A SUSPICIOUS SILENCE. THE WEST ABOUT THE CASE OF GHEORGHE CALCIU-DUMITREASA

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Abstract: Father Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa was one of the famous figures of the Romanian anti-communist dissent, in the years 1970-1980, notable for the tenacity with which he supported the defense of some fundamental rights of the human condition, against a suffocating, repressive and criminal regime. His message of Christian essence managed to penetrate large segments of Romanian society, which turned it into a threat to the ideological monopoly that communism claimed. Subject to pressure, persecution, arrest, beatings, Father Calciu was quickly adopted by the West, supported, encouraged, used in anti-communist propaganda and portrayed as a hero for the courage of his confession. The present study sheds light on this whole case of Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa and without minimizing his near singular merits as an opponent of the regime, highlights an obvious silence that the West has accepted regarding him: his legionary past, the promotion, until his death, of some legionary, undemocratic, anti-Semitic and anti-Western ideas and visions. Methodologically, I began by demonstrating that Father Calciu's ethical and ideological affiliation with fascist-legionary ideas is a certainty confessed by him in biographical works. Subsequently, using US government documents, Western press, reports of human rights organizations, scientific works of a historical and political nature by American, British and Romanian authors, documents of Radio Free Europe, I showed that the West preferred to remain silent about these inclinations of Father Calciu, in order to highlight only the anti-communist opponent.

Keywords: Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa; religious dissent; communism; fascism; Ronald Reagan; Radio Free Europe

Introduction

Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa's biography raises an axiological problem in front of which one can only be disarmed from a human point of view and confused as a researcher and historian. What inner springs and life circumstances make the same individual relativize crime according to political choice? We are dealing with an existential paradox enhanced by the quality of a clergyman, that

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of denying the fascist-legionary crime, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of the unequivocal condemnation of the communist crime.

According to the criminal record, the first arrest of Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa took place in May 1942, as a teenager, for "legionary activity", but he was not convicted.\(^1\) In May 1948, he was arrested again, at the age of 23, when he was a medical student, also for "legionary activity", and this time, by sentence no. 148/1949, was convicted by the Bucharest Military Tribunal to 8 years in prison for "conspiracy", according to the famous article 209 of the criminal code. In 1957 he was involved in the "re-education" process at the Pitești prison, in the group of torturers, being convicted by sentence no. 155 of the Tribunal of the Second Military Region of Bucharest, to 15 years of forced labor for the crime of conspiracy. However, in May 1963, he was released for "expiration of his sentence" and was sent to compulsory residence.\(^2\) He was arrested again in 1979, this time for his obvious activity as an opponent of the regime, especially for his sermons given as a priest-professor at the Theological Seminary in Bucharest and received a sentence of 10 years in prison, being released in 1984.\(^3\)

This was the prison path of Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, but while the quality of dissident, opponent of communism in the late 1970s and in the first half of the 1980s were intensely emphasized and popularized, his past and his deeply legionary beliefs or his involvement in "re-education" they were forgotten, ignored, if not intentionally hidden. The surprise does not come from the literature of legionary and neo-legionary inspiration published in Romania after the Revolution, texts that cultivated and intensely promoted Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, as well as other controversial characters such as the highly publicized Vintilă Horia case, the post-mortem protagonist of a controversy related to the award of the title of honorary citizen of his hometown, Segarcea. The surprise comes from the West. There, from the late 1970s, when his name became known as an opponent of the regime, and until his death in 2006, neither the press, nor human rights organizations, nor politicians leaned on his more distant past. Moreover, his name was used intensely and almost exclusively as an element of anti-communist propaganda whenever Romania needed to be reprimanded for human rights issues, the demolition of churches or the systematization of villages. For example, Voice of America hosted his sermons after 1985, intensely promoting him as a dissident figure.\(^4\) In this way, however, his biography was presented incompletely.

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2 Ibidem.

3 Ibidem.

The present text is not, in any way, meant to challenge the courage and dissident merits of Father Calciu, it even emphasizes them, showing the way in which they spread in the West. Father Calciu's anti-communist appeal was, however, a rarity in an extremely arid landscape of Romanian dissent in the 70s and 80s, and it must be scientifically researched and capitalized on. However, it is the duty of a researcher to ask himself, and then to seek explanations, for the fact that such a famous figure, who has excelled in his struggle for religious freedom and human rights, who has been so enthusiastically adopted by the West, is spared in terms of presenting biographical stages of his youth and his obviously legionary, undemocratic, even anti-Western attitudes and ideas.

The architecture of the text we propose is a simple one. We try, in the first phase, to show, through the words of Father Calciu, that he was attracted by the legionary ideology since his youth, that he supported its policies and that, until his death he did not give up on them, he even promoted them. Then, we will exemplify with as varied sources as possible, the way in which the whole Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa case was presented in the West, showing that the emphasis was placed exclusively on the second criminal conviction, on the image of anti-communist dissident, lacking the interest and previous information in his biography.

A legionnaire by belief and life

Father Calciu's legionary beliefs are not an assumption, they are not a working hypothesis for a historical study, not even an allegation of the communist regime, but a certainty presented as such by him, on many occasions after 1989, which makes them beyond any challenge. For the present study, we will exemplify them using a biographical work, Viaţa părintelui Gheorghe Calciu după mărturiile sale şi ale altora (The life of Father Gheorghe Calciu according to his and others' testimonies), which includes an extensive interview, taken in 2006, by the Monk Moise from Oaşă. It is interesting that the first edition of this book was published in 2007 under the care of the Diaconeşti Monastery, a monastery whose nuns were the protagonists of some press articles because they sang legionary hymns to Archimandrite Justin Pârvu.

In the biographical work mentioned above, Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa offered some explanations that are difficult to digest and difficult to understand, especially since Father Calciu had to face what life has uglier and more dramatic. Asked about the education of the younger generations and about an alleged "mystified history" taught in schools, Calciu-Dumitreasa found no better answer and more edifying example than denying the Holocaust and accusing teachers of being seduced of the "need" to teach it. He even made an easy appeal to an

argument in the arsenal of deniers, challenging the Holocaust in comparison to
the crimes of communism, "(...) a greater holocaust than we had, no one had! The Jews
had no greater holocaust! But they inflated it, arranged it, took money from all sides and did
what they wanted. And now, if you talk about the Holocaust under the communists, they say
it's not true. It does not suit them, that if another holocaust occurs, they lose. They are losing
ground". In fact, it is not a novelty for a notorious figure of the Romanian anti-
communist dissent to fail in anti-Semitism. Paul Goma is also the author of a
paper, Săptămâna roşie. 28 iunie – 3 iulie 1940. Sau Basarabia şi evrei (Red Week. June
28 - July 3, 1940. Or Bessarabia and Jews), published in 2004, which perpetuates
some clichés of Romanian deniers: he tries to argue that the persecution of the
Jews was caused by their aggression against the retreating Romanians from
Bessarabia; puts the sign of equality between communists and Jews; undersizes
the number of victims among Jews in Romania; invigorates themes of
Antonescu's propaganda. But Paul Goma also directly denies the Holocaust in
Romania, which he says "is a lie, a fake, a scam, a vile threat".

