

VERONICA TURCUȘ<sup>1</sup>,  
SERBAN TURCUȘ<sup>2</sup>

## THE FIRST SECRET CONTACTS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE HOLY SEE AND THE KINGDOM OF ROMANIA IN 1918

**Abstract:** This research focuses on a special moment in the history of relations between Romania and the Holy See: the discussions and efforts towards the establishment of diplomatic relations between them in the last year of the First World War. Taking advantage of a project envisaging the religious union of the Roman Catholic Church with the Orthodox Churches of Romania and Bulgaria, with a view to expanding the German religious and cultural influence, Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, Secretary of State of the Holy See, decided to engage in correspondence with King Ferdinand of Romania, mediated by Prince Vladimir Ghika, for the commencement of diplomatic relations between our country and the Holy See. The correspondence was forwarded via the apostolic nuncio to Bavaria, Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pope Pius X. A diplomatic bag was used, with the request that it should not be exposed to the German censorship.

**Keywords:** Romania, Holy See, diplomacy, Eugenio Pacelli, Pietro Gasparri, King Ferdinand.

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The theme of bilateral relations between the Holy see and our country has been a constant concern in recent historiography, even though over the past few years there has been a certain relaxation after the boom of the 1990s and the end of John Paul II's pontificate (1999-2005). There have been many efforts of retrieving strands of research and some documentary sources that were prohibited during the atheocracy, but many documents still await being brought to light either because they have been kept secret, or due to a lack of projects of applied research of the kind existing in German historiography or in French historiography, in their research institutes in Rome, where teams of researchers analyse the archives of the Holy See. As part of the vast operations of declassifying the archives of Pius XI's pontificate, decided more than a decade ago, a partial declassification of the archive produced by Pius XII has been achieved, for the period in which the future Bishop of Rome functioned

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<sup>1</sup> Phd Veronica Turcuș, Senior Researcher, "George Barițiu" Institute of History, Cluj, the Romanian Academy vturcus@yahoo.it;

<sup>2</sup> Assoc. Prof. Dr. Șerban Turcuș, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, serbanturcus@yahoo.it

as apostolic nuncio to Munich, having been accredited to the Kingdom of Bavaria. Known for his pro-German sympathies, Eugenio Pacelli,<sup>3</sup> the future Pius XII, was a career diplomat of the Apostolic See who marked the evolution of pontifical diplomacy as nuncio, as cardinal Secretary of State, and as Sovereign Pontiff. The circumstances of the year 1918 coincided with Eugenio Pacelli's fresh appointment as apostolic nuncio to Bavaria. That was the only papal diplomatic mission accredited in the powerful German Reich. During the war, the interest of the German empire in the Catholic Church was spurred not only by the national imperative to support and mobilise the German Catholics, but also by a foreign policy desideratum, as the Reich was trying to involve Catholicism in the sphere of its immediate interests in the warring zones.

One of the ways through which Germany aimed at consolidating its influence and pressure on the theatres of war in Central and Eastern Europe was by urging the Catholic Church to focus its attention on the Orthodox populations in this area. Starting from the idea that the unification of certain fragments of Orthodoxy with the Apostolic See in the previous centuries (sixteenth-seventeenth) had been the result of religious circumstances with a political background or of political circumstances that used the religious as support for the mundane projects whose protagonist had been the Habsburg Empire, the German elite (the political leaders and some of the religious hierarchs) developed a plan to encourage the ecclesiastical union between Catholicism and Orthodoxy.

The political and ecclesiological ingenuity of the German leaders was fuelled by the latest developments catalysed by the Holy See's reflections on the Christian Orient of Graeco-Slavic ritual. Unlike his direct predecessor Pius X, Pope Benedict XV showed greater sensitivity towards the tradition of the Christian Orient. On the one hand, through the papal briefs *Cum Catholicæ Ecclesiae* of 15 April 1916, he encouraged Catholics to show benevolent openness to the Oriental churches, granting indulgences to those who prayed for ecclesial union.<sup>4</sup> The consciousness of Catholics was thus prepared to

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<sup>3</sup> Eugenio Maria Giuseppe Giovanni Pacelli (2 March 1876 – 9 October 1958) was the Sovereign pontiff of the [Catholic Church](#) from 1939 - 1958. One of the most brilliant diplomats of the Holy See, he became the secretary of Pietro Gasparri in 1904 (who was, at that time, Secretary of the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs) and among his achievements was the negotiation and signing of the concordat between the Holy See and Serbia on June 24, 1914. On 13 March 1917 he was consecrated bishop by Pope Benedict XV, appointed Archbishop of Sardi in partibus, and designated as apostolic nuncio to the Kingdom of Bavaria. In 1925 he was appointed apostolic nuncio to Prussia. On 16 December 1929 he was made cardinal by Pius XI, and on 7 February 1930 he was appointed Secretary of State to the Holy See. On 2 March 1939 he was elected as the 260th successor of Peter.

