

PAOLO SARDI AND THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE ITALIAN AND HUNGARIAN MISSIONARIES IN MOLDAVIA (I)

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The relevant historiography concerning the problem of the conflicts between the Italian and Hungarian missionaries in the 18th and 19th centuries is very poor. Beside Franciscan Pietro Tocanel's extensive analysis and commentaries in his *Storia della chiesa cattolica in Romania*¹ and also in his article *Franciscanii minori conventuali și limba română* [The Franciscan Conventuals and the Romanian language]², to which I could add the study written by the Italian philologist Teresa Ferro³, and the study of the historian Marius Diaconescu, recently published⁴, I could not find any other article or study referring precisely to this controversial problem. Some information and short comments can also be found in the work of the Catholic priest Iosif Petru M. Pal⁵ and in the synthesis made by Emil Dumea concerning the Moldavian Catholicism in the 18th century⁶. The Hungarian historiography is at the moment inaccessible to me because of the linguistic barrier⁷. Therefore, I was only able to consult the book of the Hungarian ethnographer Ferenc Pozsony, which is written in Romanian⁸.

Pietro Tocanel made the most extensive presentation of the so-called *questione ungherese* starting from the middle of the 18th century until the

¹ Pietro Tocanel O. F. M., *Storia della chiesa cattolica in Romania*, vol. III: *Il vicariato apostolico e le missioni dei frati minori conventuali in Moldavia*, Padova, 1960-65, pp. 18-22, 54-58, 66-76, 82-93, 261-264, 290-297, 331-347.

² Idem, *Franciscanii minori conventuali și limba română*, in "Buna vestire", 1972, no 3, pp. 9-43.

³ Teresa Ferro, *Ungherese e romeno nella Moldavia dei secoli XVII-XVIII sulla base dei documenti della "Propaganda Fide"*, in *Italia e Romania. Due popoli e due storie a confronto (secc. XIV-XVIII)*, ed. by Sante Graciotti, Firenze, 1998, pp. 291-318.

⁴ Marius Diaconescu, *Péter Zöld și "descoperirea" ceangăilor din Moldova în a doua jumătate a secolului XVIII*, in "Anuarul Institutului de Istorie A.D. Xenopol", t. XXXIX-XL, 2002-2003, pp. 247-292.

⁵ Iosif M. Petru Pal, *Originea catolicilor din Moldova și franciscanii, pastorii lor de veacuri*, Săbăoani-Roman, 1942, pp. 152-155, 193-206.

⁶ Emil Dumea, *Catolicismul în Moldova în secolul al XVIII-lea*, Iași, 2003, pp. 77-78, 138-140, 151-153.

⁷ The problem of the conflicts between the Italian and Hungarian missionaries from Moldavia is analysed generally as subsequent to the problem of Csángos in both historiographies, Romanian and Hungarian. Therefore, I consider useful for those readers particularly interested in this problem to point out the most recent Romanian-Hungarian bibliography on the Csángos problem: Halász Péter, *A moldvai magyarság bibliográfiája*, [Budapest], 1996, *apud* M. Diaconescu, *op. cit.*, p. 248, n. 12.

⁸ Ferenc Pozsony, *Ceangăii din Moldova*, Cluj, 2002, pp. 55-85 (the chapter entitled *Viața religioasă a comunităților maghiare din Moldova*, which was published in English under the title *The religious life of the Hungarian Csángos from Moldavia*, in *Hungarian Csángos in Moldavia. Essays on the Past and Present of the Hungarian Csángos in Moldavia*, ed. by Diószegi László, Budapest, 2002, pp. 83-116).

foundation of the first Catholic episcopate at Iași⁹. His conclusions, however, bear a certain “nationalistic” pattern and prove a strong subjective approach, as he openly approves the position of the Italian missionaries and heavily criticizes the Hungarian “interferences” into the affairs of the Moldavian mission. While appreciating the preference of the Italian Conventuals for the Romanian language (although this was just a natural consequence of the fact that Romanian is very similar to Italian, therefore much easier to be learned than Hungarian), Tocanel strongly disapproves of the efforts carried by the Hungarian Catholic Church for the preservation of the Hungarian language within the Catholic communities dominated by native Hungarians. This is very interesting, as the Franciscan historian recognizes the existence of large Hungarian Catholic communities in Moldavia.

The Italian philologist Teresa Ferro has a different perspective over the problem. The main task of her study is to demonstrate the existence of bilingualism within the Moldavian Catholic communities, as it can be seen from the correspondence carried out by the Conventuals from Moldavia with the Sacred Congregation. She discusses the significance of the term Hungarian (*Ungaro, Ungherese*) as it was used in these documents in comparison with the Romanian terms *unguri* or *unguresc*. The conclusion is clear: in Moldavia, between 1623-1745, both Romanian and Hungarian were practiced in every day communication. A precise proportion of their usage within various communities, however, could not be established, but the author insisted on the fact that the spreading of Hungarian entitled most of the Italian missionaries to affirm the necessity of its assimilation.

The historian Marius Diaconescu presented the contribution of the Szekler priest Péter Zöld in the process of “discovering” the Csángos (the ancient Hungarian Catholics from Moldavia) by the Hungarian Catholic Church. Within this context, he discussed the relations between the Italian Conventuals from Moldavia and the Hungarian Catholic Church, without reaching a clearly expressed conclusion. The author, however, stressed the fact that the Italian missionaries, although aware of the necessity of the Hungarian language in the mission, rejected the collaboration with the Hungarian Conventuals for political reasons.

The conflict between the Hungarians from Transylvania and the Italian Franciscans from Moldavia can be traced back to the year 1644, when the Hungarian Jesuit Paul Beke occupied the Catholic parish church from Iași, previously held by the Italian Conventuals since 1632. Supported by the majority of the Catholics from Iași, mostly Hungarian natives, the penetration of the Hungarian Jesuits in Moldavia succeeded in establishing a firm bridgehead for the

⁹ P. Tocanel, *Storia della chiesa cattolica ...*, pp. 275-331.

Society of Jesus in this region and produced a severe breach in the monopoly of the Franciscans over the Catholic Church in Moldavia¹⁰.

