

THE COURT OF VIENNA AND CONFESSIONAL PROBLEMS IN TRANSYLVANIA, 1744-1759

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This report attempts to do two things: first, it describes how the Court of Vienna's policy on the confessional question in Transylvania between 1744 and 1759 changed, and, second, why it changed. I think we may discern four stages in the evolution of its attitude toward the Orthodox, though the boundaries between them were never rigid: 1) overt hostility toward them and a strong defense of the Union in the immediate aftermath of Visarion Sarai's appearance in Transylvania, 1744-1745; 2) determined suppression of "schismatics" and the search for ways to reinforce the Union, ca. 1745-1750; 3) signs of change in the Court's attitude and a gradual recognition of confessional realities in Transylvania, ca. 1750-1757; and 4) the Court's grant of toleration to the Orthodox and recognition of them as a distinct body of Christians, 1758-1759. I also examine the Court's relationship with the Serbian Orthodox Metropolitanate of Karlowitz for comparative purposes in order to see what it can tell us about the Court's policy toward the Romanian Orthodox of Transylvania.

These fifteen years of religious commotion in Transylvania took place in an era of decisive change in the Habsburg Monarchy as a whole as the material foundations and mental climate of traditional absolutism were gradually transformed by the gathering tide of the Enlightenment. The Romanians, both "United" and "non-United," though far removed from the sources of power in Vienna and shunned by the elites in Transylvania, could not but be drawn into the relentless advance toward new social and cultural forms. Their response to change, real and imagined, became the motive force behind community action in the middle of the century and raised a formidable challenge to the religious authority and imperial objectives of the Court of Vienna.

I. The relative religious calm among the Romanians of southern Transylvania was broken in March 1744 by the appearance of Visarion Sarai, a Serbian monk, who had come, by his own admission, to preach the truths of the Orthodox faith. His admonitions to all those who gathered in increasing numbers to hear his message that they shun their priests because they had accepted a Union with the Church of Rome caused panic. He made it clear that baptisms, marriages, and burials performed by such "impure" priests had no validity, and he warned that those who had received such sacraments had

jeopardized their eternal salvation.¹ Peasants and artisans in many villages reacted with desperation. While proclaiming that they would remain steadfast in their “old faith,” the faith of their ancestors, they seized Uniate churches and drove Uniate priests from them, and they ostracized such priests and their families, no longer treating them as members of the community and depriving them of all its benefits. They turned, instead, to monks and other holy men who lived alone or in small monastic communities in the hills and forests between Sibiu and Făgăraș.²

The initial reaction of the Court to Visarion’s mission and the massive defections from the Union that followed was surprise and disbelief. It had assumed that the Union had been complete, despite evidence that Orthodoxy had remained strong in certain areas and that many Uniates had no notion of what the Union was. It chose to ignore earlier violent opposition to the Union in the District of Făgăraș between 1726 and 1729. Although the immediate causes were unclear, hostility to the Union may have been aroused, in part, by the attempts of the Uniate Bishop Ioan Pataki to enforce strict observance of liturgical and pastoral norms on both clergy and laity. In any case, Uniate priests bore the brunt of the villages’ scorn, as peasants refused to receive the sacraments from “unclean” priests and sought comfort, instead, from monks and priests in the surrounding area.³ It apparently gave no serious consideration either to a census Bishop Ion Inochentie Klein had had carried out by the Uniate clergy in 1733, which showed that the Union had not been complete because 486 out of 2743 priests declared themselves to be “non-United.”⁴

The immediate tasks the Court set for itself were, first, to discover the reasons why so many faithful, even priests, had abandoned the Union, and, second, to suppress opposition to the Union by all available means. Still harboring the illusion of the completeness of the Union, the Court launched an extensive investigation of events to try to prove that the trouble had been

¹ Ioan Lupaș, *Două anchete oficiale în satele din scaunul Sibiului, 1744 și 1745*, Sibiu, 1938, p. 15.

² Magyar Országos Levéltár (henceforth: MOL), *Erdélyi Kancellária* (henceforth: EK), 1749/90, f. 53-55, 19-28: report debated by the Council of Ministers, Vienna, November 9, 1750; I. Lupaș, *Două anchete*, p. 20-24: testimony of Uniate priests in Sibiu district in 1744; Silviu Dragomir, *Istoria desrobirei religioase a Românilor din Ardeal în secolul XVIII*, Vol. 1, Sibiu, 1920, Annex, p. 44-46: report of the Magistrate of Sibiu to the Governor of Transylvania, April 22, 1745; Ioan Lupaș, *Doi precursori ai lui Horea în audiență la curtea împărătească din Viena*, in *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice*, Series 3, Vol. 26, 1944, p. 55-56.

³ G. Patacsi, *Die Unionsfeindlichen Bewegungen der Orthodoxen Rumänen Siebenbürgens in den Jahren 1726-1729*, in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, Vol. 26, 1960, p. 374, 376-379, 387-388.

