

THE BISHOP POLICARP MORUȘCA (20.III.1883–26.X.1958) AND THE CONCERN FOR THE AMERICAN ROMANIANS

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With the first Romanian orthodox church (with the festival of “St. Nicolas”) from Regina-Sask. (1902), then the church “St. Maria” from Cleveland-Ohio, where the Archiepiscopate from Sibiu sent the first priest, begins the history of the Romanian orthodox expectations in America¹.

The Transylvanian emigrants preferred the industrial north-east and the central areas, settling in the north of the state Ohio and in western Pennsylvania, at Cleveland, Youngstown, Akron, Canton, Massillon, Farrell, Alliance, Warren, Elwood City and around Pittsburgh. The inhabitants of Banat settled at Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Paul and Detroit and the Macedo-Romans especially in New York, Bridgeport, Worcester, Southbridge, Providence, Woonsocket, Plawtucket and St. Louis. The inhabitants of Bucovina were concentrated in Canada, but also around Detroit and Cleveland. Those from Bihor, Satu Mare and Maramureș gathered close to Aurora, Illinois, Trenton, Rewbling and New Jersey. Between all the centers looked by the Romanians, Detroit was the most wanted.

Came in great number after 1900, the number of the Romanians increased rapidly. This can also be seen from their first newspapers, “Românul” and “America”, whose beginnings dates since 1905 and 1 September 1906.

It followed “Semănătorul”, edited before the First World War by the priest Ioan Podea and then, from 1936, “Solia”.

The first Romanian priest arrived on American soil was Moise Balea, in 1905. He founded many parishes and the newspaper “America”, promoting the idea of a Union of the Romanian Societies. After him followed the priest Ioan Podea, the first rector assigned for the American Romanians since 1912. The priest John Truția, stimulated the foundation of the American Orthodox Episcopacy. Eugen Lazăr and Vasile Hațegan were Romanian priests born in S.U.A., educated at the Theological Institute from Sibiu in the first years of forth decade and then returned among their kind.

On the 24 February 1918, at the reunion of the American Orthodox Churches organized at Youngstown, the 70 representatives chosen by the parishes signed the Document for the Dedication and the Submission of the Orthodox Romanian from the United States of Northern America to the Holy Metropolitan Seat of Ungro-Wallachia. It mentioned: “none of us should have any connection with the Orthodox Metropolitan Seat from Hungary and Transylvania and the connection that once existed to be broken. They will be established again only

¹ See the introduction to Gerald J. Bobango, *Religion and Politics: Bishop Valerian Trifa and His Time*, East European Monographs, Boulder, Columbia, University Press, New York, 1981, p. 3.

when Transylvania and the Romanian regions from Hungary shall be set free, becoming a part of the Free Kingdom of the Romanians”. The same proclamation announced “the foundation, on the land of this Country of Freedom, of a Romanian episcopacy after our Eastern Law, that from no on will bear the name of the Orthodox Episcopacy from the United States of Northern America”. “We subject this Episcopacy to the Holy Ungro-Wallachian Metropolitan Seat and it will follow all the Holy Metropolitan Seat will believe, confess and decide. From no on only She has the right to guide the management of Our Church”².

But the American Orthodox Episcopacy founded formally only after the decision made by the Churchly Congress from Detroit at 25-28 April 1929. An Ad Interim Commission was authorized to organize parish schools, the activity of the orthodox youth and of women organizations, to form choirs, fanfares and cultural houses, preparing the installation of an orthodox bishop³. In this context of preparations and expectations, came in America the one who was named the first missionary Romanian orthodox bishop, Policarp Morușca.

At the end of World War One, the American space sheltered and offered work for many Romanians left “for the New World” from who knows what village from Transylvania or Bucovina⁴. Workers in factories, in rich farms, generally simple men, most of them peasants, left for America from the first decade. They all wanted to get rid of poverty, to run away from the obstruction of other nation masters, or from the antinational political and cultural measures.

Among the intellectuals or youth send to studies they were few because the Romanians didn’t excel as cultural education. Very surprising is the existence of a group of the Romanian students in America, named “Nicolae Iorga”, that reunited the young students from Indiana Harbor. At 19 February 1921 it recommended to the Supreme Council the reverend Miron Benchea⁵ as “the only Romanian priest in Western America, the preacher of God’s word in the sweet Romanian language” among the Sibieni emigrants⁶.

² See the complete text at Rev. Fr. Vasile Hațegan, *Romanian Culture in America*, Cleveland, Ohio, 1988, p. 13.

³ See at: Gerald J. Bobango, *op.cit.*, p. 5; Rev. Fr. Vasile Hațegan, *op.cit.*, pp. 98-99.

⁴ See at Ioan Opreș, *Românii înspre și în America*, în “Corviniana”, III, 1997, pp. 157-162.

⁵ Born at 10.VIII.1895 in Cornățel, Sibiu district, son of Toma and Sanda Benchea (n. Mihiu), who took the “exile’s stick”; he attended 4 gimnasium classes at the superior Greek-Catholic Gimnasium from Blaj, graduating excellently, then one year at the Pedagogic “Andreian” Seminary from Sibiu, graduated in 1913. Left with the parents in the United States, he was ordained priest at New York by professor doctor priest Gheorghe Lazăr Gherman, theologian at the University from Cernăuți. Voluntary enlisted in the American army, he served as a military priest for 18 months, being the only priest at the church “St. Cross” from S.O. Omaha – Nebraska. As a vicar he collected 23 000 lei and he send them all to Queen Maria to help the orphans of war.

⁶ In the National Archives – the Central Historical Archive, Fond the Ministry of Cults and Arts, file 109/ 1921, f.81-82 și 85.

