

Document

Truths Which Cannot be Hidden

This document is a report on repressions suffered by Christians of various denominations in Romania during 1981. It is compiled by the Romanian Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights (ALRC), which is affiliated to the Swiss-based organization Christian Solidarity International.

In the materialist-atheist abyss under the communist régime, religious repression continues in Romania. In spite of the country's so-called freedom and respect for human rights, tens of thousands of Romanians—if not millions—are setting out for other climes in the hope of finding a place where they will be respected as human beings. Even 1981 did not pass without leaving sad memories in the lives of many Christians in the country. The methods of the Romanian security police differ from case to case: some people have tasted prison life: others interrogation, beatings, and threats. The results are intimidation, broken bones, compromises or physical destruction.

Thus, the Romanian government is responsible before the people, before the whole world, before history and before God for the lack of respect for the fundamental rights of man; for the trampling underfoot of religious freedom and freedom of conscience; for the flouting of human rights and for the oppression of their own people.

We, however, find courage in the words of Jesus: "do not fear those who will kill the body, but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10,28).

1. Christians who are considered to be the most dangerous for the régime are imprisoned. Among these are: *Ionel Prejban*, a

believing Baptist, a militant upholder of the Faith, who was sentenced in March 1981 to three months' prison on a trumped-up charge of vagrancy although his emigration papers were almost completed. *Silvia Târniceru* and *Elena Boghian*, Baptists from Jassy, were sentenced to two years' imprisonment for having crossed the frontier illegally in the spring of 1981. They were pardoned and freed in August 1981, but only after three days of protest by their family and other believers. While they were detained, they were taken to another prison in a wagon attached to a goods train, together with other detainees. They were crushed together without light, air or food and without the most elementary provision for hygiene, for two days. Is there any difference between transport of this kind and that employed by the fascists when they took their detainees to the Nazi camps?

In the periodical *Femeia* (Woman) of August 1981, these two Christians were referred to ironically and labelled for their beliefs.

Father Gheorghe Calciu is still in prison and recently his jailers were supported by Patriarch Justinian, Metropolitan Nicolae of Banat, the President of the Baptist Union, Cornel Mara, and the General Secretary, Paul Bărbăței. He did not benefit from the amnesty of 1981, since he had been sentenced to ten years.*

Ioan Teodosiu, a Baptist believer from Cluj, a fighter for the rights of Christians in Romania, was arrested on 16 December

* A presidential decree of 23 August 1981 annulled prisoners with sentences of up to five years and reduced sentences of between five and eight years by one-sixth—Ed.

1981. Though he had not been charged, he was held illegally until March 1982, when he was freed.

Ioan Maier, a believer from Bucharest, Strada Logofăt Tautu 17, sector 3, is a poet and prose-writer. Since 1975 he has collected Christian prose and poetry and edited the Christian literary review *Veghe* (Vigil).

On innumerable occasions he sought permission from the authorities to publish this review. Since 1973-74 no neo-Protestant prose or poetry has appeared in official religious publications.

Maier insistently sought permission to:

- a. Print his review *Veghe* in a state enterprise, in a limited edition;
- b. Print an inter-confessional anthology of poetry and prose;
- c. Print poetry, Christian songs and prose in a volume by different authors, beginning with the poet Traian Dors;
- d. Include Romanian Christian poems, songs and prose in a separate chapter in approved literary publications;
- e. Exchange Christian prose, poetry and songs with any Christian denominations abroad.

