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## Some Considerations on the Apostolic Visit to the Transylvanian Territories Annexed by Hungary – 1942

### *Abstract.*

The Vienna Diktat of 30 August 1940 strained the relationship between the Holy See and the Romanian Greek Catholic Church. The Church's canonical territory was divided between two states, Romania and Hungary, making governance by Archbishop and Metropolitan Alexandru Nicolescu nearly impossible. The new administrative-territorial configuration effectively displaced almost entirely three of the five eparchies: Oradea Mare, Cluj-Gherla, Maramureş, and part of Alba Iulia and Făgăraş, placing them under the jurisdiction of the church leadership in Blaj.

The Holy See's decision in 1942 to send an apostolic visitor to the Transylvanian territories under Hungarian rule was intended to ascertain the true situation and demonstrated the ongoing concern of the Romanian governing bodies – the State Secretariat and the Congregation for the Eastern Churches – for defending the interests of the Romanian Church United with Rome in these territories.

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The reports of Bishop Saverio Ritter, Apostolic Visitor in Transylvania, compiled following his visit between July and September 1942, offer intriguing insights into the three eparchies that came under Hungarian rule. These observations can help us avoid a politicized and ideologically driven interpretation of this period in history.

**Keywords:** *apostolic visitor, State Secretariat, Congregation for the Eastern Churches, Romanian Greek Catholic Church, change of rite*

The Vienna Diktat of 30 August 1940 placed a severe strain upon the relationship between the Holy See and the Romanian Church United with Rome, Greek Catholic. The canonical territories of the Church were divided between two states, Romania and Hungary, rendering nearly impossible the governance thereof by Archbishop and Metropolitan Alexandru Nicolescu. The novel administrative-territorial structure nearly entirely excised three eparchies out of the five (Oradea Mare, Cluj-Gherla, Maramureș), and a portion of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș, from the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan See of Blaj.<sup>2</sup> The decision of the Holy See in the year 1942 to dispatch an apostolic visitor<sup>3</sup> to the Transylvanian territories now under Hungarian authority, with the aim of ascertaining the true situation, reveals the earnest concern of the Romanian governing

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<sup>2</sup> See Roma, Archivio della Sacra Congregazione per la Chiesa Orientale (henceforth ACO), Protocollo 544/40 – *Romeni-Baia Mare, Situazione diocesana dopo l'Arbitrato di Viena*; Protocol 545/40 – *Romeni- Oradea Mare, Situazione diocesana dopo l'Arbitrato di Viena*; Protocollo 590/40 – *Romeni-Blaj, Situazione diocesana dopo l'Arbitrato di Viena*; Protocollo 591/40 – *Romeni-Cluj, Situazione diocesana dopo l'Arbitrato di Viena* [Archives of the Sacred Congregation for the Eastern Churches (hereinafter ACO), Protocol 544/40 – Romanians-Baia Mare, Diocesan situation after the Vienna Arbitration; Protocol 545/40 – Romanians-Oradea Mare, Diocesan situation after the Vienna Arbitration; Protocol 590/40 – Romanians-Blaj, Diocesan situation after the Vienna Arbitration; Protocol 591/40 – Romanians-Cluj, Diocesan situation after the Vienna Arbitration].

<sup>3</sup> Il Visitatore Apostolico quale strumento per la cura pastorale degli orientali in diaspora: prospettive future | Federico Marti – Academia.edu [The Apostolic Visitor as an Instrument for the Pastoral Care of Eastern Christians in the Diaspora: Future Perspectives | Federico Marti – Academia.edu] (accessed on 10 October 2022).

bodies – the State Secretariat and notably the Congregation for the Eastern Churches – in safeguarding the interests of the Romanian Church United with Rome there. Our investigation considers certain aspects highlighted in the reports of Bishop Saverio Ritter, the Apostolic Visitor in Transylvania, compiled following his visits during the period from July to September 1942. These reports contain intriguing observations on the state of the three eparchies under Hungarian dominion, which may assist us in averting any political or ideological exploitation of the history of this era. The present study valorizes unpublished documents from the Archives of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, contained within two files dedicated exclusively to the apostolic visit of 1942. These documents help us better understand the relationship between the Holy See and the Greek Catholic Church of Romania during the pontificate of Pope Pius XII. The information reaching Rome, the decisions made by Romanian ecclesiastical bodies based on this information, and the mode of communication between the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, the Apostolic Nunciature in Budapest, and the Romanian Greek Catholic Bishops, as revealed through archival exploration, disclose a well-organized and articulated mechanism. This mechanism proved to be notably effective, especially in subsequent times, despite the significant challenges faced by both the Roman Catholic Church and the Romanian Greek Catholic Church.

### **The Historical Backdrop of the Apostolic Visitation in the Year 1942**

It is known that since the outbreak of the Second World War, the Holy See has asserted its neutrality or – in the terms of Pope Pius XII – impartiality. It did not intend to intervene or openly adopt partisan attitudes in controversies arising from secular interpretations.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the Vatican's diplomacy informed Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen, Romania's representative to the Holy See, on the very day of the signing of the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact (23 August 1939), that after that event, Berlin would use Hungary against Romania and Yugoslavia. Furthermore, the astute Cardinal Tisserant, Secretary of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, reportedly told Petrescu-

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<sup>4</sup> BUCUR, Ioan-Marius. (2003a): *Din istoria Bisericii Greco-Catolice Române (1918–1953)* [From the History of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church]. Cluj-Napoca, Editura Accent. 119.

Comnen on the same day, “the arrival of Soviet troops in contact with Hungary sealed Romania’s fate”.<sup>5</sup> The high prelate also warned the government in Bucharest to develop the country’s defence capabilities if it intended to withstand the difficult situation that was looming. We know that Petrescu-Comnen was not greatly impressed by this warning, and that the Romanian government did not show signs of having understood the message from the Vatican.<sup>6</sup>

As a consequence of the decision in Vienna on 30 August 1940, the territory of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church was divided in two, with the majority of the faithful ending up in the territory ceded to Hungary. Under the new circumstances, the three eparchies located in the ceded territory – Oradea Mare, Cluj-Gherla, and Maramureş – sought to organize themselves, especially since the Hungarian government did not recognize the ecclesiastical territorial jurisdiction of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church established by the Concordat signed between the Vatican and Romania. Only the pre-Union ecclesiastical organizational structure of the two Romanian churches was acknowledged, aiming therefore to return to the pre-World War I confessional status quo.<sup>7</sup> Beginning in the autumn of 1940, Hungarian political and Catholic authorities made repeated appeals to the Holy See, requesting a new ecclesiastical realignment of the Greek Catholic Church within Hungary. Their intention was noted by Bishop Iuliu Hossu of Gherla-Cluj in a letter<sup>8</sup> addressed to Cardinal Eugène Tisserant,<sup>9</sup> Secretary of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, in which he explicitly revealed the Hungarian Catholic episcopate’s desire to place the Romanian Greek Catholic eparchies under the jurisdiction of the Primate Archbishop of Hungary. The request of the Hungarian government was rejected on 2 November 1940 by Monsignor Domenico Tardini,<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> BUCUR, Ioan-Marius et al. (2003b): *România–Vatican. Relații diplomatice, vol. 1, 1920–1950* [Romania–Vatican, Diplomatic Relations]. Bucharest, Editura Enciclopedică. 124–125.

<sup>6</sup> PUȘCAȘ, Vasile. (2020): *Dictatul de la Viena, Transilvania și relațiile româno-ungare, 1940–1944* [The Diktat of Vienna, Transylvania and the Romanian–Hungarian Relationships]. Cluj-Napoca, Editura Școala Ardeleană. 26.

