

THE HOLY SEE AND THE ROMANIANS IN SPAIN IN THE EARLY 1950S

VERONICA TURCUȘ¹

Abstract: This study, based on an unpublished document preserved in the Archives of the Italian Foreign Ministry in Rome, brings new information on the policy of the Holy See towards Romanians in the early 1950s. Faced with the unilateral severance of diplomatic relations by the regime of popular democracy that had been established in Bucharest and was entirely at the beck and call of Moscow, the Apostolic See decided to support the Romanians in exile, spiritually and materially. This mission was entrusted to Monsignor John Columbus Kirk, former secretary of the Apostolic Nunciature in Bucharest. Appointed by the Holy See to head the Romanian Catholic Mission in Spain, Monsignor Kirk was tasked with assisting all the Romanian emigrants in Western Europe, whether they were Greek-Catholic or Orthodox, an activity that was to be carried out with American financial help. Consisting largely of right-wing and far-right refugees received by Francoist Spain during and after World War II, the Romanian community in Madrid organised itself as an anti-communist resistance outpost. This study attempts to highlight precisely the interesting manner in which Catholicism and militant Orthodoxy allied in those years in the fight against the atheism promoted by the regime of Stalinist inspiration in Bucharest.

Keywords: Holy See, Romanian exile, Francoist Spain, Vatican diplomacy

Rezumat: Prezentul studiu, bazat pe un document inedit conservat în Arhivele Ministerului de Externe al Italiei de la Roma, aduce informații noi asupra politicii Sfântului Scaun față de români la începutul anilor 1950. Confruntat cu denunțarea unilaterală a raporturilor diplomatice de către regimul de democrație populară instaurat la București și aservit Moscovei, Scaunul Apostolic a ales să sprijine, spiritual și material, exilul românesc, încredințând această misiune monseniorului John Columbus Kirk, fost secretar al Nunțiatunii Apostolice de la București. Numit de Sfântul Scaun în fruntea Misiunii Catolice Române din Spania, monseniorului Kirk îi era încredințată opera de asistență a tuturor emigranților români din Europa Occidentală, fie că erau greco-catolici sau ortodocși, activitate pe care urma să o desfășoare cu ajutor financiar american. Constituită în mare parte din refugiați de dreapta și extremă dreapta primiți de Spania franchistă în timpul și după cel de Al Doilea Război Mondial, comunitatea românească de la Madrid s-a organizat ca o structură de rezistență anticomunistă, studiul încercând să sublinieze tocmai maniera interesantă în care catolicismul și ortodoxia militantă s-au aliat în anii respectivi în lupta împotriva ateismului promovat de regimul de inspirație stalinistă de la București.

Cuvinte cheie: Sfântul Scaun, exilul românesc, Spania franchistă, diplomația vaticană

The unilateral discontinuation of the relations between Romania and the Holy See, in the summer of 1950, was the result of a consistent policy pursued by the regime of popular democracy imposed in Bucharest in 1948. This policy aimed to undermine

¹ Scientific researcher I, „George Barițiu History Institute of the Romanian Academy, Cluj-Napoca; email vturcus@yahoo.it

the authority of the Catholic Church in the newly established People's Republic, heavily enslaved to ideological precepts imported from Moscow. Ever since 1946, within the order of international relations, Romania had revolved in an orbit around the great Stalinist power in the east. The Soviet influence was beginning to prevail, gradually and by any means possible, in every aspect of the Romanian society at that time. For example, it is relevant that in 1946, the primacy granted to the apostolic nuncio by diplomatic tradition – that of dean of the diplomatic corps accredited in Bucharest – was no longer respected, as the ambassador of the Soviet Union took now pride of place among the foreign envoys in Bucharest. The head of the Nunciature in Bucharest, Monsignor Andrea Cassulo (1869–1952), appointed apostolic nuncio to Romania on June 14, 1936, was removed in 1946, precisely in order to undermine the position of the Catholic Church, which represented, in terms of the prestige of its diplomatic corps, the guarantee of sustainable relations with the Western democracies. Thus, at that time, the diplomatic corps accredited in Bucharest was faced with the regrettable situation of having no dean, or, more precisely, of having two deans. One, *de jure condito*, was the nuncio, who demanded compliance with his traditional prerogatives even if he was recalled. The Romanian Foreign Affairs protocol granted him this prerogative unconditionally, mentioning this in the list of the diplomatic corps distributed to the representatives of the Western states – until the arrival of his successor, whose entry visa had been indefinitely postponed by the Allied Control Commission, dominated by the Soviets.² The other, *de jure condendo*, was the Soviet ambassador, who considered himself leader of the diplomats in Bucharest, a position recognised especially by the representatives of the Slavic states.³ The period during which Monsignor Cassulo was at the head of the Apostolic Nunciature in Bucharest was followed by an interim stage, in which Monsignor Gerald O'Hara, Bishop of Savannah (Georgia, USA)⁴ occupied the position of regent of

² Under the Armistice Convention signed by the Romanian delegation headed by Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu in Moscow on 12 September 1944, between the Romanian Government and the governments of the USSR, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and the U.S. – having as signatory, on behalf of the Allies, the representative of the Allied High Command (Soviet), Marshal Malinowski – Romania, through Romanian High Command and the Romanian Government, was bound to provide all the necessary facilities to the Soviet troops and other allied forces, so that they could move freely on the territory of Romania, in any direction, at the expense of the Romanian state, whether by land, water or air. It was also stipulated that an Allied Control Commission should be established to enforce the provisions of the armistice, under the command of the Soviet High Command. The Government of Romania and its subordinated bodies had to carry out the instructions of the Allied Control Commission, in their entirety. The commission was based in Bucharest and monitored the entire Romanian administration until the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty on February 10, 1947. Romania was bound to accept the consistent presence of Soviet troops on the territory of the country, the change of its political regime and the payment of significant war damages. See *Convenţie de armistiţiu* 1944, 14.

³ For details, see Turcuş 2013, 234; Turcuş 2015, 377–379.

⁴ Gerald Patrick Aloysius O'Hara (1895–1963), Bishop of Savannah (U.S.) from 1935 to 1959, regent of the Apostolic Nunciature to Romania (1947–1950), pontifical nuncio to Ireland (1951–1954) and apostolic delegate to Great Britain (1954–1963). His ascent in the hierarchy of the Roman Church was quite rapid. Just 9 years after his consecration as a priest in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania), he was appointed auxiliary bishop of Philadelphia in April 1929, and one month later he was ordained titular Bishop of Heliopolis in Phoenicia. After the end of his mission in Bucharest on 5 July 1950, he was appointed, on 12 July the same year, Archbishop *ad personam* of Savannah, and on 27 November 1951 apostolic nuncio to Dublin. On 8 June 1954, he was appointed by the Holy See as apostolic delegate to London, a position he was to hold until his death on 16 July 1963. On 12 November 1959, he resigned from his church position in Savannah and was appointed Archbishop of Pessinus. He remained known among American prelates for his liberal views and for stimulating

the diplomatic mission of the Holy See in Romania. The regency of O'Hara, beginning on February 19, 1947, when the American bishop was appointed in Bucharest, represented an extremely difficult stage in the relations between Romania and the Apostolic See, especially as it took place against the backdrop of deteriorating relations between the U.S.S.R. and the Vatican.⁵ This happened in a context in which the Vatican had proposed a pontifical legate who was not of Italian extraction – as the custom had been since the establishment of the Apostolic Nunciature in Romania by Pope Benedict XV in 1920 – but, to make matters worse, in the sense that this proposal was a slap in the face of the authorities in Moscow, who were bent on controlling the states included in their sphere of influence, this nuncio came from the United States and had an important position in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church there. The period of O'Hara's regency coincided, among other things, with an era of silencing the Greek-Catholic Church in Romania by the Decree Law of December 1, 1948, a decree which, as is well known, stipulated the abolition of the central and statutory organisations of the Greek-Catholic Church, including those of Armenian and Ruthenian rite.⁶ There were many persecutions to which the Catholic clergy and faithful were subjected after the Romanian state denounced the Concordat with the Holy See (July 17, 1948) and there was state interference in the organisation of the Catholic Church, which should have represented one of the pontifical prerogatives par excellence (see the Law of Religious Denominations of August 1948).⁷ The firm stance of the regent O'Hara as regards his condemnation of the Romanian authorities' treatment of the Greek-Catholic Church and his arguments in favour of the maintenance of its ecclesiastical structure intact (a structure that the communist authorities wished to integrate by force within the framework of Romanian Orthodoxy) caused the communist authorities in Bucharest to react by shows of brutal force. For example, because of the police assault on the pontifical envoy's residence in Predeal, on May 11, 1949, both the regent of the Nunciature, Monsignor O'Hara, and the secretary of the Apostolic Nunciature, Bishop John Columbus Kirk (1912–2004), another member of the higher clergy of the Catholic Church in the United States, had to spend the whole night in the lounge of the mountain villa, surrounded by secret service agents and

