

Reconstructing the Cohesion of Religious Communities in the Context of Atheist Policies in Communist Romania

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Abstract

In Communist Romania, although atheism was the official state policy, religious life was not completely suppressed. The Romanian Orthodox Church continued to operate with an organizational status recognized by the communist state, maintaining an administrative-territorial structure arranged according to its own canons. Theological institutes of university level and seminaries did not lose their theological, pastoral, and socio-vocational significance. Theological journals, liturgical books, and religious works continued to be published regularly, although all of this occurred within a socio-political framework discreetly monitored by the authorities. At the same time, religious communities felt the ideological pressure of the atheist state, manifested through anti-religious education in schools and attempts to desacralize everyday life. In the early years of the communist regime, some clergy and believers were investigated, arrested, and sentenced for their religious and confessional activities, which the authorities perceived as subversive. In this tense context, the cohesion of religious communities was rebuilt through a balance between institutional survival and the preservation of an authentic spiritual life, often expressed in discreet forms but charged with depth and inner resistance.

Keywords: *Community cohesion; communism; Romanian Orthodox Church; state atheism; theology; religious resistance;*

1. Introduction

The communist regime in Romania, through its atheistic policy, had the primary objective of diminishing the influence of religion in public and private life and building a society marked by Marxist-Leninist ideology—an ideology that waged a continuous struggle "against religious prejudices" (Roth, 1960, p. 240).

Throughout the communist period, the state attempted to exert permanent control over the Church, and through its force organ, the Securitate, to surveil the clergy and the faithful. To this was added the elimination of religious education from schools and its replacement with atheistic education (Petcu, 2016), not as a standalone subject, but as an active presence throughout the entire educational discourse.

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In a communist country with such an oppressive system and near-total control of activities in all general or specific domains, with a whole array of intellectuals, clergy, and believers arrested or surveilled for their divergent opinions from the state's communist policy, the reconstruction of cohesion was an active, complex, and simultaneously secretive process. This did not necessarily mean concrete collective actions, but also a reflection on the human condition. Reading prayers encouraged a deep analysis of the sin present in each individual's life, because prayers highlight the daily sinfulness we ourselves witness. "Lord, cleanse me, a sinner, for I have never done good before You" (Ceaslov, 2019, p. 13). We sin every day. The awareness of sin for each person individually, without manifesting it publicly every day, but in secret, brings about a reconstruction of cohesion. They were aware that they were part of the same religious community, fighting the same temptations and trials, which implicitly meant a reconstruction and re-formulation of religious cohesion.

On the other hand, there was a certain duality in social manifestations and, in particular, religious ones. Internally, they professed belonging to the religious community, which struggled to preserve inherited religious values, reconstructing a religious cohesion adapted to the new socio-political conditions, while externally, they declared adherence to communist norms, principles, and values.

Even if certain internal thoughts can be inferred from a person's external manifestations, with a certain spiritual training, it became possible for everything that was secret and deeply spiritual to be barricaded, as much as possible, from the vigilant eye of the Securitate or the vigilant eye of the person next to you. Even your best friend, who prayed with you and suffered with you, out of human weakness might constantly provoke you to elicit statements opposing the communist system, only to then denounce you to the Securitate. Thus, the reconstruction of cohesion also took place in the presence of the informant beside you. You prayed and forgave him.

Interestingly, religious manifestations were not banned under communism, and thus the surveillance and control systems of the communist state would "fish out" those who were against the system and who were not afraid to express their faith and dissatisfaction with communism. Such individuals were undesirable to the system because they became models for those around them. Through blackmail and psychological pressure, some of these models of faith, "caught" by the Securitate, became, willingly or not, informants for the Securitate.

Through this study, we attempt to define the concept of cohesion, followed by several aspects concerning religious cohesion and its reconstruction within the religious communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church during the communist period. To complete the picture of this cohesion's reconstruction, we will also present some perspectives from the interwar and post-communist periods.