The violent conflicts in Transylvania between the Austrian authorities and the Hungarians led by Ferenc Rákóczi III determined also a significant migration of Catholic population from Eastern Transylvania (especially the region inhabited by the Szekler population) to Moldavia. Under these circumstances, the report sent to the Sacred Congregation in 1723 by Giovanni Bossi, the apostolic prefect of the mission, mentioned the presence of many Hungarian speaking deacons in the villages from Bacău and Roman counties. Quite interesting is Bossi's comment on this fact: he simply accused these deacons to be "wolves in sheep skins", as they imperiled the position of the Italian missionaries in Moldavia, due to the fact that they provided religious assistance in Hungarian, while the Italians used Romanian¹¹.

In 1743, the Cardinal Primate of the Catholic Church of Hungary, Kollonich, asked for Pope Benedict XIV's approval in order that the Hungarian priests from Transylvania be allowed to provide spiritual assistance to the Catholics from Moldavia without having previously the permission of the prefect of the mission. The request was based on the fact that those Catholics had been lacking priests for about ten years and had died even without the last unction. This affirmation was rejected by the prefect Francescantonio Manzi, who claimed that all the Catholics spoke Romanian and many had forgotten Hungarian, their mother tongue¹². In the same year, the Hungarian Jesuits from the College of Cluj, Andreas Pátaí and György Szégedi, tried to carry out a missionary activity in Moldavia, with Prince Constantin Mavrocordat's approval. The strong resistance of the Italian vice-prefect Giovanni Ausilia, however, caused the failure of their initiative. Ausilia simply did not recognize their right to provide spiritual assistance to the Hungarian speaking Catholics from Moldavia, and threatened them with excommunication if they broke his firm interdiction. The Italian vice-prefect persisted in his attitude even after the two Jesuits were also granted papal approval. His argument was the same as Manzi's, his superior: Ausilia simply rejected the Jesuits' affirmations according to which the number of the Hungarian speaking Catholics from Moldavia was significant. In his report sent to the Sacred Congregation in 1745, Ausilia considered that all the Catholics from Moldavia spoke the Romanian language fluently, therefore concluding that the presence of the Hungarian priests

¹⁰ For the conflict between the Conventuals and Jesuits from Moldavia, whose evolution lasted from 1644 until 1773 see the study of Francisc Pall, *Le controversie tra i Minori conventuali e i Gesuiti nelle missioni di Moldavia (Romania)*, in "Diplomatarium Italicum", vol. IV, 1939, pp. 136-357.

¹¹ P. Tocanel, *Franciscanii minori conventuali ...*, p. 17. It is interesting to mention here Tocanel's comment: "The Hungarophiles liked so much these Hungarian deacons as they were able to give ten Italian missionaries in exchange for one Hungarian deacon." – *Ibidem*.

¹² *Ibidem*.

(including here Jesuits, Franciscans or other regular clergy) was not necessary in Moldavia. Ausilia strongly affirmed that the missionary activity carried out by the Italian Conventuals successfully complied with the spiritual needs of the Moldavian Catholics, while the presence of the Hungarian missionaries in Moldavia was considered to be only a disturbing factor for the mission, as Ausilia clearly expressed in his report: “(...) *per tanto se s’havesse a permettere che i P.P. Ungari entrassero in questa provincia sarebbe l’istesso che stabilire un seminario di scandali a motivo de rancori e contrasti che succederebbero; ne meno la Sacra Congregazione de Propaganda Fide havrebbe quiete per li continovi ricorsi che li uni contro l’altri farebbero, si come pur anche i P.P. Ungari essendo privi della lingua moldava non potrebbero a pieno esercitare il ministero di missionario; la onde deggio conchiudere non esser in questa provincia la lingua ungara necessaria.*”¹³

This is for the first time when the Italian missionaries from Moldavia openly rejected the presence of the Hungarian priests in Moldavia, clearly invoking the language issue. This is, in fact, their strongest argument, as Romanian was the official language of the country. The argument, however, bears within also the major weakness of the position of the Italian Franciscans in Moldavia. They were aware of the fact that Hungarian was still used in many Catholic communities as the mother tongue, even if Romanian became their primary language of communication with the authorities and with the Romanian neighboring population. The aggressive attitude of the Italians toward the Hungarian priests and deacons is clearly based on a certain feeling of insecurity: a much stronger position within the Catholic communities from Moldavia would have produced a more moderated reaction.

Another stage of the conflict was determined by the activity of the Szekler priest, Péter Zöld, in Moldavia. Péter Zöld came in Moldavia in the year 1764 after the repression of the Szeklers’ uprising against the Habsburg authorities, which planned to carry forced recruitment for the border regiments in the region. Zöld left his homeland together with a large immigration wave from Eastern Transylvania to Moldavia, which counted thousands of Catholic Szekler families. This unexpected phenomenon strengthened the Hungarian component of the Catholic population in Moldavia and opened the road for a more consistent penetration of the Hungarian missionaries in this region, especially in the villages surrounding the town of Bacău¹⁴. The Italian Conventuals realized that the increasing of the number of the Moldavian Catholics with Hungarian speaking Szekler families exceeded the possibilities of the apostolic mission. There was not only a need for more

¹³ Gh. Călinescu, *Alcuni missionari cattolici italiani nella Moldavia nei secoli XVII e XVIII*, in “Diplomatarij Italicum”, vol. I, 1925, p. 184.

¹⁴ For more details see M. Diaconescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 249-251.

missionaries: there was a clear need for Hungarian speaking missionaries, as most of the Italian Conventuals did not speak Hungarian. The importance of Péter Zöld's activity from this perspective lies in the fact that he was the first Hungarian priest able to provide the newcomers with the necessary spiritual assistance.

Under these circumstances, the reaction of the Italian prefect of the mission, Giuseppe Oviller, who decided to strictly forbid any activity of the Szekler priest, seems quite paradoxical. Oviller's reaction was based on the same argument as in the case of his predecessor, Giovanni Ausilia: the monopolistic jurisdiction of the Conventuals over the mission. He was forced, however, to withdraw his decision, as Zöld got the necessary approvals from prince Grigore III Ghica, from Stanislas Jezierski, the Polish bishop of Bacău, and even from Pope Clement XIII¹⁵. The problem of the necessary language(s) in the Moldavian mission, however, turned to be the main issue that generated and maintained the tension between the Italian and the Hungarian Franciscans.

