NOT SO QUIET ON THE POPE'S SOUTH-EASTERN FRONT.

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THE secular struggle of the Papacy to attain world supremacy, which is still in progress, affords a fascinating theme for contemplation, even irrespective of its practical importance and of the sympathies or antipathies, which it provokes. Sometimes waged with intensity, sometimes apparently dormant, it has a single aim, though its methods vary according to circumstances. The Papal forces are united, at least on the surface, those on the other side are divided. Therefore to understand the conflict we require to study it at different stages and from different points of view.

The research of Orthodox historians, specially that of Dr. Ciuhandu of Arad, has brought to light an interesting episode in that secular struggle a hundred years ago and more, as it affected the Rumanian subjects of the Habsburgs. The situation on the Pope's South-Eastern front has always been complicated. Even at the outbreak of what Latins are pleased to call "The Photian schism" there was a variety of nationalities. There was not a simple clear-cut division between two nations and two ways of practising Christianity. And since then other factors have increased the complication. The intrusion of the Magyars brought in a new race of Eastern origin, which developed Western sympathies. The intrusion of the Turks distracted the Popes from their feud with the Orthodox and, while it enslaved and weakened the latter, at least enabled them to safeguard their individuality. In some ways even the Turk was welcome as giving respite from the oppression of the Crusaders and the Pope. First the Hussite movement, the ramifications of which extended far to the South East, and later the fully-developed Reformation, which swept through Hungary and included the Lutheran Right, the Calvinistic Centre and the Unitarian Left, interposed a fresh barrier between the Pope and the Orthodox. The combined efforts of the Habsburgs and the Pope, generally, though not invariably, good allies, drove back the Turks. But Protestantism was less easy to suppress. Calvinism particularly rallied Hungarian national sympathies against the Germanic tendencies of the Habsburgs, although the Counter-Reformation reduced it to the position of a minority cult. Under the Habsburgs the Orthodox fared worse than the Protestants. Transylvania claimed, with some reason, to be a land of tolerance and enlightenment with equal rights for the three nationalities, Magyars, Germans and Szeklers, and their four religions, Romanism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Unitarianism. And these conditions were not fundamentally altered, when it came under the Habsburgs. But the oldest inhabitants of the land, the Rumanian Orthodox, were for long not recognized at all, or hardly recognized, except for the purpose of being oppressed. The great Orthodox prelate of the last century Andreiu Shaguna, had some

excuse for referring to the " three nationalities " and " four religions " as the Seven Deadly Sins. Western writers have sometimes overlooked this point. The Orthodox in the Habsburg domains were partly Rumanians, partly Serbians, a number of whom were refugees from the Turks and enjoyed special privileges, and partly belonged to other nationalities.

The Roman Catholic Church enjoyed an exceptionally privileged position under the Habsburgs. From early times Hungary had been an Apostolic Monarchy favoured by the Pope and pledged to support him. The dominant religion was supported by huge endowments and an elaborate system of patronage, by which the civil administration, the nobles and the landowners were associated together in the furtherance of the Papal cause. A peculiar feature of Papal policy in the endeavour to subjugate Eastern Christendom is the creation of Uniate Churches. It was realized, that Easterns, whether Orthodox or Heterodox, were not likely to be ever attracted by a purely Western rite. Therefore the Pope was ready to tolerate an Eastern service and Church order, provided that fundamental points of principle were admitted. Weaknesses and disputes among Easterns could be exploited in order to attract proselytes to " Holy Union." And once they were within the net, its folds could be tightened or loosened, as circumstances suggested. There may have been some Uniates from conviction ; but there certainly were many from interest or fear. And probably few, who accepted Union, realized exactly how much they were letting themselves in for. The creation of a Uniate Rumanian Church in 1700 was as much to the interest of the Habsburgs as to that of the Pope. It tended to hinder the intercourse of the Rumanians with their co-religionists and kinsmen across the Carpathians and to weaken the political influence of Hungarian Calvinists of the disloyal stock of Stephen Bocskay, always suspect to the Habsburg rulers. The scheme was nicely worked by the Jesuits, whom the Orthodox accuse of forgery. The chief convert was a prelate called Atanasie, nicknamed by the Orthodox, " Satanasie."

Union undoubtedly assisted a people of partly Latin origin to reintegration with Western culture after centuries of isolation in an Eastern environment. But it was not popular. The Uniate prelates chafed under the humiliating tutelage of Jesuit theologians imposed to supervise them. And some of them gave evidence of bitter disillusionment. The Uniate laity remained Orthodox at heart and, unlike their clergy, were never as a whole effectually latinized. A large number of the people refused to accept Union at any price whatsoever and endured cruel persecution and oppression in consequence. They felt that their souls were their own and not to be bartered or disposed of by earthly governments. In the latter part of the eighteenth century the peasant rising under Horia and Closhca, similar to the Irish revolt in 1798, was a manifestation of national feeling. Definite toleration for Orthodoxy was at last granted by enactment 1790, 1791. Before and after that date the Rumanian Orthodox received some protection from the Serbian Metropolitan of Carlovits, though less in Transylvania than in the Hungarian kingdom.

