the Orthodox monastic life with almost a decade. Departamentul Culte, Direcția de Studii: Monahismul ortodox in paralelă cu cel catolic în țara noastră, (The Orthodox versus the Catholic monastic life in our country) file number 85, volume 11, 1948, 40 pp., Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

⁵⁰ Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, *Considerații generale asupra monahismului, Tabele nominale ale viețuitorilor din mănăstiri și schituri ortodoxe . Anexa Recapitulatie* (General characteristics on the monastic life. Nominal tables with the monks and nuns in orthodox monasteries and hermitages. Annex, Review) file 85 vol. 11, 1953, p. 63, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

which the Transylvanian hierarchy regarded the monastic life.⁵¹ The Patriarch was up against the ministry representatives as well. In the beginning of the 1950s the Ministry was engaged in a sustained activity to control and reduce the number of monasteries.⁵²

One of the most interesting actions of the new Patriarch was to reform the patriarchal administration by bringing in young councilors, priests coming directly from the theological institutes, enterprising young monks decided and eager to climb the hierarchical ladder, loyal to the new patriarch to whom they owed their entire career. Devoted to the Patriarch on whose presence in the patriarchal see they were all dependent upon they proved to be supporters of the patriarchal program, they implemented the new policy and helped in reforming the church and centralizing the administration. They climbed the hierarchical and administrative ladder being rewarded with hierarchical or administrative positions. They formed the first generation of a institutional elite. They were opposed to the intellectual group made up of well educated and well versed in the diplomacy of the church theologians and clergymen, specialized in the dialogue with the secular power supported by Archbishop Bălan located in the academic theological environment of the three and later two Theological Institutes and inside the Ministry for Religious Denominations. On one side we find the late patriarch Teoctist,⁵³ Rev. Professor Dumitru Radu,⁵⁴ Rev.

⁵¹ Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, Archbishop Nicolae Bălan, *Scrisoare către minister privind situația monahismului în Mitropolia Ardealului* (Letter to the Ministry for religious denominations regarding the situation of the monastic life in Transylvania) file 85 vol. 11a, 1954, pp. 115-117, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

⁵² The ministry policy was directed at first against the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic monastic life with dreadful results. The urban thriving Roman Catholic monastic life in Transylvania was liquidated and entire monastic communities were scattered. Their involvement in social activities was denied and the monastic elite were placed in forced domicile at Ciorogîrla monastery.

⁵³ The late patriarch Teoctist (1985-2007) was among the first hierarchs that were brought in by Patriarch Justinian from Jassy. He owes his hierarchical ascendance partly to the Patriarch but from mid 1950s he switched sides and joined Justin Moisesescu to the bitter disappointment

Professor Dumitru Popescu,⁵⁵ Fr. Constantin Pârvu former Administrative Vicar of the Romanian Patriarchate,⁵⁶ Fr. Traian Ghica,⁵⁷ Archbishop Bartolomeu Anania,⁵⁸ an administrative elite of the church and on the other side we find the future Patriarch Justin Moisescu, the canon law professor Liviu Stan, professor Spiridon Câdea, Professor Isidor Todoran, professor Ene Braniște, professor Ștefan Lupșa its intellectual elite. The separation is not as clear cut. The patriarchate recuperates several young intellectuals that the Patriarch Justinian Marina personally supports like Andre Scrima and Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae.

Between the ministry group backed by Archbishop Nicolae Bălan and the Patriarchal group the conflicts appeared from early stages. A careful conflict management done by the communists kept the two sides in a relative equilibrium, with no apparent winning side. More so, direct interventions from the communists created and preserved this conflict. These conflicts revolved around internal debates, debates related to the monastic life, the theological education, the church involvement in

of Justinian Marina that reported him to the ministry for alleged fascist connections in the interwar period. He followed Justin as Patriarch for the last five years of the communist regime and managed to survive the revolution and remained Patriarch to his death in 2007.

⁵⁴ Rev Professor Dumitru Radu, owes his entire professorial career to Patriarch Justinian. He was one of the Patriarchal See specialists for the theological education.

⁵⁵ Rev Professor Dumitru Popescu, like Rev Dumitru Radu was among the young theology graduates that were brought in by Patriarch Justinian. He later directed the ecumenical life of the Orthodox Church.

⁵⁶ Fr. Constantin Pârvu, former administrative vicar of the Romanian Patriarchal See described his first encounter with Justinian Marina when Justinian when inside the Metropolitan Cathedral to pay his respects at Patriarch Nicodim's coffin. Two theology students, Fr Constantin Pârvu and Fr Dumitru Radu were on the steps of the Cathedral and greeted Justinian that Fr Constantin Pârvu says, later invited them to join his administration. Fr Constantin Pârvu will be responsible with the theological seminaries and later will direct the external life of the Romanian Orthodox Church – the parishes abroad. Fr Constantin Pârvu, Administrative Vicar of the Romanian Patriarchy, informal interview 26 January 2005, Antim monastery, Bucharest, Romania.

⁵⁷ Fr Traian Ghica was recuperated by the Patriarch and led the pension system of the Patriarchal Administration.

⁵⁸ Archbishop Bartolomeu Anania recuperated in his memoirs his first encounter with the new patriarch offering a glimpse in his recruitment techniques. See Valeriu Anania, 2009.

social activities, defining the relationship between state and church, the reformation of the church. The two sides created fractions inside the church and the state administration took advantage of them. The state functionaries, the *Securitate* agents, the members of the communist government had inside knowledge of these conflicts, knew the weak points of the persons involved in, they were blackmailed and used against one another. And still the church maintained its unity. Controlled and supervised, infiltrated and conflictual the hierarchy and the central administration of the church was still capable to win its small wars with the state: the Greek Catholic forced unification, the priests remuneration, the building of churches, the publishing of religious books and journals, preserving and gradually increasing the number of students.

This was the context when the first break in the already routinized activity of the Orthodox Church in the new regime appeared. Archbishop Nicolae Bălan's death in 1955 created the first real possibility for the Patriarch, now controlling the internal situation of the church to place one of his protégées' in the Metropolitan See and consolidate his power inside the hierarchy. This context created a stir.⁵⁹ The group of specialists inside the ministry became aware that many of the institutional advantages

⁵⁹ This is the moment in which Liviu Stan sends several letters and reports on the activity of the Patriarch that resembles slender articles and presents the alleged love of money of the Patriarch, his encouragement of the groups that praises him with money and functions. These attacks are directed against the patriarchal administration. These reports bring forth the internal debates between the group of *intellectuals*, theologians and professors and the group surrounding the Patriarch. Liviu Stan condemns the Patriarch that he carelessly got involved in designing the social involvement of the Orthodox Church. This *intellectual* group wanted to design this social involvement by themselves and accused the Patriarch to reform the church superficially just to satisfy the requirements of the communists. All these reports were handed in to the Patriarch by the communist administration and were signed by him for conformity with the written text. See Liviu Stan, *Întunecimea Sa din Deal* (His Dark Prominence on the hill – the Patriarchate is situated on a hill in centre Bucharest), January 1955, Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, File Patriarch Justinian, not processed in the archives, vol.3, 1965, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania, pp. 72-73

that Archbishop Bălan offered would not be offered by the Patriarch. First and foremost the Patriarch would have delegitimized the group and their voice inside the church. By 1955 the Patriarch managed to create a reflection group for the reformation of the church, group that would have replaced easily the one in the ministry.

The involvement of the state was direct. They promoted from within the ministry, a man of the new system, one close from the group supported by Archbishop Bălan: the theologian Iustin Moisescu, inspector in the Ministry. The Patriarch protested. He invoked a recurrent illness to postpone the Synod meeting that would have nominated and elected Iustin as Archbishop of Transylvania were futile.⁶⁰ The state imposed Iustin on the Transylvanian Archbishopric See and shortly after placed him in the Archbishopric See of Moldova placing him into the natural succession line for the Patriarchal See. They kept Justinian Marina on the patriarchal see until his death in 1977, although Archbishop Iustin legitimised by his former belonging to the corpus of state functionaries continuously militated for his replacement, in the same effort of maintaining a hierarchical equilibrium that the communist administration has done from the early days of the installation of the new regime.

III. 3. Church policies – different solutions to internal problems

The church specialists that the ministry hired in the early years of the communist regime came into the ministry with a church reformation agenda that they have put together during the interwar period. The agenda was designed and proposed by

⁶⁰ Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, Alegerea lui Justin, (Justin's election) File Patriarch Justinian, not processed in the archives, vol.1, 1955, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania, section 15, 9 pages.

application in the interwar period. A draft policy was taken under consideration in 1941 during the fascist government and later during Antonescu's regime when the ministry had among its personnel Fr. Ilie Imbrescu, Fr. Liviu Stan and Fr. Nicolae Nicolaescu as minister for religious denominations.

III. 3. a. The monastic life

The draft policy took into consideration reforming the monastic life.⁶¹ In the Ministry for Religious Denominations at the urging of Archbishop Nicolae Bălan⁶² and under the supervision of the future patriarch Iustin Moiescu an attempt to reform monastic life was taken. This involved a proposal for reforming the education of monks and nuns, the hierarchical control over admissions into the monastic order. This overlapped with the proposed reform articulated by the patriarchal administration undertaken at the request of the communist administration. The church administration fearing that the situation of the Roman Catholic monastic life would be applied to the Orthodox Church monastic life transformed the monasteries into centre of production thus ensuring their survival by their very productivity.⁶³ This reform failed. The attempts of the hierarchy of the church to control the monasteries brought about open hostility towards a hierarchy that has "sold the church to the devil," and a generalized opposition against the communists and their continuous attempts to infiltrate the

⁶¹ Adrian Petcu, *Partidul, Securitatea și Culetele*, (The Party, Secret Police and the Religious Denominations), (Bucharest: Nemira Editing House, 2005), p. 52.

⁶² Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, Archbishop Nicolae Bălan, *Scrisoare către minister privind situația monahismului în Mitropolia Ardealului* (Letter to the Ministry for religious denominations regarding the situation of the monastic life in Transylvania) file 85 vol. 11a, 1954, pp. 115-117, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

⁶³ Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, Monahismul ortodox în paralelă cu cel catolic în țara noastră, 1948 (The Orthodox monastic life compared with the catholic) file 85 vol. 11, 1948, p. 7, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

monasteries.⁶⁴ The result was a harsher state reform of the monastic life that closed up more than half of the orthodox monasteries in the country, imprisoned and forced the monks and nuns to return to secular life.⁶⁵

III. 3. b. The theological education system

Another point on the interwar policy agenda was the education of the Orthodox clergy. The centralization of the academic life was attempted after 1948 under the supervision of the theologian Liviu Stan inspector the ministry. The number of Theological Institutes was reduced to three in 1948 and in 1952 to two, making this project easier to control and finalize. The education of the clergy was centralized and standardized. The courses were decided and both theological institutes in Bucharest and Sibiu shared the curricula, the list of bibliography and in some cases the text books. New courses were introduced like those related to the social life of the church and those on Marxism while others were dropped from the curricula. The attempt of reforming the academic theological life failed due to the strict control of the state in most aspects. Yet, Liviu Stan succeeded in imposing the centralization of the theological education and standardized the important curricular package based on the German theological system. This model is followed with few exceptions in the theological faculties today.

⁶⁴ Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, *Memoriul lui Ioan Iovan* (Ioan Iovan complaint), File Patriarch Justinian, not processed in the archives, vol.2, 1955-1958, 25 pp., Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

⁶⁵ Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, *Decizia de aplicare a decretului 410/ 1959 privind viața în mănăstiri* (The decision to apply the legal provision regarding the monastic life no 410/1959), File Patriarch Justinian, not processed in the archives, vol.4, 1958-1965, pp 92-98, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

III. 3. c. *The elephant in the room – the Greek Catholic problem*

The history of the relationship between the two Romanian churches in Transylvania,⁶⁶ the Orthodox and the Greek Catholic, is a complicated account of entanglements, collaborations, negotiations, ruptures, conflict, dialogue and its absence. The relationship was constantly refashioned, and influenced by each new social, economic or political context. Since its inception, the political, rather than religious project of the Habsburgs⁶⁷ in their newly acquired province redesigned its religious landscape to favour the Catholics. Applying the counterreformation pattern already functional in L'viv (at the time known as Lemberg),⁶⁸ the Austrian monarchy redrew the confessional map of Transylvania by unifying a part of the Orthodox Church with the Roman Catholic Church. The clear lines of ethnic segregation based on religious affiliation became murkier, with a large part⁶⁹ of the Romanian community of

⁶⁶ The Greek Catholic Church in Transylvania has a rich history. It was created mainly for political reasons by the Austrian monarchy as a response to the Protestant majority of the Hungarians in Transylvania at the end of the 17th century. The Church comprised a large part of the Romanian population. Less an ecumenical act of Christian unity - though several attempts to argue this approach were made - and more a political and a national one from the Romanian part the Greek Catholic Church this act was the instrument for the national revival of the Romanians in the late 18th and 19th century. Also an important factor in the unification of the country in 1918 the Greek Catholic Church was recognised alongside the Orthodox as a "national" church during the inter war period.

⁶⁷ For a look into the history of the Transylvanian Romanian religious and political life in the 17th and 18th centuries see Mathias Bernath, *Habsburg und die Anfänge der rumänischen Nationsbildung* (Leiden: Brill, 1972); Keith Hitchins, *A Nation Discovered: Romanian Intellectuals in Transylvania and the Idea of Nation, 1700-1848* (Bucharest: Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1999)

⁶⁸ Research into the unification of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches in 18th century concludes that the counter-reformation actions in the spirit of church union initiated by the Council of Florence in 1439 in Eastern Europe that were finalized with the partial unification of Brest in 1596 was used as model by the Habsburgs for the union in Transylvania, see Pompiliu Teodor, 'Introducere,' (Introduction) in Mathias Bernath, *Habsburgii și începuturile formării Națiunii Române*, (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1991), p. 5-7.

⁶⁹ A statistic of the Romanian clergy in Transylvania in 1716 registers over 2200 Uniate and 456 Orthodox priests, but this is to be carefully read since most of the population could not tell the difference between the two churches the Greek Catholics having preserved the Byzantine rite and the calendar, see David Prodan, *Supplex Libellus Valachorum*, Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1998, p. 179; In the interwar period the Romanian statistic yearbook finds 58,2% Orthodox and the rest Greek Catholics among the Transylvanian Romanians, see Irina Livezeanu, *Cultura și nationalism în România Mare, 1918-1930*, (Cultural Politics in Greater Romania, 1918-1930), (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998), p. 164.

Transylvania now inside a larger Catholic community. The now religiously segregated Romanian community developed differently within the bounds of the two churches: the old Orthodox and the new Greek Catholic. The Greek Catholic community played an important role in the modernization of the Romanian community in Transylvania from its inception in the eighteen century to 1918 and the unification of the country especially in the national awakening process during the nineteenth century; the Greek Catholic personalities, for example, had an important role in the unification process with the Romanian Kingdom in 1918.

The expectation was that after the unification of the country in 1918, the Romanian churches would also unite to reach the concept of ‘one church one nation’.⁷⁰ Instead, in the 1923 Constitution, the state compromised and sanctioned both churches as national churches. A competition between the two Romanian elites in Transylvania for legitimacy in the newly created state ensued, and with it a competition for survival for both these churches in the 1920s and 1930s. For the Greek Catholics it was about surviving in the bounds of a different structure that legitimized and formed the national elite. For the Transylvanian Orthodox the legitimacy fight was around entering in a Romanian structure, a discursive corpus where the highest authority was represented by the Orthodox Romanians, where the authenticity of their orthodoxy was discussed and questioned. For the Transylvanian Orthodox as well this was a strategy for survival in a foreign (albeit Romanian) ensemble with different norms and religious practices, a distinct hierarchy and a new decision-making centre. The Greek Catholics, meanwhile, had to integrate their history into a larger national narrative.

⁷⁰ Cristian Vasile, *Între Vatican şi Kremlin. Biserica Greco-Catolică în timpul regimului comunist*, (Between the Vatican and Kremlin, The Greek Catholic Church during the communist regime), Bucharest: Curtea Veche publishing house, 2004, pp. 68-76.

The Transylvanian Orthodox strove to save their history from being engulfed by the history of the mother institution (the Romanian Orthodox Church) they joined after the union of 1918. Both the Greek Catholics and the Transylvanian Orthodox competed in Transylvania to offer their own solution to constructing the nation at the regional level.⁷¹ After the unification of the country, the Transylvanian Orthodox put forward several offers and designed a number of plans for the unification of the two churches, put forward as a *natural return to the mother church*. The unification of the nation united that the church serving the nation had *to become one again*. The response was a Greek Catholic unification project: by making Greek Catholicism the sole valid means of unifying the two churches.⁷²

The communist regime regarded the Greek Catholics as a potential problem for several key reasons: important among these were the subordination to an external administrative and hierarchical body of a large part of Romanians from Transylvania, and the relative political independence of the hierarchy of the Greek Catholic Church, part of the Romanian elite in Transylvania. The solution of the union with the Romanian Orthodox Church had Soviet lineage but with significant local characteristics. It provided the communist administration with a united and compact group of Romanian believers, subject to one church and one discourse.

The unification of the two churches, prepared for several years, was predictable in light of the propaganda issued by the state. The Orthodox Church, which had been engaged for several decades in the pro-union debate with the Greek Catholic elite,

⁷¹ See Keith Hitchins, *A Nation Affirmed: The Romanian Movement in Transylvania 1860-1914*, (Bucharest: Encyclopedia Publishing House, 1999).

⁷² Cristian Vasile, 2004, pp. 68-76.

realized that the state might become involved with the Greek Catholic problem from 1946 onwards, once the dissolution option had been applied to the Greek Catholic Church in West Ukraine.

In applying its policy, the State co-opted the Orthodox Church, which had in turn advertised the dissolution of the Greek Catholic Church as a long-awaited reunion between the two Romanian churches, thereby conforming to the state's line of propaganda that focused on nationalist ideals. The unification project was labelled *Revenirea Bisericii Greco Catolice in sânul bisericii mamă – Biserica Ortodoxă* (The Return of the Greek Catholic Church to the Mother Orthodox Church).

A serious campaign to bring the Greek Catholic Church 'back to the bosom of the mother Church' was organized only after the L'viv synod act of 1946. In reaction, that same year Iasi-based university professor Milan Şesan (1910-1981) published an article⁷³, later included in a book with the same title, *De ce Uniația?* (Why did Unification Happen?). Already in the preamble, he states that one of the reasons for writing the book was the denunciation by the Greek Catholic Archbishop of Western Ukraine of the 'confessional union with Rome, realized at the famous Brest-Litovsk synod in 1596.'⁷⁴ The article is a *histoire evenementielle* of Greek Catholicism in general with just a few mostly incidental references to the Transylvanian case. Şesan describes the different types of church unions, plus the motives behind them and their sponsors. He carefully inserts biblical and canonical precepts in his argumentation for the religious union that solicit the existence of one united church and one truth. However, there are some remarks with obviously tendentious implications. For

⁷³ Milan Şesan, 'De ce Uniația?', in *Candela* (The candle), Year LVI, 1946, pp. 273 – 293.

⁷⁴ Milan Şesan, *De ce Uniația?*, (Iasi, 1946), p. 3.

instance, he talks of the unification of the two churches at the local level and states that:

Every act of union is connected in almost every case with a moral violation, as objectively historiographical monographs should record. Dissatisfaction and splits between believers accumulate and Greek Catholicism becomes a refuge for the crowd of those dissatisfied with the Orthodox believers, and is left by all those embittered by *equivoque*.⁷⁵

This particular type of article that prepared the religious union can be found throughout 1947, though most of them lose their propaganda hint seen in Şesan's article.

Following these developments and debates, the constitution of 1948 stipulated that the state guaranteed freedom of religion and conscience and that all religious denominations were free and equal under the law. The same was stipulated in the Law of Religious Denomination issued in August 1948. The Greek Catholic Church complied with this law's requirement that all religious denominations submit a statute of faith, and the church was thereby recognized by the Romanian state. Events unfolded rapidly thereafter, beginning with the Autumn 1948 gathering of 38 Greek Catholic archpriests [protopopi] in Cluj - Napoca to sign the act returning the Greek Catholic Church to the Orthodox Church. This date coincided with the anniversary of the Greek Catholic Church, marking 250 years since the 1698 unification signed by 38 Transylvanian archpriests. The act of *reunification* was therefore laden with symbolism: signed on the same date and by as many archpriests as the union with the Roman Catholic Church in 1698 which helped create an aura of legitimacy for the Romanian Orthodox Church's actions. Six days later, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church blessed the reunification of the Romanian Church from

⁷⁵ Şesan, 1947, p. 21

Transylvania and signed the synod act that made official the re-uniting of the two churches. On 21 November in Alba Iulia, a religious ceremony was to bestow a divine and popular blessing on the event, and notably large numbers participated: 100,000 and 150,000 according to estimates in official reports and Orthodox Church documents.⁷⁶

At the end of the year, the communist regime used the union to dissolve the Greek Catholic Church on the basis of its alleged obsolescence: supposedly now lacking believers and priests, all its material patrimony had in any case already been entrusted to the Orthodox Church.⁷⁷ The Greek Catholic hierarchy that had opposed unification was imprisoned, and believers that remained faithful to their religion were either forced to practice it in secret or to join the Roman Catholic Church.

Archbishop Nicolae Bălan and the Sibiu church history and canon law professors received the task of devising a policy to integrate the Greek Catholics in the mother church. Throughout the 1950s, the Romanian Orthodox Church worked alongside the state to strengthen the union. In practice, the process of turning the Greek Catholic believers and clergy into Orthodox ones required consistent efforts both at the local and at central level. Satisfied in 1948 with simply a name change, representing only a superficial union, the Romanian Orthodox Church became increasingly aware of the

⁷⁶ Nicolae M Popescu, "In Alba Iulia odinioara 1698 si acum 1948"(In Alba Iulia then 1698 and now 1948), *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* (The Romanian Orthodox Church), Issue 11-12 (November-December 1948) p. 613.

⁷⁷ The decree that dissolved the Greek Catholic Church stated: "After the reunion of the Greek Catholic Church with the Romanian Orthodox Church and according to the Article 13 of the Decree No. 177/1948 the central and statutory organisations of this denomination, such as metropolitan sees, bishoprics, orders, congregations, archpriests, monasteries, foundations, associations and any other institutions under any other name shall cease to exist." *Monitorul Oficial*, Issue 281, Bucharest, (December 2, 1948).

complications as time passed. In the 1960s, the Romanian Orthodox Church was still in the process of strengthening the *religious union*. The process of “publicizing the *re-unification act*” was part of a complex activity of bringing the Greek Catholics back into the fold that was sometimes jointly designed by the Romanian Patriarchate and the Ministry for Religious Denominations. This process included schooling former Greek Catholic priests and swapping parishes with Orthodox priests in the Old Kingdom. The result was an influx of young theology graduates in former Greek Catholic parishes. These were corroborated with a brutal campaign of destroying the Greek Catholic opposition, involving the imprisonment of hierarchs, priests and believers.

III. 4 Conclusion

A dual elite system functioned inside the Orthodox Church all throughout the late 1940s and 1950s entertained and supported by the communist state administration that used this parallel administration of the church against each other. Yet the hiring inside the ministry of several specialists and theologians, insiders in the Orthodox Church sped up a process of reformation of the Orthodox Church undertaken under the control of the state but on a policy agenda that belonged to the interwar intellectual elite of the church. Well argued by the Orthodox specialists to befit the alleged needs of the communist administration this reform managed to offer the possibility, especially to the intellectual/ administrative elite of the church, to safeguard the position of the Romanian Orthodox Church in its relation to the communist state on an interwar model.

The chronology of Romanian communism offered by important researchers like Katherine Verdery or Vladimir Tismăneanu that locates in the late 1950s and the 1960s the return to a nationalist ideology in an independence move from Moscow of the Romanian Communist Party can be pushed forward. An interwar/ nationalist agenda was introduced in the Ministry for Religious Denominations already in the early 1950s by specialists co-opted by the ministry to design the policy towards religious denominations of the communist central administration. The *unification* of the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches and the projects of integrating the former Greek Catholics was but one of these nationalist projects that spoke of the unification of the Romanian believers into one church, project that the Transylvanian elite of the Orthodox Church considered since the early 1920s.

CHAPTER IV

Know thy enemy - changing central policy from outside the political administration

In the first years of the new regimes, until 1952 the state administration in the ministry for religious denominations developed an apparatus of functionaries to survey and control the religious life in territory based on a dual model. Similar to the central administration of the Ministry for Religious Denominations, the corpus of local inspectors of the ministry bore resemblances both with the Soviet model and with the previous existing model coming from the organization of the Ministry in the interwar period. Similarly again to how the state administration was organised at central level, inside the Ministry and later the Department for Religious Denominations, the organization at local level in the administrative regions and major cities was subject to the initial compromises both the state administration and the church made.

The present chapter continues the discussion on the organization of the Ministry/ Department for Religious Denominations looking at the apparatus of local functionaries. My hypothesis is that the mechanisms of control that the central state administration developed for the functioning and for the surveillance of the religious denominations were built on initial compromises and came to function against the state in various moments. This chapter discusses who is controlling the religious denominations and the religious life at a regional and local level, it looks at the methods employed by the central administration to ensure that the central decisions and policies were put into practice, what were the methods to implement these

decisions and policies, what was controlled and how the Churches responded and at times bypassed this control of the state.

The previous chapter offered an insight into the internal life of the Ministry/ Department for Religious Denominations' central administration. I followed the way in which a parallel Orthodox Church hierarchy inside the Ministry was created resulting not just in a successful hierarchical change with clergy that was closer to the new regime but also in promoting an agenda of the Church inside the state administration and the safeguard of several important characteristics of the institutional religious life in communist Romania. This chapter develops around the activity of the specialists that imposed the policy agenda of the ministry onto the religious denominations and how the denominations at their turn succeeded in accommodating those rules and regulations coming from the ministry.

The makeup of the apparatus that managed the religious life (Împuternicit de culte¹ - the regional/ local inspector for religious denomination) imposing the decisions of the ministry on the church, supervising and controlling the following of these rules and regulations set by the ministry and the Party and the response of the Church to the state attempts of control are the focus of this chapter. The response of the local religious community, the clergy and the hierarchy to the requirements of the state in the interaction with the state functionary and the member of the church went from a period of learning to one when the actions of both state personnel and members of

¹ Translated literally with *One given power over religious denominations* which mirrors the Soviet nomenklatura at the position of regional inspector. See Tatiana Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia: Russian Orthodoxy from World War II to the Khrushchev years*, (New York, M.E. Sharpe, 2002).

religious institutions became routinized. For each action of the state administration one reaction from the church could be revealed. The reactions went from new negotiation techniques,² blackmail, bribes, isolating the collaborators, hiding behind Church regulations, using the believers to name but a few. The results of the interactions between the state administration and the church allow the latter to maintain a certain status quo in the number of priests, believers and church places and lead to less state interference in religious practice, where interference is often understood in the involvement of the regional/ local inspector in the administration of the church. The chapter provides a look at the way in which the church constructed the relationship with the communist cadres that supervised religious life in territory. It is the activity of what E. A. Reese termed in the Soviet case the *operatives of control*, those monitoring the activity of religious denominations.³

I was interested in how *orthodox* was the communist administration in its local negotiations with the religious denominations? Whether the members of the local administration that dealt with the religious communities respected the regulations and policies set by the central administration – the ministry - or they exercised individual power over this relationship at local level. Was the existing process of deal making

² The journal of the personal secretary of the first patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church His Excellence Miron Cristea, Dudu Velicu records for the first years of the installation of the communist regime in Romania the changes in the administration of the Church and its encounters with the state administration (government and Party officials) and witnesses the continuities and discontinuities in this relationship, see Dudu Velicu, *Biserica Ortodoxă în perioada sovietizării României, Însemnări zilnice, II, 1948-1959*, (The Orthodox Church during the sovietization of Romania, Daily notes, II, 1948-1959), (Bucharest: Arhivele Naționale ale României, 2005).

³ E. A. Reese, *State Control in Soviet Russia. The Rise and Fall of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, 1920 – 1934*, (New York: St. Martins Press, 1987).

and constant negotiation of decisions coming from the centre a mean for church members to bypass, modify or “weaken the effectiveness of the monitoring agency.”⁴

IV. 1 Research methodologies – challenges and solutions

Researching the apparatus of control and the response of the Romanian Orthodox Church and other religious denominations to its regular interferences in their administrative decisions at various levels I have used documents from the Archives of the State Secretary for Religious Denominations. These Archives have the largest collection of documents pertaining to the corpus of inspectors. They held the results of the apparatus of inspector’s field work, the rules and regulations developed by the centre – the Ministry and later the Department, and various other legislative bodies. These archives also give the researcher access to individual and group evaluations of the work of these cadres. Of interest for the research were the archival materials elaborated by two directions in the ministry: the direction for studies (Direcția Studii) and the direction of the local inspectors (Direcția Împuterniciților). While the direction of the local inspectors is made up exclusively from the materials that the local inspectors sent to the ministry, the direct results of their field work, the direction of study processed the information received from the local inspectors and either transformed it into policy or evaluated a set policy of the ministry or department. The direction for studies takes the materials sent by the local inspectors to the next level and designed the response and actions as following the information received. I have thus used largely the materials created by the direction for studies. The files in this direction compile also the notes from the inspectors – selections of materials on which the policy is based or to which the ministry personnel chose to reply to are present in

⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

the overall study. Duplicates are still preserved in the files of the direction of the local inspectors.

Interviews with former inspectors and various persons that functioned at one time or another in the administration of the Ministry/ Department, interviews with members of various religious denominations that had contacts with these inspectors, access in the archives of the Romanian Orthodox Church at both local⁵ and central level helped in structuring the mechanism of the relationship between the corpus of ministry inspectors and the members of religious communities. The interviewees, both the former communist cadres and the clergymen, described an arduous process, a complicated relationship that was difficult to internalize by everyone involved, a state overregulated relationship, but at the same time a relationship that involved interpersonal relations.

The period in focus in this chapter are the late 1940s and early 1950s when the profile of the state functionary at a local and regional level is structured and the response of the religious denominations to this intrusion of the ministry into their life started to develop, the mechanism of negotiation, response, protection become manifest. Also this is the period when the position of the inspector in the communist cadre system changes from one that is available to the insider,⁶ cadres selected from and connected with the religious denominations to one almost exclusively available to the outsider,

⁵ The local archival materials belong to the Archives of the Alba Iulia Archbishopric of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Archives of the Tirgu-Mures Deanery of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

⁶ Due to the lack of specialised cadres the first pool of candidates for the position of inspectors in the ministry was made up of persons that were connected with the religious life in the country (insiders) – defrocked priests, theology students.

those communist specialists formed by the state to take over the activity of supervision and control.

During the research period tracking the the relationship between the ministry personnel and the members of the religious communities in the archive materials was more complete for the early stage of the communist period. In the first decade of the communist regime the documents that the local inspectors drafted during their daily activities were richer in information, more detailed, trying to completely respond to the requests coming from the ministry. The documents become rather standardized after a period of adjustment for the newly employed ministry personnel. Starting from the late 1960s the documents contain standard formulae, the inspectors anticipate the requests and the ministry's response to their paperwork and make efforts to prevent any action that the centre might take in response to their work. There were inspectors who wrote their summaries of the meetings with various members of the church, the minutes of the priest conferences for instance, before those meetings actually took place.⁷ This revealed a routinized relationship between the inspector and the subject of surveillance/ investigation, with both sides mechanically aware of the rules and regulations that govern their relationship in the second decade of the Romanian communist regime.

To complete the research for the period where the documents became standardized I have conducted several interviews that offer a view limited to the 1970s and 1980s. Many of the examples used in this chapter come from the late period of Romanian communism and followed the continuities and discontinuities in the characteristics of

⁷ David Gheorghe, interview by Anca Şincan, file recorder, Tîrgu-Mureş, January 31st, 2006.

the relationship, in the way in which this corpus of functionaries was structured and behaved in the long *duree* to create a portrait of the potential candidate for this function in the communist cadres system. I used examples from his activity of control and supervision. I looked at his attributes but also at the response of the religious denomination to his activity

IV.2 The Local Inspector for Religious Denominations

In various conversations I had with priests, pastors, church functionaries and even believers taking part in the administration of their parishes about the communist period and the involvement of the state administration in the affairs of the church the figure of one communist functionary surfaces almost always: the Ministry's and later Department for Religious Denominations' local/ regional inspector. The inspector is part in most of the conflict situations experienced by the parish or the clergymen in the period. For some, remembering the inspector was directly connected with the punishments he was able to enforce upon the religious community and their spiritual leaders, others remembered the unavoidable encounters⁸ and the petty interventions in the religious life of the community. This person inside the communist cadre system is not just a simple communist functionary but an individual with broad authority over

⁸ Dimitrie Poptămaş a Greek Catholic intellectual remembers the local inspector's weekly Sunday visits to the church by relating his mother-in-law awe towards what she perceived as the religiosity of the man. "He spends more time in church than you are" he recounts her saying to him. His identity never revealed to the community of believers could have produced such misunderstandings. The explanation of the presence of the inspector to the church on religious celebration could not have been his religious belief (the inspector in question Arpad Tanko was of Hungarian descent and most probably not a member of the Orthodox Church) but of a work related motivation. The church in question served a community of former Greek Catholic believers and thus needed a closer supervision on account of possible opposition activity. Anca Şincan, informal conversation with Professor Dumitru Poptămaş, Sovata, spring 2004.

the realm he administered: the religious denominations, the local religious communities with their members and its clergy.

This type of state functionary was transferred from the Soviet experience in the politics of administration, surveillance and control over religious denominations to the rest of the communist bloc.⁹ The inspector for religious denominations is both in the Soviet and the Romanian communist case the last link of the newly designed relationship between the communist state and the religious denominations, responsible with implementing state policy, the first and in most cases the only Ministry representative available at a local level. He is the person with whom the clergyman “negotiates” his position, requests, needs, conflicts.¹⁰ His intervention, often brutal,¹¹ in the life of the church was based on a set of rules, regulations and liberties assigned to this position from the centre, in this case from the specialised Ministry/ later Department for Religious Denominations inside the Ministry for Internal Affairs, or in many cases from the *Securitate* whose member and subordinate the inspector often was.

The initial reactions of the clergy, hierarchy and religious communities alike to the introduction of the inspector in the life of the church were of shock and disbelief. The reports show the consternation of the members of the clergy, especially at a local level, with regards to the introduction and the role of the inspector in the life of the religious community. His unfamiliarity with religious life created important

⁹ See Otto Luchterhandt, “The Council for Religious Affairs” in Sabrina Ramet, ed., *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 58.

¹⁰ For a broader look into the functioning of the relationship between state and church and the role of the inspector for religious denominations see Tatiana A. Chumachenko, 2002.

¹¹ The brutality of the inspectors ranged from physical punishments to threats, economic punishments, and social constraints.

communication problems and his authority, always challenged had to be enforced frequently by appealing to the communist hierarchical chain, the local administration, the militia, the secret police, and in numerous cases the hierarchy of the religious denomination the contestant belonged to. These initial reactions never completely vanished. The inspector paralleled a function in the administration of the Romanian Orthodox Church, that of the archpriest (protopop), an intermediary between the hierarch and the local clergy. The inspector was part of the most intimate administrative decisions the church had to make and behaved as an intermediary between state and church, hierarch and clergy, clergy and church members, a mediator as well as a monitor.

The local inspectors for religious denominations¹² were mentioned in the Law for the Organization of the Ministry for religious denominations as “special agents” (delegaţi speciali).¹³ Starting from the second half of 1948 these functionaries, much like the other employees inside the apparatus of the Ministry severed their direct tie to the Ministry for Religious Denominations or the Prime Minister and depended directly on the leadership of the Romanian Workers Party, the Party Central Committee. The minutes of the meeting of the Workers Party Central Committee Secretary in November 25, 1948 reflect this new type of subordination. In his speech Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party proposed the founding by the party of a structure inside the Ministry for Religious Denominations to deal on daily bases with the manifestations of the clergy and to be in touch permanently with the Party Secretary. “In each county there must be someone who

¹² See also Adrian Nicolae Petcu, Ministerul Cultelor şi slujitorii altarelor în anii “democraţiei populare,” (the Ministry for religious denominations and the servants of the altars in the years of people’s democracy) in *Pro Memoria*, nr. 3-2004

¹³ *Monitorul Oficial* 30, (1949), 1063.

knows what is happening in the churches and would later inform the party” – concluded Dej.¹⁴ The Ministry for Religious Denominations was subordinated to the Central Committee of the Romanian Worker’s Party, to its administrative political section,¹⁵ and thus limited Prime Minister Petru Groza’s involvement in the religious affair to a rather secondary role. Placing the inspectors of the Ministry for Religious Denominations under the direct umbrella of the Party’s Central Committee argues for the separation inside the communist party with regards to planning the regime’s position towards the various religious denominations as discussed in the previous chapter.

To administer the religious denominations at central level the state administration preserved the interwar Ministry for Religious Denominations that was served by a technical apparatus (functionaries, inspectors) inherited from the previous regime or by personnel that function on a preexisting pattern of church state relationship. The new ministry preserved not just a part of the personnel but also largely the functions that it had in the interwar period. As discussed in the previous chapter some of the nominations of the ministry’s personnel belonged to a hierarchical center of the Romanian Orthodox Church that was slightly segregated from the Bucharest patriarchal centre. While the hiring of several ministry functionaries out of the Sibiu Metropolitan See intelligentsia could be explained by the need to create a double hierarchical chain to be used by the Party leadership to counter pose any independence

¹⁴ Stenogramele şedinţelor Biroului Politic al Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc (Minutes of the meetings of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Romanian Worker’s Party) Font Comitetul Central al Partidului Comunist Român – Cancelarie, File 78, 1953, Direcția Arhivelor Naționale Istorice Centrale (The National Historical Archives), Bucharest, Romania, p. 11.

¹⁵ Font Comitetul Central al Partidului Comunist Român – Cancelarie, File 78, 1953, Direcția Arhivelor Naționale Istorice Centrale (The National Historical Archives), Bucharest, Romania, p. 24.

move of the newly communist appointed hierarchy of the Romanian Orthodox Church¹⁶ it resulted also from the lack of trained specialists who could be capable to deal with the pressing issues related to religious life in the country.

Unlike in the Soviet Union where in the early stages of the organization of the Departments of Cults and later the Secretariat/ Permanent Commission for the Affairs of Cults there was a “real revolutionary zeal amongst the Bolsheviks [...] with a genuine hostility towards religion, particularly as institutionalized in the Russian Orthodox Church”¹⁷ in the early years of Romanian communism, in the formative stages of the relationship between state and religious denominations the anti – religious sentiment was still to be taught, the new cadres (*the reds*) still to replace the *specialists*.

Until the early 1950s, when the new regime formed its own cadres, the Ministry functioned at the local level with specialists selected from those trained in the former regime. One can assume by the period of time it took to replace the specialists trained in the former regime that extended in some cases to almost a decade that the selection process implied careful consideration and increased concern because of the sensitivity of the work in this department. It seems, as we have discussed in the earlier chapters, that for the associates of the Ministry for Religious Denominations, not those persons that in one way or the other manifested support for the new regime were preferred, but specialists that could be blackmailed because of their past. In several cases members of the clergy that were outspoken in their opposition to communism before the coming to power

¹⁶ Several hierarchs were appointed directly from their Ministry positions into Orthodox Bishoprics, Metropolitan Sees and later even in the Patriarchal See or kept positions inside the Theological Institutes both in Bucharest and in Sibiu.

¹⁷ Philip Walters, “A Survey of Soviet Religious Policy”, in Sabrina Ramet, ed., *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 5.

of the regime were preferred to those insiders that expressed their willingness to collaborate with the regime. This is the case with Bishop Valerian Zaharia of Oradea that was passed over by various hierarchical promotions even if a staunch supporter of the regime and indebted to the communist administration for most of his hierarchical gains. The past of the ministry functionaries was considered in the process of selection because on its basis they were easily blackmailed (adherence to the legionary movement was at times an incentive for their selection to a position inside the corpus of inspectors but in the same time punishable with imprisonment). It also legitimated most of these new state employees for the position they occupied their training in the interwar period being an important reason for their appointment. This eased the strain in the relationship between the communist administration and the members of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

The local inspector had a vital position inside the structure of the Ministry for Religious Denominations enforcing the decisions taken at the centre. As in the Soviet case, the inspector ensured the link between State and religious denominations at a local level. In both the Soviet and the Romanian case the commissioner/ inspector represented the ministry and had as tasks the inventory, registration, supervision and from the early 1950s the control of religious life.¹⁸ His activity was centred on transmitting the central administration's requests, state policy and the state rules and regulations with regard to religious life and on supervising their implementation. He gathered statistical data for the centre, mediated conflicts and set the system of punishments and rewards, or advised the immediate hierarch regarding the punishment or reward he was to give. Therefore the impact he had was extreme. The official and un-official positions of church members against the apparatus of

¹⁸ Tatiana Chumachenko, 2002, p. 27.

inspectors and the individual complain speak of tangible tensions existing between the two parts.¹⁹

IV. 2. a From administering control to owning control

The development of the organization of the Ministry for Religious Denominations, later the Department for Religious Denominations follows the chronology of the installation of the communist regime in Romania. While in the late 1940s early 1950s the Ministry preserved the interwar structure, functions and even part of the personnel²⁰ after 1952 the Soviet model is over imposed in the organization of the Ministry. The corpus of inspectors enlarges and their attributes include not only supervision but also control and were no longer limited to solving minute problems connected to the relation between the state administration and the religious denomination while re-directing the important ones to the centre.

A first major change in the structure and the make-up of the ministry is noticeable in 1952-1953 with the replacements in the corpus of inspectors the specialists that ensured the transition from the interwar period were replaced by communist cadres educated in the new educational system. In the period of transition from the traditional interwar ministry to the newly imposed requirements of the communist regime the corpus of inspectors was made-up from persons connected in one way or another with the religious life of the country (former priests, defrocked priests, theology students and even priests that return to priesthood once their activity for the Ministry is

¹⁹ Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, File Patriarch Justinian, not processed in the archives, vol.2, 1955, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania, pp. 1-22

²⁰ See Dudu Velicu, *Biserica Ortodoxă în perioada sovietizării României. Însemnări zilnice 1945-1947* (The Orthodox Church in the period of sovietization in Romania. Daily notes, 1945-1947), vol. I, (București, Arhivele Naționale ale României, 2004), p. 36.

concluded).²¹ This brake with the previous period brought forth a new transitional period that ended in the late 1950s and is characterised by the rough and sometimes violent encounters between the corpus of inspectors and the Romanian Orthodox Church.

The Ministry upon its transformation into a Department in the Ministry for Internal Affairs in 1956 had 4 directions and 10 services. From the 342 employees, 198 were inspectors in territory. After repeated restructuring in 1968 the Department had 185 positions, 73 of inspectors in territory. After 1970 it had 136 positions and 42 inspectors.²² The drop in numbers of more than 70 percent signifies not only that the work became more efficient and routinized but also that the Ministry/ later Department for Religious Denominations shared attributes with the Secret Police and parts of their tasks were taken over by the latter.

The 1960s brought forth the routinization of the relationship between the church members, its hierarchy and clergy and the apparatus of supervision and control. The 1960s brought about also a change in status for the Romanian Orthodox Church along with the nationalization of the Communist Party and the return to various national themes in the Party discourse, themes that involved not just the Orthodox Church as an institution but also members of the church well versed in this type of discourse.²³

²¹ Dudu Velicu, 2005.

²² Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, Atribuții (Assignments) (not processed in the archives), 1970, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

²³ The resurfacing in the mid 1960s of church personalities, historians, hierarchs, theologians that were imprisoned for their interwar connections with the Iron Guard or their opposition to the new regime in religious journals but also in the publications that the communist regime sent to the Romanian Diaspora revisiting intellectual debates on nationalism, the birth of the new man, the unification of the Greek Catholic and Orthodox Church speaks of the reassessment of the status of the Orthodox Church. This is the case of church historian Silviu Dragomir or the case of the theologian Dumitru Stăniloae.

Together with the routinization of the relationship between state administration and church came the gradual decrease in numbers of the inspectors. While in the first years of communism the number of inspectors is impressive, their *strength coming from numbers*, later with the slow decrease their *strength* came from information.

As discussed in the previous chapter the first period in the activity of the Ministry for Religious Denomination was a transition period when the personnel came from within the clerical intelligentsia of the Romanian Orthodox Church and were used by the regime for their inside knowledge. The same is true for the corpus of inspectors that was initially selected from a similar pool – specialists trained in the interwar closely connected with the religious life. To supervise and control, to, sometimes even administer the religious denomination one had to be familiar with their structure, organization, administration, history, statistical data, canonical and dogmatic precepts. This type of education was not available but for insiders, for persons with direct links to the denomination they administered especially in the early days of the installation of the communist regime in Romania.

This is a common trait of all the communist countries of East Central Europe. For the sensitive issue of the state regulation of religious life the training of specialists was conducted in the field and the majority of the inspectors conducted their activity based on trial and error. Tatiana Chumachenko describes the complicated situation of the Council for Russian Orthodox Affairs in its early years:

Workers in the Council for Russian Orthodox Affairs, the majority of whom formerly served in the state bureaucracy, lacked work experience or even knowledge essential for the specialized task of interacting with religious organizations under the new ecclesiastical policy. [...] Work itself provided the

necessary experience. Mistakes and errors forced the Council personnel to seek new and more effective methods for organizing their activity.²⁴

The similarities with the Romanian case are striking. One can notice how the rules and regulations were constantly changed to accustom the field requirements. Therefore even if the initial corpus of inspectors was replaced after the transition period with trained communist cadres the former ministry employees were kept inside the state apparatus in a second tier of the decision making process and administration.²⁵

The archival material of the Ministry mirrors the replacement of the functionaries, at least at a local and regional level, with trained communist cadres starting from 1952. Most of the personnel thus far were connected with the religious life, in most cases having a theological training or belonging to the clergy. They were replaced with communist cadres, faithful to the regime with a training that allowed them not just to impose to the clergy and hierarchy the central regulations but also to analyse and discern their relevance and importance, to solve a number of them without the help of the central or the local administration, to decide about the possibility to implement a central directive.

From the archival materials and the analysis of the political context one can only assume why this transition from one type of inspector to another took place. First 1952 can be regarded as a marker year, a year when the first promotion of communist cadres and specialists left the three year university system set up in the early period of the communist system in order to quickly create the educated specialists and cadres the Party needed, this year ended the first period of formation for the communist

²⁴ Tatiana Chumachenko, p. 19.

²⁵ Sheila Fitzpatrick, 1992, pp. 150-155

cadres and with this a new administrative apparatus of the new regime was put in place. The early 1950s is also a period of convulsions in the political arena when the fidelity of the existing communist functionaries towards the communist leadership that preserved the power was tested.²⁶

The corpus of inspectors was endowed in this new stage that began with 1952 with larger latitude in dealing with the local problem. Their communist orthodoxy gave them a privileged status over the former inspectors that were more specialised in their activity but less orthodox in their communist allegiance. During the censorship of religious books from the libraries of the eparchies the regional inspector Eugen Giurgiu from Cluj noted in a report sent to the Ministry in 1952 the exaggeration in applying a measure that was not well taken by the clergy. He states:

This involves picking up an important number of books ... and thus this activity was postponed so as to verify this possible mistake when the list of books was drafted by the Ministry. Many of these books are simply prayer books and some were approved for publishing by the present leadership of the Publishing Directorate in Cluj. Please revise if necessary the list of books so we would not commit any mistakes. The Reformed bishop was not yet briefed as a cautionary measure. Please send instructions.²⁷

Eugen Giurgiu's request was not singular. Other inspectors were also conflicted between the requests of the ministry and the reality in the field. The ministry ended up recommending that a potential solution be sought to problems before sending them to the ministry. Most of the problems, which the ministry had to solve after the mid 1950s, came thus after an attempt to solve them was already made by the inspector at the local level as opposed to the previous period when all the problems in territory had

²⁶ Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for all Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism*, (Berkley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 107-136.

²⁷ Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, *Adrese, referate, diverse situații cu privire la bibliotecile din cuprinsul unor eparhii din țară*, (Notes, reports on various situations regarding the libraries in several archbishoprics in the country) file 72 vol. 2, 1952, p. 20, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

to be reported to the centre and the central inspectors offered solutions to the problems coming from the field extending the chain of command and the necessary time frame for solving the problems.

With this decision to seek out solutions to problems and conflicts first at a local level and only after the mediation failed to involve the central inspectors in the ministry the inspector was invested with authority. If in an initial phase the inspector was selected from specialists in religion and his function was to administer the state's authority without owning it – his nomination for this function being directly connected to needing an insider, and more, a person that could be blackmailed into doing the ministry work of supervision and control, his replacement was with a specialist, a communist cadre faithful to a communist ideology and thus situated in opposition to the religious worldview that they have to control. From administering the state's authority to being endowed with authority the corpus of inspectors developed their status to encompass traits that were hardly accessible to the inspectors before 1952. They were now entrusted to seek solutions to the problems met in the field, to negotiate the rules, to adjust them to the requirements of the specificities of the problems he met.

There is a need to invest the functionaries with authority a need that resides in the ministry's gradual loss of control over the activity of the religious denominations in territory. These malfunctions in authority appeared first while trying to solve the Greek Catholic problem, and strictly related with it the subsequent Roman Catholic

problem manifested in contesting the authority of the new regime and opposing it.²⁸

Another important problem was that of the Neo Protestant denominations resulted from the lack of a central hierarchy that could be held responsible for the problems in territory. One needs also to look into the problems that came about in the relationship with the Romanian Orthodox Church, problems that followed the constant bypass of rules and regulations and the challenges to the authority of the state functionary in matters regarding the religious community life. These malfunctions imposed the presence of a state representative capable to exercise authority to replace the ones coming from within the rank and file of the religious denomination that were subject to pressure from within his community.

This situation is an ideal one though and few persons manage to function on this reasoning. This is the premise on which the Romanian Orthodox Church developed their response to the communist cadre in charged with its supervision: their inability to adhere strictly to the requirements of the communist ideology. This grey margin was exploited at all the level of the Romanian Orthodox Church where the church interacted with the state administration. The final chapter will illustrate how the local religious communities bypass regulations regarding the construction of church buildings through negotiations with the inspectors for religious denominations and with the local administration. In a similar way the administration of the church had devised a system of check and balances that kept the intrusions in the life of the church of the secular administration of the communist state encapsulated. Personal

²⁸ There are various problems connected with the unification of the Orthodox Church with the Greek Catholic expressed also in a gradually higher number of believers that attended the Hungarian Roman Catholics services instead of choosing the Romanian Orthodox ones. See Cristian Vasile, *Între Vatican şi Kremlin, Biserica Greco Catolică în timpul regimului comunist*, (Between Vatican and Kremlin, The Greek Catholic Church during the communist regime), (Bucharest: Curtea Veche Publishing, 2004), pp. 214 – 263.

relations with the inspectors, negotiations, bribery, blackmails, all served the church in their contacts with the men designated to supervise and control them.

The transfer from one type of inspector to another was subject to a particular context and an overlapping of factors, be them political or administrative. The education of the communist specialists that could replace a first pool of specialists that the ministry had to rely on in the first years of the regime produced its first results in 1952. The need to offer more authority to the local inspector came from the various problems that the first years from the installation of communism revealed in the relationship between the state and the religious denominations. The changes in the corpus of inspectors produced also a favourable context for the re-negotiation of the rules and regulations that govern state church relationship at a local level.

IV 2. b A new local inspector: selection and characteristics

The transition from one type of inspector to another as revealed by the archival materials was in some cases done abruptly without preparations. The ministry required that the transition be smooth and not influence the way in which the local office was run. In spite of requests coming from the centre and their expectations there were unavoidable situations when taking over the new office proved more strenuous than expected and needed a consistent effort from the newly appointed local inspectors. After taking up his position, the inspector of the Autonomous Hungarian Region²⁹

²⁹ The Autonomous Hungarian Region was an administrative region in Transylvania that comprised territory with Hungarian ethnic majority. It functioned as a separate administrative region from 1952 to 1968.

describes his daily program to the ministry officials to justify some of the syncope in his activity:

The reasons for not sending [to the ministry] the minutes of the meeting in time are in no way related to my negligence but to being overloaded with several work related problems. These are also the first minutes and evaluations that I send to the centre after taking up this position and finishing my training. I need a longer period to prepare this type of written evaluation for I have just left a job in production and I am not accustomed with office work [...] I am working from 8 AM to 10 PM³⁰ to send the paperwork on time and I put everything into this, thus I do not find it reasonable to be threatened with disciplinary measures, but rather I feel I need to be helped in my work so I could cope correctly.³¹

This description is of great importance. It reveals several characteristics of the activity of the local/ regional inspector. First of all it shows the level of control that the centre had over their employees in territory. The meetings that the inspectors took part in were announced beforehand and the report from those meetings was due in their short aftermath.³² In some cases the ministry had information of the meetings from Securitate cadres and informants as well thus rounding up the view on the event that the inspector offered. One can notice from the quote above that not only the ministry was aware of the inspector's schedule but breaches of that schedule led to immediate notifications from the ministry. The document offers a view of an all knowing hierarchical centre that reacted almost instantly to the local problems. Than it reveals some of the ways in which the Ministry and later the Department for Religious Denomination sanctioned the performances that were below the requirements and expectations of the Ministry. Inspector Kolozsvari Tiberiu reveals the pressures

³⁰ Underlined in the original text by the author.

³¹ Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii: Raport de activitate, Kolozsvari Tiberiu, (Activity report, Kolozsvari Tiberiu) file 86, vol. 13 a, 1954, p. 4, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, România.

³² In an interview with inspector David Gheorghe he talked about drafting the report beforehand and only in cases where unexpected situation occurred modifications were made to the report that was sent the very next day. David Gheorghe, interview by Anca Şincan, file recorder, Tîrgu-Mureş, January 31st, 2006.

imposed and the sanctions that the centre might bring about in light of potential future poor performances. Finally the description shows how unprepared this inspector was when taking up his position, how, brought in from a different environment (in this case inspector Kolozsvari Tiberiu came from a blue collar environment and was not accustomed with office work), he needed time to adjust to the requirements of the new position.

He requests not only time but also help. Corroborated with other documents that witness similar situations one could draw up a larger picture about the training available for these cadres. This unpreparedness was true with regards to the *Securitate* personnel that dealt with the religious communities as well. Adrian Petcu focused on an example of a *Securitate* member dealing with religious denominations that was “a new element, skilled in the office work but lacking experience in the field work and with regards to the specificities of working with religious communities” and extrapolates this to a general trend in the early 1950s. Other things missing in the activity of the cadres in charge with supervising the activity of religious denominations were, according to evaluation documents found in the *Securitate* archives by researcher Adrian Petcu, a work/ action plan and a notebook for daily activities and requirements. This notebook was mandatory for every secret service member and contained the daily plan for the work that was decided by its superior. Based on this notebook the weekly evaluations meetings analyzed the quality of the work and how it could be improved.³³

³³ Adrian Nicolae Petcu, *Partidul, Securitatea şi Cultele*, (Bucharest: Nemira Editing House, 2005), pp. 126-127.

The process of selection for the change in the apparatus of inspectors at the local level (raion) cannot be closely followed in the archival documents. One can notice a certain type of functionary³⁴: summarily educated, an executor of the requirements coming from the centre but lacking completely any type of initiative and making constant appeals to higher authorities for solving more difficult problems met in their field work. Their answers to the requirements of the office were in most cases filtered by their immediate superiors: the regional inspectors. Every piece of information was first processed at regional level before being sent to the centre.

In solving the requirements the local inspector does not hesitate to use the local enforcements agencies, especially the militia and to use force with the clergy or the believers when his actions were met with opposition. Looking at the documents one can assume that most of these sometimes true acts of violence towards the religious communities remained unsanctioned by the centre when the ministry not find out about them. Still in cases where the use of force was discovered the ministry remedied the situation.³⁵

This type of behaviour is different from the one of the former body of inspectors that were replaced in early 1950s. The background, the education and the lack of authority made the first group of inspectors rather more careful in dealing with the religious communities and individuals they supervised and controlled than the second group that had as support system their communist orthodoxy. The new inspector is less a

³⁴ See Adrian Nicolae Petcu, 2004, pp. 317-318; Tatiana Chumachenko, 2005, pp. 20-21.

³⁵ The case of pastor Lăţiş described later in this chapter is a case in point, Departamentul Culte, Direcţia Studii: Nota Informativă cu privire la caracterizarea unor pastori, (Informant report regarding the characteristics of various pastors), file 95, vol. 2, 1953, p. 2, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

negotiator as he once was and more a state functionary that imposes, often by force, the requirements coming from the centre. Once invested with authority the ministry local representative was able to use it. This use of authority was at times personal.

There were numerous cases of corruption at the local but also at the central level of the Ministry. With the local inspectors in constant contact with local clergy and responsible even for aspects of the latter's private life there are cases when the inspector received payment and bribes for various services rendered to the community and the priests. At the central level we find well documented cases of buying and selling hierarchical positions,³⁶ but also, as seen from the last chapter, in charge with administrative decisions for the Romanian Orthodox Church (like building churches) we find numerous instances where positive decisions were bought by the religious communities or the hierarchs. Cohabitation between *victim* and *torturer* is reached through routinizing a system of benefits (banquets at monasteries, money gifts and other types of gifts for small services rendered³⁷ like letters for good behaviour so one could send ones child to university).³⁸ The selection and replacement of inspectors had to account the possibility of corruption of the communist functionary.

A different criterion for selection of the local inspector was ethnic background. Supervising the Transylvanian denominations involved not just theological,

³⁶ This is the case with inspector Gheorghe Nenciu, director in the Department for Religious Denominations who in 1977 was found guilty by an investigating committee, excluded from the Party and fired from his position because of an accusation of imposing/ facilitating the nominations of vicar bishop Nicolae Vasile Veniamin in the hierarchical ranks of the ROC and receiving 100000 lei in return. Departamentul Culte, fond Nenciu, not processed in the archives, 1977, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest.

³⁷ David Gheorghe, interview by Anca Şincan, file recorder, Tîrgu-Mureş, January 31st, 2006.

³⁸ Children of priests were for a long period of time impeded to follow graduate studies. Restrictions were maintained for certain types of training. Restrictions were lifted for technical universities and hard sciences but maintained for humanities.

administrative and organizational knowledge pertaining to up to thirteen denominations but also knowing the history of several ethnic groups³⁹ that involved customs, traditions, mores and language since many of the problems the inspector was confronted with came from interethnic conflicts. For instance the problem of marriage proselitism created a number of conflict situations in religious communities in Transylvania. Marriage proselitism is found mostly in Transylvania or in areas with religious minorities. The name was given by the Traditional Protestants in Transylvania to a practice seen as threatening proselyte activity conducted by the Roman Catholic Church. As the name suggests it involved changing one's denomination for their spouse's and bringing up their offspring in the new religious affiliation. While a current practice in Transylvania this was less problematic for the ministry/ department unless the denominations losing believers became vocal and involved the state in solving the matter. "Mixed marriages still remain a problem since the Roman Catholic believers live in confessional mixed parishes (Catholics and Orthodox, Catholics and Protestants). The problem of mixed marriages is especially acute between the Roman Catholic and Protestant believers."⁴⁰ Thus in the regions with important Hungarian and German minorities the inspectors either were selected from that particular ethnic group or had to know the respective language. The linguistic criterion produced several limitations. For a long period of time the reports coming from local Hungarian inspectors were completely unintelligible to the personnel inside the ministry. On the margins of the reports the readers constantly asked themselves with regards to the meaning of words or even to

³⁹ The Transylvanian ethnic map includes Hungarians, Germans (Saxons), Gypsies (Roma), Jews each with different religious background than the Romanian majority.

⁴⁰ Departamentul Culte, Directia de Studii: *Nota informativă* (Informative note) file number 86, volume 1, 1965, p. 26, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

the message that the inspector sent to the centre.⁴¹ In other cases linguistic constraints hinder the participation of the inspector to reunions of clergy or other supervision work (especially at denominations that spiritually administer German ethnics).

IV. 2. c Attributes of supervision and control

The relationship between the state and the religious denominations is set by 1952/1953. This relationship disregards all other options but the infiltration of agents inside the denominations, its supervision and control through mandatory rules and regulations that were to lead to the slow and gradual decrease of the influence of religion, especially in its institutional form in society that would be gradually educated in principles that oppose the religious ones.⁴² Supervision and control become key-words when referring to Romanian religious life.⁴³ This is an interventionist principle that combined compromise (the acceptance of a functioning religious life in the country) with a constant interference in the activity, organization and functioning of the religious denomination.

There are thus, following this way of dealing with the religious denominations involving compromise and insertion in the life of the religious community, several categories of problems the state administration had to deal with. One of the most visible and perhaps one of the most exhausting for the inspector was the supervision

⁴¹ The inspectors in the ministry offices in Bucharest had the possibility of prioritizing and comparing documents, making cluster of cases and solutions based on the documents received from territory. In the same time there were cases when extra reports were asked in cases where the local inspector could not make the case.

⁴² Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii: *Originea și dezvoltarea Monahismului. Monahismul în țara noastră trecut istoric al vieții monahale* (The origin and development of monastic life. The monastic life in our country – its history), dosar 85, volume 11, 1951, p. 178, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest.

⁴³ Adrian Nicolae Petcu, 2004, p. 302

of the proselyte manifestations of various denominations. These manifestations went from missionary work of the monasteries, the proselyte work of the Neo Protestant denominations, marriage proselitism, or catechism. The state administration is adamant in prohibiting and controlling these activities for while a political activity and the political opposition to the regime is easy to trace and to prohibit, this type of action, hidden in the everyday activity of the church and expanded at national level is almost impossible to trace and stop. The inspector had to be careful what was to be considered a common religious service and what could be labelled proselitism.

Proselyte activity of the religious denominations was regulated by law. Article 38 from the Law of the General Regulations for Religious Denominations refers to this activity: “Members of a denomination are free to embrace another denomination or to abandon their denomination. Upon leaving a denomination, a declaration to that effect shall be communicated to the local component of the abandoned denomination through the local communal authority. The respective communal authority is obliged, upon demand, to issue a certificate respecting this communication.”⁴⁴ In fact through this legal provision the state tried not to protect the denominations of proselyte activities directed towards their believers by other denominations, of what proselyte activity is called in the archival documents “the theft of believers” but rather by complicating the process to hinder an activity that led directly to the increase in number of believers and by legalizing the state administration role in the process (communicate through the local communal authority) to control the phenomenon. Moreover, registering new members that abandoned one denomination for another was complicated by article 39 of the same law that stated “no denomination may

⁴⁴ *Legea pentru Regimul General al Cultelor Religioase*, (Law of the General Regulations for Religious Denom) *Monitorul Oficial*, Nr. 178, Partea I-a, 4 August, 1948.

register as a new member [a person] unless the person presenting himself for membership proves that he has announced to the former denomination that he is leaving it.”⁴⁵

The largest and most complex proselyte activity was carried out by the communist state via antireligious campaigns in an effort to push religion outside the public sphere. In the first years of the new regime one of the most sought after statistical information for the ministry was the presence at the religious services of the young people, students, with or without their parents. Various documents received from the inspectors related in details about the number, type, and gender of the youngsters in church or prayer houses. For instance one of these documents that spoke of presence at religious service noted that:

Next to older bigots, in almost all the churches in Bucharest I could notice numerous youngsters, college students, high school and primary students, even pioneers attending. In some churches the percentage of youngsters and children was over 50% of the persons present at the religious service (e.g. Floreasca Church in area Stalin, Dudeşti Cioplea Church in area TV, Plumbuita and Proletaru Churches in area 1 Mai...).⁴⁶

While knowledge of youth attendance to religious services was an important factor in creating policy and antireligious propaganda statistical data was required about attendance in general. The data collected helped the inspectors to compare religious attendance in the long run. Such documents were required especially for the important and constant celebrations of the denominations. The common celebrations like Easter or Christmas services were occasions speculated by the ministry to ask for comparative data on religious attendance between denominations. In a document that

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Departamentul Culte, Direcţia Studii: *Manifestări religioase – sărbătorile de Crăciun, Bobotează, Paşte si 23 august 1954* (Religious manifestations – Christmas, The Epiphany and Easter religious celebration and 23 August 1954 national day celebrations), file 85, vol. 13, 1954, p. 224, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

informs about the Christmas celebration in Bucharest and the surroundings one can trace the particularity of data collecting and the importance given by the inspectors to church attendance:

Attendance to church religious services was smaller than last years in most cases and in others it was the same as last years. No instances in which the number of church goers is higher than last year were noted. Thus, concretely, in Alexandria region, in Drăgăşani village out of 3100 villagers on December 25th only 75 persons attended which is lower than last year. At the cathedral in Alexandria on December 26th 190 believers attended compared with the 300 believers present at the ceremony the previous year.⁴⁷

This data has to be considered carefully. The inspectors knew the expectations of the Ministry/ Department and some of the data could have been tempered with to fit these expectations. The recurrence of this type of required materials from the inspectors spoke of the high interest in the decrease of religious activity in religious communities.

In most cases even the existing proselitism of various religious denominations was in great respect controlled and in some cases controlled and orchestrated by the state. One of the most important proselyte activities was the “come back to the mother church”⁴⁸ of the Greek Catholic Church, its unification with the Romanian Orthodox Church an act orchestrated by and under the direct control of the state authorities. The

⁴⁷ Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii: Notă informativă în legătură cu sărbătorile religioase de Crăciun, Anul Nou și Bobotează, (Note on the religious services for Christmas, New Year and Saint John celebrations) file number 76, volume 1, 1955, p. 77, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

⁴⁸ This was the catch phrase used in defining the act of *unification* between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Greek Catholic Church. It was part of a larger *publicity campaign* for the union. It spoke of a comeback and not of unification. It legitimated the act by working in the phrase the lineage of these two churches. One segregated from the other at the end of the 17th century and brought back to form a whole with this final act of 1948. See for instance the representation of the *union* in Ortodoxia (Orthodoxy), the religious journal officially belonging to the Patriarchal See, unofficially led by the Ministry for Religious Denominations experts. In 1949, a year after the union when the journal appeared it dedicated large column spaces to discussion the events of 1948 and especially the unification with the Greek Catholics. Also see ***, *Când frații sînt împreună*, (When brothers are together) (Sibiu, 1956).

unification with the Orthodox Church, especially its aftermath with the integration of the Greek Catholics, could have easily been seen as proselyte activity if this action was not completed under the guidance, surveillance and control of the state administration. The cases when the Greek Catholic believer chose to integrate into the Roman Catholic Church instead of the Romanian Orthodox Church after 1948 were placed by the administration of the Ministry for Religious Denominations under the label of proselyte activity and even reactionary activity from the part of the Roman Catholic Church. This action was labelled enemy activity and proselyte activity and was monitored and punished when encountered.⁴⁹

Another example of proselyte activity controlled by the state and, in the first years of Romanian communism, instrumented by the state in various policy documents, was the Neo Protestant case. The granting of legal status for the four Neo Protestant denominations can be seen as a way in which the state tried to control the rest of the religious denominations, especially the Romanian Orthodox Church. By allowing the legal functioning of the four denominations for the first time in 1948 the state administration retained a permanent element of blackmail for the traditional/ historic denominations and forced them to constantly approach the state to mediate conflict instances that arose from the missionary activity of the Neo Protestant Denominations.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Departamentul Culte, Directia de Studii: *Referate cu privire la reglementarea situației dintre cultul romano-catolic și statul român* (Summaries regarding the situation between the Roman Catholic denomination and the Romanian State) file number 86, volume 3b, 1953, p. 8, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

⁵⁰ Bishop Valerian of Oradea applied in 1953 for the Ministry approval to introduce into the yearly pastoral guide of specific ways to fight the Neo Protestant proselyte activity. The note of the ministry specialists reads: “motives for positive reply to the Bishop’s request are the following: in his bishopric one can note a steady number of believers that change their Orthodox affiliation to a Neo Protestant denomination. This process is not a spontaneous one

These two actions where the state intervenes brutally in the life of the religious communities triggered also the first two failures and created numerous problems for the administration of the ministry. From the end of 1948 the activity of supervision was intensified. Targeted denominations: the Roman Catholic and the four Neo Protestant Denominations. Most of the cases where these denominations posed problems to the state administration have to do with proselitism in its multiple forms.

Supervising the Roman Catholic Church had much to do with the activity of integration into the Roman Catholic Church of the former Greek Catholic believers that *refused to come back to the mother church* the Romanian Orthodox Church. Both in the Patriarchal See and the Department for Religious Denominations archives, there are files preserved under the title “Strengthening the religious unity of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania.” In most cases, these files refer to problems with Roman Catholic priests that conduct proselyte actions towards the “former” Greek Catholic believers. The Roman Catholic hierarchy was concerned with the situation of the former Greek Catholic priests⁵¹ and the state was supervising the meetings and contacts of the Roman Catholic hierarchs with the Greek Catholics.⁵²

but is due to the organized and dynamic proselyte activities of the Neo Protestants. Their proselyte activity uses harsh critics to the Orthodox Church [...] insinuating that the Orthodox priests have become communists, that they have sold themselves to the present state that belongs to Satan and receive payment for this.” The ministry specialist agrees that the Orthodox priests have to know/ be taught how to protect themselves. Departamentul Culte, Direcția de Studii: Caracterizarea lui Valerian (Describing Bishop Valerian’s activity), file number 85, volume 2 a, 1953, p. 40, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

⁵¹ Many Greek Catholic priests did not accept the unification with the Orthodox Church and abandoned the priesthood altogether. There were rare cases when they turned to the Roman Catholic Church but most entered civil life. There are numerous cases when the Greek Catholic priests were arrested and imprisoned.

⁵² For instance in a note the Department was informed that Marton Aron met the Greek Catholics from Ciorogârla. Departamentul Culte, Direcția de Studii: *Nota informativă*

The inspectors were asked to monitor closely the places with former Greek Catholic communities. The believers were supervised. The ministry/ department was interested in what church they chose to attend the religious service (Orthodox, Roman Catholic or underground Greek Catholic prayer houses), if they had contacts with former Greek Catholic priests that did not signed and accepted the *union* with the Orthodox Church or with Roman Catholic priests. The inspectors were asked to present detailed statistics with the age groups, social status, jobs, the attitude towards the new regime, statistics that were used by the ministry and later the department to broaden their image of the local religious life.

Some of the feedback from the local inspectors brought forth a Greek Catholic reality that the official discourse of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Ministry disregard or even hide. Thus in a document presenting the Greek Catholic problems in territory one can note that the situation regarding the *union* and the integration of the Greek Catholic believers was different from what the Romanian Orthodox Church and the state administration publicly affirmed.

And if, in the beginning the activity of those that chose not to come back to the Orthodox Church seemed restricted to small circles of intellectuals or mostly small owners, lately we noted that this activity spread to encompass gradually more and more the rural environment. In some places, parallel with attending the religious services of the Roman Catholic Church, one can note the reaction of some religious associations and the practicing of typically Catholic rituals (the Rosary and Marian praying) both amidst the old and amidst the young. From the field work we could notice that such a Roman Catholic orientation it is rather gradually increasing in intensity than decreasing and it is being looked at by the reactionary classes, no matter their religious affiliation, with increased interest.⁵³

(Informative note) file number 86, volume 2, 1960, p. 12, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

⁵³ Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii: Problema revenitilor greco-catolici, (The problems regarding the Greek Catholics that came back to the Orthodox Church) file 80, vol. 1, 1954, p. 3, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, București, România.

This field reality brought forward from the reports received from local inspectors differed from what the propaganda of the state and the Orthodox Church was prepared to admit created the bases on which the Ministry intervened. In 1953 the inspectors received under supervision and control the Roman Catholic Church, up until then left under the direct administration of the centre.⁵⁴ The Ministry reached the conclusion that “involving the inspectors in this matter gives the Ministry the possibility to be better acquainted with the more serious problems regarding this denomination, the means the reactionary elements use, what were their support groups in various parishes, and so on. These elements would be better clarified by the work of the inspectors thus reducing their influence.”⁵⁵ This speaks on the one hand of the diversification and multiplication of issues the ministry had under control and in some cases of its poor performance. On the other hand one could derive from this internal note that the central administration of the ministry trusted the local inspectors with more complex situations, proof that the regulations were interiorized and at a satisfactory level put into practice.

The supervision of possible proselyte activities was characteristic not just for the field work inspectors underwent in matters related with the Greek Catholic communities and Roman Catholic Church but also with the Neo Protestant denominations. The situation was different with regards to the Neo Protestant communities though. The activity of these denominations was centered on proselytism. While in the early stages of the new regime the number of adherents to these denominations was insignificant, this being among the reasons the four denominations received legal status and were

⁵⁴ Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii: Referate cu privire la reglementarea situației dintre cultul romano-catolic și Statul român, (Reports on the regulation of the position of the Roman Catholic denomination in the Romanian state), file 86, vol. 3 b, 1953, p. 5, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, București, România.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

authorized to function in a short period of time they became one of the most disconcerting problem the ministry and the local inspector dealt with. Their volatility,⁵⁶ the lack of a clear centre that one might actually appeal to in case of problems with the communities in territory, a centre that could be constraint to solution the problem as the hierarchical centre of the other denominations were, or even infiltrated by agents or collaborators with the regime made the surveillance activity extremely thorough but rarely coherent. The local reality presented the Neo Protestant *problem* as one of the most stringent one involving most of the inspector's time. Proselyte activity as described by the documents was frowned upon not just by the state employees but also but the other religious communities.

Another characteristic phenomenon of the Neo-Protestant denomination is proselytism, practiced arduously by the Pentecostals and leading to inter confessional tension and strife. Thus, in the last period of time, in Oradea region, their number increased with up to 1100 members, four new communities being founded without asking for the approval of the Ministry as the Law for Religious Denominations specifies. Similar cases of proselyte activity were pointed out also in the regions of Timișoara, Bacău, Cluj and Bucharest where they [the Pentecostals] organized gatherings with the believers from several villages and towns...⁵⁷

Verifying and supervising the activity of these four denominations by the inspectors was eased by the collaboration received from the denominations that were losing believers to the Neo Protestants.⁵⁸ In many cases these denominations when trying to *protect* their believers from the influence of the proselyte activity of the Neo

⁵⁶ One could encounter communities that migrated from village to village, their pastors served more than one community and one community could be formed out of believers from more than one village. These being only some of the examples of situations met often on the field work by local inspectors for religious denominations.

⁵⁷ Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii: Note informative cu privire la manifestările și atitudinea unor credincioși și deserventi – Culte Neoprotestante, (Informants reports on the attitude and behaviour of believers and pastors – Neo Protestant denominations), file 95, vol. 13/a, 1953, p. 2, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, București, România.

⁵⁸ Departamentul Culte, Direcția de Studii: Caracterizarea lui Valerian (Describing Bishop Valerian's activity), file number 85, volume 2 a, 1953, p. 40, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania

Protestants with the help of the state legislation regarding religious denominations and profited from the strict rules against proselyte activities to counteract losing believers.

In the period the religious denominations borrowed techniques and measures that produced positive results from one another. Be them methods to counteract the activity of control and the administrative restrictions imposed by the communist cadres or proselyte methods if successful they were adopted and adapted to the special circumstances of the religious denomination. Thus with regards to proselytism we find the usage of methods that were particular to Neo Protestant denominations by the Romanian Orthodox Church or the Traditional Protestant denominations in Transylvania.⁵⁹ The catechetic activity of the Romanian Orthodox Church is a close replica of the catechetic activity of the Roman Catholic Church. The latter was using the catechism classes in church to compensate for the destruction of their confessional school by the communist state. Alongside these methods to counter the proselyte activities of a denomination towards the believers of another the relationship with the state was used, the connections established by members of the religious communities with the state local administration. One could in many cases verify the affinity the state employee (the inspector, the policeman, the local administration personnel) had for one denomination or another. The inspectors used this syncope in the relationships

⁵⁹ This could be noted in actions like the multiplications of prayer notes. Used extensively by Neo Protestant believers this habit slowly made its way into the arsenal of means several Orthodox monasteries used. Found in the state archives were notes designed by or being related to Vladimireşti monastery since this was one of the monasteries found under strict supervision. The inspectors trace notes that offer advices on how to live a proper Christian life, notes with different prayers and guidance to overcome difficulties related mainly with the political regime. The notes suggested that the reader/ finder is to multiply and resend them: Sister Veronica is asking you not to work on Sundays. Who finds this to make 40 others in 15 days. If he/she will not a great misfortune will happen to him/her. If he/she will he/she will have great joy.” In Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii: Notă Informativă (note from informant), file 74, vol. 1, 1955, p. 110, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

between the denominations to better supervise and control the religious denominations' activity.

IV. 2. d A typical working day of the local inspector

A local inspector for religious denominations was extremely solicited by his work. In areas where a higher number of religious denominations either legally recognized by the state or not were present like Transylvania, Banat, Bucharest, Dobrogea his workload increased exponentially.⁶⁰ The link that these cadres provide between the ministry/ department for religious denominations and the denominations at a local level called for his involvement in the life of the denomination. To verify, supervise and control, to impose the regulations of the centre onto the functioning of the various denominations under his *care*, to be able to inform the ministry/ department on the activity against the regime or supporting the regime of the clergy and believers, the number of churches, prayer houses, various statistics regarding the type and number of believers that attended, and how often they attended the church,⁶¹ to be able to suggest possible solutions to problems or in cases to solve conflict situations the inspector had to be familiar with the organization, structure, administration and hierarchy of the church/ religious denomination, religious group, community.

He had to infiltrate the denomination, especially the hierarchical echelon with persons he could trust or use the ones that already were infiltrated or were already

⁶⁰ For instance an inspector in a Transylvanian town would supervise a higher number of denominations than one in a southern town of Romania where one would meet a considerably lower religious diversity.

⁶¹ Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii: *Manifestări religioase – sărbătorile de Crăciun, Bobotează, Paște și 23 august 1954* (Religious manifestations – Christmas, The Epiphany and Easter religious celebration and 23 August 1954 national day celebrations), file 85, vol. 13, 1954, p. 224, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

collaborating with the state administration adequately.⁶² He needed to speculate any sort of tension existing among clergy, between clergy and hierarchy, between clergy and believers. Special attention needed to be given to ways in which acts of loyalty towards the regime, but mostly towards the inspector (help for accomplishing his duties) could be rewarded and the acts of insubordination, disloyalty or opposition punished.

To fulfill his obligations the inspector was mandated (from the early 1950s this was part of the regulations of the ministry thus made mandatory) to take part in the activities of the religious denominations (inter confessional conferences,⁶³ *peace* conferences,⁶⁴ dean conferences, priest conferences, special gatherings of the denominations, religious services, meetings of the hierarchs with visitors from abroad. The inspector knowledge of the institutional function of religion ranged from the name and number of the books in the library of the parish house⁶⁵ to the names of all

⁶² In an interview with retired inspector David Gheorghe he mentioned the situation of one priest that was moved disciplinary to an impoverished village where he had no church and no parish house by his bishop and helped by the inspector to build the church and the house. To receive the accord of the department to build the church David sent the priest to the ministry “You go to Bucharest at the ministry gates and you do not go in. You ask the person you want to see to come outside and tell him that David from Bistrița sent you to bring him something (three lambs) and ask for his home address so you could deliver it.” The inspector also mentioned in the same interview: “I had the priests as friends. One could not have done otherwise. Some kind of inspection was coming to the parishes, I called the priest, let him know, told him to prepare a meal at a restaurant because someone was coming. After eating one is reluctant to create problems. David Gheorghe, interview by Anca Şincan, file recorder, Tîrgu-Mureş, January 31st, 2006.

⁶³ The inter-confessional conferences were meeting places for most Christian denominations in the country and were largely instrumented by the ministry.

⁶⁴ The so-called *Peace conferences* – conferences in support for the fight for the peace process were meeting places for all legally recognised denominations in the country, organised at the suggestion and under the direct control of the ministry and were largely used to spread communist ideological, anti Western propaganda while under the label of the fight for peace. These were also used to publicise the *support* the regime had from the religious denominations.

⁶⁵ Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, *Adrese, referate, diverse situații cu privire la bibliotecile din cuprinsul unor eparhii din țară*, (Notes, reports on various situations regarding

the priests that did not received money from the state and the number of those who did.⁶⁶ Their involvement in the life of the denomination on a local level was thorough.

To highlight some of the aspects of the inspector's job I traced his activity in a report that one such inspector sent to the ministry in 1955.⁶⁷ This report was more complex than the daily notes that were sent to Bucharest with single problems. The everyday report went from acknowledging the receipt of requests from Bucharest, to sending the requests of the religious communities to recurrent problems that might be looked at as potential risk factors.⁶⁸ One of the assignments the inspector had was to oversee religious services. Especially during religious feasts this was an immense workload. In some parts of the country where the religious and ethnic makeup was more diverse the local inspector could have several hundred religious communities to observe and whose activity to supervise. In a report sent to the Ministry in 1955 with the occasion of the Holiday of Pentecost in the Orthodox Church calendar the local inspector in Târnăveni area, Stalin region describes at length the extent of his duties in a day's work.

the libraries in several archbishoprics in the country) file 72 vol. 2, 1952, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania, p. 20

⁶⁶ Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, *Complectarea salariilor din fonduri parohiale a preotilor ortodocsi scosi dela salarizarea statului* (Paying the salaries of the orthodox priests removed from state paid salaries) file 85, vol. 3a, 1953, pp. 48-50.

⁶⁷ Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, *Obiect: notă informativă despre desfășurarea serviciului religios la rusale* (Subject: note from informant on the religious service on Pentecost), file 76 vol. 3, 1955, p. 104, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

⁶⁸ For example the note sent from the local inspector from Luduș to the regional inspector of Cluj regarding the chain letters of Saint Anthony sent by Roman Catholics in the town, letters that were found at school as well. The local inspector was writing to let the regional inspector that he was following the situation and informed the local inspector for education about it and also the proper local organisms. Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, *Notă informativă* (Note from informant), file 76 vol. 3, 1955, p. 93, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

According to the document where the inspector describes all his activities around that celebration preparing for the celebration began a week prior to the events when the inspector and the Orthodox dean of Târnăveni spent time together educating the priests on the ministry requirements for this particular celebration. Since the celebration included the blessing of the crops that was traditionally done in the fields and the ministry forbade all religious services outside the church premises the inspector had to make sure that the clergy in the area was informed and aware of the consequences. In the document the local inspector sent to the ministry he justified the discussion he had with the clergy on keeping the religious services inside the church on the Orthodox Church status of faith that each religious denomination submitted before being legally recognized by the state. He used this argument for requesting that the blessing of the crops be held inside the church as opposed to outside in the fields but the status does not have this statement.⁶⁹ It is most probably included in one of the requests that the Ministry sent the inspector. His request is issued in the presence of the church authority, in this case the dean. “Thus in most parishes that I have verified until this day since this celebration I found that the priests respected the status requirements and the request from the dean” related the inspector. “The *blessing of the crops* was held inside the church respecting the dogmas and the canons of the denomination and *we* had no influence over them”. This statement reflects a policy of the Ministry: the appearance of noninvolvement. In the interview with the former inspector Gheorghe David he mentioned this particular requirement as one of the central formulae to guide his work.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ See the Status of faith of the Romanian Orthodox Church in *Legea și statutele cultelor religioase din Republica Populară Română*, (The law and the status of faith of the religious denominations in the Romanian People Republic), (Bucharest: Editura Ministerului Cultelor, 1951), pp. 21-62.

⁷⁰ David Gheorghe, interview by Anca Şincan, file recorder, Tîrgu-Mureş, January 31st, 2006.

The document mentions few situations where the recommendation that the inspector and the dean gave was only partially followed and gives the reason for it: “In some parishes like Cetatea de Baltă, where the number of believers [credincioşi] is higher and the church’s capacity does not hold them the religious service was held outside, but not in the crop fields as it was previously done.”⁷¹ The inspector needed to mention the possible situations that came in conflict with the request that he received from the ministry to keep the service in the church to cover the potential questions from the centre. We note that one example is named, Cetatea de Baltă, but others might exist as well. These parishes were left unnamed and uncounted for as insurance for the inspector’s work. The reason for not respecting the request was also provided, general enough reason to fit all possible situations, a reason that would protect both the parishes and the priests that have not respected the recommendation and the inspector that was unsuccessful in enforcing the recommendation.

The inspector also verified the sermons. “In all the parishes I have supervised on this occasion during the sermon I have not witnessed bad behaviour from the part of the priests. In Târnăveni the priest George Oprean demonstrated a healthy attitude in his sermon [...] explaining the Gospel he talked about loving thy neighbour and hard work, respecting the superiors.” Again, the example chosen by the inspector was the positive one and it was continued with a general conclusion that most of the priests during their sermons mobilized the people to complete their obligations that they have towards the state.⁷²

⁷¹ Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, *Obiect: notă informativă despre desfășurarea serviciului religios la rusale* (Subject: note from informant on the religious service on Pentecost), file 76 vol. 3, 1955, p. 104, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

⁷² Ibid., p. 104.

To end the report brings about the potential negative aspects of the celebration. The inspector informs that all the problems that he did not identified until he sent the report would be inserted in the semestrial report. It is a way for the inspector to equilibrate the positive tone of the report and also to protect himself in case any of the potential existing problems would be big enough that would require the centre to be informed. This report shows a new stage in the activity of the inspector. He is confident enough to send a positive report to the centre, but not positive enough to include all the information that he has on the events. He kept room in the report to shield any potential problem that might surface. He is familiar enough with the requirements from the ministry and uses standard formulae like “taking measures,” “healthy attitude,” to transmit and in the same time hide the information he sent to Bucharest. He used the church authority to convey the message, and shields the clergy from the possible repercussions that their holding the service outside the church might have.

In most cases the inspector mediated not just the relationship between the centre (ministry/ department, government) and the religious denominations but also the relationship between the denominations and the local administration. They advocated for the construction of a relationship at the local level since many were the cases where for fear of a *doctrinal* compromise, one that would tamper with the requirements receives from the Party the local administration was reluctant to use the religious denominations and refused their invitations to attend various occasions they organized. The inspectors had to stand in and explain not just the importance that the religious denominations might have in various economic, social and cultural activities

that the local administration organized (the agricultural works, support for the constitution, the fight for peace, the problem of literacy or the helping hand given for the willing integration of their believers in the new order, help with the nationalization and the collectivization of agriculture) but also to explain that building a relationship with the religious denominations did not run counter the communist orthodoxy.

They also had to explain to the local administration their own position in the communist cadres system, their importance in the administrative mechanism at a local level. By their direct link with the centre (the Ministry for Religious Denominations, later the Ministry for Internal Affairs) with regards to hierarchical chain, reviews of work duties, work results they situate themselves often outside the local administrative apparatus and thus their relationship with the local party hierarchies are at times strained.⁷³ In conversations with former inspector for religious denominations Gheorghe David he mentioned the curious hierarchical chain he was subordinated to. The control over the inspectors came from various agencies: local Party administration, the *Securitate*, both local and central and the ministry/ department.⁷⁴ Navigating through the numerous institutions that had or imposed their jurisdiction over the corpus of inspectors led to situations where their work was re-directed to follow the local necessities.

Until the early 1950s the archival evidence described the inspector as having the attributes of an intermediary between the state (central and local administration) and

⁷³ Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii, Ședința cu protopopii de pe raza episcopiei Buzău – Inspector șef Simadan Ilie, (Meeting with deans in Buzău bishopric – Chief Inspector Simadan Ilie) File 77, vol. 2, 1954, p. 72, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

⁷⁴ David Gheorghe, interview by Anca Șincan, file recorder, Tîrgu-Mureș, February 15th, 2006.

the religious institutions. From around this period, with a change in the type of personnel administering the relationship between the state and the religious denomination one could witness an increase in the inspector's attributes. He was able to offer advice; he was no longer only a data collector but could also intervene together with the local authorities where he saw fit.

There were in most cases rules and requirements of the Ministry for Religious Denominations that the Empower had to respect but as a general rule they have the power to intervene to solve. The Ministry for Religious Denominations developed its policy on the information and suggestions received from the local inspector, there were problems left entirely at his latitude and even interventions of the centre in favour of enlarging the local inspector abilities in solving the problems appearing in territory. The local inspector knew who collaborated, where he had to exert pressure to force a collaboration or to pressure for the seizure of a hostile attitude, he intervened in the entourage of the hierarchs to find out of their intentions, use intimidation or reward to fulfil their final purpose. By the final stages of the regime the religious denominations were controlled to the insignificant of details.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Insiders in the eparchies of the Orthodox Church offered information on the minute details of the day to day life of the administration of the church. In one such note describing the activity of Archbishop Nicolae Mladin's one could find about who prepared the food for the archbishop, what did the salary of the archbishop went on, who were the Archbishop's favorite councilors and how was the old hierarch manipulated into relinquishing the power into the hand of several File Archbishop Nicolae Mladin, not processed in the archives, Notă informativă privind modul în care a decurs consiliul eparhiei de la Sibiu ținut în ziua de 24 Aprilie a.c., (Note from informant on the way in which the meeting of the council of the Sibiu archbishopric was conducted on April 24 this year), 1980, registration number 006190, 4 pp, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

The policy regarding personnel selection inside the central hierarchy of the legally recognised religious denominations, the nominations, the transfers, the hiring policy, the hierarchical ladder climbing were almost entirely decided by cadres inside the Department for Religious Denominations.⁷⁶ They could have circumvented almost entirely the hiring policy of the various religious denominations in the country. Instead they focused on individual cases, in positioning inside the denominations key decision makers in the process and controlled it from a distance. Collaborating with these insiders (either councillors at the hierarchical centres or for instance the secretaries of the theological institutes in charge with the application files of the future and current theology students) they have decisively influenced the way the personnel circulated inside the church according to the needs of the communist administration and, in various cases, according to their own agenda.⁷⁷

The presence of the inspector in the daily activities of the religious communities is constant and noticed. There are several examples of complaints that came from the cases where the intervention of the inspector disturbed the life of the deanery or parish. Numerous complaints were lodged during the elections for church councilmen where the inspectors were present “to set the lists, according to instructions received from the Ministry, (...) collaborating also with the local communist administration.” The inspectors’ reports describe negative results with “hierarchs that became

⁷⁶ Departamentul Culte, File Cultul Ortodox 1936 – 1961 (The Orthodox Denomination 1936 – 1961), Alegerile bisericeşti din 8 VI 1949, (The church elections from June 8th 1949), Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania. (not processed through the archives).

⁷⁷ David Gheorghe, interview by Anca Şincan, file recorder, Tîrgu-Mureş, February 15th, 2006.

disinterested of the election results, regarding them as Ministry affairs.”⁷⁸ Thus in Buzău and Cluj bishoprics the hierarchs distanced themselves from these matters of the selection of the lay councilmen.⁷⁹ The later reports show that the centre considered this involvement wrong especially since even though requested from the Ministry it was carelessly implemented so as to involve the Ministry directly and thus jeopardize the results.

The inspectors were overzealous in proving that the state and, by extension, they controlled the hiring policy of the church and even if this was the case here their openness in executing the requirements of the centre brought about their reprimand. The open protest of the hierarchy that was witnessing the replacement of the lay members of the church councils with communists or communist sympathisers proved significantly important for the decision taken by the Ministry to manipulate these situations with care.

This was the case when Bishop Nicolae Colan⁸⁰ refused of the vote on the lists proposed by the Inspectors, a vote that would have imposed candidates that the inspectors chose, as opposed to the vote for individual candidacies that would have

⁷⁸ Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii, Alegerile Eparhiale, (Bishopric elections) report designed by Dumitru Dogaru, File 85, vol. 4, 1954, p.462, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania;

⁷⁹ Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii, Alegerile Eparhiale, (Bishopric elections) report designed by Dumitru Dogaru, File 85, vol. 4, 1954, p.462, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania;

⁸⁰ Bishop Nicolae Colan (1893 – 1967), of the Cluj Romanian Orthodox Church Bishopric later Archbishop in the Transylvanian See was one of the few hierarchs that survived the coming to power of the communists. He followed in Archbishop Nicolae Bălan as Archbishop of the Orthodox Church in Transylvania just a few months after his death after the future Patriarch Justin Moisescu was rotated to the Moldovan Archbishopric See via the one in Sibiu. He retained the hierarchical position until his death in 1967.

allowed the bishopric to rid of the ministry's candidates. The ministry had to keep the appearances. The adviser in the Ministry made several suggestions regarding the errors that the reports signalled. The regional and county inspectors together with the general inspector were requested to analyse the mistakes made in the process of replacing the lay members of the church councils with people favourable to the regime. He requested drafted reports regarding the members whose election provoked dissatisfaction or whose attitude was not suitable to the situation at hand.⁸¹ The replacement of the leadership of the religious denominations with supporters of the regime was accomplished at the local level in the mid layers of the administration of the church – for instance the dean and the administrative hierarchs. The Ministry was the organism that approved the candidacy and election of each person in the administration of the church based mainly on reports received from the local inspectors.

The activity of these functionaries was directed in most cases by two distinct decision making centres: the Ministry for Religious Denominations and the Secret Police, the *Securitate* of whose rank and file a large part of the inspectors belong to. Their activity is carefully controlled through the requests and directives received from the two organisms that govern their existence. The inspector often works in blind not aware of the overall policy and the reason behind the request. This often leads to the failure of negotiation at the local level with the representatives of the church and also the perceived absurdity of the request to lead to the failure of its implementation and this in turn to the use of force to solve the central request, force that is reprimanded by

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 462.

the central administration for it leads to the increment in the open opposition of the church to the state.

IV. 3 The response of the religious denominations to the interferences of the local inspectors

It is less surprising considering the impressive amount of attributes and the huge work load of the local and regional inspector and the way in which the ministry/ department is dependent on the information and the knowledge that this member of the communist administration develops that he was authorized to solve many of the problems in the church state relationships that surface at the local level. While most of the activity of the inspector was based on and coordinated from the decisional centre, the policy of the centre is based almost exclusively on the information received from territory. Thus the authority of the inspectors increased throughout the early communist period. Constant questionings over their activity, their role and their authority arose from the rank and file of the clergy:

We also mention the attitude of priest Debrețeni (sic!)⁸² in Sfântul Gheorghe deanery, Hungarian Autonomous Region. He manifested [...] against the ministry cadres asking his bishop for instance what authority do ministry inspectors have and what were they allowed to do for he could not consider the cadres of the ministry as his superiors and could not give them any reports under these circumstances for he does not trust them. As a result several other deans stood up in the meeting and asked about the rights and authority of the inspectors, what is to be handed to them from the official data, and up to what extent one should collaborate with them [...]⁸³

⁸² The name has been Romanianized. The priest is Hungarian and it is possible that the inspector or the Secret Service informant wrote the note after hearing the priest.

⁸³ Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii: Caracterizări ale unor deservenți din ambele parohii reformatе, (Characteristics of some priests from two Reformed parishes) file 87, vol. 2 a, 1954, p. 9, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

Like in this case the hierarchy had to mediate the inspector's position in the religious community, explain his role and functions and urge the clergy not to create problems by directly opposing the state functionary. Contesting the authority of the inspectors was a recurrent attitude especially in the early 1950s when their role changed and they were endowed with more power over the local religious communities. This type of documents gradually decreases in time. It could be that the role of the inspector becomes common or the inspectors deal with these situations locally without involving the ministry and reporting only the complicated cases.

The documents do not offer the possibility to follow the dialogue that the inspectors had with the clergymen and especially with the hierarchy when they come in contact on various issues. The cases when the leadership of the religious denominations arrives at the decisional centre with problems related to the activity of the inspectors are rare. One could though, based on the archival materials, argue that a certain code of conduct is implemented in the relationship between the inspectors and the clergy. The lower on the hierarchical scale one moves the higher the authority of the inspector over the clergymen. Accounts of brutal interventions of the inspectors in the life of the local church were common especially for the 1950s.

A more brutal behaviour is directed against the members of the four Neo Protestant denominations legally recognized by the communist state.⁸⁴ A deferent attitude is

⁸⁴ Informant report regarding the activity of Pastor Lăţiş: "Lăţiş does not have the behaviour a pastor and the leader of a religious community should have and does not keep his word, things that the organs of state and the state administration noted as well. On the Orthodox Church feast of Saint Mary on August 15th this Lăţiş was caught proselytizing in Copalnic Mănăstir area. He was apprehended by the militia and was beaten but because he was aware of the fact that he was guilty under the law he never placed an official complaint and not recounted this

directed towards the Orthodox religious communities and the traditional protestant, characteristic that is maintained at the level of the local inspector all throughout the communist period irrespective of the changes that occur in the central policy towards these denominations. An attitude of reciprocal control characterizes the relationship with the Roman Catholic Church, one based on disbelief and suspicion. One of the explanations for these distinctions in behaviour revolves around the hierarchical centre of the respective denomination. The stronger is the decisional centre of the denomination and the clearer is the pyramidal organization the stronger is the protection that they can offer the lower ranks of the denomination. Centralization of religious institutions does go in the ministry's favour as well since it is easier to control and supervise an institution by controlling its hierarchy when the members respond to the hierarchs. The lack of a clear centralization and of an accepted hierarchical centre in the Neo Protestant denominations left the community with less protection at the local level facing the authority of the inspector than for example the Orthodox community who with a direct link to the ministry/ department for religious denominations through their respective local/ central hierarch can denounce the authoritarian behaviour of the inspector. On the other hand by being more diffuse and not respecting a strict hierarchical chain the policies of the state not only took longer but were more difficult to implement.

The denominations had their own methods of protection. As I have shown earlier the pyramidal structure of some denominations and their centralisation helped in the process of supervising and limiting the authority of the inspector by addressing the

event to anyone/ not even the leadership of his religious community" Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii: Nota Informativă cu privire la caracterizarea unor pastori, (Informant report regarding the characteristics of various pastors), file 95, vol. 2, 1953, p. 2, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

superior forums of authority. For protection it was imperative though that the actions of the inspectors be known.⁸⁵ Although for the majority of the cases the requests from the Ministry were communicated to the leadership of the church and via the hierarchical chain arrived to the local community there were numerous cases where the inspectors chose to discuss with second tier members in the leadership of the Church, persons that the ministry/ department had won over or infiltrated in the life of the church especially when the inspector was confronted with a less responsive hierarchy when it came to implementing the requirements coming from the central state administration.

The double hierarchy, as implemented in the early years of the communist regime by inserting the second tier of the leadership of the religious denominations with persons that collaborated and were faithful to the regime, helped especially because these members of the leadership of the church knew that their collaborations maintained them in the hierarchical ranks of the Church. Their status is directly connected with their collaboration. In the majority of cases their collaboration was known by their hierarchical superiors and piers. In the archival documents one can find insight into two types of reactions: the collaborator complaining about the injustices that he is faced with inside the institution he was inserted in as member of the hierarchy (subtle threats, the obstacles he met when attempting to take part in the activity of the

⁸⁵ The inspector of Stalin region noted in a report sent to the Ministry that “from the discussions had with the Sibiu (Archbishopric) councillors he discovered that the delegates of the archbishopric to the inter-religious and the priest conferences deliver special reports on what the inspector had to say during the meeting” Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii: *Notă Informativă*, (Informant report), file 76, vol.1/2, 1954, p. 12, The Archives of the State Secretary for Religious Denominations, Bucharest, Romania.

leadership of the church)⁸⁶ and another one of the inspector reporting this shortcomings, thus leading us to believe that the institution of the Church created defence mechanisms by isolating the collaborators and the communist infiltrated members.

This is the case with vicar Sabin Truția. A former Greek Catholic priest who accepted the *union* with the Orthodox Church, vicar Truția was imposed in the hierarchical ranks of the Orthodox Church. He was appointed auxiliary bishop for Cluj bishopric as part of a reward system set up to insert the Greek Catholic priests and deans that signed the *union* or supported it into the Orthodox clergy and, where possible inside its hierarchy and administrative leadership. By his appointment the ministry had hoped to counteract and supervise from inside the activity of Bishop Nicolae Colan that the ministry thought and found opposing the regime. Bishop Nicolae Colan, to protect himself from Sabin Truția's surveillance forbade his access to the meetings he had with the Bishopric's councilmen in matters regarding the administration of the Cluj diocese. Vicar Truția complained to the inspector and made formal complaints to the ministry which in turn solicited brutally that Bishop Colan was to allow vicar Truția's access and proper functioning in the administration of the bishopric see.⁸⁷

The case of the Cluj Bishopric internal problems was settled in favour of Sabin Truția, with the direct involvement of the state administration into the life of the church. Yet

⁸⁶ Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii: Nota Informativă a împuternicitului regiunii Bihor (Laza Petru), file 77, vol 7/2, 1952, p. 10, The Archives of the State Secretary for Religious Denominations, Bucharest, Romania.

⁸⁷ Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii: Diverse lucrări în legătură cu cazul Preotului vicar Sabin Truția dela Episcopia ortodoxă Cluj, (Various works connected to the case of vicar Sabin Truția from Cluj orthodox bishopric), file 85, vol.14 a, 1954, p. 63, The Archives of the State Secretary for Religious Denominations, Bucharest, Romania.

Truția's hardships continued to exist inside the Cluj Bishopric as his collaboration extended throughout his entire active life. His functioning continued to be impaired. These types of cases are not denomination specific. One can find them at the Roman Catholics or Traditional Protestants but less with the Neo Protestant denominations since their pastors and communities can only rarely be influenced by the state authority in accepting a collaborator that was previously out casted/ singled out by the community.⁸⁸

There is a constant concern of the administration of the church, especially the hierarchy to discover what the inspectors were interested in, what they said, what their arguments in justifying an action or another were and what their immediate actions were. A detailed portrait of the inspector that mediated their relationship with the state was created. In many cases these particular pieces of information helped. The inspectors saw their plans crumble, priests moved from parishes to avoid contact with a particular inspector,⁸⁹ priests with the salary cut off at the request of the inspector paid by the church administrative centre or by other parishes so as the pressure exercised by the inspector through retaining the financial means for survival was eased.⁹⁰ These situations exist until the inspectors discovered the improvisations and report the situation to the centre.

⁸⁸ In the case of the four legalized Neo Protestant denominations the state's only bargain chip and method of negotiation remained the allotment of authorizations for functioning as pastor. Without such an authorization received from the ministry and annually renewed by the inspectors the pastor cannot function. If caught without he is immediately imprisoned.

⁸⁹ Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii: *Referate, note aduse cu privire la consistorii disciplinare protopopești în cadrul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, probleme de salarizare*, (Reports regarding disciplinary actions within the Romanian Orthodox Church, issues related to salaries) file 85, vol.3 c, 1953, p. 8, The Archives of the State Secretary for Religious Denominations, Bucharest, Romania.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 8

IV. 4 Guarding the guardians

In monitoring the activity of the monitors the ministry had an array of options. Effective control, states E. A. Reese in his research on the state control in Soviet Russia, involved “collaboration between controllers and operatives.” The control of the corpus of inspectors is thorough since they have conflicting interests with the centre with regards to “the exposure of defects.”⁹¹ In researching the control agencies Arfon Reese described various methods that were available to prevent the subversion of the activity of the monitors: creating an office of control that is separated from the operative hierarchy, offering rewards for performance, use different agencies to monitor them.⁹² These methods could be traced in the Romanian case in the activity of monitoring of the local inspectors by the ministry. Other methods were also employed like educating the inspector, constant evaluation of performance and immediate feedback, self evaluation and peer evaluations were also used, using and soliciting feedback from the religious denominations.

In the makeup of the apparatus of inspectors one can notice a clear set hierarchy. One finds the inspector adjoined to each regional administration and within the region several local inspectors were detached to important local administrations (either cities or several village communities that were problematic with regards to religious life).⁹³ He was not integrated in this administration, he responded directly to the centre – the Ministry for Religious Denominations. There were cases when these functionaries got

⁹¹ E. A. Reese, 1987, p. 3.

⁹² E. A. Reese, 1987, p. 3.

⁹³ David Gheorghe, interview by Anca Şincan, file recorder, Tîrgu-Mureş, January 31st, 2006.

Şincan

into conflict with the local administration because of this administrative duality and their independence from the control of the local administration.⁹⁴

The reason behind this, at times, conflicting situation was the two tier administrative control over the inspector, both central and local. The local and regional inspectors were not part of the local communist administration. They reported directly to the centre (the Ministry, later the Department and the Ministry for Internal Affairs). Their salary and benefits came directly from the centre along with their requirements. Yet the verification and control of their job performance came at a first stage from the local communist administration and only later from their immediate superior in the hierarchical chain within the corpus of inspectors (regional for the local, central inspections for the regional). More so, the local party administration had to make provisions for the local inspector for religious denominations. Those ranged from providing an office and work supplies, a car for field work, secretary, all paid from the local administration budget and not from the central budget as in the case of the regional inspector.⁹⁵

This two tier control over the activity of the local inspector was reflected in his activity. As Tatiana Chumachenko notes the local authorities assigned commissioners tasks unrelated to their official duties and quotes a document that instructed the local authorities to “stop assigning commissioners to other tasks without the Council’s consent or sending them on extended business trips unrelated to their official

⁹⁴ Tatiana Chumachenko, p. 20.

⁹⁵ David Gheorghe, interview by Anca Şincan, file recorder, Tîrgu-Mureş, January 31st, 2006.

responsibilities.”⁹⁶ The situation is similar in Romania. Similar is the system of dual payment and double tier of control.

In this particular case of supervising the activity of those that at their turn supervise the religious denominations a strict control was kept by the ministry/ department for religious denominations. There are several means to control the local employees. Firstly the centre made every effort to educate the inspector. The regional inspectors were periodically attending training sessions at the ministry/ department. The results of their activity were carefully evaluated by the experts in the ministry and their reports were often filled in by the central inspectors, questions were added, inquiries into the veracity of the information, corrections that went from the simple language and grammar mistakes to substantive ones that involved input from different reports and documents that came from diverse sources. Each local and regional inspector had evaluations handed in by the next in rank; the local inspectors were evaluated by the regional inspectors whom in turn were evaluated by the ministry/ department inspectors. The control also included inspections.

The centre also used the feedback received from the religious denominations, various complains registered by the hierarchs and local clergymen, written character notes coming from the local *Securitate* agents. One efficient way to control the activity of the local inspectors was self control. Constant self evaluations were demanded from the inspector and caution in designing them was imperative. The result was a mechanism of mutual control between the denominations, the inspectors and the

⁹⁶ Tatiana Chumachenko, p. 22

ministry/ department that allowed the functionality of an institutional religious life during the communist regime.

IV. 5 Conclusion: an interdependent system of control

The creation in the early years of the Romanian communist regime of an apparatus of cadres to supervise locally the religious denominations by the Ministry for Religious Denominations following the Soviet model, to serve as intermediary between the secular administrative centre and the local manifestation of religious life produced the first major brake with the past in the relationship between the state and the religious denominations. The initial shock produced by the direct interference in the life of the religious community, in the local and regional administration of the religious denominations was tempered in the first few years of the communist regime when because of a lack in trained cadres the central communist administration used inside the rank and file of the corpus of inspectors persons connected directly with the religious denominations they were to control.

This has offered the possibility to the religious denominations to form a mechanism of negotiation and control the state representative and the way he implemented the state policy and requirements. After a short period of time the ministry replaced the initial corpus of inspectors with trained specialists, from functionaries that administered the authority of the ministry to one that used and was endowed with authority in dealing with the religious denominations.

Yet the mechanisms developed by the religious denominations served to protect them from this change in the profile of the corpus of local inspectors and allowed them to continue negotiating the rules and regulations enforced by the state at a local level, to bypass them and to blackmail in this way the state representative. In the next chapter I use the example of the construction of a church building in an Orthodox parish in the 1970s and 1980s Romania to illustrate the development of the relationship between the local state representative and the members of various religious communities in communist Romania.

The resulted mechanism of reciprocal control between the denominations, the inspectors and the ministry/ department allowed the functionality of an institutional religious life during the communist regime. The influence that the religious denominations had over the central policy arose also from this paradoxical relationship with the corpus of communist cadres at a local and regional level.

CHAPTER V

Central policy into practice – Building a Church in the 1980s

Transylvania¹

In the previous chapters I have looked at the subversion of the state policy regarding religious life at a central level. The ways in which the Church redrafted the state policy through infiltration in the policy making bodies of the state apparatus, through negotiation between the leadership of the Church and state administration, governmental officials, and communist inspectors for religious denominations were used to illustrate how the model of state – church relationship was thought of and implemented at a central level.

This chapter looks at the way in which the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the communist regime negotiated at a central level was renegotiated at the level of the local religious community discussing the interchangeability of these two levels of negotiation in the life of the church and in redrafting the relationship between church and state. I was primarily interested in the way state central policy is put into practice with sometimes distinct and particular aspects at local levels.

As seen in the previous chapters the communist administration used a parallel theological hierarchy against the central hierarchy of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

¹ I would like to thank His Excellency Andrei, Archbishop of Alba Iulia for His affability and willingness in helping with this research project. Also I want to extend my thanks to the administrative councillor of Alba Iulia Archbishopric, Father Remus Onisor for taking the time to review the archival materials with me and to locate the files that refer to the economic sector of the Bishopric administration. I owe my findings to the help of the archivist of the Archives of the Alba Iulia Archbishopric, the late Ms Elena Gheaja and and to Gheorghe Avram from the technical service of the Archbishopric that has located various files that were not processed in the archives that proved central to my research.

The local religious communities had at times their own voice and agenda that sometimes went against the central negotiated mechanism of interrelations. This behavior of the religious communities at a local level bypassing the restrictive central regulations of the church was subject of concern for the hierarchy.² The cases when the church of the hierarchy and the church of the local religious communities acted independently in front of the state authorities were common and both the state authorities and the church administrative hierarchy took pains in controlling this recurrent phenomenon. As I stated earlier centralization went for and against the Orthodox Church. While via a strong pyramidal structure with a strong leadership the local orthodox communities, the clergy and the lower hierarchs managed to undercut a large percentage of the interferences of the ministry in the life and organization of the church at a local level the over centralization on the other hand helped the state administration to enforce the rules and regulations but also to have a different institution enforce punishment for the disregard of the rules and regulations. This chapter looks at the failures of centralization, the local negotiations of the central rules.

In the late 1970s and 1980s in Bucharest the state administration was demolishing churches in the process of urban systematization.³ In 1987 the Italian journalist

² See for instance for the Synodal meeting of 1957 when an entire section dedicated to the uniformity of the religious service all throughout the country was prepared. Called: *The religious life of the believers* the section was dedicated to the religious service that had to incorporate the sermon and the catechesis. Fond Sector Administrație (Administrative Sector), *Darea de seama asupra sectorului administratiei patriarhale* (The Yearly report on the administrative sector of the Patriarchate), p. 29 Arhiva Secretariatului Patriarhiei Române, Bucharest, Romania.

³ According to the Report of the Presidential Commission on Analysing Communist Dictatorship in Romania where the demolition of Churches in Bucharest received special attention starts this activity of the Party State in 1977 with the destruction of the Enei Church in Bucharest. This activity in the 1980s was systematic and has behind a clear policy that is not specifically antireligious but rather stems from power positions in negotiations between

Francesco Strazzari investigated the life of the Christian church in its encounters with the state. His snapshots of religious life under communism in Eastern Europe were collected into a book: *Between Bosforus and the Danube, churches in turmoil, on the footsteps of Kyril and Methodius and of the perestroika (Tra Bosforo e Danubio chiese in fermento. Sulle orme di Cirillo e Metodio e della perestrojka)*.⁴ The book holds several interviews with church officials in Easter Europe among witch there are those taken in Romania under the title: The effects of the political allegiance (*Gli effetti del lealismo politico*). Strazzari interviewed briefly the Romanian Patriarch Teoctist and Bishop Nicoale Mihăiță, the specialist in ecumenism of the Romanian Patriarchal administration and the person in charge with the contacts between the Orthodox Church and the Department for Religious Denominations. Strazzari questioned the religious life in Romania, particularly the demolition of churches in Bucharest.⁵ The answer Strazzari received to his interpellations on the issue of church demolitions was designed by the central administration of the Romanian Orthodox Church for an international audience growingly concerned about the status of the religious life in Romania. “Urbanization always implied sacrifices. This happened even in Paris when they made the large boulevards. This has happened in Bucharest in the interwar period when a first attempt to modernize the city was made” said

the Party State and the central hierarchy of the Orthodox Church. See Cristian Vasile, Anca Șincan, Dorin Dobrinicu, Regimul comunist si cultele religioase, (The communist regime and the religious denominations) in Raportul Final al Comisiei prezidențiale pentru analiza dictaturii comuniste din România (The Final Report of the Presidential Commission for Analysing the Communist Dictatorship in Romania), Bucharest, 2006, p. 467

⁴ Francesco Strazzari, *Tra Bosforo e Danubio chiese in fermento. Sulle orme di Cirillo e Metodio e della perestrojka*, (Milan: Edizione Paoline, 1988).

⁵ The answer was strikingly similar up to being identical in some parts to the one given by Bishop Nicolae Mihăiță, (Nifon Ploșteanul) currently Archbishop of Târgoviște, one of the most important advisors to the former Patriarch Teoctist, in an interview for France Press in 1988.

Mihăiță.⁶ It was thus no cause for concern but part of an ongoing centuries long process of European modernization.

Church demolitions, village destruction, random and forceful urbanization and industrialization, this was what the international audience knew about Romania in the 1980s. Yet in the same time framework in the newly created Alba Iulia bishopric of the Romanian Orthodox Church over 250 construction sites were opened. The bishopric was building churches, re-constructing damaged ones, painting them, building parish houses or deanery offices. They were undertaking major renovation works at the Grand Cathedral in Tîrgu-Mureș and at the bishopric quarters. The bishopric was one big construction site.⁷ All throughout the communist period, from the early days of the new regime the process of the construction of religious building continued and legal provisions were drafted to control it. The Alba Iulia bishopric in the 1980s was thus not singular but it was though the most frantic construction activity in the Orthodox Church.

The research is follows two questions: why was this church constructing activity possible and how was it done. I have selected from the Alba Iulia bishopric the Mureș

⁶ Nifon Ploșteanul, “Biserica și sistematizarea orașelor”(The Church and the towns systematisation) , in *Biserica Românească*, Vol. XIII, Issue 47, (January – March, 1988), p. 30; Francesco Strazzari, 1988, p. 34.

⁷ In between 1975 – 1989 in Tîrgu-Mureș deanery five churches historical monuments were restored, five of them were moved (3 completed and 2 in the process), four were undergoing repairs totalling a cost of 1078400 Romanian Lei. In the same period 5 churches were built (1 rebuilt on the same spot), 17 church buildings were undergoing repairs and 11 were painted totalling a cost of 6464484 Romanian Lei. Tîrgu-Mureș is one of the eight deaneries of Alba Iulia Bishopric and totals up to 50 parishes throughout the period. Episcopia Ortodoxă Română Alba Iulia, *Dare de seamă generală. Secția Economică* (General report. Economic Service); Not processed in the archives, made available in the archives by Elena Gheaja archivist and Gheorghe Avram from the technical service of the Archbishopric, Arhivele Arhiepiscopiei Ortodoxe Române, (The Archives of the Romanian Orthodox Archbishopric), Alba Iulia, Romania.

deanery as my case study and within the Mureş deanery I have focused on Cerghizel, a small village of 150 families (658 inhabitants), where, between 1977–1982, the villagers built a new church next to the old wooden church from 1832. I used Cerghizel as a model for pressure from below, from the local religious community that would impact the state policy in the area. It is on this case study that I verify how the relationship between state central administration and Romanian Orthodox Church central hierarchy functioned. Does the concurrence between the state policy and church policy has tangible results in the construction of the church in Cerghizel? Or is this tangible result one that comes out of a local negotiation favored by a specific context of the Mures region in the 1980s, a combination of local pressure and sympathetic local administration?⁸

V. 1. The legislation regarding the construction of churches and places of worship

Legally, building a church in communist Romania was possible; a corpus of laws and regulations was designed specifically for it with specific provisions for the construction of churches distinct from that of the interwar period that regulated church-building as part of the public building process regulations.⁹ The communist

⁸ Research in the Archives of the State Secretary for Religious Denominations in Bucharest, the Archives of the Holy Synod of the Romania Orthodox Church and those of the Orthodox Archbishopric in Alba Iulia, interviews with priests, state functionaries and villagers are used as primary sources.

⁹ The Ministry documents argue that the construction of buildings in the country was not centralized until only in 1946, the centralization of the decision making regarding the construction of buildings (churches included) in a single institution made the process less chaotic and random considered the ministry and easier to control. The new legislation was based on the principle of centralization of construction permits. Departamentul Culte, Direcția

administration argued the specific regulations for church building were introduced to incorporate the specificities and provisions of the Orthodox Church regulations with regard to building a church. The restrictions imposed to the church building process by the central political administration were designed, argued the Ministry to compliment and include in the state regulations the internal restrictions imposed by the Orthodox Church to the process. In effect a distortion of the understanding of church regulations since by the process of building a church the Orthodox Church understood in most cases the foundation of a new parish. By appropriating the regulations of the Church the state administration appropriates the decision making process. Decision making in building a church is no longer available to the central administration of the church. The decision making was taken over by the Ministry for Religious Denominations.

Building a new church in communist Romania involved reproducing and understanding a legal mechanism. Until 1958 any community that wanted to build a church or a prayer house had to secure the endorsement of the local council and regional council that were the institutions that issued construction licences. This meant that the negotiations for obtaining the authorizations were conducted locally with people that one would meet on daily bases like the village mayor or the village Party secretary. If not members of the local religious community themselves, they always had a member of the family that the priest or the church councilmen could approach with their request for a construction permit. Sometimes even a verbal

Studii, *Construcţii de biserici* (Construction of churches, evaluation) dosar 102, volum 1, 1959, p. 79-84, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

authorization of the local authority sufficed for the construction process to envelope.¹⁰

But until 1958 both parties involved (the religious community and the local authorities) had no legal blueprint for this activity and this led to confusing situations and based the entire process on the individual decisions of local authorities.

The number of religious buildings, especially those built by the Neo Protestant communities began worrying the authorities. The Neo Protestant denominations that became legal just after the Second World War in Romania, in their construction frenzy have disturbed much of the conservative personnel of the communist administration. The Romanian Orthodox Church was involved in a construction process of its own, rebuilding churches destroyed in the war triggering the close and worried attention of the state officials. By 1958 extra restrictions were imposed.

After the Second World War some religious denominations – especially the Romanian Orthodox Church – have tried to intensify the religious life through a campaign of constructions, re-constructions and repairs of churches and the Neo-Protestant churches have shown a special inclination to buy property for building prayer houses [...] Against these tendencies the department for Religious Denominations, following the political directives of the party, tried to prevent this campaign [...] and with the help of the local Inspector it took measures so that both the religious denominations and the local administration apply the 144 and 545/ 1958 decrees.¹¹

It is safe to say that the steady multiplication of construction sites for religious buildings worried the Department engaged in an anti religious campaign, and they sought necessary to take legal measures to prevent the construction process from escalating. But surprisingly while theoretically making it more difficult to receive a

¹⁰ David Gheorghe, interview by Anca Șincan, file recorder, Tîrgu-Mureș, February 15th, 2006.

¹¹ Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii, *Construcții de biserici* (Construction of churches, evaluation) dosar 102, volum 1, 1959, p. 99, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

permit for building a church and giving legal provisions for the demolitions of the religious buildings where the building regulations were not respected¹² the new regulations made the building of churches legal, gave the communities, clergy or hierarchy a clearer image of what they had to do in order to build a church, it created a unified mechanism.

In 1953 the Ministry for religious denominations made a first unsuccessful attempt to centralize the construction process by soliciting an authorization of the Ministry among the documents for the constructions the religious community.¹³ This proved not to be a mistake, for the Ministry was confronted with “an assault” of requests, documentations, priests or believers coming for audiences. Thus the Ministry delegated its field cadres (the inspector for religious denominations) to take over this matter of authorizing construction works thus doubling the local authorities. It created a new barrier in front of the communities that wanted to build churches or prayer houses.

The local inspectors for religious denominations, had to investigate each request, they had to contact the local authorities and inquire about the necessity of the new building, they had to instruct the community of believers when to address their request to their hierarch and the hierarch to present the request to the Ministry for religious denominations that was the highest authority. The inspector had to prepare a file on each case, the Ministry basing each decision on his suggestion. In 1956 the law changed again and they had to inform also the local first secretary of the Communist

¹² Ibid. p. 87.

¹³ Ibid. p. 83.

Party of each request and present the cases they had to the local leadership of the Party. By 1958 all requests had to be directed to the Department for Religious Denominations.¹⁴ The final decision was no longer taken by the local authorities but by the Department, making it more difficult, at least in theory for any community to build a church or a prayer house. According to the statistical data collected by the Ministry this did not terminate the church building process. As can be seen in the annex 4 from an evaluation drafted in the Department with the exception of 1958¹⁵ when the number of requests dropped significantly the Department's approval for construction of churches was constant.

No.	Year	Requests	Solutions		
			Favourable	Negative	In process
1.	1954	125	62	15	48
2.	1955	173	93	32	48
3.	1956	182	65	32	85
4.	1957	161	21	82	58
5.	1958	63	12	39	12
6.	1959	239	89	49	101

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 85.

¹⁵ The year 1958 witnessed an increase in the authoritarian practices of the communist regime. This is seen in the literature on the Romanian communist regime as caused by the need of Romanian communist leadership to prove that it can govern the country by itself after the Soviet Red Army left the country. It comes soon after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution that heightened the control of all possible sources of revolt in the country and it matches even partly the Khrushchev's wave of repression over religion in the Soviet Union. See Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for all Seasons. A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003); Tatiana Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia: Russian Orthodoxy from World War II to the Khrushchev years*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 2002).

7.	1960	131	66	52	13	
	Total	1,074	408	301	365	

Table 4 Evaluation for the construction of churches process¹⁶

What the Department gained from this legislative initiative was direct control over construction process. It became part of the negotiation process the Department had with the religious denominations. This centralization of the decision making in the construction process also complicated the system of bribes and bargaining became more complicated, now including the Ministry cadres in territory and the Ministry inspectors as well. It moved the construction process from the local arena to a central negotiation one. The negotiations went from being between the priest or the local community and the local authority, to being between a hierarch and the ministry personnel. And since the construction process did not involve the Department financially granting authorization was the only way in which the process could be controlled.

There are various reasons why these changes in the regulation on building religious sites were implemented. One of the most important arguments was the pressure exercised by how these regulations were put into practice over the local political administration. The gradual increase in the number of authorisations for the construction of churches or prayer houses, in the number of construction sites throughout the country showed that the local religious communities, the clergy and

¹⁶ Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii, *Construcții de biserici* (Construction of churches, evaluation) dosar 102, volum 1, 1954, p. 94, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania

the hierarchy found loopholes in the regulations that allowed them to perpetuate the construction process. Yet, while the state administration centralised the decision making process it was not with the intent of preventing the building of religious sites, as one could see from the constant number of churches built from 1948 to 1989 it was done in order to control the process and use the authorisations for particular gains.

V. 2. Constructing process: the reasons and the methods

To explain the reasons behind granting permission for the building process one has to confront the two levels of decision making: the central and the local both in the case of the State and in the case of the Church. The central policy as created by the authorities is a result of central needs and local input. Its enforcement was localized and adapted to the needs of the community. Church policy was dependent on the demands and permissions of the political authority.¹⁷ The argument that the church building process is partly due to pressure from the local religious communities that enjoyed a favorable political context is verified in this chapter by looking at the four sides involved in the process: the central authorities, the local authorities, the Church hierarchy and the local religious community.

The central authorities: If the law gave permission to religious denominations to administer their religious buildings and also to build churches, prayer houses or parish houses the religious denomination had their own interpretation on the ownership of

¹⁷ See Philip Walters, *A survey of Soviet religious policy*, in Sabrina Ramet Ed., “Religious policy in the Soviet Union,” (Berkley, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 3-30.

the religious buildings. For the Roman Catholic Church the ownership rested with the church hierarchical administration. Even if the local Catholic community built the church with local financial means and without the help of the hierarchical centre, the bishopric owned the building. For the Romanian Orthodox Church the ownership belonged to the community of believers, the same was valid for the Traditional Protestant and Neoprotestant denominations. For instance if an Orthodox community constructed a church and later that community decided to leave the Orthodox faith the church building remained in the ownership of the community that built it. For the Orthodox Church and the Neo Protestant denominations the construction of a church was connected with creating a new parish. This understanding explains not just the reluctance of the state in granting permission for the construction of a new church but also why permission was easier to obtain for repairing or renovating the already existing religious buildings. This understanding also led to situations where a new building was constructed on the site of the old building, a solution that the community found to bypass state restrictions and construct a church that would better accommodate the religious community from a particular parish.¹⁸

Ownership and property were not always easy to disentangle and the various facets created problems for the local authorities. The state favored requests and projects coming from communities. On the other hand they have also responded to the hierarchical requests, more so since these offered the state grounds for negotiation.¹⁹

Authorization for Catholic churches constructions were given for instance as reward

¹⁸ David Gheorghe, interview by Anca Şincan, file recorder, Tîrgu-Mureş, January 31st, 2006

¹⁹ Various perks were used in the negotiations between the state administration and the clergy, in attracting the clergy into collaborating with the regime. For some hierarchical advancements and state paid salaries, funding from the Secret Service was used. For a large number of clergymen concessions in the practice of religious life soften their stance towards the regime.

for the *good behavior* of the priest or hierarch requesting the permit. This was a general tendency noticeable with all the religious denominations. The constructions were often the state's way to reward or punish the clergy. This is also the reason why among the documents submitted by the local inspector to the Ministry together with the application file was a characterization of the priest offered by the local/ village authorities, by the inspector or, even by the hierarch himself. The documents show that more constructions were approved and a larger number of churches were built in areas that posed problems to the regime or in areas the state central administration targeted with specific policies that required the involvement of the religious denominations.

For the present case two policy directives of the state administration might have influenced the permission in the construction of churches in Mureş County in Transylvania: the Greek Catholics integration into the Orthodox Church and the nationalization problem. The forceful dissolution of the Greek Catholic Church orchestrated by the state and the integration of the Greek Catholic believers into the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1948 created a number of problems for the communist administration. The incapacity of the Romanian Orthodox Church to absorb the massive number of believers, to deal with the reticent priests that joined the Orthodox Church in name only and to convince the Greek Catholic hierarchy to join the hierarchical ranks of the *mother church* involved the communist authorities in the process. It made the central and local authorities inclined to give more leverage to the Romanian Orthodox Church attempts and policies for integrating the Greek Catholic believers. This was the case with some religious communities in Mureş County. They were Greek Catholic communities that were integrated in the Orthodox Church in

1948. The authorizations for the construction of churches could have been part of a larger policy that the Department had to complete the unification process of the two churches.

