

PERSECUTION OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN SOVIET RUSSIA

1917 - 1927

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by

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines how the Bolsheviks changed their policy toward the Orthodox Church in Russia from one of passive to one of active persecution. The period between 1917 - 1923 is examined in order to show in particular how the government implemented its anti-religious policy in an effort to destroy the Church as an institution. The thesis also shows how the Church leaders because of their inexperience fell into a political trap that gave the Communists an excuse to accuse the Church and its followers of being both reactionary and counter-revolutionary. Between 1925 and 1927 the Bolsheviks again changed their policy from one of active external persecution to one of infiltration. The object of this new policy was to gain control of the Church.

ABREGE

Maîtrise ès arts  
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LA PERSÉCUTION DE L'ÉGLISE ORTHODOXE EN RUSSIE SOVIÉTIQUE

1917 - 1927

Cette thèse a pour but d'examiner comment les bolchevistes sont passés d'une politique de persécution passive à une politique de persécution active envers l'Église orthodoxe en Russie. La période allant de 1917 à 1923 est étudiée notamment afin de démontrer comment le gouvernement a instauré sa politique anti-religieuse pour tenter de détruire l'Église en tant qu'institution. Cette thèse démontre également comment les chefs de l'Église, à cause de leur manque d'expérience, sont tombés dans le piège politique qui permit aux communistes d'accuser l'Église et ses adeptes d'être à la fois réactionnaires et contre-révolutionnaires. Entre 1925 et 1927 les bolchevistes ont changé leur politique externe et active pour une politique d'infiltration. Cette nouvelle politique avait pour objet d'avoir la haute main sur l'Église.

## INTRODUCTION

The history of the Russian Orthodox Church from 1917 to 1927 is both the story of the struggle in survival and suffering of the Church and its believers at the hands of the Soviet government, because the Bolshevik policies were shaped in such a way as to extend them into every aspect of human life in order to absorb the people into the Communist society and to destroy all those who could not be remodeled to suit the Bolsheviks' ideas.

Lenin adopted his anti-religious policies from Marx who did not know the role the Russian Orthodox Church had played in molding the Russian peasants' soul. Lenin interpreted Marx's definition of religion as "the opium of the people" in a much harsher and antagonistic way by saying that

Religion is a sort of spiritual vodka [sivukha] in which the slaves of capital drown their image of man and their claims to any decent life.<sup>1</sup>

With this in mind he concluded that

All contemporary religions and Churches, all religious organizations, Marxism always regards as an organ of bourgeois reaction

serving to defend exploitation and to stupify the working classes.<sup>2</sup>

He thought that once ~~all~~ the Church lands with its properties were nationalized, i.e., its economic basis had been destroyed, the Church as an institution would cease to exist; instead, the Soviets encountered the hostile opposition of the Russian Orthodox Church which challenged the Soviet government and called upon the faithful to defy, not nationalization, but the newly introduced regulations concerning religious life.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this thesis is to show why and how the Soviet government attempted not only to subdue the Church but also to eradicate the Orthodox faith from Soviet Russia.

The Bolsheviks persecuted the Church for at least three reasons: firstly, Christian teaching, which advocated the existence of God and Christian spiritual and moral values, was opposed to the Communist ideology which rejected God's existence and considered the belief in God to be a hindrance in the progress of mankind and the formation of a Communist society. Secondly, the Bolsheviks believed that the Church existed exclusively to serve the capitalists'

interest. Finally, the Soviets were afraid that the Church in its opposition to the government was liable to inspire rebellion against the Soviet government. Therefore, the Communists launched a full-scale campaign to destroy the Church in Soviet Russia by means of heavy taxation, arrests, exiles and death sentences, as well as by organized, systematic propaganda against religion.

The Soviet law concerning "freedom of conscience" and the "separation of Church from the State" became a constitutional instrument used by the Communists to mask the persecution of the Church. From the very beginning, the Bolsheviks diverged in their practice from the constitution which said that religion was the private matter of every Soviet citizen.

To understand the real relationship between the government and the Church one must look beyond the constitution to the actual attitude of the Communists and the Party in practice.

Because of the large-scale arrests and executions of clergymen and believers, and the desecration of churches and sacred objects, the government caused great resentment



among the people, which started to doubt Soviet justice. As the persecution continued, the faithful began to withdraw into the underground. Since the Bolsheviks were not able to destroy the Church from outside, they decided to do so from inside. They brought the Orthodox Church under full control by forcing certain bishops to cooperate fully with the Bolshevik government.

