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Reference points of the atheist communist persecution against the Orthodox Church in Romania between 1945-1989

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Abstract

The complete establishment of the atheist communist regime in Romania in the late of 1947 was followed by an endless series of atrocities committed in the name of the ideal of creation “the new man”, ideal that supposed complete elimination of the notions about God, church and faith from the social life. The Church, being put to cope with these ideological changes, had to adapt itself, reducing its main domains of activity.

Keywords

Romania, communism, religious persecution, Church, Orthodoxy

Preliminary points

Turning back the guns against Germany on 23rd August 1944 and the instauration of the pro soviet government led by dr. Petru Groza on 6th March 1945 there are the two key moments that widely opened the gate for the soviet Romania. The gradually taking of power by the communists, in the context of big Russian contingent’s presence, allowed taking

antidemocratic and anti Romanian decisions – cleaning the state apparatus of the “bourgeois elements”, setting up “the People’s Court” and prisons for political prisoners, gradual nationalization of the Romanian economy, the suppressing media’s freedom and public manifestations, monetary stabilization (in fact, the complete ruining of all social backgrounds), the big election fraud in November 1946 – translated by Romania’s obedience to the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. The explosive inflation, drought and famine in 1946 enlarged the after war disaster. On 30th December 1947, the last obstacle against the Stalinist model was removed, king Michael I of Romania was forced to abdicate¹. Years 1945-1989 can be divided into four groups: 1945-1947 – the period of the implementation of the communist structures in Romania; 1948-1964 – the consolidation of the communism in a Stalinist process; 1965-1974 – a period of internal relaxation; 1974-1989 – the Ceaușescu period, having a new Stalinist essence².

The five decades of communism represented a period of profound changes for Romania felt at all levels of public life. The measures that communist regime underwent in our country through “the socialist way” were varied: nationalization of all private factories and institutions, forced collectivization (between 1949-1962) and imposing difficult agricultural shares, a single party system, the radical change of the legislation, a forced industrialization of Romania, strict control over the economy by imposing planning for five years, the media censorship and the appearance of all kinds of publications, the reforming of the school system following the soviet way, rewriting the Romanian traditions under the demagogical Marxist-Leninist slogans of “cultural revolution”, forced urbanization of Romania, the creation of a efficient system of propaganda , the development of an excessive cult of the leaders’ personality. The procedures the soviet system was imposed in Romania were the same. Where the propaganda seemed to be not efficient enough, “the Militia” and “the Security” took place in, the repressive elements of the state. The reeducation by work of “the imperialism agents” and “people’s enemies” (prisons and extermination colonies, deportation colonies, psychiatrist asylums) meant, in fact, the destroying of the Romanian spirit, individuality and essence. Under the apparent mask of a “multilateral developed society” the drama of a nation

¹ To see: Gheorghe Onișoru, *Instaurarea regimului comunist în România*, București, 2002.

² Ioan-Aurel Pop, *Românii și România. O scurtă istorie*, București, 1998, p. 154-158.

Reference points of the atheist communist persecution...

was hidden. The brutal violation of rights and elementary democratic freedom in the name of “the class struggle” specific to the “dictatorship of the proletariat”, put under shadow and covered the achievements of Romanian people as a whole and not of a persecution regime by definition³.

Many people partook of the communism’s “good” but many more shared the drama of millions of people foreigners in their own country; some of them directly opposed, others waited for the dawns of freedom. Facing the refuse of collectivization and giving shares to the state⁴, the resistance of the army in the mountains (there were more than 200 nucleus of partisans, the best known were the groups of Ogoranu and Arnăuțoiu in Southern Carpathians)⁵ or the labor protests (the miners’ strikes in Jiu Valley in 1972 and 1977)⁶, the Security answered by tough reprisals: torturing, inquiries and political staging. For example, in the mediated trial “Garda Alba” (“White Guard”) organization in Hunedoara, in 1958 – a real staging – there had been given hard verdicts: 5 to death, 47 sentences to life labor, 4 to life hard jail and 17 jails between 3-25 years⁷. The communist courts, following fake trials, filled the prisons and the extermination colonies by labor with innocent people. There were arrested, interrogated and sentenced laics and clerics; some of them were released in 1964, others lay as martyrs in unknown graves widespread on the entire Romanian gulag⁸.