⁴ Nicolau Togan, *Statistica Românilor din Transilvania în 1733*, in *Transilvania*, Vol. 29, 1898, p. 210, 212-213.

caused by outside agitators. Officials in Transylvania interrogated Visarion in April 1744, but could get no satisfaction. They suspected that the Serbian Metropolitan had sent him to preach against the Union, but Visarion stoutly insisted that he was simply obeying a call from God to minister to “wandering sheep,” and he repeatedly denied that he had attacked the Union. Other suspects were also interrogated, and investigations were carried out in numerous villages, especially those around Sibiu in May and June 1744. Clearly alarmed by what seemed to be a massive uprising, the Transylvanian Gubernium had decrees posted in Romanian villages ordering the inhabitants to attend church and threatening severe punishment of those who respected “neither the law of God nor the law of the land.”⁵ As late as the spring of 1745 in many places, such as Rășinari, “agitators,” both priests and laymen, were put in chains, and the village elders were forced to allow Uniate priests back into the churches from which they had been driven.⁶ Transylvanian authorities treated the Orthodox as crude, superstitious, and volatile, as Governor Johann Haller put it in a letter to officials on April 6, 1745, and, he added, they had to be dealt with firmly. The Court gave no thought whatever to yielding to such people in the matter of the Union.

While attending to the immediate problems left in the wake of Visarion’s mission, the Court was also stirred to undertake a thorough review of its policy toward the Union in the preceding decades. It was determined to protect Uniate priests and to strengthen all Uniates in their faith. Yet it could not but wonder about the state of the Uniate Church itself, and it blamed Bishop Klein, who had assumed office in 1729, for having failed in his duty to further the Union and root out “schismatics.” It may even have suspected that he was ready to renounce the Union. Klein himself had encouraged such thoughts by his forceful efforts to gain rights for the Uniate clergy and faithful in the previous decade and a half. Almost from the moment he had taken up his duties as bishop he had embarked on a campaign to obtain fulfillment of the promises made to those who accepted the Union with Rome by Emperor Leopold I in his second diploma in 1701. In petition after petition to Charles VI (1711-1740) and then Maria Theresa (1740-1780) he pointed out that decades after the conclusion of the Union Uniate priests still did not enjoy the rights and immunities of their Roman Catholic colleagues, but, instead, were subjected to the most blatant social and economic discrimination.⁷ During a long sojourn in Vienna in 1743 he nearly overwhelmed the Court with

⁵ I. Lupaș, *Două anchete*, p. 11.

⁶ S. Dragomir, *Istoria desrobirei religioase*, Vol. 1, Annex, p. 41.

⁷ Augustin Bunea, *Din istoria Românilor: Episcopul Ioan Inocențiu Klein (1728-1751)*, Blaj, 1900, p. 28-29, 37-39; MOL, EK, 1731/111, f. 8-11: Klein to Emperor.

petitions on behalf of his clergy and faithful. Besides urging confirmation of the Second Leopoldine Diploma, he called specifically for the appointment of qualified Uniates to public office and adequate financial support for the Uniate clergy.⁸ He got little in return for his efforts, and an exasperated Transylvanian Chancellery instructed him not to come to Vienna again without permission.⁹

Under the impress of events in Transylvania in the spring of 1744 the Transylvanian Chancellery summoned Klein to Vienna on June 15 to discuss ways of coping with the hostility to the Union that was sweeping southern Transylvania. Before leaving, he held a synod of his clergy and faithful in Blaj on July 6, at which he reported on his work on their behalf and received their strong endorsement to continue. Numerous Orthodox were there, too. Several years later, when participants in protest movements against the Union in 1748 and 1749 were interrogated by the authorities, they reported that Klein had asked them why they refused to attend church and rejected their priests and that they had replied simply that they did not want Uniate priests. When Klein asked if they had known beforehand that their priests were Uniates, they said that they did not. Klein then told them that their priests were indeed Uniates and that their religion had been changed a little. But he promised to go to the Empress with their petitions, and, if he were unsuccessful, he “would seek his bread elsewhere.”¹⁰ Other testimony confirms that Klein promised to plead for their [the non-United’s] religion in Vienna because they did not want Uniate priests.¹¹

Klein arrived in Vienna in early August and immediately resumed his efforts on behalf of his church. But now the attitude at Court toward him was mistrustful, even hostile. He seemed not to grasp the change of atmosphere. A “promemoria” for the Empress, in which he reviewed the history of the Union, confirmed the suspicions of those who thought the Union for Klein was merely a pretext to gain political and economic advantages for the Romanian “nation.” Klein, in a sense, played into their hands because he warned that if Uniates could not benefit from the rights that Leopold I had granted them they would rather be schismatics because then they would at least have the protection of the Romanian princes and the Russian tsar, as they had had before the Union.¹² Such bluntness lent credence to accusations by officials in the Transylvanian Chancellery that Klein was ready to seek aid for

⁸ Aug. Bunea, *Episcopul Ioan Inocențiu Klein*, p. 65-85.

⁹ Zoltán I. Tóth, *Az erdélyi román nacionalizmus első százada, 1697-1792*, Budapest, 1946, p. 112-113.

¹⁰ MOL, *Magyar Kancellária Levéltár: Ungarn und Siebenbürgen*, packet 52, 1749, f. 6-13: interrogation of Bucur Birsan, of the village of Gura Râului, Sibiu district.

¹¹ *Ibidem*: interrogation of Moga Trufflye, of Orlat.

¹² Aug. Bunea, *Episcopul Ioan Inocențiu Klein*, p. 117-119.

his cause beyond the borders of the Monarchy and that he bore much of the responsibility for the resurgence of the “non-United” in southern Transylvania.¹³

Realizing, finally, that his position in Vienna had become untenable, Klein fled to Rome in December.¹⁴ He continued his campaign for Uniate rights from exile, but the Court prevented his return to Transylvania and eventually, in 1751, it obliged him to resign as bishop. He died in Rome in 1768.

