

The Debate of the Romanian Concordat from the Perspective of Hungarian Catholics in the Twenties of the 20th Century¹

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The legal framework of ethnic and denominational minorities in the era

First of all, we have to mention the decisions of the Romanian assembly in Alba Iulia, on 1 December 1918. Passages of the 3rd section of the resolution state the followings: "1. Complete ethnic freedom for the cohabiting nationalities. Each has the right for their own education and governance in their own native language, with their own administration and by individuals of their own community. 2. Equal rights and fully autonomous denominational freedom for all denominations of the state. [...] 4. Unrestricted freedom of press, gathering and assembly, a free propagation of any human idea."²

It meant some hope for the Transylvanians when the allied powers and Romania made a minority agreement in Paris (9 December 1919) that could have resulted in a more acceptable situation for churches separated from Hungary. "All Romanian citizens, without regard to racial, linguistic or religious differences, are equal before the law and are in possession of the same civil and political rights. Their difference in religion, faith of denomination cannot be disadvantageous for any Romanian citizen, with regard to the practice of civil and political rights, namely the gaining of offices, titles and honours or the practising of various professions and crafts"³ – as the 9th point of the document states.

As we have seen, both cited documents promised full religious freedom and internal autonomy for both churches, so including Roman Catholics. It must be noted that the first was never codified and though the latter entered the Romanian corpus iuris in 1920, it was never used in practice.

The 1923 constitution states something else. There is quite a contradiction inasmuch as it grants equal rights and protection to all religious denominations, but then again section 22 makes a ranking list of them, quite contrary to the principle of equal freedom, which is also included, by the way: „The state grants equal rights and protection to all religious

1 The research was supported by the National Scientific and Research Fund (Országos Tudományos és Kutatási Alap) – application number: PD 76004.

2 Endre BARABÁS, A magyar iskolaügy helyzete Romániában 1918–1940. I., in: Kisebbségi Körlevél 6, 1943, 3, 272–275, 274.

3 Béla POMOGÁTS, Változó Erdély, Budapest 1994, 169.

denominations [...] Eastern orthodox and Eastern Catholic Romanian churches. Being the religion of the majority of Romanians, the Romanian Eastern Orthodox Church is the dominant church in the state, and the Eastern Catholic has precedence over the other denominations. As to the relation of the state and the other denominations, a separate law will decide about it.”⁴

The 1925 law on the organisation of Roman Orthodox Church⁵ says that the Romanian Orthodox Church is dominant in the country. It received significant estates and – apart from other concessions – it had a great relative advantage that state allowance was given based on the number of followers.

The next step in regulating church’s rights was the 1928/1093 religion act⁶. Here the discrimination among churches and denominations, especially handicapping the Hungarian believers in Transylvania, is fully obvious. There are five groups of churches: the dominant Orthodox Church, the preferred Eastern Catholic Church. Historical churches, including most of the Hungarian population, are the next in hierarchy: Catholic churches (with Latin, Ruten, Greek and Armenian rites), Reform churches, Evangelic, Unitarian, Armenian and Jew churches, followed by Baptism as a single category. The last are the unrecognised denominations like Nazarenes and Adventists.

According to those involved, denominations of minorities are no longer recognised as full-right churches, only “cults”⁷. In theory, the law grants freedom to those as well, but in every aspect of church life there is a strict state supervision on them. They cannot be involved in politics, cannot accept charity from abroad without state consent, only Romanian citizen can be the member of clergy, and church leaders have to pledge allegiance to the Romanian constitution, in front of the ruler.⁸ Ghibu’s words reflect this restrictive concept: “Papists, if they will, may call themselves Catholic. [...] Today, we are the true ‘catholics’ in this country.”⁹ All this conforms to Romania’s contemporary large-scale plans in foreign affairs. To be short, it is the political concept of spreading its influence on the whole Balkan, as if counterbalancing Russian Bolshevism. One of the tools was to become an apparent centre of Orthodox Christianity in the region.¹⁰

The Vatican’s concordat policy after the war

The Codex Iuris Canonici was created in 1917 [...] It contains no systematic regulation of the relation between church and worldly powers. It does signify that the Holy See has permanently abandoned the medieval approach to the relation of church and state. [...] It can accept every form of rule as a sovereign public entity if [...] in it, rule is just and for the

4 Zsombor SZÁSZ, *Az Erdélyi Római Katolikus Státus I.*, in: Magyar Szemle 7, 1933, 17, 196–197.

5 Lajos NAGY, *A kisebbségek alkotmányjogi helyzete Nagyromániában*, Erdélyi Tudományos Intézet, Kolozsvár 1944, 227–229.