2. Cohesion and Reconstruction

Social cohesion can be understood as an action, formed over time, through which a person or group of people adheres to, supports, defends, and internalizes certain values, principles, or norms of action; it is that something they profess in common and in which they find themselves, at a given point in time. Simultaneously, cohesion can also be spontaneous, with a very short duration, for saving or fulfilling needs that a community considers vital for its existence. Social cohesion does not necessarily imply that those individuals know each other explicitly in particular, or that they constantly share all their values and norms of private or social life.

Cohesion does not mean a strict and rigid identification with the values, norms, and beliefs of a social system, where all persons adhere unconditionally. Rather, cohesion represents diverse forms of manifestation where different opinions exist, but which converge towards the same units of values and beliefs.

A characteristic of social cohesion is that the same units of values and beliefs can be shared by people with different concerns, education, or social status, in similar or different environments and times.

There are various agents that form, coordinate, and maintain cohesion, on different levels and with varying intensity. Institutions of culture and sport, mass-media, school, church, family, or various state or private associations, to which the political factor is added, determine a certain degree of cohesion around general or particular values of a social nature. A. G. Johnson (2007) states that social cohesion can be understood as the way participants in a social system identify with it, primarily with the system's values, beliefs, norms, and structure.

In his study "An Integrated Approach to the Conceptualisation and Measurement of Social Cohesion," B. Aruqaj (2023) proposes an empirical and theoretical framework for measuring and defining the concept of social cohesion, suggesting it be measured on multiple layers: at the level of individual attitudes and orientations (micro), then at the level of important social categories, as a degree of distinction and presence of latent conflict (meso), and last but not least, as a predictor, social determinant, and therefore antecedent, at the societal level (macro). These approaches highlight the important links between socio-economic inequalities, social cohesion, and individual subjective well-being.

L. Moustakas (2023), in the article "Social Cohesion: Definitions, Causes and Consequences," considers social cohesion as the glue that binds societies; an essential ingredient for addressing common societal challenges, determining positive social relationships, a sense of belonging or identification with societal values, as well as an orientation towards the common good. Considered the glue that binds societies, social cohesion is seen as an essential ingredient for tackling common societal challenges. Associated definitions and conceptual frameworks usually summarize social cohesion as collective attributes and

behaviours, characterized by positive social relations, a sense of identification or belonging, and an orientation towards the common good.

Undoubtedly, the environments in which a person develops socially, culturally, or religiously influence religious life and implicitly social cohesion. All these can be characterized, in general, by an eloquent phrase:

"We live on scorched or frozen lands, with many churches or none, exposed to dominations, servitudes, contacts extremely varied. Our dwellings take us out of the community or integrate us into it. The action of the physical, geographical, ethnic environment is felt from childhood" (Le Bras, 1971, pp. 793-794).

To all these environmental factors highlighted by Le Bras, one can add the socio-political environment, which in Romania's case changed radically after the Second World War, becoming one of communist nature. Thus, a definition of religious cohesion can be formulated, paraphrasing G. Le Bras, as the attachment of a person or a community to a common spirit of justice, lucidity, and power of faith, manifested through seriousness, morality, or regularity in the practice of religious rituals (Le Bras, 1971, pp. 790-791) which the Church decidedly has; and the reconstruction of religious cohesion implies that action of continuously updating religious cohesion, taking into account all these environments that influence religious life, whether we speak of the physical, geographical, ethnic, or socio-political environment.

The reconstruction of religious cohesion also occurs when you follow certain religious customs of the community you belong to, without being fully conscious of what you are doing, and you follow them with a fidelity hard to explain in rational words:

"Even when you don't know what you are doing, you know that you must do it. And thus you come to hope that you know you are doing what must be done. Because you have the duty to do and because you have the duty to know... Even when tradition means for you only an enigmatic and meaningless series of words, you are immediately struck by the poverty of knowledge about the ritual followed with such unexpected fidelity" (Mihăieș, 2009, p. 12).