1. V. I. Lenin, Sochineniia, 4th edition, Vol. X, Moscow, 1941 - 1952, p. 66.
2. Ibid., XV, pp. 371-372.
3. B. Szczesniak, The Russian Revolution and Religion; A Collection of Documents 1917 - 1925, Notre Dame University, 1959, pp. 36-37.

## CHAPTER ONE

### NATIONALIZATION OF CHURCH PROPERTY

When the Soviet government came to power on November 7, 1917, the Sobor (Council) of the Russian Orthodox Church was in session. This Sobor had been convoked in order to reform the Church and to discuss the issue of the patriarchate. Since the abdication of the Romanov dynasty after the March Revolution had left the Church, so to speak, without a head to guide it,<sup>1</sup> the only alternative for the Sobor was to elect a "strong and energetic patriarch", who would "be for the Church what the Tsar was for the state."<sup>2</sup> Defending the reinstitution of the patriarchate, speakers assured the Sobor that the voice of the Church, in the person of the patriarch, would be "authoritative" and "commanding" and that the government would not dare to ignore the patriarch the way the Provisional Government had ignored the Synod's deputies.<sup>3</sup> In his speech to the Sobor Bishop Mitrofan stated that

We need a patriarch, who will be our spiritual leader and director, who will inspire Russian people and who will call upon the people to correct themselves in their way of life for greater deeds and who will be willing to lead the way. No institution can exist without a leader, nor can the Church exist without one.<sup>4</sup>

It was uncertain whether the Sobor would be able to finish its work, because of the Soviet coup d'état, but the fear proved to be unfounded. The new regime did not interfere with the work of the Sobor which continued to function and to move toward the election of a patriarch. There were three nominees for the patriarchal office. On November 14, 1917, Starets<sup>\*</sup> Aleksii of the Zossimov monastery drew one of the three names and gave it to Metropolitan Vladimir of Kyiv who crossed himself and read out, "Tikhon, Metropolitan of Moscow, Axios!"<sup>\*\*\*5</sup> The first Patriarch since 1721 had been elected.

The Bolsheviki, on coming to power, found the Church very different from the one that for centuries had served the Romanovs. Although the March Revolution had brought an end to the Synodical period of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Bolsheviki believed that it remained

the same as it had been before the Revolution,<sup>6</sup> when it had been one of the departments of the tsarist government.

Lenin knew that the Church had played a leading role in the formation of the Russian state. The Church could be called the maker of the Russian nation and its leading figures had been, indeed, servants of the Tsars.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, he wanted to destroy it "at all cost... as the remaining bastion of the old regime",<sup>8</sup> before it could reinstate itself. His concept of the Church's role in human life was to keep people submissive and to exploit them. Already in 1905 he wrote:

Religion is one of the forms of spiritual oppression, which everywhere weighs heavily upon the popular masses... Those who toil and live in want all their lives are taught by religion to be submissive and patient while here on earth and take comfort in the hope of being rewarded in heaven. But those who live by the labour of others are taught by religion to practice charity while on earth and thus religion offers them a very cheap way of justifying their entire existence as exploiters...<sup>9</sup>

Consequently, after assuming power in Russia he thought that the first task of the struggle against religion should be to break up the social-economic system into

which religion had sunk its roots.<sup>10</sup> He was convinced that the Church existed preponderantly as an economic unit. Hence the Communists passed a law which placed all the landed estates, including the monastic and Church lands, with all their livestock, implements, etc. under the control of the Soviet of Peasants' Deputies.<sup>11</sup> Shortly after the decree of November 8, 1917, the government also denied the Church the financial support which it had received from previous governments. The Bolsheviks believed that with the nationalization of Church assets and the liquidation of the exploiters as a class, the Church would crumble and cease to exist as an institution and that eventually religion would disappear completely, because it would lose its social base and its function to defend the interest of the dominant class.<sup>12</sup> This theory was a logical conclusion of the Marxist's analysis of the role of religion in a capitalist society: "the belief in God had been invented by the rich in order to keep the poor in a state of oppression..."<sup>13</sup> Liberated from the capitalistic exploitation, the people would come to the conclusion that it was religion that kept them in bondage as much as the exploiters.<sup>14</sup>

Nationalization of the land was a severe blow to the economy of the Church. The Church owned 23 million acres in 1905, according to M. Daube-Bancel, but after the decree of November 8 it owned none.<sup>15</sup> In addition to losing all its accumulated wealth, the Church was forbidden to acquire any new property, even implements needed for the services: "No Church or religious associations have the right to own property."<sup>16</sup> If a local church-parish did acquire something, that item automatically became national property. By nationalizing Church lands the government struck a crippling blow against the monastery, the institution that supplied the Church with its hierarchy. In closing all the monasteries, the Church not only lost its land but also its printing presses, dairy farms and other enterprises where monks engaged in free labour. Besides all this, monasteries ran hostels where pilgrims stayed during their visits to the monasteries. Pilgrimages were a vital element in the monasteries' existence. The pilgrims sustained every monastery by paying the monks for the services and by buying their produce. The same pilgrims spread the monasteries' fame and glorified the monastic way of life, thus inspiring young boys and men to become monks. Sometimes an older person would decide to remain

in the monastery for the rest of this days. Usually such a person left all his property to the monastery; others gave great sums of money, so that the monks would pray daily for their souls.

