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**THE GREEK-CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF CLUJ-
GHERLA IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE FIFTH
DECADE OF THE 20TH CENTURY**

PHD THESIS
SUMMARY

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SUMMARY

The research topic titled "The Greek-Catholic Diocese of Cluj-Gherla in the First Half of the Fifth Decade of the 20th Century", developed as a doctoral project, aims to illustrate the evolution of the aforementioned United Diocese during a period as brief as it was eventful: 1940–1945. The study explores aspects related to the relationship between the diocese and the authorities, as well as administrative, economic, educational, and cultural elements, both at the central level and in the broader territory. The key figure, or the central thread of this research endeavor, is the Greek-Catholic bishop Iuliu Hossu, who, during the analyzed timeframe, demonstrated tireless efforts to defend the interests of all the faithful within his confessional community and beyond.

The research naturally begins with a series of general aspects regarding the history of the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Cluj-Gherla, as well as its state of affairs in 1940: structure, territorial extent, demographic aspects, administrative matters, as well as the educational institutions and religious associations under diocesan auspices. The introductory section also highlights a series of biographical details about the Greek-Catholic bishop of Cluj.

Once these foundational elements are established, the study continues with three chapters that detail the evolution of the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Cluj-Gherla in relation to central and local authorities. This division was employed because, during the highlighted chronological segment, the diocese interacted with three distinct categories of decision-makers. The first category concerns the decision-makers in Bucharest, characteristic of the Carlist regime at the time. Following the territorial changes at the end of summer 1940 brought about by the implementation of the Vienna Arbitration, the Cluj diocese became territorially part of the Hungarian state. Thus, the evolution of the diocese had to be analyzed in relation to the Hungarian authorities.

Finally, due to military developments, from the autumn of 1944, the territorial situation reverted to the pre-Vienna Arbitration status. However, politically, the government in Bucharest underwent significant transformation compared to 1940, with the post-World War II period marked by clear Soviet influence and representatives of the Kremlin becoming prominent within the state apparatus.

During the analyzed period, the first eight months of 1940 saw the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Cluj-Gherla as part of the Romanian Carlist state, characterized by an authoritarian regime with a monarchy whose powers had increased, though not to the extent of constituting a fully fascist state.

This period was devoid of adverse events for the Greek-Catholic Church in general and for the Cluj-Gherla Diocese in particular, in terms of its relations with the authorities. Notably, two key issues emerged. Firstly, discussions regarding salaries were prominent, as the Greek-Catholic episcopate advocated for income parity with other categories of state officials. Secondly, the military service required of students at the Theological Academy posed challenges, especially for those pursuing priestly formation after the outbreak of World War II. However, these matters did not create insurmountable obstacles in the relationship between decision-makers and the diocese but rather represented isolated points of potential disagreement.

An important aspect to review is the relationship with organizations specific to the Carlist regime, such as Straja Țării (The Country's Sentinel) and the Frontul Salvării Naționale (National Salvation Front). At both the central and territorial levels, clergy were occasionally asked by the authorities to officiate Te Deum services for events of national importance: January 24th (Union Day), Monarchy Day, the anniversary of the 1938 Constitution, and other similar celebratory commemorations. Bishop Iuliu Hossu consistently complied with these requests and instructed the priests in his diocese to do the same.

Community training for passive defense in the event of war and efforts to equip the army were two notable ways in which clergy were involved in activities outside their usual scope of duties. Since priests were seen as role models within their communities, particularly in rural areas, they were all required to attend a series of well-structured defense courses to prepare for the possibility of Romania's involvement in the ongoing global conflict. Once trained, the priests acted as instructors for their parishioners.

Additionally, the army needed better funding, prompting the government to raise funds for the state budget. This was done through the issuance of military equipment bonds: individuals could purchase these bonds at various price points, with the promise of receiving the principal plus interest after five years. The clergy, from the central leadership, including the bishop, to the parish level, showed responsiveness to these initiatives, encouraging parishioners to make such

purchases. Simultaneously, some parishes made donations to the army or contributed to equipping the Military Hospital in Cluj.

The relationship between the diocese and the authorities, which functioned largely without significant issues under the Carlist system, underwent profound transformations following the redrawing of borders and the gradual entry of Hungarian troops and administration into Northern Transylvania in September 1940. From this point onward, the next four years represented a continuous series of efforts by the bishop to mitigate the hardships faced by the diocese and the Greek-Catholic community.

