

**THE “POLITICAL CRIME” OF BEING A CHRISTIAN****Nicoleta Chicinaş, PhD, “Babeş-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca**

*Abstract: In this paper I intend to analyze some aspects of the Communist Party’s process of purging the neo-protestant culte, in Cluj county, in the period 1944-1950. The purging of religious minorities was carried out by Communists according to the same pattern used for the purge of political opposition. To discredit them, Communist authorities used a variety of methods, from fanciful accusations, to murders. Moreover, along with accusations dealing with their membership in the opposition parties (mainly P.N.Ț., or P.N.L.), in the files of some religious minorities representatives we can find, in the rubric of „political affiliation”, categories such as: “priest”, “titelist”, “former legionary”, “Jehova’s witness”, etc. Therefore, in many situations, the neo-protestants activities were considered the same sort as the ones of the members of P.N.Ț, P.N.L., P.S.D., or of the legionaries converted to Communist doctrines; in some particular contexts, the neo-protestants were charged with the most severe accusations, as part of the Communist strategy of turning public opinion against them. The difference between Antonescu’s regime way of dealing with religious culte/sects/confessions, and the Communist one’s was that while the former did not care about keeping up the appearances – it forbade religious minorities, called their adherents “foreigners”, “traitors”, “renegades”, “Bolsheviks”, or “Judeo-Bolsheviks”, deported them or sent them to war -, the Communists cared for their image. They paid lip service to religious freedom, but in reality they sought to control absolutely the religious life of the country; they subverted religious life in any possible way, and infiltrated devoted party and Securitate members in leading positions of various religious culte and associations. The parishioners were accused for being “agents of Western/Anglo-American/American imperialism.” All these strategies were in consonance with the Soviet pattern of exercising control over the Church/culte, in order to mobilize people to “reach the heights of Socialist achievements”. Beside its multidisciplinary character and methodology (I make use of several methods – historical, analytical, comparative, statistical), the novelty of this paper is to use inedited, previously unstudied documents found in the archives of National Archives of Cluj County.*

*Keywords: communism, Romania, Northern Transylvania, neo-protestant, political affiliation.*

**Introduction**

In this paper I intend to analyze some aspects of the Communist Party’s process of purging the neo-Protestant *culte*, since its accession to power. The paper will cover the period 1944-1950, but will sporadically make reference to other historical periods, too, for comparative purposes. Beside its multidisciplinary character and methodology (I make use of several methods – historical, analytical, comparative, statistical), the novelty of this paper is given by the use of inedited, previously unstudied documents found in the archives of the National Archives of Cluj County.

***The emergence of neo-Protestantism in Romania. From tolerance to intolerance***

Transylvania was the first region in Europe to issue a decree on religious tolerance - the Edict of Turda -, in 1568, by which the right of every person to “keep his/her own faith” was acknowledged for the first time. The affirmation of religious freedom and tolerance made from Transylvania the “cradle” of religious tolerance in Europe and probably in the world. However, the edict has officially recognized only four confessions or “receipt religions”:

Lutherans, Calvinists, Unitarians and Catholics. The Orthodox Christians were explicitly banned.<sup>1</sup>

The 18th century brought the Greek-Catholic church in the religious arena of Transylvania and the end of the next century witnessed the emergence of the so-called “evangelical revival” which set the stage for the neo-Protestantism arrival in our country, represented by Adventists, Baptists, Pentecostals and the Christian Evangelicals (Romanian: *Biserica Creștină după Evanghelie*).

The first Adventists appeared in our country in 1872, in Pitesti. In Transylvania, there were Adventists among the Romanians, Hungarians and Saxons, and they organized a church comprised of many ethnicities and of mainly young people.

The Baptist Movement has spread among the Romanians from Transylvania, starting with 1883. By 1920, the Baptists were already organized as part of The Baptist Union of Romania.<sup>2</sup> Around 1910, Pentecostalism arose out of this movement, under the influence of some Transylvanian migrants returning from the U.S. after the First World War. The first Pentecostal community has been established in Arad, in 1922. Then the movement spread out to Banat, Transylvania, Bukovina and other regions of the country.

