

THE CONSEQUENCES RESULTING FROM THE GOVERNANCE OF THE POPULAR DEMOCRACY REGIME ON THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN 1945-1964

Ionel Chira

Lecturer, PhD., Faculty Orthodox Theology „Episcop Dr. Vasile Coman”,
University of Oradea

Abstract: The political regime established in 1945 in Romania had no connection with democracy and the legitimate interests of the people, but on the contrary was anti-democratic, anti-popular and anti-Christian. In Romania, from 1945-1964, there were two strategies of the relations between the church and the political power: the diplomatic strategy of survival through the compromises adopted by the hierarchy, and the martyrdom strategy adopted by the priests, monks and believers who dared to fight and to reject the abuses of the communist power against religious life.

Keywords: The Romanian Orthodox Church, the communist regime, hierarchs, political police, The Archives of the State Political Police

Although there has been very much written and also accumulated an impressive bibliography related to the Romanian Orthodox Church and its relations with the communist regime, their value is unequal and full of contradictory ideas, so has not yet been developed, a systematic, comprehensive and definitive study on the post-war history of the Church. The historiographic and theological processing of the experience of our Church in communism "was not a priority neither for the hierarchy nor for the school theology."¹ University theological textbooks, recognized for their authority and formative capacity on the future ministers, deal with the subject regarding the relation of the Romanian Orthodox Church with the communist regime in a superficial way.

Only after 2000, when the National Council for the Study of the Archives of the State Political Police was established, researchers who had access to the documents of the former political police were able to elaborate more rigorous studies about the real history of the Church during the totalitarian regime. Trying to compensate the lack of thorough studies of the church authority, many historians have elaborated, on their own initiative, clarifying books related to the Romanian Orthodox Church and the communist regime, but the authors being laymen, although they have tried to rigorously present scientifically argued facts however, they did slip through some interpretation errors. A useful book in restoring the first decade of post-war church history is *the Romanian Orthodox Church under the communist regime*, having as authors the two researchers from the National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism. In the introduction of the book, for example, it is categorically stated that: "Today we know with certainty that Patriarch Justinian saved the Church"², bringing as an argument, the critical reports about his activity prepared by the State Political Police informers. Realistically, the content of the book shows only the fact that the patriarch had

¹ Radu PREDA, *Deconspirarea Securității între uitare și judecată pripită*, Rost, 45, (2006): 8.

² Cristina PĂIUȘAN și Radu CIUCEANU, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română sub regimul comunist*, I, (București, Institutul Național pentru Studiarea Totalitarismului, 2001), 29.

tried to save the institution of the Church, but not that he had succeeded. Eloquent in this regard are the conclusions of the historian Cristian Vasile, who, studying the same period, states that: "*the submission of the patriarch to the communist officials was not complete (or did not reach the degree desired by the communist rulers, which is also evident in the State Political Police documents), but the numerous concessions made to the regime seriously affected the moral authority of the Orthodox hierarchy, especially in the Romanian exile, where the bishops of the country were perceived as "unworthy shepherds".*"³

In the introductory study of another work entitled, *The imprisoned Church. Romania 1944-1989*, there are errors made regarding the situation of the bishops persecuted by the regime. Thus, it is stated that: "*many hierarchs of the Christian Church have been removed from their church seat, arrested, they died or were only purified*"⁴, so that further, we can find mentioned only the name of a single arrested bishop, but the information is contradictory also about him. It is about Efreim Enăchescu, the Metropolitan bishop of Basarabia, about whom it is said that he was abbot of the Cernica monastery until 1952, when he retired, then he was arrested and died in detention (the information is still uncertain).

Also, the author of the book, *The Romanian Orthodox Church and the communist regime (1945-1964). An image of the relations between the Church and the State*, states that: "*the church resisted the persecution of the regime because of its sacramental being, through the great spiritual advisers, unique in Orthodoxy and who cannot be met in the other Christian denominations.*"⁵ The statement is true but incomplete, because the author does not mention that many of these great spiritual advisers were imprisoned in communist prisons because they criticized the official strategy of collaboration between the church and the political power.