<sup>7</sup> BUCUR 2003a, 100–101.

<sup>8</sup> Op. cit. 101–112.

<sup>9</sup> [www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/btiss.html](http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/btiss.html) (accessed on 2 November 2022).

<sup>10</sup> [www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/btardini.html](http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/btardini.html) (accessed on 2 November 2022).

Secretary of the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the effort of the Greek Catholic Bishop of Hajdúdorog, supported by Hungary's envoy accredited to the Vatican, who requested the reintegration of the Hungarian Greek Catholic eparchy within the boundaries set by the 1912 bull, was not crowned with success. The intention of the Catholic hierarchy and the political authorities in Hungary to secure the ecclesiastical realignment of the Greek Catholic Church in Northern Transylvania and place it under the jurisdiction of the Primate of the Catholic Church in Hungary had a dual aim. It would have allowed the government, on the one hand, to implement a religious policy capable of contributing to the ethnic homogenization of the state and, on the other hand, to obtain Vatican's "recognition of the Vienna Award".<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, as early as the autumn of 1940, the Holy See was informed by the Apostolic Nuncio in Bucharest, Monsignor Andrea Cassulo, of the abuses committed by the Hungarian authorities (expulsions, forced conversions, the destruction of churches).<sup>13</sup> Consequently, it requested Hungary, through Cardinal Luigi Maglione,<sup>14</sup> the Secretary of State, to cease these practices. Additionally, the Secretary of State, Cardinal Maglione, requested the Apostolic Nuncio in Budapest, Monsignor Angelo Rotta,<sup>15</sup> to intervene on behalf of the expelled Romanian Greek Catholic priests and faithful so that they might return to their homes.<sup>16</sup>

The death of the Greek Catholic Metropolitan Alexandru Nicolescu on 5 June 1941 was an event the Hungarian government sought to exploit to achieve the reorganization of the Greek Catholic Church in the Transylvanian territories annexed to Hungary. The vacancy of the metropolitan seat could only be resolved through the convening of an electoral synod of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church, a challenging endeavour under the prevailing conditions. Consequently, the Holy See chose a temporary solution by appointing an apostolic administrator to head the Metropolitan See at Blaj.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> BUCUR 2003a, 100–101.

<sup>12</sup> Op. cit. 102.

<sup>13</sup> [www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bcassulo.html](http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bcassulo.html) (accessed on 2 November 2022).

<sup>14</sup> [www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bmaglione.html](http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bmaglione.html) (accessed on 2 November 2022).

<sup>15</sup> [www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/brot.html](http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/brot.html) (accessed on 2 November 2022).

<sup>16</sup> BUCUR 2003a, 103.

<sup>17</sup> Op. cit. 103–104.

Under these circumstances, Cardinal Maglione was persuaded to send an apostolic visitor to Northern Transylvania to ascertain the situation of the Roman Catholics and Greek Catholics, the latter having presented the Vatican with numerous reports regarding the treatment they were subjected to by the Hungarian state and ecclesiastical authorities.<sup>18</sup> The Holy See requested the authorities in Budapest to ensure that the visitor would have full rights to gather information, that no official receptions be organized for him, that his presence not be made public, and that the Hungarian authorities not seek his impressions from the visit. On 3 June 1942, the Apostolic Nuncio in Romania, Andrea Cassulo, informed Mihai Antonescu of the decision by the Cardinal Secretary of State to appoint Monsignor Xavier Ritter,<sup>19</sup> former Nuncio to Prague, as Apostolic Visitor to Northern Transylvania, with the additional mandate to travel to Southern Transylvania should circumstances require it.<sup>20</sup>

### **Instructions Addressed to the Apostolic Visitor in Transylvania**

In the instructions addressed to the Apostolic Visitor in Transylvania (Hungary), drafted by Monsignor Giuseppe Mojoli,<sup>21</sup> an official of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, the following situation was outlined: until the date of the Vienna Award, the situation of the five Romanian Byzantine Rite eparchies was calm. The relations between the Holy See and Romania were regulated by a Concordat, which was loyally observed. The political situation in recent years has had a significant impact on the situation of the five Romanian eparchies. The Bolshevik advance took Bessarabia and Bukovina from Romania: while in Bessarabia there were few Latin parishes belonging to the Latin Diocese of Iași, in Bukovina many Ruthenian parishes belonging to the Ruthenian Vicariate, under the authority of the Romanian Bishop of Maramureș, were lost. The Treaty of Craiova retroceded to Bulgaria a large part of Dobruja, including one Latin parish and one Byzantine parish in formation. This was followed by the Vienna Diktat of 30 August 1940, which profoundly affected the entire Romanian Church. Of the five

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<sup>18</sup> PUȘCAȘ 2020, 94.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/britt.html> (accessed on 2 November 2022).

<sup>20</sup> PUȘCAȘ 2020, 94.

<sup>21</sup> Archbishop Giuseppe Mojoli [Catholic-Hierarchy] (accessed on 2 November 2022).

Byzantine eparchies, only one remained untouched, that of Lugoj, which remained entirely in Romania; the eparchies of Oradea Mare, Cluj, and Maramureş were almost completely transferred to Hungary. The Archeparchy of Alba Iulia and Făgăraş remained almost entirely in Romania, except for the so-called Székely Vicariate, which passed to Hungary [...]. Immediately after the Arbitration, complaints began to arrive at the Holy See from both sides: the Romanians continuously denounced the sufferings they endured and begged the Holy See to intervene to protect their interests, while the Hungarians wished to restore the status quo existing before 1919 (thus the idea arose of sending an apostolic visitor to seriously inform the Holy See). In February 1941, the Joint Plenary Session of the Cardinals from the three Congregations (Consistorial, Eastern, and Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs) was convened to examine both the emerging issues and a memorandum from the Hungarian government. No radical decisions were made, but a wait-and-see approach was recommended, with measures adopted only on a provisional basis. The only permanent decision was the separation of the Latin dioceses of Oradea Mare and Satu Mare, which the Romanian Concordat had united. Additionally, the three remaining Basilian houses in Hungary were incorporated into the Hungarian Province of the Order, albeit with a form of autonomy. These two provisions were not to the liking of the Romanians, as emphasized by the author of the instructions. With bishops unable to communicate due to the new borders separating them, vicars with special faculties were appointed. In the early months of the occupation, many incidents were noted: murders, destruction, expulsions of priests and intellectuals, imprisonments, trials, expropriations, and suppressions. The Holy See attempted to alleviate the inferior position to which the Romanian Church was brought, but with little success. Particularly problematic was the situation of parishes that had belonged, between 1912 and 1919, to the Hungarian diocese of Hajdúdorog, parishes re-integrated under the administration of Romanian bishops since 1919. The Hungarian government, the Bishop of Hajdúdorog, and the Apostolic Nunciature in Hungary repeatedly pointed out to the Holy See the opportunity to restore these parishes to the diocese of Hajdúdorog in order to prevent conversions to Calvinism. To avoid appearing disloyal to the state, the faithful of these parishes, self-identified as Hungarians by language and nationality, wished to be reincorporated into the Diocese of Hajdúdorog – as highlighted in those messages addressed to the Holy See. However, the Romanian side contested this

inclusion, arguing that these individuals were in fact Romanian or Hungarianized Ruthenian faithful. Over time, Romanians feared that other parishes would also be Hungarianized, which would represent a significant loss for their Church. Equally delicate, as emphasized in the instructions, was the mass conversion of Byzantine Rite believers to the Latin Rite. Therefore, the Holy See reserved for itself the changes in ritual. After presenting these framework elements, the Apostolic Visitor was provided with a detailed inventory of issues to consider and clarify during his visit. The report expected from him was essential for understanding the actual situation on the ground, even though the Vatican did not intend to make definitive decisions before the Peace Treaty.<sup>22</sup>