The Christian Evangelical Church (*Biserica Creștină după Evanghelie*) has emerged in Romania in the period 1920-1924, by the instrumentality of two young former Orthodox theologians: Dumitru Cornilescu and Teodor Popescu. At the authorities’ request, the new movement has changed its name into „Creștinii după Scriptură”, in order to distinguish themselves from other believers and it was officially registered as an association. In 1939, coerced by the authorities, this association has fused with another association from Bucharest - „Creștinii după Evanghelie” (created in 1899, under the influence of some foreign missionaries). Although they were different dogmatically and ritualistically, the two associations merged from an organizational perspective and gave birth to „Cultul Creștin după Evanghelie”.<sup>3</sup>

In some respects, we may therefore notice that not only in Transylvania, but in the Old Kingdom, too, there was a relative religious tolerance in the first decades of the 20th century. Although the Orthodox Church, which represented the majority church in the Old Kingdom, controlled the religious life of Romanians, for a short time, a series of other religious associations – called pejoratively „sects” (such as stiliștii, tudoriștii, inochentiștii, studenții în Biblie etc.) – have enjoyed a relatively tolerant treatment. However, the first signs of intolerance have soon appeared: Pentecostals were banned in 1925, the Bible Students in 1926. To discredit them, they were politically accused for being “agents of Moscow”, supported also by the US and UK. In 1926, for instance, the bishop of Arad, dr. Grigorie Comșa, accused the Pentecostals for being instruments of the communists, the most serious charge at that time (The 1924 Mârzescu Law banned the Romanian Communist Party and provided the death penalty for communist agitators). He demanded measures of retaliation

1 Radu Cerghizan, *Doctrină și religii*, S.C. InfoKAMTechnologies SRL, p. 17.

2 Detailed studies concerning the neo-protestants in the period 1945-1989 were published by Denisa Florentina Bodeanu, by the historians and CNSAS members, Elisabeta Neagoe-Pleșa and Liviu Pleșa, and by the theologian Alexa Popovici.

3 “Istoricul *Cultului Creștin după Evanghelie*”, <http://www.bcev.ro/istoric/>, accessed on Sept. 12, 2014.

and Pentecostal leaders were arrested and put to trial by the Martial Court in Sibiu and Timisoara. They were eventually released, for there was no reason for them to be sentenced.<sup>4</sup>

During the interwar period, the religious politics with respect to the minority religions was oscillatory. For instance, the Law 54/1928 guaranteed religious freedom for all recognized historical *culțe* and allowed the functioning, under the conditions of the law, of religious associations (that is of all neo-Protestant *culțe*, even of those previously forbidden). In this context, the census of 1930 gives us the picture of a multi-religious society and one can even notice a confessional regionalization: the Greek-Catholics were concentrated preponderantly in Transylvania, Muslims in Dobrogea, and the Jews in Moldavia. There were about 226 Baptists in Cluj (0,22%), no Pentecostals and no evangelical Christians. The Hungarian Baptist church had 115 members baptized members and 72 family members.<sup>5</sup>

The freedom guaranteed by the Law of 1928 was however of short duration. A regulation issued on August 1933 forbade again a series of religious associations: Bible Students, Millenarianists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals, The Apostolic Church of God, Nazarenes, Inochentists, „hliștii (hlăstâii)”, the Reformist-Adventists and the Harvesters. The Adventists, Baptists and Evangelicals enjoyed certain rights and some religious freedom, although with many restrictions.<sup>6</sup> However, the banned associations have continued their clandestine work, and consequently, in 1937,<sup>7</sup> the administrative authorities and the police have begun to shut down the illegal houses of prayers.

According to the Orthodox writer, Mihail Sevastos, the relative religious tolerance of that period can be explained by a lack of interest, rather than by a strong interior conviction: *“We had no major Christian turmoils, probably because the religion of the mass of the peasants (where the sects are manifest) bear little resemblance to Christianity. The Bible and evangelism were not inserted in the soul of the people; in its deepness there was fetishism, paganism, witchcraft, anything else but Christian faith. Even the priest was less a priest than a quack [...]. Under these circumstances, the lack of religious persecutions was understandable. It was not so much tolerance as lack of interest. But the mind of the peasant has begun to get on the move. It has been encircled for millennia. Now it is freed and it does not easily stop. The rustic wants to find out, to acquaint, to know. The religion in power does not bother itself with enlightening the believers and with mass propaganda. It is the sectarians which do these. They respond to a spiritual need of the masses. They guide the restless minds and souls. They put them wise, they show them new ways – on whose end there*

<sup>4</sup>Teofil Sandru, *Trezirea spirituală penticostală din România*, Ed. I.T.P., București, 1997, p. 92; „Libertatea religioasă”, in *Dimineața*, No. 1357, 23 February 1949.

<sup>5</sup> See Alexa Popovici, *Istoria Bapțiștilor din România*, Ed. Făclia, Oradea, 2007, Vol. 1-3.

<sup>6</sup> The sects' preachers and leaders had to be educated, to be at least 25, to not have been convicted before for crimes, or revoked from previous positions etc. They were forbidden to wear religious or monarchical clothes, and their sole evidence for being preachers was the identity cards issued by the Ministry of the *Culte*. They could teach their association's member children only if they had the necessary training proved by some titles that gave them the right to catechize. Religious services could be organized exclusively within the prayer houses, avoiding any act that could be interpreted as an offense by the recognized *culțe*. („Regimul sectelor” (“The Regime of the sects”), in *Unirea*, Foaie bisericească politică, Year XLIII, No. 36, Blaj, 9 September 1933, f. 1).