The Court’s concerns over the future of the Union were complicated by the hostile attitude of the Protestant estates in Transylvania toward it. They opposed the Union, in part, because they objected to any measure that would strengthen Roman Catholicism, and, in part, because they were reluctant to share their privileges with a new and largely disdained element – the Romanians, whether Uniate or Orthodox. Such views may explain why the Orthodox movement could gain such momentum in the Saxon *Fundus regius*. It was a point Bishop Klein had made in 1734 in a letter to the Apostolic Nuncio in Rome, Domenico Passionei, in which he accused Protestant “heretics” (he was undoubtedly referring to the Saxons) of doing everything in their power to hinder the Union.¹⁵ Even the Catholic estates could sympathize with the monopoly of elite status by the three constitutionally recognized nations.¹⁶

II. For the next half-dozen years after the uprising ignited by Visarion the Court persisted in its determination to restore the Union as it had imagined it before 1744. In so doing, it failed utterly to grasp the nature of the religious sentiments that motivated the Orthodox. In a decree of May 22, 1749 Maria Theresa expressed the certainty that the great majority of Romanians remained Uniates and urged that “those few” who had left the Union, because of the “intrigues” of a handful of “schismatics,” be persuaded by peaceful means to return.¹⁷ The Council of Ministers in the following year declared all the Romanians before 1744 to have been Uniate and blamed defections on “seductions” carried out during that year of “tumult.”¹⁸

¹³ Z. I. Tóth, *Az erdélyi román*, p. 145-148; MOL, *EK*1745/226, f. 2-3.

¹⁴ Francisc Pall, *Inochentie Micu-Klein. Exilul la Roma, 1745-1768*, Vol. 1, Cluj-Napoca, 1997, p. 16-21.

¹⁵ I. Dumitriu-Snagov, *Românii în arhivele Romei*, București, 1973, p. 99: Klein to Passionei, May 24, 1734; p. 101: Klein to Passionei, June 11, 1734.

¹⁶ S. Dragomir, *Istoria desrobirei religioase*, Vol. 2, Sibiu, 1930, p. 325: Saxon Count to City Council of Sibiu, 1757.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, Vol. 1, Annex, p. 80-81: Maria Theresa to the Catholic Estates of Transylvania.

¹⁸ MOL, *EK*, 1750/297, f. 19-28: A report on conditions in Transylvania considered by the Council of Ministers on November 9, 1750.

The Court proposed a series of measures to protect and foster the Union. On April 15, 1746 Maria Theresa appointed four “protectors” for the purpose, and on June 18, 1747 she reconfirmed Uniate privileges and promised to grant Uniate nobles official posts, thereby ignoring the protests of the Transylvanian estates. Persuaded that “schismatics” had made headway against the Union because Uniates themselves had been ill-informed about what the Union meant, she was intent upon improving the educational opportunities for Uniates and discouraging priests and laymen from sending their children to non-Catholic schools. Citing the “ignorance” and “inexperience” of Uniate priests as the origin of the “evil” that had befallen the Uniate population of Transylvania, she instructed the Transylvanian Gubernium to find ways of expanding the number of schools available to Uniate priests, and she urged the Catholic Protectors of the Union to see to it that new primary schools were established and that Uniate boys attended them.¹⁹

The Court reserved for the Uniate clergy an enhanced role in promoting the Union. It wanted an activist clergy who would go into the villages as teachers and preachers and explain to peasants and others that the Union did not mean an abandonment of tradition and the substitution of the Latin for the Greek rite. The most effective way of eliminating ignorance and false impressions and winning the faithful back to the Union, it suggested in decrees of April 15 and June 8, 1746,²⁰ was persuasion, not force. In any case, it was convinced that this bold enterprise could be successful only if the Uniate Church itself had forceful leadership, since the main burden would fall on its clergy. The Court thus put heavy pressure on Bishop Klein to resign, since it had ceased to regard him as an ally. It intended to put in his place a bishop who was fully committed to its conception of what the Union should be and not afraid to take vigorous action against “agitators.” Klein finally acceded to the demands of the Court, as we have seen, and resigned as bishop in May 1751. In his place a synod of the Uniate Church in November elected as his successor Petru Pavel Aron, who had been serving as episcopal vicar since 1745. Aron proved to be the zealous promoter of the Union so eagerly desired by the Court.

The Court and Transylvanian authorities had to contend with an upsurge of Orthodox resistance to the Union in 1748 and 1749, as priests and laymen organized public meetings to demand recognition of their right to choose their own priests and to worship in accordance with their “old faith.”

¹⁹ S. Dragomir, *Istoria desrobirei religioase*, Vol. 1, Annex, p. 59: Maria Theresa to Transylvanian Gubernium, June 18, 1747.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, Vol. 1, Annex, p. 50; Mihai Săsăujan, *Politica bisericească a Curții din Viena în Transilvania (1740-1761)*, Cluj-Napoca, 2003, p. 155.

