

SZALAY JEROMOS

THE TRUTH ABOUT CENTRAL EUROPE

Tableau de Mgr. A. MARTON

Volume One

AARON MARTON

Bishop of Transylvania

Collection DANUBIA

INTRODUCTION

An attempt to explain and analyse the problems of Central Europe. What a presumptuous enterprise, some people will say. And yet, if a Central Europe is to be rebuilt upon a solid basis, one in which each constituent part can find relative satisfaction of its claims, a *Danubian Federation* must be created, independent of the Great Powers, in no way directed against them, but of value to each of the rival States which go to make it up. Vague theories are not a solution, for they lack any contact with reality and cannot be translated into fact.

When the Treaties of Versailles, Trianon and St Germain were drawn up, statesmen who were nothing more than propagandists and intriguers who had been clever enough to gain control of the Peace deliberations, promised us a new world built on justice and law. They took it upon themselves to satisfy " every legitimate interest ", " every sacred right ", and boasted that they had created a " lasting " order in Central Europe which guaranteed the security of the beneficiaries of the Treaties. Time did not give its sanction to these artificial creations. The " lasting " effects collapsed at the first shock. " It was easy to set up artificial States by means of force and finance... but it is not a matter for wonder if they collapsed as soon as the force which elevated them ceased to operate, or as soon as the political scene changed*¹ ".

It is not with the intention of carping at the past, or reviving bitter feelings, that the author reviews events which horrify or scandalise him, but in order to show what men who are blinded by their " sacred selfishness " and their contempt for the rights of others, are capable of doing.

The term " Danubian Federation " is used rather than " United Europe ". Principally because this Danubian Federation was once a reality. Although it needed reforming, it had given proof of a vitality which no amount of propaganda can put in doubt. Its constituent elements are there for all time, and in any case events have erased the work of 1919-20. It is to be hoped that those who were the beneficiaries of those years, as well as those who were the victims, will emerge from the present cataclysm a little wiser, and will take the words " justice " and " right " more seriously. Otherwise, even the most laboriously built creation will crumble once again.

Why speak of a Danubian Federation, since the whole of Europe ought anyhow to be federalised?

Firstly, because we can see only too well how many difficulties and how many hidden interests are already standing in the way of the birth of a United Europe. Secondly, because the champions of a United Europe are the selfsame chauvinistic politicians who have already once been the bane of Central Europe. Behind their machinations and their intrigues, lies the hope of a return **to** the *status quo*. They have learnt nothing. Having taken no account before of forces of which they know nothing—political, geographical, economic, etc—they want to indulge in fresh injustices, after the mistakes of 1919 and those of Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam, which will inevitably bring the States of Central Europe to the brink of fresh catastrophes.

This work consists of two volumes. The first is centred round the person of Mgr Aaron Márton, Bishop of Transylvania, whose destiny is at the origin of the book. His life-work provides a suitable framework for the discussion of several problems which, until they are solved, will render illusory any attempt to create a possible way of life for Central Europe.

To complete the exposition of the subject, a second volume will be added with the title " Unite or Perish ". It is a book which many people will not like, but it is necessary reading for those who wish to familiarise them-selves with the problems of Central Europe.

Quotations appear perhaps a little too frequently. The author's excuse lies in the very delicacy of the subject dealt with. Yet he makes so bold as to say with Pascal: " Let nobody say that I have said nothing new ; the arrangement of the material is new. "

The author takes his motto, to which he wishes to remain faithful throughout his book, from Juvenal:
" *Vitam impendere vero*^{*2} ".

*¹ F. O. MIKSCHE: *Danubian Federation. A Study of Past Mistakes and Present Possibilities in a Vital Region of Europe*. London. P. 2. Cf. the states created by Napoleon.

*² To devote one's life to the truth. (*Satires*. IV. 91.)

PREFACE

One more hero and confessor of the faith has become part of the history of the Hungarian nation, of Christendom, and we may say of humanity itself. Aaron Márton, the Bishop of the Hungarian Catholics of Transylvania, is a worthy companion to Joseph Mindszenty. Both occupy a special place amongst the martyrs and heroes of Hungary. They did not have a nation of 30 millions behind them, as was the case in Poland. They did not make use of dubious political subtleties, as happened in some countries, they refused to rub shoulders with the conqueror. They were the mouthpieces of a conquered nation, whom they sustained on the road to Calvary, and in whom they kept alive the flame of hope, when all hope seemed lost.

Their names have introduced a new notion of sanctity and heroism to mankind. Joseph Mindszenty and Aaron Márton would have been saints and heroes, even if Providence had not placed them in positions where the whole world could see that they were great men. Great men do not suddenly appear out of nothing, neither are they formed by their high positions. " Martyrdom is but the crowning of a whole life of daily heroism and constant submission to the will of God ", said Pius XII.

These men must have been made of the stuff of saints and heroes to acquit themselves as they did in such hard times ; to become such universally—acknowledged and passionately—loved heroes, they had to be body and soul part of the Hungarian nation, to be identified with it and to be the incarnation of everything that Hungarians expect to see in their heroes. They came out of the ranks of the people, when their country needed leaders. The whole Hungarian race lived, protested, fought, suffered and accepted martyrdom with them, for their religion and their country.

Joseph Mindszenty and Aaron Márton each represent and incarnate separate aspects of the Hungarian destiny. Joseph Mindszenty was the leader of a dismembered country ; Aaron Márton is the hero of a people who lived as a Minority under foreign domination. Both are national figures to an extent that has no parallel in Hungarian history.

The Primate of Hungary was loved as no other Primate has ever been loved by his people ; he was hated by enemies who knew no scruples and disposed of a material strength which, humanly speaking, was irresistible. Every sincere Hungarian stood at his side ; against him were ranged the opportunists, the cowards, all the internal and external enemies of the Hungarian nation. He has attracted a great deal of attention and has been a popular subject for authors.

Aaron Márton has not received any attention. Those who could have spoken of his courage and his witness to the Faith were obliged in their own interest to be silent. And when opinion changed, his former persecutors, who had forced him and his people to tread the paths of Calvary, made capital out of his martyrdom and in the interests of propaganda, *Aaron Márton was declared to be a Rumanian.*

Woe betide me if I do not speak out. Woe betide me **above all if I allow the** truth to be distorted through fear or self-interest. As d'Etournelles de Constant, the famous promoter of international peace movements said, at the unveiling of the statue to Jaurés on 5th August 1921:

" Our minds have been so saturated with official lies, that they cannot suddenly awaken in the daylight and see the truth all of a sudden... It would not be believed !... It would only be believed gradually, and little by little, as remorse, or conscience, or discord, or simple vanity forced all the witnesses to speak, one after the other... If we wait a little longer, we shall know and understand... even if we do without what the Foreign Offices will have had time to destroy or fake in their archives ".

Weakness of this kind is not the hall-mark of any one nation. It is a weakness in human nature.

Today two worlds face each other. Each claims to be in exclusive possession of the truth, and accuses the other of having violated it. Nothing on earth will make us deviate from the truth, however unpalatable it may be, even to ourselves. We take for our guidance the device of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, who was later to become Pius II, custodian of the Faith and the truth: "*Ne in sinistrum nos trahat ignorantia, non favor inflectat, non acceptio personae corrumpat** ".

When writing this book, we have often called to mind the celebrated phrase of Cardinal Faulhaber, directed against the " Profaner " of the Bible and his Nazi disciples, who ventured into the

field of Biblical exegesis: " Must I say it ? Must I not say it ? No, my duty is to speak out ! " It is our duty too to speak the truth, especially today, when it seems that speech has not been given to men to explain their thoughts, but to conceal their intentions. Fléchier, the great French preacher, exclaimed: " Nobody now has the courage to speak the truth, nor the strength to listen to it.- Sincerity passes for incivility and uncouthness. "

The battle between truth and falsehood is indeed only too unequal a one. Sincerity and truth must be more ingenious than falsehood in finding ways to make their voice prevail. We approach our account in the same courageous spirit that enabled the young Churchill to declare in his maiden speech in Parliament: " If I were a Boer, I hope that I should have taken up arms and fought. " (Quoted in *Le Figaro* of 2nd August 1952). We also ask for the understanding of those who will consider themselves the opponents of our ideas and our findings. May they be inspired by the same integrity and love of justice as ourselves.

We have placed Aaron Márton in the setting in which he lived and carried out his apostolate. Without such a setting, a false picture would have been given of the real stature of the man. Let nobody be surprised, there-fore, if there are digressions which endanger the proportions of the book, but which are absolutely necessary for the understanding of the great role he played, and which explain why we must pay attention to one of the great heroes of our day.

We must resign ourselves to the dislike of all those people for whom the crumbling of their castles in Spain, the bankruptcy of their systems, the total failure of their experiments, the most evident disasters brought about by their folly or stupidity, do not induce in the slightest degree to acknowledge as right those people who were in the right all the time " — as was so well said in another context by the French writer, Clément Vautel.

* " May we not be drawn into disaster by ignorance, nor deflected from our path by favours, nor corrupted by sympathy. "

CHAPTER ONE

THE EARLY YEARS OF AARON MARTON

History in the twentieth century has provided the Hungarian nation with the material for two heroic epics. They form a parallel to the epics of antiquity, in that they were created by the whole nation. The leading parts were played by two heroes who were singled out by Providence, and rose to leadership from humble origins, at a moment when their country was overwhelmed by catastrophe. Caught up in a struggle which, humanly speaking, was a hopeless one, both of them were determined to bear witness to Christ and to proclaim the will of their nation to remain true to itself. " We are ready ", they said, " to play the part of modern martyrs, so that our people will recognise us as their true leaders. "

One of these men, Joseph Mindszenty, was nominated to his high position by Rome, with her usual keen insight into the special needs of difficult times. The second, Aaron Márton, was the instinctive choice of the Hungarian people of Transylvania, young and old alike, and Rome confirmed the wisdom of this choice. Joseph Mindszenty and Aaron Márton were both raised to the dignity of Bishop by popular acclaim, like St Ambrose and St Augustine before them.

The heroic lays of old were composed by anonymous minstrels ; only the arrangement of the verses can be traced to individual authors. We likewise can but arrange the material of our modern epics, as the ancients did before us.

Cardinal Mindszenty was born in the province of Zala, where at the first election held after the War, in October 1945, 136,000 electors out of a total of 140,000 voted anti-Communist. Aaron Márton, Bishop of Transylvania, was born in the province of Csík, the most Catholic of all the old provinces of Hungary: out of a population of 157,000, 135,000 were Catholics.

Aaron Márton was a descendant of one of those Hungarian races to which tradition ascribes a legendary origin. It traces its ancestry back to Prince Csaba who, according to the Siculi (Székely), was the son of Attila. However that may be, it is certain that by blood, language and mentality, the race of the Siculi forms part of the Hungarian nation. Even if Prince Csaba is a legendary figure, the Siculi have had one of the finest destinies known to history, for from the eleventh century onwards this branch of the Hungarian nation had the noble mission of guarding the frontier fortresses of the Carpathians and defending Hungary and Christendom itself against the Tartar and Mongol hordes. This guard they mounted with unshakeable faith and intrepid courage. They were the nation of St Ladislas, of Louis of Anjou and of John of Hunyad. They knew freedom even before the inhabitants of the Swiss cantons did.

The Siculi are a gentle and pious people. But they have always been ready to take up arms in defence of their liberty and their religion.

The province of Csík remained Catholic even when the neighbouring provinces had been conquered by the Protestants. Although they often lacked priests, they steadfastly kept their faith alive by popular devotions.

The Siculi have always loved to sing and recite ballads and epic poems, according to ancient custom. The people of Csík especially excelled in these.

Aaron Márton was born at Czíkszentdomokos on 12th August 1896*. It is a celebrated place, this village situated in a narrow valley. For it was here that the Siculi in the service of the Voivod of Wallachia murdered Cardinal Andrew Báthory, Prince of Transylvania, in 1599.

The Báthorys reigned over Transylvania from 1571 onwards, the family giving Transylvania its greatest Prince and Poland its greatest King. The premature death of Stephen Báthory had tragic consequences for the history of both nations. His successor, unfortunately for Transylvania and the whole of Hungary, was the son of his brother Christopher, Sigmund Báthory. He possessed many qualities and his reign seemed at first to be full of promise for the cause of Christendom. His brilliant victories against the Turks, in alliance with the Habsburg Emperor, King of Hungary, made his name glorious throughout

Europe. Unhappily, hereditary weakness appeared later on, for all the brilliant qualities. During the course of a war which was waged as much against the intrigues of his allies as against the Turks, he was subject to fits of depression, followed by wild bursts of energy.

In order to put an end to the political disorder following upon the abdication of Sigmund, the Transylvanians elected Cardinal Andrew Báthory who was born in 1566 and was the Bishop of Varmia (Ermenland) as their

* In Transylvania Old Testament names were very common. In the seventeenth century a sect was founded which observed all the prescriptions of the Old Testament. In 1638 the Diet condemned the leaders to death. Then they embraced Calvinism, but remained secretly attached to their old religion. The last remnant of them openly adopted Judaism. Others went over to Orthodoxy.

Prince. Brought up by the great Stephen Báthory and educated in Italy, this gentle and cultured prince might have been able to restore order in Transylvania. But alas, the Voivod of Wallachia, Michael the Brave, who had reconquered his own country from the Turks with the help of Sigmund Báthory, betrayed him. Instead of continuing the fight against the Turks, he turned against Transylvania and her Prince, Andrew Báthory, despite the fact that four months previously he had sworn fealty to him on the Gospel and on the salvation of his family. Michael the Brave, with the help of his mercenaries, destroyed the Prince's army, caught unawares, at Sellemberk on 28th October 1598. The Prince, withdrawing towards Poland, was killed by a Hungarian soldier in the service of Michael the Brave at Csíkszentdomokos, the village where Mgr. Márton was born. Prince Andrew Báthory, who deserved a better fate, fell a victim to the vacillating policy of his cousin Sigmund, the intrigues of Vienna, and the ingratitude and megalomania of the Voivod, Michael the Brave.

A wooden cross with an inscription commemorates this tragic event, which Aaron Márton must often have contemplated in his youth... He never dreamed that a similar fate would be his.

Michael's treason brought about a whole series of events which extended the Turkish domination for over a century, although it was already considerably weakened and ready to make concessions. Neither did it serve the traitor's overweening ambition. The very General Basta with whom he had joined forces to over-throw the Báthorys, to the prejudice of Christendom, had him assassinated.

The Pope excommunicated the village. Although the interdict lasted a whole century, it did not drive the inhabitants of the commune into apostasy. The villagers had the firm conviction that the Cardinal's murder would one day be expiated by an outstanding man from their

own village. The great man did indeed in the end come from Csíkszentdomokos and the prophecy was accomplished in the person of Aaron Márton.

Aaron Márton, the third of four children, was born of a peasant family. The land of the Siculi has never been very fertile. It is hard work to wrest food from the soil. But this unending struggle, combined with a strong religious feeling, is a good preparation for the difficulties of life.

The Siculi peasant is strong and industrious. The women of the race work gaily in the fields as girls, then spend the rest of their lives in devoted sacrifice for their children. For centuries they have found joy and consolation in singing the old Church songs and in reciting the Rosary alone or in groups. In the Hungarian form of the Rosary, the essential needs of our Christian lives are recalled in connection with the mysteries of the life of the Saviour, immediately after the phrase " Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus " in the Hail Mary. How could the Siculi ever lose their faith, when following the example of their famous leader, John of Hunyad, Palatine-Regent of Hungary, they had prayed so often: May Jesus increase our faith, may He strengthen us in hope and perfect us in charity. "

Christian mothers throughout the centuries have only to recite the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary to understand the duties of their state: (Jesus... whom you, a Virgin, have conceived... Whom you bore in your womb when you visited St Elizabeth... Whom you presented in the Temple... Whom you found again in the Temple...

These mysteries prepared them for the Sorrowful Mysteries: (Jesus Who sweated blood for us... Who was scourged... crowned with thorns carried His Cross... Who was crucified on the Cross...) Such mothers know how to suffer and carry their cross. It is good and pious women, such as the mothers of

Cardinal Mindszenty and Mgr Aaron Márton, who prepare their sons for the priesthood. Prayer gives them a better idea of spiritual truth than others find in learned dissertations. This awareness of the spiritual life they infuse into their children. They are even ready to tread the road to Calvary if need be.

In the Márton household, family prayers were recited every day in common. When the father came home from his work in the fields and the mother was preparing their modest supper, he would take his little son on his knee and say " Make the sign of the Cross, my boy. " By the time he started school, little Aaron already knew the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Angelus, the recitation of which at noon was decreed by Pope Calixtus II, to commemorate the Hungarian victory over the Turks at -Belgrade in 1456.

At the primary school, the boy's intelligence was immediately spotted by the priest and the schoolmaster. He would make a good priest or a good teacher one day, they thought; who could tell ? Anything was possible in one of Siculi race. Each province had its own Catholic or Protestant Grammar School, where industrious and intelligent boys were educated free of charge. The school provided the textbooks, while other expenses were paid out of funds provided by former pupils, or by scholarships, or by any means devised by the priests and staff.

Thanks to the perspicacity of the parish priest and the village schoolmaster, Aaron Márton was sent to the Boys' Grammar School at Csíksomlyó, a place of pilgrimage for the Siculi. The Franciscan Convent which had administered the school for over two hundred years, was originally founded by John of Hunyad. The great Christian champion's work was destroyed by the weakness of his successors and by the selfish interests of European politics, but the Convent has survived every vicissitude and still today nourishes the faith of the Siculi.

Aaron had already seen Csíksomlyó before he went there to school. All Siculi boys are taken during childhood by their fathers to the sanctuary of the Siculi, to pray before the five-hundred-year-old wooden statue of the Madonna. He too made the pilgrimage on foot, reciting the Rosary in procession to a chant which is sung only in Hungary, and which fills the people with rejoicing.

The period spent at Csíksomlyó was a testing time for the little village boy. Was he really intelligent ? Or, as has so often happened before, was the judgement of the priest and the schoolmaster going to be at fault ? Soon the anxious parents were convinced that their son would not disgrace them and was fully equal to the demands of higher education.

Although he was not very good at Latin prose, little Aaron showed himself to be an intelligent and studious boy. He took part in all the games and sports, while during the holidays he helped his parents in the fields.

He took an enthusiastic interest in the Catholic youth movements of his time. A word here ought to be said about the influence exercised by the review for young people called " *Zászlónk* " (Our Flag) and also about the Association of chaplains to the youth clubs of Budapest, known as the " *Regnum Marianum* ".

The review " *Zászlónk* " had a deep influence on young Hungarian Catholics between 1908 and 1918. Neither before nor since has a Catholic paper been able to create such an intimate link with its readers. It might be said that the whole of the Catholic youth of the time was responsible for its contents, supervised by their kindly elders. Many young talents spread their wings here for the first time. Young poets, whose reputation has been in some cases confirmed by time, published their first-fruits here. Mgr Tihamér Tóth began his literary career in its columns. Here also the three priest-poets, Alexander Sík, the Piarist father Louis Harsányi and Ladislav Mécs first revealed their talent. Such names as these would be an ornament to literature. (The last-named has been deported to Siberia, where he continues to edify those who share the same sufferings). Many minor poets also contributed to the paper.

The *Zászlónk* " group and " *Regnum Marianum* " had indeed an extraordinary success in Hungary. Subscribers soon increased in the first year from 3,000 to 30,000. The editors of " *Zászlónk* " and its readers were amongst the most important factors in the renaissance of Hungarian Catholicism at the time.

How impatiently the schoolboys of distant Csíksomlyó waited for each new issue !

Csíksomlyó, the seat of the pilgrimage, is a small town of no more than 2,000 souls. The little Franciscan Convent has fulfilled the aim of its founder most worthily. It has become a living centre of piety and patriotism for the Siculi in their isolation. As he sang at Mass, the boy Aaron could not help but recall the event which had made Csíksomlyó famous. For in 1567, when they had beaten the army of the Protestant Prince John Sigmund of Zápolya, sent to stamp out their Catholic faith, the Siculi celebrated their liberty by singing a *Te Deum* in thanksgiving in and around the Franciscan Church.

To commemorate that victory, the Siculi have ever since organised a pilgrimage to Csíksomlyó. At first it took place on Trinity Sunday, the actual anniversary of the battle, then it was transferred to Whitsuntide, probably as a reaction against the Unitarians (or anti-Trinitarians) whom they had repulsed in 1567. On such days, processions arrive in a steady stream and from 70 to 100 priests are available to hear confessions.

The little town of Csíksomlyó has its own traditions, watched over by the Franciscans. The celebrated hymnal of John Kajoni was first printed at Csíksomlyó, on primitive presses made by the author himself. The book is a proof of the Catholic spirit of the Siculi and bears witness to their enthusiasm for Church music.

Young Aaron hung on the words of his masters as they explained the working of the primitive printing press.

With a boy's eagerness, he decided that he too would become a worker in the cause, and a soldier of his country. In what form and in what circumstances would this decision be translated into reality? Providence does not reveal its designs to anybody before the due time.

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While Aaron Márton was still at school, Csíksomlyó lost some of its importance. It still remained the national sanctuary, but the Boys' College had to be extended and modernised, so that it was transferred to Csíkszereda, the county town, about a mile away. Here he spent two years, from 1912 to 1914. And it was at Csíkszereda that his vocation first began to take shape. Then he entered the minor seminary at Gyulafehérvár (Alba Julia) where he would have completed his higher studies, had the war not broken out. He went straight from the seminary into the army.

Aaron Márton joined his regiment cheerfully. He had not been born a Siculi for nothing. He reached the rank of lieutenant and was several times decorated. More important than this, he won the affection of his soldiers and kept their morale at a high level. He was already at the front when the Rumanians, who were the allies of Austria-Hungary, broke that alliance and invaded his country. They met with a humiliating defeat, while the Siculi region suffered considerable damage from the Rumanian invasion. The young lieutenant knew what it was to share his country's sorrows.

Aaron Márton was still at the front when the saddest event in the whole history of Hungary occurred. The neighbouring states cast covetous hands on parts of Hungarian territory, their obligations to her in the past being all forgotten. Hatred and the strain of the four-years' war excited a feeling of hostility against the Hungarian people, while the Socialist party and the ultra-patriotic parties, plus a handful of intellectuals, sapped the very foundations of the land which had, in the course of the centuries—if the propagandists will allow the remark - fulfilled one of the noblest vocations in the history of the world: the defence of the West and of Christendom against the Turk.

Once the shock of his country's fate had passed, Aaron Márton had to decide what to do. Should he remain in Transylvania, which had now passed under Rumanian control, or should he return to a mutilated Hungary? Once the Treaty of Trianon had been signed, no further hesitation was possible. He remained in Transylvania, and as soon as circumstances allowed, he returned to the seminary at Gyulafehérvár, where he began his theological studies in the year 1920.

CHAPTER II

AARON MARTON AT THE SEMINARY

The war with all its upheavals had cost him five years ; on the other hand, he had acquired experience and a knowledge of men which was to last him all his life.

He started his Calvary when he entered the seminary. His Bishop told him: " I send you like a lamb to the wolves. " He deliberately chose to be the priest of a persecuted people. The whole of his early life had pre-pared him for such a mission. He had completed his secondary studies while Transylvania had still been part of Hungary, so that he was familiar with the past of his own nation. He had fought against the Russians as a soldier of his country. He was always proud of being a descendant of the Siculi race, whom the Hungarian Kings had settled in the military marches of the S.E. Carpathians in the eleventh century, to serve as a bastion for Hungary and Western Christendom against the Turk.

It was obvious from the beginning of his course that the Rumanians were paying special attention to the Catholic seminary at Gyulafehérvár. If they were not as yet acting with the brutality of the later

popular democracies, the sword of Damocles was none the less constantly suspended over the heads of the seminarists.

His four years at the seminary broadened the young man's horizon and gave him a serious spiritual and intellectual formation, which was to sustain him in his apostolate. On Sundays the theological students went to High Mass at the Cathedral, which brought back memories of the Hungarian past. This beautiful Cathedral is full of historic tombs, including those of John of Hunyad and some of the Princes of Transylvania. At the time of the Reformation, it became a Protestant church and remained so for one hundred and fifty years, the Diets of Transylvania being also held within its precincts. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, it reverted to its legitimate custodians. Memories of the great Bishops who had served the diocese caught the heart and the imagination of the young theologian. These were the men who had founded Catholic institutions all over their immense diocese (extending to 57,000 sq. kilometres) which were instrumental in preserving the Faith amongst a people who would otherwise perhaps have apostatised, considering how isolated they were from their fellow-Catholics.

Not far from the seminary was the *Batthyaneum*, the rich and beautiful library which had been founded by Bishop Ignatius Batthyány in the eighteenth century. One of the most ancient documents of the Hungarian language was kept in this library, the "*Fragments of Gyulafehérvár*."

What was the seminary like? The professors were excellent, the students were full of enthusiasm, and mindful of the Hungarian seminary tradition whereby for one hundred and fifty years generations of young theologians had prepared themselves for serious scholarship by their work in the "Literary Circles". Did our silent Siculi take his share in such work? As a schoolboy at Csiksomlyó he had seen the fine edition of old school plays which had been written by the staff and acted by the boys in the eighteenth century. Few schools, however ancient their foundation, can boast of such a collection as

this, which combines instruction with entertainment. It is small wonder that the young men who felt they had a vocation to write should have been stimulated by such examples as these.

The man who exercised the greatest influence of all over him was his Bishop, Count Gustave Charles Majláth, who must receive a special mention here.

Mgr Majláth was the son of the last Lord Judge of the Realm *¹ in Hungary. He was born in 1864 and was a godson of the Emperor Francis-Joseph. As a student at Strasbourg, he saw the murder of his father in a vision. This tragic event affected him so profoundly that he took Holy Orders. He had a fine priestly career. He was parish priest at Komárom, Rector of the minor seminary at Esztergom, never stinting the abundance of his heart and intelligence, not to mention the huge fortune which his mother made over to him. He was also a celebrated confessor, who brought peace to many souls.

He accepted the See of Transylvania in 1897, because it was the seat of his family. Here in this diocese, which is unique in the whole world, as we shall see later, he found the true field of his apostolate. He took no advantage of Francis-Joseph's favour beyond asking to be allowed to remain in Transylvania, where apart from the Siculi region and some of the towns, the Catholics constituted but the slenderest of minorities.

Mgr Majláth played a great part in the Catholic renaissance in Hungary. He was a pioneer of new methods when he was Rector of the seminary. He helped to found many institutions which were remarkable for their enterprise in the face of a conservative tradition. Above all must be mentioned the "*Regnum Marianum*", the community of priest-catechisers in Budapest. They formed the real centre of the Catholic revival, evolving new methods and making enthusiastic experiments with the most admirable devotion. In particular they thrashed out the problems of Catholic education which were topical in every country, and worked out solutions which were in conformity with Hungarian needs. *Regnum Marianum* certainly set its seal upon Catholicism in Hungary; so that it was no matter for astonishment that the Communist regime should first of all have attacked the church of *Regnum Marianum*, alleging that the site was wanted for the new town-planning. This was no excuse at all, the real one being that they wanted to sweep away all the monuments of the past and had no intention of letting the church interfere with the obligatory cult of the colossal statue of Stalin erected nearby.

The real scene of Mgr Majláth's apostolate and of his mission as peacemaker was Transylvania, a region unfortunately only too prone to religious strife. Here he succeeded in strengthening the harmony

between the confessions which had already existed for a century, without surrendering one iota of the Church's rights. His visitations invariably ended as triumphal processions. He used to be surrounded, not only by Catholics, but by Protestants and Jews as well. The Protestant leaders soon discovered his goodness and learned to behave with the same tact as he did. The atmosphere of inter-confessional harmony in Transylvania was such that, after the return to Hungary of a part of the territory in 1940, one of the squares in Kolozsvár, the capital, was given the name " *Three Bishops' Square* " (Catholic, Calvinist and Unitarian) to mark the gratitude of the population towards their religious leaders, who had managed to preserve religious peace in such very difficult times.

It was however towards the end of a fruitful apostolate which would have satisfied the most exacting of historians, that Mgr Majláth did his most valuable work for the

Church in Transylvania, when it was under Rumanian occupation.

He was not murdered, as was his ancestor Cardinal Andrew Báthori (whose mother was a Majláth), but he had to endure all the petty persecution of a police state. He had to look on while the occupying power fought to undo the work of centuries. For the sake of his flock, he accepted humiliation, which is often more meritorious than suffering a cruel death. His noble attitude can serve as an example to later generations. He did not go out of his way to make things difficult for the new masters, but neither did he suffer his conscience to be violated. He did not betray the oath of loyalty which he had taken to the King of Hungary. Before taking the oath to the King of Rumania, he asked the permission of the Pope and the Hungarian Parliament. The speech he made to the King of Rumania on this occasion is a good lesson to all those who are always ready to abase themselves before new masters: " Bowing to the will of Providence, which directs the fate of nations, obeying the voice of conscience, which imposes upon us the duty of respecting the established government, and of setting a good example to our faithful in the performance of this duty, and of contributing to the peace and security of the country, we have sworn allegiance to Your Majesty... We are convinced that Your Majesty will defend religious liberty and will give effective help in safeguarding our respective rights in the matter of worship and the maintenance of our schools, and finally that Your Majesty will be able to put an end to the sufferings of so many souls, whose only fault was that they loved their country passionately. " (1)

It was Mgr Majláth whom our young seminarist chose as his model, as did all the other students. Happy are the young men who can find their ideal in their immediate entourage. Happier still are those who, later on in the light of their own more mature judgement and wide experience, can look back and say that the object of their admiration had not betrayed their hopes. This is exactly what happened in regard to Mgr Majláth. And how necessary such a model example was to these young seminarists at Gyulafehérvár ! Depression, exhaustion and impatience were very real dangers to these young apostles of Hungarian Catholicism in Transylvania.

The future looked dark for them. History was there to remind them of the cruel reprisals which had followed upon the peasant uprisings of Horia and Closca (in 1782-5) and the Revolution of 1848. The Hungarians in Transylvania were not unaware of what the Rumanian Minister Bratianu had said when he signed the Treaty of Trianon: " *Now the whole world will see how the Minorities will disappear in Rumania.* " (2) Later on, in 1927, he declared to Dudley Heathcote: " (3) *If you come to Kolozsvár in ten years' time, I can assure you that you will not find any Hungarian Minority* " (4). " *It is either they (the Hungarians) or ourselves,* " said Julius Maniu, the leader of the Peasant Party of Transylvania, and former Member of the Budapest Parliament, who had no reason at all to complain of Hungarian " oppression ".

The Rumanian State, which had seized Transylvania as a consequence of international political intrigue, and in spite of a crushing military defeat in 1917-18, spared no effort to bring this about by every means in its power. It no doubt overlooked the fact that it had given a pledge, within the framework of an international convention, to protect the rights of Minorities. This pledge was the *sine qua non* of the ratification by the Peace Conference of the annexed territories. To prevent Rumania from defaulting on her obligations, the first article of the first chapter of the Peace Treaty declares:

" Rumania undertakes that the stipulations contained in articles 2-8 of the first chapter of the Treaty, be recognised as binding to the extent that no law, ruling, or official act will contradict or be in opposition to these stipulations, and that no law, ruling, or official act will take precedence over them. "

The Rumanian Constitution was reformed in 1923. The clauses in the Minorities Statute were, however, passed over in silence. Instead, the Constitution declared that Rumania is an *indivisible national* state—which is a flagrant violation of the rights of Minorities. Indeed the Rumanian mentality was no different in this from the Serb conception, formulated by M. Pacic, Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, at a meeting of the Cabinet held in 1926: " The greatest mistake the Serbs made was not to have settled accounts with the Minorities from the very beginning of the occupation. " (4)

The outlook was dark indeed for the Hungarians incorporated into Rumania. There was not a ray of hope on the horizon. The young theological students of Gyulafehérvár needed all their self-control and steadfastness if they were not to lose heart at the sight of what was being prepared against their nation and their religion. Aaron Márton had the courage to consecrate himself to the service of his nation, condemned thus to disappear, and of his suspect religion. While still a theological student, he witnessed the first moves in the pitiless offensive which was designed to annihilate the Hungarian element in the territories attributed to Rumania.

The reduction of the Hungarian element was effected in several ways.

At the beginning of the Rumanian occupation, many Transylvanian Hungarians had fled, remembering the massacres committed by the partisans of Horia and Closca (in 1782-5) and of Avram Jancu in 1848. Amongst those who remained behind in Transylvania, many had to go into exile subsequently, in order to escape prison and multifarious other troubles, such as beatings-up, preventive detention, etc.

The Rumanians set to work from the very first days of their occupation.

Article 3 of the Peace Treaty with Hungary stipulates:

" Rumania recognises as Rumanian nationals, in the full legal sense, without any formality being necessary, all those persons domiciled at the time of the coming into effect of the present Treaty in any territory forming a part of Rumania, including those territories transferred to her by the Peace Treaties with Austria and Hungary ".

Now the Rumanian legislation and administration were extremely ingenious in devising means of depriving a great number of persons among its Minorities of Rumanian nationality. As a result of the complicated and calculated requirements of the Rumanian law of 1924, article 56, tens of thousands of Hungarian-speaking people were not recognised as having the right to Rumanian nationality. Thus, for example, at Nagyvárad (Oradea Mare), out of 88,000 inhabitants, 32,000 names did not appear on the register as being Rumanian nationals.

The tragic implications of such an uncertain situation can easily be imagined. On the one hand, Rumania wanted to get rid of her Minorities ; on the other hand, Hungary, relying on the stipulations of the Peace Treaty and, furthermore, overwhelmed with refugees, could not take them in. It happened quite often that these stateless people were turned back several times from both sides of the frontier.

The Rumanians singled out Hungarian officials for particularly inhuman treatment. Contrary to the specifications of international law and the stipulations of the Armistice Convention, the Rumanians demanded an oath of allegiance from all Hungarian officials, as from 1st December 1918. Those who refused to take the oath before the Peace Treaty was even signed (on 4th June 1920) were dismissed and their salary suspended. Not content with dismissing these officials, the Rumanians expelled them from their native land. Up to the end of 1924, more than 197,000 Hungarians, officials for the most part, were expelled from the territories attributed to Rumania.

At first, the Rumanian government retained in its service those officials who had taken the oath of loyalty before the conclusion of peace, but they were soon disillusioned. First of all a considerable contingent of them was transferred beyond the Carpathians into pre-Trianon Rumania ; others were dismissed, under the pretext that they did not speak Rumanian, in proportion as the Rumanian government succeeded in improvising the necessary personnel from amongst Rumanians. The administration, as well as private corporations, submitted them to one examination after the other in the Rumanian language, in order to find some excuse for eliminating them, fifteen years even after the conclusion of the Peace Treaty.

The Hungarian element decreased in numbers, thanks also to a method the Rumanians adopted

whereby nationality was not decided according to the mother-tongue, or the declaration of the person concerned, but according to his ethnic origin. The investigation into this ethnic origin was, of course, the business of the administration. The thorny problem of the Minorities would in this way soon be solved, they thought, thanks to this ingenious method. An under-secretary of State, Bucsan by name, made this observation:

" Very numerous are those Rumanians who do not bear a Rumanian name, do not go to a Rumanian church or school, and who are yet of Rumanian origin. This is the result of the Austro-Hungarian domination. We shall seek out the real origins of these nationals, so that they can recover the racial nationality to which they have always remained secretly loyal in their hearts. This is true of numerous Rumanians in Bukovina, who have become Ruthenians, and also of the Siculi, who are only Magyarised Rumanians. It is specially true of the Transylvanian Jews, who think themselves to be Hungarians, although racially they are not Magyars but Jews. " (5)

Such sophistries defy comment. It goes without saying that they were directed against the Minorities, especially the Hungarians. (We shall return to this subject in connection with the schools problem.)

The purpose of such abuses was to reduce the Hungarian element and present the public of Western Europe with statistics in favour of the Rumanian element. Their specious arguments, through sheer force of repetition, convinced people in the end, because they wanted to be convinced—such was the pathological ascendancy of war-propaganda over their minds. The fact remains that the Rumanians themselves knew full well just how accurate their statistics were. Em. D.B. Vasiliu notes in his book, " The Demographic Situation in Rumania ", that the Minority question was the most important problem modern Rumania had to face. " But ", he adds, " public opinion has been given false data on the subject. The explanation is that *the authorities are trying to hide Me truth and deny the plainest facts. The greatest fault in the statistical methods of Rumania is their absolute lack of good faith. The Director of the Statistical Institute has invented a new school of false statistics.* " (6)

" *There are three sorts of lie; the positive lie, the evasive lie and the statistical lie.* " With a little twisting, statistics can be made to say anything required.

The Treaty of Trianon had stipulated " There shall be no restriction among Rumanian nationals upon the free use of any particular language, whether in private or in business life, in religious matters, in the press, or in publications of any sort, or in any public meetings. " In point of fact, the use of the Hungarian language was forbidden in offices and in the courts of law. The Tele-phone Department declared in 1922: " We draw the attention of all managers and all subsidiary personnel to the fact that we shall not tolerate the use of Hungarian in Post Offices ; you must always answer across the counter in Rumanian." At the station of Csikszereda, a town which was almost entirely Hungarian, a poster was put up: " Speak Rumanian ! Anybody who does not do so will be dismissed. " Schoolboys who dared to speak Hungarian during break were dismissed from the state schools. No signboards could be written up in Hungarian. People who spoke Hungarian in the street were insulted.

Methodically, ingeniously, and in a variety of ways, the Rumanian regime in Transylvania did its best to " *extirpate the very memory of the Magyar tradition.* " Now deported himself, Stelian Popescu has lived long enough to regret his outrageous conception.

Complaints addressed to the League of Nations obtained no satisfaction, because the League was founded, not to dispense justice to the " conquered ", but to protect the " conquerors. "

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* *

The most efficacious means designed to eliminate the Hungarian element and its culture were *the agrarian reform and the campaign against the Hungarian schools.*

The Agrarian Reform.

Agrarian reform is the magic formula which justifies every abuse. The victims in this field are not even allowed to offer a defence, or explain their side of the case. That has always been the way with new

masters, the only difference today being that the technique of theft has been perfected. In our book on Cardinal Mindszenty, we have already gone into the question of agrarian reform, but we must return to it here in order to refute the accusations brought against Hungary by her former Minorities.

The great estates in Hungary have their origin in the depopulation of the countryside, which was caused by the Turkish wars between the years 1526 and 1718. After the expulsion of the Turks, vast stretches of land passed into the hands of those people who could prove that their families had a claim to them. At the same time, the beneficiaries always had to pay a tax towards the cost of the war of liberation, the rate of which was fixed by the *Neoacquisita Commissio*. Many families which had died out, or had been ruined under the Turkish occupation, were unable to pay this tax. So immense estates became available for disposal and were donated by the dynasty to those families who had contributed financially towards the liberation of the country, while others were sold by the Treasury, whenever it was short of money.

In former times, the land in Hungary was farmed by serfs, as it was throughout Europe at that time. Since the Turkish invasions and occupation had reduced the population to half its former numbers (from 4 million in 1500, it had dropped to 2,500,000 by 1720), the Hungarians were not able to exploit these vast devastated areas themselves, and were obliged to enlist the help of emigrants who came to Hungary from all over Europe. The great estates were originally formed when the most outlying and least fertile areas, for which no serfs could be found, were grouped together.. They were still further enlarged by the damming of rivers and de-forestation. The most prosperous estates, however, were invariably the ones which were worked by serfs. Then the whole system was changed, when the tenant farmers came into full legal possession of their land in 1848.

A sensible and natural division of the big estates was impossible because a new class of big landowners had arisen—rich business-men, especially Jews, who had bought up the estates of landlords who had gone bankrupt. So it came about that more than 1,149,200 hectares of land were registered as being in the hands of the Jews.

Those Hungarian or foreign publicists who criticise Hungary on the score of agrarian reform do not understand, or refuse to understand, the real problem. In Hungary, the former serfs simply became the legal owners of the land, whereas in England, for example, where there are huge estates, the exact opposite happened and farmers are merely tenants on the land. In France, you can pass through village after village and only see small properties scattered here and there.