All this led to his sentence of three months in prison on 12 June 1979 and again on 26 July 1981 to four months, according to Article 153 (of the Penal Code—Ed.). He was followed, questioned, searched and threatened because of his writings. On 27 July 1981, on the day of his last arrest, his home was searched and all material relating to religion was confiscated—the only archive and complete collection of Christian literary creative work assembled with great difficulty over five years. The following were confiscated:

- 170 typewritten copies of over 30 Romanian poets and Christian writers
- 340 copies of *Veghe*
- 30 photocopies of new religious songs
- 100 cassettes
- all the materials used in typing and editing the review and its cover
- two typewriters
- personal correspondence
- all photographs
- personal notes

Afterwards, he was questioned day and night in order to try to force him to reveal the names of all the Christians in the country who had subscribed to *Veghe*. The lawsuit was conducted without any members of the public present—only the judge and the clerk of the court—and in civilian clothes. He was not allowed to be defended—even after a hunger-

strike. In prison he was forbidden to buy the strict necessities of life. After his eventual pardon, he never recovered any of his confiscated belongings—in defiance of his legal rights as stated in the amnesty. In the winter of 1981 he was again charged. This time he was accused under Article 3/1974, No. 90 of the Press Law, of “multiplication of material without legal permission”, although Article 29 of this law permits such publications. His actual “crime” was, in fact, Christian culture and literature.

On 10 February 1982 Maier appeared in court again. Because of the great crowd of Christians who came to attend the hearing, a quarrel arose between two security officers, which broke up the hearing. These two officers brandished empty boxes and made such a noise that the judge was obliged to evacuate the hall, instead of ordering the two troublemakers out. Thus, Ioan Maier was judged in private and the sentence he was given legalized the confiscation of all his religious material.

The *Paul Dragu* family, Baptists from Târgu-Jiu, Str. 6 Martie, No. 5, telephone 929-13580, asked leave to emigrate because of religious persecution. Paul Dragu, the head of the family, was followed and repeatedly interrogated by the security police. Marcela Dragu, his daughter, was sacked from her job in a laboratory. Geta Dragu, another daughter, was persecuted at school. On 22 January 1982, following a hunger-strike which he undertook in the hope of resolving his case, Paul was judged without witnesses and given a sentence of six months, based on Article 153, although he had fulfilled all the formalities for emigration. His wife, Paulină Dragu, was imprisoned for four months for the same reason. She was later freed. On 23 January, Geta Dragu was arrested in the street and interrogated by the security police. Paul Dragu was badly beaten and maltreated while in prison in Târgu-Jiu.

Three people who visited the Dragu family when on hunger-strike in January 1982—Buşuloiu, Geamănu and Popescu—were arrested in the street in Târgu-Jiu and sentenced to six months in prison. Another person—Cornel Turnaru—a family friend, was also arrested.

A new lawsuit is being prepared for Paul Dragu by the military tribunal, accusing him of anti-State activities. He could be sentenced to 8-15 years. On 21 March 1982, his wife Paulină Dragu was summoned again by the security police—ill though she was then—

apparently to finish her sentence in prison. All telephone calls to and from the Dragu girls are interrupted.

2. The Christian Churches in Romania continue to suffer religious persecution in one form or another; lawsuits under different pretexts; imprisonment; surveillance; etc.

The Baptist Church of Cloșani, county of Mehedinți, was opened on 5 September 1976. Until 1981, when it was closed, its members suffered continual persecution by the authorities. They even went so far as to interrupt services, claiming they had a right to do so as officers for cults. The authorities also exercised pressure on school-children by interrupting classes.

On 8 March 1981, the mayor of the district—Gheorghe Balai, the security major, Nicolai Morenciu and Dumitru Sprâncenatu went to the church and locked the doors, thus preventing the parishioners from entering. On 15 March 1981, the same men came to the church and swore at the parishioners and threatened them. When one of the friends of the congregation succeeded in entering the churchyard, one of the security majors attacked him with his rubber truncheon, shouting that anyone else who did not understand that they must not meet in church any more would meet the same fate. On 22 March 1981, Major Sprâncenatu stood in front of the church, pushing everyone aside and telling them not to enter. One parishioner fell, and he took the Bible from another and threw it in the Motru river. The deacon, Ion Corlan, was beaten up four times and told to shut the church. Then he was fined 1,000 lei. In April 1981, the mayor of Cloșani went up to Haralambie Ploscariu, Baptist preacher in Mărășești, county of Mehedinți, threatening him: "We teach people to work, to fulfil their duties and to eat. We don't teach them to pray, to sing and to weep before God." Also, he said that he would fine him if he entered the church in Cloșani again.