In the work, *Orthodoxy and political power in contemporary Romania*, the author states that: "*in the ecclesiological conception of the Orthodox Church, the hierarchy, the clergy and the monks have an equally important role, all representing the Church or the mystical body of Christ.*"⁶ It is true that all members of the Church have a real role in its life, but their responsibilities are different, depending on the hierarchical rank that each believer occupies. The role of the simple lay believer is of one kind, and the role and responsibility of a bishop who is a shepherd of both laymen believers and monks, as well as the priests in the diocese he leads, is of another kind. Another error arises when it is stated: "*The fact that a hierarch did not undertake an action of special resistance, is compensated by the vigorous actions of another monk, a priest or just a believer, the Church's dignity being thus preserved in its entirety.*"⁷ Firstly, the pastoral strategy of the Church is not made by the lay believers, monks or even priests, but by bishops, because through the holy canons, they have the full decision-making power and the highest pastoral responsibility. Secondly, even though we acknowledge that there were thousands of priests, monks and believers who fought openly against the communism, for which many were martyred and imprisoned, however, their action could not change the course of the official church policy, which it was a collaboration with the political power. While in camps and prisons, the intellectual and spiritual elite of the Romanian people were subjected to an extermination regime, Patriarch Justinian exposed in his sermons his unconditional attachment to the political power: "*It is true that there are many*

³ Cristian VASILE, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română în primul deceniul communist*, (București, Curtea Veche, 2005), 271.

⁴***, *Biserica înțemnițată*. (București, Institutul Național pentru Studiarea Totalitarismului, 1998), 13.

⁵ Pr. Prof. Dr. Adrian GABOR. *Biserica Ortodoxă Română și regimul comunist 1945-1964*, (București, 2007), 5.

⁶George ENACHE, *Ortodoxie și putere politică în România contemporană*, (București, Nemira, 2005), 11.

⁷ ENACHE, *Ortodoxie și putere politică în România contemporană*, 11.

who wanted to see us in conflict with the dominion and there are still many who, even today, are trying for personal reasons to drag the clergy of our Church down this slope of a disagreement with the leaders of our state..."⁸. He hoped that at the shelter of these statements of political support he would be able to obtain a certain freedom of maneuver whereby he could organize a resistance of the Church from inside and maintain the church in its existence.

When bishops who were confessors of the truth rose, they were sanctioned by the politically obedient hierarchy, under cover of so-called "higher church order" motives. These measures were illegal because they had no basis in the Holy Scripture or in any writing of the Holy Fathers. These remained unhealed weaknesses in the body of the Church, whose effects are still speculated today by the enemies of Orthodoxy.

It is true that the fruits of the sacrifice of the holy martyrs from prisons are beneficially spread over the whole Church, but this does not nullify the guilt of the clerics and laymen who by their acts served the State Political Police and the party and did not repent for their sins.⁹

The first of the Romanian hierarchs who was the target of the constraints of the new pro-Soviet regime was *the Patriarch Nicodim Munteanu* (1939-1948). He ministered the Church as its hierarch under extremely vitriolic conditions, during the period of three dictatorships: of King Carol II, of Marshal Ion Antonescu and the communist one, of the Government ruled by Petru Groza. He was accused by the representatives of the communist power of having agreed with the legionary regime and the regime ruled by Marshal Antonescu, but he was a close friend of King Mihai, seeking to avoid the controversy with the new communist structures and to maintain the autonomy line of the Romanian Orthodox Church which was facing the pressure of the Russian Orthodox Church to guard all the Orthodox Churches from the countries which were satellite to USSR.¹⁰

The Metropolitan bishop of Moldova Irineu Mihălcescu (1939-1948) was retired due to his age at the decision of the Ministry of Cults, led at that time by Petru Groza himself, who was also prime minister and *add interim* minister to cults. He retires to the Agapia Monastery and dies in unclear circumstances on April 3, 1948.¹¹

The Metropolitan bishop Tit Sîmedrea of Bucovina (1941-1945) gave up to the metropolitan throne on January 31, 1945, understanding that he would be *ex officio* dismissed, after which he was obliged to reside at the Darvari Hermitage in Bucharest, then from 1959 at the Cernica Monastery, where Security continuously monitored him until his death in 1971.¹²

Visarion Puiu was one of the most ardent persecuted hierarchs by the communists. After he ministered the Metropolitan Church of Bukovina as its hierarch, seven years, in 1942 he was elected Metropolitan bishop and leader of the Romanian Orthodox Mission in Transnistria. He led this mission during the Romanian government during the anti-Soviet war of 1942-1944, after which he was forced to withdraw with the Romanian troops from the counter-offensive of the Red Army.