For the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Cluj-Gherla, the border change initially resulted in territorial division, with approximately 50 parishes remaining in Romania. To manage these parishes, a diocesan delegate was appointed, residing in Abrud, the seat of the Mountain Apuseni deanery. The territorial loss was immediately followed by demographic loss.

The demographic shifts were not limited to the believers in the separated parishes. A considerable number of Greek-Catholics chose, either voluntarily or under the influence of various factors, to leave Northern Transylvania due to the new political realities. These migrations occurred primarily during 1940–1941 but continued with varying intensity throughout the Horthy regime. Notably, the number of refugees varied across regions. Areas with a predominantly Romanian population, such as the extensive Năsăud vicariate, were less affected, while regions with mixed Romanian-Hungarian populations were more vulnerable to harassment and pressure. Another issue arose from confessional changes. While such changes were not entirely absent before the implementation of the Vienna Arbitration, often occurring in the context of mixed marriages, their frequency increased alarmingly in the new Northern Transylvanian context. Particularly in rural areas, and especially in mixed communities, repeated reports indicated pressure from members of other denominations or even local authorities to persuade Romanians to change their religious affiliation so that Hungarian could become the liturgical language.

For those who firmly resisted, other forms of pressure materialized through violence, destruction, or the restitution of land properties. Both at the central and territorial levels, instances of violence were relatively isolated, but they were not absent. Perhaps the most notable cases involved the destruction of educational institutions under the auspices of the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Cluj, particularly during the autumn of 1940 and the spring of 1944, when even Bishop Iuliu Hossu was insulted and assaulted. Combating such cases was perpetually hindered by the

lack of a clear stance from the authorities, who, although officially condemning any form of violence, often failed to take decisive measures to stop it. Furthermore, documents indicate that in some cases, Hungarian gendarmes were directly involved in these violent acts.

Regarding confiscations and restitution of property, authorities sought to establish a legal framework to return all properties previously granted by the Romanian state to the churches, primarily to former Hungarian landowners. This issue remained complicated throughout the period due to the authorities' delays in finding a uniform solution for all regions affected by these measures. Consequently, some parishes succeeded in court in retaining lands acquired through the Agrarian Reform, while others lost similar cases.

The situation of the diocesan educational institutions was equally challenging during these years, as they faced constant harassment and restrictions. Every summer, the buildings of these schools were used to quarter Hungarian troops without compensation for damages incurred during these occupations. With the involvement in the war, grain requisitions from school resources became another burden for these institutions, which were already struggling financially due to the complete cessation of material support from the Hungarian state. The financial responsibility thus fell on the diocese.

Access to education in the Romanian language was severely restricted, particularly at the secondary level. As a result, the Teacher Training Schools in Gherla attracted an increasing number of students each year. Additionally, the diocese opened a diocesan boarding school in Cluj to support Romanian students from rural areas attending state high schools.

On the issue of confessional schools, Hungarian authorities argued that Greek-Catholic and Orthodox schools had been closed by the Romanian authorities. Despite granting permission in 1941 to reopen them, the decision-makers in Budapest continuously delayed the process, which ultimately never materialized. The buildings of former confessional schools were used for state primary schools, and authorities paid rent to the Greek-Catholic parishes for their use. There were, however, occasional delays or failures to pay this rent, though these instances were more sporadic than frequent.

Communication with the outside world was severely restricted. The slow pace of correspondence across the border established in 1940 significantly hindered the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Cluj-Gherla in staying informed about decisions made by the Metropolitan See in Blaj or the status of its own parishes that had been separated. Romanian press, including church

publications under the auspices of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church, could no longer be received in Northern Transylvania. Despite these limitations, the diocese managed to maintain connections.

During the period when Northern Transylvania was under the administration of the Horthyst Hungarian state, the evolution of the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Cluj-Gherla was characterized by disruptions, with the diocese's relationship with the authorities largely defined by Bishop Iuliu Hossu's efforts to mitigate challenges and improve the situation.

The military events of the autumn of 1944 and the subsequent liberation of the territory ceded to Hungary through armed conflict brought significant material damages to the Greek-Catholic Church. Numerous parishes reported the destruction of archives due to bombings, and protopresbyterial headquarters were often repurposed as soldier encampments. Bishop Hossu was subjected to house arrest, and his car sustained severe damage, restricting his mobility until the Romanian-Soviet troops fully liberated the area.