<sup>4</sup> *Preghiera per l'unione dei Cristiani d'Oriente alla Chiesa Romana*. «O Signore, che avete unito le diverse nazioni nella confessione del Vostro Nome, Vi preghiamo per i popoli Cristiani dell'Oriente. Memori del posto eminente che hanno tenuto nella Vostra Chiesa, Vi supplichiamo d'ispirar loro il desiderio di riprenderlo, per formare con noi un solo ovile sotto la guida di un medesimo Pastore. Fate che essi insieme con noi si compenetrino

accommodate a willingness to respond positively to Oriental ecclesial systems that were not in communion with Rome. On the other hand, after Pius IX had decided, on 6 January 1862, that for the churches united with Rome there should be set up, besides the Congregation *De Propaganda Fide*, a section-congregation appointed to deal with “the problems of the Oriental rite”, Benedict XV decided to issue a Motu proprio entitled *Dei Providentis*, on 1 May 1917, stipulating the foundation, as of 1 December 1917, of a new congregation called the *Sacred Congregation for Oriental Churches*, led by the Roman Pontiff himself.<sup>5</sup> What Benedict XV underlined in this Motu proprio was to be somehow premonitory for the whole of the twentieth century and its Catholic ecclesiology: “*this initiative of ours will clearly demonstrate that in the Church of Jesus Christ, which is not Latin, Greek or Slavic, but Catholic, there is no discrimination between its sons and that all of these, be they Latins, Greeks, Slavs or other nationalities, are equally important before the Apostolic See*”.<sup>6</sup> Another Motu proprio, *Orientis Catholici*, from October 15, 1917, emphasised the same intentions. Under this document, Benedict XV decided the foundation of a Pontifical Institute in Rome for the development of Oriental studies (in the sense of Christian religious traditions) where access was granted to both Catholic and Orthodox Christians.

In this research, based on several documents kept in a special archival fund, *Segreteria di Stato della Santa Sede, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati – Archivio Storico*, declassified a few years ago,<sup>7</sup> we will highlight how certain

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degli'insegnamenti dei loro santi Dottori, che sono anche nostri Padri nella Fede. Preservateci da ogni fallo che potrebbe allontanarli da noi. Che lo spirito di concordia e di carità, che è indizio della Vostra presenza tra i fedeli, affretti il giorno in cui le nostre si uniscano alle loro preghiere, affinché ogni popolo ed ogni lingua riconosca e glorifichi il nostro Signore Gesù Cristo, Vostro Figlio. Così sia». [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xv/it/briefs/documents/hf\\_ben-xv\\_briefs\\_19160415\\_catholicae\\_ecclesiae.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xv/it/briefs/documents/hf_ben-xv_briefs_19160415_catholicae_ecclesiae.html)

<sup>5</sup> “*Deliberatum Nobis est pro unitis, qui dicuntur, orientalibus propriam Sacram Congregationem instituere, cuius Nosmet ipsi geramus, Nostrique deinceps successores, praefecturam.*”

<sup>6</sup> “*in Ecclesia Iesu Christi, ut quae non latina sit, non graeca, non slavonica, sed catholica nullum inter eius filios intercedere discrimen, eosque, sive latinus, sive Graecos, sive aliarum nationum, omne apud hanc Apostolicam Sedem eundem locum obtinere*” [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xv/it/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_ben-xv\\_motu\\_proprio\\_19170501\\_dei-providentis.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xv/it/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xv_motu_proprio_19170501_dei-providentis.html)

<sup>7</sup> Emma Fattorini, *La Segreteria di Stato e la Germania: il fondo degli Archivi per gli affari straordinari. Uno strabismo documentario: ricognizione di un campione significativo*, “*Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée*”, the monographic issue *Les secrétaires d'Etat du Saint-Siège (1814-1979). Sources et méthodes*, Roma, Ecole française de Rome, tomCX, no. 2, 1998, pp. 545-551. The reference details of the document are: *Segreteria di Stato della Santa Sede, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati – Archivio Storico, Fondo Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Austria-Ungheria, 1918-1919, pos. 1343, fasc. 536, fol. 47r-48r*. We have treated the documents *in extenso* (except for the one published here) in the study *Mirajul unirii religioase (I). Nunțiul Pacelli și un proiect german despre unirea cu Roma a ortodoxiei românești în anul 1918*, soon to be published in *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie “George Barițiu, LVII, 2018*.

