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The Unitarian Church during the first two decades of Communism (1945-1965)

According to Tzvetan Todorov “the constitutive facts of the past do not appear to us in their raw form, but through narratives.” In these narratives we may distinguish four kinds of role models: the actor (individual/community) might be benefactor or its beneficiary on one side, and malefactor or his/her victim on the other side. Because the behavior of the participants in a certain event can be morally judged, their moral rating is not a matter of indifference to us. “To be the beneficiary of a certain action is less glorious, than being inside of it, and it shows our inertia. Of course, being the victim of a misdeed is much more respectable than to be its perpetrator”- Todorov writes.

The possibility of the moral interpretation of the past determines the utterance and the type of speech of the historical reconstruction. The *heroic* and the *sacrificial* narrative is being created: the first one presents the glory of the acting subject the latter recalls the agent’s misery. Their common feature is, that they both present the agent in a positive light. Gaining victimized status through sacrificial narrative is as advantageous as the heroic one, because, if “it is convincingly grounded, that this group has been the victim of injustice in the past, it gains inexhaustible credit in the present.” A narrative based on the suffered injuries ensures moral capital and privileges, which are useful for covering up, whether intentionally or unintentionally, their negative manifestations.

The main characteristics of the Unitarian historiography’s methodology had been a sacrificial narrative, until the present times. At the end of the 19th century, and at the beginning of the 20th century, and during the four years period after the Second Vienna Award, the sacrificial narrative based on real historical events, served the goals of the Church policy, and - beside the reconstructions of the past - tried to make an ideological ground for the effort of expansion of the Unitarian Church.

Between 1945-1989, and even up to the recent times, the central motif of the historical narratives was the sacrificial model. The summaries written at the beginnings of the 90’s, showed the true reality when they presented the Church as the victim of the Socialism, but they lacked any scientific research. This kind of presentation showed a one-sided vision of the Church’s “Socialist past”. The results of the historical researches of the recent years demonstrate, that the sacrificial narrative typed in the public awareness of the church is not suitable for highlighting the events of the recent times. This type of interpretation however seems to “forget” – from moral consideration – that the Church’s role and course of action very much

differed from the Church's canonized image, based on a divine ethos. The sacrificial narrative was widespread in the Church's discourse, and sustained up to the present day, but led to a disproportionate identity image, and disproportionate representation of the past. Beside the reconstruction of the past, there was a tendency of gaining moral capital, too. This view based on sacrifice offered the institution moral impeccability and supremacy in front of the society, and on the other hand it gave the opportunity to critically analyze the happenings of the past, and separate itself from negative events and roles.

As we have mentioned before, the researches prove, that the Church could not exist as a materially or morally independent entity amongst the barriers of the totalitarian regime. Each Confession became part of the integration efforts of the Socialist government. In this dissertation we try to answer how this process could affect the varied roles of the Church, and which were those fields, that the state wanted to take under its own authority. Did the Communist Party succeed to incorporate the church in its materialistic worldview? If it did, in what measure, what kind of methods and instruments did the party act? What was the reaction of the Church's leadership to these attempts, and last, but not least: how viable is the view that first presents the Church as the victim of the regime, and afterwards reflects it as an active or passive "rebel", that protects the Christian and national values?

We started our dissertation with a short historical reflection, in order to answer these questions, and to have a more precise diagnosis of the events. The inventory of the social institutions of the Church before 1945, and the presentation of their actions was a prerequisite for showing the effects and consequences of Socialism on the Church, and to understand in what way, and in what areas the Church's roles were changed under totalitarianism. The social role of the Unitarian Church had been extremely important until the eve of the construction of the Socialist regime. This kind of presence is rooted in the Protestant character of the Church, because the reformers had found effective methods and communication skills for spreading their creeds, building up and developing the institutional network of the church, which became widely accepted in the society. Beside the Protestant traditions, the ethnical characteristics had had a major role in the social effect of the church. After the political takeover in 1920, the Church had to take up new roles on behalf of the Hungarian community living as a minority in Romania, roles that before the change had been in the competence of the Hungarian government. In such surroundings the Church's importance and activity became much more important.

Until the second half of the 19th century the school was the most important institution of the Church's social policy. Until the Settlement of 1867, education was owned by the church monopoly. Before 1868 the church had run 108 elementary schools, but by the end of the century this number had decreased because the Church Headquarters in Kolozsvár decided to let the

majority of the schools pass to the management of the Hungarian Government, this way taking a huge weight off from the church members' shoulders. The Church's high schools had somewhat different way of development. The high schools of the Church faced major developments in the first part of the 19th century, except the gymnasium of Torda. After 1920 the educational system of the Church with its subordinated institutions became the symbols of maintaining the national identity of the Hungarians, now a minority in their homeland. In these circumstances, the extension of the elementary school system and the development of education became a strategic aim for church governance. They wanted an educational system that is suitable for solving the existential issues and preserving the religious and national identity of the Hungarian speaking minority.

Through the Church's social organizations aiming cultural, religious and educational actions (Dávid Ferenc Association, Dávid Ferenc Association's Youth Group, Unitarian Women's Association), the Church had an enormous influence in shaping the spiritual and moral standards of the communities. Their work expanded to all generations, and in the rural areas they had been the most effective economical, cultural and social organizations before the state's Socialist regime.