Guessing the fate of Romania, Metropolitan bishop Visarion took refuge in the West and managed to reach Rome, with the help of the apostolic nuncio from Bucharest. On February 21, 1946, by the People's Court judgment from Bucharest, the Metropolitan bishop

⁸ Justinian MARINA, *Apostolat social. Pilde și îndemnuri pentru cler*. IV, (București, EIBMBOR, 1952), 113.

⁹ Horia-Roman PATAPIEVICI, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română și modernitatea*, II, *Dilema*, 331 (1999): 19.

¹⁰ Pr. dr. Ioan DURĂ, *Ierarhi ai Bisericii Ortodoxe Române îndepărtați din scaun și trimiși în recluziune monastică de autoritățile comuniste în anii 1944-1989*, AB, 10-12, (2002), 45.

¹¹ Vasile MANEA, *Preoți ortodocși în închisorile comuniste*, (Alba Iulia, Reîntregirea, 2004), 14.

¹² MANEA, *Preoți ortodocși în închisorile comuniste*. 21,

was judged in default and sentenced to death. He was considered a war criminal. On February 28, 1950, at the order of the communist authorities, the Synod of Bucharest defrocked him. This unfair measure illustrates the real limits of the church autonomy during the regime of popular democracy. It was only in 1990 when the abusive canonical sanction was lifted from the Metropolitan bishop Visarion, by a synodal act of the Romanian Orthodox Church.¹³

After the settling in the metropolitan seat of Bessarabia, *Efrem Enăchescu* was forced to leave his Metropolitan church shortly, due to its invasion by the Soviets. Although he had initially been called a spiritual minister and guiding of the theology students in Bucharest, due to his anti-Bolshevik actions and sermons, the former metropolitan bishop was imprisoned at the Cernica Monastery. Here he was ordained abbot until 1952 and, after some sources that cannot be verified, he was arrested and killed in detention by the Soviets.¹⁴

The Metropolitan bishop of Banat Vasile Lăzărescu is elected Bishop of Timișoara and was enthroned on March 25, 1941. In 1947 he becomes the Archbishop of Timisoara and Metropolitan bishop of Banat. In 1961, at the request of the communist authorities, he was withdrawn and retired, establishing for him as a place of residence, Monastery Cernica. The reason for his retirement was the fact that he helped the families of some arrested priests.¹⁵

Nifon Criveanu was elected metropolitan bishop of Oltenia in November 1939, but shortly afterwards, on April 20, 1945, the metropolitan church ministered by him was disbanded, and he was forced to retire although he was only 56 years old. He died on June 14, 1970 in Bucharest, at the *Mother's Hermitage* where he was sent in exile and was buried at Cernica Monastery.¹⁶

The Bishop Antim Nica was vicar of the Mission of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transnistria within the short period of time the province was under the Romanian administration. When the fate of Bessarabia was sealed by the invasion of the Red Army, he returned to the country and was sent as vicar to the Bishopric called Dunărea de Jos (1947-1950). He was ordained bishop in Galati only in 1973, then he was ordained archbishop. The Communist State Political Police drafted him a secret follow-up file due to his hostile activity towards the communism during his ministry in Transnistria.¹⁷

Bishop Eugeniu Laiu, former deputy of the bishop of Tomis, was dismissed in 1944 and sent to the Neamt Monastery. V. Manea states that the archhierarch Eugeniu Laiu was arrested in 1949 "for hostile actions against communism".¹⁸

It is not known when he was released from prison, but only that he died on April 20, 1968. He is one of the few cases of the Orthodox bishops arrested and imprisoned by the communist authorities.

The bishop of Huși Grigore Leu was withdrawn on February 5, 1949, because his diocese was disbanded, being divided between the Roman and Galați bishoprics. Before being dismissed, in the Synod, he had the mission to coordinate the Romanian Church from exile. He refused to join the Romanian churches from exile to the Moscow Patriarchate, which led to the communists' decision to kill him. Another reason that led to the authorities' decision to eliminate him was the escape of his son Vasile Leo, to the West, where he was ordained bishop of the Romanian Orthodox from exile, in December 1948, in Munich, by the hierarchs

¹³ Vasile M. POPESCU, *Un martir al Crucii, Viața și scrierile lui Teodor M. Popescu*, (București, Cristiana, 2006), 301.

¹⁴ DURĂ, *Ierarhi ai Bisericii Ortodoxe Române îndepărtați din scaun și trimiși în recluziune monastică de autoritățile comuniste în anii 1944-1989*, 43.