In the village of Gîrdoaia, district of Florești, county of Mehedinți, there is an active group of Baptists who are often persecuted because they asked to be associated with the church in Drobeta, Turnu-Severin. A parishioner was followed along the road and an attempt was made to cause an "accident" with a car. She was obliged to leap three times over the ditch on the edge of the road. When she walked along the same road with her mother, they were both accosted by so-called "hooligans" who wounded one of the women in her arm with a knife.

In March 1981 the inspector of cults in the county of Mehedinți gave a talk in the Baptist Church in Drobeta, Turnu-Severin, against those who wish to emigrate and against those who do not submit to "the policy of the closure of churches".

In the Baptist Church in Fălticeni, county of Suceava, the Romanian authorities damaged the front of the church, demolished the baptistry and built walls in the interior, thus sealing any entry to the building.

The Pentecostal Church in Rădăuți, county of Suceava, is in a critical state: its roof is asphalted cardboard. The members bought slate for the roof but the authorities simply stole it and put it in a state shop for sale.

The believers in Baptist Church No. 5 in Timișoara, Str. Comunadia Paris No. 2, have been refused permission to function, and recently a lawsuit has been started. The president of the church, Ioan Trif, gave his members the chance to placate the authorities by accepting Ieremia Găvârină as pastor, a man well-known as a tool of the authorities.

The Baptist Church of Găujani, county of Caraș-Severin, newly erected with approval by the authorities, is now threatened with demolition.

The Baptist Church of Răchitova, county of Caraș-Severin was demolished by bulldozer and the parishioners were fined.

The faithful of the Baptist Church of Buceoșnița, county of Caraș-Severin, bought a house in Buceoșnița in the name of Ioan Lazăr to serve as a meeting-house, because the congregation, who are mostly elderly, some of them invalids, could not go on foot to the Baptist Church in Petroșnița four kilometres away. Because they met in the church in Buceoșnița the following Christians were fined by the militia:

Ioan Lazăr—2,000 lei
 Ilie Ufa—1,000 lei
 Alera Smaia—1,000 lei
 ? Smaia—1,000 lei*

The Baptist Church in the town of Dr Petru Groza. A lawsuit was held in October 1981 according to Article 1440, and it was resolved that the church in Republic St. No. 83 should be demolished.

The Baptist Church in Țigănești, county of Teleorman, severely damaged by the earthquake of 1977, was pulled down by the members in the absence of the security police, because they hoped to build a new one. The authorities, however, did not allow this. So

*A thousand lei are worth a little over £50—Ed.

the brethren built a tent from tarred cardboard which, with difficulty, permits the holding of a service.

In front of the town council building in Milișăuți, county of Suceava, a caricature mocking the faithful in the village of Iaslovaț, in the district of Emil Bodnăraș was pinned up. The caricature represents people in the nude bathing in the river in the village with captions denigrating the act of baptism. Thirteen Pentecostal Christians were fined 2,000 *lei* each for having taken part in a baptism, while the pastor who officiated was fined 3,000 *lei*, a total of 29,000 *lei*.

In the district of Satu-Mare, in the village of Țipeni, county of Suceava, a group of fourteen Baptists were fined 1,000 *lei* each in 1981 because they had held a religious service. Most of them were elderly—between seventy and eighty years old. Among those who were fined were: Dumitru Prelipceanu, Constantin Costea, Margareta Costea.

In the district of Emil Bodnăraș, in the village of Bădăuți, county of Suceava, on several consecutive Sundays during religious services several people, among whom were Professor Țopală and an engineer from the collective farm in the locality, entered the church against the will of the people, read extracts from the writings of Marx and held political discussions. One of the faithful, Ioan Lucescu, took a stand in the face of this intrusion, and invoked the Constitution. Because of this, his children—Ioan and Maria Lucescu—were put back one class at school though they were good scholars. Professor Varvara told their mother that if the two children had not been religious they would not have been punished in that way. The president of the district, Podiuc, stirred up quarrels and fined the faithful of the community and of the neighbouring villages.

Other churches in Romania are also threatened with closure.

3. Active Christians, considered by the authorities to be a danger, are subjected to various kinds of repression.

Ioan Clipa, of 20 Alexandru Cel Bun St., Suceava—telephone 987-11168, was interrogated in the autumn of 1980 because he had distributed Bibles. He was tortured by the security police until his psyche was destroyed and afterwards underwent nervous crises. At the beginning of 1981, the security police came again to his house and arrested him. Ioan Clipa had suffered a trauma (he had not forgotten the torture he had suffered in the autumn of 1980; he had heard of the interro-

gations and tortures suffered by his friends in Botoșani and knew what he too could experience); he had a breakdown, went into hiding and committed suicide.

We consider the Romanian police to be directly responsible for the death of Ioan Clipa. They had already killed him in the autumn of 1980 by destroying his mind. His wife, Eugenia Clipa, an invalid pensioner, is left with seven young children.

Gavril Bărnut, a Baptist from Lacului St., No. 10, Arad, a convinced atheist until 1973, became a good Christian and spread the word of Christ after a personal experience with God.

The numerous converts due to Gavril Bărnut's evangelizing irritated the security police who followed him so that he was obliged to leave Reșița where he was living and move to Arad. For years he was interrogated and threatened. In May 1981, five members of the Romanian Communist Party came from Arad to the industrial machinery plant in Brașov. They held a meeting with the heads of the firm to which he was also called. The men from the Central Committee said to him: "Pack your belongings and go to the USA where you will be able to carry out your propaganda". Then they threatened him: "We will teach you; we'll show you".

His request to emigrate, however, was ignored. On 11 August 1981 a security policeman entered his house and said: "You have put in a request to go abroad? Good! We'll supply you with your wish. Get ready to come to the council with me." He was put in a car and driven through Arad. At a certain point, the car stopped and he was pushed by the policeman into a quiet alley and told: "Do you give up or not?" "Give up what?" said Gavril. "The propaganda you are waging." Gavril said, "I do not give up." Then he was beaten up and left fainting in a pool of blood. His assailant was one of the five who had visited the firm. When Gavril Bărnut used to preach in various churches, he was interrogated afterwards in many cases and the respective pastor was also called to the local police.

The chain of persecution and brutality, however, does not end here. On 14 February 1982, Roland Vasilievici, a security officer, well-known for his antagonism to any sign of faith in God, wrote an article in his capacity as a "publicist and jurist" as he called himself in the *Red Flag* at Timișoara, attacking Gavril Bărnut. The so-called "publicist" launched a tirade, not only against the believing Baptist,

but also against the Christian conception of life and death. Normally a "publicist and jurist" would be better informed and sure of his facts: though Vasilevici learned that Gavril was from the parish of Marca, he hastened to name his birthplace as Marga, in the county of Sălaj, at the other end of the country. Vasilevici hastened to satirize the sermons of Bărnut, but the words he quoted were quite different from those spoken from the pulpit. He stated that Gavril had said he had been in hell and seen there "cauldrons of tar" and "beautiful angels". Those who had listened to his sermons had heard nothing of the sort. In his article Vasilevici "proved" a direct connection between a certain Lennox—a horse thief—and Gavril Bărnut, a former Communist and fervent atheist, now both converted to Christianity in similar circumstances. This resulted, in the iron-logic of the "publicist" from Timișoara, in a direct connection between horse thieves and communists!

Today, however, everyone in Romania is able to read the papers. When something is stated positively, it must be understood negatively and inversely.

Gavril Bărnut was interrogated on 16 February 1982, together with Milentie Pop from Arad. The interrogations continue: and the pastors are threatened with imprisonment if they refuse to give up preaching.