Following the military actions of 1944, there was a semblance of normalcy. Refugee priests and believers began returning, though reintegrating them into the diocese's structure posed significant administrative challenges at times. The Greek-Catholic Diocese of Cluj-Gherla once again received substantial funding from decision-makers in Bucharest, which supported both the diocese itself and its educational institutions.

However, the changes emerging from the east soon became evident. By March 1945, the Romanian government was headed by Petru Groza, a sympathizer of Soviet ideologies. For the Greek-Catholic Church, and implicitly for the Diocese of Cluj-Gherla, the gradual establishment of the communist regime marked the onset of a new era of restrictions. Nonetheless, in 1945, apart from a few tensions and ideological differences, there were relatively few indications of the magnitude of the challenges to come. On the contrary, in the autumn of 1945, the diocese was even permitted to open a theoretical high school for boys in Cluj.

These territorial and political changes, which also generated economic, social, and demographic transformations, naturally left their mark on the diocese, not only in terms of its relationship with the state but also in its internal administration. While some aspects remained unchanged, others had to be adapted to the new realities. To thoroughly detail these developments, a comprehensive chapter was dedicated to addressing the administrative aspects of the diocese throughout the analyzed chronological period.

The efficient administration of the diocese required appointing competent parish priests and, especially, deans in the territory. Their appointment followed a practice that, during the period analyzed, was already well-established. Initially, vacant positions were announced in *Curierul Creștin* (The Christian Courier), a publication that, in theory, every parish subscribed to, as it was not only the diocese's periodical but also a communication channel for diocesan decisions from the center to the territory.

Those wishing to apply for the vacant position had a specific time frame to submit their application files to the diocesan residence, accompanied by justifications explaining why they wished to leave their current parish. These justifications varied, but financial considerations often prevailed. The applications for both parish priests and deans were reviewed by the bishop and the consistory, and appointments were published in *Curierul Creștin* and communicated to those concerned. Upon the transfer of a clergy member from one parish or deanery office to another, a complete inventory of the office was required, and the revenues of that year generated by the priestly session had to be fairly distributed. If an interim parish administrator had temporarily managed the office until a permanent appointee was found, they too received a share of the revenues.

The installation of a priest always had to be conducted in the presence of a dean or vicar forane, who was tasked with reporting back to the bishop on how the process unfolded and whether the parishioners welcomed the new priest. Tensions could arise in such transitions. The bishop's desire was always to ensure harmonious cohabitation between the clergy and the community, free of conflict.

State authorities acknowledged these appointments or transfers from one office to another, but this was largely a formality. Neither during the Carolist regime nor the Horthy regime did decision-makers interfere in appointing priests to various parishes. During the Horthy period, sporadic issues arose related to clergy salaries, with cases in which the clergy complained that their seniority was not fully recognized, resulting in lower pay. In such situations, the bishopric needed to intervene. However, the appointment process changed in 1945 when the Petru Groza government required that any appointment also receive approval from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Only after a favorable decision from the ministry could the installation of a priest take place, marking a certain level of political intervention compared to previous practices.

In addition to its careful attention to appointing priests, the bishopric also closely monitored any non-compliant behavior by priests, as such issues could easily lead to tensions between them and their parishioners. This study includes four case studies where priests faced disciplinary action, with accusations including alcoholism, aggression, excessive fees for services, and incitement of discord within communities.

Such investigations were initiated at the bishop's discretion after being informed of the issue from the territory. Accusations could come from anyone: parishioners, other priests, the dean of the district where the irregularities occurred, a neighboring dean who learned of the issue, or even representatives of local or central authorities.

After being informed, the bishop would request the dean of the district to investigate the case and report back. Based on the report and the severity of the situation, the accused could be reprimanded by the consistory and asked to immediately rectify the situation. Some priests promptly complied and admitted fault, while others vehemently denied the accusations. In such cases, the dean consulted witnesses among the parishioners.

The most challenging situations involved persistent inappropriate behavior, requiring additional measures such as summoning the priest to the diocesan residence, sending them to a monastery for penance (typically to Nicula), temporarily suspending their activities, or, in extreme cases, expelling them from the clerical community if the problem could not be resolved otherwise. Although Bishop Iuliu Hossu was firm in handling such cases, he was not inflexible. He consistently sought to resolve issues as amicably as possible, while ensuring that parishioners were not deprived of proper religious services, which might lead to their conversion to other denominations. Another concern of the bishopric was to avoid involving authorities in these matters, which is why reconciliation between the clergy and the community was always expedited. In addition to its commitment to efficient administration by appointing suitable priests for each parish and fostering strong relationships between priests and their communities, the diocese also provided direct material support to priests and, in exceptional cases, to parish offices or even parishioners in need.