¹⁵ ***, *Biserica întemnițată*, 22.

¹⁶ DURĂ, *Ierarhi ai Bisericii Ortodoxe Române îndepărtați din scaun ...*, 44.

¹⁷ George ENACHE, *Episcopul Antim Nica și poziția sa față de relațiile stat-Biserică în România comunistă, în Ortodoxie și putere politică în România Contemporană*, (București, Nemira, 2005), 287.

¹⁸ MANEA, *Preoți ortodocși în închisorile comuniste*, 16.

of the Russian Orthodox Church outside the borders. In 1952, *Bishop Vasile Leu* was kidnapped from Vienna, taken to Moscow and accused of spying for the American services. After two years, in 1954, he was transferred to Bucharest and sentenced to death for homeland betrayal. Finally, he is exempted from the capital punishment and released in 1964. Refusing the proposed compromises, he is exiled to the Cernica Monastery and dies in 1978. Returning to the bibliography of bishop Grigore Leu, from the book published by the Romanian National Council in 1983, we find out that his mysterious death shortly after his dismissal was due to the fact that he was the only one who knew the perpetrator and the methods used to exterminate Patriarch Nicodemus and Metropolitan bishop Irineu Mihălcescu. On February 25, 1949, bishop Grigore Leu is invited to Bucharest for discussions, and three days after his return he dies, being more than likely poisoned.¹⁹ The documents of the State Political Police says that: *"he wanted to die so that the public could see in his death a vehement protest against the regime of oppression of religion"*.²⁰

Bishop Andrei Magieru was ordained to Arad in 1936. He ministered this diocese as its ruler until 1960, when he was poisoned.

The one who provides this information is the writer Mihail Sadoveanu, known for his membership in Freemasonry and his communist beliefs. The causes of the poisoning of the hierarch from Arad are unclear, because in the vision of the State Political Police he was a man devoted to the regime who: "generally applies the norms transmitted to him by the Ministry of Cults".²¹ A possible explanation would be the involvement of the bishop's name in the investigations of the priests from Arad, arrested in 1958.²²

Metropolitan bishop Sebastian Rusan, although he was initially considered a trusted man of the regime (he was in kinship with the Prime Minister Petru Groza) and advancing in the ranks of the church hierarchy to the extent of the abusive abolition of several bishoprics, ultimately chose to disappoint the communists. He was ordained bishop of Maramures in 1947, became the holder of the Archiepiscopate of Suceava and Maramures in 1948, and in 1950, at the disposal of the communist authorities, he became Metropolitan bishop of Moldova. He ministers the Metropolitan Church of Moldova until his death in 1956. As a hierarch, *"he provoked only difficulties to the county political organizations of the democratic parties and especially to the Romanian Labor Party"*.²³ Father Ilie Cleopa reveals in a conversation with the priest Nicolae Grebenea that bishop Andrei Magieru and Metropolitan bishop Sebastian Rusan were poisoned. The writer Mihail Sadoveanu had announced that, on the evening of September 15, 1956, the two bishops would be poisoned and urges Archimandrite Cleopa to go to Iasi, so that he could eventually confess and give them the eucharist. He arrived too late. Father Cleopa shows that, the reason for his murder was that he openly preached against the official atheism: *"Do not consider those who say that there is no God, they are crazy"*.²⁴

Bishop Partenie Ciopron of the Army (1937-1948) is removed from the active army personnel (he had the rank of the general of brigade), his bishopric is disbanded and he is forced to retire on August 4, 1948.²⁵ Patriarch Justinian ordain him as vicar of patriarchate,

¹⁹ Florian BICHIR, *Episcopul Vasile Leu a fost răpit de KGB și condamnat la moarte, Evenimentul Zilei*. 2687.,(2001), 11.

²⁰ PĂIUȘAN, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română sub regimul comunist*, 241.

²¹ ENACHE, *Ortodoxie și putere politică în România contemporană*, 234

²² ENACHE, *Ortodoxie și putere politică în România contemporană*, 150.

²³ PĂIUȘAN, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română sub regimul comunist*, 230.

²⁴ DURĂ, *Ierarhi ai Bisericii Ortodoxe Române îndepărtați din scaun ...*, 48.

