EAST-WEST CHURCH REPORT

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Uncovering Recent Christian History in Romania

On Christmas Day 35 years ago, the execution of dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu amid revolution ended Communist rule in Romania. This issue of the East-West Church Report *features interviews with three historians whose research—enabled by the opening of Romania's state archives after 1989—explores various aspects of 20th-century Romanian church history. Newly uncovered chapters in that history include harrowing elements that were obscured by the Communist regime: the suppression of the Greek Catholic Church, Orthodox complicity in state persecution, and—unusual in the former Communist East—staunch Orthodox support for fascism before and during the Second World War. This year, the last of these has proved especially topical: Eight out of 16 Communist-era saints approved for canonization by the Romanian Orthodox Church have been identified as fascist sympathizers, while bombshell presidential candidate Călin Georgescu has praised both traditional Christian values and some of Romania's most brutal 20th-century fascist leaders (see Alec Russell, "Romania's second revolution,"* Financial Times, *5 December 2024, https://www.ft.com/content/37383ab7-9756-4d24-82b7-132f1aa401df.)*

Publication Changes to the *Report*

Readers will find that this issue of the *East-West Church Report* contains an extra four pages—20 rather than 16. Starting in 2025, we will publish two 20-page issues annually, in May and October. Please see the new subscription details on page 20.



Commemorative candles for the living and deceased, Metropolitan Orthodox Cathedral, Iași, Romania (G. FAGAN)

"The church was co-opted by the state and slowly transformed into a state institution":

An Interview with Anca Șincan

Dr. Anca Șincan is a researcher at Gheorghe Șincai Institute for Social Sciences and the Humanities of the Romanian Academy in the Transylvanian city of Târgu Mureș, also her home town. She was part of the research team for the groundbreaking recent European Research Council project Creative Agency and Religious Minorities: "Hidden Galleries" in the Secret Police Archives in Central and Eastern Europe. *[For more on the* Hidden Galleries *project, see https://hiddengalleries.eu/ and Tatiana Vagramenko, "How the KGB Turned Believers into the Enemy,"* East-West Church Report, *vol. 28 (2020), no. 1, 11-12.] In 2006 she contributed expertise on religion under Communism to the Presidential Commission for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania [Romanian:* Comisia Prezidenţială pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România*].*

In April 2024 the editor of the East-West Church Report *interviewed Dr. Șincan in downtown Washington, DC, where she was spending several months as her husband Dr. Ionuț Biliuță—also a specialist in the field of religion in Romania—completed a research fellowship. The original conversation took place in English.*

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Șincan Interview *(continued from page 1)*



Dr. Anca Șincan (G. FAGAN)

How did you come to research Christian life in Communist Romania?

When I was a BA student one of my professors said to me, "Your father was a priest under Communism. Why not take church life during that period as the topic of your BA thesis?" I worked on how the Romanian Orthodox rewrote Greek Catholic historiography after the Greek Catholics were forced to unite with the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1948. I then did an MA on local ecumenical relations during the Communist period at the Faculty of European Studies of Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj. After that, I completed a second MA and a PhD in the history of church-state relations in Communist Romania at the Central European University in Budapest.

I looked at religion from the state's perspective. I wanted to see what changed when Communist administrators began to oversee religious life after the Second World War. They borrowed from Soviet textbooks on how to deal with various spheres of life, including religious policy. But the context in Romania was rather different. The church-state relationship they borrowed from the Soviet Union was the one newly implemented in the 1940s, by which time the Soviets had had 20 years in which to demolish religion. When this new policy was created, the Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union was almost non-existent as an institution—they had to create a new church structure, leadership, everything. In Romania—as elsewhere in Eastern Europe—the Communists did not have this 20-year period in which religion had been dismantled. Religion was alive and extremely well-established. This was especially the case in rural areas, and Romania was still a largely rural society. The new Communist state in Romania had a dilemma: On the one hand, it was supposed to get rid of religion, but at the same time, the guys in Moscow were saying, "You have to create an understanding with religion that will help you to function."

Was there a movement in Romania similar to the Soviet League of the Militant Godless?

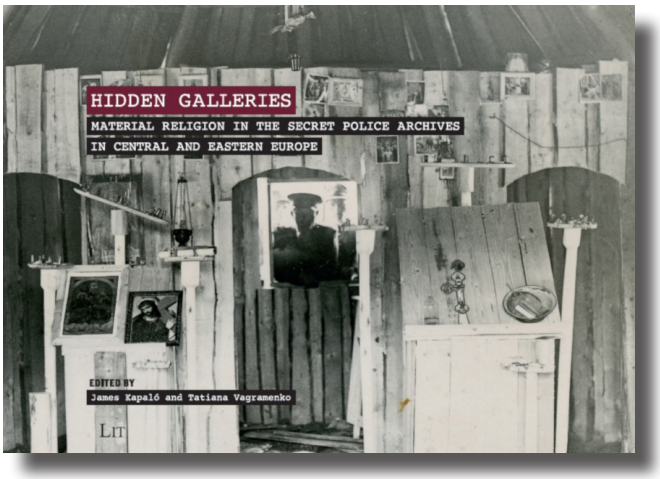
No, there was nothing like that to help the Romanian state do away with religion. There was an anti-religious campaign corresponding to that of Khrushchev in the Soviet Union [1958-64]. At that time, many Soviet writings offering a scientific way of dealing with religion—"Science will explain how everything works, you don't need God for that"—were translated into Romanian. By the mid-1960s, however, the Romanian state found it needed religion for legitimation of the regime. In 1964 there was a general amnesty, in which political prisoners were released and integrated into Romanian society. These were people who had been active in the interwar period and who had kept their religious allegiance, and so religion returned to the discourse of nation building.

The political line of "Communism with a national twist"—national Stalinism, if you like—was continued by Nicolae Ceaușescu after he took over as leader of Romania in 1965. The crushing of the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia in 1968 became a further factor. Ceaușescu was concerned that the same thing could happen in Romania, and so we drifted further from Moscow. This never became a complete break, but it sparked a relationship with the United States, which hoped for greater democratization. Clearly, that did not happen, but Americans' interest in religion became another reason why it was more tolerated in Romania.

Did the fact that your father is an Orthodox priest give you particular insight into the nuances of how the Romanian Orthodox Church dealt with the Communist authorities?

First of all, it gave me access to the archives of the Romanian Patriarchate, which is not the case for everyone. I received letters of recommendation from several bishops when I started my research. I was able to see material curated by the archivists, whose attitude was, "Little girl, let us tell you how it was… ." Nevertheless, I saw documents from those archives.

Having a father who is an Orthodox priest also helped because there are questions that the archives cannot answer. Bishops and priests are typically reticent when talking about the Communist period, yet they were more open to answering my questions in that regard. A chapter of my thesis dealt with church construction in the 1970s and '80s—I found it curious that numerous new churches appeared then, in my childhood. As well as studying local government and church archives, I was able to talk to the priests who built these churches. I could ask them, "Who gave you permission and funding for that?" Those interviews would not have happened without the help of my father.



Book published in 2020 under the auspices of the European Research Council project *Creative Agency and Religious Minorities: "Hidden Galleries" in the Secret Police Archives in Central and Eastern Europe*

In 2010 you wrote a paper on that topic: "From Bottom to the Top and Back: On How to Build a Church in Communist Romania" [https://www.icsumures.ro/lucrari/A.Sincan_From-Bottom-to-the-Top-and-Back.pdf]. There you observe that church building in Communist Romania often relied upon

family or other personal connections with relevant government officials. That sounds like something which would only emerge if you knew the people concerned.

You wouldn't know it from the central archives. Plus, my father served as a priest in the late 1970s and '80s. He had to deal with the Communist plenipotentiaries for religious affairs, the so-called *împuterniciţi*. As a result, I was able to speak to some of those who had been plenipotentiaries before 1990.

At that time, you needed planning permission from the county architect if you wanted to build anything. I learned that the architect for Mureș County in Transylvania granted planning permission for many Orthodox churches, which surprised me, as he was ethnic Hungarian, while we researchers were discussing anti-Hungarian and other Romanian nationalization projects emanating from Bucharest. When I first started researching this, I had thought it was an attempt by ethnic Romanians to nationalize territory after industrialization brought many Romanian workers into previously strongly Hungarian parts of Transylvania in the 1970s. However, this Hungarian architect responded, "No, the churches were not built in the cities where the industrial complexes were. They were built or rebuilt in the villages." So my question became, "Why were they allowed to build churches in the villages? What would the state gain by that?"



Within Cluj County, Transylvania, the 17th-century Church of the Holy Trinity was moved from the village of Năsal-Fânațe to Nicula Monastery in the 1970s. (G. FAGAN)

When I asked in one village why they had built such a church, the inhabitants explained: "Well, we had an old church which was Greek Catholic." As I went from village to village, I realized that these were actually Greek Catholic villages that had become Orthodox, and that church construction was an activity through which the community had changed. Essentially, this was the state assisting the Orthodox Church in converting the villagers from being Greek Catholic to Orthodox. The villages did not switch back in 1990 [after the fall of Communism] because they had put such effort into building these new churches.

In Romania there seems to have been considerable contradiction in Communist religious policy, with some aspects of religious life tolerated.

Officially, for instance, you were not allowed to teach religion—certainly not in schools—but there were ways to bypass this. When I was a child in the 1980s, we had a sort of Sunday school every evening during the two-week fasting period prior to the feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God [celebrated by Romanian Orthodox on 15 August]. The Catholics and Protestants had successfully petitioned the state authorities in Transylvania for the right to conduct Sunday schools. Archival documents show the Orthodox negotiating for the same right as a result, as well as letters from church administrators asking parish priests if they wished to lead Sunday schools. This would be an extra job for the priest—two more hours after Sunday liturgy—so whether or not classes took place might depend upon how dedicated the priest was. The Orthodox Church has also always taught theology through its services, so its ability to do so would already provide an introduction to the Bible.