After the Narodnyi Komissariat Justitsii (the People's Commissariat of Justice) ordered the "complete liquidation of monasteries, as the chief centres of the influence of the Churchmen,"<sup>17</sup> some of the monasteries reorganized themselves into Labour Communes in accordance with the new legislation in favor of collective farming in order to survive as a unit and to prevent their liquidation. But the People's Commissariat of Justice, on March 29, 1918, attempted to repress this movement by ordering "the Communes to accept, regardless of denomination, any person who might apply for membership."<sup>18</sup> Usually volunteers did not show up and the Labour Communes prospered because of their strict discipline, the improvement of agricultural techniques and the carrying on of all the work without hired labour. For this reason the government dissolved the Communes and all monks and nuns were evicted from them.<sup>19</sup> By 1920, 673 monasteries had been liquidated, their two and a quarter million acres and



4,248,000,000 roubles confiscated, and their 84 factories, 436 dairy farms, 602 cattle farms, 1,112 apartment houses and 704 hostelries nationalized.<sup>20</sup> Although the monasteries were nationalized and their members evicted from the Labour Communes, some of the monks and nuns secretly managed to lead a monastic life until 1938, while earning their livelihood at various Soviet enterprises.<sup>21</sup>

Nationalization of Church factories, particularly those producing candles, hit the Orthodox Church hard because not only are candles essential in Orthodox worship but they also brought substantial revenue to the parishes. Once the government took over production of tapers, it sold them to the parishes at a fixed price and forced the parishes to sell them at the same price to the people. The faithful understood this law well: when buying candles they usually did not bother to take change. In this way parishes were able to make a few kopecks to cover their many expenses.

The nationalization of the Church presses deprived the Church of its defence against anti-religious attacks. On the other hand, the government used all available means to disseminate anti-religious thoughts among the people.

Communist leaders were convinced that as soon as the people started to read anti-religious literature they would not only neglect their Church and begin to support the government, but would also adopt a materialistic way of life. Anti-religious ideas would convince them that the "Church is the propaganda department of the bourgeois state."<sup>22</sup> Once this state had been destroyed then the people would realize that they "no longer need God and priests than the liberated slave needs his chains."<sup>23</sup>

With the nationalization of the printing presses, the Church became dependent on the government to print its publications. It was not an easy task for the Church to publish its material at the Bolshevik's presses. An instruction of the People's Commissariat of Justice insisted that a Church or a parish could not rent a press from the government to publish its material,<sup>24</sup> and that "all manuscripts of a religious nature were to be submitted to the government's publishers for printing."<sup>25</sup> It was easy for a printing press to reject religious publication because it was the government that controlled the "distribution of paper and other needs."<sup>26</sup> As a result, the

Communists published only those Church's articles that were of interest to the Soviet government. On February 21, 1923 the Bolsheviks implemented a new law:

Religious organizations and societies (obshchestva), according to the decree of Separation of the Church from the State and School from the Church do not have judicial rights, and they cannot have in their name property, or any kind of enterprise which could publish a magazine, but individuals of religious groups under their own name can publish any kind of magazine.<sup>27</sup>

But even this privilege was restricted because if any kind of anti-Communist propaganda "active or passive" was found in a religious publication, the offense was punishable by no less than three years of confinement.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, no one was prepared to undertake the risk of publishing a magazine. But there were also other hindrances even after the Church managed somehow to publish its material. The post offices refused to handle Church publications.<sup>29</sup> In one way or another, the Church was placed in the predicament of being unable to reach its faithful with its publications while the government used all its power and facilities to indoctrinate its subjects in anti-religious philosophy.