interracial understanding, erecting, during his episcopate, the Cathedral of Christ the King in Atlanta, exactly on the spot where the Ku Klux Klan meetings had been held. His experience in the Orthodox environment fostered a genuine openness, a development of the ecumenical spirit. It was not by chance that, at the end of his life, he wrote a preface for the book of Bea 1963.

⁵ In the 1920s–30s, the successive leaders of the Nunciature in Bucharest were the following Italian archbishops: Francesco Marmaggi (1920–23), Archbishop Titular of Hadrianopolis in Haemimonto (Edirne), whom the Roman Church afterwards assigned with diplomatic missions in Central European countries in the period between 1923–1939 (he was nuncio in Czechoslovakia until 1928 and, then, in Poland); Angelo Maria Dolci (1923–33), as of 1914 vicar apostolic of Constantinople and titular of the Archdiocese of Gerapoli, distinguished himself at the time of the First World War, as a result of the intervention of Pope Benedict XV, through his contribution to the rescue of the Romanian prisoners from Santo Stefano; in the mid–1930s, Valerio Valeri (1933–36), Archbishop Titular of Ephesus and apostolic delegate to Egypt and Arabia, former auditor at the Apostolic Nunciature in France during 1921–27, a diplomatic mission that he tied his destiny to from 1936 on, the policy he promoted as pontifical nuncio to France, in 1936–44, which, at that time, was in line with the position of the Holy See, being condemned after the war by Charles de Gaulle, president of the provisional Government of the French Republic, who accused him of collaboration with the Vichy regime. For a general outlook on this issue, see De Marchi 1957; De Marchi, Filippazzi 2006; Doboş 2013, 32.

⁶ Decree no. 358 of 1 December 1948.

⁷ Decree no. 151 of 17 July 1948 and Decree no. 177 of 4 August 1948; Decree no. 178, 4 August 1948.

policemen, until the belated intervention of the Protocol Office of the Romanian Foreign Ministry. The excuse for this flagrant violation of international diplomatic norms was an alleged lack of communication with the Ministry of the Interior, which was responsible for this action.⁸

Thus, in the late 1940s, the pontifical diplomatic envoys to Romania were viewed with increasing suspicion for the „subversive“ activity, contrary to the state policy, they were carrying out, particularly in light of the fact that the majority of the staff of the Apostolic Nunciature in Bucharest consisted of Americans. In April 1949, before the assault on the pontifical envoy's residence in Predeal, a report from the Romanian intelligence service recommended the „liquidation of the papal Nunciature and the implementation of all of the consequences deriving from the repeal of the Concordat.”⁹ The unilateral severance of diplomatic relations was just a first step. In July 1950, the pontifical regent was forced to leave Romania,¹⁰ the burden of representing the Catholic Church here being temporarily assumed by the chaplain to the Italian Church in Bucharest, Clemente Gatti (until his arrest by the communist authorities, in March 1951).¹¹

For our present approach, which aims to highlight a number of issues related to the policy of the Holy See towards Romania and the Romanians after 1950, a policy focused on the constant idea of supporting the Catholic Church and the Greek-Catholic Church, which had become clandestine in the regime of popular democracy, it is interesting to analyse the data provided by the document published in the annex below. This document represents an informative note of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, received on February 7, 1952, from its Embassy in Madrid and sent on February 18 by the central office in Rome to the diplomatic representations in Bucharest and Washington, as well as to

⁸ For a comprehensive overview of the problem, see Turcuş 2015, 377–384.

⁹ For more information, see Bucur 2000, 111–121.

¹⁰ On the evening of 4 July 1950, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bucharest notified with a *note verbale* sent to the Apostolic Nunciature that the diplomatic staff of this mission – the nunciature counsellor and chargé d'affaires ad interim (regent) Bishop Gerald Patrick O'Hara, the ecclesiastical judge-uditore Guido del Mestri (originally from a noble Italian family in Banja-Luka, in present-day Bosnia-Herzegovina, but at that time in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with an education in the Jesuit environment in Vienna and then completed at the Capranica College in Rome and the Pontifical Gregorian University, ordained a priest on April 11, 1936, in the Patriarchal Basilica in the Lateran, initially sent on pastoral ministry to the Diocese of Gorizia, with diplomacy studies at the Pontificia Accademia Ecclesiastica in Rome, which he started attending in 1938, thereby acquiring the necessary training for diplomatic missions, such as that of attaché of the Apostolic Nunciature in Yugoslavia in 1940–1941, or of secretary of the apostolic delegation to Lebanon, where he stayed until 1943, appointed private chamberlain of the Pope on October 21, 1941, and sent to the Apostolic Nunciature in Romania, first as a secretary, on April 30, 1943, and then as an auditor) and the secretary of the Nunciature, John C. Kirk – no longer enjoyed the status of *personae gratae* in the context of the espionage process in which the Nunciature was considered a party that acted contrary to the interests of Romania. As a consequence, the above-mentioned diplomats were forced to pack up their personal effects and institutional documents and to go, on the evening of July 6, 1950, to the Gare du Nord, from where they took a train to Curtici, on the western border of Romania. Although the diplomats of the Bucharest regime declared in the European diplomatic environment on July 7, 1950, that it could not be definitively ruled out that the Government of the People's Republic of Romania would be able to admit, in time, the presence of a Vatican representative in Bucharest, the unilateral severance of relations was obvious, as were the tendencies of „nationalising“ the Catholic Church in Romania. See *România-Vatican* 2003, 359; Bozgan 2001, 130–154; Turcuş, Turcuş 2014, 809–815; Heger 2002, 379–380; Turcuş, Turcuş 2017 a, 239–271.

¹¹ Turcuş, Turcuş 2017 b, 155–171; Turcuş, Turcuş 2017 c, 255–271.

the permanent representative to N.A.T.O. The document refers to the activity, throughout 1952, of the former secretary of the Apostolic Nunciature in Bucharest, Monsignor J. Kirk. As revealed by the document published in the annex, the former secretary of the Apostolic Nunciature in Bucharest, who, prior to his mission in the capital city of Romania, was the secretary of Bishop O'Hara in Savannah, Georgia (US), had received from the Holy See the assignment of „head of the Romanian Catholic Mission in Spain.“ This aspect was particularly significant and delicate, since the Romanian community there¹² was the most powerful and important concentration of extreme right-wing, Legionary forces abroad, after World War II.

The concentration of Romanian far-right forces in Spain had been stimulated since World War II, when the government of Legionary Romania made a series of changes in its diplomatic apparatus, appointing to the capitals of the Axis countries or to those with a pro-Axis orientation, including to Spain, new heads of mission from the ranks of the Movement's leaders. Thus, in November 1940, Radu Ghenea was sent to the Romanian mission in Madrid and by the end of that month he had established optimal relations with Foreign Minister Ramón Serrano Suñer, head of the Spanish Phalanx. An interesting event that attested the ecumenical attitude adopted both by the representatives of the Romanian far-right government, which enjoyed undeniable support from the Orthodox priesthood, and by the Spanish Catholic Church was the celebration dedicated to the commemoration of two years since the execution of Captain Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (on 29/30 November 1938). For that manifestation Ghenea obtained *nulla osta* from Suñer on the very day of 26 November 1940, when he was received in audience by the Spanish Foreign Minister. Advertising the event, the Spanish newspapers published eulogising articles dedicated to the „Captain,“ and a religious service was held at the San Jerónimo Church in Madrid, the last prayer being uttered by a Spanish Catholic bishop.¹³ In addition, we would like to draw attention here to the church in which the memorial service was held, San Jerónimo el Real, the church of an old Hieronymite convent,¹⁴ founded in the late 15th century by the

¹² Cerullo 2017.

