

## **II. HISTORICAL THEOLOGY**

### **VISARION PUIU, THE FIRST ROMANIAN ORTHODOX METROPOLITAN IN PARIS**

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**ABSTRACT.** The case of metropolitan Visarion Puiu, the only bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Church who remained exiled after the Romanian territory was occupied by the Soviet troops in August 1944 and who was condemned to death in February 1946 and defrocked by the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1950, is still one of the most controversial topics of the recent Romanian church historiography. Having been studied fragmentarily and very few times thoroughly researched, his writings not edited or read according to his true contribution to the Romanian contemporary Theology, Visarion Puiu still represents a long debatable, yet little known figure.

**Keywords:** metropolitan, condemned, defrocked, exiled, Paris

#### **Circumstances of the exile**

After having attended the Romanian orthodox people for a considerable period of time as a bishop of Arges (1921-1923, Curtea de Arges, Romania) and of Hotin (1923-1935, at Balti, in the Republic of Moldavia), then as a metropolitan of Bucovina (1935-1940) and of Transnistria (1942-1943) at Chernovtsy and Odessa in Ukraine, Visarion Puiu looked for a way to be helpful to the Romanian in the West, thus avoiding the contact with the Communist Regime established in Romania. His activity during the exile could be summarized as follows: Croatia, 13th-17th of August 1944, Austria August 1944-October 1945, Italy October 1945-November 1947, Switzerland November 1947-August 1949, and France August 1949-August 1964<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Metropolitan Visarion Puiu, *Notes of my life*, (edition, notes and addenda by Dumitru Stavarache and Gheorghe Vasilescu, Trinitas Publishing Company, Iași, 2004), 116, 117.

He left the country together with an official delegation at the request of the Church Management and Gh. Tatarascu government in order to participate at a Croatian bishop's ordainment in Zagreb, ceremony that took place the 15th of August 1944. The 23rd of August 1944 (the day the Soviet troops entered Romania) he was on his way back from Vienna, that date the diplomatic relationship between Romania and Germany were cut off, the borders being closed and any means of transport that related Romania were stopped. Under the new conditions, the metropolitan was in the situation of organising a new Church Structure for the numerous Romanian masses, people who were left outside the country borders with no help whatsoever from the Civil Authorities. With the approval of the Berlin government, he thus creates the Romanian Orthodox Doicese for Germany and Austria, being its temporary leader and waiting for the political situation to get better instead of asking for the approval of the Central Official Church of Bucharest. Because the political situation remained unchanged, the Romanians in exile reorganised themselves and, around Horia Sima, they founded the Romanian National Government in Vienna (December 1944), in which, without his agreement, the metropolitan is designated to help the Church problems of the Romanians in exile. From Vienna, the Metropolitan Visarion leaves for Italy (hosted for a while at the Maguzzano Monastery), then in Switzerland, and in the autumn of 1949 he reaches Paris as a guest of the Martinian Ivanovici archimandrite, the superior of the Romanian Church, who invites him to serve in more suitable conditions and to offer a more solemn note to the religious masses officiated here. When he arrived in Paris in September 1949, the metropolitan succeeded for a short period of time, to establish the residence of his diocese on Jean de Beauvais Street, because its vicar refused to turn in the office to the Legation of the Popular Republic of Romania. In the meantime, The People's Courthouse in Bucharest, created especially for the trial of the war criminals and for those responsible for the country disaster, condemned him to death in February 1946, and the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church defrocked him in February 1950. His death verdict was motivated by the fact he would have developed terror activities in Bessarabia and Transnistria, he would have left Romania serving the Hitlerism leaders and he would have been part of the exile government lead by Horia Sima<sup>2</sup>,