Another interesting factor determining the limits of toleration was that Orthodox leaders knew the state so well by the 1970s that they would punish people in advance. The state did not need to act, as the church hierarchs already knew what would bother the state and intervened to maintain the status quo. Collaboration with the state was unavoidable… actually, I do not much like the word "collaboration" because it suggests a relationship on equal terms. I prefer "co-option." The church was co-opted by the state and slowly transformed into a state institution. In Romania, this process started in the mid-19th century, when the Orthodox Church's lands and fortune were nationalized. It continued between the two world wars, when the state was involved in the selection of bishops and funded religious education. It was completed by the Communists, who turned the church into an uber-centralized institution in the sense that, if the authorities had a word with the church leadership, a priest behaving out of line in a remote village somewhere would be punished.

There are accounts of especially brutal Communist persecution of Christians in Romania, such as re-education experiments in the early '50s and early '60s involving physical and mental torture at notorious prisons such as Aiud and Gherla. [See, for example, Alexandru Popescu, *Petre Țuțea: Between Sacrifice and Suicide*, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004, 62-75.]

On coming to power, the Communists first embarked upon a process of de-Nazification. A lot of Orthodox held interwar allegiances to the fascist Iron Guard. The new Communist regime did not know the Orthodox Church, and everything looked bad to the young officials at the Ministry for Religious Affairs [Romanian: *Ministerul Cultelor*] and the *Securitate* secret police. People could be sent to jail for even the most minor transgression. At the same time, the regime made use of people even if they had collaborated with the fascists because they could be blackmailed into doing whatever the state needed. Many functionaries were retained—within the Ministry for Religious Affairs, almost 60 percent of personnel were kept on from the pre-Communist period.

Whenever a change of regime takes place, it is common to retain specialists from the previous one. This even happened under the Communist regime—especially in the sphere of

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church-state relations. While many clergymen went to jail, many sympathizers with the fascist Iron Guard movement [founded in 1927 as the Legion of the Archangel Michael] were picked up by the Communist authorities and employed in the second or third tiers of state administration. There were not enough Communists to run the Ministry for Religious Affairs, basically. Many elements of policy from the interwar period ended up being re-used, as these lower-level administrators could not simply become faithful followers of a new ideology which they had fought against for 20 years.

On the other hand, the Communists wanted institutions they could manage. I have a theory that the state was creating a second, parallel hierarchy for the Orthodox Church within the Ministry for Religious Affairs. This included Patriarch Iustin [Moisescu, 1977-86], who succeeded Patriarch Justinian [Marina, 1948-77] and was a theology professor on the payroll of the Ministry for Religious Affairs. When a suitable vacancy appeared in 1956, he went from being a layman to an archbishop in less than a month.

Is it clear from the archives to what extent Patriarch Iustin was a churchman prepared to compromise or a creature of the state?

He was entirely a creature of the state. On the other hand, the regime could have forced Patriarch Justinian into retirement, but they kept him and waited for his natural death. During that time, Iustin remained in Iaşi as Metropolitan of Moldova and Suceava for 20 years.

Do the archives refer to him by a codename?

All the bishops are referred to by codenames, even if they did not collaborate. Both Patriarch Iustin and Patriarch Justinian collaborated with the state in the sense that they went back and forth negotiating and compromising. However, Iustin is someone whose origins are within the state administration and the theological sphere, whereas Patriarch Justinian began as a rural priest with some leftist political connections.

A KGB archival document in Kyiv from the late 1940s indicates that the degree of collaboration by Soviet-approved Orthodox bishops in newly occupied Ukraine varied hugely. While denunciations by some resulted in multiple arrests, others were vocally critical of the Soviet regime, even while Stalin was alive. [See Geraldine Fagan, "Christians as Targets of the KGB: A Peek into the SBU's Historical Archives," *East-West Church Report*, vol. 28 (2020), no. 1, 4-5.]



Saints Constantine and Helen Patriarchal Orthodox Cathedral and Patriarchal Palace, Bucharest (G. FAGAN)



Left: Patriarch Justinian (Marina) in 1967 (Open Source). Right: Patriarch Iustin (Moisescu) meeting Communist leader Nicolae Ceauşescu (left) in 1977 (Source: Romanian National Archives, Online Photo Library of Romanian Communism, Photo #LA502, 120/1977)

We did not have such critical voices—at least, not in the public sphere. They could be found in monasteries—where many people went who were ideologically opposed to the regime—but not at the level of the church hierarchy. Any independent voices were taken out by the Communists and replaced with someone acceptable to the regime. After that, Romanian hierarchs were either men who collaborated willingly and happily, or men who took care of their flock and did nothing that would spark confrontation with the state.

There were also attempts within the Romanian Orthodox Church to ostracize people known to be collaborating with the state. Archival correspondence can give interesting insights into this. After one former Greek Catholic signed the forced union with the Orthodox Church in 1948, the Communists installed him as auxiliary Orthodox bishop of Cluj. Wary of his ties with the state, the bishop of Cluj refused to allow him into senior diocesan meetings. This former Greek Catholic then wrote to officials in Bucharest: "I cannot give you information if the bishop does not allow me into his meetings. You must force him somehow [to let me into the meetings]." The archives preserve the state's response in the form of officials' letters to that bishop, saying: "You must allow this man to participate in your meetings because he is your auxiliary bishop!" From such documents you start to realize how the church gradually learnt what the state wanted and tried to do the bare minimum.

Have there been any repercussions since 1990 for Orthodox hierarchs who collaborated with the Communists?

Bishop Emilian Birdaș of Alba Iulia [d.1996] was forced out immediately after the revolution, although he was soon reinstated as auxiliary bishop in Arad. My father was a

dean in Târgu Mureș at that time: Clergy in Alba Iulia diocese became rather revolutionary and decided to remove Emilian for collaborating with the regime. Their thinking was that this would be the beginning of a wider process, but that did not happen—I think Bishop Emilian was the only hierarch who was ousted. It really came down to likeability: He was a bishop who behaved tyrannically towards his priests, and they used the opportunity of the revolutionary mood within the country to get rid of him.

You have also conducted research into the role of Greek Catholic women.

In the archives of departments for religious affairs, you will find women being counted—300 women participating in a particular service, for example. There are seldom names, only numbers, making it possible to do sociological reviews of how many women attended church or how many were nuns, for example. But the secret police archives deal with private life, and so women pop up there. With those archives, you can start to put faces to the numbers.

Greek Catholic women are some of the best examples for a researcher. Regarded as heads of the family, only Greek Catholic men had to sign in support of reunification with the Orthodox Church in 1948—other members of the family transferred with them automatically, apparently. Men who did not want to accept the reunification went to jail, which suddenly created a space for women. Women had to continue Greek Catholic religious life, and so you start to see a different church. The Virgin Mary starts to have a more prominent role, for example, and women start to teach religion. They have to create underground networks in order to find the nearest priest if there is no longer one available in their village. In order to do that, they have to turn to Roman Catholics, who are Hungarian in Transylvania. Most of their priests barely speak Romanian, and so women act as translators.

In one Transylvanian village I interviewed two Greek Catholic women who set up a Sunday school at home in the early 1950s. They invited a priest from a nearby town to come every Sunday to teach, but as he was Hungarian, they told him



1970s clandestine Greek Catholic liturgy at the house of Bishop [later Cardinal] Alexandru Todea, who spent 13 years in jail prior to his release in 1964.
(Source: HIDDEN GALLERIES DIGITAL ARCHIVE)



Surveillance images taken by the *Securitate* secret police of Greek Catholic believers in the mid-1960s
(Source: HIDDEN GALLERIES DIGITAL ARCHIVE)

just to sit there while they taught whatever he requested, and to correct them if they made any mistakes. In this way, they became empowered through their role as intermediaries. In the 1990s—when there were not so many archives open—we usually talked about the role of women in the church under Communism as a domestic one: They taught their children religion at home, and this is how religion survived. It is now clear that this was not the case—at least not in Romania, but also in Poland and some other Eastern European countries. Women might have taught the basics of religious precepts in a domestic environment, but that was not the only thing they did. Some of them were steering an underground church that continued to function.

As a result of archival documents in which Communist officials concluded: "We have defeated religion because there are only old women going to church," there has also been a tendency to assume that religion became a preserve of the elderly under Communism. This was really not the case in Eastern Europe. It was usually young nuns who took up intermediary roles, for example. In the early 1950s they were able to travel from one place to another, to connect a bishop under house arrest in one village with another elsewhere. This happened because the state officials were biased against them. They did not think that women were capable of doing this. It was only late in the Communist period when secret police officers figured out, "Hey, we have to pay attention to these women."

Would such women look like Greek Catholic nuns?

No, because it was illegal to wear the habit. They would dress in a certain way—a long skirt, head covered—but you would not automatically recognize them as nuns.

Were they still able to live in community?

Most of them were engaged in social work in hospitals, old people's homes, and the like, so they requalified as social workers, doctors, nurses, or teachers. An underground Greek Catholic community led by a group of nuns that was broken up in Cluj in the 1960s used to gather inside a hospital. Its members were converting young people, preaching about family life and against divorce and abortion. Even once the state authorities

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Șincan Interview *(continued from page 5)*

realized this was happening, they still thought there had to be a man or men behind it!

What are some of the challenges of working with this archival material?

The main problem is that these archives are basically anti-biographies—all the negative parts of a person's life are assembled against them. The underground church is not necessarily a good or holy place—and if bad things happen, you cannot turn to the state for protection. If you were to report a priest for rape, for example, you would immediately be jailed because you had visited that priest in the first place. Who will punish the priest? Nobody. When you see such a story in the archive, you think, "If I bring out this story now, won't I be doing more harm to the victim? Am I not doing the same thing as the secret police when they first found out about this rape and instrumentalized it?" What is and is not for public consumption is complicated for a researcher, and you usually have to take several steps back and consider the documents from a different, ethical perspective.

The archives contain a lot on infidelity and sexual matters, for example. When the *Securitate* opened a file on a priest, among the first entries in his biographical information—after his place of birth and parents' names—was "he likes women" or "homosexual, deviant." The state was particularly interested in privacy and sexuality when dealing with priests because it could be used immediately as blackmail. Is it important to point this out? I think it is, because people's lives were reduced to this and it meant that decisions were taken based upon sexual behavior.

Given such content, it seems extraordinary that these archives are publicly accessible.

The rules regulating access to the archives in Romania are very open in the sense that a researcher can see a file in its entirety—nothing is hidden. However, you cannot make copies of the files. When you request a copy, any details connected with sex, as well as disease, are blacked out in the copy.