³ In extenso: Dennis Deletant, *România sub regimul comunist*, București, 1997.

⁴ Cosmin Budeancă, “Impactul colectivizării asupra spațiului privat românesc în zona Hunedoara-Orăștie”, in *Studii de istorie a Transilvaniei. Omagiu Profesorului Pompiliu Teodor*, Cluj-Napoca, 2000, p. 86-90; Loredana-Liliana Leleşan, “Colectivizarea în raionul Hațeg”, *Perspective Istorice*, Deva, I (2010), 1, p. 61-67.

⁵ In extenso: Ion Gavrilă-Ogoranu, *Brazii se frâng, dar nu se îndoiesc*, vol. I-IV, Timișoara-Făgăraș, 2001-2003; *Mișcarea armată de rezistență anticomunistă din România (1944-1962)*, București, 2003.

⁶ Dan Cătănuș, “Revolte muncitorilor în România comunistă”, *Historia*, București, VII (2006), 54, p. 22, 24-26; Florian Banu, “Instrumentalizarea trecutului: greva minerilor din Valea Jiului din august 1977 în viziunea Serviciului Român de Informații”, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie «George Bariț»*, Cluj-Napoca, XLVI (2007), p. 503-516.

⁷ Cosmin Budeancă, “Aspecte privind colectivizarea și represiunea comunistă în regiunea Hunedoara. Cazul «Garda Albă»”, *Corviniana. Acta Musei Corvinensis*, Hunedoara, V (1999), p. 233-238.

⁸ Cicerone Ionițoiu, *Victimele terorii comuniste. Arestați, torturați, întemnițați, uciși. Dicționar*, București, 2000, passim; *Martiri pentru Hristos, din România, în perioada regimului comunist*, București, 2007, passim.

Reference points of the communist persecution against the Church

For over four decades, the Church was among the enemy institutions of the communism being put under a continuous repression for half a century⁹. There are three periods: 1948-1963 – total isolation of Church, arresting priests who opposed the regime and setting up of an economical and political control over its entire activity; 1963-1980 – the forbiddance of social and cultural presence of the Church in daily life and 1980-1989 – the efforts to vanish this institution¹⁰. At the beginning of 1948, the Church had two alternatives: a) direct and open confrontation that would have led to its covering with the blood of martyrs and, finally, its abolishing (like in Albania and China); b) embracing the long term dialog with the atheist regime. Considering that confrontation would have meant suicide, it was chosen the second alternative for a “modus vivendi” with the communism which allowed it to exist as an institution; “the concessions” made did not affect Its sacred essence or ecclesiastic prerogatives. The martyrs existed though thousands of priests, monks or ordinary believers being put in the communists’ jails¹¹.

Being taken out from the life of the state, Church became a “tolerated” institution without its missionary, philanthropic and cultural attributions. The interdictions and abuses were considerable: nationalization of parish properties and former confessional schools, the abolishing of Theology faculties in Iași, of theological Academies Oradea, Arad and Caransebeș, of Religious music Academy in Bucharest and of the majority theological schools, of a few positions of archbishops and a few dioceses (Huși, Argeș, Constanța, Caransebeș and Sighet) accompanied by the compulsory retirement of about 20 bishops, the forbiddance of almost all the inter-war clerical periodicals and magazines, of the icons and religious education in schools, of connection with Diaspora, of clerical associations of any

⁹ To see, in extensor: Cristina Păiușan, Radu Ciuceanu, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română sub regimul comunist. 1945-1958*, I, București, 2001; Cristian Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română în primul deceniu comunist*, București, 2005.

¹⁰ Ioan Dură, “Ierarhi ai Bisericii Ortodoxe Române îndepărtați din scaun și trimiși în recluziune monastică de către autoritățile comuniste în anii 1944-1981”, *Altarul Banatului*, Timișoara, XIII (2002), 10-12, p. 35-36.