The resistance movement, which was centered in the districts of Sibiu, Miercurea, Sebeș, Orăștie, and Dobra, achieved a significant degree of coordination, at least enough to organize large protest assemblies and send delegations to the Empress in Vienna and the governor in Sibiu. They were led by priests, artisans, and more enterprising peasants, all those who usually directed village affairs. One of the most impressive of these gatherings was held in Săliște at the beginning of 1749. It took on the air of a revival meeting as “schismatic” priests baptized the faithful and themselves in the spirit of unrestrained religious fervor.²¹ The “non-United” at all these assemblies remained unshaken in the principles they had proclaimed in 1744 and 1745. They denied that they had ever been Uniates,²² and they demanded “to be of one religion with the Greeks and Serbs.”²³ On these and later occasions they warned that unless the authorities granted them “spiritual peace” they and their families would go to “Turkey” (Wallachia) or “Muscovy” or the Banat where they could practice their faith without fear.²⁴ It was a threat that the Court took seriously, since it was engaged in laying new financial and economic foundations for the Monarchy and could ill afford to lose large numbers of peasants and taxpayers through emigration.

In all these endeavors the “non-United” were aided by outsiders. Saxon officials supported their mission to Vienna in 1748, as the “Magister” of Alba served as their “protector” and oversaw the drawing up of their petition, and the “Procurator” and a “Senator” of Sibiu gave them money for the journey.²⁵ On this and subsequent trips to Vienna the delegates traveled through the Banat, where it is reasonable to assume that they made contact with Serbian Orthodox clergy. The members of the Greek merchant companies in Brașov, Făgăraș, and Sibiu also appear to have aided the petitioners. An example is to be found in the petition of the Romanian Orthodox of Făgăraș (“*Valachica communitas Fogarasiensis hactenus non Unita, nec se unire volens*”) to the Supreme Captain of Făgăraș in 1748 or 1749, in which they requested the same privileges as the Greeks, since they both “sailed in the same vessel.”²⁶ The petition is fairly sophisticated in its arguments in support of the “non-United’s” freedom to worship and to live in accordance with their own rite, and one suspects the help of Greeks in drawing it up. Although the language of the petitions in general was humble and full of devotion to the Empress, the

²¹ MOL, *EK*, 1749/90, f. 51-52: interrogation of Cristof Oprea of Săliște, February 26, 1749.

²² S. Dragomir, *Istoria desrobirei religioase*, Vol. 1, Annex, p. 68-69: petition to Governor Haller, November 1748.

²³ MOL, *Magyar Kancellária Levéltár: Ungarn und Siebenbürgen*, packet 52, 1749, f. 6-13.

²⁴ MOL, *EK*, 1749/183, f. 2-3: petition to Maria Theresa, June 1749; 1752/312, f. 2-11a.

²⁵ MOL, *EK*, 1749/90, f. 42-44: interrogation of Ioan Oprea, January 20, 1749.

²⁶ MOL, *EK*, 1749/93, f. 11.

petitioners were determined not to yield on their demand for religious freedom.

Both the Court and officials in Transylvania were alarmed by the size of the “schismatic” movement and its ramifications. They thus did not hesitate to take severe measures against those who incited others against the Union. A series of decrees and instructions issued between 1746 and 1749 called for the arrest and punishment of schismatic priests and laymen and especially monks from the hills and forests near the border with Wallachia.²⁷ Maria Theresa on January 15, 1749 approved the strongest possible measures against the Orthodox movement, calling its leaders “nobodies.”²⁸ Then, in a note to the Transylvanian Gubernium of March 14, 1749 she denounced opponents of the Union for their innumerable “crimes,”²⁹ and at this time “schismatic” priests and laymen who were suspected of organizing protest meetings were arrested and troops were quartered in numerous villages. Yet, a month later the Transylvanian Chancellery, tacitly acknowledging the gravity of the situation, recommended that any action taken against schismatic priests be done with as little public commotion as possible in order to avoid heightening tensions.³⁰ But neither the Court nor the Transylvanian Gubernium dealt seriously with the “non-United’s” demands. Instead of concessions, they had the petitioners arrested and, in the best case, sent home.³¹ A report of the Governor of September 13, 1750 epitomized official thinking toward the Orthodox. It said that they were not entitled to rights because they were peasants bound to the soil and thus merely tolerated.

III. In the early 1750s there were signs of change in the Court’s policy toward the Orthodox. A series of decrees offered them, in effect, private toleration. It proposed that those who had left the Union should no longer be pursued as long as they did not agitate against the Union or disturb the general peace of the country. Further evidence of a softening of official policy toward the Orthodox was Maria Theresa’s rescript of May 31, 1756, which repeated

²⁷ S. Dragomir, *Istoria desrobirei religioase*, Vol. 1, Annex, p. 52-53: Maria Theresa’s instructions to the Protectors of the Union, June 20, 1746; p. 60-61: Maria Theresa to the Transylvanian Gubernium, June 18, 1747; p. 77: Governor Haller to Transylvanian officials, February 12, 1749.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, Vol. 1, Annex, p. 73-74; p. 77-78: Governor Haller to Transylvanian officials, February 12, 1749.

²⁹ MOL, *EK*, 1749/116, f. 18-19: Maria Theresa to the Transylvanian Gubernium and the Catholic Councillors.

³⁰ MOL, *EK*, 1749/144, f. 2, 6-11: conference on Transylvanian affairs, Vienna, April 29, 1749.