But you still know what is there if you have seen the original?

Yes. If you go back to the original file in the archive, you can see what has been covered over in the copy.

Including any names?

Except for those of spies or informants—they are given aliases. If you research in these archives for a long time, however, you can figure out the identities of church figures. We do have some of the most accessible secret police archives in the former Communist bloc.

Is this now an accepted part of public life in Romania, or do people try to sensationalize the contents?

Every darn day! That typically happens to public figures, such as Nadia Comăneci, the famous Olympic gymnast who defected to the United States in 1989. Nobody goes into the archives to look for files on ordinary people—except those in the church. When the archives were opened in the 2000s, I recall an Evangelical church starting to purge itself of collaborators with the regime. Then at some point, one of its members came out and said: "We will have to stop because, if we continue, there won't be any church left to speak of!"

Another ethical problem we have with these archives is that they tell us nothing about the secret police officers who compiled them. They tell us only about the lives of the people being surveilled and demonized—the victims, as well as the informants, who may also be victims sometimes. I do not believe in the uncovering of informants. They were sometimes blackmailed into informing, or consented so that their children could go to university, for example. If you look at these files from an ethical point of view, you can have a really difficult time justifying being able to see them as a researcher. The *Hidden Galleries* project in which I participated was conducted in a way that bypasses this. We do not necessarily need the stories contained in the files in order to examine the collections of material objects confiscated from a religious community by the secret police.

As a researcher, you therefore oscillate between Stanford historian Stephen Kotkin, who says you should not delve into the "den of iniquity" contained in these files, and Yale historian Laura Engelstein, who points out that we would not have the stories of some communities without them. There are people who have never seen their parents because the secret police confiscated all their family photographs, for instance. For some of these underground church communities, the archives are the only place in which their lives have been preserved. If you get rid of that, they no longer exist in the historical record. So, bearing these two perspectives in mind, you must navigate a way of reading these files that is not just telling the story the secret police wanted to tell. ♦



Romanian postage stamps commemorating Greek Catholic Bishops Alexandru Rusu of Maramureș, Ioan Bălan of Lugoj, Valeriu Traian Frențiu of Oradea Mare, and Ioan Suciu, apostolic administrator of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș diocese. All were beatfied as martyrs in 2019.
(Open Source)

"From what vantage point are we going to judge the past?": An Interview with Ioan-Marius Bucur

Professor Ioan-Marius Bucur has taught history for more than 25 years at Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj (officially Cluj-Napoca), the largest city in the Transylvanian region of northwestern Romania. He has written extensively on the history of the local Greek Catholic Church—which follows the Eastern Orthodox rite but is in communion with Rome—as well as church-state relations more broadly in post-1918 Romania. This includes two Romanian-language monographs: Culpa de a fi greco-catolic. Procesul episcopului Alexandru Rusu (1957) [The Guilt of Being Greek Catholic: The Trial of Bishop Alexandru Rusu (1957)], (Cluj: Editura Argonaut & Mega, 2015) *and* Din istoria Bisericii Greco-Catolice Române (1918-1953) [From the History of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church (1918-1953)], *(Cluj: Editura Accent, 2003).*

For insights into the 20th-century plight of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church, particularly under Communism, the editor of the East-West Church Report *met Professor Bucur at the Faculty of History and Philosophy in Babeș-Bolyai University in late November 2023. The interview took place in English.*



Professor Ioan-Marius Bucur (G. FAGAN)

How did the Greek Catholic Church appear in Transylvania?

Between 1698 and 1700, a series of local Orthodox synods accepted and then ratified union with Rome. The context is significant: Following the Habsburgs' victory in the Battle of Vienna in 1683, they slowly gained control over the former Ottoman vassal states of Hungary and then Transylvania. Together with their allies in the Catholic Church, the Habsburgs tried to rebalance the ethnic—and especially confessional—configuration of Transylvania. In those days, there were four "received confessions" here: Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Unitarians. While in the majority, Orthodox Christians were not recognized. The solution found was to create a united church in accordance with the principles of the Council of Florence [held 1431-49 and which briefly resolved the differences between Catholics and Orthodox].

One consequence was the possibility for ethnic Romanians—at least the elite—to become involved in political life. As confessional allegiance increasingly became a key element in building national identity—particularly in the late 19th century—both Greek Catholic and Orthodox Churches engaged in the project of Romanian national independence. In the absence of a stable middle class, clerics played a major part in the social activism that drove this national liberation movement, although the circumstances differed between Transylvania and the older Romanian principalities—Wallachia and Moldavia—which united in 1859. In Transylvania, there was a double effort emanating from both the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches.

What was the fate of the Greek Catholic Church in 20th-century Romania?

When the borders of Romania were extended at the end of the First World War, religion became a key issue in discussions about national identity. Is Orthodoxy a determining factor in being Romanian? In which civilization does our history place us—East or West, or are we in between, on some kind of Middle Earth? (Laughs.) Through political, literary, and media debates, the idea emerged that Orthodoxy was a key element in defining Romanian national identity. The question then arose: What to do about the Greek Catholics? At the level of ordinary believers, such discussions were not so important. At the institutional level, however, Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan of Transylvania and other Orthodox bishops highlighted this issue during the interwar years. Their argument was that political union of the Romanian lands was insufficient, and that something should be done for a spiritual union in order to overcome the division among Romanians created by the Habsburgs' introduction of the Act of Union with Rome. As a member of the Romanian Senate, Metropolitan Nicolae aggressively pushed the proposal that Greek Catholics should reunify with the Orthodox Church during parliamentary debates on legislation concerning religious liberty, for instance. For the most part, the political elites were glad to use the Orthodox Church as an instrument to consolidate the nation. In far northern Transylvania—then predominantly Greek Catholic—an Orthodox archbishopric was created in 1937, for example.

Such proposals were not specific to Romania: Interwar cultural policies promoting cultural assimilation in Poland were also clearly aimed at homogenizing the nation and sparked tensions between Roman Catholic Poles and Greek Catholic Ukrainians in the early 1920s. There were differences, of course, but in Central-Eastern Europe during that period you generally find that the question of whether to define the nation in politically liberal terms—as a civic nation—or as an ethnic nation becomes a pressing issue. This was the case in newly reborn states like Poland or Czechoslovakia; states expanding their territory, like Romania; as well as within the newly formed Kingdom of Yugoslavia—initially the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

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Bucur Interview *(continued from page 7)*

When the Greek Catholic Church in Romania was suppressed by the Communists in 1948, was this on Moscow's orders?

When I was researching this issue in the late 1990s, gaining access to our relevant state archives was problematic. They were open, but only partially—that is the case even today, actually. I tried to find documents that would confirm that Moscow imposed the idea of dismantling the Greek Catholic Church but I did not find anything. Over the past 10 years some fellow historians have gained access to archives that were closed when I started my research, including plans drawn up by the Ministry for Religious Affairs [Romanian: *Ministerul Cultelor*] at the request of the Politburo [Romanian: *Biroul Politic*] in Bucharest. They did not need an order from Moscow, but the decision was consonant with Moscow's logic of severing all relations with the West. Also in the late 1940s, *Cominform* [a Stalinist body co-ordinating Communist government policy in the Eastern Bloc] adopted a resolution aimed at diminishing Western—and especially Vatican—cultural influence. The decisions taken by the Bucharest authorities with regard to the Greek Catholics in Romania should be seen in that context.

Was the mechanism similar to that used against Ukrainian Greek Catholics in 1946—the convening of a church council consisting of those Greek Catholic clerics willing to compromise with the Communist authorities?

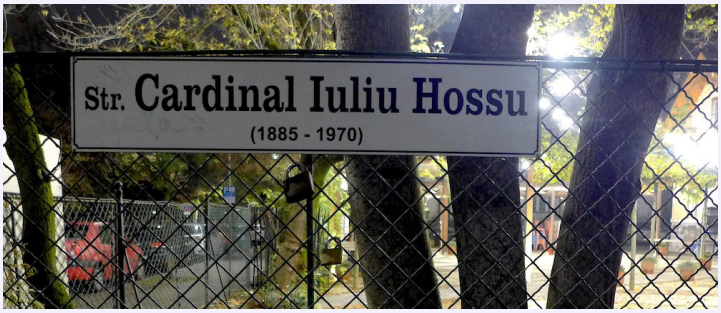
Exactly. With the forced abdication of King Michael I at the end of December 1947, the last remnants of the old bourgeois political order were swept aside. Romania became a People's Republic, and 1948 marked the beginning of the institutionalization of Communism in each and every sphere of activity, from the economy to culture, and including religious life. That spring the Ministry for Religious Affairs drew up relevant plans that were implemented between September and December. On 2 December 1948 *Monitorul Oficial*—Romania's newspaper of record—published a decree announcing that the institutions of the Greek Catholic Church had ceased to exist due to the return of its believers to the faith of the Orthodox Church. It was presented as self-dissolution, as in Ukraine. The strategy and methodology were identical. First, the authorities engineered a petition from priests in favor of "discussing" a return to the Orthodox Church after 250 years. (Laughs.) But they proved unable to organize a valid synod to replicate the one that created the Romanian Greek Catholic Church in Alba Iulia in 1698.

They could not identify any Greek Catholic bishop who would collaborate?

Yes, unlike in Ukraine. The "synod" they organized was held here in Cluj, at a high-school gymnasium on [George] Barițiu Street, not far from here. The proceedings took place under the supervision of senior officials from the Ministry for Religious Affairs. The delegates stayed at a nearby hotel and were escorted to the gymnasium under armed guard. The 1698 Union with Rome had been adopted by 38 archpriests and priests, as well as one bishop. They attempted to reproduce this, but could find only 36 predominantly parish priests—and no bishop.

What happened to the Greek Catholic bishops?

They were all arrested. At the time of the October 1948 "synod," there were five bishops: Iuliu Hossu [d. 1970] of Cluj-Gherla, Alexandru Rusu [d. 1963] of Maramureș, Ioan Bălan [d. 1959] of Lugoj, Valeriu Traian Frențiu [d. 1952] of Oradea Mare, and Ioan Suciu [d.1953], who was apostolic administrator of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș diocese. After their arrest, they were all imprisoned and/or confined to monasteries until they died—Bishops Rusu, Frențiu, and Suciu died in prison.