Critics are unjust when they accuse the big landowners in Hungary of the shortcomings of foreign systems, as well as of their own. The land problem in Hungary is far more complex than simple people or demagogues imagine. The men responsible for the break-up of the economic unity of Austria-Hungary had every interest in propagating the idea that all difficulties could be traced back to the evil of "feudalism". Their theories are a mixture of truth and falsehood, incomprehension and ignorance. Poverty in Hungary was not the result of "feudalism", but of the shortage of markets. In 1938, the Hungarian peasant was selling his corn at 30 francs a hundred-weight, whereas in France a hundred-weight of wheat fetched 197.50 francs.

The situation of the Rumanian serfs in Hungary and Transylvania was exactly the same as that of every other peasant in Europe. At the time of the liberation of the serfs in 1848, the Rumanians enjoyed the same rights and advantages as the Hungarian serfs. In historic Transylvania, the peasant class became the legal owners of 1,600,000 Hungarian acres *² of land, of which 80 % fell to the lot of the Rumanian peasants. And these Rumanians represented but one half of the Rumanian population of Hungary. The other and richer half lived outside historic Transylvania (in the provinces of Crishana and Bánát). In addition, the Rumanian peasants received in their entirety the immense common holdings of the former military marches of Naszód (Nasaud in Rumanian), 358,000 acres, and of Karánsebes (Caransebes in Rumanian), 255,000 acres, comprising forests and pastureland in the main. The revenues of these "*compossessorati*", or common holdings, were devoted to bursaries for Rumanian technical schools, boarding schools and orphanages. Thanks to this income and to the generosity of Hungarian governments, the "oppressed" Rumanian nation was able to make good its cultural backwardness.

The Rumanians could certainly not complain that they had no means of extending their

patrimony. To take an example: between 1903 and 1912 the Rumanian peasants were able to buy 125,663 acres of Hungarian land and 31,810 acres of German-Saxon land in Transylvania. Then on top of all this, the Hungarian banks gave them long-term credits on easy terms (21 million gold crowns, as compared with the 24 million the Rumanian banks allowed to their own nationals). (7) Before the first World War, the Rumanian minority (54 % of the population) possessed 65 % of the land attributed in 1914 to Rumania *³.

All the evidence goes to show that historic Transylvania was not a country of big estates. The division of the land there was the most equitable in Europe, after Belgium and Bulgaria. Let the figures speak for themselves: 69.9 % of the arable land belonged legally to the small peasant proprietors ; 11.6 % consisted of medium-sized estates. The big estates thus comprised 18.5 % of the land available for cultivation, while scarcely one third of this 18.5 % of the total area—namely 32.5 % of it—remained in the hands of the big landlords. The rest belonged to various organisations serving the common good: school foundations, orphanages, communal lands and Church property.

The real country of big estates was Rumania, the last country in Europe to emancipate its serfs, and the one in which one peasant revolt followed another: the last and most savagely repressed of them all took place in 1907 (it cost the lives of 10,000 peasants). They liked to talk in Bucharest of the " liberation " of the Rumanians of Transylvania. The truth is that all the social and administrative imperfections which could be laid at Hungary's door, were to be found multiplied in Rumania.

" Although the small farms were only 5 to 10 acres in extent on the average, it was sufficient to nourish a family on, for the rural economy was sensibly organised and the big estate was not a competitor to be feared, but rather an example to be followed ", says a Saxon writer on agrarian subjects. " In Transylvania also, of course, the farms were often coveted by jealous neighbours, but this was a different sort of covetousness. The explanation was not that the peasant did not have enough land on which to feed his family, but it was his healthy and natural desire to enlarge his holding. Add to this the instinctive struggle between the three nationalities to possess the land. Here again the explanation lies not in the fact that one nationality oppressed another nationality, but in the healthy spirit of competition, which made each nationality strive to do as well as or better than the other, in an ethnic rivalry which was consciously felt and served a good purpose. " (8)

Notwithstanding, the confiscation of landed property, thus baptised into " Agrarian Reform ", had to be justified to observers in Western Europe. So began the campaign of calumny and exaggeration to discredit the one-time Hungarian landowners. In itself, neither the so-called " abuses " of the past, nor the all too thoroughly exploited slogan of " the future of the nation ", justified the new masters' expropriation of Hungarian land, in particular, alas, the way in which it was carried out. We remember in this connection what Tacitus said in his " *Agricola* ", Chapter XLII: " *It is human nature to hate the man you have wronged.* "

A cynical declaration of the Prime Minister, Bratianu, revealed without any beating about the bush the true motives which lay behind this so-called " Agrarian Reform ". In 1922, he said in concise terms: " In order to supplant the French culture which was the fashion in the former Kingdom *⁴, the German culture in Transylvania which was transmitted by the Hungarians, and the Slav culture of the Eastern part of the country, the young Rumanian nation must create a new culture. The old forms of civilisation can be the more easily suppressed if we destroy the economic basis of the life of the non-Rumanians. Thus they will become poor. Their progress will be halted. Their social structure will disintegrate. The Rumanian culture can then be established upon the ruins. " (October 1926, at a lecture given at Turnu Severin).

According to Rumanian statistics, a total of 3,118,570 hectares was expropriated in the Hungarian territory attributed to Rumania. Of these, 212,497 hectares were Crown lands, 187,927 hectares had previously belonged to people of Rumanian or Saxon origin and 2,718,146 hectares were expropriated from Hungarian landlords. Out of 3,118,570 hectares, 310,583 only were given to the Minorities, which does not necessarily mean the Hungarian Minority, for the Rumanian government was careful to take into account the place of birth, the language and the race, when deciding upon those who should benefit from the deal.

The Agrarian Reform in the Succession States was presented in Paris and London and abroad generally, as a democratic and humanitarian measure. " The big estates must be divided up and given to those who cultivate them, " said propagandists all over Europe. The plain fact was, however, that the " Agrarian Reform " had one purpose only, to evict the Hungarian Minority from their land. As far as pre-1914 Rumania was concerned, the Minister of Agriculture, Garofield, declared:

" If we do not take the appropriate measures, in less than a generation the big estates will be frittered away, and this would be a great loss to the national economy, because the big estates are still necessary to the economic development of the country. They are as yet only at the beginning of their historical mission. " (9)

So we can see that " Agrarian Reform " could be interpreted in different ways, according to whether pre-war Rumania, or the annexed territories were meant. Hence in Rumania, the number of hectares which could be left to each landowner was 500, whilst in Transylvania various categories were established, whereby all but the last 50 Hungarian acres of a holding was confiscated. The distinction between hectare and Hungarian acre already made an appreciable difference, since the hectare is equivalent to 1.42 Hungarian and 2,47 English acres. More-over, when it was a question of how much could be left to each landlord in Transylvania, the various holdings of a man were counted as one unit, whereas in Rumania each holding was considered separately. So that not even this unjust and inadmissible method of calculation of the minimum holding allowed was strictly observed. The Hungarian landowner never knew when he was safe from further expropriation.

More unjust and indeed even more dishonest, was the rate fixed for compensation. In pre-1914 Rumania, the value of the land which obtained in 1917-22 was paid. In Transylvania, rates of compensation were calculated on the figures which obtained in the years 1908-13, which meant an immense loss because of progressive inflation. They did not scruple to calculate rates for Hungary in devalued crowns, which were not then worth more than one fiftieth of their 1908 value — in other words they were practically worthless. And when the Rumanian government withdrew the Hungarian currency from circulation, the exchange imposed upon the Hungarians was one Rumanian *lei* to 2 crowns. Now, the former owners of the land were given compensation in State bonds only, which immediately upon issue were quoted at 40 % below their nominal value. The upshot therefore was that the unhappy dispossessed landlords found themselves with 00.50 % of their fortune left.

Demagogues are quick to excuse this confiscation of property in the name of social justice, and because they think that the rights of the small-holders were respected. But this was not so. The " Agrarian Reform " was an inhuman weapon directed against the ethnic Minorities. The confiscation did not even spare the small-holdings, which should have been exempted au principle. They were never at a loss for an excuse. The Rumanian government dispossessed by these means 2,285 families of agricultural settlers by expropriating 48,000 of their 65,000 acres, on the pretext that these settlers had not been given any legal right to the land. At Mádéfalva, the few humble acres of 41 small-holders were expropriated and given to Rumanian railway employees, who transferred the farmland into kitchen gardens and orchards.

Such instances speak for themselves. Here is another one. The Protestant church at Maroszentimre, together with 30 acres of church land, was expropriated on the pretext that the Protestant community which owned them had disappeared. The Minister of Agriculture simply offered the church (built by the generosity of John of Hunyad in memory of his victory over the Turks in 1452) to the Greek-Catholic, or Uniate community. The Uniate Archbishop, embarrassed by such indelicate generosity, declined the offer and said in the newspaper *Uniera* ":

" No law exists in Rumania by which churches can be expropriated. Such expropriation is illegal. We are opposed to it. In our opinion, this Protestant church could only be used as a Catholic church with the consent of the competent Protestant authorities. If it were otherwise, what guarantee would there be that tomorrow other churches would not similarly be stricken with illegal; expropriation ? "

Prophetic words if ever there were any ! Six months later, the Sub-Prefect, accompanied by the mayor and the police, summoned the old pastor to surrender the keys of his church.

Even more characteristic was an incident which happened at Szamosszentandrás, where the kitchen garden belonging to the former big landowner of the place was expropriated, on the pretext that

the land was wanted to provide a worthy site for the Greek-Catholic church. In order to get the full flavour of the brutality of such a gesture, it must be realised that the existing Uniate church had been built in former times thanks to the generosity of the ancestors of this same Latin-Catholic " lord of the manor ". But the new church was never built, so he was allowed to pay rent for his own kitchen garden.

The " *compossessorati* " (or grants of land made in the eighteenth century to the Siculi Border Guards for the upkeep of the soldiers who fought against the Turkish invasions) were also confiscated, or reduced to a minimum. This land—forests and pasture in the main—had been held in common by the descendants of these Siculi Border Guards. As well as providing the villagers with pasture-land, free firewood and opportunities of work, the income from these " common lands " was devoted to works of charity such as schools, orphanages, etc. Now the Rumanian regime forced the district of Marosszék (consisting of 127 Hungarian communes) to share its " *compossessoratus* " with the neighbouring Rumanian communes. On top of this, the district had to pay a special tax to help build a Rumanian Orthodox cathedral at Marosvásárhely. So with Hungarian money levied from Protestants and Catholics alike, they tried to build an ugly Byzantine cathedral in a Hungarian town which was practically devoid of any Orthodox population.

Graver still was the question of the " Common lands of Csik. " This " *compossessoratus* " composed of 62,604 acres of forest and pasture, with its appropriate farm buildings, etc, and worth 105,820,000 crowns (pre-war value) was simply expropriated from the Siculi families, while the Rumanian " *compossessorati* " of Naszód (358,000 acres) and Karánsebes (255,000 acres) were left intact in the hands of the Rumanians, who were likewise descendants of the old Rumanian Border Guards.

This communal land at Csik had supplemented the incomes of 15,000 families and sometimes provided a little work for them. A petition against the spoliation was immediately sent by the victims to the League of Nations which, at its session of 27th September 1932, forced the Rumanian government, without any preliminary discussion of the legal aspects of the case, to restitute 11,659 acres to their rightful owners.

Yet it was not the peasants, who were relatively helpless to strike back, but the Church and cultural organisations which suffered the most unfair discrimination. (We shall return to this matter when we discuss the school question.)

Such an unjust Agrarian Reform had disastrous consequences not only for those who were deprived of their land, but on production also. A German-Saxon observer wrote: " *Now we have come to the last act in the tragedy of the non-Rumanian nationalities in Transylvania ; what is happening at present is a flagrant and cynical violation of legal obligations and the results exceed the most pessimistic forebodings. Our senses refuse to take in what is going on under our very eyes. "* And we must remember that the Saxons were given a privileged position in Transylvania, so that they could be played off against the Hungarians 1

The indignation of the Rumanians themselves was no less strong than that of the Minorities. The newspaper " *Indereptarea* " condemned the abuses of the " Agrarian Reform " in very strong terms:

" The implementing of the Agrarian Reform is giving rise to countless and interminable scandals ; illegal proceedings and corruption are rife and are giving rise to complaints and protests from all corners of the country. " (10)

La Réforme Sociale published balanced articles in which the Agrarian Reforms instituted in Europe after the first World War were analysed (11). The conclusion to be drawn from these impartial studies is that the extent of the estates is only one aspect of the rural problem ; those reformers who concentrate on size run the risk of creating anomalies as bad and even worse than those they try to abolish. Since the first World War, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Germany, as well as Russia and Latvia and other countries besides, have adopted an agrarian reform. Wherever Socialist ideas were in the ascendant, the same unfortunate results appeared: production fell. It was not so in Austria and Hungary, where other principles prevailed.

Any fair-minded observer is bound to come to the same conclusions.

Alas, the demands of a short-sighted policy do not always take the claims of economics and justice into account. The art of the statesman is to try to reconcile them. But it was not a social problem

which the Rumanian politicians were proposing to solve. Their one idea was to destroy Hungary's wealth, so that Hungarian culture could all the more surely be undermined. The obligation to respect the fortune and the land of the ethnic Minorities was circumvented by the " Agrarian Reform ".

The new masters did not stop at " Agrarian Reform " to bring about the ruin of the Hungarians. In 1922 they issued a law nationalising industrial and commercial enterprises. According to this law, three-quarters of the members of Boards of Directors had to be Rumanian by origin, while two-thirds of the shares had to be in Rumanian hands. Medium-sized and small businesses were similarly victimised by regulations which deprived their owners of their livelihood.

The Struggle for the Church Schools.

" It is a reparation for all the misery endured in the past ", said the Minister of Agriculture of the Agrarian Reform, to the applause of the Deputies in Parliament. This was simply an excuse to deceive public opinion abroad. The truth was rather that the big estates had been broken up " according to social need ", as they called it, " to ensure the levelling down and then the fusion of all social classes ", and in order " to increase agricultural production. "

Yet all this was but preparing the ground for a policy of undermining the resistance of men who, under the new regime, were trying to keep faith with their race. It was but the prelude to the decisive blow which was going to destroy the culture of the Hungarian Minority. The first step was to attack the Hungarian schools, for the surest way of killing the soul of a country is to exercise a systematic and hostile influence over the children. It is a violation of both the natural law and every positive law.

" The problem of educating the linguistic and religious Minorities ", said A. Popovici, a University professor, " is not only a cultural one, it is above all a political one ; the schools problem is identical with that of the Rumanian state itself. " (12)

" The Hungarians have too many schools ", said Octavian Prie, former under-secretary of State in the Ministry of Education (13). A system so prejudicial to all the Rumanian aims had of course to be changed.

The Hungarians had indeed many schools in Transylvania, a considerable portion of them being Church schools. A great deal of money had been accumulated from foundations and legacies throughout the centuries, to provide and maintain schools. It was a touching thing to see in the old school records how the widow's mite of the Scriptures was noted down side by side with the donations of " pious patrons ", or ecclesiastics. As regards the Catholics, apart from gifts of land for foundations and gifts of money from Church benefices, the central organisation of the Diocese of Transylvania, the " *Status* ", alone disposed in 1911 of a capital of more than 3 million crowns, which was used to provide scholarships. Each Confession or denomination built schools and charitable organisations over the whole of Transylvania. Thus the Catholics of Transylvania, who apart from the Siculi region and the towns, mostly lived in a sort of diaspora, were able to provide their children with a Catholic education. The " *Status* " was responsible for the foundation of boarding-schools and orphanages, and also for maintaining them. The same state of affairs prevailed in the Protestant body. The Hungarian government, which before 1868 had entrusted primary education entirely to the Churches, was well disposed towards these schools, whose teaching staffs possessed the same qualifications as those in the state schools. If the need arose, the government gave a grant.

But once the Rumanians became masters of the country, they laid avid hands on the wealth of these schools. They confiscated 23,387 acres of land belonging to the Catholic

Status ", 24,563 acres from the Protestants, 35,000 from the Lutherans of Saxony, 1 400 acres from the Unitarians, notwithstanding the fact, or rather because of the fact that these revenues were devoted exclusively to educational purposes.

This land, together with the income derived from it, had enabled the Hungarians to maintain a very high intellectual standard. Their success was all the more striking in that the accumulated capital enabled them to put a " *mensa* " in practically all the Church schools—i.e. a canteen service.

At the same time, almost the whole of the property belonging to the Church suffered the same

fate. Of the 371,756 acres in the possession of the Churches of the Minorities in Transylvania, 314,331 acres (representing 84,5 %) were expropriated. As the compensation paid by the Rumanians was fixed at the average rate of the 1913 value of the land, as we have seen, this theft, known as the "Agrarian Reform", ruined the whole material basis of the religious and educational institutions belonging to the Minorities. The operation was conducted speedily in view of the fact that in 1913 there was a gold standard, whereas at the time of the expropriations only a depreciated paper currency was in circulation *⁵. To make matters worse, the Rumanian government did not even pay cash at these artificial rates. In the end, payment was made in 5 % Government bonds, realisable in 50 years and inconvertible.

In historic Transylvania, Mgr Aaron Márton's diocese, there were 1318 primary schools belonging to the State and 284 schools belonging to the communes. In 1918 there were also 755 confessional schools, both Catholic and Protestant.

With the expulsion of Hungarian officials, or their transfer to pre-1914 Rumania, with the loss of the capital belonging to educational foundations, which had melted away in the inflations, with the confiscation of Church lands and relegation to a secondary place in the economic life of the country (both in commerce and in industry)—what more was necessary to destroy Hungarian education at its roots? In principle a state subsidy should have been given to the schools, such as the Hungarian government had so generously provided in the past, especially to the schools of its Minorities—but the Rumanian government never lifted a finger to help. Yet it had signed precise undertakings in regard to education, the stipulations of which "constitute obligations of international interest and will be placed under the guarantee of the League of Nations." (14)

Far from honouring her obligations regarding the schools of her Minorities, the Rumanian government seized all those schools which had formerly belonged to the Hungarian government, or had been maintained by it. The position of these last schools must be explained. The Hungarian government had founded schools only in those places where there was no Church school, or where the various Confessions had been unable to maintain one. When in the past the Church did not have the means to maintain its schools at the level required by the various educational reforms, it ceded them to the government, on the understanding that they would be returned as soon as the financial means to maintain them had been found. In the meantime, the Church reserved certain rights, such as that the teaching staff must always be members of the Confession in question. This applied particularly to the Calvinist schools. In reality, these "ceded" schools remained virtually Church schools, but they too were closed by the new Rumanian regime, together with the state schools.

Other abuses followed. From 1st October 1919, the teaching had to be conducted in Rumanian in all the schools that had been expropriated. The Hungarians reacted to this by founding Hungarian confessional schools. The Protestants founded 402 schools, the Catholics 107, the Lutherans 59 and the Unitarians 11. They could naturally not replace all the schools which had been suppressed, especially the state and the village schools. In any case the Rumanian government knew what it wanted: to destroy the Hungarian Church schools at the roots.

First of all, the Orthodox and the Catholics of the Eastern Rite, i.e. the Uniates, "spontaneously" offered their schools to the Rumanian government, so that public opinion would accept the principle of a state school. According to the propaganda publication *Transylvania*, the Rumanian government undertook to "maintain" these schools (p. 13.1). According to Canon Georgescu, panegyrist of the Rumanian government, it confiscated them (15).

After the arbitration award of Vienna in 1940, when the northern part of Transylvania was reintegrated into Hungary for a few years, the Uniate Bishops complained at the annual meeting of the Hungarian Episcopate that the Hungarian government had not returned the nationalised schools to them, but was keeping them under government administration. Cardinal Serédi justly observed on this occasion: "They should never have been surrendered in the first place."

In order to give the teaching staffs of their secondary schools a professional training, the Hungarian Churches had founded an Inter-confessional, or Interdenominational University, inspired by the warning words of Gabriel Bethlen, Prince of Transylvania from 1613 to 1629: "*The different religions of Transylvania should live in mutual charity and respect; the time might come when they*

N would have to defend each others' rights. " Alas, the new University had only functioned for one year, when the Rumanian government closed it down on the shameless pretext that " only the Rumanian government was qualified to supervise the training of the teaching profession. "

Worse still, and because it possessed ample means to do so, the Rumanian government found ingenious ways to counterbalance and render ineffective the heroic struggle for the schools. Nearly every month brought a fresh surprise to the Minorities of the new state. Teachers were appointed to the primary schools which had passed from Hungarian to Rumanian control, who could not speak a single word of Hungarian. In the department of Csik, for example, where more than 90 % of the population was Hungarian, 82 new teachers were appointed who were not only quite incapable of teaching the language of the country, but even of understanding it.

From 1923 onwards, all the Hungarian schools had to teach the language, history and geography of Rumania, and give lessons on the Rumanian Constitution, all in Rumanian *⁶.

A very effective, albeit arbitrary and iniquitous means of eliminating Hungarians from the teaching staffs of Church schools, was an examination in Rumanian which the teachers were obliged to take. Numerous teachers in both primary and grammar schools were got rid of in this way, under the pretext that their Rumanian was not up to standard. Worse still, these examinations could be reimposed later on and the papers were marked, not by the body of examiners, but by the Minister of Education.

Next, Hungarian pupils were forbidden to attend Church schools of other denominations. Yet according to Hungarian law, Confessional schools were under the obligation to admit pupils of other denominations, whose religious instruction was provided for by a priest of their own religion. It was this very provision which made it unnecessary for the State to found fresh schools in districts where Church schools were already established. Now everything was changed, but not for the better. A Catholic school might have a vacancy, but a Calvinist or Orthodox boy did not have the right to take it. If there was no Calvinist school available for him, there was no alternative but to go to the state school. He was not even allowed to go to the Calvinist school in the next village. Apart from that, the Hungarian nation was "free".

" We must defend our frontiers not only with soldiers, but with enlightened men who influence the minds of others ", said M. Angheliescu (German in origin and name-Engels) Minister of Education and creator of the famous " cultural zones ".

According to the Angheliescu law concerning primary education, the counties of Csik, Háromszék, Maros-Torda, Torda-Aranyos, Udvarhely, Hunyad, Bihar, Szilágy and Szatmár constituted " cultural zones ". That was true enough. They were indeed the most highly educated departments, in which the Hungarian element predominated and the rate of illiteracy was the lowest. In these cultural zones the teachers were given special privileges of a material order, in keeping with the importance of their mission: the de-magyarisation of the region and its subsequent " rumanisation ". They received 50 % more than the usual salary.

It was with this same purpose in view that the former state schools were rumanised and that superb schools paid for by the Hungarian Minority were built in villages where the population was purely Hungarian, in order to teach them Rumanian. In the excellently-organised educational system which the Rumanians had destroyed, nobody had ever needed such schools. Likewise 63 Hungarian nursery schools were closed in the department of Csik, which the Rumanians subsequently had the effrontery to reopen shortly afterwards, this time as Rumanian institutions. The story did not end there. The expropriated schools had to be filled with Hungarian pupils who had been removed from the Church schools. The Rumanian attempt to force acquiescence and capture the consciences of the children was cleverly thought out. A law of 22nd December 1925, article 35, said:

" *Private schools can only give places to children whose mother tongue is the same as the language used in the teaching.* "

This law was amplified and made clearer by a decree emanating from the Ministry:

" *Nationals of Rumanian origin, who have lost their mother tongue must send their children to schools where the teaching is done in Rumanian. A declaration made by the parents in this regard can evidently not be taken at its face value, and fraudulent declarations are a possibility... The school authorities are not competent to decide the racial origin of their pupils, and these cases must be referred*

to the public authorities. "

Such texts as these were at the bottom of the famous theory of the " *analysis of names and racial origin*. " Any child whose name did not sound incontrovertibly Hungarian, was irrevocably catalogued as Rumanian. No matter if the family belonged to one of the Rumanian Churches (Orthodox or Uniate), or had once done so in the past. Likewise of Rumanian nationality was any person who had once upon a time possessed even one Rumanian forbear. Parents appealed in vain against the decision of the Rumanian schoolmaster or mayor. Might was Right.

A former Rumanian Minister, Aurelius Lazar, has no hesitation in qualifying these proceedings as " attacks upon civilisation itself. " (16) The result was that a Hungarian child who had a German name was not allowed to go to a Hungarian school. Then if a German school was not available, as was often the case, it had to go to the Rumanian school. During the school year 1927/ 8, 224 children were forced to leave the school at Zsilvölgy, near Petrozsény (Petroshani in Rumanian). It also happened that more than once a child was pronounced of Rumanian nationality according to its physical appearance, or else as a result of a blood test... No commentary need be passed on this proceeding.

In particular, the proposed law of 22nd December 1925 concerning private schools was intended to give the final blow to the Hungarian Confessional schools. They were hereby turned into private bilingual schools. The Hungarian schools were now nothing more than places where pupils were prepared for the official government examinations. In these examinations, 70 % of the pupils were systematically failed. In 1934, at the baccalaureate (the school Leaving Certificate), 94 % of the Hungarian candidates were failed. The one purpose of all this was to ;exclude the Hungarian Minority from higher studies. The problem of the restricted percentage of passes for each nationality has been solved henceforth in a most ingenuous way ", said Alexander Vajda-Voivod, a former Rumanian Prime Minister (17).

It was therefore impossible to found new private schools, ^{even} if the material means to do so could have been found. [n subsequent years, the Rumanian language was made compulsory three times a week at all the lessons, and given during the 10 minute break between classes the boys had to speak Rumanian. Spies saw to it that the ruling was observed. Any boy who dared to speak Hungarian was sent away from the state school for no other motive.

On 14th May 1925, the *Status Catholicus*—we shall explain the Status in a subsequent chapter—solemnly protested against the drafting of such an iniquitous law. On the same day, the Calvinists and the Unitarians met to protest against the violation of rights which had been guaranteed them by the Peace Treaty. The leaders of all the Confessions accused the Rumanian government of doing spiritual injury to Hungarian children by suppressing their national culture. The " *Status* " declared that it would never give up its schools, that it would send a protest to the League of Nations and appeal to world opinion:

" If however this law comes into force, the Church will bear with humility the sufferings imposed upon her, unless our consciences compel us to do otherwise, for it is better to obey God than man. "

In these grave days, when Hungarian hearts are heavy, the *Status* recalls to men's memories the unforgettable struggles and sufferings of our ancestors. It is strong in the hope that Hungarians now living under Rumanian sovereignty will show themselves worthy of their fathers and able to bear sufferings and accept sacrifices, finding in their faith in Providence the strength to persevere and be faithful. May God be our help. " (18)

In spite of all protests, Anghelescu's law was voted and came into force. So the victim was laid by the throat and finished off. From that time onwards, the Catholic schools collapsed and were confiscated, including the Gram-mar Schools at Nagykároly, Nagyvárad and Temesvár. Many schools in historic Transylvania (i.e. in Mgr Aaron Márton's diocese) were closed. There were at the time of the change of regime 274 Catholic primary schools, with a staff of 703 teachers. In 1933 there were no more than 189 with 432 teachers, although at the beginning of the Rumanian occupation the Catholics had founded 107 more schools. In the whole of the annexed province, out of the 1047 Church primary schools which existed in 1918, there were only 808 ten years later in 1928 which still functioned. Which makes a loss of 818 confessional schools, if we add the 579 schools founded after the change of regime.

The state Grammar Schools and their dependencies were all Rumanised.

In the school year 1932/33, the number of Hungarian pupils in Hungarian primary schools can,

according to reliable figures, be put at 330,000. In 1926, according to their own estimate, the Rumanian government admitted the existence of 258,000 children of school age, not counting Jews. By 1932, this figure had dropped to 170,000, owing to Rumanian tampering with statistics. This discrepancy in figures cannot be accepted. In the year 1932/33, 76,000 children went to a Hungarian primary Church school. For 254,000 pupils, there were in 200 communes Hungarian sections in the state schools, with 430 so-called Hungarian teachers. And to think that the Peace Treaty had imposed on the Rumanian government the obligation to establish Hungarian-speaking schools in towns and villages which were inhabited by Hungarians !

A few eloquent examples will suffice to point out the tragic situation in which the Hungarian Minority found itself in Rumania, where the rights of Minorities had nevertheless been defined in precise terms by the Peace Treaty.

In 49 towns of Transylvania, the Hungarian element formed 63.2 % of the whole population. In 1932/33, out of 67,965 Hungarian children of school age, only 16,123 (representing 23.8 %) had any possibility of going to a Hungarian primary school and 2,568 were admitted to the Hungarian section of the state schools. Thus did the Rumanian government violate the national conscience and take away the right of more than 49,000 children (almost three-quarters of the school population) to be taught in their own language.

In 19 other towns, there were 55 state schools, in only 8 of which was there a Hungarian section as provided by law, and yet the Rumanian statistics themselves showed that out of 33,052 children in question, 17,903 were Hungarian—that is to say a good majority.

At Bánffyhunjad, 90.4 % of the population was Hungarian. As there was no confessional school in the town, the 526 Hungarian children had to go to the Rumanian school (19).

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A comparison with the old Hungarian system shows in its true colours the real nature of these thinly-veiled attempts to impose a servitude upon the Hungarians.

In the former Kingdom of Hungary, each religious body had enjoyed from the seventeenth century onwards the right to found schools. The choice of language in which the teaching was given depended upon the particular authority which had founded the school and maintained it. Law XXI of 1848 (article 5) says: " In schools at present in existence, and in any schools which may be built in the future in these Rumanian-speaking departments, the instruction is to be given in Rumanian. " Further, " The Uniate Churches and schools will enjoy the same advantages as the churches and schools of other religions " (article 10). To which we may add: " The expenses incurred by the schools of each religion recognised by the State (Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran, Unitarian, Orthodox and, later, Jewish) will be covered by the State. (Law XX, article 3, 1848). All these laws were clarified and amplified in succeeding laws, especially the one of 1868 concerning the Minorities, but never was there any restrictive clause.

According to the Hungarian statistics of 1910, there - were in Hungary 168 Rumanian village schools for the Rumanians, with 287 Rumanian teachers, 1057 for the Uniates, with 1168 teachers, 1,353 Orthodox schools, with 1736 teachers, and 2 private schools. In all, therefore, there were 2580 Rumanian primary schools, with 3,193 teachers. This number gradually increased, until by 1918 there were 2,813 schools, with 3,353 teachers.

In 1910, these schools were receiving from the Hungarian government a subsidy which amounted to a minimum of 1,948,534 gold crowns for the Uniates, 1,522,785 for the Orthodox and 412,785 for the village schools, i.e. a total of 3,884,104 gold crowns, a considerable sum if we realise that the crown was at that time worth a little more than the gold franc of the period.

The amount of the subsidy was the same as that given to the Hungarian confessional schools. In addition, when the Rumanian schools were founded, they were each given several hectares of land. Their capital did not melt away like snow in the sun, for inflation had not yet set in.

Rumanian-speaking citizens were not ruined as they are today ; the maintenance of their clergy was assured by the income from Church property and by subsidies from the State. The Hungarian government never had the idea of confiscating the property of the Churches of the Minorities, although it

had certain knowledge that this income, which had originally come from donations by the Hungarian government, was very often used for anti-Hungarian propaganda.

As regards Grammar Schools, the Rumanians did not have as many of these as did the Hungarian Churches (Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran or Unitarian) which had for several centuries vied with each other in founding centres of humanistic culture. The Rumanians had 6 grammar schools for boys, 5 for girls, and 7 teacher training colleges *⁷.

In any case, nobody had ever prevented them from founding more schools or colleges. But they had had no need to. For the spiritual welfare of Rumanian boys and girls had never been in any danger. The Rumanian language was taught in several of the state schools and colleges, as well as in those belonging to the Churches. All the means of instilling a broad national culture were at their disposal. It must be said, however, that the Hungarian grammar schools opened up a much wider horizon than they would have received from their own educational institutions. And as to the education of girls, the convent schools exercised an attraction for the Rumanians which had no counterpart in the Uniate or Orthodox church schools.

Neither was the financial support of the clergy a liability of the faithful. The Catholic priest and the Protestant pastor received a supplementary sum from the government, if his income was less than 1600 gold crowns, on condition that he had passed the baccalaureate (the School Leaving Certificate). The Rumanian and Serb Orthodox priests could bring their salaries up to the tune of 1200 gold crowns, if they had spent a minimum of four years at a grammar school.

We must add to this the revenues from 613,000 registered acres of forest land and pasture (the communal lands of the old Military Marches) the income from which was used solely to further the cultural development of the Rumanian population. So it is obvious that the Hungarian government cannot possibly be reproached for not having encouraged the Rumanian Minority to develop their specific national culture !

In contrast to this liberal and fraternal attitude, the Rumanian regime set about organising the ruin of the Hungarian Minority as soon as it came into power. By their brutal confiscation of the Hungarian schools and by all sorts of petty persecution, examples of which we have quoted, it prevented the Hungarians from fulfilling their natural mission, which was as noble as it was inalienable.

During the first 10 years of the Rumanian regime, the Hungarian church schools received 10,500,000 *lei* only, i.e. 300,000 Swiss francs (100 *lei* = 2.80 francs). From then until 1938, and although the Peace Treaty had put the new State under the obligation to subsidise the schools of its Minorities, no more money was received. (The schools of the German Minority, however, received a regular subsidy.)

The Rumanian law of 1st July 1930 had, it is true, levied an education rate of 14 %, but the Hungarian schools were given nothing out of this. Yet in the towns and in the Siculi region this tax was paid almost exclusively by Hungarians. As if this were not enough, the Hungarians even had to pay for Rumanian schools to be built in communes which were entirely Hungarian, as we have mentioned.

In 1938, when the international situation was particularly threatening for Rumania, she was obliged to make *a volte-face* in her policy towards her Minorities. After 20 years of a cruel and only-too-effective opposition, Silviu Dragomir was given the task of informing world opinion of the generosity of the new policy:

" The Rumanians in Transylvania have had the merit of formulating the principles which must determine the policy of the new State towards the ethnic Minorities of long standing in the province: Full and complete national liberty for all peoples living side by side... Such declarations constitute an eloquent witness to the present generation in Transylvania, which is without parallel in any other modern State. "

" The law of 4th May 1938, establishing a Central Commission for the Minorities; the promulgation of this law on 4th August 1938 under the title " The Statute of the Minorities. The 1st Decree of the Advisory Commission put into effect in Transylvania the former Hungarian law concerning had put into Nationalities. "

Who was to know that this eloquent testimony dated from 1918, and that the liberal dispositions of the former Hungarian law were not put into force until 1938, after twenty years of occupation ? By

then the Hungarian Minority had already been spoliated and more than . decimated by this so-called liberal regime, while the consequences of an inhuman policy were threatening the very existence of Rumania herself.

According to S. Dragomir, following upon this same law, 600 Hungarian schools were inaugurated in 1938, as well as 89 German schools and 71 Serb schools. " Thus the number of the Church primary schools of the ethnic Minorities rose from 1005 to 1303, of which 261 belonged to the Saxons of Transylvania, and 33 to the Swabians of the Bánát. " (We can easily understand why in 1940 the author underlined the number of German schools in the region. But why did he omit to mention that the Hungarian confessional schools alone ought to have numbered 1,334—755 old ones, plus 579 new ones founded after the change of regime—not counting the alleged 600 new schools promised by the Rumanians, but never opened ?)... " *The Minorities Statute of 1938, taking account of the Hungarian claims... grants by special decree that:*

" *Only those persons legally responsible for the education of the children (the father and mother) will have the right to determine the race to which the child belongs, so that it can be entered either at a church school or a state school. "*

S. Dragomir did not pass over in silence the monstrous law which had broken the Hungarians, but he thought that if he slipped it into the middle of his grandiloquent phrases it might pass unnoticed !

The second disposition " *assures the Minorities schools of the means of existence " (20).*

It would appear that this Rumanian generosity did not stop at the church schools. In the volume " *Transylvania "*, edited in 1946 to provide the Peace Conference with documentation, we read:

" In 1918 the Hungarian government gave to all the Episcopal sees 2,020,570 crowns, whereas in 1940 the Rumanian government gave them the **sum** of 75,568,480 *lei*. "

The mere drawing of such a parallel, in the form in which it is put, arouses the indignation of all those who still set store by intellectual probity. The author has cleverly arranged his text and his figures to deceive the majority of his readers over exact facts. So, when comparing the subsidy given in 1918 to that given by the Rumanians in 1940, he quotes the 1918 figure in crowns and the 1940 figure in *lei*, without giving any inkling of the fact that the purchasing power of this fabulous sum was in no way greater than that of the Hungarian subsidy. This deliberate confusion of issues is as immoral as outright forgery. For reduced to their real value, which was so skilfully suppressed, these figures are fraudulent.

We mentioned above the subsidy given to the Rumanian primary schools in 1913-14. We possess reliable figures from other sources concerning the subsidies allocated to the various confessions. We know that in this very year of 1918, which S. Dragomir quotes, the Hungarian government gave to the Rumanian Confessions the following subsidies :

Uniate Rumanians	8,762,231 crowns
Orthodox Rumanians	9,283,598 crowns

making a total of	18,045,598 crowns

We are also in a position to know that the same year the subsidies granted to Rumanian schools amounted to 16,392,436 crowns. Thus, the subsidies paid out in 1918 to Rumanian religious and cultural institutions amounted to 34,438,265 crowns, which is 17,5 % of the whole sum paid out by the Hungarian government to the various Confessions. Consequently, the percentage paid out to the Rumanians was actually greater than the numerical total of the Rumanian population in pre-war Hungary (16.6 %).

The Hungarian statistics were at the disposal of S. Dragomir, just as they have been at that of the present writer. How comes it that he is ignorant of them and that in their stead he offers falsified statistics?

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The anxiety with which the young seminarists followed the struggle for the Catholic schools can well be imagined. The very foundation of their mission was in danger from Rumanian oppression. This

struggle for the souls of their future flock was not, however, the only cross they had to bear. Their people were the victims of false accusations and insidious attacks ; they were made scapegoats by their Rumanian enemies, who were determined to find a spectacular justification for their policy of crushing the Hungarian Minority. God alone knows whether in the world as it is constituted today the weak are always in the wrong !

Aaron Márton was wounded in his innermost feelings, his attachment to the land of his forefathers. The Siculi form a compact group of from 500,000 to 600,000 souls in the South-east of Transylvania. Hence the Peace Treaty assured them cultural and religious autonomy, but the Rumanian government " forgot " to put it into effect. Now this enclave of 16,000 square kilometres, which is inhabited by the descendants of the Border Guards, was an obstacle to the narrow nationalism of the new state. In an attempt to neutralise the unfortunate impression which might have been created abroad, a Rumanian historian, Nicholas Jorga, constructed and propagated a fantastic theory. According to him, the Siculi, or at any rate a large proportion of them, were not Hungarians at all, but Rumanians who had been Magyarised. He first claimed that 30 % of the Siculi, thanks to clever administrative juggling with figures, belonged to this category, in order to justify in Western eyes the unjust measures directed against the Minorities. So the impression was given that the new masters were merely restoring the Hungarians to their real " ethnic origin. " By such ridiculous proceedings as these, and without forcing the_ facts in so unseemly a manner, the neighbours of Rumania herself could also have claimed the " return " of one half of the Rumanian population to their " ethnic origin " !

We shall return to this question in the second volume of our book.

For the moment, however, we will simply record the fact that Rumanian propaganda, armed with this fallacious theory, got as far as Rome. There it found powerful supporters who let themselves be taken in with ideas of Christian Unity and with political chimeras, because they were insufficiently informed of the true facts to realise that the Rumanian theses put before them had no serious foundation in fact. Thus it happened that in 1938 the *Congregatio Orientalium* sent these questions—or rather made these statements to the See of Transylvania:

1. *For political and economic reasons, numbers of Rumanians have been Magyarised in the past, especially in the region inhabited by the Siculi.*
2. *The Siculi are not of Hungarian origin.*
3. *When did the Siculi adopt the Latin Rite ?*

We shall answer these somewhat curious questions in the second part of our book. It will be enough here to report that the Latin Catholics were accused of having forced the Uniates to transfer en bloc from their own Rite to the Latin Rite ; consequently the Catholics had denationalised, i.e. " Magyarised " them. Now, the Bishop of Transylvania merely had to find in his archives the documents relative to the change-over in Rite. With these in hand, he proved that between 1905 and 1928,

there had only been 513 conversions among the Uniates to the Latin Rite.