All priests, whether parish priests or interim administrators, had the right to request salary advances. These advances were essentially loans provided by the Chapter Administration after the bishop's approval. Although there was no explicitly stated limit on the amount that could be requested, considerations were made based on the priest's income, as the repayment was structured

in monthly installments deducted from their salary, along with a 5% administrative fee resembling interest. Students of the Theological Academy could also request advances, with repayment expected to begin from the income earned after ordination and appointment to a parish.

The most common reasons for such requests were various material difficulties. Occasionally, delays in repayment were requested by those struggling to pay, and these were often granted. On the other hand, some priests requested loans when purchasing personal property in the locality where they served or when funds were needed to relocate to another parish following a transfer approval.

Priests also had the option to request stipends for liturgical intentions. Upon completing these ceremonies, they could either collect their honorarium directly from the Chapter Administration or request it to be sent via postal services.

Parishes and other entities under the auspices of the Greek Catholic Diocese of Cluj-Gherla were eligible for such loans only in exceptional circumstances. For instance, United Schools (Greco-Catholic schools) frequently requested assistance, particularly during the Horthy period, when state support was withdrawn. Similarly, in urgent situations where a church building required immediate repairs and no funds were available in its treasury, the diocese could provide a loan, which was to be repaid under the same terms, including the 5% administrative fee.

Parishioners, however, did not have access to direct financial assistance in the same manner as priests. Nonetheless, the diocese advocated for providing material support to families in need and often contributed financially. With the bishop's approval, collections for the poor, orphans, widows, and other vulnerable groups could be organized at the deanery or diocesan level. The diocese also occasionally made material donations.

As the war progressed, the number of orphans and widows increased significantly, prompting the eparchy to enhance its material aid efforts to address the growing need. Another significant component that focused on the administration of the diocese, with particular attention to the faithful, was the granting of dispensations (exemptions from the observance of certain canonical norms). In the current work, a typology of these dispensations has been developed for easier understanding.

At the beginning of each calendar year, the most frequent dispensations were those related to fasting, where priests and various believers requested exemptions from the obligation to follow fasting rules, often citing medical or material reasons. These requests could be made individually,

for an entire family, or sometimes a priest would compile a list of all those in the community seeking such an exemption, resulting in situations where dispensations were requested for dozens of individuals.

A much broader category is that of matrimonial dispensations, as these were of various types. Firstly, it was necessary to grant dispensations for impediments related to time or age to allow weddings to be officiated during fasting periods or before the three public announcements in the church were completed. This also applied in cases where one of the betrothed, especially the bride, had not yet reached the canonical age for marriage. Such dispensations saw an increase during the years when Romanians were at the front, as some soldiers on leave wished to marry within a short timeframe, and also after the war ended, when soldiers returned home.

This was followed by a series of exemptions from impediments involving various degrees of kinship, particularly blood relations, though not exclusively. The bishop had the authority to approve all such requests, except for fourth-degree consanguinity (between first cousins) and first-degree affinity, for which intervention from the Apostolic Nunciature was required. Although such marriages were discouraged to prevent cohabitation without matrimony, Iuliu Hossu approved these requests.

Failure to comply with the procedures for obtaining any type of dispensation could have serious consequences for the believers involved, as well as for the priest who failed to properly guide them. Additionally, it is notable that all matrimonial dispensations required the payment of a fee, whereas others did not. However, in the case of financially disadvantaged couples, there was the possibility of exemption from this payment.

Besides its concern for the clergy and the faithful, the diocese's administration also focused on the management of the movable and immovable patrimony of all parishes in the territory. Priests were responsible for maintaining parish assets entrusted to them upon assuming office and, if possible, even enhancing them.

In parishes with large communities and wealthy families, this was easier to achieve because the support from the faithful was more substantial. In some cases, in addition to subsidizing liturgical objects, some parishioners donated properties such as houses or land. However, the wartime context led to widespread impoverishment of the population, resulting in fewer such cases.