Street in downtown Cluj, Transylvania, named after Cardinal Iuliu Hossu, who was beatified in 2019 (G. FAGAN)

Those confined to monasteries were presumably closely monitored.

Of course, although people were able to visit them. Given this very aggressive new policy against the Romanian Greek Catholic Church, the Holy See decided to create a clandestine hierarchy that could continue its activity as titular bishops were repressed. This process began in November 1948, when Ioan Ploscaru was consecrated clandestinely as auxiliary bishop of Lugoj at the apostolic nunciature [diplomatic mission of the Holy See] in Bucharest. Alexandru Todea [d. 2002] was one of the last bishops consecrated in this way before Vatican diplomats were barred from Romania for the rest of the Communist period. He was made Cardinal in 1991.

What would ordinary Greek Catholics have experienced after the October 1948 reunification with the Romanian Orthodox Church? Were they forced to profess the Orthodox faith? Did they continue to attend the same churches?

The picture is very complex and nuanced. One important factor is that, being Eastern Rite Christians, Greek Catholics have the same canon, saints, and church calendar as the Orthodox. Another is that the union was very much a formality in many areas, at least initially. The Communists mainly looked at the process of reunification from a political point of view—putting an end to the institution of the Greek Catholic Church was seen as a way to eliminate a source of opposition. From the point of view of senior Orthodox hierarchs, Greek Catholic believers were actually Orthodox, so they did not pay much attention to them.

In some communities—especially in rural areas far from the cities—the process was also a formality because the Communist regime did not have the resources to monitor what

was happening there. A priest might consent to reunification with the Orthodox Church while remaining Greek Catholic in his heart and continuing to serve as a Greek Catholic priest. In some cases, priests decided not to consent. This was very difficult psychologically: They had to give up their parishes and find alternative employment, such as in agriculture. They could be arrested, beaten, or threatened with eviction from their homes. As in Ukraine, there was strong political pressure.

To what extent did Greek Catholics preserve their connection with Rome?

It remained very important. There are various forms of piety deriving from Roman Catholicism which were adopted by Greek Catholics in Romania with the tacit consent of their bishops—the cults of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Anthony of Padua, for instance. As far as their liturgical books and ritual were concerned, people became Orthodox, but such influences persisted in terms of lived religion. In some Transylvanian villages, you will find reproductions of the Sacred Heart or rosaries in the homes of some Orthodox believers even today.

Were you raised in a community that retained its Greek Catholic identity?

No. My parents were blue-collar workers with very modest social origins. My father was the first—and my mother the second—generation to live in a city. Having transitioned from poor housing with no plumbing to apartment blocks, employment, and social security, the new way of life—not religion—was what mattered. They followed a daily routine that was identical for millions of Romanians in the 1960s and '70s.

This socioeconomic perspective is another part of the complicated explanation of what happened to Greek Catholics. When the Communist regime was established in 1948, Romania was still a rural, traditional society—almost 80 percent of the population lived in rural areas and drew their revenue from agriculture. There were very few cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants. Romanian society underwent rapid modernization as the economy was industrialized according to the directives of those in power. As the rural population was absorbed into the new, urban areas, links with memory and identity—including religion—were severed. In Cluj, for instance, there was no new church built between 1948 and 1990. Religion was left aside by many young people, who were the ones moving into the cities.



St. Joseph Greek Catholic Cathedral under construction, Cluj (G. FAGAN)

While my mother grew up in Cluj, my father was born in a small village where the Greek Catholic priest decided to sign the union with the Orthodox Church and continued to serve in the same parish. My father did not have very good memories of that priest! Ways of punishing pupils in Romania were harsh in those days, and one of them was being made to kneel on nutshells. When I was a child, we visited the wooden church in the village. I tried to ask my father about his childhood, but he replied, "I don't care to remember, because we had a priest who made me kneel on nuts for not learning some prayers!" He was marked by that experience.

I also remember, as a child, watching my maternal grandmother following what I considered a very strange routine. On Sundays she used to listen to a Vatican Radio Romanian-language broadcast of a Greek Catholic Mass on an old-fashioned radio with funny lights and noises. I would watch her kneel down to listen to this service. At that time, I did not ask about this, and neither did my family raise the subject. When still at elementary school, I also discovered a booklet of prayers to St. Anthony at our home. I asked my mother about it, but she said something like, "That's not your business." She probably had a protective instinct not to open up what could be a sensitive issue at school: "Let him take care of his schooling, and we'll deal with that later." In other families, experiences could be quite different, of course.

What was it like for Greek Catholics in Cluj who tried to maintain their faith?

It was much more complicated in the cities, as government surveillance was far more present—it was not like a village away in the hills where no one knew what was going on! If you were also part of the old intellectual world—if a parent or grandparent had been a university professor or lawyer, for instance—your family may well have been targeted for repression in the early Communist years, and you could experience discrimination as a result. You might be forbidden access to university, for example. That was the case for many thousands of young Romanians due to their social origins.

Some urban Greek Catholic believers who decided not to attend Orthodox worship chose to go to Roman Catholic churches. This was rather complicated in Transylvania, because here Roman Catholicism is culturally associated with the Hungarian community. As this was prior to the Second Vatican Council [1962-65], however, there was also an advantage, as the Mass was said in Latin.

That would be easier to understand than Hungarian, given that Romanian derives from Latin?

Exactly, especially for Romanians with a moderate level of education. The sermon would be in the local language—in this case, Hungarian—but all Catholic services had to be in Latin until the Second Vatican Council.

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In cities like Cluj, would Greek Catholic families who decided to attend churches that had become Orthodox actually become Orthodox over a couple of generations, given the slight differences between the two forms of worship?

The issue of Greek Catholic identity is a very complex one. I can cite my own family as an example: I was baptized in a small historic church named Bob Church after the Greek Catholic bishop, Ioan Bob, who built it around 1800 [https://bisericabobcluj.ro]. This was the church of my mother's family, and she and her sisters were baptized there. At the time of my birth, it was an Orthodox church. My mother also married there, but with an Orthodox priest, as the family continued to regard it as their own church. It was returned to the Greek Catholic Church in 1995.

I first attended Greek Catholic worship in the early 1990s. At that time, the Greek Catholics held open-air Sunday Masses in Cluj city center, in front of the monument to King Matthias Corvinus on Union Square [Romanian: *Piața Unirii*]. This was because they had not received back any historically Greek Catholic churches at that point. They won back the Transfiguration Cathedral [a Roman Catholic church donated to the Greek Catholic Church in 1926] only in 1998. That was after a huge protest, including some small but violent confrontations between Greek Catholic and Orthodox theology students.



Transfiguration Greek Catholic Church, Cluj (G. FAGAN)

That was just one conflict over the restitution of Greek Catholic church buildings at the time. Were these generally instances where a single parish contained opposing opinions about what should happen? Or did more senior Greek Catholics claim the church building even if the parishioners were mostly content to continue as Orthodox?

We may find all kinds of situations, including the ones you describe. Again, I will cite the history of my own family. My mother, God rest her soul, decided to remain Orthodox. One of her sisters, also deceased, said, "No, I was baptized Greek Catholic, and I am going to attend a Greek Catholic church." My mother's response was, "Okay, go there—that is your decision." In other cases—especially in rural areas—a few families considered themselves Greek Catholic because of their mothers or grandmothers, but they did not represent the majority within their community, and so there was friction. Given the possibility to do in-depth sociological research, I am sure that the whole picture would prove extremely complex.

In order to examine church property disputes, I think we need a framework of reference, for which we still need to answer certain questions. For instance, what do the terms "politics of memory" [how collective memory of history is addressed politically] and "transitional justice" [how societies respond to the legacies of egregious human-rights violations] mean in countries like Romania, bearing in mind what happened in 1948 and under Communism in general? From what vantage point are we going to judge the past, and how are we going to ensure that justice is done, both for those who are alive and in memory of those who are no longer with us? This is key, I believe—how do you reflect upon your past, bearing in mind what Communism meant for the whole of society, not just the Church?

If we take this approach, I think it becomes obvious that the first constructive attempts to address the past in Romania occurred only after 1996, when the first coalition opposed to the neo-Communists was elected. Prior to that, there was ambiguity on this issue: A decree recognizing the legality of the Greek Catholic Church was adopted, but the authorities were extremely evasive concerning the issue of church property restitution. They followed the Orthodox position that the believers of each parish should decide whether to remain Orthodox or not. However, the process is very complicated from that perspective, given the changes to Greek Catholic identity over four decades of Communism.

After three post-Communist decades, is confessional identity now more settled?

I had hoped to research this point, but it proved very difficult to ascertain why few Romanian Orthodox whose parents and/or grandparents were Greek Catholics decided to join the Greek Catholic Church again after 1990. This occurred despite the fact that the Romanian Greek Catholic Church had succeeded in retaining its institutional identity at great cost. I still have no answer. I believe the explanation partly has to do with how believers internalized the differences between being Greek Catholic and Orthodox under Communism. In Ukraine, Greek Catholicism was very important in terms of cultural and national identity. This was also the case in Romania, of course, but in our case the Orthodox Church was similarly Romanian—and not Russian. ♦

"The Romanian files are breathtakingly open —but it is not a free-for-all": An Interview with Roland Clark

Professor Roland Clark is a historian specializing in religion and politics in Romania after 1918, particularly the homegrown fascist movement known as the Iron Guard or the Legion of the Archangel Michael. From Australia, he studied History and Religious Studies as an undergraduate at Sydney University. After spending 18 months teaching at an American school in Brașov, Romania, in 2003-4, he pursued graduate study on Romanian Orthodox theologians Nichifor Crainic and Dumitru Stăniloae at the University of Pittsburgh in the United States, also translating Stăniloae's The Holy Trinity: In the Beginning There Was Love *(Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2012). He now teaches at the School of Histories, Languages, and Cultures at the University of Liverpool in the UK.*

Professor Clark has authored two monographs: Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania *(Cornell University Press, 2015) and* Religious Reform and Sectarianism and Renewal in Interwar Romania: The Limits of Orthodoxy and Nation-Building *(Bloomsbury Academic, 2021). In November 2024 the editor of the* East-West Church Report *met Professor Clark in Bebington, near Liverpool, for an illuminating overview of 20th-century links between Orthodoxy and fascism in Romania.*



Professor Roland Clark (G. FAGAN)

Could you briefly describe the appearance of fascism in Romania in the interwar years of the 20th century?