Returning to the biography of Calciu-Dumitreasa, in Viaţa părintelui
Gheorghe Calciu..., in its first parts, in which he recalls his youth until the arrest in
1948, the work abounds with passages that glorify the youth organization of the
legionaries, Brotherhoods of the Cross (Fraţii de Cruce), deify Corneliu Zelea
Codreanu and proposes an idealized vision of legionarism. In 1940 he left
Mahmudia, his native village in the Danube Delta, for the city of Tulcea, to attend
the Spiru Haret high school, about which he remembered that "religion was taken
very seriously. All the students had to go to church". For these years of adolescence and
youth, Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa mentioned as the most important formative
experience, his membership in the Brotherhoods of the Cross. He had been
attracted to them a few years ago when he saw their members in the Danube Delta at a labor camp, and they looked like "serious, Christian, church-going people". At the age of 15, he was impressed by those people, by the "honesty, fairness, relationships between them, which seemed very appropriate for my education (...) They were role models, they stood out from the others!" And then, in those years when he was part of the Brotherhoods of the Cross, he was excessively disturbed by the death of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, whom he perceived as a legendary personality, "It was the hardest blow for me". He was fascinated by the activities or missions, some minor, which he had to fulfill, as a kind of courier, but which "stimulated us in the heroic sense of coming out of the common". Equally and with the same educational role, the

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5 ***, Viaţa părintelui Gheorghe Calciu după mărturiile sale şi ale altora, Bacău, Editura
Bonifaciu, 2014, p. 128.
6 Paul Goma, Săptămâna roşie. 28 iunie – 3 iulie 1940. Sau Basarabia şi evrei, Bucureşti, Ed.
7 Ibidem, p. 273.
8 ***, Viaţa părintelui Gheorghe Calciu după..., p. 24.
obligation to save "the forty part" of the daily expenses seemed to the young Calciu-Dumitreasa "an exercise of responsibility, fairness and the habit of not leaving a thing from today to tomorrow". The elitism of the organization, which did not receive everyone in its ranks, the friendships that formed as "lasting soul bonds", the moments of exercise and concentration of attention, which had an almost military load, the "restraint of instincts" by abstinence, the prayers and the emphasis on faith, understanding and assuming suffering to sacrifice and martyrdom, were all narrated by Calciu-Dumitreasa with nostalgia and the conviction that the model of the Brotherhoods of the Cross was fundamental to prepare their members as adults.

It was expected, therefore, that the political events of September 1940-January 1941 would be recalled and interpreted in a pro-legionary manner. The young Calciu-Dumitreasa was still in Tulcea during the legionary rebellion in January 1941 and did not participate directly in the events, but he had firm beliefs about them. The arrests that General Ion Antonescu made among the members of the Iron Guard were challenged by Gheorghe-Calciu, on the grounds that innocent children aged 14-15, who received very large sentences, went to prison for a simple "educational action". Remembering Virgil Maxim or Valeriu Gafencu (later protagonists of the "Prison Saints" initiative), Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa confessed that he had been disturbed by Antonescu's actions ever since. Their only guilt had been that they had joined "groups of believers (...) who had raised them in a spirit of great faith". In fact, in Calciu-Dumitreasa's memories, the months of legionary rule did not produce any abuse, in fact, the young members of the Legionary Movement were more and more appreciated and loved. Even the rebellion of January 1941 was, in the eyes of the protagonist of the memoirs, a simple harmless protest of young people.

The sentence-worthy conclusion of Calciu-Dumitreasa was that the Legionary Movement was inspired by God “because it was based on religious principles. First of all, it put faith above all else and then self-sacrifice for the nation”. As for Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, he says that a gift of the Holy Spirit was present in him and "for his martyrdom, yes, he is already a saint!".

10 Ibidem, p. 24-29.
11 Ibidem, p. 29-30.
12 Here, Father Calciu-Dumitreasa launches into a theological speculation starting from two verses from the Gospel of Matthew about the Last Judgment: „When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” (Matthew 25: 31-32), concluding that „we will go to judgment as nations. This is one of the important points of the legionary ideology. Everyone will be judged for his deeds, but also for what he has done for the salvation of his people. That is, we will be united in punishment or reward. And from here flows a whole vision of life”. Ibidem, p. 31.
13 Ibidem.
It is not surprising that when Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa became a character of anti-communist dissent interesting for Western political and media circles, the Securitate, according to known practices, launched an action to compromise the one registered in documents under the name of “Cucu-Gelu”, having as main argument his activity and legionary beliefs. The plan of action proposed in 1978 included the use of "persons of Jewish origin through which we could achieve the following combination designed to compromise Cucu-Gelu abroad and to determine the Radio Free Europe to stop providing assistance. The people in question must inform Jewish organizations in the West about the fascist past of the target, asking them to intervene with Noel Bernard, also a Jew, in order not to support him".\(^\text{14}\)

In fact, it is highly relevant that Father Calciu was buried, at his request, at the Petru Vodă Monastery in Neamț County, a monastery associated with the name of Father Iustin Pârvu, himself an active militant of the Legionary Movement. Father Iustin Pârvu tried to maintain and spread the legionary spirit in the last years of his life, until 2013. Over the years, the Romanian media has produced numerous news and press materials, some of which have even become public scandals, about the pro-legionary, anti-ecumenical, even anti-Semitic attitudes or manifestations at the Petru Vodă Monastery.

A political and intellectual silence of the West

Regarding the above, the West, whether European or North American, has kept a suspicious silence. Starting with American government circles, going through the analyzes of the influential Radio Free Europe station, consulting reports of human rights organizations, browsing the press or reading history works, all are limited to the protagonist's anti-communist message and his experience in prison from 1979-1984.

At the highest level of the American government, in the documents of the State Department that refer to the issue of human rights, the legionary past of Gheorghe Claciu-Dumitreasa is non-existent. He appears only as a fighter for the defense of human rights, as an opponent of the communist regime in Romania, as a supporter of the Free Trade Union of Romanian Workers (FTURW)\(^\text{15}\), without any reference to the years of his legionary youth or to the legionary, anti-Semitic and anti-Western beliefs preserved until his death.


