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# The Drama of the Romanian Orthodox Diaspora in North America during the Instauration of the Communist Regime in Romania

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## Abstract

The Romanian immigrants were still connected to their mother country by origin, faith and traditions when they embraced their new state and gave a new dynamic to the group, which, after 50 years of existence in the land of the free, went through the identity construction struggle, becoming Romanian Americans. We intend to underline that, at the core of the separatist actions, which animated the group across the Ocean, was a unilateral perception regarding the condition of the Orthodox Church in communist Romania, doubled by a “custom” among the ethnic Orthodox Churches of America, which was to declare themselves different and brake filial ties with the mother Churches of the countries that were under the communist sphere of influence and domination, hence, assuming an autonomous, independent, self-sufficient status, we must say, contrary to the ecclesiology, the spirituality and the orthodox canons.

## Keywords

Orthodox Diaspora, Orthodox Romanian Church, Communist Regime in Romania, romanian bishop

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The effects of the glacial veil imposed by the iron curtain, after the Second World War, marked the religious life of the Romanian Americans as well. They were still connected to their mother country by origin, faith and traditions. Romania was gravitating on a soviet orbit and was still under the communist yoke. In the meantime, the Romanian Americans were loyal and appreciated the democratic values of their adoptive country<sup>2</sup>, the United States of America, the declared enemy of any form of totalitarianism. In this context, the Romanian Americans went through a dramatic experience, with consequences that could not be surpassed, even 25 years later, after the fall of the communist regime in Romania. This is the reason why we intend to make an incursion into the history of the religious life of the Romanians that emigrated to America<sup>3</sup> and outline, mainly based on the existing archive documents and on the press documents of the period, the object of our analysis, respectively the evolutionary stages during the instauration of the communist regime in Romania.

At the end of the Second World War the Romanian Americans that had been dwelling on American soil for over a half a century<sup>4</sup>, entered a new stage of their existence and identity in a new socio-political habitat, the anti-communist exile. During that time, as a result of the war, many people from Europe, known as DPs<sup>5</sup>, came to North America. The majority

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<sup>2</sup> This loyalty was clearly stated on several occasions, especially during the fifth decade. Significant in this context are a few articles published in the Romanian-American press such as: *Lealitatea și numele nostru sunt în joc*, in „Solia”, XV, No. 47, December 10, 1950, p. 3-4; *Spre cinstea românilor-americieni trădătorii nu au loc printre noi*, in „Solia”, XV, No. 48, December 24, 1950, p. 5-7; *Afară din mijlocul nostru*, in „Solia”, XV, No. 49, December 31, 1950, p. 3-4; *Românii din America și-au spus cuvântul*, in „Solia”, XVI, No. 7, February 15, 1951, p. 3-4; *Adunarea poporală din Detroit*, in „Solia”, XVI, nr. 7, February 15, 1951, p. 1; *Memoriu*, in „Solia”, XVI, No. 7, February 15 1951, p. 2; etc.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed presentation of this subject see Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, *Episcopia Ortodoxă Română din America – parte a Ortodoxiei Americane*, Presa Universitară Clujeană Publishing, Cluj-Napoca, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> For details regarding the beginnings of the Romanians in North America see Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, *Românii Ortodocși din America. Documente. Vol. I*, Presa Universitară Clujeană Publishing, Cluj-Napoca, 2010, especially the introductory study *Identitate confesională și conștiință etnică. Viața bisericească a primilor români emigranți în Statele Unite*, p. 5-97.

<sup>5</sup> This denomination was given in connection to the law that allowed their access to American soil: *Displaced Persons Act*. Based upon this legal stipulation a number of

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of the Romanians that went to the United States were well prepared from a professional standpoint, for their decision to leave had political reasoning, and was determined by *passionate and irreversible anti-communist feelings*<sup>6</sup>. The new immigrants embraced their new state and gave a new dynamic to the group of Romanians, which, after 50 years of existence in the land of the free, went through the identity construction ‘furnace’, becoming Romanian Americans<sup>7</sup>.

Being a Romanian American did not mean being separated from Romania or being an appendix of Romania. The group became a real and authentic product of an equally real and authentic historical process<sup>8</sup>, for it preserved its traditions, customs and ancient beliefs, and, at the same time became part of the American society and nation. The respect manifested towards the Christian and traditional values and the respect manifested towards the American democratic principles determined their ties and interests in the country they belonged to by birth. When these democratic principles and traditional and Christian values were attacked with anger by a regime that opposed all the values the Romanian Americans believed in, they had no other choice but to reject such a regime, avoid any contact with it, and fight against it by any possible means<sup>9</sup>. A historical transformation occurred and the Romanian Americans acknowledged how institutions belonged to them entirely, as they had the right not only to administer these institutions, but protect them, as well, against any attempts of subordination initiated by the communists<sup>10</sup>.

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approximately 15-20.000 immigrants of Romanian origin entered the territory of the United States.

<sup>6</sup> Alexandru Nemoianu, *Cuvinte despre românii-americani*, vol. I, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Clusium, 1997, p. 22.

<sup>7</sup> An analysis of the main components of the assimilation process can be seen in the work of Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, Marius Eppel, *The Romanian Emigration to the United States up Until the First World War. Revisiting Opportunities and Vulnerabilities*, in *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 11, No. 32, (Summer 2012), p. 256-287.

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed presentation of this historical process see Alexandru Nemoianu, *Cuvinte...*, vol. I, p. 25-27.

<sup>9</sup> Alexandru Nemoianu, *Aspects regarding The Romanian-American Institutions after WW II*, in *Romanian American Heritage Center Information Bulletin (still R.A.H.C.I.B.)*, Jackson, Mi, USA, XII, 1996, No. 3, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Eugen Raica & Alexandru Nemoianu, *History of the „United Romanian Society”*, published by The United Romanian Society, Southfield, Mi., USA, 1995, p. 137.

The leaders of opinion, in an engaged and vehement way, both emotional and personal, demonstrated that there cannot be *neutrality* when it comes to the communist malevolence; for when it comes to communists, you either are with them, or against them<sup>11</sup>.

Alexandru Nemoianu believed that for the people that joined the community of Romanian Americans, and later on for the *entire* community, *communism was not an impersonal "system", but a very "personal" one, that drove them away from home, tortured their relatives and friends, and besmeared their country*. For this reason, they enthusiastically joined the American efforts during the "cold war" and brought great service to this cause. Moreover, by rejecting any form of collaboration with the communists, all of their institutions, including the Church, shifted focus, and consequently *the psychological "umbilical cord" once connected to the "old country" got cut*<sup>12</sup>.

The transformations and the changes that occurred during this time and the identity changing process of the Romanian American community were best illustrated by the historical evolution of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, the indisputable exponent of the aspirations of the Romanian Americans. As a consequence of these socio-political changes, the people decided to disavow any element, any connection that would extend the influence of the Romanian authorities onto the Romanian-American community. This decision impacted the ecclesial life as well, especially because the Romanian Orthodox Church was perceived by the people living across the Ocean as serving the communist interests and plans, as a Church deprived of its freedom care for its faithful, regardless of where they were. Recent research findings<sup>13</sup>, resulting from archives

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<sup>11</sup> See the numerous articles hosted in the pages of the newspapers „Solia”, *America*, etc.