A magnificent figure, when we consider that the total number of Uniates amounted to 1,133,512 at the census of 1910 ! But the men who indulged in such calumnies did not realise that Bishops keep archives.

It may also be said in passing that while the Oriental forms of Christianity interest people brought up in the Latin Rite, they do not exercise such an attraction that they force them to go over to them.

The zealots who made such gratuitous accusations were neither delicate nor moderate in their proceedings. Immediately the Rumanians were in possession of Transylvania, they incorporated 46 Hungarian-speaking Uniate parishes in the diocese of Hajdudorog into the Uniate diocese of Nagyvárad (Oradea Mare). Thus, at one stroke, 85,000 Hungarian-speaking Uniates were handed over to the policy of Rumanisation. The figures are admitted in the Rumanian census of 1927. (The number of Orthodox who declared themselves to be Hungarians was, according to the same census, 15,455, whilst Rumanian-speaking Catholics only amounted to 5,818 *⁸).

Another systematic weapon employed against the Hungarian element in an attempt to weaken it and crush it entirely, and one which was more hateful than all the rest, was the policy of " re-germanisation ". Especially in villages where the old folk were the only ones left who still spoke a little

German, did the Rumanians make German the official language. For example, in the county of Szatmár the overwhelming majority of the German population had for long remained faithful to Hungary. It was only when they saw that Hungary was powerless to defend their interests, that the German Catholics accepted the role which had been assigned to them by the Rumanians. They became Germans again, but it was against their will.

The Rumanians found a truly edifying formula with which to cover up this sordid transaction: " By giving back to the Swabians of Satumare (Szatmár) their language and their traditional culture, we are merely accomplishing an act of social and national justice "—so said S. Dragomir.

In their fear that the former Minorities of Hungary would still feel the attraction of her influence, the Rumanians made use of veritable forerunners of Nazism in order to counteract it. They were to regret it bitterly later on—when Hitlerism was triumphant in Germany *⁹.

The Germans themselves paid a **heavy** price for separating themselves officially from Hungarian Catholicism, in order to better their lot. They were still, under the leadership of Mgr Pacha, their Bishop, a Germanised Czech, looking to Germany for support even when she was defeated, seeming to think that she would be able to protect their interests.

The secession of the German Catholics was a great blow to the Hungarian Catholic cause. They young seminarists in particular realised that they could expect no more support from that quarter.

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The Rumanian Constitution of 1923, and the law concerning Religious Worship of 22nd April 1928, were a warning to the Hungarians that Rumania did not intend to respect her obligations under the Peace Treaty of 1920. The same Constitution declared that the Orthodox Church was to be the state religion, while precedence over the other religions was accorded to the Uniate Church. All the Bishops of Rumanian Churches were *ipso facto* members of the Senate, whilst each of the Minority Churches had the right to have one representative only in the Senate, and then on condition that the Confession counted a minimum of 200,000 faithful. Thus the 1,200,000 Catholics of the Latin Rite, the 770,000 Calvinists, the 300,000 Lutherans, the 1,000,000 Jews and the 72,000 Unitarians only had one representative per Confession in the Senate. All the Hungarian Catholic Bishops were excluded from the Senate, under the pretext that they were already represented by the Archbishop of Bucharest, the head of a diocese which at the most accounted for one quarter of the faithful of the diocese of Transylvania. By contrast to this, all the Uniate Bishops under the Hungarian regime, and in the last years all the Rumanian and Serb Orthodox Bishops also, had had the right to sit in the Hungarian Upper House.

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In such difficult circumstances as these did Aaron Márton prepare for the priesthood. As Henri Pozzi says, with a method, an ingenuity and a variety of means which it must be admitted approached genius, the Rumanian administration did everything in Transylvania, from the moment her troops entered the country in November 1918 to extirpate even the very memory of Magyarism "—to use the phrase of Stelian Popescu, the former Minister of Justice. The new masters ruined the Hungarian nation by stripping them of their property ; they made it impossible for them to use their mother tongue ; they suppressed two-thirds of their schools and paralysed the functioning of others ; they destroyed and confiscated their churches, drove their priests and teachers into exile... and what is more, each systematic and premeditated violation of her Treaty obligations by Rumania was explained away and justified by the " exigencies of public order ", behind a facade of general legislation which, by that very fact, escaped the supervision of the Peace Treaties (21). "

The Movement for Union.

After the first World War, the Hungarian nation was accused of the worst sort of misdeeds, not to say crimes. It was held responsible for starting the war and oppressing its Minorities. How was it possible to detect truth from falsehood, in the face of such diabolical propaganda ? Where could the young

seminarists find any support ?' They were so young that their knowledge of world affairs was rudimentary. They could not be expected to understand the deep seated causes of the World War. No published documentation, either Hungarian or foreign, on recent events tracing the history of the war was available to them. The new masters of Transylvania deliberately prevented them from trying to find out the truth. All they were supposed to do was to admit their guilt and accept responsibility for a war which others had brought about. Even their fellow-Catholics had nothing but recrimination for them. The more senior students had been inundated with German propaganda. Now Mgr Márton's generation received a spate of French propaganda. But it gave them no encouragement, nor did it offer any fraternal charity. It is not surprising that from those days onwards, no contortions of propaganda could ever make any impression upon them. It tried to prove too much. The Latin Catholics of Transylvania had to take a back place. At the most, they were generously allowed to express their humble submission to, and boundless admiration for, the Catholics of the West.

" Austria(-Hungary) is a Catholic power and her sovereign (Francis-Joseph) deserves our respect ; but what a policy and what an administration she has ! The influence of Joseph II was still paramount in the Austrian administration, imbued as it was with all the prejudices of the eighteenth century, a state of affairs which kept the Church in a position of subservience far more fatal to her in the long run than the principles of the French Revolution ever were ", wrote a religious paper, in reply to Professor Svoboda of Vienna, who had been so tactless as to reprimand the French Catholics. The seminarists of Gyulafehérvár might well have asked such indiscreet propagandists the question a diplomat asked Cardinal Baudrillart: " Do you really mean all that you are saying seriously ? "

The unscrupulous propaganda concerning their fellow-Catholics was finally accepted in the West through sheer force of repetition. The unfortunate seminarists in Transylvania had no opportunity to go abroad and " make their own contacts, or reply to so-called experts who tried to foist their own ideas upon them.

Into what a difficult and complex situation were they not caught up in their isolation ! Alexander Vaida-Voivod, the former leader of the Rumanian Minority in Transylvania, and now Prime Minister of Greater Rumania, undertook a propaganda tour abroad, to reassure those people in the West who had expressed doubts about the religious liberty allowed to nations which had fallen under Rumanian domination. In particular, ecclesiastical circles in England had to be reassured. A. Voivod's secretary 'tells that they entered into contact with Cardinal Bourne and Copland Bovie, an eminent Unitarian, and many others. Voivod explained to one and all, with a wealth of documentation, that it was not in Rumania's interest to oppress the various religions of her Minorities. On the contrary, the new Constitution guaranteed full religious liberty, which had already been recognised in the Constitution of 1866, and called for in the Resolutions of Gyulafehérvár (Alba Julia). (*Actiune diplomatica a Romanei*, Sibiu 1925, pp 54-56).

In London, more notice was taken of Voivod's declaration than of the memorandum drawn up by the Catholic and Protestant Bishops of Transylvania. An article of Copland Bovie (in the Westminster Gazette, 4th February 1920) reassured those who felt some misgivings over surrendering Christians of the Western Latin Rite to an Orthodox state, in these words:

"The Prime Minister of Rumania, with whom I had an opportunity of a long talk, gave us a guarantee that their fervent English friends, passionately attached to the idea of religious liberty, need have no fears, since the present government in Rumania has the sincere desire to assure full religious liberty to all its citizens. Those people who have been anxious about rumours of cruelty and petty persecution committed in Transylvania, can have no cause for disquiet after these pledges ".

The laity taught the Hungarians of Transylvania a lesson in democracy. The clergy, however, had a new line of exegesis to exploit. The good news was not preached first and foremost to Catholics of the Latin Rite, as might have been expected. Their role was to stand back and give way before the grandiose dreams concerning the union of the Church, which had been fabricated by self-styled apostles. Such a union, according to the propagandists, would be a rich compensation to the Church for the loss of that withered limb which was Catholicism in Austria-Hungary. And it would be their handiwork. The Kings of Poland and the Habsburgs had never been able to bring such a union about, because their idea of union

was a political one... By dint of repetition, such gratuitous statements as these came to be accepted as final truths.

M. François Mauriac wrote in 1944:

" Ruined nations resemble a man who has had a series of misfortunes: their best friends, even the most delicate among them, easily give offence. The destitution of a man or a country changes former friends into advisers, critics and judges. It is a law which we must accept as inevitable. We do not have to be reduced to ulcers and the dunghill to hear the same language as did the holy man Job. " (Figaro, 8th-9th October 1944).

The seminarists at Gyulafehérvár were in a similar predicament. The books of their fellow-Catholics of Western Europe tried to insinuate that the religious practice of their own countries, and the experience that they had gained in solving certain problems, ought to be an inspiration to other countries. They naively believed that they were in the *avant-garde* of Catholic life and in many cases laboured under the illusion that Catholicism in other countries was just a matter of routine. If their ideas, institutions and slogans, their spiritual and political preoccupations were not adopted, they condemned such countries as being in the wrong. Formalism did not exist in their countries, only in other people's *¹⁰.

It is often forgotten that the religious mentality of a nation is coloured by its national psychology, and that neither the one nor the other can easily be understood by a foreigner. The explanation is that we are only too ready to judge other people's affairs according to our own ideas, instead of studying them objectively, as they really are. (cf. *Etudes*. Vol. 107, pp 433-453; Vol. 269, pp 236-242).

The propaganda of this nature deserves the strictures of Joseph de Maistre: " False opinions are like counterfeit money, which is first of all coined by real criminals, then put into circulation by honest people, who perpetuate the crime without realising that they are doing so ".

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The propaganda which was directed against the Hungarian nation at the end of the first World War was quite unrestrained. Legitimate grievances were travestied and no arguments brought forward in its defence could obtain a hearing. Yves de la Brière, the expert on international questions in *Etudes*, wrote in a review of Sigismond Varga's book " The Tragedy of the Thousand Years Old Kingdom ":

" Nevertheless the austere wisdom of antiquity teaches us that we must not attempt to redress certain grievances if the attempt itself would provoke still graver and more widespread damage. The enforced submission to the *status quo* in the Danubian region is perhaps the least of conceivable evils on account of the tragic necessities of the day. " (22)

In his review of G. Roux's book: " *Faut-il réviser les Traités ?* " (Should the Treaties be revised ?), he asked:

Must we make the revision of the Peace Treaties the primary concern of our European politics today ? Here we must say: No. Since each proposed revision is controversial and is being seriously opposed, the idea of proceeding today on a new demarcation of frontiers appears more likely to provoke an explosion than to stabilise an uneasy peace. Amidst all the complex problems of post-war Europe, our aim will be to strike a just balance between our sacred obligations to present friendships and the legitimate ties of former friendships. " (23)

And yet Yves de la Brière saw the situation clearly. Speaking of Lucien Graux's book: " Violations of the Peace Treaties ", he made this observation:

" *If we are to believe M. Lucien Graux, Austria and Hungary had no legitimate grievances against either the Western Allies or the Little Entente — neither had the Croats against the Serbs, nor the Slovaks against the Czechs. No. It is simply not true to say that all is for the best in the best of all Europes. " (24)*

It would have needed great courage and much humility and disinterestedness to make sincere approach to the problems of Central Europe, in the face of a public opinion which was formed by a war psychosis. But such courage was not forthcoming, and instead the Treaties were left as they were, with all their injustices, absurdities and weaknesses, which ought to have been apparent to any fair-minded observer.

"It would appear to be wise to let the new States make their own political experience over a generation of those conditions of existence granted them in 1919 and 20 by international diplomacy, in the face of the most formidable difficulties. But to put everything in the melting-pot again would be the most dangerous of enterprises. The over-riding general interest is the preservation of peace", said the same Yves de la Brière in 1932 (25).

The Succession States of Hungary did indeed live through this experience. And what was the result ? *" In the interests of peace, they succeeded in killing real peace, "* and hastened the approach of a cataclysm without precedent in history. Rarely can the lie have been given so cruelly to the actions of a short-sighted international policy. Diplomats who were in a hurry to edify the new world founded on an international regime, *" based on justice and liberty "*, did in point of fact append the seal of Christian law, of *" pax romana "*, to a Treaty which was in itself unjust and monstrous in its consequences. The services they offered so eagerly were accepted, yet the idols themselves judged their handiwork with some misgivings, in spite of their optimism. Briand said in 1932:

" I am trying to prop up a house whose foundations have gone. With the collapse of Russia, they made a peace directed against Austria (-Hungary). They thus provided Prussia and Italy with security and left us to bear an even heavier burden of defence... If we had had an Austria at the head of a group of all the Catholic States, we should not have had a Germany delivered up to Prussia without any counterpoise" (26).

No, the abuse of moral principles for the purpose of propaganda and in order to justify injustice and cruelty, is precisely the method of the Communists. If religious principles are invoked, it is not permissible to combine them with human passions and ambitions. The sort of morality which was invented by certain people may suit the interests of their countries very well, but it has nothing to do with the teachings of Christianity.

The propagandists created swollen reputations they made great men out of people who were nothing more than unscrupulous agitators. They transformed them into heroes, apostles of democracy, builders of a new world—yet this new world was soon to assume the name of Communist " popular democracy. " Then when the apocalyptic events of recent years came to pass, they had the mortification of seeing that the real heroes, and the real resistance to Communism, came from the ranks of those whom they had considered to be backward follower: of a dead branch of the Church. So they refused to pay such men the tribute of martyrdom. Their Church was: referred to as " feudal "; the heads of the Church were first and foremost politicians—all because they did not ask the help of the propagandists when they were defending the rights of the Church and the personal liberty of their flock. Such candidates to martyrdom as these men were could only acknowledge one order of the day, and it could not be gainsaid:

" Upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watch-men, all the day and all the night ; they shall never hole their peace. " (Isaiah LXII, 6.)

Political injustice was condoned in the name of democracy. In the religious sphere, the idea of the " Union of Catholics and Orthodox " covered up every tattles: blunder and every abuse. Many people threw themselves enthusiastically into working for such a fruitful idea. " ° Union " became a fashionable catchword. Specialist: on the question, major and minor, flocked into Rumania and Transylvania. They took not the slightest notice of their fellow-Catholics:

" From that Western Europe whose culture and religious faith they represented and defended, but which was blinded by political preoccupations, came no mark of sympathy for the Catholics ; to add to the feeling that they had been forsaken, came the bitterness of seeing that the Calvinists and the Lutherans received more sympathetic attention than the Catholics from the Commissions sent from abroad, from Germany, England and America, to get evidence on the spot of abuses and persecution " (27).

The Orthodox community gave a most gratifying reception to these itinerant apostles. They gladly accepted scholarships and other advantages, but it was not the Union of Orthodox and Catholic that the enthusiastic speeches had in mind. Nicolas Jorga, the historian of Rumania's greatness, said so openly in his speech to the Rumanian Parliament on 4th April 1928: *" A united Church, which some people would like to see split up into fragments, is an absolute necessity for the Rumanian nation... It forms a precious liaison for us with the West. "* A few months before his death, he developed his ideas in the

following way in a speech to the annual assembly of Orthodox women: " We do not need to seek anywhere else, not even in France, any other link with the Church of Rome than that of a United Church " (28). Now, the role of the Uniates, or Greek-Catholics, according to Jorga and his political friends, was to serve as he put " as an extremely profitable link " between Rome and Rumania.

Needless to say, Jorga did not neglect other means. On 2&tlh January 1929, he went to Paris to give a lecture at the Protestant Faculty of Theology, in a series celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation. In an enthusiastic speech he explained to the professors assembled there what colour and riches Protestantism brought to the intellectual and spiritual life of his country. Naturally, there was not a single word to suggest that this same Protestantism was Hungarian, not Rumanian at all. After such unctious as this, is it to be wondered at if the learned corporation was won over to the possibilities of a Union ? (See the Report on the Studies of the Faculty, 1929).

This idea of Union, desired by so many people in Western

Europe, received a very different interpretation within the Orthodox community. Ghibu Onesiphor wrote:

" The fact that today the term Catholic is exclusive¹³ applied to the Church which recognises the primacy of the Pope, does not in the least affect our main thesis. The Papists can, if they like, call themselves Catholic: we in the Eastern Church, can call ourselves Catholic with more justification, since we have preserved the teaching of Christ in all its purity, and live lives more in accordance with the principles of Christianity. It is we who are today: the real Catholics in the country " (29).

According to Ghibu, it was Rome who should unite, with Bucharest:

" If Rome does not appreciate the magnanimity of our gesture and the scope of our proposition... we shall use every means to re-establish the union of the Rumania] people within the bosom of the Orthodox faith. " Pierre Delattre comments that all Orthodox people were in agreement with such an idea (30).

A Belgian Jesuit, Father Honoré, was no less sceptical about the outcome of Union:

" I am going to try to show how a schismatic national Church, far from coming closer to Catholicism, seems on the contrary to drift further and further away from it and become increasingly the servant of the State... A man would be bold indeed to claim that the reunion of the Orthodox with the Church is humanly-speaking very near, when he has seen and heard things for himself in Eastern Europe " (31).

These texts do not seem to be very encouraging for the apostles of Union and neither are the very instructive quotations which follow. " The Eastern Orthodox Church is not as independent as the Catholic Church, which can be compared to a forest oak. The Orthodox Church need a protector, just as the ivy clings to the powerful trunk of the tree, and her protector is the throne ", declare Take Ionescu, in the Bucharest Parliament on 4th May 1925, when he introduced a bill giving a long-solicited subsidy to the clergy, counterbalanced by direct government intervention in the government of the Church.

Union with the Orthodox Church is a foolish illusion. The Orthodox have kept their old habits of servitude. Amongst the peasants, religious practices often border upon superstition. The intellectual element is profoundly sceptical. Riez Dobresco, an Orthodox priest, made this melancholy reflection on the lack of faith amongst his contemporaries at a lecture given at Targoviste:

" This is the stuff of which our Rumanian is made: he is a real hypocrite. He listens to everybody and believes nothing. He conforms outwardly, because his grand-father and great-grandfather did before him, but his faith has no solid basis " (32).

Pierre Lhande wrote: " Sincere and fervent Orthodox people, who are adamant on the question of Rumanian unity, have admitted to us that they are only bound to their Church by a sort of mystic link, which does not bind them in any way to any obligation or religious practice " (33).

A religion which makes the fundamental claim to express the relations between God and his faithful belittles itself if it makes any concessions to such a conception of religion as this.

In his book on the Rumanian Church and its organisation (*Biserica Romana si noua ei organizare*, 1925), Joan G. Savin, Director-General of the Ministry of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs, declared bitterly: " A fact that neither priest nor laity can deny, is that the Church is dead in

Rumania... The low level of religion in our country is due to the fact that the Church has been made the slave of the government " (p. 21).

Is it to be wondered at that both their doctrinal position and their religious practice leave much to be desired ? The Archimandrite Scriban went so far in 1908 as to call the clergy of the time " a gathering of pagans in whom there was nothing left but a facade of piety and doctrine ".

The Church does not possess a single religious writer. The majority of priests simply do not read anything now ", said Bessarion, Bishop of Bessarabia (34).

Christea Miron, Patriarch of Bucharest, criticised the teaching of the Faculties of Theology controlled by the State, and in proof of his contention read out this letter, signed by the seminarists at the Faculty of Kichinev (Chishinau). It is a truly „ edifying " document in the circumstances:

" We, the undersigned, students of the State seminaries, declare ourselves to be atheists. We apply to you, begging you to deliver us from the weight of this millstone which is crushing our spirits and forcing us, as a result of circumstances, to follow courses at a Theological College, in the truth of whose doctrine we do not believe " (35).

The Archimandrite Ciuhandu published a book (in Rumanian), in 1927, called "Popery and Orthodoxy ", in which he showed tolerance to all Confessions, Catholics excluded, whether they were of the Latin or the Greek (Uniate) Rite. He went so far as to say: " Rumania ought to conclude an alliance with all the Churches against the Papists, who are subversive elements in the country " (36).

The Orthodox religion is thought of as a political weapon in Rumania:

" Rumania claims her own sons, the million Rumanians whom the Uniate clergy are trying to retain by force within the ranks of Catholicism. Our race cannot have two religions, and does not want to have two ", wrote the official lawyer of the Rumanian Orthodox Church, Todor Popescu, on 4th March 1928 (*Natiunea. Dominanta*).

Since public opinion in the West had to be taken into account, Rumanian government officials, at the same time that they tried to absorb or destroy the Catholics, gave the apostles of Union and their political agents a most flattering welcome, as Rumanian political interests demanded. When he received Mgr Herbigny, the Patriarch of Bucharest praised the Uniates to the skies: " The Catholics of the Rumanian dioceses of Transylvania are especially admirable for their gifts of organisation, their intellectual formation, their high moral standards, their care for the public welfare, their religious sentiment and the culture of their clergy... It is thanks to these Rumanian patriots of the Catholic dioceses, that our language and our nation have reconquered their place in the sun ".

All that the Patriarch said was indeed true, but in the excitement of talking, he forgot that his words might be published. They would then be taken as an eloquent homage to the Hungarian regime, which was responsible for the superiority of the Uniate Catholics over the Orthodox community, rather than as a testimony to the so-called oppression which was at the basis of all the anti-Hungarian propaganda. An extraordinary flight of eloquence praised the peasants of Transylvania, who were truly " the heirs of the Roman senators ".

The visits of these personalities and their written accounts of them were a diversion amidst the sterner realities of the day. The propagandists found an excellent opportunity of slipping in remarks of their own, directed at the unsophisticated public of Eastern Europe. In a written account of a propaganda tour made by a high dignitary of the Catholic Church, for example, we can be edified by the pacific intentions of Rumania, but must be scandalised by the revisionist conduct of Hungary. " As regards territorial claims, the Rumanians are perhaps more justified in these matters than their neighbours, the Magyars. The Orthodox Rumanians possess a complete deanery at Gyula (in Hungary) and the Uniate Catholic Rumanians another in Nagyléta. But in their desire to respect treaties, the Rumanians are not pressing any claims for these territories. "

What a touching interest in the question ! Even the Rumanian statistics of 1930 recognise that, compared with 23,000 Rumanians dispersed over the whole of Hungary, there were in Rumania 1,388,000 Hungarians; whilst Hungarian statistics showed that in 1910 there had been 1,700,000 of them. We must add that the Hungarian statistics were far more reliable than the Rumanian (37).

As this high dignitary crossed the frontier from Hungary into Rumania, the Orthodox community,

with their priest, Dean Chirida, at their head, were ordered to turn out to greet him. Chirida said: " These good people do not realise who their guest is. If they did, they would have given you an enthusiastic welcome " (38).

We believe what we want to believe. It is this propensity in us which provides the key to so many indiscretions which were committed by Catholics against their fellow-Catholics. An expert in questions of Union wrote: " Some people go so far as to call tragic the affiliation to an Eastern Confession of a Latin people who were more suited than the Czechs, the Hungarians and the Poles... to play a part in the concert of that universal civilisation which has been born of Catholicism " (39).

It must be said that such a zealous apostle and learned author passes very lightly over 30 millions of Polish Catholics, 10 millions of Hungarian Catholics and several millions of Czech Catholics. Is he ignorant of the historic services in the defence of this " universal civilisation " which the Rumanians torpedoed so many times in the course of their history ?

By such clumsy tactics as these were the Hungarian Catholics passed over in silence, they who represented 70 % of the Catholic population in the territories attributed to Rumania, and the majority of the Catholic population of pre-1914 Rumania. (In Moldavia, Catholicism was known as " the Hungarian religion ").

According to the Rumanian formula, " the Catholics of the Latin Rite are partly Rumanian, partly German, Magyar, Bulgarian, French, Polish and Italian " (40).

The truth is rather that in Transylvania, ethnically speaking, there are only 5,816 Rumanian Catholics out of a total of 980,000 Catholics. Apart from the Hungarians and the Germans, there is a negligible percentage of Catholics of other races. Yet propagandists never tired of repeating the same false old catchwords (41).

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Such were the circumstances in which Aaron Márton and his fellow-seminarists had to pursue their theological studies. They had to be steadfast and persevere in the way of the Cross which was their lot. " The only road I must follow is the one that leads to the priesthood. It is there that I can best serve my faith and my unfortunate country. " *Ego memet in ardua fixi*, the future Bishop would say: I have planted my footsteps on the rough path.

The material situation of the diocese made it impossible for him to do his theological studies abroad. Fortunately for the Church ! For then he would have become a Professor of Theology and his powers would not have developed to the full, for lack of scope. Providence had a much higher vocation in store for him. *Suo anno*, that is to say as soon as he had reached the age required by Canon Law or custom, he was given some new mission to carry out. And each one accomplished was but a preparation for his greatest mission of all—the final one this time—of consoling his persecuted people, of strengthening his flock in faith and piety in evil days, and according to the conviction **of his** village, of expiating the murder of Cardinal Báthory.

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By 1924 he had completed his theological studies. Before making the retreat which precedes ordination to the priesthood, he came across Anthony Schütz's book: God in History. " This book of a Hungarian theologian was in truth an excellent *vade-mecum* for a career in which disappointment and disillusion play only too big a part, but in which there is no place for passive resignation. Here are some aphorisms from the book which gave him food for thought:

" Every oppression, every act of cruelty, from the civil wars of Rome to the Communist terror of our own day, has been launched under the flag of liberty and fraternity. "

" Even the most holy Ideal becomes tarnished, or at least degraded, as soon as it begins to take concrete form. "

" The will to live always triumphs over suffering, destruction and cruelty. "

" History is not as sombre as the pessimists claim it to be. Heroes of sanctity and virtue who have no name are always found in the midst of crime. "

" The heroes and martyrs of everyday life are as numerous, or more so, than those of the big moments of history. "

" The reign of impiety cannot impose itself indefinitely. " " The reign of impiety carries within itself from birth the germs of dissolution. "

" What would have become of Christianity without persecution and the oppression of Gnosticism, Judaism and Roman Imperialism in the beginning, and later on without the attacks upon the Church by the Reformation, and today, without the conscious and organised oppression of Bolshevism ? "

To the man who makes these words his own, " words will be given in the hour of need ", amidst the storms of persecution.

*¹ An old-fashioned title which existed until the modernisation of Hungarian institutions in 1867. Lord Judge Majlath was murdered by robbers with the complicity of one of his employees in 1882.

*² One Hungarian acre = 1.42 English acres.

*³ According to E. de MARTONNE: " 2.5 % only of estates of more than five hectares belonged to the Rumanians. Of the remainder, 80 % belonged to the Hungarians and Germans. " Quoted from the Conferences on International Conciliation 1929—Carnegie Foundation. P. 75.

One hectare equals 2.47 acres. (Harrap's Standard French and English Dictionary.)

*⁴ Meaning Rumania within her pre-1918 frontiers.

*⁵ The Exchange at Zurich quoted the Rumanian lei at 2.80 Swiss francs on 1st May 1924.

*⁶ When Count Albert Apponyi was Minister of Education in 1907 and the teaching of Hungarian was made compulsory for the Rumanian Minority, it was only considered as one of the subjects in the curriculum, while the language in which the teaching was given was decided by the school authorities. Yet the Rumanians complained bitterly to all and sundry. There was a considerable difference, however between the two systems, and Hungary was under no international obligation to do otherwise.

*⁷ It is a mere invention of Rumanian propaganda to claim, as the volume called " The Problem of the Minorities in Central Europe " (Carnegie Foundation, Bulletin No 2., p. 74, 1929) does, that the Rumanians only had two secondary schools maintained by themselves and simply tolerated, not to say threatened with closure at certain moments.

The learned critic who knows Transylvania only too well could have said, for example, that the Rumanian College at Naszód (Nassaud), together with two other secondary schools and several primary schools, were entirely maintained on the revenues coming from the " *Compossessoratus* " of Naszód. The Grammar School alone benefited from a subsidy of 56,000 crowns, a sum which generously covered all the expenses of the school. All the children who went to a school outside their own commune received a scholarship to cover the expenses of their schooling. As regards the primary schools for the Rumanians, the Rumanian Minority in Hungary possessed more of them than did the Rumanians of pre-war Rumania, i.e. 2,813 for 2.9 million inhabitants, compared with 5,000 for 7 million inhabitants.

*⁸ The foundation of the Hungarian-speaking Uniate See is a tragic story. As there were in Hungary 304,000 Hungarian-speaking Uniate Catholics (according to the figures of 1910), the Hungarian government made representations to Rome, on the request of the faithful, concerning the creation of the diocese of Hajdudorog for the Hungarian-speaking Uniates. Hungary thereby hoped to withdraw the Hungarian element from the tyranny of being administered in a language which they did not understand. But in practice, the new diocese only had jurisdiction over 184,000 of them, while 120,000 souls had to remain in sub-mission to Bishops who spoke a foreign language. It is true that on the other hand, 32,000 non-Hungarian Uniates (Rumanians and Ruthenians) found themselves incorporated into the Hungarian diocese, but it was impossible to avoid this situation, on account of the uncertain linguistic frontier; but at least 75 % of these Uniates spoke Hungarian. Some of them emigrated to the United States and Canada, where they founded 22 Hungarian Uniate parishes. This fact alone proves the falsity of the assertions that were made for propaganda purposes. On 12th February 1914, Rumanian fanatics sent a bomb through the post to the Uniate Bishop of Hajdudorog, which exploded and killed the Bishop's secretary, two other persons and wounded eight others. When passions are so fierce, how can men live at peace with each other if they are blinded to the obligations of law and the interests of their neighbour ? No wonder humanity has got itself into such a terrible predicament today !

*⁹ It was not long before the Rumanians were able to meditate **on** the declaration of Col.

Fabricius, the " *Führer* " of the Saxons of Transylvania: " There is neither here, nor anywhere else, a German Minority, but a vast German Empire which extends as far as the Black Sea, and in which you, Rumanians, are only a minority. " (A. REDIER: *The Tragedy of the Danube*, p. 102.)

*¹⁰ It goes without saying that naive and arrogant formulas *à la Péguy* were hawked about by those who, not satisfied with being sons of the Church, gratuitously took upon themselves the dignity of Fathers of the Church, even if they were not practising Catholics, and lost their tempers when their authority was challenged. Henri Brémond said with some humour in 1916: " If we let our young writers of the new renaissance have their way, the word " Catholic " will have soon lost its real meaning and the " eldest daughter" of the Church will have become the " only daughter" (*Lot et les Entretiens de Péguy*, " *Correspondant* ", 1916, Vol. 263. p. 472.)

CHAPTER THREE

INGREDERE IN DOMUM DEI,

" Enter into the house of the Lord " and set to work. Aaron Márton was ordained priest by Mgr Majláth on 6th July 1924. He said his first Mass in his native village on 13th July. What happiness this first Mass gave to the new young priest and his parents! The joy and pride of his parishioners was no less great. The faithful came in procession from the outlying villages to receive his blessing. There is an old Hungarian saying which runs: it is worth wearing out a pair of boots to go to a priest's first Mass. A first Mass often has a greater influence than missions preached by the most practised of preachers. The occasion was made even more solemn by the presence of Mgr Majláth, who was passing through Siculi territory at the time, and chose in this way to honour the new young priest's family. The entire village went in procession to the station to conduct their Bishop in triumph to the church.

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Thus began the life of action for which his years of solid theological formation at the seminary had prepared him. There was plenty of work for him to do. He was first appointed curate at Ditro (Ditrau in Rumanian). The war years had brought about a loosening of morals in men who had passed through so much suffering. It cost the young priest much sacrifice to tighten up the standards of his flock. His steadfastness and his earnestness found a response in the end, and with his first sermon on 17th August he had already won the affection of old and young alike.

He did not remain long at Ditro. Transferred to Gyergyószentmiklós as curate and catechist, he helped to foster a special devotion to the Sacred Heart. At the Friday Benedictions, he delivered a series of sermons on the Great Promises. Only a few men came to the first sermon ; at the last of the series, there was no room in the church for all the men who would have liked to hear him.

The young priest's reputation quickly spread. He won the confidence of men who had hitherto been wild and lawless. In regions where the mountains are more than a thousand metres high (3,000 ft), the sacred ministry is most arduous. To reach the sick and the dying, impossible tracks have sometimes to be negotiated. Once Aaron Márton had to carry the Blessed Sacrament right up to the former frontier of Transylvania. It was no good trying to climb up the mountain track by grasping at the trees to secure a foothold. At a certain point he got stuck. Then, as if by magic, a rough Rumanian shepherd appeared, who knew him by reputation, and took him on his back, like a second St Christopher carrying the Body of Christ and His priest.

Five of the boys amongst whom Aaron Márton worked at the time embraced the priestly vocation. He founded a Guild (on the model of the " *Gesellen* " of Kolping). Under the influence of its young chaplain, it grew in scope and influence beyond all hopes. Young in body but mature in experience, he did not start a fresh movement just for the sake of making an innovation at any price.

The support which such associations as these gave to the Church in Hungary can hardly be over-estimated. Today, if the Communist tyranny had not destroyed them, they would have been able to look back upon a glorious past of a hundred years. Founded to cater for the needs of working-class boys, these associations and clubs had, before 1914, more than 50,000 members in Hungary. These figures represent an impressive percentage of the total Catholic population of 8 million. Thanks to such guilds as these, boys from the working class in Hungary were educated and kept firm in their faith.

It is obvious that such a man could not remain long in one post. Like a good soldier, he was always sent to the danger spots. For a short time, he was transferred to Marosvásárhely (Targu Mures in Rumanian). His job there was to give missions. Even people who were not Catholics crowded round his pulpit. His parish priest was more than delighted with him. So he soon lost him.

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From Marosvásárhely he was transferred to Vöröstorony as parish priest. His presbytery was at Szeben (Sibiu in Rumanian). Here he had come to a place where the Church had bitter and mean enemies. Nobody who has the slightest knowledge of the Orthodox Church will be surprised at this.

At the time of Aaron Márton's appointment to Szeben, the Metropolitan Balan was reigning. An ardent apostle of reunion between the Churches, his aim was to bring all Christians back to the Church ruled over by the Patriarch of Bucharest. He could not realise such a grandiose dream through the spiritual influence of the schismatic Church, which had long ago spent any internal strength it possessed for proselytisation, but he could do so if he received the support of the Rumanian government, which had inherited the religious mission of Czarist Russia, and seemed marked out for the leadership of Eastern Christianity.

Temesvár who do not mind which regime they serve so zealously often make a mistake in their calculations. That explains why Nicholas Balan burned his fingers during the second World War, when he tried to organise the Orthodox Church in those Russian territories which were overrun by Rumania *¹. The Russians excuse such minor peccadilloes if it is in their interest to do so. Accordingly, the Metropolitan Balan was quick to show that he had learned wisdom when the Russians occupied Rumania, by putting himself at the service of popular democracy, and supporting the campaign against the Catholic Church.

Pastors of the type of Nicholas Balan are no danger to atheistic materialism, because the very idea of a genuine resistance never crosses their mind. At the most, they are determined to fall on their feet again, whenever a new regime comes along. But they are a great danger to truth and justice, which they disregard because they never let religious convictions, or philosophical considerations, or common decency stand in their way.

It was at Szeben that Aaron Márton could observe the two-faced attitude of the Uniate Church, and the advances it made to the Orthodox Church. Szeben was also the centre of all the intrigues which were set on foot to make the greatest possible number of Catholics apostasies. It was here that unjust laws were brutally applied—laws which in the twentieth century were intolerable, concerning education, marriage and the change of religion—and which every regime which has suddenly acquired an extension of territory thinks it can impose upon its citizens, in an attempt to muzzle religion.

The parish priest of Vöröstorony had a characteristic example of this abuse of power before his very eyes. The orphanage at Szeben, founded by the Empress Maria--Theresa in 1767 with Catholic money, was seized by the Rumanian government on 8th May 1921 and filled with Orthodox and Uniate children. Its Foundation Charter expressly stated however: " We are founding a Catholic orphanage... " Aaron Márton was justly angry when he saw that all the representations made by Mgr Majláth on behalf of the orphanage failed. The seizure of the orphanage was confirmed and it remained in the hands of the Rumanian aggressors.

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From Vöröstorony-Szeben, Aaron Márton was transferred to Gyulafehérvár, or Alba Julia. It was as though the holy Bishop Majláth had designated him to be his successor by sending him here. He was now put in charge of the diocesan archives. Up till then, he had seen from the outside all the intrigues that were directed against the Hungarian element and the Hungarian Catholics and Protestants in Transylvania. Now the documents were going to give him an inside view of the cruel campaign of unbridled hatred which the Orthodox Rumanian Church was waging against the Catholics of the Latin Rite, and in particular against their Bishop, Mgr Majláth. Those who had benefited most from the former Hungarian regime now became the fiercest and most adamant of Hungary's enemies.

This warfare—for such it was—was waged even more fiercely behind the scenes and concentrated particularly upon two questions: the Concordat and the *Status Catholics*, or *Legal Statute*, of Catholicism in Transylvania. The two problems are really one and the same thing. The Concordat aimed at the destruction of the *Status*. We must discuss these two questions in detail if we are to give an adequate summary of Mgr Márton's work.

The Concordat

Since the incorporation of Hungarian territory (102,000 square kilometres) and Austrian Bukovina, approximately 3 million Catholics were living in Rumania. According to the Rumanian statistics of 1931, the Catholics of the Latin Rite amounted to 1,230,000, the remainder of the Catholics being Uniates. In 1927, in the territories formerly belonging to Hungary, the Catholics of the Latin Rite amounted to 981,000, of whom 70 % were Hungarians. The diocese of Transylvania alone accounted for 352,000 Catholics of the Latin Rite, practically without - exception Hungarians.

Practically all the German-speaking Catholics were at first Hungarophile, that is before Rumanian intervention forced them to become Germans again, in an attempt to weaken the Hungarian element, and before Nazi propaganda got a hold upon them. The Saxon Lutherans of Transylvania broke away from the Hungarians after they had lived in their country for 800 years, and been loaded with privileges, but the German-speaking Catholics had always been conscious of their obligations towards Hungary, the country which had given them a home and shared its territory with them. No sophistries of propaganda could weaken that obligation.

Since Rumania had guaranteed her Minorities freedom of worship, she was obliged to follow this up with a Concordat. Indeed, the interests of a country torn by so many crises, dynastic, political and economic required it. Apart from considerations of this nature, the Rumanian political leaders hoped that the Concordat would put Hungarian Catholicism at the mercy of the State. Having ruined the Hungarian Catholics economically and paralysed the functioning of their schools, the Rumanians wanted to use the Concordat to destroy what was the greatest source of Catholic strength in Transylvania—the *Status Catholicus*, a Catholic organisation which was unique in the world.

The promoters of the Concordat talked to such good effect of the political advantages to be derived from it, that they disarmed the violent opposition of the Orthodox Church itself, which had organised protest meetings to oppose the slightest concessions to the Catholics. The General Assembly of the Rumanian Orthodox, meeting on 23rd April 1927 at Bucharest, declared:

" We protest as strongly as lies in our power against the conclusion of a Concordat. Such an agreement would expose our race and our nation to the gravest dangers. We are opposed on principle to any Concordat with Rome. A contract which would detach the Rumanian Uniates from our race can only cause troubles which would be dangerous at a time when we should all be working for the spiritual unification of our country... We do not want the Pope to interfere in our political life... If the government disregards the wishes of the Orthodox nation, we declare that we shall never recognise the Concordat... "

In vain did the government reply that the Orthodox Church itself would derive advantages from the Concordat, since it would permit the suppression of Episcopal sees in the territories which formerly belonged to Hungary. The opposition did not weaken. Todor Popescu, the legal expert of the Rumanian Orthodox Church, wrote: " The signature of the Concordat by the government will be a signal for tumultuous and bloody disturbances... Rumania is the country of the Rumanians, of the Daco-Rumanian nation, Rumanian-speaking and Orthodox by religion. It is we who are the masters of the length and breadth of the country... " (See also what he wrote in his chapter on the question of Union.)