Information of a more general nature was requested regarding: **1.** the situation of the 67 parishes that once belonged to the Diocese of Hajdúdorog, now located in both the Székely Vicariate and on the outskirts of the eparchies of Oradea Mare and Maramureş (many letters addressed to the Holy See requested the restoration of Hajdúdorog's jurisdiction – are these requests spontaneous? Has there been any propaganda in this regard? How are the faithful spiritually assisted? In how many parishes is there a lack of a priest? What provisional solution could be taken?); **2.** the conversion of several Eastern-rite faithful to Protestantism (How true is this statement? What were the causes? What can be done and how should apostates be approached for their return?); **3.** the conversion of some Eastern-rite faithful to the Latin Rite (Has the number of such cases been verified? What are the causes? Did Latin priests collaborate in this? How can the canonical situation of these faithful be remedied?); **4.** the use of the Hungarian language in liturgy (Is this language expressly accepted by the Holy See for liturgy?); in the establishment bull of the Eparchy of Hajdúdorog (1912), Greek was indicated (Has the use of the Hungarian language been imposed in the churches of Romanian eparchies?; – where and by whom? How is such a directive received, and what are the reactions of Romanians? What could be accepted regarding this point?); **5.** the obstruction of Romanian confessional schools (to verify their operation and the past difficulties so that the Romanian minority now has the possibility to have schools in its language and in sufficient numbers); **6.** the material

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<sup>22</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 *Fond Romeni, Locus Affari Generali, Res Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all'Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary]. Fascicul I, f.1,2,3. 4625–4627. The translations of all, originally Italian-language quotations belong to the author of the article.



situation of the clergy (bishops, canons, professors, priests, teachers – do they have a decent salary to cover their needs? How could an improvement be achieved?); **7.** the situation of church assets, episcopal revenues, Catholic institutions (Have there been inconveniences, confiscations? What are the reasons and justifications? How could reparations be requested?); **8.** expelled, imprisoned, or persecuted priests (to compile a list of them – can their release or repatriation be obtained?); **9.** the number of Romanian parishes left without priests and spiritual assistance; **10.** obstacles placed in the way of the movement of Romanian students from Hungary and Romania to and from the Pontifical Romanian College in Rome; **11.** the functioning of appellate tribunals established for the three Romanian eparchies?; **12.** the distinct preservation from Latin works of preaching the faith, of the missionary union of the clergy; **13.** the relations of Latin bishops with the three Romanian bishops; **14.** the claim for Romanian bishops to attend Hungarian Episcopal conferences; **15.** the sending of catechist priests from the Diocese of Hajdúdorog to schools in Transylvania (What were the resulting consequences?); **16.** the imposition of the Hungarian state political anthem in Romanian churches (If imposed, what responses emerged?); **17.** Cases of church destruction or damage to cult buildings, parish houses, Catholic institutions (Have there been any, where, by whom?); **18.** the suppression of Romanian Catholic press (How is this justified? What steps should be taken to obtain press freedom?); **19.** preventing bishops from visiting places beyond the new frontier (Could a permit be obtained for them to cross the border when necessary?).<sup>23</sup>

Concerning the three Romanian Greek Catholic eparchies placed under Hungarian government authority, the Congregation for the Eastern Churches desired that the Apostolic Visitor take into account several specific matters. For the Cluj-Gherla eparchy, the following were requested: **1.** to ascertain whether there exists an intention by the Hungarian government to return the bishop to the small centre of Gherla-Armenopolis, which ought to be prevented (as per the Concordat with Romania, his residence was transferred to Cluj, with the Latin conventuals yielding their church for the cathedral; it was also to be determined if the respective order was making efforts to reclaim the church and convent, which actions should be discouraged); **2.** whether the bishop has encountered

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<sup>23</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 *Fond Romeni, Locus Affari Generali, Res Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all'Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary]. Fascicul I, f.4,5,6. 4628–4630.

difficulties in possessing and utilizing the episcopal palace, magnificently enlarged and endowed by him; **3.** whether efforts could be resumed to transfer the Boys' Normal School to Năsăud, in a magnificent building (the diocese had two normal schools in Gherla, one for boys and one for girls, once flourishing greatly and contributing much to the evolution of Catholic life); **4.** to investigate the incidents at Bob Church in Cluj, which was provided by the bishop for liturgical functions in the Hungarian language, for Eastern-rite Greek Catholic soldiers (Is there still insistence on celebrating in Hungarian and in the cathedral?); **5.** to visit the diocesan seminary and report any potential difficulties.<sup>24</sup>

Regarding the state of the Eparchy of Oradea Mare, the Congregation for the Eastern Churches wished the Apostolic Visitor to inquire into the following aspects: **1.** whether Monsignor Iuliu Hossu possesses the genuine capacity to actively engage in the proper governance of that eparchy, given his pastoral duties over the vast Eparchy of Cluj-Gherla (Considering the difficulties imposed upon Bishop Valeriu Traian Frențiu by the Hungarian government, the Holy See had appointed him Apostolic Administrator of the Metropolitan Archeparchy of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș in Romania, entrusting the care of the Eparchy of Oradea Mare, almost entirely situated within Hungary, to the Bishop of Cluj-Gherla.); **2.** whether the impediments to the activities of the auxiliary bishop, Monsignor Suci, have ceased (The Hungarian government hoped that the Holy See would transfer him from Oradea Mare, alleging his participation in a political demonstration just before the Arbitration, and also due to his lack of proficiency in the Hungarian language.); **3.** the situation of the Eparchial Seminary and the Boys' Normal School in Oradea Mare (to provide information on their operations and the challenges they face); **4.** how the distribution of benefits for the maintenance of the two parts of the eparchy (one in Romania and the other in Hungary) has been managed between bishops Hossu and Frențiu (How do benefits from Romania reach Hungary? Are they sufficient for the functioning of the part remaining in Hungary?); **5.** discreet collection of information concerning Canon Georgescu and Father Stan, the rector of the seminary, as well as a discussion with Professor Chirvariu regarding the seminary (to ascertain whether he has calmed down, as he has often written harshly against Bishop Frențiu).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 Fond *Romeni*, Locus *Affari Generali*, Res *Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all'Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary]. Fascicul I, f.7,8. 4631–4632.

<sup>25</sup> Op. cit. f.8,9. 4632–4633.

Although the Hungarian state did not officially recognize the Eparchy of Maramureș, the Holy See remained steadfast in adhering to the organizational norms of the Romanian Greek Catholic metropolitan province, as specified in the Concordat concluded with the Romanian State. Consequently, the Apostolic Visitor was tasked with gathering specific information concerning this bishopric: **1.** whether the hostility of the Hungarian government towards it persisted (a vast eparchy still lacking its own seminary, with a bishop who is exceedingly zealous and active); **2.** whether the issue of accepting Bishop Alexandru Rusu as a rightful senator (as were all other bishops in Hungary) and the restitution of the episcopal palace, from which the Romanian hierarch had been dispossessed, could nonetheless be resolved.<sup>26</sup>

The Congregation for the Eastern Churches also instructed the Apostolic Visitor to consider other specific objectives: **1.** to visit the monastery at Bixad and compile a report on the current situation of the Romanian monks incorporated into the Hungarian Monastic Province (Do they have grievances to submit to the Holy See?); **2.** to visit the two houses of the Sisters of Our Lady, owned by them in Cluj and Juc (the one in Sovata is of no interest), and to compile a report on the situation of the nuns, specifying whether they could benefit from the recent provisions given by the Holy See for the entire congregation in Romania (appointment of a Jesuit father as ecclesiastical superior with special faculties); **3.** to examine the current situation of the Romanian parishes remaining in Hungary after 1919 (numbering 16, entrusted to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Hajdúdorog with the condition of appointing a Romanian vicar specifically for them, an appointment that has not been made); **4.** to examine the situation of Romanian parishes that entered within the borders of Czechoslovakia (5 or 6 in number, entrusted to the Bishop of Munkács), which Monsignor Stoika proposed to be transferred to Romanian bishops in exchange for some Ruthenian parishes after the Vienna Diktat.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 Fond *Romeni*, Locus *Affari Generali*, *Res Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all'Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary]. Fascicul I, f.9. 4633.

<sup>27</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 Fond *Romeni*, Locus *Affari Generali*, *Res Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all'Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary]. Fascicul I, f.10,11. 4634–4635.

Ultimately, the document contained instructions regarding the conduct of the visit: **1.** During his religious mission, the Apostolic Visitor was entirely free to go wherever he wished, without an official escort, to speak with whomever he desired, and to establish his residence wherever he deemed most suitable, in order to visit all the Catholic bishops in the territory. **2.** The journey was expected to last 2-3 months and would not be reported in the press. **3.** The Apostolic Visitor had the authority to present his opinion to the Holy See on the matters mentioned in the instructions or on any other issues he deemed appropriate.<sup>28</sup>

In an unsigned note, it was suggested that the Apostolic Visitor be provided with information regarding cases of violence brought to the attention of the Holy See. Ultimately, following the instructions, Monsignor Ritter was tasked with meeting the individuals concerned in person and gathering data personally.<sup>29</sup>

It is noteworthy that on 19 June 1942, Cardinal Serédi, the Primate of Hungary, met in Rome with the Monsignor advisor of the Congregation for the Oriental Church. During the meeting, the Hungarian prelate emphasized the following points: **1.** In the parishes that once belonged to the Diocese of Hajdúdorog, 20,000 faithful had abandoned their faith, but many now wished to return if given the opportunity (the Hungarian government committed to conducting a census to make informed decisions). **2.** To ensure the impartiality of the investigation undertaken by the Apostolic Visitor, he suggested that the visitor should be accompanied by a trusted person appointed by the Bishop of Hajdúdorog and another one appointed by the Romanian bishop involved. Only in this way would the papal envoy know the truth and be fully independent. **3.** His Eminence proposed that the Nuncio in Budapest be granted the authority to approve changes in ritual, even in cases where the opinion and authorization of both the bishops *a quo et ad quem* might not be feasible. **4.** There are cases of Romanian priests who have concelebrated with the “schismatics”. **5.** The Romanian bishops strongly clamour (hoping) that the Sacred Congregation vindicate them; with the Ruthenians, who number only 200,000, it is easy to reach an agreement, as there have never been any issues. **6.** regarding the parishes belonging to Hajdúdorog, the Cardinal mentioned the memorandum he sent to the Secretariat of State, proposing that without changing the legal status, the Bishop of Hajdúdorog should be appointed apostolic administrator of the Hungarian parishes *ad*

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<sup>28</sup> Op. cit. f. 11. 4635.

<sup>29</sup> Op. cit. 4636.

*mutum S. Sedis*; **7.** The Cardinal invited the Romanian bishops to integrate within the Catholic framework (during the last Catholic Congress), but they refused to participate, risking not being recognized by the Hungarian government as belonging to the Catholic religion. In this case, the percentage of Catholics in Hungary would automatically decrease, with serious repercussions for all Catholics. **8.** Monsignor Alexandru Rusu was not admitted to the House of Magnates due to his personal anti-Hungarian stance. However, the government was willing to admit him later, after resolving the issue of the parishes of Hajdúdorog. **9.** There should be reciprocity regarding the freedom of diocesan publications between Hungary and Romania. The Hungarian government will proceed accordingly when the other party grants freedom to publications of Hungarian-speaking Catholics. **10.** Regarding Romanian state Catholic schools, the government has not taken any action yet, thus awaiting the outcome of the apostolic visit. **11.** Monsignor Alexandru Rusu purchased land for building a church, but the transaction was not recognized as valid by the government. Under these circumstances, the bishop refused to continue construction, holding the government accountable before the people. **12.** The destruction of Romanian churches, whether by the fault of the people or partly due to the military, is to be condemned. **13.** It is suggested that in Cluj the Capuchin church be returned to Hungarian Catholics or that the latter be compensated. **14.** Monsignor Iuliu Hossu has three vacant canon posts; some canons have involved themselves in politics (Mălai, Agârbiceanu). Cardinal Serédi is not interested in this matter, is merely pointing it out. **15.** Not only Romanians in Hungary but also Hungarians in Romania complain of persecution. In Braşov, three of their schools were confiscated by Romanians for military reasons, similar to Hungary's actions against Romanians for reciprocity. It is also noted that Romanian authorities did not allow the Latin Bishop of Alba Iulia to enter Hungary for a period. **16.** The Apostolic Visitor is to conduct his visit without being influenced by either side. The Cardinal will do everything in his power with the Hungarian government to ensure that Eastern-rite Romanian Catholics do not suffer. **17.** Payment to all seminary professors and clergy stipends has been suspended because some did not declare all their income, which then had to be supplemented by the government. This is unfair, as only those who deceived authorities with false information should be penalized. **18.** The Cardinal invited Romanian bishops to the Episcopal Conference, with all Hungarian bishops prepared to receive them fraternally. However, Romanian bishops did not demonstrate the same willingness, leading the Archbishop-Primate to refuse the visit of

the Auxiliary Bishop of Oradea Mare. **19.** Romanian bishops claim not to be subject to the primate, as they are “immediate subjects” of the Holy See. This means that Romanian bishops are exempt from metropolitan rights but not from primatial rights.<sup>30</sup>

The decision of the Holy See to send an apostolic visitor to Northern Transylvania was not thwarted by this intervention from the leadership of the Catholic Church in Hungary. According to a copy of a report sent on 25 July to Cardinal Secretary of State Luigi Maglione, we learn that on 18 July 1942, Archbishop Titular of Egina Saverio Ritter, accompanied by Monsignor Sette, arrived at the Apostolic Nunciature in Budapest. On 20 July, accompanied by Apostolic Nuncio Angelo Rotta, the two met with Cardinal Serédi.<sup>31</sup> Following a lengthy colloquium, Cardinal Serédi reiterated the importance of a meeting with Mr Kallay, the President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs. With the assistance of Nuncio Rotta, the requested meeting took place on Wednesday, 22 July. President Kallay expressed deep deference towards the Holy See, being pleased with the arrival of the Apostolic Visitor. He emphasized that the Hungarian government desires every matter to be handled and decided justly. He assured Archbishop Ritter that he had issued all necessary instructions for him to enjoy complete freedom and support from various local authorities.<sup>32</sup>

In the same report, Monsignor Ritter indicated that he had informed Monsignor Iuliu Hossu of his arrival and his intention to meet with him as soon as possible. In the response received on 24 July from Hossu, the bishop expressed his pleasure to receive and host him in Cluj and Oradea, suggesting that Oradea be the first stop. Immediately in the following week, the Apostolic Visitor and Monsignor Sette set out, aided by an automobile provided by the Hungarian government.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 Fond *Romeni*, Locus *Affari Generali*, Res *Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all'Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary]. Fascicul I. 4637–4640.

<sup>31</sup> [www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bseredi.html](http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bseredi.html) (accessed on 3 November 2022).

<sup>32</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 Fond *Romeni*, Locus *Affari Generali*, Res *Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all'Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary]. Fascicul I. 4643–4644

<sup>33</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 Fond *Romeni*, Locus *Affari Generali*, Res *Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all'Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary]. Fascicul I. 4643–4644.

In Budapest, Archbishop Ritter had also met with Monsignor Dudaş, the Bishop of Hajdúdorog, who was unaware of the arrival of the Apostolic Visitor, and after a lengthy meeting, the Visitor recommended that he diligently gather and organize all news and information that could serve the Holy See for a future decision.<sup>34</sup>

On 23 August, in a brief report addressed to Cardinal Eugène Tisserant, Secretary of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, the Apostolic Visitor presented the complex and heated situation he found in Transylvania. He endeavoured to bring calm and peace there, recommending to the clergy to collaborate *in charitate Christi* in the charity of Christ”. Additionally, he specified in the document that the urgent issue requiring immediate resolution was that of ritual changes and apostasy, which could not be delayed.<sup>35</sup> On 23 August, Monsignor Ritter wrote to Cardinal Maglione, the Secretary of State, informing him that he was regrouping for the second part of his journey. He considered the part concerning Transylvania itself to be fulfilled, and he planned to travel to Baia Mare in the following week to attend to that diocese and region. He emphasized that he had already gathered a small amount of material. Before presenting his written report, the Apostolic Visitor suggested that upon his return to Rome, he would verbally address the issues of ritual changes and apostasies.<sup>36</sup>

### **The First Report on the Apostolic Visit**

On 24 October 1942, the Secretariat of State communicated to the Congregation for the Eastern Churches the copy of Monsignor Ritter’s report, which was to be the subject of the next Joint Assembly of the Cardinals of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches and of Extraordinary Affairs (the Secretariat of State being responsible for the respective report).<sup>37</sup> This copy, dated 1 October 1942, from Milan, comprises 32 pages. The annexes to the document, fourteen in number, however, did not reach the Congregation for the Eastern Churches.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Op. cit. 4646–4647.

<sup>36</sup> Op. cit. 4647–4648.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

Before presenting the general report concerning the apostolic visit to Transylvania, Monsignor Ritter wished to depict the particular situation of transitions from one rite to another and the issue of apostasies in the territories incorporated into Hungary following the Arbitration of 30 August 1942, extremely serious issues requiring urgent resolution. The Apostolic Visitor notes that these problems are intimately connected with those of the diocese of Hajdúdorog. Due to changes resulting from the Treaty of Trianon and the Concordat of 1930 concluded between the Romanian State and the Holy See, it was only in 1934 that the reassignment of parishes formerly belonging to Hajdúdorog was resolved. Six years later, the Vienna Diktat brought back within Hungary's political borders the entire old territory of the Hajdúdorog Eparchy. Immediately, the Bishop of Hajdúdorog, in response to what happened in 1919 when the parishes of the Hajdúdorog Diocese that remained in Romania quickly came under the jurisdiction of the Romanian ordinary, requested their restitution, even temporarily. Despite the support from the Hungarian government and the nunciature in Budapest, the Holy See did not make any decision regarding the jurisdiction of Hajdúdorog. According to inquiries addressed by the Bishop of Hajdúdorog to both the Congregation for the Eastern Churches and Monsignor Ritter, the Holy See was reproached for not satisfying the desire Hajdúdorog Diocese to have its 77 parishes, currently under other ordinaries, restored to it, even though two years had already passed. The Bishop of Hajdúdorog's question reveals the sentiment that the Holy See is entirely and always on the side of the Romanians, leaving the Hungarians aside.<sup>38</sup>

Monsignor Dudaş revealed to the Apostolic Visitor the danger posed by Calvinism. From Nyíregyháza, the idea was spreading that a true Hungarian could only be Calvinist. Unlike the difficult transitions from one rite to another (from Eastern to Latin), the transition to Calvinism could be immediate (which was happening among Hungarian believers).

Although complete and exact statistics were not yet available, according to the received data, in the united Eparchy of Maramureş – which included 20 parishes formerly from Hajdúdorog – there were reportedly 2,382 transitions from one rite to

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<sup>38</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 *Fond Romeni, Locus Affari Generali, Res Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all'Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary]. 4651–4656.



another and 1,234 cases of apostasy to Calvinism. In the Greek Catholic Eparchy of Oradea Mare, with 22 parishes formerly from Hajdúdorog, there were 767 transitions to the Latin rite and 837 apostasies.<sup>39</sup> According to Monsignor Scheffler, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Satu Mare and Apostolic Administrator of Oradea, the changes in rite from the Greek to the Latin (between 1 September 1940 and 30 June 1942) amounted to 1,332 for the Diocese of Oradea Mare and 2,450 for Satu Mare, totalling 3,782 transitions and 2,071 apostasies.<sup>40</sup> In the parishes of the Szeklerland region, there were mass conversions to the Latin rite, without any consideration for re-incorporation into the Hajdúdorog Eparchy, thus excluding a return under its jurisdiction. From conversations with Latin-rite parishioners in Szeklerland regarding the return of Greek Catholic parishes under the jurisdiction of Hajdúdorog, the Apostolic Visitor noted the declaration of a household head: “In my house, a Greek-rite priest will never enter again; I would rather become Protestant.”<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the statistics provided by Monsignor Iosif Pop, Vicar General of the Romanian Rite Archbishop of Blaj, documented that approximately 13,000 believers in the Szeklerland region converted to the Latin rite, accompanied by around 3,300 apostasies, all due to pressures exerted by Hungarian authorities.<sup>42</sup>

In Cluj – a city that has never been involved in the Hajdúdorog issue –, according to the local Latin archpriest, there were 269 conversions from the Greek to the Latin rite and 425 apostasies between 1 September 1940 and the end of 1941. On the other hand, according to the Romanian archpriest, there were 293 conversions to the Latin rite and 1,418 apostasies. Both archpriests highlighted a strong pro-Calvinist movement, with Calvin’s Small Catechism being translated into Romanian.<sup>43</sup>

Based on all these received data, Monsignor Ritter concluded that there were 17,075 conversions to the Latin rite and a total of 6,852 apostasies. These figures

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<sup>39</sup> Op. cit. 4657–4661.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 *Fond Romeni, Locus Affari Generali, Res Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all’Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary]. Fascicul I. 4664.

<sup>42</sup> Op. cit. 4662–4664.

<sup>43</sup> Op. cit. 4665.

contradict Cardinal Serédy's statement, who mentioned over 20,000 apostasies.<sup>44</sup> The Apostolic Visitor also appealed to Bishop Iuliu Hossu's observation regarding the changes in rite. There existed a category of *fluctuants*, consisting of those who change their rite, or religion, with each change in regime (to avoid losing their job, for better financial gain, to avoid compromising the family's economic situation, etc.). Under Romanian governance, there were conversions from the Latin rite to the Greek one, or Orthodoxy, followed by a return to their original rite with each subsequent change in regime. These conversions were done merely for the eyes of civil authorities, without any ecclesiastical significance. Thus, the *fluctuants* essentially remained, despite all these movements, at the starting point.<sup>45</sup> The same bishop was of the opinion that those who truly want to change their rite should be allowed to do so. The Romanian Greek Catholic Church would not suffer from the few thousand souls who will choose to pass to the Latin rite. On the other hand, Monsignor Ioan Pop, Vicar General for the Szekler Vicariate, wanted a rigorous selection to be made, because all the conversions were forced.<sup>46</sup>

Regarding the Romanian believers who had experienced pressure, meaning their transition from one rite to another had not been voluntary, Monsignor Ritter proposed waiting until the situation was clarified.<sup>47</sup> This, even though Monsignor Scheffler suggested „sanare omnes transitus a die 1 septembris a. 1940 usque ad certum terminum (ex. gr. ad finem a 1942) civiliter iam factos[...]”.<sup>48</sup> However, the Hungarian government also had a responsibility to contribute to resolving the serious issues of changing rites and apostasy by facilitating Romanians to freely express their choice.<sup>49</sup> It was noted that all changes of rite and apostasies occurring in the territories transferred to Hungary were carried out in accordance with the Romanian law on religions, which had not been repealed by the Hungarian government. According to this law, it was sufficient for a citizen, accompanied by two witnesses, to appear before a civil servant and declare their

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Op. cit. 4666.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Op. cit. 4668.