¹¹ Alexandru Moraru, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română între anii 1885-2000. Biserică. Națiune. Cultură*, III/1, București, 2006, p. 171-172.

Reference points of the atheist communist persecution...

kind (“Lord’s Army”, “Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood”, “Orthodox Women Society”, “«Andrei Şaguna» Association of the orthodox clergy”, “«Saint George» Association of the orthodox youngsters” and “«Anastasia Şaguna» Association of the orthodox young women”), of missionary and social assistance in hospitals, orphanages, asylums, military barracks and penitentiaries. The army’s bishopric was abolished and the positions of priests were outside the law. The clerics’ activity was limited only to a parish area, without stepping over the premises of the church; it was officially allowed only the preparation of the mature catechumen through the ceremony of Vespers but the risks the priests faced were too big. “The cult inspectors” became a constant presence; their attributions were the media’s censorship and a strict surveillance of the diocesan centers, districts of archpriests, parishes, monasteries and theological schools¹².

The authorities’ measures were varied; as an example we could mention here the dispositions sent to parishes in the south-west of Transylvania. So, the address 8293/1944 sent to archdiocesan secretary office in Sibiu on 23rd November 1944, asked for the giving back of all the cult objects received from the Soviet Union. The circular letter no. 1.001/1948 disposed the elimination of all the “injurious” publications from the parish libraries¹³. The decree no. 176/1948 disposed that all the premises of the old confessional schools should enter in the state’s property¹⁴. On 17th March 1949 it was asked the centralization of the clerics’ personal data: the priest’s date and place of birth, the county, the commune, his studies, wife and children and of the church singer’s too. On 6th July 1950, the decree no. 153/1950 of the Ministry of Home Affairs disposed the picking up of all the clerical registration files where they could observe the christenings, marriages and funerals¹⁵; this measure led to disappearance of numerous documents of crucial importance for the past of the Romanian villages. The

¹² Adrian Gabor, Adrian-Nicolae Petcu, “Biserica Ortodoxă Română și puterea comunistă în timpul patriarhului Justinian”, *Anuarul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă a Universității din București*, II (2002), p. 93-154; Cristian Vasile, *Între Vatican și Kremlin. Biserica Greco-Catolică în timpul regimului comunist*, București, 2003, p. 130, 138; Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, III, Iași, ³2008, p. 426-430.

¹³ *Protocolul de esibite al parohiei Vorța cu filia Valea Lungă pe anii 1938-1972* (Vorța-Hunedoara Parish Archive), no. 31/23.11.1944, f. 54; no. 7/16.02.1948, f. 59.

¹⁴ Petru Iacob, Aurelia PISOIU-IACOB, *Satul Crăciunești (Date monografice)*, Deva, 2009, p. 79.

¹⁵ *Protocolul de esibite...*, no. 10/17.03.1949, f. 61; no. 36/20.07.1950, f. 62.

landed properties of the parishes were affected too, in the most parts of the county, because of the collectivization process, in other words confiscated; the report of the meeting of the parish council from Crăciunești, on 14th May 1961, “the priest [Aurel Moga] as the chairman reminded that he received an order from the archpriest’s office to give the land to the state and on 15th May 1961 they were cited by the Băița Popular Council where, Igna Nicolae, the chairman, asked for these lands being given to the state in the shortest time according to decree no. 15/1959¹⁶.

The believers’ life was affected. The Security, present everywhere, a repression element for the communist regime, was continuously watching to the formation of the “new man”; according to the materialist-atheist spirit, faith and religion were considered decaying mentalities, old and insignificant for the individual and society. The state’s clerks, teachers and students were not allowed going to church, practicing the ancestors’ Christian traditions¹⁷. The confessions fight to weaken their capacity of resistance, the stimulation of old fight between orthodox people and Greek-Catholic people and some intentionally made tensions in the heart of Orthodoxy fulfilled the series of anti clerical measures. At the beginning of 1949, a directive of 3rd Service of Security stated: “To be used at maximum the conflicts between priests and clerical singers in order to obtain compromising information for both of them”¹⁸.