diplomatic contacts between the Holy See and Romania for the establishment of diplomatic relations interfered with the German projects of encouraging the unification of the Roman Catholic Church with the Romanian Orthodox Church. Chronologically, this was the beginning of the summer of 1918, when our country was under German occupation. At that time, Eugenio Pacelli had served as apostolic nuncio to Bavaria<sup>8</sup> for a few months, and the communiqués he sent to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri,<sup>9</sup> Secretary of State of the Holy See, signalled the emergence, due to the German interference, of a political-religious problem for our country.<sup>10</sup>

Romania occupied a defensive position, both politically and militarily, at that historic moment. The situation was sanctioned by the signing of the Treaty of Bucharest shortly before that.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> “Pacelli viene nominato nunzio a Monaco nel maggio del 1917 e a partire dalla primavera la sua corrispondenza con Gasparri è fittissima. Il nunzio riferisce giornalmente, a volte anche due volte al giorno ogni indiscrezione, ogni osservazione il più delle volte tramite il suo più solerte informatore, Erzberger. Un commento minuzioso sugli spostamenti anche minimi degli ambienti governativi e militari, nonché, ovviamente commenti sulla situazione interna ed internazionale”. *Ibidem*, p. 546.

<sup>9</sup> Pietro Gasparri (5 May 1852-18 November 1934), a Catholic sacerdote, professor and diplomat, was made cardinal by Pope Pius X on 16 December 1907. He became Secretary of State of the Holy See in the autumn of 1914, remaining in that position until he was replaced by Eugenio Pacelli. Gasparri’s name is linked to the signing of the Lateran Accords of 11 February 1929, which normalised relations between the Holy See and the Kingdom of Italy.

<sup>10</sup> The relationship between Pacelli and Gasparri was long-lasting, the future Bishop of Rome beginning his career in the Roman Curia and acting under the guidance of Gasparri.

<sup>11</sup> The peace treaty was preceded by a form subscribed in Buftea on 20 February/5 March 1918 by the representative of Romania, [Constantin Argetoianu](#) and the delegates of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey. Subsequently, the details of peace signed in Buftea were transformed into the peace treaty that was eventually signed on 24 April/7 May 1918, at Cotroceni Palace in Bucharest. The signatories acting on behalf of Romania were [Alexandru Marghiloman](#), Prime Minister, [Constantin C. Arion](#), Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mihail N. Burghiele, Minister Plenipotentiary, and Ion N. Papiniu, Minister Plenipotentiary. Under the peace treaty, which placed us on the losing side, certain provisions negative were accepted for our country, such as: Romania had to return Southern Dobrudja and to cede a part of [Northern Dobrudja](#) (south of the [Rasova-Agigea](#) line) to [Bulgaria](#), which had already re-annexed the Quadrilateral in December 1916; the rest of Dobrudja remained to be nominally administered by Romania, but was to be controlled and occupied by [Germany and Bulgaria](#), until a later, definitive treaty; Romania was to give [Austria-Hungary](#) control over the passes of the [Carpathian Mountains](#); at the same time, Romania was to lease all oil explorations to Germany for 90 years, through two oil companies; shipyards were now the property of the German state; Germany and Austria-Hungary the right of controlling navigation on the Danube. The [Central Powers](#) accepted, in exchange, not to oppose the [unification of Bessarabia with Romania](#). Thus, according to the opinions of the signatories of the treaty, although defeated, the kingdom would have nonetheless expanded its borders by the end of the war. The treaty was ratified by the [Romanian Parliament](#) (by the Chamber of Deputies on 15/28 June 1918, and by the Senate on 21 June/4 July 1918) but was not sanctioned by King Ferdinand. The provisions laid down in the treaty entered into force, but were short-lived because when the [Central Powers](#) began, in October 1918, to give signs of exhaustion, there were annulled by the [Marghiloman Government](#).