The interwar years saw rising fascism due to massive and widespread corruption. To start with, this was very much a grassroots movement of peasants and workers, but it spanned every social class—including the clergy. In 1938 King Carol II responded by establishing a royal dictatorship in place of democracy. As his prime minister, Patriarch Miron (Cristea)—the Romanian Orthodox Church's first patriarch—introduced harsh anti-Semitic legislation. The move to a royal dictatorship was intended to curb the fascists: King Carol wanted to harness their growing popularity so that he, and not the people, would remain in control. However, his government collapsed at the beginning of the Second World War. Under Hitler's pact with Stalin, Hungary was allowed to annex part of northern Transylvania, and the Soviet Union to annex northern Bukovina and Bessarabia. Romania could do nothing about this, and it was so humiliating for the royal dictatorship that the king was forced to step down. As Romanian troops withdrew from Bukovina and Bessarabia, they massacred local Jews, whom they blamed for what was happening.

In early September 1940, the Iron Guard—also called the Legion of Archangel Michael—came to power amid this political vacuum. They did so along with General Ion Antonescu, but their relations grew increasingly tense: The Legionaries stole whatever they could and reduced the country to anarchy, whereas Antonescu was a law-and-order sort of guy. The Legionaries rebelled against Antonescu in late January 1941: In the course of around four days of fighting between them and the army, a brutal pogrom took place in Bucharest. While small numbers were killed in comparison with later pogroms, it was grim: victims were hung on abattoir meat hooks and strung up in forests.

After this rebellion, Romania became a military dictatorship under Antonescu and a wartime ally of Hitler. It also carried out the Holocaust, with members of the Orthodox Church very much engaged as strong supporters of massacres of Jews and other minorities.

Given that the Iron Guard was also called the Legion of the Archangel Michael, were its founders inspired by Orthodox beliefs? Or did they just see the Orthodox Church as a useful political instrument?

The Guard's founder, Corneliu Codreanu, was a politician from beginning to end. He was politically active even as a teenager, and his goal was anti-Semitism: "Let's rid Romania of the Jews, and of corrupt politicians working with the Jews." Codreanu's mentor, Alexandru C. Cuza, was initially an outspoken atheist, but he became Orthodox when he saw its political value. Cuza rejected the Old Testament as the work of Jews, however: He began distributing pamphlets outside the gates of the Metropolitanate in Bucharest calling for the Old Testament to be removed from the Bible.

Codreanu was quite superstitious: He believed in lucky and unlucky days, and astrology. He drew on the tradition of the *haiduc*—a sort of Robin Hood or outlaw character in Romania—and dressed up in folk costumes. He wanted to be seen as a mystic, messianic sort of figure. In sum, his movement always had clear hallmarks of fascism—such as anti-Semitism—with Christian elements progressively introduced.

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Clark Interview *(continued from page 11)*

What was the response of the Romanian Orthodox Church?

Churches were in bed with fascists in countries across Europe during the 1930s. In Romania, however, the Orthodox Church officially declared its opposition, mostly because Patriarch Miron was allied with Liberal politicians initially. Codreanu consequently claimed that the Church had lost its way, and that his movement was obedient to the Church without agreeing with its position. At the same time, there were senior bishops openly attending fascist rallies, but in a personal capacity, as they did not have the official backing of the Church.

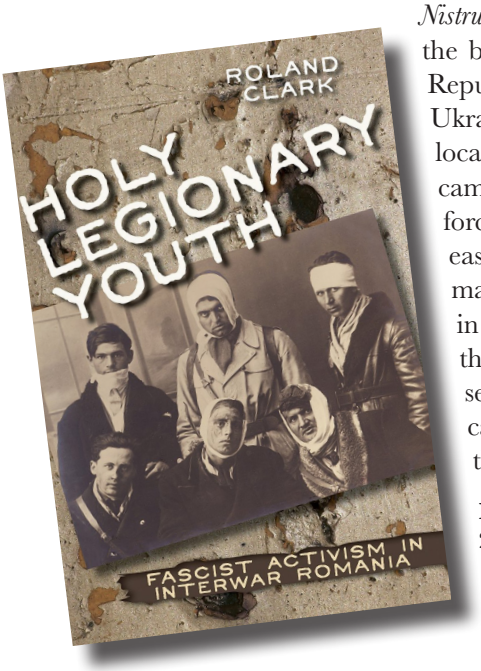
The Church's leaders could not control what was happening?

Yes, and they also did not feel the need to do so. Clerics had been state employees since the late 19th century and were not allowed to get involved in politics. Essentially, the Church's line was, "None of our priests are getting involved in politics, regardless of what it looks like." (Grins.)

Was fascism in Romania an internal response to the local Jewish population or an attitude copied from Nazi Germany?

Anti-Semitism had been a core part of Romanian national identity since at least the 1840s, as people started to articulate the question, "What is Romanian-ness?" Large numbers of Jews lived in Bukovina and Bessarabia, which were part of the Pale of Settlement. Once incorporated into Greater Romania after 1918, this was where massacres and deportations of Jews took place. The state tried to establish power over those territories by "purifying" them as ethnically Romanian. Anti-Semitism was also worse in Bukovina and Bessarabia: Jews living in the Old Kingdom of Romania were persecuted, but they were not deported or massacred.

During the Second World War, Bukovina and Transnistria (the territory between the Dniester [Romanian: *Nistru*] and Bug rivers, today the breakaway Transnistria Republic and part of Ukraine) were also the locations of concentration camps. As Romanian forces advanced eastwards in July 1941, massacres took place in almost every village they reached, and they set up concentration camps after capturing the city of Odessa.



Professor Clark's 2015 monograph, *Holy Legionary Youth*



Priests marching at the funeral of Legionaries Ion Moța and Vasile Marin in 1937 (Source: *Kampf und Sieg* photo album, Romanian National Archives, Fondul CC al PCR - Albume Foto, Dosar AF2815, f. 75)

Jews who survived previous massacres, as well as those from cities such as Iași and Suceava, were sent there, as were Roma and a few Evangelicals. While there were no gas chambers, the conditions were so horrific that inmates died of starvation, dysentery, typhus, and the like. According to official statistics, around 250,000 Jews and 25,000 Roma perished, but I have seen estimates of up to 400,000 Jews. Roma deaths are poorly documented—there may have been as few as 11,000, but there may also have been very many more.

The best book on the army's motivation in all this is Grant Harward's *Romania's Holy War: Soldiers, Motivation, and the Holocaust* [Cornell University Press, 2021]. In great detail, he lays out the vast religious rhetoric and depths of anti-Semitism that permeated soldiers' thinking. Their sense was that the campaign against Moscow was blessed by God for the destruction of atheistic Communism.

They were associating Jews with Communism in line with the common trope?

There are many speeches about "holy war" and the great things that Romanian troops are doing in the East. When Vice-Prime Minister Mihai Antonescu announced the June 1941 invasion of the USSR, he declared, "I believe that since the sacred wars of the Crusaders, not a battle was holier, greater, and more epic than that which Adolf Hitler, the apostle of our new civilization, began today."[1] Visiting war-torn Chișinău a few weeks later, the Orthodox priest Fr. Gheorghe Secaș wrote, "The Bolsheviks and the Jews have committed these acts of crude barbarity like true vandals. … The sons of Judah… are the children of the curse and they should receive double retribution for their barbaric deeds."[2]

Were the atrocities committed by Romanian soldiers a continuation of those by the Legion?

The Legion was outlawed in January 1941, so there was no such thing as the Legion by the time the Holocaust began with Operation Barbarossa that summer. Consequently, the Legion is not accused of having carried out the Holocaust.

However, while the general assumption is that they were all put in prison after the January 1941 rebellion, its members were still around.

Since the *Securitate* secret police archives are organized by name, I was able to go through hundreds of biographies of senior Legionaries to find out what they did after the rebellion. Many evaded prison entirely, while others were jailed for only a few months, meaning that most were free by July 1941. As their political past was tainted, they were no longer welcome in Romania. Many were conscripted, while others joined the army of their own accord. Their files just say things like: "Simion Lefter was in the 68th Infantry Regiment as a peacekeeper after the troops arrived in Odessa. On the Moldovan Front and the Western Front until the end of the war he served as company commander in the 15th Dorobanți Piatra Neamț Regiment with the rank of Lieutenant." Knowing what the 68th Infantry Regiment was doing during those months, I was able to trace that individual's movements around Europe and place him in villages where massacres took place. In this way, I have been able to show that former Legionaries were in the army at the times and places where there were massacres. I do not know if they were the ringleaders, but they were definitely there and involved, so it is no longer possible to say, "It was the army, not the Legion." The army was full of Legionaries!



Literature on the Romanian Orthodox Church during the Communist era in the bookshop of Iași Orthodox cathedral, Moldavia (G. FAGAN)

From 1944 onwards there was a reversal, as the Soviet Union began to win the war. Romania then turned Communist, which posed a huge problem for those Orthodox who were staunchly right-wing.

What happened to them?

Some went into monasteries in order to keep their heads down, but that did not work out because the Communists targeted specific monasteries for closure, such as the Vladimirești Monastery in 1956. Others kept quiet and reinvented themselves as Communists, while inwardly retaining their core fascist beliefs. Once Nicolae Ceaușescu came to power in 1965, he reinvented Romanian Communism as a nationalist form of Communism. This was perfect for the Orthodox Church: It could remain nationalist while supporting the Communist regime. However, the Church also became deeply infiltrated by the *Securitate* secret police under Communism to the extent that, if you went to confession, whatever you told your priest could be reported to the *Securitate* and result in your arrest.

Is this also clear from the *Securitate* archives?

Yes, it is very clear from those archives, and it has also become public knowledge. There were many exposés in the 1990s and 2000s, and people who were informers are still being exposed.

The *Securitate* archives appear to be extraordinarily open today.