Till 1959 the monasteries were put under strict informative surveillance; Security made lists with all their inhabitants being specified their attitude to the regime of “popular democracy”. After the promulgation of the decree no. 410, the same year, tens of monasteries had been abolished, some of them being transformed in parishes, stores or jails, others being forgotten. Hundreds of monks and nuns were taken out from monasteries by force and sent to their families or to labor in factories; they continued to live a monastic life discreetly waiting for coming back to their old monasteries. All of them were watched by the “people’s security”. Following the same principles, the nun schools from Agapia and Hurezi were closed, women being forbidden to enter the theological learning system; at the end of the University school year 1958/1959, by the disposal of the Cults Ministry, all the woman students were expelled from the Romanian Theological

¹⁶ P. Iacob, A. Pisoiu-Iacob, *Satul Crăciunești...*, p. 57.

¹⁷ Al. Moraru, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română...*, III/1, p. 173.

¹⁸ C. Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română...*, p. 262-265.

Reference points of the atheist communist persecution...

Institutes and the monks and nuns were expelled from any other type of education¹⁹.

In the name of ideal systematization and fast industrialization of Romanian localities, the graveyards were rummaged and the churches hidden after the blocks (deformed or collapsed); only in the 9th decade over 20 establishments of praying disappeared in Bucharest, one of them being on the list of historical monuments: the monasteries Cotroceni, Văcărești and Pantelimon, and churches “Saint Friday”, “Saint Trinity”, Enei, Dudești and others²⁰. The situation was similar at a local level too. For example, in Hunedoara county the churches from Plop (on its basis the school and the village store were built), Cinciș, Cerna and Baia Craiului (covered by the waters of the accumulation dam from Cinciș) had a similar fate. A part of the construction material for a new church was used for a triumphal arch in the Zam station, for the “generalissimus” Stalin (destroyed in 1953); from the bricks of Peștișu Mare parish, donated by the deputy Constantin Bursan, the greatest contemporary founder of orthodox ecclesiastic premises, were built the stables of local agricultural production co-operative²¹. The medieval churches from Batiz and Suseni-Colț had been used for the same purpose.

“Reactionary” by definition, promoting an idealist world of peace, love and divine justice, the shepherds of soul, considered the instigators in the name of “retrograded legionary principles”, had to endure for many decades the interrogations, tortures, jails and deportations. It is considered that between years 1948-1964, one of four priests was arrested, interrogated and sentenced; from 12.000 orthodox clerics in Romania in those times, 3.000 met with the Romanian “gulag”, 1.800 dying in unimaginable conditions. Well known theology teachers (Nichifor Crainic, Teodor M. Popescu, Dumitru Stăniloae, Ilarion Felea, Florea Mureșanu, Liviu Munteanu) were arrested and interrogated, Christian cultural personalities of international value (Onisifor Ghibu, Mircea Vulcănescu, Petre Țuțea), great confessors (Arsenie Boca, Benedict Ghiuș, Daniil Sandu Tudor,

¹⁹ Sebastian Cârstea, “Aspecte ale vieții monahale ortodoxe ardelenne în timpul perioadei comuniste”, *Revista Teologică*, Sibiu, XVII (2007), 3, p. 406-430; George Enache, Adrian-Nicolae Petcu, *Monahismul ortodox și puterea comunistă în România anilor '50*, Galați, 2009, p. 9-58.

²⁰ In extenso: *Bisericile osândite de Ceaușescu. București, 1977-1989*, București, 1995.

²¹ Mircea Păcurariu, “Constantin Bursan – ctitor de biserici hunedorene”, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, CXX (2002), 7-9, p. 189-190.

Arsenie Papacioc, Adrian Făgețeanu, Iustin Pârvu), former military priests from the East Front (Dimitrie Bejan), supporters for the partisans in the mountains (Nicolae Andreescu, Ioan Drăgoi, Ioan Constantinescu) and others²².