The reconstruction of cohesion and the recovery of collective memory within the religiosity of communities is a lasting process that has no end. It is a continuous ascent towards defending fundamental values with humility, patience, and prayer, because every day we discover that we still have something to add to our struggle to acquire the eternal heavenly treasures.

Reconstruction was and is simultaneously influenced by socio-political, economic, cultural, or spiritual movements at both local and regional, national, or global levels. From hearing a piece of news to participating in a family event, reading a novel, attending a conference or a religious service, concert, play, film, or football match, visiting a restaurant, spending free time, or practicing a hobby - all these influence our social behaviours and implicitly the evolution of the reconstruction of religious cohesion.

Religious cohesion is also full of sensitivity and emotion because we put into practice, or rather truly live, the religious precepts that anchor us in a time

and space that cannot be defined by scientific mechanisms, mechanisms that measure and analyse the concrete world of matter. This space and time, connected to eternity - that is, it actually resides in eternity and paradoxically is also found within our souls and truly makes us partakers of eternity - is not easily understood and lived without a drop of sensitivity and emotion.

Religious cohesion is like an indicator highlighting our proximity to Christian values and the tenacity with which we preserve these values. It shows us how strong we are in defending certain values we consider sacred.

3. Interwar Religiosity and Cohesion

Interwar society, as described by M. Feinberg (2022) in Eastern Europe, was characterized by democratic nation-states sketching their national and religious identity. On top of this came the economic tensions of the 1920s and 1930s, which generated various social and political crises, leading after 1938 to democratic governments in these countries being replaced by right-wing authoritarian regimes.

Religious communities in the Romanian space were marked by an identity ferment, activated to some extent also by right-wing movements marching towards preserving identity traditions of a Christian Orthodox nature. According to statements by G. Enache (2019) or O. J. Schmitt (2023), some of those belonging to the Romanian Orthodox Church during that period were members or sympathizers of right-wing political movements, especially the Legionary movement, a movement accused of violent actions and murders that distorted its mystic-religious aspect. Significantly, C. A. Bejan (2023) and R. Clark (2024) highlight that alongside part of the clergy, some intellectuals from the interwar period were attracted to the ideological discourses of the Legionary movement. All these leaders, formal or informal, influenced to some extent the religious behaviour and cohesion of religious communities, who felt threatened by the dilution of their Christian Orthodox identity or, worse, by the prohibition of religious practice, using as arguments information coming from the Soviet space, where the communist and atheist state was dismantling religious communities through systematic actions that included acts of extreme violence, convincingly presented by W. C. Fletcher (1965).

All this created a state of tension that intensified with the outbreak of the Second World War. In this context, the awareness of Christian Orthodox identity and closeness to the Church and Christian values intensified, to which was added the emphasis on the cult of heroes. Within the religious communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the interwar period, religiosity made its presence felt, and this contributed to the preservation of religious, social, and historical identity. An example is found in the journal "Sociologie românească" (Romanian Sociology), launched in 1936 on the initiative of sociologist Dimitrie Gusti, which had as its first action the research of rural communities in Romania and which also included analysed religious perspectives. In issue 2 of the journal, from its first year of publication, H. H. Stahl, presenting an agrarian ceremony called "Cununa" (The Wreath), through which girls in a rural

community wove a wreath from wheat stalks, followed by a certain "magical" ritual to make the next wheat harvest richer, stated the following: "Through this [the agrarian ceremony 'Cununa'] we entered the spiritual life of the village in which, after showing a few scenes of incantations, we have the occasion to insist on religious life proper, centred around the Church" (Stahl, 1936, p. 31). The article from which we cited this fragment is a review of a sociological documentary film presenting aspects of the social life of a Romanian village. The emphasis was placed on religious life around the Church, highlighted by presenting ceremonial scenes from a funeral and a wedding. The film highlights the religious cohesion within a rural community from the interwar period.