\(^{15}\) It was established in March 1979, after the appearance statement was read repeatedly on Radio Free Europe. He aimed to fight against unfair dismissals and retirements, miserable working conditions, hygiene and safety at work, the unpaid extended working hours and the mobilization for so-called "voluntary" work, rallies and demonstrations. At the same time, they demanded a revision of the pension law, respect for free time and a reduction in the working week. The initiators, Gheorghe Brașoveanu and Ionel Cană, were inspired by an idea circulating then in countries such as Czechoslovakia, Poland and even the USSR, to set up free trade unions and managed to attract between a few hundred and 2000 members in the two
For example, in a 1979 State Department report on the state of implementation of the Helsinki Accords, Romania was mentioned for arresting FTURW founders Ionel Cană and Gheorghe Brașoveanu, for restrictions and discrimination suffered by neo-Protestant denominations, and for arresting "an Orthodox priest, Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa". Well informed, in 1981, the State Department expressed concerns about the situation of Calciu-Dumitreasa and even mentioned, for the first time, that he had been sentenced to 10 years for "alleged neo-fascist activities", although it is not clear to which conviction the perpetrators referred to. A few years later, in another report in 1984, in which Romania was harshly criticized for "severe violations" of human rights, the detention of an Orthodox priest "defender of human rights" was mentioned. In the next such report, it was emphasized that the human rights situation is constantly worsening in Romania, that "the practice of religious faith is strictly monitored and discouraged", but the novelty was the decision of the Bucharest authorities to release Father Calciu-Dumitreasa „probably Romania’s most celebrated current human rights case“. But this gesture by Bucharest was not convincing and sufficient for the authors of these reports, given that official detention had only been replaced by another form of semi-official detention, one at home. In this last report, from June 1985, the situation of Gheorghe Claciu-Dumitreasa is described in more detail: „Father Calciu has been under virtual house arrest; armed, uniformed militiamen restrict entrance to his apartment building entrance, while plainclothes Securitate agents are permanently stationed in the hallway in front of his door and surrounding his building. No contact is allowed with foreigners, either in person or over the telephone, and few, if any, Romanian friends are allowed access. While attending church services or shopping, he is surrounded by Securitate agents who prevent any contact with other people“. The authors were also well informed that Father Calciu had applied for emigration, but was refused and could not have access to any consular office. It appears from these reports that the State Department carefully monitored the situation in Romania, was informed in detail about the situation of some detainees and we can assume that it was aware of their past, in this case Calciu-Dumitreasa, without mentioning it.

If at the State Department this information about Calciu-Dumitreasa's past was missing or considered irrelevant, it was very unlikely that members of Congress would be aware of it. That is why, in June 1981, Senator Bennet Johnson requested information, also from the State Department, about the situation of the arrested Orthodox priest, about whom he only knew that he had received a 10-year sentence.21

However, what remained in everyone's mind as a defining image were the receptions of Father Calciu by two American presidents, Ronald Reagan and George Bush, as well as their remarks about the suffering endured in communist prisons. Here, for example, is what President Bush said at a convention of religious media institutions in the United States in 1990. „Gheorghe Calciu, a Romanian Orthodox minister. His story proves you can’t kill an idea, or you can’t destroy the human will. Father Calciu has spent 21 of his 64 years in jail -- 21 of his 64 years, a third of his entire life, in prison. And in fact, he found God there while in prison for opposing the Government. Released, he risked his freedom by preaching a series of Lenten sermons. And for that he was imprisoned again, tortured beyond belief. Yet Father Calciu had faith”22

For the United States Government, the case of Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa must also be understood in a certain particular context of bilateral relations. After about two decades in which the Romanian-American friendship was obvious to the level of heads of state23, the 1980s marked a clear deterioration of these relations.24

The issue of human rights and the annual renewal of the Most Favored Nation Clause25 could not be separated in the following years, to the despair of the Bucharest regime, proving to be an increasingly difficult undertaking. Until 1986, the annual hearings for the Clause were dominated by those representing religious interests and the issue of human rights.26 The golden age of Romanian-American relations was about to end, and the first signal was the appointment of

21https://foia.state.gov/search/Results.aspx?searchText=Romania&beginDate=19770101&endDate=NaNNaNNaN&publishedBeginDate=&publishedEndDate=&caseNumber=
25 For renewal, the US president was calling on Congress to accept a derogation from certain human rights standards, such as the famous Jackson-Vanik amendment, which made the United States' Clause or other type of trade agreement conditional on freedom of emigration.
David B. Funderburk as ambassador to Bucharest, a conservative with clear anti-communist views and who then recounted what he discovered in Bucharest.27

In 1982, when President Reagan asked Congress for a new extension of the Clause by derogation from the condition of emigration, he did not do so without reservation and without expressing concern to Romania, and Mircea Malita, Romania's new ambassador to Washington had to work to resolve as many emigration applications as possible.28

Far from being receptive to messages and protests in Washington, the Bucharest regime has managed to erode even worse bilateral relations. On October 22, 1982, the adoption of Decree 402 on the reimbursement of education expenses for those wishing to emigrate was announced.29 The adoption of the decree provoked outrage in the United States, and on March 4, 1983, Reagan announced that he intended to suspend the Clause granted to Romania and other trade advantages. The threat seems to have been taken seriously in Bucharest. The Cause was still important for Ceaușescu, who had already begun the plan to pay off foreign debt, among other things by increasing exports and decreasing imports in order to have a surplus trade balance.30

In the following years, the relations between Romania and the United States deteriorated rapidly. The causes of this situation were multiple, from the aggravation of the situation of religious minorities, the destruction of cultural heritage, the obstacles to emigration. The election of Mikhail Gorbachev at the head of the CPSU and the support he showed for peace, made the "Romanian deviation" useless. In addition, the Clause had become economically unprofitable for the US, due to Romania's low imports.

In 1984, the extension of the Most Favored Nation Clause was increasingly difficult to obtain, and the objections in the House of Representatives and the Senate focused on three directions: religious persecution, ethnic discrimination, harassment of emigrants. Ceaușescu was thus forced to make a few gestures to cover at least partially the increasingly intense criticism that was brought to him. In this regard, Father Calciu was released from prison in the summer of 1984, and the Clause was extended again.

During 1985, the issue that came to the attention of the United States the most was the freedom of religious groups, primarily neo-Protestant ones. Even so, the Clause was extended for another year, but in December, when President

29 The decree established the obligation for people who wanted to emigrate to reimburse the state for tuition fees from the gymnasium upwards, some amounts reaching $ 20,000 to be paid in foreign currency.
Reagan delivered a speech on the occasion of International Human Rights Day, he wanted to publicly admonish Romania for restrictions on the distribution of the Bible and its recycling in toilet paper.\textsuperscript{31}

The year 1985 was a crossroads from another point of view. Congress called for the issue of extending the Clause to be no longer linked to emigration, but directly to the issue of human rights, especially religious freedom.\textsuperscript{32}

The nervousness in the Congress increased on this topic, increasing the number of motions submitted for the suspension of the Clause. In 1987 it was the last extension. Ceaușescu had come to the conclusion that the extension of the Clause did not compensate for the pressures exerted by congressmen and international organizations and what he perceived as interference in internal affairs. He was no longer willing to make concessions, and in February 1988 he announced that he was renouncing the renewal of the Most Favored Nation Clause.\textsuperscript{33}

It is clear, therefore, that in the 1980s, the issue of human rights had become an integral part of American foreign policy, even for moral reasons, and the emergence of an almost exceptional figure through the courage to openly challenge communist despotism, such as Calciu-Dumitreasa, was a leverage that the White House could not miss or ignore. His past was irrelevant to the time of the 1980s, so only the image of an anti-communist dissident was intensely cultivated.