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<sup>2</sup> Archives CNSAS, *MAI fund*, file P80/8, ff. 139, 140. According to an informative note of 1st February 1945 with information taken over from the radio show of Donau (Danube) of the 14th of December 1944 at 0,30, Romania National Government with its headquarters in Vienna had the following members: Horia Sima, the president of the Council of Ministers; Vasile Iasinski, Home office, Health and Social Service minister; Mihail Sturza, Foreign affairs and instruction minister; Platon Chirnoagă, war minister; Sergiu Vladimir Cristea, Culture minister; Corneliu Georgescu, Finance and Economy minister; Grigore Manoilescu, propaganda minister; Visarion Puiu was just at the disposal of the government for church affairs (Archives CNSAS, *SIE P 3763 fund*, P80/1 file, f. 16). The information complete and contradict themselves at the same time, another note in the file, volume 7, line 21 presenting the metropolitan as Cult minister in the same government, together with a new person on the list, university professor Ion Sângiorgiu as being the National Education minister.

and the Holy Synod, which was subdued to the Communist Authorities, couldn't do anything but acknowledge the decision of the criminal verdict and provides as such.

In the background of international political changes occurred after the Geneva Conference (1955) which led to a relaxation, at least temporary, of the international relationships, that had both military and economic implications, the Romanian State started the revision of the final verdicts ordered to those people who expressed the reeducated and well-behaved conduct in the communist prisons, who had exceptional professional qualities or who were old and ill whose situation stirred up the citizens' compassion. Having discovered in many cases, many judicial errors or verdicts disproportionate with the committed acts, maybe justified by the postwar environment, but unsupported ten years after the war, the communist authorities were compelled to initiate a revision of the situation in which political convicts had final sentences, including war criminals, the real war criminals being imprisoned. In the meantime, Romania started a vast external project in different west European states, especially francophone countries, in whose shadow there were sometimes illegal political activities. The means to do so were organizing cultural demonstrations and changes, sport events, meetings between delegation members and different autochthonous figures, at the same time and by which trying to infiltrate undercover agents to supervise, discourage and most of all disturb the plans of the Romanian emigration.

In these circumstances, it was intended to contact some of the leaders of the emigration, including one of the most influential people of his time the metropolitan Visarion Puiu. Both acts issued against him, his death sentence and his defrocking, made him solve his canonical and judicial situation preparing his coming back home<sup>3</sup>, this being the main reason for his meetings with the members of the Romanian delegation who were sent specially to contact him. The political situation was unfavorable for a very long time to be able to solve these problems. Although he was an exile advocate, promoting the idea of creating a Synod in exile, totally separated from the Bucharest Patriarchy, which he considered summated to the communist government politics, the documents existing in the archives of the former Direction of the External Affairs presents him as a person who expressed his interest for repatriation many times, interest which was stimulated in many ways by the communist security. In the operative plans of the Security there were references to which he had to be contacted since 1955 and had to be turned into an influential agent for the Romanian fugitives and church circles<sup>4</sup>. "The Fugitives" was the name used by the Security agents

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<sup>3</sup> Adrian Nicolae Petcu, "The Problem of the repatriation of Visarion Puiu metropolitan reflected in the security documents", in *Agero magazine*, Stuttgart, [http://www.agero-stuttgart.de/REVISTA-AGERO/ISTORIE/Problema%20repatrierii%20mitropolitului%20Visarion%20Puiu%20in%20documentele%20Securitatii.htm#\\_ftnref1](http://www.agero-stuttgart.de/REVISTA-AGERO/ISTORIE/Problema%20repatrierii%20mitropolitului%20Visarion%20Puiu%20in%20documentele%20Securitatii.htm#_ftnref1), (accessed December 12, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Information regarding the beginning of the prosecution of the metropolitan Visarion Puiu is being found in the operational archives of the Internal Affairs Ministry, file P80, volume 1.

to call all the Romanian emigrants, no matter the political party they belonged to, people who left Romania the time the communist party took political control. The punitive measures taken by the Romanian State against the Monarchy which was flourishing after 1945, made the repatriation attempts of the metropolitan fail, he asked numerous times for warranties to accomplish it. As the required warranties were so long waited for, the contacts with him being on and off several times, especially because of the lack of people capable to give a well argued speech in front of the metropolitan, he was in the situation of accepting easily the help of foreigners than to deal with the unfounded promises of the Romanian officials who were sent to convince him to be repatriated. Many times thou, his attempts to contact were made beneath national interests, for example to ask for advice about church problems emerged inside the Romanian immigration, the indications received from him being used later on by the agents of the Security.

### Parisian Period

On April 18<sup>th</sup> 1948, The Romanian Parochial Assembly of the Church in Paris, in front of the believers who were attending the service declares itself against the Communist Regime in the country and therefore all ties with the Romanian Legation in Paris<sup>5</sup> and the Romanian Patriarchy from Bucharest are

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<sup>5</sup> For details regarding the Romanian Church in Paris see: Veniamin Pocitan Ploesteanu, *The Romanian Church in Paris with an introduction on the Romanian-French relations*, (Bucharest, 1941); N.A. Gheorghiu, *La La Fondation de l'Eglise orthodoxe roumaine de Paris*, (Paris, 1953); Jean Miloe, *La Riposte aux attaques du Gouvernement Roumain contre l'Eglise Roumaine de Paris*, (Paris, 1976); Dinu Sikitiu-Cartior, *Romanian Altars in Paris*, (Bucuresti, 1994); Jean-Paul Besse, *L'Eglise orthodoxe roumaine de Paris*, (Paris, 1994); Mircea Păcurariu, "Geschichte der Rumänsch-Orthodoxen Kirche", *Oikonomia* 33 (Erlangen, 1994): 587-590; Idem, "The Romanian Diaspora in the past and present", in *Deisis*, number 1, 29-34; Mircea Basarab, *The History of the Nativity Romanian Orthodox Parish, München*, (Oradea, 1997); Ovidiu Bozgan, "The Romanian Orthodox Church in Paris during the first post-war years", *Studies on the History of the Church*, (University Publishing, Bucharest, 2000): 43-66; Ioan Barbu, *The Orthodox France*, (Antim Ivireanu Publishing, Langues et Culturea Europeennes Publishing, Paris, 2001); Dumitru Stavarache, *The Metropolitan Visarion Puiu. Documents when wandering*, (Pașcani, Moldopress Publishing, 2002); Dumitru Stavarache, Ion Negoescu, *The Metropolitan Visarion Puiu. Relations with Churches from Canada and USA - Documents. 1912-1963*, (Bucharest, Publirom Publishing, 2005); The Metropolitan Visarion Puiu, *Notes of my life*, (edition, notes and addendum by Dumitru Stavarache and Gheorghe Vasilescu, Iași, Trinitas Publishing, 2004); Florin Manolescu, *The Encyclopedia of the Romanian Literary Exile. 1945-1989*, (Company Publishing, 2003); \*\*\* "Les incidents de l'Eglise Roumaine de Paris", in *La Nation Roumaine*, 28 (15th September 1949): 3; \*\*\* "Le pretes et la politique", in *La Nation Roumaine*, 27 (1st September 1949): 3; \*\*\* "The Romanian Church in Paris", in *Patria*, 4, (October 1949): 2; \*\*\* "Vers une solution du probleme de l'eglise roumaine de Paris", in *La Nation Roumaine*, 31 (1st November 1949): 3; \*\*\* "The Centenary of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Paris", in *The hardworking Romania*, 23 (November 1953): 11-13; \*\*\* "Le centenaire de l'Eglise orthodoxe roumaine de Paris", in *La Nation Roumaine*, 125 (1st December 1953): 1, 3; \*\*\* "A Romanian School in Paris", in *B.I.R.E.*, VII, 176 (1st April 1954): 7; \*\*\* "The last achievement of the adventurer Vasile

broken. At the same time, it is decided for king Mihai the first and his mother queen Elena to be mentioned in the prayers of the church. An association for practising the orthodox cult is founded in order to continue the liturgical activity and to oppose the Bucharest Government intentions to take over the

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Boldeanu", in *B.I.R.E.*, 193 (15<sup>th</sup> January 1955): 8; Corespondent, "From the Romanian Orthodox Church in Paris", in *Stindardul*, 24-25 (January-March 1956): 5; \*\*\* "A new Parochial Council was elected at the Romanian Orthodox Church in Paris", in *B.I.R.E.*, VIII, 194 15<sup>th</sup> February 1955, p. 11; M.V. Ottescu, "Of the priest Pârvănescu's file", in *B.I.R.E.*, number. 197, 15<sup>th</sup> March (1955): 7-8; Idem, "Looking through the priest Pârvănescu's file", in *B.I.R.E.*, VIII, 198 (1<sup>st</sup> April 1955): 8,12; Idem, "Priest Radu Grațian unmasks Virgil Pârvănescu ever since", in *B.I.R.E.*, 200 (1<sup>st</sup> May 1955): 8,11; Idem, "The Drama of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Paris is about to be solved", in *B.I.R.E.*, 212 (1<sup>st</sup> December 1955): 4; \*\*\* "How the so-called General Assembly of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Paris turned out", in *B.I.R.E.*, 199 (15<sup>th</sup> April 1955): 12-13; \*\*\* "Romanian Orthodox Church in Paris emerged from Visarion Puiu's judicial canonicity", in *B.I.R.E.*, 213 (15<sup>th</sup> December 1955): 11; \*\*\* "What is about the rumour of repatriation of the Metropolitan Visarion Puiu", in *B.I.R.E.*, 216 (1<sup>st</sup> February 1956): 2; \*\*\* "The drama of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Paris continues", in *B.I.R.E.*, IX, 218 (1<sup>st</sup> March 1956): 4; 8; \*\*\* "How the second General Assembly of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Paris turned out, in *B.I.R.E.*, 220 (1<sup>st</sup> April 1956): 9, 10; \*\*\* "The Sacrilege from the Romanian Orthodox Church in Paris", in *B.I.R.E.*, 232 (15<sup>th</sup> May 1956): 9, 10; \*\*\* "What reasons determined the Civil Court of Justice in Sena to decide Virgil Pârvănescu's detachment from the Romanian Orthodox Church in Paris", in *B.I.R.E.*, 236 (1<sup>st</sup> January 1957): 11-12; \*\*\* "News and internal disposals", in *Orientations for Legionaries*, (Bavaria, 5, February 1958): 6; Ion Dascalu, "Great Sin", in *Crucifix*, 26 (August 1958): 4; Teofil Ionescu, "A Contribution to the Union of the Romanian Principalities. Archimendrite Iosafat Snagoveanu", in *Romanian Wanderers's Almanac 1963-1964*, (Paris): 63-72, \*\*\* "At the death of His All-Holy metropolitan Visarion Puiu", in *Le Courier Roumain*, 274 (31<sup>st</sup> of August 1964): 20-26; \*\*\* "The Romanian Orthodox Church in Paris. Announcement", in *The Word in Exile*, 28-30 (September-November 1964): 8; N.A. Gheorghiu, "The Romanian Orthodox Church in Paris", in *Prodromos*, 3-4 (April 1965): 22-24; \*\*\* "Questions addressed to the former priest Boldeanu", in *Le Courier Roumain*, 291 (May 1965): 19, 20; \*\*\* "Notes", in *Le Courier Roumain*, 300-301 (7-30 October 1965): 28, I.D.M., "The Twelfth Hour", in *Le Courier Roumain*, 295-296 (16-31 July 1965): 23, 24; \*\*\* "The readers Tribune", in *Le Courier Roumain*, 305-306 (16-31 December 1965): 26-29; A parishioner, "A parishioner's letter", in *Le Courier Roumain*, XVII, 328-329 (Sep.-Oct. 1968): 14; An orthodox christian, "The lack of humility of the defroked priest V. Boldeanu", in *Le Courier Roumain*, 288-289 (31<sup>st</sup> March-16<sup>th</sup> April 1965): 21, 22; C.A., "The arrogance of the defroked priest Boldeanu, in *Le Courier Roumain*, 290 (30<sup>th</sup> April 1965): 21, 22, \*\*\* "What's going on at the Church in Paris", in *Le Courier Roumain*, 292-293 (31<sup>st</sup> May-16<sup>th</sup> June 1965): 22-25, A.T., "The sin against the evidence of truth", in *Le Courier Roumain*, 297-298 (16<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> August 1965): 15-20; Idem, "A year since the death of His All-Holy metropolitan Visarion Puiu", in *Le Courier Roumain*, 295-296 (1<sup>st</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> August 1965): 7-9; Alexandru Gregorian, "The Metropolitan Visarion Puiu", in *Le Courier Roumain*, XIII, 300-301 (14<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> October 1965): 11; editorial office, "Mr. Vasile Boldeanu and his conspiracy against the canonical authorities", in *Le Courier Roumain*, 304 (30<sup>th</sup> November 1965): 23-30; \*\*\* "Echoes" (reproduces the article from L'Aurore number 10/11 June 1972), in *Carpathians*, I, 1 (1972): 12; Faust Brădescu, "Praise the Lord we got rid of Teofil", in *Carpathians*, I, 2 (1972): 12; René Theo, "Teofil Ionescu's file", in *B.I.R.E.*, 559 (1<sup>st</sup> July 1972): 5; G. Filiti, "L'Eglise roumaine en danger", in *La Nation Roumaine*, 27 (November 1972): 3, 4; D. Nacu, "Les communistes contre l'église orthodoxe roumaine de Paris", in *La Nation Roumaine*, . 260 (May 1973): 1-3; I. Cușa, "Open letter addressed to the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, in *Path*, 3 (July-September 1973): 7.

control of the Church in Paris. (*Association pour la pratique du culte orthodoxe roumain*)<sup>6</sup>. According to its statute, the Association had to help the Church organize the religious service and fulfill its mission towards the Romanian Orthodox believers. Only Romanian orthodox people who had been settled themselves in France for at least six months could be part of the Association. A person could become a member of the Association faster in case he or she was recommended by at least two members. The Boarding Committee was the Epitropia formed of five people and the Parochial Council formed of twelve people. Both of them were elected on a three year time by the Parochial Assembly. The Parochial Assembly met at least once a year to analyse the moral and material report. The Extraordinary Parochial Assembly could decide the dissolution of the Association or the modification of its status.

At the 18<sup>th</sup> of August 1949, Martinian Ivanovici<sup>7</sup>, the superior of the Church, makes a mistake by pronouncing at the end of a religious service, the name of Charles the Second, the former sovereign of Romania, together with his recent wife, Elena Lupescu. His gesture stirred the discontent of the believers who had withdrawn their support towards Superior Ivanovici, support which they had been offered by then. As a reaction, a spiritual council made of six Romanian priests<sup>8</sup> who were residents in France, asked the metropolitan Visarion Puiu to take over the Church, so in September 1949, we meet the metropolitan in Paris, he having arrived from Switzerland<sup>9</sup>. Here he took over the lead of the Romanian Church established on street Jean de Beauvais, estranging priest Martinian Ivanovici and seeking to raise the church to a diocese. As Ivanovici rejected the metropolitan's injunctions, metropolitan who asked him to stand down, the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 1949 a group of legionnaires and sympathisers had literally assaulted the church building where the metropolitan and his followers had been settled. Everything was just a scheme used by Horia Sima and his priests who tempted the metropolitan from Switzerland, misrepresenting him

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<sup>6</sup> *Règlement Intérieur de l'Association culturelle de Eparchie Orthodoxe Roumaine D'Europe Occidentale*, of the archives of the Metropolitan Cathedral from Paris, 1949, f. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Martinian Ivanovici had been named superior of the church in Paris in the autumn of 1946. Father Ivanovici wasn't ashamed to say that before taking the plane to Paris, he didn't leave the chancery of the Patriarchy, but Emil Bodnăraș's office, companion of thought and political action, with whom he kept in direct touch, avoiding the contact agent of the Romanian Legation from here (Priest Vasile Boldeanu, *Notes*, typed manuscript, unpublished, in Romanian Library Archives in Freiburg from Library "D. Staniloae" *Fond Visarion Puiu*, Iași, cassette 6, unnumbered pages).

<sup>8</sup> Archimandrite Ștefan Lucaciu, Priest Vasile Boldeanu, Priest Grațian Radu, Priest Gheorghe Preda, Priest Nestorian Cicala, Priest Gheorghe Brânzeu.

<sup>9</sup> Jean Miloe, *La Riposte (aux attaques du Gouvernement Romain contre l'Eglise Roumaine de Paris)*, (Paris, 1976), 21.

the reality<sup>10</sup>. The 8<sup>th</sup> of September 1949 a new Association of the Romanians, called “The Cultural Association of the Romanian Orthodox Bishopric of Western Europe” is registered at the Paris Prefecture, under the lead of Visarion Puiu and under the obedience of the Russian Orthodox Church Synod from outside Russia (that belonged to the Free Russians), with its headquarters in New York, which was led back then by the metropolitan Atanasie<sup>11</sup>. Because of the incidents arisen inside the church, in the French press of 4<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> of September, there were several articles against the metropolitan Visarion and the legionnaire movement, the main accusation being his belonging to the legionnaire government led by Horia Sima<sup>12</sup>. The success was temporary because the same month in September 1949, to avoid new incidents, the French police interfered and closed the church, and the metropolitan was exiled again, getting banned to come near Paris. He took refuge at Théoule-sur-Mer, at Draguignan (both in the south of France), then at Viels-Maisons (in the north-east of France) where he tried however to achieve his project. This conflict was brought before the French Justice who appointed a judicial administrator and who prohibited the achieving of the divine service between the years 1949-1952, with a few exceptions. The Cultural Association was rebuilt under French judicial control, the superiors of the church being elected and named by the Romanian community who took over the entire financial support of the sanctuary. Visarion Puiu will be elected Superior of the church and he will lead the Romanian Diocese of the Western Europe until 1958. The Association organised in this way by the metropolitan functioned normally, under the cover of the French laws. The action took by the Romanian Patriarchy (the defrocking) had no effect upon him. As part of the newly founded Diocese, there were several parishes<sup>13</sup> of France, Canada, Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, Belgium, and England. The metropolitan’s

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<sup>10</sup> Priest Ștefan Palaghiță, *Iron Garde for the revival of Romania*, accompanied by a *Cronology regarding the history of the legionary movement* and by Nae Ionescu, *The legionary Phenomenon*, (the Winds Rose Publishing, Bucharest, 1993), 299.

<sup>11</sup> Miloe, 21.

<sup>12</sup> Archives CNSAS, file SIE 142, f. 28.

<sup>13</sup> Jean-Paul Besse, *L'église orthodoxe roumaine de Paris*, (D.U.C., Paris, 1994), 159 and Aurel Sergiu Marinescu, *A contribution to the Romanian exile history, Romanian Orthodox Church abroad, in exile, in Diaspora*, (Vremea Publishing Company, Bucharest, 2004), 151. The ten parishes were: 1. “St. Joan the theologian” Cathedral, named also “Saints Archangels Mikhail, Gavril and Rafael” of street Jean de Beauvais 9 and 9 bis, Paris; 2. Church “Annunciation” 8080 Christopher Columbus, Montreal, Canada; 3. Church St. George”, Machabäerstrasse 41, Köln, West Germany; 4. Church “Holy Trimethyleneuracil”, Friedrichstrasse 23 a, Offenburg, West Germany; 5. Church “Nativity”, 14-16 street Beaulcre, 1205, Geneva, Switzerland; 6. Church “St. George”, 139 street Cour, Lausanne, Switzerland; 7. Church “Assumption”, Brantholnsgränd 54, Skärkolmen, Sweden; 8. Church “Saints Archangels”, Bredängsvägen 260, Borås, Sweden; 9. Church “Holy Spirit”, street Basse Wez 143, 4000 Liège, Belgium; 10. Church “St. Peter”, 17A Wellesley Road Ilford, London, JGI-4JT, England.