As the threat of a new world war became increasingly evident, the Romanian State desired that adherence to the fundamental values of preserving national and territorial identity be as strong as possible, and the growth of cohesion within religious communities be as high as possible. Among the characteristics of the interwar period were the affirmation and defence of a statehood gained with great sacrifices. After a world war that changed the face of Europe and the entire world, through the disappearance of great empires and the affirmation of nations in the European space, Romania fully benefited from a completion of national and territorial unity to which the Romanian Orthodox Church had a significant contribution († Daniel, 2018).

4. The Communist Side of Religious Cohesion

And so, after the Second World War, a new type of society appears on the world map: communist society, which promised a new, totally changed world, without injustices, superstitions, or traditions. All concepts about good, beautiful, equality, or social justice were redefined according to new perspectives based on communist, Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Societies before communism were seen as outdated, retrograde, anachronistic, and historically and socially obsolete. All these distanced man from the social reality in which he had grown and developed until then.

With the change of the social and political system, the newly established statehood no longer saw it as opportune to maintain a very high level of religious cohesion among the faithful. This was not only of no use anymore but even harmed the new communist policies of societal change.

And yet, the reconstruction of religious cohesion took place, despite all the efforts of the communist regime. It aimed not only at defending religious values but also at defending inherited social and traditional values. In fact, all these values or treasures in the Romanian space could not be separated; they formed a unitary whole. When speaking of religious values, one was simultaneously speaking of social, historical, or cultural values. They all were part of the same existential matrix.

Of course, Romanian society offered stronger resistance, especially in the first years after the establishment of communism. The religious activity of the Church did not cease for a moment. Many or few, young or old, women or men, were present in places of worship or at various religious holidays

organized by the Church according to its own customs. We recall here Bishop Nicolae Popovici of Oradea, "enthroned on June 2, 1936, refugee in Beiuș between 1940-1944, and pensioned off by decree of the communist authorities on October 5, 1950, being forced to reside at the Cheia Monastery" (Păcurariu, 1996, p. 363), who had an intransigent attitude towards the newly installed communist regime. In May 1950, at the Izbuc Monastery, in the presence of over 1000 people, he spoke the following words:

"Today's leaders are not with God nor do they believe in Him; these people will not succeed in their plans, for without God nothing can be done" (Seiche, 2014, p. 445).

According to F. Seiche (2014), the last ten years of Bishop Popovici's life were spent in exile and a life of misery, being humiliated and searched by the Securitate. His main source of food was milk from a cow he grazed in the monastery's ditch. Anyone who asked for his advice suffered at the hands of the Securitate. He passed away on October 20, 1960, at the age of 57. O. J. Schmitt highlights the fact that some authors, like D. Velicu (2005), claim that the clergy's resistance to the communist regime was almost non-existent. However, "despite enormous structural difficulties, priests dared individual acts of resistance" (Schmitt, 2023, p. 271).

The large number of arrested priests, as mentioned by G. Enache (2019), highlights that religious cohesion within Christian communities existed and made its presence felt. One of the 16 saints canonized by the Romanian Orthodox Church in 2025² was Saint Martyr Gherasim of Tismana. He was arrested "by order of the atheist rule," when he was 35 years old, in 1948, sentenced to 10 years of hard prison, "tormented terribly, enduring hunger, cold, insults, and beatings. Nevertheless, the Saint did not forget his priestly calling but continued to secretly hear confessions and give communion to the faithful, helping them with work and strengthening them with words of comfort" (Synaxarion, 2025, p. 295). He soon fell ill with tuberculosis and, after great suffering, passed into eternity on December 26, 1951.