After 1920 the developing and educating roles of the church organizations were automatically completed with the role of preserving one's national identity. The ideology of preserving the national identity of the Hungarian speaking minority lived through even after the Second Decision of Vienna, and after the changed political climate. By the change of the polarization of the church governance, the thoughts of representing national interests and needs became priority number one. The Berde Committee, founded in 1941, financed and gave logistic support to the vocational and economical training of Hungarian/Székely students in order to fill the strategically important economical sectors with Hungarian people, instead of "unwanted elements" (Jews).

Other socializing instruments were the periodicals and the journals edited by the different central and provincial church institutions. By these the church became able to form the society's public opinion, and by printed press it became possible for the church's messages to be delivered even to the faraway readers. The press became an important element in sustaining the relationship between the church and its members and forming their reader's way of thinking. In 1920 the church established in Kolozsvár the Unitarian Literary Association, for a more effective press action. Beside the presentation and popularization of the Unitarian values, the Association tried to strengthen the Unitarian identity of its members, and tried to unify the Church's spiritual resources. The Association kept an eye on the Hungarian national literature, and targeted the organization and preservation of Hungarian literary works. The Association published several

publications, and held numerous regional meetings in the congregations, which became very popular in its work to consolidate the national and religious identity of its people.

Before 1945, the church's political and public roles were extremely important, and they became even more important after the I. World War. The political and military collapse of Hungary threatened the possibility of losing the Eastern part of the country. During the uncertainty after the Aster Revolution, the Church tried to fill in the roles that should have been under the state's competence: community organization, or representing Transylvanian affairs in front of the international public. After hundreds of years of long, peripheral existence, the international events have put the church in immediate action. When the eastern parts of the country were lost on behalf of Romania, the church became an important actor of the Hungarian community, and this role entitled it to be in direct contact with the political representatives of the Hungarians. The Church's ethnical character, and the Romanian government's discriminatory policy, forced the Church to become close to the Hungarian National Party, in order to speak out their needs, and to guarantee their survival.

The Church's political role culminated between 1940 – 1944, when the whole church governance was changed and completed with the representatives of the Hungarian Parliament, and joined the political life of Hungary based on a strongly ideologized concept. They emphasize on the myth of the Hungarian origins of the Church, and spice it with the political views of that moment, claiming for leading roles in the life of the whole nation.

Beside politics, the churches established their own advocacy organization: Ecumenical Council. However, this institution had close relationships with the Hungarian and Transylvanian political elements. They tried side by side to strengthen and sustain the positions of the Hungarian minority of Romania. Whenever the Church Headquarters in Kolozsvár had faced an injury by the Romanian government, it used its British and American relationships, beside the political and ecumenical legal enforcement.

With the help of its institutional system, built up by 1945, the Church got a deep and wide social embeddedness among its church members. After 1920 its role and influence became even more important and powerful, because after Hungary's collapse, the church was the sole institution that accepted the role of maintaining the national identity. After the Second World War, the position of the Church increased, and remained a strategically important institution in the fight for the possession of the Transylvanian basin.

The political takeover by the Romanian Communist Party brought hard censorship to the Church. The social conversion and homogenizing tendencies of the Communist leadership had severe and direct effects on the institutional network of the Church, because due to the Marxist

and Leninist determination, the Church and its institutions had been nominated as “enemies of the working class”. So the Church became one of the Socialist regime’s major enemies.

Unlike the USSR, the leaders of the ally countries were much moderated in solving the problem of the church. There might be two explanations to the moderate pace of violence. An acceptable explanation is Hannah Arendt’s suggestion that the totalitarian regime could only unfold in societies with a huge mass of people. The terror, as the basic tool of the regime was limited by the number of the inhabitants, and the excessive use of it would have led to demographical disasters, or to the collapse of the whole society. Another explanation can be found in a changed integration strategy that urged the co-optation of the Church in the Communist Party’s plans, instead of its open assault and final liquidation. The regime used all its administrative, legal and security methods to decrease the Church’s actions to the minimum, and to keep it under perfect control.

The integration of the church went parallel with the growth of the regime’s political influence, the practice of the Socialist ideology, and the balance of power between the society and the newly born political power.

Between 1945 and 1965 we can divide three main periods in the history of the church: –1948; 1948–1958; 1958–1965. If we try to evaluate the events of these periods, we can say that these have been stages of church integration by the socialist leadership. After 1945 the events had taken another direction, moving away from the role they have had before.

In the Fall of 1944 the church has confronted with the same situation as before the Second Vienna Award. Based on the experiences of living 22 years in minority, the church leadership in Kolozsvár tried to continue the events from the same point it was ended in 1940. The legal and political changes between September 1944, and March 1945 were reflected in the church strategy and discourse. The most spectacular change of this period has been the re-evaluation of the events of the Second World War. The militant, patriotic and war legitimating way of speech was changed to a pacifist discourse, that criticized the events between 1940 – 1944. This step was influenced by the political changes, and two other facts, too: the directly experienced disasters of the war, and the awareness, that the ethnical issues can only be normalized through peace, and by the resources of democracy. At this point the church actually joined the official public discourse, which in the most cases, affirmed with a trite and naive demagogy, the forms and methods of remedying conflicts between the nations.