Ioan Lupulescu of Pacii St., Fırdea, county of Timiș, pastor of the local Baptist church, was warned not to allow Gavril Bărnut to enter his church. That was in August 1981. Lupulescu was fined 1,000 lei because he had officiated at a Communion service in the district of Zold. Now he is being threatened by a party activist who has come to Fırdea from Lugoj, that the latter will soon "attend to him".

Nelu Tinăru, of Fırdea, county of Timiș, was one of Gavril Bărnut's converts to Christianity in the church of Fırdea. Because of this, he was arrested in July 1981, held all night and beaten and terrorized until the morning, until he was unconscious and had to be taken to hospital.

Ioan Iancu, a Baptist believer from Țancu Vacărescu St., No. 20, Timișoara, telephone 961-14342 is well-known to his compatriots as a keen evangelist who moves around with his five children, who form a small orchestra. On 11 June 1980, his house was searched for seven hours by eight security police, without a warrant, on the pretext that he was hiding arms. They turned everything upside down

and confiscated anything connected with Christianity: cassettes containing religious material, a loud-speaker, a typewriter, a screen for projecting films, a camera, etc. They also confiscated religious brochures, all his Bibles, a cheque-book and all his life-savings. During the search, a colonel, one of the eight, said to Iancu: "Now we'll see how you can go on carrying out propaganda; you will have to do it all from memory".

Afterwards proceedings were instituted against him. At first he was accused of making religious propaganda, then of buying objects from foreigners. At length after long drawn-out sessions, he was sentenced in February 1981 to a year of hard labour and the confiscation of 46,000 lei in conformity with Article 295 of the Penal Code for speculation. Not a single witness was brought to "prove" the accused's speculation or that he had bought objects from foreigners. In a second, civil, lawsuit, he was accused of illegal gains. In this way the authorities tried to account for the confiscation of his belongings and his money in 1980. Iancu was forbidden to call any witnesses at the trial. At the last session the judge recognized that "mistakes" had been made in calculating his income at more than 500,000 lei, taking into account the needs of his family. But even if the expenses were reduced by half, there still remained illicit gains almost equal to what had been confiscated.

On 5 February 1981 the security officer, Roland Vasilevici serialized an article in the local paper, *Red Flag* in Timișoara, entitled "The End of the Saint", full of calumnies. The author invented an entirely slanderous report whose aim was to prove that Ioan Iancu was a speculator in radio-cassettes, etc. But Ioan Iancu had only one radio-cassette. Nor was he a shoemaker; nor did he have many "things" to sell as Roland affirmed. Nor were there any discussions between the charwoman and the militia in which the servant accused Iancu, for there was not a single servant there in 1978 and at that time, Iancu was even elected president of the property.

When Ioan Iancu was searched, he was not asked about money, he was simply accused of proselytism. As regards the so-called "statement" in which Iancu is said to have owned up to his guilt, it was only Roland's invention.

We see then, that Roland is a master at inventing false statements about honest Christians. That is how communist journalism is practised. According to the law, it is illegal to make accusations in the press while a case is *sub judice* because the accused is consi-

dered to be guiltless until the sentence is pronounced. We ask whether there is no law to cover such a person, who makes a business of libelling honest men?

Haralambie Ploşcariu, a Christian and Baptist preacher from the district of Mărăşeşti, county of Mehedinţi, was taken by police from the churchyard of the church in Cloşani on 19 October 1980, where he had been preaching, and taken to the bridge over the Motru river. He was sworn at and threatened with another "baptism".

In May 1981, the Inspector of Cults in the county of Mehedinţi listened to the sermon of Haralambie Ploşcariu about another life, which he had preached in the Baptist Church in the district of Mărăşeşti, and accused him of talking politics from the pulpit.

Buni Cocaru, a Baptist pastor in the church in the district of Giuleşti in Bucharest was interrogated by the security police in connection with the intense religious activity in which he was engaged.

Mihai Gongola, a student in the Baptist Theological Seminary in Bucharest, was picked up in the street at the end of October 1981 and taken to security headquarters in Calea Victoriei, Bucharest. He was interrogated for two consecutive days and asked to make a declaration that he would report periodically to the Minister of Home Affairs. On 5 November 1981, he was again interrogated and told that the security police wished to discuss matters with him at least once a month.