In the same year, another priest, Vasile Medelian, had been ordained in America by the Russian bishop Ștefan from Pittsburgh⁷. This priest “crossed the ocean before I was ten because I wanted to get rid of the despotism of tyranny and to earn bread and clothes for my family”.

In this case the priest waited for the Romanian Orthodox Synod to recognize his ordain. “Understanding that the long desired country escaped from the tyrannical domination, I hurried home to help, with my humble powers, at the cultural and economical consolidation and development of the people who made me”⁸.

In the first case, the reverend dr. Lazăr Gherman was not recognized by the Holy Synod as administrator of the Romanian parishes from America, not having any right to ordainment. The second case was about a Russian orthodox hierarch, and American citizen in the same time, who didn’t had such a prerogative according to the canonic right. The Romanian legation to Washington signaled – under the signature of the Minister Anton Bibescu – “the disorganization of the Romanian orthodox parishes from America and the total lack of supervising its clerks”⁹.

The Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church informed – under the signature of prime Metropolitan Bishop Miron – the Minister of Cults and Arts, Octavian Goga, that the only authority which had authority over the orthodox Romanian in America was the Archiepiscopate from Sibiu. The high hierarch himself had taken care of these problems before he came to Bucharest. Observing that “there wasn’t a unity of opinions among them”, Miron Cristea underlined: “Our interest is to be well taken care of, so they will not be lost for our Nation and for the Church”. “Guarded for the church and for the nation, among them can appear useful talents for the nation, or in the worst case can appear rich men who could leave their millions for their mother land, for some superior raisons”¹⁰. So the scrupulous hierarch wanted to send a bishop to visit the parishes and to analyse the situation, and concluded: “we must organize them and put in the van a bishop to lead them for their own good and for the good of the nation. Only in this way they will not be lost into the sea of strangers”¹¹.

For the situation to be well understood, the Consistory of the Romanian Orthodox Archiepiscopate from Sibiu communicated to Bucharest that it recognized as administrator of the orthodox parishes in America only the priest Ioan Podea, working at Youngstown, and supported him in the next years. He also supported him in the summer of 1921, when pr. Podea wanted to return into the

⁷ Cf. Memorial send from Foeni, Torontal district, to the Ministry of Cults and Arts, 12.IV.1921 to the recognizal of the ordainment, *loc.cit.*, f.89.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ Cf. the address no. 7044/ 1921 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Cults and Arts, annexing the report no. 907 of the diplomatic office, *idem*, f.90.

¹⁰ See the address of the Ungro-Wallachian Metropolitan Seat no. 2086/7 VI 1921, *idem*, f.96-97.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, f.97.

country, but he couldn't do it because he didn't had money ensured by the Romanian authorities¹².

The priest had a great influence and his services for the Romanian cause are conjured up by numerous sources, among which professor Vasile Stoica, who had official missions in U.S.A between the years 1917-1920.

Strong personality, very popular, Ioan Podea's activity evolved in a sense that was contrary to the unity of the American Romanians. This situation is also confirmed by the diplomatic sources. The legation to Washington appreciates, in the autumn of 1924, that "the activity developed in America by priest Ioan Podea is ominous" and "it would be in the interest of the Romanian spiritual peace to take his priestly gift"¹³. As we can see, it is a very serious observation!

Meanwhile, the hierarchs from the Moldavian and Sucevean Metropolitan Seat named priests in the parishes from America: the protosinghel Ghenadie Gheorghiu, from Secu monastery, came to the church "St. Nicolas" from Regina-Sask., and Martin Ionescu – from Cozia – in the same Canadian locality, but to the church "St. George"¹⁴. Also they answered to the demand of 200 families from Dahinda-Sask., who build the church "St. Maria" to grow "the patriotic and religious feelings of the ancient belief", and they brought there the friar Teofil Maxim from the church "Trei Ierarhi" in Iași.

These appointments concerned mainly the Romanians that came from Bucovina.

The pastoral condition and the fate of the emigrant Romanians intensely concerned the political circles. The deputy Sever Dan asserted that their fate "should be a special preoccupation for the governments who permanently speak about the national interests"¹⁵. The Romanians closer to the boundaries were especially concerned, but those in America weren't excluded either. In the same year, in a letter send to Minister Al. Lapedatu, regarding the settlements from Athos, the Patriarch Miron said: Romania should have founded "some orthodox settlements abroad, mend to give the Romanian Patriarchy an universal character". He also asked "a greater daring than that indicated by the ancient small Romania"¹⁶!

¹² See the addresses of the Consistory from Sibiu no. 4321 Bis/ 1/ 14 VI 1921 and of the Minister of Foreign Affairs no. 29146/ 2 VIII 1921, *idem.*, f.98, 102.

¹³ In the address of the Minister of Foreign Affairs no. 17955/ 22 IX 1924 to the Minister of Cults and Arts, *idem.*, file 14/ 1924, f.75.

¹⁴ Cf. addresses of the Mitropolitan Bishop Pimen no. f.75, 554/ 12 II and 4909 and 4910/ 31 XII 1925, to the Ministry of Cults and Arts, *idem.*, file 9/ 1925, f.3-4.

¹⁵ The interpelation of the Transylvanian (4 June 1921) the Deputy Chamber send it to the Minister of Cults and Arts with no. 2679/ 5 VI 1925, *ibidem.*, f.103.

¹⁶ Cf. the letter of the Romanian Orthodox Church Synode signed by Patriarch Miron with no. 309/ 15 VII 1925, on which Al. Lapedatu noted: "At the Minister of Foreign Affairs it will be done after the wish of His Holy Highness the Patriarch", *ibidem.*, f.108.