¹³ Many Spanish newspapers published articles, in those days, commemorating two years since Codreanu's death and depicting the turmoil Romania was experiencing at the time. For example, the newspaper „ABC. Diario ilustrado de informacion general,“ which appeared in Madrid, informed, in its issue of 29 November 1940, 5 about the events in Romania, regarding the revenge of Codreanu's death and the numerous assassinations, including the murder of historian and politician Nicolae Iorga.

¹⁴ The Order of Saint Jerome or the Hieronymites (*Ordo Sancti Hieronymi*, O.S.H) – a cloistered religious order of the Roman Catholic Church, based on respect for the Rule of Saint Augustine, and having as an inspiring model for monastic life the 5th century sage and exegete of the Holy Scriptures, St. Jerome – was founded in the proximity of Toledo in the 14th century, being recognised on 18 November 1373 by the papal bull of Pope Gregory XI. What remains important for the history of the order – which, in 1415, obtained from the Pope the exempted status, no longer depending, thus, on the jurisdiction of the local bishop – is the particular attention that it received from the Kings of Spain. The monastic congregation was inextricably linked to the destiny of the Spanish monarchy and possessed some of the most important monasteries of the Iberian Peninsula (the *Royal Monastery of Santa María de Guadalupe* in Extremadura, is directly associated with the New World, including in terms of the name of the Caribbean island that is derived from it, and due to the fact that it was here that Christopher Columbus made his first pilgrimage a sign of thanksgiving for having discovered America in 1492; the *Royal Monastery of Santa Maria de Belém*, built in Lisbon, at the mouth of the River Tagus, in Manueline style, designed originally for the spiritual welfare of seafarers and navigators – it was here that Vasco da Gama and the members of his expedition prayed before setting off towards the

Castilian royalty in the vicinity of the royal Palace El Pardo, erected by order of Henry III of Castile in 1406. Built in Isabelline Gothic (or late-Gothic Castilian) style, the church had acquired special significance for the Spanish monarchy, being chosen for the investiture ceremony of the Princes of Asturias in 1528. When King Philip II transferred the Spanish court to Madrid, he built the Palace del Buen Retiro adjacent to the church, placing the royal bedroom right next to the rectory so he could listen to the religious service in bed. Not by chance, in an attempt to appropriate the symbolism of power, General Franco established his residence at the El Pardo Palace when he became head of the Spanish state, and the church was his favourite for official ceremonies, at a time when there was still no imposing cathedral in Madrid: Santa Maria la Real de La Almudena was consecrated only by John Paul II in 1993. The ecclesiastical edifice that had served as a cathedral until then, the Church of San Isidro el Real, dedicated to the city's patron saint, St. Isidor, the protector of simple people, of workers and craftsmen suggested something altogether different than patronage over a thriving nobility. Therefore, the Church of San Jerónimo acquired, over the centuries, the role of a royal chapel and a church belonging to state and government officials. It was not by chance, if we are to return to the ceremony held here and dedicated to the commemoration of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, that the religious service was held in the Church of San Jerónimo, as this was the place of worship preferred by the state authorities for the masses celebrated here, to which the Francoist government paid special attention.

Dismissed after the suppression of the Legionary Rebellion of January 21–23, 1941, Radu Ghenea remained in Spain, launching an important propaganda activity which supported the Legion and was directed against the Antonescu regime. In addition, several other members of the Romanian diplomatic mission in Madrid, Legionaries or supporters of the Movement (the commercial attaché Enescu, for example, or the poet Aron Cotruş, press attaché at that time), had formed here a resistance centre, by refusing to step down and expressing their confidence in the victory of the extreme right-wing forces.¹⁵ Eventually, the situation was settled with the arrival in Madrid, in the second half of April 1941, of the minister sent by the Antonescu regime, Nicolae Gr. Dimitrescu, who would, however, later also thicken the ranks of Romanian emigration in Francoist Spain. Minister Dimitrescu had played, as is well known, an important role, endorsed by Mihai Antonescu, in the policy waged by the Bucharest regime for strengthening Romania's position in the sphere of international relations, proposing the concept of Latinity at European and world level, which, after all, was in perfect agreement with the Roman imperial idea promoted by the Mussolinian regime. It is not by chance that the Antonescu regime campaigned for closer relations with Francoist Spain, where Legionaries made numerous attempts to denigrate the „Conducătorul's“ Romania, and the conclusion of the cultural agreement of March 5,

Orient in 1497 – and known as Mosteiro dos Jerónimos. It was turned by Philip II of Spain, in 1604, during the period of the Iberian Union, into a royal necropolis, a role that it would retain after Portuguese independence was secured in 1640; last but not least, the famous royal necropolis of El Escorial, built by Philip II of Spain, which was also a Hieronymite monastery, the order remaining undeniably tied to the Spanish royalty). In addition to that, Hieronymites played an important role in the spread of Christianity to the New World, first in the Antilles and the Caribbean (it should be noted that many of the bishops of Santo Domingo were Hieronymites, for example, Luis de Figueroa, appointed in 1523. At that time, his authority also encompassed the Islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico).

¹⁵ For more information, see Calafeteanu 2007, 65–69.

1942, based precisely on cultural cooperation and predicated on the idea of common Latin origins and the role of neo-Latinity at the two frontiers of Europe,¹⁶ was a genuine success. Signed by Minister Nicolae Dimitrescu and the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs Serrano Suñer, the agreement opened the way for a massive project of Romanian book translation (especially literature and history) and publication at the publishing houses of the Iberian Peninsula.¹⁷ Here was, in fact, the basis of the huge Romanian editorial presence, subsequently supported, along the lines established during the war, by the right-wing émigrés who took refuge in Spain in the post-war decades.¹⁸

In addition, it is known that as of February 1943, Mihai Antonescu launched a policy of setting up a „Latin axis,”¹⁹ which would encompass Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, and Romania, in order to save the country from a disastrous destiny at the end of the war. To this end, Mihai Antonescu had consulted Italy’s Minister in Bucharest, Renato Bova Scoppa, but Ciano made negotiations drag on and Mussolini’s dismissal rendered them an utter failure. Mihai Antonescu continued his inquiries and attempts to approach the Allies through the papal nuncio Andrea Cassulo, but also through a number of diplomats, such as the Foreign Minister of Turkey in Bucharest, the Romanian Minister in Lisbon, Victor Cădere, or Romania’s envoy to Madrid, Nicolae Dimitrescu.²⁰ Therefore, the period in which Nicolae Dimitrescu was at the forefront of the Romanian mission to the capital city of Spain was one of profound consolidation of Romanian - Spanish cultural relations and of Romanian propaganda in Francoist Spain, based on the ideological similarities between the regimes of the two military men, the Romanian Marshal and *el Generalísimo*, and of the relentless promotion of the principle of Latinity as a means of historical legitimation. On this institutional basis and benefiting from a right-wing government that was hostile to communism, the Romanian emigration of Legionary extraction thrived in Spain in the post-war years, attracting, not by chance, the attention of the Holy See, which was concerned to uphold those parts of the exile that were hostile to Moscow’s policy of destroying the authority of the church, the difference between Orthodoxy and Catholicism being of lesser importance in this context. The Legion’s activity in exile in the 1950s focused especially on Spain, where the political context was favourable. In addition

¹⁶ Significant for the spirit in which the negotiations were carried out are the statements made by Serrano Suñer, when the agreement was concluded. He spoke about the relationship between the two countries, established during the time of „the glorious imperial era of Trajan;“ see Dumitrescu 2008, 56.