At the end of the Second World War, one of the main objects of the church’s work plan consisted in the revision of ethnical coexistence, filled with countless negative experiences. The church leadership in Kolozsvár planned it according to the rules of civil democracy, and was thinking similarly in the aspects of the political and social issues, too. The future of the church

was imagined in a milieu, which works according to democratic principles, where the conditions of a free development are guaranteed for each and every element of the society. The church wanted to be present as an active factor in a similar living space, as the entity which shapes this reality by its own actions. The necessity of its presence in the public life was justified by the disasters of both world wars, which had occurred because of the complete ignorance of the Christian church's axioms. Therefore to avoid similar experiences, the church urged the introduction of Christian doctrines in the public thinking through education, considering that is a mandatory and a necessary task.

Another important element of the church strategy, beside the "political resolution", has been the care for the Hungarian national identity. The church became the moral educator of the people, and beyond its nation-building role, the leadership has pointed out a third field of action in its social project: the church encouraged its ministers and teachers to take part in the organization of the different cooperatives and farmer's clubs, so they can contribute economically to the personal development of their church members.

The future of denominational education was a key priority to the church, and to the Hungarian minority. The church leadership imagined it in a continuity, playing an active role in the whole process. In 1945, after the reannexation of Northern Transylvania to Romania, the bishops and the educational counselors of the Hungarian Unitarian Church, together with the educational Committee of the Hungarian People's Alliance had been negotiating repeatedly to ensure the future of denominational education. The central object of these negotiations was the building and the expansion of a school system, which would be able to embrace all the Hungarian-speaking children facing school enrollment. This entire plan would have been realized through ecumenical cooperation. The elementary education was a strategically important priority, and each church tried to expand its school system. The Unitarian Church intended to start 12 new elementary schools beside the 33 that had already existed in the 1945/1946 school year. This intention of the church was backed up by the Hungarian People's Party, but it remained in the planning stage. The needs expressed by the church were not assisted by the competent public authorities. The standpoint of the Romanian Government in Bucharest remained the same - with small exceptions - as before 1945, at least regarding the Hungarian denominational education.

The Romanian Government's wait-and-see policy, was based on promises completely lacking in any kind of goodwill, and this behavior had affected other areas, too: the central government ignored the repeated request of the churches to change the law of education, and to bring some kind of remedy to the situation of the Hungarian denominational schools, which ever since 1920, and especially since 1925 - when the Act of Private Education was voted - had been disadvantaged.

Beside representing the interests of the Hungarian minority, denominational education served to strengthen the position of the church. This tendency may be seen in the recruitment strategy, which helped increase the numbers of the Unitarian teachers, in order to provide Hungarian state schools with Unitarian teaching staff.

The concept of the educational development of the church included not only elementary schools, but high-schools, too. This attempt seemed successful: In February 1945, the church succeeded in starting the Unitarian Industrial Vocational School for Women in Kolozsvár, in the building of the Unitarian College. Their objects was to maintain the Unitarian identity of their students, and they were motivated by community work and cooperation. In spite of all this, the school did not stick to the level of religious particularism, and in its report dated on the 8th of February 1946, it explained the act of its establishment, due to professional reasons. Another objective has shown up on the agenda of the development strategy of the church: namely the restarting of the Unitarian Civil School for Boys, which was established in the Fall of 1943, in Székelykeresztúr. This project has failed first because of the lack of material resources, and then because of the changes in 1948.

After the Fall of 1944 there were two major issues regarding denominational education, that needed to be solved: State financing of the denominational teaching staffs and their institutions, and working out a new and much reasonable Law of Education, which equitably adjusted the status of denominational schools. In the case of the first issue there had been some progresses, but the last one remained unsolved. During this period, the state interfered in the authority and independence of denominational schools, and often did so without asking for permission from the Unitarian bishop.

The events after the division of Transylvania in 1940, then the area becoming the seat of war operations, and the uncertain political and legal background between the Fall of 1944 and the Spring of 1945, had completely paralyzed the actions of the church organizations. In the Southern part of Transylvania, the church associations had suspended their activities in the Fall of 1940, and their restart after the end of the Second World War faced a serious disadvantage. In some places of the Northern part of Transylvania similar situations had occurred in 1944, especially where church activity was suspended because of war. At the end of 1944, another obstacle in the development of these institutions were the unfavorable political circumstances. The main opponent in the restoration of these associations was the Hungarian People's Alliance (HPA), which tried to gain a monopoly in the lives of the Hungarian communities. The local organizations of the HPA rolled numerous obstacles in front of the social orientation of the church. The restoration was harder, where the headquarters of the association has been destroyed in the fight, or where the leaders escaped.

Our documents concerning the function of these church associations are deficient, but based on the existing sources we may conclude, that after the recovering political stability the church leadership immediately started the reorganization of these associations that were considered a major priority. In 1945 the Consistory of the Unitarian Church released a circular on starting the association's activities, and in 1946 repeated its request to those congregations, where the activity had not been started. The reorganization of these associations was urged by the recognition that these large activities give the church the mobilizing power, through which it would be able to integrate each generation into its own institution. Despite the war atmosphere, and the difficulties caused by the local authorities, the associations started to return to normality during the transition period (1945 – 1948). The women's alliances and the youth groups had started a lively religious, social and cultural action, aiming the development of the church, and of the Hungarian national identity.

There had been associations and areas that couldn't return to their previous state, despite of the favorable processes. The Unitarian Literary Society was one of them, which after the Fall of 1944 couldn't show up any merit-edge activity. The period of inactivity can be explained by anarchic state, and economical reasons: the *Christian Sower*, a periodical edited by the Society, was forced to suspend its activity for a certain time, because of lack of funds.