When I was doing research in the past, there was no list of what files were available. If I wanted to see Codreanu's file, for example, I had to give his name, date of birth, place of birth, and his parents' first names. Without all of that information, you could not find someone's file—you went in blind. Even with all the information needed to request a file, you could be told, "No, we don't have any file on that person." Then someone else might come in a week later and receive files for that person: Information was given to some people and not to others. Before providing a file, an archivist also had to read it and decide which bits were acceptable for researchers and which were not.

More recently, things have become much better. There are now finding aids and a proper list of which files are available, although I am still not convinced that it is comprehensive. In comparison with most of Eastern Europe, the Romanian files are breathtakingly open—but it is not a free-for-all.

How much was generally known under Communism about Romania's involvement in the Holocaust, particularly that of the Orthodox Church?

Very little. Under Communism—and this is the case across Communist East-Central Europe—the Holocaust was not discussed. It was mentioned in terms of fascist crimes against humanity, but these were not seen as ethnic crimes. While the Holocaust was understood in the West in terms of racism and as directed against Jews, in the East it was framed as the bourgeoisie against workers. In Poland, for example, Polish and Jewish victims of the Holocaust were lumped together, so you had no sense of a separate attempt to wipe out the Jewish people. The same was true in Romania. There were a handful of trials for war crimes in the late 1940s, but they were not very detailed. No church figure was ever asked about what they did in the East: They were seen as having served the church and certainly not as having broken any rules. This was while there were priests writing approving articles in military and church newspapers, as well as visiting and blessing concentration camps. It is very well documented. Archimandrite Antim Nica, for example, was one of many priests involved in bribing officials to take home jewelry and goods he had stolen from Jews while in Transnistria, as well as being—like many other priests—implicated in the rape and sexual exploitation of Jewish women.[3]

Was this terrible legacy discovered with the collapse of Communism in 1989?

From 1990 people who were persecuted by the

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Communists became celebrated as true Romanian heroes, including right-wing nationalists such as Nichifor Crainic and Dumitru Stăniloae. Even fascism acquired a reasonably good name. Then, in the early 2000s, Holocaust history started to come through. The impetus for this came in June 2003, when Romania's government shocked everyone by strongly emphasizing that no Holocaust took place within its boundaries between 1940 and 1945. In response to widespread pressure, the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania was created to examine the issue. In 2004 its official report detailed Romania's direct involvement in the Holocaust, including that of the Orthodox Church [see https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20080226-romania-commission-postwar.pdf.]

This history of the Holocaust was then mandated to be taught in schools, but none of the teachers knew about it, and it felt like a Western ideology being imposed upon Romanian education. Most Romanians still either do not understand that the Holocaust happened in Romania or do not believe that Romanians took part. General Antonescu is not seen as a genocidal maniac allied with Hitler; he is up there with Vlad Țepeș—Vlad the Impaler, or Dracula—as a tough but righteous king.

It is probably only within the past 10 years among specialists—and five years among the broader public—that people have started to realize what was involved. It is really only the work of historian Ionuț Biliuță over the past three or four years—very, very recent!—that has properly started to explain the role of the Church.



Grave in Râmeț Monastery, Transylvania, of Dometie Manolache (d. 1975), one of 16 clerics approved for canonization in 2024. Fr. Dometie is not one of those alleged to have supported fascism. (G. FAGAN)

This summer the Romanian Orthodox Church listed 16 clerics approved for canonization in 2025 [https://basilica.ro/en/holy-synod-approves-canonization-of-16-modern-day-saints]. Dr. Biliuță subsequently maintained that half of them "either supported or expressed fascist and anti-Semitic ideas during the interwar years or following their imprisonment during Communism" [https://publicorthodoxy.org/2024/07/30/fascist-hagiographies]. What is your reaction to the names on the list?

None of them surprises me. The Church has been promising to do this for years saying, "We need to canonize these people," but they have not done so precisely because of the problems and delicacies that it throws up. We have now reached a point where no one cares enough, and you can celebrate someone like Fr. Arsenie Boca, who has become a great miracle-working saint in Romania. Arsenie Boca was associated with the Legion—but under Antonescu's regime and under Communism, when this sort of activism was illegal.

The really controversial one is Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, just because he is so famous. When he came of age as a theologian in the mid-1930s, he was a disciple of the fascist theologian Nichifor Crainic. Crainic helped Stăniloae get published in his magazines, and Stăniloae defended Crainic in public. This was Stăniloae's flirtation with fascism, but he did not join the Legion or any other fascist movement. At that time, he wrote anti-Semitic material and attacked Roman and Greek Catholics, but he later became famous for his ecumenicism through his involvement with the World Council of Churches in the 1960s. The Communist Romanian state did not permit someone to become involved in international affairs unless they were sure that person would do everything they were told to do. The secret police had Stăniloae under control by the time he was active in the WCC: They had kept him in prison long enough that he was "well-behaved" by the time he got out.

Ionut Biliuta's recent article pointing out Stăniloae's problematic past upset Rev. Dr. Radu Bordeianu, an Orthodox theologian at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, who basically responded with, "Stăniloae may not have been pure, but he was still a good guy—we can use his ecumenicism" [https://publicorthodoxy.org/2024/08/27/st-dumitru-staniloae-complex-figure]. If you look at Stăniloae's work during the 1930s though, his ecclesiology identifies Orthodoxy with the Romanian nation. Contemporary Orthodox theologians like John Zizioulas and Nicholas Afanasiev, by contrast, shared a eucharistic ecclesiology. Once Stăniloae articulates his ecclesiology again in the 1960s, it is based upon "open sobornicity"—"my group is friends with your group"—which still assumes that churches are collectivities based on ties such as nationality, kinship, or territory, and that churches relate to each other in much the same way as nations do. In a sense, his "open sobornicity" of the 1960s is the same way of thinking about the church that he promoted in the 1930s, just without using the word "nation" anymore. To my mind, that is why Stăniloae is problematic [https://publicorthodoxy.org/2024/10/02/nationalism-and-ecumenicism].

Overall, I think the list is pretty clean compared with what was possible. There is a strong grassroots movement in Romania to canonize Codreanu, for example, as well as two of the Iron Guard's martyrs from the 1930s, Ion Moța and Vasile Marin. I do not think that will ever happen, though—it would be like canonizing Hitler.

[Editor's note: An official Romanian Patriarchate statement on 17 July 2024 acknowledged that some Orthodox saints displayed "at certain moments in their lives, attitudes and actions that are difficult to understand or even contrary

to Christian teaching. However, the Church takes into account *change in a sinner's life*, especially the way in which they ended their life, without encouraging (sanctifying) certain deviations by those persons during their lives" https://basilica.ro/comunicat-punct-de-vedere-canonizari-recente-ale-sfantului-sinod-al-bisericii-ortodoxe-romane.]

Is the difficulty of gauging both the depth and duration of fascist ties a challenge? The reality appears to have been complex: Fr. Nicolae Steinhardt, an ethnic Jew, was imprisoned in 1959 because he refused to testify against a former Legionary journalist, for example.

He was in prison as a converted Jew, but he made friends with Legionaries in prison. Many of those on this list are being canonized because they were persecuted in Communist prisons. Why did they end up in prison? Because they were Legionaries—but many of them were not in fact Legionaries. Just because you went to prison as a Legionary does not mean that you actually were one. This was a label that the Communists often threw at anyone they didn't like, so it is a very complex situation. Also, there were different types of Legionaries in prison. A small minority became Christian mystics while they were there, and they were mocked and persecuted by the other Legionaries.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, a lot of young people wanted to become anti-Communists, but they needed some sort of ideology to draw them together. They looked back at the Legion, read some of Codreanu's writings, and thought, "Wow, this guy was a saint and a mystic! We want to be like that!" But they had not known Codreanu—the eldest were young children in the 1930s. The Communists immediately threw them into prison as Legionaries, where they met actual Legionaries for the first time. Those Legionaries mentored them, but the problem there is that three people would frequently be placed in a cell together, one being an informer who would encourage the others to talk about their past: "Do you remember when we did this?" The Communists would record that conversation and use it as evidence against the other two—but, knowing they were being recorded, they would lie to each other. We consequently have reams of archival documents of people in prison telling stories to each other about their Legionary past—but we have no idea if any of it is true.

There were also Legionaries in exile presenting themselves as anti-Communists, who played up elements of religion and martyrdom in Communist prisons. They ignored all the anti-Semitism of the 1930s and rewrote that history in the 1960s to make the Legion look more mystical and religious than it really was—if you look only at sources from the '30s, you do not see it.

Looking at the list of proposed canonizations, are there any names obviously missing?

There is almost no one from the Burning Bush [Romanian: *Rugul Aprins*] movement, such as Daniil (Sandu) Tudor. There is no one important from before 1945, such as the theologian Gala Galaction, who was a left-wing theologian. Other interesting people who are not there are Metropolitan Antonie Plămădeală and Metropolitan Bartolomeu Anania. If you are going to consider the most important Romanian Orthodox figures of the 20th century, they are both giants, yet they are completely ignored—I think partly because they have clearly problematic pasts, but also because they worked too closely with the Communists. The selection of these particular saints is partly an attempt to make it look like the Church suffered under Communism, when in reality it was deeply implicated in the Communist state. These people were the exceptions, not the rule. ♦

Notes:

[1] Quoted in Grant Hayward, *Romania's Holy War: Soldiers, Motivation, and the Holocaust* (Cornell University Press, 2021), 92.
[2] Quoted in Ionuț Biliuță, "'Christianizing" Transnistria: Romanian Orthodox Clergy as Beneficiaries, Perpetrators, and Rescuers during the Holocaust," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 34, no. 1 (2020), 24.
[3] Ibid., 28-31.

"Rescue those who are being taken away to death": An Interview with Oleg Turlac



Oleg and Natasha Turlac (Source: O. TURLAC)

A note from Editor Emeritus of the* East-West Church Report, *Dr. Mark Elliott:

From Moldova, Oleg Turlac founded Turlac Mission with his brother, Vitali, in 2004 (https://turlacmission.com). Their outreach, primarily to their homeland and other countries of the former Soviet Union, includes evangelism, humanitarian assistance, trafficking prevention, and support for families with autistic children.