³¹ M. Săsăujan, *Politica bisericască*, p. 161-163; MOL, *Magyar Kancellária Levéltár: Ungarn und Siebenbürgen*, packet 52, 1749, f. 6-13: interrogation of Nicolae Oprea and colleagues.

earlier admonitions that officials undertake no action that would “upset” the people.³²

The Court displayed a special indulgence toward the Orthodox communities in Braşov, Sibiu, and Făgăraş. Toleration there was of long standing and had been determined largely by the presence of Greek merchant companies.³³ The Court had accorded them the right to hold services in churches and even allowed them to have Orthodox priests who had been ordained outside Transylvania.³⁴ But it was equally determined to prevent them from spreading their religion beyond their own communities and observed closely any relations they might have with Russia.³⁵ The forbearance of the Court at such a turbulent moment in the religious life of the principality is striking, especially as it suspected the “Greeks” of Braşov, Sibiu, and Făgăraş, along with monks in the surrounding countryside, of being responsible for the “tumult” since 1744.³⁶

The Court and Transylvanian authorities nonetheless remained vigilant, despite apparent concessions to the Orthodox. They opposed formal public recognition of the Orthodox, and the Gubernium on May 22, 1756 reiterated its earlier stand that they belonged to the lower classes and thus were not entitled to rights.³⁷ Both the Court and the Gubernium encouraged the Uniate Bishop Petru Pavel Aron and his protopopes to take strong action against the “non-United.” Between 1749 and 1756 Aron and his clergy indeed seemed intent on converting everyone in southern Transylvania to the Union, a campaign that led to numerous arrests, fines, and even imprisonment of Orthodox priests.³⁸ As late as July 20, 1756 the Gubernium reminded local officials of Maria Theresa’s earlier edicts about dealing firmly with all those who opposed the Union. It urged them to imprison schismatic priests and laymen who encouraged the people in their disobedience and, if necessary, to call on the military for aid.³⁹

³² S. Dragomir, *Istoria desrobirei religioase*, Vol. 1, Annex, p. 160.

³³ Olga Cicanci, *Comaniile greceşti din Transilvania şi comerţul european în anii 1636-1746*, Bucureşti, 1981, p. 159-168.

³⁴ Mihai Săsăujan, *Habsburgii şi Biserica Ortodoxă din Imperiul austriac (1740-1761)*. *Documente*, Cluj-Napoca, 2003, p. 243: order of Hofkriegsrat, March 20, 1748.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 265, 271: instructions of the Hofkriegsrat to Wallis, Commanding General in Transylvania, December 20, 1751.

³⁶ MOL, *EK*, 1750/297, f. 19-28.

³⁷ S. Dragomir, *Istoria desrobirei religioase*, Vol. 1, Annex, p. 159.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, Vol. 2, p. 38-40; Augustin Bunea, *Episcopii Petru Paul Aron şi Dionisiu Novacovici*, Blaj, 1902, p. 107-109; MOL, *EK*, 1750/247, f. 2-4: letter of Orthodox priest Stan of Dobra, August 2, 1750.

³⁹ S. Dragomir, *Istoria desrobirei religioase*, Vol. 2, p. 53-54.

IV. It may be useful at this point to examine the Court's relationship with the Serbian Orthodox Metropolitanate of Karlowitz to see what light it can shed on the Court's treatment of the Romanian Orthodox in Transylvania.

Formal relations between the Serbian hierarchy in the Habsburg Monarchy and the Romanians may be traced back at least to 1695, when the Metropolitan began to appoint bishops to sees in the Banat and Arad, where large numbers of Romanian faithful resided.⁴⁰ In the following decades a number of Serbian Metropolitans asserted claims to jurisdiction over Transylvania, but they encountered strong opposition at Court to any attempts to strengthen Orthodoxy in this way.⁴¹ Nonetheless, Metropolitans Arsenije Šakabent (1737-1748) and Isaja Antonović (1748-1749) encouraged the Orthodox of Transylvania to seek closer ties with Karlowitz. The Orthodox of Braşov seem to have been the first to claim Serbian protection against the Union, and they sent representatives to the Serbian national church congress in Karlowitz in 1743 and to the electoral congresses for Metropolitan in 1748 and 1749. Other Romanians followed the lead of Braşov. Ioan Oancea, one of the leaders of the Romanian Orthodox of Făgăraş, asked Metropolitan Arsenije to take them under his protection in a petition of November 28, 1747 signed by the inhabitants of the city and the surrounding area and by the monks of the "holy little monasteries" (*schituri*).⁴²

The most forceful proponent of close relations between the Serbian Metropolitanate and the Romanians of Transylvania was Metropolitan Pavel Nenadović (1749-1768).⁴³ He made it his mission to bring them under his jurisdiction and defend them against all efforts to convert them to the Union.⁴⁴ They, in turn, appealed to him on numerous occasions to intercede on their behalf with the Court, and their visits to Karlowitz for aid and advice became frequent in the 1750s. Nenadović continually urged the Romanians to remain steadfast in their faith and encouraged them to seek a bishop of their own from the Empress. He used the numerous occasions when he was in Vienna to support the Orthodox cause in Transylvania and, no less vigorously, to gain the Court's approval to extend the boundaries of his Metropolitanate to include Transylvania. Although he had little immediate success, his persistence and ingenuity forced the Court to deal with, for it, unpalatable questions.

⁴⁰ Silviu Anuichi, *Relații bisericești româno-sârbe din secolul al XVII-lea și al XVIII-lea*, in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, Vol. 97, No. 7-8, 1979, p. 907.

⁴¹ On the Serbian Metropolitanate during this period, see Djoko Slijepčević, *Istorija srpske pravoslavne crkve*, Vol. 2, München, 1966, p. 30-47.

⁴² S. Dragomir, *Istoria desrobirei religioase*, Vol. 1, p. 208.

⁴³ D. Slijepčević, *Istorija*, Vol. 2, p. 47-52.