After the end of the war Church literature faced a spectacular decline. Its cause can be found in the war affairs, and in the confusions of the transition period afterwards. Later on the authorities had been a clear factor that stopped the further development of the church literature. Kolozs County didn't authorize the editing of the *Unitarian Gazette*, the monthly periodical of the church. The policy of social displacement of the church was strictly enforced. This is confirmed by the fact that despite repeated intercessions, the Church still wasn't allowed to print either of its periodicals. The *Unitarian Almanac* became the sole publication of the Church, printed once a year, and it was mainly filled by the propaganda of the socialist ideology. The government started the gradual atrophy of the Church's spiritual life after 1945, and this negative tendency was aggravated by the fact, that book publishing was reduced, and between 1945 and 1948, only a few books were printed out.

After 1945 the relationship between the Church and the political powers of the Hungarian community gradually changed. The Church leadership financed and supported the Hungarian People's Alliance, and invited all its officials to join without exceptions the political formation, which was considered to be the only representative of the Hungarian community at that time. But this relationship was soon deteriorated, and the Church had to recognize the fact that the HPA tried to gain a monopoly over the Hungarian community. On the other hand, HPA submitted the national interests to the socialist ideology and class aspects.

During 1945 – 1948 the relationship of the Church with the Romanian Government was basically defined by three issues, similar to those during the times of both world wars, namely: education, state finance, and operational freedom for church institutions. These have been the strategically important areas, which generated numerous disagreements between the two institutions, because of the ethnically motivated conflict of interests, rooted in the foregoing times of the Second World War. In the background of this tension stood the discriminatory policy of the Romanian Government, which treated the Hungarian issue with great hostility. The Romanian Government tried to whittle away the legal and economical status of the church, which had been received under Hungarian leadership, and with all its efforts tried to decrease the chances of its survival. The conflicts and the problems remained even after 1944. The only development during this period could be seen only in education, where denominational school teachers managed to receive state salary. The Government interfered in the development of the social institutions, and with the economical constraints in 1947, the church became helpless. Compared to 1948, the only difference in the relationship of the church with the state consisted in the fact, that the socialism was still under construction, and the government wasn't able to emphasize the social displacement of the church.

The first radical changes appeared in 1948, when after the political consolidation of Communism, the process of a violent transformation of the society was started. This action did not leave the church untouched, and due to several reasons, the church was placed right in the crosshairs of the events.

The church was considered a potential source of danger in the eyes of the strengthening socialism, and it was considered an obstacle in the development of a classless society. Nearby the structures of a socialist power, the church as an independent entity, represented a parallel with the totalitarian state, that wanted to be a homogeneous unit. On the other hand, the internal measures and activities of the church represented an unwanted spontaneity. The other main problem consisted in the teachings of the church, that were completely opposite to the ideology of the socialist regime, and that's why the church was ranked in the group of anachronistic and anti-regime institutions.

The biggest problem in the eyes of the authorities was the congregational religious education, according to our sources. This action was understood as the most powerful influence of the church on society. When the Educational Reform removed religious education from the school schedule, the authorities were satisfied, considering, that "the social classes of the clergy, the bourgeoisie and the kulaks have been deprived of their strongest weapon: the influence on the population."

Other important, anti-regime issues were the group of ministers, who activated beyond their church services and ceremonies, developing in this way the religious lives of their people. The numerous State Security Reports made on this type of actions of the ministers suggest, that the authorities were disturbed by the progresses of the church, which had a completely opposite view to the socialist ideology. The presence of the church in the public life seemed very hostile to the authorities, who tried to keep the actions of the church inside the church walls.

The discretion and judgment of the socialist reality, other than the official rhetoric, had a disturbing effect on the system. Those ministers, who wrote the opposite of what the socialist propaganda required to be written in their reports, faced discrediting campaigns.

The socialist regime was unpleasantly affected by the fact that its orders were denied by the members of the clergy. The system that was used to central leading rejected any type of personal or collective spontaneity. The church was indifferent to the propaganda of the authorities, and their passive behavior classed the clergy in the group of the anti-regime elements. Even those ministers who supported the system in the early phase of the socialist regime were declared anti-regime elements because of their pastoral care. An opposite action to what the indicated course line of the system was, assumed hostile motivation by the “offender”. The pastoral quality was enough to be treated with suspicion, and to be seen as a threat to the popular democracy.

The recurring motif that the church is the cradle of the Hungarian nationalism is sustained in this period, too. After 1956 the church was accused by the Romanian Government of being a nationalist and irredentist institution, and this justified one of the reasons of the prosecutions started in 1959.

The socialist leadership would have wanted an institution which is closed to public life, and has minimal influence on society. They would have liked the church to accept the control of the authorities, and to become the speaking tube of the official propaganda. In their vision the church, as an integrated part of the power, would help in the creation of their new world with unconditional loyalty to the socialist system. In order to meet the new criteria and “challenges” of the political system, the church had to go through correction process, strictly coordinated by the regime.

The Religious Act no. 177/1948 proclaimed on August 4th, 1948 established the restricted margins of the church, and severe control of the State over the church. The Acts no. 175/1948 and 176/1948 proclaimed on August 3rd 1948, a day before, led to institutional degradation, and nationalized the denominational schools. As an enhancement of the social isolation of the church, the government prohibited the actions of the social institutions, and the editing of their periodicals. By the end of 1948, the Church has become under the complete control of the socialist system.