The consequence of unification, resulted from the fulfilling of the national unity, led to a measure appeared gradually in the political, diplomatic and churchly strategies: the foundation of an Episcopate of the Romanian Orthodox Church for the Romanians in Diaspora. At 12 December 1922 the Romanian Orthodox Church Synod decided this hierarchy, but from the beginning connected it to the Romanians close to the boundaries and from the Balkans. The Romanian Ministry at Tirana, Simeon Mândrescu, was delegated to “study the possibility to found a Romanian episcopate for the Romanians in Albania”. In the future all the other Romanians close to the boundaries and those from America were to be subjected to this institution¹⁷. Miron Cristea expressed for the first time the intention to create a superior orthodox hierarchy mend to take care also for the European and American Diaspora. The Orthodox Society of the Romanian Women associated to this institution, stimulating it and asking a bishop “for the spiritual rule” of the 250000 American Romanians¹⁸.

The Minister of the Cults was leaded, all these years, by the historian Al. Lapedatu, a visionary minister, who knew very well the problems related to the confessional organization¹⁹. In the third decade of the XX century he imposed an exceptionally legislative, organizational and guiding dynamics. The works developed due to seriousness and persistence, but with strains and many obstacles. More than once the uncertainty and opportunities confronted, motivating the churchly servants to leave to American parishes. For instance, in 1925, pr. Ioan Truția from Râșnov – who will support a lot the first missionary bishop, Policarp Morușca – found himself in dilemma whether to accept or not a parish in U.S.A., giving up his parish in Romania²⁰.

He could not risk the situation happened to the Romanian orthodox church vicar from Wood Mountain (Saskatchewan) who didn't received from the country any money since 1914²¹.

Already the sector minister begun to correct, after 1925, some debts, according traveling helps or facilitating the passports obtaining. Things happened this way with pr. Vasile Bucșa from Bistrița, send to Chicago by the Sibian Archepiscopate, at the demand of the Romanian flock. Al. Lapedatu gave him 10000 lei as a traveling help despite the negative notice of the economical sector.

¹⁷ This proposal was made by the Synode under the signature of Miron Cristea, ministry Lapedatu.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, f.15.

¹⁹ See the chapter Alexandru Lapedatu and the Romanian Orthodox Church at Ioan Opriș, *Alexandru Lapedatu în cultura românească*, Editura Științifică, București, 1996, pp. 137-182.

²⁰ At the address of the Romanian Orthodox Archiepiscopate Consistory from Alba Iulia and Sibiu with no. 9522/ 2.XII.1925, the ministry Al. Lapedatu negatively notes about the concomitent payment of the salary into the country, *ibidem*, f.146.

²¹ The out-dated situation grasped by the Moldavian and Sucevean Metropolitan Seat with no. 156/ 10.II.1927 to the Minister of Cults and Arts, *loc.cit.*, file 134/1927, f.1.

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For other two Transylvanian missionaries, sent in America either, was asked direct help from²².

All the postwar modifications – on macro political, economical, strategic and cultural order – also reflected in Romania's evolution, which became a referential point in the south-eastern European region. Many solutions were found also on ecclesiastic plan, where the Romanian Orthodox Church, became Patriarchy, represented, as hierarchy, the second great Orthodox Church in the world.

The need to organize a Romanian diocese in America imposed as a consequence of the great number of Romanian believers came in the New World, before World War One. The great number of Romanian emigrants came from the Austrian – Hungarian Empire, mostly from Transylvania and Bucovina, soon demanded measures for churchly support and sustain. The big majority of these emigrants were orthodox and the space in which they established belonged to the United States, so the churchly forums from home begun to discuss some measures. More concerned were the regional ones, from where the emigrants had left: the Metropolitan Seat of Ardeal and the Metropolitan Seat of Moldavia and Suceava. The solution that resolved the complex problematic came only in 1934, when in was founded the Missionary Episcopate for the Romanian orthodox believers from the western unorthodox countries (or the Romanian orthodox missionary episcopate of America and western states)²³. For the episcopacy seat was chose missionary bishop Policarp Morușca²⁴, through the decision of the Romanian Orthodox Church Synod, on the 24 January 1935. At 24 March he was ordained and on 4 of July 1935 established in the Cathedral „Saint George” from Detroit. The will of the Church and mostly of the Patriarch Miron Cristea to give an organization to the American Romanians finally fulfilled and at their leadership came a priest with exceptional qualities and a great calling to devote himself to the mission.

The bishop took the hierarchy in very difficult conditions, being accompanied only by two priests when he left the country: the archimandrite Ioachim Popescu from Constanța Episcopate and the priest hierodeacon Petre Prochnițchi. The first one was forced to undertake immediately a parish, at 1 August 1935, and the other one returned into the country in the same year. The bishop remained and found support in a very helpful rector, Ioan Truția (1895-1954), who stood at his side although he was preferred as bishop by the communities. Further on we will see what was the situation of the Romanian groups all over the

²² See the addresses of the Romanian Orthodox Archiepiscopate from Alba Iulia and Sibiu with no. 10003 and 1176/ 1927, *Ibidem*, f.254. In the last case the dignitary was reminded that in 1922 the Minister of Cults and Arts supported the departure of 6 missionary priests in America, giving them 250 \$ each for the installation.

²³ Founded by the Law published in Monitorul Oficial, no. 105, 8 V 1934.

²⁴ A detailed biography and bibliography at Mircea Păcurariu, *Dicționarul Teologilor Români*, București, Univers Enciclopedic, 1996, pp. 288-289.