¹⁷ The agreement was the climax of the Romanian propaganda in Spain, centred on the figures of the two leaders, Antonescu and Franco. In the Spanish press of the time there were published articles which insisted on Romania’s anti-communist role, on the European mission of the Romanian people. In addition, interuniversity and inter academic exchanges were stimulated (a number of Spanish academics were received in the Romanian Academy and vice versa, especially in the Spanish Academy of Pharmacy), the task of promoting Romanian culture in Spain being entrusted to cultural counsellor Alexandru Busuioceanu, who was invited by the University of Madrid to deliver lectures on the origin and Latinity of the Romanians. In addition, following the cultural agreement, the Romanian language was introduced as a field of specialisation along with other neo-Romance languages. Also as a consequence of the agreement, the „Traian“ Association was created in Valdes House on November 24, 1942, intended to support bilateral cultural relations, alongside the Hispano-Romanian Association in Madrid, see Dumitrescu 2008, 55–61.

¹⁸ We should mention the post-war magazines, such as „Destin“ or „Fapta“ and a massive policy of literary translations from Romanian into Spanish, see Cerullo 2015, 85–95.

¹⁹ See also Calafeteanu 1993, 154–156.

²⁰ Diaconescu 1997, 167–172.

to that, there was a certain willingness on the part of the Catholic Church to unite all the available forces, in an ecumenical manner, against the atheist communists. It should be noted that over time, numerous leaders of the Movement found shelter and championed their ideas in the Romanian community in Madrid. For instance, Grigore Manoilescu, towards the end of his life, was the former director of the newspaper „Buna Vestire,” a close friend of Sima’s, a former director of the Romanian Institute in Berlin, which had been established by his father-in-law, the linguist Sextil Pușcariu, in August 1940. He was a member of the National Romanian Government in Vienna, established in September 1944 as an alternative to the Soviet occupation. He died in Madrid in 1963. Other Romanian émigrés included: Horia Stamatu, a writer and journalist who lived in Madrid in 1951–61, the editor of the magazines „Fapta” and „Libertatea Românească,” and of the publication „Oriente Europeo,” and the founder of the Spanish literary review „Punta Europa”; Crișu Axente, who passed away in Madrid, in 1953, and who was a former editor-in-chief of the magazine „Axa” and a collaborator of Aron Cotruș to the Romanian-language channel of the national radio station in Madrid; Vasile Florescu, Ion Brașoveanu, Alice Ponta, the wife of Petre Ponta, Valeriu Vințan, Ion Baicu, Zoe Sturdza and, as of 1956, the commander of the Legion, Horia Sima, who settled in the Iberian capital, the Francoist regime granting him the status of a political refugee. Sima had the opportunity to teach a class at the University of Barcelona (his home in Jorge Juan no.183 became a meeting place for the exiled members of the Movement). In Spain, to which Sima tied his destiny till his death (which occurred in 1993), his wife, Elvira Sima died on April 13, 1974. They were both buried at Torredembarra, near Barcelona, in the region of Tarragona. Those who chose the path of exile to Spain included a number of the supporters of right-wing ideas and intellectuals who were hostile to the communist regime that had been set up in Romania after 1948, such as Alexandru Busuioceanu (whose name was inextricably linked to the creation of the Department of Romanian Language and Literature at the University of Madrid), Alexandru Ciorănescu (who settled, in December, 1948, in Tenerife, where he taught for thirty years Italian, Spanish and Portuguese literature, Romanian language and comparative literature), Gheorghe Uscătescu (Chair of Philosophy at the Complutense University of Madrid, his illustrious predecessors being Ortega y Gasset and Eugenio D’Ors), and Vintilă Horia (who settled there in 1953),²¹ with a significant contribution to the promotion of Romanian culture on the Iberian Peninsula.

The document published in the annex indicates that the director of the Romanian Catholic Mission to Spain, Monsignor Kirk, introduced himself in the diplomatic milieu from the Spanish capital alongside the person who had represented for years Romania’s interests in Madrid, Minister Dimitrescu. This demonstrated the Vatican diplomacy’s desire to cultivate those Romanian political forces that resided outside the People’s Republic and that could always be a possible alternative to the power imposed by Moscow. We would also like to point out that the mission that Monsignor Kirk had received from the Holy See was not at all haphazard. It must be correlated with the Apostolic See’s policy towards the entire Romanian emigration at that time. In fact, as the published document makes clear, the mission bestowed on him by the Holy Father was centred in Spain because the right-wing Francoist government, close to and well-disposed towards the demands of the

²¹ Behring 2001; Cerullo 2018, 39–41; Cerullo 2016, 273–278.

Catholic Church, provided the support necessary to sustain the religious life and faith of the communities in the countries where the Stalinist and atheist domination of Moscow had been installed. However, it was to include „all of the countries of Western Europe where there are Romanians,“ with the particularly interesting mention that its support was granted both to the *United* believers (the Greek-Catholics) and to the *schismatics*, being backed up with *American help*, as the document states. Spiritual assistance was also provided to the Romanian far right, in the sense of „an effort to pacify and unify the different political tendencies that divided the different Romanian communities.“ It is interesting to note that the Holy See promoted after 1948 similar links with the Romanian emigration of Legionary extraction in Austria, a state known for its strategic position near the Iron Curtain and an entrance gate to the West for all those who professed anti-communist ideas and sought refuge abroad. The Romanian committee organised by the Legionaries in Salzburg as early as June 1945 – set up in the „Bristol“ Hotel in the Marquartplatz, inhabited by Americans, who had placed at the disposal of all the national committees rooms where they could carry out their work, a committee led by Grigore Filiti and Marcel Ghinea, and designed to protect the social welfare of the refugees and to procure the necessary documents for them – was supported in their humanitarian projects by the Romanian Catholic Mission in Austria, which was provisionally headed by the priest Octavian Bârlea for a period of time.²² Based on the subsidies offered by the Vatican mission, the material means were ensured for the operation in Salzburg of a barrack serving as a dormitory for refugees. This Romanian asylum in Salzburg (located in Elisabeth strasse no. 38) was inaugurated in September 1949. Here many Romanian refugees and members of the Movement found shelter. It should be remembered that the above-mentioned Romanian Committee in Salzburg, which functioned in the 1950s, was also involved in the promotion of Legionary texts. For this purpose, a printing press located on Ignaz Harrer Strasse no. 75 was used. The Holy See’s appointment of Florian Müller – a priest of Latin rite born in the Dobruja region and a good connoisseur of the Romanian realities – at the head of the Romanian Catholic Mission in Austria, in November 1949, signalled an even closer involvement of the

²² Octavian Bârlea (1913–2005) resided then in Kronberg, Germany, attached to the American Archbishop of German origin Aloysius Muench (1889–1962), head of the Vatican Mission in Germany as apostolic visitor and then apostolic nuncio in the F.R.G., sent specifically for assisting the masses of refugee from Eastern Europe. A Greek-Catholic priest trained in Rome at the Pio Romeno College, at the De Propaganda Fide and at the Pontifical Oriental Institute, he had shown as early as in his doctoral writings a remarkable openness towards ecumenism, dealing with problems related to *The Orthodox Confession*. In the fall of 1945, he was entrusted by the Holy See to look after the Romanian refugees to Germany and Austria, and, in the service of the said Vatican mission, he was helped, for seven years, by the Jesuit priests Ivo Zeiger, rector of the Collegium Germanicum in Rome, by Robert Lieber, private secretary to Pope Pius XII, and Emil Herman, rector of the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome. His name is linked to the publication of the newspaper „Îndreptar. Foaie pentru gând și faptă creștinească,“ in 1950–53, in Freising. In 1952–54, Octavian Bârlea was in Paris at the head of the Greek-Catholic Romanian Mission in France, being also vice president, under Kirk’s leadership, of the Romanian Catholic Mission for Europe. In 1955, he was transferred to Rome, as editor of the Vatican Radio, and in 1957 he set up here, with the support of Cardinal Tisserant, the Romanian Academic Society (conceived as a form of anti-communist resistance through culture, as well as a place of rapprochement between the two Romanian Churches), publishing an impressive collection of related *Acta*. Appointed by Paul VI apostolic visitor to the Greek-Catholic Romanians in the U.S., he helped establish the Romanian-American Academy of Sciences and Arts (A.R.A.) in 1975. In 1978 he settled in Munich as rector of the Greek-Catholic Romanian Mission in Germany. For the biography of the Monsignor, see Fărcaș 2017.