These are the texts to which we must turn, if we want to understand the mentality which suppressed Uniate Catholicism in Transylvania in 1948.

The Concordat was signed on 10th May 1927, but in spite of its satisfaction, the government did not dare to announce it until 29th May 1929.

Roman diplomacy had apparently gained a success, but the real beneficiary was the Rumanian government. It guaranteed, it is true, equality of rights to Catholicism and Catholic citizens and accorded Catholics the right to found and maintain schools, to determine the language in which the instruction should be given, " except however in schools in which the language is Rumanian at the time of the conclusion of the Concordat. " That is to say that after the Rumanians had suppressed or rumanised 500 Hungarian schools, the Rumanian government granted the right to teach in the Hungarian language in schools which nobody now had the means to found.

The Rumanian government used the Concordat as a means to solve all the problems connected

with the Catholic Church in Rumania in a way favourable to Rumanian interests. They put Episcopal sees which had been in existence for a thousand years under obedience to the archiepiscopal see of Bucharest, which had only been in existence for some decades, and possessed an insignificant number of Catholics from a statistical point of view. Most important of all, the Concordat provided the means to attain the principal Rumanian objective—namely the annihilation of the *Status Catholicus*.

Neither the Catholic Church in Transylvania, nor its heroic Bishop can be put into proper relief, unless the vicissitudes of this organisation which did so much for the faith in Transylvania are explained.

The Campaign against the Status

What exactly was this *Status Catholicus* of the diocese of Transylvania ? " The Status is the organ of the priest and lay representatives elected by the whole Catholic population of the diocese. The aim of this organisation is to help the clergy to administer a certain proportion of Church property and to administer the institutions which are maintained with this money. "

The *Status Catholicus* of Transylvania was founded in the seventeenth century, but its origin goes back much further, to the parish organisation of the Siculi communes. Independent of any seigniorial rights, they administered the temporal affairs of the parish and supervised discipline by means of a Council elected by all the adult members of the parish. This Council presented the name of the parish priest to the Bishop for canonical nomination and also elected the teacher of the Church school.

It was this organisation, with its extensive privileges, which had preserved the Roman faith of the Siculi at a time when the Protestant Reformation threatened to submerge the Catholics, who were deprived of a Bishop, and were more often than not without any resident parish priest, or religious Orders. For more than a century, Catholics were in a minority in Transylvania ; their only champions, since they had lost their natural ones in the clergy, were the few great families who had preserved the Catholic faith. The heads of these families used to meet regularly the few parish priests there were at the time, to discuss religious matters ; they also interceded in favour of their religion with the hostile Protestant Princes of Transylvania. The Parish Councils of the free Communes of the Siculi existed throughout the whole diocese. This was the origin then of the *Status Catholicus* (which really means a States General for the Church). From the time when the Bishop's see was restored in 1716 up to our own days the *Status* has continued to exist, with certain modifications. Rome was kept fully informed about the organisation and more than once expressed its appreciation of the services it rendered to the Church.

It was thanks to the activities of the *Status* that the huge diocese of Transylvania, 57,000 square kilometres, where the majority of the Hungarian population was Protestant, was provided with churches, schools, boarding schools, orphanages and almshouses.

In our own day, the *Status* acted as a link between the parishes to settle problems which a single parish could not cope with by itself. It was also part of its mission to support small Catholic communities, by providing them with schools and churches. To carry out such work as this, the *Status*, which had a juridical personality, possessed land and capital, and administered Catholic foundations. As its wealth increased in the course of the centuries, the *Status* was able to do work which other dioceses could not possibly have tackled. Hence it was a form of the modern Catholic Action for three centuries before this latter existed.

The *Status*, with its clearly defined statutes and its deliberating Assembly, represented a force in the conduct of Church affairs and stimulated public interest. Two-thirds of its members were lay people, one third clergy. There were ex-officio and elected members. Business was conducted by an office consisting of 24 members, presided over by the Bishop, whose approval gave the force of law to their recommendations. The Bishop, as President, had the right to exclude from the Council any member whose public or private life was not in conformity with the requirements of the Church. The Bishop had to confirm the election of a member before it became valid.

Following upon the change of sovereignty in Transylvania, the Catholic deputies in the Rumanian Parliament and the Catholic Senators were allowed to become ex-officio members of the *Status*, since

they represented a certain area of the diocese.

The big Annual Assemblies of the *Status* were important events. All the Catholics of Transylvania were interested in its elections. From a practical point of view, the *Status* was far superior to any other Catholic organisation. And as the faithful of the diocese were almost exclusively Hungarian, the *Status* represented a force in the life of the Hungarian nation also. So it was small wonder that the Rumanian government did its best to devise the economic ruin of the *Status* as a first step, and then proceed to paralyse its functioning.

The first attack came under the admirable pretext of the Agrarian Reform, which ruined the Hungarian Churches and enriched the Rumanian Churches. (See the chapter on the Agrarian Reform). But the Rumanian government went much further than that. They tried to question the very canonical legality of this centuries-old institution.

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The campaign against the *Status* was directed by Onisiphor Ghibu, a Professor at the University of Kolozsvár. In the course of the first World War, he had talked to Pope Benedict XV about the reunion of the Rumanians with Rome. The Rumanian government acted in a very two-faced manner towards him in this whole matter. It entrusted him with official missions and made him Chair-man of the Historico-Juridical Commission for Religious Affairs in Transylvania. In 1931, he was sent to Rome to discuss the problems of the *Status*. His anti-Catholic books were published with the help of a government subsidy. Then it disavowed him and threatened him with imprisonment. The police, however, put at his disposal archives which had been confiscated from Catholic convents. The Surveyors' Departments made changes in their land registers in accordance with his demands, under the pretext of rectifications in the land register. " Thus were the legitimate owners divested without their knowledge of their land, in favour of the new State.

Onisiphor Ghibu began his attack in the newspaper *Patria*. According to him, the Rumanians had taken over control in Transylvania in too civilised a manner. It looked like weakness on the part of the nation. Through-out history, conquerors had always seized everything in a conquered land. The Agrarian Reform had already levelled matters up in the agricultural sphere. This same balance must now be struck in the religious sphere also... The churches in Kolozsvár (Cluj in Rumanian) for example, must be redistributed according to the requirements of justice... The Orthodox have the right to at least two of the churches ; St Michael's Cathedral and the University Church. They must be taken by force, before an official ruling was made, just as the Turks seized the church of Hagia Sophia in 1453. (These articles appeared in book form with the title " The Radical Revision necessary in the Legal Statute of the Hungarian Churches in Transylvania ", in Rumanian, 1923).

The following year, O. Ghibu went further. He now tried to prove that all Catholic Church property in Transylvania belonged by right to the Rumanian government. According to this system, he claimed the Cathedral of

. Gyulafehérvár (Alba Julia), several other churches, and the Bishop's Palace at Gyulafehérvár (42).

The *Status* was, however, the object of his bitterest attacks in articles and books. According to him, the *Status* was a political organisation, unlawful and anti-canonical. He had forgotten an enthusiastic article he had once published on the *Status* in 1915, in which he said that the organisation of the *Status* was " fundamentally identical with that of the Orthodox Church " (43).

In 1924, the Uniate Senator Bianu attacked the *Status* in Parliament and described it as illegal, fraudulent and a challenge to the Rumanian government.

On 5th January 1924, the Rumanian Parliament passed the law concerning civic rights, in 1928 the law on religious practice, and finally in 1929 the Concordat. An old saying runs: A story of Concordats, a story of sorrows. In order to win over the opposition, the Foreign Minister, Take Jonescu, openly declared that " the Concordat was necessary, not for the Holy See, but for the Rumanian government. "

By invoking article 9 of the Concordat, the Rumanian government tried to trick the *Status* out of

its civil personality in law. It considered also that according to article 13, it no longer had the right to administer its own funds. Article 13 said that funds which still remained were to be converted into Rumanian government bonds, and to form an inter-diocesan " sacred patrimony ". This fund was to be administered by the Council of the Diocesan Bishops.

From the point of view of Canon Law, the solution was an excellent one. The only thing was that the Catholic funds in Transylvania were to be surrendered to the Council of Bishops. Besides the Bishop of Transylvania, there were five Uniate Bishops and four Bishops of the Latin Rite, of which two came from pre-1914 Rumania. The two other Bishops had little chance of being nominated from amongst the clergy of Hungarian origin.

The trap that was thus laid for the Hungarian Catholics of Transylvania escaped the notice of the competent authorities in Rome, but the Catholics themselves and the *Status* made a protest. Elemér Gyárfás was their spokesman in the Senate at Bucharest: " The " sacred fund " instituted by the Concordat ", he said, " is none other than the " Catholic autonomy " (or the Legal Statute extended under the Hungarian regime to the whole of Hungary) which the Rumanians attacked so bitterly, with this big difference, that the participation of the laity is entirely excluded. The Bishops only are to deal with the temporal affairs of the Church. Hitherto the *Status* had assumed this responsibility. "

The Rumanian government could not bring about the disintegration of the *Status* through the infiltration of the Rumanian laity, as they would have liked to do, for the simple reason that there were not enough Catholics amongst the Rumanians themselves. So they tried to achieve it by means of this Council of Bishops.

The bitterness which the Catholics of Transylvania felt towards the Uniate Catholics can well be imagined, when they saw that the latter, whom they had welcomed as brothers at the time of the Union between them, and with whom they had shared their centuries-old heritage, tried to carve out a share for themselves of the patrimony of their persecuted brethren.

The Rumanian government pretended to assume that the *Status* had no legal personality. This was their reason for forbidding the Annual Meetings of the *Status* in 1930 and 31. Then, as a result of the work of a Commission nominated by the Minister of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs, a ridiculous campaign was started against the *Status*. The press began it, then it was taken up by the intellectuals, both clerical and lay.

The whole personnel of the University of Cluj (Kolozsvár) took part in the patriotic campaign. The Science Faculty demanded the sacristy of the University Church, built by the Jesuits, together with the sacristan's house, to accommodate its collections. Father Borza, a Uniate priest and Professor of Botany, insisted on the dissolution of the *Status* if the charges levelled against it were proved, and demanded that its directors should be brought before a court of law. The University students were also told to express their spontaneous indignation.

All these attacks, however, were as nothing compared to that made by the Patriarch, Christea Miron, who demanded that a commission should be nominated to enquire into the conduct of the *Status*, and that in such an important matter, the personal intervention of the Minister himself should contribute to the triumph of morals and legality.

This Historico-Juridical Commission was quick to publish, at the expense of the Ministry, a volume of 466 pages, edited by O. Ghibu, which they did not dare, however, to put on the market for sale. In the Foreword, Ghibu said, among other things:

" As the *Status* has no legal or canonical basis, and as it is an organisation of extreme danger to the Rumanian State, it must be dissolved and the property it administers should be transferred by the State... first of all to the Rumanian University of Cluj (Kolozsvár)... The *Status Catholicus* is an anachronism and a challenge to the State. "

The activities of this Commission did much damage to the *Status*. The Surveyors' Department simply transferred the assets which still remained (some buildings and a little) and to the Rumanian government. When, after numerous representations, the Minister of the Interior finally authorised a meeting of the Assembly of the *Status*, Nicholas Jorga, Minister of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs, declared that he would consider any decisions made at the Assembly as null and void. After a violent

campaign in the newspaper *Universul* (the Universe) the Attorney General, Colfescu, arraigned all the directors of the *Status* on charges of fraud, forgery of documents and subversive acts against the State.

The resistance put up by the Catholics won the day. The Rumanian government was obliged to enter into negotiations with Rome. In the course of these negotiations, the Rumanian representatives did their utmost to mislead Rome and outwit the delegates sent by the *Status*. The indelicate proceedings of the Rumanians so displeased the Vatican Secretary of State that he gave the delegates an assurance that he would not accept any text concerning the agreements as final, until they had been consulted.

It was during these conversations in Rome that Mgr Majláth, the Bishop of Transylvania, received a written Note from the Minister of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs, informing him that whatever might be the outcome of the conversations, there would be no discussion or rectification in the Surveyors' Department land registers. This question was considered to be an internal matter for the Rumanian government.

The Rumanian government thought the creation of the " Sacred Interdiocesan Patrimony " would ensure at least that Catholic property would have to be shared with the Uniates, if it could not be confiscated outright. The Catholics, however, sent the following solemn declaration to the Nuncio:

" We are ready to accept no matter what persecution, to expose ourselves to any violence, to risk the brutal confiscation of all our property, but we are not prepared to accept the humiliating conditions proposed to us, and we are not disposed to inter with our own hands the institutions founded by our fathers, and which are so dear to all the faithful. "

As a result of this protest, the Nuncio invited the Uniate Bishops to make a declaration that they would not accept any Catholic property belonging to the Latin Rite. Thus they were obliged to come down on the side of justice.

The " Agreement " between the Holy See and Rumania was finally signed on 30th May 1932. By the terms of this " Agreement ", the *Status* was transformed into a " Council of the Latin diocese of Transylvania ", with the powers indicated by canons 1520-22 of Canon Law. " The funds of the *Status* can be used in the diocesan territory of Transylvania only. As in the past, Church funds are to be used for educational and religious purposes only, and Church property is to be inscribed on the land register as belonging to the *Status*. "

The " Agreement " did not disarm the opposition. O. Ghibu declared: " It seems to me that modern war can only be won by tanks. " But if they crushed others besides the members of the *Status*, it would not be his fault. And so he appeared with his tanks in 1934. In his book " Hungarian Catholics and the Activities of the Holy See in Greater Rumania ", which appeared in that year, he attacked everybody, Rome in particular, with whom he had formerly wanted to be united.

The Rumanian Courts did not recognise the " Agreement " as valid. Ghibu and his adherents demanded the denunciation of the Concordat. The officials of the Surveyors' Departments refused to make the necessary rectifications in the land registers in favour of the *Status*. In 1935 there was again danger that Catholic property would be shared out with the Uniates. The Minister, Valeriu Pop, a Uniate Catholic, declared to a Uniate Bishop: " Even if you give up these claims, the government will still press on in the matter. " By 1937 it was decided that the proposed division of Catholic property should be enquired into by a Commission of three, which should submit its findings to the Holy See, in order to obtain a decision.

The Diocesan Council, as the *Status* was now called, resisted all these proposals firmly. In 1937 it addressed a new memorandum to the Holy See, proving by historical and juridical arguments the purely Catholic origin of the funds of the *Status*. It did not omit to underline the fact that in the course of the centuries, the Catholics of the Latin Rite had given a great deal of their wealth to the Uniate Catholics ; for example, the very rich livings of the Uniate Sees of Nagyvárad (Oradea Mare), the domains of Szamosújvár and Alsószombatfalva, which in 1738 were exchanged for the still richer domain of Balázsfalva, founded in the nineteenth century, the endowments from the sees of Lugos (Lugoj) and of Karán-sebes, the subsidy given to the Uniate clergy and paid out of the subsidy given by the Hungarian government to the Catholic community, not forgetting the money contributed by Catholic priests as well as the laity at the time of the Union between them, to raise the intellectual and material standards of their

Uniate brethren. The Uniates on the other hand felt no embarrassment whatever in accepting churches expropriated from the Latin Catholics after the change of regime—e.g. the church at Kolozsmonostor and the Franciscan church at Kolozsvár. They declared that they would not allow their ancient rights to be contested.

Not content with his attacks upon the *Status*, O. Ghibu then turned upon the religious Orders, especially those which still had something left which could be seized: the Premonstratensians, the Piarists and the Franciscans. He devoted a book of 1,000 pages to plan the complete confiscation of their property. But while all this was going on, the international situation had worsened. Having been advised to steer a more moderate course by its protectors, the Rumanian government no longer remained deaf to the insistent demands of the Holy See, and recognised the validity of the Rome " Agreement " (44).

It is difficult to excuse the proceedings of the Rumanian government towards the *Status*. They always thought of it as though it were an organisation which was Calvinist in character, usurping the rights of Bishops and reducing them to the narrow prerogatives of the Protestant Bishops. The truth is rather that the constitution of the Orthodox Church in Transylvania shows Protestant influences, not the *Status*. Drawn up in 1868 by the Metropolitan Andrew Siaguna, the Orthodox Constitution followed the Hungarian Protestant model (45).

' Such allegations were made by the Rumanians in bad faith. Indeed the Protestant Bishop has no hierarchical powers over his pastors, whilst the *Status* was given a mandate by the Bishop to administer a part of the diocesan funds. The delegation of the Bishop's authority in this instance allowed the *Status* to supervise and inspect the institutions maintained by diocesan money, i.e. the schools and the teaching staffs. Above the Protestant Bishop is the Assembly (or " Convent " Consistory), whilst the Bishop in Transylvania was always the Chairman of the Status, and his approval gave the force of law to its recommendations and decisions.

The solicitude of the Orthodox for the purity of Catholic institutions was very touching. Only neither Rome nor the Hungarian Catholics fell into the traps that were laid for them with such hypocrisy. For if historical circumstances had not created the *Status*, the Bishop would have had the right to organise it according to Canons 1520-21 of Canon Law.

In 1903, when Mgr Majláth made his visit *ad* ((mina to Rome, he spoke in high praise of the *Status* in a Report 48 pages long. On 14th November 1929, at the General Assembly, he quoted a passage from his inaugural speech of 10th August 1897:

" Is the organisation of the Status justified ? I consider it is, for three reasons... Here is the third reason: so that the indifference of the laity towards their religion may cease. Let the cause of the Church not be considered as the exclusive affair of the clergy. Such affairs are common to all of us. Let everybody participate in the work of the Church and also in the merits gained. The laity will not claim that it is they who should govern the Church. Their only ambition is to help their Bishop. Like all human organisations, the *Status* can be imperfect. Its statutes may need adapting or modifying, nevertheless I firmly believe that it is a precious auxiliary for the Bishop in the administration of the various foundations and of the schools. "

" Those were the words of a young Bishop. The old Bishop thanks God for having directed him here to Transylvania, where he has been able to see the *Status* at work " (46).

Aaron Márton, working on the archives, saw all these attacks against the *Status* at first hand. Following in the footsteps of his masters, he saw clearly that it was his bounded duty to defend the institutions founded by their forefathers, and that in every era, the fight for liberty must be won by methods appropriate to the attack. He will be seen to do likewise, when he is at the head of his diocese of Transylvania. He well knew that relations between Church and State can never be regulated once and for all by over-simplified formulas. Neither was he unaware of the fact that persecution is always lying at hand:

" And you shall be brought before governors and before kings for My sake. "

St Matthew X.v. 18.

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We have to add two remarks only to this chapter.

1. S. Dragomir has written: " During these twenty years of existence within the framework of Greater Rumania, no conflict arose between the government and the Churches of the Minorities. The Memoranda addressed in the spring of 1938 by the three Hungarian Bishops, with a view to a general pacification in religious matters, contain nothing which suggests any hostility on the part of the state towards the Hungarian Churches " (47).

Why then talk of a " pacification ", one may well ask ?

2. Everything that has been said in the last two chapters is a refutation of the allegations made by S. Dragomir in his book called " *Transylvania.* ". In this book, even facts which are true are presented in such a way that they do violence to the truth (48).

*¹ As the young Bishop of Karánsebes at the time of the Rumanian declaration of war in 1916 against Austria-Hungary, he declared that any Rumanian who showed himself on the crest of the Carpathians should be shot. (*Documentation Catholique*, 1949, column 837.)

CHAPTER IV

Kolozsvár

The time he spent at Gyulafehérvár, on intimate terms with Mgr Majláth, prepared Aaron Márton for the grave problems which awaited him at Kolozsvár. Kolozsvár was the biggest Catholic parish in Transylvania. For two hundred and fifty years the Catholic institutions of learning and charitable foundations had all been concentrated in this town. It possessed also a University and the spiritual directors of the student body had to be really outstanding men. In 1931 the Bishop entrusted this delicate post to Aaron Márton.

Chaplain to the University Students

Before taking up this post, Aaron Márton went to Rome with Mgr Majláth and was presented to the Pope as the future Chaplain to the University students. "Do you like young people?", asked Pius XI. Aaron Márton said that he did. Then the Pope went on: "The education of young people is one of the important problems of our times. I give you my special blessing in your task." With this encouragement, Aaron Márton set to work.

The Catholic Students' Association was affiliated to the Catholic People's Union of Transylvania. The particular aim which the Students' Association set itself, was to deepen the spiritual life of its members and to study the problems of the rural areas.

It was no easy task to stir up the sacred fire of religious practice in Transylvania and the outlying regions. Aaron Márton did his best to encourage his flock, adapting as best he could to the unhappy political circumstances of the time the splendid ideals which the Catholic youth movements had tried to put into practice ever since pre-1914 days.

In order to get a clearer picture of this side of his work, we must set it against the background of the Catholic youth movements in Hungary which flourished before the first World War.

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The origin of the Catholic youth movements in Hungary goes back to 1900, when overt anti-clerical tendencies were a serious danger to the Church in the political as well as the intellectual sphere. The politico-religious quarrels of 1894-96 concerning legislation on civil marriage opened the eyes of the Catholics. Their first reaction was to found the Catholic People's Party. Then came a period of intense activity in the practical field, when several new Catholic organisations were founded.

The foundation of the Catholic People's Party was of great significance. The other political parties were taken by surprise. They were quick to redress the balance between the Catholic and the anti-Catholic elements in their organisations, by allowing their Catholic members to play a political role in proportion to their numbers. The interesting thing was that the Catholic initiative had come from precisely that quarter—the younger generation—which the enemy had imagined was amenable to his own influence, and was grouping in associations such as the *Galileo Club* for young free-thinking Radicals. The young Catholics asserted their existence with a flourish and organised themselves first into St Emery Clubs and then into a series of organisations called the Catholic Students' Association, the Marian Congregation, Americana, etc.

The Catholics were now impervious to the tyranny of fine phrases and false historical conceptions. The title of one of Mgr Ottokár Prohászka's books illustrated the tendency of this religious renewal: "The Triumphant Philosophy of Life". No longer did the Catholics take up a rather desperate defensive position in the face of the fashionable catchwords of the day: first, an enthusiastic patriotism; the next day 'civilisation and liberty'; the day after, 'history working towards the progressive international idea'. Now the younger generation of Catholics could see that they did not have to blush for the past ;

they understood what the religion of their fathers really meant. They intended to live their faith fully. And it was just at this particular time that Pope St Pius X gave his device to the Church: " Restore all things in Christ ".

And what labourers these young Catholics gave to the vineyard. Of course the good work must have been going on all the time, for so many labourers and such devotion could never have materialised suddenly out of nothing. The greatest among these early names was Ottokár Prohászka, philosopher and theologian. He made preaching fashionable in circles which had hitherto been quite indifferent to it. Non-Catholics crowded into the University Church of Budapest, or to missions he preached in the provinces. The unbelievers, curious or disconcerted as the case might be, were intrigued by his ardent and poetic soul, and especially by the man of prayer. Conversions followed from every quarter, new initiatives were started. The Academy and the Literary Societies hastened to elect him among their members, so that posterity could not reproach them for having failed to recognise a great writer in their midst.

At first, the new types of organisation and the new forms of pastoral work were centred upon the University students, but Catholic Clubs and Working-class Associations were not neglected either. Spiritual books which were both attractive and sound were published one after the other and were read enthusiastically. The most prolific author at this time was Bishop Prohászka. But how many others there were besides who produced bedside spiritual reading—Tihamér Tóth, for example, to mention one name only.

What a splendid life was that of Tihamér Tóth, and what an example he gave of a disciplined life and methodical work ! He was shy as a preacher, and until the end of his life he would mount the steps of the pulpit with evident trepidation, but he was able to master his weakness like a modern Demosthenes and developed such an influence that he became the spiritual director of people who lived far beyond the frontiers of Hungary. In this way he was able to give back to Western Christendom some part of what the Hungarian nation had received at the time of its conversion, and later on in the course of its history. He became a Bishop and died on the field of honour, like his master and ideal Ottokár Prohászka, who collapsed and died in the pulpit of the University Church of Budapest in 1927. Tihamér Tóth died because he persisted in proceeding with a visitation to administer confirmation, although he was ill. Truly, he encompassed all the work of a long life in a short one.

A phalanx of young writers came to their maturity after the first World War. They started writing in the reviews for young people—The Marian Congregation, (*Mária-Kongregáció*), Our Lady (*Miasszonyunk*) and especially in " Our Flag " (*Zászlónk*)—to mould the Christian ideals of such a promising young generation of Catholics. The influence of this last review can hardly be imagined today. Its enemies were dumbfounded by its success. They tried to neutralise it by founding a rival review. They had the money and the writers, but were totally unable to recruit the readers.

During these years before 1914, the Scout Movement was also started. It reached its full strength only after the first World War, when an international centre was created. The Catholic and Protestant troops were run independently, while the Catholic Scouts were in charge of the national H.Q. of the Movement.

It was to this enthusiastic and formative background that young Aaron Márton came as a schoolboy. He experienced the same influences during his years of theology. In vain did the Rumanian occupiers try to seal the frontiers more or less hermetically against any influences coming from Hungary—Aaron Márton could not therefore witness the wonderful revival in liturgical chant which took place in Hungary after the first World War—all the same the seminarists at Gyulafehérvár were not entirely deprived of all news of what was going on. Consequently, when his Bishop made him Chaplain to the University students, he had something of his own to contribute, as well as inheriting the wealth of the old experience that had gone before him. He was sustained in his new mission by his scholarship, his experience of life as a soldier, and by the common sense which he inherited from his Siculi ancestors.

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Later, on 18th May 1944, when he was ordaining some new priests, he preached a sermon in which he said among other things: " The young generation expects us to have the courage of our

convictions. In the present confusion of ideas and of catchwords, spread by various organisations amidst the threat of war, youth seeks in its devoted enthusiasm and selflessness the rules of life which it can make its own without fear of being deceived. Young people are searching ardently for men who are different from all the weathercocks and chameleons of the day, men who can stand firm and are worthy of respect, and whose example is worth following. "

Here was a noble stand to make in an age of cowardly conformity. It is no easy matter to advise young students, when nearly every one of them has a briefcase full of plans for social or constitutional reform. Spiritual direction is especially difficult in periods as troubled as that through which Aaron Márton lived. So many different tendencies, some good, some bad, were in the air, all of them a danger to young men with a weakness for infallibility and anarchy, which is natural to their age. To add to the difficulties, the students belonged to a national Minority. Aaron Márton tried to steer a clear course. Without exalting youth as an absolute value, thus making them unbearably conceited—a mood which can be ridiculous or dangerous according to circumstances—he understood them and loved them. To young men who had a superstitious belief in all new systems, he tried to suggest that it was always more important to convert men than to change institutions. He used to tell them that the best preparation for public life, when they reached maturity, was to work hard at their studies when they were young and pass their examinations, and that it was inexcusable for a man to take up a post in adult life for which he was insufficiently prepared, both intellectually and morally.

A man who hopes to secure a hearing from young men who are barely past the crisis of adolescence must inspire respect. That is the only means, not indeed of avoiding the conflict between the generations, but of extenuating it. His personality, devotion, good works and war record, combined to win Aaron Márton their respect and liking, upon which the success of his mission depended. We can apply Tacitus' remark to him: "It was not difficult to take him for a good man ; he was willingly acknowledged to be a great man. " (Agricola XLIV).

His main task as a Catholic educator was of course to nourish the faith of his flock. When young men have lost their faith by the time they go up to the University, their priests and teachers are often held responsible. But Aaron Márton liked to ask this question of those who felt any of those doubts and uncertainties which often trouble them on the threshold of manhood: " Do you not think that sceptics abandoned the practice of their faith before they lost the faith itself ? " Nourished on St Fran9ois de Sales and the Imitation of Jesus Christ, he insisted on the corporate aspect of religion. If any young individualists wanted to lead a private religious life of their own, he liked to quote the orders of his master St Fran9ois:

There is always more benefit and consolation to be obtained from the public devotions of the Church than from individual prayers: God having ordained that communion is to be preferred to any sort of individuality. It is always a very charitable thing to combine with a few and to co-operate with others ". He was entirely of the opinion of M. Blondel, who might have been describing Hungarian Catholic practice: " There is more of the infinite in the simplicity of the most popular and ordinary religious practices, than there is in haughty speculation and exquisite sentiments. "

In 1934, the grip of the totalitarian systems upon the young generation seemed irresistible in every country, whether great or small. Aaron Márton quoted at this time the last sermon of Mgr Prohászka, his master: " Hail, Catholic Church ! Thou art called servant, when thou art the daughter and standard-bearer of liberty. Thou hast been so in the past and shalt remain so in the future. Not that noisy sort of liberty which sets the crowd in the market-place in a fever, and constructs barricades in the streets ; thou defendest the interests of true and real liberty, thou watchest over the foundations of moral life and human dignity ! "

In 1934, there were many in Transylvania who believed it on the word of Ottokár Prohászka. By 1955 nobody dared to doubt it any longer. By then, Aaron Márton too had made himself the tireless and brave champion of this sort of liberty—and at the price of his own liberty.

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Not all the Hungarian student population in the territories taken from Hungary at the Treaty of

Trianon were grouped in the Catholic Association of Kolozsvár. More than 3 million Hungarians had been incorporated into the so-called Succession States. The younger generation amongst them followed different paths, although they had frequent contacts with each other and had many common problems to solve. Their associations were political or social in character. All the groups however shared the same mood, and future prospects were black for all of them. These young Hungarians, who had over-night become merely tolerated in the land of their ancestors, who had been dispossessed of the family fortune, and eliminated from public life, set to work feverishly to try to find a solution to their problems. Under the title " Our Vocation as Members of a Minority ", the students of Northern Hungary, now attributed to the Czechs, wrote in 1929:

" Bearing the burden of our destiny as members of a Minority, which exposes us to pressure in cultural matters and poverty in the material sphere, we are surrounded by malice and loaded with reproaches. We can even surprise from time to time, in the eyes of our own fathers, those doubts that come from incomprehension. But conscious of seeing our problems clearly, we hold firmly to our positions, in spite of the oppression which overwhelms us as a Minority " (49).

" And to every fresh sign of incomprehension, these hypersensitive young men reacted with a radicalism which was even more extreme ", remarked Stephen Andreánszky, in this connection (50).

These young men realised that in the West the most sacred principles were scoffed at (the Fourteen Points of Wilson, for example and the Five Supplementary Points.) When they travelled in Western Europe, they saw that the various student associations accepted their country's policy docilely, and acquiesced in the injustices perpetrated in Central Europe. Disillusioned, they turned their eyes towards the East and dreamed of a sort of national Communism. Edgar Balogh, a man of exceptional integrity and devotion, who was later "purged " in Transylvania when the Communists took over, wrote:

" The intellectual brilliance of the West, the lights along the banks of the Seine, no longer light up Central Europe, the land of sorrow and poverty for the peoples of the Minorities. Today all those who desire that the unstable order of Central Europe should break down, fix their eyes upon the lights which have been lit upon the banks of the Neva. "

In 1917, Lenin proclaimed the right of nations to self-determination. Later on, he tried to make the Hungarians, who were oppressed by hostile states and reduced to poverty, believe that Bolshevism was the system which preached the self-determination of peoples. The other side had nothing but misrepresentation and false arguments to offer people who wanted their right to dispose of their own fate taken seriously. Can it be wondered at that in these circumstances the Hungarian students of the Minority should now turn in disgust from the West to Communism, which promised them that injustices would be remedied ?

The case of László Bányai provides an illustration of . this mentality. László Bányai did his higher studies in France on the strength of a scholarship awarded him by the *Status Catholicus*. He found neither friendship nor understanding from anybody but the Communists. If he attempted to speak about his country, spoiled and mutilated as it was, he found a hearing only among these people. (They were perhaps acting in all sincerity at the time). On 5th July 1930, at the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes* in Paris, the doctoral thesis of a Rumanian student named Siadbey was presented and examined. The subject of the thesis was the earliest documents in the Daco-Rumanian language. Now the earliest document in this language was none other than the foundation Charter of the Abbey of Tihany, situated on Lake Balaton, in Hungary. A candidate for the doctorate can construct his theories freely: facts are another matter. Anyhow, M. Siadbey had situated the Abbey 600 kilometres distant from its true geographical site.

Unluckily for him, a Hungarian specialist was present at the session. He asserted that some of the words quoted belonged to medieval Hungarian and he exposed the linguistic and topographical audacities of M. Siadbey. Bányai, being now a Rumanian national of Transylvania, courageously took part in the discussion, attacking in particular the French professor who had at first been disconcerted by his candidate's daring, but had now regained his composure, and upheld his thesis. Naturally, the Year Book of the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes* passed this scandal over in silence. It reported: " M. Siadbey presented the first results of his research ; the examination of his thesis was particularly precise, thanks to the collaboration of a Hungarian member of the audience (...) who engaged in a useful discussion of certain

topographical hypotheses of M. Siadbey " (51).

L. Bányai likewise knew perfectly well what had happened at a lecture given by a writer who was a specialist in Hungarian matters. Two officers had stood up to protest against the sympathetic tone with which the lecturer had referred to Hungary, the enemy of their allies. Bányai was also present at the Carnegie Foundation lectures held in 1929 under the aegis of the movement for " International Conciliation ". The subject of the lectures was the problem of the Minorities in Central Europe. The three fortunate recipients of the Carnegie funds fulfilled their task to the satisfaction of their sponsors. The first manipulated very cleverly statistics which were often quite genuine. The bold and cynical theories of the other two lecturers presented in a favourable light that monstrous process which became known after the second World War as " the- exchange of populations ".

The young Hungarians of the Minority saw only too often how the truth was flouted in the West in the interests of a shameless propaganda. They listened to all the commonplaces and empty phraseology which cast discredit on their country and condemned it in the name of democracy, that most prostituted of words, as Bernanos used to say.

We must look closely at the facts before we judge the aberrations of some of the young men of this time. Their destiny was that of the oppressed Minorities, their tragedy was that of the Hungarian nation. The case of László Bányai had to be explained to show what difficulties educators and students faced in Hungary. It also serves to make the picture of Aaron Márton stand out in relief.

PRESIDENT OF THE CATHOLIC PEOPLE'S UNION

In 1934, Aaron Márton was made President of the Catholic People's Union by Mgr Majláth. A charming story is told of him when he went to see his now ageing parents after his appointment. Like all village folk who have a priest son, old Augustine Márton cherished the hope of seeing his son put one day in charge of a parish, to which he would retire, so that he could assist every morning at his son's Mass.

" I understand ", he said to his son, " that you are no longer Head Master of the Báthory College?"

" No, Father, I have been appointed President of the Catholic People's Union. "

"That is all very nice, my boy, but when are you going to become a parish priest ? "

" With God's help, I shall become that too one day, perhaps, " replied the son.

Old Márton did not understand that his son would need experience in that post also before his training was completed and he could take over a higher responsibility still—the care of one of the greatest dioceses in the whole world—Transylvania.

The Catholic People's Union was founded in 1906 on the model of the German *Volksverein*. It was the greatest step the Church had yet taken in Hungary in the field of public education before the first World War. Its almanacs, pamphlets, a weekly paper and the free advice it gave in juridical and economic matters, did a signal service to the cause of popular education and awakened the Catholic conscience to this problem. Thanks to the Catholic People's Union (numbering 300,000 subscribing members) which in ten years distributed more than 36 million pamphlets and tracts, the Hungarians were not caught unprepared when, in March 1919, Count Michael Károlyi lost control of events and gave place to a Communist government. The resistance, both active and passive, which the Union offered to Communism was partly responsible for the fall of Béla Kun. It was a fall which had a calming effect on the unrest which was seething in practically every country in Europe at this time.

After 1919, the Catholic People's Union lost much of its original drive. Other movements, however, took its place.

Now the situation in Transylvania was quite different. No new organisations at all would have been tolerated by the new Rumanian masters. The old ones had to be preserved and adapted to the new circumstances. In 1921, a branch of the Catholic People's Union was formed, or rather, it broke away from the parent Union in Hungary. Its aim was to support in the social and cultural spheres those Hungarians who were incorporated into Rumania.

Aaron Márton gave a new impetus to the Union, which in the difficult circumstances of the time had just been vegetating. Its leaders, it must be admitted, had not always been able to adapt themselves to

the changed circumstances. He reorganised the movement, drew up methodical plans for lecture courses and for the publication of pamphlets, and organised meetings that were attractive as well as instructive.

He had to use his pen also in order to carry out the task entrusted to him by his Bishop with success. He found time in his busy life to write on topical problems in the " *Transylvanian Bulletin* ". Later on, in collaboration with several educators, he founded " The Transylvanian School " and contributed several articles on problems concerning Christian education.

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A priest in Aaron Márton's position was invited to speak over the length and breadth of Transylvania. He preached in every parish in the region incorporated into Rumania. It often happened that at the beginning of his Missions he had small congregations ; but as they drew to a close, the churches were hardly big enough to contain the people. His addresses on spiritualism at Kolozsvár were much commented upon. His greatest success, however, was the retreat he preached to the Catholics of Temesvár (Timisoara in Rumanian) in 1934. Things began badly. In his desire not to offend the Rumanians, Augustine Pacha, the Bishop of Temesvár, refused to give his permission for the Mission to be preached in the Cathedral, under the paltry pretext that it would never be filled. Yet every evening, it was full to overflowing. Young Protestants flocked to it and even a few Jews. Everybody was proud of such a success, which was beyond their wildest hopes.

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The University Chaplaincy and the Catholic People's Union took six years of Aaron Márton's life. Yet successful as he was in these two spheres, they were but steps on the way to a still greater vocation. In 1936 the Parish Council of Kolozsvár chose him to be parish priest of the most important parish in the whole diocese of Transylvania.

Rector of Kolozsvár

The successive stages in Aaron Márton's career could not have been organised with greater wisdom, in view of his final and supreme vocation of all. His new parish of St Michael's of Kolozsvár possessed the most modern educational and charitable institutions of the whole diocese. His predecessor had done very fine work in this direction. But the economic crisis which followed upon the spoliation of the Hungarian element, the confiscation of Church property and the suppression of the Government subsidy, had created a particularly difficult situation for the parish. The lay administrators of parish funds had not managed their business very efficiently, either through inexperience, or else because they had a personal interest in the disposal of the funds. The problem seemed insoluble. But Aaron Márton set things right.

Success or failure were equally stimulating to him in his work. On one occasion, he was visiting his predecessor, on his deathbed in hospital, when a former parish official, who had been dismissed for disloyalty, came to see him. There and then he fell on his knees before the dying man and begged his forgiveness for having informed on him to the Rumanian secret police, when he had been dismissed. Aaron Márton never forgot this scene, but it did not alter his devotion to his flock.

CHAPTER V

BISHOP OF TRANSYLVANIA

The Rumanian regime neglected no means or occasion to relegate the Hungarians to the background. If a Bishop had to be appointed, the Rumanian government threw its whole influence into trying to secure the nomination of men who, if they were not exactly hostile to the Hungarians, represented not them, but rather the German-Catholic element—such men as Stephen Fiedler, who was made Bishop of Szatmár, and Augustine Pacha, who was made Bishop of Temesvár. They tried to do the same thing in the diocese of Transylvania. There being no Rumanian Catholic candidate available, they nominated Adolphus Vorbuchner, who was duly appointed. But in this case the Rumanians miscalculated. A descendant of officers of the former Austro-Hungarian army and the former parish priest of Szeben (Sibiu), no better Bishop could have been found to protect the interests of the Hungarian population. It was he who put forward Aaron Márton's name for election as parish priest of Kolozsvár *¹. And it seemed that he only occupied his See long enough for Aaron Márton to reach the canonical age to take it over, for he passed discreetly from the scene, even dying before his own predecessor in the See, Mgr Majláth. On his death, Aaron Márton was nominated apostolic administrator of the diocese, and thenceforward the heavy burdens of a vast diocese fell upon his shoulders. On 24th December 1938, he was made Bishop of Transylvania. His Episcopal consecration took place on 24th February 1939.