The few pastors who do not agree to collaborate with the police and the Department of Cults are slandered, interrogated, and subjected to persecution with the aim of softening and compromising them.

Traian Morar, a Baptist from No. 2 Unuiri St., Curtici, county of Arad, member of the Romanian Committee of CSI (Christian Solidarity International—Ed.), was interrogated by the security police in Arad (Lieut.-Col. Maniscu, Major Roman, Lieut. Gorun) on 12, 13 and 14 January 1982. They confiscated his documents containing cases of religious persecution and his personal notebook. He was threatened with five years' imprisonment under the Press Law.

4. Children of Christians are subjected to persecution even at an early age. At the General School in Arad, Aurel Vlaicu St., Christian children in classes 5-8 are subjected to discrimination on the part of the teachers; they are threatened with low marks if they go to church on Sundays. On Easter Sunday,

1981, the pupils were obliged to attend school where they were taught about the "evolution of life on earth".

The Baptist Church in Lugoj organized a camp for Christian children during the holidays in Ohaba Romană, county of Timiş, in the house of a believer. The children were supervised and taught about the Bible and had a daily programme which was varied and enjoyable. The local people were pleased with the children's activities. But those children were not to have holidays—or so the teachers of atheism, together with the president of the Baptist Association in Timişoara decided. These were Ioan Trif and the Inspector of Cults, Ţepeşel. The two latter arrived at the camp in Ohaba Romană and compelled the children to go home. One child had his Bible taken from him, while some of the Christians who were running the camp had their homes searched in Lugoj.

Those children and many like them are strangers in their own country. They are subjected from infancy to religious discrimination, and deprived of the right of any child in the world to delight in their childhood. Christian children in Romania cannot have a camp where they can be protected from the violent indoctrination of Marxism.

Recently, in Dumbrăveni, county of Sibiu, thirty Adventists were arrested, and their children were taken to a children's hostel elsewhere where they were forced to eat meat. One eleven-year-old organized a hunger-strike, and they ate only bread and water. The parents were later released, but they were still pestered.

5. Persecution and sacking of Christians from their jobs continue.

Silvia Petcu, an Orthodox Christian, engaged at the Institute of Research for the Water Board at Splaiul Independenţei, 294, Sector VI, Bucharest, was reprimanded by the head of the sector, Florin Lazărescu, though she held a top post; the reason given was that she conducted religious propaganda in the institute.

Daniel Stoiceanu, a Baptist from Bucharest; leader of the Basarab Baptist Church, was sacked from his job as music teacher. The official reason was that he believed in God.

6. Another form of persecution is the libelling of Christians in the press:

Aurel Chiu, a Baptist, son of Pastor Pavel Chiu of Pilu, county of Arad, was subjected to a so-called investigation in the newspaper *Red*

Flame of Arad on 3 December 1981. What intrigued the investigator, Roman Sălăjan, was the fact that the Dr Chiu did not leave the hospital to attend a little girl who had fallen in the bus station. Aurel had examined her, however, diagnosed a sprain on the right elbow and sent her to the dispensary where the sanitary official gave first-aid. It was not a serious situation, a simple sprain does not require any unusual treatment. But this incident caused a prick of conscience in Roman Sălăjan. Dr Chiu was well qualified professionally: in 1977 he was in the Romanian delegation to an International Medical Congress in Madrid. The author of the article accused the Baptist doctor of arriving late sometimes at the dispensary. To this Aurel Chiu replied: "I am late only when I have had to attend patients at nights". Probably Mr Sălăjan was not disturbed at night and did not know what it meant to get up from sleep to attend the sick. As well as distorting the facts, Mr Sălăjan lied in his "investigation", claiming that Dr Chiu has a weak character and had himself admitted that he could not bear the sight of blood—which is not only incorrect, but a down-right lie, Mr Investigator! At the end of the article, the fact that Dr Chiu handed in his resignation under these conditions is presented negatively. He did it in the knowledge that he was being watched and was aware of the intentions of his persecutors. We ask you, Mr Sălăjan: are the Romanian security not "weak in character" when they see blood oozing from the people they are torturing?

