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RUMANIA
COMINFORM COUNTRIES

RELIGION

ATTITUDE OF THE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT TOWARD
THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

On 14 October 1951, at the 30th congress of the Union of the Bulgarian Orthodox priests, the Minister of Public Worship of the Bulgarian Government, JILIEV Dimitar, stated that Church and State are not two independent bodies and that the Communist Government considers the Church to be an instrument which it can use at will, as it is the Church's duty in a Popular Republic to serve the State. At the same congress, the secretary of the Popular Front declared that the priests must obey the orders of the Popular Front, just as any other organization does.

During the visit of the Patriarch of MOSCOW, the ex-Premier of Bulgaria, DIMITROV George, delivered a speech urging the Bulgarian clergy to place itself entirely at the disposal of the Communist Popular Front. The Church must collaborate with the Communist organizations. He further declared that the Church must be republican, progressive and popular, not only in word but in deed.

In a letter addressed to the Holy Synod on 11 May 1948, and published in the Bulletin of the Clerical Association (Naroden Pastir, 1 June 1948,) JILIEV stated: "The Church is subordinate to the State and must obey its laws... There is only one authority in Bulgaria .. the State." And then he continued with further details as to what the State expects the Church to do. The Church must faithfully follow the program of the Popular Front in its publications; it must exalt the heroic struggle of the Bulgarian people in creating the Popular Republic; it must respect and praise the Communist Party, approve of the socialization of the means of production, and must do everything in its power to convince the clergy and the congregation to accept the principles of the Popular Democracy. In addition, the educational program of the seminaries must be in keeping with the principles of the Popular Front, and the seminaries must propagate "the scientific method in explaining the development of nature and society." In other words, the State expects the Church to adopt the principles of historic and dialectical

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materialism. In fact, the priests must support the foreign and domestic policies of the government, and the faithful must be educated to love the Communist Government and the Government of the Soviet Union, and to hate and condemn the activities of reactionaries. In view of this we can understand the attitude of the "Orthodox Church in Soviet Russia, which carries out all government orders without any resistance.

The same situation exists in Rumania. In a letter addressed to the Church Hierarchy on 22 February 1948, the Minister of National Economy, GHEORGIU-DEJ, urged the "Orthodox Church" to try to convert the Catholics to the progressive ideology. Then, in a speech delivered by the Minister of Public Worship, at the election of the new Patriarch GIUSTINIANO in May 1948, emphasis was placed on the perfect collaboration between Church and State in the construction of the new "Democratic" order and in the struggle against reaction. The Communist State not only invites the Church to support its plans but uses every means, including fraud and violence, to force it to do so. The government threatens and intimidates both the hierarchy and clergy until they are forced to surrender, as article 58 of the Soviet Penal Code states that any criticism of the Soviet Government is a counterrevolutionary activity. It is well known what it means to be accused of counter-revolutionary activity in the Soviet Union. This article has often been used to condemn priests to years of hard labor, merely because they preached the Gospel. Those who have been in MOSCOW inform us that all live in fear and do not dare express a personal opinion.

In the summer of 1946, during the visit of Patriarch ALESSIO to Bulgaria, Prime Minister DIMITROV, in a speech, threatened the "Orthodox" priests that they would suffer the same as did the Russian clergy during the period of the persecutions, if they did not collaborate with the government.

The Communist Government well know, how to create a clergy which is always ready to obey orders, and they know how to eliminate rebellious persons. This policy has been carried out for many years by the Soviet Government. Those bishops and priests who rebelled against the Bolshevik control of their conscience have either been killed or are in concentration camps. When in 1943 the Soviet Government hastily reestablished the "Orthodox" hierarchy for political reasons, they released those bishops who were willing unconditionally to support the Communist regime. Those priests who befriended the Soviet Union were rapidly promoted.

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For example: During the war a hitherto unknown Ukrainian priest, JARUSEVIC Nicholas, all of a sudden became the Metropolitan of KIEV. JARUSEVIC is the "right arm" of Patriarch ALESSIO and is a propagandist for the Soviet system. Whoever dares criticize the system is immediately eliminated. In the seminaries which were recently founded, an authentic Bolshevik clergy is being formed. This clergy is recruited primarily from among the Komsomol.

In those countries which have only recently created "progressive democratic" republics the same attempts are being made at exploiting the Church Hierarchy.

In the spring of 1947, two laws were passed in Rumania: The first stated that those bishops over 70 years of age could retire if a government commission determined that they were no longer capable of doing their duties" the second law gave the representatives of the Parliament of each district the right to vote in the elections for new bishops. These representatives are, of course, all Communists ("Scanteia," 12 May 1947.) During the summer of 1947, nine pro-Communist bishops were nominated. In Bulgaria the Minister of Public Worship declared that "the clergy must be purged of all those elements which blocked the complete collaboration between the State and the Church" (Naroden, 1 June 1948.)