Never had the consecration of a Bishop in Transylvania caused so much joy. Rarely had St Michael's Cathedral in Kolozsvár seen so many tears of joy. Everybody present followed the liturgy with intense concentration. During the ceremony, the consecrating Bishop asked the Vicar-General what qualities in the new prelate had appealed to him. He could hardly make his voice heard above the enthusiasm of those present, when he declared: " His modesty, his humility, his patience and his other virtues. " They would gladly have added: " He is one of us, we need a father and a guide. "

His parents were present at his consecration and were the first to receive the Episcopal blessing from their son, who kissed their hands. The Siculi had prepared a surprise for their new Bishop and presented him with a carving of the house in which he was born.

The new Bishop could say with St Martin: " Lord, if I can still be of use to my people, I do not refuse the task. " Like St Martin, he devoted himself to God's service after the years he had spent in the army. He took up his heavy responsibilities on the eve of the second World War. He too heard the words: " My grace is sufficient for thee ; for power is made perfect in infirmity. "

Aaron Márton's Episcopal coat-of-arms was full of this symbolism: a fir-tree growing amongst the rocks, with the device Pax in the middle of the fesse ; on either side, the sun and the moon, the two symbols being taken from the coat-of-arms of the department of Csik. All of which meant that the son of the department of Csik accepted the vocation of the fir-tree, which in the most unpromising situations clings tenaciously to the soil which nourishes it. The fir-tree stands out as a landmark, it sets an example of probity by standing upright, it reaches bravely up to heaven as it clings firmly to the soil, however poor it may be.

Aaron Márton's past record was a guarantee for the Hungarians that the highest dignity in the territory incorporated into Rumania had found a truly worthy representative. Above all else, they saw in him a leader, at a time when a Hungarian party had been forbidden by the Rumanian authorities, and the only political representation possible for the Hungarian element lay in the " Hungarian Community " (*Magyar Közösség*, Rumanian-sponsored), which was the sole organisation tolerated by the Royal dictatorship.

His position was no easy one. Being part of a Minority tends to wear men down in the long run. Aaron Márton's role was to reconcile conflicting tendencies. He was always quick to detect when motives were merely personal or partisan, and his intervention invariably put embittered discussions back on to the right road.

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Ever since 1938, there had been much nervous tension in Rumania. In 1934, Louis Barthou, the French Foreign Minister, had declared in the Bucharest Parliament which he was invited to address, with somewhat exaggerated rhetoric:

„ *Your frontiers have always been and will always be your own. Rest assured that if a square centimetre of your soil were touched, France would be at your side.* ”

At the same time the French Foreign Minister gave the Rumanians a free hand in their attempt to eliminate the Hungarian element from Transylvania. New winds were however blowing in 1938. The West was now preaching moderation and understanding, at least outwardly, to the so-called Succession States of the Little Entente.

Frightened by the threat from beyond their frontiers, the Rumanians reintroduced in Transylvania the First Decree of the Governing Commission (*Consiliu Dirigent*), the former Hungarian law of 1868 concerning Nationalities, because, remarks Silviu Dragomir, quoting Ladislas Goldis *²: " The new Rumania has not been created to destroy, but on the contrary, to bring liberty and full justice to all. This ideal of liberty and justice constitutes her mission in history " (52).

As things turned out, Rumania had waited too long to realise this noble vocation. She first wanted to see the results of the experiment which the officials of " Inter-national Conciliation " had suggested, together with the French Professor Louis Eisemann, who asked for a mere 50 years of patience, by which time the Minorities would have disappeared from the Succession States of former Austria-Hungary (53).

In spite of the new promises, which were mere bluff, everything went on as before. The Rumanian police continued to make their constant incursions. The analysis of surnames was pursued even more thoroughly, while the political murders of the *thirties* (of Duca, Jorga and Codreanu) and the cruelties of the Iron Guard augured badly for the future.

What fate was to be reserved for the Hungarian nation in the storm that was brewing ? Were the Western Powers prepared to recognise their responsibility and would they at long last be ready to tackle the problems of Central Europe ? Far from it. By abandoning Central Europe to Hitler and Mussolini, they simply resigned themselves to the worst.

After the failure of the attempted reconciliation between the Hungarians and the Rumanians at Turnu-Severin, the two interested parties appealed to Germany and Italy to arbitrate over the question of Transylvania *³.

The Vienna Award of 1940, as it is called, satisfied neither party. Notwithstanding, Hungary showed great restraint. She did not renounce her traditional role as the defender of Christendom, when in 1940 she refused to listen to the siren's song from Moscow, which advised her over the radio so to conduct herself that Regent Horthy and Stalin could shake hands in Bucharest. Further, before invading Bessarabia, Stalin summoned the Hungarian Ambassador in Moscow to his presence and asked him if Hungary had renounced her claim to Transylvania. Upon the Ambassador replying in the negative, Stalin suggested that now was the time for Hungary to attack Rumania (54).

Germany and Italy were obliged to accept the role of arbiters, given the danger to their military and political plans which a war between Hungary and Rumania would have involved, and a decision was made in the interests of Germany. The new line of demarcation in Transylvania cut right across the main railway line in the Siculi territory, in such a way that the Goering factories remained in Rumanian hands. The town of Arad *⁴ was left in Rumania. It lay within a few kilometres of the frontier fixed at Trianon, and its return to Hungary would have been entirely legitimate and reasonable. But as it was a railway junction, it had to be left in Rumanian hands, in accordance with the demands of the German General Staff, which had more confidence in its Rumanian ally than in Hungary. The same thing happened with Temesvár, the return of which to Hungary would have meant that fewer Rumanians would have been incorporated into Hungarian territory than there were, for example, in the departments of Beszterce (Bistrita-Nasaud), or Szolnok-Doboka (Somes), which were returned.

A few days before the Hungarians entered Kolozsvár, Mgr Aaron Márton went there himself to give his instructions. He named a Vicar-General to look after the spiritual needs of the territory now

returned to Hungary, and in conformity with his duty as a Bishop, returned to his residence at Gyulafehérvár, the seat of his diocese, to which he was bound by his Episcopal oath and his duty to defend his people in danger.

He was now more necessary than ever to his people who had been left under Rumanian domination. The hatred of the Rumanians for the Hungarians flared up again. Many Hungarians were sent to concentration camps. They dealt a severe blow to young Hungarians by forcing them to do military service in the Rumanian Army. The schools were unable to function and several of them were shut. In 1941, what was left of the Hungarian state schools was simply suppressed by decree. The Catholic Seminary of Theology at Gyulafehérvár had its taxes increased by 3,000 %, following upon the Vienna Award—i.e. 126,827 *lei*, as against 3,996 *lei* paid in 1939. The College and School of Calvinist Theology at Nagyenyed (Aiud) had its taxes raised by 12,000 % and had to pay 860,000 *lei* as against 7,000 *lei* formerly paid. And to crown all these misfortunes, in accordance with Decrees Nos 26,625 and 130,109 of 1941, the Rumanian Minister of National Education dismissed, as from 1st July 1941, all Hungarian professors, teachers and officials who were employed in the state service. As for the Confessional schools, the global number of primary and secondary schools to cater for the needs of the 537,834 Hungarians left under Rumanian domination amounted to 221.

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Aaron Márton became the spiritual director of those Hungarians who remained under Rumanian sovereignty. The Hungarian leaders never failed to ask his advice on any question. During the four years of war against Russia, he had to face fresh difficulties. His people were now more than ever deprived of the means of existence. He visited them, helped them and did his best to see that their institutions were preserved.

The great esteem in which his people held him, and to whom he was so closely united, was shown in 1945 when, upon the death of Cardinal Serédi, the Provisional Hungarian Government and the people themselves asked that Aaron Márton should be raised to the primatial See of Hungary. Providence decided otherwise. Aaron Márton remained where Providence had called him. He did not allow himself to be deflected from his path by any popular acclamation, however flattering the form in which it was presented. He governed his diocese and defended his flock and tried to act as a mediator between Hungarians and Rumanians wherever possible in the over-wrought atmosphere of the time.

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After the Vienna Award, the attack against the Catholic Church and the Hungarian nation took on new forms. It seems that Hitler had told Marshal Antonescu, the Rumanian Prime Minister, that the last page in the history of Transylvania had not yet been written (56). Fortified by the promises of the German dictator, the Rumanians increased their persecution of the Hungarians, in spite of the laws and decrees of 1938, to which they attached such importance in their propaganda. They were as zealous now in their attempts to discredit the Hungarians as they had been just after the first World War. But now the powerful countries which had to be won over were no longer France and England, but Germany and Italy. In the *Dacia* " series of pamphlets, 8 only were written in French, whereas 38 numbers were written in German and Italian.

The Hungarian government, completely paralysed in its action, kept an anxious watch over this undignified bidding for favour. It did what it could to prevent a German invasion of the country—a haunting nightmare ever since 1941.—Who can reproach them for this ? In the end, in March 1944, Hitler ordered the invasion to take place, having inveigled Regent I-Iorthy into a trap. The aims of the politicians who had made the Little Entente were thus realised. Hungary was invaded from the North, i.e. from the direction fixed by the strategists of the Little Entente *⁵ twenty-three years previously, but with this difference, that the occupation turned to the advantage of Hitler, who imposed upon the Regent a government subservient to German interests.

The occupation was a terrible blow to Hungarian national sentiment. With the enemy in possession of all the country's resources, Hungary was quite unable to make even the minimum

preparations for her own defence. And all this time, the countries of Central Europe could see looming on the horizon the fearful consequences of a defeat unprecedented in history.

No sooner was the war over, than the small nations who had been drawn into the conflict, whether they liked it or not, tried to outdo each other in proving what great services they had rendered to the Allied cause. -Both Rumanian and Serb voices were raised in perfectly legitimate protest (in *Le Figaro* of 7th and 30th November 1953) against Sir Winston Churchill's account in his Memoirs of the frivolous way in which the " Big Three " disposed of the fate of Central Europe. These protests go deeper than at first appears. They unmask all the oratory concerning liberty and justice which for more than 30 years had but one purpose: to charge the opponent with crimes, and justify the most inexcusable self-seeking. When the historians of the future try to apportion responsibilities for these last 30 years, they need only read the declaration of Dragicha Tsevetkovitch, former Prime Minister of Yugoslavia *⁶.

King Albert of the Belgians was perfectly right to say " Small nations must beware of great ones, even when the latter are called Allies " (55). On the other hand, the small nations have played a large enough part in the crimes and intrigues which have brought the world to the desperate straits in which we live today. Every-thing has to be paid for one day, even the wisdom of cowards, who think that treason is a meritorious action, provided that it places you on the winning side.

The Hungarian nation was fundamentally opposed to the war. When it seemed that it was imminent in 1939, Regent Horthy went so far as to declare at the re-opening of the Legislative Assembly: " No problem exists which cannot be settled amicably. Both sides must meet and examine calmly and in good faith all the questions which contain the germs of a conflict " (56). Hungary wanted above all to conduct herself in a Christian and a humane way, not only toward those to whom she owed gratitude, such as the Belgians and the Dutch, but also toward the Greeks and all who needed support. Especially did she treat in a humane manner those prisoners of war—English, French and Belgian—who escaped from German prison camps. One striking example of Hungary's attitude can be given here.

After the invasion of Poland, the Rumanian government interned Polish refugees. " The public figures subjected to the most rigorous internment were Field Marshal Smigly-Rydz and the Foreign Minister, M. Beck. The British Legation at Bucharest protested to the Rumanian government against the internment of the leaders of an Allied country... But Colonel Beck expressed the desire that if he should die, Regent Horthy should be asked to reserve him a corner of Hungarian soil for his grave, until such time as his body could be brought back to Poland " (57).

The moral significance of this gesture cannot be called in question by any sophistry, not even by those who condemn Colonel Beck's policy.

Leading personalities who were suspected of being hostile to Hitlerism, even amongst the Bishops, such as the future Cardinal Mindszenty, at that time Bishop of Veszprém, were thrown into prison, or sent to concentration camps. An inhuman persecution of the Jews was set in motion, which the Hungarian government had hitherto refused to countenance, in spite of Hitler's demands. Aaron Márton's courage did not fail. He made himself the champion of all those who were persecuted unjustly. He made representations to the authorities, demanding that the Jews should be treated like human beings, and invited officials to refuse to obey orders which were contrary to divine and natural law. And when he was able in 1944 to go into the region returned to Hungarian sovereignty, for the purpose of ordaining his seminarists, he pronounced the celebrated sermon in which he stigmatised all forms of persecution. We who live in such sordid times can appreciate from this sermon how indomitable his courage was:

" With God's help, I have conferred the order of the priesthood on our young brothers. On this occasion I should like to dwell in the presence of all my brethren on the duties of this present time...

" A victim of its own malice, the world is consumed in a fire of hatred and enmity... In addition to the precept to love our neighbour, a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith affirms that we are, all of us, children of God and brothers in Christ. The world has challenged each of these doctrines in theory, and even more in practice, and that in the name of theories which look attractive... For us, dear brethren, these fundamental articles of our faith remain constant. "

To accept openly and put into practice the precept to love our neighbour is a more imperious necessity today than it is in tranquil times. In our apocalyptic days, when peoples are trembling for their

future, *Christ's priest cannot avoid the duty of showing that he has the courage of his convictions ; he must show proof of his devotion to justice and his will to see in man his brother only, whatever language he may speak, whatever religion he may profess.*"

" We are obliged to do so, reverend brethren, by the title of Christian, which is only too frequently used and abused for selfish and unjust purposes. The man who is guilty in regard to his neighbour discredits and endangers one of the greatest results of the 2,000-year-old work of Christianity: the idea of the brotherhood of Christians. "

" We are obliged to do so because our young people expect us to bear a brave witness to justice..."

" We are obliged to do so because men of good will expect it of us. They number so many, and in their fear they can see the danger facing us, in a war into which we were dragged against our will... "

" Finally we are obliged to bear witness to justice because of our one last and inalienable treasure: the honour of our people... Hatred is not one of the faults of our nation. It has proved in these recent days, by its touching gestures towards members of another race, with what charity and understanding it can turn towards those who suffer..."

" I have been told of the consternation of my people at rumours concerning the fate of prominent personalities. They have also followed with distress the fate of the persecuted Jews. The heart of your shepherd is moved with joy and pride when he sees that your attitude and your judgements are inspired by the principles of Christian morality... Our people understand that the circumstances of the time demand extraordinary measures, but their Christian sentiment protests instinctively when they see the dignity of the human person humiliated in their neighbour, and when their neighbour is prevented from defending his opinions, or his adherence to a religion.

*" My dear sons, when two months ago I conferred the diaconate upon you, I told you that I had perhaps marked you out for martyrdom. I say the same thing to you again today. Perhaps you will have to suffer the worst kinds of persecution. Perhaps you will be mocked at, **have** mud thrown at you. It is possible that you will be repaid, not with gratitude, but with ingratitude. But neither prison, nor fear of what people may say, can make you draw back from performing those duties which are inherent in your sacred mission. To suffer persecution in the defence of justice, and in the service of charity, is not shameful, but glorious.*

" You are the ambassadors of Christ. Your heads held high and your souls resolute, go on your way. Be the defenders of justice, the apostles of charity. Be mediators between God and man, open Heaven to men and communicate to sick humanity the abundant grace of God and the mercy of the Redeemer. Be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame ; be the father who provides . all for the wants of the orphans, of the poor, the unhappy and the fallen. (Job, XXIX. 15.) Accept the hard life of the faithful committed to your care. And, determined and heroic, mount guard in times of peril, wherever you may be sent. I give you my blessing for the road, and I firmly believe that the prayers of your flocks and the gratitude of souls reconciled to God will accompany you in your work. Amen.

Kolozsvár. 18th May 1944.

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The tragic destiny of the peoples of Central Europe drew irresistibly nearer. Changing sides could not help them—witness the fate of Rumania. Aaron Márton was fully aware of the direction which Rumanian policy was taking in 1944. The honest descendants of the champions of Christendom shuddered with horror at the sight of such perfidy, which served no purpose in the end. In vain did the Rumanian politicians reverse their alliance with Germany with consummate skill, and come over to the Allied side—those who played a double game came to a miserable end. " Politics divorced from morality betrays the very people who practise it. It dishonours nations as well as individuals. " The Russians had forgotten nothing. Every phrase that had been written, every declaration made in a speech, had been recorded. Now all rash words, all the easy oratorical successes, had to be paid for.

Aaron Márton, too was, amongst those who had written on Communism in the past. (See " The Catholic School in Transylvania ", 1933, pp. 233-238). But his articles showed real depth and were not

melodramatic.

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Once they had changed sides with a zeal worthy of a better cause, the Rumanians led the "liberating armies" over hill and dale in pursuit of the tiny Hungarian army. The Hungarians tried to stop the Russians at the Carpathians, but what could they do against powerfully-equipped divisions, which were helped and guided by the Rumanians? Northern Transylvania soon fell to the Russians. The Maniu Guards and the Rumanian armed police and officials followed in their wake. Massacres were perpetrated by the Rumanian troops, especially in the countries of Háromszék, Csik, Kolozs and Bihar. In Aaron Márton's native village, 16 Siculi were beheaded by the Rumanians—yet not a single Rumanian had ever lived there, so that personal vengeance cannot explain the murders. The cruelties committed by the Rumanian armed police were such, that the Interallied Commission in Bucharest ordered on 14th November the immediate recall of the Rumanian army, paramilitary organisations, the armed police and officials from Northern Transylvania. A unique phenomenon in Central Europe—such cruelty aroused even the indignation of the Russian army, which offered its protection to the civil population.

Nothing is known to this day of what the Great Powers will eventually decide to do about the future of Transylvania. In the armistice conditions, it was simply stipulated that the United Nations agreed that Transylvania, or the greater part of it, should be given back to Rumania. Mr Montgomery, the former American Minister to Budapest, has said in his book that the United States and England wanted to postpone a final decision until the Peace Congress (58), but that the Russians decided otherwise. Henry Prost^{*7} and Hamilton Fish Armstrong^{*8} have also corroborated this statement.

Following upon this decision, the Hungarian Communists received orders to accuse Hungary of having committed war crimes, which they promptly carried out.

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The years 1944 and 45 mark the beginning of a time of suffering such as human nature has never before experienced. Wickedness has taken every possible form, ranging from simple hypocrisy to the most frightful cruelty. The Church in Transylvania, which had already lived through a sad period of crisis for the last 26 years, now lived in the terrifying present, with the prospects for the future even more sombre. All those who kept their independence of judgement, irrespective of the misleading propaganda broadcast by Western and Russian stations alike, knew what was in store. Yet the horrors which have overwhelmed the Catholics came about as a result of the policy of a nation which, not being Slav, ought to have considered the Hungarians as natural allies against an enemy who was as hostile to the Rumanian tradition as it was to the Hungarian. When the failure of its megalomaniac policy was becoming increasingly evident, the Rumanians should have put an end to the stupid and unjust tyranny which they had exercised over the Hungarians for more than 26 years. But no: Rumania, whose early military successes against the Russians had gone to her head, deserted the mighty German ally when the fortunes of war changed, and passed over to the lines of her former enemy. Such is the tragic fate which befalls weak nations.

The Rumanians were under the impression that they would ride the storm, as they had been able to do in the past, by dismissing a few discredited leaders from public life. They made a mistake. They were dealing with Russians now, and with Communists. They tried to recoup themselves for the loss of the Axis friendship. They hoped in the general confusion to be able to liquidate once and for all the Hungarian element in Transylvania, an enterprise they had hitherto not dared to carry out, for fear of international disapproval. But now the way was clear. First they acted against those who had fled from the Russians and gone abroad. Then young Hungarians who were guilty of shedding their blood fighting the Russians were the next target. Young men in the territories returned to Hungary had also fought against the Russians. The Rumanians arrested them all, whether they had been fighting in the east against the Russians, or in the west against the Germans. Soon contingents of men, chiefly Hungarians, were deported to Russia or Siberia. The population was paralysed with terror. Western Europe did not see, or did not want to see, or perhaps did not dare to see these acts of cruelty.

It was in these tragic days that Aaron Márton's greatness revealed itself in its full stature. He had hitherto been a man of duty, of courage and of foresight. Now under the Russian regime, he became truly heroic. He consoled, encouraged and defended his people in their sorrows and misfortunes. He governed his diocese, visited his flock, administered confirmation and preached sermons. His motto was: Save everything; schools, charitable institutions, orphanages. But first and foremost he consoled and encouraged. He did not speak just for the sake of saying something. The young Bishop became everything to all men. He understood the Gospel words " I will set over them shepherds to feed the sheep. "

In 1944-45 the wise men of our new order thought they were inaugurating a new and happy epoch in history " The opponents of a revolutionary regime (i.e. the Nazis) ought no doubt to have kept to the old traditions. But the scale of events was such that they thought they had to act in a new way, and the immensity of the means employed gave them an excessive confidence in their intellectual powers: they thought they were creating something new, but actually they were reverting to barbarism (59) ".

The Churches also were exposed to the machiavellism of the new masters. Aaron Márton stands in no need of whitewashing by the historians of the future. On 28th October 1948, quoting the Christmas Message of Pius XII in 1942, he spoke of human dignity. In 1946, democracy was the subject of his Pastoral Letter. In those days of cowardly compromise, when so many converts of a day tried to prove that they had imbibed the principles of the new regime with their mother's milk, Aaron Márton never had recourse to base flattery. With head held high, he spoke to the powers of the day with dignified courage.

" We see today, " he said, " that those who wield power try to influence legislation and jurisprudence in their own interests. That is the reason why the idea of law, independent of any despotic power, is weakening in men's consciences, so that they come to accept the fact that right and justice are necessarily on the side of those who shout in favour of the masters of the day.

" Without true law and independent justice, society can know no peace. Citizens have the right, given them by God, to be sure that unchangeable laws and impartial justice shall protect their fundamental rights. "

That was a courageous protest to make against the dishonest and cruel People's Courts. If no concrete result was obtained, at least he recalled to persecuted men that justice, law and charity still had their defenders.

Aaron Márton did not speak of democracy to flatter the new masters, but to insist on the moral foundations of democracy. " The free expression of political opinion and the right to vote are the fundamental rights of democracy. " " The real strength and authority of democracy are shown in its fruits, not by laws made " in defence of democracy "... If a terrorised nation takes note of events in cold silence, no one has the right to state that the entire nation is beside itself with joy. And if some men are to be found who pretend to rejoice, because they have been given orders to do so, no one has the right to assume that the entire nation is behind them... Decisions made by mass-pressure kill the democratic principles of liberty and equality. Wherever a handful of men can impose their will upon the majority, democracy is a mere travesty of itself. In this case, men are no more than puppets, applauding the idle talk of agitators. The common good cannot be safeguarded by street processions or giant meetings. " " In the black shadow of terror, democracy is a cover for amateurs and demagogues. " " If our nation is to surmount its trials, we need an edifice built upon a rock, cemented by truth and morality. To lay the foundations of such an edifice, we need men who represent the interests of the common good, not the partisan interests of an infinitesimal minority... We do not doubt that democracy has a great part to play in the future... "

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These were the days " when men will not endure sound doctrine ", but listened to their own desires. Their itching ears " will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but they shall be turned into fables" (II Timothy 4,v.4). Aaron Márton preached the divine word patiently and faithfully. At the same time, he undertook to defend his countrymen. His letters to Prime Minister Groza prove that he did so.

Peter Groza was one of those opportunists who insure themselves against every possible risk. A clever man, quick to make money, he was never a real Communist. He was not a bad man either. He spoke Hungarian and kept up good relations with the Hungarians of Transylvania. He had a great liking for Aaron Márton, but he was one of those people who want to keep in the swim in all circumstances and whatever the cost. As a result, they support any regime which happens to be in power and carry out its orders in servile fashion, however **criminal** they happen to be.

It was at the beginning of 1945 that Aaron Márton wrote to Groza about the injustices committed against the Hungarians in Transylvania. On 28th January 1946, he wrote to him again about his people's sufferings, in a memorandum which we give below in full, because of its documentary value:

Sir,

The kindness which Your Excellency has shown me on many occasions encourages me to expose to you in all sincerity the present situation of Hungarians living under Rumanian administration.

" Since the problem is a delicate one and its outcome has serious implications, I think that it is best to approach it with complete frankness. In order to bring it to a useful conclusion, I must first state the premises of the present, situation and ask for your indulgence in advance for importuning Your Excellency with a detailed and not very pleasant letter. "

I

Following upon the events of 23rd August 1944 *⁹, the Rumanian government accepted the principles of democracy, and faithful to these principles, decreed the equality of civic rights. In spite of these official declarations—and even in flagrant contradiction of them—a general attack has been launched against the Hungarians, which threatens our nation with total destruction. The situation of the Hungarian Minority under Rumanian rule has never been an enviable one, but the chapter which began on that date was one of the most tragic in its history. During the autumn of 1944, I had the honour of submitting to Your Excellency a memorandum describing the wrongs inflicted upon the Hungarians, and that is why I make only brief mention of them today:

First came the internment of the leaders of the Hungarian Minority. Then followed the arrest of several thousand Hungarians, who were deported in shameful conditions to Russian or Rumanian slave camps, or else were put under house arrest.

Apart from these individual arrests, the Hungarians were obliged by another decree to confine themselves to their own communes, and they were forbidden to leave them without a special permit from the Minister of the Interior, or to go on foot, by car, or train, from one commune to another. The undersigned was himself, on 3rd November 1944, escorted back from Nagyenyed (Aiud) to Gyulafehérvár by the police authorities, who alleged the above-mentioned decree as the pretext. (He was on a visitation to administer Confirmation).

Young lads of from 16-19 years of age were conscripted for compulsory labour, and this without any means of transport, or any food being provided for them.

Alleging the demands of the war, the Rumanian government requisitioned a great deal of cattle and cereals. The Rumanian officials have carried out this requisitioning exclusively to the detriment of the Minority, alleging that they had confidential instructions to do so.

Military units passing through, or else stationed in the communes, were mostly billeted in the houses of the Hungarian Minority, even if this latter represented a mere fraction of the total population.

It was the members of the Hungarian Minority in particular who were conscripted for the hospital service and the military labour squads, without their age or the financial state of their families being taken into consideration. In many cases, the armed police woke up the Hungarian inhabitants of a village in the middle of the night and ordered them to be at the required destination by dawn.

Many prominent people—alas, even ecclesiastics—have abused the cruel situation in which the Hungarians find themselves today by proselytising. The terrorised and defenceless Hungarians were told that they would be exempted from requisitioning, and their sons freed from military service, if they would become converted to one or the other of the Rumanian religions (Orthodox or Uniate). When this

propaganda failed to produce the expected effect, even more shameful tricks were resorted to.

A considerable number of men, who are fathers of families, still languish and have been languishing for years in the inhuman conditions of the labour camps, a fact which has provoked the repeated disapproval of the Left-wing newspapers.

In the terroristic atmosphere created by the gendarmerie and the police, the violence of the Maniu Guards has come as an added scourge. These armed bands have invaded the territory inhabited by the Hungarians, and not content with pillaging, have perpetrated massacres and a long series of cruel acts which make hair stand on end one's. Such ferocity has also provoked a lively reaction in the press.

To crown all the anti-Hungarian measures in Northern Transylvania, came the deportation of thousands of peaceful farmers, workmen and intellectuals, supposed to be German " partisans ", to slave camps in Russia or Rumania. Yet many of those deported had escaped from their units and rejoined the Hungarian troops to fight the German occupiers. The Hungarians of Southern Transylvania were the helpless witnesses of the misery which their compatriots endured, when the endless files of prisoners were marched along the muddy roads in the cold wet autumn days.

The articles in the Peasant Party and Liberal Party newspapers breathing hatred against the Hungarians have poisoned the atmosphere still further and encouraged the hostile attitude of the authorities. And it was not the good sense or the humanity of the Rumanians which put an end to this campaign of hatred and the massacres, but a decree of the Russian High Command, dated the beginning of November, and ordering the Rumanian troops and the Rumanian administration re-established in Northern Transylvania to leave the territory.

II

In this atmosphere of universal hatred, it was Your Excellency alone who pronounced words of understanding and it was the Left-wing parties which protested against the persecution and the oppression of the Hungarians.

It was owing to this understanding attitude that the Hungarians of Transylvania gave a welcome to the government formed under the leadership of Your Excellency. They hoped that your government would keep its promises and make the equality of civic rights a reality for all. Unfortunately, it must be put on record that these Hungarian hopes have been disappointed. Kindly allow me to quote the following cases to illustrate the situation.

1. The Order in Council known as the Minorities Statute, published on 6th February 1945, recognises the right of the Minorities to have schools teaching in their mother tongue. The competent Hungarian authorities received notice of the draft law concerning the schools of the Minorities, they presented their observations to the Ministry of Education in the middle of the year 1945, but the law has not yet entered into force to this day. The problems of the schools of the Minorities is only dealt with casually, by the issuing of decrees which are tainted with the anti-Minority spirit prevalent at the time of the unjust laws concerning the religious schools.

The government has given to the personnel of the Hungarian sections of the state schools the most modest privileges, which are quite insufficient to assure their livelihood, instead of a regular salary.

The government also promised a subsidy to the confessional schools. But except for some grants which have been paid out at irregular intervals, the problem has not been resolved either in law or, in practice, and although the State has not discharged its obligations, M. Potop, Minister of National Education, found it opportune, at the end of October 1945, to declare at Kolozsvár that the Rumanian Ministry of Education owns the buildings of Church schools, since their teaching staffs are paid by the State. Of significance in this connection, is the refusal of the Rumanian governments for the last 25 years to give the Hungarian Minority their quota of the Cultural Tax (14 % of the direct taxation) to which they have all the same contributed. The Groza government has promised to see justice done, but the promise has not been kept. Notwithstanding, the Minister claims non-existent rights over the buildings of Church schools.

2. The draft law published on 29th May 1945 provides for a Hungarian University at Kolozsvár,

but the Rumanian University which has been established in this town took possessions of the buildings of the Hungarian University, and the Faculty of Medicine has been obliged to transfer its seat to Marosvásárhely, on account of the attitude of their Rumanian colleagues.

3. A draft law, published likewise on 29th May 1945, orders all Rumanian schools which left Northern Transylvania after 30th August 1940 (the date of the Vienna Award) to return to the scene of their former activity. This decree renders possible the revival of the famous "cultural zones", and the re-struction of the Hungarian sections in the state schools. To give but one example, at Kolozsvár, a town where 80 % of the population is Hungarian, all the school buildings have been confiscated in favour of the Rumanian-speaking schools.

4. The agrarian reform, published on 22nd March 1945, expropriated, according to an approximate estimate, 100,000 registered acres of Hungarian land. 75 % of this land has been given to Rumanians, although there are many more Hungarians than Rumanians who have no land at all. On the other hand, the Rumanian land-lords were exempted from the expropriation measures under various pretexts, e.g. that **they** were conducting a "model farm", etc.

5. Law 91, of February 1945, decrees the blocking of enemy assets. A draft law of 25th April 1946 extends this law to Northern Transylvania. The draft law instituting the C.A.S.B.I. *¹⁰ gives as a reason for doing so article 8 of the armistice, which in our opinion is an error, and declares as "enemy assets" all the personal and real estate of every Rumanian national who, after 12th September 1944, took refuge in Hungary or in Germany.

Article 4 of the draft law of 13th August 1945, which regulates the nationality of the inhabitants of Northern Transylvania, stipulates that all those who, on 30th August 1940, were Rumanian nationals, but who when the enemy armies retreated showed solidarity with them and left Transylvania, should lose their nationality.

Both these decrees have very serious consequences for the Hungarian element in Transylvania. The Siculi departments were forced to evacuate their inhabitants by the German armies as they retreated. In the interior of Transylvania the battle raged for weeks. The population was obliged to fall back to more sheltered positions. The equivocal nature of these two draft laws could put 300,000 Hungarians into a painful situation, whereby they would lose their nationality, together with their personal and real estate. The Rumanian government is keeping in a state of uncertainty the fate of Hungarian assets, which amount to several milliards of *lei*, and at the same time it has opened up unending possibilities for corruption, a startling proof of which is to be seen in the scandalous embezzlements which were denounced as soon as CASBI started to function. Through this shady affair, several milliards of *lei* were arbitrarily stolen from Hungarians.

6. The draft law N° 645, published on 14th August 1945, is a classic example of the anti-Hungarian bias of ruling circles in Rumania. By the terms of this law, all those who sold their assets between 30th August and 25th October 1944, can buy them back again at the same nominal value. All the world knows that the people who sold these assets had chosen to be Rumanian nationals, whilst those who purchased them were mostly Hungarians, who could therefore lose almost the whole of their fortune today, since money has lost the greater part of its value. That the aim of this law is none other than the economic ruin of the Hungarian Minority, can clearly be seen from the ruling (Number 104,115/1945) of the Minister, Patrascanu, which forbids the courts of law to deal with petitions brought by Hungarians who had fled in the autumn of 1944, and who were now asking to have their assets returned.

7. When the Rumanian administration took over Northern Transylvania once more, the authorities declared on many occasions that Hungarians would be employed in the administration. Contrary to these promises, the important positions have been given to Rumanians, while the subordinate posts only have been given to the Hungarians, even in towns which have a definite majority of Hungarian inhabitants.

8. The tendency of the government to change the character of towns which have a majority of Hungarian inhabitants, by installing the greatest number possible of Rumanian employees, reveals the same spirit. The plan to transfer 24,000 Hungarian inhabitants from Kolozsvár in November 1945,

without taking into consideration the hard winter climate and the distress following upon the war, is an irrefutable proof of this tendency.

9. Since the reintegration of the Rumanian administration, especially in the rural areas, agitation against the Hungarian population has increased in violence. At the beginning, this agitation had no other aim than to intimidate the Hungarian population, rob them, and expropriate such Hungarian holdings as might still be left ; but soon this was followed by beatings-up and even murders. Neither the administration nor the police lifted a finger to curb this anarchy.

In your speech of the 13th May 1945 at Kolozsvár, Your Excellency took a firm stand in favour of a Hungaro-Rumanian customs union; notwithstanding, a few days later, the Minister of the Interior stopped all movement about the country, and made passports obligatory for all.

III

The facts set out above were not such as to inspire Hungarian confidence in the Rumanian regime, however attached it claimed to be to democratic principles. The agrarian reform annihilated the land-owning class by transferring important Hungarian assets into Rumanian hands. The expropriation of small-holdings still continues today, under various pretexts. The existence of the middle class is threatened by the revocation of work-men's and businessmen traders' licences, and by the arbitrary imposition of various taxes. The Hungarian artisan and agricultural worker are only too familiar with the anti-Hungarian mentality of the Rumanian people and administration ; they know by experience how the burden of taxation is made to fall unequally upon the Hungarians. For these reasons, they have no faith in promises concerning the equality of civic rights.

Your Excellency must not be led astray by declarations made by certain persons in the name of the Hungarian Minority. The Hungarian Minority in Rumania has not, to this very day, any elected body to represent its political interests. Since 23rd August 1944, succeeding governments have taken measures which were hostile to the Hungarian nation and its leaders. In this way, they have virtually made it a physical impossibility for Hungarians to create a political organisation which could defend their interests. The " Hungarian People's Association " (*Magyar Nepszövetség—Rumanian inspired*) is the only group which has enjoyed any freedom of expression and assembly.

When Your Excellency's government was formed, the " Hungarian People's Association " joined the ranks of Your Excellency's supporters with genuine enthusiasm. And many of the people who never approved the policy of the " People's Association " hoped that it would help to bring about a sincere *rapprochement* between the two peoples. For the reasons given above, these hopes have been dashed and the " People's Association " has been dissolved, a victim in its turn of the government's policy.

The insulting and harmful decrees promulgated against the Hungarian element, the consistently anti-Hungarian attitude of the Rumanian administration, have reminded the Hungarians of Transylvania of the period of the worst oppression they had hitherto endured, with its attendant bitterness and perils. In their newspapers and in their many meetings, the leaders of the " People's Association " promised in vain to remedy abuses; in vain did they try to reassure their supporters with promises emanating from Bucharest, the unjust decrees remained on the statute book and were severely enforced. In addition, several leaders of the Association—whether on their own account or on government inspiration is not known—have made declarations which aroused violent protests from the whole body of Hungarians. All these facts have had the result that the Hungarian masses are irrevocably opposed to the "People's Association " (which has Communist sympathies). Notwithstanding, the Association, backed by government support, clings to the positions it has won, by the use of methods which surpass all previous notions of political terror.

Judging by communiqués in the press, Your Excellency has several times expressed the conviction that the Hungarians living under Rumanian rule desired to be incorporated into the Rumanian state. Since these declarations go to the very heart of the Hungaro-Rumanian problem, it is my duty to say in all sincerity that *never have I seen the slightest tendency amongst the Hungarian people towards such a " voluntary incorporation " *¹¹*.

Looking at the situation closely, even objective Rumanians agree that the attitude of the Hungarian Minority has been a loyal one, and that it is not the fault of the Hungarians if the two peoples have not drawn more closely together under Rumanian sovereignty, but on the contrary have drifted further apart. Since the Hungarian nation could not act otherwise, under the compulsion of events, it accepted the "*Diktat*" of the Great Powers and has tried, by the loyal performance of its civic duties, to safeguard its rights, its cultural life and its nationality. But the Rumanian regime has ignored the dispositions of the Minorities Statute of the Treaty of Paris and its pledges at Gyulafehérvár, which guaranteed the right of peoples to self-determination—a principle to which Rumania herself owes her existence. On the contrary, Rumania has pursued a policy of denationalisation which has been disastrous for the Hungarian Minority. To attain her ends, Rumania has submitted the Hungarian Minority to a political, economic and cultural oppression which has made a mockery of the most elementary rights of mankind.

The Hungarian nation, threatened in its culture and its very existence, has answered this ever-growing oppression by marshalling its energies to resist.

Your Excellency's government has not succeeded in allaying Hungarian suspicions. The attitude of the successive governments of the last 27 years has taught our people to judge promises by their results. Our people are disposed to give their trust to those who approach them in a spirit of good will, but diverse experiences have taught them how to note the contradiction between words and deeds, between pledges and their fulfilment, between laws and their practical application. The hostility of Rumanian public opinion, and its sabotaging of the executive power, have on more than one occasion undoubtedly prevented the government from putting into effect certain well-intentioned plans. But Your Excellency will understand from your own love of your nation that the Hungarians can never sacrifice themselves to the idea of " Greater Rumania. "

The Rumanians of Transylvania claim that they have the right to the possession of the whole of Transylvania, on the basis of their numerical superiority to the Hungarians, and a 27 year-old occupation. The Hungarians of Transylvania cannot base their claims on numerical superiority, but they can support their case with political and economic arguments, which are attested by history. The Rumanians, naturally enough, do not want to abandon Transylvania, and the Hungarians who have civilised it and lived there for more than a thousand years, do not want to leave it and emigrate either.

An autonomous or independent Transylvania would not solve the problem. Today, when huge political units are the fashion, small units could not stand out against the magnetic attraction of their powerful neighbours. The Rumanian nation, with its own cultural background, does not want to live under Hungarian sovereignty. On the other hand, the Hungarians of Transylvania, who have been torn asunder from their motherland and know what it is to lead the life of a Minority, are convinced that it is impossible for them to live under Rumanian rule, either as individuals or as a race, a life which is worthy of the name human.

It may be that up to the present time no decisive plan or final decision has been taken by the Great Powers, whose task it is to conclude peace. That is why Rumanians and Hungarians equally hope that partisan arguments and political manoeuvres will work in their favour. Rumania has the advantage of being the nation " in possession ", but the hopes of the Hungarians are sustained by the fact that the Great Powers have had to recognise that the Treaties following the close of the first World War did not solve a single one of the grave problems of this part of Europe. And if a more lasting order is to be created, political and economic factors will have to be taken into consideration, independently of any ethnic question. In any case, the problem of Transylvania cannot be envisaged in isolation ; the solution will have to be found along lines which will reconcile the legitimate interests of the nations concerned. Further-more, the solution must take into account the legitimate interests of Europe as a whole.