In 1774 the Sacred Congregation issued a decree that obliged all its missionaries to learn the language spoken by the Catholic inhabitants as soon as they arrived in their mission. This entitled Romanus Jakabfálvi, the Provincial of the Hungarian Franciscans Conventuals, to propose in 1776 to the General Minister of the Franciscan Conventuals the replacement of the Italian missionaries with Hungarians. He argued that the Italian Franciscans were unable to provide proper spiritual assistance to the Hungarian speaking Catholics from Moldavia, as they could not speak the Hungarian language¹⁶. The letter was sent by the General Minister to the vice-prefect of the Moldavian mission, Giuseppe Martinotti, who replied on 17 March 1776 to Jakabfálvi's assertions by repeating the language argument: "*una simpliciter loquela est necessaria in Moldavia, scilicet patria, sine qua nemo licite exercere valet ministerium apostolicum in Moldavia, cum plures sint pagi in quibus hungarica lingua penitus ignoratur.*"¹⁷

A complaint sent to Rome in 1777 by the leaders of the Catholic communities from Săbăoani, Fărăoani, Troțuș and Grozești, who accused to the Sacred Congregation the ignorance of the Italian missionaries both in Hungarian and Romanian, thus making them unable to provide proper spiritual assistance to their parishioners, determined the red cardinals to issue in 1778 a new decree concerning the problem of language, which reiterated the previous decree of 1774.

Jakabfálvi's project from 1776 was adopted by Ignác Batthyáni, the bishop of Transylvania: in a letter sent on 6 October 1787, he proposed to Pope Pius VI: "*revocentur omnes Minores Conventuales itali, illiusque regimen ad Transilvaniae Episcopum transferatur*"¹⁸. In addition, Batthyáni suggested that the bishop of

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 267.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 268.

¹⁷ P. Tocanel, *Storia della chiesa cattolica ...*, p. 18.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 20.

Transylvania should also be appointed apostolic vicar, in order to be able to send in Moldavia Hungarian priests. Batthyáni stressed the idea that those priests should speak both Hungarian and Romanian, thus recognizing the existence of a certain bilingual phenomenon within many Catholic communities from Moldavia. On 7 January 1788 the pope rejected Batthyáni's proposals, claiming that the situation of the Moldavian mission did not impose such a radical solution and suggesting that the Transylvanian bishop might have been misinformed in this matter¹⁹.

In fact, pope Pius VI could not accept the solution proposed by Batthyáni due to several reasons. Firstly, recalling all the Italian missionaries from Moldavia and transferring the control of the Catholics from this region to the Transylvanian bishopric would have clearly led to the dissolution of the Moldavian mission. The Sacred Congregation could not accept this, considering those Hungarian Franciscans selected from the alumni of the Italian colleges to be sufficient to cover the needs of the Hungarian speaking parishioners from Moldavia²⁰. The second reason was that appointing the bishop of Transylvania as apostolic vicar of Moldavia would have infringed some of the main attributes of the bishop of Bacău, who was the only authority to appoint secular priests in Moldavia. The third reason, although not based on certain documents, recalls the Italian origin of the pope himself, which could explain his attitude: Pius VI would have been rather unwilling to accept that the Italian missionaries were not able to preach the Gospel to the Hungarian speaking Catholics, as much as Romanian, and not Hungarian, was the official language of the Moldavia. That is why the Catholic Roman authorities could eventually accept the existence of bi- or multilingual communities, but not the existence of large Hungarian speaking Catholic communities in a country where the dominant language was other than Hungarian.

The Italian missionaries, although considering the absolute supremacy of Romanian as the official language of the Catholic Church in Moldavia, admitted sometimes the predominance of the Hungarian as a mother tongue of many Catholics. Vincenzo Gatt, the prefect of the mission, noted in a letter sent to the cardinal secretary of the Congregation on 11 May 1799: "*Inquanto gli sacerdoti ungari, o per meglio dire, transilvani, non sò se siano religiosi petrini, mà comunque siasi, questa nazione più volte ha tentato di usurpare agl'italiani dette missioni sotto la maschera della lingua ungar, mà però benche la maggior parte del popolo parla la lingua ungar, parla altresì la lingua della provincia*"

¹⁹ *Ibidem.*

²⁰ In a particular meeting held on 20 April 1744, the Sacred Congregation appointed for the Moldavian mission two Hungarian Conventuals, Basilius Frenk and Urbán Baczoni. The Congregation decided also to reserve two places for the Hungarian Conventuals in the College of Assisi, the alumni being prepared for Moldavia. – see E. Dumea, *op. cit.*, p. 110. We can see here also a clear expression of the Sacred Congregation's firm intentions in preserving its entire capacity in controlling the Moldavian mission.

[emphasis mine], e come si deve, difatto i loro trafichino più con i moldovani, che con altri di loro nazione, onde la lingua puramente ungara si restringe per pochi siguli instabili e giranduloni, e pure anche quei pochi sono provveduti, essendosi tre missionarii il Padre M(inorita) Giorgio Castellani ben instrutto in detta lingua ungara; ma il fatto si e l'accennati sacerdoti vorrebbero avere sotto la loro cura detta Provincia di Moldavia, non pure come missionarii, ma bensì indipendenti dalla Sacra Congregazione (...)".²¹ From this document it is clear the fact that the Italian Franciscans were carrying a real assimilation policy of the Hungarian speaking Catholics by imposing the usage of the Romanian language, while Hungarian was abandoned. This policy was conducted for political reasons: the Italians tended to use the official language of the country, because this could open a far easier communication with the secular authorities and elites of the country (such as the boyars and the Orthodox clergy). Also, the fact that Romanian was a Romanic language, closely related to Italian, was a strong argument for the missionaries as they could learn it easier than other languages, such as Hungarian. Moreover, the conflict with the Hungarian Franciscans and with the Hungarian Catholic Church, that seriously threatened the dominant position of the Italian missionaries in Moldavia, naturally determined a firm "Romanian" orientation of the latter.