Church properties themselves could sometimes become sources of income for acquiring new assets. For instance, the buildings of former denominational schools were often rented out, initially to Romanian authorities, then to Hungarian ones, and eventually back to Romanian authorities. Additionally, both at the central and local levels, there were residential properties that could be leased. Land and mills were rented out, and the income from these church holdings represented a source of revenue for the parish rather than the priest, who had a separate stipend.

To further protect church assets, the diocese introduced a requirement for each parish to insure its properties against fire. Since parish houses and annexes were often made of wood, the risk of significant material losses in the event of a fire was considerable. The implementation of this initiative initially met with skepticism from some priests, but gradually, more and more complied with the episcopal directive.

Beyond the regulations that the bishop transmitted to the territory through the vicars forane and the deans, as well as the reports he received from parishes via the hierarchical route, another effective method preferred by Iuliu Hossu to understand the realities within his diocese was direct contact with the clergy and the faithful.

Pilgrimages represented a method through which the bishop managed to be among a large number of believers coming from various corners of the eparchy. Recurring throughout the period were the pilgrimages to Nicula, Strâmbu, and Strâmba, supplemented by the one to Buciumi. Although the course of the war and the shifting borders led to a decrease in the number of participants in these pilgrimages, especially among the male population, their organization was never interrupted.

Additionally, Iuliu Hossu traveled to faith communities to conduct canonical visits. Except for the years 1940 and 1945, during which the number of visits was extremely limited, in all other years, the bishop was among the faithful, with 1943 standing out as the most prominent year in this regard. These visits were not without obstacles, both in terms of the material challenges, which became harder to bear toward the end of the analyzed period, and the difficulties posed by war-affected roads. Furthermore, unforeseen events, notably two assassination attempts initiated by Hungarian ethnics targeting Iuliu Hossu, added to the challenges.

The Cluj bishop also visited forced labor centers housing Romanians, military hospitals with wounded soldiers from the front, correctional centers for youth, and even prisons where

Greek-Catholic detainees were held. He demonstrated a constant concern for the entire community he shepherded, and his presence among the faithful was a source of celebration and joy.

The following two chapters address Iuliu Hossu's administration of territories that were divided by the border changes in the autumn of 1940. These territories belonged to the Archdiocese of Blaj and the dioceses of Cluj-Gherla and Oradea Mare, varying significantly in terms of territory and demographics.

The Greek-Catholic Diocese of Oradea came under the administration of the Cluj bishop in the summer of 1941, following the appointment by the Holy See of the rightful titular, Traian Valeriu Frențiu, as Apostolic Administrator of the Metropolitan See of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș, after the passing of Metropolitan Alexandru Niculescu. In this context, Iuliu Hossu was delegated by the Holy See to administer the Oradea eparchy, but it is important to note that he was responsible only for the territory split off and incorporated into Hungary.

With Ioan Suciu as auxiliary bishop, though unrecognized by the authorities, Iuliu Hossu regularly participated in consistory meetings in Oradea and handled administrative matters that Suciu could not resolve. The relationship with the authorities mirrored the challenges faced in his own diocese, with similar problems occurring throughout Northern Transylvania.

A significant issue in Oradea was financial in nature. While Cluj also faced financial difficulties, the diocesan treasury there managed to overcome many obstacles when the Hungarian state cut off certain funds. In Oradea, however, a loan from the Cluj-Gherla diocese was necessary to address financial problems.

This eparchy also experienced harassment, destruction, and especially violence, the most notorious case being the Ip massacre, though it was not an isolated event. Furthermore, during the final stage of the Horthy regime, as Romanian-Soviet troops advanced, Oradea suffered significant damage from bombings, which heavily impacted properties owned by the bishopric. The most notable example was the seminary of the Theological Academy, which initially served as military quarters and later as a hospital for the wounded.

As Apostolic Administrator, Iuliu Hossu sought to be present among the faithful in the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Oradea, both during festive occasions and canonical visits.

Initially, he participated in school year-end celebrations or events organized around holidays by the Teachers' School in Oradea, which was under diocesan auspices. He was also present at the 150th jubilee of the Theological Academy's founding. Additionally, in 1942, as he

marked 25 years since his investiture as bishop, Iuliu Hossu was celebrated in the Oradea diocese both locally and centrally, through a large-scale festive event.

In the years 1943–1944, Iuliu Hossu visited several localities in the part of the diocesan territory he administered, participating in church consecrations or protopresbyteral synods. For example, in 1944, he made more visits to the Oradea diocese than to his own. When Romanian troops turned against the Axis, the bishop happened to be in Oradea on such visits and was forcibly escorted by Hungarian authorities back to Cluj.