In conclusion, I must stress the fact that I have received no mandate to speak on behalf of the entire Hungarian population; but I have a clear idea of their situation and their feelings, and I make so bold as to think that the picture I have given in my letter is an objective one. I am in constant contact with every section of Hungarian society. I know what the situation is in the villages as well as in the towns, I know how the minds of intellectuals work, and of artisans also. The Lord has made me Hungarian by

birth, and I cannot be indifferent to the fate of my brothers and compatriots, or to their future development. My priestly vocation, moreover, obliges me to envisage their fate from a moral standpoint. The situation of the Hungarian Minority living under Rumanian sovereignty in no way satisfies the moral obligations which the Charter of the United Nations has prescribed for neighbouring peoples. That is why I have allowed myself to deal with this extremely delicate question **unequivocally**, and in all sincerity, and I dare to hope that Your Excellency will in your kindness excuse my frankness.

Aaron Márton,
Bishop.

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The writing of such a letter took considerable courage at a time when the law was freely flouted, and an unscrupulous propaganda-machine had been set in motion once more, to justify a revolting oppression and saddle the adversary with its own crimes.

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Meanwhile, Aaron Márton had to enter the lists in defence of Catholic education and the Catholic schools. In a pastoral letter (No. 10) he put his faithful on their guard against a new syllabus of studies, designed to reduce the number of hours given to religious instruction.

Aaron Márton was in very truth a defender of the City for his people. The Russians rewarded the servile and pliable Rumanian Communists; furthermore, they acknowledged the appointment of Groza as Prime Minister by retroceding to Rumania the whole of Transylvania. The Hungarians now lost all hope and it was their Bishop who, in his sermon at Csiksomlyó, found the words which expressed the sorrow and indignation of them all.

The Bishop of Transylvania took up the defence of his people in a world dominated by hypocrisy. Ever since 1918, the Hungarians had learned how much value to place on high-sounding words such as international justice, liberty of thought, the self-determination of peoples. They were only too conscious of the truth of what Oswald Spengler said:

" The press is today a carefully-organised army, officered by the journalists, and whose readers provide the rank and file. But here, as in every army, the common soldier obeys blindly, while war aims and strategy change without his realising it. The reader does not know what is expected of him, and probably does not realise what function he is performing. There is no more terrible caricature of the freedom of opinion. In earlier days, people were not allowed to think for themselves. Today they are allowed to do so, but they are no longer capable of thinking for themselves. Everybody is allowed to say what he likes, but the liberty of the press decides whether to take note of this opinion, or to ignore it, as it chooses. *It can condemn every truth to death by refusing to publish it. It is a terrible censorship exercised by silence, and which is all the more powerful since the slavish mass of readers is unaware of its very existence* ¹² ".

It was against just such a conspiracy of silence that Aaron Márton raised his voice in 1946, in his Whitsuntide sermon:

" ... The war has imposed severe trials upon us, but it has also purified our way of judging events. Today, more closely united than ever, and with a more lively faith, we desire to reconstruct our future on the rock of the truths proclaimed by Christ. We desire our social order to be in conformity with the will of God... We want to live in a society which renders human despotism power-less and maintains a secure legal order, in which justice is administered to all impartially... During and after the war, the competent public men have made reassuring declarations. They promised us a just and lasting peace. We believed that this time decisions would not be made in defiance of moral principles, and that they would not serve the interests of imperialistic policies. The communiqués published up to 7th May on the Peace Conference in Paris, shook our confidence in the impartiality of the arbiters... The bitter deception which overwhelmed us on the one hand, and the hatred which on the other hand seized a part of the population when the Paris decisions were made public, oblige us to give voice to our grief.

" In his Christmas Allocution of 1941, Pope Pius XII, analysing the fundamental conditions for a

just and lasting peace, declared: " *In a new order, founded upon moral principles, there is no place for the oppression, either overt or secret, of the cultural and linguistic characteristics of national Minorities, nor for the impeding of or the restriction of their economic capacity, nor for the limitation or abolition of their natural fertility.* "

" We also have the right to demand that similar sufferings are not inflicted upon us. Throughout the 25 years and more of our life as a Minority, we have experienced numerous systems of political or economic oppression. They have operated openly, or in a disguised form, and with differences of degree. We have been subjected to an ever fiercer battle to save our cultural and linguistic values. Our political, economic and social situation places a grave obstacle in the way of the natural fertility of our people...

" ... *We are not able to accept this unjust and humiliating situation and we ask those who have reserved to themselves the right to decide our fate not to impose this cruel injustice upon us any longer...*

" The peoples of the United Nations, inspired by the desire to spare future generations the horrors of war, have made a stand in favour of the fundamental rights of man, the equality of rights for all nations, both great and small... All treaties concluded in defiance of moral principles and political wisdom have been short-lived and have entailed disastrous consequences, said Pius XII.

" The ravages of the present war have been too great for mankind to be able to bear the consequences of a lost peace. If the wrong done to our country is not put right, there will be a dangerous fissure in the edifice of peace... The devastation which the two world wars have caused, lead us to the conclusion that *Europe has been punished for her own mistakes. The tragic fate of our unhappy people can also be laid to the conscience of Europe.* Our nation has been divided out between four countries. The multifarious sufferings which it has had to endure are the result of such arbitrary decisions. We realise that we have become a negligible quantity in the great family of nations, and one that it is even easy to destroy, but the great ally of small nations is the moral order, which when violated can bring its own revenge for injustice done.

" We desire to live lives worthy of a free people and we desire also to be a useful member of the family of nations in its search for a new order. When the last Peace Treaty was made, a certain number of nations were allowed, by virtue of the right to self-determination, to live in a community with their compatriots in one country. That right has been refused us. Conscious of the justice of our cause, and placing our trust in the unshakeable truth and natural law, we ask those who have power over us not to crucify our people a second time on the same cross...

" ... The authorities feared that we should make a political demonstration. But you have come to pray, and I am edified by the exemplary self-discipline you have shown during the pilgrimage. Go back to your homes, showing the same spirit of discipline.

" But your Bishop could not be deaf to the distress of his flock, and it was his duty to put into words what his faithful were not free to say. A crowd of one hundred thousand Christians who were here yesterday and today, and several thousands of people who united their intentions to ours, have prayed to be liberated from their distress.

... Our life is at stake... Our own honour, and the responsibility which we bear to future generations, oblige us to defend our rights and to protest against an unjust sentence. "

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Wasted words !—so the pessimists would say. No doubt. Yet must not the truth be preached " in season and out of season " ? The prophet cannot be silent in the face of tyranny, whether it be the tyranny exercised by dictators, or by public opinion. There has been no lack of either kind in our day. The French sociologist, Elie Halévy, has said: " The era of tyranny dates from the month of August 1914... From the intellectual point of view, the standardisation of thought has taken two forms ; one is negative and means the suppression of all those expressions judged unfavourable to the national interest ; the other is a positive one, and means what we might call the organisation of enthusiasm " (60).

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The year 1946 brought a drought of alarming proportions. Aaron Márton immediately set about

organising charitable relief on a large scale. He was helped in the first place by those who were poor like himself. The intervention of the Apostolic Nuncio and the inexhaustible charity of Catholic organisations in the United States, Belgium, Holland and Ireland, helped him to relieve the poverty of the Transylvanians.

In his Lenten Pastoral of 1947, Aaron Márton thanked the benefactors for their generosity, and asked his flock to continue to help those who were in need.

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The building of churches, the foundation of schools, the care of the poor, have been for centuries the chief preoccupations of the Bishops of Transylvania. Since the " liberation " by the Russians, it had been impossible to found schools, but Aaron Márton set to work to build or rebuild churches and temporary chapels, with an energy which overcame all obstacles. He circulated to all his clergy a speech of Fr. Badalik, the future Bishop of Veszprém, on " What I should do if I were a parish priest and had to build a church "—" My reply, which may surprise some people, is that I should first organise a choir, and by means of our beautiful popular religious chants I should draw people into the orbit of the faith. What we need first when we have to build a church is not money, but faith... Do you realise, you singers and

musicians, what power you hold in your hands ? Have we the right to neglect this power, instead of exploiting it ? What must we do today, when we have had to give up several of our traditional ways of fostering our Catholic conception of life (schools, the press, the right of association) ? Sing, sing and then sing again, my children... Let us give our sacred songs all the fervour of the old Gregorian chant, in as many churches as possible. Let us make our popular hymns in their revised form fill every soul in every church in our country with enthusiasm. Religious chants, when they are sung with conviction, bear witness to God, to the soul and to eternity.

This particular conception of Church singing and its practice was at the root of the Siculi faith and spiritual life. It was in just such an atmosphere as this that Aaron Márton had himself been nurtured. And this explains why he was in such close communion with the souls of his people.

The chief goal of the Bishop of Transylvania was to deepen the spiritual life of his flock. In common with the rest of the Hungarian Episcopate, his Lenten Pastoral of 1947 ordered prayers of expiation, to obtain God's mercy.

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It is not difficult today to see through the Russian intentions at a glance. The Russia of today is simply continuing under the banner of Communism the policy which the Czars pursued under the aegis of the Orthodox Church. As Michelet wrote in 1850: " Yesterday Russia said to us: ` I am Christianity '. Tomorrow she will say to us: , I am Socialism ' . "

Emile Montégut wrote in 1854: " Every nation which has aspired to universal domination in the past has exposed its designs to the full light of day, and has loudly proclaimed its ideas to all and sundry... The first nation which has not confessed its ultimate goal is Russia... The Russians are the most circumspect and perhaps the least stupid of all peoples. That explains why they can so easily be the most aggressive of peoples, and with the minimum of danger to themselves... They care little whether they are in the right or the wrong, or whether they have to fall back if it cannot be avoided. They have no false shame, they care nothing for public opinion and have no noisy love of glory " (61).

" One must go to Russia, " said the Marquis de Custine ^{*13} " to see the result of the terrible combination between science and the human mind, between Europe and the genius of Asia ; in my opinion, such a combination is all the more to be feared in that it can last a long time, because here ambition and fear, passions which in other countries can cause a man's ruin, because they make him talk too much, engender silence. This violent sort of silence produces an enforced calm, a public order which is stronger and more terrifying than any anarchy, since the malaise which it engenders is a permanent one."

" My opinion is that world domination has passed, not to the restless peoples of the world, but to the patient ones. "

" When our cosmopolitan democracy is in its last phase, and has succeeded in making war hateful to entire nations ; when those nations which are supposed to be the most civilised on earth, having exhausted their energies in their corrupt politics, and having become ever more decadent, finally collapse in a hopeless state of torpor, in company with those other societies which have perished through self-seeking—then the floodgates of the North will once more overwhelm us ; then we shall suffer one last invasion, not at the hands of ignorant barbarians this time, but of cunning and clever master-hands—cleverer than ourselves, for they will have learnt from our own excesses how to rule, and how not to rule. "

" It is not for nothing that Providence is accumulating so many forces in the East of Europe which remain as yet inactive. One day the giant will rise from his sleep and force will henceforth prevail over the dominion of mere words... Society will perish because it put its faith in meaningless or contradictory words ; then those deceptive echoes of public opinion, the newspapers, in an attempt to keep their hold on their readers at any cost, will press for the overthrow of society, if only to have something to write about for another month. They will be prepared to kill society in order to live on its corpse. "

" The eternal oriental tyranny is a constant threat to us and we shall suffer it, if our folly and iniquity make us deserve such a punishment. "

" Russia sees in Europe a prey which will fall into her hands sooner or later as a result of our dissensions ; she encourages anarchy in our countries in the hope of deriving advantage from a corruption which she deliberately fosters, because it favours her own designs... An effete Liberalism, she says, is weakening Europe, while we remain strong, precisely because we are not free ; let us bear the yoke patiently; we shall make others pay one day for our shame. "

What a transformation there has been in the life of men since 1839, when the Marquis de Custine's book was published ! Yet the 115 odd years which have passed since then only prove how right he was in his views (62).

The thought of Donoso Cortés had a considerable echo amongst the Hungarian clergy. After the experience of Communism under Béla Kun, Hungarian priests found a certain edification in the words:

" ° When we consider these abominable doctrines closely, it seems impossible to me not to see something of that mysterious but visible sign with which error will be marked in the times foreshadowed by the Apocalypse. If I were not afraid to raise the veil which enshrouds those fearful times, I should perhaps be able to support this opinion of mine with very powerful analogies: that the great empire of anti-Christ will be a colossal demagogy, governed by a plebeian of Satanic proportions, the man of sin... Demagogy is the great All, the true God, the God armed with a single attribute—Omnipotence, and liberated from charity, mercy and love " (63).

As we can see, there were plenty of warnings which men could have pondered over. Once more the dictum *Historia est magistra vitae* (History is the mistress of life) has been belied. Cardinal Mindszenty and Aaron Márton, the two truest resistants in Central Europe, would have liked the West to liberate itself from the hysteria and the hypocrisy of propaganda slogans. But the West did not recover its balance and pull itself together. Rather did it hate its enemies than love its friends. In the delirium of victory, the Allies had one thought only, to take their revenge on those nations or individuals whom they qualified as war-criminals, and to carve out the lion's share for themselves out of the enemy spoils. Today, in 1955, when the whole world recoils from the frightful prospects of the future, we can see all-too-clearly that we are but paying the penalty for the injustice and stupidity of such a policy.

In this atmosphere of blindness and treason, Aaron Márton refused to prevaricate. He was absolutely fear-less and stood alone, for he could count on no powerful support. In such apocalyptic days as he lived through, neither the Protestants nor the Uniates were disposed to run any risks. His Catholic colleagues of the Episcopate were discredited. (Mgr Pacha was accused of collaborating with the Germans. He had in any case lost the greater part of his flock, who had either been exiled or deported). Mgr Scheffler had been appointed under the Hungarian regime and was therefore too old ; thus neither could wake any serious contribution to the struggle.

The voice of consolation and of protest came from St Michael's Cathedral, from the Bishop's pulpit. On 1st January 1947, he arraigned the fatal intellectual and political tendencies which had brought

mankind to its present bankruptcy and catastrophe:

" Who, or what, has so unwisely influenced men's thoughts, that like Samson they have pulled down their own house about their ears?... The " clerks " of the present-day, the legislators and Pharisees of every sort, have brought this disaster upon us... And not least, those religious and priests who always bend a servile knee to the masters of this world. Today they fawn upon such and such a man, tomorrow it is somebody else. They are cowards who have refused to defend the truth and the eternal principles of morality. They have applauded abuses of power. They are opportunists who have compromised with fashionable ideas, at least to the . extent of 50 %. They have tried so hard to justify their disloyal and unprincipled attitude by specious arguments, that they have succeeded in killing the faith of their flock, who were honest and upright and good-living people. That is why they have withdrawn their confidence from such unworthy shepherds... The tragedy which has overwhelmed mankind is the result of such intellectual and moral betrayals as these. "

It is quite clear from this sermon that Aaron Márton knew what was at stake for him and his people in the coming struggle. He was to be the leader and the first of the martyrs. The ways of Providence are surprising ; it did not choose the leader from amongst the great Catholic families of Transylvania. Mgr William Apor, a descendant of the oldest family in Transylvania, had been sent to Győr, where he was to shed his blood defending the honour of Christian women against the Russian soldiers (on Good-Friday, 1945). Mgr John Mikes, Bishop of Szombathely, had dropped dead from horror, as he too tried to defend the honour of Hungarian women in similar circumstances. The hero of Transylvania had been singled out from amongst the Siculi peasants of John of Hunyad.

Catholics everywhere have always had an affectionate cult for their martyrs. The affection which Hungarian Catholics have always felt for their martyrs surpasses the imagination. The little failings of great men are told in many an amusing village anecdote, or their accent is mimicked. But Joseph Mindszenty and Aaron Márton rose to such heroic heights that it would have been considered sacrilege to mimic them, or ridicule them in the slightest way.

The struggle grew ever fiercer. The Bishop of Transylvania accepted the fact that he would be the object of attack. To demand liberty, and not to have the courage to fight for it and suffer for it, was contrary to his character as a priest and one-time soldier.

Pin-prick attacks came first. When he was officiating at Mass, for example, a military band would play outside the Cathedral. The Criminal Investigation Department (Siguranza) seized his Pastoral Letters without, however, succeeding in breaking the contact between the Bishop and his faithful. His Episcopal visitations to administer confirmation and his sermons had never taken on such importance as they did in these days of oppression.

In vain did the new masters forbid the traditional triumphal arches to be erected for his reception. Where-ver he went, the Bishop was invariably received beneath a triumphal arch, which had been put up in a few minutes, while a mounted escort conducted him to the church. Then the Bishop would give his blessing to his flock and after a short prayer everybody adjourned to the cemetery, for in the Siculi region the second stage of an Episcopal visitation, the prayer for the dead, is always said in the cemetery. Then would begin the Bishop's real mission. Usually he spoke of the faith of his ancestors, rooted in the Siculi soil. He reminded them that, following the example of their forefathers, the fathers of today must transmit in its entirety to the generations of the future the faith which has planted the Cross everywhere: on churches, on the fronts of houses, at the cross-roads, on the mountain-tops. The Siculi race had carried the Cross themselves in the past and it was still resting heavily on their shoulders today. When he spoke of the Communion of the Saints as the mysterious link which, according to Catholic doctrine, links the faithful with their forbears and the generations yet to come, all the faithful would be moved to tears. Every Confirmation ceremony meant a gathering of the whole of the Siculi people in the region in the name of religion. They came from far and wide, over hill and dale, to listen to one who was of their blood.

In the Siculi highlands, everything bore witness to the centuries-old struggle against the pagans, the Tartars and the Turk—grottoes caverns, passes and fortified churches. Faithfulness, sacrifice, even if it meant of life itself, the sense of unity, were not mere idle words for the Siculi. They were imbued with

the ideas of their great poet: " Today all forces are concentrated in the minute white churches. Beside you on the little church benches are the dead: your grandfathers and grandmothers. In their eyes shines encouragement or reproach. Do not abandon church or school. "

Echoes of the struggle in which Cardinal Mindszenty was engaged reached the West. A double Iron Curtain has been rung down between Aaron Márton and ourselves. Yet his action, within his own sphere, was not inferior to that of Cardinal Mindszenty. Both worked with equal zeal for souls and for unity amongst Catholics and Hungarians. With this end in view, the Catholic authorities in Transylvania had created a system of itinerant priests, whose special work was to seek out the Hungarian Catholics who had been dispersed, and were cut off from church and school. They stayed with the faithful for a few days or a few weeks, according to circumstances, and rekindled the sacred flame of the faith. The young Bishop's dream was to exploit this system to the full.

The storm was brewing. Everything depended on the Russian intentions. Their plans were well laid. What was the duty of the shepherd in these tragic days ? It was to defend the rights and strengthen the faith of his flock. Aaron Márton did not fail to protest against the despotism of tyrants. But his main preoccupation was always to deepen the spiritual life of his faithful and prepare them for the great struggle that lay ahead, so that they could say with the Psalmist: " I take refuge beneath the shadow of Thy wings until the storm is passed. " Above all, he prayed that he might be worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus when his hour came, and by this means to render to his faithful the greatest service which could do their shepherd them. When he had exhausted all the legal possibilities of human resistance, he too was able to say: " We are not here to triumph through combat, cunning, or resistance... We can only conquer now through suffering. "

If the word of God had not yet been muzzled at that time in the ancient diocese of Transylvania, it is thanks to the zeal and courage of its Bishop and of those who gave him their support.

A martyr and a saint is always made according to the designs of God, for the true martyr is one who has become an instrument of God, says T.S. Eliot, in " Murder in the Cathedral ":

*" A Christian martyrdom is never an accident, for Saints are not made by accident. Still less is a Christian martyrdom the effect of a man's will to become a Saint, as a man by willing and contriving may become a ruler of men. A martyrdom is always the design of God, for His love of men, to warn them and to lead them, to bring them back to His ways. It is never the design of man ; for the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God and who no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of being a martyr " *14.*

The Suppression of the Uniate Church

The Uniate Church was in 1948 the chief target of attack by the new regime, although it did not neglect the Catholics of the Latin Rite for that reason. Towards the end of the seventeenth century (1698-1700) the Orthodox Rumanians of Transylvania had signed an act of union with the Latin Church, chiefly for motives of a material and political order.

Now, the Rumanian propaganda tried to maintain that the Union had been nothing but a political manoeuvre of the Habsburgs and the Hungarians, in order to drive a wedge between the Rumanians. The truth is that the Habsburgs were animated by religious, rather than by any other motives. If political considerations did enter into the matter, they wanted to provide a counter-weight to the Protestants of Transylvania, who were not enthusiastic for the dynasty. Apart from the Jesuits, nobody played any part in bringing the union about. The Catholic clergy in Transylvania, who were few in number, had their hands full in building up Catholic life again after the Reformation. In any case, they could not speak Rumanian.

The Union was the mainspring of intellectual life in Rumania, for it was an understood thing that the level of the Uniate clergy was to be raised to that of the Latin clergy. The generosity of the Habsburgs, which was exercised to the detriment of the Latin Catholics, made the foundation of Rumanian schools and cultural institutions possible. This tradition of generosity was continued by the Hungarian

government, and even exceeded in the nineteenth century. It is easy to see why the Uniates of Transylvania far out-distanced the Rumanian Orthodox in matters of culture. *La Documentation Catholique* of 3rd August 1949, column 836, expresses Transylvanian opinion on this point perfectly: " *A psychological factor strengthens the attachment of the Uniates to Rome: the feeling of their undeniable superiority in cultural matters to what they somewhat disdainfully call this side of the Carpathians the " Old Kingdom ". To become Orthodox would have meant intellectual decadence for the élite. The reason for this lies in the more advanced intellectual standards of the Uniates, but it is also due to the consciousness of the services rendered by the province (of Transylvania) both to the cause of national unity and the purifying of the modern Rumanian language. "*

What the well-informed author of these lines forgets, is that the Uniates owed their intellectual superiority to the Church in Hungary and to the Hungarian government (including the Calvinists)—whereas he does not miss a single opportunity of recalling the " thousand-year-old oppression " exercised by the Hungarians.

When the Union with Rome was concluded, the Rumanians did not look upon the Church in Hungary as the " oppressor ", but rather as their sincere friend and protector. Propaganda inspired by hatred misleads public opinion today, if it describes the Church in Hungary as the representative of dynastic or national interests.

Propaganda, however, has nothing to do with the truth ; it is only interested in striking and grandiloquent formulas or catchwords. The Uniates of Transylvania were constantly accused by the Hungarians of being anti-patriotic. For this reason they never took part in the great Latin Catholic Congresses. They paraded their anti-Hungarian sentiments ostentatiously, although their spiritual life was nourished on Hungarian religious literature. When Greater Rumania was established in 1918, the cleavage was complete between Latin and Uniate Catholics. At the very most the Uniates acted secretly, like Nicodemus: they went to confession to Professors of Theology, or else to members of religious orders. But for consumption abroad, they made a great point of admiring certain fashionable tendencies in Catholicism, which they hoped would give them moral support. So the Catholic Minority in Transylvania remained alone and friendless under the Russian occupation. But the tragic hour of the Uniates was not long in coming. Aaron Márton did not stand aside from the struggle his fellow-Catholics then had to wage.

The Communist regime first of all tried to intimidate the clergy, both Latin Catholic and Uniate. Several priests were imprisoned under various pretexts. When they had been subjected to torture, they were set free, in the hope that being wise after the event, they would become docile instruments of their masters.

In 1947, the government invited the Bishops to give up their schools, under the threat that they would lose the subsidy which the Rumanian government was obliged to pay under the stipulations of the Peace Treaties of 1920, and the pledges they had made at the time when land intended for the maintenance of schools had been expropriated (pledges which in any case had never been honourably discharged). The Bishops had no intention of giving up the Catholic schools *¹⁵. They managed to save them for the time being, but at the price of how many sacrifices ! Under the guise of honouring the government subsidy, the government imposed upon them teachers of doubtful morality. In addition, they made the Marxist classics obligatory reading in the schools.

Simultaneously, coarse attacks were made on the Church and the person of the Pope. Gheorgiu Dej, Deputy Prime Minister, declared: " We are obliged to state that the attitude of the Catholic clergy is not in conformity with the democratic regime in Rumania and the interests of the country and nation. In every country in the world, the Catholic clergy takes orders from the Vatican, whose violently reactionary and Imperialist activity is well known " (64).

After the elections of 28th March 1948, the Rumanian Parliament drew up a new constitution—on 23rd April. It granted liberty of conscience and religion to all, as is the habit in states of the Russian obedience. But soon a rapid series of decrees, issued one after the other by the Presidium of the Republic, cut short all illusions.

To spare itself the embarrassment of any protest from Rome, the Rumanian government

denounced the Concordat unilaterally on 19th July 1948, as well as the subsequent conventions and agreements which followed its coming into force. Finally, three decrees, promulgated on 4th August 1948, gave a foretaste of what was in store for the Churches.

The first decree, relating to educational reform, declared that education must serve democracy. The Minorities had the right to instruction in their mother tongue. The confessional schools were nationalised. The teaching profession was invited to enter the state service. The funds of the schools taken over by the State were to become the property of the State.

New religious laws reduced the number of Uniate Sees from five to two, and Catholic Sees from six to two, while each diocese was to comprise an average of 750,000 faithful.

The decrees also ordered that an inventory should be made of Church property. (Experience had shown what was meant by " an inventory of Church property "). The funds of a Confession which had disappeared, or which had been deprived of official recognition, were to pass to the State. In cases where a certain number of faithful had left a Confession, the funds belonging to the latter were to be shared with the dissidents. **Any** religion could well be undermined by such means !

The relations which the various Confessions maintained with Churches abroad were to pass automatically through the office of the Minister of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs, who would transmit them to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Subsidies received from abroad, or sent abroad, were to be supervised by the State.

Both Latin and Uniate Bishops protested on 26th August 1948 against the nationalisation of the Church schools, and made representations to the government on the new religious legislation. In reply to the Bishops' Memorandum, the Official Gazette announced on 3rd September the enforced retirement of seven out of the ten Bishops. So that as a result of this high-handed action, there remained only three Bishops to administer 3,000,000 Catholics: Aaron Márton, Bishop of Gyulafehérvár, Alexander Durcovic, Bishop of Jassy and Julius Hosszú, Bishop of Kolozsvár-Szamosújvár (Cluj-Gherla).

All the Bishops thus retired " refused to accept the pension that was offered them. When they met on 7th October, they addressed a collective letter to Prime Minister Groza, and to the President of the Republic, Parhon, protesting against arrangements which violated the rights of the Church and the liberty of Conscience. The government replied by imprisoning the seven Bishops.

Now that they had deprived Catholics of their natural leaders, the Communists set about converting the Uniates to Orthodoxy. The leading spirits in this curious enterprise were Justinian Marina, recently appointed Patriarch of Bucharest, and Nicholas Balan, Metropolitan of Nagyszeben (Sibiu). It was in the Cathedral at Karánsebes that Justinian announced on 19th September 1948 that the religious unity of the Rumanian nation would soon be a fact.

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The denunciation of the Concordat was intended to drive a wedge between the Uniates and Rome. The Russians and the Orthodox clergy were conveniently agreed on the necessity for this. The Patriarch Justinian, on his return from consultations in Moscow, hastened to declare that: " The interests represented by the Vatican are foreign to the essence of our faith. That is why the Patriarchs of the Eastern Churches, united with the representatives of all the Orthodox Churches, welcome enthusiastically the measures taken by the Rumanian government to put an end, once and for all, to any possibility of interference in the internal affairs of the People's Republic of Rumania on the part of the Vatican. "

The Orthodox were too blinded by their hatred of Rome to see the dangers which threatened them from the same source. They forgot that a few years previously they had been looking for ways and means to bring about a union with Rome, for political motives needless to say (65).

According to the acute observation of the Marquis de Custine: " This Church (i.e. the Orthodox) has neither virtues lofty enough, nor talents great enough, to conquer men by the power of its thought ; it can conquer them through persecution (66).

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The Orthodox Church had a privileged position in Rumania and looked askance at Bolshevism.

Since it possessed the greatest number of faithful in the country, the new regime concentrated all its attention on first trying to make the Orthodox Church change sides. Orthodoxy has always served the secular power well. When in 1943 Stalin permitted the re-establishment of the Patriarchate of Moscow, the Orthodox everywhere were convinced that there was no underlying motive of propaganda connected with it. Their hopes were soon dashed, and it needed more than a gesture of that nature to win them over to Communism. First the Bishops, who were hostile to Communism, would have to be separated from their people. So two laws were promulgated with the intention of transforming the Orthodox Episcopate into a docile instrument of the government. The first said that a Bishop could be compulsorily retired, if " a government commission found that he was incapable of discharging his duties properly. " The second stipulated that, in future, the Parliamentary Deputies in each diocese were to participate in the election of the Bishops. By 1947, it was possible by these means to appoint nine Bishops who had Communist sympathies.

Hence it soon became clear that the re-establishment of the Patriarchate of Moscow had only been intended to throw dust in the eyes of the Orthodox nations and the world in general. By 1948, the Communist annexation of Rumania was an accomplished fact. All political opposition had been liquidated and the economic life of the country was nationalised. King Michael of Rumania was forced to abdicate. The People's Republic was then officially proclaimed.

The Patriarch Nicodemus, who had always behaved towards the Pope with great respect, died in February 1948. He would have been incapable of dishonouring his dignity as Patriarch by dishonest dealings against anybody whatsoever. By 24th May 1948, the new Patriarch was appointed with the concurrence of the Communist Deputies. Opening the debate at the time of the election, the Minister of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs announced that the new Patriarch " must not be like his predecessors."

The successful candidate was Justinian Marina who, while still a coadjutor to the Patriarch, had proclaimed in a Pastoral Letter that the precepts of the Scriptures could be realised most completely under a People's Democracy. " The Orthodox Church had been chosen by God to point out the path of truth to all those who believe in progress and the imminent inauguration of the Socialist paradise. "

The Rumanians knew perfectly well that Justinian had been foisted upon the Orthodox Church. At a banquet offered in the new Patriarch's honour, Prime Minister Groza made a slip of the tongue when he said: " It is neither I, nor the Rumanian people, who have elected you, but (pointing to Gheorgiu) this Bolshevik in the service of the Russians " (67).

The new Patriarch made his debut with a daring programme which delighted the people who had elected him:

1. Purge the clergy of their old-fashioned ideas.
2. Educate the young seminarists in a scientific and political spirit.
3. Revise and edit religious books in the light of dialectical Marxism.
4. A closer supervision of the activities of the religious Orders (68).

At the ceremony of his enthronement, on 6th June 1948, he pronounced a sermon which was stuffed full of historical inaccuracies and tendentious interpretations. The new Patriarch declared openly that one of his first preoccupations would be the return of the Uniate Catholics to Orthodoxy. On 19th September 1948 at Karánsebes, he declared: " I give you an assurance that all the engagements entered into by me will be respected, for our sole preoccupation is the extension, the greatness and the strengthening of our Orthodox Church of Rumania. " Those who knew what sort of a man Justinian Marina was knew that His Beatitude would not be held back by any humane or Christian consideration.

" The Democratic Association of the Orthodox Clergy " followed him in this line of apostolate. He launched his appeal on 28th March 1948: " As the representatives of a certain Confession have put themselves at the service of foreign interests, and have alienated the destiny of our Church away from the people and from God, they have degraded themselves into becoming the ignoble instruments of the enemies of peace. Those who serve the Orthodox Church condemn such conduct as strongly as lies in their power. In the struggle for peace, for liberty and our national independence, we shall place ourselves on the side of our People's Democracy. We have faith in our people and in the regime which it has

chosen. "

The " return " of the Uniate Church in Galicia to Orthodoxy made these zealous apostles' mouths water. They paid not the slightest attention to the cost in blood and suffering of their apostolate, directed as it was from Moscow.

On 29th June, the Feast of St Peter and St Paul, the Uniate Bishops addressed a very fine Pastoral Letter to their flock: " At this moment, which sees threatening signs looming on the horizon, in the form of a friendly invitation to " return home ", but which is nothing but an attempt to tear us away from the bosom of the Church of Jesus... Our fathers put an end to a tragic separation ; they established a union with the true Church and thus fulfilled in our name the ardent prayer of Our Lord that we should all be " one "... The sacred union with Rome signifies for us the return to the faith in which the Rumanian people lived for a thousand years, a faith from which we were torn in 1054 *¹⁶... without our knowledge or desire... We became re-united to Rome in order to restore the seamless garment of Our Lord Jesus, which was spared by the executioners who crucified Him, but was rent by the Greek Bishops when they separated them-selves from the true Church of Christ... We re-united ourselves to Rome in order not to trample underfoot the words of our ancestors who, in Florence in 1439, subscribed to the union under the leadership of their Metropolitan of Moldavia, Damian... in order not to give the lie to the great Councils of the Church which glorify with one voice the Church of Rome... These Councils are held in honour today, even **by** the Orthodox Church... and in order not to give the lie to our spiritual literature and our books of prayer. "

After enumerating the intellectual and material advantages derived from the union with Rome, the Bishops stressed the fact that the union brought about in 1698-1700 had not been made for material ends only.

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In July 1948, the five-hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the Patriarchate of Moscow was celebrated. The Orthodox Bishops present signed a communiqué expressed in a language which beggars description, designed to prepare public opinion for the suppression of Uniate Catholicism:

" Today, as in the past, the activity of the Vatican is directed against the masses of the people everywhere. The Vatican is a centre of international intrigue directed against the interests of the peoples of the world, particularly the Slavs; a centre also of international fascism. No Christian, whatever his nationality or rite, can profess any other attitude than to stigmatise the anti-Christian, anti-democratic and anti-national policy of the Vatican. "

Following upon the Moscow conversations, the Uniate priests had to give their signatures to the election of delegates who were to be sent to Kolozsvár to proclaim the union of the Uniate Church with Orthodoxy. The Rumanian government had to organise a veritable round-up, and bring all kinds of pressure to bear on those priests who were refractory. But the result surpassed all their expectations, for in three days 423 priests gave their approval to the projected union. This high figure (one fifth of the total priesthood) was a bombshell to Hierarchy and faithful alike. " In completely identical circumstances, had not the Ukrainian priests (i.e. in the Northern provinces of Hungary) required to embrace obedience to Moscow, been seen to prefer prison, death and the horrors of the Carpathian *maquis* to apostasy " ? (69).

The Bishops and the Nuncio protested against the inhuman proceedings employed by the Rumanians in the matter, but to no avail. In any case in Russia " neither evidence nor justice find any advocate if they embarrass the government " (70).

The Uniates did not submit easily. A great number followed the directives given by the Bishops, before they had been cast into prison. Clandestine pamphlets circulated over the whole of Transylvania. They censured the conduct of the Orthodox in particular: " ° The Orthodox Bishops are clutching to their bosom booty captured by atheists... The Godless have become the apostles of the -Orthodox Church... "

Now that the Uniate Church had been eliminated, the Presidium of the People's Republic made an official declaration to the effect that it had been abolished. (Decree of 1st December 1948).

The suppression of the Uniate Church was part of the Russian plan in Eastern Europe, but at the same time it was a reward for the servility of the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox, who were often

atheists in reality, had been waiting impatiently for the time when they would be able to eliminate the Uniate Church. But their victory was sealed by a humiliating defeat: " The former Uniates are rallying *en masse* to the Latin Rite, and a number of Rumanians who have hitherto been Orthodox have become converted to Catholicism, which they regard as a spiritual refuge. The prestige of the Roman Church **has** never been greater **in** Rumania than it has since the persecution started " (71).

*¹ In Hungary, several towns and Parish Councils had the right to elect their own parish priest from a list of candidates drawn up by the Bishop.

*² An Orthodox prelate, Member for Transylvania in the Budapest Parliament before 1918.

*³ In August 1940, Stalin sent an ultimatum to King Carol of Rumania and occupied Bessarabia without any resistance being offered. Hungary considered that the Czecho-Slovak state being dissolved, and the principle of Rumania's integrity being abandoned, it was no longer logical that the question of Transylvania should be regulated by the Treaty of Trianon, which by this date had practically ceased to exist. After the French defeat, Rumania renounced the Anglo-French guarantee of her territory in August 1940.

*⁴ After the capitulation of the Hungarian insurgent forces to the Russian Commander-in-Chief at Vilagos, near Arad, on 13th August 1849, the military leaders of the insurrection remained imprisoned in the fortress of Arad, where thirteen of them were tried and executed by an Imperial Court Martial. The day of their execution, 6th October, was subsequently celebrated as a day of national mourning. They are usually called the " Arad martyrs ", and a statue in their honour was erected on the main square of Arad in 1890. Thus, the name Arad is dear to Hungarian national sentiment.

*⁵ In 1921, when it seemed as though King Charles IV would be restored to the throne of Hungary, the Little Entente, and especially the Czecho-Slovak Foreign Minister Benes, contemplated a combined military intervention by which the Czechs in particular would have invaded Hungary from the North.

*⁶ " It is Mr Churchill's duty to give an explanation to the Yugoslav nation, for it is thanks to him and his efforts and to the functioning of his secret services, aided by certain irresponsible elements who brought about the *coup d'état* of 27th March 1941, that Yugoslavia lost her neutrality, and, as the result of a miscalculation, found herself first dragged into a war which was both premature and useless, and then abandoned to a Communist regime, which was established by the direct intervention of the Russian army... "

*⁷ " Since they now have in Bucharest a government in which they have confidence, the Russians have agreed that Northern Transylvania should be placed once more under Rumanian administration. "— *The Destiny of Rumania*, p. 157.

*⁸ When Vychinsky put Groza in power on 6th March, he felt that he ought to do something to make the new Prime Minister popular with the Rumanians, who had virtually never heard of him. So on 8th March, he intimated to Groza that he ought to ask Stalin to let him have N. Transylvania. The latter thereupon made him a " present " of it. " Tito and Goliath ", p. 319. See also J. F. BYRNES, *Cards on the Table*, p. 112.

*⁹ When King Michael of Rumania dismissed the government of General Antonescu, broke with Germany and entered the . war on the Allied side.

*¹⁰ An organisation founded after 1944 to liquidate the assets of those who fled before the Russians. Its unjust provisions / were naturally applied to the Hungarians, although the Germans) were the chief targets. This organisation accumulated enormous wealth. Its corruption and cruelty will remain as an eternal blot upon this period.

*¹¹ The Hungarians were not ignorant of the fact that the " Hungarian, People's Association " had been created by the Rumanian government and, against the wishes of the majority of Hungarians had assigned to it a role quite out of proportion to the force which it represented in the country. Yet today,

Rumanian propaganda tries to make people believe that it is the Hungarians within the Communist party in Rumania who call the tune.

*¹² *The Decline of the West. Vol. II, Chapter 3, pp. 705-706.*

*¹³ A French Royalist-Liberal writer, mainly known through **his** travel **books**, of which ' *La Russie en 1839* ' is the most topical **today**.

*¹⁴ From the Christmas sermon of St Thomas of Canterbury, in *Murder in the Cathedral*. T. S. ELIOT. London. Faber and Faber. P. 49.

*¹⁵ Catholic schools especially were meant in the context, because the Uniates and the Orthodox in Transylvania had " offered " their schools to the government after the union with the Kingdom of Rumania in 1918.

*¹⁶ The **year** of the Great Schism.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIGHT TO THE DEATH FOR JUSTICE

The Uniate Church had not been the sole preoccupation of the Communist regime. The final telling blow fell upon the Catholics of the Latin Rite once the Uniates had been liquidated. According to the declaration of Groza, the measures taken against the Uniates were but child's play compared with what was in store for the Latin Catholics.

In all its attacks upon the Catholics, the government was never able to make the excuse that it was working for the "moral unity" of the Rumanian nation, for the simple reason that most of them were either Hungarians or Germans. So the Communist regime tried to catch the Hungarians through their attachment to their mother tongue. Aaron Márton had already said in his letter to Groza that "the Hungarian nation (after the arrival of the Russians upon the scene) had found understanding only from the parties of the Left in Rumania". In conformity with the Russian directives, the Hungarians were allowed to organise themselves into political parties. Naturally, the latter were supposed to serve the interests of the Communist party. But since the Hungarians were closely united on all questions concerning their religion and their institutions, treachery was virtually unknown. And to safeguard fidelity of this order, Providence had placed a watchman in Transylvania who kept silence neither by day nor night.