Congregation for the Oriental Churches, led by Cardinal Tisserant (he was its secretary in the period between 1936 and 1959, the prefect dignity being assumed by the sovereign pontiff at that time) in the support offered to the Romanian refugees. It appears that the regent of the Nunciature in Bucharest, Monsignor O'Hara, had inspired this initiative, insisting in those years on the orientation of the pastoral mission towards the emigration that needed spiritual and material support. Florian Müller was expelled from Romania on January 7, 1949, together with a group of nuns who were involved in the educational system of Galaţi, Brăila, and Craiova (in a context in which confessional education was suppressed and its material basis was nationalised). After a period of time in which he stayed in Rome and acquired a deeper understanding of the Oriental rite at the Pio Romeno College, he was assigned to help the Romanian emigration in Brazil and he even moved for a period of time to Rio and São Paulo but, then, Cardinal Tisserant entrusted him, on behalf of the Oriental Congregation, to take over the leadership of the Romanian Catholic Mission in Austria, being commissioned to serve as priest of all the Romanian refugees, regardless of denomination (Orthodox, Greek-Catholic, or Catholic), and being able to hold the Mass in both of these rites. It should be noted that chaplain Müller established the headquarters of the Romanian Catholic Mission in Austria in Salzburg. On the basis of a letter of recommendation from Monsignor O'Hara, he intervened with the Austrian branch of the American Caritas, N.C.W.C. (National Catholic Welfare Conference) and its director there, Monsignor Flim, in order to provide financial support to the Romanian asylum. It was provided with a cafeteria and a dining room arranged in a bunker in the vicinity, which operated in 1950–55.²³

Therefore, the Holy See's appointment of Monsignor Kirk as the person in charge of providing spiritual and material assistance to the Romanians in Western Europe, regardless of whether they were Catholic, Greek Catholic or Orthodox, was merely the continuation of a policy launched by the Apostolic See as early as 1949, in support of the anti-communist emigration. In the context of the unilateral severance of relations by Romania, a country that was subservient to Moscow, the Vatican responded by appointing a representative for that part of Romania with which relations and connections could be maintained. The first step had been made for the Romanian refugees in Austria, where the establishment of an asylum was a priority, and it was not by chance that the Romanian Catholic Mission set up an asylum in Madrid, on Calle Homero 12, in the summer of 1951. Many exiles, including Legionaries, found shelter here. The initiative was linked to the name of the priest Florian Müller, who travelled to Madrid in January 1951 to establish an asylum of the Romanian Catholic Mission and engaged in extremely difficult negotiations with the Spanish Justice Minister. The asylum began operating on July 31, 1951, when the first group of tenants

²³ In 1953 Fr. Müller became leader of the Romanian Catholic Mission in Germany, initially based in Tattenhausen, near Rosenheim, and then in Munich, since the spring of 1954. When Austrian independence was achieved following the signing of the Treaty of May 1955 and the occupation troops subsequently retreated, American contingents were also withdrawn from there, and the American Caritas ceased its activity in Austria in the autumn of 1955. Although the last aid for refugees was received, via this channel, in the summer of 1955, the Salzburg asylum was closed down only in 1957, after being left with very few residents, and the Romanian Salzburg Committee of the Movement ceased its activity in 1958. For a memorial perspective, see Mailat 1978.

arrived in Madrid, some of them from the Romanian emigration in Austria.²⁴ The rental of the building in Calle Homero no. 12 was made by Fr. Amalio Orduña (a Jesuit monk expelled from Romania in 1949),²⁵ and the first tenants contributed with the practical experience they had acquired by organising the previous settlement. Father Orduña and the Greek-Catholic priest Alexandru Mircea supported the functioning of the establishment, which lasted until 1967, having been run by George Demetrescu, vice-president of the Romanian community in Spain.

What is also interesting is how Monsignor Kirk's mission dedicated to the Romanian emigration in Western Europe was perceived by the Romanian far-right refugees there, most of whom were Orthodox. Faced with their implacable condemnation by the regime of communist inspiration, they saw the relationship with the Apostolic See and its ecumenical and assistive attitude as a possible legitimisation of the exiled Romanians before the Western Bloc states. The unification of the Romanian Catholic Missions in the diaspora, under the authority of Monsignor Kirk, opened up the possibility for the exiled Romanians, regardless of confession, to have a central religious organisation on behalf of which they could bring the current problems of the Romanian exile to the attention of the authorities of different countries and discuss them, in parallel with the religious issue in Romania (especially the persecutions to which the Church United with Rome had been subjected), as well as with problems related to the political situation of the country, subservient to Moscow. In the eyes of the Romanian exile, Monsignor Kirk was a tireless advocate of the national cause. In addition, the unification of the Romanian Catholic Missions had been achieved under the leadership of an American prelate weighted heavily in the eyes of the Western governments. There was thus an authority that could represent the Romanians in exile in those years, somewhat similar to the way in which the Roman Church had supported the emigration of other peoples that had been placed under Soviet influence at the end of World War II, peoples that had a Catholic tradition, such as the Poles or the Hungarians. In a way, the Holy See's concern for the Romanian diaspora was similar to the attention paid to the Ukrainians, who had experienced religious Union.²⁶ The problems of the Romanian exile were supported, thus, in the Federal Republic of Germany, Austria, Italy and, last

²⁴ The first installed in the asylum were the group of people who were supposed to organise the institution, the engineer Tului Basiu, who had gathered experience in Salzburg, and Vasile Florescu, famous for the meals he prepared in the kitchen of Salzburg, then Ion Fleşeriu, Ion Bozosan, Ion Braşoveanu, Florea Stancu. The Legionaries opened the store of colonial merchandise „Los Cárpatos“ in Madrid, in 1952. They were later joined by Valeriu Vinţan, Ion Baicu and Niculae Borca, coming from France and Germany. See Mailat 1978.

²⁵ Birtz 2006, 14–15; Botiza 2005, 144. Fr. Orduña was the chaplain of the Romanian community in Spain, having served as late as the early 1970s. On September 13, 1970 he spoke at the inauguration of the monument erected in memory of the Legionaries Ion Moţa and Vasile Marin, in Majadahonda, insisting, in his speech, on the very element that drew the Romanian far right close to the Roman Church – defending the Cross and the anti-atheist and anti-communist attitude: „I see [Moţa and Marin] supporting the Cross. What did they come to Spain for? They heard the Cross was being attacked here. They heard that the enemies of the Cross were taking down, everywhere, the crosses that stood on the belfries of our churches, because people wanted to tear them down. Some fell. Many fell. The intention was to tear them all down”. See also www.mişcarea.net/1-cultul-dela-majadahonda.htm (2 October 2019).

²⁶ In fact, when the mission of Monsignor Kirk came to an end in the mid-1950s (the context was, of course, different, and the participants in the Cold War now relied on negotiations), the Congregation for the Oriental Churches resumed the system of fragmenting the Romanian Catholic Missions, removing the central leadership and subordinating each mission directly to the local bishop.

but not least, in Spain, where Monsignor Kirk had been received in the audience by General Franco as soon as he was entrusted with the mission by the Apostolic See. In fact, as regards his reception in audience by *el Generalísimo* and the position of the Vatican's diplomatic envoy, the document emphasises tersely, for the information of the Italian Foreign Affairs missions abroad, that the statements made in the press by the American prelate were „too Francoist“ for a hierarch of the Roman Church sent on a mission by the Apostolic See and that Monsignor Kirk told his interlocutor at the Italian Embassy in Madrid, with whom he had met on February 7, 1952, at the onset of the prelate's mission in Spain (from February 1, 1951 to April 30, 1954 the Italian ambassador to Francoist Spain was Francesco Maria Taliani de Marchio, representative of the De Gasperi Government), that he had not informed the Nunciature beforehand. He also commented that the time had come to tell the truth about communists and anti-communists.