Five Baptist pastors of Bucharest, *Vasile Talos, Ioan Geabău, Buni Cocaru, Săracu and Brînzei*, were slandered in the newspaper *Flacara* (The Flame) of 29 October 1981, and accused of financial frauds. Mr Adrian Păunescu, why have you not published the replies which gave you the true facts of the case, as well as that of the Sfînta Treime Baptist Church on the Mihai-Bravu Boulevard? That church is in the best position to tell you the facts if indeed, its pastor, Vasile Talos, had appropriated the money. We do not propose to present proofs of this case of persecution, because the facts are well-known. The aim of the authorities was to vilify those pastors of Bucharest who did not accept the title of Correspondent of the Ministry of Cults.

7. Owing to persecution, many Christians have applied to emigrate, without, however, obtaining a passport.

Gheorghe Braşoveanu, an Orthodox Christian of Bucharest, Grigore Alexandru St., 27, an economist, now a pensioner, is a long-

standing dissident, a fighter for human rights. For that reason he has suffered much: he has been in psychiatric hospitals several times where he was given tranquillizers which harmed his brain. In 1979 he was imprisoned because he founded a free Trade Union in Romania. While in prison, his pension of 2,200 lei was withheld for 21 months. Not one of his works on economics was recognized though Nicolai Ceauşescu himself had applied and supported some of his ideas. After he was freed, he applied to emigrate to the USA. The militia told him that his application would not be approved. The authorities are irritated by the interpretation which Braşoveanu gives to the Apocalypse, which discredits communism. He was prevented five times from entering the American Embassy.

The family of *Gheorghe Mladin*, a Pentecostal believer from Arad, father of eleven children, went on hunger-strike in April 1981, asking that he be allowed to emigrate with two of his children. One of the two children—Daniel Mladin—had to be interned in hospital as a result of the hunger-strike.

Daniel Tibici, a young Baptist from Orşova, was sentenced to two years in 1981 because he had tried to cross the frontier. He was beaten up by the security police.

Gigi Rogoveanu, a Baptist from Turnu-Severin, with five children, was sentenced to six months in prison for his attempt to cross the frontier in 1981.

The family of *Gheorghe Michescu* of Turnu-Severin, Mihail Sadoveanu St., No. 35, Baptists, asked permission to emigrate to the USA because of the religious persecution to which their father was subjected. He was demoted from his post as head of a firm of forestry workers because he was a believer. He was obliged to look for work in another county because no firm in his own county would accept him (the security police had informed all firms in the county that Michescu was a believing Baptist). So he found a job in the pig complex in Beregşaul-Mare, county of Timiş, where he was again demoted for the same reason. He is obliged to shuttle hundreds of kilometres, which takes up much of his salary. He has to support a family of three children. His wife, Ecaterina, was also threatened with arrest by the head of the Passport Office of Mehedinţi county—Mr Bulzan. In September 1981 they were forbidden by the militia to travel to Bucharest. Though they managed to get to Bucharest,

they were forbidden by the militia to enter the American Embassy.

The brothers *Ploșcariu* applied for permission to emigrate to the USA. They are Zaharia, from Motru, county of Gorj, with his family, and Haralambie Ploșcariu, junior, now in Turnu-Severin, owner of the house in Motru where the Baptist services were held and which was closed on 1 April 1981 following the persecutions to which it had been subject in other years. In 1980, the wife of one of the brothers, Zahazia-Maria, was demoted, slandered and threatened at a public meeting that she would be sent to a psychiatric hospital. The authorities refused to grant them passports.