I first met Oleg Turlac back in October 1995 when I was giving lectures on Russian church history at the Evangelical Christian-Baptist Seminary in Moscow. Oleg had come to the Russian capital to study for the ministry only a few short years after this residential theological school had been established in the wake of sixty-plus years of state prohibitions against Protestant pastoral training in the Soviet Union.

(continued on page 16)

Turlac Interview *(continued from page 15)*

When Oleg and I met briefly following one class session, we had no idea that our paths would cross again years later in support of our shared conviction that something had to be done to combat human trafficking.

In the summer of 2000 my wife, Darlene, and I led a team of 27 American students and adults from Samford University and Riverchase United Methodist Church (both in Birmingham, Alabama) to staff a three-week camp for 144 orphans near Vladimir, Russia—the first of seven short-term missions I would lead to work with Russian orphans under the auspices of Children's HopeChest. Orphanage workers at that first camp shared with us that many young girls—most of whom were required to leave their orphanages at age 16—ended up in prostitution; and the more attractive, the greater the risk. Pimps even showed up at orphanage graduations to recruit young girls.

At the same camp, Darlene developed a deep burden for Sveta, who was dangerously attractive and quite close to "aging out" of her orphanage. Sveta impressed us with how attentive she was to the needs of the younger children from her orphanage, and in the process stole Darlene's heart. Back home in Alabama, Darlene frequently asked for prayer for sweet but vulnerable Sveta. Some eight years later we were greatly surprised to receive a letter from Sweden from Sveta. Just in time, she had been adopted by a Scandinavian couple who had given her a home of her own. Sveta had not forgotten Darlene, however. She wrote to share with us that she had a loving home and a good life, and that she was safe. It was one of the most heartening letters we have ever received.

The disturbing revelations about the vulnerability of teenage orphan girls in Eastern Europe shared at the 2000 summer camp prompted me to research the issue, culminating with the publication of "Faith-Based Responses to Trafficking in Women from Eastern Europe," Bogoslovskie razmyshleniia/ Theological Reflections, *No. 5 (2005), 147-91. The doctor of ministry student who served as my excellent research assistant was none other than Oleg Turlac.*

Among the sources I consulted for that project was The Natashas: Inside the New Global Sex Trade *by Victor Malarek (Arcade Publishing, 2004). It turned out that the generic term for prostitute across much of Eastern Europe is "Natasha." This also happens to be the given name of Oleg's wife. Working against the stereotype, Natasha Turlac is a dedicated colleague in Turlac Mission's outreach to young Eastern European women at risk of being trafficked.*

Oleg Turlac holds an M.Th. degree from Moscow Theological Seminary of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (1997), a B.A. from Kentucky's Georgetown College (1998), and an M.Div. (1999) and D.Min. (2006) from Alabama's Beeson Divinity School, Samford University. He served on the faculty of the College of Theology and Education (now Divitia Gratiae University) in the Moldovan capital, Chișinău, from 2000 to 2010.

Oleg and Natasha Turlac subsequently emigrated with their son, Roman, to Toronto, Canada, where they were able to obtain specialized treatment for Roman's autism. In August 2024 the family—now including daughter Victoria, born in Canada—moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota, to allow Natasha to provide care for her ailing mother.

The following interview with Oleg Turlac was conducted by the Editor Emeritus of the East-West Church Report *in English via email during September 2024.*



Mark and Darlene Elliott with children from Yuriev Polski Orphanage, Vladimir Oblast, 2000 (Source: M. ELLIOTT)

When did you begin your outreach to trafficked young women, and what is your motivation for your ministry to those at risk?

We began anti-trafficking work in Moldova 20 years ago. We first opened the doors of our home to victims of human trafficking in 2004. We see our mission as twofold: 1) teaching a profession to young women from Moldova and the "Stans" [Post-Soviet Central Asian republics with the suffix -stan, such as Kyrgyzstan] in order to provide economic small business opportunities for them (and so minimize the likelihood of young girls falling prey to traffickers), and 2) through this effort sharing Christ and Christian values with these vulnerable women. We are guided by the Scripture that teaches us, "Rescue those who are being taken away to death" (Proverbs 24:11).

What has been the impact upon trafficking in Moldova from the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine?

The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine brought additional economic and social challenges in the East European region. Thousands of women had to relocate from Ukraine to Moldova and other countries. That escalated human trafficking, including the demand for online sex services, prostitution, and slave labor, as well as organ harvesting.

How do traffickers recruit their "clients" from Ukraine?

Due to its proximity to Ukraine, Moldova has become a new base for human traffickers. They often use Moldovan cafés and restaurants to connect with young women from Ukraine.

Expatriates from both countries who travel between the European Union (EU) and former Soviet countries and who are fluent in Russian, Romanian, or Ukrainian are often involved in recruiting these women. They conduct interviews and select candidates, who are sometimes asked to submit photos in revealing clothing before the interview. Many makeshift studios in Moldova and Ukraine specialize in providing these photo services. The visa-free travel between the EU and Moldova/Ukraine has made it easier for traffickers to lure young women into slavery.

What has been your strategy in trafficking prevention?

Through the years, we have started three training sites in sewing and alterations and two in cooking and catering. These are situated in the northern Beltsy Region and southern Gagauz-populated area of Moldova. (Gagauz are an ethnic Turkic group in southern Moldova and southwestern Ukraine who are predominately Eastern Orthodox Christians.) Through our training classes women learn a trade and can support themselves. They also learn of the risks associated with online recruitment that is offered as regular work in Western Europe. As part of the process, women learn about Christ and the Gospel from Christian instructors. The ministry is conducted in partnership with local Baptist churches. We also have collaborated with our partners to offer shelter and medical supplies to women at risk of trafficking in Chișinău and at points of entry in the north and south of Moldova.



Turlac Mission cooking/catering training site, Moldova (Source: O. TURLAC)

How many women have taken the training classes in Moldova?

Though not all training sites keep precise statistics, we estimate that in the last seven years more than 250 teenagers/young women have gone through catering and tailoring training at our sites in Moldova.

What is their ethnic background?

About 40 percent of the young women are of Gagauz ethnicity and live in the south of Moldova. The rest are of Moldovan, Russian, and Ukrainian heritage.

Are you involved in trafficking prevention in other countries?

Due to visa-free travel with Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) many young women from the "Stans" are being lured there and become victims of traffickers. In the "Stans" we work with local Christians who have received training in social work and oversee a program aimed at preventing trafficking among at-risk teens. In 2015 we helped establish a training program for sewing and alterations for young women in a provincial town in one of the "Stans." We make regular trips to the "Stans" to provide support and encouragement for this work.

Could you share an example of someone who has been helped by your ministry?

S., age 25, was trafficked out of Moldova, with the promise of a job in a café in Istanbul, Turkey. Because she is Gagauz, born in southern Moldova, she could speak a Turkish dialect. She was excited about the good life ahead of her, as she could not make a living in her village in Moldova. However, instead of the promised job, she was taken to a dungeon where she was held against her will and forced to sell her body. After becoming pregnant by one of the "clients," she was thrown out onto the street. Because of the kindness of good people—angels—whom she believes God sent to her, she managed to return to Moldova. With no place to stay, she was welcomed into a shelter in southern Moldova, which we helped support. She gave birth to a boy. The workers at the shelter became her family, providing both food and spiritual support. S. received training in sewing and alterations, was given her own sewing machine, and could return to normal life. S. lives in a small town in Gagauzia, Moldova, and makes a living by offering tailoring services.

[Editor's Note: See also Andrew Raatz, "Healing the Natashas: Observations on Trafficking Aftercare in Moldova," *East-West Church and Ministry Report*, vol. 18 (2010), no. 2, 16-15: https://www.eastwestreport.org/?view=article&id=283:healing-the-natashas-observations-on-trafficking-aftercare-in-moldova, and vol. 18 (2010), no. 3, 11-13: https://www.eastwestreport.org/?view=article&id=289:healing-the-natashas-observations-on-trafficking-aftercare-in-moldova.]

Since launching Turlac Mission, how many trips have you, your wife, Natasha, and brother, Vitali, made to the various countries you serve, particularly since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022?

Since 2008—except for 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions—we have taken four to six trips per year to the former Communist countries, primarily Moldova, Poland, Transcaucasia [Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan], and the "Stans." So far we have conducted ministry work in 14 of the 15 former Soviet republics, with Turkmenistan being the only former Soviet republic we have not yet reached.

Since the beginning of the full-scale Russo-Ukrainian war, we have made eight trips to Poland. Additionally, we have made multiple trips to Czechia, Slovakia, and Estonia, where we sponsored soup kitchens for refugees, provided food baskets, and helped fund shelter for several families from the Donbas Region.

(continued on page 18)

Turlac Interview *(continued from page 17)*

You were living in Toronto, Canada, at the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. What were you able to do from that distant point from the war zone?

When Russian troops began bombing Ukrainian cities on February 24, 2022, we received numerous phone calls from friends outside of Ukraine who had relatives in the country, asking for help in evacuating them. Natasha and I set up a makeshift call center to address these concerns. We did our best to act as a link between people inside and outside of Ukraine. While residing in Toronto, we welcomed Ukrainian refugee families and helped them adjust to life in Canada. We gave the refugees $100 grocery store cards and drove them to medical appointments. Since the start of the war in Ukraine, we also have been working with our Christian ministry partners in Moldova to provide humanitarian aid, including hot lunches, bottled water, and medical and hygiene supplies. We were also helping to transport and shelter refugees arriving from Ukraine at the Tudora (South) and Otaci (North) crossing points.

Poland has been a hub for much of your Ukrainian refugee relief work. Can you share the scope of your outreach there?

My brother Vitali and I traveled to Warsaw to meet incoming Ukrainians at the Central Train Station. We provided coffee, tea, and trays with lunch from McDonald's for the refugees. In Poland, we have partnered with the Warsaw Bible Church to provide humanitarian aid and hygiene/medical supplies for adults and children. Turlac Mission also provided Christmas gifts for Ukrainian refugee children and Easter food baskets for needy Ukrainian families. We provided meals for pastors who had come to Poland from Ukraine to care for their congregations. In addition, we helped strengthen the Ukrainian Baptist churches in Poland by visiting them and preaching in Warsaw, Łódź, and Wrocław.