In addition, besides the fact that he came from the high ecclesiastical hierarchy in the United States, certain elements of Monsignor Kirk's biography clearly indicate that he was the right person for such a mission, conceived by the Holy See as an alternative to the impossibility of running a diplomatic representation in Bucharest. Monsignor John Columbus Kirk, the son of Emory and Pearl Richards Kirk, came from a Methodist family in Athens, Georgia, a city that gravitates around Atlanta forming the cultural and economic centre of its metropolitan area, which developed in conjunction with the University of Georgia, a state institution of higher education whose Charter dates back to 1785. He was attracted to the Catholic faith during his college years in Baltimore (Maryland) at St. Mary's University,²⁷ where he obtained a degree in liberal arts, specialising in philosophy, with a relative interest in classical disciplines. The fact that he had become a Catholic – the only Catholic in a family with a strong Methodist background – after he made Catholic friends in college and attended, together with them, the Mass specific to the Roman Catholic Church, remains an important element in the biography of the prelate,²⁸ the experience of religious opening and the ecumenical spirit proved ever since his youth having been decisive for his election by the pontiff, Pius XII, who knew him closely, for a mission to support the Romanian emigration with a strong Orthodox component. Returning to the biography of Monsignor John Columbus Kirk, it should be noted that he chose the sacerdotal vocation and the Catholic religion after his period in St. Mary's University, as he completed his training at St. Charles College (Catonsville, Maryland), a second-level seminary designed for teenagers who manifested their calling to the priesthood. This seminary had been founded in the 1830s thanks to the efforts of the family of Charles Carroll of Carrollton (1737–1832), signer of the Declaration of Independence for Maryland

²⁷ St. Mary's University of Maryland is located in the first colony of Maryland, St. Mary's City – the fourth colony in British North America and also the first capital of Maryland, considered the birthplace of religious freedom in America. As early as 1791, the Seminary of St. Sulpice or St. Mary's Seminary functioned in Baltimore, a Roman Catholic educational institution elevated to the rank of University in 1805 under the name of St. Mary's University. Not by chance, for the destiny of the American clergyman we are discussing here, St. Mary's City was deemed to be the hotbed of Catholicism in America, its supporters seeking the restoration of Roman Catholic worship as a state religion (it should be noted that Colonial Maryland was founded as a Catholic colony in opposition to the Bill of Rights of 1689, reimposing Catholicism as a state religion). See Cordell et alii 1907, 5–8; Greenwell 2008.

²⁸ Greear 2004.

and the only Roman-Catholic who voted for independence and signed the document.²⁹ After completing his studies at the University of Georgia and the University of South Carolina, John Columbus Kirk was ordained a priest at St. Joseph's Church in Athens in 1944.³⁰ It is significant that the small Catholic Church of St. Joseph, founded in the Diocese of Savannah in 1881, was the first place of worship of the Roman Church in Athens, and for several decades it was only visited by priests, who celebrated the Mass on a monthly basis or less frequently. The place of worship had a resident priest only in 1911 and a corresponding edifice in 1913, the parish having at first a strong missionary component (its ministry extended over 23 counties in the northern part of Georgia). The important role of the young priest and the missionary vocation of his activity – Kirk was the first ordained priest at St. Joseph's – conferred him a certain importance in the Diocese of Savannah, so that the young priest became secretary of Bishop Gerald O'Hara and followed him on his mission to Romania in 1947. It is interesting to note that both prelates – after all, among the few North American diplomats of the Vatican at the time (they were among the first North American clergymen drafted by the Holy See in its diplomatic apparatus, in light of the victory of the allies in World War II and of the more delicate position of the Pope in the public opinion, which frequently accused him of having adopted a pro-German attitude during the conflict) – were initially summoned by Pope Pius XII, in May 1946, to be sent as envoys of the pope to Albania, but considering the persecution of the Roman Church there, the pontiff changed the mission's destination to Romania. In addition, we should emphasise the importance of the mission that O'Hara and Kirk had in the part of Europe that was under Soviet influence, Monsignor Kirk being elevated to the rank of papal Chamberlain with the title of *reverendissimo* in 1946, immediately after his arrival in Rome. A connoisseur of English, Italian, French, Spanish and Latin, Monsignor Kirk was the English teacher of Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII.

The appointment of Monsignor Kirk as leader of the Romanian Catholic Mission in Spain, who was responsible for the spiritual and material assistance of all the refugees from Romania to Western Europe, regardless of their religion, was conceived by the Apostolic See also in the context of the resumption, after the war, of the long tradition of the International Eucharistic Congresses. Starting in 1881 – in fact the year when Pope Leon XIII opened the Vatican Archives to the public – the series of eucharistic congresses represented, after all, the international expression of one of the most important doctrines of the Roman Church, the testimony of the real presence of the Saviour in the Eucharist. The first such congress, also due to the initiative of the French clergy and faithful, took place in Lille, on June 21, 1881, and so did the vast majority of the first congresses, held at first every year. However, the patron saint of the Eucharistic congresses is the Spanish mystic Saint Paschal Baylón, O. F. M., (1540–1592), known for his zeal of eucharistic worship. In 1910,

²⁹ The seminary was run by the Sulpicians (members of the Society of the Priests of Saint-Sulpice, the *Societas Presbyterorum a Sancto Sulpitio*, or the *Compagnie des Prêtres de Saint-Sulpice*, a society of apostolic life of the Roman Catholic Church that takes its name from the Parisian church of Saint-Sulpice. It was founded in France in 1641, with the purpose of educating the priests, was divided later into three provinces, with vast areas of operation: France, Canada, and the United States), and received the name of St. Charles after the name of the benefactor. See Sergeant 1833; Devanter 1975; Icard 1886. For further data on the society and the way priests are trained even at present, see *La formation sacerdotale* 2013–2014.

³⁰ *John Columbus* 2004.

the 21st International Eucharistic Congress was first held on the North American continent. In 1893, the 8th International Eucharistic Congress was the first held outside Europe, in Jerusalem. World War I interrupted the series of these religious reunions, being resumed with a biennial periodicity in the interwar years, some held in locations on different continents, in Chicago, Sydney or Tunisia. The 25th International Eucharistic Congress was organised in Lourdes between 22 and 25 July 1914, and after the war, the 26th was held in Rome on 24–29 May 1922, the chosen theme being that of *The Peaceful Reign of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist*. The last interwar Congress, the 34th, took place in Budapest, and the manifestations held on May 25–30, 1938, subsumed to the theme of *The Eucharist, The Bond of Love*, were attended by the future Pope Pius XII (Cardinal Pacelli) as papal legate. When the tradition of congresses was resumed after an interruption of more than a decade, much attention was paid to the 35th International Eucharistic Congress, held from May 27 to June 1, 1952 in Barcelona, the country of the patron saint of those reunions. Its symbolic theme was *Peace*. In addition, the Holy Father opted for a staunch Catholic and anti-communist European country. Hundreds of Catholic bishops attended the meeting, including North American Cardinals Francis Spellman of New York and Samuel Stritch of Chicago, but unfortunately the participation of the Roman Catholic prelates of communist-controlled Eastern European countries was limited. It is in this context that we must consider the mission that Monsignor Kirk, an American prelate familiar with the issues of Romania, received from the Apostolic See³¹ at that particular time and the interesting perception of