The end of his delegation to this administration did not coincide with the changes on the frontlines and the liberation of Northern Transylvania but occurred only a year later. During this time, just as during the Horthy regime, Iuliu Hossu was tireless in finding the best solutions to ensure the optimal functioning of the United Diocese of Oradea, making similar efforts to those he made for his own diocese.

Another divided territory under his supervision, although not under his direct administration, was the Vicariate of Secuimea, or the Mureș Vicariate. This extensive area, with approximately 160 Greek-Catholic parishes, had been split from the United Metropolitan territory. For this region, the Metropolitan appointed an archiepiscopal delegate in the fall of 1940, namely the dean of Târgu Mureș, Iosif Pop. He consistently benefited from the support and guidance of Bishop Iuliu Hossu.

In this region, where the Hungarian ethnic population was much larger, the most frequent and consistent cases of violence against the Romanian population were reported, including arson and the destruction of Greek-Catholic churches. Church lands were often confiscated without even a formal notification, and force was used to maintain these imposed changes.

Religious conversions were also significant in the Secuimea region, with considerable pressure exerted for both Greek-Catholics and Orthodox to switch to denominations where services were conducted in Hungarian.

A particular situation arose with conversions to the jurisdiction of the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Hajdúdorog. Established in 1912, this diocese had sparked negative reactions from the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church since it included parishes that belonged to Blaj, Gherla at the time, and Oradea. This diocese, based in Hungary and conducting services in Hungarian, sought to reabsorb its former pre-war parishes in the new political context.

Through misinformation and pressure, supported predominantly by verbal and occasionally physical aggression, some believers—or even entire communities—were ultimately forced to agree to switch to the jurisdiction of the United Diocese of Hajdúdorog, fearing the continuation or intensification of the hardships they faced in the Secuimea region.

In response to these problems, both Iosif Pop and Iuliu Hossu made constant appeals to the authorities, but very few assurances from decision-makers were fulfilled. For better administration, however, the archiepiscopal delegate began participating in episcopal meetings of the united bishopric on Hungarian territory, alongside Iuliu Hossu, Alexandru Rusu, and Ioan Suciu (initially, Traian Frențiu also participated before moving to Blaj).

The diocesan publication from Cluj was distributed for purchase in the Secuimea region, and vacant positions from this area were announced in its pages. Materially, the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Cluj-Gherla also addressed the urgent needs of the Secuimea Vicariate, just as it had done for the Oradea diocese.

Lastly, the physical presence of the Cluj bishop was notable in this geographical area as well. In fact, his first visits during the Horthy regime, in 1941, were made to Secuimea, specifically to the Bicazul Ardelean area. He also visited the Târgu Mureș area two years later, in 1943, a year dedicated to canonical visits.

The final divided territory analyzed was part of the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Cluj-Gherla but remained within Romanian territory in the autumn of 1940. Similar to the Metropolitan's decision to appoint a delegate for the Secuimea region, Iuliu Hossu also chose an episcopal delegate for the approximately 50 parishes in the separated deaneries. Their temporary administrative center became the town of Abrud, and Cornel Oțiel, the dean, was chosen to ensure efficient administration.

However, numerous challenges arose in this area. The slow pace of correspondence hindered effective communication between the bishop and the delegate. The issue of refugees was also pressing, especially concerning priests. The Apuseni Mountains region was already a poorer area with smaller parishes, and the influx of priests made it impossible to integrate everyone. Moreover, experienced priests were given priority over newly graduated and ordained students, resulting in the relocation of some to regions such as Bukovina or even Bessarabia, as Romania engaged in the war and administered these territories recovered from the Soviets. Bishop Hossu

was able to visit this territory only once, in 1942, when he also attended events in Alba Iulia and Blaj.

Overall, Iuliu Hossu was dissatisfied with how his appointed delegate carried out the assigned tasks, criticizing him for failing to submit regular reports. This was compounded by tensions between Cornel Oțiel and other clergy members.

Thus, for the three territories—whether directly administered, supervised, or guided—significant effort was required to ensure coherence and address both general and specific needs. Despite the challenging circumstances, Iuliu Hossu fulfilled this responsibility admirably.