The reconstruction of cohesion in religious communities during the communist period had an evolution closely linked to the atheistic policies of that time, and this cohesion had different stages of reconstruction. At the beginning of the communist period, due to the system's pressures, some of the faithful were frightened and did not know how to react to the contradictory messages coming on one hand from the communists, and on the other from the clergy. Agitators and the Securitate put pressure on anything that could lead to the destabilization of the newly installed communist society. The faithful expected anyone to be a Securitate informant. Sermons and occasional speeches by priests were monitored very carefully by the Securitate, especially

² In 2025, 16 Holy Confessors and Priests of the Romanian Orthodox Church were canonized. Some of them suffered in communist prisons or were pursued and investigated by the security forces.

those who had been members of right-wing movements from the interwar period.

"The informants were attentive to any discourse by the priest and noted the names of the faithful present at catechism hours" (Enache, 2019, p. 25). These activities of the Securitate were more intense in the 1950s, when the number of arrests or sending to labour colonies was very high. Arrests and deportations decreased in intensity after 1965, when the communist regime considered that all these were part of the re-education activity, and "individuals who had passed through the Caudine Forks of this process had the right to reintegrate into society" (Enache, 2019, p. 25).

Starting with 1965 and continuing until 1989, the reconstruction of religious communities took on a new dimension, even though the Securitate did not cease to monitor the activity of clergy and the faithful until the fall of communism. From the establishment of communism until 1965, thus for 20 years, the communist system, through all its repressive systems, managed to greatly diminish this social cohesion. Two decades of terror and fear.

The testimony of a believer from Poiana village, Vrancea county, who had a brother studying theology in the 1950s: "don't become a priest because the communists will come and put you all on a train, just as Stalin did in Russia, and they will set the train on fire and you will all die."

News about those arrested in communist prisons was very scarce. People were afraid to talk about it. The activity of the Church, viewed from the outside, seemed normal. Churches were open, services had a normal rhythm, and the clergy's activity seemed unhindered. There was a certain discretion in expression. People began to adapt to the transformations imposed by communist ideology on society. If in the first period of communism, some clergy or believers could express themselves freely and were not afraid to talk about God and the Church and boldly criticized the communist system, even if they were arrested or deported, after 20 years the transformations caused by the pressure of the communist system made the attitude of the clergy and the faithful turn towards an interiorization of faith, without openly criticizing the communist system.

Nevertheless, the reconstruction of social cohesion made its presence felt in specific forms, adapted to the factual situation. Interestingly, on one hand, the communist state wanted to minimize or even eliminate religious manifestations of any kind, while on the other hand, Romanian society of that period followed its own course regarding religious manifestations, with specific forms, new, old, and unique at the same time.

The main objective of the communist state was the elimination of this cohesion, and if this was not possible, at least its minimization, reducing it to a stage that could be understood as a retrograde and almost primitive form of manifestation, with tragic-comic accents. In the reports drawn up by Securitate informants, such tragic-comic characterizations of religious communities are found, displaying contempt for religious values: "the frequency of parishioners attending church is non-existent – a few old women making their final

reckoning before death and a few old men come to doze off, after having, mechanically, made the sign of the cross and bowed" (Schmitt, 2023, p. 269). They did not realize that the presence in church spaces during the communist period of the faithful and priests, however many or few they were, old or young, with their greater or lesser sins, was a form of manifestation of religious cohesion, but also a cry of despair and an instinct to defend an inherited identity verified over time and containing no form of theatricality. It was their struggle to live in good order, with God and with people, following the word of the Savior guiding the Holy Apostles: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20).

The smiles and remarks of communist leaders, big and small, from that period are known; they saw the Church, the faithful, and the clergy as a place of social uselessness, lack of culture, and wasted time. And yet, the cohesion within the Church was being reconstructed, preserving the same values and principles and fighting against an aggressive modernity that sought to change everything rapidly, replacing traditions with techniques and industries - anyhow underperforming and morally obsolete - that twisted the human soul. And so, among communist blocks, construction sites, factories, and plants in that period of brutal industrialization, the sacred rhythms of the Church were preserved with a discretion and dignity worthy of note.