²⁵ Maior Cezar MĂȚĂ, *Război împotriva crucii, alungarea crucii, BAMR*, 2-3, (1998): 77.

but in one of his pastoral letters during his campaign in the East, he wrote that the soldiers were fighting "against Bolshevism and for the defense of the ancestral faith and homeland".²⁶

The reaction of the communists was fast and decisive: the next day, the bishop Partenie was sent to the Neamt monastery, he is investigated, he loses his pension and, although later rehabilitated, due to the troubles caused by the Political Police, he retires to the Văratec monastery where he dies, in 1978.²⁷

Bishop Lucian Triteanu of Roman, was the leader of this eparchy until 1947, when, by the Decree no. 1836 from September 10, he was forced to retire. The reasons for his retirement are not known, but his retirement in the house near the Bishopric of Roman must be interpreted as a monastic imprisonment imposed by the communist authorities.²⁸

Bishop Veniamin Nistor of Caransebeș (August 24, 1941-5 February 1949), after the demolition of the Diocese of Caransebeș and its merger with the Archbishopric of Timișoara, was forced to retire to Alba Iulia where was the former residence of the bishopric of the army, which had also been disbanded. Being devoid of any financial resources, bishop Veniamin retires in February 1949 to the monastery of St. John the Baptist, where he dies in 1963.²⁹

Bishop Valerian Zaharia (1905-1996), was the successor of bishop Nicolae Popovici to the leadership of the bishopric of Oradea.

After the earthquake caused by the fight of the martyr bishop Nicolae Popovici against those who wanted to take over and destroy the Church, the authorities calmed the situation by imposing Valerian Zaharia to the leadership of the bishopric. He had been archimandrite and chief inspector in the Ministry of Cults "with a special democratic publishing activity after August 23, 1944",³⁰ which suggested that he would be a reliable man of the popular democracy regime.

With all the outspoken opposition of Patriarch Justinian (in the State Political Police's documents it is mentioned that Justinian stated: "that he would not ordain him to any position of church leadership, even if his hands were cut off"³¹), finally he had to give up at the pressure of Petru Groza and the Minister of Cults and was ordained bishop of Oradea. In 1969, the bishop of Oradea was accused of refusing to collaborate with bishop Visarion, vicar of the Metropolitan church of Transylvania. On the same occasion, Patriarch Justinian pointed out that "bishop Valerian has many serious deviations since he is in Oradea, which created dissatisfaction and aroused protests".³²

Thus, after 18 years of activity in a bishopric, he is removed from the Synod and retired against his will. He retired to Bucharest in the house of the Podeanu parish, where he dies on March 13, 1996. Bishop Valerian Zaharia is the first hierarch removed from the church seat during Ceausescu's dictatorship.³³

Cosma Petrovici was bishop of the Lower Danube, based in Galați, from January 1924 to August 1947 when, due to the application of the Decree 1836 of September 10, 1947, he

²⁶ Lect. Dr. Adrian GABOR și Adrian Nicolae PETCU, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română și puterea comunistă în timpul patriarhului Justinian*, *Anuarul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă a Universității din București*, București, (2002): 116.

²⁷ GABOR și PETCU, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română și puterea comunistă în timpul patriarhului Justinian*, 117.

²⁸ DURĂ, *Ierarhi ai Bisericii Ortodoxe Române îndepărtați din scaun*, 46.

²⁹ DURĂ, *Ierarhi ai Bisericii Ortodoxe Române îndepărtați din scaun*, 51.

³⁰ Adrian Nicolae PETCU, *Cazul Episcopului Nicolae Popovici în Teologie și Politică*, (București, Anastasia, 2004), 278.

³¹ PĂIUȘAN, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română sub regimul comunist*, 180.

³² ENACHE, ENACHE, *Ortodoxie și putere politică în România contemporană*, 150.

³³ DURĂ, *Ierarhi ai Bisericii Ortodoxe Române îndepărtați din scaun*, 55.

was "withdrawn".³⁴ The reasons for the withdrawal and the place where he withdrew, are not known, but only that he died on December 16, 1948.

Valeriu Moglan Botoșăneanu was a deputy of the Metropolitan bishop of Moldova, then a deputy of the bishop of Buzău, and after the change of the regime he was removed from his rank in 1949 and sent to the Neamt monastery. He died on August 15, 1949 and was buried in the cemetery of Neamt Monastery.³⁵

Athanasie Dincă Bârlădeanu was bishop vicar of patriarchate, then in 1945 he was ordained deputy of the bishopric of Ramnicu. But on March 11, 1948, he is dismissed and sent to the Neamt monastery, where he will work as a teacher at the monastic Seminary established by Patriarch Justinian. After the demolition of the monastic seminary of Neamt in 1952, the bishop Athanasie Dincă is sent to the Cernica monastery, where he died in 1973.