The case of the Hungarian priest, István Botskor, who tried to find his place in the Catholic parishes from South-Western Moldavia at the beginning of the 19th century, revealed an unexpected ally of the Italian missionaries from Moldavia: the Austrian diplomatic agency from Iași²². Botskor was imprisoned in Timișoara at the order of the Austrian diplomat, Hammer, in 1807. Hammer was persuaded to adopt this decision by the apostolic prefect, Domenico Brocani, who refused to appoint Botskor as priest in Săbăoani. The Vienna government was clearly not willing to encourage any Hungarian claim over the Moldavian Catholic communities, due to obvious political reasons. Its real interest in acquiring a dominant political influence in Moldavia could have been better served by the Italian clergymen, who were in very close relations with the local authorities. Moreover, any revitalization of the Hungarian national conscience could not have been supported by the Austrian authorities

Another reason for which the Hungarian missionaries were contested by the Italian Conventuals was their secular intellectual formation. Unlike the Italian missionaries, all of them alumni of the Italian Catholic colleges (such as the colleges from Fermo or Rome), the majority of the Hungarian Franciscans were alumni of public universities from the Austrian Empire (e.g. the universities of

²¹ Archivio della Congregazione de Propaganda Fide, Scritture riferite nei Congressi della Sacra Congregazione [hereafter ACPF, SRCSC], vol. 6, f. 50 *apud* National Archives of Romania, Microfilm Collection Vatican [hereafter NAR, MCV], reel 31, mm. 555-556.

²² See the Botskor case in P. Tocanel, *Storia della chiesa cattolica ...*, pp. 54-58, 66-76, 82-93.

Vienna, Budapest, etc.)²³. Perhaps, this aspect explains a certain “preference” of the Italians in accusing the Hungarians of poor morality and of neglecting the Order’s regular discipline, as it can be seen in a letter sent by Giovanni Filippo Paroni, the apostolic visitor of the mission (1818-1826), in on 30 April 1820 from Săbăoani, to the prefect of the Congregation, the cardinal Francesco Fontana: “*Questi religiosi austriaci volti dalla giurisdizione del Superiore regolare non sono ne religiosi, ne preti secolari e quella è più poco o nulla stimano Roma, e li suoi ordini. Istruiti nelle pubbliche moderne Università, in alcuni punti non combinano con noi la sola soggezione degl’Italiani li trattiene dal metterle in pratica.*”²⁴

The visitor Paroni, however, tried to make a compromise with the Hungarian Franciscans by appointing them as priests in richer parishes, where they could ensure greater revenues for daily life and ecclesiastical needs. Paroni informed the cardinal Fontana about the changes he put into practice: “*Da questo foglio la Sacra Congregazione facilmente conoscerà che li P. P. Ungari non sono altrimenti contrarii al vescovato, ma bensì se l’hanno sentita e la sentono molto male per il dispotismo dei P. P. Italiani che non consenti di essere nelle migliori parrocchie, vogliono ancora la privativa del monasterio di Iassi per dilapidarlo. Questo fù il motivo per cui tanto pati il monsignor Berardi di B. M. e per cui io fai a loro sospetto e dovetti molto guardarmi da loro a principio. Presentamente la cosa è cambiata. Tutti gli Ungari, o tutti li P. P. che si trovarono in quella circostanza invassirono il Padre Missionario Broceni, a lo hanno quasi costretto a portarsi a Iassi per assistere con me questo monastero, fore da mio vicario, e liberare ne stesso da tante persecuzione falle mi per lo passato. Investirono similmente il Padre Alessandro Papp, e lo hanno indollo a lasciare il suo Tatrosc che facilmente verrà servito dal Padre di Grosest, come già lo era per lo passato, e servire la parrocchia di Faroano, e fare da mio vicario nella Bistriccia. Il signor D. Emerico Deenes resterà in Kalughera ed amministrerà la possessione del vescovo (...)*”²⁵

On the one hand, as the number of parishes increased due to an extensive re-organization of the mission carried by Giovanni Filippo Paroni, the need for new missionaries became more pressing. The General Minister of the Conventual Order, however, had limited possibilities to send new missionaries from Italy to Moldavia. On the other hand, Paroni was not willing to bring in Moldavia secular priests, Conventuals educated in other institutions than the colleges of the Propaganda, or monks from other orders (such as the Jesuits from Russia). In this context, a compromise was nevertheless required. Therefore, taking also into account the need for missionaries who could speak Hungarian, Paroni decided to appeal to the Hungarian Province of the Franciscan Conventuals. His decision was

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 185.

²⁴ ACPF, SRCSC, vol. 7, ff. 511-514, *apud* NAR, MCV, reel 34, mm. 513-520.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, ff. 598-599; 601, *apud* NAR, MCV, reel 34, mm. 613-616; 618-619.

influenced by the Austrian diplomatic agent at Iași, Lippa, who convinced the apostolic visitor that he could find valuable missionaries among the Franciscans from Transylvania. On 25 July 1825, Paroni met with the Provincial Minister of the Hungarian Conventuals, Rudolf Studer, at Cluj and concluded a verbal agreement, which stipulated that the apostolic mission from Moldavia was entitled to receive six Hungarian Conventuals for whom it had to pay an yearly stipend of 100 scuds²⁶. The main obligation of the Provincial Minister was to replace those missionaries, who would have been considered by the apostolic visitor, or by the Propaganda itself as non suitable for the apostolic work. Moreover, the Provincial Minister promised that he would increase the number of Hungarian Conventuals to be sent to Moldavia, if required by the mission; in exchange, the apostolic visitor would have to pay the adequate sum of money.

This agreement was considered as a provisory solution to the problem. It actually did not oblige the Moldavian mission: ceasing to pay the due money would determine the recalling of all the Hungarian missionaries from Moldavia. Although Paroni had not the authorization of the Sacred Congregation to conclude the contract, the Propaganda approved it, reserving the right of annulment, if it proved to be inefficient.²⁷

Rudolf Studer determined in 1831 the Hungarian Province of the Franciscans Conventuals and the new Provincial (elected on 1 June 1830), Cajetan Egyed, to visit the Hungarian missionaries from Moldavia and to control their activity, within the usual visitation of the Transylvanian parishes²⁸. By this decision, the Franciscan Province of Hungary tried to subordinate the Hungarian missionaries in order to ensure the moral quality of the missionaries to be sent to Moldavia, according to the stipulations of the 1825 agreement. Thus, the Italian

²⁶ See for example Paroni's letter from July 30, 1825 sent from Iași: "(...) *Vedo che crescono qui giornalmente li cattolici e con questa freddezza prevedo che alla fine la Sacra Congregazione appiagliarsi il rimedio unico quale è quello di dare la missione ad un altro ordine. Mi dispiacerebbe moltissimo se li Padri Italiani. Perche non sia neppure questo io ho combinato che vi siano qui sei Ungari, onde riesca più facile ai nostri di somministrare il resto. Ma se neppure questo si potrà avere, meno male sarebbe che restasse ai padri provinciali dell'Ungaria che sono pure nostri correligiosi, anzi che possesse ad un altro ordine (...).*" – ACPF, SRCSC, vol. 8, ff. 47-48 *apud* NAR, MCV, reel 38, mm. 64-66.

²⁷ P. Tocanel, *Storia della chiesa cattolica ...*, p. 186.

²⁸ "(...) *Eadem occasione caetera inter in Capitulo Provinciali decisum est: justum esse ut fratres nostri in Sacra Missione Moldavica operantes a Ministri Provincialis actu fungentis dispositione dependeant ac proinde ii, qui jugum obedientiae excutere seque a Provincia independentes declarare praesumant eo ipso ad claustra relequitur aliique idonei iisdem surrogentes. Quocirca Ministro Provinciali commisum est ut occasione visitationis canonicae in Transylvania peragenda in Moldavia quoque excurrat et missionarios de Provincia nostra ibidem existentes personaliter visitet sicque tum in mores ipsorum tum etiam quorum zelo sacrum ministerii manus exercent, sedulo inquirat ut debitam super eo relationem praestare valeat.*" – letter sent by Studer to the papal nuncio from Vienna on 11 June 1831 from Miskolc in ACPF, SRCSC, vol. 9, f. 256, *apud* NAR, MCV, reel 39, mm. 160-161.

apostolic visitor could not really control the activity of the six Hungarian Franciscans from Transylvania.

The regular visitation of the Provincial Egyed in the Catholic parishes from Western Moldavia, where the Hungarian missionaries were active, resulted in Egyed's proposal made to the papal nuncio from Vienna to replace all the Italian missionaries with Hungarians, as the latter were better prepared for providing religious assistance for the Moldavian Catholics: "*Se verum fateri oportet candide retulit mihi nominatus Pater [Cornelius Kónya] sortem missionariorum in Moldavia non quidem quoad statum physicum, verum quoad moralem miserandum esse: siquidem exigua aut nulla inter illos dependentia **apidua** perseverat inter illos questio – Quisnam videatur ipsorum maiorum? et si quid etiam in spiritualibus praestare videntur, id non more pastorum, quibus cura est de animabus; verum more mercenariorum, quibus cura est de opibus mundanis praestare apolent – Itali propter ignorantiam linguae quae maxima ex parte Hungarica viget, parum utiles, hinc parum occupati, et ii non omnes maiori tamen ex parte otio torpescunt dies noctesque computationibus **lusui** foliorum, quasi futurorum immemores consecrant. Horum pessimo exemplo abrepti nonnulli ex Hungaris, et quidem quos ante hac morigeratos noveram a via virtutis d(...)ii facti, reiectis ordinis directoris Breviarium non orant, imo plures illo destituuntur, potui vitaeque liberiori indulgent.*

Hoc ipsum penitius pensando cum pro tali opere apostolico societatem non honorem sed ignominiam mansuram probe perspexerim, ni alii positi fuerint ordines, in corde meo omnes revocandos praestitui, Qua propter pro medela in humilitate flagito et secundum (...)le iudicium meum optime fore iudicarem, si nominata missio, Provincialis Hungariae curae et directioni concrederetur; posset hic penes certum pensum pro itineribus expensis omni triennio, quando dispersai per fines Transylvaniae domos suas visitat et missionarios ordine suo visitare, errata corrigere, necessarios ordines facere, et conscientiosam Sacrae Congregationi informationem adornare. Si enim missio in moderna constitutione permanserit pessimae permetuendae sunt sequelae."²⁹

Obviously, this assertion was based mainly on the language argument. The nuncio from Vienna, was, however, unwilling to accept Egyed's project: "*Testochè il Padre Provinciale dei Francescani di Ungheria è ritornato dalla visita dei suoi religiosi di Moldavia, mi ha diretto la lettera di relazione, che ho l'onore di unire in copia conforme. Dalla medesima si rileva in sostanza, che quanto si espose dal Padre Prefetto Panfili pur troppo è vero. Il provvedimento che dal medesimo Padre Provinciale si propone, non parmi convenevole, ed io crederei che non*

²⁹ The letter was sent on 13 September 1831 from Miskolc – ACPF, SRCSC, vol. 9, f. 273, *apud* NAR, MCV, reel 38, mm. 181-182.

*converrebbe escludere gl'Italiani dalla Missione.*³⁰ In another letter sent on 13 December 1831 from Vienna, the papal nuncio noted: “*Con altro mio rispettoso rapporto de' 27 scorso settembre no. 1756 nel trasmettere la relazione del Padre Provinciale Franciscano di Ungheria, il quale proponeva che il prefetto della Missione di Moldavia venisse scelto dalla sua Provincia, mi esternai contrario di sentimento ad una tale proposizione; oggi dovendo di nuovo parlare sul medesimo argomento perchè chiamato dalla degnazione di Vostra Eminenza Reverendissima credo di mio dovere di ripetere la stessa mia opinione aggiungendo anzi ch'io ritengo che ciò sarebbe un accrescere i mali di quella stessa missione, anzi il produrne dei nuovi, che sarebbero in seguito di più difficile correzione.*”³¹

Giuseppe Zanghi, one of the Italian missionaries from Moldavia, in a letter sent to the prefect of the Congregation, Cardinal Pedicini, on 4 April 1832 from Iași, witnessed the strong opposition manifested by many Hungarian Catholics against the Italian Franciscans, due to their ignorance in Hungarian language: “*(...) Soppia ancora l'Eminenza Sua che Monsignor Paroni convenne colla Provincia dell'Ungheria di pagar una certa somma annua affine di avere dei Padri Ungaresi pel servizio delle parrocchie della Bistriccia dove i cattolici parlano la lingua unghera, quasi tutti, e non la moldavana. Or questo padre viceprefetto dispose le parrocchie in maniera che io e il padre Franchi dobbiamo andare nella Bistriccia, e quei due padri, uno dei quali è unghero e l'altro che capisce la detta lingua unghera devono passar nel Siret dove parlano tutti il moldavano. Noi intanto abbiamo ubbidito, ma ne viene che saremo del tutto inutili in un luogo dove si parla una lingua difficilissima a legno, che sino adesso un solo missionario italiano si conta che dopo molti anni ha parlato l'unghero. Molto più che il popolo di Klesia non mi accetta volentieri in detta parrocchia perchè non parlo la loro lingua. Ne credo l'Eminenza Sua ch'io dica questo perchè le parrocchie siano povere, e quindi non possiam far denaro; anzi al contrario la mia parrocchia di Klesia è la più grande di tutte ci sono in questa missione, quella di Padre Franchi in Calughera è una delle più grande ancora, e che non possiamo desiderarle migliori, quando ci dominasse lo spirito di far denaro. Io ed i miei compagni siamo venuti in questa missione non per farsi ricchi d'oro, ma per fare frutto spirituale e per gl'altri e per noi. (...)*”³² This document is very significant as it presents the difficulties of the Italian Franciscans in their activity when coping with Hungarian speaking communities. These difficulties forced Zanghi to admit the predominance of the Hungarian speaking Catholics in Bistrița district, as well as in the villages of Cleja and Călugăra.

³⁰ See the letter sent on 27 September 1831 from Schönbrunn – ACPF, SRCSC, vol. 9, f. 272, *apud* NAR, MCV, reel 39, mm. 179-180.

³¹ ACPF, SRCSC, vol. 9, f. 288, *apud* NAR, MCV, reel 39, m. 202.

³² ACPF, SRCSC, vol. 9, f. 307, *apud* NAR, MCV, reel 39, mm. 231-232.

The annual report sent to the Propaganda by the apostolic prefect, Giancarlo Magni, on 8 March 1833, mentioned six Hungarian missionaries: Filuszek (Iași), Finta (Călugăra), Hideg (Pustiana), Fortunátus Pápp (Trotuș), Heja (Grozești), Mansuetus Lukótya (Fărăoani). The other missionaries, Italian and Polish, were eight in number (six Italians and two Poles). Therefore, the proportion of the Hungarian and Italian missionaries was equal. In the same report, Magni complained about the fact that the agreement of 1825 was very onerous for the Moldavian mission: *“Perchè pagare? Forse perchè i missionari ungheresi sono più belli dei missionari delle altre nazioni? Forse perchè mentre stanno in missione, la loro Provincia non ha il peso di mantenerli? Forse perchè la missione somministra loro il comodo di fare denari? E’ un giogo del quale la missione deve liberarsi. Se al Provinciale non piace, ritiri i suoi missionari.”*³³

The reason for such an aggressive reaction was that the Hungarian Province requested the payment due for the last three years. At that time, Magni did not have this money – 300 scuds – therefore he tried to impose to the Sacred Congregation the annulment of the contract. This seemed a very simple solution, but only at first sight. On the one hand, the Sacred Congregation did not have the necessary resources to replace the Hungarian missionaries from Moldavia. On the other hand, the Hungarian Province obviously needed the money in exchange for the services provided by the missionaries, and was rather reluctant to break the agreement, even if the payment did not come in due time. Therefore, the Propaganda decided to pay itself the stipend owned by the Moldavian mission³⁴.

Magni’s arguments supporting the necessity of breaking the agreement of 1825 lay especially in the fact that the Hungarian language was not necessary for the missionaries to deliver the spiritual assistance to the Catholics from Moldavia. For Magni, the Romanian language was more appropriate to be used in this mission, as it was the official language of the country, spoken by the majority of the Catholics. Moreover, keeping the Holy Mass in Romanian could entice the Orthodox Romanians to Catholicism. Magni claimed that Hungarian missionaries intended to replace the Romanian, the “official” language of the mission, with the Hungarian language, and, therefore, turn the Italian mission into a Hungarian mission by driving away the Italian missionaries using the language criterion.

³³ P. Tocanel, *Storia della chiesa cattolica ...*, p. 252. See also the letter sent by the General Minister Luigi Battistini to the secretary of the Congregation, Cardinal Caprano, on 18 December 1826: *“(...) Si protesta tenuissimo il surriferito Ministro Generale alla benigna condiscendenza della Sacra Congregazione ma nel tempo istesso si vede in necessità di sottometter al saggio discernimento della medesima che la missione di Moldavia, stante lo spunto, in cui si trova non è al caso di gravarsi dello sborso dei scudi 100 e però addomanda su questo articolo una provizione, onde attivare l’ajuto alla missione di Moldavia, comesi è proposto la detta Sacra Congregazione (...)”* – ACPF, SRCSC, vol. 8, f. 176, *apud* NAR, MCV, reel 38, m. 228.

³⁴ P. Tocanel, *Storia della chiesa cattolica ...*, p. 255.

These were serious affirmations and, at the same time, grave accusations against the Hungarian missionaries. Even Magni later recognized that he might have been too severe in his appreciation³⁵. In 1836 he wrote to the prefect of the Congregation: “*Sperando nella bontà della Sacra Congregazione che questa sarà l’ultima volta che le scrivo in qualità di superiore di questa missione, sul proposito dell’idea sfavorevole da me data de’ missionari ungari supplico di non venir preso stanto alla lettera. Forse il **colorito** è stato caricato più del dovere dalla mia immaginazione al quanto riscaldata ed intorbidata a motivo di vari disgusti ricevuti. D’altronde avendo loro attribuito parecchi difetti alla rinfusa, assicuro di non aver pretesto d’indossarli tutti a ciascuno di essi, ma a quale l’uno, a quale l’altro. Insinuo anche che questi difetti è sperabile che siano agevolmente correggibili da un altro superiore, a carico di cui non sia la dispiacevole prevenzione di esser contrario agli ungari. Del resto sebbene sia certo d’aver sempre scritta subbiettivamente la nuda verità, cioè d’aver riferite le cose come eran da me conosciute e sentite, e non altrimenti; tuttavia non garantirei che tutte le cose dette da me siano obbiettivamente vere in tutta la loro estensione, potendo benissimo aver presso qualche abbaglio. Perciò prego la Sacra Congregazione a benignarsi di sospendere il suo giudizio intorno ai missionari ungari, attendendo ulteriori informazioni dal nuovo Prefetto o Vice-Prefetto, che nella sua saviezza si compiacerà di eleggere a governo di questa missione. (...)*”

The Hungarian Franciscans answered Magni’s accusations referring to the importance of the denominational language in the life of the Catholic communities. For them, using the Romanian language instead of Hungarian, in all religious services (e.g. the Holy Mass, the confession, the common prayers, the religious chants, the catechism, etc.) would have led to the “wallachization” (by this term the Hungarians meant “the orthodoxization”) of the Hungarian speaking Catholics. They pleaded for the preservation of Hungarian language as a guarantee against this serious danger. The letter of the Hungarian Franciscan Mansuetus Lukótya sent to the cardinals of the Sacred Congregation on 10 June 1837 is strongly suggestive in this sense:

“*Vox audita est in Moldavia quasi novus superior nollet huc venire, donec vero unicus missionarius Hungarus hic, hic locorum ut maneret, sed ego dico propter nisi venire poterit quia praeter amorem, reverentiam submissionem superioribus debitam nihil aliud in nobis reperiet. Quod scriptae fuerint plurimae Romam litterae contra modernum missionis superiorem non nego, sed quid faciendum? Idem ipse occasionem praebuit dum sponsam Christi suis planis poenitus eversum iret hoc idem iam ipsi Christi fideles agnoverunt ad quod ego addo: Pater praefectus noster non est Romano-Catholicus, millenae mihi inferantur mortes et totius mundi in me concurrant gladii et ego ad ultimum*

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 264.

habitum id cogitabo, id clamabo, malo esse opprobrium mundi abiectio plebis, quam ab hacce propositione discedere; probas autem quae immensam epistolam componere possent pro futuro relinquo.

*Reverendissime Pater! Hic non est nationalismus, sed faeda animarum pretioso Christi sanguine redemptarum pestis. Hic non habent locum ungarizzare moldovinizzare [author's emphasis], ut Pater Procurator scribitur suppositae voces, hic sponsa Christi fidelis ecclesia, multis fatigiis, nec non sudore praedecessorum nostrorum aquisita venenum iam sumpsit dolore praessa amare clamat **eiulat** et lamentatur et non est proh! dolor! quis sanet eam, quis liberet eam ex omnibus caris eius. Luppi rapaces intrarunt iam ad ovile Christi... Ex operibus enim eorum cognoscetur eos. Assecuro etiam de hoc Paternitatem Vestram quod inter nos nullat sint rixae, nullae contentiones, ad destructionem populi nos unus alium visitamus colloquimur praesente etiam superiore totum quidquid est, totum est per litteras et totum pro causa Jesu Christi Bonum etiam foret ut id quod in praesentiarum scribitur teneatur adminus usque ad futuram rerum investigationem, sedulitatem prudentem propaletur, quia tam se laudant aliqui missionarios Ungaros per agentiam exportabunt e Moldavia, sed ego qui mille montes et totius mundi gladios non timeo pro fide S. Sancta, brachium seculare timebo? Abhorescam? Voluit, noluit credere superiores mei, iustis, veris sinceris repraesentationibus, relationibus ego semper clamabo Pater Praefectus modernus missionis superior implacabile odium habet, erga nationem nostram Hungaram clamabo quod plano suo velit perdere hanc omni comiseratione dignam miseram afflictam simplicem Catholicam gentem, quasi non esset ille Deus Hungarorum, qui est etiam aliarum nationum Christi fidelium, sed non est mirandum siquidem Hungari non fideles sed cassones, rustici, rusticissimi proh dolor! ab ipsis missionariis et quod plus ab ipso superiore nominantur. Hinc si aliquis Ungaros in Moldavia quaerere vellet et nomen eorum scire cassones rustici, rusticissimi appellantur, huius rei documenta, certe cor meum opprimentia praemanibus teneo. Reverendus Pater concedat mihi facultatem Romam eundi et hanc veritatem in plateis Romanis declamabo ingressus mihi debetur ad S. Congregationem de Propaganda Fide, hic et ad pedes Sanctissimi prostratus misericordiam pro populo, pro natione mea Hungara et in illa pro religione Jesu Christi iugis lacrimis deprecabor, scio enim ille zelotus et animarum saluti prospicere cupidus Jesu Christi in terris vicarius humillimam orationem meam non spernet, animarum saluti prospiciet et iter quod ad aeternam damnationem ducit praecludet, suggerente mihi verbamilissimo ac suavissimo salvatore pro cuius unice causa et hanc praesentem litteram scribo, ad quam scribendam antequam venire consului conscientiam meam, consului Jesum Christum et hunc crucifixum interrogavi mement ipsum possumne subsistere in tremendo illo extremis horribili iudicio et mihi responsum fuit omni modo quin advocatum Domini mei ago. – Penes hoc rogo Paternitas Vestra ut a S. Congregatione de Propaganda Fide novam decretationem*