The arrestments were gradually made, according to the slogan of minister Vasile Luca: "We would better arrest ten innocents than lose one bandit". The first period was between March and August 1945; the suspects, accused by "legionary ideas" were confined in the Caracal camp (Olt county). Released after a short period of time, they remained under the observation of pro Moscow authorities. Arrestments, under the accuse of "keeping publications with fascist character" were retaken in the spring of 1946, during the Ion Antonescu's trial; the prime-minister Petru Groza, a priest's son and member in the synod of the Sibiu Archdiocese (1911-1958) tempered the excessiveness. After 1948, the Security more strongly attacked the inter-war intellectuals, massive arrestments being made in 1949-1952 and 1956-1959. By the circular letter 1361 on 12th December 1948, the new Patriarch of Romania, Justinian Marina (1948-1977), asked to all dioceses lists with all the arrested priests, centralized data, to be forwarded to the Ministry of Cults, asking to be checked the correctness of the arresting measures²³. Their wives and children faced big difficulties regarding the continuity of their studies and employment. In summer of 1952, the present day academician Mircea Păcurariu, first year student then, was expelled, due to his "unhealthy" origin, from the Faculty of History in Cluj-Napoca²⁴. The interrogations and arrestments continued up after 1964, the year of general amnesty of political prisoners in Romania. Those who were released remained under the observation of the Security as "hostile elements for the popular regime"; the periodical check and the informers made longer their imprisonment, even if they were free.

To distract the soul shepherds from their mission, the communist authorities brutally interfered in the orthodox parishes' life; in 1948 many of these were made vacant²⁵. In the next decades, by circular

²² Mihai Răduleacu, Irineu Slătineanu, *Preoți în cătușe*, București, 1997, passim; Vasile Manea, Cicerone Ionițoiu, *Martiri și mărturisitori ai Bisericii din România (1948-1989)*. *Biserica Ortodoxă*, București, 1998, passim.

²³ C. Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română...*, p. 110, 232-244.

²⁴ Paul Brusanowski, "Părintele Magistru Mircea Păcurariu la a 75-a aniversare", *Revista Teologică*, XVII (2007), 3, p. 11.

²⁵ *Calendarul Arhiepiscopiei Sibiului pe anul comun de la Hristos 1948*, Sibiu, 1947, passim.

Reference points of the atheist communist persecution...

letters imposed to bishops or by the directives came from the local state authorities, priests were imposed to be involved in the activities of the new “popular regime”; a few examples from the territory of Hunedoara are enough to demonstrate the epoch’s “climate”. In the Arad bishopric’s address no. 6.551 on 5th November 1949, it was asked that priests, after the Holy Liturgy to talk to people about the tight Romanian-Soviet friendship and about the importance of 7th November 1917 (25th October in the old calendar style), the date of Russian Bolshevik revolution²⁶. On 8th April 1950, the provisional Committee of Brad notified the Băița Popular Council to organize, after the first religious ceremony, the conference “The Fight Committees for Peace”²⁷. In March 1951 parishes received the new cotes for wool and milk, insisting on the obligation for the agricultural cote; for example, the mother nuns from monastery Prislop must participate to the “handicraft labor”. Between 1 and 9 December 1951 a collection for North Korean people was imposed²⁸. By the circular letter no. 189 of the Deva archpriest office on 20th March 1952, all priests had to finish the agricultural sowing²⁹. On 5th March 1953, the authorities, “in mourning”, sent to all dioceses in the country that in all churches to be held religious ceremonies and for three days the bells in churches to beat thirty minutes four times a day for “all peoples’ father” and in sermons to be praised “the personality and activity of the president of Council of Ministers of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics and general secretary of the Central Committee of Socialist Soviet Republics Union, the Soviet Union Generalissimo, Iosif Vissarionovici Stalin”³⁰. On 13th July 1953, the archpriests of Hunedoara had to guide the priests to support “the agricultural campaign, a holy duty for every citizen”³¹. On September 1955, according to an address of the Banat Metropolitan Church, conferences were held in archpriests offices having the duty to talk about agricultural sowing³²; on 3-6 September 1960 it was debated “Romanian-Soviet clerical and cultural connections” and

²⁶ *Protocolul de esibite...*, no. 32/8.11.1949, f. 59-60.

²⁷ Ioachim Lazăr, *Comuna Băița. Monografie*, Deva, 2007, p. 199-200.

²⁸ “Partea oficială”, *Mitropolia Banatului*, I (1951), 3, p. 4-5; II (1952), 1, p. 18.

²⁹ *Protocolul de esibite...*, no. 7/20.03.1952, f. 64-65.

³⁰ “Oficiale”, *Mitropolia Banatului*, III (1953), 4-6, p. 32.

³¹ I. Lazăr, *Comuna Băița...*, p. 202-203.

³² “Deservenți de culte aleși în comitetele pentru pace”, *Mitropolia Banatului*, Timișoara, V (1955), 7-9, p. 35.

”the friendship’s benefits” between the two peoples³³. For 17th December 1988, the priests were recommended to participate at the meeting of “The Organization of Democracy and Socialist Union”³⁴.

On 4th August 1948 the “law for the general regime of cults” was promulgated, that stated the total separation of Church from state with the idea that all the citizens have freedom of conscious and equality for the religious cults and their independence. According to this legislation, a committee elaborated in Bucharest a new “Statute for the organization and functionality of the Romanian Orthodox Church” voted in the meeting of Holy Synod on 19-20 October³⁵. According to the article 27 of the new Constitution of Popular Republic of Romania where every diocese should have an average of 750.000 believers³⁶, many orthodox dioceses were amalgamated. In the exchange of these nationalized clerical goods, the state monthly gave a sum of money (usually little money) for the clerics; the rest of the income, till a decent level, was done from own funds. In these conditions the Church organized its own (House of Reciprocal Help) offering not only money for the retired priests but treatment tickets in spas where it could be found own resting places (Bazna, Buziaș, Techirghiol, Bușteni, Călimănești, Olănești, Slănic Moldova and others). To helping the poor parishes it was established, at Patriarchate, by the will of a the orthodox believers of everywhere, a “Missionary Central Fund” annually completed on the first Sunday of the Lent (The Orthodoxy Sunday)³⁷. The auxiliary staff was excluded from payment.³⁸

The preparation of the new priests was done in theological schools from Bucharest, Buzău, Craiova, Monastery Neamț, Cluj-Napoca and Caransebeș, gradually opened after 1948 – till 1977 there were two educational levels “The School for clerical singers” (two years of studying) and “Seminary” (three years) – and Theological Institutes of University rank in Bucharest and Sibiu (four years); all were supported by the church not

³³ “Conferințele de orientare ale preoțimii, ținute în luna septembrie 1960”, *Mitropolia Banatului*, Timișoara, X (1960), 7-12, p. 205-206.

³⁴ “Adunarea Organizației Democrației și Unității Socialiste din cadrul Centrului eparhial”, *Mitropolia Banatului*, Timișoara, XXXVIII (1988), 6, p. 145-146.

³⁵ In extenso: *Statutul pentru organizarea și funcționarea Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, București, 1949; *Legiuirile Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, București, 1953.

³⁶ Ioan D. Suciu, *Monografia Mitropoliei Banatului*, Timișoara, 1977, p. 238-240.

³⁷ M. Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii...*, III, p. 439.

³⁸ C. Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română...*, p. 265.

Reference points of the atheist communist persecution...

being included in the state learning system. The subjects studied here were theological ones (The Old Testament and Biblical Archeology, The New Testament, The Universal Clerical History, The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church, The Patrology, The Dogmatic Theology, The Christian Morals, The History of Religions, Canonical Law, Clerical Administration, Homiletics and Catechetical, Clerical Music etc.) and classical languages (Greek, Latin and Hebrew). Many courses were organized in these centers for priests with a period of activity of over 5 and 10 years³⁹.

Despite the interdictions and for the pastoral talent of some devoted servants of Church, the achievements did not miss. As a result, in the communist period many churches were finished, some of a great and monumental value; a good example is the church “Saints Michael and Gabriel” in Ghelari (47 m long, 21 m wide and 47 m high), built between 1939 and 1960, considered to be the most stately church in the entire rural Romanian space⁴⁰. To these achievements could be added the fixing, consolidation and repainting of the majority of clerical and monastic buildings, some of great historical importance. We can list here many monastic settlements from Putna, Voroneț, Sucevița, Neamț, Văratec, Cozia, Bistrița, Hurezi, Govora, Tismana, Râmeț, Prislop, Hodoș-Bodrog, Rohia and others. Many museums and collections with clerical objects were opened in the premises of old monasteries. Many clerical books were reprinted especially from the four branches of Romanian theological research: biblical, historical, systematical and practical. The magazines „Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, „Studii Teologice”, „Glasul Bisericii”, „Ortodoxia”, „Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei”, „Mitropolia Olteniei”, „Mitropolia Ardealului” și „Mitropolia Banatului” and the periodical “Telegraful Român” had a large demand; depending on the jurisdiction metropolitan area where there were parishes, they were subscribed to one or more of the publications lined⁴¹.

The connections with the sisters Orthodox Churches and with the Romanian Diaspora were retaken gradually, too establishing, with the

³⁹ Viorel Ioniță, “Institutul teologic de grad universitar din București, 1948-1981”, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, XCIX (1981), 9-10, p. 1118-1141; M. Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii...*, III, p. 448-450.

⁴⁰ Florin Dobrei, *Bisericile ortodoxe hunedorene*, Reșița, 2011, p. 187-188.

⁴¹ Ene Braniște, “Tiparul și cartea bisericească în cei cincizeci de ani de Patriarhat (1925-1975)”, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, XCIII, 1975, 11-12, p. 1422-1428; M. Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii...*, III, p. 448-453.

Patriarchate blessing, new parish communities, all of them being under the jurisdiction of some local dioceses of the structures of the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchy; the only painful point was the Romanian Orthodox Bishopric from America entered, in 1960, under the jurisdiction of Russian Orthodox Metropolitan Seat on the American continent. To these parishes were added a few clerical units that depended directly from the Patriarchate, the Romanian churches from Baden-Baden, Sofia, Melbourne, Adelaide, Sidney and Wellington, Romanian settlement from Jerusalem, hermitages Lacu and Prodromu from Mount Athos, respectively the Romanian parishes from the office of locum tenens in Vojvodina (former Yugoslavia) and from Hungary dependent on the Banat Metropolitan Seat. The majority had own clerical magazines where it was reflected aspects of their cultural and pastoral activities⁴². After 1961, when the 3rd General Meeting of Churches Ecumenical Council was in New Delhi, Romanian Patriarchate reentered in the circuit of meetings and international ecumenical manifestations; a special attention was given to the cooperation with the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, the Romanian Orthodox Church also brought a significant contribution to promote inter Christian dialogue in the Conference of European Churches whose main purpose was the cooperation and proximity of the people within the European continent and their common safety⁴³.

The church followed its mission, remaining a life boat for the souls of those in need. Statistically, at the end of 1989, the situation of the Romanian Orthodox Church was as follows: 17 cathedrals, 8.232 parish churches, 3.588 secondary parishes, 256 cemetery churches, 273 chapel of ease, 20 chapels and 132 monastery churches; there also existed 8.232 parishes (5.100 having parish houses) with 4.004 secondary churches, 149 monastic settlements of which: 32 monasteries of monks and 35 monasteries of nuns, 27 hermitages for monks and 6 for nuns, 14 succursal monasteries and 35 monastic chapels of ease. The clerical staff had 24 bishops, 8.465 priests, 46 deacons, 740 monks and 1.771 nuns; we add

⁴² M. Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii...*, III, p. 439-444.