Under the circumstances, the long-term German presence in the capital of the country, but also in the areas occupied by the troops of the Central Powers, brought about a whole series of privations and obligations that were burdensome and sometimes unbearable or hardly tolerable for the population. The most common were related to requisitions, confiscations, restrictions of civil liberties, but there were also propagandistic actions for creating breaches in the solidarity of the Romanians, in the hope that the occupant would look not just as an enemy or unwanted guest, but as a partner for a common future. One of these breaches was made on an ecclesiastical level. The Reich believed that the political situation in the area of Oriental Europe could be improved to the German advantage on the basis of a possible ecclesiastical union that would bring the Bulgarian Orthodox Church under the compass of the Catholic Church, in a first phase; in neighbouring Romania, the Reich counted on the help given by the monarch of German origin.<sup>12</sup> Recent research led by Reimund Haas has demonstrated that several attempts to encourage this process were made in the early years of the First World War. The protagonists were Matthias Erzberger, a member of the Catholic Centre Party in Germany, a signatory of the armistice of Compiègne on 11 November 1918, and Hubert Bastgen, a priest from the Diocese of Trier and a professor at the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Strasbourg.<sup>13</sup> The idea of the religious unification of Bulgarian Orthodoxy with Rome was not new. It had been invoked in the pre-war period, motivated by the ethnicity of the king-tsar. There had been discussions in 1892-1893,<sup>14</sup> in 1906 or 1913,<sup>15</sup> but stronger efforts were made in 1916-1917. In 1916 German parliamentarians led by Matthias Erzberger made a visit to Sofia. On that occasion, a working document entitled “The Union of Bulgaria with Rome” was drafted. The motivation was now clearly objectified politically. At stake was the project of religious union to counter the Russian influence. In concrete terms, Erzberger organised a conference in Vienna, where the catholic German and Austrian

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<sup>12</sup> Ferdinand I (26 February 1861 – 10 September 1948), born Ferdinand Maximilian Karl Leopold Maria of Saxa-Coburg and Gotha-Koháry, was the ruler of Bulgaria from 1887 to 1918, first as knyaz (prince regent, 1887-1908) and later as tsar (the years 1908-1918). On 5 October 1908 (celebrated on 22 September), Ferdinand proclaimed the *de jure* independence of Bulgaria from the Ottoman Empire, raising the status of Bulgaria to the level of kingdom and proclaiming himself tsar. He involved Bulgaria in the Balkan Wars and in the First World War on the side of the Central Powers. Bulgarian Troops were deployed in the campaign for the conquest of Romania in 1916. After the Bulgarian army was crushed in Greece, he abdicated in favour of his son Boris, who became the new King of Bulgaria on October 3, 1918. He died in Coburg in 1948.

<sup>13</sup> Reimund Haas, *Uniunile bisericești din Balcani - șansă pierdută sau utopie? Realismul lui Raymund Netzhammer în contextul strădaniilor unitariene (sic!) ale lui Matthias Erzberger și Hubert Bastgen în Bulgaria, în Raymund Netzhammer în România. Pe urmele spiritului locului*, edited by Violeta Barbu and Nikolaus Netzhammer, Editura Academiei Române, București, 2014, pp. 194-201.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 196.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 197

dioceses had to instruct the Bulgarian Catholic higher prelates about the steps to follow in order to induce the idea of religious union in the Bulgarian population. At the same time, the German parliamentarian informed in Rome Rudolf von Gerlach, a theologian and member of the Roman Curia, about the steps that had been taken, claiming that he had discussed with Tsar Ferdinand “*all the means and ways of achievement of the union*”.<sup>16</sup> In 1917 Hubert Bastgen became an army chaplain in Bulgaria and in July the same year he came to Romania, where he discussed with Raymund Netzhammer,<sup>17</sup> the Archbishop of Bucharest, about “*talks concerning an ecclesiastical union with Romania*”. The prelate from the capital of Romania was rather reserved on this subject.<sup>18</sup>

In in the first half of 1918 the unionist projects continued and passed to a higher level, in a belligerent context that was favourable to Germany. The fact that direct access to the Holy was sought on this topic is mirrored by a diplomatic dispatch that Eugenio Pacelli sent from Munich to Cardinal Gasparri, on June 9, 1918. The bulk of the text is a translation of a request received on 7 June 1918 from Nham von Hertling (Chancellor of the Reich from 1 November 1917 to 30 November 1918). The German high dignitary was a representative of the Catholic movement in German politics. According to him, a high official of the empire had made a visit to Romania. Being a practising Christian, from a family with old Catholic beliefs and ideals, he was

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 198.