The nationalization of the Church's printing presses also prevented the Church from reproducing icons which are essential to Orthodox worship. In addition to all this, the government encouraged people to remove icons from their homes and to destroy them. In 1924 Izvestiia reported that men and women of one rope factory had brought over one hundred icons to the local Communist cell, which organized an anti-religious meeting at which more than six hundred witnessed the ceremonial burning of the icons.<sup>30</sup>


As early as August 24, 1918 the Soviet government officially forbid icons to be kept in public or state buildings and on January 3, 1919 the People's Commissariat of Justice issued an instruction on how icons should be removed from public and state buildings:

The removal of icons should not resemble anti-religious demonstrations, but must be done when as few people as possible are present, in order not to create a false impression in the minds of the populace regarding the methods of the Soviet authorities in the struggle against popular prejudices.<sup>31</sup>

The Communists knew also that the Church's strength did not depend solely upon its wealth; its strength lay in its influence over the people's daily life and in the discipline it exerted upon their families. To separate

people from the Church, the government decided to eliminate religion from family life by excluding all Church rituals, i.e. marriage, baptism, etc.. Until December 31, 1917 one had to be baptized, married and buried by the Church and, if one wanted a divorce, one had to appeal to the Church authorities who would decide whether or not to grant it. Now, the Bolsheviks changed all this. On December 31, 1917 they passed the law which stated that from now on all births, marriages and deaths had to be registered solely by civil or secular authorities where the Church registration books were to be turned in.<sup>32</sup> But the government could not enforce this decree. The people continued to register at the priests' offices as they had before. Only in those places where strong communist cells existed was this decree obeyed. It was only in late 1918 that the order was given to turn the record books over to the Kommissariat Vnutrennikh Del (Commissariat of Internal Affairs). By the beginning of 1919 all record books were in the hands of the civil administration.<sup>33</sup> On December 31, 1917 in order to undermine the Church's marriage ritual the Soviet government also decreed that "the Russian Republic henceforth recognizes civil marriage only."<sup>34</sup> On the same day another decree was passed. It was called "the Revolutionary Divorce Law", and ordered that

All suits for annulment of marriage which are now tried in the ecclesiastical consistories of the department of Greek-Catholic and other denominations, in the governing Synod and all other institutions of the Christian and non-Christian religions, and by officials in charge of ecclesiastical affairs of all denominations... are declared by reason of this law null and void... The parties are given the right to file a new petition for the annulment of the marriage according to this decree, without awaiting the dismissal of the first suits...<sup>35</sup>

Now, it became easy to get married and to obtain a divorce in Soviet Russia. Marriage involved a visit to a Mirovoi sud'ia (Justice of the Peace) and a signature in the record book. If at any time, even a few days after the marriage, one of the spouses decided to be divorced, all he or she had to do was to go before the official for divorces and declare his or her wish.<sup>36</sup> The marriage and divorce laws were not uniform throughout the Communist Republics. In the Ukraine, for instance, not only could one marriage partner get a divorce without the presence of the other, as in the Russian Federation, but one partner could even register a marriage in the absence of the other. The latter, it is true, had the right to annul such a unilaterally registered marriage within one month.<sup>37</sup> 

According to the decree the government did not object to Church marriage. But a couple had to undergo civil marriage, because it was the only ceremony recognized by the Communists; after the civil marriage according to the decree, one could have a Church marriage. Nor did the Bolsheviks interfere if a priest refused to marry a couple who had obtained a civil divorce.<sup>38</sup> But this tolerance of the Church's marriage existed only on paper. In reality the situation was different. The Soviet government was guilty of the persecution of the rank and file of religious worshipers. No member of the Communist party or Comsomol (Communist Youth Organization) was allowed to take part in any religious ceremony. Should a Communist or a Comsomol member take his marriage vows in Church he would be expelled from the party and his place of work. Dismissal from his job would place him in the same category as the clergy: he would be ousted from his lodging, lose his food ration card and the other privileges granted good Communists.<sup>39</sup>

The Church authorities did not surrender their rights to the Bolsheviks without a struggle. In June 1918 the Sobor declared that only the diocesan councils were entitled

to handle divorce cases.<sup>40</sup> This action on the part of the Sobor brought the Church into direct conflict with the People's Commissariat of Justice, which ruled that the Church and its dioceses were assuming juridical rights denied them by law. On May 18, 1920 the government instructed the provincial executive committees to close the diocesan councils and to bring its members to trial. Those bishops that refused to comply with the law were charged with carrying on counter-revolutionary propaganda through their diocesan journals and with violating the law by assuming juridical functions in divorce actions, by charging fees and similar acts. The court found the accused guilty and sentenced them (probationary) to five years imprisonment. The diocesan councils were ordered closed. The Patriarch, the members of the Vysshoe Tserkovnoe Upravlenie (Higher Church Administration) and the Holy Synod realized that they had gained nothing from opposing the government but persecution and consequently they gave a written pledge to the government that they would comply with the government's circular that



the carrying on of divorce cases and the trial, investigation, taxation, financial, economic and administrative matters connected with them are discontinued in the diocesan councils, the Holy Synod, and the Higher Church Administration.<sup>41</sup>

The relationship between the government and the Church was becoming more tense. The Bolsheviks adopted an irreconcilable animosity to any religion, any Church, and led against them a merciless war to win the masses.<sup>42</sup> On his part the Patriarch issued his first proclamation on February 1, 1918 without waiting for the Sobor to reconvene. The proclamation began with a violent denunciation of the murder and rapine perpetrated by the Soviet government, and continued:

Recall yourselves, ye senseless, and cease your bloody deeds. For what you are doing is not only a cruel deed; it is in truth a satanic act. By the authority given us by God, we forbid you to present yourselves for the sacraments of Christ and anathematize you...