<sup>12</sup> Alexandru Nemoianu, *Tărâmuri, între Banat și America*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Limes, 2003, p. 83.

<sup>13</sup> See, especially, George Enache, *Ortodoxie și putere politică în România contemporană*, Editura Nemira, București, 2005; George Enache, *Patriarhul Justinian și Biserica Ortodoxă Română în anii 1948-1964*, Editura Partener, București, 2009; Adrian Nicolae Petcu (coord.), *Partidul, Securitatea și Cultele (1945-1989)*, Editura Nemira, București, 2005; Adrian Nicolae Petcu, *Martiri pentru Hristos din România în perioada regimului comunist*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2007; George Enache și Adrian Nicolae Petcu, *Monahismul ortodox și puterea comunistă în România anilor '50*, Editura Partener, București, 2009; Cristian Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română în primul deceniu comunist*, Editura Curtea Veche, București, 2005; Cristian Vasile, *Propaganda and Culture at the Beginning of the Commu-*

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that are still hard to access, brought to light a more complex reality, regarding the relationship between the totalitarian communist state and the Romanian Orthodox Church, a reality different from the one perceived during the anti-communist exile. We will not insist upon this aspect here, but we intend to underline, once more, that at the core of the separatist actions, which animated the group across the Ocean, was a unilateral perception regarding the condition of the Orthodox Church in communist Romania, doubled by a “custom” among the ethnic Orthodox Churches of America, which was to declare themselves different and brake filial ties with the mother Churches of the countries that were under the communist sphere of influence and domination, hence, assuming an autonomous, independent, self-sufficient status, we must say, contrary to the ecclesiology, the spirituality and the orthodox canons.

The specialized literature consecrated the expression *the great schism* of the Romanian orthodox diaspora of America. By this, we understand the division of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America into two: The Romanian Orthodox Missionary Episcopate and The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate, and implicitly the severance of any relations between the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate and the Romanian Patriarchy. The drama of the severance of any canonical ties represented the end of a process that lasted for more than 12 years. The beginning of it all was represented by the very moment when Bishop Policarp Morușca decides leave America in order to visit Romania. At the end of the month of July 1939, Bishop Policarp Morușca<sup>14</sup>, the shepherd of all the Romanian Orthodox of America

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*nist Regime*, in Vladimir Tismăneanu (ed.), „Stalinism Revisited: The Establishment of Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe”, CEU Press, Budapest-New York, 2009; Olivier Gillet, *Religie și naționalism, ideologia Bisericii Ortodoxe Române sub regimul communist*, translated by Mariana Petrișor, Editura Compania, 2001; Dudu Velicu, *Biserica Ortodoxă în perioada sovietizării României, însemnări zilnice I. 1945-1947*, Arhivele Naționale ale României, București, 2004; Idem, *Biserica Ortodoxă în anii regimului comunist, însemnări zilnice II. 1948-1959*, Arhivele Naționale ale României, București, 2005; Cristina Păiușan & Radu Ciuceanu, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română sub regimul comunist, 1945-1958*, vol. I, Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, București, 2001; lect. dr. Adrian Gabor & Adrian Nicolae Petcu, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română și puterea comunistă în timpul Patriarhului Iustinian*, în „Anuarul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă „Patriarhul Iustinian” București, anul universitar 2001-2002”, Editura Universității București, 2002, p. 93-154; and others.

<sup>14</sup> See Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, *Policarp Morușca, primul episcop al românilor ortodocși din America*, in „Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, Theologia Orthodoxa”, XLVII, 2002, No. 1-2, p. 229-252.

since 1935, decides to go to Romania. He had multiple objective reasons to visit the country: he tried to gain financial support from the Romanian state, for his missionary acts in America, he wanted to meet Nicodim Munteanu, who became the new Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, and was enthroned on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 1939. The moment chosen by Policarp to visit was considered ill-timed, given the existing tension in the diocese. Back then, Bishop Policarp did not know that he will never return to his episcopate.

Shortly after his departure to Romania, the priests and the parishes found themselves divided into two partisan camps, engaged in a fratricidal battle for the leadership of the Episcopate and for the succession to the Episcopal chair, while a third camp was expecting to see what was to happen.

Unfortunately, the situation in the Episcopate of America was deteriorating by the day, the priests and the faithful were divided, in accordance with the personalities they were gravitating towards, the political interests, as well as the differences of opinion. Of course, such preoccupations made almost all of them *shamefully indifferent* to the organization of the religious life<sup>15</sup>, for this reason the internal life of the episcopate began to resemble a wasp nest.

Declared enemies of Bishop Policarp started to arise, namely the chair hunters that wished to establish an autonomous Episcopate, with father Ștefan Atanasie Opreanu as their bishop<sup>16</sup>. Among the most ardent supporters of this idea were father Glicherie Moraru<sup>17</sup>, an opportunist and partisan of King Carol II. After his abdication, the king lived in Coioaca, Mexico, and from there he financed both father Opreanu and Glicherie Moraru, giving them the chance to publish in Detroit, and in other American centres, newspapers that would support pro-Carlist ideas<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Gerald J. Bobango, *The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America. The First Half Century, 1929-1979*, published by Romanian-American Heritage Center, Jackson, Mi, 1979, p. 132.

<sup>16</sup> The Archive of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church (still ASS), File 594/1946, f. 78.

<sup>17</sup> A synthesis of the actions undertaken by father Glicherie Moraru to the detriment of the Diocese can be seen in *The Struggle for liberty. Communistic attempts to gain control over American Church Organization*, p. 17, in The Archive of the Center of Studies and Documentaries Valerian Trifa (still ACSDVT), File History of ROEA (A).

<sup>18</sup> ACSDVT, File History of ROEA (A), *The facts behind The Romanian Orthodox Missionary Episcopate in America*, p. 5.

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The tension between the two camps reached the greatest levels when, on January 26 1943, the Eparchial Council, fond of the idea of a Carlist restoration, led by father Simion Mihălțan, proposed the acceptance of each parish of the Episcopate of a declaration of autonomy and independence, severing this way any ties with the Romanian Patriarchy and the Romanian government, led back then by Marshal Antonescu<sup>19</sup>.

As it got closer to the date of the Congress, scheduled for the month of July 1944, the situation became more and more critical. In different circles, the idea of a possible severance of all *natural ties* with the Church was spread, as well as the intention to elect a Bishop from among the priests of America<sup>20</sup>. In the end, the Congress decided it was better to maintain the existing jurisdictional situation, and try to come up with a solution at the end of the war.

The end of the Second World War did not bring peace in the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America. With the end of the war in site, Bishop Policarp's correspondence with the clergy and the faithful of America was resumed, but the news shared via the correspondence was not good.

Patriarch Nicodim's attitude when it came to Bishop Policarp's return to the Episcopal Chair of America was hesitant. At the declarative level, at least, he was in favour<sup>21</sup>. At the practical level, his ulterior measures proved to be contrary to such a solution.

State authorities were also against Bishop Policarp's return to America, they were also in favour of sending someone else. Therefore, the address, dated on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 1946, and having following route: The Romanian Legation in Washington – The Ministry of External Affairs – The Ministry of Cults – The Patriarchy, contained a message that stated the need to send a Bishop to America whose role would be to restore the unity of that community, a bishop that would have to be noticed for his tactfulness, and, more importantly, would have to be on *the Government line*<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Gerald J. Bobango, *The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America*, p. 140.