³¹ The Eucharistic Congress was attended by Monsignor Bârlea as vice-president of the Romanian Catholic Mission for Europe. In fact, it was also in 1952 that the volume *Biserica Română Unită. Două sute cinciszeci de ani de istorie. Documente* was published in Madrid, including texts by Monsignor Aloisie Tăutu, Carol Capros, Flaviu Popan, Octavian Bârlea, Alexandru Mircea, Pamfil Cârnațiu and Mircea Todericiu. It should be noted that the activities promoted by the Romanian emigration to Spain in the early 1950s included the organisation of a Romanian week in Madrid, on 7–13 May 1953. During that week, exhibitions were opened (for example, the exhibition of Romanian painting, sculpture and crafts housed by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Madrid), conferences on Romanian history were held (among those who spoke at those conferences were Antonio Tovar, rector of the University of Salamanca, Ernest Gamilscheg, Mircea Eliade, Iosif Constantin Drăgan, Ciril Popovici, etc.), aerobatics demonstrations were organised under the patronage of the Spanish aviation, on 13 May the mayor of the Iberian capital gave a reception in honour of the members of the Romanian community. On May 10 a Te Deum was celebrated by a group of Greek-Catholic priests who came from the mission to Madrid in the Church of San Francisco el Grande and were presided over by the apostolic nuncio, Monsignor Gaetano Cicognani, and the pontifical delegate for the Romanians, Monsignor Kirk, the service being accompanied by the choir of the Orthodox Church in Paris. The Romanian emigration strove to make sure that the events would be massively reflected in the Spanish press, on the radio and in cinema newsreels, and the propaganda brochure *...Y existimos (Yet We Are Still Alive)* was distributed on this occasion. Over the following years, the Romanian community in Spain was distinguished by its participation in the Second International Congress of the Latin Union, which took place in Madrid on May 10, 1954, being represented by a delegation headed by Aron Cotruș and composed of George Demetrescu, Fr. Alexandru Mircea, then rector of the Catholic Mission for the Romanians in Spain, Traian Popescu, director of the „Carpații“ publishing house. They were joined by the Romanians who had immigrated to France, Constantin Arsene, director of „Curierul Românesc,“ and Captain Cristescu, editor of the „Chemarea“ newspaper. In the summer of 1956, the Romanian diaspora in Spain participated with a Romanian handicraft stand and with folk and gastronomic manifestations in the Third International Agricultural Exhibition, organised in Madrid, at Casa del Campo, on May 23–June 22. June 21 was established as the day for celebrating Free Romania. The day of May 10 was also celebrated in 1958, when a Romanian philatelic exhibition was inaugurated in the Royal House of the Post Office in Madrid, presenting early issues and valuable stamps from Moldova, the United Principalities, the Principality and, then, Kingdom of Romania. The opening of the exhibition was graced by the presence

Spain's position imparted by the Italian diplomats to the politicians in Italy. Considering the mission of Monsignor Kirk, at least from a formal point of view, as abnormal rather than normal, the Italian diplomacy insisted precisely on the connection between the mission of the American prelate and the unique position that the Francoist government had assumed toward the countries behind the Iron Curtain, above all, the special „status“ granted by Madrid to the former diplomatic representations of the states that were now under Moscow's influence. That is why the American high prelate discussed with the former Romanian ambassador in the Iberian capital, N. Dimitrescu, all the problems related to the Romanian community and was constantly accompanied by him in the diplomatic environment there. In addition, the government in Madrid had unconditionally received the right wing and far right emigration from beyond the Iron Curtain and had granted due honour, according to their former dignities, to the foremost representatives of the anti-communists in those countries (for instance, the royal family of Bulgaria³² and His Majesty, Archduke Otto von Habsburg, the last Crown Prince of the Austro-Hungarian throne, on the occasion of his wedding).³³ Prince Nicolae of Romania had established residence here in 1951, having requested and received even financial support from General Franco, as did the former Minister of Foreign Affairs from the time of the legionary national state, Prince Mihail Sturdza (a member of the Legionary Movement).³⁴ Moreover, as the Italian diplomatic envoys in Madrid considered, it was no accident that in Spanish Foreign Affairs, Minister Prat³⁵ held the position of director of Affairs for America and was also an expert on Balkan

of the director-general of the Spanish Post Office, Bulgaria's Queen Mother, the delegate of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Minister Prat.

³² The Royal House of Bulgaria (of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha), headed by Simeon II of Bulgaria (b. 1937 in Sofia), who ruled the state in 1943–46, initially with his uncle Prince Kiril as regent, left Bulgaria in 1946, when the popular referendum that year had decided to abolish the monarchy. Avoiding forced abdication, Simeon and his family left the country, taking refuge first in Egypt, then settling in Madrid. For more information, Pérez-Maura 2002.

³³ The document refers to his wedding to Princess Regina of Saxe-Meiningen, held in Nancy on 10 May 1951. As regards the position of Franco and his government on the archduke's situation, it should be noted that, in 1961, Francisco Franco offered him to become King of Spain after his death, Otto von Habsburg declining the offer. Related to the Romanian participation in the 35th International Eucharistic Congress in Barcelona – a participation with an obvious Orthodox majority, but also with a massive concentration of Legionary elements, of representatives of the Romanian right and of Greek-Catholics under the patronage of Monsignor Kirk – Archduke Otto of Habsburg, who was the head of the Hungarian delegation, which was to follow the Romanian one in introducing itself to Pope Pius XII, allegedly claimed, rather insidiously, that „I had no idea Romania was a Catholic country.“ The vice-president of the Romanian community in Spain, George Demetrescu, aptly replied that „for the Romanians Christ is unique and we shall enter any Christian temple for His worship or defence.“ On Otto de Habsburg, see Pérez-Maura 1997.

³⁴ Prince Nicholas received the honours due to his rank in Spain (for example, in February 1952, when he arrived from Paris – according to the Spanish press – he was greeted at the airport by the representative of Foreign Affairs, the Marquis of Prat), see ABC. *Diario ilustrado de informacion general*, Madrid, 5 de febrero de 1952, 21.

³⁵ Pedro de Prat y Soutzo, Marqués de Prat y Nantouillet was born in Athens on June 23, 1892, and died in Madrid on November 16, 1969. He was the son of a Spanish minister plenipotentiary to Greece, the marquis Pedro Miguel de Prat y Nantouillet (1847–1916) – previously Spain's ambassador to China and, as of 1899, Spanish minister plenipotentiary to Stockholm and Copenhagen. He got married in Athens, on June 2, 1891, to Elise Pericles Soutzo (b. December 25, 1863), daughter of Pericles (Ioannis) Soutzo (1829–1895) and Eleni (George) Ralli (b. 1838). The diplomat had, therefore, a natural understanding of the problems of the Balkans and an interest in issues of migration in the region, especially since, in the early 1940s, he had been the

issues. In addition, the Italian diplomacy suggested that the anti-communist attitude of Francoist Spain had reached such intense levels that on the occasion of New Year, 1952, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Madrid, Alberto Martín-Artajo,³⁶ criticised the system of the Atlantic Alliance for its defensive content, stating that, at that time, Christendom, as Spanish politicians believed, should actively seek the liberation of the countries oppressed by the Soviets. It seems that the position of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs had a remarkable echo among the emigration of those states and even the American propaganda radio station in Munich broadcast it massively beyond the Iron Curtain. The questions and clarifications requested by the embassies in Madrid in relation to these statements – with explicit reference to the liberation of the peoples beyond the Curtain – were answered by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a less formal manner, claiming that Minister Artajo had not discussed anything on this issue with the interested environments, but had expressed a series of spontaneous opinions. The conclusion of the Italian diplomacy was that Spain, which did not, at the time, have diplomatic representations in Moscow's satellite countries because of its right-wing government, could afford such extremist statements, which incited a rethinking of the international geopolitical structure and of the spheres of influence established after World War II. Those statements were somehow in line with the Spanish temperament and quixotism, while also being to the liking of the great power across the Atlantic.

The document published here also insists on another aspect of Monsignor Kirk's mission to Spain. In order to provide correct spiritual assistance to the Romanian refugees in Madrid (besides the asylum that had been put into operation in the summer of the previous year in Calle Homero no. 12, also through the contribution of the Romanian Catholic Mission), in early 1952 an Oriental rite chapel was opened in the Spanish capital. On behalf of the Catholic Mission, the Jesuit monks Amalio Orduña and Santiago Morillo,³⁷

ambassador of Francoist Spain to Turkey. Pedro de Prat y Soutzo promoted, in the early 1950s, a right-wing religious movement, the United Active Christians, and in 1964 he tried to organise, with American help, an anti-communist Christian front, a „worldwide Christian movement.“ He published a series of conferences and articles on Balkan issues (for instance, *Boris III, Rey de los Búlgaros (1894–1943), conferencia del...*, Madrid 15 de junio de 1965, Madrid, [s.n.], 1965). See de Miguel 2012, 227–228; Scott 2015.