I adjure all of you who are faithful children of the Orthodox Church of Christ, not to commune with such outcasts of human race in any matter whatsoever; "cast out the wicked from among you".<sup>43</sup>

The Patriarch also protested against the nationalization of the Church's lands and other property, the secularization of marriage and the school, and the desecration of chapels.<sup>44</sup> Although the Patriarch did not specifically call the people

to arms, he did urge them to "rise up in defence" of the Church and to "cast out the wicked." The message told of the evils endured by the Church at the hands of "the open and concealed enemies of Christ", who had moved and urges the people to vile crimes and murders, forgetting Christ's commandments.<sup>45</sup>

The message had a striking impact upon the people. The Church which had been subservient to the Tsarist autocracy for centuries now not only stood up in defence of its rights but also labeled the Communists as "outcasts of the human race" and their work as "the work of Satan."

The breach between the Church and the Bolsheviks became irreparable. Since the Patriarch had anathematized the Bolsheviks, no believer, according to Church teaching, could even communicate with the Communists, much less co-operate with them. In other words, by the anathematization the Patriarch severed all connections with Soviet Russia and those that followed their ideology. The Patriarch called upon the believers

to stand in defence of our Holy Mother  
[Church], now outraged and oppressed...  
you, brother archbishops and pastors,  
without delay... call our sons to defend  
the trampled rights of the Orthodox  
Church, immediately organize religious  
leagues, call them... to range themselves  
in the ranks of the spiritual fighters,  
who to external force will oppose the  
strength of their holy inspiration, and  
we firmly trust that the enemies of the  
Church of Christ will be broken and  
scattered by the strength of the Cross of  
Christ.<sup>46</sup>

The reaction of some of the clergy was what the Patriarch expected. The very next day the famous reactionary priest, Father Vostorgov, preached in the Church of St. Basil on Red Square, promising to preach the following day, "if, of course, after service or during the night they do not arrest or kill me." He told his audience of the Patriarch's message calling upon them, as true sons of the Church, to "the holy struggle for the Church," and he counseled those determined to go "without trembling in defence of the Church against bayonets and rifle fire", to confess and receive Communion. The following day, in his sermon "The Struggle for Faith and the Church," Father Vostorgov told his audience that the Patriarch was calling them to the struggle against the forces of evil:

Then - all into the churches! All - to prayer meetings... on streets and squares! By religious processions, petitions, declarations, protests, resolutions, messages to the authorities - by decisive force, by all that is permitted by Christian conscience, we can and are obliged to fight the holy fight for faith and Church, for the trampled treasure of our soul... Let them then cross our dead bodies. Let them shoot us, shoot innocent children and women. Let us go with crosses, icons, unarmed, with prayers and hymns - let Cain and Judas kill us! The time has come to go to martyrdom and suffering!<sup>47</sup>

Similar enthusiasm was displayed not only by individual priests but also by the civilian members of the Sobor, which reconvened on February 3, 1918.

Prince E. N. Trubetskoi urged the Church to act decisively saying

Here is an open war against the Church, not begun by us. On our part silence and inaction would be criminal. We must loudly raise our voices and arouse all the Orthodox people to the defence of the Church...<sup>48</sup>

One member of the Sobor hoped "that the first collision with the servants of Satan will serve as the beginning of saving the Nation and the Church from the enemy."

Another accused the Communists of removing banners with the sign of the Cross and replacing them "with red rags."

