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ABSTRACT

PhD THESIS

**The Ecclesiastical Press in Germany and Romania under the
Communist Regime (1945-1989). A Comparative Analysis.
Historical Context, Thematic Framework, Freedoms and
Constraints.**

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The contents of the PhD thesis

1. INTRODUCTION EROARE! MARCAJ ÎN DOCUMENT NEDEFINIT.

<u>1.1. The Theme</u>	<u>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</u>
<u>1.2. The goal and the method</u>	<u>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</u>
<u>1.3. The Structure</u>	<u>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</u>
<u>1.4. The stage of research</u>	<u>15</u>

2. COMMUNISM IN ROMANIA – GENERAL FRAMEWORKS EROARE! MARCAJ ÎN DOCUMENT NEDEFINIT.

<u>2.1. Communism in Romania before 1945</u>	<u>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</u>
<u>2.2. The end of the war and the taking over of the power by the Communists</u>	<u>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</u>
<u>2.3. The governance of Petru Groza</u>	<u>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</u>
<u>2.4. Romania during Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (1952-1965)</u>	<u>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</u>
<u>2.5. Romania during Nicolae Ceaușescu (1965-1989)</u>	<u>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</u>
<u>2.6. Censorship and the cultural politics under the communism</u>	<u>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</u>

3. COMMUNISM IN THE EAST GERMANY – GENERAL FRAMEWORKS EROARE! MARCAJ ÎN DOCUMENT NEDEFINIT.

<u>3.1. The Soviet occupation area (1945-1949)</u>	<u>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</u>
<u>3.2. The establishment of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and „the construction of socialism” (1949-1961)</u>	<u>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</u>
<u>3.3. The consolidation of the east german republic (1961-1970)</u>	<u>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</u>
<u>3.4. Permanence and crisis in the period 1971-1980</u>	<u>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</u>
<u>3.5. The period 1981-1990</u>	<u>Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.</u>

4. CHURCH IN ROMANIA DURING THE COMMUNISM– GENERAL FRAMEWORKS EROARE! MARCAJ ÎN DOCUMENT NEDEFINIT.

5. CHURCH IN EAST GERMANY DURING THE COMMUNISM – GENERAL FRAMEWORKS EROARE! MARCAJ ÎN DOCUMENT NEDEFINIT.

6. THE ORTHODOX CHURCH JOURNALISM IN ROMANIA DURING THE COMMUNISM EROARE! MARCAJ ÎN DOCUMENT NEDEFINIT.

- 6.1. The journal *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* after 1945** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 6.2. The publications *Revista teologică* and *Mitropolia Ardealului* after 1945** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 6.3. The journal *Glasul Bisericii* after 1945** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 6.4. The journal *Altarul Banatului* and the journal *Mitropolia Banatului* after 1945** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 6.5. The journal *Mitropolia Olteniei*** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 6.6. The journal *Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei* after 1945** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 6.7. The journal *Studii Teologice* after 1945** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 6.8. The journal *Ortodoxia*** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 6.9. Other orthodox church publications** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 6.10. The theological literature and the orthodox church, between 1945-1989** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.

7. EVANGELICAL CHURCH JOURNALISM IN EAST GERMANY IN THE COMMUNIST PERIOD EROARE! MARCAJ ÎN DOCUMENT NEDEFINIT.

- 7.1. Evangelische Verlagsanstalt Berlin** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 7.2. The magazine *Zeichen der Zeit*** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 7.3. The diversification of the church publications** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.

8. ROMAN CATHOLIC JOURNALISM IN EAST GERMANY IN THE COMMUNIST PERIOD EROARE! MARCAJ ÎN DOCUMENT NEDEFINIT.

- 8.1. Roman Catholic church journalism after 1945 – general frameworks** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 8.2. F. W. Cordier Typography and Publishing House from Eichsfeld** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 8.3. The efforts to establish St. Benno publishing House** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 8.4. The Catholic Church and the East German radio system , after 1945** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 8.5. Granting the licence for St. Benno Publishing House** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 8.6. The catholic church newspaper *Tag des Herrn*** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 8.7. The church newspaper *Kirchliches Amtsblatt der Ordinariate und Bischöflichen Ämter*** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 8.8. The short appearance of *Christophorus*, catholic magazine for young people** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 8.9. The journal *St. Hedwigsblatt* of the Berlin Diocese** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 8.10. Catholic attendance in the program of the East German radio system after 1949** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.
- 8.11. The journal *Begegnung* – expression of the new church state policy from GDR** Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.