Dumitru Mureșan, a devoted Baptist from the village of Arcalia, county of Bistrița-Năsăud, has five children. His wife is ill and he is an invalid pensioner. From time to time his pension is withheld. He receives no benefit for his children. They have absolutely no income. All this is because he is religious. He was interned in a psychiatric hospital where he received "neuroleptic" injections to destroy his mind. Three years ago he asked permission to emigrate. For that "crime" his children are not allowed to attend school. The Romanian authorities also confiscated his identity card. For that reason he cannot "enjoy" the few small "rights" which are due to him. In 1981 he witnessed a campaign to follow up and destroy those who were distributing Bibles and Christian literature in the country.

In the summer of 1981, the Pentecostal pastor *Caraman* of 13 September St., Bucharest was searched at home and two sacks of religious books were confiscated. One of the security officers said to him: "We would shoot all of you, but the law still protects you".

In January 1981, five believers accused of distributing Bibles in Romania and the USSR were imprisoned for periods of two to three years after a trial in Botoșani. These were *Gheorghe Hofman*, *Mathias Fahner*, *Paul Gross*, *Manfred Herbert* and *Mihai Closs*.* Before that they were tortured by the security police. Paul Gross and Mihai Closs were injected with drugs to break their will and reveal all that they knew. In connection with this, the following were also interrogated and searched in their homes: Mihai Romaniuc, Ioan Latan, Filip Tăbăcaru, Pricob Tărniceru, Bocan. Other Christians were beaten. Recently, Pricob Tărniceru, a Baptist be-

liever from Jassy, was fined 1,000 lei for distributing Bibles.

On 2 December 1981, *Simeon Lupei*, a Pentecostal believer, a pensioner of 11 Abrud St., Arad, was interrogated, and his house was searched by three security agents: Mihai David, Dorel Gorun and Viorel Roman. The indictment specified: "religious material from abroad, received from foreigners". The three agents confiscated all the religious literature in the house. Though an old man, Lupei was questioned day and night, threatened and mentally tortured until exhausted. Together with him, a Pentecostal Christian, David Merca of 10 Badea Cirtan St., and two Swiss citizens were interrogated for the same reason. David Merca was beaten and interrogated for two days and a night: tied to a chair and tortured until he collapsed in a pool of blood. He is summoned regularly to the security police. Also in Arad, the believer Emil Blaj was interrogated on the subject of Christian literature.

On 10 November 1981 in Ploesti, several Christians were arrested and interrogated about the distribution of Bibles and religious literature. Among these were Mircea Cioată, Silviu Cioată, Toader Nelu, an engineer, and Petru Furner: all of whom were sentenced to more than five years in prison (probably so as to avoid the amnesty for sentences up to five years as happened with the five Christians sentenced in the trial in Botoșani).

Klaus Wagner, of Sighișoara, 12 Erminescu St., was arrested on 1 October 1981 and his house searched without a warrant. Many things were confiscated, among them a cassette-recorder. Recently, he was sentenced to six years' imprisonment for having distributed Bibles and Christian literature.

Fibia and Maria Delapeta of Carpinis, county of Hunedoara, were sentenced together with Klaus Wagner to five years' imprisonment for the same reason. In connection with the latter, Constantin Firu, a ship's captain, was arrested and sentenced to seven years because a cargo of two thousand Bibles was found on his barge in the Danube port of Orșova.

Nicolai Eva, a Baptist from Timișoara, was interrogated and fined 5,000 lei for having distributed Bibles.

Thus, sad times continue in Romania. We feel close to all oppressed Christians and we appeal once again to international public opinion to intervene on their behalf. We beg the Romanian government to respect their

*They were all released under the amnesty of August 1981—Ed.

own laws and to honour international agreements on human rights.

As members of the Body of Christ we cannot be separate from those among us who are suffering. Our thoughts now turn to Psalm 58, verse 1: "Do ye indeed speak righteousness,

O congregation! do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men!"

Romania, 22 March 1981

The Romanian Committee of Christian Solidarity International

**Keston College's
Annual General Meeting**

is to be held on

Saturday 9 October

from 10.30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Non-members are welcome to attend for lunch and the afternoon session, but are asked to contact the College in advance.