⁴³ Dumitru Soare, "Contribuția Prea Fericitului Patriarh Iustin la dezvoltarea relațiilor ecumenice ale Bisericii Ortodoxe Române", *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, XCVIII (1980), 3-4, p. 405-432; Antonie Plămădeală, "Ecumenism și relații externe bisericești (1944-1970)", *Ortodoxia*, București, XXXII (1980), 1, p. 159-170; Idem, "L'Église Orthodoxe Roumaine et l'oecuménisme. Un quart de siècle depuis l'entrée dans le Conseil Oecuménique des Églises", *Romanian Orthodox Church News*, București, XVI (1986), 4, p. 87-99.

Reference points of the atheist communist persecution...

here the honorific priests and deacons employed in the theological learning system (University and seminar) and those who had administrative jobs in Patriarchy, Metropolitan Seats and Bishoprics and the retired priests⁴⁴.

In those troubled times, Church had remained a single institution that promoted other ideas than the atheist materialistic ideas. Despite the fact that promoting that ideology had become a state politics, the believers could not have been distracted from their old Christian traditions. The communist regime had to tolerate the existence of priests and monks, of parish and monastic churches, of theological learning system, and, finally, the ecclesiastic connections with different foreign communities. Romanian church was not only a martyr church because of the martyrs it gave but a heroic church that never gave up its holy mission⁴⁵.

The dawns of new changes

The events in December 1989 when the totalitarian communist regime was vanished determined some changes in the life of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Having no interdictions it gradually entered back in normality. Religion was reintroduced in schools, taught at the beginning by priests and then by specialized teachers. The activity of some inter-war associations was retaken: “Lord’s Army”, “Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood”, “The National Society of the Orthodox Women”, “The Association of the Orthodox Christian Students in Romania”, “The League of Romanian Orthodox Youth”. At the local television and radio channels many programs having priests and orthodox theologians as guests were released. Almost everywhere in the country the television channel “Trinitas TV” and the radio channel “Trinitas” could be received by anyone, these being a part of the “Basilica” trust of the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchy in Bucharest. At a local level we could receive radio stations as “Renașterea” (“Revival”) from Cluj-Napoca and “Reîntregirea” (“Reunification”) from Alba Iulia. In the main cities carol concerts are organized, painting exhibition and clerical sculptures, symposiums and conferences on history and orthodox spirituality. In hospitals, military units and penitentiaries priests were introduced and chapels were built for this purpose. For the

⁴⁴ M. Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii...*, III, p. 439.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 429-430.

youngsters who want to become priests or to teach religion in schools as teachers, many theological schools were reopened, of secondary school level (Arad, Baia Mare, Făgăraș, Târgu Jiu, Râmnicu Vâlcea and others) or of university level (Alba Iulia, Arad, Pitești, Constanța, Târgoviște, Craiova, Oradea, Iași, Timișoara and others); we could mention here a few monastic seminars. The social-philanthropic sector, having no legislative status before, knew a very fast and important development. There were established 10 new dioceses (Argeș, Tulcea, Hunedoara, Sălaj, Caransebeș, Severin, Teleorman, Slatina, Huși etc.), many more archpriest offices and many parishes. New connections were made between the Christian churches through many meetings and manifestations with an ecumenical character in the country and abroad. The visit of the pope John Paul II in Romania on 7-9 May 1999 was representative. Thus, as a whole, the Church regained its lost positions⁴⁶.

The aversions of the communist atheist regime gradually disappear from the consciousness of Romanians. Step by step the wounds heal themselves. It is sad that for many this history lesson has no relevance, minimizing and forgetting the dramatics of some episodes from a not too distant past. If these facts will not be learned and made aware and always brought to the contemporary people's mentality, there is a risk for the history – perhaps other actors and other stage – to repeat.

⁴⁶ *Viața religioasă în România*, București, 1999, pp. 7-165; Alexandru Morariu, "Biserica Ortodoxă Română între anii 1990-2000", *Studia Universitas Babeș-Bolyai*, series *Theologia Orthodoxa*, Cluj-Napoca, XLVII (2002), 1-2, p. 35-47; M. Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii...*, III, p. 465-481.