United States of America and how the bishop Policarp Morușca managed to unite what seemed impossible to unify. Before he left the country, the bishop deposited 240000 lei at the Churchly Central Council, but at the end of the year he hadn't received a penny, although in the budget were stipulated certain sums. Revolted, he addressed to the Ministry of Cults and Arts, Al. Lapedatu, and he threatened that if he will not receive the money, he will talk to the King and expatriate himself, "to end the situation of Bishop beggar"²⁵. Punctually, he demanded the Minister 5576000 lei a year – a sum earmarked by the Holy Synod – for the functioning of the diocese with 7 positions (bishop, vicar – advisor referent, diocesan inspector, secretary-deacon, registering clerk, typist, cleaner), and payment at the level of the Romanian diplomatic personal from Washington. „Without this sacrifice – wrote the bishop – made by the Romanian state, by the Mother Land, the organization we managed it made in the last half of year will remain illusory. Then will follow the deception of our poor believers whose souls were stirred up by our canonical visits, from one boundary of the United States to the other. Except the four parishes all were researched until now, and in Canada remained only the north-western part.”

If these measures were not taken, „the Romanian group destined to perish. And it would be a damage for the entire nation. The Romanian group present here has the duty to make the connection between the Romanian nation and country and the great republic of the United States which, forewarned by the Romanians, can still be useful for the interests of our people in the international concert of nations”²⁶. What a visionary opinion!

The analysis made by the bishop to the American Romanians situation impresses with its lucidity and insight: „The depression continues, the people barely earn those strictly necessary to live and many of our men are kept by the towns where the lack of work found them!” After crossing long roads, visiting the Romanian parishes, he considered that “now follows the building consolidation action”. He found the Romanian believers “gripped in a firm hassle” between the American Romanians Union and the American Romanians League from the many societies around the newspaper „America”²⁷. The vanity of the Union and League leaders didn't leave place even for the Church and considered that the missionary bishop was a rival for the domination of the Romanian colonies.

After he analysed the situation, the hierarch refused to take part at the permanent arguments and stood aside at the elections for the League and Union

²⁵ Cf. address with the heading of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate from America, 6201 Detroit Av., Cleveland-Ohio, no. 21, 12 I 1936, in Arh. Naționale, Central Historical Archive, Fond Minister of Cults and Arts, file 8/1939, f. 8.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ In the address no. 82/1936 of the Council of the Romanian Orthodox Archiepiscopate from America to the Churchly Central Council, registered at the patriarchy cabinet with no. 2098/21 II 1936, loc.cit., supra, f. 12-13.

Convention, organized on the 2 September 1935. He considered that he came to America “to gather, not to waste”²⁸!

Attentive observer, the bishop underlined: „The Romanians from America are destined to die here. Some of them have connections they can't undo, others would like to leave, but with what?” „The children born here think of America as their home and the parents can't leave their children”²⁹. He concluded that “they cry when I tell them about the country we left. But I only found exceptions that were animated about the desire to go back home. The homesickness and nostalgia now presses all. But they are American citizens, house owners in towns and country areas. They have their own children grown here, some of them in offices, married and settled at their homes. Others buried in America's land their beloved. Because they don't have any money, there is nothing they could do at home. It is totally erroneous the idea that the Romanians from America could come back home and constitute the middle class that we lack: manufacturers, handicraftsman, traders.... They may work here in factories, but they know the only one thing they do for years, in the same place... To know the production device, or to have men to conceive or execute an independent think is a rare exception”³⁰. The bishop understood the effect of the mechanization, of the rolling belt which strictly specialize a certain technical operation! He appreciated that the ethnic Romanian group, “especially through the molding generation”, could still make “a permanently connection”. “The future might still reserve some surprises, because the Romanians which were American citizens, could sustain the cause of their brothers from home, and do it with great results and response”³¹. Because „as Romanian group they are very divided” – only in Detroit there were 43 societies and organizations! -, it had to be knocked together “so it can impose through discipline and dignity. As a number we can't count much among the 120 millions citizens”³².

“Souls fisherman”, the bishop enumerated the causes which led to the scission of the Romanian group: „the disease most spread among the Romanians is that to be a president”, the traditional vanity. Then followed the condition of the youth, „unconcentrated and troubled by the tempting delusions of workers organizations of left orientation” and who – although remained decorous – „do not understand their parents anymore”³³.

He mentioned then a generally human and national feature: „*There are so many here that display their Romanian spirit only to maintain in a situation, or to fish in the diffuse waters of the actual politics, or occasionally, after the American*

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 21.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ *Ibidem*, f. 23.

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ *Ibidem*, f. 16, 23.

way. Here has success the daring and the talkative, as in the rest of the world. Here there are people who fraternize with the Socialists and the Communists and in the same time speak loudly about their nationalism and Romanian spirit, so people will hear about them in the mother country”³⁴.

Knowing and loving the people, the bishop Policarp Morușca saw that only about 5000 Romanians were actually supporting the Church, from the 80000 in the USA, 15000 in Canada and other tens of thousands in South America. So he wondered: „Where is the rest of the Romanians from America?”³⁵

Against him many strangers unleashed hostilities and “intrigues”, and Romanians too! They named him heretic, schismatic, Communist, and accused him of God knows what! Among them, and sometimes leading them, was the priest Ioan Podea, who founded an independent parish, for “the workers”, at Cleveland, preaching Communist ideas, of a too embarrassing equalitarianism in a capitalist country! His approaches, the promoted propaganda made him undesirable for the churchly authorities from Bucharest. He has called back home in December 1935 and he left in the same month. The bishop asked directly the Patriarch Miron to support him into the Synod, to the government and the King, seeking answer to the question “are the country and the church from home decided to support and sustain the Romanian group from America?” *Or else we will not delude ourselves anymore with hopes and promises that cannot be fulfilled and we will make our own future thinking without counting on an outside help.* This clear orientation very necessary so we will not take initiatives and establish targets that cannot be accomplished”³⁶. What a daring attitude!