While the Washington government has ignored Father Calciu's troubled past, human rights organizations have not even bothered to investigate and present more fully all elements of his biography, especially the controversial ones. More than two decades after British lawyer Peter Benenson founded the movement in 1961, Amnesty International had become a globally recognized organization dealing with the full spectrum of human rights issues. In July 1987, it published a tens of pages report on human rights violations in socialist Romania in the 1980s. Besides the fact that the references to the Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa case are fragile and inconsistent, the theme of his legionary past is totally absent. In the first phase, the report reviews Father Calciu's arrest in March 1979 and his 10-year sentence for criticizing the communist authorities in his sermons. From here, the document takes over the official phraseology, noting that „the romanian authorities publicized the fact that he had been a political prizoner for 15 years (1949-1964) and claimed that he belonged to the Romanian fascist movement, the Iron

\textsuperscript{32} Ibidem, p. 510-520.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibidem, p. 538-540.
Therefore, in Amnesty International's view, Calciu-Dumitreasa's membership in the Legionary Movement was not a certainty, but only an allegation of the regime.

The same report then describes, for example, the investigation to which Father Calciu was subjected in 1979, quoting from an open letter from him: "In the time when I was under investigation the two investigators, the Securitate Colonel and the Colonel-Procurator did nothing for a period of some days other than insult me and my family - living and dead - in the most degrading way possible. This was the time when the Securitate police had decided - in advance - that I was to be condemned to death ... After three days of investigation, in which I had answered no questions, the Commander of the Securitate came into the office and ordered that I be subjected to continuous investigation lasted 48 hours".

Although the report has no details about the actual period of detention, it also describes, like all Western sources, the restrictions to which Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa was subjected after his release, first the forced residence, then the ban on leaving Bucharest, cataloging "the restrictions so severe that they amounted to imprisonment". The letter of June 1985 is also quoted here to point out this treatment he underwent with his family: "For months, there have been three militiamen stationed day and night in the entrance hall of the block where we live, another three at one end of the street, and another three at the other end. They check anyone who comes into the entrance hall and accompany them to the flat they wish to visit; if [they say] they are coming to our home their names are recorded in a register, and, with the exception of relatives and some very close friends, they are forbidden to come up. Three Securitate cars, each with two or three police in them, are stationed day and night near our building, and when we go out into town – even for bread or milk - at least six of them come with us, shoulder to shoulder, so that we don't exchange a word with anyone. People who innocently greet us have their identities checked, and are threatened and forbidden to have any contact with us". Finally, when he applied to leave the country, he was allowed to emigrate in August 1985. What is certain is that, and this emerges from the quoted report, at that time, it was more important for Amnesty International to draw attention to the dramatic situation in Romania regarding respect for human rights, including the case of Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, than to focus on his past.

As for the Western press, it also did not pay attention to this biographical detail, ignoring it, minimizing it but most often hiding it. Until his release in 1984, for example, most articles were calls to make known his situation in prison or to call for an end to persecution. In September 1980, The British Romanian Association, through the voices of Leonard Kirschen and Horia Georgescu, drew attention, in "The Times", to the situation of dissidents in Romania, invoking several names in this regard, Ionel Cană, Gheorghe Braşoveanu, Vasile Paraschiv

36 Ibidem, p. 24-25.
and Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, who was known to have been imprisoned in 1948-1964.\(^{37}\) Also, in December 1983, The Times also wrote that the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcine, had made a personal appeal to the Romanian authorities a year earlier, during a visit to Bucharest. Since then, the situation had worsened, and the Anglican hierarch was to make a new appeal to the Romanian Ambassador to London. According to the information that The British Romanian Association had, Father Calciu's situation was critical, being kept in isolation for whole periods and being beaten if he made the sign of the Cross.\(^{38}\)

Even many years after the collapse of the communist regime in Romania, when perhaps the need to emphasize exclusively the issue of human rights violations was no longer so pressing, when the demand for a speech against a totalitarian communist regime disappeared, the American press wrote about Calciu-Dumitreasa in a exclusively laudatory manner. At his death, for example, in November 2006, "The Washington Post" published an obituary signed by Patricia Sullivan, presenting only the anti-communist priest Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa. He died on November 21, 2006, at the age of 80, from pancreatic cancer. At that time, Father Calciu was the pastor of Holy Cross Church in Bailey's Crossing, Virginia. The author describes him as "a hero to his religious brethren and to anti-communists around the world for standing up for his beliefs despite long prison terms, torture and death threats". The first incarceration took place in 1948, when he was studying medicine in Bucharest, "for making speeches against the imposition of Communist rule".\(^ {39}\) The author did not know or did not consider it necessary to mention that the accusations of a political nature brought against Calciu-Dumitreasa also concerned his membership in the Legionary Movement. Further, the article mentioned that in prison "he came to admire the priests who were also jailed, and his faith grew"\(^ {40}\), without establishing that many of the other detainees, priests or laity, were also legionaries, as Calciu-Dumitreasa himself said. After his release, he studied French, then theology with the support of Patriarch Justinian, being appointed professor at the Theological Seminary in Bucharest and ordained a priest. His situation worsened in 1978, when he gave a series of sermons condemning Ceaușescu's religious persecution in Romania, violation of conscience rights, and demolition of churches. First he was forbidden to preach in the Church, then the gates of the seminary were closed so that believers could

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\(^{40}\) Ibidem.
not come in large numbers, he was warned to stop, then arrested the following year receiving another sentence of 10 years.\footnote{Ibidem} „Prison the second time was much worse” note the author of the article, recounting in detail the episode in which two detainees were instructed to assassinate Calciu-Dumitreasa, but eventually came to convert to the faith.\footnote{In Aiud, the management of the penitentiary distributed him in a cell with two detainees, "some brutes", who had the mission to discipline him, to make him work, to give up prayer, terrorizing him for a month, according to the management, the same management who asked them to kill him. According to the protagonist's testimony, in the end, through God's care, the two detainees spared his life: „We're not killing you anymore. Let the guards do it! If they need to kill you, let them kill you! We're not killing you anymore”, confessed one of them. *****, Viata părintelui Gheorghe Calciu după..., p. 108-110.} Eventually, international pressure, even the personal insistence of President Reagan and Vice President Bush, who also used the lever for the annual renewal of the Most Favored Nation Clause, led to his release and emigration to the United States in 1985. In the next years he led demonstrations and lobbied Congress in addition to preaching radio sermons, still vocal in his criticism of atheism in Romania's government, and the FBI even investigated an assassination attempt ordered by Ceaușescu.\footnote{Patricia Sullivan, op. cit.} Total silence regarding the political past and the legionary-fascist options of the deceased.