9. CONTENT ANALYSIS: THE JOURNAL *ZEICHEN DER ZEIT* AND THE JOURNAL *ORTODOXIA*, BETWEEN 1980-1989 **EROARE! MARCAJ ÎN DOCUMENT NEDEFINIT.**

9.1. The objectives of the analysis and the analysed sample Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.

9.2. Content analysis: the journal *Zeichen der Zeit* Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.

9.2.1. THE THEME OF *ECUMENISM*, REFLECTED IN THE PAGES OF THE JOURNAL *ZEICHEN DER ZEIT* **EROARE! MARCAJ ÎN DOCUMENT NEDEFINIT.**

9.2.1.1. Quantitative results **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.2.1.2. Qualitative results **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.2.1.2.1. Sub topic 1: A chronicle of different meetings organised by the ecumenical forums **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.2.1.2.2. Sub topic 2: The analysis of different aspects regarding the activity of the ecumenical forums **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.2.1.2.3. Sub topic 3: Official documents presented at the meetings of the ecumenical forums **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.2.1.2.4. Sub topic 4: Ecumenical Theology **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.2.1.2.5. Other supports regarding ecumenism **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.2.2. THE THEME OF *SOCIALISM*, REFLECTED IN THE PAGES OF THE JOURNAL *ZEICHEN DER ZEIT* **EROARE! MARCAJ ÎN DOCUMENT NEDEFINIT.**

9.2.2.1. Quantitative results **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.2.2.2. Qualitative results **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.2.2.2.1. Sub topic 1: Church and State in GDR **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.2.2.2.2. Sub topic 2: Church and the principles of the socialist agenda **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.2.2.2.3. Sub topic 3: Christianity and Marxism **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.2.2.2.4. Sub topic 4: Other supports regarding socialism **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.2.3. THE THEME OF *PEACE AND DISARMAMENT*, REFLECTED IN THE PAGES OF THE JOURNAL *ZEICHEN DER ZEIT* **EROARE! MARCAJ ÎN DOCUMENT NEDEFINIT.**

9.2.3.1. Quantitative results **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.2.3.2. Qualitative results **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.3. Content Analysis: the journal *Ortodoxia* Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.

9.3.1. THE THEME OF *ECUMENISM*, REFLECTED IN THE PAGES OF THE JOURNAL *ORTODOXIA* **EROARE! MARCAJ ÎN DOCUMENT NEDEFINIT.**

9.3.1.1. Quantitative results **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.3.1.2. Qualitative results **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.3.1.2.1. Sub topic 1: A chronicle of different meetings organised by the ecumenical forums **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.3.1.2.2. Sub topic 2: The analysis of different aspects regarding the activity of the ecumenical forum **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.3.1.2.3. Sub topic 3: Official documents presented at the meetings of the ecumenical forums **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.3.1.2.4. Sub topic 4: Ecumenical Theology **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.3.1.2.5. Other supports regarding ecumenism **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.3.2. THE THEME OF *SOCIALISM*, REFLECTED IN THE PAGES OF THE JOURNAL *ORTODOXIA* **EROARE! MARCAJ ÎN DOCUMENT NEDEFINIT.**

9.3.2.1. Quantitative results

Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.

9.3.2.2. Qualitative results

Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.

9.3.2.2.1. Sub topic 1: Church and State in the Romanian Socialist Republic **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.3.2.2.2. Sub topic 2: Church and the principles of the socialist agenda **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.3.2.2.3. Sub topic 3: Christianity and marxism

Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.

9.3.2.2.4. Subtema 4: Other supports regarding socialism

Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.

9.3.3. THE THEME OF *PEACE AND DISARMAMENT*, REFLECTED IN THE PAGES OF THE JOURNAL *ORTODOXIA* **EROARE! MARCAJ ÎN DOCUMENT NEDEFINIT.**

9.3.3.1. Quantitative results

Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.

9.3.3.2. Qualitative results

Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.

9.4. A comparative outlook on the results of the content analysis **Eroare! Marcaj în document nedefinit.**

9.4.1. THE THEME OF ECUMENISM

EROARE! MARCAJ ÎN DOCUMENT NEDEFINIT.

9.4.2. THE THEME OF SOCIALISM

EROARE! MARCAJ ÎN DOCUMENT NEDEFINIT.

9.4.3. THE THEME OF PEACE AND DISARMAMENT

EROARE! MARCAJ ÎN DOCUMENT NEDEFINIT.

10. CONCLUSIONS

EROARE! MARCAJ ÎN DOCUMENT NEDEFINIT.

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Introduction

Missionary vocation is, for the Church, an ontological reality. The *call*, then *discipleship*, and ultimately, *the sending to the apostolate* are three ends of the same journey: life in Jesus Christ. Considered as a subjective reality, of every Christian reborn through the water of Baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity, as well as a communal reality, of branches, of the sacred body of the Savior, the Christian life, in the light of Scripture and in the spirit of Tradition, involves keeping active the three dimensions listed above. Thus the call involves discipleship, and discipleship requires apostolate, proclamation, mission. The program opened by the Son of God through Resurrection, namely, the metamorphosis of the world and its recapture to the original axis, that of being a temple of God, in which God is always present, and men to be a people of priests, this program was proclaimed for two thousand years, shaping the world and shaping it in what we know today.