The efforts for the social isolation of the church put huge pressure on the former institution, and caused a palpable fracture in its life. Starting with this moment, the actions of the church had split and continued its work in two parallel directions: the first one tried to keep and strengthen the religious nature, the other one – mainly for self-defense – tried to fulfill the expectations of the authorities.

The main action for preserving the religious identity of the church after 1948, consisted in the Religious Education besides services and sermons. The importance of education was pretty clear to the church leadership of those times. The evidence of that tendency is that the Unitarian Church was the only church that immediately reacted to the new situation created by the nationalization, and the only that required the restoration of Religious Education.

The Law of Education nationalized the denominational school system, and – especially in the initial period – there was a serious problem concerning the proper places for education. Mostly the congregations didn't have classrooms, so in these circumstances the education was held in the church, in the kitchen, or one of the rooms of the parsonage, or even in the ministerial office. The lack of other infrastructural necessities, like: visual aids, proper furniture, or fuel undermined the education. But the most important issue was still the general hindrance of the authorities, and their propaganda against denominational education. These attacks came mainly from the educational authorities, which prohibited their students from attending religious classes, or offered alternative programs instead.

As we mentioned above, the local authorities had a problem with the religious education, and tried everything to shrivel it out from the public life. During 1948 – 1965 the authorities were gradually suppressing the religious education of the church with alternating strength, according to our documents. The authorities had tried to impede the religious classes from the start, but the first important severity was taken only in 1952, when the religious education was compressed to a 24-hours interval (from Saturday afternoon to Sunday afternoon). This was followed by a milder period, when the education and its related actions were undisturbed. The next turning point showed up in the 1959/1960 school year, when much more severe restrictions were applied: the actions of the Religious Education Committee were abolished; teaching activities had to ignore any methods that were based on systematic or organized workflows (work plans, testing, registration log, attendance). Awarding children was prohibited, as well as the recruitments at the start of each school year.

Despite of the official propaganda of the authorities, the religious education of their children remained an important issue for the parents. The minister's reports reveal that the parents demanded religious education for their children. Of course, there were negative examples, too. The instructor of the Háromszék district (Three Chairs is one of the Székely Seats, which were

the traditional self-governing territorial units of the Transylvanian Székelys during medieval times) complained about the negligent parents as inhibitory factors, but in total the positive attitude was much more specific than the negative behavior.

The church leadership in Kolozsvár made everything possible in order to have an effective and undisturbed activity. It organized different training for the ministers, and tried to obtain the permission for editing religious textbooks and to supply their students with proper publications, and last but not least to give advices to the Religious Education Committees of the districts. Beside the church headquarters, the committees of the districts have made serious efforts to keep up the level of education: they organized different trainings, edited guiding circulars, supplied the congregations with visual aids, curriculum and work plans, offered different teaching models for the ministers, and wrote application for books, which were suitable for illustrations.

For increasing the number of the students on Religion classes, and for the recruitment of children, the congregation used different methods: the most frequent were the parents' meeting, and the appeals from the pulpit. In many congregations ministers had personally visited the parents with the members of the Religious Education Committee. In Kolozsvár even theological students were involved in recruitment and made pamphlets to attract children more efficiently. The student received books as reward at the end of each semester, which targeted the same goal. To make religious education more attractive, they tried to realize proper classrooms, and supply them with modern visual aids, and educational curriculum.

Beside the different types of religious education, the church tried to strengthen the religious identity of the children, organizing varied events and activities, such as: puppet shows, religious parties, contests, occasional programs.

Other actions that strengthened the religious identity, and religious specific of the church, had been those events which were held with different occasions during a church service, and where religious poems had been recited, and religious songs had been sung. One of the reduced accessories of the religious identity was the Unitarian Almanac, which beside the compulsory propaganda of the government, contained writings which were important in maintaining the religious identity, and the historical awareness of the people. The very few writings edited during this hard period can be counted in this category.

Summarizing the facts, we can say, that after 1948 the events that supplied the mission of the church have almost faded away, not counting the religious education, the church services, and sermons. Of course, the policy of the Romanian Government had a major role in this process. Beyond the fact that it prohibited the actions of the social associations of the church, it decreased the edition of the church periodicals almost to the minimum, and by their administrative and state security organizations successfully prevented the church from development. The religious

program was canceled in Abásfalva, when the district dean was in visit in May 1953, and after the Securitate agent (agent of the communist secret police) – based on the reports of local agents and police reports from Homoródszentmárton – asked for the poems and the lyrics of the religious songs which were prepared for that special occasion. This action so terrified the people involved in the program, that they canceled the religious program, and had a negative influence on the congregation: just few people had come to the church service held on the dean's visit, and on the Annual Meeting of the church district the attendance was very slow.

Our researches proved that the church life in, its behavior with the socialist regime, had been motivated by the thoughts of self defense, and survival. The first step in this strategy was the self-legitimizing action of the church, which was realized through the re-evaluation and presentation of the Unitarian heritage in a class-based view. That is why the liberalism and the rational world view of Unitarianism were highly accentuated. According to their definition these characteristics were in harmony with the way of thinking of the socialist ideology, and justified the social presence of the church. An important specific of the church was the importance of public education, which pointed out the social teachings of the Christianity. "Our Bible, with his (Jesus') social teachings has always been the guideline to a right life, and his success does not fade with the teachings of the new times, but it completes them, and makes them perfect." – wrote Jakab Kővári, the Unitarian minister of Brassó.