In the earlier part of the nineteenth century there are several developments in the situation to be noticed. There was a growth in the sense of nationality. The Magyars were much concerned for the use of their own language instead of Latin or one of the minority languages. Serbians and Rumanians pulled apart, the former seeking to dominate, the latter to assert themselves. Rumanian books were published with the encouragement of the administration. A training College for Rumanians was established at Arad. And there was a demand for a Rumanian instead of a Serbian bishop there. An attempt to westernize the calendar and the alphabet failed. The sympathies of the Magyar Protestants were divided. They favoured religious toleration for the Rumanian Orthodox, but they regarded aggressive Rumanian nationalism as subversive. The central government encouraged Papal proselytization within limits, especially under Francis I, but tolerated other confessions in theory, if not always in practice.

The Uniate movement continued with varying intensity and success. It gained most in the North West of what is now Great Rumania in a mixed population of Rumanians and Ruthenians, which became largely magyarized. Uniate and Orthodox Rumanians were sometimes at daggers drawn, but sometimes combined for national interests.

Perhaps the greatest Uniate protagonist was Samuil Vulcan, born in Transylvania, 1758, Bishop of Oradea Mare from 1806 till his death, 1839. He was well educated and one of the outstanding men of his time. His portrait is that of a keen and masterful person. No doubt he cared for Rumanian culture, although his services to it have been exaggerated. His ruling passion up to the end of his life was proselytization. He indulged in it the more freely to acquire merit with the government, when taken to task for favouritism and maladministration of his diocese. The Roman Catholic bishop of Oradea had princely endowments and was for a long time prefect of the county. A portion of these endowments was employed to create a Uniate diocese under a Papal Bull, August 1780, with the express object of proselytization. Medieval feudal pressure imposed upon the Orthodox peasants was intended to promote their perversion. Bishop Vulcan's efforts in this direction were remarkable. He achieved nearly as much in 33 years as his predecessors had in 105 years, perverting 15 villages in Bihor, 19 in Arad and 9 in Banat. For his "apostolic zeal" he was made a Privy Councillor. During his episcopate his diocese was augmented by 72 Rumanian parishes transferred from that of Muncaci. Dr. Ciuhandu's big book is an exhaustive study of his Uniate campaign and the Orthodox defence against it. Bishop Vulcan's Latin colleagues did not always treat him too kindly. Indeed the Uniate Church as a hybrid product has tended to provoke distrust on both sides. The Orthodox abominate Union as Papal, while Ultramontanes regard it as a temporary makeshift to be exchanged, the sooner the better, for complete absorption. The Uniates claim to have consolidated Rumanian nationality. The Orthodox would rejoin, that they are out to split it by forming a set of Rumanian Croats.

The design of conquering Arad for "holy Union" had been

entertained for a long time, before active steps were taken to put it into effect. Francis I had written to Bishop Vulcan in 1815, suggesting that he should try to find a lukewarm Rumanian candidate for the Orthodox see, who might be prepared to acquiesce in its becoming Uniate. Accordingly the see was kept vacant on two occasions, on the decease of bishops Avacumovici (1815) and Ioanovici (1830).

The campaign against Arad launched by Bishop Vulcan in 1834 amounted to a regular persecution. In a contemporary Orthodox report it is compared to the sack of Jerusalem or the conquest of Byzantium by the Turks. The missioners conducting it, Vasile Erdélyi and Alexandru Dobra, were later rewarded with the bishoprics of Oradea and Lugoj. Strategically planned, it was supported by magnates and officials. Legally anyone might become a Uniate by simple declaration. Mass conversions were supposed to be attested by mixed commissions, on which both confessions were represented. If things did not go smoothly for the Papists, the officials would bring persuasion and pressure to bear. The County Council notified the Viceregal Council : the latter sent on the case of change of religion for the King-Emperor's approval. To return to Orthodoxy was difficult. One had to undergo Papal instruction for six weeks and then petition the King-Emperor. As the instruction was individual, the six weeks might drag on for years. If people were fraudulently registered as turning Uniate, there had to be an enquiry. Nomad gypsies and dead persons were registered as Uniates in one instance ; in another a man, Dârlea Toader, was entered on the list when dead drunk, but denied having accepted Union the next day. Disloyalty and scandal among the Orthodox clergy were frequently exploited to support proselytization. Inducements were offered to peasants in the form of promises to reduce obligations of villeinage and to remit church dues. Rumanians were instigated against the Serbian hierarchy and invited to come under a " Rumanian bishop " instead, nothing being said about the change of creed involved. Popery was represented as the " older and better religion." Further there were free drinks of spirit offered as bribes. Bishop Vulcan made a pastoral visitation in regal style, before he had any flock to speak of. The Orthodox protopope of Vărădia, Zaharie Protici, was told by his own bishop not to have church bells rung on the occasion, as the Orthodox visitations were ignored by Uniates. The protopope remarked on the " benefactions and terrors " dispensed by the Uniate bishop. The " benefactions " were bribes. By turning Uniate a priest might increase his salary ten times over. The " terrors " were the persecutions of bullying officials. Apart from his two missioners Bishop Vulcan had a nice lot of associates, such as Count Königsegg and Judge Salbeck, and officials ready, like Horky István, to insult the Orthodox at Easter. There was a forced Uniate baptism at Târnova. The campaign proceeded with lightning rapidity. Its hypocrisy was as odious as its brutality. The people were warned not to mention to a commission the bribes they had been offered. They were supposed to have gone over from honest conviction. The persecutors complained that the Orthodox clergy were making the trouble.