<sup>20</sup> ASS, File 594/ 1946, Memoriul preotului Glicherie Moraru către Patriarhul Nicodim, November 25 1946, f. 76-77.

<sup>21</sup> In a letter addressed to Metropolitan Bishop Nicolae Bălan on February 1946, the Patriarch stated that Bishop Policarp no longer has the delegation of lieutenant in Maramureș, for *His Holiness had to go to America*. ASS, File 594/1946, f. 32.

<sup>22</sup> ASS, File 594/1946, f. 67-68.

Hence, Bishop Policarp was not positioned on the pro-soviet *Government line*, he had a *bad reputation* among the new leaders, therefore, he was not allowed to occupy an Episcopal Chair, a fact already established by the communists<sup>23</sup>.

As for the attitude of the Holy Synod towards the problems the Episcopate of America was facing in 1946, there was an attempt to name a bishop meant to replace Policarp. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, 1946, the Holy Synod decided to send to America Justinian Marina, back then a vicar at the Metropolitan Church of Moldova, but he did not wish to accept this mission. The same response was given by Bishop Emilian Antal<sup>24</sup>.

The Patriarch did not wish to decide upon this matter by himself, therefore the entire matter, as presented in the memoirs received during the year 1946, became a subject on the working agenda of the Holy Synod. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of December, 1946, during the conference, the Holy Synod had a debate regarding the confusing situation existent in the Episcopate of America. In the end, they reached to a natural, but, at the same time, surprising conclusion in the given context: the Holy Synod invited Bishop Policarp Morușca, as a representative of the Episcopate of America to contact the Romanian Government, in order to get ready for his departure back to his Episcopal residence in America<sup>25</sup>.

At the beginning of the year 1947 things started to precipitate. On one hand, the Episcopal Council continued with its intent to clarify Policarp Morușca's situation. On the other hand, in Bucharest, there were preparations made for sending another bishop, the one chosen being Antim Nica, who benefited of trust coming from the Patriarch and Government<sup>26</sup>. We have enough reasons to believe that in America the word was already spread, regarding the intention of the authorities to name as a successor of Policarp, Bishop Antim Nica<sup>27</sup>. Most certainly, also known were the at-

<sup>23</sup> Dudu Velicu, *Biserica Ortodoxă în perioada sovietizării României. Însemnări zilnice, I. 1945-1947*, București, ed. revised by Alina Tudor-Pavelescu, The Romanian National Archives, 2004, p. 198.

<sup>24</sup> Aurel Jivi, *Ortodoxia în America și problemele ei*, Ph.D thesis, typed manuscript, Sibiu, 1980, p. 84.

<sup>25</sup> ASS, File 594/1946, f. 79-80.

<sup>26</sup> Dudu Velicu, *Biserica Ortodoxă în perioada sovietizării României. Însemnări zilnice, I. 1945-1947*, p. 212.

<sup>27</sup> The perspective offered with the passing of time, we can observe that a first signal as to the possibility that Antim Nica might occupy the Episcopal chair in America was



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tempts made by the Holy Synod to send Bishop Justinian Marina or Emilian Antal<sup>28</sup>. All these actions were perceived in America as attempts on behalf of the Government of Bucharest to see how it could directly interfere with the Orthodox Church in America<sup>29</sup>. There is no other way of explaining the discussions that took place at the assembly of the Episcopal Council on the 15th of January, 1947, discussions that targeted the attitude that was to be adopted towards a possible sending of a new bishop<sup>30</sup>.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of February, 1947, the Romanian Legation in Washington announced that, as recommended by Patriarch Nicodim, the Minister of the Cults approved the appointment of Dr. Antim Nica<sup>31</sup> as Bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Church in America<sup>32</sup>. This was perceived by the members of the Episcopal Council as a brutal violation of the autonomy of the American Episcopate, and as an unwanted interference of the Romanian Government into the religious life of the American citizens<sup>33</sup>. As a result, the Episcopal Council was summoned on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February, 1947, and rejected any new bishop or priest, unless solicited by the faithful of the episcopate<sup>34</sup>. It was not the person of Antim Nica that led to the decision

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the publishing of the article signed by Archimandrite Dr. Antim Nica, *Prin mănăstirile Banatului – însemnări de călătorie* in the newspaper „Solia”, No. 38, September 22 1946. This was a method often employed by the newspaper, and it was meant to present the future Bishop in order to gain the sympathy of the immigrants from Banat, who were well known for their sensibility when it came to Banat and their characteristic regional pride.

<sup>28</sup> These attempts made by the Holy Synod faced the definite refusal of the two hierarchs and the negative reaction of the state authorities. The Archive of the Romanian Information Service, Fond „D”, file No. 2488, vol. I, f. 77-84, apud Cristina Păiușan & Radu Ciuceanu, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română sub regimul comunist, 1945-1948*, vol. I, The National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism, București, 2001, p. 50.

<sup>29</sup> *Album aniversar, 1954*, published by the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of America on the day of the Congress of the Diocese, 3<sup>rd</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> of July, 1954, p. 43.

<sup>30</sup> ACS DVT, File History of R.O.E.A. (A). *Minutes of the Romanian Episcopate Council, January 15, 1947*.

<sup>31</sup> Bishop Antim Nica was appointed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1947, back when he was bishop of the Dunărea de Jos Diocese.

<sup>32</sup> ACS DVT, File History of R.O.E.A. (A). The Archive of the Ministry of External Affairs (still AMAE), Fond Washington, vol. 94.

<sup>33</sup> *The search for a bishop, a critical period in the history of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America which led to the election of a new Bishop in 1951*, in the Almanac-calendar *Solia*, 1977, p. 93.

<sup>34</sup> ACS DVT, File History of R.O.E.A. (A). *Minutes of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate Council, February 21, 1947*. This decision was communicated to the authorities

made by the council (the only thing that generated concern regarding him as a person was that he was a member of the delegacy of the Romanian Orthodox Church that visited the Soviet Union, the cradle of communism), but the way the authorities tried to impose him as bishop without consulting the Episcopal Council, respectively, without consulting the faithful of America, thus violating the autonomy instituted across the Ocean<sup>35</sup>.

On the 28th of March, 1947, there was an extraordinary assembly of the Church Congress in Detroit, under the presidency of father Simion Mihălđan, and having as a secretary father Andrei Moldovan. The leaders had no problem convincing the delegates, who were already manifesting concerns regarding the situation in Romania, where the communists were in control. Moreover, they were indignant at the attempts made to usurp their rights, consequently, they unanimously accepted the proposals of the Council. According to the assessment record of the assembly, the following decisions were made: the rejection of any interference coming from the Romanian Legation when it comes to matters pertaining to the Romanian Orthodox Church (in America); the refusal to accept Bishop Antim Nica; a request for the return of Bishop Policarp; a ratification of the decision of the Episcopal Council to reinstate the rules and the status adopted by the Church Congress in 1932; the appointment of a commission meant to elaborate the proposals for new regulations of the Episcopate<sup>36</sup>.