⁴⁴ S. Anuichi, *Relații bisericești româno-sârbe*, p. 947-956.

Contacts between Karlowitz and the non-United in Transylvania could not but cause alarm in Vienna and among all the protectors of the Union. Between 1752 and 1758 the Court repeatedly forbade Nenadović to interfere in Transylvanian affairs and, as Maria Theresa specified in a decree of June 5, 1756, he must cease attempting to extend his jurisdiction over Transylvania, an admonition that had to be repeated in 1758.⁴⁵ At the same time the Governor of Transylvania, by a decree of September 23, 1756, forbade “schismatics,” who had delivered numerous petitions to Karlowitz in the previous year, to make appeals to “foreign” bishops.⁴⁶ He had no doubt that the Metropolitan and the petitioners had joined forces in order to undo the Union.

Nenadović was resourceful in the face of such implacable hostility and approached relations from another, political perspective. In his dealings with representatives of the Transylvanian Orthodox he thus raised the matter of extending the privileges that the Serbs had received from Leopold I in 1691, which had, in effect, granted them ecclesiastical administrative autonomy, to the Orthodox of Transylvania. To this end he had published in Râmnic, in Oltenia, in 1751 a small brochure entitled, *Scoaterea sau izvodul puncturilor din prevelegii cinstituluii clir al legii grecești și a tot laudatului neam grecesc*,⁴⁷ which he undoubtedly intended as an incitement to Romanian Orthodox to seek close ties with Karlowitz as the best means of improving their situation.

The response of the Court to Nenadović’s initiatives is instructive. In 1750 the Council of Ministers firmly rejected an expansion of the Metropolitanate of Karlowitz into Transylvania because it had no wish to strengthen Orthodoxy and thereby weaken the Union. But it justified its action by pointing out that there was no Serbian community in Transylvania. Not only that, the Council insisted that, in any case, there were no “non-United” believers in Transylvania because all the Romanians and their clergy had belonged to the Union with Rome since the end of the seventeenth century.⁴⁸ When the Illyrian Aulic Deputation took up the matter later, in 1755, it, too, opposed any extension of the so-called Illyrian (that is, Serbian) privileges to the Romanians of Transylvania. In supporting this stand, Councillor Franz Xaver Koller raised the issue of inherent differences between Serbs and Romanians. The Illyrian privileges, he argued, covered only the Serbs and not the Romanians because not everyone who was Orthodox belonged to the

⁴⁵ S. Dragomir, *Istoria desrobirei religioase*, Vol. 2, p. 29; M. Săsăujan, *Política bisericească*, p. 170.

⁴⁶ S. Dragomir, *Istoria desrobirei religioase*, Vol. 1, Annex, p. 160-161.

⁴⁷ Ioan N. Beju, *Tipărituri românești vechi necunoscute*, in *Mitropolia Ardealului*, Vol. 9, No. 1-2, 1964, p. 61-64.

⁴⁸ MOL, *EK*, 1750/297, f. 19-28: a report on conditions in Transylvania considered by the Council of Ministers on November 9, 1750.

Serbian nationality.⁴⁹ Koller's comments suggest that a new conception of the Romanian Orthodox was gaining ground at Court, one based as much on ethnicity as on religion. It is also worth noting that Koller and his colleagues on the Aulic Deputation had no intention of treating the Serbs and Romanians as ethnic nations in the modern sense of the term. Yet, as a zealous advocate of the conversion of the Serbs to the Union, Koller thought Uniate Serbs should not be excluded from enjoyment of the Illyrian privileges, since this boon had been granted not to the "schism," that is, Orthodoxy, but to the Serbian nation.⁵⁰

V. By the summer of 1758 the Court was already considering substantive changes to its policy toward the Orthodox clergy and faithful in Transylvania. The main question before the Council of Ministers at its meetings on July 19 and August 19 was the organization of the Orthodox Church in Transylvania. Opinions were sharply divided. The Transylvanian Chancellor Gábor Bethlen spoke for those who opposed any significant change in policy. He was certain that decisive, even aggressive, action would discourage agitation against the Union, and he urged that Nenadović's interference in Transylvanian religious affairs be stopped immediately and his representatives arrested and imprisoned. To name a bishop for the non-United, let alone extend the authority of the Serbian Metropolitan over Transylvania, seemed to him the height of folly, since it would ignite great unrest and might even result in a mass abandonment of the Union.⁵¹ He, like many of his colleagues, seems to have thought of the masses as highly volatile and thus easily aroused by the religious passions of the moment to commit irrational, even violent, acts.

Of a quite different persuasion was Johann Christoph Bartenstein, head of the Illyrian Aulic Deputation and an influential adviser of Maria Theresa. He urged the installation of a metropolitan or bishop for the Orthodox of Transylvania to be appointed by the Empress upon the recommendation from the Transylvanian Chancellery or the Illyrian Aulic Deputation. He thought it in the best interest of the state to take such action because a Romanian metropolitan would serve as a rival to the Serbian metropolitan. In a situation of divide and conquer, then, Orthodoxy would be weakened and the Court would have the power of decision between two competitors for its favor.⁵² He also urged keeping the Orthodox of Transylvania subordinate to a bishop or

⁴⁹ J.H. Schwicker, *Politische Geschichte der Serben in Ungarn*, Budapest, 1880, p. 193-205.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 205-207.