<sup>7</sup>Jehovah's Witnesses Association was banned again in 1937, by the Ministry of *Culte* and Arts' Decision 4781/937 (A.N.D.J.C., Fond *Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj*, Inv. 399, file 674/1937, f. 27).

might be the salvation not found previously. Only now are the real Christians beginning to get into gear into the depths of our people” (1931).<sup>8</sup>

This situation represented a potential threat for the position of the Orthodox Church and therefore it started to favour an intolerant regime. Consequently, the unrecognized religious minorities were treated increasingly rough by authorities and the penalties for minor real or imagined offenses were ridiculously harsh. In 1938, for instance, a soldier belonging to the sect of Nazarenes, Vasile Pop, was condemned by the Military Court to 10 years of hard labour for his refusal to take the oath, although he was an “acquiescent and obedient element” and could have been used in auxiliary services. The same court has sentenced other soldiers to 2-5 hard labour for repeated desertions, during the very same session. Therefore, the repeated infringe of the oath was less blamable than the refusal to take the oath. Moreover, the fight against religious minorities was fiercer than that against criminality. For instance, on the same page of the “Patria” newspaper, where the sentence of the Nazarene soldier was published, there was another crime presented: that of a criminal who killed his victim stabbing him 34 times with a knife. This criminal was sentenced for 8 years to prison for a bestial crime.<sup>9</sup> Any other comment on the subjectivity of these sentences is useless at this point.

Subsequent to territorial truncations of 1940, when Northern Transylvania was lost in favor of Hungary, in the context of the anti-Semite politics promoted by the Antonescian-legionary regime, the ministry of Cults and Arts modified radically the regulations of the Law of 1928, and abolished all religious associations (including those of the Adventists, Baptists and Evangelical Christians), by its decision of September 9, 1940. The decision was suspended in short time. Three months later, however, the minister Traian Brăileanu participated in a priestly conference in Ploiești, where he approved the elaboration of a list comprising 102 Baptist preachers to be lynched during the first months of 1941. This list has been recovered by the Baptist Union, through the instrumentality of the general secretary of the Union, Marin Dumitrașcu, who managed to get a copy for the archives of the Union.<sup>10</sup>

In 1941, the offensive against the unauthorized believers gathered momentum. Marshal Ion Antonescu decided to send immediately all members of unauthorized religious minorities to labour camps on the Bug.<sup>11</sup> Those who did not comply were sent to Transnistria.<sup>12</sup> For this end, the ministry of internal affairs has requested urgently the numerical situation of the prayer houses and of the members of religious sects, both of the previous authorized ones (the Baptist Association, the 7th Day Adventist Association, the Evangelical Christian Association) and of the banned ones (the Millenarian Association – Bible Students and Jehovah’s Witnesses -,<sup>13</sup> Pentecostals, Shakers, The Apostolic Church of

8 Mihail Sevastos, in *Adevărul*, 21 November 1931, p. 4.

9 „Sectar condamnat la zece ani muncă silnică pentru refuzul jurământului”; „Bestiala crimă din str. Mărășești în fața Curții criminale”, in *Patria*, Year XX, 5 November 1938, p. 4.

10 Popovici, *op.cit.*

11 Ioan Mihalaș, former political detainee in the prison of Malmaison, „Anticamera Iadului”, witnessed that during the war there were approximately 1400 neo-Protestants taken from all regiments, including him, who were deported in Borlova (Interview with Ioan Mihalaș, former political prisoner, 9 October 2011).

12 A.N.D.J.C., Fond *Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj: Poliția Abrud*, Inv. 399, file 109/1942, f. 2.

13 In the context of the nationalistic ideologies and instigated by the priests, the authorities launched an offensive against those who could not prove their patriotism by killing others. Thus, at the beginning of the first World War, many Bible Students were arrested and condemned, and some of them were killed. In 1931, the

God, the Repentants, the Nazarenes,<sup>14</sup> the Reformist-Adventists, the Harvesters, Hristis, Inochetinsts, Stilists, Tudorists, Aconfessionalists, “fotești”, “trudo bapțiști”, “berbovriști”, “lipovenii”, “răscolicii” and “copeții”.<sup>15</sup>