6 NAGY, 102–103.

7 SZÁSZ, *Az Erdélyi Római Katolikus Státus I.*, 196.

8 Ibidem, 291.

9 Ibidem, 199.

10 Sándor KERESZTURY, *A bukaresti patriárkátus és az erdélyi magyar kisebbségek*, in: Magyar Kisebbség 5, 1926, 1, 22–25, 23–24.

general welfare.”¹¹ From this perspective, „therefore, as a prerequisite of the concordat, any state can require from this international treaty to recognise its national idea (of state) with its rulings”¹² However, if these nation’s interests violate the rights of minorities within the state, the question arises what standpoint should the Holy See have. It’s hard to tell, since „If the Holy See were to enforce the absolute Chirst-ian notion of justice, [...] it could hardly make concordats with any modern state.”¹³

Even so, the Holy See saw it necessary to conclude concordats, so that legal affairs of the Church would not remain within the power of states. The question is, in this matter, what sort of standards should apply, to quote Elemér Jakabffy¹⁴, „where can the Holy See find the scales upon which the concordat rulings that the state requires might be placed?”¹⁵ The author thinks international contracts and modern constitutions to be guidelines in this regard. Romania was not the only country where the relation of church and state had to be revised. Rome was aware of that as well. The necessity to conclude the concordats was brought up by Pope Benedict XV. Several countries chose that the church within its borders should be regulated not only by their own laws but by an international agreement as well.¹⁶ Especially those, whose new borders were defined by the peace treaties ending the world war. Their primary goals were to announce their independence and to ensure their national interests, and the concordats were conducted in this vein. “So the Holy See had to decide already at the onset of the negotiations whether it can accept the nation state’s ideology in its present form, whether it is compatible with its principles or not.”¹⁷ as Jakabffy writes. In addition, he argues that “Concordats cannot be the pioneers of minority rights. But we can demand from concordats not to abandon such rights, already recognised in other international treaties, when the stronger strive to curb the rights of the weaker.”¹⁸

Attitudes toward the prolonged negotiations

Negotiations were started in 1920 by Octavian Goga, the cultural minister of the Avarescu-regime. Already in the first year, at least five different drafts were sent to Rome¹⁹. Until 1926, Goga was replaced by Banu and Lăpădatu and it was him again who went to the Vatican in 1927 when the details of the finally accepted text were formed.²⁰

Each involved party (Roman Catholic Hungarian minority, Orthodox Romanians, the Romanian government and Eastern Catholic Romanians) reacted to news of the talks and leaked

11 Elemér JAKABFFY, A konkordátum és a nemzetkisebbségek, in: Magyar Kisebbség 10, 1931, 2, 49–52, 50.

12 Ibidem, 51.

13 Ibidem, 51.

14 Elemér JAKABFFY (17 May 1881 – 19 May 1963), politician, publicist, vice-president of the Romanian “Országos Magyar Párt”.

15 JAKABFFY, A konkordátum és a nemzetkisebbségek, 52.

16 In 1922 in Latvia, in 1925 in Poland, in 1927 in Lithuania, see in: JAKABFFY, 49; in 1933 in Germany, see: GYÁRFÁS, A német birodalommal kötött konkordátum, in: Magyar Kisebbség 12, 1933, 19–20, 566–580, 566.

17 JAKABFFY, A konkordátum és a nemzetkisebbségek, 52.

18 Ibidem, 52.

19 Zsombor SZÁSZ, Az Erdélyi Római Katolikus Státus II., in: Magyar Szemle 17, 1933, 3, 290–296, 292.

20 Gábor PÁL, Konkordátum és a katolikus magyarság, In: Magyar Kisebbség 7, 1928, 18, 678–693, 678–679.

20	<p data-bbox="212 186 393 211">Csaba Máté SARNYAI</p> <p data-bbox="532 163 1085 211">The Debate of the Romanian Concordat from the Perspective of Hungarian Catholics in the Twenties of the 20th Century</p>	
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negotiation details differently, each according to their interests, expectations and fears. These factors were not seen unanimously even within one group.