<sup>17</sup> Raymund Netzhammer was born in the family of a farmer, in the town of Erzingen from the Grand Duchy of Baden, on 19 January 1862. He chose the monastic path, joining the Benedictine Abbey in Einsiedeln, where he became a novice on 12 October 1876. Fond of monastic life, but also of the exact sciences, he was consecrated as a priest in Einsiedeln on 5 September 1886. He activated there as a teacher of mathematics, chemistry and physics, and at the age of 27 he published his “Textbook of Trigonometry for the Use of High Schools”, a book that secured his renown in the world of exact sciences. In 1900-1903 he worked as a professor and director of the “Holy Spirit” Roman-Catholic Seminary in Bucharest. After that he was transferred to Rome, as rector of the Greek College. Pope Pius X appointed him Archbishop of Bucharest, on September 16, 1905. He shepherded the Archdiocese of Bucharest from 1905 to 1924. He was forced to leave the archbishop’s see as a result of the position of Pius XI who, aiming to ease the tense relations with the Romanian authorities, imposed his resignation on 3 July 1924. Passionate about archaeology, art and ancient numismatics, a lover of Dobrudja, he wrote a large number of works relating to the ancient history of Romania, such as: “Das altchristliche Tomi” (Salzburg, 1903); “Aus Rumänien” (Einsiedeln, 1909); “Ancient Weights from Dobrudja” (1912); “Other Ancient Weights from Dobrudja” (1913); “Archaeological Miscellanea”. A New Weight Method from Kallatis. A Weight with Amphora” (1914); “Archaeological Objects. Five Weights from Constanta” (1914); “Die christlichen Altertümer der Dobrudscha” (1918); “Epiktet und Astion, diokletianische Märtyrer am Donau-Delta” (Zug, 1936); “Die christlichen Märtyrer am Ister” (Bucharest, 1939). He died on 18 September 1945. For a balanced historiographic perspective on Netzhammer, see the recently published volume *Raymund Netzhammer in România, pe urmele spiritului locului*, edited by Violeta Barbu and Nikolaus Netzhammer, București, Editura Academiei Române, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Reimund Haas, *op.cit.*, p. 199.

not just a government representative on a state mission of with propagandistic goals, but, as suggested by the entire context of the nuncio's letter, he was also on an exploratory mission at a confessional level. Although the chancellor did not mention his name, given the associations he made in the letter ("*a senior state official who is descended from a Rhenian Catholic family and maintained a fervent Catholic feeling* ") and the diary of the Roman-Catholic Archbishop of Bucharest, Raymund Netzhammer,<sup>19</sup> we know the person in question was the senior government advisor Karl Leopold Kaufmann.<sup>20</sup> He did not limit himself to discussions on this topic with the Roman-Catholic Archbishop of Bucharest, but went further and visited Orthodox locations that allowed him to get an idea about Romanian Orthodoxy. His point of view, as resulting from Netzhammer's journal, was not positive. Pacelli's dispatch suggests, on the other hand, that the German high official had left Bucharest for Sofia, where he conferred with Ferdinand I, the King of Bulgaria, on the same topic.

The text of the letter reveals that Kaufmann's action was not a unique initiative, but part of a series of steps designed to address this issue. The confirmation came again from Netzhammer, who noted in his diary that, after Kaufmann's visit, a political parliamentary leader, by the name of Friedrich Naumann,<sup>21</sup> visited him. According to Netzhammer, Naumann "*Shows much interest in the political consequences of the union between the Romanians and other Balkan countries with papal Rome.*"<sup>22</sup> In February 1918 the young

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<sup>19</sup> "Thursday, 23 May 1918. Senior Government Advisor Dr. Kaufmann, the president of the Insurance Office of the German Empire, is an interesting man. His father was the mayor of the city of Bonn, dismissed then from office in the "Kulturkampf" (struggle waged by Bismarck against Catholics and the Catholic Church). One of his brothers is the canonical of the Cathedral of Aachen, and one of his sisters is married to the famous historian Pastor. We had a talk about the current issues of the moment, about the dynasty and the union. Mr. Kaufmann had been on a visit to the Orthodox monastery of the monks of Cernica, near Bucharest, and his impression was deplorable; starting from the divine service performed there and from the squalid appearance of several monks, he reached certain conclusions with regard to the state of the national church." Raymund Netzhammer, *Episcop în România într-o epocă a conflictelor naționale și religioase*, volume I, edited by Nikolaus Netzhammer, in collaboration with Krista Zach, Editura Academiei Române, 2005, p. 789.

<sup>20</sup> Karl Leopold Kaufmann (15 November 1863 – 28 November 1944).