The reconstruction of cohesion during the communist period was the one that affirmed the perennial values of the Church, regardless of the temptations and challenges coming from all sides - a reconstruction that left behind examples to follow, sacrifices, and saints mourned and celebrated in secret or in the open world († Casian, 2019).

The Church helped people discover social life with all its challenges, understanding that through all these we receive strength for our improvement. The Church did not modify the prayers in its liturgy during the communist period. They remained the same, despite the pressures from the communists. The prayers remained the same after the fall of communism as well. If we compare the texts of prayers from the interwar, communist, and post-communist periods, we observe that they are unchanged, apart from modifications arising from the evolution of the language.

There is no doubt that the reconstruction of cohesion had an interesting trajectory during the communist period. For Marxist theories, the reconstruction of cohesion in religious communities within a communist society was a nonsense. It contradicts the entire materialist-dialectical theory regarding the evolution of human society and its historical determinism, which stated that religion had only a transient role, like all societies, until the advent of communism.

4.1. Destructuring and Reconstruction

It can be stated that during the communist period, there were two forms characterizing religious cohesion: on one hand, a form of destructuring of religious cohesion, and on the other hand, a form of its reconstruction. The two forms, present in communist society, unfolded simultaneously, with different intensities, depending on the education level and socio-economic and cultural level of the communities where it was present.

Religious communities felt the ideological pressure of the atheist state to destructure cohesion also through sustained attempts to desacralize daily life.

Thus, in urban communities in heavily industrialized areas, where the vast majority of the population worked in mammoth factories with tens of thousands of workers, practicing specific forms of Christian worship such as church attendance or observing specific customs for penitential periods, fasting, or receiving the Holy Sacraments were difficult to follow because, on one hand, work in factories was exhausting, and on the other hand, the number of places of worship was very small in large industrialized cities.

Another form of destructuring took place in the educational space. Generations born during the communist period received a systematic atheistic education. Suggestive in this sense is even Ceaușescu's speech from the last months of 1989, emphasizing that education at all levels must "ensure the acquisition by all youth of the most advanced knowledge of science and technology, of human knowledge in general, based on the revolutionary, materialist-dialectical and historical conception" (Ceaușescu, 1989, p. 47).

Think of a person born in communist Romania in the mid-1960s: for 25 years, as long as communism lasted, at all educational levels they attended, they systematically received information denying God's existence, and religious life was viewed as a primitive and retrograde form of spiritual manifestation. In classes or courses part of the social sciences or life sciences, they received arguments proving this. How did that person manage to build and then rebuild their religious cohesion, in other words, to rebuild that belonging to the values of the Church, if around them most attitudes related to faith, God, and the Church were atheistic?

While they sought to build their social and religious cohesion within the family, conscious of belonging to certain religious values, the school educational space worked on destructuring it, day by day, and with much greater intensity than the construction and reconstruction they found in the family.

Imagine that in Romanian communist schools, an entire victorious symbolism of communist society dominated the front of the classroom: slogans, portraits of communist leaders, emblems of the party and the socialist country, which students of that period saw daily for decades as true sacred icons. A political sacrality stemming from the ideologies of the time. That symbolism, that political iconography, could not completely disappear from the collective memory of the pupils and students from those times, who today are at the age of full maturity.

Interestingly, all those ideological fixations find their place today alongside the sacred elements of the Church and together determine a new reconstruction of religious cohesion.

5. Religious Cohesion and the New Reconstructivist Nostalgias

Today, the reconstruction of cohesion in religious communities from the communist period cannot be understood without being aware of the activity of the decision-making political factors from that period. Even though 35 years have passed since the disappearance of communism from the Romanian political scene, the social, political, and religious themes of that period cannot be easily analysed. Things are not yet settled. There are differences related to how that period is understood. The works published after 1990 in Romania that treat this theme are conclusive. We find some of these aspects in M. Marin's work³ "Communist Nostalgia" (2022), where alongside communist nostalgia, the struggle of those who wish to highlight the true history of the crimes and repressive policies of the communist period is also presented.