Bishop Emilian Antal was bishop lieutenant of the Bishopric of Argeș and deputy of the metropolitan church of Bukovina. He was dismissed in 1948, then exiled to the Neamt monastery where he served as a teacher at the monastic Seminary. Then Bishop Antal was sent to the Cozia monastery, which he ruled as abbot for two years, until 1952. From there he was replaced and sent to be abbot to the Toplița monastery in Harghita county, which he ruled for 19 years, until he died on June 15, 1971.³⁶

Bishop vicar of patriarchate Pavel Șerpe was elected in this position by the patriarch Nicodim Munteanu, but due to his anti-communist attitude, only a few months later, he is dismissed and sent to the Neamt monastery. He was the director of the monastic Seminary until 1952, when the seminary was disbanded. He was then sent to the Curtea de Argeș monastery where held the re-education courses for the priests from all over the country. He died on April 18, 1978 and was buried in the crypt in the basement of the Belvedere church in Bucharest, where he served two decades as a missionary priest.

Teodor Scorobeț was elected bishop vicar of the Archepiscopate of Sibiu in 1946. In 1948 he was forced to retire. No information is known about the place of his exile or death.³⁷

The last in the list of persecuted hierarchs, but the first in the defense fight of the Church against the injustices of the communist regime, was *Nicolae Popovici*, bishop of Oradea. After 1950, when he was dismissed, and until 1989, Nicolae Popovici was almost forgotten and forced to stay in silence. He was elected bishop of Oradea at the will of the former titular, bishop Roman Ciorogariu, and ordained on June 28, 1936. During the Hungarian occupation he was insulted and expelled from the occupied area, because he was known for the firmness with which he defended the rights of Romanians and because he was a good animating of the masses.³⁸ He was active within the Romanian Orthodox Mission in Transnistria and Bessarabia, released by communism. His missionary activity in the Romanian territories released by the Soviets was recorded in the periodical newspaper the Romanian Law and later constituted an argument used by his enemies.

Following the gross falsification of the parliamentary elections of 1946, by the Communists, bishop Nicolae Popovici, together with the Metropolitan bishop Nicolae Bălan, refused to bless the parliament resulting from the elections of the November 19th.³⁹

The three vicars of the episcopates of Transylvania, Traian Balașcu in Sibiu, Andrei Coman in Oradea and Sabin Trață in Cluj, all three former Greek Catholics, "formally"

³⁴ MANEA, *Preoți ortodocși în închisorile comuniste*, 67.

³⁵ DURĂ, *Ierarhi ai Bisericii Ortodoxe Române îndepărtați din scaun*, 51.

³⁶ DURĂ, *Ierarhi ai Bisericii Ortodoxe Române îndepărtați din scaun*, 49.

³⁷ DURĂ, *Ierarhi ai Bisericii Ortodoxe Române îndepărtați din scaun*, 54.

³⁸ ENACHE, *Episcopul Nicolae Popovici s-au despre curajul de a rosti*, în *lucrarea Ortodoxie și putere politică în România Contemporană*, (București, Nemira, 2005), 157.

³⁹ PETCU, *Cazul Episcopului Nicolae Popovici, Teologie și Politică*, (București, Anastasia, 2004), 234.

moved to Orthodoxy, supported the interests of the Communist Party in the church matters. Through the reports to the authorities, they tried to undermine the three bishops of Oradea, Cluj and Sibiu and to replace them with former Greek-Catholic vicars.⁴⁰ The State Political Police bodies carefully monitored the activity of the bishop of Oradea and always gathered evidence in order to dismiss him.

Nicolae Popovici himself declared in front of his friends who advised him to give up the attitude of resistance to the authorities: "*I know that I am accused of legionary deeds, that I made propaganda on the Russian front and that, on the occasion of the Easter holidays of 1948, I have preached against the regime. I am also accused that at the end of the school year 1947-1948, I have distributed prohibited books (...) against any surprises I am prepared and ready to retire to the Sâmbăta de Sus-Făgăraș monastery and to suffer as one of the few good Romanians, for the gospel of Christ, without any hesitation*".⁴¹ On that occasion he also testified about a truth worthy of being written in the consciences of all Christians: "*The church cannot be humiliated by any political regime, because it is superior to any temporary government.*"⁴²

After ten years of exile and rigorous supervision of the State Political Police, during which there were several attempts to poison him, bishop Nicolae Popovici dies at the monastery Cheia, at the age of 57.