Another example, also marking the death of Father Calciu, is the obituary published in "The Washington Times" and which gave him a brief biography. Born in Mahmudia, Tulcea, Calciu-Dumitreasa studied medicine in Bucharest, until, in 1948, the new communist authorities „imprisoned him because he espoused Orthodox Christian morals and a deep religious conviction”. During this first period of detention he also went through "re-education", „a tactic used by the regime to erase Christianity from the youth of the nation”.\footnote{George Calciu, 80, Orthodox priest, in „The Washington Times”, November 24, 2006. \url{https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2006/nov/24/20061124-105911-1242r/} (accessed 09.09.2020)} The 1948 conviction was also due to the legionary political affiliation, and regarding the "re-education" it seems that he was also a participant in it, not just a victim, details that were missing. After his release in 1964, he studied French and theology, was ordained a priest and worked at the Theological Seminary in Bucharest, where he „remained vocal in his criticism of the atheistic government and its allies, preaching Christianity to all who would listen, especially the many young people who were drawn to his message”. He was arrested again in 1979, convicted, but Western pressure, including from some Romanians such as Mircea Eliade and Eugen Ionescu, led to his release and leaving the country. After settling in the United States he preached against communism, participated in public events, including in the presence of President Reagan and Vice President Bush, wrote books and articles, „known around the world for his sufferings and
commitment to Christ in the face of persecution”, but not at all known for his past political commitment or many of his pro-legionary visions.

More surprising is that this silence was equally visible in the specialized works of American and British authors, dedicated to Central and Eastern Europe on issues related to resistance and repression in communist regimes, human rights, Romania’s relations with the United States. For example, David P. Forsythe, a professor at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln and a pioneer on the issue of human rights in the political sciences, wrote in 1993 about the silence and complicity of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the 1979 arrest of Father Calciu: „Such collaboration between the church and Romanian authorities led to the arrest in March 1979 of Father Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, who had become outspoken on the subject of the regime’s atheism. The Romanian Orthodox priest was released from prison in 1985 after much international pressure, but very little internal religious pressure, was focused on his case”.

As for the legionary past, not a word.

In another paper, the former American ambassador to Bucharest, between 1985-1989, Roger Kirk, author of a paper on Romanian-American relations, approached the issue of Father Calciu several times in the pages of his book, but exclusively from the perspective of human rights and renewal of the Most Favored Nation Clause for Romania. Romanians welcomed Ronald Reagan’s election to the White House, recalling that the most important advances in bilateral relations had been made during Republican presidents. They even hoped that the new president would not focus on the human rights issue, as President Carter had done. However, this problem constantly reappeared in the debates in Congress every year when the Most Favored Nation Clause had to be renewed. Thus, in 1981-1982, human rights violations, especially with regard to Protestant communities, Orthodox clerics with dissident tendencies, or discrimination against the Hungarian minority, were well known in Congress. It was not enough, and Romania received the extension of the Clause. The problems began to complicate in 1983, when the Bucharest government decided to impose a tax on those who wanted to emigrate, equivalent to the expenses incurred by the Romanian state for their education, which was in contradiction with the Jackson-Vanik amendment. It took several months of American pressure and negotiations, a public threat from President Reagan not to renew the Clause and an exchange of letters between him and Nicolae Ceaușescu so that the emigration tax would not be applied and Romania would receive again the Most Favored Nation Clause.

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But the issue of human rights could not disappear from the bilateral agenda, as Vice President George Bush’s visit to Bucharest in September 1983 showed. Even so, in 1984, Reagan recommended a new extension of the Clause, and the Congress did not oppose it, due to gestures with a strong symbolic charge that Romania made. The first was Ceaușescu’s decision to send Romanian athletes to the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, in the context in which the USSR and other communist countries had announced a boycott. The second gesture was the release of Father Calciu from prison, after five years of detention, but in connection with this dissident Orthodox priest, the author does not provide any other information about his past.49 The name reappears in the context of a visit to Bucharest by Senator Robert Dole, the Republican leader in the Senate, at the end of May 1985. Meeting with Ceaușescu, he asked him to allow and accelerate the emigration formalities for Calciu-Dumitreasa and his family, things that the Romanian leader accepted out of the desire to maintain good relations with the United States and a high level of bilateral trade. But in July 1985, when hearings were held in the Senate to extend the Clause, several senators announced that they would oppose precisely because the emigration of the Calciu family was delayed. The fact alerted the Romanian embassy in Washington, and it addressed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bucharest to unblock the situation. In the end, Ceaușescu agreed, but insisted that the gesture be promoted as a goodwill to Senator Dole’s request in May, and not as a surrender to pressure from elements "hostile" to Romania in the Senate.50 No wonder in a letter to Ceaușescu in December 1985, Reagan thanked him for his efforts „in the resolution of several human rights cases, particular that of Father Calciu”.51

Even in a paper on the history of Christianity, Adrian Hastings, writing about the persecution suffered by various Christian denominations by communist regimes, noticed an increase in the late 1970s, amid efforts to respect human rights. Sporadic examples also existed in Romania, first among the neo-Protestants, then among the Orthodox. But the leaders of various religious denominations „were prompt to co-operate with the secular authorities by repressing dissent within their own denominations”, the most telling case being, again, that of Father Calciu, „whose preaching and political involvement led to his arrest in 1978 and release to emigrate in 1984”.52 Furthermore, we do not know who Father Calciu was and what his political, ideological or prison antecedents were. All that remained was the fact that even in a church tolerated by the regime, such as the Romanian Orthodox Church, any criticism of the status quo was impossible, causing great image damage since it was increasingly identified with the repressive regime.