Maybe the most important decision of the extraordinary Congress was the **proclamation of the complete administrative autonomy**, which referred to all the relations the American Episcopate had with the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church<sup>37</sup>. The Congress also decided to allow only canonical and spiritual future relations, which meant that the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America would be still in communion of faith with the Orthodox Church of Romania, and with the rest of the Orthodox Churches<sup>38</sup>.

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in the country via a telegram on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 1947. ASS, File 610/1947, f. 9.

<sup>35</sup> ACS DVT, File History of R.O.E.A. (A). *The facts behind the Romanian Orthodox Missionary Episcopate in America*, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> ACS DVT, File History of R.O.E.A. (A) *Minutes of the Romanian Orthodox Church Congress, special session, March 28, 1947*.

<sup>37</sup> ACS DVT, File History of R.O.E.A. (A) *Minutes of the Romanian Orthodox Church Congress, special session, March 28, 1947*.

<sup>38</sup> ACS DVT, File History of R.O.E.A. (A), *The facts behind the Romanian Orthodox Missionary Episcopate in America*, p. 10.

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The attempt made by the authorities, which was to impose a bishop without previously consulting the community, generated a new reaction of sympathy towards Bishop Policarp. The Congress voted a resolution which clearly expressed solidarity with the aggrieved bishop as a form of protest against all accuses brought against him<sup>39</sup>.

Patriarch Nicodim took into account these standpoints and did not send Bishop Antim Nica. As a result of the interventions of the representatives of the Episcopate at the State Department of the United States<sup>40</sup>, Antim Nica did not get an entry visa into the United States<sup>41</sup>.

The situation was still as confusing as possible. The Episcopate declared its administrative autonomy, rejected any interference coming from the Romanian authorities, and wanted to be able to choose its own bishop, a new one, or maybe bring back the old one<sup>42</sup>.

What has been presented above, clearly depicts the idea according to which both the faithful and most of the clergy, considered Policarp Morușca their canonical bishop, and stated at several Church Congresses during this period, their desire to have him come back to America.

In order to maintain the existing status, they rejected any attempt coming from Romania's civil and ecclesial authorities, as well as the attempts coming from the priests and laymen of the Episcopate, to name or choose another bishop, strengthening this way the autonomy of the Episcopate and the exclusive right to solve its administrative problems, the Episcopal succession, being such a matter, in their opinion. Moreover, with every failed attempt coming from outside, the leaders of the Episcopate strengthened their efforts of bringing back their canonical bishop. Several memoirs were sent to the representatives that could, one way or another, determine the adoption in Bucharest of a favourable attitude towards their request.

The final answer came on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July, 1948, when the new decree was published in Monitorul Oficial No. 136. According to this new decree, the bishop assigned to America and to the Western States (the West) was withdrawn, that is he was no longer exerting the duties he had until

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<sup>39</sup> ASS, File 610/1947, f. 26.

<sup>40</sup> These acts were brought to the attention of the members of the Episcopal Council by Nicolae N. Martin Ia at the extraordinary meeting that took place on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February 1947, cf. *Minutes of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate Council, February 21, 1947*, in File History of R.O.E.A. (A).

<sup>41</sup> *Search for a bishop*, p. 94.

<sup>42</sup> ASS, File 610/1947, f. 23.

that point in time. This decision was the result of previously removing the Episcopate of America from the budget plan, which was the equivalent of abolishing the Episcopal Chair.

All the waiting and all the efforts of the faithful in America were in vain; the new political power had great projects in mind, and the people that opposed them were brushed aside. Therefore, Bishop Policarp, who on several occasions spoke against communism and communists, and who was still considered by the free Romanians of America their leader, was no exception to the rule.

The signal sent from Bucharest determined the Romanian Americans, aware of their new identity and of their right to solve their church problems on their own, to closely analyze the political changes and the way they affected the life of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Their assessment was dependent upon the editorial publishing of a country already subdued by the communist forces. Just by following the news, as presented in the Romanian press, they could observe how the totalitarian state was coming to life, and how, one by one, the still existing obstacles were eliminated. A first step towards an institutionalized communism<sup>43</sup> was Romania's joining of the soviet block from a military standpoint, followed by the consolidation of the sole party, by abolishing the main opposition parties. Then, the new totalitarian soviet model was imposed, by adopting the 1948 Constitution. The soviet origin judging system was introduced as well, followed by the nationalization act in 1948, when the right to own property was taken away. Then, the freedom of expression was taken away, the means of public information were under the absolute control of the state, and, in the end, the freedom of faith was affected as well, a new law of the religious cults issued on August 4<sup>th</sup> 1948, gave the state control over the matters pertaining to the legally recognized cults<sup>44</sup>.

The Romanian Americans were convinced that the communist regime, given its ideology<sup>45</sup>, couldn't tolerate the existence of a strong Church, and,

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<sup>43</sup> Different aspects pertaining to this process can be followed in the anthology of articles published in „Analele Sighet”, No. 6, *Anul 1948 – instituționalizarea comunismului*, Fundația Academia Civică, București, 1998.

<sup>44</sup> An excelent analysis of this process can be seen in the work of Dennis Deletant, *România sub regimul comunist*, București, Fundația Academia Civică, 1997, in chapter *Crearea statului totalitar*, p. 64-77.

<sup>45</sup> Great theologians of the Church signalled the profoundly anti-Christian character of the communist ideology. See for example Teodor M. Popescu, *Anticreștinismul comu-*

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in the meantime, didn't have the necessary force to destroy the Church of the majority of the Romanians (over 70% of the Romanian population was orthodox). The political strategy forced them to temporarily adopt a tolerant attitude and accept a co-existent relationship between the State and the Orthodox Church conditioned, without a doubt, by one aspect: the Church was not to oppose the new regime, but was to collaborate for a better implementation of its politics<sup>46</sup>. The ulterior actions of Patriarch Justinian<sup>47</sup> (visits to Moscow, participation to peace conferences, his position against the actions of the American army in Korea<sup>48</sup>) do nothing else but strengthen the perception that the Orthodox Church in Romania is a state Church which, in spite of its internal autonomy assured by the Statutes and regulations adopted in 1949-1950, became a political instrument of the communist regime<sup>49</sup>.

Given the political evolution back in Romania, the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate in America, an autonomous institution, became a symbol of unity for the Romanian Americans and a force for the free orthodox Romanians everywhere<sup>50</sup>.

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nist, in „Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, LX, 1942, No.1-4, p. 13-50 and Idem, *De la Nero la Stalin*, in „Gândirea”, XXIX, 1942, nr. 1, p. 22-29.

<sup>46</sup> Search for a bishop, p. 101.

<sup>47</sup> Recent research, chiefly based on documents from the Archives of the former Security, nuanced the political attitude of Patriarch Justinian emphasizing his great contribution to the maintenance of the Church in a totalitarian communistic state. For details see: lect dr. Adrian Gabor & Adrian Petcu, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română și puterea comunistă în timpul Patriarhului Justinian*, in „Anuarul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă Patriarhul Justinian”, București, 2002, p. 93-154; Cristina Păiușan, *Politica Patriarhilor României și „colaboraționismul” cu organele statului*, în „Analele Sighet”, vol. VII, *Anii 1949-1953: mecanismele terorii*, Fundația Academia Civică, București, 1999, p. 111-117; † Bartolomeu of Cluj, *Amintiri despre Patriarhul Justinian*, in „Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, CXVI, 1998, No. 1-6; George Enache, *Patriarhul Justinian și Biserica Ortodoxă Română în anii 1948-1964*, Editura Partener, București, 2009, p. 13-297, and others.