*pro confirmatione titulantium super propositiones mox sequentes elaborare velit: 1) Suntne e natione Hungarica (ex fidelibus nempe translati ad aliam vitam) aliqui ab Ecclesia Romana approbati et venerati ut sancti? 2) Fideles nationis Hungaricae habentne partem in Regno Coelorum? 3) Fideles nationis Hungaricae possuntne in illorum lingua laudare Deum? 4) Cum cuiuslibet missionarii essumsit convertere et conservare conversos quaeritur ad quod ex praedictis duobus **affirmatis** [s.a.] incumbere debent missionarii in Moldavia? 5) Publicae processiones quas ecclesia Romana nunquam vendere solebat possuntne applicari ad intentionem alicuius individui pro pecunia? 6) Possuntne missionarii auctoritate propria in Moldavia instituere preces vero alias ceremonias pro liberatione fidelium defunctorum sine accipiendi peccuniam? 7) Postquam Sacra Congregatio decretavit ut Processio Resurrectionis et illa Corporis Christi peragatur iuxta rituale Strigoniense possuntne auctoritate propria missionarii in Moldavia has processiones aliter absolvere quam praescribit praedictum rituale audita etiam populi murmuratione? 8) Processiones praedictae iam a S. Congregatione approbatae habentne sensum communem? 9) Possuntne illi missionarii ex amore salvendi animas illi populo administrare sacramenta, ut convent, quem summo odio prosequuntur? 10) Dispensationes papales necnon Brevi a Roma in Moldaviam missa suntne alicuius valoris? 11) Suntne apostolici regni Hungariae episcopi una cum suo populo haeretici?”³⁶*

To prove these harsh accusations against the Italian Franciscans, Lukótya included several letters and fragments of letters written by various Italian missionaries, from which I selected the letter which was written by the Polish missionary Eugen Zamoisky to the Franciscan Agostino Melis on 20 May 1837: “*In secondo luogo vi respondo con summo mio dispiacere che non vi posso servire in quanto alla prediche di S. Giovanni quantunque uti evenimus mi abbiate piu volte favorito per cui vene resto obligatissimo ed ecco vi la ragione se fossi stato sina dora nel Sereth mi sarebbe facile adesso a predicare in Moldovano, ma porto che gia un anno allontanato di la e disposto in questa parte e conosciuta la necessita della lingua ungara, nella situazione in cui mi attualmente ritrovo con tutte le altre presenti e critiche circostanze della missione, mi sono applicato alla detta lingua, cosiche ora predico debolmente in ungaro percio mi sarebbe gia più difficile adesso a predicare in Moldovano, stanteche non ho più uso e necessita attualmente di sudetta lingua*”³⁷. Lukótya commented this letter as follows: “*Epistola haec sat clare monstrat quod etiam lingua hungarica sit necessaria in Moldavia, quamvis auctor huius epistolae antequam Foroanum venisset acerrimus Hungarorum persecutor esset; hic pauperculos scilicet fideles Hungaros porcos, asinos appellabat, dicebatque unum Turcam se non dare pro centum Hungaris.*

³⁶ ACPF, SRCSC, vol. 9, ff. 618-625, *apud* NAR, MCV, reel 40, mm. 9-25.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 624, m. 23.

Seculares hoc audiverunt et scandalisati sunt (dicit quod debiliter concionetur cosiche ora debolmente predico in Ungaro [author's emphasis]) ego autem scio quod plus quam uno anno ullam concionem, unam homiliam verbique Dei explicationem audiverint Forroanenses, fideles etsi numerus eorum ad 2579 animas ascenderet concio quam dicit P. Zamoisky pura Dominicalis Evangelii lectis est [author's emphasis], hic revera adimpletum est illud Divinum effatum: Parvuli petierunt panem et non fuit quis frangeret eis."³⁸

Lukótya finishes his polemic letter invoking the isolation of the Hungarian Catholics from Moldavia, a process to be imputed only to the assimilation policy conducted by the Italian Franciscans: "(...) Reverendissimi Patres, in Moldavia diversissimae dantur nationes invenire est aliquos Italos, Gallos, Germanos, Arabes, Turcos, Russos, Polonos, plurimos Valachos, tandem Haebreos et Zingaros et tamen nulla illorum nationum in tantum irridetur, vituperatur, quam natio haec nostra Hungarica et a quibus? Proh, dolor! ab ipsis animarum curatoribus, missionariis (salvo honore eorum qui tales non sunt) et quod plus ab ipso missionis Praefecto Superiore. Inauditum vero in ipsis ecclesiae historiis solutis impedimentum. Quod hic existentes Catholici sint Hungari, luce meridiana clarius est, si quidem omnes cuiuscunque nationis missionarium sub nomine Patrum Hungarorum etiam ipsis schismaticis sunt noti."³⁹

The Italian Filippo Nicola, one of the predilect targets of the accusations issued by the Hungarian Franciscans, considered that the conflict within the Moldavian mission was mainly determined by the Hungarian missionaries Cornelius Könya and Mansuetus Lukótya, who wanted to forcefully impose the Hungarian language in the Catholic communities where the Romanian was the only known and spoken language: "(...) Egli col suo compagno dicono che ci fanno la guerra per via della lingua ungaro che noi non sappiamo, ma neppure i popoli ove noi amministriamo sanno altro idioma di che il valacco. Ciò poi non è vero che questo è il motivo; ma il solo interesse dal Padre Konya amministrata solamente per metà, e sepure sà la lingua ungara. Ma lui ha in odio questa lingua non predica mai, e neppure vuole confessare quei fedeli che non sanno l'ungaro come attestano diversi paesi da lui scacciati dal confessionario a tempo dell'ultima Pasqua, cosichè già due volte hanno fatto ricorsi al Padre Prefetto affinche lo obligasse a predicare in lingua lor, che è la valacca."⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibidem, f. 625, m. 24. It is interesting to mention also the short song ridiculing the Hungarians from Moldavia attributed by Lukotyta to the prefect Giancarlo Magni: "(...) addo certam cantilenam, quam P. Praefectus composuit, scripsit propria manu et P. Philippo Nicola tradidit ut eam cantent pueri in schola quamve etiam produxit ad mensam saepius P. Praefectus cum suo laico ad risum Hungarorum: Cantat in majo Hungarus ita, qui melius cantabit Hungarus seu asinus vocabitur. I-ha etc. (...)"

³⁹ Ibidem.

⁴⁰ See the letter sent on 1 May 1838 from Prăjești – ACPF, SRCSC, vol. 10, f. 18, apud NAR, MCV, reel 40, m. 54.