⁵¹ S. Dragomir, *Istoria desrobirei religioase*, Vol. 2, p. 73.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 73-75.

metropolitan within the Habsburg Monarchy, rather than allow them to fall under the jurisdiction of a prelate in Russia or the Romanian principalities.

Bartenstein had the support of Prince Wenzel Anton Kaunitz, Chancellor of State, who reasoned in similar fashion. His primary concern was to enhance the power and well-being of the state, not to pursue a religious policy that had little relationship to the prevailing state of affairs in Transylvania or to the overall objectives of a new imperial policy that he himself was engaged in formulating. Toleration of the Orthodox made more sense to him than repression, which kept the province in turmoil and risked the loss of large numbers of agricultural workers and taxpayers through emigration. Like Bartenstein, he recommended the appointment of a bishop in Transylvania independent of the Serbian metropolitan. Such a solution, he thought, would put an end to the agitation of the Orthodox without weakening the dominant, Roman Catholic faith of the Monarchy and would end the Serbian Metropolitan's disruptive interference in the religious affairs of Transylvania.⁵³ Maria Theresa followed the advice of her councillors and on October 13, 1758 approved the nomination of an exempt bishop in Transylvania. Her action was the first major step away from a religious policy she had followed since her accession to the throne in 1740.

Maria Theresa took a second major step in promoting a new approach to confessional problems in Transylvania on July 13, 1759, when she issued an edict of toleration. It was a grudging act. She allowed the Orthodox to practice their faith unmolested, but only if they did so quietly and made no effort to obstruct the Union, and she threatened to withdraw toleration from those who left the Union in the future and refused to return to it.⁵⁴ Rather than breaking new ground, she was, in effect, recognizing the existing state of things. This kind of toleration could have no positive results. It did not bring peace, but stirred even greater turbulence among the population.

VI. We have thus far sketched how the Court modified its policy toward the Orthodox in the course of fifteen years, how it moved from a militant denial of their very existence in 1744 to a reluctant grant of toleration in 1759. The question we must now try to answer is why the Court's policy took such a direction. Both immediate and long-term causes need to be considered.

After about a decade of combating "schismatics" influential figures at Court, even strong supporters of the Union, recognized that a policy based on force had been ineffective; unrest continued and was growing stronger.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 76-77; M. Săsăujan, *Habsburgii și Biserica Ortodoxă*, p. 117-120.

⁵⁴ S. Dragomir, *Istoria desrobirei religioase*, Vol. 2, p. 136-137.

Tranquillity at home had become imperative. A new war with Prussia had broken out in 1756, which had put a severe strain on the Monarchy's economic and financial resources and had drawn troops from Transylvania to the battle front. As a result, the ability of the Court and of Transylvanian authorities to deal with widespread unrest in the villages in southern Transylvania had been sharply curtailed. Statesmen in Vienna realized that the large body of Orthodox, whose existence they had now been forced to recognize, could not be allowed to drift, to be subject to the "ignorance" and "capriciousness" of leaders from their own midst. They agreed that the uncertainty of the situation merely enhanced the fortunes of Orthodoxy by increasing the powers of the Serbian Metropolitan of Karlowitz and by encouraging Russia and the Romanian principalities to meddle in the Monarchy's internal affairs. Men like Kaunitz and Bartenstein were thus determined to impose order and a suitable direction on the Orthodox through the appointment of a bishop who would subordinate himself to the Court's interests. Compromise, even some form of toleration was accepted as inevitable.

If we turn to long-term trends in the evolution of the Habsburg Monarchy, we may be able to put the Court's policy toward the Orthodox in proper historical perspective and explain it as part of a broader pattern of ideological and socio-economic change. Between the second half of the seventeenth century and the reign of Joseph II in the 1780s the foundations upon which the governance of the Monarchy rested moved from confessional absolutism to enlightened absolutism.⁵⁵ Put briefly, this shift meant that the interests of the state came to prevail over the interests of the church. Even at one of the high points of confessional absolutism – the Church Union with Rome of a significant portion of the Romanian Orthodox at the turn of the eighteenth century – the political aims of the Court in strengthening the unity of the Monarchy were manifest. As state interests grew at the expense of the church under Joseph I, Charles VI, and Maria Theresa religious uniformity among the population became less crucial, and the Court acknowledged that one could be a loyal and useful subject without having to be Catholic. Such a perspective had been evident for some time in the immigration policies of Charles VI and Maria Theresa, who had encouraged merchants, peasants, and others with useful skills from the Balkans to settle in the Monarchy.⁵⁶

A sure sign of the laicization of principles and policies at the Court was the increasing emphasis on the development of the economic structures and the political institutions of a modern state. Statesmen were fully aware of the

⁵⁵ Eduard Winter, *Der Josefismus. Die Geschichte des österreichischen Reformkatholizismus, 1740-1848*, Berlin, 1962, p. 22-99; Idem, *Frühauflklärung*, Berlin, 1966, p. 124-149.

⁵⁶ Virzhiniia Paskaleva, *Sredna Evropa i zemite po dolniia Dunav prez XVIII-XIX v.*, Sofia, 1986, p. 28-31, 41-42.

need for such reforms if the Monarchy was to be a significant player in European affairs. Early in the reign of Maria Theresa an important step was taken in the creation of a unified, centralized administrative organization of the whole Monarchy with the establishment of the *Directorium in Publicis et Cameralibus* in Vienna in 1749.⁵⁷ Just a few years earlier, in 1746, the initiative had been taken to coordinate the economy of the Monarchy with the creation of the *Commerzdirektorium*, which in the main followed mercantilist principles. Even the peasants figured in its projects. Increasingly, officials thought of them as primary producers of wealth and contemplated ways in which the state could make them more productive. Thus, the view prevailed that this vital labor force must be kept at home and discouraged from migrating to foreign countries.⁵⁸ In this new atmosphere Orthodox peasants were accepted as just as good cultivators of the soil and taxpayers as Roman Catholic and Uniates. Non-Catholics in 1749 were even invited to settle in the Monarchy without having to become Catholics.