What followed was the abolishment, by the Law 927 of December 1942, of all *de jure* or *de facto* existent religious associations and sects. Their abolishment did not have to be motivated, being considered a governmental decision. All their goods, funds and archives were transferred into the State patrimony,<sup>16</sup> and many of their members were arrested, tortured and/or deported. At the end of 1942, approximately 50 Jehovah’s Witnesses were sent to the Nazi camp in Bor (Serbia). By that time, there were 6 000 Jews, 14 Adventists, and 152 Jehovah’s Witnesses in that camp. Other 40 Jehovah’s Witnesses from Transylvania, Moldavia and Bessarabia were sent into the concentration camp of Șibot (Transylvania), between 1941–1945.<sup>17</sup>

### The period from 23 August 1944 to 1948

Subsequent to the disposal of Marshal Ion Antonescu, by the coup of 23 August 1944, the old Constitution of 1923 entered into vigour again. Article 22 of the Constitution provided that the freedom of conscience was absolute and the state guaranteed freedom and protection for all cults, because their exercise does not infringe upon public order, and the laws of the state. It also stated that the Orthodox Church and the Greek-Catholic Church were Romanian churches and stipulated that the „Romanian Orthodox Church is the dominant church in the Romanian State as it represents the confession of the majority of Romanians, while among the others the Greek-Catholic has priority”.<sup>18</sup>

The other cults, less significant in numerical terms, represented mainly the national minorities, three of them being concentrated in Cluj (a city under Romanian administration from March 1945 on): the Hungarian Lutheran Evangelicals, the Reformed Protestants and the Unitarian Protestants.

Romania’s inclusion into the Soviet sphere of influence after the communist takeover had serious consequences for all religious cults, because communism established an atheist regime which required the eradication of religion and the demolition of the churches. It was not possible to build a communist society when alternative ideologies existed – therefore, religion was considered a major obstacle for the imposition of the Soviet model in Romania.

### The electoral campaign of 1946

During the electoral process of November 1946, in the context of the struggle to annihilate the refractory clergy, the authorities were suspiciously amiable with the previously persecuted believers. In order to attract their votes, the Communists have temporarily allowed the functioning of several associations which were harshly persecuted during Antonescu’s

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Bible Students adopted the name Jehovah’s Witnesses. Some of them became apostates, according to some Jehovah’s Witnesses, and took the name of Millennialists.

14 Some authors identify the Nazarenes as “repentants” (“pocăiți”) and the “nafeți” as „hlăști”.

15 *Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj...*, file 109/1942, f. 8, 13.

16 *Ibidem*, f. 26, 30, 39, 40.

17 *Anuarul marturilor lui Iehova 2006*, Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York.

18 “Constituția României din 1923” (The Romanian Constitution of 1923), published in *Monitorul Oficial*, No. 282/29 March 1923.

regime. Four neo-Protestant confessions have received the legal status of culte: The Baptist Church (by the Decree 553/1944),<sup>19</sup> the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist Church (by the Law 407/June 1946), the Pentecostal Apostolic Church of God of Bucharest (by the Decision 39 259/August 1946), the Pentecostal Apostolic Church of God of Arad (by the Decision 64 603/1946),<sup>20</sup> and the Christian Evangelical Church (Biserica Creștină după Evanghelie), with its two branches (by the Law 883/9 November 1946). Each of these was required to present their confession and position in relation to the state. Other religious groups fell into the category of sects (Jehovah's Witnesses, Reformist Adventists, Nazarenes, "spiriții") or "anarchical groups" (the Lord's Army and the Stilists, which came out of the Orthodox Church, the Betanists from the Reformed Church, the dissident Pentecostals from the Pentecostal Church; to these the "awaken ones" from the Baptist Church were later added). Their religious activities were banned throughout the communist period.<sup>21</sup>

### The political and religious purge

On 26 July 1946, the communist Vasile Luca reminded the political cabinet of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, that one of Moscow's ten commandments from 7 March 1945, was the "compromising and destruction of the historical parties."<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, the offensive against the political adversaries has begun with the preparation of the public opinion: all communist press requested their death. The second step was to infiltrate the National Peasant Party with foreign and internal agents. The communists encouraged political dissidence and then manipulated the dissidents according to their own agenda. The Peasant Party's members were pictured as "agents of imperialism." Similarly, in order to discredit the neo-Protestants, the Communists qualified them as "agents of Western/Anglo-American/American imperialism" – an accusation which reminded of the World War II period stigma, when they have been accused of being "foreigners", "traitors", "renegades", "bolsheviks" or "Judeo-bolsheviks."<sup>23</sup> Depending on the historical context, the neo-Protestants were accused of the most serious faults. The objective was to turn public opinion against them. They used exactly the same strategy against them as against their political adversaries: the peasants party's members, the liberals, the socialists and the unconverted to communism legionaries.<sup>24</sup>

19 Law 553/1944, published in *Monitorul Oficial*, No. 253/1 November 1944.

20 Since their inception in our country, the Pentecostal communities have evolved in three branches which eventually merged into the Pentecostal Cult – The Apostolic Church of God (1954).