49 Ibidem, p. 10.
51 Ibidem, p. 268.
Two other British authors, Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe, dealing with a topic about anti-communist resistance, limited themselves to naming Calciu-Dumitreasa in a wider list of dissent personalities, without biographical or political details.\(^{53}\)

Even two Romanian authors, Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu, in a work dedicated to the relationship between religion and politics, repeatedly touch on the case of Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, but only to exemplify a case of dissent among the clergy, who dared to protest against the demolition of churches and to demand respect for religious freedoms, being convicted in 1979 and almost forced to leave the country, but also a case of collaboration of the church hierarchy with communist authorities.\(^{54}\) What triggered the regime's anger against Calciu-Dumitreasa was the series of sermons dedicated to young people at the Theological Seminary in Bucharest, but attended by a much more varied and numerous audience, in which he denounced the demolition of churches, condemned atheism and materialism and called to the rediscovery of Christian values. Convicted in 1979, then defrocked by the Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Father Calciu had to endure the communist detention regime: "his food ration has been reduced, he is given very little bread, because they want to kill him. He was told that if he needed more food to go to work. But he says he’s not going, that then they’ll find an excuse, like he wants to run away, and shoot him.". It was only at the insistence of the West that he was allowed to emigrate, and after 1989, the Synod revoked his defrocked decision.\(^{55}\) Here, too, we do not find even a fragmentary biographical data from the protagonist's youth. The same information is repeated by the two authors in another jointly signed paper, "Church, State, and Democracy in Expanding Europe".\(^{56}\)

The notable exception is the British historian Dennis Deletant, who suggested the participation of detainee Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa in "re-education" after the transfer from Pitești prison to Gherla prison. The author used the testimony of another detainee from Gherla, Dumitru Bacu, who mentions Gheorghe Calciu as one of the executioners he feared the most, having the fame of being the most efficient of the commander's informants.\(^{57}\) His legionary sympathies can also be understood from the fact that in the trial against the authors of "re-education", i.e. the famous Țurcanu group, Calciu-Dumitreasa refused to the statements requested by the Securitate investigators, in the sense


\(^{55}\) Ibidem, p. 159-160.


that everything was orchestrated by legionnaires, reason for which was judged separately from the rest of the group. 58

Dennis Deletant also recounts the moments related to the 1979 arrest as a result of the sermons held, the protests against the demolition of churches and the audacity to demand the observance of some basic freedoms of conscience. It should be noted that in May 1979, at the time of the establishment of FTURW, Father Calciu was a kind of spiritual mentor for the initiators of the trade union movement. 59 It all began in 1978, with Easter sermons at the Radu Voda Church in Bucharest, sermons that beyond the spiritual message to young people, was a frontal attack on official atheism, based on the force of a totalitarian state that enslaves the individual, while Christianity frees the person. These were the immediate cause of his arrest in March 1979, and the 10-year sentence he received after an investigation in which he had been brutally beaten. 60 He was released in August 1984, as a result of international pressure, placed under house arrest, and only then was he allowed to return to Bucharest, but under severe restrictions. The street and the block of flats where he lived were constantly monitored by the Securitate, no one could visit him, he was flanked on the street when he went shopping so that no one would come in contact with him. 61 But Calciu-Dumitresca's notoriety abroad and especially in the West had become uncomfortable for the regime, and following international pressure he was offered a visa to leave the country in August 1985, somewhat in a hurry so as not to affect the renewal of the Most Favored Nation Clause by the US Congress. One of the conclusions of Dennis Deletant after the presentation of this case of Gheorghe Claciu-Dumitreasa is related to the position and attitude of the hierarchy of the Romanian Orthodox Church in relation to the state authorities, always obedient, flattering and afraid not to lose the few privileges allowed: „It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Orthodox believers were not well-served by their leaders under Ceaușescu; the leaders' compliance with the regime can of course be explained by the privileged position and the freedom to worship which they enjoyed, and they expressed their gratitude for that privilege in the ritual adulation of Ceaușescu. Sycophancy towards Ceaușescu became commonplace among the Orthodox hierarchy, spawning declarations in which black was presented as white”. 62

58 Ibidem. 40.
59 Ibidem, p. 100; 247.
60 Although the Securitate's methods had become more refined, frequently resorting to psychiatric asylum, for example, in the late 1970s, beatings in communist prisons were still widely used. Ibidem, p. 101.
**The Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa case on Radio Free Europe**

Radio Free Europe, a media institution that we cannot suspect that it was poorly informed or uninformed about the events in Central and Eastern Europe or that it did not pay attention to the biographies of various anti-communist dissidents and human rights fighters, Radio Free Europe ignored the legionary youth of Calciu-Dumitreasa. It is not a singular case. Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, who appear in dozens of documents produced by the radio station, are practically exonerated from their legonary youth.

Radio Free Europe was the West itself for most Romanians, Poles or Czechs, but also for the leaders of communist regimes. The information and comments broadcast by the radio station were the most tangible and close to Western reality that the inhabitants of the communist countries could perceive.

Radio Free Europe was founded in 1950 as one of the four divisions of the National Committee for a Free Europe, created a year earlier as a structure of the US State Department. Until 1971, it was financed by the US Government, through the CIA, later the control was entrusted to a Board for International Broadcasting, appointed by the President of the United States. The radio station provided its listeners in Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union with political information and commentary from around the world, but especially from their own countries, and was credited with great merits in overthrowing communist regimes. From this point of view, the historical literature\(^63\) includes Radio Free Europe among the most effective instruments of the American psychological warfare and the American liberation strategy.

In the numerous situation reports or more complex reports that radio documentarians drew up, he always appears as a fresh figure in opposition to the communist regime, criticizing the demolition of churches, denouncing violations of human rights and religious freedoms, strongly asserting subordination and the passivity of the church hierarchy before the institutions of the regime. Although Calciu-Dumitreasa's biographies also show the period of detention that began in 1948, which proves that there was no lack of information about his youth, the legionary episode was passed over in silence.

For example, such a document, dated September 1984, announced the release of Father Calciu from prison, "the most articulate Romanian critic of the regime in recent years", five years after his 1979 arrest, which led to a total of 21 years spent in communist prisons, if we add the period 1948-1964. The 1979 conviction was

due, as Radio Free Europe rightly summed up, to spreading a message of Christian essence among young people, to whom he demanded „to break through the barriers of atheistic indoctrination and to turn to Christianity for spiritual guidance”. The appeal to young people was to rediscover a religious ethic „as an alternative to communism’s ethical relativism”, given that only the transcendent values of Christianity could represent a defense „against the total claim of communist ideology on man’s soul”. Furthermore, the report summarizes in no more than four lines the years of Calciu-Dumitreasa’s youth. Although wrong about the year of birth, 1928 instead of 1925, the document points to the first arrest, that of 1948, under common accusations at that time in communist Romania, „fascist terrorist crimes” and mentions just as briefly that he was among „thousand of political prisoners, most of them students, who were subjected to the infamous experiment of re-education through torture at Pitești and in other prisons during the 1950s”. Other details, related to the involvement of Calciu-Dumitreasa in this experiment are missing, but the authors of the document were of the opinion that being one of the survivors, his religious vocation was accentuated, and after his release in 1964 he studied theology with the help of Patriarch Justinian, ordained priest and appointed professor at the Theological Seminary in Bucharest.