The 1970 yearly report of the Patriarchal administration offered a general view on the spending of the Patriarchate on the renovation and construction of church buildings and religious sites. The money came in great part from donations from believers, donations from the bishoprics, from the missionary fund of the Patriarchate, from the Department for Religious Denominations or from the Direction for Historical Monuments. The Patriarchate spent over 30 million lei on constructions on religious sites. The break up of the spending finds the state administration on the list of donors only for Cluj Bishopric where the department offered 70,000 lei and the Direction for Historical Monuments offered 240,000 lei out of the 372,000 lei spent in total in the bishopric, for Arad Bishopric where out of the 3,395,000 lei spent 81,000 came from the Department and 70,000 from the direction and for Oradea Bishopric where again the Department offered for church building and reconstruction 46,000 lei and the Direction gave 251,000 lei out of a total of 5,026,200 lei spent by the bishopric that year.²⁰

The financial involvement of the Department for religious denominations and the Direction for Historical Monuments in church restoration while small in percentages speaks not just on the legality of the construction of churches but also since all financial support was directed towards Transylvanian bishoprics speaks also on the

²⁰Administrația Patriarhală, Fond Sinod, Administration Sector, *Dare de seamă a sectorului I al Administrației Patriarhale*, (Yearly report of the first sector of the Patriarchal Administration), file 67/ 1970, no. II, 23, p. 41-44, Archiva Secretariatului Patriarhiei Române.

possibility that state national policy is directed towards these regional areas. Although none of my interviewees gave positive answers to questions on whether the church building process was a vanguard for the nationalization process in Transylvania, I noticed that the state relaxed its policy with regard to the Romanian Orthodox Church activities in Transylvania as part of a nationalization policy directed towards the areas with a majority of Hungarian ethnics. Inspector of Mureș region in late 1980s, David Gheorghe recalled a meeting in Cluj Napoca with all the department directors:

One of the directors, Munteanu, stood up and spoke about a recrudescence of the constructions of churches. I replied. We can see you are not Transylvanian. The Roman Catholic Church²¹ or the Germans have churches in town and in the center of the villages. The Romanian peasant's church is on top of the hill with his church (he laughs).²² Everybody applauded then.²³

David Gheorghe is the first Romanian Inspector of Mureș region. Like Traian Hârșan the first secretary of the Communist Party in Mureș they were part of a slowly growing ethnic Romanian administration in the counties administered until then by Hungarian ethnics. Gradually Romanian communist administration elite were formed. It was the result of a process of nationalization of the Communist Party started in the late 1950s and part of a nationalist policy applied in Transylvania. This was reflected in an increase in percentage of the Romanian population in areas of Transylvania with a Hungarian majority. When asked about the reasons for the increase in number of construction sites in the newly created Alba Iulia Bishopric the chief architect of the Mureș County, during that period replied:

The Romanian population was growing, the Orthodox believers, mostly situated in the villages started to slowly penetrate the towns. The other religious

²¹ By referring to the Roman Catholics he implied the Hungarian community.

²² In Transylvania Romanian Orthodox Churches of 18th to late 19th century are made of wood and placed outside the centre of the rural community and *extra muros* in the urban communities.

²³ David Gheorghe, interview by Anca Șincan, file recorder, Tîrgu-Mureș, January 31st, 2006.

denominations had a sufficient number of buildings so there was no need for more buildings. In these cases they received authorizations for repairs. [...] ²⁴

Following with a question on whether or not this process was related to a nationalist policy I was told that this was a local process, all the authorizations given were local and were met by a local political support. ²⁵

The church building process might not have been a state policy for nationalization but it was the result of one such policy. This does not imply that the Romanian Orthodox Church was the only denomination involved in a construction process. Authorizations were issued by local authorities for the Protestant, Roman Catholic and Neo Protestant denominations. Apart from the Neo Protestant denominations that were also involved into a process of construction of prayer houses, for the other denominations the authorizations received were for repair, rebuilding, renovation works and not so much for actual construction. As the chief architect said in the interview, these denominations had a “sufficient number” of religious buildings. The construction of new churches was necessary for the Romanian ethnics belonging to the Orthodox Church that migrated into areas with a majority of Hungarian ethnics.

The inspector for religious denominations: The local representative of the Department the man in charge with the religious life of the region was the first contact a priest had with the state authority, sometimes the last one as well. By law the Inspector was the state representative who had the most to say in the process of authorizing the construction of the church. The amended law from 1958 gave the Inspector important

²⁴ Burhardt Arpad, interview by Anca Şincan, file recorder, Tîrgu-Mureş, January 30, 2006.

²⁵ Burhardt Arpad, interview by Anca Şincan, file recorder, Tîrgu-Mureş, January 30, 2006.

prerogatives. They had to verify on site and report to the Department. In theory based on this report the community received or not the final authorization from the Department. The report had to contain data on:

- whether the religious unit had another religious building in the village and the state in which this other building was;
- the distance to the nearest prayer house/ church of the same religious denomination;
- whether the religious need of the community were cared for and how was that done before deciding to build a new church/ prayer house;
- the number of believers that petitioned for the new building;
- how do the local authorities feel about the believers attitude towards the regime;
- the financial means of the believers to began the construction for the new church (building space, materials, funds, workers, and so on);
- references from the local authorities about the priests or the believers that lead the construction project;
- whether the community obtained the authorization from the local authorities.²⁶

The role of the inspector was clearly encapsulated in the law. By the 1980s the clergy and the church hierarchy realized his importance in the administration of the church. When it came to building a church the first person whose consent had to be secured was the inspector. David Gheorghe the former inspector for religious denominations in the Mureș region in 1980s talked about the reasons he had or needed to have to support and authorize such a project.

I had a discussion with the mayor. I was looking if they had money, if he needed the money for something else than building the church. All the constructions in the rural areas were done with the village financial means regardless if we talk about the church or the house of culture. I was asking about their other projects. If they had to build the house of culture or the school I was postponing my decision for the church until all the other projects were completed.²⁷

²⁶ Departamentul Culte, Direcția Studii, *Construcții de biserici* (Construction of churches, evaluation) dosar 102, volum 1, 1954, p. 84, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte, Bucharest, Romania.

²⁷ David Gheorghe, interview by Anca Șincan, file recorder, Tîrgu-Mureș, February 15th, 2006.

According to the interviewee it depended on the inspector if he chose to support a project or not. That meant that it was mostly about personal connections between the priest and the inspector, or between the hierarch and the inspector. With the inspector having the veto power over any major project a religious community undertook, this including the construction of places of worship, negotiations and close contact with the state employee was common. Still the community played an important role. In the three interviews with the former inspector he only mentioned either cases that had positive solutions or cases that presented amusing particularities. Yet one could note that this process of applying for the authorization and negotiation was not always successful and it was not facile.

There were cases when the inspector refused to give the authorization. In the interview the former ministry delegate discussed the case of a village that proceeded with the building of the Church though they were denied authorization by the interviewee. They laid the foundations of the new church around the old one. When notified, the ministry delegate went to the village and asked them to stop the construction. Yet the villagers continued with the works.

That year May 1st was a Saturday and everybody was celebrating it. During that Saturday and Sunday the villagers raised most of the church from the foundation up. On Monday the priest came to me. He was scared. I immediately saw the problems this situation could create. I coached the priest to act shocked and tell the county first secretary that he had no idea of what the villagers wanted and that he could not stop them. The Party first secretary laughed and told the priest. 'That's what we deserve; we went for picnics and drinks while these people worked.'²⁸

The solution in this case was favourable to the community. In other cases the construction of places of worship was terminated and the members of the community

²⁸ David Gheorghe, interview by Anca Șincan, file recorder, Tîrgu-Mureș, January 31st, 2006

sanctioned. In most of the interviews the former inspector is painting his role in bright colours. He takes centre stage in all this construction work enveloped in the area where he functioned as a ministry employee. I have corroborated his story with the activity in the area and with the take of other persons, especially clergy and hierarchs on his activity so I could verify his allegations. The number of authorizations given, the way in which the clergy, be it Orthodox, Roman Catholic or Protestant still remember David Gheorghe after more than two decades since he retired from this activity suggest that this febrile construction activity undertaken by the religious communities in the Mureş region could also be the result of local and personal solutions and negotiations. Both Burchard Arpad, the county chief architect in that period and David Gheorghe argued for this specific solution in their interviews. The particular situations that I verified were solutioned via negotiations with the local power and only seldomly with the central administration.

The Church hierarchy: The Romanian Orthodox Church's policy in 1970s and 1980s Transylvania was targeted towards what the documents call *completing the union* with the Greek Catholic Church. The discourse of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the years immediately preceding the *union* with the Greek Catholics made no reference to a possible difference in identity between the communities belonging to the two churches. One of the arguments for unification was this common identity of their believers. Supported by an official discourse that linked Orthodoxy with Romanianness, the Transylvanian hierarchs of the Romanian Orthodox Church neglected the identity problem when preparing the integration of the Greek Catholics into the *mother* Church. They kept the argument that the differences between the two churches were negligible and focused their process of unification on convincing the

Greek Catholics priests to join the Orthodox Church. So important was the setback in the mid 1950s in the *unification process* quantified in a large number of Greek Catholic priests that turned Orthodox in 1948 leaving the priesthood and taking with them their believers, violent resistance to the *unification*, that the Department for Religious Denominations became directly involved in supporting the integration. Still neither state administration nor church hierarchy have considered devising a coherent policy to integrate the local communities of believers and restricted their activities to the clergy considering that the Greek Catholic priests will bring with them the flock.

It is only in the 1960s and 1970s, when the Orthodox Church admitted the failure of its policy towards the integration of the Greek Catholics²⁹ and directed its activity toward the community first at the level of the discourse and then at a more practical level, that the situation changed. In an excerpt from a policy document of the Romanian Orthodox Church hierarchical administration designed in 1969 to encourage the missionary work of the church against various religious denominations one can find expressed the methods through which the church was considering integrating the still reticent former Greek Catholic believers.

To eliminate the problems that still exist in integrating the former Greek Catholics into the mother church we will take the following measures:

1. clarification regarding the churches that still preserve unorthodox effigies. Statistics with their number and their categories. Measures taken to rectify.
2. clarification regarding the preservation of unorthodox rituals with decisions for their elimination
3. list of priorities regarding painting the churches according to the orthodox needs – using qualified painters

²⁹ This is the period of the petitionary activity of the Greek Catholic that requested the communist government to allow the existence of the Greek Catholic Church, see Cristian Vasile, op. cit.

4. supplying the churches with the right priests garments, books and ceremony objects.
5. completing the clerical personnel with proper elements [elemente apte] able to consistently promote the practices and the orthodox specific ritual
6. the personnel moves – the appointments, transfers will be arranged with necessary care permanently following the completion of the unification.³⁰

Even in this sketchy manner, as illustrated by the quote above, one can still see the multitude of problems the Orthodox Church was confronted with and some of the means it had for their solution.

It is in the localization of the process of integrating the Greek Catholic believers that the Transylvanian Metropolitan See and bishoprics had a larger autonomy, in an otherwise centralized institution that was the Romanian Orthodox Church during the communist period. While the central policy of the Orthodox Church regarding the Greek Catholic was focused on top down solutions³¹ the Church leadership allowed a certain amount of leverage to the Transylvanian hierarchy in dealing with this problem. Due to the composite religious and ethnic make-up of the region as opposed to the more monochrome one in the rest of the country the authorities had closer encounters with the local religious communities and the local and regional religious leaders. Direct local negotiations between hierarchy and the local authorities were

³⁰ Excerpt of Summary of the Holy Synod Meetings in 1977, The work meeting of December 10th, 1977, The minutes of the synodal commission presided by His Excellency Archbishop Metropolitan Nicolae of Banat regarding measures on preventing Neoprotestant proselyte activities, bringing back to the church the Old Orthodox schismatic believers, completing the church union in Transylvania and Banat, Fond Sinod, Sumarul Ședințelor de Sinod din 1977, pp. 146 – 147 Archiva Secretariatului Patriarhiei Române.

³¹ The top down policy included solutions like the exchange of priests between old Orthodox parishes and former Greek Catholic ones – this sometimes meant that priests were moved from one side of the country to another, replacing ceremonial objects, publishing prayer books to replace the existing Greek Catholic ones. See Cristian Vasile, *Între Vatican și Kremlin, Biserica Greco-Catolică în timpul regimului comunist*, (Between Vatican and Kremlin, The Greek Catholic Church during the communist regime) (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2004).

frequent occurrences. This coupled with slow but steady increase in autonomy for the Transylvanian Orthodox bishoprics in administrative matters led to the localising of the solutions to the problem of integrating the former Greek Catholic believers. This is the case for the Alba Iulia bishopric in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Alba Iulia was a newly created administration unit of the Romanian Orthodox Church, on a traditional site of significant historical importance for the Church and the Romanian population of Transylvania. Alba Iulia was the See for the Orthodox Archbishopric in 1600, the town also hosted the Grand National Assembly that decided the union of Transylvania with the Old Romanian kingdom in 1918. It has spiritual and historical importance for the Romanian population of Transylvania.

In 1975 Alba Iulia became a bishopric see that administered Alba, Mureş and Harghita counties.³² The new bishop Emilian Bîrdaş designed almost immediately a project for the „renewal of religious life in the Romanian Orthodox communities”. The problems that he met in his administration were connected with the proselyte activity of the Neo Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church. The inclusion of the former Greek Catholic believers also caused numerous problems and so did the

³² Alba Iulia Bishopric had eight administrative units, 477 parishes and 137 smaller units under the administration of bigger parishes (filie), it had under administration 148960 families and 655000 persons. It employed 444 state budgeted priests and 5 priests were paid from church funds. Twenty eight parishes had no priest. Out of the 449 priests 284 had a BA in Theology at one of the two Theological Institutes of the country, 148 priests were seminary graduates (secondary education) out of which 51 graduated of the special Theological Seminary of Curtea de Argeş, 17 priests had incomplete education and one was a deacon. Episcopia Ortodoxă Română Alba Iulia, *Dare de seamă. Secția Economică* (Annual report. Economic Service); File no. 4786, December 5, 1976, Arhivele Arhiepiscopiei Ortodoxe Române, Alba Iulia, Romania.

numerous vacancies caused by poor Orthodox parishes in an area dominated by a Hungarian majority. These issues were reflected in the measures he took.

Among his policy measures one could find replacing the old priests with new young ones, well educated into the missionary activity of the church, an increase in the number of Episcopal visits, full support for the construction activity. The bishop designed a financial plan to support the construction projects in the Bishopric.³³ He placed an important role on publicity and he advertised the success stories throughout the Bishopric using the diligent clergy as role models. There were also rewards for these diligent priests.³⁴ They went up the hierarchical ladder, received better parishes and even financial gains. Some were transferred to other parishes and other projects according to the needs of the Bishopric.

He maintained excellent relations with the communist authorities. The rumors of his collaboration with the communists still roam around the nowadays Archbishopric of Alba Iulia. There are no archival materials available to support this claim and of the former councilors that the Bishop had, none was willing to talk about the bishop's or theirs for that matter, relationship with the authorities. Suffice it to say that Bishop Emilian Bîrdaş was the only hierarch in the Romanian Orthodox Church that had to

³³ Episcopia Ortodoxă Română Alba Iulia, *Dare de seamă. Secția Economică* (Annual report. Economic Service); File no. 4786, December 5, 1976, Arhivele Arhiepiscopiei Ortodoxe Române, Alba Iulia, Romania.

³⁴ This was for instance the case of father Ioan Tutecean of Cerghizel and father Valeriu Velcherean of Băița in the Mureş and Reghin orthodox deaneries that were offered a hierarchical recognition and whose example was publicized by the Bishop in the late 1980s after the construction of the churches in the villages where they were priests were finalized. Special recognition on the wall of the new church building was offered also to the biggest financial contributors and the councilmen.

leave his bishopric because the clergy he had under administration asked for his resignation in 1990.³⁵

The results of his Emilian Birdaș's administration are impressive. In 1989 there were 206 construction sites throughout the Bishopric. The financial effort totaled around 15 million lei.³⁶ One can compare this financial involvement in construction works of the Bishopric to the one undertaken by the Patriarchate in the 1970 when we have available archival data that totaled the financial efforts for renovation and construction of religious sites to around 30 million lei³⁷ to have a grasp of the financial efforts that this construction process entailed. The works ranged from mortuary houses to construction of new churches. The Bishopric See functioned as an autonomous administration almost disconnected from the central administration of the Church and looked for local solutions to local problems and needs.

V. 3. Cerghizel

What the villagers remember and share of their building adventure(s) can be used as the utopian-ideal example of the mechanism in function. Cerghizel, a small village of 150 families was moved in the early 1970s from a valley on the riverbanks of Mureș

³⁵ Bishop Emilian Birdaș was replaced by Andrei Andreicuț, his administrative vicar. After a few month Birdaș was appointed Bishop Vicar of Caransebeș, a lower position in the hierarchy. He died a couple of years later.

³⁶ Episcopia Ortodoxă Română Alba Iulia, *Dare de seamă. Secția Economică* (Annual report. Economic Service); File no. 4786, December 5, 1976, Arhivele Arhiepiscopiei Ortodoxe Române, Alba Iulia, Romania.

³⁷ Administrația Patriarhală, Fond Sinod, Administration Sector, *Dare de seamă a sectorului I al Administrației Patriarhale*, (Yearly report of the first sector of the Patriarchal Administration), file 67/ 1970, no. II, 23, p. 41-44, Archiva Secretariatului Patriarhiei Române.

River to a hilly area because of floods that affected the area. They moved with their old wooden church but without the priest. The former Greek Catholic priest, that “came back to the mother church” in 1948 together with the entire parish died of old age. The new priest, father Ioan Tutecean,³⁸ recent graduate of the Sibiu Theological Institute, was the result of the central church policy to gradually replace the old, former Greek Catholic priests from the Transylvanian villages.³⁹ This was part of a larger project under the auspices of *completing the union* of 1948 that involved varied activities, from re-painting the churches with byzantine iconography, changing the cult books or moving priests from former greek catholic parishes to old orthodox parishes sometimes across the country. Intelligent and astute students were selected especially from the Theological Institute in Sibiu to enter the hard missionary work in the former Greek Catholic parishes. Each had its own way of dealing with sometimes a cold reception.

The Romanian Orthodox Church policy makers began looking for local solutions to specific local problems. Missionary work, involving well trained clergy willingness to accept the existence of the difference and at the same time the complete and clear cut attempt to break with the past were the technical means with which the Romanian Orthodox Church made a final attempt to integrate the remaining Greek Catholic communities. It helped that the state central administration was also favorable to this project and supported the numerous attempts of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Cerghizel is one of these cases where a local community of *former* Greek Catholics

³⁸ Father Ioan Tutecean graduated in 1975 when he was appointed priest in Cerghizel. Construction started two years after.

³⁹ In 1975 and in the years immediately following for instance close to 70 % of the over 50 parishes of Reghin orthodox deanery in Mureş region were occupied by recent theology graduates from the Sibiu Institute. Informal discussion with the current archpriest of the Reghin orthodox deanery father Teodor Beldean, 25 September 2005, Reghin Romania.

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was involved by the priest in a common project that followed closely this new Church policy of finding local solutions to local problems.

The young priest Tutecean recollects fond memories of the villagers. They had no parish house when they arrived to Cherghizel and for a year the village rented them one. The first major project was the parish house that the village bought with 100.000 lei, recollects the priest. It is not sure why they went further to build a new church.



Illustration 5. The old church of Cerghizel and the foundation of the new Church. In the middle church councilor Gligor Cojoc⁴⁰

The small wooden church still stands in the middle of the village today, next to the large, impressive new stone church building.⁴¹ The priest offered few reasons, the most important being that a bigger church was needed the wooden one being too small to fit the churchgoers. It is what the priest never uttered out loud throughout the interview but came out in the very end that could be seen as the main reason for this

⁴⁰ Photograph of the old church next to the building site of the new church in Cerghizel, Photograph from the personal archives of Fr. Ioan Tutecean

⁴¹ In Băița village of the Reghin deanery also belonging to the Alba Iulia Bishopric the construction of the church was made on a preexistent interwar foundation and the villagers argued for building the stone church on account of the old 18th century wooden one could no longer accommodate the believers.

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project whether of the village believers that came from Greek Catholic families re-became Greek Catholic after 1989. None of them did, though the entire village was Greek Catholic in 1948.⁴²

The church was the work of the entire village; 150 families contributed financially. The donations were collected by the church councilmen regularly at important religious celebration in church. Several collections were conducted throughout the village twice a year by the same councilmen. They also kept the spending logs.⁴³ The villagers hosted the workers hired for the construction process; they provided food for construction workers and the various hierarchical visits that they received during those years, for the special religious festivities that accompanied the consecration of the place for the construction, the setting of the first stone and the completion of the construction and painting works. For one such event for instance the village had to prepare food and entertain 200 guests, among whom the Bishop, numerous priests, regional and local authorities and the Cerghizel church councilmen.