The Rumanian Orthodox were up against a stiff fight. If half of what their detractors allege were true, they would have gone under. They were not a half pagan, half barbarous mob, groping in a twilight of superstition and priestcraft. They were poor and backward and oppressed. But they were patriots and Christians. And in defending their faith they reproduced the constancy of the martyrs and confessors of the early persecutions. Take the case of the heroic priest, Moise Ghergariu, of Nădălbeshti. He was offered a good position as the reward of apostasy, but refused it. He took round, it is said, a miraculous icon of our Lady for the people to kiss, which insured immunity from perversion. Count Königsegg robbed him of his glebe and hampered his movements. He wrote in distress to his protopope, Grigorie Lucacic, wondering, what was to become of his children. Protopope Zaharie Protici was equally loyal. Judge Salbeck called in an apostate priest to officiate at Petrish. The protopope came and took the service himself. Salbeck arrested him and insulted him with his usual " Turanian " brutality.

The Orthodox were well led. The Metropolitan Stephen Stratimirovici, of Carlovits, an elderly and experienced prelate, made repeated representations to the Crown for redress. The Bishop of Timishoara, Maxim Manuilovici, who administered Arad diocese during the vacancy, sent out a strongly worded pastoral letter, which greatly annoyed the romanizers. Salbeck had Petrish church broken into and a copy of it seized from the Holy Table. In the letter Orthodoxy was proclaimed as the true trunk of Christianity, other confessions being branches more or less separated from it ; and the people were warned to be steadfast against seduction. The bishop was hampered and threatened by a noble, Török István. This worthy imprisoned the man, who announced the bishop's arrival, and the sexton, who rang the bells in his honour. The constant intervention of the Metropolitan and Bishop-administrator had its effect. The people took courage. Many, who had succumbed, petitioned the Crown for permission to return to their ancestral faith. Some of the peasants were noble and some were veterans. These showed themselves particularly refractory. In one case the church key was detained ; and the Uniates were prevented from holding service. In another case hay was cut and taken to the Orthodox protopope from glebe confiscated for the Uniates.

The see of Arad was at last filled by a sound Orthodox bishop, Gherasim Rats. This represented a notable success for Orthodoxy. He tightened up discipline, went round his diocese and complained to the higher authorities. It was now easier for the clergy and people to forward an impressive petition to the Crown. They asked, why they should endure such persecution after all their loyalty. They were disturbed in their religion, they said, not by pagans, but by Uniate Christians, without knowing, with whom they were expected to be united. It could not be with Christ. For they were Christians already. It could not be with the Sovereign. For they were loyal subjects. If it were with a foreign prince (i.e., the Pope), that implied treason. They denounced the promises, bribes and threats employed to promote Union. They objected to the misuse of His Majesty's name, as

though he wanted Union all over the country. It had led the Lutherans of Mocrea to offer to become Uniates. But the offer had been turned down for fear of unsettling the Protestants. Those who had become Uniates, in their subsequent disillusionment avoided the services of Uniate priests, never attended church, left their children unbaptized and buried their dead like animals without the Sacrament, without priests. Even services in the homes were denied to Orthodox thus tricked though permitted to Jews, simply to coerce them into remaining Uniates. Their children were registered as Uniates. They did not see why the secular power should interfere with their rites. They wanted to enjoy the protection extended by the law to their religion, not to have religion commercialized. "If then," the petition concludes, "the Uniates want to proselytize contrary to Christ's express words let them go to the Jews, but leave us Christians alone." This petition was forwarded to Ferdinand V, who had just succeeded to the throne.

The Protestants were getting annoyed with Papal aggression too. Beöthy Ödön, M.P., for Bihor, was chosen to bring forward their complaints in the Diet. This enlightened man had liberated his serfs. He moved for a commission to draft legislation to secure liberty of conscience. The Diet approved, but the Senate rejected the draft seven times. Beöthy said, that he would blow his trumpet, till the walls of Jericho fell down. He took up the cause of the Orthodox as well as that of his own people. He mentioned the case of a dead body left unburied, till relatives of the deceased were infected, and another case of some one driven mad by Uniate proselytism. Such persecution was an anachronism, un-Christian and immoral. In the course of the debate reference was made to the offer of free drinks. And it was remarked, that no law existed to curb the machinations of Popish priests. Protestant pastors were punished for the merest suspicion of proselytizing. The Orthodox Council at Oradea had Beöthy's speech entered in their minutes and decided to have his portrait painted and set up in their hall.

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