21 Jehovah's Witnesses also benefited from the temporary favour of the Communists during their electoral campaign. After being granted juridical person status, on 11 July 1945, they held their first national congress in Romania, at the Romanian Arenas in Bucharest, between 28-29 September 1946 (during the Peace Conference in Paris). The Directory of the state railway carrier (CFR) has agreed to provide for a special train for the participants in the congress and even to reduce the price of the tickets by half (*Anuarul martorilor...*, p. 254). Next year, however, the authorities were chasing them again, accusing them for "nihilist propaganda against the state" (A.N.D.J.C., Fond Parchetul General al Curții de Apel Cluj, file 6/1947, f. 59).

22 Cicerone Ionițoiu, „Rechizitoriu: Înscenări, arestările din 14/15 Mai 1948”,

<http://www.universulromanesc.com/ginta/showthread.php?t=957>, accessed on Oct. 14, 2014.

23, Dezvăluiri, dezinformări și divagații. Regimul comunist și cultele religioase” (excerpts from “Raportul final al Comisiei prezidentiale pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din Romania”, by Sorin Ilieșiu, October 2005, updated in January 2006 (Suplement, „Revista 22”, No. 188, 21 March 2006); *Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj...*, Inv. 399, file 109/1942, f. 21.

24 *Ibidem*, file 660/1948, f. 3-7.

Moreover, subsequent to the disposal of the opposition parties from the political life of the country (1947), the neo-Protestants were accused for hiding the former peasants, liberals and socialists in their midst. For instance, a 1947 report of the communists from Cluj stated that: „the banish of the historical parties (PNP, LNP and the right wing of the DSP) from the political life has significantly weakened the activities of the Romanian reaction in Cluj. Consequently, the reactionary forces have begun to concentrate around the Romanian and Hungarian church and around various religious organizations and sects.”<sup>25</sup>

1947 was a difficult year for authorized *culte*, unauthorized *sects* and historical churches as well. While the communists from Cluj reported a “serious progress” in the study and knowledge of the “reactionist” methods, by discovering a series of religious “sects”, whose activities were closely supervised,<sup>26</sup> the Orthodox and Catholic “reactionary” priests were classified into categories, depending on their collaboration or lack of collaboration with the communist regime. They were closely supervised and the dangerous ones for the “democratic” regime were to be removed.<sup>27</sup>

### The religious life in the Romanian Popular Republic

Just like during the previous parliamentary elections, during the elections of 1948 many persons considered “hostile” to the regime were arrested. Along with accusations such as: “member of the Peasants’ Party, conducting an anti-democratic campaign”, “member of the Liberal Party”, “member of the Ploughers Front, sympathizer of National Peasants’ Party - Maniu”, “Titelist, agitator against the regime”, „former legionary”, we can notice, in the rubric of “political affiliation”, accusations such as: “priest – sets a rumor about the uproot of the churches”,<sup>28</sup> “Jehovah’s Witness sectarian, encouraging population to not vote”, “Pentecostalist, anti-democratic propagandist”, “Jehovah’s Witness sectarian, propagating anti-democratic ideas.” Out of the 71 arrested persons, 36 were members of the Peasants party, sympathizers of this party or former legionaries included in this party, 15 were “Jehovah’s Witnesses”, 2 were priests and one was “pentecostalist.”<sup>29</sup> Thus, neo-Protestants came to be in irons along with their former persecutors sentenced for their links with the old Antonescian regime (Annex 1)

The new Constitution of 13 April 1948 seemed, at a superficial glance, a life buoy, despite its restrictive regulations. Emulating the Soviet Constitution of 1936, it was however a typical product of the application, in the Romanian political life, of the Soviet style communist doctrine and ideology. The new Constitution did not grant the Orthodox Church a privileged status, treating it on the same foot as the other churches, and although the article 27

25 A.N.D.J.C., Fond *Comitetul Regional P.C.R. Cluj*, Inv. 2, file 1/1947, f. 94.

26 *Ibidem*, file 9/1947, f. 29.

27 A.N.D.J.C., Fond *Comitetul Regional P.M.R. Cluj*, Inv. 1, file 10/1946, f. 43; A.N.D.J.C., Fond *Inspectoratul General Administrativ Circ a III-a Cluj*, file 52/1947, f. 3.

28 A significant number of Orthodox and Catholic priests were sent to prison or to insane asylums. In 1949, for instance, those orthodox who fell prey to the “wonders epidemic”, including the “jennet”, “the saint on the windows”, “the wonderful fountains” and the “conversations with the Mother of Jesus” were considered insane and were sent to asylums. (Adrian Nicolae Petcu, „Securitatea și Cultele în 1949”, in *Partidul, Securitatea și Cultele 1945-1989*, Ed. Nemira, București, 2005, p. 217).

29 *Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj...*, file 660/1948, f. 3-7.

guaranteed the freedom of conscience and religious freedom, only a limited number of religious cults were officially recognized.<sup>30</sup>

In line with the Constitution provisions, the Communists issued the Decree 177/ 4 August 1948 which avoided the nominalization of the recognized *culte*, but stated as a condition for their official recognition the elaboration and approval of new statutes for their organization and functioning (Art. 14).<sup>31</sup> The decree, whose validity lasted formally until 2006, when it was replaced by a new religious law, has guaranteed conscience freedom and religious freedom in theory, stating that it was not state's business to intrude in the intimate area of one's conscience.<sup>32</sup> Articles 2-4 stipulated that: confessional hatred manifested through actions meant to restrict the free exercise of an officially recognized cult represented an offense sanctioned according to the law; no one should be chased for his/her belief or unbelief; one's religious faith cannot stop him/her from attaining and exercising civil and political rights and cannot exempt anyone from implementing his/her obligations required by the laws.<sup>33</sup> However, it reduced the number of officially recognized *culte* from 60 (in line with the law of 1928) to 14.

For various reasons, the recognition of the four neo-Protestant *culte* - Baptist, Pentecostal,<sup>34</sup> Evangelical and 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist - lasted until 1950.<sup>35</sup> This was due, according to some authors, to the Communists' desire to control the number of believers. By allowing their existence, the Communist state assured for itself a permanent means for blackmailing the traditional *culte*. At the same time, it attempted to gain their support and commitment to the Communist regime, as comes out of a note of *Culte's* Department (no. 452/20 June 1958): "*Within the popular-democratic state, they were offered for the first time the condition of culte, as in the period of bourgeoisie they enjoyed the status of "associations" (which allowed for a restrictive, discriminatory and arbitrary treatment). ... It was hoped that, absolved of the discriminatory treatment of the bourgeoisie period, they will be attached to the regime and draw out of the influence of their western centers.*"<sup>36</sup>

The regime's expectations were however baffled, as the representatives of the neo-Protestant *culte* have maintained their relations with their outside correspondents, although they allowed for certain interferences of the state in their internal life. This has fueled the

30 *Monitorul Oficial*, partea I, No. 87 bis, of 13 April 1948.

31 *Ibidem*, No. 178 of 4 August 1948.

32 "Libertatea credinței religioase", in *Adevărul*, Year 62, No. 17.217, 22 July 1948, p. 1.

33 Decree 177/1948 for the general regime of religious *culte*, published in *Monitorul Oficial* no. 178 of 4 August 1948.

34 The Pentecostal cult has been granted full recognition on 14 November 1950. Theoretically, Romanian Pentecostals had more rights than those of other Western European countries, but practically they were the most persecuted ones (See Trandafir Sandru, *Biserica pentecostală în istoria creștinismului*, Ed. BDAPR, București, 1992).

35 A potential reason for mass conversion to neo-Protestantism, despite the persecution to which they were subject, could include the one stated by a master sergeant militiaman from the Police Inspectorate of Cluj, D. Sticlet, in 1949: "*the registration of members in the neo-Protestant cults continues because the priest of the Romanian Orthodox Parish, Rusu Dumitru, and the former vicar of the Greek-Catholic Church of Someșeni, Cordoș, did not take care at all of the believing citizens of the commune. They performed religious services only formally and they continue to do that, and they did not represent a model as a true shepherd of the believers; on the contrary, their occupation is manifested in cupidity for material possessions and luxury.*" (A.N.D.J.C., Fond Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj, Inv. 1171, file 14/1949, f. 64).

36 Elis Neagoe-Pleșa, Liviu Pleșa, „Culte neoprotestante din România în perioada 1975-1989”, in Adrian Nicolae Petcu (ed.), *Partidul, Securitatea și Cultele, 1945-1989*, Ed. Nemira, București, 2005, p. 351.

suspicion that they were acting like spies, although their relations with the organizations from abroad were limited to religious issues. Being simultaneously believers within an atheistic regime, proselytes in an Orthodox country and nourishing relations with religious organizations from abroad, the neo-Protestants were closely watched by the Communist authorities which took a series of restrictive measures against them: they were not allowed to occupy administrative, educational or media positions, they lost their jobs, their children were expelled from schools and faculties,<sup>37</sup> their religious services were regulated and limited by the authorities,<sup>38</sup> they were prevented from building new churches or extend the existing ones, the illegally built ones were demolished,<sup>39</sup> their leaders and their families were closely supervised, their publishing houses were allowed a limited number of publications etc. Many of those who refused to collaborate with the Communist regime were blackmailed, denigrated and compromised through accusations of “divergence from the social norms of cohabitation, illicit businesses, inobservance of their religious organizations’ dogmas” etc. What the Communists were after was to create dissensions among the leaders of those *culțe*, by circulating rumors about their compromising behavior.<sup>40</sup> They used the same strategies as those employed for the annihilation of their political opposition; they encouraged dissidence, a pattern they used against all citizens that were refractory to the new regime. The Securitate resorted even to assassinations against some of the reactionary neo-Protestants.<sup>41</sup>