<sup>21</sup> Friedrich Naumann (25 March 1860 – 24 August 1919) was a politician, publicist and theoretician of [liberalism in Germany](#). In 1893, he transformed the publication *Die Hilfe* (Assistance) into a forum for debate on the ideas he promoted. In 1896 he founded the Social National Union, an organisation that appealed to the national strength through a democratic programme of social reforms. Failing to organise a political party based on his association, Friedrich Naumann joined the *Freisinnige Vereinigung* (Liberal Union), and was elected as MP in [1907](#). In [1910](#) this party merged with the Progressive Popular Party, and nine years later he was one of the founders of the Democratic Party, whose presidency he retained until his death. Friedrich Naumann was the author of a well-known treaty of [geopolitics](#) entitled *Mitteuropa* (1915), which describes the project of a Central-European federation whose main actors are [Germany](#) and [Austria-Hungary](#).

<sup>22</sup> Raymund Netzhammer, *op.cit.*, p. 790.

archbishop of Munich, Michael von Faulhaber<sup>23</sup> visited the part of Romania occupied by German troops. He also performed the duties of military bishop to Bavaria.

That succession of visits demonstrated interest of the German authorities for the fate of Romanian Orthodoxy, an interest that was more than circumstantial, but was underpinned by political calculations.

In the letter mentioned above, the Holy See was requested by the high German authorities to look more carefully at these developments and projects. Taking into account that the pontifical authority could not abandon its neutrality on the warring parties and could clearly not position itself on one side or the other, the Germans nonetheless believed that, under the new political circumstances, Rome would have to make some corrections to its perception of the Oriental ecclesial situation. In view of the situation on the front and in Russia, Germany considered that the Apostolic See could relinquish the idea of impartiality in the context of the war, especially since Orthodoxy had been isolated in Russia and the Entente Powers were not interested in granting support to the Orthodoxies of Eastern Europe.

The German official was of the opinion that the process of religious unification should start in Romania, which was occupied by the Central Powers, and then expand to Bulgaria. This was also the option of King Ferdinand I of Bulgaria, who gave his assent, according to von Hertling's confessions, to such a large-scale operation. The religious union was a proposal with political underpinnings and the message to the Holy See was actually composed from this perspective. For Gasparri and Benedict XV, this was probably not the first time they had received information on this matter, having also been persuaded, as the missive states, on other occasions, as the Reich had emissaries in the Curia. The pressure exerted on the Pope was so strong that in 1916 Erzberger designed a plan to move the Holy See to Liechtenstein.<sup>24</sup>

In the perspective of interfaith relations, the German project was somewhat congruent with the union with the Orient, desired by Benedict XV, but considering the dynamics of international relations, it was hard to believe that the two high prelates, the Sovereign Pontiff and the Secretary of State,<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> He was Archbishop of Munich in 1917-1952 and was appointed cardinal by Benedict XV in 1921. The echoes of his personality are discernible even today. Pope Benedict XVI stated that he wanted to be a priest because he was inspired by this prelate, the name the pontiff chose in 2005 being a tribute to the pope who appointed Faulhaber. Also, as Netzhammer noted in his journal, *Ibidem*, p., 757, Pope Ratzinger underlined the majestic impression Faulhaber made, dressed in his purple robe. Joseph Ratzinger, *Il sale della terra*, Milano, Edizioni San Paolo, 1997, p. 59

<sup>24</sup> Maximilian Liebmann, *Der Papst – Fürst von Liechtenstein. Ein Vorschlag zur Lösung der Römischen Frage aus dem Jahre 1916*, "Römische Quartalschrift", LXXIX, 1984, pp. 93-108.

<sup>25</sup> "La sua politica, se è lecito un'impressione di profano, è l'ultima politica europea di tipo tra veneziano e inglese, ispirata cioè dai fatti più che dalle idee, dal diritto più che dalla



