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July 51

Press release.

For immediate publication.

The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America
2801 Detroit Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio

ROMANIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA ELECTS NEW BISHOP

The clergy and lay delegates of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America met in their annual Congress at Chicago, Illinois on July 1, 2 and 3, 1951. They represented the absolute majority of the faithful of this Church in the United States and Canada.

After serious deliberations, many of the current problems confronting the Church in this country were resolved satisfactorily. The Congress was especially concerned with the problem of the relationship of the Church in this country with the Mother Church in Rumania. From its very beginning, the Episcopate was granted complete administrative autonomy and has always conducted its affairs through its legally constituted organs, elected by the Church Congress.

At the request of the Church in America, in 1934 the Holy Synod of Rumania designated His Grace, Bishop Polycarp Morosan to head the newly formed Episcopate. After his enthronement in 1935 at Detroit, Michigan, as titular head, he was in charge of the Episcopate right up to August, 1939, when he left for Rumania on a visit. Since then, he was not permitted to leave Rumania to return to his diocesan seat.

After the present Communistic regime gained control of Rumania, the Orthodox Church in that country was subjected to the new government and was allowed to rule itself only under its strictest control and supervision. This government had tried unsuccessfully to impose a Bishop of their choice and to their liking upon the Church in America, without prior consultation and in complete defiance of the duly elected authorities of the Church in this country. Naturally, this action was hastily repudiated unanimously by the congregations in this country.

The Communistic regime was not satisfied to let things stand as they were until it finally succeeded in finding a man of its liking amongst the clergy in America, who was willing and ready to carry out its orders. The procedure towards this end ran to form of all similar Communistic infiltrations.

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At a so-called "meeting" of only 8 or 9 persons at Detroit, Michigan in May, 1943, a "new" Episcopate (Diocese) was organized and incorporated under the title of "The Romanian Orthodox Autonomous Episcopate of North and South America" and elected the Rev. Andrei Moldovan, at that time pastor of the parish in Akron, Ohio, as bishop of this diocese. This group immediately petitioned the Holy Synod and the present Patriarch of Romania to approve this "election" and to take steps to consecrate their "bishop-elect".

Upon the completion of the necessary formalities, which were made in the greatest secrecy, said Andrei Moldovan flew to Romania where he was received with the utmost pomp for propaganda purposes by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities. The native population was told that the newly elected "bishop" of their brethren in America had come to take back some of the "new light" which now shines in Bucharest.

As per plans, Andrei Moldovan was consecrated bishop on November 12, 1940 at Sibiu. Shortly thereafter, upon being thoroughly instructed by Patriarch Justinian Ehrim, the trusted tool of the regime, the new bishop returned to America, with orders that all properties of the Romanian Orthodox Church outside the Mother Country be assigned to him.

Whereupon, the legal and duly elected Council of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, presided by the Very Rev. John Trutsa, flatly refused to execute the orders of the Red Patriarch, since Andrei Moldovan was not elected according to the canons of the Church nor with the consent of the members upon whom he now wanted to impose himself. For them, he was not their bishop, but merely the bishop of the New Episcopate which he had incorporated and for the few followers he was able to gather together. The legal Episcopate denies the right of the Romanian Patriarchate to decide upon matters pertaining exclusively to American citizens belonging to the Romanian Orthodox Church.

As a result, Andrei Moldovan turned to the district Federal Court at Cleveland, Ohio to force by law the Council of the old and legal Episcopate of

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America to turn over to him the properties and leadership of the Church. The trial is pending. Andrei Moldovan has already been found guilty of Contempt of Court for violating specific court instructions.

This whole matter was presented to the Congress held at Chicago. The attitude and notions of the Council and of Father Frutan, on its behalf, were wholeheartedly endorsed. The claims of Andrei Moldovan were utterly repudiated and so as not to have a recurrence of the unrightful interference of the Romanian Patriarchate in the affairs of the Church in America, it was unanimously decided to sever all relationships with the Mother Church. (See annexed copy of text.)

At this same Congress, Dr. Viorel Trifu, a promising young theologian, was elected Bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America to perform all Episcopal functions in the absence of the titular head.

The new bishop-elect was born in Romania on June 26, 1914. He studied Theology and Philosophy at the Universities of Jassy and Bucharest and did graduate work in Germany and Italy. During World War II, he was interned for years in the concentration camp at Dachau. Upon cessation of hostilities, refusing to return to Romania because of his antipathy of the Communist regime, he went to Italy, where he was a professor of languages at a College for 5 years.

He came to the United States as a displaced person in July, 1950 and was shortly thereafter entrusted with the editing and managing of the "Solis" weekly, the official organ of the Episcopate. He held this position until his election. Plans are under way for his consecration in the near future.