

The Catholic Church in Hungary and Romania during the Communist Dictatorship: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract:

The paper takes a comparative approach to examine the situation of the Catholic Church in Romania and Hungary during the communist dictatorship, looking at the specific style of the local churches from the point of view of their differences. This history cannot be adequately described in terms of the usual model of oppression-resistance to communist rule, but requires an approach that also takes into account the interaction between the ruling classes and their "subjects". The possibility or impossibility of cooperating with secular power was shaped not only by religious beliefs but also by social, ethnic and denominational interconnections and traditions, and action against the churches was differentiated by the complexity of ethno-religious relations. This is why the dictatorships that emerged east of the Iron Curtain are different versions of the Soviet model and of each other. The adaptation of the pattern has been shaped by different internal conditions and external constraints in each country, with external influences being incorporated into local contexts through a dual process of reception and mutation. The ambition was essentially the same, the means used were, however, extremely varied and the result even more mosaic. This has resulted in substantial differences, and in any case point to the specific differences between the societies concerned. To understand all this, therefore, it is essential to take account of the conditions, the characteristics of local societies across political eras, and to be aware of continuous factors.

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