both Italians, would pursue the project indicated by the German chancellor. Italy was in the opposite camp of Germany and stood to gain political and territorial advantages if the coalition of the Central Powers was defeated. Cardinal Gasparri, the Secretary of State, answered Nuncio Pacelli in a letter dated 29 June 1918.<sup>26</sup> On a moderate tone, the pontifical dignitary rapidly surveyed the plea of the German chancellor for the agenda of the Holy See's Oriental policy. Reference was made to the message of the German chancellor, but the only aspect that was retained was the diplomatic aspect of interest to the Secretary of State: the establishment of diplomatic relations with Romania and Bulgaria. After he presented to Benedict XV the political situation as derived from the information transmitted by Pacelli, Cardinal Pietro Gasparri did not take into account the points of view of the German chancellor, which encouraged the religious union. The analysis conducted at the level of the Secretariat of State probably revealed that engaging the Catholic Church in political projects would be detrimental and would provide ammunition to its enemies. However, what the German side had not taken into account was the ever-stronger aversion of the Holy See towards political interference in the affairs of the Church, a final episode that had triggered the reaction of Rome being the veto of Austria-Hungary at the election, in 1903, of Cardinal Rampolla del Tindaro as the successor of Leo XIII. At that time, the Cardinal of Cracow, Jan Puzyna had expressed the veto of the Court of Vienna, favouring the election of Pius X, who had decided not to admit this *ius exclusivae*, exerted by the Catholic kings in elections for the Bishops of Rome ever since the seventeenth century. Gasparri therefore decided, in agreement with the Pope, that the most useful solution for the Apostolic See was to try to follow the German idea, but along other avenues, in an attempt to establish connecting bridges with Romania, while respecting the legitimate power in our country. Here the cardinal mentioned the King of Romania, as a privileged interlocutor of the Holy See. Also, the Secretary of State highlighted that the decision was taken in a broader context of assessing the international situation, in which the issue of diplomatic relations with Bulgaria or with Turkey had been raised as well, stating that for Romania was important for Benedict XV at that moment in history. Gasparri even specified, in his correspondence with Pacelli, that the Bulgarian matter would be discussed after the end of the war and that what was important now was the possibility to develop a diplomatic dialogue with Romania. We do not yet know the context very well, due to our lack of access to relevant documentary sources, but Pietro Gasparri informed Eugenio Pacelli that he had discussed this issue with Prince Vladimir Ghika,<sup>27</sup>

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*cosiddetta cultura*". Giuseppe De Luca, *Pietro Gasparri nel centenario della nascita*, *L' Osservatore romano*, Città del Vaticano, 19 novembre 1952.

<sup>26</sup> *Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Fondo Archivio Nunziatura Monaco 342, fasc. 8, fol. 30r-31r.*

<sup>27</sup> Vladimir Ghika was born in Constantinople on December 25, 1873, in the family of the Ghika/Ghica princes, which gave Moldavia and Wallachia ten rulers. After studying literature and law, medicine and history, he went to Rome, where he studied philosophy and theology at

an intimate of the King of Romania, a frequenter of the pontifical Curia, and the most famous Orthodox Romanian converted to Catholicism in the twentieth century, who was very dissatisfied with the intention of Benedict XV and his first collaborator. Actually – and here was the key to establishing the first diplomatic contacts between the Holy See and Romania – Cardinal Gasparri resorted to an interesting technique whereby the intentions of Benedict XV reached the Romanian authorities directly from Rome, albeit not through direct, but through mediated correspondence.

The pontifical dignitary informed Pacelli that a letter from Vladimir Ghika to King Ferdinand on the topic of the establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations was included in the “diplomatic bag” and it was necessary for it to reach the recipient, without being exposed to German censorship. Thus, the pontifical Curia did not eschew the clear goal of establishing diplomatic relations with Romania, but pursued it through the intermediation of a Catholic-Romanian vector. The confidential quality of the correspondence is confirmed by the key words “*diplomatic bag*” and “*German censorship*”. It is a little strange that Cardinal Gasparri chose this way of communication with Romania, through the nunciature to Bavaria, but this was probably a matter of his diplomatic skills, as he tried to make the Germans believe that the diplomatic correspondence contained positive information for their projects of union, while the Holy See followed its own interests.

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the Minerva Dominican Institute. In 1902 he officially joined the Catholic Church by conversion, dedicating his life to the unity of the Church. In his youth he accompanied his brother Dimitrie on diplomatic missions, but he was always ready to put into practice charitable ideals in Romania, on an unprecedented scale. He brought to Bucharest the sisters of St. Vincent de Paul and, together with them, he founded the first free dispensary for the poor. He created a service of ambulances for the victims of the 1907 Uprising, and he cared for sick soldiers during the Balkan War and the First World War. In the First World War he was present in Italy, where he dedicated himself to helping the victims of the earthquake in Avezzano (January 2015) and consumptive patients in Rome, in addition to which he carried out voluntary diplomatic work. After the war, in 1923, he was consecrated as a priest in Paris, where he cared for foreigners and the marginalised, in the outlying district of Villejuif, in Paris. At Auberive he founded the Community of Saint John. He was appointed Apostolic Protonotary by Pius XI and was elected member of the Standing Committee of International Eucharistic Congresses. In this capacity he often accompanied the Secretary of State, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli. In 1939 he could be found in Romania, where he remained even after 1947, when he knew that harsh times of suffering were facing his compatriots. Because he had championed the communion of the Catholic Church in Romania with Rome, he was arrested in 1952 and sentenced a year later. After a year in which he alleviated the prisoners’ suffering, he passed away, on 16 May 1954, because of prison hardships and deprivations. The information exchange process for beatification and canonisation began in 2002. The complete file was submitted to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on February 2, 2012. On its basis, after receiving the unanimous favourable opinion of theologians and cardinals, Pope Francis recognised the martyrdom of Vladimir Ghika on March 27, 2013. Monsignor Vladimir Ghika was beatified 31 August 2013, in Bucharest.

In the document we reproduce here, we are informed that Eugenio Pacelli received both the diplomatic dispatch his superior had sent him, and the letter Vladimir Ghika had addressed to King Ferdinand. Although he drew attention to the fact that it would not be easy for him, in the circumstances of the war, to ensure that the Romanian monarch would receive that letter for the establishment of “*diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Romania*,” Pacelli gave assurances that he would see through the operation. In spite of his pro-German position, the nuncio to Munich certainly kept the secret and forwarded the letter via discreet channels, perhaps through some religious orders. It is known that there was a Franciscan presence in Moldova, where the king was in retreat.

In this correspondence we may detect, therefore, the little-known steps that led, at the end of September 1918, to Vladimir Ghika’s appointment by the Romanian National Council in Paris as its representative to Benedict XV, the act recognised by Pietro Gasparri on 11 December 1918.<sup>28</sup> This was actually a public confirmation of the backstage role Ghika had played.

What has not been known until now, however, is the contribution of Nuncio Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pius XII, to the onset of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Romania, a contribution that was, admittedly, a technical one and was made in secret, but was not one to be ignored given the circumstances of the war and the watchful eye of German censorship.

Launched at the German initiative, at a time when Romania was dominated from a military point of view, the project of religious union between the Catholic Church and the Romanian Orthodox Church offered the Holy See an opportunity for action that Cardinal Gasparri seized and capitalised upon. His sharp political sense probably made him act in a moment when the fate of Romania was still in the balance, but the briefings available to him determined him to make this apparently risky move.

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<sup>28</sup> *România-Vatican. Relații diplomatice*. Vol. I, 1920-1950, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2003, p. XXV.

DOCUMENTARY ANNEX<sup>29</sup>

Nunziatura Apostolica, München

11 Luglio 1918

Nr. 7791

Ref: Relazioni diplomatiche della Santa Sede colla Rumania

Eminenza Reverendissima,

Mi è pervenuto insieme col relativo Allegato l'importante e venerato Dispaccio dell'Eminenza Vostra Reverendissima in data del 29 Giugno scorso, relativo allo stabilimento di relazioni diplomatiche fra la Santa Sede e la Rumania.

Nell'assicurare l'Eminenza Vostra che procurerò di far giungere in modo sicuro, per quanto almeno è possibile sperarlo in questi tempi eccezionali, la ivi acclusa lettera a Sua Maestà il Re Ferdinando, m'inchino umilmente al bacio della Sacra Porpora e con sensi di profondissima venerazione ho l'onore di confermarvi

di Vostra Eminenza Reverendissima

Umilissimo Devotissimo Obbligatissimo Servo

+ Eugenio, Arcivescovo di Sardi

Nunzio Apostolico

*Segreteria di Stato della Santa Sede, Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati – Archivio Storico, Fondo Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Romania, 1912-1922, posizione 33, fascicolo 13, foglio 22r.*

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<sup>29</sup> The documents are brought to light through a project that is operational until 2019, by which the Archivio Segreto Vaticano, together with German specialists, unravel the reports and diplomatic dispatches of Nuncio Pacelli. See the link [http://www.archiviosegretovaticano.va/content/archiviosegretovaticano/it/attivita/ricerca-e-conservazione/progetti/edizioni-di-fonti/patrocinio-dell\\_edizione-critica-online-dei-rapporti-del-nunzio-.html](http://www.archiviosegretovaticano.va/content/archiviosegretovaticano/it/attivita/ricerca-e-conservazione/progetti/edizioni-di-fonti/patrocinio-dell_edizione-critica-online-dei-rapporti-del-nunzio-.html)