Yet it became increasingly evident that the Rumanian regime was in process of liquidating all those who had placed their faith in Rumanian pledges—Gervase Kurkó, Edgar Balogh, Louis Csögör and even the so-called Hungarian Vasily Luca fell into deep disgrace.

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The nationalisation of the educational system was one of the first concerns of the Peoples' Democracies everywhere. As the Hungarians of Transylvania had for centuries been most deeply attached to their schools, their seizure by the state was considered to be a disaster. Aaron Márton and all the Bishops protested. This protest was naturally not on the same scale as that made by the Hierarchy in Hungary proper, where a united country stood behind Cardinal Mindszenty. And even there, those who had under constraint signed protests against the Cardinal were with him in their hearts. In Hungary the battle had been worth fighting, even if it was lost, for it gave the Hungarian nation a salutary shock which stimulated a long-term resistance.

In Transylvania, events took the same course as in Hungary: the teaching staffs of the confessional schools were invited to join the state service. The Premonstratensians at Nagyvárad and some communities of nuns tried to keep going under the new conditions. But after two months' trial, they found they could not reconcile their consciences any longer to the requirements of Marxist education.

On 3rd November 1949, the Catholic hospitals were nationalised: the nurses, male and female religious, were thrown out into the street.

On 29th July 1949 came the turn of the religious Orders, the Franciscans excepted *¹. Fourteen men's religious houses (Friars Minor, Piarist, Jesuit, Premonstratensian) and seventy-one convents of nuns belonging to teaching or nursing Orders, as well as numerous schools for which they were responsible, were eliminated from the Catholic life of Transylvania. The religious were confined in the Bishops' Residences at Gyulafehérvár and Bucharest. 1,800 nuns were piled into three convents, which had accommodation for from 500-600 people only. The Minister of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs was approached and authorised the nuns to return to their families, but not wanting to give the impression that he was expelling them from the country, he refused to allow them to go abroad.

A Superior was placed over the nuns to prevent them from reading forbidden books of a "mystical or reactionary nature", and to oblige them to attend ideological talks regularly.

Thus did Rumanian-Russian Communism destroy institutions which, from the days of the Turkish-Tartar invasions and the establishment of religious liberty, the Church had built up in Transylvania during 250 years of devotion and sacrifice.

*¹ Later, the Franciscans were also dissolved. Some of the Fathers were allowed to remain with their churches.

CHAPTER VII

THE LAST YEARS OF AARON MARTON'S LIFE

In accordance with the new religious laws, the Catholic Bishops presented, on 28th October 1948, to the Minister of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs a constitution for the Church, which would meet the requirements of Canon Law. On the evening of the same day, the government ordered the arrest of all the Greek-Catholic Bishops.

The draft of the proposed constitution had been drawn up by Aaron Márton, on the request of the Episcopate. The underlying intention of the Rumanian government was to organise a national Church, a project which would be greatly facilitated if the drafting of the proposed constitution looked as though it had been done by expert hands. On the contrary, they found that Aaron Márton had strongly stressed the dependence upon Rome. The Minister was disappointed in his hopes and when he asked Moscow what he should do, he was told to temporise.

On 12th January 1949, the Minister of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs declared the proposed plan for a constitution to be unworkable. Of the 46 clauses presented in the Memorandum, he demanded the suppression of all those relating to the primacy of the Pope, because the regime *would not tolerate any but "dogmatic relations" with Rome*. The Minister also insisted that there should be no mention of the Uniates, since they no longer existed. Nevertheless, Aaron Márton stood his ground, maintaining that the fundamental principles of the constitution of the Church were sacrosanct.

Aaron Márton had never been *persona grata* to the Communists ; but after he had drafted a constitution for the Church and bravely defended the clauses guaranteeing the rights of the Church, their anger knew no bounds. When on 25th February 1949, he stated his regret that the Uniate Bishops had been deprived of their freedom of opinion, and declined to make any compromise which would prejudice the rights of the Pope or Catholic doctrine, the Communists let loose all the catchwords of their propaganda against him. So the newspapers announced that Bishop Aaron Márton was preventing the Catholics from exercising their civic rights by forbidding them to take any part in Communist organisations ; he was threatening his flock with excommunication ; he was exercising a spiritual terror by imposing Church laws in flagrant contradiction with the Constitution of the country ; he was trying to ensure Vatican interference in the internal affairs of Rumania and he was engaged in espionage.

In the spring of 1949, Aaron Márton set out on his last Episcopal visitation to administer Confirmation and take leave of his faithful. He knew well enough, and his flock also had a foreboding of what was in store for him. Episcopal visitations and the administering of Confirmation have always attracted many pilgrims in the Siculi region. But during the last years of Mgr Marton's active life, the numbers of such pilgrims surpassed anything that had been seen in previous years. The Siculi understood better than ever St Paul's words: " Even if you had ten thousand masters in Christ, you have not many fathers. " The people thronged to Csiksomlyó, the centuries--old citadel of their faith. In 1948, the number of pilgrims was estimated to be 70,000 ; in 1949 there were more than 100,000. It was a touching scene, and one which recalls Chapter 20 of the Acts of the Apostles, when St Paul takes leave of the Christians of Ephesus. The same scenes were repeated throughout his whole journey: the last exhortations were given, touching farewells taken. When he had exhorted his people in the churches and the cemeteries to be faithful to the example of their forefathers, Mgr Márton could say with St Paul: " I have served the Lord with all humility and with tears and tribulations... I have kept back nothing that was profitable to you, but have preached it to you and taught you publicly and from house to house... Take heed to yourselves and to the whole flock... I know that after my departure ravaging wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock... And now I commend you to God. " What follows in Acts also describes what happened each time the Bishop made his farewells: " And when he had said these things, kneeling down he prayed with them all. And there was much weeping among them all. And falling on his neck they kissed him, being grieved most of all for the word which he had said, that they should see his face no

more. "

On the Feast of Pentecost, 1945, the Siculi were given their last chance of fulfilling their vow to make a pilgrimage—after four centuries. The Communists did their utmost to prevent it from taking place: they organised popular festivals in the villages, and bicycle races on the roads which converge on Csiksomlyó. All to no avail. The faithful came from far and wide. On this Feast of Pentecost, the Siculi race bore a dazzling witness to their religion and protested energetically against every attempt to deprive them of their nationality and their faith.

On the days when Mgr Márton administered Confirmation, all the Siculi wanted " to come home ". The government was surprised and humiliated by such a manifestation of affection. It unleashed a campaign of hatred and calumny against Mgr Márton in the press, yet they dared not arrest him in the middle of his visitations. The Siculi organised a bodyguard to protect him. Thus the attempt to arrest him as he prayed at the tomb of his parents in his native village was foiled.

When his five-weeks series of visitations was over, Aaron Márton returned to Gyulafehérvár on 16th June. The regime could no longer afford to let the symbol of the spiritual resistance of the country remain at liberty. The Bishop of Transylvania was therefore summoned to Bucharest, under the pretext that his presence was required for the final elaboration of the constitution designed for the Catholic Church. On 21st June, he took a taxi to pick up the Bucharest express at Tövis (Teius). Before they reached Tövis, the taxi-driver stopped the car, saying that his engine had broken down. Another car appeared shortly afterwards on the deserted road. The men who were travelling in it got out and begged the Bishop and his secretary to accept a lift. They have never been seen since *¹.

On the next day, 22nd June, the Minister demanded indignantly to know why the Bishop had not kept the appointment.

A few days later, on 26th June, the Communists arrested the last Bishop who remained at liberty, or rather they abducted him as he was getting off a tram, on his way to administer Confirmation at a neighbouring church in Bucharest.

After his arrest, the *Osservatore Romano* devoted a fine article to the memory of Aaron Márton:

" We do not think that this piece of violence came as a surprise to him. Following upon the triumphal days of his last series of visitations, the government authorities were only too conscious that they had failed. We need only recall the first days in June, when his triumphal visitations started, and the coarse attacks made against him by the Rumanian press, in their attempt to cast dirt on the person of the illustrious prelate. The Communists did not realise that their attacks merely served to deepen the affection which the faithful felt for their shepherd and for the person of the Pope.

" In 1949, a Hungarian-Siculi Bishop in full vestments approaches on a white horse—it is history repeating itself. Before our eyes appear the figures of Archbishop Ugrin (who fell fighting the Tartars), Paul Tomori, Arch-bishop of Kalocsa (who fell at the battle of Mohács, fighting the Turk), and so many other prelates who, followed by their escort, rode against the pagan and died for the faith on the field of honour. We see Buzád Bánffy, Dominican Prior at Budapest, falling sword in hand, beneath the blows of the Tartars who were attacking his monastery in 1241. We are happy to note that the line of these great Bishops has not been broken, but that it was incarnate in 1948 in the person of Aaron Márton, Roman Catholic Bishop of Transylvania.

" Aaron Márton did indeed lead the last pilgrimage to Csiksomlyó on horseback, clad in full Bishop's vestments, and followed by 4,000 Siculi praying fervently. This triumphal procession to Csiksomlyó was soon followed by the road to Calvary, which still endures. His fate is even more of a mystery than is that of Cardinal Mindszenty.

" Bishop Aaron has entered into the legends of the Siculi race, but at the same time his name is inscribed in the book of the Bishop-Confessors of the Church Militant. His body belongs to his beloved land of the Siculi, his soul to God and his heart to Rome. " (30th June 1949).

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Exactly 350 years after the murder of Cardinal Báthory, torturers who came from the same province of Wallachia gave Aaron Márton first a living death and then death itself. The prophecy of the

legend of old has been fulfilled ; the **son** of Csiksomlyó has made expiation for the men of his village, who had served the evil designs of the foreigner and assassinated the man who seemed destined to become the greatest Prince of Transylvania.

After the martyrdom of Aaron Márton came the persecution of his people. The Rumanian government had persecuted the Hungarian Minority from the very beginning as we have seen, and in spite of the formal stipulations of the Treaty of Trianon. Now the one-time persecutors of Aaron Márton tried to desecrate his memory in the interests of their propaganda. The Rumanian Committee of Liberation in Washington published a pamphlet called " *The Persecution of Religion in Rumania* ". Out of 39 pages, 10 are devoted to an introduction, 11 to the Catholics of the Latin Rite (pp. 11-21), 8 to the liquidation of the Uniate Catholics (pp. 22-29), 5 to the dominant religion, i.e. Orthodoxy (pp. 30-34) and the last 2 pages to the Protestant Confessions. The compiler could not do otherwise than give the first place to the Latin Catholics. But although 70 % of the above-mentioned Catholics are Hungarians, there is but one single mention of the Hungarian nation in the whole pamphlet — when the author tries to saddle it with the sins of a Hungarian Communist called Ferdinand Csikós.

The Rumanian émigrés tried to make capital out of the martyrdom and the heroic suffering of the Hungarian Catholics. These self-same Rumanians had begun the persecution as far back as 1918. Articles in the review " *The Rumanian Nation* " (La Nation Roumaine) are also inspired by the same spirit (cf. NO8 for 15 Feb. and 1 Sept. 1950).

After the disappearance of Mgr Márton, the Church in Transylvania remained without a leader. The Protestant Churches, the Jews, the Muslims and the Orthodox accepted the new cultural laws and expressed their gratitude to the government for its generosity.

Henceforth the government could concentrate all its efforts upon stamping out Catholicism. It continued to close down the churches staffed by religious. It seized the celebrated Bishop's Library, the *Batthanyeum*. A decree of 1st December 1949 ordered road repairs to be done by forced labour. This decree meant that anybody could be forced to do this sort of work. Happy were they who were not expedited directly to Russia. Liberated from their forced labour, the faithful were constantly spied upon for their relations with priests. There was a continuous flow of priests into prison.

When Aaron Márton had gone, a Siculi, Aloysius Boga, became Vicar-General. When he was put into prison, another Siculi, Imre Sándor, succeeded him. The regime thought that once the Bishops were imprisoned, the Vicars-General would give in. So they were asked to draw up a constitution for the Church in conformity with the new spirit. The Vicars-General replied that they could change nothing without the authority of the Bishops.

Faced by this refusal, the government decided to draft the constitution itself and to force it upon the faithful and the lower clergy. In vain did they camouflage the enterprise with! slogans of the *Peace Movement*, the Catholics were not taken in.

After the kidnapping of Mgr Márton, the government exercised very great pressure upon the clergy. They were forced to make various declarations. Further declarations were attributed to them, which had no basis in fact. The Communists tried to say that 40 % of the priests had given their support to the Peace Movement, although the latter had to be dissolved for lack of members. If by any chance the regime managed to organise a meeting of priests and to make them declaim slogans for peace and diatribes against American imperialists, these same priests, even when they were suspended from their priestly duties, always stressed in the next breath the primacy of the papal authority.

In order to refute accusations of war-mongering, the two Vicars-General, Mgr Boga and Mgr Glaser of the diocese of Jassy, addressed a letter to the Minister of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs, in which they stressed the fact that Peace being founded upon love and justice, the Catholics had learned the principles of Peace from the Papal Encyclicals. They wanted to send this letter as a Pastoral to the faithful, but the government forbade it to be read from the pulpit. Then the government got together a hundred odd priests and members of Parish Councils and organised a meeting at Marosvásárhely, where Catholics and Orthodox were invited to discussions. The idea was to get them to sign the Stockholm Peace Appeal. This would have had the effect of making the Church serve the ends of the People's Democracy. Instead of that, the priests present asked to have the letter of the two Vicars-General read out

to them, and they added their signatures to it. Having been forced to form a " Catholic Committee for Peace ", the Vicar-General Boga, 80 years of age, refused to sign the resolutions drawn up by the said committee. Thereupon, he was cast into prison with his secretary, on 11th May 1950.

The government then made further efforts to make the Catholic clergy subservient to popular democracy. Intimidated by threats, a certain number of priests met one day at Gyergyószentmiklós (Gheorgeni). Suddenly, in the middle of the discussion, Joseph Kosszó, parish priest of Nagyenyed, got up and said : " We are here without any mandate. Our leader is the Pope, our Bishops who are our immediate superiors are absent, as well as their deputies, the Vicars-General. Consequently, any decisions which we make here today are valueless. " An excommunicated parish priest continued: " We will do nothing here without the Pope. All decisions made here today will be referred to him. "

The applause which greeted these two interventions expressed the real feelings of the " Congressmen ".

The next step was the Congress at Kolozsvár, held on 12th March 1951, designed to prepare the schism from Rome. In order to win over the Catholics, the government dangled before their eyes the re-establishment of the *Status*. This institution, which had done such fine work in the past, now threatened to become the longed-for means whereby the Catholic Church was to become subservient to the regime. (This actually happened to similar Protestant organisations ; the leaders were simply removed from office). Now that the Bishop was in prison, the time appeared to the government to be opportune for killing two birds with one stone: first, to set up Communist cells within the *Status*, and secondly, to extend the *Status* to the whole of Rumania. The previous regime - had never been able to attain this end, in spite of all the efforts made.

On 14th March 1951, 40 priests, mostly brought along by force, met at the residence of the Patriarch of Bucharest. They were supposed to prepare the ground for the decisions to be taken by the Assembly, convoked for the following day at Kolozsvár. In reality, the Catholics had been called together to the Orthodox Patriarch's Residence to be told of the government's wishes, and to make preparations for the General Assembly which was to be held at Kolozsvár. On 15th March, the 224 priests and lay people who were present at Kolozsvár took the decision to extend the *Status* and place it within the " framework " of the People's Republic. The participants presented certain *desiderata*, to which the government had agreed beforehand. The speakers insisted upon the necessity of defending peace and condemned the imperialism of the Anglo-Saxons.

The Rumanian government was truly generous. It took measures concerning the retirement of the teaching staffs and the clergy. It returned to the *Status* a few buildings which did not bring in any income ; it subscribed to the restoration of a few churches, returned the *Batthanyeum* Library, the church at Kolozsmonostor and another church at Kolozsvár, which the previous regime had seized and given to the Uniate Catholics. After the suppression of the latter, such generosity obviously did not inconvenience the government.

It went further, however, in its attempt to throw dust into people's eyes. It began to put into force some of the stipulations of the Treaty of Trianon concerning the Minorities. The Russian aim was to regulate the problem of the nationalities by a long-term plan. Since all the Minorities were destined inevitably to become their prey one after the other, why should they apply the chauvinistic and intemperate methods of bourgeois regimes ?

On 1st May 1951, Gheorgiu declared: " The party's task is to work for the logical application of the Lenin-Stalin policy, to fight all nationalist or chauvinistic tendencies which would make a mockery of the equality of civic rights of peoples living side by side within the one country (72).

" A cardinal point in the real people's democracy is the problem of the Minorities. A democracy which does not treat its Minorities equitably is meaningless. I quote the words of Stalin: " Is the Minority dissatisfied because they have not got any schools ? Let them have schools

Are they dissatisfied because they are deprived of rights ? Give them the rights which they demand ! Dissatisfaction will immediately disappear " (73).

Naturally, the aims of Russian imperialism were wonder-fully served by the friendship existing between the satellite countries. The realities of the situation greatly helped the Russians, whose only aim

was to absorb oppressor and oppressed alike. In the February number of *Utunk* (Our Road), under the title " The Experiment of Exchanging Rumanian and Hungarian University Professors ", we read : " The lesson to be drawn from this exchange is that it is impossible to obtain any serious progress in the scientific sphere, without a thorough knowledge of the Russian language and without applying the Russian methods. "

Rumanians and Hungarians alike could observe with amazement how cleverly the Russians had resolved their quarrels to the advantage of the Russian language. When all is said and done, it would have been better to come to an understanding earlier on and to respect each other's rights.

The Editorial of László Bányai

László Bányai, mentioned earlier in connection with the young post-World War generation in Transylvania, joined the Communist party in France. After his return to Transylvania, he taught at Csiksomlyó. In 1934 he was condemned to forced labour in the salt-mines. Today he is a great man of the Communist regime. He has written an article recently which is worth quoting in full, because it sheds considerable light on the clever tactics of the Russians:

" After the first World War, the reactionary governments of Rumania closed one after the other the schools and cultural institutions functioning in the Hungarian language. What was left remained in the hands of the various Confessions. For lack of any State subsidy — and because their funds had been seized —, these schools were quite unable to pay the salaries of their staffs, so that they were not able to carry on. Teachers in primary and grammar schools alike received a very much lower salary than did their colleagues in the state schools. Governments drawn from the middle class and the big landowners, very similar to those under the Fascist regime, did their best to stir up hatred and scorn for the language of the Minorities.

" The State machine exercised rigorous control over the schools and cultural institutions of the Minorities. They closed them on the slightest pretext. By 1933, 112 Hungarian-speaking state schools were all that remained. By 1935, there were no more than 44. By 1937, if we include the confessional schools, there were in all no more than 921 Hungarian-speaking primary schools. This means that the great majority of Hungarian children (more than two-thirds of them) were unable to make their studies in their mother tongue.

" After the liberation, side by side with the confessional schools, a whole series of state schools was founded for the Minorities. . The confessional schools received an adequate subsidy from the State, and from April 1946 until the present time they have received the same treatment as the Rumanian schools.

But the decisive step which wiped out the injustices of the past was taken on the historic date of the 30th December 1947. At this turning-point in history, a final solution of the problem of the Minorities was effected, in the spirit of proletarian internationalism. The *Constitution of the Republic* decreed that the Minorities should be given equality of civic rights on the same footing as the Rumanians, and that they should have the right to be taught in their own tongue. The reform of August 1948 completed the network of schools for the Minorities in Rumania.

" Teaching in their own language at every level is henceforth assured to the Hungarians, the most numerous of the Minorities in Rumania. In the school year 1950-51, there were 250,000 pupils in Hungarian-speaking infant, primary and secondary schools. At the Bolyai University, at the Institute of Pedagogy, at the Academy of Dramatic Art, at the Institute of Agricultural Studies, there were more than 3,000 students making their higher studies in the Hungarian language. There are Hungarian sections in the Faculty of Law, at the Art School, the Conservatoire of Music and the School of Arts and Crafts.

" In the same school-year, there were 538 German-speaking schools, including Grammar Schools, Teachers' Training Colleges and Technical Schools. " (Author's Note: We should have to have fuller details before we could form a true estimate of the value of these institutions.)

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The Vicar-General, Mgr Aloysius Boga, had been silenced in the interests of the Marosvásárhely Assembly. His successor, Imre Sándor, fell victim to the Kolozsvár Assembly. He was the third Siculi prelate to be imprisoned by the regime, which thought that no voice of protest could penetrate prison bars.

A campaign directed against those who refused to attend these schismatic Assemblies suggested that dissidents would become involved in a prosecution for treason. And so it transpired that soon all the leading Catholic personalities in Rumania were arrested. The great trial of this "band of traitors" opened on 10th September 1951. The chief accused was Augustine Pacha, Bishop of Temesvár. At the age of eighty, he had served as an unofficial intermediary between the Rumanian government and the Nazis.

In its issues of 11th, 17th, and 19th September 1951, the newspaper *Scanteia* gave considerable space to the trial. As was to be expected, *all the accused had engaged in espionage for the benefit of American imperialism, using as a go-between the Vatican, the Nunciature and certain Italian diplomats in Bucharest... The Catholic Bishops all over the world had conducted and were conducting intelligence services of the same nature for the benefit of the Vatican... These new offices were presided over by Catholic priests who had been consecrated Bishops, with a view to participating in this odious activity.* "

Any man who has read the charges made at this trial will marvel at the account given by Professor Langevin, of the *Collage de France*, of his journey to Rumania: "I observed complete religious freedom here: the churches are open. I saw shops which sold religious articles. Such observations show how unfounded are all the calumnies, widespread in Western Europe, which claim that religious liberty is non-existent in the People's Democracies." (*Scanteia*, 20th September 1951).

Yes, the churches are open, but the faithful, especially the priests, are in prison.

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With the imprisonment of the last of the Bishops and their Vicars-General, the Catholic Church in Rumania was deprived of all its leaders. It is now leading the life of the catacombs of old. Those who, on the contrary, know only too well that they owe their lives to Catholic intransigence—for without this intransigence servile submission their own would have been of no interest at all to the regime—met at Bucharest in the palace of the Patriarch Justinian (on 23rd June 1949) to thank the government for its approval of their *Status*. In their motion of thanks, they did not omit to heap abuse on the martyrs: "A single religion which in the past acquired privileges in opposition to other religions and, indeed, used them against the sovereignty of the State" (Where? In Rumania, or in Transylvania?—, Author) *appears to be dissatisfied. The representative of this religion is the only man missing from our company, a fact which we do not think lies at the door of his faithful.*

"In the Rumanian People's Democracy, no believer or priest has ever been punished for his religious faith, or because he practised his religion regularly. Only those have been punished who, by putting themselves at the service of the Imperialists, have plotted against the independence and the sovereignty of the Republic..." (*Documentation Catholique*, 17th July 1949, col. 935-6).—They recited their lesson well.

Russian Communism hates the Catholic Church and the Papacy, because Catholic doctrine and Communist principles are irreconcilable. "Stalin is a realist who weighs up issues cleverly. He therefore knows that it is not "bourgeois" liberalism, or "decadent" socialism, as he calls them, which can embarrass him in any way, since Karl Marx has taught him that these two things pave his way." (*La Croix*, 30th September 1952—Jean Caret). But Russian Communism detests the Papacy also, because it alone refused to be deluded by the voices of the Russian sirens, at a time when the men who were responsible for the fate of mankind were nearly all their dupes.

If ever the temptation was great for the Papacy to ally itself with the temporal power, it was during the second World War. The America of Roosevelt, through the intermediary of his personal envoy, Mr Myron Taylor, offered its mediation, with a view to a reconciliation between the Vatican and the Soviet Union. Pius XII did not share Roosevelt's optimism.

The American Catholics—as well as many of the Protestants—were anti-Communist, but Stalin was their ally in the struggle against Hitler. And as Winston Churchill has said: "You can always go some way with the devil, until you get to the end of the way". (Quoted in the *Figaro* of 16th October

1951). The only drawback is that this piece of wisdom, and the variations on the theme, have cost, and will continue to cost, much suffering to mankind. It would have been better to put it into practice a little more cautiously than was in fact done.

In July 1941, Mr Myron Taylor transmitted to the Pope a request from the American State Department that he should abstain from any declaration which could be interpreted as being in favour of the Axis. Then, in September, he asked for a clear declaration exhorting Catholics to fight Nazism and support the Anglo-Saxons and the Russians. In spite of all this pressure, the Pope did no such thing. Why ? He explained in his Christmas message of 1946: " Do not ask a mother to make a pronouncement against one or other of her sons. "

Roosevelt tried to make the Pope believe that the Russian attitude to religion had changed. " To my knowledge, " wrote Roosevelt, " there are serious possibilities of seeing Russia recognise the freedom of religion at the end of this war, while continuing to deny to the Churches the right to engage in education or politics. " I think ", he went on, " that the Russian dictatorship is less dangerous to the security of other nations than the German dictatorship. The only weapon which the Russian dictatorship employs is Communist propaganda, which it uses, I agree, against religion and established governments. Germany, on the contrary, not only makes use of similar propaganda, but wishes to secure world domination by the united strength of propaganda and arms... " " I think that the leaders of the Churches in the United States should recognise these facts and not help Germany indirectly to achieve her aims, by shutting their eyes to the main problem " (74).

After the invasion of Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, the Pope could not put any faith in the assertions of Roosevelt, and as the Russian army advanced ever further his anxiety increased over the fate of the nations which were being liberated, only to be thrown into the arms of Bolshevism.

Pius XII disapproved of unconditional surrender, which he thought was as absurd as it was un-Christian. It prolonged the war and cast a considerable portion of the human race into the jaws of the Soviet hell. " The origin of all our misfortunes is to be found in unconditional surrender ", writes Aldo Dami (75)—" All the world knows of the mistake made at Casablanca, when, without consulting either his advisers or even his allies, Roosevelt proclaimed as one of the war-aims the unconditional surrender of Germany. His surrenders at Teheran and at Yalta are also known, which perpetuated the reign of slavery and terror in Europe by exchanging the Brown tyranny for the Red one. "

" Indeed, if we judge the work by its fruits, which are bitter, we shall limit ourselves to admiring its intention "; " but should not high policy, despite what the ideologists may say be judged by its results ?... For some people, Roosevelt is a kind of St Michael who destroyed the National-Socialist dragon. For others, he was above all a Left-wing ideologist, who was somewhat scatterbrained, and who only saved us from the Brown tyranny in order to hand us over more surely to the Red despotism " (76).

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The Orthodox Church, faithful to its centuries-old traditions, not only made its submission to the State, but desiring to curry favour with it, took part with equal vulgarity in the Russian propaganda which equated the Vatican with " American Imperialism ". The Patriarch Justinian was the leading spirit of the campaign. In 1948, the Feast of Christmas had just been suppressed by the People's Democracy. In a broadcast which was reported in the press, Justinian called the Pope the " erring shepherd of so-called Christians " ; he accused him of being in the service of the enemies of peace and of bringing discredit upon the Cross of the Saviour.

The decree excommunicating the Communists gave the Patriarch a new opportunity to attack the Pope. The excommunication, he considered, did not serve the interests of souls, since religious freedom was guaranteed to all in a People's Democracy by law. If the Vatican wanted to defend the faith, why had it not excommunicated the Nazis *² ? On the contrary, it had allied itself with the Nazis. Justinian tried to make people believe that the Vatican was the most ancient of all the centres of imperialistic traditions ; the Pope was unscrupulously taking every advantage of the capitalist system, whilst the Orthodox Church was watching over the Christian tradition and was opposed to the return of the Fascists, the corrupters of the faith and the exploiters of the people. Justinian put the Fascists, the partisans of Horthy and the Pope

of Rome all into the same bag.

Naturally, the Rumanian people did not follow Justinian. With regard to his Christmas Mass in 1948, *La Libre Belgique* commented: " Only the stones, the candles and the incense were real at this ceremony. People on their knees were weeping with shame and rage. They were hiding their faces in their hands. " (31st October 1951).

Justinian cast aside those who did not sympathise with the new regime, and those who were still malleable had to toe the line. He organised classes for this purpose. The priests thus received a Marxist formation, so that they could manage to avoid any conflict between the laws of the Church and the principles of Marxist evolution. (*Universul*, 6th August 1949). The local paper of Arad noted that the lectures had the same effect on the souls of the priests as rain on a dry soil... The Orthodox Church and Socialism agreed on more than one point: they condemned the exploitation of man and the incitement to war. (*Universul*, 16th July 1949).

It would be an exaggeration to place everything at the door of the Patriarch Justinian. A specialist section of the *Central Committee of the Communist Party of the U.R.S.S.* had been given the job by the *Politburo* of drawing up the plan of action. He confined himself to repeating in a servile way, and with semi-literate demagogy, what he had been told to say. (Cf. *La Libre Belgique*).

The Communists, and Justinian himself, would have liked the Catholics to take advantage for a certain time of a liberty for which they would have been beholden to them. But if the Catholics had accepted liberty on those terms, they would have betrayed the vocation of the Church, and of mankind also. Men like Cardinal Mindszenty and Mgr Márton were not deceived in their judgements. They preferred to accept martyrdom. Instead of dishonouring themselves by subterfuges, they had the courage to say: "We ought to obey God rather than men. " (Acts V, 29).

Must I say it? Must I not say it?

No, I must say it, said Cardinal Faulhaber. It is this very problem which has been preoccupying the author of this book.

Aaron Márton had to disappear—one of the first victims. The man who had won the heart of an entire nation, as the Bishop of Transylvania had done, could not have lived a life of effacement amongst his faithful. The Communists did not even dare to apply to him their technique of arrest-by-night.

Aaron Márton was the leader of a persecuted nation whose martyrdom had begun after the first World War. As to any difference between the first form of persecution and the second, with their varying degrees of refinement. and cruelty, one can only recall the famous words of Maeterlinck: " The thief says: I steal, but I do not murder., The murderer says: I murder, but I do, not betray. The traitor says: I betray, but I do not betray my brother. " (Cf. *Figaro*, 31st July 1952).

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In 1944 and the following years, the West was **not** disposed to pay any attention to the complaints made by the Hungarians. When the heroic fight of the Hungarian Catholics began in 1945 against the Communist stranglehold, most people in the West watched the struggle without any sympathy, and even with some hostility. The courage of a Cardinal Mindszenty was a source of embarrassment and upset their political ideas. Aaron Márton's struggle passed unnoticed. Brave confessors of the faith were labelled feudal reactionaries, acting from political motives.

Perverse or cunning people who empty the Gospel of its content, to the point of excluding there from Christians, the Hierarchy and the Church, never ask themselves on what authority Communism rests *³. We call the ecclesiastical dignitaries of the past who did not resist the encroachments of the secular power cowards. Those who today resist a far crueller oppressor and defend their flocks against despotism, are treated as being in league with the rich and the imperialists. In order to defend a tyrannical minority *⁴ which forces itself upon a huge majority, the anxious partisans of the " acceleration of history " out-do their fellow-men in faith and betray the teaching of the Gospel. Have they never read the words of Isaiah:

" All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, yea, all ye beasts of the forest.

" His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant; dumb dogs not able to bark... The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart. " (Isaiah LVI, 9-10; LVII, 1.)

They are concerned with one problem only, namely that the defenders of the City are an obstacle in the way of their ideological conceptions.

Remarks are often heard which not only verge upon injustice and sin against charity towards our neighbour, but are equivalent to a falsification of history and deliberate malice.

There are many people in Western Europe who talk too much about the " witness " for Christ. Now that at the present moment they have many heroic examples of this before their very eyes, they are absolutely dismayed and indulge in astonishing feats of intellectual acrobatics, in order to belittle the sacrifice the martyrs have made. "Let us wait for the result of the Berán experiment ", they said, when Cardinal Mindszenty was condemned. And even the religious press, so jealous of its impartiality, listed the martyrs in the following order: Berán, Stepinac, Mindszenty. Are the zealous apostles of the organisation of the world on moral and democratic foundations by any chance going today to seek the truth in some Foreign Office ?

There are Catholics in the world who are so sure that they will never have to face persecution themselves, that they take it upon themselves to discourse upon the martyrdom of others with the sophistry of a street-arab. One such writes: " When I think of the Christian martyrs of the present moment behind the Iron Curtain, I wonder if they are not once more martyrs in the ancient and objective sense of this beautiful word of " martyr ", which means ` witness '. Certainly they are martyrs, in the subjective sense of the word... But the question I ask myself is whether they are really martyrs at all. In any case, they are not martyrs for those who condemn them, but traitors, capitalists, hidden enemies of the State... The more these modern martyrs protest their innocence, the more they prove that they are traitors to the cause of the people, such at least as it is conceived " (77).

What purpose does this hotchpotch of phrases serve, of which the author is evidently very proud ? As if the hangman had ever been disposed to give the crown of martyrdom to his victim !... " Verily, I say to you that all sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men and the blasphemies wherewith they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost shall never have forgiveness, but shall be guilty of an everlasting sin. " (Mark III, 28-29).

Many Catholics are so naive as to think that persecution has come to certain countries because the Church was badly organised there, or their spiritual life lacked depth. It is an old objection, as unjust as it is devoid of any foundation. " All those who wish to live piously in Jesus Christ will have to suffer persecution. That is why the tribulation of persecution will never be lacking, as long as the observance of piety endures " (*Serino Sti. Leonis 46, de Quadragesima*). Péguy once said: " The failure of sinners to recognise saints and the salvation of sinners by saints sums up the history of Christianity. "

And what are we to say about the hypocrisy of such formulas as " to be with the people ", " to follow the movement of history ", " to be in line evolution historical ? The truth is rather that people who say they are revolting against social injustices and the failure of the democracies, are only doing so to make sure they are on the winning side tomorrow. It shows the shameful opportunism of those who are afraid they will not be able to run quickly enough to help on tomorrow's victory.

Such opportunists as these are always ready to close their eyes to crimes committed by the Communists against the Church in every part of the world. " It seems that **the** anxiety of St Paul to bring Christ to all and to lead all to Him, has been replaced by a system which preaches mercy for all, except for fellow-Catholics (78). The latter are treated with nothing but bitterness and arrogance. "

" What makes the morale of nations perish; and with their morale the nations themselves ", said Chateaubriand, " is not violence, but deceit ; and by deceit I mean the flattering and specious elements which are present in any false doctrine. Men often take error for the truth, because every faculty of the heart or the mind has its false reflection. " (*Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, II, p. 29).

People who think Communism will evolve along more democratic lines, or that the Western or capitalist world will become socially more progressive, are mistaken. Will the better world, that men who are devoted to the disinherited of this world desire with all their hearts, come about in this way ? Could we not recall the words - of Burke: " If I cannot bring about reforms without committing injustices, then I

will give up the reforms ? " Could we not work more effectively for the happiness of humanity by using those means which are sanctioned by traditional morality, rather than by sacrificing millions of human lives to a mirage which, after a tyranny extending over nearly forty years, has brought mankind nothing but material ruin, not to speak of the loss of liberty ?

Do non-Catholic Christians who have the feeling that anti-religious propaganda can go part of the way with them, not notice that the attack is launched against the very idea of religion itself ? The Communists, it is true, take care to single out certain aspects of Catholicism for attack, but they do not omit to underline the fact that one religion is as good as another.

The fight against religion is one of the most important principles of the philosophy of militant Marxism... The proletarian party stands firm on its atheistic position ; it insists that its members not only give up religion, but lead active war against it ". (The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, Volume III, p. 352, 1950).

It would be opportune today to meditate upon the following thought: " Revolutions proceed rather from the accumulation of small grievances than from the explosion of great ideas. " (A. Mousset, *Paradoxes*, p. 41).

In the West, naive people hail enthusiastically the disappearance of feudalism in Hungary, Poland and Rumania ; they praise the new regime of the People's Democracies and rejoice already that Christianity and the Church in these countries have been purified by more than one link with the temporal power. They are sure they can see further, more truly and even in a more Christian way than the Catholics. The latter, who in their eyes are carnal-minded and Pharisaical, do not dare to anticipate the future with such assurance and take for granted the good intentions of the Soviet power... They do not doubt that the sins of the Christians themselves have ultimately brought persecution upon them... Their ideas on the matter can easily be gauged by the fact that they—as a rule so eager to castigate every injustice committed by the other side in memoranda signed with their name—have persistently abstained from making any protest against the trials of Cardinal Mindszenty or the Czech Bishops " (79).

" A young aristocrat once asked Lenin whether he thought that the Russian masses would take up his ideas—" We shall have to kill 35 millions of them and then they will recognise the benefits we are conferring upon them was the reply (80).

Yes, in the eyes of these new-style ideologists and missionaries, the tortures inflicted upon Christians are either deserved or else inevitable. And if on occasion they take up the defence of their fellow-Catholics (out of opportunism) they introduce so many strictures that their defence is a more severe indictment of the martyrs than outright defamation could achieve. They have no doubts that " Russia cannot be understood by using reason ; all we must do is to have faith in her " (81).

Salvador Madariaga, replying to assertions made by Mr Aneurin Bevan said: " ° Do you think that the only answer to Communism lies in an improvement in social conditions ? Do you think that a single one of the countries in Europe behind the Iron Curtain has adopted Soviet Communism because its social conditions were inadequate ? Do you think that without the ruthless intervention—either threatened or real—of the Red Army, a single European nation would have adopted a system which abolishes the liberty of trade unions, the right to strike, the liberty of the press, the freedom to join a political party, the freedom of religion, the right of association, and which imprisons those who oppose it in concentration camps which are nothing less than a step to the grave ? " (82).

" The scandal is that truth itself is always challenged. And the greatest scandal of all is that men can be tortured without anybody being able to protect them, and without their torturers ever having to answer for it " (83).

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Must I say it? Must I not say it? Yes, I will speak out. In the world today, we can see only too well evidence of a hatred, and perhaps of a dangerous inferiority complex, that is brought to bear against the Church. The books of Paul Blanshard (" American Freedom and Catholic Power ", Boston, 1949; " Communism, Democracy and Catholic Power ", Boston, 1951) leave one amazed ; he tries to persuade his readers that Catholic " totalitarianism " is more dangerous to Protestantism and American liberty than

Communism.

The pamphlet called " Infallible Fallacies " *⁵, and the speech made by the Archbishop of Canterbury (reported in the *Times* of 15th October 1953) give a painful impression of an unjustified resentment and a groundless fear of the Church. The Archbishop declares in tortuous phrases that if conflicts break out between Church and State, it does not mean that the Church is necessarily in the right. It can sometimes happen that a Church runs the risk of surrendering too many of its rights to the State, but it is equally possible that a Church imprudently resists the demands of the State, or else makes too many claims. It is therefore not possible to claim, immediately an ecclesiastic has been deprived of his liberty, that he is necessarily exempt from all blame. However, in the particular case of the Primate of Poland, the Archbishop thinks that this is so. (*La Croix*, 3rd November 1953). And what about the other cases ?

In reply to such laboriously-chiselled phrases, we can say: " It is the real brotherhood of Christians that has conquered the crimes of this world. "

And what are we to say about the " study-tours " so handsomely subsidised by the totalitarian regimes and which are intended to destroy " lying reports " ?... After a short stay in a totalitarian country, during which nobody except the official reporters of the regime are in contact with them, such travellers, upon their return home, ostentatiously bestow a sort of certificate upon their hosts, testifying to their good conduct. Without seeming to realise it, they are putting themselves at the service of Bolshevik propaganda. The accounts they give of their travels are the more useful for the purposes of Communist propaganda in that the few reservations which are slipped in give the impression of impartiality. However, such reservations are always too insignificant to contradict in the slightest the favourable impression which, at bottom, marks them. We can easily understand " the bitterness which people subjected to the Soviet yoke feel, when they see their co-religionists lending themselves to the comedy staged for their benefit by the Communist masters. " (*Journal de Geneve*, 26th October 1951).

