

provided, the absolutely necessary semantic problematisation and the lines of further investigation opened thereby grant this study a prominent place in the historiography of the subject. Finally, both *Soldați fără uniformă* and the volume of documents it is based on demonstrate the enormous potential that documents - as primary historical sources - continue to have and the need to resort to archival sources for a correct understanding and interpretation of historical events.

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**Veaceslav, CIORBĂ, *Biserica Ortodoxă din Basarabia și Transnistria (1940-2010)* [*The Orthodox Church in Bessarabia and Transnistria (1940-2010)*], Chișinău, Ed. Pontos, 2011, 460 p.**

The work elaborated by Fr. Veaceslav Ciorbă, with a preface signed by Fr. Acad. Mircea Păcurariu, represents the revised and enlarged version of a doctoral thesis entitled *Istoria vieții bisericești din stânga Prutului, din 1940 până în zilele noastre* [*The History of Ecclesiastical Life Left of the Prut River, from 1940 until Today*], which was publicly defended at the Faculty of Theology from "Lucian Blaga" University in Sibiu in 2007.

The book published now provides a monographic overview of the Orthodox Church left of the Prut, focusing on a period that has so far been (more or less) obscure to the researchers.

The volume begins with a timely review of both the Romanian and the Soviet/ Russian historiography of the problem (pp.14-30), summarising then the main periods in the history of ecclesiastical life in Bessarabia and left of the Dniester prior to 1812 (pp. 31-34), from 1812 to 1918 (pp. 34-56) and between 1918-1940 (pp. 53-73). Ecclesiastical life in Transnistria around the year 1941 is briefly depicted (pp. 73-75), emphasising the destruction of 235 churches from this area and the existence of a single serving priest in Odessa (in 1941).

Church life in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, newly established within boundaries set by Moscow, and the terrible persecution launched in July 1940 are suggestively illustrated between pages 76 and 106, the interpretive approach also focusing on the amputated territories of Bessarabia which were included in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

It is entirely natural that the liberation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, as well as the conquest of Transnistria in 1941 led to the enthusiasm of the local population, to the re-establishment of ecclesiastical life, important chapters being dedicated here to the restoration of the Orthodox Church in Bessarabia and the role of the Romanian Orthodox Mission in Transnistria (1941-1944) (pp. 107-122, 123-132). The author's attention remains focused not only on the clergy (bishops and priests), but also on the religious press, theological education and the inherent works of charity.

The reinstallation of the Soviet occupation resulted in the resumption of not only religious, but also ethnic persecution, the Church going thus through an unimaginable ordeal.

Important sections address the policy adopted by the Soviet authorities towards the Orthodox Church in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (pp. 133-172), the attitude of the (Russian speaking) hierarchs and their concrete activity (pp. 172-192), the situation of the clergy (pp. 193-212), the state of monastic life (pp. 213-242), special attention being also given to the mode of operation of the KGB officials, of those entrusted with the supervision of the cults, as well as of the various types of atheistic propaganda.

The chapter dedicated to the restoration of church life after 1989 offers significant references up until the year 2010 (pp. 243-266), highlighting, thus, the re-launching of the

Metropolitan See of Chişinău and All Moldova (the Russian Patriarchate), the reactivation in 1992 of the Metropolitan See of Bessarabia (the Romanian Patriarchate), the restructuring of the dioceses, the campaigns for the canonical and juridical recognition of the new units, and the social involvement of the Church, etc.

The monograph also includes conclusions (pp. 267-272), a summary in French, a documentary appendix (58 annexes, comprising a memorial fragment, four statistical tables and 53 documents) (pp. 321-436) and an onomastic/ toponymical index (pp. 437-460).

The materials consulted in writing this volume included civil documents preserved in the National Archives of the Republic of Moldova, in the archive of the Moldovan Social Political Organisations and others, as well as documents of ecclesiastical origin, found in the Archive of the Metropolitan See of Chişinău and All Moldova.

Given the wealth of information and its systematisation, the neat and concise rhetoric, the author's exegesis represents a thorough examination of the history of the Orthodox Church left of the Prut, harmoniously integrating itself in the series of treatises addressing the more distant or the more recent history of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

We may, however, outline a few suggestions, with a view to a future edition or the continuation of this thematic and chronological undertaking.

It would be interesting if Fr. Veaceslav Ciorbă explored the literary reflections of the church life in Bessarabia, as well as the persecutions suffered by the Romanian or foreign authors residing now in the West.

Sergiu Grossu (1920, Cubolta - 2009, Bucharest) was a tribune of the Persecuted Church in the communist world: a journalist, a political prisoner, and a confessor of the faith, he was exiled in 1969, and through his numerous works and the periodical *Catacombes* (Paris-Courbevois, 1971-1992), he drew the attention of the civilised world to the plight of the multi-confessional church life across the USSR. He remained one of the leading publicists of *samizdats* coming from the homeland of the successors of Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev and so on, and Bessarabia was also included in this sense.

An analysis of the Churches from the Soviet and East European space was also undertaken in the journal *Religion in Communist Lands* (1973-1994), edited by Keston College (the U.K.), Alan Scarfe and Michael Bourdeaux featuring among the outstanding researchers of ecclesiastical life from this part of the world.

One should also not ignore the works of the theologian and ecclesiastical historian Vladimir Moss, who wrote several Orthodox theological analyses targeting the various stages in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as encyclopaedias on the new martyrs in Russia.<sup>4</sup>

The volume we are specifically interested in is entitled *The Holy New Martyrs of Southern Russia, the Ukraine, Moldavia and the Caucasus*, which also came out in cyberspace,<sup>5</sup> emphasising the martyrdom of: Bishop Dionisie Paul I. Sosnowsky (1859, Tambov - 1918, Vyatka), Bishop of Ismail, assassinated through terrible tortures (severed into pieces, see pp. 23-24); Archbishop Procopie Piotr Semionovici Titov (1877, Kuznetk - 1932 Turtkul), Archbishop of Odessa and Kherson, deported and shot; Archbishop Partenie Petru Arsenievici Brianskih (1881, Irkutsk - 1937, Arkhangelsk), Archbishop of Ananiev, suffering an identical martyrdom;

<sup>4</sup> The first volume of Vladimir Moss's important hagiographic encyclopaedia *The Russian Golgotha: The Holy new Martyrs and Confessors of Russia* came out in 2007, at Monastery Press, Wildwood, Alberta, Canada, being followed by four more. They are accessible on: [www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com](http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com)

<sup>5</sup> This may be consulted on the site: [www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com/downloads/313\\_THE\\_HOLY\\_NEW\\_MARTYRS\\_OF\\_SOUTHERN\\_RUSSIA.pdf](http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com/downloads/313_THE_HOLY_NEW_MARTYRS_OF_SOUTHERN_RUSSIA.pdf)

Confessor Bishop Gabriel Cepura, Bishop of Cetatea Albă/ Akkermann since 1911, repeatedly deported, but still active in 1971 (pp.121-146, 254-271, 282-283); or the group organised around the archpriest martyr Dr. Leonid Krotkov (shot to death in Tiraspol in 1933), imprisoned in 1929/1930 in Tiraspol (pp. 560-574).

These hierarchs, priests, or simple believers, martyrs and confessors rejected both affiliations with the "Living Church" or the schismatic submission sanctioned by the Bolsheviks and obedience to the statement made by the patriarchal *locum tenens* Sergius Stragorodsky (1927), whereby one part of the Russian Church conceded to subordination to and cooperation with the Soviets (the Sergianist heresy). Moreover, they all were directly involved in clandestine pastorate and in the Catacomb Church. It would be interesting to see if, after 1944, the Romanian clergy from Bessarabia kept in touch with the Catacomb Church in Russia.<sup>6</sup>

It would also be desirable for a file of canonicity to be compiled for both metropolitan sees, starting with the Eparchy of Chişinău, which was established in 1813; both the Russian and the Romanian Patriarchates have partisan positions here, with more or less justified arguments and counterarguments.

One fact, however, should be noted: although the Russian Orthodox Church, with its clear imperial and expansive vocation, suffered a hecatomb during the communist regime, it canonised its new martyrs (both through its diaspora branch, in 1981, and through the Moscow Patriarchate, in 2000): more than 2,000 confessors and martyrs killed by the communist plague were officially raised to the dignity of the altars.<sup>7</sup> Such action has been expected from the Romanian Patriarchate for an unjustifiably long time.

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<sup>6</sup> An overview of the Catacomb Russian Orthodox Church and of its relations with the official Church was carried out by the dissident Lev Regel'son in *Tragedia Russkoi Tserkvi 1917-1945*, Paris, YMCA Press, 1977, a book that has been translated into several languages of international circulation.

<sup>7</sup> The Romanian readers may find information on the tragedy of the Russian Orthodox Church in the following works: P. Polski Mihail, *Noii Martiri ai Pământului Rus*, 2 vol., I/Schitul Românesc Prodromu, Sf. Munte Athos, 2002, II/Idem, re-edited as *Noii Martiri ai Rusiei*, s.l., Ed. Areopag, 2012; Orlovski, Damaschin, *Noii mărturisitori ai Rusiei*, Bucharest, Ed. Sofia, 2002; Idem, *Rusia Pătimitoare - Martiri ai Secolului XX*, Galați, Ed. Egumenita Cartea Ortodoxă, 2005.