The formation of "democratic" associations among the priests for the purpose of making the Church Constitution more "democratic" and of eventually eliminating the opposition of the Church Hierarchy, is another efficient method of making the "Orthodox Church" a Bolshevik organ.

In Rumania, the law of 4 August 1948 completely subordinated the "Orthodox Church" to the State. As a result of this law every Church dignitary must have government approval in order to carry out his duties (article 21.) The Minister of Public Worship can veto any decision made by Church authorities and all important letters written by the bishop must be submitted to him for approval before being read to the congregation (article 25.)

A law was passed in Bulgaria on 17 February 1949, whereby

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every ecclesiastical nomination, deposition or transfer must be approved by the government (article 9.)

From the tone of these laws it is easy to see that the Communist State is not at all willing to grant the Church complete freedom to fulfil its mission. Even when the Communist State pretends to collaborate with the Church, it never changes its antireligious feeling and if, for the present, it continues to make use of the Church, the State's ultimate goal is the destruction of all religion.

In 1941, the anti-religious propaganda was interrupted for political reasons, but in 1944 to 1945 a series of atheistic books were printed and widely distributed. In 1947, such books as "The Popular Scientific Library" were printed and 200,000 copies were distributed. The "Youth Guard" publishing house issued "Conversations on Nature and on Man" which discuss "the absurdity of superstition and religious sentiments." That same year the Academy of Sciences published a series of "Scientific" books among which was the work of WIPPER R.U., "The Origins of Christian Literature." This book attempts to prove by "scientific" methods that Christ was a mythological figure.

During the last few years articles have been written in Bolshevik newspapers and periodicals on the necessity of the anti-religious struggle.

In June 1947 "The Young Bolshevik" (page 39) states: "The Komsomol organization cannot permit its members to stray from the Party's program in questions of religion. The Party always has been and still is against "superstition."

On 14 October 1947 "Pravda" informed the directors and professors of the schools of higher teaching that emphasis should be placed on Marxist and anti-religious doctrines. Then, on 29 June 1948 the subject of the "development and improvement of scientific propaganda" appeared in which the statement is made that the sciences must attack what remains of "superstition." If STALIN's Constitution guarantees freedom of conscience, it doesn't mean that the State organizations will be neutral with regard to religion. It is sufficient to remember the warnings of LENIN and STALIN with regard to the necessity of the "struggle against religious sentiments." On 17 November 1948 "Pravda" dis-

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cussed the ideological and political education of the Soviet schools and outlined a program of anti-religious education. The newspaper attacks superstition and religious sentiments, calling them the remnants of the capitalistic conscience which must be constantly attacked. Again on 30 March 1949, "Pravda" declared that it is the duty of the Komsomol to carry on anti-religious propaganda and to perfect scientific propaganda.

On 15 September 1948 the "Literary Journal" placed emphasis on the anti-scientific and reactionary character of religion and on the part which literature must play in the struggle against religious sentiment.

On 18 October 1948, "Komsomolskaja Pravda" discussed the problem, whether a member of the Komsomol may go to church. The newspaper concludes that such a thing is not possible, and cites a quotation from the works of "STALIN: "The Party cannot be neutral with regard to religion. It conducts anti-religious propaganda against all religious sentiments, because the Party is based on science, and every religion is in opposition to science." The duty of the Komsomol is to conduct anti-religious propaganda.

The situation of the "Orthodox Church" in the satellite countries is no better. In Bulgaria and Rumania, the Communist governments have imitated the anti-religious policy of the Soviet regime. They have avoided open persecution and have tried to use the Church for political purposes. In these countries, the "Orthodox Churches" have settled in the new situation without too much difficulty.

In Bulgaria, the law concerning Church organization takes into consideration the fact that the Bulgarian "Orthodox Church" is closely tied up with the history of the country, and in its form and spirit may be considered a popular and democratic church. Despite this the law excluded any Church influence on the youth of the country. "The Church Messenger (1946, 114) complains of the difficulties the church encounters in its charitable work and in its religious instruction ~~instruction~~ of the children. The law of 1949 concerning Church organization (article 21) states, that education and organization of the children and of the youth

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of the country is the job of the State, without any interference on the part of the Church; the same law (article 22) prohibits the Church from carrying on any charitable activities. In State schools, the children receive an anti-religious education. They are taught to scorn religion an expression of spiritual ignorance and are not given any religious instruction at all. Sunday School is prohibited, and the school teachers use every effort to keep the children from attending religious services. Churches have often been pillaged and destroyed.

In Rumania, the Church can have no influence on the youth of the country as the law of 3 August 1948 concerning teaching reforms, states(article 1) that all teaching must exclusively be organized by the State.

DATE OF OBSERVATION:

Current period

EVAL. COMMENT:

Source : reliable

Information : confirmed by other sources.