Lately, a new perspective has emerged claiming that during the communist period, religious activity was permitted and even tacitly encouraged by the communist party. The communists needed the Church and its servants to demonstrate to the whole world that communist society was democratic and that freedom of belief was not restricted.

It is claimed that the Romanian Communist Party attached importance to relations between the State and the Church, which indirectly would have led to the reconstruction of cohesion in Romania's religious communities. The discourses are said to have been democratic and permissive towards religious manifestations and thus towards religious freedom.

M. Feinberg (2022) notes that in Eastern Europe, post-World War II communism sought to transform societies into something new: new cities, new industries, new people. Not everything turned out as planned, but nevertheless, communism left a strong imprint on this part of Europe. The policies applied systematically in each country under U.S.S.R. influence developed a common denominator of thought and social action that is still present today in the collective mentality of former communist countries.

Thus, this collective mentality awakens nostalgias and selective reinterpretations, highlighted by the newest sociological surveys.

Testimony in this sense are the surveys from July 22, 2025, which highlight that 66.2% of respondents consider Ceaușescu a good leader⁴. Also

³ See the volume coordinated by Liliana Corobca, which features the works of 48 authors, renowned specialists in the field, university professors, researchers from the main scientific institutions in Romania, but also from the diaspora, and which presents and analyses the most important socio-political and cultural fields in a vast and exciting Panorama of post-communism in Romania (Corobca, 2022, p. 9).

⁴ JULY 22, 2025 – THE WORD OF FREEDOM: INSCOP Research Survey: 66% of Romanians reevaluate Nicolae Ceaușescu! in <https://www.inscop.ro/22-iulie-2025->

from this survey, conducted by INSCOP, we learn that the opinion of those surveyed regarding all things that happened during the communist period is a good one; 55% consider that more good things happened than bad⁵.

As we stated, an analysis of the reconstruction of religious cohesion, from the communist period and the present, cannot overlook the perception we have today towards communism. And when I say today, I mean precisely the year 2025. The further we move away from the communist period, the more that period acquires new, increasingly appreciative valences. One can speak of a historical and social reconstructivism that seeks, depending on the needs and opportunities of the present, value, identity, meaning.

6. Conclusions

The reconstruction of religious cohesion under communism took place in a world that applied a collective and rigid rationalism, disregarding freedom of expression or personal choices. Each person was seen as a means through which agricultural or industrial production increased for the good of a dystopian society. The same clothes, the same food, the same dwellings, all made for exceeding industrial and agricultural production, and where science was used to justify the hegemonic actions of a political class that considered itself the eternal master.

Within this social system, which considered itself infallible, religious life unfolded its activity, intertwining with the new social realities of those times. Interestingly, this reconstruction that began in the communist period continues today. We meet people today who timidly approach the space of the Church, with a certain reserve and discretion.

We still see living testimonies of past times, presenting us with a part of what they experienced then. An octogenarian lady, when asked: "What was it like in that period?" answered with a sad smile: "Everything was fine. We were young and beautiful." The reconstruction, from the interwar period, continued in the communist and post-communist periods, seeks to redefine itself today. However, without delicacy, emotion, and love in the Pauline sense, this reconstruction will not be truly accomplished.

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⁵ JULY 22, 2025 – BUCHAREST FM: INSCOP Poll: What Romanians think about communism, Ceaușescu and the democratic present – a gap between reality and perception, in <https://www.inscop.ro/22-iulie-2025-bucuresti-fm-sondaj-inscop-cecred-romanii-despre-comunism-ceausescu-si-prezentul-democratic-o-prapastie-intre-realitate-si-perceptie>. consulted on 04.08.2025.

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