[Editor's note: For a special issue of the *East-West Church Report* on Christians in Poland aiding refugees from Ukraine in the wake of Russia's full-scale invasion, see vol. 30, no. 3, 2022.]

Please share an example of your firsthand involvement with Ukrainian refugees.

One memorable story is about how my wife, Natasha, helped guide a family with two autistic teenagers from Berdiansk, Ukraine, to Warsaw, Poland, in March 2022. As Russian troops closed in on the port city of Berdiansk, Luda and Alex, along with their two boys Gene (15) and Sasha (14), were unsure what to do. Natasha had been in touch with Luda before the war through a social network group for moms with autistic children. Luda was uncertain about attempting to escape from the occupied city, considering the difficulties the boys would face on the escape route. On the other hand, living under occupation did not promise anything good. Natasha encouraged them to do their best to leave the city, which was soon captured by Russian troops. The family escaped in their old car through a narrow corridor, witnessing bombings and drone attacks as they drove away from their hometown. They even had a missile fall within their sight, shaking their car, but luckily escaped on foot without any damage.

Traumatized by the sight of burnt vehicles and dead bodies, the family came close to giving up on their escape from Berdiansk. However, Natasha kept encouraging them and praying for them over the phone. They persevered, and in three days they reached Lviv in western Ukraine, where they boarded a train to the border with Poland. After an eight-hour wait at the border, the family crossed into Poland and were placed on a bus to Warsaw.

I timed my trip to Warsaw to meet this refugee family arriving from Berdiansk. Although I had never previously met Alex, Luda, and their boys, when we finally met in Warsaw we hugged each other as if we were old friends. Natasha shared their joy from Toronto via live Facebook broadcast. Later, the family made their way to—and settled in—the United States. ♦



Turlac Mission tailoring training site, Moldova (Source: O. TURLAC)

Best Practices in Protestant Aid for Ukrainian Refugees

In July 2022 Oleg Turlac answered queries for "Best Practices in Protestant Aid for Ukrainian Refugees: 2022," an article by Editor Emeritus Mark Elliott published in Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe, *vol. 42 (2022), no. 7, 39-76; https://doi.org/10.55221/2693-2148.2378. Below are brief excerpts from Oleg's observations, the full range of which may be found on pages 44, 50-51, 59-60, and 64-65 of the "Best Practices" article.*

An effective model of East-West cooperation in Warsaw

The Warsaw Bible Church, located downtown within two miles of the Central Train Station, is led by Pastor Mykhailo Balokha, who is originally from western Ukraine. Westerners/Americans cooperated with Ukrainians from the Bible Church, which knew the needs inside Ukraine and maintained effective communication with pastors in Ukraine. This eliminated the language barrier and ensured that financial resources were used beneficially. Western visitors/missionary organizations provided funding. Ukrainians

took care of the rest (purchase and delivery). I saw Western missionary agencies partner with the church, which served as a hub for helping refugees arriving from Ukraine en masse during the first two months of the war. It also served as a hub for sending aid provided by different organizations from the West to the people/churches inside Ukraine.

A dire, ongoing need for trauma counseling

What was lacking (from my experiences of visits to Prague and Warsaw) was spiritual counseling. The refugees needed more than just food and shelter. They needed a listening ear. That required time, which pastors and other workers had in short supply. The refugees were dealing with various traumas: loss of home, death of loved ones and friends, and uncertainty about the future. Some refugees couldn't talk. They just wept. Some were so traumatized that they spoke as if they were still in Berdiansk or Mariupol. What could have helped and is still needed is teams of experienced pastors/counselors who speak Russian and Ukrainian who could provide counseling to the refugees and help them cope with war trauma. Sadly, very few people with such skills could leave their jobs/ministries and come to Poland, the Czech Republic, or Slovakia for a long time. ♦

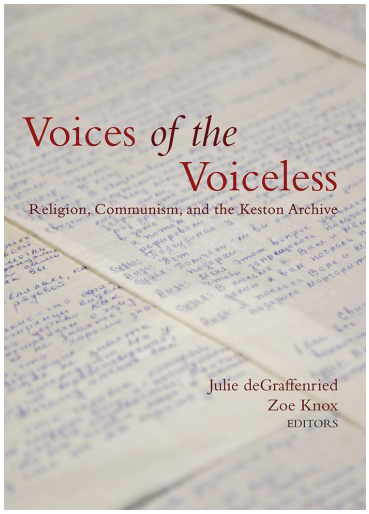
BOOK REVIEW

Voices of the Voiceless: Religion, Communism, and the Keston Archive

edited by Julie deGraffenried and Zoe Knox
Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019
116 pp., $35 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1-481311-23-6

DAVID BROERSMA

During the 1970s, if there was a newsletter or ministry report that described religious persecution in the Soviet Union, my parents subscribed to it. As a result, I remember reading many stories in my teens about brave people who stood firm for their faith in spite of desperate circumstances, and I became familiar with an organization that seemed nearly always to be the source of information for those stories: Keston College [later Keston Institute]. It was therefore with deep interest that I read the volume edited by Julie deGraffenried and Zoe Knox about Keston's archive, which is now housed at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.



Voices of the Voiceless: Religion, Communism, and the Keston Archive serves as a worthy tribute to the work of Keston Institute and the archive's new home at Baylor. It is not a comprehensive history of persecution or of the Institute's work, but rather a well-curated sampling of the types of materials contained in the archive that together give a sense of the scope of the activities of tireless heroes who did not look the other way when their neighbors were experiencing injustice.

For the volume, many of the principal actors behind Keston Institute were asked to select and describe different artifacts contained in the archival collection. *Voices of the Voiceless* therefore highlights both the types of materials that were collected—*samizdat* [self-published, clandestine] books, letters, requests for help, propaganda posters, and newsletters—and the key personnel who maintained lines of communication with marginalized people of faith in Eastern Bloc countries and disseminated information about their very real suffering.

Keston Institute did not limit itself to researching and reporting on the persecution of a single religious group, such as Protestant or Orthodox Christians, but also documented the persecution of people from a wide range of faith commitments. The selections in the book also reflect this emphasis on defending freedom of conscience as a fundamental human right for all.

Among the notable items highlighted is the book *Son of Man* by Fr. Aleksandr Men. Men was a Russian Orthodox priest who had a vibrant ministry among intellectuals, artists, and professionals, particularly in the 1970s and '80s. At the time of his shocking murder in 1990, he was having a powerful impact upon people disillusioned by the disintegration of the Soviet Union. I became acquainted with a number of people who had been directly influenced by him during my own years living in Moscow (1997-2014), and so it was fascinating to read of Keston Institute's early interest in his ministry after encountering his enduring legacy.

Reading through the volume and viewing the propaganda posters within it further reminded me of the testimony of one of my colleagues in Moscow, who as a young woman had been active in the *Komsomol* Communist youth organization and had distributed propaganda against

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deGraffenried and Knox Review *(continued from page 19)*

Christianity. Her journey to faith began as a kernel of a thought: "Why is the government so desperate to convince people that there is no God, if there is nothing to it?" Before long, she found a group of Christians and came to believe in Christ herself.

Encountering people who had suffered for their faith led me to reflect upon the tragic irony of such gentle, loving souls being labelled "enemies of the people," while those who imprisoned and attempted to coerce them into rejecting their faith were awarded for their contribution to the state. The temptation to accept a convenient lie in order to avoid unpleasant consequences instead of embracing a painful truth is always with us, and the example of those who have gone before us in the faith should speak to us today. Baylor University's decision to house the archive on its campus thus preserves a vital legacy for later generations.

Voices of the Voiceless also briefly describes the effect of the early 1990s upon Keston Institute, when funding dried up and many people felt that the job of tracking religious freedom was finished. This reflects a broader belief in the West during that period that the Cold War was over, and we no longer had anything with which to concern ourselves in Eastern Europe and Russia. Although active, officially sanctioned persecution of the type described in this book largely ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, unofficial prejudice and injustice continue to have an impact on communities of faith even now. [Editor's note: *Keston News Service*, a regular bulletin that reported on violations of religious freedom in the Soviet Bloc from 1974-1990, was revived by Keston Institute in 1995. From 2002 its reporters continued this monitoring work as *Forum 18 News Service*: www.forum18.org.]

Voices of the Voiceless accomplishes its goal of illustrating the work of Keston Institute and the resulting archive now housed at Baylor University. It reminds me of a yearbook—sharing highlights and photos from a season in the lives of defiant individuals who documented the suffering of many for decades. If you are looking for a comprehensive treatment of religious persecution in the Soviet period, then this volume is not the answer—but it does give a glimpse into the scope of the suffering that existed and the attempts to use whatever means possible to alleviate it.

For those who might be interested in doing research into the Soviet period, this book also gives an overview of the Keston research materials available at Baylor University. [Editor's note: Further details are available at: https://library.web.baylor.edu/kestoncenter.] For those not involved in in-depth research, but who—like me—are interested in the history of people of faith in the Soviet period, this volume of short essays and photographs gives an illustrative flavor of the breadth of the challenges faced and the valiant efforts to respond. ♦

David Broersma *is a professor and the Thesis Director for the MA TESOL [Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages] at LCC International University (formerly Lithuania Christian College) in Klaipėda, Lithuania. He is also a professor of TESOL and Linguistics in the Languages and Literature Department at Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee. Prior to 2014, he lived and worked in Moscow, Russia, at the Russian-American Christian University and Hinkson Christian Academy.*

A Note from Our Book Review Editor

What Went Wrong? Russia's Lost Opportunity and the Path to Ukraine *by Philip Yancey and John A. Bernbaum (Cascade Books, Paperback, 190 pages, ISBN 9781666747973, February 2024, $20.00) provides a perspective on developments since 1989 in Russia and Ukraine; the book focuses on the significance of religion in the political evolution of these two states. Chapters 2-11 are based on* Praying with the KGB *by Philip Yancey (Multnomah Books, 1992). John A. Bernbaum's* Opening the Red Door: The Inside Story of Russia's First Christian Liberal Arts University *(InterVarsity Press, 2019) was reviewed by our Editor Emeritus in 2022 (*East-West Church Report, *vol. 30, no. 1, 15-16).*

The biannual *East-West Church Report* explores Christian life in the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe. We focus on:

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