The activity of teacher was not limited to a simple didactic act, but must be put in the context of a deep moral and social crisis, analyzed in the context of the intensification of the anti-religious restrictive measures of the regime and correlated with „the Orthodox hierarchy’s failure to play its proper role in reasserting the perennial religious values that the regime’s discredited ideology had sought to displace”. Father Calciu gave a direction to the teaching activity, „to encourage Romanian society to sustain religious values in the face of the authorities’ ideological pressures”, to insist on the orthodox clergy to resist the restrictions already imposed and to work „to reopen areas of religious life that had been closed by the regime”.

Obviously, Radio Free Europe was remembering the moment of the seven sermons addressed to young people in the spring of 1978, which „attracted overflowing audiences of students and intellectuals of all ages” și au reprezentat „a highly effective challenge at the philosophical and moral lever, to the fundamental postulates of communist ideology and the improper intrusion of communist state authority into the spiritual sphere”. Father Calciu defended „religious freedom as a guarantee of human liberty an spiritual life as giving meaning and purpose to human existence”. He therefore appealed to those who listened to him to rediscover the primacy of the spiritual over matter and thus to reaffirm the right to freedom of conscience in the face of state coercion. Arguing that freedom of conscience is part of the legacy of the human being, against the acceptance of officially proclaimed necessity, the speaker

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65 Ibidem, p. 25.
66 Ibidem.
challenges the statement of Marxism regarding the so-called laws of social development that subordinate the individual to the masses. In opposition to this, he affirmed the Christian idea of love of neighbor and brotherhood which had the quality of preserving the freedom offered by God to the individual, but also his uniqueness.67

In a state whose ideological basis was violence and repression, human freedom claimed, more than anywhere else, the freedom to choose and practice a faith, or those could not be fulfilled without a competition of ideas at the social level and without release from restrictions and oppression of the state at the religious level. Therefore, Father Calciu reminded his listeners, in one of the famous sermons of 1978, that “communist ideology based its authority on the interdiction of response; state power was the sole source of the strain of officially imposed atheism”, in other words, institutionalized violence is the only instrument through which state atheism is imposed. By denying the human spirit the right to religious exercise through forced atheist indoctrination, it resulted in the killing of that spirit or its irreparable amputation.68

Very rarely in his speeches did Father Calciu deviate from strictly theological, philosophical or moral themes, but when he did he appealed to the hierarchy of the Orthodox Church to stand up in defense of its fundamental values and the interests of the flock they pastored: religious education, observance of religious holidays and, especially, the demolition of churches.69

As proof of a thorough information and the fact that there was no lack of concrete data, the analysis of the radio station continues with a few paragraphs on the huge echo and the consequences that Father Calciu's sermons had, both in Romania and abroad. First of all, it was about the young people in the audience, overly impressed by “a unique experience of spiritual and moral inspiration” and who, moreover, had the courage to acknowledge these things in investigations carried out by the authorities. According to an engineering student, the sermons convinced him that “the defence of truth and justice must take precedence over opportunism and complacency, and that adherence to principles must override moral compromises”. And a young high school teacher regretted “for having carried out the authorities' orders over the years to dissuade his students from attending Church services”.70 Alarmed, the state authorities could not attend peacefully and used, as so many times in the past, the obedience of the Church. Thus, Father Calciu was dismissed from the Theological Seminary, then defrocked, and from here his notoriety increased to the dissatisfaction and concern of the authorities. Thus, in April 1978, a Romanian Christian Committee for the Defense of Religious and Conscientious

68 Ibidem.
69 Ibidem.
70 Ibidem, p. 27.
Freedom was established among the evangelical Baptists\(^{71}\), organized on a broader interfaith basis and which did not hesitate to defend Father Calciu, already subjected to harassment by the authorities. Moreover, after his arrest, one of the leaders of the committee, Pavel Nicolescu, visited him in prison. In his turn, Calciu-Dumitrescu wrote an appeal to a committee of French intellectuals for a Europe of freedoms, becoming a member of it. Finally, in 1979, when FTURW was founded, Father Calciu offered spiritual assistance and encouragement to the founders.\(^{72}\)

Equally consistent and detailed was the information that Radio Free Europe had about the arrest of Father Calciu in March 1979 and the five-year detention period that followed. The 10-year sentence had come for anti-state activity and the disclosure of state secrets, and most of it had been executed in Aiud, Jilava and Calea Rahovei. The treatment suffered in prison was known to the authors of the document: "he was constantly beaten, including beatings with a stick over his hands when he was seen making the sign of the cross; was kept for different periods of time in isolated confinement; and was deprived of beating, a bed, and food for periods that included winter time."

His wife and other witnesses who had seen him reported that he was disfigured from the beatings, had reached a weight of 38 kg and was not offered any medical assistance. He repeatedly went on hunger strike, especially around the sessions of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the authorities made him offers of release only in exchange for pleading guilty and a request for pardon addressed to Nicolae Ceaușescu. He refused.\(^{73}\)

As for the international reaction and support from the West, they were massive according to Radio Free Europe. An enumeration is more telling than anything: human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, the Helsinki Watch Committee and the International Society for Human Rights; a large

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\(^{71}\) The Romanian Christian Committee for the Defense of Religious and Conscious Freedom was established in April 1978, on the initiative of nine Baptists, who immediately sent a statement and an appeal to the state authorities and the Baptist Union, entitled "Stop the Persecution," requesting "affirmation of the moral and spiritual values of the Christian religion; defense of religious and conscience freedom; defending and helping all those persecuted because of their religious beliefs; promoting interfaith ties between Christians in Romania and with those abroad; informing the public opinion in Romania and abroad on the religious persecution in Romania; an analysis of the religious phenomenon in the context of socialist society". The Committee's most important document was drawn up in July 1978, entitled the 'Program of Claims drawn up by the Committee for the Defense of Religious and Conscience Freedom', in 24 points essentially calling for respect for religious freedoms, in a multi-faith international agreements that Romania had signed. As expected, the repression of the committee was strong coming from the Securitate, the Department of Religions and local authorities. It resulted in layoffs, arrests, surveillance and even suspicious deaths. CPADCR, *op. cit.*, p. 380.


\(^{73}\) Ibidem.
A number of French intellectuals, especially those who formed a French Committee for the Defense of Father Calciu; religious rights organizations such as East Watch International, Christian Solidarity, but also several churches, the Vatican, the German Evangelical Church, the Archbishop of Canterbury; Western governments, the State Department that hinted that the issue of Father Calciu's situation is always on the bilateral agenda with Romania; Chancellor Helmut Kohl, French, Canadian Foreign Ministers; British, French, Austrian, Swiss parliamentarians, members of the US Congress. As a consequence of this international pressure, the release of Father Calciu came in August 1984, followed by some kind of house arrest and surveillance. The radio station's conclusion was that the release was “a success for the forces that stand for human rights and another demonstration that leverage can be applied effectively; but, above all, it is a victory for Calciu's own moral fortitude and dedication to a cause that commands universal support”.