interventions to defend the rights of the church were saving many times, especially between 1953-1954 when the Bucharest government pursued its passing to the property of the Romanian State, the right to appoint a serving priest, but above all, to change it in a mere museum for the culture of the Romanian people.<sup>14</sup>

In the correspondence with Leon Negruzzi, member of the Parochial Council of the Romanian Church in Paris, The metropolitan summarizes the causes which convinced him to leave Paris: he had no shelter, no life resources, he was sad because of the inadequate behaviour of the police that forbade his entrance in Paris, but he was most sorrowful because of the Romanians' indifference and carelessness about this situation<sup>15</sup>. Leon Negruzzi answers him a month later, informing him about the authors of the reports against him presented at the French police, some of them being not only from Paris, but even from Romania, Russia or England<sup>16</sup>.

Starting with July 1951, we find him in Théoule-sur-Mer in France. The 18th of July from Villa Saint Camille he sends a letter to the Blessed Andrei Moldovan, the Bishop of the Romanian Orthodox in USA and Canada, asking him to find a way to solve the misunderstandings risen in the Church. These misunderstandings appeared because of the election of the young Viorel Trifa ordained bishop in the Church Congress in Chicago, this election wasn't agreed by everybody, still this controversy didn't do any good to the Romanian believers who lived there. He mediates in this way in favour of the young man he himself had as a secretary when he was in Austria and who "has proved intelligent and wellbehaved among all the foreigners he met wherever he's been"<sup>17</sup>. Apparently young Trifa had been attacked through a letter sent to all the orthodox bishops in America and this letter arrived to the metropolitan Visarion, and this one, upset about everything that happened, advises that its effect to be neutralized by a sudden reconciliation which pleases everybody. In a different letter of the 24th of August 1951 which was intercepted by the Security, sent by the bishop Andrei Moldovan to the metropolitan Iustinian Marina (probably because of lack or delay of evidence they didn't know he was elected Patriarch in the meantime), and written in the operational plan in pages 54-57 of the file, it is mentioned that bishop Andrei sent 50 dollars monthly to the

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<sup>14</sup> Besse, 113.

<sup>15</sup> *Letter towards Leon Negruzzi from 9th of June 1951*, In Romanian Library Archives in Freiburg from Library "D. Staniloae" *Fond Visarion Puiu*, Iași, cassette 2, file 1, unnumbered page.

<sup>16</sup> *Letter towards the metropolitan Visarion from 3rd of July 1951* in *Ibidem*. Among the ones who reported him to the French police it couldn't miss priest Boldenu together with Rădescu, Vișoianu, Crețianu, Gh. Răutu, Caranfil, royal house, prince Sturza.

<sup>17</sup> Archives CNSAS, *Fond SIE*, file 142, f. 46



metropolitan Visarion for him not to give approval to metropolitan Atanasie in USA to ordain young Viorel Trifa, promising he would prepare a report for the Holy Synod to revise his situation and ban his defroking. However, it is not specified why bishop Andrei Moldovan or metropolitan Atanasie needed metropolitan Visarion's approval for Viorel Trifa, as long as his defroking given by the Holy Synod confirmed the young bishop's actions were null and void!

The 25th of December 1954, Sunday morning, in the Russian church of St. Nicholas in Versailles, vicar bishop Teofil Ionescu (1896-1975) was sanctified, he got the name of the Sevrean<sup>18</sup>. At the sanctification, besides the metropolitan Visarion, according to the orthodox church canons, two more hierarchs participated, the archbishop Jean Maximovici de Bruxelles (1896-1966, canonized in 1994) representing the Russian Synod in New York and bishop Natanail de Cartagina and Tunis<sup>19</sup>. The sanctification was accepted by metropolitan Visarion forced by circumstances, compelled by priest Vasile Boldeanu<sup>20</sup> on one side, and by the complains of the priests in Paris on the other side. He sent him to America to agree with the bishop Valerian Trifa and to strenghten ties between orthodox Romanians in America and Europe, situation which wasn't acomplished totally. He will manage however to establish a new diocese named Romanian Orthodox Church in Canada and Western hemisphere. Metropolitan's involvement in the organisation of the new diocese in Canada is obvious. There were some things established regarding the mark of the diocese (two important elements must appear, the symbolic leaf of Canada and a Romanian symbol), the seal of the bishopric chancery, the communication of the diocese foundation had to be done to all the parishes, the preparation of a Congress, the drawing up of a chart of the parishes (according to a chart he made), an application form sent to Bucharest so that bishop Policarp Morusca could come back to USA, accepting Trifa as a vicar if he abjured his wander, the division of the diocese in two (the eastern part and western part) for a more efficient leadership, supporting Andrei Moldovan as a leader of the eastern diocese<sup>21</sup>. The Aknowledgement of the Romanian Orthodox Diocese in Canada and the Western Hemisphere in 1956 was a victory of the metropolitan Visarion, being published in the press as a success<sup>22</sup>. Teofil Ionescu