Communism presented itself as a new civilization, superior to the capitalist civilization, which it would vehemently deny. The Communist perspective was supposed to be the embodiment of absolute humanism, the only one of all that could give birth to a society in which class-based distinctions disappear. "Communism was an utopian conception, rooted in the dream of suppressing, at all costs, of the private property and of building a universe of total equality."¹ Moreover, any kind of totalitarianism, regardless of its morphology or the context that facilitated its appearance, focuses on the denial of human rights in such a way that it surpasses the individual of that augmented collective entity, which is the state-party. A totalitarian regime offers the spectacle of a new type of domination, which implies taking over the control of the economy, of politics and society in general, as well as building specific mental patterns that

¹ PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION TO ANALYSE THE COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIP IN ROMANIA, *Final Report*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007, p.23.

individuals are willing to adhere willingly or forcibly. "In the totalitarian universe, everything that is not forbidden is obligatory. Including the people's duty to be happy despite the degrading conditions the system condemns them. ²"Aleksander Wat stated in his paper *My Century* that "Stalinism means killing the inner man. And no matter what the sophists say, no matter what lies the Communist intellectuals say, it all derives from that. The inner man must be killed for the Communist Decalogue to be implanted in the soul. "³

The emergence of communism is essentially linked to modernity, being the product of the social and political emancipation of the nineteenth century. The birth and the crystallization of the communist ideas are meant to be read in the key of a disappointment of the revolutionary desideratum that debuted with the French Revolution in 1789, which was delaying to take roots in many areas and social classes where it would have been expected. In order to truly understand communism, we cannot overlook the era in which this current has appeared and the social background dominated by the severe inequalities of the capitalist world in 19th century Europe. The socialist movement, in which the Communists grew, has gradually been polarized to such an extent that Communism has become, over the course of several decades of internal disputes, a trend that sympathizes rather with the violent and sudden overthrow of the bourgeois order, while the Socialists classics still relied on the destiny of the democratic approach.

In another order of ideas, church journalism represents, in its various forms, the materialization, in the media, of the missionary vocation of the Church. Regardless of the epoch, the journalistic act of church blessing must respond to the demands of "sending" to the apostolate, in the spirit of Pentecost, with a maximum responsibility. In the conclusions of the symposium dedicated to the church press organized in Cluj-Napoca in May 1994, it is specified that "through the themes it addresses, from the explanation of the life of the Church, as a whole to the theological readings made to the themes of great actuality, the church press is bound to fulfill a formative function. From this point of view, it must become an active catechetical and missionary factor. "⁴

² Ibidem, p.24.

³ Vladimir TISMĂNEANU, Stalinism for eternity. A political history of the romanian communism, Polirom publishing house, Iași, 2005, p.61

⁴ These conclusions have been published in RADU PREDA' s material, „Antenna of Church. Church press between preaching and imagine". In Irina Vainovski Mihai, *For a democracy of values. Strategies of religious communication in a pluralistic society. International Workshop organised by the New Europe College, Bucharest 30 November-1 December 2001, Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for*

In his speech on 6 July 1974 in Bielefeld-Brackwede, Robert Geisendörfer, the pioneer of West German evangelical journalism after the Second World War, would emphasize the need for this type of journalism, especially in that era of social transformations and political tensions. Quoting Gerhard Stoll, Geisendörfer notes the danger that the Church may no longer be able to participate in the daily discourse of society and thus become a voiceless Church. In his opinion, church journalism should be perceived as standing along with the diaconry and the mission, the two dimensions consecrated in the Church from ancient times, with its well-defined role not only as a hobby or as an optional, marginal or even dispensable thing. Asking why church journalism is so necessary, Geisendörfer introduces in his speech the notions of "freedom" (Freiheit) and the one of "representativeness" (Stellvertretung).⁵

Understood in the context of the theology of freedom, which brought new contours in the epoch, the notion of *freedom* that Geisendörfer calls upon regards the Christian freedom, based on the liberation brought by Jesus Christ through His saving work. But, in his opinion, this freedom can not be conceived without the freedom of expression, and the Church must be the medium of communication by excellence, the one that makes isolated people, brothers, and one that helps the voiceless speak. In this sense, the evangelical journalism (and, by extension, church and Christian journalism in general) is a *mean of freedom*.⁶

The other concept introduced by Robert Geisendörfer in his speech is that of *representativeness*. Thus, the Church has the opportunity to work for the benefit of the people: for the benefit of the weak, of the isolated, and of the powerless ones. "Evangelical journalism could be a place for those information and opinions that would have no chance of being published elsewhere." This type of journalism can facilitate the contact between the Church and the world, providing information and guidance on the Church. It can also facilitate the Church's contact with itself, creating the framework for open discussions, sometimes even with a critical tone. And, in the end, it can facilitate a better perception of things in the world, within the Church, this thing meaning bringing to Church the information of interest from the world.⁷

studying the religious problem of European Integration and New Europe College, Bucharest, 2002, p.89-90.

⁵ Robert GEISENDORFER, *Für die Freiheit der Publizistik*, Kreuz Verlag, Stuttgart, 1978, p.38.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p.39.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p.40.

Turning to the Eastern Bloc countries, journalism in general, and church journalism in particular, is a sensible reality, in a totalitarian system declared as an atheist, in which the ideology promoted by the Communist Party penetrates into school, at work and in the public space. If secular journalism takes, over time, to a large extent, the image and the resemblance of the dominant power, guided by the ideological lines of the unique party, the church journalism in the communist countries will embrace the ambivalent fate of the ecclesial communities in the difficult mission of being next to the faithful and loyal supporters of the truth of faith, but also to resist institutionally, in a political and social system that would not hesitate to show hostility and permanent disposition of instrumentalization.

Surviving the war and shyly stepping at the dawn of the new post-war society, people working for the Romanian church press would have their existence determined, to a significant extent, by the freedom granted to the Church by the political factor. Disbanded and then re-established on a different structure, following the institutional line, the church periodical in the Romanian Patriarchate will crystallize their journalistic style according to the freedoms granted by the censorship institutions. The official bulletin board will be seconded by the theological side, the two joining in different proportions, depending on the period of time, obviously politically imposed materials and themes. The social position of the Church was to be silenced, in its place the social position of the new dominant political class was transmitted.

Church journalism in East Germany faced the expected reestablishment after the ban on the Nazi regime. Licenses for the recurrence of the evangelical or of the Roman Catholic periodicals in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) would delay, amid the negotiation of roles in the society, between the Church and the state apparatus. Once re-established, the East-German church publications would also have a course with limitations and obstacles. The fight against censorship has become, for decades, a *modus vivendi* for church journalism, both in Romania and in East Germany. Referring to the situation of church journalism under communism, the East German theologian Jens Bulisch points out that it has always been "a foreign body in the landscape of the socialist media", a tool that, according to the communist leading, served rather the class enemy, than the socialist society.⁸

⁸ Jens BULISCH, *Evangelische Presse in der DDR. „Die Zeichen der Zeit“ (1947-1990)*, Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht Publishing house, 2006, Gottingen, p.32.

The goal and the method

The present paper aims, first of all, to highlight the general frameworks regarding the political and the ecclesial situation in the two spaces, East Germany and Romania, between 1945-1989. A second goal of the work is to highlight the situation, as well as the aspects of the evolution of church journalism in these two spaces, namely the Orthodox church journalism in Romania and the Roman Catholic and Evangelical journalism in East Germany.

Further, the paper wishes to investigate, on the basis of a quantitative and qualitative content analysis, two church magazines, from the German Democratic Republic and from Romania (*Zeichen der Zeit* and *Ortodoxia* magazine), the following aspects:

- how the two publications deal with the theme of ecumenism in the decade 1980-1989;
- how the two publications deal with the theme of socialism in the decade 1980-1989;
- how the two publications deal with the theme of peace and disarmament in the decade 1980-1989;

By identifying how the three major themes are captured in the materials of the two magazines, within the timeframe mentioned, it is desired to refer to the manner in which the two publications, which appear in the Eastern Bloc countries, and thus behind the "curtain of iron ", manage to open themselves to the outside by treating the ecumenical themes on the one hand and, on the other hand, they assimilate themes specific to the social and to the political context of the country in which they emerge (the theme of socialism and the theme of peace and disarmament).

The present paper is not an exhaustive one. Along with its purpose and the conclusions based on the research, the work wants to invite other scholars to study church journalism from different periods, but also to study the way in which secular media treats certain church and religious themes and subjects .

Summary of the parts of the paper

In the first part, the present paper brings to light the important historical aspects of the period of the communist regime in Romania, on the one hand, and in East Germany on the other side (period 1945-1989). All these general frameworks concern both the historical reference points of the interwar communism in the two societies, as well as the situation in the first months after the Second World War, the state of advancement on the political scene of the Communist Party, and then the moments and periods that make up the entire interval until the fall of the Berlin Wall, and up to the revolution of December 1989.

There are briefly introduced a series of issues related to the left-wing political movement in the Romanian space, starting with the nineteenth century and continuing with the dawn of the next century, the war period and the post-war period. The post-war socialist trends on the Romanian political scene, as well as the appearance of the Communist Party of Romania as an impetus for the communist political forces in Moscow, are underlined by Marcel Pauker, Ana Pauker and Lucretiu Patrascanu as exponents in Romania. It also reviews the Communists' inter-war trajectory, their passage into illegality, but also the ideological dominance and the way in which the few important camps in the Communist Party are beginning to crystallize. It is pointed out how these camps are trying to consolidate their party's position of coordination in the years before the second World War.

Another sub topic of the first part of the paper takes into account the context after the end of the war and the new perspectives that arise for the Romanian Communist Party. Although with little popular support, the Romanian Communists will turn at a rapid pace into the vectors of Moscow's interests in Romania and, with the support of the Red Army, consolidate their position in the political landscape, eliminating, unscrupulously the old historical parties. The main points of the evolution of our country's situation are outlined in relation to the way the World War II ended, insisting on Romania's relationship with the allied countries.

The third sub topic of the first part insists on the dominance of the Petru Groza governance, on the main measures taken at the political level and, in general, on how the Communists in Romania organized their ascension. Included here are: the land reform decree of March 1945, the economic agreement between Romania and the Soviet Union signed in Moscow, and the establishment of Sovroms, the tense relationship between King Mihai and

Petru Groza (royal strike), Ion Antonescu's trial, the promulgation the electoral law and the November 1946 elections, but also the way the Communists acted to silence the other political forces in Romania. Also, we highlight the moment of King Mihai's abdication and the proclamation of the Romanian People's Republic, the moment of creating the Cominform, the beginning of the action of eliminating Lucrețiu Patrascanu and the ascension of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. At the same time, the adoption of the Constitution of 1948 and, in general, the most important stages of the process of stalinization of the Romanian society (forced industrialization, collectivization, nationalization of industrial factories, of banking, of insurance, of mining and transport, but also political purges) are pointed out.

The fourth subchapter concerns the Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej period (1952-1965), the new battles within the Communist Party and the cleansing of the party's top, and not only, but also the turning point represented by Stalin's death on March 5, 1953 , and the opening of a new era in the space of the Eastern Bloc, with the coming to power of Nikita Khrushchev. It insists on the relationship between Romania and the USSR, which evolved more and more towards independence and the assumption of its own destiny, but also on the thawing period in the Romanian society, around 1964.

The next subchapter aims at highlighting the dominant things of Nicolae Ceausescu period(1965-1989), with the whole new breath that was evident from the younger leader of Bucharest. The opening steps towards the West stopped, however, in the early 1970s, and the political trajectory in Romania would go through a series of excesses, which eventually end in the revolution of December 1989. At the end of the first part of the work, there were highlighted the more significant aspects regarding the cultural policies in Romania under the communist regime, especially the activity of censorship in aligning the entire sphere of creation with the ideological lines imposed by the Communist Party.

A second part of the paper reviews the general frameworks of the 1945-1989 period in East Germany. It is about the period of organization as the Soviet occupation zone (1945-1949), with the Soviet policies regarding the Eastern Germany: the order to set up political parties and the moments of their establishment, the establishment of mass organizations, the process of denazification and war reform, agrarian reform, industrial reform, reform of the education system, the local elections in the autumn of 1946, the adoption of the Soviet economic system, respectively a centralized planned economy. At the same time, the relationship between East

Germany and West Germany is underlined and the stages of the separation of the two entities culminated in the creation of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) on 7 October 1949.

Further there are the main events from 1949-1961 in East Germany, the way the Communists led the political landscape and the first years of the new republic. A series of dominant elements of the political life of this period are highlighted: the imposition of Walter Ulbricht at the head of the German Socialist Party of Germany, the purges of the dissidents wandering from the direction imposed by Moscow, the instrumentalization of mass organizations, the idea of "building socialism" as a country program, the role of the GDR in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance - CMEA, the industrialization, but also the implementation of the New Course after Stalin's death. The subchapter entitled „Consolidation of the East German Republic (1961-1970)“ draws the attention to the events in East Germany after the rise of the Berlin Wall as a symbol of the separation between the two German states. The following subchapter illustrates the situation in the 1970s, dominated by Erich Honecker's rise to the governance of GDR, and the authorities' efforts to improve the living conditions of citizens. Since 1976 there has been an increase in the population's discontent, especially due to the growing political pressure towards the opponents of the communist regime. The last subchapter deals with the last decade of the East German state, characterized by a crisis of the political system, by the increase of dissent, but also by the opposition of the German Communist leaders towards the opening policy of Mikhail Gorbachev. In October 1989, following large protests in the major GDR cities, a series of resignations took place at the head of the party, including that of Erich Honecker. The sudden fall of the separating wall between eastern and western Berlin was the climax of the end of the German communist era. After a series of debates between the existing political forces, on October 3, 1990, the dissolution of the German Democratic Republic took place.

The third part of this paper presents a series of general frameworks on the Church in Romania during the communist era. In particular, there are aspects of the life of the Romanian Orthodox Church, representing over 80% of the country's population. It insists on the interference of the state in the work of the Church, the attempt by the communist authorities to facilitate the rapprochement between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church, on the new legislation on cults in 1948, and on the election to the patriarchal throne of Justinian Marina. The situation of the religious and of the confessional education, as well as the

nationalization of ecclesiastical properties, are points of interest in this third part. To these moments are added the event of the Greek-Catholics return to Orthodoxy in the autumn of 1948, and the problem of the dissolution of the Greek Catholic Church, as well as the period of persecution of the clergy and of believers in Romania, by the communist authorities, but also of the models of spiritual resistance . The attempts of the Communists to silence the voice of the monks as much as possible, which culminated in Decree 410 of 1959, are also taken into consideration in this part of the work. Also, the reorganization of the structure of the Dioceses of the Romanian Patriarchy represented a point of interest. Above all, it is noticed the remarkable personality of the Justinian Patriarch who, in particularly difficult times, managed to preserve the life of the living Church, even if limited to the liturgical space. The diplomacy and the tact he has shown, especially in relation to the communist authorities, make Patriarch Justinian a providential historical character.

The fourth part of this research captures the general frameworks regarding church life in East Germany. It highlights the position of the Evangelical Church and of the Catholic Church in this space, the antagonistic position of the Church over the dominant political line, the way in which ecclesial personalities chose to express critically to the regime, but also the coercive measures taken by the authorities to the detriment of the Church.

The third part penetrates into the universe of church journalism in the two countries. It is emphasized the effort of preserving the journalistic activity of the Church, of the organs of the church press, but also of a more objective, more balanced writing and of a satisfactory literature. For the Romanian space, this research is limited to studying only the course of the Orthodox church journalism. A dimension that remains to be researched is that of the journalism of other denominations in Romania at that time. Also, for East Germany, we have included in the research the evangelical and the Roman Catholic journalism.

The fifth part of the work introduces the landscape of the Orthodox church publications in Romania during 1945-1989. The main Orthodox church publications are highlighted, with a series of details about each of them. The same was done, in the sixth and seventh parts of the research, regarding the evangelical and the Catholic church publications in East Germany. It is emphasized, on this occasion, the efforts to re-open the church publications in the Soviet occupation zone, respectively, in the German Democratic Republic.

The eighth part is a content analysis that has in the center the East German journal of the Lutherans *Zeichen der Zeit* and the *Ortodoxia* journal, from the Romanian Orthodox background. A quantitative and a qualitative content analysis is carried out on three themes, as they appear in the materials published in the pages of the two magazines, over the course of a decade: 1980-1989. The three themes are: the theme of ecumenism, the theme of socialism and the theme of peace and disarmament. From the first theme, another five subheadings were written: the chronicle of the various meetings organized by the ecumenical forums, the analysis of some aspects related to the ecumenical forum activities, the official documents presented at the meetings of the ecumenical forums, ecumenical theology, other materials from the economic spectrum of ecumenism . From the theme of socialism, four subheadings were written: Church and State in the GDR, the Church and the Principles of the Socialist Agenda, Christianity and Marxism, other materials from the thematic spectrum of socialism. The results of the content analysis are highlighted in a comparative manner, including in a graphical form. The conclusions of this paper will be based on the results of this content analysis, understood in the key to the social, political and church context prior to 1989.

Conclusions

The two spaces I have referred to in this paper, the East German space and the Romanian space, respectively, have had a different destiny in many aspects. What, however, united them in the post-World War II era was that part of the political context that implied the entry into the "family" of the Eastern bloc countries on the one hand, and on the other hand , the Christian substratum that would soon enter into conflict, initially only ideologically, and then with extremely concrete valences, with the Communist authorities. All these generated similar reactions, but also different reactions and evolutions, which we tried to point out in the first chapters of the paper.

One of the most visible macro-religious developments in East Germany was that of *Enthristlichung* (of christianization) that manifested itself in the course of the four decades, from the end of the war to the fall of the Berlin Wall by drastically decreasing the number of citizens who declared themselves to belong to a religious community. If, at the end of the war, about 92%

of the population belonged to a community of faith, in 1989 only about 30% of them declared themselves members of a religious entity. On the other hand, things were different in the Romanian space. At the first census organized in Romania after the revolution in 1992, only 0.16% of the respondents declared themselves as atheists or without religion.

These data, compared, raise at least two major questions: What was the basis of the de-Christianization process in East Germany? What made things look so different in the Romanian society as regards the belonging of the inhabitants to a community of faith?

It is still difficult to formulate fully satisfactory responses to cut these interrogations. But, of course, attempts to articulate a series of answers in this regard will take into account a few aspects: the theological, the spiritual dominance and of the Christian practice of the Evangelical Church on the one hand and of the Orthodox Church on the other, differ, each putting the message of Divine Revelation in its own way. Thus results different ways of reporting of the Christian, either evangelical or Orthodox, to his or her own faith and concrete historical realities. In Orthodoxy, the emphasis on the liturgical dimension and spiritual life facilitates, when external living conditions become unfavorable, a certain retreat from the unfavorable social and focus on inner life, through contemplation and prayer. This attitude offers the possibility of better preservation, on a personal level, family and even community-parochial, of the Christian spirit. On the other hand, the emphasis on ethics, responsibility and social morality, derived from a spirit of legal order, on the part of evangelical communities, and less on the reflections of a spiritual life with ascetic, liturgical, contemplative shades, seems to have played a role in the attachment of men to the Church. To some extent it can be said that the ethical dimension and that of social responsibility and morality were articulated in the Communist Party's discourse, so that the latter, having the elements of power as well, appeared in the eyes of many of the East- Germans as an exponent that could facilitate people's need for ethics, social justice, and so on. Thus, the message of the Church on these themes has come to be overwhelmed by that of the state through careful measures and by the work of the propaganda apparatus

Another factor that facilitated the process of dechristianization in the GDR was the social model of the urban type in which the proletariat was already a well-defined class. The relationship between urban and rural and industrial and agricultural was, in eastern Germany, noticeable in favor of the city. It is notorious that the depository of spiritual values and Christian

practice has represented the rural universe. On the popular level, the city, and especially the highly industrialized, was rather a space of escape from the traditional line in general and from the line of Christian tradition and practice, in particular. Thus, we can state that the high degree of urbanization / industrialization, in conjunction with the ideological infusion of dialectical materialism, constituted an environment conducive to the process of dechristianization in East Germany.

Both in East Germany and Romania, the Communist authorities, by virtue of the atheist doctrine that they promoted, have taken a series of measures, most of them similar in the two countries, of embezzling the religious sentiment, especially in young people. The abolition of confessional education and religious education in schools, based on the separation between the state and the Church, promoted by the Communists, the introduction of the dialectical materialism concepts in the educational curriculum, the weakening of the role of the parents as educational factors in the educational process, in favor of the state, all these, led, in years, to weaken the sense of confessional membership and the cultivation of a religious indifference. Groups of young Christians, such as *Junge Gemeinde*, have been suspected of illegality and have faced chaos from the communist authorities. Also, the introduction of *Jugendweihe* rituals ("youth initiation").

In both countries, the state tried to instrumentalize the Church through a series of specific methods. The creation of structures of "democratic priests", the promotion of favorable frameworks, the withdrawal of those who took the form of opposition, all these were only a few measures from the methodical arsenal of the authorities in relation to the relationship with the Church. The majority churches in the two countries, namely the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Church of the GDR, have undergone subtle but often atrocious pressure, leaving them only a very narrow range of options. The specificity of the relationship between the Church and the state in East Germany was represented, among others, by the neighborhood with the Democratic Republic of Germany, a state in the "West" and therefore on the other side of the interests of the eastern bloc. The GDR faith communities have always been suspected of too familiar relationships with the churches of West Germany, relations that were subject of the state security. The gradual separation of the Evangelical Churches from the East and West, both logistically and institutionally, was encouraged by the creation of the Federation of Evangelical Churches of the German Democratic Republic (BEK). Also, the Roman Catholic Church in the

GDR has always been viewed with increased suspicion, even if the number of Catholics represented only 5% of those belonging to a Christian community. The relations between the Catholic communities in East Germany and the Vatican were closely surveyed and considered potentially dangerous for the communist regime.

Regarding the situation of church journalism in the two countries, namely the Orthodox church publications in Romania and the evangelical and Catholic church publications in the German Democratic Republic, this followed the line of relationship between the Church and the state authorities. Whether they have gone through a relatively long licensing process from the Soviet occupation authorities, or had to deal with the lack of print paper imputed by the same authorities, the editorial offices of the East German church publications have had to adapt to the restrictions imposed by the party line and, above all, to censorship.

In the Romanian space, the church journals were to undergo a process of reformation and systematization, following the institutional and central-patriarchal structure (the journal *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*), and local-metropolitan ones (the journals edited by the metropolitan centers) to which was added the *Studii Teologice* Journal, of the two theological institutes, and *Ortodoxia* magazine. Most of these journals had six appearances a year. They were added *Telegraful Roman*, which appeared in Sibiu, twice a month.

In East Germany, the number of evangelical ecclesiastical publications that covered most of the 1945-1989 period is higher than that of the Orthodox church publications in Romania. The noticeable differences occur in the context of the appearance frequency, but also of the type of publication. In the GDR, the concept of *Sonntagsblatt* (Sunday paper), with weekly appearance, works during this period. In this category there are the five publications: *Mecklenburgische Kirchenzeitung*, *Der Sonntag*, *Glaube und Heimat*, *Die Kirche* and *Potsdamer Kirche*, each serving a regional church. Besides this category of publications is also the category of journals intended for the specialized public, namely theologians and catechists: *Theologische Literaturzeitung* and *Die Christenlehre*, to which *Zeichen der Zeit* was added, which addressed a broader audience, all of which had a frequency of 10-12 appearances per year. Until 1953, the Evangelical Youth Journal *Die Stafette* also appeared. To these two categories listed above is added a third one, that of the official bulletins, edited by each Regional Church, which have a monthly appearance.

From a functional and comparative perspective, the Orthodox church publications in Romania bring together in their pages both official bulletin contents of the dioceses, as well as theological contents, reviews or different news from the country or abroad. These contents appear in the GDR church press divided by the type of publication: the Sunday papers were intended primarily for the general public, for the believers; the official bulletins had as target audience the clerical and non-clerical staff engaged in the work of the Church, and they were the ones who made the readers group of the other three magazines. Catholic church publications have also been constrained by insufficient number of copies printed, but also by the limitations imposed by authorities to address strictly to church themes.

At the level of broadcasting, the East German authorities allowed the broadcasting, initially on a few Sundays a year and then every Sunday, of prayers accompanied by sermons, these being made by the Church people both from the Evangelical and from the Catholic side. Everything was carefully checked by censorship. In Romania, Church access to broadcasting was practically non-existent.

Another feature of Christian journalism in the GDR was the initiative encouraged by the political authorities of the proximity of Christians and Marxists, especially after 1961, which materialized also through the publication of the *Begegnung* journal, around a group of Catholic members of the CDU in East Germany. The publication wanted to be the voice of the GDR progressive Catholics who were aware of the mission of "building socialism" and of the danger that comes from the West. The editorial staff is recommended to be made up of devoted Catholics who, at the same time, are loyal citizens of the socialist state. Thus, the involvement of the political factor in the GDR religious publishing landscape is noted.

Regarding the results of the content analysis carried out in the present paper, taking into account the three major themes, one can notice on the one hand how the editions of the two journals have chosen to allocate space to the analyzed themes, and on the other hand, the way in which the aspects that make up these themes were captured and presented in the form of various publicistic materials.

We note that, with regard to the theme of ecumenism, the percentage of materials on this subject is slightly more than 10% higher in the journal *Ortodoxia* than in *Zeichen der Zeit*, respectively 17,198% versus 7,148%. It is also noteworthy that the pages of *Zeichen der Zeit* cover chronicles of the ecumenical meetings and also analyzes of these meetings, in a larger

proportion than in the *Ortodoxia* journal. A noticeable difference is noted in the publication of documents or fragments of documents. On the other hand, in the *Ortodoxia* journal, the thematic approach of the ecumenical sphere meant a greater proportion of the materials in the subcategory "Ecumenical Theology", but also of the materials dealing with diverse ecumenical aspects, different from those captured in the other four subheadings. Mainly, the latter deal with different theological issues, from an interconfessional perspective.

The analyzed materials, which cover different aspects of the thematic sphere of socialism, are found in a higher proportion in the pages of *Zeichen der Zeit* journal, with a percentage slightly above 3.7%, compared to almost 1.3%, in the *Ortodoxia* journal. We find that in the Romanian journal the share of articles that raise the relationship between the Church and the State, as well as those referring to the principles of the socialist agenda and the Church, is more frequent (around 86% of the materials having the theme of socialism). On the other hand, in *Zeichen der Zeit*, these two subcategories accounted for only about 46%, the highest share being the materials that deal with the relationship between Christianity and Marxism (with a 52% share).

Also, the theme of peace and disarmament, one of the themes frequently circulated in the era, accounts for almost 7.5% of the total of the materials analyzed in *Zeichen der Zeit*, between 1980 and 1989. In *Ortodoxia*, this type of material occupies a little over 3.5%.

The present research on church journalism in Germany and Romania under the Communist regime tried to capture the historical context in which the Church of the two countries operated for more than four decades, a context in which, despite all the ideological and of all measures of opposition from the communist authorities, the Church responded to the call to preach the message of the Gospel including in the media. All the efforts to re-establish and to maintain the emergence of these publications, at the highest standards, outlined in the chapters of this work merely show the Church's concern for the preached word and its fidelity to preach faith among the contemporaries.

At the same time, the research on the three themes - the theme of ecumenism, the theme of socialism and the theme of peace and disarmament - shows, on the one hand, how the editions of the two ecclesiastical publications have chosen to provide space for materials with a certain theme, but also how the same editors chose to include in the specific content part of the major thematic directions, not necessarily anachronistic, but with subjective intentions, coming

from the state authorities. In the material that embodies the three themes analyzed, the intentions of opening up to the world through the approach of the ecumenical theme, but also the desire to be anchored in specific and ideological, through numerous materials from the spectrum of socialism and of peace and disarmament.

Often, with forms and themes imposed and with a censorship institution that selected any "non-canonical" intention from ideological point of view, the Church, through the editorial offices of the a Christian nature, managed to maintain a guiding line, even sometimes very discreet, with regard to the busy mediatic space. Either pushed to strictly theological areas or to areas of wood themes, taken as such, with a few openings to a possible critical approach, the church journalism of that period largely followed the destiny of the Church, that of a diplomacy to stay near people, and of action at the individual level, from person to person. Whether in the restricted spaces of the parish churches or in the ever-insufficient circulation of publications, the Church kept lit the flame of the gospel teachings, and only those who have formed the church press editions of those times can know how much energy, courage and patience they have been needed to bring the message of the Church closer to the faithful people.

As I have pointed out in the introduction of this work, church journalism, as a whole, represents the materialization, in the media, of the missionary vocation of the Church. The ever-increasing diversification of the mass media and of the way of communication with these means impose on the part of those responsible with the church press a great attention, openness and careful missionary spirit. If we reflect for a few moments at Marshal McLuhan's assertion that "the environment is the message", we will understand why "how" and "by what" we communicate, it becomes very easy "what" we communicate. The presence of the Church in the media, including in the online one, both in the West and in Romania, is auspicious and comes to meet there, with specific but adapted content, her sons. Moreover, the Church can put on its agenda, through its media involvement, topics often overlooked by the commercial media, generally oriented towards entertainment and superficial. It can thus become the "voice of those without a voice" and the representative of these "too small brothers" among the world.

On the other hand, the research in the field of church journalism should also be outlined in the Romanian space, for the reasons mentioned above: the importance of the media presence has become very large, and the analysis of the way the Christian message takes shape and is mediated it only helps to better communicate it in writing, on radio, TV, or online. Perfect

communication will probably never happen. But improved forms of communication, which can guarantee that the message of the Church reaches its recipients at its best, are always to be followed, thought and put into practice. This thing is no less than the discipleship, than the mission and the testimony, so appropriate to those who follow them and who follow the path of Christ, the Logos, the Word of the Father.