Being an action man, the bishop visited Romania’s Ministry to Washington, Carol Davilla, who introduced him to the chief of the Near-East Department from the American govern, to the state secretary Cordell Hull and to the president Roosevelt. Here he was welcomed „with kindness and encouraging words”, and he was promised help³⁷.

He also cultivated good connections with orthodox metropolitan bishops: the Russian Teofil from San Francisco and New York, Leonte from Chicago and Veniamin from Pittsburgh, as well as with the Greek metropolitan bishop Athenagoras from New York and the bishop Calistos from Chicago. When, at 31 December 1935, he picked up 1753,55\$ send from the country, after a half a year, se saved the situation of the Bishopric and his own.

Meanwhile, he received from Romania books and magazines from the Churchly Central Council, as an answer to his demands to found parish libraries in the American space, and schools around the churches. The hierarch had insisted for this, underlying that „if in a year or two we will not be able to attract the youth, to

³⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 24.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 23.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 25.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 28.

regain him and reintegrate him in the Romanian and churchly life, the fate of the Romanian group from America is sealed”³⁸.

In 1936 – a very difficult year for the Romanian bishop – he made efforts to organize at Youngstown an Orthodox Churchly Congress and he chaired it between 5-6 September. The manifestation was met with great enthusiasm by the Romanian communities, and found a special interest among the participants. The Magyar parishes from America appealed with great success to such reunions, a few years after the war ended.

Send by the legation to participate at the sections and to transmit the Romanian government’s support, Andrei Popovici, the chargé d’affaires, reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that: „I had never seen before so many people gathered at a Romanian manifestation in the United States, as this one. Thousands of Romanians all over the country gathered, among which youth, both boys and girls. This manifestation was significant especially because the youth born and grown here is not interested about the Romanian life – as it manifested until now in the mutual assistance societies which didn’t understand them and didn’t offered anything attractive”³⁹. The diplomat’s conclusion was that the bishop Morușcă „offers them the guarantee of his actions continuity and solidity”, inducing „a strong sudden change for the better in the Romanian’s thinking and feeling”⁴⁰. Morușca – as it results even from his reserved attitude face to his detractors at „America”, diminishing the participants critics and offering them a way of better understanding – „deserves the largest support from the authorities and Romanian society”. This was necessary for the union between „a second and a third generation of the American Romanians and the mother country”⁴¹. During the Congress also developed the Conference of the Romanian youth – the first of the kind in the United States of America. The participants received and adopted with great enthusiasm the bishop’s proposal to organize in 1937, a great trip into the country, a good opportunity to tighten the connections, to make new friends and to discover the roots of those left from home a long time ago.

Appreciating this churchly congress, the Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church expressed its satisfaction face to „the churchly, missionary and national activity developed in America by His Highness the Bishop Policarp Morușca. Seeing the success of the orthodox churches Congress, the Synode asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs to support the projected and the Minister of Cults to enlarge the subvention send to the missionary bishopric”⁴².

³⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 33. See also the intervention of the Churchly Central Council to the Minister of Cults and Arts, no. 2790/7 III 1936, *idem*, f. 32.

³⁹ Cf. report no. 3240 – P – 12/15 IX 1936 to the ministry Victor Antonescu, *idem*, f. 81.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 82.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, f. 84.

⁴² Cf. the meeting of the Holy Synod, 26 XI 1936, *loc.cit.*, file cit., f. 85.

Meanwhile, the bishop's actions led to important achievements, consolidating the activity he begun. Continuous visits, after the şagunian model, discussions with priests and believers, encouragement and support to build or repair churches, always restless on the road, these were the bishop's actions. He considered himself forgotten, „left entirely alone; alone at the office, alone on the long roads of the canonical visits and often alone at the religious services. The subvention send by the Romanian state made the bishop's salary equal to that of a functionary from America (358\$ lunar)”, and I am forced to pass the winter „in a 22 dollars topcoat. I took a lunch, together with the accompanying priest, of 52 cents”⁴³. The bishop Moruşca did not despair and didn't give up! On the contrary! He said: „Until now I endured all this with serenity, considering myself permanently on the <<front>>, where there's to question about comfort”⁴⁴. In all those years he edited episcopal calendars (1936-1939), he published „Solia” – from February 1936 – and bought 200 acres of land for the orthodox ecclesiastic center. „Vatra Românească”, „was mend to gather the charity and culture institutions, without which the Church cannot fulfill its mission”⁴⁵. At his initiatives answered many Romanians, priests and laymen, who understood his ideas and supported them. They build national houses close to the churches, sometimes parish residences, repaired churches and even build new edifices. The seeds sew on American soil by the hardworking bishop begun to grow! We find the restless bishop participating at the Romanian National House hallowing, at the church „Saint Maria from Cleveland, ceremony developed with great enthusiasm on the 17 October 1937⁴⁶. The bronze bas-reliefs with historical scenes made by Mac Constantinescu testify about the major ideas that dominated the bishop's, mind. He often took part at conflicts extinction or the solving of the difficult situations of the priests send at American parishes. His way of life, his temperance and kindness had the gift to attenuate conflicts or even to extinct them The bishop Moruşca knew, better than any other Romanian representative in America, how the priests and their flock were living. Once he negotiated the situation of the priests Glicherie Moraru and Teodosie Scaletchi – both wanting to stay in Montreal. Generalizing, he said: „The story of both priests past life is long and painful, back in the country and here in America, where, to resist, you must have the patience of a martyr, ungrudgingly persistence and self-denial devotion to the Church. Above all, you need fair, spotless life”⁴⁷.

⁴³ Cf. The olograph letter with the missionary Episcopate heading, no. 99/6 IX 1939, send from Craiva, to the poste office Ighiu the ministry Dr. Nicolae Zigre, *loc.cit.*, f. 39.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶ See the participation notice of the Romanian vice-consul from Cleveland consulate, G. Anagnostache, in *loc.cit.*, file 6/1938, f. 1.