If we take an overview, it can be seen, that there was a persecution on the leaders of the Church, to which dozens of hierarchs fell victim. They were removed by legal, non-violent methods, in perfect agreement with the communists' purpose of displaying the image of a good collaboration between the State and the Church. At the same time, the unacceptable policy of the communist power of domination and subordination of the Church has not led to an active resistance from the hierarchy, with some exceptions.

Facing the pressures exerted by the Party and the State Political Police on the Church, its members reacted differently, depending on their inner condition. Although many believers (laymen and monks) or priests chose the worthy path of martyrdom, the hierarchy chose in the vast majority (with some notable exceptions), the difficult and humiliating, but saving path, in the objective plan of the structures, of the personal compromise for keeping the church institutions in function (parishes, theological schools, monasteries), under the circumstances of a refuge in a kind of a tolerated "liturgical ghetto".⁴³

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BICHIR, Florian *Episcopul Vasile Leu a fost răpit de KGB și condamnat la moarte*, EZ. 2687.,(2001), 11.

DURĂ, Pr. dr. Ioan, *Ierarhi ai Bisericii Ortodoxe Române îndepărtați din scaun și trimiși în recluziune monastică de autoritățile comuniste în anii 1944-1989*, AB, 10-12, (2002), 45.

ENACHE, George, *Ortodoxie și putere politică în România contemporană*, (București, Nemira, 2005), 11.

ENACHE, George, *Episcopul Antim Nica și poziția sa față de relațiile stat-Biserică în România comunistă*, în ENACHE, George, *Episcopul Nicolae Popovici s-au despre curajul*

⁴⁰ PETCU, *Cazul Episcopului Nicolae Popovici*, 243.

⁴¹ PETCU, *Cazul Episcopului Nicolae Popovici*, 241-242.

⁴² PETCU, *Cazul Episcopului Nicolae Popovici*, 243.

⁴³ Ioan I. Jr., ICĂ, *Dilema socială a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române: radiograful unei probleme în Gândirea socială a Bisericii*, (Sibiu, Deisis, 2002), 539.

de a rosti, în *Ortodoxie și putere politică în România Contemporană*, (București, Nemira, 2005), 157.

Ortodoxie și putere politică în România Contemporană, (București, Nemira, 2005), 287.

GABOR, Pr. Prof. Dr. Adrian, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română și regimul comunist 1945-1964*, (București, 2007), 5.

GABOR, Lect. Dr. Adrian și PETCU, Adrian Nicolae, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română și puterea comunistă în timpul patriarhului Justinian*, *Anuarul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă a Universității din București*, București, (2002): 116.

ICĂ, Ioan I. Jr., *Dilema socială a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române: radiografia unei probleme în Gândirea socială a Bisericii*, (Sibiu, Deisis, 2002), 539.

MANEA, Vasile *Preoți ortodocși în închisorile comuniste*, (Alba Iulia, Reîntregirea, 2004), 14.

MARINA, Justinian *Apostolat social. Pilde și îndemnuri pentru cler*. IV, (București, EIBMBOR, 1952), 113.

MĂȚĂ, Maior Cezar *Război împotriva crucii, alungarea crucii*, *BAMR*, 2-3, (1998): 77.

PATAPIEVICI, Horia-Roman, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română și modernitatea*, II, *Dilema*, 331 (1999): 19.

PĂIUȘAN, Cristina și CIUCEANU, Radu, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română sub regimul comunist*, I, (București, Institutul Național pentru Studierea Totalitarismului, 2001), 29.

PETCU, Adrian Nicolae, *Cazul Episcopului Nicolae Popovici în Teologie și Politică*, (București, Anastasia, 2004), 278.

PREDA, Radu *Deconspirarea Securității între uitare și judecată pripită*, *Rost*, 45, (2006): 8.

POPESCU, Vasile M., *Un martir al Crucii, Viața și scrierile lui Teodor M. Popescu*, (București, Cristiana, 2006), 301.

VASILE, Cristian, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română în primul deceniu communist*, (București, Curtea Veche, 2005), 271.

***, *Biserica întemnițată*. (București, Institutul Național pentru Studierea Totalitarismului, 1998), 13.