The Romanian state has a controversial relation to its churches. The anti-Christian views of its politicians are due to the fact that they regard church autonomies as an inhibitor of anticlerical ideas (that are the effects of the French political culture). Orthodoxy is treated as subordinated to the state, the state religion is to express the unity of state: a unified nation state with a unified religion. With their cultural and clerical separateness, minorities disrupt this idealised unity.²¹ Even more does so the existence of the Eastern Catholic Church: "They regard it as a wedge struck into the body of the Romanian people by its enemies, a tool to disarray religious unity and thus to destroy its national unity as well."²² This is why the Romanian state has such a two-fold relation to this denomination. On the one hand, "they are forced to fight in self-defence for their own survival"²³ and followers are demanded to turn away from Rome. On the other hand, they are given concessions, to the disadvantage of Roman Catholics. At the execution of the agrarian act, they were granted significant estates, from the areas confiscated from historical Hungarian churches.²⁴ In addition, all of their bishops had a seat in the senate of the Romanian parliament.²⁵ As we have seen, so that its sovereignty and area annexes be recognised, the political elite had to codify an international treaty about minority protection.²⁶ But they knew that their unifying and Romanian-ising efforts are incompatible with these. It had to be careful, to avoid international troubles, namely the responsibility for the practical ignorance of theologically accepted entries. They did not wish any conflict with the greatest Western moral authority, Rome, yet it intended to have its own church policy accepted at the Holy See. The goal was to have a concordat that requires the least sacrifice on Romanians' part while granting the most boons. Details of the negotiations were not published²⁷ so there was great uncertainty within both parties. Thus, ex-cultural minister Goldis²⁸ emphasised that though there are many who do not like the concordat, it means no long-term disadvantage for Romania. On the contrary, it is the best way to silence minority complaints. "A simple law would not be sufficient in this regard [...] because it would be only a unilateral fact of the Romanian state, without the obvious and express agreement of the Pope, the greatest authority of the Catholic Church. In this case [...] the irredenta agitation would target the Romanian state itself, under the pretence of religious wrongs. [...] But the concordat creates a difficult situation for the agitators, since it openly bears the consent of the Pope. [...] Nobody can admit that the Romanian agitator would be better Catholics than the Roman Pope himself. In front of this supreme authority, all allegations and vilifications are muted."²⁹

21 SZÁSZ, *Az Erdélyi Római Katolikus Státus I.*, 193.

22 Benedek JANCÓSÓ, *A katolikus egyház helyzetet Romániában*, 59–64, 61.

23 JANCÓSÓ, 59–60.

24 PÁL, 686.

25 JAKABFFY, *A konkordátum*, in: *Magyar Kisebbség* 8, 1929, 12, 441–444, 442.

26 SZÁSZ, *Az Erdélyi Római Katolikus Státus II.*, 290.

27 Elemér GYÁRFÁS, *A Szentosz és az erdélyi katolikusok*, in: *Magyar Kisebbség* 7, 1928, 19, 717–726, 720.

28 Vasile GOLDIS (12 November 1862 – 10 February 1934), member of the Romanian National Party and the Romanian Academy

29 GYÁRFÁS, *A konkordátum és az erdélyi katolikusok*, in: *Magyar Kisebbség* 8, 1929, 12, 445–470, 467.

Goldis's words clearly show why the concordat was in the interests of the Romanian state, also the extent of the success they can achieve by it and how efficiently they can avoid undesired compromises in order to achieve their goals.

The leaders of the Eastern Catholic church also behaved controversially. After the change of imperium, first they propagated the conducting of the agreement³⁰. Raymund Netzhammer, Roman Catholic archbishop of Bucharest writes³¹ that "After the world war, high priests of the Eastern Catholic clergy in Transylvania nurtured a hope that their influence can assist in creating a positive atmosphere in Bucharest for the much mentioned 'union' with the Catholic church. This hope was articulated by the assembled in Rome as well. [...] they regarded everyone in Rome who doubted the realisation of these hopes with suspicion and accusation."³² Thus, after falling under Romanian authority, Eastern Catholic religious leaders were working toward the Eastern Orthodox Romanians' union with Rome.³³ But they were hostile toward Roman Catholics, even if they were connected by their loyalty to the Pope and the negative discrimination that they both suffered (though not to the same extent).³⁴ Eastern Catholic leaders "are informing the Holy See in Rome not because of a religious sentiment but to promote Romanian national efforts"³⁵ After a decade, the already cited archbishop Netzhammer evaluates the realisation of the Roman Catholic clergy effort as follows: "But today, in the tenth year of Great-Romania [...] even the Eastern Catholic Romanians have to admit, that none of their past hopes were fulfilled. [...] There is no chance for unification in Romania today. [...] Today, the Eastern Catholic Church must fight as hard as it can for its own survival."³⁶

The standpoint of the Orthodox clergy was completely obvious: at the congress at Oradea, they demanded that the negotiations be ceased. In the spring of 1927, when talks with the Vatican were again in progress, they gathered in Bucharest to protest, as "the concordat officially seals the secession of Eastern Catholic Romanians" and "gives opportunity for Rome to Catholicise the rest of the Romanians."³⁷ The leaders of the church did not want their government to have a treaty with the Holy See because that would underline a fact that they would rather ignore: that there are ethnic and religious minorities in the country. Leaders of Roman Catholic dioceses expressed their protest about the plans as well. Bishop Gyula Glattfelder made a memorandum and Gusztáv Károly Majláth contacted the Pope himself, as in the opinion of the Hungarian Catholics, the Vatican shows an exaggerated compliance toward the Romanian Kingdom³⁸. "[...] which does not care a bit for the

30 Márton METZGER, A konkordátum, in: Magyar Kisebbség 3, 1924, 22, 878.

31 Netzhammer was forced to resign, due to political pressure. The main pretext was that during the concordat negotiations he preferred the defense of Catholic interest to Romanian national interests.

32 Published in the 8 April 1928 issue of the 'Schönere Zukunft' Catholic Church periodical. See: JANCSCÓ, 59.

33 JANCSCÓ, 59–60.

34 PÁL, Konkordátum, 688.

35 PÁL, A konkordátumról, in: Magyar Kisebbség 7, 1928, 21, 801–804, 804.

36 JANCSCÓ, 59–60.

37 SZÁSZ, Az Erdélyi Római Katolikus Státus II., 292.

38 Among other things, the reason for this was a promise from Romania that in the near future, the Orthodox will convert into the Roman Catholic Church, and a concept shared by the Eastern Catholic clergy leaders that they could conquer as much territory as possible from the Orthodox Church with some Papal background support. Of course, these promises never had any practical contact with reality.

millennium-old past of Hungary [...] They chase the illusion of union in Rome. It is time for the Hungarian bishops to leave the suppressed voice of obeisance but talk to the Holy See with an open and insulted self-esteem and warn it about the dangers of its recent policy." as Miklós Széchényi, bishop of Oradea wrote about the policy to follow.³⁹

The news on the concordat negotiations also divided the Hungarian Catholic public opinion in Transylvania and members of the Roman Catholic Status⁴⁰ of Transylvania, organising the first from the sixteenth century on. Some welcomed it with joy, others were worried about it. Some expected the Hungarian Catholic's liberation from oppression but others understood the intention of the government and were afraid that its goal will be achieved in spite of every effort. For counterbalance, in 1921 the Transylvanian Catholics made an 8-point memorandum to give information on their real situation.⁴¹ Among other things, they expressed their disappointment with the Wilsonian points, with the Alba Iulia resolution and with the minority treaty.

The rights that were guaranteed on paper were never put into practice.⁴² The concordat plans did not meet their expectations either. The memorandum was made so that the Holy See could know their opinion about the treaty in which they are involved.

They expressed criticism on the proposed transformation of church structure,⁴³ the modification of bishop election system, they informed about the estate confiscations⁴⁴ and the educational situation⁴⁵, and asked the Pope to protect their church autonomy. In the eighth point they listed the areas that are not addressed by the concordat though they should be regulated in the treaty. "Such is the recognition of the unification, assembly, counselling and decisional rights of Catholic organisations, or the lack of the part that protects the schedule of the mass from Romanian authorities' interference."⁴⁶

During the newer phase of the concordat negotiations in 1924, Márton Metzger⁴⁷ states that "the concordat is not crucial for us, Catholics"⁴⁸ He points out that the interest about the negotiations on the part of the Hungarian minority is a proof that they also intend to further the welfare of the state.⁴⁹ He brings the Eastern Catholic intellectuals as example to show that "Catholic religion is a quite unsuitable tool of de-nationalisation!"⁵⁰ He supports the conclusion of the concordat, as "it not an irrefutable truth that the dwindling believers

39 Péter SAS, *Az erdélyi római katolikus egyház 1900–1948*. Budapest 2008, 44–45.

40 „The Roman Catholic Status of Transylvania is the organisation of clerical and layman representatives elected by the Catholic congregation in Transylvania which assists the priests in the management of a part of the diocese wealth and the thus maintained institutions” *Az erdélyi katolicizmus múltja és jelene*, 376.

41 SARNYAI, 90.

4243 Ibidem, 91.

43 Ibidem, 92.

44 Ibidem, 93.

45 Ibidem, 94.

46 Ibidem, 95.

47 Márton METZGER (2 January 1876 – 28 July 1945), priest and teacher, vice-president of the Erdélyi Római Katolikus Népszövetség.

48 METZGER, 877.

49 Ibidem, 878.

50 Ibidem, 879.

of failing churches convert to other churches only in rather small numbers and instead they sink into utter faithlessness, being the same as communism today, which is mutually destructive for the minorities and the state as well".⁵¹

"So did they [Status members responsible for informing Rome] tell the Holy See truly and in time all that they had conveyed to us here at home? [...] so, can we really believe that the decision was caused by 'false and insufficient information'? [...] was not there a real cause for concern?"⁵² as Gábor Pál asked. "I can reassure Gábor Pál that we told all that we announced here at home and much more than that." Elemér Gyárfás replies and adds that informing the Holy See about the situation of Catholics is still a most important task.⁵³ For the mostly Hungarian Catholics in Transylvania this was the only tool during the concordat talks to protect their interests. To put it short, they confronted the promises of the Romanian government with the most detailed information on their real situation.

The words of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bucharest, Netzhhammer (and we emphasise that he was not Hungarian) well summarize the approach of the Hungarian-Transylvanian Catholic minority to the concordat: "the concordat plans of the Holy See and Romania had and edge pointed toward the Catholic Hungarians in Romania"⁵⁴

The main points of the concordat, its aftermath and its evaluation from the perspective of the Catholic Hungarians

On 10 May 1927, the Holy See and representatives of the Romanian government signed the concordat but it was not ratified in Romania for more than one year. The reason was that they wanted to modify some of its regulations, so that those would serve their national interests better.⁵⁵

Roman Catholics in Transylvania were stunned by the concordat. They got into a difficult situation, as their loyalty to the Pope obliged them to accept its regulations, but they could not suppress their disappointment as Hungarians.⁵⁶ The greatest shock were sections 2, 5, 10 and 13, and the post facto modifications.

Section 2 abolished the 800-year-old Oradea diocese, which was founded by St Laszlo⁵⁷ and instead of the thousand-year-old Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár) diocese, that of Bucharest received the rank of the Archdiocese, thus dioceses in Transylvania were subordinated to it. The goal of these actions was two-fold. To enable that the Roman Catholic Archbishop would not support the nationality efforts of the Hungarians⁵⁸ and to change the numbers

51 Ibidem, 879.

52 PÁL, Konkordátum, 693.

53 GYÁRFÁS, A Szentszék, 726.

54 JANCSÓ, 59.

55 About the text of the concordat and the later modifications see: Árpád BITAY (transl.): Törvény a konkordátum ratifikálásáról in: Magyar Kisebbség 8, 1929, 12, 473–480.

56 PÁL, A konkordátumról, 804; JAKABFFY, A konkordátum, 441–444, 442; GYÁRFÁS, A konkordátum, 445; János JÓSIKA, A konkordátum ratifikálása, in: Magyar Kisebbség 8, 1929, 12, 471–472, 471.

57 GYÁRFÁS, A konkordátum, 460.

58 PÁL, Konkordátum és a katolikus magyarság, 681.

of dioceses with Greek and Latin liturgy that in the council of Patrimonium Sanctum, established in section 13 and commanding over the Roman Catholic wealth) the first would be in majority. Thus in questions of monetary management, the Romanian interest prevails over that of the Hungarians.⁵⁹ According to section 5, only those bishops can be appointed to lead dioceses who are not questioned by the government. The loose definition of 'political scruple' can be interpreted according to their own interests, as "the Holy See will not enter a fight and persevere in it for an appointment [...] to reach goals that are considered to be marginal anyway"⁶⁰

Section 10, though preaching equal treatment of minorities, justifies an obvious inequity: only the Roman Catholic Archbishop is admitted into the senate (who will not speak for Hungarian interests), while every bishop of the Eastern Catholics is granted a seat there. It is an especially neuralgic point for the Catholics because every Eastern Catholic and Eastern Orthodox bishop was granted a seat in the Hungarian parliament.⁶¹

Catholic Hungarians in Transylvania could not be content. With regard to the extent of desperation and to suitable behaviour, there were certain differences, as it can be seen from the different publicised opinions.⁶²

Section 9 and later interpretation excluded the Status from the institutes that can behave as legal persons, so attacks against it gained strength again.

On 30 April 1931, the Romanian ministry of religious affairs set up a committee of "historic rights", under Ghibu's presidency. Again, this came to the conclusion that autonomy of the Status does not have any valid historic-legal basis. As the concordat does not mention it either, the committee proposed that the Status should be abolished by a single action and its wealth confiscated.⁶³ The committee did not intend to gather new historical or legal arguments, rather to spread propaganda against the Status. There is obvious evidence for this in one of Ghibu's proposals toward Prime Minister Nikolai Jorga. In this, Ghibu articulates the true reason for the political attacks against the Catholic autonomy in Transylvania and also the agenda of the committee: "As the Status does not have a lawful and canonical form, and as it proved to be dangerous to the Roman state beyond expression, it must be immediately disbanded and the estate that it unlawfully commanded must be taken over by the state then given to entities that are authorised to dispose over them, primarily the

59 Ibidem, 691. A similar plan had appeared in Hungary as well but the Eastern Catholics protested strongly and were prepared to resist even to the point of breaking the union with Rome. See: GYÁRFÁS, A konkordátum, 452.

60 PÁL, Konkordátum és a katolikus magyarság 689–690. For a more optimistic standpoint, see: GYÁRFÁS, A Szentszék, 724.

61 GYÁRFÁS, A konkordátum, 461.

62 PÁL, Konkordátum és a katolikus magyarság, 693; GYÁRFÁS, A Szentszék, 717–719; PÁL, A konkordátumról, 803; JAKABFFY, A konkordátum, 444; GYÁRFÁS, A konkordátum; 469.

63 János SCHEFFLER, Az „Erdélyi Katolikus Státus” küzdelmes húsz éve in: Magyar Szemle 15, 1941, 5, 299–310, 303. On 21 December, the prosecutor in Cluj summoned the secretary and the accountant of the Status. They were interrogated with the translation of the guard and then a typist. They were asked questions about the past recognition of the organisation, with references to the diploma by Maria Theresa and to other such matters about which they lacked any substantial knowledge. When he learned about this, Gyárfás visited the prosecutor and offered to give competent answers and also wanted to know if there is any criminal procedure in progress. The only reply was that it is state secret. After this, he was shocked when a Romanian representative quoted from the already written indictment documents, in a claim before his own. In: Az Erdélyi Katolikus Státus a Szenátus előtt, Cluj 1932, 13.

University of Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár). And as the Status is a legally non-existent subject, these can be done without any formality, with a single decision."⁶⁴

Finally, it must be noted that meanwhile the Romanian government was conducting separate negotiations with the Holy See about the Status. These were initiated because according to the law committee of the Roman senate, defenders of the Status could rightfully argue, based on the minority treaty, and if their demands are supported by the Holy See, that would not serve well the international prestige of the country and the government. So they proposed that the issue of the Status should be "solved" in compliance with Rome. Since then the Catholic Hungarian will have to accept the decision supported by the Holy See and the mentioned international prestige would not suffer either. Thus the government initiated the talks with the Holy See in the beginning of 1932.

In the preliminary discussions in Bucharest, the Romanian leaders set the following goals: the name of the Status should be changed, it should not have a legal personality, the management and control of its wealth should be conducted by cooperation of the Roman and Eastern Catholic bishops, under the supervision of the Archbishop of Bucharest and it could operate only as an advisory body to the Roman Catholic bishop of Alba Iulia.⁶⁵

The representatives of the Status, András Balázs and Gyárfás were against the wealth management parts in particular. Romanian foreign minister Valerian Popescu was demanding that this wealth should be regarded as a "Catholic wealth" that belongs not only to the Roman, but the Eastern Catholics as well. The basis of the agreement was that Eastern Catholic Archbishop Suciú announced in an official statement that he does not lay claim to it.

Before Balázs and Gyárfás travelled to Rome to conclude the negotiations and finish the agreements, representing the Status, bishop Gusztáv Károly Majláth received a letter from cultural under-secretary Crăciunescu that read that – regardless of the result of the negotiations in Rome – the Status wealth, that was in the possession of the state according to land registry, remains there, because the issue of these goods belongs in the competence of the Romanian justice system.

Apart from the foreign minister, Comnen Petrescu was representing the government in Rome and strives to prevent Gyárfás and Balázs from being present at the talks. Therefore they sent their standpoint in writing to Pacelli Vatican under-secretary, who replied likewise. He stated that they can modify the decisions accepted by the preliminary negotiations only with the consent of the Hungarian representatives, including those about the legal issues of the wealth.

In addition to the Bucharest points, representatives of the Romanian government also demanded in the drafts that the Hungarian Catholic church next to the university of Cluj-Napoca, managed by the Status, should be given over to the Romanian Eastern Catholics. With regard to this, Status representatives agreed only with that on Sundays and holidays a Romanian Eastern Catholic priest holds Romanian mass.

The so-called Accord (Agreement of Rome)⁶⁶ was created on 30 May 1932. It decrees that

64 Sándor BÍRÓ, *Kisebbségben és többségben. Románok és magyarok (1867–1940)*, in: *Európai Protestáns Magyar Szabadegyetem*, Bern 1989, 325.

65 BÍRÓ, 325.

66 The document itself was only published as a ministerial decree in the official paper (*Monitorul Oficial*, 3 August 1932, 180). See: NAGY, 103.

the Roman Catholic Status of Transylvania is abolished and is replaced by the Diocese Council of the Roman Catholic diocese in Alba Iulia, which ceased to be an autonomous legal person. Its wealth was managed by the diocese of Alba Iulia and though its incomes were to be spent on religious, school-related and educational goals, but under the supervision of the Archbishop of Bucharest and the Romanian state. The relation of the most involved to the document is well illustrated by the fact that when Balázs learned the text of the agreement, he burst into tears...⁶⁷

To conclude, we have to say about the religious and/or ethnic minority politics mentioned in the title that the Romanian political elite reached multiple goals through the concordat with Rome. As the vast majority of the followers of the Roman Catholic Church belonged to the Hungarian minority in the annexed territories, so its internal religious affairs could be controlled according to its interests. What's more, it could be done with the authentication from the Roman Holy See, the supreme religious authority for Catholics. With this, the political goal of regional and religious unification was served at the same time.

Abstract

Due to the territorial redistributions following WW1, Transylvania became a part of Romania. Most of its population were Hungarian-speaking Catholics. For the Romanian state, the conclusive resolution of their issues was the agreement with the Holy See in Rome. On the one hand, the Catholics obliged to the standpoint of Rome, on the other hand, due to the international situation, Romania could not afford to avoid an official agreement with the Pope in the case of Hungarian Catholics, in order to prevent accusations of anti-religiousness. The official diplomatic communication between Bucharest and the Vatican began in 1919 and concordat negotiations began in 1920. It was signed on 10 May 1927 and was only ratified by the Romanian parliament on 13 June 1929.⁶⁸ During this long process, the Romanian legislation had several important events that affected the situation of the churches and thus that of the minority society. These are the first to be discussed in the paper.

Afterwards, we briefly address the principles and practice of the contemporary concordat policy of the Holy See. Each involved party (Roman Catholic Hungarian minority, Orthodox Romanians, the Romanian government and Eastern Catholic Romanians) reacted to leaked negotiation details differently. This is presented in the next section. In the last part of the paper, we examine the main points, aftermath and evaluation of the final and accepted concordat, from the viewpoint of the Catholic Hungarians.

Keywords

Religious freedom, ethnic minorities, concordats and minorities

⁶⁷ BÍRÓ, 326.

⁶⁸ Csaba Máté SARNYAI, Az erdélyi katolikusság "kiáltó szava" a pápához (1921). A román konkordátum-javaslat és az erdélyi hívek reagálása, in: Székelyföld 13, 2009, 9, 89–99, 97.