<sup>48</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 Fond *Romeni*, Locus *Affari Generali*, Res *Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all'Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary]. Fascicul I. 4666–4669.

<sup>49</sup> Op. cit. 4671.

desire to change their rite or religion. Therefore, the Apostolic Visitor considered it beneficial to return to the old Hungarian law, which placed this matter under the competence of ecclesiastical authorities.<sup>50</sup> The Bishop of Hajdúdorog, Monsignor Dudaş advanced a solution, proposing that Romanian parishioners, wherever they may be in Hungarian territory, should belong under the jurisdiction of Romanian bishops, and vice versa.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, Bishop Alexandru Rusu expressed willingness to relinquish the 7 Ruthenian parishes, which could be considered Hungarian, incorporated into the Baia Mare Eparchy through the Bull *Solemni Conventione* of 1930.<sup>52</sup>

In a verbal note signed by official Mojoli on 18 December 1942, he reported meeting with Canon Tăutu, who had been introduced that morning to the Congregation for the Eastern Churches. He had learned (but did not disclose the source) that the Holy See was preparing to make certain decisions regarding Transylvania. The informant had also detailed the anticipated measures: *a blanket “sanatio” of transitions to the Latin rite*; appointment of a special administrator for the Szeklerland region; and the return of parishes that had come under Oradea Mare and Maramureş after 1919 to Hajdúdorog. Canon Tăutu, in conversation with Monsignor Rusu (whom Tăutu had spoken with), as well as Mojoli, suggested that these details be formally documented in writing. Tăutu believed that the Romanian Greek Catholic bishops had not been able to reveal everything; hence, the Holy See should delegate authority to a special tribunal for resolving these transitions, as well as to a special commission that could address both the Bishop of Hajdúdorog and the Romanian bishops.<sup>53</sup>

Given the complexity of the issues raised, there was held a mixed plenary assembly on 20 December, where 10 cardinals, among whom were Eugène Tisserant and Luigi Maglione, the Secretary of State, discussed the issue of changing rites, the Hajdúdorog eparchy, and apostasies.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Op. cit. 4672.

<sup>51</sup> Op. cit. 4674.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Op. cit. 4683; Canon Tăutu’s letter dated 18 December 1942, addressed to Cardinal Eugène Tisserant in the same file. Op. cit. 4684–4685.

<sup>54</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 Fond *Romeni*, Locus *Affari Generali*, Res *Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all’Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to

The provisions adopted were communicated to the Apostolic Nuncio in Hungary by the Congregation for the Eastern Churches (on 13 January 1942, with letter No. 144/43), as well as by Cardinal Luigi Maglione, the Secretary of State (on 25 January, with letter No. 416/43).<sup>55</sup>

The Congregation for the Eastern Churches conveyed to Nuncio Angelo Rotta that the report of the Apostolic Visitor in Transylvania, Monsignor Saveriu Ritter, had been brought to the attention of the mixed plenary assembly of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches and Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs. Upon a thorough examination, the following conclusion was reached, which the Holy Father approved on 27 December:<sup>56</sup> the Holy See, in harmony with current practice, reaffirms its position of not making definitive ecclesiastical decisions before the end of the current war, that is, until peace treaties sanction the changes that occurred after the outbreak of the war within the borders of the interested states. However, their eminences focused on issues that require resolution for the spiritual good: changes of rite, apostasies, and the resolution of the issue of parishes belonging to the Hungarian Byzantine-rite Eparchy of Hajdúdorog.<sup>57</sup>

Regarding the first issue, it was noted that Apostolic Nuncio Rotta received in timely manner from the Congregation for the Eastern Churches the necessary faculties to permit changes of rite when there were canonical reasons, with partial or total dispensation from fees. Regarding the large number of irregular transitions from one rite to another, carried out in front of civil authorities, their Eminences, declaring themselves against a “mass healing” (as proposed, for example, by Monsignor Scheffler, the Latin Bishop of Satu Mare), expressed the opinion that a singular review of these transitions, conducted with

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Hungary]. Fascicola I. 4689–4693 – Note raccolte dell’assessore de la S.C. per la C.O. durante la Plenaria Mista del 20 dicembre 1942 [Notes collected by the Deputy of the S.C. for the C.O. during the Mixed Plenary Session of 20 December 1942]; Op. cit. 4694–4720. Adunanza della SS. CC. Concistoriale, pro Ecclesia Orientali e degli Affari Eccl. Straordinari, 20 dicembre 1942, Verbale [Meeting of the Sacred Congregation of the Concistorial SS. CC. for Eastern Church Affairs and Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, 20 December 1942, Minutes]. See also Cardinal Tisserant’s Vote. Op. cit. 4726–4733.

<sup>55</sup> Op. cit. 4693.

<sup>56</sup> Op. cit. 4720.

<sup>57</sup> Op. cit. 4722.

great goodwill and with the aim of calming souls and spirits, could be the way forward to determine if pressures were exerted, constraints were applied, or irregularities occurred.<sup>58</sup>

Regarding the eparchy of Hajdúdorog, the cardinals pointed out that three-quarters of the faithful in that eparchy included in the Szekler Vicariate had had themselves converted to the Latin rite. Monsignor Dudaş, the ordinary of the Greek Catholic Church, stated that he did not wish for their return, which greatly facilitated the resolution of this thorny issue. For the remaining faithful in the Szekler Vicariate who stayed in the Byzantine rite, and for resolving the issue of parishes that were under Hajdúdorog before 1919, now under the jurisdiction of the Romanian bishops of Oradea Mare and Maramureş, their Eminences advised that the interested ordinaries (who expressed to the Apostolic Visitor feelings of fraternal understanding) be invited to come together and study the proposal to provisionally arrange matters and submit solutions for approval by the Holy See. The Apostolic Nuncio was tasked with informing the bishops of the solutions.<sup>59</sup>

Regarding the validation of changes in rite, Cardinal Luigi Maglione communicated to the Apostolic Nuncio in Hungary on 25 January 1942 that any transition equates to a change in ecclesiastical discipline. Therefore, it was imperative to always determine to which rite the faithful belonged. To avoid scandals, it was desired that these transitions be recorded on a card deposited in the Archives of the Apostolic Nunciature, and interested parties were to be issued a document accordingly.<sup>60</sup>

On 27 February 1943, the Secretariat of State informed the Congregation for the Eastern Churches that Apostolic Nuncio Angelo Rotta had commenced the review of the changes in rite that had taken place before the civil authorities, notifying the interested ordinaries by letters on 5 February 1943.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 Fond *Romeni*, *Locus Affari Generali*, *Res Visita Apostolica ai territori Transilvani passati all'Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary] Fascicul I. 4723.

<sup>60</sup> Op. cit. 4725.

<sup>61</sup> Op. cit. 4734–4737.