Other efficient instruments had been the forms of loyalty, which were expressed in very different manners. One group was the solemn loyalty statements and gestures. The telegram sent in the Soviet Union, on Stalin's 70th birthday had this dual role. Speaking of loyalty statements, we need to underline that these statements of the church were made in public, and beside the sympathy of the authorities, it provided against suspicions.

The second group was formed by the integration of the church in the propaganda of the socialist regime, and in its social reforming policy. Due to that circulars had been coming to the congregations, which suggested the ministers, and through them the people, to fulfill their civic duties which strengthen of the popular democracy (agricultural work, compulsory delivery of the crop, vote attendance). Other instruments of the church loyalty were their part in the peace movement, and in the state legitimizing national holidays (August 23rd, November 7th).

The church leadership made everything to make its integration in the socialist regime as peaceful as possible, and without any conflicts. They made several compromises and tried to conform to the new social and political reality that has started in 1948. However the leadership of the Communist Party wasn't so understanding and accepting with the church. The leadership of the regime, which was producing conspiracy theories all the time and was blinded by its totalitarian lust, counted the church as a possible threat to the socialist era. That's why the regime

treated with distrust and bad faith each manifestation of the church, the clergy, and the people whom they were in contact with. Thanks to their social point of view, the religious education was regarded to an act, which was used by the class enemy for mass manipulation, and for propagation its anti-regime thoughts. Similar to religious education, church sermons, services and ceremonies got an anti-regime connotation.

After the regime smashed the political parties and the civic institutional system, the negative judgment of the church was multiplied. According to the Securitate (communist secret police) of Kolozs county: “with the intensification of the class struggles, and the loss of anti-democratic parties, on which they based their actions, the reactionary circles have enhanced their instigations to the maximum under the guise of religion”. That means the church has become the collection place of the hostile elements, and the speaking tube of the opposition of the socialist regime. The ousted political elite saw the church as the possibility for overthrowing the political power.

Since 1950 the list of the anti-regime manifestations has been expanded with new elements, beside the church services and sermons. In November 1950, the Securitate of Udvarhely county ordered to its office in Székelykeresztúr to start an organized and systematic observation of the Protestant churches. According to the document the observations were made superficially and randomly before, but this needs to be changed, because the institution didn't give importance to the fact, that many of the Protestant ministers had studied in England and in the Federal Republic of Germany.

This “recognition” opened new perspectives for the political power, which immediately constructed the charge of spying for the western countries. Based on this script the church leadership which had visited the congregations, by the help of their ministers whom visited Kolozsvár, the Bishop's Office was able to collect information on the congregations' affections, economical situation, and had the opportunity to deliver the received information to the governments of the imperialist countries, through their ministers whom had studied abroad.

Please note, that the charge of spying wasn't based on facts, but just on preconceptions: the western relationships of the church were given, and the political power living in the shadow of suspicion has built on that fact the charge of spying, and by these the connections between the church organizations have moved beyond the administrative area, being considered as threats to the state security. The clergy and the church institutions also became threats to the well-being of the country.

In addition to the ideological and international political situation, the negative judgment of the Church was also influenced by the efficiency of the socialist transformation of the society. The first phase of the collectivization had failed, because of the resistance of the peasantry. The peasantry stood up for their right to private ownership, and didn't allow anyone to influence their

strong decision. In this situation the Church had become the scapegoat of this failure, was considered as a causer of the events, and needed to support all the consequences of it. In the eyes of the authorities, the ministers were responsible for the resistance of the peasantry. In their view the Church had had an active role in the attempt to overthrow the socialist regime, and in the anti-regime actions.

The conflict between the Church and the socialist government was even more induced by their contradictory way of thinking. The advanced, new world propagated by the socialist ideology was in contrast with the worldview of the Christianity, which was considered to be a vanishing mentality that has no meaning for its existence, and it's the main obstacle to the development.

The suspicious action of the State became more specific, when on March 20th, 1948 the Ministry of Religious Affairs has sent a telegram to the Bishop's Office, informing the bishop that some minister's behavior are contradictory with their civic and pastoral duties, and ask the leadership to take actions, and request their ministers to work properly.

Bucharest used two methods to handle the issue of the Church, considered to be a threat to the security of the system: in the first group there were the legal and administrative instruments, which from the system's view were legal and conventional. In the second group there were the instruments of threatening and violence, which were less conventional and not so legal utensils of the secret police, known also as the Securitate.

The Religious Act no. 177/1948 guaranteed the supervision of the Church, and put on new foundation the relationship of the Church with the State: the right of the Church to hold public meetings needed authorization; the decisions of the General Consistory could be contested by the Ministry of Religious Affairs; the communication of the Church was censored; the international connections, and the economical management were supervised. All these actions have led to the complete liquidation of the Church autonomy.