Tension between state and church, always present, increased during Maria Theresa's reign. However devout a Catholic she may have been, she did not hesitate to press the right of the state to intervene in matters that for a long time had been the prerogative of the church. Education was one such contested area. Eager to shift the church's resources away from monasticism and the contemplative life to an engagement with the day-to-day issues of the parishes, she proposed a reform of theological training that would produce the active, practical men needed in the villages and the schools. She found valuable allies in the Jansenists and Reform Catholics, who gradually replaced the Jesuits in theological faculties.

Providing an intellectual and even a spiritual framework for the competition between state and church and pervading all areas of public life, especially the Court, were the currents of the early Enlightenment. By emphasizing the importance of reason and knowledge in dealing with the problems of society, the *Aufklärer* challenged the primacy of the traditional church in secular matters, and, by focusing on the common heritage of mankind, they undermined the church's claim to decide between those who would be saved and those who would be damned.⁵⁹ In this growing climate of relativism a refuge thus presented itself to the Orthodox.

⁵⁷ Friedrich Walter, *Die Geschichte der österreichischen Zentralverwaltung in der Zeit Maria Theresias (1740-1780)*, Vienna, 1938, p. 175-180, 194-216.

⁵⁸ M. Săsăujan, *Habsburgii și Biserica Ortodoxă*, p. 119: Kaunitz to Maria Theresa, October 9, 1758.

⁵⁹ For an overview of the spirit and reception of the Enlightenment in Maria Theresa's reign, see Karl Vocelka, *Glanz und Untergang der böhmischen Welt: Repräsentation, Reform und Reaktion im habsburgischen Vielvölkerstaat*, Vienna, 2001, p. 235-275.

The Monarchy's expanding relations with the Orthodox world also could not but have a salutary effect on the Court's relations with both the Romanian and Serbian Orthodox communities. The alliance with Russia, so vital in parrying the threat to the Monarchy's integrity from Frederick II of Prussia, and the consequent need to placate Russian religious sensibilities, feigned or real, imposed caution on the Court's dealings with the Orthodox in Transylvania.⁶⁰ The Monarchy's growing trade with Southeastern Europe during Maria Theresa's reign and the possibilities of expanding it⁶¹ and the resulting need to soften confessional rigidities also contributed to the shift in the Court's policy toward the Orthodox of Transylvania from antipathy to toleration.

VII. The crisis provoked by Visarion and the subsequent widespread defiance of the Union and demands for freedom of worship by the Orthodox down to the edict of toleration of 1759 were signal events for both the Romanians and the Court of Vienna. The "schismatics" had obliged the Court to define more precisely the place of the Romanians, both Orthodox and Uniates, in the Monarchy. The Orthodox had thus achieved recognition of their identity from a reluctant political authority that had chosen to ignore their very existence for over four decades. By gaining a bishop of their own, they had taken an important step in creating a church administration and thus in acquiring a crucial instrument for asserting their distinctiveness. The Uniate Church, paradoxically, also benefited from the crisis. The Court, loath to abandon a project – the Union – that still seemed capable of contributing to the Monarchy's cohesion, supplied increased resources to enable it to prosper. Of no little importance either, the Court itself had gained valuable experience in dealing with a new and still fragile concept – the ethnic nation, both Romanian and Serb.

⁶⁰ M. Săsăujan, *Habsburgii și Biserica Ortodoxă*, p. 105-106: Kaunitz to Maria Theresa on his meeting with the Russian ambassador, November 27, 1757; p. 106-109: Russian ambassador to Kaunitz concerning the grievances of the Orthodox, November 27, 1757; p. 110-117: Kaunitz's reply to the Russian ambassador concerning the grievances of the Orthodox, December 3, 1757.

⁶¹ Virginia Paskaleva, *Die Wirtschaftspolitik Maria Theresias und die Balkanvölker*, in *Österreich im Europa der Aufklärung*, Vol. 1, Vienna, 1985, p. 153-172.

CURTEA VIENEZĂ ȘI PROBLEMELE CONFESIONALE DIN
TRANSILVANIA, 1744-1759

Rezumat

Studiul expune motivele și felul cum s-a schimbat politica Curții de la Viena față de problemele confesionale din Transilvania. Autorul a ales spre analiză câteva momente pilduitoare, pentru a evidenția politica Vienei față de românii din Transilvania: 1744, 1745-1750, 1750-1756, 1759. O a doua problemă a studiului este legată de răspunsul la întrebarea: de ce se schimbă politica confesională a autorității centrale. Răspunsul la chestiunea ridicată este dat printr-o analiză a contextului politic internațional și a situației politice, sociale și economice din Imperiul habsburgic la jumătatea secolului al XVIII-lea. O rezolvare a conflictului confesional a fost Edictul de toleranță din 1759, căruia autorul îi rezervă o analiză distinctă, explicând contextul adoptării și semnificația acestuia pentru românii neuniți și uniți din Principatul Transilvaniei.