Therefore, five pages from a well-documented analysis of Radio Free Europe about the biographical route of Father Calciu, but not a word about the legionary past.

A year later, in August 1985, another analysis and synthesis report of Radio Free Europe dedicates a consistent space to the Calciu-Dumitreasa case. On this occasion, the causes of the 1979 arrest are only mentioned, namely the sermons given a year before, attended mainly by young people, in a worrying number for the authorities and whose texts circulated very widely afterwards. The themes chosen for these sermons referred to religious freedom, the autonomy of individual conscience, the Church's defense against the intrusion of political power, and were an appeal to young people to return to Christianity to discover the moral landmarks they needed. For these speeches, Father Calciu was defrocked, and then he was convicted, in 1979, for supporting the initiators of a free trade union. It took 5 years of international pressure to be released in August 1984.

The novelty of this analysis was that it brought to the attention of the listeners three new texts of Father Calciu sent to the West. The first of these, although entitled "Appeal to the Christian Conscience," refers to his arrest and conviction, the involvement of the Securitate in the judicial investigation, the obedience of Church hierarchs and the period of detention. Thus, he revealed that the investigation was conducted by two colonels (whom he did not name), one from the Military Tribunal and the other from the Securitate, but was supervised by the commander of the Bucharest Securitate, General Vasile Gheorghe, who sent his orders directly to the case prosecutor. This was the relationship of subordination of justice to the Securitate. Such a subordination

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75 Ibidem, p. 28.
76 OSA, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Background Reports, Vladimir Socor, Mounting Religious Repression in Romania, 30 august 1985, p. 3
also existed in the Church's relationship with the state authorities, the hierarchs being overly obedient and violating the canon law. But what was worse was that these hierarchs carelessly accepted the demolition of churches, some of them architectural monuments. From this point of view, Father Calciu concluded that „the Securitate's power is unlimited. It makes its own laws, has completely free hand, and there is no lawlessness from which it would not recoil”. Furthermore, the text broadcast on the radio station provided details of the conditions of detention, especially the systematic beatings, even at the prison infirmary, even because he was caught praying or requesting inquiries into inhuman treatment of the convicts. Finally, after his release, the conditions in which he had to live with his wife and son were almost like prison: Numerous militiamen and Securitate agents surrounded the block of flats, watching his movements, intimidating visitors, intercepting his correspondence, listening to his phones and flanking him on the street so that no one would come into contact with him. „Some 40 agents, both in plainclothes and uniformed, led by at least 2 colonels and deploying a full array of electronic and video equipment and a fleet of cars, were thus maintaining surveillance over a powerless clergyman who is seriously weakened after 21 years of imprisonment”. The second text of Father Calciu brought to the attention of Radio Free Europe listeners in August 1985 was a shorter one, entitled "Concerning my Freedom", it contains other details about the period of detention. For example, the author made it known that he insisted even in prison that the guards address him with the formula "reverend", that he officiated the Holy Mass for the other detainees and that he was beaten for this audacity. As for the Orthodox hierarchy, he appealed countless times for the defrocked decision to be revoked, but did not find it within the Church. „the Christian love and spiritual communion that he found upon his release from prison on the part of his former parishioners and students”. In addition, regarding emigration, he lived a dilemma between the security of his own family and the duty he had towards his followers and his moral supporters.

77 Ibidem, p. 4.
78 Ibidem, p. 5.
79 Ibidem.
Finally, a third text, “On the Death of Father Jerzy”, was a tribute to a Catholic prelate supporting Solidarity, a victim of the communist regime in Poland, whose death served “to illuminate the polish conscience”.

This analysis from August 1985 ends with some details regarding Father Calciu's emigration request, which was blocked by the communist authorities in Bucharest, directly by Nicolae Ceaușescu, under the accusations of fascist, war criminal or American spy. However, the most useful lever for supporting Father Calciu was the one related to the Romanian commercial interests in the relationship with the USA, no less than 64 members of the Congress signing a letter of support addressed to the Romanian government. It was not until July 1985 that the leader of the Republican majority in the Senate and chairman of the Finance Committee, Robert Dole, who dealt with U.S. trade law, received a notification from Bucharest regarding the issuance of a visa for Calciu-Dumitreasa.

Conclusions (Some explanations)

What remains to be explained, at least in part, is this silence of the West. We believe that this is, first and foremost, a political imperative. The issue of human rights has become, since 1975, a valuable asset in the West's attempt to undermine the stability of communist regimes by encouraging, publicizing and supporting the efforts of local dissidents. For the United States and its Western allies, reliance on a dissident figure in any of the communist countries had become absolutely normal and essential in the ideological confrontation with the space of Soviet domination; it was an imperative and an instrument of their foreign policy. The Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa case is part of such a logic, and it has been exploited politically and in the media as much as it has served immediate political interests. The West did not need to know, nor did it serve to publicize an episode that could have been controversial in the past of a dissident and diminished his image as an opponent of communism. Therefore, Father Calciu remained, across the ocean and in the West, the one who dared to raise his voice against the demolition of churches, to challenge official atheism, to call young people to rediscover and revalue Christianity, to defend the fundamental

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80 On October 30, 1984, Father Jerzy Popiełuszko, a Solidarity supporter, was found murdered. He had been repeatedly reprimanded and criticized by the Polish government for supporting the opposition, until he was abducted by Polish political police on October 19 and beaten to death. In the face of pressure from the Catholic Church and public opinion (200,000 Poles attended the funeral), the case was investigated and, for the first time, three political police officers were tried for murder. Gregory F. Domber, Empowering Revolution: America, Poland, and the End of the Cold War, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2014, p. 128.


82 Ibidem.
rights of a free conscience. It was enough and served a pragmatic political purpose, and the legionary episode would have complicated his biography too much.

On the other hand, up to a point, we believe that we can also talk about some precariousness or even lack of information. In the 80’s, the possibilities of information were certainly limited, and the legionary youth of a character from a small town on the outskirts of Europe, Tulcea, was very difficult to document even by Radio Free Europe or large Western publications. One could hardly ask an American senator, for example, to master such a biography in detail. It would have been all the more difficult for anyone to find out details about Father Calciu’s first prison experience and his possible involvement in what was called "re-education". The phenomenon of "re-education" itself is one that still provokes controversy and exchanges of ideas by researchers, one that still requires deep archival research to be elucidated. Therefore, then, in the 80s, who and how could have insisted on such a possible involvement of Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa in the terrible tortures in Pitești or Gherla?

Even so, the truth must be told to the end. As important were the merits of the opponent of the communist regime, as spiritual and at the same time incisive were the seven sermons addressed to young people in 1978, as salutary was the attempt to stop the demolition of churches, so reprehensible are the praises brought to Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and the denial of the Holocaust. These are two dimensions that only together offer the image of the whole man Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa.