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**Abstract:** *This study explores – through British documents – the case of the restoration of the building which housed the Church and the Anglican community in Bucharest in 1950s. At the end of the Second World War, having understood that no free political activities would have been permitted by the new local government, London concluded that a cautious but concrete propaganda activity was the appropriate response to the new situation in the country. In this context, the Anglican Church of Bucharest was deemed as a valuable stronghold, prompting the British Foreign Office to support the refurbishment works of the building. The edifice allowed religious worship activities in a country where the state was committed to reduce the local society's way of life to dictatorial standards. In other words, thanks to the Anglican Church, the Foreign Office thought that the Romanians would remember the existence of democratic values different from those advocated by the Communists.*

**Keywords:** United Kingdom, Romania, Anglican Church, Propaganda, Communism.

East-West relations in the first half of the 1950s witnessed the peak of Cold War tension. Originated by the Soviet occupation of the East and Central part of Europe (which highlighted an aggressive posture towards the Continent by Moscow) and by fear of conservative and moderate circles of the Western society (in turn clearly antagonistic towards the USSR) the Cold War was fought in Europe with unconventional methods. Many of these methods have been scrutinized in depth, and new contributions examined continually East-West bilateral relations and contrasts. The analysis of events related with the preservation of the Anglican Church building in Bucharest during the first part of the 1950s offers the opportunity to examine the British strategy towards the Communist States of the Soviet bloc in a crucial period of the broader East-West relations, during the last part of the Stalinist régime and the first years of the detente.

The seizure of power by the Communist Party in Romania is a well-known matter, as it is familiar the strategy adopted by Moscow in European States where Communist Parties did not enjoy large following<sup>1</sup>. Despite King Michael had tried

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<sup>1</sup> For these facts among various studies see Stefano Bottoni, *Un altro Novecento. L'Europa orientale dal 1919 a oggi*, Carocci, Roma, 2011, pp. 101-175; Robert Bideleux – Ian Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe: Crisis and Change*, Routledge, London-New York, 1998, pp. 497-544;

in 1944 to preserve his power with a reversal of alliance – which brought the country to fight alongside the Allies even before the arrival of the Red Army – the fate of Romania was decided. Avoiding initiatives that could have worried the international public opinion, the local Communist Party participated in a Government comprising Ministers coming from moderate parties. However, the Communists controlled key Ministries (Home Department, Justice and Public Works) in the newly formed coalition<sup>2</sup>.

Not surprisingly, all these events were in turn analysed by Western Europe, British public opinion and Foreign Office. From November 1945 onwards many critical statements about the Soviet System were expressed by British Statesmen<sup>3</sup>. These first discussions immediately showed the main topic that would divide Great Britain from Communist world: the fact that in East and Central Countries was underway a prolonged systematic campaign of vilification of democratic and liberal values. The recognition that the Soviets were pursuing a new ideological, economic and strategic imperialism, with the final aim of dominating the East and Central European countries, became the basis on which British Government shaped its policy towards the region.

British politicians and diplomats from 1945 analyzed in detail what was going on beyond the Iron Curtain. And immediately, they recognized that Western Powers had no countermeasures to adopt, apart a new war that was practically impossible to sustain by weakened countries. Above all, London knew that two

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Jean-Marie Le Breton, *L'Europe centrale et orientale de 1917 à 1990*, Nathan Press, Paris, 1994 (ed. it., ID., *Una storia infausta. L'Europa centrale e orientale dal 1917 al 1990*, il Mulino, Bologna, 1997, p. 257); François Fejtö, *Histoire des démocraties populaires*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1952 (ed. it., ID., *Storia delle democrazie popolari*, Bompiani, Milano, 1977). The existence of old political tensions, working beneath an apparently identical power's structures and a political monolith, is a well-known fact. For these facts cf. Misha Glenny, *The Rebirth of History: Eastern Europe in the Age of Democracy*, Penguin Books, London, 1993. An analysis of Romanian Communism is in Ionescu Ghiță, *Communism in Rumania, 1944-1962*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1964.

<sup>2</sup> This occurred during the Government led by Petru Groza from 6<sup>th</sup> March, 1945, even if events were accelerated by the elections of November 1946 onwards. A short but masterly reconstruction of the Communist action in East and Central Europe between 1945 and 1947 is in Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*, Penguin Press, New York, 2005, pp. 100-139 (ed. it. ID., *Dopoguerra. Come è cambiata l'Europa dal 1945 a oggi*, Mondadori, Milano, 2007, pp. 164-177). See also, Liliana Saiu, *Le grandi potenze e la Romania, 1944-1946. Uno studio sulle origini della Guerra Fredda*, CUEC, Cagliari, 1990, pp. 151-213.

<sup>3</sup> In December 1955, the Foreign Secretary gave to the Cabinet a memorandum arranged by the Foreign Office reporting the Soviet policy during the 1955 and a selected list of critical statements about the Soviet System made by British Statesmen since 1945. The list started with a Bevin's reply to Conservative critics in the House of Commons on 7<sup>th</sup> November, 1945 and went on with an extract of the famous Churchill speech at Fulton on 5<sup>th</sup> March, 1946. The National Archive (from here on TNA), CAB 129/78/47, CP (55) 197, *Anglo-Soviet Relations: Note by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations*, 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1955, *Annex B: Selection of Critical Statements About the Soviet System and Leaders Made by British Statesmen since 1945*.

deficiencies affected its bargaining position toward Romania and the Central and Eastern Nations, consequences of diplomatic mistakes made during the war years. Firstly, London was tied to the Potsdam Conference's decisions: that was the peace settlements with the ex-enemy satellite States in South-East Europe had to be discussed first, even before a final statement over Germany's future. Secondly, the Western Powers had put themselves in a weak diplomatic position accepting (in Three-Power Conferences at Teheran and Yalta) most of the territorial claims of the Soviet Union well before the discussion of the peace settlements began.

Accepting these shortcomings, British politicians tried to find a possible solution. In a Cabinet meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 1947, the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin sustained that, since Soviet political prominence was unquestioned, London – in the first years after the end of the war – had tried to defend its economic interests in the area through diplomatic channels; and this tactic had to be kept going. At the very start of 1947, when political situation in East and Central States could seem not completely defined, someone supposed, as Bevin did, that those surviving Bulgarian, Hungarian and Romanian democratic authorities would realise the impossibility of their countries' economic survival if they depend only on Soviet Union's economy. This would open the doors for the safeguard of British trade with the East. Bevin said to his colleagues that if Great Britain had been able to take full advantage of the Treaties and handled the situation carefully, it would have been good prospects of re-establishing her trading connections with Eastern countries<sup>4</sup>. Thus, British Cabinet placed great hopes on the forthcoming Peace Treaties:

“[*The Balkan States*] were not anxious to remain dependent on the Soviet economy; and the signature of the Treaties would give us good opportunities for re-opening our trade with South-Eastern Europe. Surveys would at once be undertaken to assess the long-term possibilities of this trade”<sup>5</sup>.

But, which were these economic ties that could be revived or newly interlaced? In the past, for example, Romanian oil wells had attracted British investments, but Bucharest had never been an agricultural products supplier,

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<sup>4</sup> Bevin noted that it was already evident that Great Britain would not be able to restore the pre-war position of British oil companies in Romania, although he noted that some improvements would depend on London ability to supply goods or credits craved by Communist States. See TNA, CAB 129/18/29, CP (47) 129, *Revision of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty: Memorandum by the Prime Minister*, Memorandum, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1947, Annex C, *Copy of a Telegram Dated 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1947 Form Moscow to the Foreign Office*. For these ideas see also TNA, CAB 128/9/1, CM (47), 1<sup>st</sup> Conclusion, *Peace Treaties: Balkan States and Finland*, Minute n° 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1947; see also cf. TNA, CAB 195/5/1, *Foreign Affairs: Peace Treaties*, CM 1(47), Note, 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 1947.

<sup>5</sup> TNA, CAB 128/9/2, CM (47), 2<sup>nd</sup> Conclusion, *Peace Treaties: Balkan States and Finland*, Minute n° 1, 6<sup>th</sup> January 1947.

because Romanian production was normally sent to Germany and Austria. Along 1947 and until the final Communists' seizure of power, British Cabinet discussed if there were chances that Bucharest could become an economic partner, despite her political condition as a Soviet political satellite. As the Ministry of Food, John Strachey, noted on 6<sup>th</sup> August, 1947 in a memorandum, the virtual disappearance of Germany and Austria as markets for food supplies had opened the possibility that the Danube basin's countries could become provider of supply in a period when United Kingdom was suffering an heavy agricultural products shortage<sup>6</sup>.

Nevertheless, the British Cabinet had to admit quickly that the Peace Treaties in Paris – signed in February 1947 – changed the situation, marking a negative turning point<sup>7</sup>. In Romania, like in all East and Central countries under Moscow control, the Treaty gave to Communist Party free hands to the final sovietisation of the country: having secured official diplomatic relations with the other nations, Communists in Bucharest and in Moscow had no reasons to worry about possible Western reactions to their anti-democratic initiatives<sup>8</sup>. Thus, in September, just few weeks before the Communists seized the power, Bevin won his Cabinet colleagues' support to his strategy towards Romania, that was a appeasing one<sup>9</sup>. Patently, British Ministers tried to value if, thanks to this line, they could preserve the flimsy influence they believed Great Britain had in the country, and, thanks to this, safeguarding a possible market. With no doubts, the shortage of cereals that Great Britain was experiencing in those days had a role in this attitude<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Strachey's reflections in TNA, CAB 129/20/28, CP (47) 228, Development of New Sources of Food Supply: Memorandum by the Minister of Food, European Countries, Minute, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1947.

<sup>7</sup> The signature of the Treaties of Peace as a turning point was described by the George VI himself in two speeches in TNA, CAB 129/21/32, CP (47) 282, *Note by the Lord President of the Council*, 10<sup>th</sup> October 1947, Annex I, *Draft of The King's Speech on the Prorogation of Parliament*; and TNA, CAB 129/21/32, CP (47) 282, *Note by the Prime Minister*, 16<sup>th</sup> October 1947, Annex I, *Draft of The King's Speech on the Prorogation of Parliament, Monday 20<sup>th</sup> October 1947*.

<sup>8</sup> A short analysis of the Paris negotiations, and the report of Moscow's position and its allies' tactics seen from the British point of view in TNA, CAB 129/25/12, CP (48) 72, *The Threat to Western Civilisation*, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1948, *Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*.

<sup>9</sup> British Ministers decided to distance themselves from the decision taken by Inter-Parliamentary Union of sending a United Kingdom Parliament's Delegation to visit Romania early in October, which numbered some members selected by the Speaker and who were openly against of Communist régimes. Cf. TNA, CAB 128/10/27, CM (47), 76<sup>th</sup> Conclusion, *Inter-Parliamentary Delegation to Roumania*, Minute n° 2, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1947.

<sup>10</sup> In a memorandum, Strachey deemed that Romania (like Russia) could be a possible source of coarse grain and maize supplies, but only if Great Britain was willing to furnish Bucharest with the British goods she wanted. These were steel, heavy electrical plant and other industrial manufacture of which the Balkan country badly needed. The absence of USSR and its satellites at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Employment (held in Havana from 21st November, 1947, to 24th March, 1948) with the target to settle the terms of an International Trade Organisation's Charter had certified the end of dreams of a positive settlement with the Communist States in the international economic field. For these reflections see TNA, CAB 129/22/8, CP (47) 298, *Cereals*, 31<sup>th</sup> October 1947,

Sincerely, it is hard to understand how someone could foster any dream about the possibility of a clear separation between diplomacy and economics. If Bucharest was a political enemy, it could not be an economic partner, all the more in those dramatic days. Since Romania's value as trade market could not be a large one, British Ministers felt themselves at a crossroads. The indignation caused by the underway repressive activities in Eastern Europe against the opposition parties and their leaders went side by side with the vital need of a military commitments reduction in the world. Actually, in those weeks the future British strategy towards the Eastern bloc was fully and finally outlined. The desire to achieve a significant loosening of the rising cold confrontation induced London in the following years to take significant initiatives from symbolic point of view, but not dangerous on political level. This was a strategy which brought London at odds with her American ally<sup>11</sup>. On 24<sup>th</sup> November 1947, Bevin admitted that the respect of human rights were not assured in Eastern bloc and the freedom of expression, of press and publication, of religious worship, of political opinion and of public meeting were denied<sup>12</sup>. The British Government had to carry on in promoting respect for human rights, because it could not, in public statements, take a line on

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Memorandum by the Minister of Food, Annex II, *United Kingdom – Cereals Stock and Supply Position, 1947-1948, Detailed Notes, Part II – Coarse Grain*; and TNA, CAB 195/5/62, CM 84(47), Minute n° 2, *Cereals: Bread Rationing, II. Coarse Grains*, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1947. Almost immediately the Cabinet was informed that USSR only could offer barley and oats in enough quantities to offset the failure of British home crops, whereas export surpluses of coarse grains in Yugoslavia and Romania were too smaller and their demands of other supplies did not fit with the strategic political conditions of the moment. Cf. TNA, CAB 128/10/35, CM (47), 84<sup>th</sup> Conclusion, *Food: Coarse Grains*, Minute n° 2, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1947. In addition, cf. TNA, CAB 129/26/17, CP (48) 107, *Havana Trade Conference: Memorandum by the President of the Board of Trade*, Memorandum, 19<sup>th</sup> April 1948, Annex B, *Summary Report on the Havana Trade Conference*. The economic and monetary consequences of such a situation were investigated in TNA, CAB 129/28/27, CP (48) 177, *Import Programmes – July 1948-June 1949: Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer*, Memorandum, 9<sup>th</sup> July, 1948.

<sup>11</sup> The American suspicion of Soviet Union's behaviour after 1945 is a well-acquainted history and it is under scrutiny by scholars still today. Remarkable analysis are in Wilson D. Miscamble, *George F. Kennan and the Making of American Foreign Policy, 1947-1950*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1992; Kenneth J. Jensen (ed.), *Origins of the Cold War: The Novikov, Kennan, and Roberts "long telegrams" of 1946*, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington, D.C., 1993, p. 13 and following pages; and Nicholas Thompson, *The Hawk and the Dove: Paul Nitze, George Kennan and the History of the Cold War*, Henry Holt, New York, 2009, *passim*. Landmark study are Gaddis' works, in particular, John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*, Clarendon Press, 1997; and ID., *The Cold War*, Allen Lane., London, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Allegations of human rights disrespects in Romania were many and dated well before the Communist seizure of power: the Catholic Church, noted the British Minister in Rome in a memorandum of 13<sup>th</sup> April, 1948, was associated with the Austro-Hungarian rule before 1918 and this had justified an aggressive posture taken by the local Governments even during the interwar period and surely from 1944 onwards. Perowne's information in TNA, FO 371/89815, *Perowne to Bevin*, 13 April 1948 (but received April 20), Minute n° 60, *Holy See: Annual Report for 1947*, f. Z 3342/3342/57.

human rights in regard to Eastern Europe contradictory with the one it had taken at the United Nations in other occasions. Foreign Secretary noted that the belief in human rights and in liberties of Western democracy was part of British way of life and had to be defended, because it represented Great Britain in foreign countries more than anything else.

“Our tacit denial of this cardinal article of faith in regard to Eastern Europe would immediately be remarked in the rest of Europe and in the Middle East, with disastrous effects”<sup>13</sup>.

But, admitting British weak position of those days, Bevin recommended, first of all, that London did not give her support to any political faction asking for an uprising against the Soviet rule:

“We have been scrupulously careful not to encourage subversive movements in Eastern European countries or anti-Russianism, or to lead the anti-Communists to hope for support which we cannot give. But we should continue [...] to maintain our stand against totalitarianism in regard to Eastern Europe as elsewhere. This need not involve official protests through the diplomatic channel, but would be part and parcel of our attitude on this subject as shown in our publicity generally”<sup>14</sup>.

Bevin acknowledged that Great Britain had accepted, in Paris, a moral obligation towards Eastern Europe peoples, and doing nothing in support of them would place the United Kingdom in the wrong. At the same time, even if the United Nations had the courage to condemn the Communist authorities, there would be no means of enforcing upon them a greater respect for the human rights. Worst, “to use the Treaty machinery to try to enforce these obligations” would “serve merely to demonstrate its ineffectiveness”<sup>15</sup>. The immediate use of the enforcement machinery by His Majesty’s Government would so angered the Romanian Government and their Russian masters that they would retaliate by a further and more drastic purge of oppositions. Moreover, Bevin was sure that Bucharest would close British Legation as an act of retaliation, thereby annihilating its value as a centre of information. Thus, the Foreign Secretary concluded his analysis noting that

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<sup>13</sup> TNA, CAB 129/22/23, CP (47) 313, *Extinction of Human Rights in Eastern Europe*, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1947, *Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*. In those days the Labour Government was experiencing a worsening in its relations with South Africa on the human rights’ issue. See TNA, CAB 129/42/14, CP (50) 214, *Relations with the Union of South Africa: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations*, 25<sup>th</sup> September, 1950, Annex, *Telegram to Dr. Malan from Mr. Attlee*; and TNA, CAB 129/43/72, CP (50) 322, *Japanese Peace Treaty: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 20<sup>th</sup> December, 1950.

<sup>14</sup> TNA, CAB 129/22/23, CP (47) 313, *Extinction of Human Rights in Eastern Europe*, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1947, *Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

“My conclusion therefore is that, while we should certainly use the full Treaty machinery at the right time, it would be premature to do so at this moment. We should certainly await the outcome of the Foreign Ministers Conference and I would not proceed against Roumania while King Michael’s position is in question. Our best course at this stage is to keep the matter alive on our side and at the same time keep our hands free”<sup>16</sup>.

It is of the clearest evidence that, in supporting this line, Bevin had engaged Great Britain in a twofold strategy. On one hand, it was aimed to demonstrate to British public opinion the Government’s interest towards Eastern Europe’s situation, avoiding, on the other hand, increased tensions in the Continent that would have shown how weak Great Britain was in that moment, unable to change or, at least, influence the political situation in the Soviet bloc.

Thus, at the start of 1948 the breakdown of the Council of Foreign Ministers brought to an end the residual British Ministers’ hope of a possible *modus vivendi* with Moscow. In a memorandum written on 6<sup>th</sup> January, 1948, the Secretary of State tried to pinpoint the Soviet strategy. While it was waiting a new conflict between the Capitalist States (caused by the Marshall Plan) Soviet Government would not change its policy, based on the assumption of two worlds in conflict; would continue to oppose to the Western reconstruction; and would continue to consolidate its own bloc. Since the former satellites of Germany were now USSR satellites, British relations with Eastern Europe was subject to Soviet and Communist political requirements and therefore liable to sudden interruptions. It was highly plausible that Moscow would use in the future the new condition as a way of bringing political pressure on United Kingdom, since Moscow-trained Communists and Soviet authorities effectively controlled the main European food-producing areas. The Romanian case was the perfect example of this strategy, said Bevin, because the Soviet Union had made a complete mockery of Teheran and Yalta commitments in Romania, and, after the enforced abdication of King Michael in Romania, the Country could be considered completely lost by the democratic world<sup>17</sup>.

It was the time to figure out a better strategy suited to counter the of Communist influence or power’s expansion in other parts of Europe and in the

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*. An interesting account of Anglo-American attempt to change the tide, obstructing Groza’s political activity is in Paul Quinlan, *Clash Over Rumania: British and American Policies towards Rumania, 1938-1947*, American Romanian Academy of Arts and Sciences, Oakland, 1977, pp. 132-143.

<sup>17</sup> Bevin’s reflections in TNA, CAB 129/23/7, CP (48) 7, *Review of Soviet Policy*, 6<sup>th</sup> January 1948, *Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*. An interesting account of Romania’s slipping into Communist hands is in Giuliano Caroli, *Nascita di una democrazia popolare. La Romania dal 1944 al 1950 nei rapporti dei diplomatici italiani*, Edizioni Periferia, Cosenza, 1999, pp. 71-77.

world<sup>18</sup>. First of all, London would have to sign the Benelux Treaty, which was judged a good political device against Moscow, and a necessary positive step in the international scene after the bad impression done with previous year's retreat from any political and military commitments in Greece and Turkey, and, generally speaking, in Balkan area. Moreover:

“Simultaneously with this, the whole problem of the co-ordination of efforts for the cultural, social, economic and financial revival and development of the west and for the defence of western civilization with the support of all friendly western Powers and of course of the Commonwealth should be proceeded with at once”<sup>19</sup>.

It is important to underline that Bevin deemed cultural and social commitments important as much as the economic and political ones. This was the strategy which was followed in subsequent years by British Governments towards the Soviet bloc. Together with the military contrast of any Soviet expansion of influence in the world, the use of culture as a political tool pointed out how Bevin and his colleagues had fully understood that from that moment onwards – within the blocks and between them – the culture would have been one of the most important means through which deciding the future of the world. It was not a coincidence that, in those weeks, showing their complete grasp of their society, the Communist leaders extended their control on local Churches. In particular, the Romanian Orthodox Church slipped quickly into Government's hands, thanks to large purges, which get rid her of those who were considered opponents of the régime<sup>20</sup>. Furthermore (and this was a more decisive point suggesting the choice in favour of a British policy towards Romania and Eastern states based on cultural factors), during a following Cabinet meeting, George Tomlinson (the Minister of Education), noted that Great Britain could make use of spiritual values also as useful means

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<sup>18</sup> A particular emphasis, for example, was put by the Cabinet on the use of BBC as a fundamental propaganda means, through which it would have been possible to influence the foreign public opinion both in the West and in East. For this view see TNA, CAB 195/6/18, *Foreign Policy in Europe*, CM 19(48), Note, 5<sup>th</sup> March, 1948.

<sup>19</sup> TNA, CAB 129/25/12, CP (48) 72, The Threat to Western Civilisation, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1948, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

<sup>20</sup> For this purges see Dennis Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania: Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State, 1948-1965*, Hurst & Company, London, 1999, pp. 89-90. When Justinian Marina was elected (by the Synod) Patriarch of Romania on 24<sup>th</sup> May, 1948, relations between State and Orthodox improved tremendously. Justinian and Gheorghiu-Dej had good personal relations dated from war period, and immediately the Patriarch accepted the régime. On his part, the Communist leader repaid the aid forcing the Catholic of Greek Rite back to Orthodox Church, a step acclaimed by the Holy Synod on 21st October, 1948. See Raoul V. Bossy, *Religious Persecutions in Captive Romania*, in “Journal of Central European Affairs”, vol. 15, n° 2, July 1955, pp. 168-169. The limits imposed on churches' freedom was based on a legal support, The Law on Religious Confessions, enacted on 4th August, 1948, that reduced the sixty religious denominations previously recognised under the previous law of 1928 to fourteen and gave the control of the affairs of all churches in the country in the hands of Ministry of Cult (which become in 1957 Department of Cult).



against Marxism. Bevin suggested that the World Congress of Churches had been considered recently as a way through which Western values could be spread in the World. Notably, while the use of Protestant Churches was deemed to herald positive effects, an appeal to Vatican to use its political influence was ruled out by Foreign Office both for British internal and for Vatican-Romanian reasons<sup>21</sup>. It was in 1948 that the Roman Catholic Church (that was the Church of Hungarian minority) knew which would be her condition in a country ruled by Communists, that was of being tolerated, but unrecognised. The Vatican-Romanian relations were governed by a Concordat (concerning Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic communities) which had been concluded on 10th May 1927 and ratified in 1929. It was denounced by Gheorghiu-Dej on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1948 and eventually abrogated on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1948 by an unilateral Romanian act<sup>22</sup>. All these facts were well-acquainted in London. British Legations in Bucharest and in Rome sent regularly memorandums and notes to Foreign Office, describing reactions in Vatican milieu. In August 1949, despite the fact that Catholic authorities appeared really encouraged by the refusal of all local bishops (and most of the local priests) to acquiesce in the Marxist-Leninist attacks, no one could deny that the Church had suffered dismaying blows. At the same time, it was noted from Rome that,

“In spite of these blows, the Catholic Church continues to plan in generations. The Secretariat of State at the Vatican expressed the view that good would come from the disgraceful subservience of the Orthodox Church to Communist Governments and from the demolishing of existing religions in the Soviet Union, since the inevitable destruction of the Soviet Government would leave a vacuum which the Catholic Church would have a good chance of filling”<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. TNA, CAB 195/6/18, *Foreign Policy in Europe*, CM 19(48), Note, 5<sup>th</sup> March, 1948.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Hansjakob Stehle, *Eastern Politics of the Vatican, 1917-1979*, Ohio University Press, Athens (OH), 1981, p. 265. Romanian government noted that foreign religious cults could not exercise jurisdiction over faithful on the territory of Romanian state. Consequently, Bucharest was able to reduce the number of Roman Catholic dioceses from five to two, imposing preventive or illegal detention to almost all of Catholic Bishops, preventing them to fulfil their religious duty. A month later, with the education reforms of 3rd August 1948, confessional schools had been abolished and Catholic seminaries closed. In the years after, Roman Catholic newspapers and publications were suppressed, and a decree of 29th July 1949 abolished all Catholic orders and congregations. On 30th August 1949 an order was issued by which all monasteries and convents were to be completely evacuated, and Securitate agents were entrusted with the speedy execution of this order. After this, to the priests still at liberty the Ministry of Cults applied intense pressure. This happened via the creation of the *Catholic Committee for Action* whose task was to collect signature for the *Stockholm Peace Appeal* and to advocate the placing of the Catholic Church in Romania under the ultimate authority of the People's Republic. Support for the committee was given at an assembly of Catholic priests and laymen held on 27th April 1950 in Târgu Mures, which was attended by Orthodox priests also.

<sup>23</sup> TNA, FO 371/79874, *Perowne to Attlee*, 3 August 1949, Minute n° 121 (124/1/49), f. Z 5369/1011/57.

This kind of strategy was required for Great Britain too. London had to think and plan in generations, to recognize or improve every tools it had at its disposition and, first of all, had to renounce to any arranged bilateral action with Rome, probably damaging for London position versus Bucharest.

The choice of distancing themselves from Rome proved a wisest one when, at the start of 1950, deadlock in the negotiation over Austrian Peace Treaty and tensions over Trieste and Germany showed that USSR had opted for a very aggressive posture towards the West<sup>24</sup>. Romania was a sort of rear guard of the front line embodied by Italy, West Germany and Austria<sup>25</sup>. And as such, Romania was ordered to silencing any opposite voices inside the country. Thus, local authorities stepped up their level of aggression against the Catholic Church. In August 1950, Communist Militias assaulted the Nunciature in Bucharest and occupied it. The Romanian authorities refused to allow Swiss to represent the Vatican interest (as Rome had arranged) and, in particular, to safeguard Catholic buildings. Bucharest justified its action with saying that National Government was forced to defend itself from the anti-Romanian activity done by the Nuncio<sup>26</sup>. Patently, the step was the local reaction to the Holy Office's Decree (dated 1<sup>st</sup> July 1949) forbidding membership of the Communist Party to Catholics under ecclesiastical penalties<sup>27</sup>. Thus, British Legation in Rome reported that no independent religious representatives were in Bucharest or in Romania, where the general situation for Catholic Church seemed even worst of those in Poland and Czechoslovakia<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Communist attitude in the world in TNA, CAB 129/34/2, CP (49) 72, Communism in Countries Outside the Soviet Orbit: Note by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 24<sup>th</sup> March, 1949.

<sup>25</sup> For this opinion see TNA, CAB 128/12/27, CM (48), 27<sup>th</sup> Conclusion, *Austrian Peace Treaty*, Minute n° 4, 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1948; and TNA, CAB 128/13/14, CM (48), 54<sup>th</sup> Conclusion, *Foreign Affairs: Soviet Policy in Europe*, Minute n° 4, 26<sup>th</sup> July, 1948.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. TNA, FO 371/88143, *Chancery of British Legation in Bucharest to Bevin*, 3 August 1950, Dispatch n° 129 (1782/48/50), f. RR 1932/2. In the last months of 1950, a pamphlet entitled *The Vatican, Infamous Instrument of the Warmongers* accused Rome firstly of being a machine interested in making money without care of the means used for it; and secondly, she was alleged of being a Nazi and Fascist ally before 1939, a position that explained the reason why she had increased the hatred against Communism. It was for these reasons that any Catholic action had to be considered with attention and suspicion: the Catholic Church was very sensitive with power, it was said, and she was able to exploit secular authority to augment her position in the world. See TNA, FO 371/96285, *Perowne to Bevin*, 27 December 1950, Dispatch n° 146 (63/53/50), f. WV 1022/1.

<sup>27</sup> The Decree and its British translation in TNA, FO 371/79883, *Perowne to Foreign Office*, 14 July 1949, Telegram n° 47 Saving, f. Z 4977/1027/57.

<sup>28</sup> See TNA, FO 371/89817, *Foreign Office Research Department Memorandum*, 13 December 1949, Memorandum n° VAT/2/49, *The Vatican and the "Iron Curtain" countries*, f. WV 1022/1. Other informations on the issue were given to London by Perowne in TNA, FO 371/89815, *Perowne to Bevin*, 28 February 1950 (but received March 11), Minute n° 27, *Holy See: Annual Report for 1949*, f. WV 1011/1.

The meanings of Romanian authorities actions – noted the British Cabinet – could be better understood having in mind the Soviet proposal for a new meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, aiming the restart of discussions about Potsdam Agreement on German demilitarisation. The step was the natural consequence of the previous year birth of two Germany as consolidated States. In a memorandum of 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1950, Bevin admitted that there were tiny possibility that a deal with Moscow could be achieved on a demilitarized Germany, and a partial settlement also seemed difficult to be reached<sup>29</sup>. At the same time, no one could dream of the complete and final withdrawal of Red Army from Communist Satellites, followed by free elections supervised by United Nations, and it was not a surprise to note that cooperation proposals on German disarmament went together with an improvement of Soviet Union and her Satellites armed forces' combat readiness<sup>30</sup>.

In spring and summer of 1951 the new Labour Foreign Secretary, Herbert Morrison, emphasized the virulence of the propagandist attacks directed by Slav delegates against Western Powers during the *Twelfth Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council*<sup>31</sup>. It was during this Cabinet discussion that Morrison suggested that the better counter-action of Communist warmongering was the simultaneous stepping up of the British propaganda, and this statement marked a new step along the way we are reconstructing in these notes. As a result, on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1951, the Cabinet discussed the importance of the *British Council* as a instrument of foreign policy. Analysing the experiences of its activities during the last five years, the Cabinet acknowledged that the *Council* (a non-governmental body) had familiarised foreign, colonial and Commonwealth peoples with the ideals, methods and achievements of United Kingdom. In doing so, it was recognized that it had given an important aid to the maintenance of the widest British political and trading influence, and that, if the *Council* did not exist, other agencies had to be supported by public funds for the same services. Thus, the British Ministers recommended that its existence should be prolonged indefinitely; that the non-official status of the *Council* had to be preserved; and that – in order to plan long-term works, to lease premises and to secure a fair proportion of staff on a

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<sup>29</sup> Bevin's analysis in TNA, CAB 129/43/44, CP (50) 294, *Soviet Proposal for a Meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1950. However, Great Britain and United States reacted differently about which position the West had to take on the Soviet proposal. Washington pressed for a stiff line against the USSR and her strategy in Europe and in Asia, while Bevin supported a flexible position, which, in his mind, could have ensured greater results.

<sup>30</sup> For this point see TNA, CAB 195/8/41, *Coal*, CM 19(50), Note, 6 November, 1950; and TNA, CAB 195/8/57, *Defence Preparations*, CM 2(51), Note, 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1951.

<sup>31</sup> The meeting was held at Santiago de Chile from 20<sup>th</sup> February to 21<sup>st</sup> March, 1951. See TNA, CAB 129/45/63, CP (51) 138, *United Nations Economic and Social Council: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 24<sup>th</sup> May, 1951, *Trade Union Rights*.

long-term basis – some form of stabilisation of its authorised expenditure could be envisaged<sup>32</sup>.

“The task defined in the Council’s Charter as ‘promoting a wider knowledge of the United Kingdom’ is now in fact bound up with the wider task of defending Western civilisation against the inroads of communism by presenting a positive alternative. The Communist countries have paid their tribute to this by preventing the Council’s establishment in the U.S.S.R. and Roumania, and expelling it from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria”<sup>33</sup>.

Sadly, British politicians had to admit that, in those unique days, the *Council’s* value behind the Curtain was at a low ebb. Communist control over local newspapers, radio and Churches in Eastern Europe and in Romania was a *fait accompli*, and this made their use impossible by *British Council* and its activities. Thus, London had to evaluate the employ of other political, diplomatic or propagandistic means. From that moment onwards, British Ministers paid attention to every channels that could be used with no arm to relations with Communist countries. One of these devices could have been the radio broadcastings over the Curtain. On 25<sup>th</sup> March, 1952, after Conservative return to power, the new Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, described in the Cabinet the Foreign Office and his opinion on BBC’s role in the ongoing Cold War. From 1947, London had rejected the American strategy towards the Eastern bloc based on the idea that West radios had to bring the peoples to revolt against the Communist authorities<sup>34</sup>. British officials knew perfectly that, if those revolts had erupted, the Western bloc could do nothing in supporting them. A better job could have been done by radios and their aired programs in keeping alive in minds of Eastern population crucial Western democratic values. BBC had received accurate instructions on this line and it did an excellent work so far. The better proof of this was given by the Soviet

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<sup>32</sup> It could be interesting to note that an “aggressive” *British Council’s* policy was suggested for Italy and the Vatican. The latter, in particular, seemed well disposed towards every leaflet and materials that could explain, not only in Europe but also in other Continents, the importance of a stiff contrast against Communism. Cf. TNA, FO 924/945, *Finch to Johnstone*, 7 May 1951, Dispatch w.r., f. CRL 1221/3.

<sup>33</sup> In particular, both the Brussels Treaty and the Council of Europe were involved in supporting cultural activities, and British Government had placed British Council of taking charge of them; and the Council was British Government’s principal nominated agency for the implementation of cultural conventions signed since the war. For this reflections see TNA, CAB 129/47/6, CP (51) 231, *Future of the British Council: Memorandum by the Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs, Colonies and Commonwealth Relations*, 26<sup>th</sup> July, 1951, Appendix, *The British Council’s Organisation: Relation to Government Departments and Method of Work*.

<sup>34</sup> For a study on this issue cf. Paul D. Quinlan (ed.), *The United States and Romania: American-Romanian Relations during the Twentieth Century*, American Romanian Academy of Arts and Sciences, Woodland Hills, 1988, particularly pp. 97-104.

jamming activities, which were trying to disrupt radio communications from West to East. Speaking with his colleagues, Eden backed the idea that Exchequer would have to pay for counter jamming, thus permitting the BBC programs to be received behind the Curtain<sup>35</sup>. At the end of July 1952, Eden, commenting a report of a Committee which had investigated the activities of the Overseas Information Services, regretted that from December 1951 to May 1952 stubborn jamming operations had been steadily extended to the point where they affect all BBC services to Russia, Poland, Finland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Albania, Bulgaria and Romania. The principal means of combating or circumventing the menace was the radiation of each service on the maximum number of transmitters that could be made available in simultaneous operation on different waves. This involved heavy expenditures which, compared with those required for normal operations, were relatively unprofitable. But there were no alternatives if not to accept defeat<sup>36</sup>.

This was the situation when, on 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1952, Eden received a letter from the British *chargé d’Affaires* in Bucharest, Horatio Kevin Matthews. In it, Matthews described to his Minister the Anglican Church’s edifice conditions in

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. TNA, CAB 129/50/39, C (52) 89, *The British Broadcasting Corporation’s External Services: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 25<sup>th</sup> March, 1952. Another important Foreign Secretary’s memorandum on Overseas Information Services at the end of July 1952 reiterated the propaganda warfare importance. Eden directed his colleagues’ attention to the fact that British overseas publicity had played a very substantial part in the manifest weakening of Communist influence in Western Europe recently. Consequently, in his speech he supported the request of the Committee that more funds was given to the OIS. Eden suggested that the so called “common ceiling” for overseas information expenditure could be abolished, because it damaged the office’s ability in counter-acting Communist threat. It was a clear proof of his belief that the international situation demanded an intensification of OIS work and a measure of continuity in its financing in order to permit operations to be so planned as to produce their full cumulative effect. See Cf. TNA, CAB 129/54/9, C (52) 259, *Overseas Information Services: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 24<sup>th</sup> July, 1952, *The Overseas Information Services: Report by Committee of Enquiry*, 14<sup>th</sup> July, 1952, *Annex I, Overseas Publicity, Chapter VIII: The External Services of the British Broadcasting Corporation*. The importance of BBC was increased by the fact that the freedom of action of diplomatic service was limited if not badly damaged by Communist authorities. The Foreign Secretary, a couple of weeks before the above mentioned discussion on BBC’s role, had obtained the Cabinet’s support in his decision of restricting some Communist diplomatic representatives freedom of movement in London. These restrictions had been imposed as a retaliation for similar restrictions to which British diplomatic representatives were subjected in the Soviet Union, Romania and Bulgaria. The Soviet Ambassador and the Romanian and Bulgarian Ministers in London had been notified that neither they nor the members of their staffs were allowed to travel more than twenty-five miles from Hyde Park Corner without notifying the Foreign Office forty-eight hours in advance. See TNA, CAB 128/24/29, CC (52), 29<sup>th</sup> Conclusion, *Travel Restrictions on Diplomatic Representatives of Soviet and Satellite Governments*, Minute n° 5, 12<sup>th</sup> March 1952.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. TNA, CAB 129/54/9, C (52) 259, *Overseas Information Services: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 24<sup>th</sup> July, 1952, *The Overseas Information Services: Report by Committee of Enquiry*, 14<sup>th</sup> July, 1952, *Annex I, Overseas Publicity, Chapter VIII: The External Services of the British Broadcasting Corporation*.

Romanian capital<sup>37</sup>. They were a growing concern both to the Church Committee and to the small British and American Protestant communities living in the city. During the previous winter, it had become clear that repairs to the edifice could not much longer be delayed and the British representative noted that such refurbishing were needed first and foremost because the Church was the only material expression of the local Anglo-Saxon communities' spiritual life<sup>38</sup>. In this circumstances, Matthews ventured to ask whether it was possible for Foreign Office and Ministry of Treasury to assist the Legation in preserving the Church. He knew that arrangements subscribed by His Majesty's Government when the building was vested, in 1912, provided that no pecuniary liability could be ascribed on Church of England's (and thus, on Government's) shoulders. But in 1912 the Church in Bucharest was supported by a large and flourishing British colony, which had virtually disappeared after the Communist seizure of power. A close political reflection induced Matthews in supporting the refitting plan of the Church. The building was situated in a busy thoroughfare of Bucharest and:

“From the crowds which collect outside the church on such occasions as the Memorial Service for His late Majesty, when the entire Western Diplomatic Corps attended, it is obvious that the existence and continued use of the building are known and appreciated by many in Bucharest. I venture to submit that it would be little short of a catastrophe to allow decay to overtake this unique monument, testifying as it does to British endeavour; to our sense of spiritual values; and to our firm belief in the freedom of worship, which the Communist régime in this country has reduced to such a travesty”<sup>39</sup>.

It seems clear that all the basic elements of the discussions within the Foreign Office on the necessity of a propaganda warfare against the Communism and the need of the preservation of every devices in British hands were already contained in Matthews' dispatch.

In order to strengthen his request, on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 1952, Matthews sent another letter, this time to Littlejohn Cook (of the Northern Department) summarizing the

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<sup>37</sup> The Anglican Church of the Resurrection is a church located in central Bucharest, near Grădina Icoanei, at the intersection of Xenopol street and Arthur Verona street. The church is built with red bricks. The land over which the church was built was given by the Bucharest borough to the British Crown in December 1900, the erection of the building being completed in 1914, but the interiors (with furnishings from England) were finished only after World War I. The first service was held in 1920, being dedicated on November 5, 1922, by the Bishop of Gibraltar. It must be remembered that the Diocese under which the church was submitted was the Gibraltar's one.

<sup>38</sup> It is appropriate to bear in mind that the *Chargé d'Affaires*, as diplomatic representative of United Kingdom's ruler, the Queen (who was the Head of the Church of England), was *ex officio* Chairman of the Church Committee.

<sup>39</sup> TNA, FO 371/100789, *Matthews to Eden*, 29<sup>th</sup> July 1952, Letter n° 77 (1781/20/52), f. NR 1782/1.

situation and underling, once again, the urgency of repairs not only for religious reasons, but also for the “strong political complexion” the maintenance works brought with itself<sup>40</sup>.

The letter caused a broad discussion within the Foreign Office. On 9<sup>th</sup> August, 1952 Littlejohn Cook supported Matthews’ request, hoping that it was possible to win the Ministry of Works and Treasury’s cooperation with the Conference and Supply Department. The theme, he noted, had important political implications:

“I can only add that, from a political point of view, the arguments [...] of Mr. Matthews’ despatch are no overstatement; a grant towards the upkeep of the church would not be a simple act of charity but would contribute to the maintenance of an institution whose existence plays some part in the execution of H.M.G.’s policy in Roumania”<sup>41</sup>.

As it was noted by another British expert, it would be a most unfortunate event for British prestige in Romania and a victory for the Romanian Communist régime if the Church were closed merely for savings 650 pounds (the sum needed for refit the building)<sup>42</sup>.

A week later, it emerged that the Gibraltar Diocesan Office (the body that had to supervise the edifice administration) had no funds immediately available. With a letter of 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1952, Matthews had warned the Bishop of Gibraltar, stroking the cord of the religious comfort and spiritual consolation granted by the Church to the Anglican believers. Simultaneously, he had not hidden the political consideration which fostered the maintenance of the Church, asking for a close cooperation between the Bishop’s Office and the Foreign Office<sup>43</sup>. In reaction of Matthews’ letter, the Anglican Church assured that, if British Government had not been able to provide support, steps would be taken to appeal privately for funds.

“The Canon [*C.H.R. Cocup, Bishop of Gibraltar’s collaborator*] said that if a public appeal could be made, the money would be collected easily, but he felt that it would be harmful politically and embarrassing for the Legation of H.M.G.”<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> TNA, FO 371/100789, *Matthews to Littlejohn Cook*, 31<sup>st</sup> July 1952, Dispatch n° 81/21/52, f. NR 1782/2.

<sup>41</sup> TNA, FO 371/100789, *Littlejohn Cocks’s Note*, 9<sup>th</sup> August 1952, f. NR 1782/1.

<sup>42</sup> On 26<sup>th</sup> August, 1952, Shuckburgh, who was in those days Principal Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary, underlined how much embarrassing and deplorable could be the fact that His Majesty’s Government was unable to give some contribution supporting the Church rebuilding through the official channels. This position in TNA, FO 371/100789, *Shuckburgh’s Note*, 26<sup>th</sup> August 1952, f. NR 1782/1.

<sup>43</sup> See TNA, FO 371/100789, *Matthews to Bishop of Gibraltar*, 29<sup>th</sup> July 1952, Letter n° 1781/19/52, f. NR 1782/2.

<sup>44</sup> TNA, FO 371/100789, *Foreign Office’s Note*, 19<sup>th</sup> August 1952, f. NR 1782/1.

Leaving the reflections of possible political consequences of a public appeal to diplomacy, anyway, Cocup added that the Anglican Church would not let the Church fall down for lack of funds.

Lambeth Road's position partially reassured British diplomats. Given that the Anglican Church could collect probably 400 pounds out of 650, Whitehall argued that the remaining sum had to be provided by itself for the political reasons emphasised previously by Matthews and Littlejohn Cocks in their notes, although there were some members of the Office who thought that there would be great problems in obtaining Treasury's permission to the expenditures<sup>45</sup>. The state of affair was summarized in a Foreign Office's memorandum at the end of August.

"The closure of the Anglican Church would be a misfortune from the point of view of British prestige; it would be a victory for the Communist régime in Roumania which has been successful in eliminating nearly all other manifestations of Western culture in Bucharest"<sup>46</sup>.

The political value of the small institution emerged in memo's pages. The author noted that under discussion was not only British prestige, but also the British propaganda strategy in the country.

"The question is, however, not merely one of prestige or of assisting the church as a British institution in a foreign country, but is one of keeping alive an institution which in the absence of normal *British* Council and information activities plays an important part in testifying to British endeavour, our sense of values, and our confirmed belief in the freedom of worship which the Communist régime in Roumania has reduced to such a travesty"<sup>47</sup>.

Thus, the Foreign Office strongly supported any efforts for the repair of the building, even in the case that it had to be conducted directly by the British government itself. Rather, it supported the Government's direct engagement, because a public appeal for collecting funds would have been embarrassing for London and her Legation in Bucharest, as highlighted in internal notes previously<sup>48</sup>. According to the Foreign Office experts a better action could have been an approach to the Treasury at ministerial level, and, through this way, understanding if there were chances to obtain Government's funds.

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<sup>45</sup> See TNA, FO 371/100789, *Foreign Office's Note*, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1952, f. NR 1782/1.

<sup>46</sup> TNA, FO 371/100789, *Foreign Office's Minute*, w.d. (but after 26<sup>th</sup> August 1952), w.r., f. NR 1782/1.

<sup>47</sup> TNA, FO 371/100789, *Foreign Office's Minute*, w.d. (but after 26<sup>th</sup> August 1952), w.r., f. NR 1782/1.

<sup>48</sup> What is more, it was noted that "If therefore, H.M.G. could provide a grant towards the present essential repairs, the Foreign Office would be in a better position to support the church's request in the Diocese for a regular contribution towards its current expenditure". *Ibidem*.



Such a position was sustained by the British Minister in Bucharest also, who feared long delays in London<sup>49</sup>. Having received an official assurance that the Bishop of Gibraltar would have not allowed the building's ruin<sup>50</sup>, Littlejohn Cook replied to Matthews that, while Foreign Office's approach to the Treasury was under consideration and the possibilities of public funds support remained uncertain, the support of the Gibraltar Diocesan Office was sure<sup>51</sup>. Moving deftly, the British Legation advised – always through a Matthews' letter to London – that, taking the cue from Littlejohn Cook's letter, they were ready to start immediately the more urgent repairs. This step opened the way to another problem, that caused some troubles in the years ahead. Matthews asked London a free hand to use – temporarily – the Legation's public funds for the payment of the contractor, while waiting the Diocese's money to write off the debt balance<sup>52</sup>.

Practically, in September 1952 this was the state of affairs: while British Legation had started the building's repair, having received the green light from Whitehall at least for the most urgent refurbishing, the Foreign Office was engaged with its pressure for obtaining Treasury's economic support for the whole renovation. As a result, Hohler (Head of Foreign Office Northern Department) sent to Drake (of the Treasury) a note having the purpose to win the Treasury sympathy towards the fate of the building. Hohler did not hide the scanty number of the Protestant worshippers in 1952 in Bucharest, but he emphasised the cogent political reasons which suggested the edifice preservation, namely the well-known interest in preserving a small but significant cultural (and political) stronghold. The Church's building was a place of people's gathering in particular occasions, such as the latest memorial service for George VI.

“Its closure would be a minor victory for the Communist régime and a blow to British prestige in Roumania. The church provides a means of expressing our sense of spiritual values and our belief in freedom of worship, and this is all the more important since the *British Council* and the Information Office were obliged to cease functioning in Roumania several years ago”<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> The request in TNA, FO 371/100789, *Matthews to Littlejohn Cook*, 28<sup>th</sup> August 1952, Letter n° 1781/24/52, f. NR 1782/3.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. TNA, FO 371/100789, *Foreign Office Note*, 1<sup>st</sup> September 1952, f. NR 1782/3.

<sup>51</sup> See TNA, FO 371/100789, *Littlejohn Cook to Matthews*, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1952, Dispatch w.r., f. NR 1782/3.

<sup>52</sup> Matthews thought that the Diocesan Office could not be able to give the sum required for contractor's payment, while it would not be possible for the Legation to keep the contractor waiting for payment when works had been finished. These reflections in TNA, FO 371/100789, *Matthews to Northern Department, Foreign Office*, 4 September 1952, Dispatch n° 1781/26/52, f. NR 1782/4.

<sup>53</sup> TNA, FO 371/100789, *Hohler to Drake*, 8<sup>th</sup> September 1952, Dispatch n° G.S.L-C. 5/9, f. NR 1782/1. The letter ended exploring two solutions to the problem. Firstly, it stated Hohler's hope that it would be possible for the Treasury or the Board to make a grant from public funds of 550 pounds to cover the whole cost of the repairs. Secondly, another solution could be represented by the availability of one of ministries to provide a grant of 400 pounds which would enable the Church Committee to execute the minimum repairs before the winter arrived. Thanks to this, it was possible that the Diocese of Gibraltar could be induced to give the remaining 150 pounds to complete the works.

From that moment to the end of September, continuing contacts between Foreign Office and Treasury went on. The latter, in proposing a sort of loan to the Diocese, showed its fear that, giving a positive answer to an official help, it could open the road to other requests of the same kind<sup>54</sup>. Not surprisingly, Whitehall tried to slow down every refitting activity in Bucharest and firstly recommended Matthews not to do what the Minister had proposed in his letter of 4<sup>th</sup> September, unless the Diocese of Gibraltar had given its good disposition in writing to make the necessary refund permitting thus a quick repayment; and, secondly, it decided for a direct approach to Gibraltar Diocesan Office<sup>55</sup>.

The British Legation did not comply. On 25<sup>th</sup> September 1952, the British Minister at Bucharest, William Sullivan, wrote to Finance Department remarking that, due to the approaching rainy season, the Legation had already started the works on the Church building. He added that he had been encouraged by previous Foreign Office telegrams and by a letter from the Bishop of Gibraltar in which Horsely wrote that he would do whatever was in his power to get the money to Bucharest. Inter alia, the British Minister noted:

“It is more than fortunate that the repairs have already been done for it appears that the local authorities are intent upon breaking up the small building cooperative which has done so much for the Legation”<sup>56</sup>.

And this Romanian’s behaviour – concluded Sullivan – witnessed not only a tougher position towards a building cooperative (in consequence of internal reasons that were not better explained), but also an obvious concern of the local Ministry of Interior for the role the Anglican building had within Bucharest society, offering an ideal stronghold for freedom that had to be checked and, if possible, quickly stifled.

The Foreign Office’s pressure gained the upper hand with the Treasury. Between 24<sup>th</sup> September and 16<sup>th</sup> of October, Pimley – who was a Treasury’s official in touch with Whitehall colleagues – was able to found a precedent which justified a public support to the renovation of the Anglican Church in Bucharest,

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. TNA, FO 371/100789, *Foreign Office Note*, 12<sup>th</sup> September 1952, f. NR 1782/4.

<sup>55</sup> A step that the Foreign Office had not yet done because it was waiting the Treasury’s reply. See TNA, FO 371/100789, *Northern Department, to Matthews*, 16<sup>th</sup> September 1952, Letter w.r., f. NR 1782/4.

<sup>56</sup> TNA, FO 371/100789, *Sullivan to Rance*, 25<sup>th</sup> September 1952, Letter 1781/29/52, f. NR 1782/5. Apart from the cooperative owner’s fate (it seemed that he, named Frank, was daily expecting to be arrested, although the authorities had been unable to prove that he had infringed the law), the very fact was that the local authorities seemed to be less friendly towards the building’s future. As Sullivan noted, “If, therefore, Frank’s team had not done the repairs we should, if their services were removed, have had to request the assistance of the local Burobin. This office would probably have refused to carry out the work; and even if the task had been eventually accepted, the charge would have been very much (perhaps several times) higher than Frank’s”.

clearing the way for a positive acceptance of the Foreign Office's request<sup>57</sup>. Nevertheless, when Drake replied to Hohler's letter of the 8<sup>th</sup> September on 7<sup>th</sup> October, 1952, the Treasury's support went altogether with two conditions:

“(i) It cannot be taken to imply that we admit any liability for the running expensed of the Church; (ii) That details of the proposed repairs ad submitted to the Ministry of Works for scrutiny”<sup>58</sup>.

Apparently, Sullivan's letter of 25<sup>th</sup> of September had cleared the way for a quick solution<sup>59</sup>, which gave to the Legation the authorization to spend 550 pounds from public funds<sup>60</sup>. This positive solution was facilitated, surely, by the peculiar condition of the ongoing Cold War in which Great Britain was playing a significant part. The deepening of the propaganda warfare seemed increasingly a necessity, because there were signs of growing economic difficulties in USSR and her satellites. At the end of 1952 the breakdown of the economic plans in Eastern Europe surfaced, causing internal divisions in Communist Parties. At the same time, trials in Czechoslovakia (the Slansky process, first of all) showed that the Communists disliked excessive concentrations of power in one man or groups, noted Eden<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> Informations on Pimley's activity in TNA, FO 371/100789, *Foreign Office Note*, 24<sup>th</sup> September 1952, f. NR 1782/4; TNA, FO 371/100789, *Foreign Office Note*, 30<sup>th</sup> September 1952, f. NR 1782/4; and, first of all, TNA, FO 371/100789, *Pinlay to Minshall*, 16 October 1952, Letter n° IF 99/610/01, f. NR 1782/7.

<sup>58</sup> TNA, FO 371/100789, *Drake to Hohler*, 7<sup>th</sup> October 1952, Letter IF.99/610/01, f. NR 1782/6.

<sup>59</sup> The Legation was informed of Treasury's acceptance with a telegram. Cf. TNA, FO 371/100789, *Foreign Office to Chancery of British Legation at Bucharest*, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1952, Telegram n° 190, f. NR 1782/6.

<sup>60</sup> See TNA, FO 371/100789, *Hutchinson's Note*, 10<sup>th</sup> October 1952, f. NR 1782/6. Thus, Littlejohn Cook wrote to Sullivan reporting Treasury's authorisation to expenditure from public funds and also the Ministry of Works' request for full details of the expenditure. Littlejohn Cook's letter in TNA, FO 371/100789, *Littlejohn Cook to Sullivan*, 11<sup>th</sup> October 1952, Letter w.r., f. NR 1782/6. Sullivan's thanks to Littlejohn Cook and the expenditure amount of refurbishing in TNA, FO 371/100789, *Sullivan to Littlejohn Cook*, 16<sup>th</sup> October 1952, Letter n° 1781/33/52, f. NR 1782/8. All these informations were redirected to Gilchrist with an Hutchinson's letter of 24<sup>th</sup> October, 1952 in TNA, FO 371/100789, *Hutchinson to Gilchrist*, 24<sup>th</sup> October 1952, Letter w.r., f. NR 1782/8.

<sup>61</sup> Eden was wrong in his prediction, since Communists disliked, surely in those days, any form of dissention against leading groups in their countries. A recent analysis of British foreign policy is in Robert Self, *British Foreign and Defence Policy since 1945: Challenges and Dilemmas in a Changing World*, Macmillan Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2010; Eden's policy towards Eastern countries is analysed in Robert D. Thorpe, *Eden: The Life and Time of Anthony Eden*, First Earl of Avon, 1897-1977, Pimlico, London, 2004, p. 315 and *following*. With reference to trials in Czechoslovakia and, generally speaking, about political conditions and facts that were underway in those months in Eastern Europe see Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*, Penguin Press, New York, 2005, pp. 185-186. The Foreign Secretary's analysis is also in TNA, CAB 195/11/2, *Foreign Affairs*, CC 102(52), Note, 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1952. Incidentally, it could be interesting to note that the Conservative Government faced the same problems the Labours had in the trade relations with the Eastern bloc. Generally speaking, Great Britain had to reconcile two different needs. Firstly, she needed to trade with foreign nations (the Eastern ones included) in order to earn valuable currency improving in this way her balance of payments;

Similar trials were predictable in Romania and Hungary. Thus, it was deemed that having means able to reach people in Communist countries appeared even more valuable if not essential. The BBC came out increasingly as a central device in such a confrontation. On 13<sup>th</sup> November, 1953, the Drogheda Committee corroborated and strengthened this opinion, saying that broadcasting seemed even more important because it was the only channel through which British could do political warfare, trying to reach people beyond the Iron Curtain<sup>62</sup>. But, at the same time, with the British international radio programmes in continuous trouble, especially in Romania (due to the distance that separate it from the Western Europe), the role of the Anglican Church's building in Bucharest seemed even more central to the Foreign Office. When the recently appointed new Bishop of Gibraltar, Frederick William Thomas Craske, after his visit to Bucharest earlier in 1954, asked once more a support from Whitehall to the Diocese in order to guarantee certain urgent repairs to the Church building, the Ministry reacted quickly: a telegram to Bucharest was sent on 16<sup>th</sup> July, 1954, in which was stated that the British Legation would have to begin the repair work, since 720 pounds would be guaranteed<sup>63</sup>. Subsequently, Hohler sent to the new British Minister to Romania, Sir Dermot F. MacDermot, a more detailed letter, clarifying the reasons supporting the Ministry decision. He wrote that Craske deemed that the repairs could amount to 1.200 pounds, and, although some of them could be deferred until the Church were in a position to meet the cost, the most urgent intervention would cost 900 pounds. The congregation of the Church had collected 180 pounds yet, leaving 720 to be found by the Gibraltar diocese. But, this time also as two years before, the Diocese could not find the sum without making a special appeal, and, in Craske's opinion, causing the political consequences previously envisaged, first of all for his own person.

“In this he felt severely embarrassed, since if an appeal were to be effective, he and the Clergy of Gibraltar diocese would need to lay considerable stress on the

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secondly, she did not want to furnish strategic assets to Communist bloc. The ongoing adjustments of the embargo list led in September 1952 of a restriction of grant export licenses for goods in many countries, Romania included. This discussion and the list of goods under embargo in TNA, CAB 129/54/47, C (52) 297, *East-West Trade – Prior Commitments: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the President of the Board of Trade*, 10<sup>th</sup> September, 1952.

<sup>62</sup> The Committee asked the Government to rise the funds offered to broadcasting activities, because, in order to overcome Russian jamming against BBC transmissions, the service had had to discontinue or reduce transmissions to other parts of the world, thus releasing the necessary transmitters and frequencies which were needed for the purpose. This had had adverse effects on their programmes to the Middle East, America, Europe and Africa. Because the anti-jamming measures cost £125,000 a year, the Drogheda Committee asked for a new injection of money in BBC's budget. These reflections in TNA, CAB 129/64/5, C (53) 305, *Overseas Information Services: Report of the Drogheda Committee*, 13<sup>th</sup> November, 1953, VII, *Financial Requirements*.

<sup>63</sup> See TNA, FO 371/111658, *Foreign Office to Chancery of British Legation at Bucharest*, 16<sup>th</sup> July 1954, Telegram n° 134, f. NR 1782/1.

fact that the Church at Bucharest was what he termed a ‘lantern in the darkness’. This would inevitably come to the ears of the Roumanians, and would severely prejudice his chances of obtaining a visa for Roumania in future – quite apart from the embarrassment in which it might place Her Majesty’s Legation”<sup>64</sup>.

Hohler went on saying that the need of acting aptly was made more indispensable by well-known political reasons:

“[We] had reason to believe that, on political grounds, both we in the Foreign Office and you at Bucharest attached importance to the continued maintenance and use of the Church building. It seemed to him that to allow it to fall into disrepair, or to be taken over by the Roumanians, would be a severe blow to British prestige”<sup>65</sup>.

The British expert admitted the considerable importance of Bishop’s opinion and asked for a formal dispatch from Bucharest which, setting out the case for assistance from public funds, could enable Whitehall to ask the Treasury’s economic support.

On 4<sup>th</sup> August, 1954, MacDermot passed on his request for a financial help and this time he addressed directly it to Eden himself. Noting that the history of the Church had been closely bound up with the friendly relations which marked British-Romanian affairs before the Communist seizure of power, the diplomat stressed that, although the English Church was not an integral part of Her Majesty’s Legation, the building was nevertheless the property of Her Majesty’s Government in the same degree as the edifice in which the Legation offices were housed, as the Ministry of Works’ had acknowledged. MacDermot repeated once again the Church’s high value, because it was the almost unique visible sign of the way of life and spiritual values for which the West and United Kingdom stand.

“An indication of its standing in the eyes of the local Roumanian Community is provided by the small but steady stream of visitors who quietly enter the Church during the course of services and, after making their obeisance and staying a few minutes to pay their devotions, leave quietly and respectfully”<sup>66</sup>.

Although there had been signs of a sort of de-escalation in political and diplomatic relations between two blocs, political condition inside each Communist states remained intolerable for every dissenting voices. The surviving popular sympathies towards the Anglican institution showed both the respect to British

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<sup>64</sup> TNA, FO 371/111658, *Hohler to MacDermot*, 24<sup>th</sup> July 1954, Letter w.r., f. NR 1782/1.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>66</sup> TNA, FO 371/111658, *MacDermot to Eden*, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1954, Dispatch n° 78 (1782/52/54), f. NR 1782/2. MacDermot advised Hohler of this step in TNA, FO 371/111658, *MacDermot to Hohler*, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1954, Letter n° 1782/53/54, f. NR 1782/1.

society and Nation, and the deep dissatisfaction of Romanians with local policy. So, all political and religious factors counselling for the preservation of the Anglican building became the more and more fortified:

“These are but slender signs of what I have suggested is not inconsiderable, if intangible, token of British traditions and the respect that is shown to them. I can therefore only conclude that if the English Church was to fall into disrepair (and possibly therefore be taken over by the Roumanians) or was obliged to close its doors, it would be a very severe reflection on British prestige”<sup>67</sup>.

MacDermot, because he was addressing directly Eden, summed up what was written before between London and himself, firstly noting he had appealed to the Bishop of Gibraltar for the sum and, secondly, his worries about the possibilities that the Diocese’s public petition would have prejudiced the chances of the Bishop of Gibraltar to obtain a visa to Romania, embarrassing, at the same time, the Legation.

“In these circumstances it is, I feel, appropriate to urge that the value of the Church as a ‘standard bearer’ for our way of life, amid the black materialism of this Communist régime, justifies expenditure from public funds in order to keep that flag flying”<sup>68</sup>.

At the same time, the British Minister could not deny that the local community had no other means to use for the purpose:

“To sum up, it seems fair to say that locally we have reached the limit of the financial contributions which we can raise, and the total is not unworthy; the Diocese has responded magnificently to our appeal for help, but has clearly accepted a commitment which, without external assistance, will put an impossible strain on its tenuous resources. In these circumstances I venture to appeal for assistance from public funds: only this can maintain what is almost the only surviving public token in this country of British spiritual values and our belief in the freedom of association and worship”<sup>69</sup>.

In addition, on 10<sup>th</sup> August the British Legation in Bucharest wrote to the Finance Department asking the authority to pick up the cost of the renovation from British Legation’s quarterly accounts in anticipation of the Diocese of Gibraltar’s refunds<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> TNA, FO 371/111658, *MacDermot to Eden*, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1954, Dispatch n° 78 (1782/52/54), f. NR 1782/2.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*. Attached to the file there was a list of the repairs foreseen by the Legation

<sup>70</sup> The request was done with reference to the Foreign Office telegram n° 134 of July 16<sup>th</sup>. See TNA, FO 371/111658, *Chancery of British Legation at Bucharest to Finance Department, Foreign Office*, 10<sup>th</sup> August 1954, Dispatch n° 1782/55/54, f. NR 1782/3.

As had happened previously, also this time the Archbishop's attitude eased the situation, and allowed the affair to take a step forward. A week later, the guarantee for the funds was personally ensured by the Bishop of Gibraltar<sup>71</sup>; and at the end of the month, Northern Department advised Bucharest that the cost could be shown in Legation's quarterly account as requested<sup>72</sup>. This good disposition of the Foreign Office arrived despite the Treasury had made it clear in 1952 that its help would have been a one-off support, on the understanding that repairs to the Anglican Church were not going to be a recurring item and that details of those repairs were submitted to the Ministry of Works for scrutiny and approval<sup>73</sup>. In doing so, Hohler recurred once more on the well-known argument that if the Diocese of Gibraltar was forced to make a special appeal for collecting the sum this would have created problem for the British Government with the Romanian authorities, extinguishing the chance of obtaining visas for Anglican clergy to visit the country in future.

"I should add that the Archbishop of Canterbury has recently written to the Foreign Secretary commending the religious activities of our Embassies and Legation behind the Iron Curtain and stressing the importance of their efforts. I have no doubt that you will wish to bear this in mind when considering the particular case of Bucharest"<sup>74</sup>.

It must be noted, to avoid misunderstanding, that the need to preserve the opportunity for British citizens to obtain visas for entry into Romania was not a trifle or a superficial excuses. And this is proved by a letter sent from Chancery Legation in Bucharest to the Legation in Rome on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1954<sup>75</sup>. In the letter it was noted that MacDermot had recently received from the Archdeacon of Malta, Frederick Bailey, the proposal of a visit to Bucharest in November<sup>76</sup>.

<sup>71</sup> See TNA, FO 371/111658, *Brown Note*, 17<sup>th</sup> August 1954, f. NR 1782/3.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. TNA, FO 371/111658, Northern Department, Foreign Office to Chancery of British Legation at Bucharest, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1954, Dispatch w.r., f. NR 1782/3.

<sup>73</sup> The fear of the Foreign Office's official in TNA, FO 371/111658, *Foreign Office Note*, 19<sup>th</sup> August 1954, f. NR 1782/2.

<sup>74</sup> TNA, FO 371/111658, *Hohler to Drake*, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1954, Letter w.r., f. NR 1782/2.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. TNA, FO 371/111658, *Chancery of British Legation at Bucharest to British Embassy at Rome*, 30<sup>th</sup> September 1954, Letter n° 1782/68/54, f. NR 1782/4.

<sup>76</sup> It would be of some interest to note that the Archdeacon's proposal did not fit very conveniently with the Legation's other arrangements, because it was waiting other British personalities from Europe. In particular, the Reverend Masters (who was Chaplain at Her Majesty's Embassy in Vienna and had responsibilities of an ordained priest), was expected in Bucharest in those days, while another visit was scheduled for the week from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> October next. For these activities see TNA, FO 371/111658, *MacDermot to Archdeacon Bailey*, 30<sup>th</sup> September 1954, Letter n° 1782/67/54, f. NR 1782/4. This fact brought the Legation to suggest that the Archdeacon's journey was postponed a little, recommending at the same time that the better date would be from middle of January onward. It is not our interest to track in depth the events related to the Archdeacon's trip. It may be sufficient to note that MacDermot received news from the Archdeacon in October. Bailey said that he would not be able to come until January, and that the decision on dates must await discussion with the Bishop, who the Archdeacon hoped to see in Malta at the start of November. This would give time for the implementation of the visa procedure, because it were needed three weeks before

Since a Treasury reply to his letter of 24<sup>th</sup> August did not arrived quickly, Hohler reiterated the request of an economic support from the Treasury on 22<sup>nd</sup> November<sup>77</sup>. The same day the Foreign Office received a note from Ministry of Works, written by Gilchrist. The Ministry did not accept fully that the building had to be considered a property of His Majesty's Government like the one in which the Legation offices were housed.

“We would remind you that this remark was made in 1950 purely as an argument for extending diplomatic immunity to the Church at a time when there was a possibility of seizure of the Church by the Roumanian State under a Decree of 4<sup>th</sup> August, 1948, for the Regulation of Religion in Roumania. This argument should not, in our opinion, be applied to the maintenance of the Church by us as part of the Legation property”<sup>78</sup>.

At the same time, Gilchrist said that the Ministry accepted once again the political reasons moving the Legation – and then the Foreign Office itself – to ask a financial support for the Church's exceptional repairs. And this opened the way for the solution of the problem.

Hohler's appeal of 24<sup>th</sup> August, 1954 did not received a prompt Treasury's reply. It arrived on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1954 only. The delay, said the author, Drake, was due to long and passionate discussions into the Ministry, in a time when it

the traveller receives the visa to Romanian territory. For these questions the reader could look at TNA, FO 371/111658, *Chancery of British Legation at Bucharest to British Embassy at Rome*, 28<sup>th</sup> October 1954, Letter n° 1782/77/54, f. NR 1782/5. Archdeacon added that British Legation in Rome had offered to help him with his travel, and for which Bucharest was very grateful, since in that way it was possible that all the complex machinery for obtaining the visa could be partially simplified. In the middle of December all informations about Bailey's visa were sent from Rome to the Foreign Office and promptly redirected to British Legation in Bucharest. The positive response of the British Embassy in Rome, giving all informations about Bailey's visa, in TNA, FO 371/111658, *Clarke to Foreign Office*, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1954, Telegram n° 765, f. NR 1782/5. The timing suggested in the telegram induced MacDermot in asking London if Bailey did not want to travel with the Queen's Messenger from Vienna on January 17<sup>th</sup>. Cf. TNA, FO 371/111658, *MacDermot to Foreign Office*, 16<sup>th</sup> December 1954, Telegram n° 312, f. NR 1782/5. Bailey accepted MacDermot's suggestion and decided to leave Bucharest on 27<sup>th</sup> January, 1955, taking advantage of Queen Messengers' help also for leaving the country. Cf. TNA, FO 371/111658, *Foreign Office to Chancery of British Legation at Bucharest*, 13 January 1955, Telegram n° 10, f. NR 1782/8.

<sup>77</sup> Hohler feared that the delay could be caused by the fact that the Gibraltar Diocese was apprehensive of the possibility of being called to meet large bills at short notice and without any support from the Government. Cf. TNA, FO 371/111658, *Hohler to Drake*, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1954, Letter w.r., f. NR 1782/2.

<sup>78</sup> TNA, FO 371/111658, *Gilchrist to Skinner*, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1954, Letter n° I.F.99/610/01, f. NR 1782/7. Gilchrist noted that the title of the Church had been originally conveyed in 1900 to the then Minister in Bucharest by the Municipality of the city by Deed of Gift and it had been only because it was not desirable to leave the land vested in a single individual and because a committee of the British Community in Bucharest or their Trustees had no legal status to hold land that the title of property had been conveyed to British Government. In any case, it had been done on the understanding that Ministry of Works would have no financial responsibility.



seemed plain that detente between the two blocs – although it was considered a promising one – could not resolve all bilateral problems: an evidence that reinforced the case supporting the building refurbishment<sup>79</sup>. The Chancellor of Exchequers and his colleagues at the end had accepted the arguments of policy and prestige in a case which seemed unique. They were prepared to agree that 900 pounds could be paid by the *Special Missions and Services Subhead of the Foreign Office Grants and Service Vote*. At the same time, Drake must repeat the condition attached to the agreement reached to the payment in 1952, namely that, firstly, the payment was not regarded as an ongoing commitment for the running expenses of the Church; and, secondly, that details of the repairs had to be submitted to Ministry of Works for scrutiny<sup>80</sup>. Thus, Hohler on 11<sup>th</sup> December, 1954, could write to MacDermot announcing Treasury's decision, the two conditions laid down by it and that the Treasury would not raise problems due to the fact that it was not allowed to control locally the condition of the building<sup>81</sup>.

Expressing his satisfaction for the positive outcome, in January 1955 MacDermot reiterated his belief that, after two years and half from the issue's beginning, the need of preserving the building open seemed day after day strengthened by cogent political reasons.

“It does not escape the notice of the population that in a country where the Church has been prostituted to the service of the régime we can and do keep our Church going and hold service in it once a month”<sup>82</sup>.

Three days later, it was suggested that for the Foreign Office it would be a wise step to urge the Bishop of Gibraltar to respect his promise to finance the remaining part of repairs underpinning the political side of the issue.

Practically, the affair ended at the start of 1955, when, after a tough pressure made by Brown<sup>83</sup>, and Hohler<sup>84</sup>, Canon Cocup wrote on behalf of Bishop of

<sup>79</sup> Of course, Romania played its role in this diplomatic relaxation. A case study, relating with Italian-Romanian relations, is in Giuliano Caroli, *La Romania nella politica estera italiana, 1919-1965. Luci e ombre di un'amicizia storica*, Nagard, Milano, 2009, pp. 398-428.

<sup>80</sup> This position in TNA, FO 371/111658, *Drake to Hohler*, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1954, Letter n° IF.99/610/01, f. NR 1782/6. It was noted by a Foreign Office's official that Ministry of Work could not evaluate the congruity of estimates expenditure unless it sent someone out on the spot, and it was not practicable. See TNA, FO 371/111658, *Foreign Office Note*, 8<sup>th</sup> December 1954, f. NR 1782/6. Anyway, this problem did not delayed the refurbishing activities.

<sup>81</sup> The letter went on reporting some Ministry of Work's doubt on two proposed repairs. This informations and doubts in TNA, FO 371/111658, *Hohler to MacDermot*, 11<sup>th</sup> December 1954, Dispatch w.r., f. NR 1782/6.

<sup>82</sup> TNA, FO 371/116616, *MacDermot to Hohler*, 18<sup>th</sup> January 1955, Dispatch n° 1781/12/55, f. NR 1781/1.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. TNA, FO 371/116616, *Brown's Note*, 21<sup>st</sup> January 1955, f. NR 1781/1.

<sup>84</sup> See FO 371/116616, *Hohler to Bishop of Gibraltar*, 4<sup>th</sup> February 1955, Letter w.r., f. NR 1781/1. The same day, Hohler sent another letter to Drake, informing him of his recent correspondence with MacDermot and the Bishop of Gibraltar. Hohler's information to Drake in FO 371/116616, *Hohler to Drake*, 4<sup>th</sup> February 1955, Letter w.r., f. NR 1781/1. And the same day also, a

Gibraltar and, without beating around the bush, asked in which ways the Foreign Office wanted the Archdiocese had to disburse the money<sup>85</sup>. After a letter from Brown<sup>86</sup>, on 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 1955, Hohler replied to Cocup suggesting the employ of the method adopted in 1952: the Legation would pay the costs of repairs and the Foreign Office would inform the Archdiocese of Gibraltar the way in which the money had been expended and the way to get the reimbursement<sup>87</sup>.

From the above described notes, it is manifest that all matter was resolved on the ministerial and departmental level, and it possible to say that Foreign Office acted accurately when it identified BBC or Anglican Church as suitable tools of a positive foreign policy towards Eastern Communist régimes, or when it downgraded to second position every controversies on human rights. Although no one in Whitehall thought that this particular issue was irrelevant, it was – in those particular days – useless or, at least, ineffective. And this was because the West itself was not acting in many parts of the world fairly and many shortcoming could be ascribed to it<sup>88</sup>.

Brown's letter was sent to Gilchrist acquainting her with the latest news on the works which the Church would need in order to make her completely refitted. Cf. FO 371/116616, *Brown to Gilchrist*, 4<sup>th</sup> February 1955, Letter w.r., f. NR 1781/1.

<sup>85</sup> Cocup's letter in TNA, FO 371/116616, *Cocup to Hohler*, 8<sup>th</sup> February 1955, Letter w.r., f. NR 1781/2.

<sup>86</sup> See TNA, FO 371/116616, *Brown's Note*, 11<sup>th</sup> February 1955, f. NR 1781/2. On 18<sup>th</sup> February 1955, someone wrote a note in which the machinery set up in 1952 was described and the possible solution for the spending of the 900 pounds was proposed. Cf. TNA, FO 371/116616, *Foreign Office's Note*, 18<sup>th</sup> February 1955, f. NR 1781/2.

<sup>87</sup> See TNA, FO 371/116616, *Hohler to Cocup*, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1955, Dispatch w.r., f. NR 1781/2; cf. also TNA, FO 371/116616, *Hohler to Bishop of Gibraltar*, 3 March 1955, Letter w.r., f. NR 1781/3. This note was the effect of a personal letter sent by the Bishop of Gibraltar to Hohler on 23<sup>rd</sup> of February in which Craske expressed his gratitude to the Foreign Office for his help for the repairs to the building. See TNA, FO 371/116616, *Bishop of Gibraltar to Hohler*, 23 February 1955, Letter w.r., f. NR 1781/3.

<sup>88</sup> The brightest example of how much the human rights' issue could be used against Western powers arrived from the discussion over the admission of new members to United Nations which was held in New York during the second half of 1955. Until those days, any enlargement of the World organization had been ruled out by mutual and bilateral vetoes to Western or Soviet candidates. In 1955, and in the wake of substantial improvement of political and diplomatic bilateral relations, that was named "Spirit of Genève", fostered by the Austrian Peace Treaty ratification (for these aspects see Ennio Di Nolfo, *Storia delle relazioni internazionali dal 1918 ai giorni nostri*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2011<sup>17</sup>, pp. 807-865, in particular pp. 841-847) the Soviet had sought to break the deadlock by proposing a limited package deal, namely the mutual admission of certain Western and Soviet candidates. The proposal had been rejected by Western Powers as inconsistent with the United Nations Charter. However, the British Foreign Secretary, Harold Macmillan, noted that Nehru (the Indian leader) and Bulganin (who was in those days the Premier of Soviet Union) had agreed recently on a list of qualified States, worth of being supported in their bid for entry. Among those States there were Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Irish Republic, Japan, Portugal and Romania, indeed. Macmillan clarified pros and cons of such a line. Surely, Nehru's proposal would break the stalemate (which was discrediting United Nations) and avoid the possibility that the Soviet Union could take inconvenient initiatives, potentially embarrassing for the Western powers. On the other hand, there were some negative aspects. Pressed by Moscow action, the Cabinet noted that, "We should have to

On the contrary, the emphasis put on religious matters could be considered a wise step because Eastern authorities reverted to them, and this was clear from the very start of Communist seizure of power. Immediately, Stalinist clique extended their control on Orthodox Churches in each Eastern countries, and tried to silence other denominations when they could. Frequently, they exploited Orthodox hierarchy for condemning unfair activities or violent deeds done by Western Powers or their allies<sup>89</sup>. Another proof of the fact that British Government in stressing the importance of religion in the ongoing war against Communism had hit

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accept Bulgaria, Hungary and Roumania, despite their bad record in human rights matters, and Albania, despite the Corfu case". See TNA, CAB 129/77/24, CP (55) 124, *Admission of New Members to the United Nations: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 14<sup>th</sup> September, 1955. Macmillan knew that the admission of new members would have adversely affected the voting position of the Colonial Powers and was sure that, if the proposed seventeen members would have been admitted, Great Britain would have forced to adopt a firmer line towards attempts by the United Nations to intervene in colonial questions within British jurisdiction. A large number of the candidates were likely to vote against Britain on colonial questions, and it had make difficult if not impossible for London to block objectionable action in General Assembly. This meant that London would be forced to make use more frequently of the veto power in future. Eventually, Macmillan thought that new members could not be excluded indefinitely, and some weeks after, he summarized his position saying that Moscow had proposed the admission *en bloc* of all the applicants except Japan, while the United States had unveiled their hostility toward the admittance of Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. He added that Nehru's proposal could not be deserted by the United Kingdom, because London had to demonstrate her sympathy towards newborn ex-colonial States. Accepting the proposal could have prevented a possible Russian claim that Great Britain and the United States were responsible of blocking the admission of new African and Asian States for racial reasons, and the Soviet use of this assertion for strengthening their influence in the Middle East and South East Asia. The solution which Macmillan envisaged was a British support to another Canadian proposal (which followed the Nehru's one) with one change, namely that Spain could be added to the list, because including Madrid in it would increase the chance of securing American support. See TNA, CAB 129/78/8, CP (55) 158, *United Nations, Admission of New Members: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 19<sup>th</sup> October, 1955.

<sup>89</sup> On 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1955 an article appeared in *Informația Bucureștiului* had described the Romanian Orthodox Church's protest against the Turk Government and its undue violence against the Greeks citizens during riots bursted out recently in Istanbul. Although it was well-known that the Romanian Orthodox Church had been sold to the régime, this action seemed a proof of a change of pace by Bucharest. The Legation's news in TNA, FO 371/116616, *Chancery of British Legation at Bucharest to Foreign Office*, 29<sup>th</sup> September 1955, Letter n° 1782/4/55"S", f. NR 1781/4. In particular, the article (titled Statement of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Connection with the Disturbances in Constantinople) stated that the Romanian Church was entirely at the side of the Oecumenical Mother Church in Constantinople and of the faithful Greek people in the hardship they had experienced. Whitehall conceded that the support to the Greeks was in line with a course pursued with increasing frequency by the Romanian authorities. See TNA, FO 371/116616, *Foreign Office Note*, 12<sup>th</sup> October 1955, f. NR 1781/4. And it was similarly interesting – and from a certain point of view, worrisome – that Russian and Bulgarian Churches had issued similar statements. Cf. TNA, FO 371/116616, *Foreign Office Note*, 14<sup>th</sup> October 1955, f. NR 1781/4. All these facts gave the impression of a possible change in political strategy towards Greece and her society by Soviets. Beyond the fact that a new, smooth action towards Athens should have been taken into account, with the final aim of convincing the Greeks that Communists remained hostile towards religion and worship, a quick solution which permitted the accession to the United Nations of new States (Romania included) could be the easiest way through which it was possible to control Eastern excesses.

a sensitive point, arrived in 1955 when Romanian Orthodox authorities had tried to gain sympathy in Greek public opinion and in every Eastern Orthodox Churches thanks to a celebration for the Seventieth anniversary of the proclamation of the autocephalous Romanian Orthodox Church<sup>90</sup>. The event had been well reported in the press, a proof that the régime wished to draw a positive picture of religious freedom and toleration in the country, thanks to the fact that the gathering was characterized by some unflattering speeches pronounced by some Orthodox Metropolitans, who spoke harshly against Western bloc<sup>91</sup>. It was a matter of fact that there had not been such gathering of Orthodox ecclesiastic from both sides of the Curtain since an Orthodox Conference which was held in Moscow in July 1948, and British specialist on this matters, Miller, on 29<sup>th</sup> December, 1955, noted that these changes were an important progress in Romanian religious policies. He suggested that Soviet authorities were behind this event, because they believed the Romanian Church could be entrusted of a role which the Russian one could not fulfil by itself without raising a general suspicion<sup>92</sup>.

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<sup>90</sup> The British Legation wrote to Northern Department in London, on 27<sup>th</sup> October, 1955, about a recent considerable gathering of dignitaries of Orthodox Churches in Bucharest. They had convened in the city for the celebration of the Seventieth anniversary of the proclamation of the Romanian Orthodox Church as an autocephalous Church. As it was already emphasized in past reports, the leaders of the local Orthodox Church were docile followers of the régime and obedient supporters of the Peace Campaign organized by the Soviet authorities in the past years. This scheme had obtained decisive support not only in the Eastern countries and in their public opinion, but also in sectors of Western societies. From British point of view, particularly disquieting was the Metropolitan Hrisostom of Filippi's speech. He was the representative of the Greek Orthodox Church and both his words and his participation were deemed a step towards an unleashed cooperation between the two sides of the Iron Curtain which could produce more damaging consequences rather than positive results. Hrisostom said that, "When we go back to our country we shall be the heralds of the close collaboration which exists in Roumania between the Government and the Church. I cannot forget, the speaker said in conclusion, that the first movement of liberation of the Greek people started from this country". *Reception in Honour of the Delegation of Foreign Orthodox Churches*, in "România Liberă", 25 October 1955, in TNA, FO 371/116616, *Chancery of British Legation at Bucharest to Northern Department, Foreign Office*, 27 October 1955, Dispatch n° 1782/5/55 "S", f. NR 1781/5. By the way, the delegation of the Greek Orthodox Churches stop-over in Sofia on the way to Romania was described in TNA, FO 371/116616, *Chancery of British Legation at Sofia to Northern Department, Foreign Office*, 28 October 1955, Dispatch n° 1782/9 "S", f. NR 1781/6.

<sup>91</sup> See TNA, FO 371/116616, *Chancery of British Legation at Bucharest to Northern Department, Foreign Office*, 27 October 1955, Dispatch n° 1782/5/55 "S", f. NR 1781/5. The dispatch enclosed a summary of the most important speeches pronounced by the head of delegations gathered in Bucharest. All of them praised with satisfaction that the Church and the State in Romania were in good relations and considered this an excellent example of the well grounded relationship between authorities and peoples in States where a society had to struggle for the consolidation of new social order, for peace and international collaboration.

<sup>92</sup> Thanks to this it is better understandable the Oecumenical Patriarchate's willingness to meet Patriarch Kirill of Bulgaria, whose elevation had not been recognized by other Churches. The British expert considered that the message sent out by the Russian and satellite Churches to the Patriarch of Constantinople at the end of September appeared a well timed and able step. It had helped to bring together the various Orthodox Churches and could be considered a point in favour of the Communist authorities.. Miller's opinion in TNA, FO 371/116616, *Miller Note*, 29 December 1955, f. NR 1781/5.

In the light of what has been said, it is possible to affirm that the survival of the building housing the Anglican Church in Bucharest appeared a prudent step since it confirmed to the Romanian people the existence of a different faith and different values than those favoured by the Communist régime and by the Orthodox Church controlled by it. The determination in defending an isolate stronghold was a purely political act done by London. From the events it can be drawn interesting reflections for the assessment of British policy towards Central and Eastern Europe countries during the first years of Communist rule. These considerations help the scholar to better define the political boundaries within which London wished to develop its action. If London propensity for cautious and steady propaganda activities beyond the curtain was known (with its corollary that ruled out any support for popular revolutions that could not be sustained by the West<sup>93</sup>), less known in my opinion is the British attention to the use of religious structures to combat the silent war to win the hearts and minds of public opinion in Eastern and Central Europe. If the use of Catholic Church was excluded, as we have seen, in consequence of the Vatican complete autonomy (a condition which transformed the Holy See in an inconvenient fellow-traveller), direct approach to Romanian society (and, generally speaking, to the Eastern societies) were evaluated and sometime realized<sup>94</sup>. The Anglican Church in Bucharest – although a small one – was regarded as an invaluable stronghold that had to be defended at any cost, in a period when the Soviet societies (and the Romanian one was not a exception) were assuming a ferocious inward-looking attitude. Adopting their usual realist point of view, the British Government and Foreign Office, after Bucharest had cut the long established economic ties and relations between Great Britain and Romania, decided to preserve a small post in the Balkan state, from where, it was believed, it would have been feasible to give proof of the Western values, firstly, and from where, secondly, it would have been possible to interlace new cultural or economic relations for the future<sup>95</sup>. The economic and industrial ties between London and Bucharest that were weaved during the 1960s are already known and they do not need to be explained. Surely, the roots of these relations could be tracked down in the facts analysed here.

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<sup>93</sup> Between many interesting examples of British attention towards propaganda warfare, both in Europe and outside, and of the national effectiveness in comparison with the quality and efficacy of Communist propaganda (the Romanian one included) see TNA, CAB 129/97/28, C. (59) 78, *Book Exports: Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster*, 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1959, *Annex B: Russian and Chinese Export of Cheap Books*.

<sup>94</sup> The strategic need which was beyond this tactic in TNA, CAB 129/105/47, C. (61) 97, *East-West Relations: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 19<sup>th</sup> July, 1961.

<sup>95</sup> The “we mean business” approach of British diplomacy is well showed in TNA, CAB 128/35/74, CC (61), 74<sup>th</sup> Conclusion, *Commercial Policy: Trade with Roumania*, Minute n° 5, 14<sup>th</sup> December 1961; and TNA, CAB 129/107/64, C. (61) 214, *East-West Relations: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 12<sup>th</sup> December, 1961.