## Second Report on the Apostolic Visit

The second report compiled by Monsignor Ritter is dated 6 January 1943, in Milan. This document, synthesising information from the first report (24 July 1942), provides us with details about the duration, itinerary, individuals met, and the atmosphere prevailing at that time. The document begins by specifying the duration of the visit: 18 July – 10 September 1942. Monsignor Ritter and his collaborator, Monsignor Giuseppe Sette, travelled from Budapest following the itinerary of Oradea, Cluj, Gherla, Târgu-Mureş, Baia Mare, Satu Mare, and Bixad, where he met with bishops Iuliu Hossu, Ioan Suciu, and Alexandru Rusu.<sup>62</sup>

In Oradea, they were welcomed by Monsignor Iuliu Hossu, the Apostolic Administrator of the Romanian Eparchy of Oradea Mare, and Monsignor Ioan Suciu, the Auxiliary Bishop and Vicar General. From there, they departed for Cluj, accompanied by Monsignor Iuliu Hossu. They remained in Cluj for about 15 days, during which they visited Gherla, the house of the Sisters of the Mother of God at Jucu, and Târgu-Mureş, where they were hosted by Monsignor Iosif Pop, the Romanian Vicar General.<sup>63</sup>

Departing from Cluj towards Hajdúdorog to meet Monsignor Dudaş, the Bishop of Hajdúdorog, the Apostolic Visitor stopped in Baia Mare to meet Monsignor Alexandru Rusu. From Hajdúdorog, the Holy See delegation returned to Budapest for a few days of rest. Resuming their travels in Transylvania, the Apostolic Visitor went back to Satu Mare, then to Bixad, and again to Baia Mare, where he met with bishops Alexandru Rusu and Iuliu Hossu, staying in their company for several days.<sup>64</sup> From Baia Mare, via Debrecen, the delegation returned to Budapest. After a few days of rest, they departed for Italy.<sup>65</sup>

The Apostolic Visitor mentions the assistance received from the Hungarian government, which provided them with a car that made it possible to complete the mission so quickly. Before accepting this offer from the Hungarian government, Monsignor Ritter consulted with Monsignor Iuliu Hossu, the Bishop of Cluj-Gherla, who suggested he agree

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<sup>62</sup> Op. cit. 4738–4745.

<sup>63</sup> Op. cit. 4739.

<sup>64</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 *Fond Romeni, Locus Affari Generali, Res Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all'Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary]. Fascicul I. 4739–4740.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

to it and was even pleased to be able to accompany the Apostolic Visitor in this manner.<sup>66</sup> Thus, Monsignor Ritter was able to observe many details that he would not have seen or assumed from the window of a train carriage.<sup>67</sup>

In this report, regarding the relationship with the Hungarian government, the Apostolic Visitor emphasized that the visit enjoyed complete and absolute freedom. Everything proceeded as if no one knew of his presence there; for instance, the newspapers made no mention of the visit.<sup>68</sup>

The Apostolic Visitor was struck by the severe tension between the Hungarian and Romanian factions, „un’atmosfera satura di elettricità”.<sup>69</sup> Monsignor Ritter noted, “The Hungarians do nothing but continually recall what occurred under Romanian rule. They do not feel secure in their ability to retain what they obtained through the Vienna Diktat and in their prospects of regaining the rest of Transylvania. *Everything back* was the watchword of any patriotic demonstration”, recorded Monsignor Ritter.<sup>70</sup> The Apostolic Visitor also noted their desire to resort to arms to accomplish this programme, which represented for them the legitimate reconstitution of traditional, millennia-old Hungary.<sup>71</sup>

Monsignor Ritter noted that the Romanian side, on the other hand, has no sufficient words to lament the current regime of injustice, violence, and atrocities, with their rallying cry being *a better future*, namely the revival of Greater Romania from 1919, with a Transylvania from which all Hungarians would be eliminated, he recorded. Monsignor Ritter noted that achieving this goal would not be through the force of arms but mainly with the support of the Axis powers, especially Germany, because Romania offered them the greatest possible assistance in terms of manpower and materials.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Op. cit. 4740–4741.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Op. cit. 4742.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 Fond *Romeni*, Locus *Affari Generali*, Res *Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all’Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary]. Fascicul I. 4743.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

The Apostolic Visitor also expressed his views on the perspectives of the states in the Balkans and Eastern Europe after 1918, noting a highly complex ethnic mix in the region. Beyond the division of states, he believed it would be much more beneficial to consider the goal towards which nationalities should direct their efforts: not to separate but to unite; not to dominate one another but to cooperate; and to abandon the system of majority nationality and subjected minorities in favour of living together based on true equality in rights and obligations.<sup>73</sup>

In concluding the report, the Apostolic Visitor stated that he would endeavour to progressively and punctually respond to the issues suggested by the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, intending to let the involved parties speak for themselves through the documents attached.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, he hoped that he had never strayed from the objective of the mission received, which was to be impartial, attempting to gather information to provide the most objective knowledge of reality in case it would be necessary to take any eventual and opportune measures for the good of the Church and the salvation of souls.<sup>75</sup>

On 19 August 1942, the Congregation for the Eastern Churches expressed its position regarding the report<sup>76</sup> submitted by the Apostolic Nuncio in Hungary, addressed to the Secretariat of State on 4 August, concerning the validation of changes in rite. The Congregation desired a definitive postponement of finalizing transitions from one rite to another. For the time being, it was deemed preferable not to ratify these changes, allowing each believer the freedom to return to their original rite if they wished. Additionally, the Congregation expressed its disagreement with the less charitable insinuations made by the Apostolic Nuncio in Hungary regarding the Byzantine-rite faithful, whom he referred to with clear disdain as “orientals”.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Op. cit. 4744.

<sup>74</sup> Op. cit. 4744–4745.

<sup>75</sup> Op. cit. 4745.

<sup>76</sup> Op. cit. 4748–4750.

<sup>77</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 Fond *Romeni*, Locus *Affari Generali*, Res *Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all'Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary]. Fascicul I. 4746–4747.



A further set of documents<sup>78</sup> identified within the archival records of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, accompanying the second report of Cardinal Ritter, provides us with important data gathered by the Apostolic Visitor concerning general and specific matters requiring clarification in the Instructions. Following the 1942 visit, the report of the Roggeri–Hencke Commission regarding the treatment of the so-called Romanian confessions (namely the Greek Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches) by the Hungarian authorities confirms the observations and viewpoints of the Apostolic Visitor concerning the material, administrative, and economic situation of the Greek Catholic bishoprics in Transylvania transferred to Hungary.<sup>79</sup>

The general issues in the eparchies of Oradea Mare and Cluj-Gherla are highlighted by Bishop Iuliu Hossu in his report of 12 August 1942:<sup>80</sup> **1.** The continued use of the Romanian liturgical language (except in the 2 Ruthenian parishes), even the Magyarized parishes unwilling to change their liturgical language;<sup>81</sup> **2.** Priests are hindered in their pastoral activities, and 22 parishes are without their own shepherd.<sup>82</sup> **3.** Under Romanian rule, through agrarian reform, parishes received goods according to their needs for sustenance. Now these lands have been returned to their previous owners, newly built churches on the received and unfinished lands being in danger. **4.** The issue of the properties of the Oradea diocese remaining in Romanian territory, as well as the dispossession of the Maramureş diocese of all its goods. It was also reported that the Cluj-Gherla Eparchy recorded a deficit of 300 hectares of forest, as well as the situation of the goods of other ecclesiastical institutions.<sup>83</sup> **5.** Regarding relations between

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<sup>78</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 Fond *Romeni*, Locus *Affari Generali*, Res *Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all'Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary], Fascicul II.