⁴⁷ The note of the Romanian Orthodox Missionary Episcopate in America – „Vatra Românească”, Grass-Lake – Michigan, no. 279/17 X 1938 to the Minister of Cults and Arts, His Holy Highness the Metropolitan Bishop Nicolae Bălan, in *loc.cit.* file 6/1938, f. 39.

Forced to appeal to more or less “orthodox” associations (for instance, Glicherie Moraru (1894-1973) was partner with another Romanian at a restaurant, then became a successful businessman), the priests searched for parishes which could offer them a decent life. The bishop named the first priest at the churches „St. Nicolas” from Regina and at those with the festival „Saints Apostles Pavel and Petru” and „Adormirea Maicii Domnului” Kayville – Saskatschewan, and priest Scaletchi at the churches „Saints Apostles Petru și Pavel” – Flintioft and „the Ascension” from Elmspring⁴⁸.

The bishop’s demands were later listened also at Bucharest and the parish presented the Romanian authorities undeniable realities. In the United States of America 43 priests already functioned in 1939: 2 bachelors; 5 with the theological academy; 5 with theological institute and school graduates; 3 with normal school and theological Institute; 3 with theological seminar and 20 without special theological education. 5 didn’t have parishes and 7 parishes were vacant, being unable to support the priests.

For them the bishop asked a subvention of 1 426 800 lei and a salary equivalent with those of the other priests outside the country, taking as models those from Hungary and Yugoslavia: 3300 lei/a month for those with theological Institute and 2300 lei/a month for the others⁴⁹.

He demanded these corrections for the priests in America so that they “will feel connected to the mother country”, treating them like the other brothers were. For a bishop he claimed a salary of 500\$ a month. For a reviewer he asked 250\$, for a deacon-secretary 150\$ and for a cleaner 70\$. There were also prevised stipulated 75\$ for material and chancellery expenses, and the rest of the subvention (1 500 000 lei) was to be retained for the publishing of „Soliei”, “a newspaper for spiritual construction and Romanian propaganda”⁵⁰. After observing directly the American realities, the bishop Policarp Morușca noted: „the working and money crisis crossed the Republic of the United States of America. The Canada Dominion was crossed by drought for 9 continuous years”. The believers could afford at most the church maintenance, but not their priests. At the same time with the priests fate was discussed „the prestige of the Romanian Orthodox Church abroad in the face of our believers there”⁵¹.

He capitalized all the opportunities he encountered. At New York he managed, when the Romanian stand was organized at the Universal Exposition, to organize „an orthodox parish and to buy a house, where I ordered a prayer chapel”, hallowed on the 23 July 1939, one day before he left to America to participate at

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁹ Cf. the report made by the Cults Director, Șt. Brădișteanu, according to no. 43863/1939 to the Ministry of Finances to approve the new subvention, *loc.cit.*, f. 37.

⁵⁰ In the address no. 39/6 IX 1939, wrote from Craiva, *idem*, f. 39.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

the sections of the Holy Synod⁵². In the country he asked for the approval of a priest, paid by the Minister with 100\$ a month. He also intended to send for an orthodox priest in South America, for him asking a subvention of 400000 lei⁵³.

He was a bishop without “residence in the country” and when he came to Bucharest it wasn’t very sure where he stayed. This bishopric didn’t have the others’ advantages, although it was under the canonical jurisdiction of the Holy Synod, taking part at the superior churchly corporations, with deliberative vote concerning its mission. For P.S.S. Policarp Morușca it was needed a royal decree already approved.

A Romanian Orthodox Mission in South America was founded in 1933, with headquarters at Buenos-Aires, where over 30 000 Romanians were living. The first missionary priest was the Bessarabian Mihail Petrovici, who stayed here for the Romanians from Argentina and Brazil, but in the same year he returned into the country, lacking the material means. The 300 000 „strayed” Romanians from South America were „completely lacking any organization, therefore in an inferior situation compared to the other nations and confessions”. The bishop Morușca asked for a priest for them. At 1 March 1940 the Churchly Central Council named again the priest Mihail Petrovici, the missionary Episcopate gave its blessing on the 3 March and the Patriarch Nicodim blessed immediately the mission. The priest prepared for the road, but on the 25 May 1945 he hadn’t left yet!

After breaking the war and because of his precarious sanity, the bishop understood that, at least in the near future, he couldn’t go back to U.S.A. For the next few years he retired at Craiova and accepted, in 1941, the position of bishop at Cetatea Albă – Ismail, on another Christian front. The bishop wrote to the Ministry of Cults and Arts, Ioan Nistor: on the 15 January 1940 he asked to pass the Missionary Episcopate in his budget, not with subvention, but with the necessary paid personnel. For himself he asked „the regularization of the report with the pension fond”⁵⁴.

He had 35 years in the service of the Church, the way to America was shut, so he asked to be retired. „I don’t want to throng or to stay in anybody’s way, I am tired and ill after all the efforts made in the first missionary years”⁵⁵. He didn’t pretend anything except the retiring regime that his homologue had, the bishop of Tomis and Lower Danube (25000 lei salary + 12500 lei for representation)⁵⁶. The fate didn’t allow the bishop to see again the churches, the Romanian national houses and their servants from America. But those he established in his short missionary mandate there had fruits in most of the cases, leaving to American

⁵² *Ibidem*, f. 40. He left in his place, during the official trip, the priest Simion Mihălțan, who will fulfill this job until 1947.

⁵³ Cf. referant Șt. Brădișteanu, f. 37.

⁵⁴ Cf. address no. 11/2 III 1940, from Craiva, *loc.cit.* file 8/1940, f. 22.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*.

orthodox believers well settled establishments and the memory of a persisting hierarch in the name of the Cross and of his people.

What really happened with Policarp Morușca, in the international political context? For more than 11 months, he lived “*in a small mountain village, in his fathers home, held by high order... pretending that I had connections with the Iron Guard or that I patronized the guardism... I must confess I never made militant politics. I have no other guilt than my continuous love for the country’s youth and for his desire to place himself under the standard of the total Romanian spirit and Christianity I represented in America. I left with this mission: to support and defend our traditional Orthodoxy and the Romanian spirit from there against the many melting currents which interfere there*”⁵⁷. If the missionary bishop had been an iron guardist, would he have confessed otherwise? Would he have with meekness offered his services, demanding praying hours in the rural churches – in the evening and in the morning -, sustaining the these that “first of all the priest is the man of the prayer”?⁵⁸ The iron guardist had just taken the lead of the country!

At 17 November 1940, still at Craiva, Policarp Morușca wrote to the iron guardist Ministry Șt. Brăileanu and asked an audience, so he can present the motives he had been held “from high order” in October 1939⁵⁹. He couldn’t resolve his situation. Because the international context developed towards the complication of Romania’s external relations, the bishop addressed, after the iron guardians rebellion, on the 24 January 1941, to the chief of state. He wrote “with deep grief for the new blood sacrifices the country asked, but thanking God for helping you reinstall the order, please have faith, Mister general, that there are plenty of good and decent men in this country. This men were not slaves of the Judaic freemasonry, devoted to the party spirit or mastered by vain personal ambitions. *They follow you on the road of the real healthy iron guardism, founded on total Christianity and nationalism, capable and ready to help you in the difficult mission to rebuild the country and to rehabilitate the nation*”⁶⁰. In those confuse days around Ion Antonescu, gathered the sympathies of those who sustained “the real iron guardism”. Still, Ion Antonescu himself made clear distinctions between the clerks mission and politics. Immediately after the extinction of the iron guardian rebellion, he signed an *Appeal to all the servants of the Romanian altars*: “Christ’s Church doesn’t mean only walls, icons, spiritual cleaning. Wherever lives a pure soul, there is an altar of God.” “Give the Church what the Savior placed at its foundation”, “the teachings of the *Gospel* be seen in your deeds. Thus I ask from you tat in your everyday life to be the most lovable. Be the best. Be the most correct. Be the fairest. Be the most working people.

⁵⁷ Letter from Craiva, no. 66/ 14.IX.1940 to the ministry of National Culture and Cults, *loc.cit.*, file 6/ 1941, f.9.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁹ See the letter no. 69/ 17.XI.1940, *idem*, f.8.

⁶⁰ Cf. the letter from Craiva, no. 8/ 24.I.1941, *idem*, f.7.

Be the thriftiest. Never chase money, because they make you slip on the slope of the human passions. *Drive away politics from around the altars, like our Savior drew away the traders. It brought great unhappiness to this country. It set everybody against each other, because politics, in our country, means hunting. To hunt a man, to throw him aside, to take a place without deserving it, to take a thing, by any costs and means, that is politics. It is how to get rich over night*⁶¹. Ion Antonescu rebuked the excesses, judging the priests who were exaggerating, wearing green shirts. He used to say: “In the iron guardian Romania *ended these habits*, and he urged the priests: “we started from icons and altars, let’s go back to them”⁶².

An orthodox hierarch like Policarp Morușca could make distinctions between how the iron guard was and how it should have been

The bishop shown the general “my incapacity to leave in time for my mission in America”, and how he seated “humble, lonely and quiet, with no place and purpose in the Church from home”. He waited Ion Antonescu’s decision – “according to the external circumstances” – to decide “the opportunity of my leaving at the mission that I consider necessary for the Church and for the interest of the Romanian spirit over there”⁶³.

The humble, lonely and quiet bishop ended his approach: “being used to hard and restless work, I offer to my country and my people my life experience and my humble powers, wherever and whenever you will need them”⁶⁴. General Ion Antonescu listened and shown trust to the bishop because, in the same year, he was named missionary, deputy of bishop at Cetatea Albă - Ismail!

Until his nomination, the bishop didn’t stop the approaches for his parish, asking the Patriarch Nicodim to support him: “You would say that I am victimized by the fate! Neither this time the bishopric will not be taken in budget with the necessary personnel, so it can fulfill its calling”. Policarp Morușca, being caught by the events, “I was in the country at the Paresimilor Fast and I won’t be there for Eastern either”. It is what his friends from the American diplomatic mission also made him understand⁶⁵.

In May 1941, being in Bucharest, he left the Ministry a very important note. He had just found out from the general consul Andrei Ionescu from New York that the materials from the Romanian pavilion at the universal Exposition in 1939 were transferred to Cleveland to “build there a cathedral”⁶⁶! Even before he left the U.S.A., the bishop planned, together with the advocate Nelson Cromwell, the president of the American-Romanian Society, to use the materials to build a

⁶¹ See the circular-appeal send to the parishers, countersigned by Em. Bucuța, with the heading of the Minister of National Education, Culture and Arts, no. 7952/ 12.II.1941, *loc.cit.*, file 137/ 1941, f.23.

⁶² *Ibidem.*

⁶³ *Ibidem.*

⁶⁴ *Ibidem.*

⁶⁵ Cf. letter no. 14/ 2.III.1941 to the Patriarch, *idem*, f. 14-15.

⁶⁶ See memorandum no. 27/ 8.V.1941, București, *idem*, f.25.

church and a Romanian home “in the international center New York, were are living almost all the orthodox lodgers of the other nations”⁶⁷. But the new plan didn’t revoked it, because Cleveland was the oldest “and the best organized Romanian center”, and its church was too small and narrow, so he “warmly recommended” the support of the project. It was to be build “a church-cathedral, with a residence for the bishop and with other religious and cultural institutions”, so “at least in one local Romanian center” to be very well represented⁶⁸.