<sup>48</sup> An inventory of the actions developed during that period by Patriarch Justinian, which affected the sensibility of the Romanian-Americans as American citizens can be followed in *The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, Office of Public Relations, The Politics of Patriarch Justinian Marina; some grounds which forced the Romanian Orthodox Churches in America to sever relations with the Orthodox Patriarchate of Romania*, Jackson, Mi. 1960; Idem, *The struggle for Liberty: Communist attempts to gain control over American Church Organizations*, Jackson, Mi., 1953.

<sup>49</sup> Search for a bishop, p. 102.

<sup>50</sup> ACS DVT, File History of R.O.E.A. (A), *The facts behind the Romanian Orthodox Missionary Episcopate in America*, p. 22.

For the moment, these political and religious changes had no major effects to the life of the Episcopate across the Ocean, which, because it did not get an official notification regarding the retirement of Policarp, continued its efforts to bring him back to America. Making him retire, was seen as a first act coming from Patriarch Justinian, who did not take into account the repeated requests coming from the Romanian Americans, such acts, directed with the help of the governmental authorities against the interests of the Episcopate were seen as an assault to its autonomy<sup>51</sup>.

There were people who plotted in the shadow and their actions were shaking the ecclesial life of the Romanian Americans, causing division in the community and threatening the autonomous existence of the Romanian Orthodox Church. We talk about the same people that, over the years, tried to do everything that was in their power to stop the return of the canonical bishop, and tried to impose, even if against the Status and Regulations of the Episcopate, a new bishop. In great secret, father Glicherie Moraru was ready for a hit, which was meant to revenge his removal from among the leaders of the Episcopate, as well as the loss he registered when trying to impose Ștefan Atanasie Opreanu as bishop.

On February the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1950, a group of 6 people: fathers Glicherie Moraru, John Spăriosu and Petru Moga<sup>52</sup>, and three laymen of which only one is known by name Nicolae Neamțu Martin, had a secret meeting in Detroit at the parish house of Glicherie Moraru. During this meeting they decided to elect a new bishop in the person of father Ștefan Atanasie Opreanu, and ask of the Metropolitan Bishop Visarion Puiu<sup>53</sup> to ordain him, on the basis of the *principle of vicinity*<sup>54</sup>. Several actions were carried out, including

<sup>51</sup> ACS DVT, File History of R.O.E.A. (A), *The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America*, p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> Petru Moga was the only priest under the jurisdiction of the Diocese. Glicherie and Spăriosu were independent of any jurisdiction and authority.

<sup>53</sup> A dissident metropolitan bishop, he lead a Romanian diocese of the West between 1949-1958, having its center in Paris. In 1946 he was sentenced to death by „Tribunalul Poporului” (The People’s Court) in Bucharest, and in 1950, under the pressure of the communist authorities the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church deposed him. For more information see: Mircea Păcurariu, *Dicționarul teologilor români*, București, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 1996, p. 370; Adrian Nicolae Petcu, *Problema repatrierii mitropolitului Visarion Puiu reflectată în documentele Securității*, in „Caietele CNSAS”, a quarterly magazine published by the The National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives, an II, nr. 2 (4)/2009, p. 225-256.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Extract of the minutes of the meeting that took place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 1950. ASS, File 28 bis /1950, f. 81.

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the setting of the date of ordination, as the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, 1950. The ordination was supposed to be done by orthodox Bishops from America (the Russian Archbishop Leonty of Chicago, Archbishop Simon Samuel David of Toledo, and the Serbian Bishop Dionisie of Libertyville), with special delegacy coming from Metropolitan Bishop Puiu<sup>55</sup>.

However, when finding that Visarion Puiu was deposed by the Holy Synod, the conspirators had to change their plan, had to look somewhere else<sup>56</sup>. They set their eyes on a widower, father Andrei Moldovan, and found him suitable to be ordained as bishop<sup>57</sup>.

After several secret meetings that took place in the house of father Moraru in Detroit, and after getting in touch with the Romania authorities, with the help of the Romanian Legation in Washington, they had an action plan, and received clear instructions from the Patriarch; having Andrei Moldovan be elected by the Congress and sending him to Romania in order to be ordained<sup>58</sup>. In the spirit of these recommendations, still in secret, there was a pseudo-congress in Detroit, on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1950, there were only 8 people participating<sup>59</sup>, and they decided to restore the canonical ties with the Romanian Orthodox Church<sup>60</sup>. They elected Bishop Andrei Moldovan and decided to send him to Romania for his ordination. These decisions were meant to have the legal Church Congress and the parishes of the Episcopate face and accept some already made decisions, because, as one of the participants stated<sup>61</sup>, *Romanians in America are careless and will accept things as they are*. Moreover, they decided to create a jurisdiction to

<sup>55</sup> ASS, File 326/1965, The official declaration of the Romanian Orthodox Missionary Diocese in America, June 10 1952, p. 10, f. 39.

<sup>56</sup> The decision to stop the ordination Ștefan Atanasie Opreanu was made at the meeting that took place on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 1950, cf. The extract of the minutes of the meeting, ASS, File 28 bis/1950, f. 82.

<sup>57</sup> ASS, File 326/1965, The official declaration of the Romanian Orthodox Missionary Diocese in America, June 19 1952, p. 11, f. 40.

<sup>58</sup> ACSDVT, File History of R.O.E.A. (A). *The facts behind the Romanian Orthodox Missionary Episcopate in America*, p. 25.

<sup>59</sup> This is according to Andrei Moldovan's confession during the 1951 trial. See File 11743 United States Court of Appeals, *Romanian Orthodox Missionary Episcopate, etc., plaintiff-appellant vs. Ioan Trutza, et al., defendants-appellees, civil case no. 27.916, Appendix to brief of appellees*, p. 38a-101a.

<sup>60</sup> Pr. Spiridon Cădea, *Reluarea legăturilor bisericești cu românii de peste hotare*, in „B.O.R.”, LXIX, 1951, No. 3-6, p. 238.

<sup>61</sup> *Album aniversar*, 1954, p. 48.

be officially recognized by the American authorities, the establishment of an Episcopate, on the grounds of which father Andrei Moldovan was elected. In order to have father Andrei Moldovan ordained, father Petru Moga proposed a renewal of the dogmatic and canonical ties with the Mother Church, without allowing the Romanian Patriarchy to interfere with the church administration of the Romanians in America<sup>62</sup>.

According to the outlined strategy, inside the initiative group, on June 5th 1950, a new organisation was recorded, in accordance with the laws of the State of Michigan, the Romanian Orthodox Autonomous Episcopate of North and South America, with its headquarters in Detroit, the address being Glicherie Moraru's residence<sup>63</sup>.