³⁶ Alberto Martín-Artajo (1905–1979), Foreign Minister of Francoist Spain in 1945–57, was not among the supporters of the Spanish Falangx, being a monarchist and the leader of a powerful Catholic movement during the time of Franco's government (who appointed him as head of the Catholic Action in 1940). His appointment as minister must be related precisely to the position of *el Generalísimo*, at the time of the defeat of the Reich, who wished to present an image of the Spanish government as Catholic and right-wing to the world. He directly contributed to the signing of the Concordat with Spain in August 1953 and the Madrid bilateral pact with the United States on September 23, 1953.

³⁷ Fr. Santiago Morillo Triviño, born in Benquerencia from Serena (Badajoz) in 1900, joined the Company of Jesus in 1918 and was ordained a priest in 1931, tying his destiny to Granada, Ecuador and Barcelona. He was sent to Valkenburg in the Netherlands, then to the Pontifical Oriental Seminary in Dubno, in Polish Ukraine. On February 2, 1936, he submitted the Oriental-rite profession of faith, converting from the Latin rite to the Byzantine one, celebrating his first religious services in the Oriental rite in Old Slavonic. A good connoisseur of Latin, Portuguese, French, Italian, English, German, Polish and various Slavic languages, he was the author of the work *Las Iglesias* 1946 and director of the magazine „Oriente Cristiano.“ He passed away in Madrid in 1966. See <http://hermandadsantoentierroguadalcanal.blogspot.com/2010/06/estancia-en-guadalcanal-de-un-famoso.html> (4 October 2019).

as well as the Greek-Catholic priest Alexandru Mircea, offered religious guidance to the Romanian community and organised the Byzantine rite chapel there.

Regarding the spiritual guidance of the refugees from behind the Iron Curtain who settled in Madrid after World War II, it should be noted that at the beginning of 1962, in the context of the ecumenical spirit promoted by the Second Vatican Council, a chapel of Byzantine rite through *Obra del Oriente Cristiano*, was opened in the capital of Spain, led by Fr. Santiago Murillo, S.J., assisted by Fr. Francisco Aguirre, who had specialised knowledge of the Oriental rite. The chapel, which is located on the Calle de Claudio Coello no. 129, near the Church of Sagrado Corazón and San Francisco de Borja of the Jesuits, was quite large (25 m" wide) and was dedicated to the Dormition of the Mother of God (corresponding to the Catholic Assunzione della Nostra Signora/Asunción de Nuestra Señora). It benefited from the whole architectural layout needed for the celebration of the Oriental liturgy (it was divided into two by the iconostasis and had the three altars in the sanctuary – that of the sacrifice and the *prothesis* and *diakonikon* annexes), hosting the celebration of the religious service of Oriental rite every day, from 9 a.m. to noon, and on Sundays at 11 a.m. and at noon. Its opening represented further evidence of the Holy See's interest in a unifying and pacifying work that would draw together the two ends and frontiers of Europe.³⁸

ANNEX³⁹

Ministero degli Affari Esteri
A.P. VII

RISERVATO

TELESPRESSO n. 14/2487
Indirizzato a
AMBASCIATA WASHINGTON
LEGAZIONE BUCAREST
SERVIZIO ORGANIZZAZIONE
ATLANTICA – SEDE
DIREZIONE GENERALE AFFARI
POLITICII-II

Roma, addì 18 FEB. 1952

Oggetto: Missione di Mons. John C. KIRK.

Riferimento

REGISTRATO 19 FEB 952AFF. POL. II

Sull'argomento in oggetto l'Ambasciata a Madrid ha, in data 7 corr. riferito quanto si trascrive, qui di seguito, per opportuna conoscenza:

“Accompagnato dall'ex Ministro Dimitrescu, é venuto a vedermi Mons. John C. Kirk, ex Segretario della Nunziatura di Bucarest che qui si presenta – come risulta dalla carta da visita – quale «Direttore della Missione cattolica rumena in Spagna. Nominato dalla Santa Sede». Egli mi ha detto che si propone di svolgere un'opera

³⁸ *Rito bizantino* 1962, pp. 26–36.

³⁹ The document is preserved in the Historical-Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome, the fund Affari Politici, Ufficio IV, Romania 1950–1957, pacco 1122.

di assistenza religiosa, culturale ed anche materiale a favore dei rifugiati rumeni, con speciale cura per la gioventù che subisce in Romania un'azione gravemente disgregatrice da parte degli organi comunisti. Ha aggiunto che la sua attività avrà come centro la Spagna, il cui Governo gli ha assicurato il suo appoggio, ma abbraccerà tutti i Paesi dell'Europa occidentale ove si trovino rumeni, siano essi Uniati o scismatici e, oltre ai fini assistenziali sopradescritti – per i quali conta sull'aiuto finanziario americano – si propone un'opera pacificatrice ed unificatrice fra le varie tendenze politiche in cui le colonie rumene sono divise.

A proposito delle dichiarazioni – invero troppo Francoiste per un prelado investito di una missione del Vaticano – da lui fatte alla stampa dopo l'udienza concessagli dal Generale Franco, Mons. Kirk ha tenuto a precisarmi che non ne aveva dato previa conoscenza a questa Nunziatura: egli le ha poi commentate dicendo essere ormai giunto il momento di dire chiaramente la verità sui comunisti e sugli anticomunisti.

Mons. Kirk ha concluso dicendomi che si ripromette di tenere contatti con questa Ambasciata.

Per la comprensione degli scopi di questa missione che si presenta, per lo meno formalmente, in maniera alquanto anomala, occorre a mio avviso considerarla in funzione dell'atteggiamento che il Governo spagnolo, come è stato già riferito, è venuto assumendo nei confronti dei Paesi oltre cortina.

Sono noti a codesto onorevole Ministero lo «status» che questo Governo accorda alle ex Rappresentanze diplomatiche di tali Paesi, le accoglienze riservate ai Reali di Bulgaria, gli onori resi all'Arciduca Ottone in occasione del suo matrimonio e numerose altre manifestazioni del genere che si riassumono nell'azione discreta che svolge il Ministero degli Affari Esteri spagnolo attraverso il Ministro Prat al tempo stesso direttore degli affari d'America ed esperto di questioni balcaniche.

Ma v'è di più: come si ricorderà, nel suo articolo di Capo d'anno, il Ministro degli Affari Esteri Signor Martin Artajo è arrivato a criticare il sistema atlantico per il suo contenuto difensivo, mentre la Cristianità dovrebbe, secondo il pensiero spagnolo, orientarsi in senso attivo verso la liberazione dei Paesi oppressi dai sovietici.

Commentando tale articolo, un alto funzionario del Ministero degli Affari Esteri mi diceva che l'allusione alla liberazione dei popoli al di là della cortina non era stata dal Ministro Artajo concordata previamente con gli ambienti interessati ma rappresentava uno spontaneo movimento del suo spirito. Il funzionario aggiungeva però che l'articolo aveva avuto grandissima ripercussione in tutti i circoli di rifugiati mentre la propaganda americana, attraverso la sua stazione di Monaco, le aveva dato la più ampia diffusione al di là della cortina di ferro.

Evidentemente la Spagna, che non ha interessi e nemmeno rappresentanti diplomatici nei Paesi satelliti, si può permettere a buon mercato questi atteggiamenti oltranzisti che, oltre a rispondere al lato donchisciottesco dell'anima spagnola, fanno in questo momento particolarmente comodo nei riguardi degli Stati Uniti.

In relazione con la Missione Kirk segnalo che in questi giorni è stata aperta al culto in Madrid una cappella di rito orientale.”

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