A general survey for the analyzed period reveals that almost since their first appearance on Romania’s territory, the political accusation of the neo-Protestants was a constant issue. The difference between Antonescu’s regime way of dealing with religious *culțe*/sects/confessions, and the Communist one’s was that while the former did not care about keeping up the appearances – it forbade religious minorities, called their adherents “foreigners”, “traitors”, “renegades”, “Bolsheviks”, or “Judeo-Bolsheviks”, deported them or sent them to war -, the Communists cared a little bit more for their image. They paid lip service to religious freedom, but in reality they sought to control absolutely the religious life of the country; they subverted religious life in any possible way, and infiltrated devoted party and *Securitate* members in leading positions of various religious *culțe* and associations. The parishioners were now accused for being “agents of Western/Anglo-American/American imperialism”. Obviously, these conflicting accusations cannot all be true.

Unfortunately, the pattern seems to have no end in Romania. Even now, the neo-Protestants continue to be accused for being “Satanists” – the former European Parliament member Gigi Becali, for instance, affirmed in 2012, during a television electoral program,

37 In 1959, for instance, the University of Cluj has organized an assembly to which both the students and the professors of the university participated and a number of neo-Protestant students were expelled on the ground that they were mystics and implicitly dangerous for the socialist society (Denisa Bodeanu, *Neoprotestanții din Transilvania în timpul regimului comunist. Studiu de caz: bapțiștii din județul Cluj – Mărturii și documente* -, Ed. Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca 2008, pp. 54-55).

38 Trandafir Sandru, *Biserica Penticostală în istoria creștinismului*, Ed. Cultului Penticostal, București, 1992, pp. 147-148. Even these limited prayer meetings were interrupted occasionally. For instance, in Someșeni (a commune in Cluj county), Ștefan Paștina used to interrupt the religious service and compelled the participants in the service to listen him reading the Scanteia newspaper. Even the Orthodox believers were deranged by this, knowing that they could be the next ones on the list (*Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj*, Inv. 1171, file 14/1949, f. 81).

39 Such was the case with the church demolitions in Cluj-Napoca, Dej, Bistrița.

40 Neagoe-Pleșa, Pleșa, *op. cit.*, pp. 366-367.

41 We could mention two cases of Baptist pastors who were killed by Securitate: Radu Cruțeru and Vasile Gherman (Carmen Chivu-Duță, *Culțele din România între prigonire și colaborare*, Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2007).

that he asks anybody else to vote for him – including the Muslims and Jews, but the “sectarian” satanic neo-Protestants who deny Christ.<sup>42</sup> Also, a recent “political sin” of the neo-Protestants is their imaginary support for Basescu’s Democrat Liberal Party, dissolved in July 2014. A series of articles that circulated on the Internet, accuse the neo-Protestants for subjugating the leaders of PDL, and erroneously including some of the most prominent figures of the party in the ranks of Pentecostals, Adventists or Baptists (from Emil Boc to Alin Tișe, Sorin Apostu and others). There were even television programs in which apparently serious journalists, such as Cornel Nistorescu, accused the Pentecostals who, quote he, exercised “massive influence” in the PDL, “participate in and support decisions which are against Romania at this moment,” being commanded from abroad.<sup>43</sup>

Apart from the ridiculous character of these accusations, one cannot help having a bitter taste when remembering George Santayana’s warning that “Those who do not remember their past are *condemned to repeat* their mistakes.”

Annex 1. „Inspectoratul general de siguranță Cluj, Tabele cu persoane arestate”, in *Inspectoratul de*

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TABEL NOMINAL

despre persoane, ce se găsesc arestate, la acest Serviciu de Siguranță, în cadrul ordinului Nr.342 Ca binet din 19.III.1948, pct. al Ins.Reg.Sig.Cluj.