After 1948 the supervision and control of the Church was expanded with new elements: the Ministry of religious Affairs interfered in the legislative and decision-making work of the Church, and placed the ministerial meetings and the circulars from the Church headquarters under severe control. The different church institutions had similar proceedings. The delegates of the Ministry of Religious Affairs attended the meetings of the legislative and decision-making committees, and had a coordinating and legitimizing role in their work. This fact shows very well the need of the political power to totally control and supervise the course of actions. This form of interference of the authorities in the church life, resulted a parallel "shadow hierarchy" in the Church leadership striving for compromise, and which ruled from the background of the hierarchy, leading its management. So, the guidelines of the church policy haven't been brought by the competent committees of the Church, but by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Religious

Affairs Office since 1957), which conveyed the instructions of the Party, and supervised its fulfillment. As the consequences of the implication of the political power in the life of the Church, the strategy and objectives of the institution have suffered distortions in their content. With the suppression of the religious education, and its character of maintaining religious and national identity, the Church became less and less similar to an institution that has its own values, and it is independent from the socialist regime.

By the end of the 1950's the process of losing the Church's individual actions had reached their endpoints. This loss of independency is illustrated by the fact that the church leadership acted without any objections to the request of the Hungarian People's Alliance to send a telegram to the UNO's Security Committee, condemning the Korean War, and the imperialists. The maneuverability and the socialist ideology propagating nature of the Church are best shown by those cases, when the circulars from the General Consistory were sent to the congregations only after the severe supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Beyond the legal and administrative measures, the control had a more direct form, and its mechanism was based on the compromise of the parties. In reality, this meant that there have been continuous negotiations on the most important issues between the representatives of the Church and of the State, and the Church couldn't bring any decisions without the consent of the authorities.

The forced cooperation between the two institutions increased even more the influence of the state on the Church. The elections realized by compromises made it possible for the political power to control the decision-making organizations of the Church, and fill them with their loyal people.

The first action of this kind had been taken during the general Church elections in April 1951, when the candidatures and the elections were organized according to the agreement between the delegate of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the leaders of the Church. This meant that in the General Council of the Church were elected those people too, who were initially proposed by the Government. The renewal of the membership of the General Council was also made based on the algorithm described above: preliminary checks, compromise-based and directed voting, and only after that came the approval from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Regarding the elections held in November 1957, the regional deputy in Kolozsvár reported to his principals in Bucharest, that the elected people have been controlled by the agents of the Securitate (communist secret police), and the candidature has been realized by mutual agreement. Because the elected people in the church leadership were politically correct, the regional deputy proposed for approval the results of the elections.

This game of filling-up church institutions with politically correct people was continued on lower levels also. The scenario was similar to the elections for the General Council: the regional deputies of the Ministry of Religious Affairs agreed with the district deans on who will be elected in the leadership of each district. If the vacant post was filled with politically correct person, the approval from the state authorities would automatically arrive.

In the 1950's we can find some references on the fact, that politically correct people couldn't be elected. Ten years later however these gaps are eliminated, and the machinery of the system was working very well. In 1962 in three church districts the elections were realized conform to the initial agreements.

The formal integration of the church, based on compromises didn't satisfy the need for security of the communist leadership. In the eyes of this paranoid system the Church has remained an enemy, and with its full control, the system and its leadership were safe. The only available method to this was to fill the church with informants.

Beside the identifying of anti-regime acts and opinions, the presence of the informants was very useful for the communist leadership. The guidance by the recruited informants was much more effective than to have an outsider to control the Church. On the other hand the network system of the informants brought such distrust and fear, which discredited the trust in one another, ruined personal relationships, and silenced the critical voices.

The spread of the informants in the church institutions started at the end of the 1940's. At the very start we can talk about a concentric networking, that goes from outside to inside, through people who have connections inside the Church. Until 1956 the political power had a minimal impact on the Church's leadership, but – in connection with the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 – it was enough to take such measures which got them inside the institution, and offered the possibility to gather compromising material, that was used against those, who were thought to be dangerous to the communist regime. These people were either imprisoned, either recruited to become informants of the regime, and by these actions they were disconnected from the church life.

By the end of the 1950's the Securitate succeeded in creating the climate of fear that was indispensably necessary to gain full control of the Church, and to totally eliminate independent thoughts and actions. This situation is presented in a laconic and expeditious way by Lajos Kovács, Professor of Theology, who told to Endre Májay on September 8th, 1958: "Our situation is very sad, because we cannot do or say anything, because the agents of the Securitate are everywhere."

Although the Church was pushed aside, it didn't affect its popularity. Beside the religiousness of the population, there are other emotional reasons, too. Because Church was seen as hostile in

the eyes of the socialist ideology, those who were antipathetic with this mentality became close to the Church. Attending church services was in fact a symbolic way of expressing this kind of disobedience. The oppositional world view and values offered an alternative for those who rejected the ideology of materialism. The adherence to Church had a third aspect, too: the ethnical element. The Church was a Hungarian institution, and was expected to be the fortress of the Hungarian interests and values. Being in touch with the Church meant a hidden desire for maintaining the Hungarian national identity.

By the destruction of the institutions, by the decreasing of social activities to the minimum, and with the help of the informant network the Church was integrated, but the level of its emotional effect has remained the same. The Communist Party formally won the battle of the influences on society, but the annihilation of the institutions did not automatically lead to the termination of religious feelings.

In its relationship with the political power, the church has followed the attitude of the bishop, deeply rooted in the strategy of “peaceful coexistence”, and which was completely opposite to the attitude of the Roman Catholic bishop, Áron Márton. Instead of confrontation, the Church was looking for a much peaceful alternative.