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<sup>18</sup> Declaration and Report for the ordainment in the step of the archepiscopate in "Holy Register of the Romanian Orthodox Bishopric of Occidental Europe, 1954", from the Romanian Library Archives in Freiburg from Library "D. Staniloae" *Fond Visarion Puiu*, Iași, cassette 5, ff. 18, 19.

<sup>19</sup> Jean-Paul Besse, *L'église orthodoxe roumaine de Paris*, 118.

<sup>20</sup> Priest Vasile Boldeanu was Horia Sima's contact person for the delivery of the aids to the Romanian refugees in Paris, according to Pr. Ștefan Palaghiță, *Iron Garde ...*, 297.

<sup>21</sup> Romanian Library Archives in Freiburg from Library "D. Staniloae", *Fond Visarion Puiu*, Iași, cassette 1, unnumbered pages.

<sup>22</sup> Ph.D. Petre Popescu, "We have diocese", in *The People's Leaf*, (Detroit 3, Michigan, year 46, number 3, March 1957), p. 1, cl. 3 and p. 3, cl. 4.

will be called back to take over the diocese in Paris in 1958 after the metropolitan Visarion's retirement from its leadership, but he would not be actually settled until 1964, after the metropolitan's death.

## Conclusions

I don't know how much credibility can be given to the information contained in the surveillance files of the Romanian Intelligence Service, because their pages were renumbered even four times, many of the numbers considered as final being smaller up to forty-five points compared to the initial numbering, and most of the reports weren't even signed by any operative worker. However we are certain about most of the letters, official addresses or applications which have the metropolitan's official signature. Likewise, we can rely enough on many of the operational plans signed by the communist security agents in Romania. All the contacts made with him and the repatriation attempts proved to be merely illusions of the people who had been stalking him.

During the hardest part of his life, in exile, he had moments when he was hosted with love by the Christ brothers of the Maguzzano Catholic monastery in Italy or he had monthly financial help offered by the catholic clergy of the Aisne department (France). The two years he was supported morally and financially by the Sanctuary on Lake Garda were strongly marked by the encounter with Don Giovanni Calabria, canonized in 1999 by the Pope John Paul II, affection that continues even nowadays, at the Catholic prelate's grave there is a bas-relief representing both soul shepherds who found themselves after their passing away. At Maguzzano, it went further than that, one of the conference rooms of the abbey bearing the name of the Romanian metropolitan, and in the precincts of the catholic monastery there is a Romanian chapel with the same hierarch name. This was the way to honour the metropolitan's simple life, noticed by the monastery dwellers, life spent in silence, prayer and discretion, permanent presence at the religious service, with special honour towards Virgin Mary, a man of dialogue, open to Roman Catholic theology, but faithful to Orthodoxy, believing strongly that he could approach Catholicism without losing his orthodox identity. He had been booked a place of honour in the church, an Episcopal chair and a red carpet, being incensed at every religious service as a representative of the Apostles. Maybe these are the reasons Metropolitan Visarion preferred live and die at the place of his ostracism, being pained, poor and ill, but always remembering the scent of his forefathers land which he sighed for in those twenty years of exile painful for every soul that was born Romanian.

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