Nr. crt.	Numele și prenumele	Anul nașterii	Profesiunea	Domiciliul	Apartenența politica
1.	Copil Ioan	1911	sticlariu	Turda	idem. Indemnă populația să nu voteze.
2.	Tudor Ilie	1921	agricult.	Baia de Arde	idem.
3.	Bococ Almas	1900	"	Barboși-Turda	idem.
4.	Radu Vasile	1895	"	idem	idem.
5.	Gren Simion	1900	"	idem	idem.
6.	Corb Ioan	1891	"	Șașetul Ierii-Trd.	idem.
7.	Oaida Petru	1906	cercurar	Vidra-Turda	Pentecostalist-propagandist antidemocrat.
8.	Miclea Ioana	1925	casnica	Ocolisel Turda.	Sectant Harțor Iehova propaga ideii anti-democratice.
9.	Uilecan Emil	1928	agricult.	Barboși-Turda.	idem.
10.	Seber Ioan	1901	comerciant	C.Turzii	idem. Indemnă pop. să nu meargă la vot.
11.	Piper Ioan	1914	agricult.	Valea Larga-Turda	idem.
12.	Pop Vasile	1906	friser	C.Turzii	idem.
13.	Miclea Aurel	1896	agricultor	Ocolisel Turda.	idem. Colportor de stiri alarmiste.
14.	Hister Stefan	1876	agricult.	Ocolisel Turda	idem.
15.	Faur Iughican	1912	"	idem	idem. Indemnă populația să nu meargă la vot.
16.	Senteovici Ioan	1912	"	Coco-Turda	idem.
17.	Andonie Ioan	1883	restaurator	Șașetul Ierii-Trd.	P.N.T. Eniu, a sus o campanie antidemocrat. în vedea alegerilor.

*Politiie Cluj*, Inv. 399, file 660/1948, f. 3-7.

42 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXHv74HkpfQ>, Accessed on Nov. 27, 2012.

43 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=babuw6uhw2I>, Accessed on May 10, 2013.

-3-					ARHIVELE NAȚIONALE DIRECTIA JUDEȚEANĂ CLUJ
Nr. crt.	Numele și prenumele	Anul naș- tării	Profesi- nea.-	Domici- liul	Apartenența poli- tica.-
18.	Duca Mihail	1912	agric.	Poiana- Turda	Fost legionar, apoi P.M. Maniu. A adus insulte gu- vernului actual.-
19.	Dumbrăian Tiberiu	1918	impiegat C.F.R. comprimat	Rasboie- ni Trd.	P.N.T. Maniu, Infomat reaso- tionar.-
20.	Făneșan Ar- tenie	1897	propriet. moara.-	Deleni Turda	Simpatizant P.M. Maniu. In 20.111. a strigat in pub- lic Traian I. Maniu.-
21.	Greta Ioan	1910	agricult.	Graiesti Turda.-	idem.-
22.	Hudrea Simion	1913	funct. part. comprim.	Deleni- Turda	Fost legionar, apoi P.M. Maniu.-
23.	Hănteanu Dumitru	1920	cioban	Poiana Sibiu-	P.N.T. Maniu. A adus insul- te grave Guvernului.-
24.	Masca Vasile	1911	agric.	Poiana- Turda.-	idem.-
25.	Muresan Ioan	1910	notar	Rediu- Turda	P.C.R. Simpatizant P.N.L. Detineri de material sub- versiv.-
26.	Trombitas Emil.-	1904	agric.	Poiana Turda	P.N.T. Maniu. Saboteur al masurilor date de guvern.-
27.	Violet Nicolae	1909	plut. jand. comprim.	Posaga Turda	P.C.R. Simpatizant P.N.T.- Maniu. A fost prins ripand tablourile lui Stalin si membrilor din guvern.-
28.	Vig Iosif	1923	agric.	Cuci Turda	U.P.M. Sovietist maghiar.-
29.	Pacurar Petru	1907	foclist C.F.R.	Lușus- Turda	Simpatizant P.N.T. Maniu.-
30.	Badaș Vasile	1902	agric.	Bea de Arlea- Turda	P.N.T. Maniu. La perchișitâ s, a găsit material subver- siv.-
31.	Bota Iosif	1916	mecanic	Sepetron- sa-Bihor	Simpatizant P.N.T. Maniu. Leneșca stiri tendentio- se.-
32.	Jeflea Irenie	1892	rasinar	Bistra- Turda	P.N.T. Maniu. Colportor de stiri alarmiste.-
33.	Antoniu Romulus	1905	funct. public	Cabana- M. tele Baisori	Simpatizant P.N.T. Maniu La perchișitâ s, a găsit armament clandestin.-
34.	Telei George	1912	ciubarar	Beagra- Turda	Fr. Plugariilor. Simpatizant P.N.T. Maniu.- A adus injuri regimului democrat.-
35.	Hidag Ioan	1916	agric.	H. Vitea- su-Trd.	Simpatizant P.N.T. Maniu
36.	Costea Mihail	1911	comerc.	Bucuresti Bul. B. Man- ta 85.-	Titelist. A adus critici guvernului, facand propag. in favoarea americanilor

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