Most of the villagers were peasants working in the state agricultural production companies but some also held jobs in the factories of Tîrgu-Mureș. For the village the financial pressure was tremendous. The total costs as found in the estimates at the Bishopric were around 750.000 lei,⁴⁴ the final costs, as father Tutecean remembered, were around 1.000.000 lei. The difference is found in protocol expenses. The priest

⁴² Priest Ioan Tutecean, interview by Anca Șincan, Mureșeni, Mureș, May 14, 2006.

⁴³ Informal discussions with villagers conducted by Anca Șincan, Cerghizel, June, 2006.

⁴⁴ Episcopia Ortodoxă Română Alba Iulia, *Dare de seamă. Secția Economică* (Annual report. Economic Service); File no. 4786, December 5, 1976, Arhivele Arhiepiscopiei Ortodoxe Române, Alba Iulia, Romania

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was reticent in uttering the obvious, but part of the money went for various gifts that were offered as bribes for the things needed for building of the church.

The late 1970s and 1980s were the darkest years of Romanian communism. The poverty of living conditions with food rations, electricity cuts,⁴⁵ gas coupons and rations, driving restrictions, implied learning to go around and bend the rules. Everyday life was a constant search for goods; time was lost standing in lines. The common person was queuing for almost everything. Building a church meant taking this mechanism to the extremes. Negotiations took place for obtaining construction materials, bribing authorities for gas coupons, for cement or wire, bribing various regional authorities for authorizations. Money was not the only currency for finalizing the construction works. People gave away their animals to be sacrificed for the celebration feasts, they gave their time and labor.⁴⁶

The first church councilman, Gligor Cojoc, was one of the key actors in this process. Together with the priest he persuaded the regional authorities for the building authorization. In the case of Cerghizel obtaining the permit took a long period of time. After a visit of the regional inspector for religious denominations they were asked about the reason for building a church since the village already had one, recalled the priest.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Most of the country had electricity in the household for merely two hours a day.

⁴⁶ The most impressive example that the priest gave in the interview was that of an old woman that gave the church 20.000 lei that she raised from her knitting work. She was mentioned on the wall of the church for her donation and the Bishop mentioned her in the religious service that celebrations the finalized works. Ioan Tutecean, interview by Anca Şincan, Mureşeni, Mureş, May 14, 2006

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Since the first authorization on the project had to come from the local inspector and since the refusal was obvious the priest decided to go straight to the highest authority at hand, the Mureş County Communist Party Secretary: “We went every week, me and one of the Church councilmen. I think he got tired of us and gave us the permit”

Traian Hărşan, the first secretary of the Communist Party in Mureş region, is mentioned several times throughout the interview. He came to most of the celebrations connected with the construction and he played, according to what the priest and the church council members remember a major role in the whole process.



Illustration 6. Dedication ceremony. Bishop Emilian Bordaş surrounded by villagers and officials. On his left, Traian Hărşan, the Communist Party's First Secretary in Mureş County⁴⁸

His role was mentioned also both by the chief county architect and the regional inspector. Unlike the Hungarian regional inspector for religious denominations that

⁴⁸ Photograph from the Dedication ceremony. Bishop Emilian Bordaş surrounded by villagers and officials. On his left, Traian Hărşan, the Communist Party's First Secretary in Mureş County Photograph from the personal archives of Fr. Ioan Tutecean.

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first denied the villagers the authorization for the church building, the first secretary was Romanian. He was among the first Romanian ethnics in the high ranks of the administration of Mureş County.

It appears that the county first secretary and some other important authorities closed their eyes on quite a number of issues raised by the construction of the church in Cerghizel. Since it involved large sums of money, contracts and numerous legal problems had to be observed, one would naturally suspect that the control of the administration had been thorough. Yet the priest and the community have never been audited during and after the construction works. The only time when someone asked the priests about the proceedings of their project was when a police captain thought they had no authorization for building and came to investigate the situation. The misunderstanding was cleared up rather quickly. That was the only time a state authority investigated the villagers in the five years it took to build the new church.

It was the Bishopric that devoted special attention to Cerghizel. The Bishop paid around thirty visits to Cerghizel.



Illustration 7. The ceremony of the consecration of the new church. Bishop Emilian Bordaş with archpriest Aurel Sămărghiţan and other priests. On the left, behind the bishop, village official.⁴⁹

Bishop Emilian Bordaş, devoted much of his time to the administration of his bishopric. A strong personality he was always in command of the details of the works in progress throughout his large and difficult Bishopric. The priest wife remembers:

“Sometimes he would wake us up in the middle of the night in his way back from Reghin to Alba Iulia to show him the status of the works [...] When we finished the church he asked me and my husband to swap parishes with a priest in Maramureş. That priest and his wife came to Cerghizel and we went to his parish. He wanted us to tell them how we built the church. It was winter, snow up to the knee. We went with our car up to a point and then we took a bus. The last part of the trip we went on foot. No one paid for the gas. That priest came to Cerghizel and spent a few days there. The bishop wanted to show him what a small village did on its own.⁵⁰

Used as example by the bishop, advertised as success story Cerghizel was also an incentive for the nearby village that started construction works at the parish house soon after.

⁴⁹ Photographs from the ceremony of the consecration of the new church. Bishop Emilian Bordaş with archpriest Aurel Sămărghiţan and other priests. On the left, behind the bishop, village official. Photographs from the personal archives of Fr. Ioan Tutecean.

⁵⁰ Maria Tutecean, interview by Anca Şincan, Mureşeni, Mureş, May 14, 2006

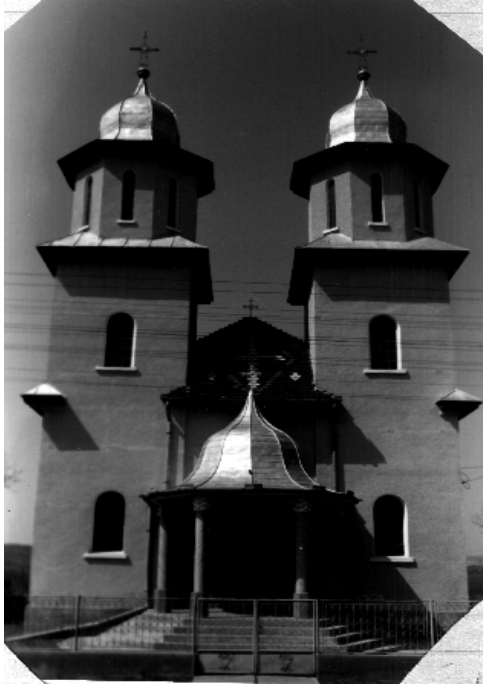


Illustration 8. The new church, 1982⁵¹

Father Tutecean was commended for his work. The young priest was one of the five Orthodox priests that were given parishes in Tîrgu-Mureș in 1988. Father Tutecean and his wife live in a suburb of the town where they have reconstructed the parish house.

From the interviews and discussions one could distinguish several elements that could clarify both how the church building process enveloped and could also shed light on what made this process possible, why these people were allowed to build churches in communist Romania. Cerghizel was a former Greek Catholic village in its entirety. After 1948 the villagers became Orthodox but kept their former Greek Catholic priest, church, iconography, traditions and the 2 word difference as it is pejoratively called,

⁵¹ Photograph of the new church in 1982. Photograph from the personal archives of Fr. Ioan Tutecean.

using the Latin variant for Holy Ghost and for Lord have mercy on us.⁵² Among the ways in which the Romanian Orthodox Church tried to integrate the Greek Catholic believers in the Orthodox Church there were severe measures as swapping priests, repainting churches, collecting the Greek Catholic cult books and bringing young priests in the former Greek Catholic villages.

This was not just a Romanian Orthodox Church policy but also a state policy. The Department for Religious Denomination was directly involved in this process as the communist state was the artisan of the two churches *unification*. The Department endorsed the Orthodox Church policies and *completed* the process with arrests of Greek Catholic hierarchs, priests and believers reticent and opposing the *union*. Cerghizel experienced all these measures, yet the construction of the new church can be considered responsible for the completion of this process of *coming back to the mother church of the Greek Catholic believers*. The numerous hierarchical visits to Cerghizel, the impact of the energetic new priest, the involvement of the entire community in the construction of the new church build a new Orthodox community.

Another element coming out of the interviews is the erosion of the communist system, especially at a local level. The “malfunctions” were immediately speculated in the negotiation process between the religious community and the local state administration. The villagers and their priest directed their request to the highest authority bypassing the Hungarian Inspector for Religious Denominations that had

⁵² Spirit versus Duh and Îndură-Te Spre Noi versus Miluieşte-ne (the Latin and Slavonic versions of Holy Ghost and God have mercy on our souls) are considered the two most obvious differences in religious service between the Greek Catholic and Orthodox Church. This is obviously a gross overstatement.

Şincan

expressed doubts about the necessity of the construction. This was also an aspect of the changes in the ethnical structure of the area in the 1970s and 1980s. A new Romanian administration rose gradually next to the Hungarian one. The villages understood that the bargaining mechanism could be redefined and made less complicated by appealing directly to the local administration of Romanian ethnicity. For Cerghizel this functioned, and so did for the Alba Iulia Bishopric in general.

Last but not least one of the traits of this process that became coherent during the interviews was that this building process belonged to the community first and foremost. It was a project undertaken by young clergymen that needed something that would put them in touch with their believers: a local project with local solutions, with financial solutions of their own. The results cannot be measured in statistical data. The results are reflected in the feeling of property over religion, over the tangible aspects of it, the church or the parish house.

What does it take to build a church in 1980s Romania? One would need an energetic priest, charismatic, with a good managerial sense, and practical, a strong and united community of believers that would have enough economic and spiritual resources to undertake such a long term commitment. Add to this a supportive hierarchical body (both the dean and the Bishop) with excellent relationship with the state authorities. An open minded mayor, a supportive regional Inspector for Religious Denominations and an approachable Communist party first secretary would also be important. The law is permissive if you fulfil the conditions: no church in the community, the next church that belongs to the community's religious affiliation is too far and the hampering religious life, the local authorities authorize the project and the community

or the priest does not create problems to the regime. If a community fulfils all these conditions in theory they would be able to build a church. In theory.

And yet in practice this did not function. On top of all the requests that the state placed on the application package one can notice that authorizations gave priority to those applications that fitted into a larger policy. It was easier to receive authorization if you were a Roman Catholic priest collaborating with the regime than it was to receive one if you were a Traditional Protestant priest collaborating with the regime. The Department for Religious Denominations needed to win over the Roman Catholics that were opposing the regime and not the Traditional Protestants that caused little or no problems to the state. It was easier to receive authorization to build a church if you represented a former Greek Catholic community, now Orthodox than if you were coming from a simple Orthodox community. Your request would fit into the Department's policy. There are numerous instances when the practice at a local level resulted in shifts in policy at the central level as demonstrated by the various changes in the regulations for church building during the 1950s.

V. 4. Conclusion

The process of church building implied on the one hand internalisation of the rules and regulations on the part of the religious denominations and developing a system of checks and balances, a way to negotiate their way out of various restrictions imposed by the state administration, be them legal, administrative, spiritual, financial. On the other hand we have a weak state administration, in constant need of legitimating itself, trying in the same time to play the actors one against the other and controlling them

for its own use, inscribing them in its policies. Theoretically, state authority was almost all-encompassing, but in practice it was eroded by the corruption of the system itself and by the constant bargaining and negotiations. In being aware of these two sides of the Romanian state, its pretensions to power and its corrosion, religious communities were able to navigate their way around the regime's restrictions and sustain religious life. Contrary to the existing literature that restricts the interaction between the ministry and the religious denominations to the hierarchy and at most the archpriests a constant interaction exists between local religious communities and the local representatives of the Department, between the communities and the local Party administration resulting in projects like those of Cerghizel. Legal, administrative, or financial restrictions were subject to negotiation at mid and local level. The results of these negotiations led in some cases to a change in policy at the centre as it happened with the constant change in legal framework regarding the construction of churches, a change that mirrored the situation at the local and regional level and on whose frequency we could measure the expedience with which the local problems were resolved.

CONCLUSION

Old wine in new bottles?

More than 15 years after the fall of communism with few provisions the same legal framework developed by the Ministry for Religious Denominations in 1948 regulated the intersections between state and institutional religion in Romania. It was only in 2006 that a new law agreed upon by the majority of the partners involved in the legislative process on all sides (State Secretary for Religious Denominations, NGO's and the legally recognized religious denominations) was issued.¹

It took 15 years for the communist legal framework regarding the religious life to be replaced. There were several reasons behind the preservation of the communist legal framework: the disagreement between the Greek Catholic Church and the Orthodox on the retrocession of the material possessions of the Greek Catholic Church now in the administration of the Orthodox, the difficulty of the State Secretary for Religious Denominations to come up with a definition of institutional religion that would satisfy all the partners involved,² the lobby made by the Neo Protestant denominations in

¹ Several personalities protested this law. The contestants came from various NGOs, the Greek Catholic Church, and members and leaders of Neo Protestant Denominations. The main concern was that the law favoured the Romanian Orthodox Church making it *de facto* a national church. The fact that all the State Secretaries for Religious Denominations were in connected with the Romanian Orthodox Church and the compromises that the State Secretary disregarded the objections coming against the legal provisions that favoured the Orthodox Church came against the law. See Dorin Dobrinicu, *Legea Cultelor: Text, Subtext, Context* (The law for religious denominations: text, subtext, context), in "Revista 22" (22 magazine) January 19th, 2007 in <http://www.revista22.ro/legea-cultelor-text-subtext-si-context-3392.html> Internet accessed on October 5th, 2009; Dorina Nastase, *Corectitudinea politica si legea cultelor* (Political correctness and the law for Religious Denominations), in "Revista 22" (22 magazine) February 9th, 2007 in <http://www.revista22.ro/corectitudinea-politica-si-legea-cultelor--3456.html> Internet accessed on October 5th, 2009.

² The State Secretary had to opt between a broader American definition and a more constrictive European one: either broadening the definition thus identifying more groups as

favour of a state church relationship based on the American model in contrast with the major denominations and the central state administration that favoured the German model.

One of the most interesting observations that I came across on the extended period of time until the 1948 law for religious denominations was replaced by a new one came in an interview with the Administrative Vicar of the Romanian Patriarchy, Fr. Constantin Pârvu.³ While discussing the relationship between the communist state and the Orthodox Church at the installation of the communist regime Fr. Constantin Pârvu mentioned the involvement of the Orthodox specialists in designing the 1948 law together with the Ministry for Religious Denominations. The document that resulted sanctioning the relationship between the state and the Orthodox Church until 2006 was designed by Orthodox specialists that not only had their training in the interwar period but also had a reformist agenda that transpired into the law.

Using the example of the law for religious denomination one argument has been insinuating itself in describing the state church relationship during the communist period: the continuation and prolongation of a late 19th century, early 20th century model of state church relationship. My findings support the characterization of the relationship between the state and church with the term *association*. This argument is rarely admitted by members of the Orthodox Church, by historians and researchers that come from within the Orthodox Church. They favour either a “befriend the devil to cross the bridge” type of argument that argues that the compromises the Orthodox

religious denomination and weakening the status of the major denominations or narrowing the definition and adding more.

³ Conversation with the Administrative Vicar of the Romanian Patriarchy, Fr Constantin Pârvu, 26 January 2005, Antim monastery, Bucharest, Romania.

Church made during the communist period helped its survival or martyrdom, the imprisoned church, the oppositional groups that fought communism research that is trying to demonstrate that the Orthodox Church similar to other denominations had suffered great losses during the communist regime. The term association speaks of the relationship between the state and the church in the *long durée*. The other two directions of research namely martyrdom and short term compromise were restricted contextually to the communist regime.

I favor the term association over what Pedro Ramet called co-optation. Pedro Ramet argues that co-optation the common trait for labeling the relationship between the Orthodox Churches and the communist regime in East Central Europe. The term suggests that from the two actors of the relationship – the state acted by co-opting the church and the church subordinated to this action. Because of the contextual premises discussed in the third and forth chapter I find that the Romanian case is particular. The relation between the two actors is more balanced and nuanced that what Ramet discusses. It is to the peculiarities and paradoxes of the first years of the communist regime in Romania that the particularities of the state church relationship were owed. The lack of trained specialists is one of the main reasons for the how the relationship was constructed. The prolongations of the interwar period, the continuities, the corrections of the shortcomings of the previous period, the type of reform undergone by the Orthodox Church in the communist period were tied to the remains of the previous period, the hierarchs, the administrators of the church, the theologians – the specialists that the communist administration brought in to administer the religious denominations as central, regional and local inspectors.

Has the relationship between the Orthodox Church and state changed in this long 20th century or can we talk about old wine in new bottles? Three different regimes over a century had to recognised a privileged position for the Orthodox Church. Different rationale for these decisions to associate the Orthodox Church with the state, a convergence of factors but also the high percentage of believers under the spiritual guidance of the Orthodox Church all create the medium in which the relationship between the state and the Orthodox Church has developed. Accounting for the differences between these three regimes while acknowledging their overt position towards the Orthodox Church I state that the model of state church relationship of the communist period is not fundamentally different of the model on which this relationship was based in the interwar period and that traits of this model can be seen in the two decades after the fall of the communist regime.

Similar arguments were brought forth by researchers that explained this *association* between the state and the Orthodox Church by looking into *caesaro papism* and the theological explanations behind the hierarchical duality in Orthodoxy. Considering it a typical behaviour for the Orthodox Church the main part of this group of researchers look at the relationship of the state and the Orthodox Church in the communist period as a preset one valuing to a lesser extent the impact of the historical, social, political and cultural context in which these relationships functioned. I argue against the importance given to theological predispositions in designing the state church relationship during the communist period put emphasis on the specific context of the transition period of the installation of the new regime from 1948 to 1952. The compromises the church made, often enforced with brutality by the communist administration were paralleled by compromises made by the new administration. For

some historians these compromises were asked for and directed from the Soviet Union. Professor Robert Service argued that the initial rapprochement of the communists to the national values were coordinated from Moscow and were the result of a common policy for all the new regimes of East Central Europe, a policy based on the realities at hand – weak communist parties, a scarcity of national communist leaders, the imposed regimes. In the initial stages of the Romanian communist regime the communist leaders took it upon themselves to continue the traditions set by the former leadership. That included appearing at religious functions alongside with religious leaders,⁴ and using this particular association to ease their accession and legitimate themselves in front of a public extremely conflicted towards this new elite.

More so the time frame for implementing the Soviet type of state church relationship was limited to the first years of the Romanian communist regime. The time frames for implementing the religious policies were different in the Soviet and East Central European case. While the Soviets have over 25 years of atheist policy and anti religious propaganda to prepare the 1943 state church association by destroying almost entirely its hierarchy and clergy and rebuilding it to fit the new state church relationship in the Romanian case this extended period of time when the communists could implement an coherent atheist policy was inexistent and the control over the religious life in the country had to be implemented in the same time the communist regime came to power and thus produced deviations from the communist model. The problems the new administration encountered in terms of specialised personnel, public opinion and legitimacy when trying to install the communist orthodoxy in religious policy created the background for the negotiation of a new state church relationship.

⁴ Cristian Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română în primul deceniu comunist*. (The Romanian Orthodox Church in the first communist decade), (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2005), p. 52.

Two other key terms define thus the relationship between state and church in the Romanian case: negotiation and compromise. The attempts to impose authority and to control the church were negotiated away and during the entire communist period the principle of compromise functioned. In the close encounters between the church officials, clergy and believers on the one hand and the communist cadres dealing with the religious denominations – the inspectors for religious denominations I have found that the relationship between state and church is not only subject to a central policy but also to local negotiation.

An overview of the state apparatus that dealt with religious denominations at central, regional and local level following up the way in which the state and church interacted completed the findings on the continuity of the model. It also helped in finding that the central policies (whether one talks about an administrative centre of the state or the hierarchical centre of the Orthodox Church) were reinterpreted and adapted to the local needs, that the relationship between the state and the church was redesigned at a local level again via negotiation and compromise. This local re-negotiation of the already decided upon regulation made its way into the law and in various cases changed at the central level the already negotiated policy. This situation of negotiation and redesign of the model came not only from the specific local needs but also from a paradox built in the model of state church relations. Thus my research concludes that an ambiguity at the central level in the construction of church state relations, ambiguity that was also translated inside the legal framework regarding the religious denominations resulted in the adoption of the set model of relationship at a local level where it was adapted to the local context.

I have discussed this hypothesis via the example of Cerghizel. The village was used as case in point to illustrate how the community negotiated its way around the central policies, the rules and regulations and the economic shortages of that time in order to build a new church brings forth the idea that the policy regarding the religious life was also developed at a local level, that the central decisions looked different when put into practice and, although the state administrations attempted to restrict the dialogue partners to the hierarchy of the religious denominations and define the relationship at the hierarchical level this was impossible to achieve.

The “subtle and complex ways” in which the Orthodox Church⁵ collaborated with the communist state led to the Church taking up its interwar position of “national church.” All opposition to this model of relationship set in place by extensive and permanent deal-makings, opposition coming especially from other religious denominations that competed for this title of national church or against the connection between national church and Orthodox Church, was dealt with by the communist administration. That included the Church internal opposition. The successful centralization of the church, undertaken during this period, a joint effort made both by the state administration and by the church administration (with distinct reasoning), translated into the completion of the process of *institutionalization* of the church that began in the 19th century.

⁵ Lucian Leuştean, *Orthodoxy and the Cold War: Religion And Political Power In Romania, 1947-65*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 3.

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