He added the need to support “Vatra Românească”, asking to be paid the remaining sum of 11.000 \$ (from 31.000 \$, the entire cost). Further on it was to be “organized the home for the olds, the school for singers, the institutions for orthodox and Romanian education of youth in summer holidays”⁶⁹. The rector Truția, who was replacing him, asked Ion Antonescu support for the church-museum from Cleveland. His telegram to the general was briefing: “the material is already transported. The plans are ready. We want to start the building and we must know if we will receive help or not. Decide in any way you wish. The exiles will serve the country’s reunification, keeping valuable friendships for the dignity of our sacrifices”⁷⁰. The Ministry of Cults and Arts asked the bishop Morușca to confirm the need of this church, of whose fate was interesting the very leader of the state. How could the bishop not do that, he who believed that “a people without churchly and cultural institutions, of general interest, is mend to disappear. That can happen especially there, in the middle of all these nations, where all the currents interfere. Our poor Romanians can still support their churches, the few cultural houses and life assurance societies”⁷¹.

In the summer of the same year the bishop requested to the department ministry: the payment of the 17.000\$ owed by the missionary Episcopate and its endowment into the country with forests and arable land; the admittance in the budget of the missionary priests from America; the urgent sending of father Mihail Petrovici and of the priest Stavrofor Vladimir Gheorghiu in South America. He insisted “to concern about the reorganization of the missionary Episcopate from America, which is a constitutive part of the country’s Romanian Orthodox Church, like the Romanians over there are a branch from the Romanian people tree of life, spread over seas and countries”⁷².

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, f.26.

⁷⁰ Telegram from Cleveland registered at the Presidency of the Ministry Council with no. 2216 cc/18.III.1941, *loc.cit.*, *idem*, f.34.

⁷¹ See the address of the ministry of National Culture and Cults to Policarp Morușca, no. 20994/3.V.1941, *idem*, f.28 and his answer from 8.V.1941.

⁷² Cf. memorium from 7.VII.1941, București, *idem*, f.87-88.

On 4 December 1940 the Holy Synod discussed the demands made by bishop Morușca, in the presence of Patriarch Nicodim. They approved the entrance on pay lists the 42 missionary priests America and a special budget for the bishopric (salaries for the bishop, 2 cathedral priests, 2 deacons, 2 psalm-readers, 2 vergers and 2 cleaning men). Regarding the land reform, it was asked a postponement, but it wasn't excluded the purchasing of an America building for the Episcopate. The Metropolitan Bishop of Transylvania wanted to make some remarks: "let's refer to the missionary Episcopate's problem, and not to the bishop's situation. If we will find a solution for the problem, then the bishop's situation will be settled". He also made another interesting observation: "America is a domain of extraordinary propaganda for our times"⁷³. Then were discussed the necessary sums, in the U.S.A., for the bishop and his followers. Policarp Morușca diplomatically affirmed that, in case he was refused, "he will not be able to stand at the real level that he should have as Bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Church"⁷⁴.

The Minister recognized the services made by the prelate, as it results from the nomination – after the proposal made by P. Morușca – of Sirca T. Titus (born at Mănerău, Arad district, on 12 October 1916, school leaver of three gimnasium classes at the High School "Moise Nicoară" in 1939) as cleaner IV class, (salary 4.000 lei/ a month), a new founded post at the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate in America⁷⁵.

EPISCOPUL POLICARP MORUȘCĂ (20.III.1883 - 26.X.1958) ȘI STĂRUINȚA PENTRU ROMÂNII AMERICANI

- Rezumat -

Slujitor al altarului creștin, Policarp Morușca a fost ales la 24 ianuarie 1935 episcop misionar pentru românii ortodocși din America. La 4 iulie în același an a fost înscăunat în catedrala din Detroit, spre a păstori una dintre cele mai mari eparhii românești din afara țării.

Meritele sale de însuflețitor al comunităților s-au revelat printr-un neostenit efort de organizare, reunind în jurul a 44 de parohii mii de credincioși. Este ierarhul care a inițiat apariția publicației "Solia" și a "Calendarului eparhial Solia", dar și a

⁷³ See the extract of the Ind meeting of the Holy Synod, 4.XII.1940, at the report of the Commission for Foreign Affairs, transmitted under the signature of Patriarch Nicodim, the Minister of National Culture and Cults, *idem*, f.90.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, f.91.

⁷⁵ the address of the Romanian Orthodox Missionary Episcopate in America and western States, no. 12/ 20.II.1944, to the Minister of National Education, Cults and Arts in National Archives – Central Historical Arh., Fond The Minister of Cults and Arts, file 8/ 1944, f.18-19.

*THE BISHOP POLICARP MORUȘCA (20.III.1883–26.X.1958) AND THE CONCERN
FOR THE AMERICAN ROMANIANS*

reședinței eparhiale de la “Vatra Românească”. Chemat în țară, în august 1939, Episcopul Morușca nu s-a mai reîntors în SUA, retrăgându-se la Craiva (jud. Alba), de unde a corespondat, susținându-și eparhia în fața autorizațiilor timpului. O parte din această corespondență inedită, este utilizată în articolul de față, explicând demersurile ierarhului, oferind noi date și informații asupra istoricului episcopiei românilor americani. În urma prezentării acestor documente, opera primului episcop al românilor americani apare ca una consistentă și de lungă durată, iar figura sa, ca a unui ierarh ce a slujit cu o desăvârșită devoțiune și har creștinismul și Biserica Ortodoxă Română.