<sup>79</sup> *Al Doilea Război Mondial, Transilvania și aranjamentele europene. 1940–1944* [World War II, Transylvania, and European Arrangements. 1940–1944]. Cluj-Napoca, Fundația Culturală Română/Centrul de Studii Transilvane. (1995). 78–80.

<sup>80</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 Fond *Romeni*, Locus *Affari Generali*, Res *Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all'Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary]. Fascicul I. 4755–4775.

<sup>81</sup> Op. cit. 4757.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Op. cit. 4758.

Romanian and Latin bishops, efforts have been made to maintain fraternal relations ensuring the maintenance of the autonomy of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church organization.<sup>84</sup> **6.** The situation of the Pio Romeno College in Rome.<sup>85</sup> **7.** The material situation of the clergy, seminary professors, parish priests, retired clergy, expelled priests.<sup>86</sup> **8.** The situation of churches and parish houses (no destruction reported, only four parish houses being occupied by the Hungarian administration).<sup>87</sup> **9.** The precarious situation of Romanian confessional schools and Romanian-language printing.<sup>88</sup> *Considered as prisoners, we are treated accordingly,*<sup>89</sup> concludes the report of Bishop Iuliu Hossu.

The annexes of his report include statistical data concerning the clergy situation in the two eparchies (Oradea Mare and Cluj-Gherla), collected immediately after the Vienna Diktat. For instance, it is indicated that the number of expelled priests was 10 from the Oradea Mare Eparchy and 10 from Cluj-Gherla, with only 2 from the latter being allowed to return under exceptional circumstances; incarcerated were 8 from Oradea Mare and 11 from Cluj-Gherla, all subsequently released; departed due to threats were 25 from Oradea Mare and 35 from Cluj-Gherla; and interned in concentration camps were 13 from Oradea Mare. It was also emphasized that at the time of the apostolic visit, there were 43 parishes without pastors in the Oradea Mare Diocese and 49 vacant parishes in the Cluj-Gherla Eparchy. In his report, Bishop Iuliu Hossu also provides a nominal table of the faithful shot at Ip (13–14 September 1940), totalling 155 individuals.<sup>90</sup>

In his responses to the Apostolic Visitor, Bishop Alexandru Rusu stated that from the unrecognized territory of the Maramureş Eparchy, three priests had been expelled by Hungarian authorities, while a total of 30 priests had sought refuge in Romania. It was noted that no churches had been destroyed.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Op. cit. 4759–4760.

<sup>85</sup> Op. cit. 4761.

<sup>86</sup> Op. cit. 4762–4767.

<sup>87</sup> Op. cit. 4767.

<sup>88</sup> Op. cit. 4768–4670.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 Fond *Romeni*, Locus *Affari Generali*, Res *Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all'Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary]. Fascicul II. 4777–4792.

<sup>91</sup> Op. cit. 4803–4814.

A matter of significant concern to the Holy See was the situation of Romanian confessional schools,<sup>92</sup> left without funding from the state and subjected to unequal treatment by the Hungarian authorities, according to the written report of Bishop Hossu.<sup>93</sup>

The Apostolic Visitor presented to the Holy See three notes concerning the treatment of Hungarian confessional schools under Romanian occupation.<sup>94</sup> Monsignor Sette's notes underscore the fact that in the vast majority of schools, instruction is conducted in the Romanian language; only in mixed schools is teaching carried out in both Hungarian and Romanian. Due to the reluctance of catechetical priests to teach catechism in Hungarian, Monsignor Dudaş, the Hungarian Greek Catholic bishop of Nyíregyháza, proposed providing Hungarian-speaking priests to assist, ensuring at least religious education be conducted in Hungarian. However, Bishop Hossu declined this proposal for the territory under his jurisdiction.<sup>95</sup>

A central point of the apostolic visit was the inspection of the seminaries in Oradea and Cluj, which were then occupied by priests and pastors undergoing training to be appointed as military chaplains.<sup>96</sup> In this regard, Monsignor Sette's notes are highly informative, providing us with an overview of the Cluj seminary, its professors and ecclesiastical superiors involved, candidates, and the Greek Catholic clergy,<sup>97</sup> emphasizing, "the spiritual formation of the clergy is perhaps the most important, fundamental, and urgent issue of the Romanian Church, upon which the resolution of many other problems largely depends".<sup>98</sup>

With regard to the governance of the eparchies of Oradea Mare and Maramureş, Monsignor Ritter emphasized that Monsignor Suciu, the Auxiliary Bishop of Oradea

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<sup>92</sup> *Al Doilea Război Mondial. Transilvania și aranjamentele europene. 1940–1944* [The Second World War. Transylvania. Transylvania and the European arrangements. 1940–1944]. Cluj-Napoca, Fundația Culturală Română/Centrul de Studii Transilvane (1995). 75.

<sup>93</sup> Op. cit. 4868–4870.

<sup>94</sup> Op. cit. 4899.

<sup>95</sup> Op. cit. 4943.

<sup>96</sup> Op. cit. 4904.

<sup>97</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 Fond *Romeni*, Locus *Affari Generali*, Res *Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all'Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary]. Fascicul II. 5055–5058.

<sup>98</sup> Op. cit. 5058.

Mare, was satisfied with the solution adopted (with Monsignor Hossu as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Oradea Mare), acknowledging that things were progressing well in this respect.<sup>99</sup> For the Eparchy of Maramureş, it was necessary to secure recognition of its status as a bishopric in order to give legal validity to eparchial ecclesiastical acts.<sup>100</sup>

Another document from the Eastern Church Archives, titled *Reflections on the Issues of the Cluj-Gherla Eparchy*, signed by Bishop Iuliu Hossu on 12 August 1942, captures attention with the issues addressed: the problem of the episcopal residence, the church and monastery of the conventuals [Franciscans], difficulties encountered in the use of the episcopal palace, the status of schools, the issue of services held in Hungarian at the cathedral, the eparchial seminary, and the internal situation within the Congregation of the Mother of God. These points contribute to delineating the current state of the Greek Catholic Church in the Transylvanian territories annexed to Hungary.<sup>101</sup>

## Conclusions

The apostolic visit of 1942, conducted nearly concurrently with the visit of the Roggeri–Hencke Commission to Hungary and Romania between 5 July and 5 September and between 20 October and 20 November 1942,<sup>102</sup> respectively, highlights the Romanian ecclesiastical authorities' concern to provide support and solutions to the Greek Catholic Church institutions in Transylvania ceded by the Vienna Diktat. This is eloquently demonstrated by the questions posed in the Instructions addressed to the Apostolic Visitor, as well as the responses and observations provided by Monsignor Sette and the reports of Bishops Hossu and Rusu. The adoption of the Apostolic Visitor's report by Pope Pius XII, following the joint plenary Assembly of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches and the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs,

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<sup>99</sup> Op. cit. 5063.

<sup>100</sup> Op. cit. 5097.

<sup>101</sup> ACO, Protocol 507/1941 Fond *Romeni*, Locus *Affari Generali*, Res *Visita Apostolica ai territori transilvani passati all'Ungheria all'Ungheria* [Apostolic Visit Report on Transylvanian Territories Passed to Hungary]. Fascicul II. 5016–5026.

<sup>102</sup> PUŞCAŞ 2020, 98.

reaffirming the Holy See's position of impartiality and refraining from making a definitive ecclesiastical decision before the end of the war, underscores the attention paid to the Romanian Greek Catholic Church. The information gathered directly from the field through the ecclesiastical tool means of the apostolic visitor provides us with a better understanding of not only the situation of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church in the territory of Transylvania transferred to Hungary but also of the entire state of affairs resulting from the Vienna Diktat.

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