The study continues with a chapter on the relationship between the diocese and the Holy See during the analyzed period. The changes of autumn 1940 led to intensified communication with the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches, particularly since Cardinal Eugène Tisserant showed great interest in the Greek-Catholic denomination's situation in Northern Transylvania. He was informed of the pressures placed on believers to change their confession.

Reports from the territory were sent regarding arrested or even expelled priests, church properties damaged by reprisals, and the situation of believers, especially in Secuimea, who were coerced into converting to other denominations, particularly Reformed ones like Calvinism and Unitarianism.

Amid growing difficulties, in 1942, the Holy See sent a papal delegate to Transylvania, both north and south, to investigate the situation. Notably, the archival records of the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Cluj-Gherla suggest that during the delegate's visit—and shortly afterward—reports of harassment in the territory decreased. Improvements were noted, such as the relocation of certain gendarmes who had been complained about. However, these issues resurfaced later, culminating in assassination attempts against Bishop Iuliu Hossu in 1943 and the destruction of educational institutions under the auspices of the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Cluj-Gherla in Cluj in 1944.

It is evident that any intervention to combat hardships, even those from the Holy See, had limited and short-term effects.

Regarding communication with the Apostolic Nunciature, the change in borders required that requests for dispensations, stipends for liturgical intentions, or the transfer of donations for official Catholic Church missions be directed to the Nunciature in Budapest rather than the one in

Bucharest. This situation reverted to the pre-1940 arrangement only after the liberation of Northern Transylvania.

As for clerics studying at the Pio Romeno College in Rome, it should be noted that, despite the financial hardships caused by the war, the process proceeded smoothly. The Hungarian state did not restrict their departure from the territory to Italy.

A notable and distinct event compared to the others discussed in this chapter was the *ad limina* visit conducted in 1940 by three hierarchs of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church, including Iuliu Hossu. The three weeks spent in Rome were marked by a series of official receptions attended by the metropolitan and the united bishops, culminating in an audience with Pope Pius XII. Beyond the ecclesiastical significance of the visit, contemporary media highlighted it as a demonstration of Romanian diplomacy at the Vatican.

The final chapter focuses on the relationship between the United Diocese of Cluj-Gherla and the Orthodox Diocese of Cluj. The necessity of dedicating a part of this work to this subject arises from the fact that, especially during the Horthy period, due to the hardships faced by the Romanian population, a closer connection between the two sister Churches in Northern Transylvania became evident.

The two Romanian hierarchs from Cluj, Iuliu Hossu and Nicolae Colan, participated in the welcoming ceremonies for the Hungarian Prime Minister and Regent Horthy during their first visit to Cluj in the autumn of 1940. Both consistently worked to alleviate the difficulties faced by Romanians, a major joint project being the re-establishment of denominational primary schools, which had been closed after World War I by decisions made in Bucharest. This closure was exploited by their counterparts in Budapest, who persistently delayed reopening the schools despite officially granting approval as early as 1941.

In addition to their official dealings with the authorities, the hierarchs frequently participated in various festive events during the analyzed period. For instance, Nicolae Colan attended the celebration of the 25th jubilee of Iuliu Hossu's consecration as bishop, while the Cluj hierarch took part in the Saint Nicholas Day festivities at the Orthodox Diocese of Cluj. They also made joint appearances at carol recitals organized by Greek-Catholic or Orthodox students, marking their solidarity by simultaneously making official entrances to such events to emphasize the closeness of the two confessional communities.

However, the situation at the central level varied locally. During the canonical visits made by each hierarchy, the priest of the sister Church was present to welcome the visiting bishop, but this was customary practice and not specific to the analyzed period. On the other hand, *Tribuna Ardealului*, a Romanian-language daily published during the time Northern Transylvania was part of Hungary, highlighted several local events that showcased the closeness between Greek-Catholics and Orthodox: joint caroling concerts or reciprocal participation in certain religious events.

Nevertheless, some sporadic tensions at the local level, recorded in documents though not mentioned in the press, were noted. These situations, which were exceptions rather than the rule, often involved issues related to confessional transitions, particularly when a parish office became vacant, leading to accusations of proselytism from both sides. Despite this, the hierarchs consistently encouraged resolving such issues amicably.

Thus, this doctoral project, entitled "The Greek-Catholic Diocese of Cluj-Gherla in the First Half of the Fifth Decade of the 20th Century" examines a broad range of topics that illustrate and help understand the evolution of the United Diocese of Cluj-Gherla during the 1940–1945 period.