Father Glicherie Moraru presented the situation of the Orthodox Romanians of America in a memoir addressed to church authorities in Romania (needless to say in a manner that was favourable to him)<sup>64</sup>. Given the occasion, he made some proposals regarding the future of this community. Father Glicherie Moraru's offer captured the attention of church authorities in Bucharest, therefore the official request of a new Episcopate, sent on June 12, 1950, for the recognition of its autonomy, and for the approval of Andrei Moldovan as bishop and his ordination as soon as possible<sup>65</sup>, were immediately discussed by the Permanent Synod of the Romanian Church, congregated on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July, 1950; the members voted in favour of these requests.

Today, looking back at the events, the decision of the Permanent Synod, and later, the decision of the Holy Synod seem bizarre, as if they were deceived, or maybe they accepted to be deceived. On another note, Glicherie Moraru, in the papers signed on behalf of the Autonomous Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, clearly states that this new jurisdiction

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<sup>62</sup> ASS, File 28 bis/1950, extract of the minutes of the meeting that took place on May 17 1950, f. 82-83.

<sup>63</sup> The content of this act and the name of the signees can be seen in *Articles of Association of The Romanian Orthodox Autonomous Episcopate of North and South Americas*, in File 11743 United States Court of Appeals, *Romanian Orthodox Missionary Episcopate, etc., plaintiff-Appellant vs. Ioan Trutza, et al., defendants-appellees, civil case no. 27.916, Appendix to brief of appellees*, p. 48a-49a.

<sup>64</sup> ASS, File 28 bis /1950, The memoir of the president of the Interim Commission of the Romanian Orthodox Autonomous Episcopate of America, archpriest Glicherie Moraru to Patriarch Iustinian, June 1<sup>st</sup> 1950, 12 p., f. 5-16.

<sup>65</sup> ASS, File 28 bis/1950, f. 82.



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is meant to bring back to life the initial autonomous jurisdiction approved by the Holy Synod in the year 1929. In fact, this initial jurisdiction never died. Its autonomy consecrated by the 1932 Status was diminished, and annulled when it came to certain aspects (the Bishop's choice), because of the way Bishop Policarp Morușca modified the Status and imposed it upon the Episcopal Congress in the year 1936. The Episcopate existed in the year 1947 and reaffirmed the autonomous status of his jurisdiction, although this status was not formally recognised by the Patriarchy of Bucharest. However, Glicherie Moraru was not speaking on behalf of this Episcopate. Paradoxically, the Permanent Synod recognises the autonomous status of this old jurisdiction, and not of the newly established one. It also accepted, in the spirit of this autonomy, the election of father Andrei Moldovan as bishop, but he was not elected by the competent authority of the old jurisdiction, but by an assumptive parish assembly of a newly-created ecclesial entity. Their decisions and actions were kept in high secrecy. At the Church Congress of the Episcopate, of Policarp's old Episcopate, summoned in an extraordinary session on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July, 1950, in Philadelphia, when the matter regarding the election of the new bishop reached the final stage, father Andrei Moldovan participated at the congress, but said nothing about his "election" as bishop and about the establishment of a new Episcopate. Moreover, he agreed with all the decisions made during the Congress: the extension to another year of the actions meant to bring back to America Bishop Policarp, and the decision according to which none of the priests that were serving in America could become candidates for the election of a new bishop, in case Policarp was not to return.

Two weeks after the Congress, the president of the Congress and of the Episcopal Council received a telegram in which Patriarch Justinian would inform him that he approved of the election of father Andrei Moldovan for the vacant Bishop chair<sup>66</sup>. The Episcopal Council manifested its surprise in a letter, to which it got no answer<sup>67</sup>.

Father Andrei Moldovan, in his turn, denied having any interference regarding this matter<sup>68</sup>.

<sup>66</sup> ASS, File 28 bis /1950, f. 34.

<sup>67</sup> ASS, File 28 bis/1950, f. 109.

<sup>68</sup> Andrei Moldovan was contacted by phone by father Truția immediately after receiving the telegram from Bucharest soliciting explanations. He denied having any invol-

The degree of involvement he had was proved by the events that were to follow.

In the capital of Romania everybody was anxiously expecting the arrival of father Andrei Moldovan<sup>69</sup>, and the itinerary of his visit, as well as the succession of events were decided to the tiniest detail<sup>70</sup>. Andrei Moldovan was pompously welcomed by the Patriarch, by the episcopal centres and by the monasteries he visited, he had a triumphant march and ascension towards the archiepiscopate<sup>71</sup>.

His arrival to Romania for ordination on the 2nd of November, 1950<sup>72</sup> was exploited by the communist authorities for propagandistic purposes, presenting him to the Romanian people through any media possible, as the man the Romanians of America have chosen to send back home to be ordained, *as a sign of trust towards the actual regime*<sup>73</sup>. The event in itself was regarded as a great accomplishment achieved by Patriarch Justinian, and also as a victory of the regime *of the popular democracy* in the fight

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vement and at Truția's request sent a telegram to the Episcopal Council but with an ambiguous text: *I have not opted before nor do I opt now to become a Bishop*. ASS, File 28 bis / 1950, f. 24.

<sup>69</sup> In the months of June and July there was an intense correspondence between the Patriarchy and the supporters of Andrei Moldovan the subject being his ordination. The supporters from America solicited, as they were afraid that the opponents might stop the departure and the return from Romania of Andrei Moldovan, to have him ordained across the ocean by American hierarchs. The Patriarchy believed that such a mission could not be entrusted to hierarchs that were not knows therefore sent a cable message to Andrei Moldovan: *Please come urgently to Bucharest to be ordained bishop, and immediately return to your post*. ASS, File 28 bis/1950, f. 32.

<sup>70</sup> The detailed program of the visit, the place, the date and the hour of the main moments of the visit, the protocol, the participants and the attributions each had were communicated to all concerned, after the conference of the Holy Synod, scheduled for the 4th of October 1950. ASS, File 28 bis/1950, f. 96, 110-115 and 130-139.

<sup>71</sup> The detailed presentation of the events can be seen in *Hirotonirea și investitura P.S. Andrei Moldovanu, episcopul românilor ortodocși din America*, în „Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, LXVIII, 1950, No. 11-12, p. 618-671; *Calendarul Ortodox Solia, 1951*, p. 19-75. This calendar was illegally published by Andrei Moldovan, therefore in 1951 two calendars with the same name were published: the one mentioned before and le legal calendar edited by the Episcopal Council led by Truția. For details see *Două calendare*, in „Solia”, XVI, nr. 1, 7 January 1951, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> The date of the ordination was initially the 21st of October 1950. ASS, File 28 bis/1950, f. 33.

<sup>73</sup> ACS DVT, File History of R.O.E.A. (A). *The facts behind the Romanian Orthodox Missionary Episcopate in America*, p. 26.

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against the capitalist exploiters, as presented in the *Romanian Orthodox Church* magazine<sup>74</sup>.

On November 5<sup>th</sup>, Andrei Moldovan received monastic tonsure at the Neamț Monastery. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of November, he is ordained as bishop at the Metropolitan Cathedral in Sibiu<sup>75</sup>, where there were present over 400 clergymen<sup>76</sup> and many faithful. The one missing was Bishop Policarp<sup>77</sup>, who refused to participate to this act. Initially<sup>78</sup>, at the special request of Glicherie Moraru<sup>79</sup>, the monastic tonsure was to be done by the retired bishops Veniamin Nistor and Policarp Morușca, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1950, in Alba Iulia, at The Cathedral of Reunification. The refusal of the latter asked for a change of plans. Policarp found a way to protest against the situation created, by retiring at Craiova, under the pretext that he was ill and refused this way to become an accomplice to the events, that would follow their course, whether he was present or not.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of November, at the Patriarch's Palace, there was a ceremony of investiture to which participated several important personalities from among the "democratic" leaders of the country, starting with the prime-minister Petru Groza<sup>80</sup>. On this occasion, Bishop Andrei Moldovan is granted investiture through Patriarchal Gramata, where his rights and

<sup>74</sup> Fr. Spiridon Cândeia, *Reluarea legăturilor bisericești cu românii de peste hotare*, in „B.O.R.”, LXIX, 1951, nr. 3-6, p. 238.

<sup>75</sup> The ordination was in Sibiu, because at the request of Glicherie Moraru, the Holy Synod decided that the New Episcopate was supposed to be under the canonical jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Church of Ardeal. ASS, File 28 bis/1950, f. 26-27 și 33.

<sup>76</sup> *Hirotonirea și investitura P.S. Andrei Moldovanu, episcopul românilor ortodocși din America*, in „B.O.R.”, 1950, LXVIII, No. 11-12, p. 636.

<sup>77</sup> Although he did not participate to the ordination of his successor, because supposedly he was ill, Bishop Policarp had to sign letters by which he congratulated his successor and recognized his canonical succession. The text can be seen in *Scrisoarea P.S. Policarp către P.S. Andrei al Americii*, and in *A doua scrisoare a P.S. Policarp către P.S. Episcop Andrei*, in „B.O.R.”, LXVIII, 1950, No. 11-12, p. 664-666.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. the telegram dated on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1950, addressed by Patriarch Justinian to archpriest Andrei Moldovan. ASS, File 28 bis/1950, f. 33.

<sup>79</sup> The address No. 19/1950 dated on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 1950, ASS, File 28 bis/1950, f. 26-27.

<sup>80</sup> His presence was immortalized in the pictures taken on this occasion and published in *Hirotonirea și investitura P.S. Andrei Moldovanu, episcopul românilor ortodocși din America*, in *B.O.R.*, LXVIII, 1950, No. 11-12, p. 618-671; *Calendarul Ortodox Solia, 1951*, p. 19-75.

duties as Bishop of the Orthodox Romanians in the two Americas were set<sup>81</sup>.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of November, Bishop Andrei Moldovan left Romania to go back to his parish after three weeks of “treatment”, but he returned as *a sole spiritual and canonical leader*<sup>82</sup> of the Orthodox Romanians of America.

There were prompt and radical reactions to these actions, considered a brutal and unwanted interference of the Romanian political and ecclesial authorities into the life of the American citizens of Romanian orthodox origin and faith, and a clear and irresponsible violation of the autonomy of the Episcopate. Father Ioan Truția urgently summoned the Episcopal Council to decide upon this matter. The meeting was on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November in Cleveland, and to this meeting all the members of the Council participated, including Simion Mihălțan. Unanimously, the Council decided<sup>83</sup> not to take into consideration the letters and telegrams sent by the Patriarchy, not to accept the new Bishop<sup>84</sup>, and not to obey any command coming from the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church *who is serving the communist authorities more than the services of the orthodox faith and is promoting ideas opposing the ideals and the interests of the United States and of the American way of living*<sup>85</sup>.

Bishop Andrei was identified as an instrument in the hands of the communist authorities, which tried to control the life of the Romanian Americans by ordaining and installing him as bishop in America. They also said that, as stated in the Romanian Law of the Cults<sup>86</sup>, their opinion is supported by the text of the oath he had to take<sup>87</sup>.

<sup>81</sup> SS, File 28 bis/ 1950, f. 120-124.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. *Scrisorile trimise de I.P.S. Justinian prea cucernicului vicar Simion Mihălțan și Consiliului Eparhial al Eparhiei Ortodoxe Române (Autonome) din America*, in „B.O.R.”, LXVIII, 1950, No. 11-12, p. 668.

<sup>83</sup> The decisions were communicated with the public opinion in the Solia journal. See *Comunicat privitor la amestecurile streine în afacerile Episcopiei*, in „Solia”, XV, No. 45, November 26 1950, p. 1.

<sup>84</sup> *Album aniversar*, 1954, p. 50.

<sup>85</sup> ACSDVT, File History of R.O.E.A. (A). *The facts behind the Romanian Orthodox Missionary Episcopate in America*, p. 29.

<sup>86</sup> *Monitorul Oficial*, part I-A, CXVI, No. 51, Tuesday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 1948, p. 1902.

<sup>87</sup> During my research I didn't find the proof according to which Andrei Moldovan had to take this oath, the text was published in *Monitorul Oficial*, No. 178, August 4<sup>th</sup> 1948.

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Bishop Andrei Moldovan's reaction to the strong opposition encountered managed to surprise everyone. Following the instructions he received in Romania, he addressed the American judiciary system in order to gain control over the goods of the Episcopate, using all the necessary steps offered by the American judiciary system<sup>88</sup>, but without any favourable results. All the courts rejected the actions initiated by Andrei Moldovan, underlining every single time that he had no rights, for he did not represent The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, but The Romanian Missionary Orthodox Episcopate of America, which was a different entity<sup>89</sup>.

Such actions had as a result an inevitable division within the Romanian Orthodox Church<sup>90</sup>. The inexplicable indifference of the Patriarchy of Bucharest to the legitimate protests of the priests and of the faithful of America, and the intense campaign carried by Andrei Moldovan and his supporters – they published five newspapers distributed for free to all the possible addresses, and printed several pamphlets meant to denigrate

<sup>88</sup> The development of the trials as well as the rulings of the courts, which were not in favour of the plaintiff Andrei Moldovan, can be analyzed in the following official acts published by the American state File 11743 United States Court of Appeals, *Romanian Orthodox Missionary Episcopate, etc., plaintiff-Appellant vs. Ioan Trutza, et al., defendants-appellees, civil case no. 27.916, brief of defendants-appellees*; File 11743 United States Court of Appeals, *Romanian Orthodox Missionary Episcopate, etc., plaintiff-Appellant vs. Ioan Trutza, et al., defendants-appellees, civil case no. 27.916, Appendix to brief of appellees*; File 422, *In the Supreme Court of the United States, The Romanian Orthodox Missionary Episcopate of America, through His Grace Bishop Andrei Moldovan, petitioner, vs. Ioan Trutza, et. al., respondents, Brief for respondents in opposition*; also one might consult the articles published in „Solia”: *Ne-au dat în judecată*, in „Solia”, XV, No. 48, December 24 1950, p. 1; *O bătaie câștigată*, in „Solia”, XV, nr. 48, December 24 1950, p. 2; *A învins dreptatea*, in „Solia”, XVI, No. 3, January 21 1951, p. 1; „Episcopul” Moldovan oferă împăcare, in „Solia”, XVI, No. 3, January 21 1951, p. 1. *Episcopia a câștigat procesul început de A. Moldovan la Philadelphia*, in „Solia”, XX, No. 12, March 27 1955, p. 3; *Procesul Episcopiei*, in „Solia”, XVI, No. 21, July 6 1952, p. 4; *Deciziunea Curții de apel în procesul cu Andrei Moldovan, sau cum au pierdut „tovarășii”*, in „Solia”, XVIII, No. 24, June 14, 1953, p. 1 and 3; *Recursul lui Andrei Moldovan respins de Curtea supremă*, in „Solia”, XVIII, No. 51, December 20 1953, p. 1-2.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. The judge decision issued on July 8 1952. A copy of this decision can be found in ACSDVT, File History of R.O.E.A. (A).