In 1964, the Bishop said during a personal discussion that in his opinion it is beneficial for the Church to have a peaceful relationship with the State. His job is to protect the interests of the Church, and he does, but this is possible only by taking into account the given situation. This doesn't mean to surrender, but it means to accept the instructions of the political power, to be fit to the frame, and by this action to succeed.

The rejection of this fruitless Church policy can be found in the dialogue between two Unitarian ministers in the Summer of 1953, namely László Lőrinczi, minister of Ürmös, and Endre Májay, minister of Brassó. Rev. Májay criticized Church leadership for “sleeping with the Government”, to which Rev. Lőrinczi replied: what was best? The reaction of bishop Áron Márton, who remained intransigent and ended up in the prison. What can he do for his people in this situation? He is suffering, and his episcopate is in misery, too. They should see further than their noses, and the elected people should be smarter than the average, and their past is guaranteeing them to be morally untouched. They shouldn't be superficial. Luckily for them to have Bende with them, who is a balanced and mature personality, and who knows what he has to do. Of course even he is getting instructions that need to be fulfilled. Kiss cannot be condemned. They couldn't have found a better leader than him. Essentially the rulers are the old ones. And the fact that things have developed in this manner needed a miracle, and to call them insincere or to doubt their behavior is the biggest mistake. They should understand the needs of these times, and should adjust, especially when the clergy is threatened. He is a great admirer of the Church

leadership, which is accused of opportunism, and the hardest thing for Kiss is to perform his role. They must obey to the current Church leadership, because a better or luckier combination couldn't be possible, even though each of them have their own personal issues. The right way is to give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. They are living hard historical times, with life-and-death struggle, and everyone should judge the Church leadership by these circumstances.

The survival strategy of the Church that is open to integration and accepts the repression from the State is confirmed by Kiss to agent Iordaky in his reference to the unfounded accusations of betrayal. He said, his situation was extremely hard, and ending up in jail would be a foolish thing, and it wouldn't be the solution for the problem. He tries to do every possible thing for the Hungarians in Transylvania, but his actions are interpreted incorrectly by the West. Although it was hard, he convinced the principal of the Sámuel Brassai High-School to accept in their institution the children of those ministers who had been political prisoners. Of course this is not known by the public. He knows that he was followed, and the authorities have read all his mails, but still he presented his correspondence to the inspector of the Mayor's Office, showing this way his loyalty to the State. These circumstances are being ignored and his actions are misunderstood and misinterpreted by the people around him.

Kiss's views of church government were influenced by the political background and by his realistic and fatalist concept on social development. Due to this view, he doesn't have to deal with the world, or changing its course. He believed that things happen how they have to, and no one is responsible for that, not even those who dictate the instructions. He believed that the fate of the world depends of bigger powers, and these powers will decide what and how is going to happen. We don't need to deal with these kind of things. Our job is to be in harmony with those who live beside us, to protect our interests, and supply the conditions for a reasonable living.

This leadership philosophy of the church headquarters in Kolozsvár has depended on the cooperation policy quite from the start, and thought it would be useful to take advantage of the opportunities, than to choose the open confrontation that doesn't lead anywhere. This policy was based on the friendship of the Unitarian bishop with Prime Minister Groza, and this policy had been quite fruitful at the beginnings. At January 1st, 1958 in his pastoral letter Kiss speaks with recognition of Prime Minister Groza and his Government, highlighting out that during the past year the Church and the State were heading in the same direction, and all the requests of the Church have been met by the Government with kindness. In August 1964 Mrs. Kiss in her discussion with agent "Jordáky" (Emma Ferenczi) mentioned that in the past their situation was better, because some of their issues could be solved by Prime Minister Groza.

If we would like to make an evaluation on the efficiency of this policy, we could say that the Church leadership wasn't able to parry the anticlerical actions of the political power. In the critical moments the State struck the Unitarians with the same anger as it did with the Roman Catholic Church that was much less cooperative with the Communist Party. The loyalty gestures were not enough to disperse the suspicion and the revulsion of the Government. There was no chance for a change in this relationship because of the paranoid attitude of the regime, and because of the Church's world view and ethnical characteristics.

If we compare the periods before and after 1945, we may point out the following conclusions: before 1945 the Church had a well structured and independent institutional network. By these it reached many of its people, and was able to maintain its dual target: strengthening and developing the religious and national identity of its membership.

After 1945 the Church has tried to preserve its initial state. During the transition period (1945 – 1948) it still seemed an acceptable strategy, but after the socialist arrangements in 1948 led to radical changes: the Church has lost its schools, its social institutions at the same time and its monthly journal that was the connection between the Church headquarters and the villages. All these were the beginnings of marginalization, and institutional atrophy. The pressure on the Church was growing, and it had to take part in the propaganda of the socialist regime, and the initial goal of the Church, as Religious education and preservation of the Hungarian national identity became prohibited actions.

The Church was deprived of its most effective tools, and its institutional network has been truncated. It needed to struggle for its survival, was forced to serve the political power, but still tried to maintain its religious identity. By the end of the 1950's the church had come under the full control of the political leadership. Its role as a servant of the political elite was even more accentuated, and the actions that preserved the religious and national identity have quasi disappeared. The institution that was working on an extensive social ground, became by the 1960s a marginalized institution, closed in the church buildings.