He blamed all these misfortunes not only upon the Communists

but also upon the Vremennoe Pravitel'stvo (Provisional Government), which had already vanished from the scene. In conclusion he said: "Let us hope also that the present rulers, who shed blood, will get off the stage."<sup>49</sup> Father Vostorgov at the Sobor went even further in his speech, claiming that

The only salvation of the Russian people is an Orthodox, Russian, wise tsar. Only through the election of an Orthodox, wise, Russian tsar can we put Russia on the good, historical path and re-establish good order. As long as we do not have an Orthodox, wise tsar, we shall have no order, and the blood of the people will flow...<sup>50</sup>

In the conclusion of his speech he urged the Sobor to speak out against socialism which had enslaved the Russian people in a "Jewish-Masonic organization."<sup>51</sup>

Because the Patriarch's message and the speeches at the Sobor encouraged believers to oppose the Bolsheviks, the government started to pay even more attention to the Patriarch and the Church. While the power of the Bolsheviks was new and weak, the power of the Church was a thousand years old and the faithful were numbered in the millions. The Communists were afraid that if the Church as an institution opposed the government, it might cause rebellion and the eventual downfall of the Bolsheviks. - The

Communists read into the Patriarch's proclamation a call for the Church to enter into political opposition to the government and they knew that when the believers felt strong enough to overthrow the Soviet regime it would take very little effort to stir them to armed resistance. After all, it was at the Sobor that the priest Vostorgov advocated the restoration of tsardom in Russia. The Bolsheviki had to make a swift move to break its potential enemy - the Church.

On February 5, 1918, while the Sobor was still in session, the Soviet government issued the decree on the "Separation of the Church from the State and the Church from the School." From now on religion became the private affair of Soviet citizens. One could adhere to any kind of religion or to none at all or become an atheist. To the Bolsheviki, religion as an institution had ceased to exist. Article 12 of the decree stated that "No Church or religious associations have the right to own property. They do not possess the rights of juridical persons."<sup>52</sup>

The Sobor on February 28, 1918 reacted to this decree by condemning it in a message in which it complained of the violence of the party in power and of their attacking the very existence of the Orthodox Church. Hence the Sobor decreed:

1. The decree issued by the Council of People's Commissars concerning the separation of the Church from the state is, under the guise of a law for freedom of conscience, a malicious attack upon all the structure of the life of the Orthodox Church and an act of open oppression against it.

2. All participation, both in publishing this legislation hostile to the Church, and likewise in attempts to put it into effect, is incompatible with adherence to the Orthodox Church and will draw upon the guilty persons penalties up to excommunication from the Church... The Sobor calls upon all the Orthodox people now, as of old, to unite around the churches and monastic cloisters for defence of the outraged holy things. Both the pastors and the sheep of the flock of Christ will suffer abuse, but God may not be abused... We shall have to wage a fight against the dark deeds of the sons of destruction for all that is dear and holy to us Orthodox and Russians, for all without which life has no value for us."

The Patriarch called upon the priests and faithful to be

on guard in protecting the Holy Church... (to) strengthen and unite the believers for defense against attacks on the freedom of the Orthodox Faith... Parishioners and worshipers of all parishes and other churches should be organized into united societies whose duty it shall be to defend all the sacred things and other church property against violation.<sup>54</sup>

The proclamation inspired believers to organize into Bratstva and Sestritstva (Brotherhoods and Sororities), which came into existence in various parts of Soviet Russia. Brotherhoods' members included both sexes between the ages of eighteen

and forty. They were of the Orthodox faith, non-drinkers, non-smokers and literate; they strove to live a simple Christian life.

Brotherhoods took upon themselves almost all the financial burden of their parishes; women made candles for parishes, those who knew how to paint, painted icons, and still others made utensils that were needed by the Church. They started to organize various types of lectures, libraries, reading rooms, playgrounds and sanatoriums, and offered medical aid, sewing classes and aid to the needy. With the help of the Brotherhoods the Church opened its doors practically to everyone who wanted to donate his time or to broaden his knowledge. The Church became not only the centre of religious life but also the centre of cultural and social activities.<sup>55</sup>

The active participation of laymen in Church life alarmed the government and it decided to bring these activities to a halt. It was decreed that the benevolent, educational and other associations which spent their funds in the support of religion were to be closed.<sup>56</sup> The leaders of the Brotherhoods were arrested "on the grounds of instigating disorders culminating in murder, in various



parts of the Russia"<sup>57</sup> and the members were dispersed.

The Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church was not the only association whose activities were terminated by the Soviet government. The Bolsheviki also closed the benevolent societies of all the other religions, including that of the Salvation Army branch in Petrograd (Leningrad).

According to the Soviet officials

these Salvationists have been guilty of very serious offences. They have been feeding day-by-day a number of children in Petrograd... that is an offence against the State. Religious organizations are forbidden to try to bribe people to become religious.<sup>58</sup>

By closing the Salvation Army branch in Petrograd and outlawing the Brotherhoods of the Orthodox Church, the Soviet government proclaimed war against all the religions and their benevolent societies despite the fact that the latter helped the people to overcome not a spiritual crisis but an economic one.

1. Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov, Moscow, 1958, pp. 7-9.
2. M. Spinka, The Church and the Russian Revolution, New York, p. 78.
3. B. V. Titlinov, Tserkov vo vremia Revoliutsii, Leningrad, 1924, pp. 96-97.
4. A. A. Shishkin, Sushchnost' i kriticheskaiia otsenka "obnovlenncheskago" raskola Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi, Kazan, 1970, p. 12.
- \* Starets is a saintly monk who has achieved such spiritual growth that he is expressly able to teach others.
- \*\* Axios is the Greek word meaning - he is worthy.
5. J. Swan, A Biography of Patriarch Tikhon, Jordanville, 1964, p. 18.
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## CHAPTER TWO

### PERSECUTION OF CLERGY

Toward the end of 1917 and in early 1918, civil wars were breaking out in the territories of the defunct Russian Empire and the Soviet government found itself in the very difficult position of having to fight internally and to wage war with the Central Powers at the same time. As a result, the government decided to conclude peace with Germany at any cost. When the Patriarch heard the rumors that the Bolsheviks were about to sign a Peace Treaty with Germany he appealed to the Russian people to remain steadfast to the war effort. The following excerpt of his address has been preserved:

Where is the former might of our country?  
Where are you, her faithful sons? Are  
you all perished in bloody struggle, all  
killed on the battlefields or perhaps you  
have no more weapons in your hands, no more  
strength in your muscles, no more flaming  
fire in your hearts? For are not the  
weapons of death thundering in a mutual  
internecine warfare and in cruel battles, but  
not with the enemies of your country, but  
with your brothers in blood and faith is the  
power of your muscles and the flaming ardour of

your heart revealed. And from the battlefield and the face of the foreign enemy you flee with your arms in your hands in order to shoot each other with these weapons in a civil war. How can we be saved from perdition? First of all stop your mutual quarrels and the war.<sup>1</sup>

With some reservation this fragment can be used to show that the Patriarch did not mean to interfere in the political affairs of the government, but wanted to persuade the armed men to stop killing each other.<sup>2</sup>

However, when the Peace Treaty was signed he became especially uncompromising. Patriarch Tikhon not only denounced the Peace Treaty but also rebuked the army for refusing to fight for their country against the enemy. He warned the soldiers that if they accepted the Treaty God would punish them; he also pointed out to them that they were accepting peace with Germany while they continued the war with their brothers at home. Using a text from Jeremiah, he said: "They say peace, peace, but there is no peace," and ended his epistle with a condemnation of the Peace Treaty: "We are called by our conscience to raise our voice in these frightful days and loudly to proclaim before the whole world that the Church cannot bless the shameful peace now concluded in the name of Russia."<sup>3</sup>

According to Grabbe, the Patriarch did not interfere in political matters, because he denounced the Treaty on moral, not political grounds. The Patriarch foresaw that the Treaty would not

bring lasting peace but hatred which will bring a new war; can the Russian people accept the fact that they were degraded - disgraced? Can they forget their separation from their blood and faith brothers? The Orthodox Church, which would rejoice and offer thankful prayers to God for ending the bloodshed, now with great sorrow accept this peace, which is worse than war itself.<sup>4</sup>

From the viewpoint of the Church, Grabbe argued that as the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Patriarch had to protest the loss of fifty-six million inhabitants who were severed from Church life in Russia. In addition, the Patriarch charged Lenin, who prior to his premiership of the Soviet Russia was believed to be in German pay, with treason.<sup>5</sup> Without the slightest doubt the Patriarch's strong reaction to the Treaty could be construed by the Communists as an attempt on the Church's part to interfere in purely political or government affairs.<sup>6</sup> The Bolsheviks' conviction was supported by the fact that on April 29, 1918, when Het'man Pavlo Skoropads'kyj, who was supported by the



Germans, took over powers in the Ukraine, "Bishop Nikodim prayed for the long life of Het'man Pavlo."<sup>7</sup> The Patriarch did not admonish or punish the Bishop for his pro-German act.

The attacks on the terms of the Peace Treaty and the involvement of Bishop Nikodim with Het'man Pavlo reinforced the Communists' belief that the Church was part of the counter-revolution and wanted to weaken the government by keeping it in an unpopular war. The Bolsheviks had every reason to fear the Church which had survived the overthrow of the two previous regimes, and was the sole institution remaining within Russia that potentially was able to offer resistance to the Soviet government. The Communists knew that "many bishops and clergymen collaborated with and supported the White Armies and the Entente."<sup>8</sup> Some of the clergy actually fought in the ranks of the White Army. General Denikin formed a special regiment drawn exclusively from the clergy, 700 of them all together.<sup>9</sup> In the diary of General Pepeliaev, Minister of the Interior under Kolchak, the entry of September 21, 1919 read: "Yesterday the first detachment of the Holy Cross and Moslems went off - in all 500 rifles and 100 sabers. On

the 18th they were reviewed by General Dieterichs, which review concluded with a Te Deum...<sup>10</sup>

The clergy's support of and participation in the White Army gave the Bolsheviks the reason to declare them "enemies" of the proletariat and the Church an institution alien and hostile to the Soviet State.<sup>11</sup> The government resolved to eradicate not only those clergy and believers that were involved in the anti-Soviet struggle but the Church as an institution. Since the priests were the closest to the common people the Bolsheviks decided to liquidate them first.