<sup>90</sup> A synthesis of the events that had as a final consequence the severance of any ties with the Romanian Orthodox Church is offered by the document *De ce Episcopia Ortodoxă Română din America a fost silită să se despartă de Patriarhia Română*, ACSDVT, File History of R.O.E.A. (A).

their opponents<sup>91</sup>— did nothing else but rush to this inevitable moment. At the end of 1950, respectively at the beginning of 1951, it became clear for the entire community of Romanian Americans that it was necessary to find a solution for the ongoing crisis, especially because the hope for a reconciliation disappeared, and the lawsuits brought against them by Andrei Moldovan were in full display. Father Ioan Truția, as president of the Eparchial Council, tried to find the most suitable way to solve the crisis. He set a meeting that had as a purpose a common strategy of the Romanian American community. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of January, 1961, several people were present to this meeting organised by the president of the Romanian National Committee, Rudi Nan, such as father John Spătariu, the leader of the Catholic Romanian-Americans and father Ioan Stănilă, secretary of the Episcopal Council<sup>92</sup>. In analyzing the situation, they agreed that what was happening with the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate was a matter that concerned all the members of the Romanian-American community and agreed to collaborate, in order to prevent any interference coming from Romania, when it comes to the problems of the community. As for the immediate problems of the Episcopate, the present people jointly agreed that it was not enough to reject the actions coming from Bucharest, but, moreover, it was necessary to adopt a positive solution, and this solution, in the spirit of the decisions made By the Church Congress in 1950, was to choose a bishop that would serve as a vicar until Bishop Policarp could clarify his situation. According to the decision reached during the previous Congress, none of the clergymen serving in America could candidate. Several voices indicated that a good candidate would be the young editor of Solia, Viorel Trifa, who proved his loyalty to the cause of the Episcopate, and who had the theological background required by the statutory provisions. At first, he rejected the idea, therefore the Council considered archimandrite Ștefan Lucaciu from Paris.

On the 16<sup>th</sup>, respectively on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May, the Episcopal Council reached its final decision, which was to elect a vicar bishop at the Congress that was set for the month of July, 1951. It was also decided that, officially,

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<sup>91</sup> The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, Office of Public Relations, *The Politics of Patriarch Justinian Marina; some grounds which forced the Romanian Orthodox Churches in America to sever relations with the Orthodox Patriarchate of Romania*, Jackson, Mi. 1960, p. 7.

<sup>92</sup> *Search for a bishop*, p. 125.

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both archimandrite Ștefan Lucaciu and theologian Viorel Trifa should be invited to candidate for the Episcopal chair<sup>93</sup>.

The annual Church Congress of the Episcopate was summoned between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 195, in Chicago. The agenda included not only the election of a vicar bishop, but many other problems of major importance to the life of the Episcopate. It was for the first time that the Congress was convoked after the incidents caused by Andrei Moldovan and by the Patriarchal intervention. Until then, the Episcopal Council showed conscientiousness in facing the obvious intention of imposing a bishop that was not chosen by them, but now the clergymen and the laymen had to do something regarding this matter. There was a strong political weight in it, therefore it was difficult to decide. For the delegates to the Congress, to their greatest majority American citizens, profoundly attached to the democratic values, the problem was whether they should accept Andrei Moldovan, the representative of the world that was behind the iron curtain, and through him accept possible orders coming from communists, or take in their hands the responsibility of their own destiny and remain attached to the American principle of living, and shape this destiny in accordance with this principle and with the future interests of the Church.

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<sup>93</sup> Each one of them received a letter the addresser being the Episcopal Council. Here is the text of the one received by Viorel Trifa: *Dear Mister Trifa, As we are concerned with the attempt made to unify the titular Bishop position of our Romanian Orthodox Episcopate in America, the Council of this Episcopate, during its last two sessions, the one on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March and the one on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May, 1951, decided to make the necessary preparations and elect a vicar bishop, invested with the right of succession, for the canonical leading of the Episcopate, and, in this sense, the Council decided to organize the Church Congress of the Episcopate in Chicago this year, and convoke a special electoral Congress, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, 1951. Making use of the certificates and of the diplomas available, the Council of the Episcopate, joyfully observed that you have the theological and clerical qualifications required of the candidates to the archiepiscopate in Our Orthodox Church, and with a unanimity of votes, its members decided that your candidacy for the position of vicar bishop of our Episcopate would correspond. I was assigned to bring this to your knowledge, which I am gladly doing, and, in the meantime, ask of you, that after receiving this official notice, and after considering your candidacy and reaching a decision regarding this matter, to inform us upon your decision so that we can comply with it. With most sincere congratulations on this well deserved candidacy, and with the most sincere wishes of health and well-being. While awaiting your answer, please receive my reassurance of respect and love, Archpriest Ioan Truția, President of the Council. ACS DVT, File Valerian Trifa, biographical data.*

The painful experience lived by the Episcopate in relation to the Church of Romania, and Bishop Andrei Moldovan, generated discussions regarding the future relations between the American Episcopate and the Romanian Orthodox Church. A number of 12 delegates considered a resolution meant to completely separate the Episcopate from the Patriarchy of Bucharest, ceasing any kind of relations<sup>94</sup>. They motivated their proposal stating that the Diocese was brought to a state where it had no other alternative but to act immediately. At the end of the debates, the Congress unanimously adopted a resolution and decided to grant complete autonomy to the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, separate it from the Romanian Orthodox Church of Romania, change the official name of the Episcopate, and several other aspects were decided as well<sup>95</sup>.

With this decision, the severance with the Romanian Orthodox Church and with the Bishop and his very few parishes was sealed, becoming a painful reality in the life of the community of Romanian Americans. The election, at the very same Congress, of Viorel Trifa as Vicar Bishop of Policarp Morușca was the first act of the completely autonomous Episcopate, and a measure meant to consolidate this autonomy.

Therefore, after 12 years of turmoil in the ecclesial life of the Romanian Americans, there were two orthodox jurisdictions, that of Bishop Andrei Moldovan, which had very few parishes and which kept the canonical ties with the Patriarchy, and the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, with the majority of the parishes and of the faithful, which had complete autonomy and was independent of any other jurisdiction. But the new situation was unnatural from the standpoint of the orthodox canons and ecclesiology.

By recalling the context that nurtured this drama, we facilitate a critical reflection and an honest assumption, on both sides, of the responsibility for the state of affairs that continues to this day. We must also say that the political realities and oppressions do not justify the circumvention of the ecclesiological fundamentals and of the canonical norms upon which church life is built. From our point of view, the vocation of unity cultivated by orthodoxy can be rediscovered, and starting with this vocation, we can build a common future and a common testimony of the orthodox people of America.

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<sup>94</sup> *Search for a bishop*, p. 139.

<sup>95</sup> ACS DVT, File History of R.O.E.A., (A) *Declarație solemnă*.