And what bitterness must have filled the hearts of 'Hungarian Catholics, when they heard of the declarations made by foreign priests who had come to Hungary on a Communist-sponsored tour, only to give the Hungarian People's Democracy a certificate of good conduct in the matter of religious liberty. Are such casual visitors as these really qualified to form an idea of this liberty ? Everybody knows just what value to place on replies made to indiscreet questions, in a country where everything is controlled.

The consciences of such travellers are at rest. They have found a formula to justify themselves in their own eyes. They write this sort of thing: " The Hungarians are emerging from a semi-slavery in order to take their fate into their own hands. "—" There is no doubt about it: the Communists in power in Hungary desire to build a juster, more fraternal Order than the previous one ever was. " And the rashest judgement of all: " It would have been to resist the judgement of God to deplore the liquidation of illusions and lies about a pseudo-Christian civilisation, whose real gods, despite the fervour of souls, was money and brute force " (87).

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What a nightmare it is to think that the different Confessions of Western Christendom are continuing their quarrels under the threat of the most fearful danger, each one dreaming of exploiting the situation to the detriment of the others. The alleged foundation of new " National Catholic Churches " behind the Iron Curtain had already been saluted by certain people at the Congress of Lund. " It seems to us ", writes Pastor A. Finet, " that the possibility of the existence of national Christian Churches in Communist countries, however difficult and dangerous it may be, is a remarkable and very promising event ; it helps to detach the " Christian mystery from too close a connection with a particular form of civilisation ; it illuminates the universality of Christianity, which is the real bond of faith " ; it gives to the Western Churches more liberty and independence with regard to the temporal power.

" It seems to us today that the existence of these Churches heralds a promise in this chaotic world, in which the Strong only rely on might ; the Politicians on intrigue ".

These " obvious promises " are only spoilt by the formidable fact that " both the great temporal powers of the Western world have just concluded an agreement concerning the fight against Communism and then " Washington will provide the guns ; Rome will bless them ; Rome will preach, Washington will

pay up. Europe will be Catholic and Mgr Spellman will be able to dream of the papal tiara. But let nobody talk to us of the defence of " spiritual values " *⁶.

Haunted by the fear of a ' Vatican Europe ', " the worst of all hegemonies" (83), Pastor Finet refuses to be a crusader for a Europe which is reduced to those nations where the Catholics are in a majority and which are nominally at least Catholic. The fear of seeing Europe governed by Christian democracy blinds the judgement of those who think less of defending the West than of fighting the spiritual and temporal primacy of Catholicism *⁷.

These sordid quarrels strangely resemble those which rent Carthage before the Vandal invasion, or Byzantium before the Turkish conquest. Bernard Béguin writes in these terms about the anti-religious campaign launched in Russia in July 1954: " If they (the Russian Communists) are ready to call off the cold war, it is because they feel they are strong enough to consolidate their gains **without** interference. And we can be quite sure that they will do so without intermission. Meanwhile, Christians in the West are exchanging frigid words and accusing each other of intolerance and deviationism, as though Jupiter had decided to take his revenge and has managed to deprive them of their judgement " (84).

Interviewed at the Congress of Lund 1952, one of the Hungarian delegates, the Lutheran Bishop Louis Vetö declared: " I do not regret the fact that the power of the Roman Church has been crushed, nor that the influence of the big landowners and the capitalists has disappeared, nor that the land has been given to those who till it. " (What about the *kolkhozes* then ? Vetö and his colleagues are trying to justify their conduct by taking up attitudes. But they are falsifying historical truth when they say that they were always radical in their sympathies. On the contrary, they are deserters from a former Right-wing (clandestine) association, and now, in order to expiate the sins of their youth, they docilely repeat the lessons which the regime forces them to learn. They are deliberately playing at demagogy.

L. Vetö was very naive when he went so far as to say at Lund: " Do not think that Mr Rákosi is the enemy of religion, even if he is a Marxist. When we went to see him to complain about certain abuses, he declared that anyone who did violence to religion was not a true Marxist. Religion is a cultural matter. As long as the people are not sufficiently cultured, religion is necessary. In any case, violence must never be employed against religion ; it can only be fought by the wider diffusion of culture. This process might go on for a hundred or a hundred and fifty years... We forbid any recourse to violence " (85).

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Those who try to persuade people abroad and their own faithful with such verbiage as this, do not realise that the attitude of the Hungarian Protestants is not the same as that of the " wandering scholars ". The Protestants have developed an affection for the Catholic martyrs. Cardinal Mindszenty has been made an " honorary Calvinist " ; the Protestant clergy are officially accused of acting under the inspiration of his evil influence and that of Archbishop Grösz, if they exhort their faithful to take part in Catholic processions.

As for Aaron Márton, the Protestants used to ask why he could not be their Bishop as well as the Catholic one.

On 20th December 1951, a Protestant pastor wrote: " An urgent problem must be solved: how to maintain Christianity on this earth. We say Christianity simply, leaving aside all that divides us, and forsaking all religious propaganda, in order to save the essential against the terrifying assault of violence, hatred, tyranny, religious oppression, lying and barbarism.

" Each Confession will remain as it is, and on the lines along which it wishes to develop, but there will be a bond of collaboration between Christians and an understanding between Catholics and Protestants in the face of an enemy of whose tremendous power we have no real idea. Let us be united in brotherly understanding, and let us encourage everything that draws us together. " (*Liberté de Fribourg*).

The Anglican Bishop of Chichester is no **less** explicit.

Unity is broken by national rivalries, philosophical systems, ideologies which are hostile to a belief in God. If European civilisation is to survive, we must have a deeper sense of our common heritage... All the Churches have their part to play in the reconstruction of Europe " (86).

Hungarian Protestantism has its part to play also, but it will not be played by the men the regime sends abroad so frequently to throw dust in our eyes. Such men who do the Communists' bidding have forgotten the warning the great Calvinist theologian Vinet once gave: " Catholics, your dangers do not lie in Protestantism ; Protestants, your dangers lie still less in Catholicism. They lie else-where, in atheism, which rears its ugly head in a century that has lost its faith. "

In the Soviet Union, the equivocal situation concerning religion created by the war has given place to the anti-religious campaign started a short while ago. It is true that this campaign is directed primarily against the **Russian** Church, the Catholics and the Muslims, but the Protestants will not be spared in the long run. Their turn will come as soon as Soviet interests require a change of attitude.

" A Protestant who is indifferent to all that is happening beyond his own confessional frontiers does not deserve to be alive " (87).

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In spite of the good will of their sponsors, all the " ecumenical conferences " are pursuing a mirage when they try to reconcile the irreconcilable. But even if no real unity is there, brotherliness and Christian solidarity are always possible " (88).

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Cardinal Mindszenty and Mgr Márton, unyielding on matters of dogma, have proved that they were the ones to build up this Christian solidarity. And it must be said that the great majority of Hungarian Protestants are animated by the same spirit.

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It often happens in the West that reproaches are levelled against the Iron Curtain countries, as if they were responsible for the position in which they find themselves. This is a mere evasion of responsibility. The *Times* of London has asserted, for example, that Yugoslavia was the only country to resist Russian imperialism (14th May 1951).

Do they deliberately forget the small nations which were delivered up to Stalin at Yalta and Potsdam ? The Hungarian elections of 1945—and in what circumstances took they place !—are a further refutation of what the *Times* said. But in this particular instance the *Times* reproached the Hungarians, the only nation which was resisting the Russians at the time, with being incorrigible optimists, nationalists and dangerous reactionaries. Now, was this Hungarian resistance a crime at the time, or a piece of folly, asks the Hungarian Observer ? (May 1951).

"As to the satellite countries, they must recover and they will recover their complete independence ", writes George Kennan in his book *American Diplomacy*. " ° But they must not commit the folly of waging a war against a well-intentioned Russia, against a regime, that is to say, which is engaged in a constant struggle against the heritage of Bolshevism. (French edition, p. 191-2).

It is this mentality which has created the danger in Europe. " The Anglo-Saxons were short-sighted at Yalta and blind at Potsdam: they thought Stalin was as naive as themselves " (89).

" For a long time... it was bad form to take any interest in the fate of the Czechs, the Hungarians, the Poles, the Rumanians and the Bulgarians. " Can we wonder at it ? Churchill reassured public opinion in 1944: " We have the impression ", he said, " taking a long view, and by and large, that the differences between our systems (the Soviet and the democratic one) will tend to diminish... After 50 years of peace, these differences will probably become the subject of academic discussions " (90). And do we need to quote opinions which explain the situation with which we are confronted today ? In the first flush of the Liberation, Francois Mauriac wrote. " The Red Army is red with all the blood it has shed for the salvation of Europe ! It has saved those very people who were afraid of it. It has been the rampart of a culture which its enemies accused it of wanting to destroy " (91).

" Of course Camus is a Communist, as you and I are. Everybody is a Communist today. Jacques Maritain is a Communist " (92).

" It has never been discovered who was responsible **for** the instructions thus diffused by the

Allies over the whole of the liberated territory. Committees were formed, one third of the members of which were Communists, together with Socialists and Christian Democrats " (93).

All these tendencies and declarations gave encouragement to those whose interest it was to discredit Cardinal Mindszenty and to believe the false charges made against the martyrs. Bishop Márton and his people were beneath the notice of the West. Their fate was passed over in silence. Their vocation was to disappear as quickly as possible, so as not to trouble the Western conscience.

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What must we look for in Mgr Márton ? His know-ledge of theology, his gift for preaching ? His life of prayer, the inheritance from his Siculi parents ? His devotion ? No, we must see the whole man. A magnetic force came from him, which touched everybody's heart, whatever their opinions ; his eloquence in sermons, his way of looking at things, were taken from popular speech.. He remained from beginning to end a Siculi.

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Aaron Márton's master was Bishop Ottokar Prohaszka. This does not mean that apart from him, he had no other masters of the spiritual life, or was not influenced by leading thinkers. Anybody who has even the slightest knowledge of Hungarian religious literature knows what serious work was done during the nineteenth century. Besides original works, all the important works of foreign spiritual literature were translated. Very often this was done by a team of seminarists (the expenses were defrayed by the Bishop). It is enough to cast an eye at he catalogues of the parish libraries. We cannot, however, stoop so low as to admit that Catholicism in Hungary was dependent upon that **in** any particular foreign country. High ecclesiastical dignitaries, travelling on political mission, have amazed us at times. Journalists who were short of copy wrote up their journeys as though they were apostolic visitations, and publicised the " renewal " of Catholicism which had taken place in Slovenia, Austria, Czechoslovakia, or Rumania. When one illustrious prelate made a journey to Transylvania, it appears that certain Uniate seminarists said to him: " Formerly the Austro-Hungarian regime made it impossible for us to have any intimate contact with the admirable French clergy and with the privileged country of the Immaculate One " (94).

The author of the article certainly knows his clichés. The truth is quite otherwise. At the time of this so-called oppression, people could leave the country without a passport. There were no foreign exchange restrictions either on the purchase of books, etc.

Having come to the end of our task, we must now ask the question whether Aaron Márton and his companions were right to accept martyrdom, rather than compromise. It is impossible to explain away the Bible text: " Whosoever confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My heavenly Father. "

Those people who do not close their eyes in the face of the evidence must realise the fact that there can be no " understanding " between the cause of God and the interests of Satan. Yet what do we see ? In the West, those who dislike the truth where other countries are concerned, sometimes insult the martyrs. They are marching under the flag of a different army. They are carried away by political hatred.

After the condemnation of Cardinal Mindszenty, Pius XII declared to the crowds massed in the Piazza in front of St Peter's, on 22nd February 1949: " The totalitarian countries demand that the Church should remain silent when it is her duty to speak, that she should adapt herself to current opinions, that she should not put her ideas on Liberty into practice, that she should show proof of servility and shut herself up within the **four** walls of her temples... Should the Church bow before such demands ? "

The enthusiastic applause of the crowds signified clearly that Christians can still honour heroism and martyrdom.

The Communist regime intended to stage a spectacular trial of Mgr Márton. It would have been difficult to charge him with being pro-Nazi. This was the fate of Mgr Augustine Pacha, Bishop of Temesvár. Possibly they would have liked to implicate Mgr Márton on a charge of deviationism, which was the basis of the trial of the Hungarian Communists of Transylvania. Gerard Kurko was a close friend of Mgr Márton ; the sincerity of Edgar Balogh and Louis Csögör had won his sympathy. But the importance of the Hungarian Communists in Transylvania, so grossly exaggerated by Rumanian

propaganda abroad, is so insignificant in reality, that the Communists thought it useless to stage a trial on that basis. The " deviationist " simply disappeared.

They had to invent something else, for the universal disapproval which the Communist proceedings encountered at the time of Cardinal Mindszenty's trial made it impossible for them to treat Mgr Márton in the same way. But redeeming death may have spared Aaron Márton the bitter cup of being dragged before a " People's Court ", deprived of his personality. He fulfilled his mission in another way. He became *a man of sorrow, suffering and prayer*. He achieved all the possibilities of the apostolate.

They tell the story in Transylvania of a young Spanish Christian girl who was dragged before a People's Court. " Why is your Christ silent ? ", asked the unbelievers. " Why does Christ allow us to act as we do towards you and his Churches ? " The girl replied: " Because Jesus was silent when He was spat upon, flogged, crowned with thorns and crucified to death. He is silent in the same way now that the faithful of His Church are tortured and imprisoned, so that we can be as He was on Good Friday " (95).

That is the reply of all faithful Catholics, Latin and Uniate alike.

It was also the reply of Aaron Márton, the defender and leader of his people, whose fidelity he encouraged by his sufferings. It is an apostolate such as his was—the most fruitful and the most profound of all—which nourishes the other methods of the apostolate.

" Lord, it is an effect of Thy grace that the word of Faith has been sown amongst us by the labours of Thy martyrs and rendered fruitful by the shedding of their blood. Now, therefore, Holy Father, strengthen him whom Thou hast given to Thy Son, so that after he has been sanctified in the truth and made perfect in unity, Thou wilt deign to consummate Thy work by crowning him in glory. " (*Praefatio Sancti Dyonisii*).

*¹ There is a possibility, according to reliable sources, that Aaron Marton has been liberated, after five and a half years in prison.

*² His dubious activities had no doubt not allowed Justinian time to familiarise himself with the Encyclical, *Mil Brennender Sorge*. Neither had he any desire to take note of the Pope's telegrams to the sovereigns of the three countries invaded by Hitler (Belgium, Holland and Norway). He was ignorant of the remonstrances of the Italian government, to which the Pope replied that he had only done his duty and had no fear even of the concentration camp. (*Documentation Catholique*, 1949, col. 824.)

*³ How do these grim exegetists reconcile the principles of the Gospel with " Communist morality ", which subordinates everything to the creation of the Communist society, the ultimate end of everything and the criterion of good and evil ?

*⁴ " Communism does not necessarily need a majority ; it is enough if it disposes of a minority which is animated by faith and served by a technique of proselytisation and battle, a technique which is the synthesis of all that experience and psychology have discovered to dominate and lead the human masses. " (Dr. Salazar, Prime Minister of Portugal.)

*⁵ Infallible Fallacies: Anonymous, S.P.C.K., London, 1953.

*⁶ We cannot pass over in silence the misplaced attack on Cardinal Spellman, who has not only been the inspiration behind American generosity which has benefited so many people all over the world, but who also sponsored the fine declaration made by the American Episcopate on *Man and Peace* (New York Times, 17th November 1946) and was the author of an article called *Do We Want a Soviet Peace? a Pax Tartarica?* (Cosmopolitan Magazine, November 1946), a separate reprint of which was distributed in hundreds of thousands of copies. Even if we are embarrassed by American charity, we should appreciate that his clear-sighted campaign gives him a claim to our gratitude.

*⁷ But, we wonder, what excludes the Protestant nations, such as England or Scandinavia, from a ' Vatican Europe ' ? Have we not experienced a worse hegemony which, from 1914 onwards, led the world to its present abyss ? And is this hegemony, careless of the results of its activity, to continue its destructions ? Finally, is it certain that the sponsors of the European Movement have drawn up a plan for a ' Vatican Europe ' ?

CHAPTER VIII

APPENDIX

Observations on the " History of the People's Democracies "
by Francis FEJTŐ

At the time of Cardinal Mindszenty's trial, and before he made his choice for freedom, Francis Fejtő was the editor of the Information Service published by the of Hungary in France. It was he who was given the job of creating a public opinion in France favourable to the Communist proceedings and of enlightening the French public, especially the Catholics, about " the faults and errors " of Cardinal Mindszenty. Thanks to an almost perfect technique, which encouraged the ignorance and the various prejudices of his clientele, his work was not without results.

Francis Fejtő was in a good position to learn about the technique of the thieves' kitchen of Communist propaganda. It is all the more astonishing to see that in his book, the work of a first-class journalist, Mr Fejtő has not been able to get rid of certain Communist slogans which are contrary to the truth. They cannot be passed over in silence, without failing in our duty to the truth, to which the defenders of the City have a right.

1) It is not true that the Hungarian Episcopate was mostly drawn from aristocratic families (p. 369, French edition). In 1941, there was only one Bishop who belonged to the aristocracy in the whole of Hungary: the martyr William Apor, Bishop of Győr. Nobody would dare to assert that his aristocratic birth was prejudicial to his ministry as a Bishop. True Catholics do not, of course, copy the Catholic novelists or journalists who are looking for a sensational subject and demand spectacular manifestations of sanctity from their clergy. They know well enough that by its very nature sanctity usually remains hidden. Nevertheless, they are very happy to see that the Bishop they loved was found worthy to suffer for the faith.

It should be added that five priests of peasant or artisan origin succeeded one after the other to the Primatial See of Hungary: Cardinals Simor, Vaszary, Chernoch, Serédi, Mindszenty.

2) Neither Cardinal Mindszenty, nor the Hungarian Episcopate, ever protested against the so-called Agrarian Reform, as Mr Fejtő claims (p. 372); but they did protest against the spirit of revenge and injustice which lay behind the division of the land. The Primate of Hungary and his fellow Bishops are all the same shepherds and defenders of their flocks, rather than the mouth-pieces of agitators, who are imposed upon the country by the enemy.

When speaking of the Agrarian Reform in 1952, people should have been a little more careful, for this so-called reform had already by this date resulted in the system of the *kolkhoses*. The real Agrarian Reform had already been voted in 1936, an audit was in process of being carried out before the war.

Cardinal Mindszenty had his own plan for agrarian reform. While still Bishop of Veszprém, he had presented it to the Episcopate. When he was being tried, Margit Schlachta *¹ communicated this plan to the Court. Naturally, no notice was taken of it, and instead the whole world was told that the Cardinal was the enemy of agrarian reform. But then, in the People's Democracies, the accused pre not brought before the courts to defend themselves, but to admit their guilt.

3) It was the duty of the Primate of Hungary to protest against the proclamation of a Republic. All the political parties had come to an understanding that the question of the form of the government should not be raised. It was the Russians, however, who insisted that there should be a Republic. The political leaders thereupon asked Cardinal Mindszenty, the only person-age who was suitable in the circumstances, to make a protest. In any case, it was the Communists, the Succession States and the editors of the Communist Information Services that gave the greatest publicity to the protest thus made. Cardinal Mindszenty did not take this step without giving it the most serious reflection; he took the opinion of the leading lawyers in the country before making a move. All he said was: " As *titular holder*

of the Primate of Esztergom, I consider it my duty to state for the benefit of posterity that the official proclamation of the Republic was made under the Russian occupation. " He sent this declaration to the Prime Minister and the President of the National Assembly, while a third copy was placed in the primate's archives.

The Primate never made his protest public, which the honour of his country demanded, and which was wholeheartedly approved by people who were not in a position to protest themselves.

4) As the editor of the Communist Information Service, Francis Fejtő should know that Cardinal Mindszenty could not return the letter sent him by the President of the Republic, the " small landowner " Tildy—as F. Fejtő calls him—for the simple reason that he never received it. Mr Fejtő should also know that, in 1952, the title " small landowner " gave a good impression abroad; but when the Communists launched their campaign of lies against Cardinal Mindszenty (at the beginning of 1947), the title " Protestant pastor " was the correct one to have provoked the indignation of Protestants in every country.

According to Mr Fejtő, Cardinal Mindszenty refused " to present the good wishes of the Church according to protocol to the President " (on 1st January 1948).

These two particular counts in the indictment bear all too obviously the imprint of Communist propaganda and the Communist imagination.

5) Whom does Mr Fejtő wish to convince, when he says that the nationalisation of the schools was merely a " measure of self-defence " ? According to him, the Primate of Hungary refused " categorically " the official proposal to open negotiations concerning the relations between Church and State. The Communists replied in 1948 by starting the battle for the nationalisation of the Church schools " (p. 372). Similarly he says: " In a certain sense one can say that the Communist declaration was sincere. Since they were engaged in difficult battles on several fronts, the Communists wanted to reach a *modus vivendi* with the Church, until such time as circumstances would enable them to settle accounts. But *the strategy of the Vatican* decided otherwise... " (pp. 371-372).

The above lines are truly edifying. According to Mr Fejtő and the Communists, the Catholics were guilty of having anticipated the date of their " dismissal " and of having provoked in the West the indignation which the Communists wanted to allay.

The truth rings quite differently. In 1952, and with even more reason in 1955, nobody believed that it was a tactical error on the part of the Catholics which unleashed the campaign against them. Would a more supple or more diplomatic course of action have solved the question differently ? All over Europe people were waiting to see the result of the Berán experiment "—that Archbishop Berán of Prague, of whom *Le Monde* wrote: " They called him the Red Archbishop "—as well they might.

" There was a general outcry when last year Mgr Berán consecrated the appointment of Gottwald to the Presidency by singing a solemn *Te Deum* in the cathedral... The government is forging ahead. " *² And what good did this prudent attitude achieve ?—the lines of which were drawn up at a secret assembly. The Church in Bohemia and Slovakia is today in a worse position than in other countries under the Communist heel. The faithful always feel gratitude for the heroism of their martyrs, but they do not understand supple tactics.

Cardinal Mindszenty never refused to have any discussion with the State authorities. In order to be convinced of this, Mr Fejtő could have read, for example, the letter the Cardinal addressed to the Minister of Education in June 1948. *³

The confessional schools were the joy and pride of the educational system in Hungary, and at the same time they acted as a guarantee of the rights of the Minorities. The teaching personnel of the State schools, the Jews, even the Communist leaders before they were given contrary instructions by the Party, gladly sent their children to the confessional schools, in preference to those run by the State. The wealth of the Church, so often criticised by people who know nothing whatsoever about the matter, made it possible for all these people to send their children to the church schools without any additional expense. The confessional schools also provided for the welfare side of education *⁴ (e.g. the canteen service, the loan of books, scholarships, etc.) which was on a larger scale than that provided by the State.

6) According to our author, the Protestants had not forgotten the " humiliation and sufferings " inflicted upon them by the Catholics at the time of the Counter-Reformation. " Many Protestants believed

after 1945 that the hour of their revenge had struck " (pp. 386-7). If we are to believe him, the type-script of the lectures given at the Hungarian Institute in Paris (on 9th February 1951) recorded this saying of Pastor Finet: " In contrast to the Catholic Church, which combats the established regime, the Protestants walk in step with our leaders. Under the Horthy regime, the Protestant Church had to fight for its rights ; now there is real freedom of religion " *⁵ —which remarks cast a slight chill over the enthusiastic audience.

We will leave the Protestants to reply to these serious assertions, according to which they have taken advantage of the greatest tragedy which has befallen their country in order to " take their revenge " ; notwithstanding, in the interests of truth, some errors must be pointed out.

It serves no useful purpose to revive ancient wounds which have been healed long ago in the eyes of every intelligent man of good will. For if the Protestants have anything to reproach the Catholics with, the latter have only too numerous documents **to** testify to the tragic and unjust actions committed by the Protestants against the Catholics in the past. But history, shorn of preconceived ideas and biased interpretations, is an excellent counsellor of serenity, comprehension and good neighbourliness. The Protestants of Hungary have understood that " Protestants and Catholics have a common past which lasted four times longer than the period of their separation... It is not possible to erase with a stroke of the pen the whole of the past which preceded the Reformation. " (Jacques Courvoisier, *Journal de Geneve*, 27th November 1954.)

It is possible that many pastors felt flattered by the election of one of their number to the office of President of the State. But Zoltán Tildy, who from the intellectual and moral point of view is a mediocrity (his step-father was executed after the Communist era of Béla Kun), took advantage of every dishonourable trick possible to get himself " elected ". His colleagues were soon obliged to dissociate themselves from him. For, in order to save his own skin, the President of the Republic repudiated his own son -in-law, a Calvinist of Jewish origin, who had been condemned by the Communists, and expiated his collaboration with them by a brave death. " Ambition devoid of talent and morality is a crime ", said Chateaubriand.

No, Mr Fejtő,- who knows as little about the Catholic Church as he does about the Protestant one, was unable to understand the very special relations which existed between the two Confessions. Hungary was a country of Catholic background, but governed since 1867 almost exclusively by Protestants. In the nineteenth century, the spirit of the age favoured Protestantism, because its more fluid organisation could come to better terms with the prevailing Liberal spirit. As a result, Hungarian Catholics did not feel entirely comfortable in the new political and social conditions of the time. In the end, after long struggles within the Church and outside it, they managed to win the respect of the Liberals. Attacks made upon them hardened them and seasoned them (e.g. the marriage laws of 1895, etc.). They began to organise in the social and political field, where they did very important work by demanding a vigorous social policy for agriculture and industry. They demanded also that the legitimate claims of the different nationalities should be met. They thus attracted into their camp thousands of Slovak and German Catholics. At the same time, the Catholic Church in Hungary witnessed a spiritual revival, the leading figure of which was Mgr Prohaszka, as we have seen, who exercised a deep influence not only on the Catholics, but on all the Christian groups.

First of all the Protestants were somewhat jealous and mistrustful of this revival. Then, during the first years of this century, the Protestant Church in its turn had a spiritual revival which deepened its faith, a fact which was due not least to the Catholics. A wide-spread joke in Hungary has it that the Reformers (the Calvinists) were reformed by the Jesuits. *⁶

The Protestants learned from the Catholics that the Church has a far more important task to perform than to capture key positions in a party machine, by a combination of circumstances and clever electoral tactics. They understood that " opposition is more fruitful than is commonly thought. wherever it exists, coexistence is a factor which makes for balance and competition " (J. COURVOISIER, *be. cit.*)

The collapse of historic Hungary and the two Revolutions—the Radical-Liberal and the Communist—buried Hungarian Liberalism beneath the ruins. It was under the seal of a Christian and patriotic ideal that the work of reconstruction began in 1919: this Christian ideology, which for the most

part meant a contradiction of the recent past, won the support of Hungarians in the social field, all the more so since the Church had attributed, not without reason, the dismemberment of Hungary to occult anti-religious forces.

When constitutional order was restored, the National Assembly elected a Calvinist to the dignity of Regent. But at the same time, a law was passed declaring that high ecclesiastical patronage was not to be exercised by the Regent.

This said, neither Catholics nor Protestants have any right to complain of the Horthy regime. The Protestants, it is true, for understandable reasons, played a role out of all proportion to their numbers. At the same time, it must be stated that a pro-portion of the Catholics, particularly the clergy, showed some reserve towards the regime. Thus the *Gazette de Lausanne*, which is a Protestant paper, could write: " *There is only one ideological and political force (in Hungary) which was not compromised in the course of the last few years: the Catholic Church. Cardinal Mindszenty ' (and before him, Cardinal Seregi) knew how to stand up to the Hungarian Nazis and the new masters like-wise... " *⁷ (No. 194, 1947.)*

A majority which is conscious of its inner strength can some-times play the exaggerated role which is often assumed by an active minority—even if it has no particular taste for such a role. The truth of the matter is expressed in a judicious and fair way by Charles LOISEAU in his article in the *Monde Slave* (April-May 1937), a review which was at the time generously supported by the money of Edward Benes, who was certainly not disposed to sing the praises of Christianity in Hungary.

" Unlike what is happening in Germany... Catholic Action (in Hungary) runs no risk of finding itself in disagreement with the established power. On occasion, it thinks it has done the State sufficient services to justify politely calling it to account for its actions. The recent incident concerning Stranyovszky and the National Assembly is a proof of this... "

The incident thus referred to is as follows. The President of the National Assembly, Mr Stranyovszky, was in difficulties over the " mixed marriage " of his son. Under the strain of the situation, he had allowed himself to make some disparaging remarks about the Catholic clergy. At once a most powerful volume of criticism came from every quarter of the country. Bishops, secular priests and religious asked the government for an explanation. The conflict had to be arbitrated by the Prime Minister in person, Mr Daranyi (a Calvinist), and was only brought to a close with the withdrawal by the eminent personality in question of the remarks he had made. When all the excitement . had calmed down, it was seen that the most reprehensible thing about the whole business was the affront to national feeling. The Jesuit Father Bangha, the organiser of the Catholic press, said in this connection: " This is not a religious question, or a political one, for each of these can be dealt with by loyal and peaceful means. The Stranyovszky affair is, by its nature, an ethical question—that is to say, the unity of the country must not be threatened by a split between Catholics and Protestants. " (*Le Monde Slave*, April 1938.)

" Paradoxes " such as these are sufficient proof that Catholics cannot be accused of oppressing the Protestants, either in the past or in the present. It is sheer demagoguery to reproach the Catholics for having greater material means at their disposal than the Protestants. Protestant parishes and institutions had their own foundations, just as the Catholics had. The landed property belonging to the 1,379 Protestant parishes was even more than that of the Catholic parishes (1,702 in 1935). But compared with the 2,592,360 pengős subsidy (the same figure in Swiss francs) given to the 5,835,000 Catholics, the two Protestant Confessions (the Calvinists and the Lutherans) received, in 1935, 4,923,000 pengős subsidy, for 2,347,000 souls. Up to a point the difference is to be explained in various ways, e.g. smallness of parishes, family allowances to married pastors, etc.

The whole world is curious to know why the Protestants should have compromised with the Communist regime. At the time of the Ecumenical Conference at Lund, the editor of the *Church of England Newspaper* had an interview with the two Hungarian Bishops present. According to what these two Bishops said, it is relatively easy for Hungarian Protestants to accommodate themselves to the Communist regime, because they have always lived in an atmosphere which was foreign, not to say hostile, to them. Even today, they are a minority (27 % of the population, 65 % being Catholic). Besides, they were always able to understand the working classes. The means of production —still according to the two Bishops—were in the hands of a small number of very rich people. Out of 10 million inhabitants,

there were 3 million farm labourers who possessed not one inch of the land they cultivated. (If 1,631,246 registered acres of land are equal to " not one inch "—then the Bishops are right...)*⁸The Protestants were in sympathy with opposition forces in a regime which was more or less feudal (a regime which these Bishops supported, greatly to their advantage.) Doubtless there were deportations and expropriations, which according to the Bishops, were confined mostly to former large landowners who had been pro-Nazi... Even if any opposition to the Communist regime were possible, the Protestant Church had no reason to oppose it... According to our two Bishops, the position of Communism with regard to the Churches is dictated by considerations of what is opportune in the circumstances... " One may well wonder whether the same thing could not be applied to some of the opinions formulated by the two Bishops ", adds the *Gazette de Lausanne* (18-19 October 1952).

The truth is quite otherwise. The Protestants took up the same attitude as the Catholics, but the Communists' task was facilitated by the very nature of the organisation of the Protestant Church. Once the leaders had been got out of the way, the progressives and fellow-travellers, or else the former Arrow-Cross men (the Hungarian Nazis) took their place. So when the Communists offered to come to an " understanding " with them, in order to torpedo the Catholic resistance, those who could " adapt " themselves accepted it immediately, and since then they continue to make declarations in order to convince everybody of their " evangelical freedom ".

Never was the mutual understanding between Catholics and Protestants better than it is today. No Catholic reproaches the Protestants for their " understanding " with the Communists. Those men who are obliged to redeem an extremist past by a servile submission today, would also find that the Catholics judged them indulgently, if they did not try to justify their conduct by obediently heaping abuse on the heads of the martyrs. Christians of every Confession had the same means of resisting the Communists at their disposal. The Catholic Church in Hungary has certainly enjoyed extraordinary vitality at a time when circumstances were not at all favourable to it. Have the Catholics been guilty of disloyalty simply because, ever since 1840, their numbers (in the territory left to them at Trianon) has risen from 2,350,000 to 6,354,000 (*i.e.* an increase of 170%), whilst the number of Calvinists only rose from 1,181,566 to 2,934,862 (*i.e.* an increase of 64.2 %) ?

It is not right that people outside the Confessions mentioned above should distort facts which they do not understand. Catholics and Protestants behind the Iron Curtain will have nothing to do with any attempt to drive a wedge between them. Protestants behind the Iron Curtain are grateful to Cardinal Mindszenty and they admire him as much as the Catholics do, because it is thanks to him that principles which are of eternal worth did not remain without their champion, at a time when everybody was only too inclined to compromise and even to bargain with the Communists. Above all else, he saved the honour of . Christendom.

7) How are we to describe Mr Fejtö's position with regard to the Vatican ? Is it his mission to indict the Vatican, using the methods of the People's Democracies ? The Communists have merely postponed the annihilation of the Catholic Church because they think the moment is not yet opportune and because they are occupied with other matters for the time being. Mr Fejtö does not hesitate, however, to use their catchwords, and never did the idea occur to him that Communism had not the right to act as it did. According to him, Communism *wailed for more propitious circumstances in which to settle accounts. But the strategy of the Vatican decided otherwise (p. 372)... Mgr Tiso was never disavowed by the Holy See; yet many Czechs and Slovaks who are not Communists considered him to be a traitor. To take the case also of Stepinacs: would a government presided over by Mihailovitch not have called him to account for this conduct during the war ?*, asks Mr Fejtö ?

We say: No. As far as Hungary is concerned, the Vatican did not decide otherwise. Certain powerful influences there did work against Cardinal Mindszenty, who, knowing the real issues at stake, acted according to the dictates of his conscience and the desires of the Hungarian nation. He was soon vindicated by history.

As to Croatia and Slovenia, it is after all the right of these nations to decide whether or not they want to separate them-selves from a State which oppressed them. The Vatican acted in strict accordance with diplomatic procedure governing the creation of a State. It was exactly the same when the Eastern

Provinces of Germany were given to Poland. Did the Vatican never disavow Tiso's policy ? What then was it that saved a considerable proportion of Mr Fejtö's co-religionists, if it was not the intervention of the Vatican and of Hungary ? It seems we must admit that Vatican diplomacy has no, yet adopted the spectacular methods of the totalitarian states and the People's Democracies.

8) Now we must examine the charge brought against the Cardinal that he was not Hungarian by race. It is true that the Primate's name was Pehm (Boehm in German), meaning Czech. When his grandfather was called up for his military service, the recruiting officer, not speaking Hungarian, wrote his name down in German after the name of his village, *Csehi*, i.e. the village of the Czechs. Similar cases occurred quite frequently in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries e.g. Cserepes, (i.e. tiler, tile-worker) became *Ziegler* in the very next village to the one where Cardinal Mindszenty was born.

Three attitudes can be distinguished amongst the former enemies of Cardinal Mindszenty: some remain silent, feeling remorse in their hearts ; others shamelessly cling to the Cardinal's cassock and try to take advantage of his prestige. The third group continues to attack him, either openly or in secret.

In this connection, it is not without point to recall that sanctity and mobility of soul provoke, not the admiration or indifference of evil-intentioned man, but hatred and ceaseless persecution. Heroism is an unpleasant lesson for those men who have not the courage to learn it.

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On the dust-cover of Mr Fejtö's book can be read the words: "The results are already considerable and what has been done remains a definite achievement. But who will dare to weigh up the cost in justice and in blood ? "

This last phrase undoubtedly undoes the extravagant eulogy of the first. Are deportations, fear, hunger, nakedness, the farce of the People's Tribunals, the judicial murders, the economic chaos, the things which constitute considerable and indubitable results ? By letting clever propagandists decry the past, the Communists have confused everybody. The truth is that they have taken the credit for the results of the hundred years' progress achieved under " feudalism " and the bourgeoisie. Then they plundered the national heritage.

If the adherents of Communism had the courage to draw a comparison, they could see that the " results acquired " under the regime during the inter-war period, in the face of enormous difficulties, were real and that the " oppressors " respected individual liberty, whilst the new masters have shown themselves to be as bad economists as they are inhuman Inquisitors, whose misdeeds defy the imagination.

" Only a Communist dictatorship could remain in power after such a failure. "

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The former editor of the Communist Information Service, Mr Fejtö, is too involved personally to be able to explain certain facts with any understanding, or freedom from prejudice.

The *History of the People's Democracies* can satisfy certain tendencies, or a certain nostalgia, but it **does** not satisfy the simple truth.

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In an article in *Le Monde* (4th May 1955) Francis Fejtö wrote the following:

" Without their protracted presence (i.e. of the Russians) the present regime would not survive for long ; but what could be put in its place, supposing—a purely theoretical hypothesis—that the Russians withdrew from the country ? All reports coming from Hungary are unanimous in showing that in the present mood of the population, *feelings of revenge and hatred are uppermost*: anti-Communism is assuming an anti-Semitic bias ; thus a Russian withdrawal would give rise to the most serious disorders, to pogroms and attempts at a Fascist *coup d'état*. "

These are serious statements to make. But serious for whom ? For the Jews or the Christians ? We think for Mr Fejtö himself. Could he not have found another way of protecting his 150-200,000 co-religionists against the alleged resentment—possibly only too well justified—of 9 million Christians, than

the prolongation of their servitude under the Russian yoke ?
Mr Fejtö's position needs no comment.

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*¹ The first woman member of the National Assembly 1920-22. One of the founders and promoters of a secular institute of social workers, which later became an approved religious Order called the Grey Sisters. She made a brave resistance under the Communists.

*² *Le Monde*, 21st June 1949.

*³ *Magyar Kurir*, 9th June 1949.

*⁴ The scholarships provided by the State were not only open to pupils of the State schools. When in the thirties, the Hungarian government provided scholarships on a generous scale, the confessional schools benefited equally from them with the State schools. These scholarships were always awarded by the teaching body. (But details such as these, particularly "welfare services under the Fascist regime of Horthy", is of no interest to young Communists, who often work in *very* close collaboration with those who denounce the enemies of Hungary and who are financed out of secret funds.) The teaching personnel of the confessional schools had the same diplomas, the same salaries and the same pension scheme as that of the State schools. The assertion made in the Communist Information Service that from 1870 onwards the State supported them is devoid of any foundation. The laws concerning the subsidy to be given to the schools were passed in 1848, 1868 and 1883, but never in 1870 was any law passed on this matter. And it must be said that the confessional schools did not seize the State subsidy for fear of losing their independence through financial difficulties. They accepted the subsidies when they were certain that their only purpose was to maintain a high level of teaching (in the matter of passing diplomas, staff salaries, etc.).

*⁵ We must underline the fact that if lecturers repeat unflinchingly all the slogans which are dear to the Communists—e.g. 'the Communists are not placing a yoke upon the Church, they are coming to its help', etc.—they always take care to interpolate such sentences as the following: "If everything is going well at present, we must not assume that all will go well in the future." (Roger Maria).

*⁶ It was not surprising that the French pastors who went on a Communist-sponsored tour found "practically the whole population of Gödöllő present and taking part in the various activities of the parish". All the same, in spite of their "intense religious life", the Calvinist peasants and workers do not spend their entire day in Chapel, unless they are ordered to do so. It recalls the story of what happened to Roosevelt when he visited Moscow. In order to prove that there was freedom of worship in Russia, the atheist singers of the Opera (after a few rehearsals) sang for his benefit the marvellous chants of the Orthodox Church.

•⁷ Naturally, the Catholic leaders never stooped to associate themselves with the gross attacks which were sometimes made upon the Regent, in spite of the discreet reserve they showed to the regime at the beginning.

*⁸ They do not say a word of what the various governments did between the two wars, without ruining anybody; whilst the division of the land operated by the Russians has ruined not only the landowners, but the workers who had no land at all. It has also destroyed a considerable part of the national wealth by making the running of industrial undertakings based on the land impossible. The Bishops deliberately pass over in silence the fact that it was not good will which was lacking, but land itself.