The government, which had already nationalized all the Church's property, now reduced priests to a status of social inferiority. Article 65 of the Soviet Constitution of 1918 proclaimed them to be non-workers and servants of the bourgeoisie, and together with the latter they were deprived of the franchise.<sup>12</sup> In the Ukraine not only the priests but also those that held office in parish executive councils were disfranchised<sup>13</sup> and not permitted to belong to Trade Unions. On March 3, 1919 Narodnyi Komissariat Prosveshcheniia (the People's Commissariat of Education) further deprived the priests of their duties in prohibiting the clergy to be employed as educators for the "servants

of the cult should not be employed as educators,"<sup>14</sup>  
unless they renounced their priesthood.<sup>15</sup>

To preserve contact with children, the clergy tried to organize a series of private lectures for small groups. The scheme was not too successful because the government moved in and accused the priests of counter-revolutionary activities,<sup>16</sup> a crime for which death could be inflicted. Ten years imprisonment was not unusual while the common punishment for murder was six years imprisonment. In effect, to teach religion was considered a more serious crime than murder.<sup>17</sup>

E. I. Lisavtsev justifies the abolition of religious instruction in the schools for, according to him, it had nothing to do with the needs of young people. As a rule, religious instruction to a greater or lesser degree would be an infringement on freedom of conscience.<sup>18</sup>

On January 21, 1921 a decision of the People's Commissariat of Justice curtailed priests' working activities even further. They could not be hired by provincial or district towns as workers, be employed where they could earn high wages,<sup>19</sup> nor could they receive food ration cards.<sup>20</sup>

Although Article 118 of the Constitution pledged that every citizen had a right to work, this excluded the clergy for they were considered to be second class citizens. Being thus disfranchised, the clergy did not have the right to vote, to be elected, or to be a member of any Trade Union.<sup>21</sup> The priests were compelled either to submit to the Communists by renouncing their faith, or to disguise themselves, which was illegal, in order to find work, or to remain as clergy and be persecuted.

If a priest decided to choose the latter course he was in a very difficult predicament, as far as his daily survival was concerned, particularly if his church-parish was closed. Such a priest was not even allowed to beg for his bread because the government prohibited him from even entering cemetery grounds where he could perform the burial services or to ask for alms. Usually there was a sign on cemetery gates which read:

Cult workers are strictly forbidden to remain either inside the cemetery or in the street adjacent to it. Such persons are only allowed enter and perform rites individually as requested.<sup>22</sup>

Similar restrictions were applied not just to priests who did not have their own parishes but to all clergy alike.

The government tried to persuade those priests that chose to remain in their parishes to stop serving in them.<sup>23</sup>

Since a majority of the priests refused to comply with the Communists' demands they started to draw the local Soviets, the Red Army and the Trade Unions into the anti-religious campaign. The Central Council of Trade Unions ordered the local unions to combine anti-religious activity with their work in clubs, libraries, entertainments, etc.<sup>24</sup> and the Comsomol was encouraged to stage anti-religious carnivals on Christmas and Easter Holidays, in order to discourage people from attending Church Services.<sup>25</sup>

In their efforts to isolate priests from the population some local administrations forbade priests even to visit their parishioners, who wanted to invite priests to perform services or to consult with them.<sup>26</sup> Those peasants that dared to invite and harbour a priest were more heavily taxed.<sup>27</sup> To tighten the restrictions on religious life even further, the government forbade priests from serving more than one parish.<sup>28</sup> This was particularly harsh on those parishes whose priest was imprisoned or had died.

But the Communists made a mistake in their assumption that if there was no priest in a town or village, religious life would die out. Where there was no priest in a village the people gathered together to read the Gospel and to recite those parts of a service which were permitted to the layman and to sing the Liturgical songs.<sup>29</sup> Sometimes a disguised priest would come into a settlement to live. Usually he would pose as a shoemaker or bricklayer.<sup>30</sup> A disguised priest would not dare to serve openly but he would perform all the services and minister his believers in secret. He would gather the children and tell them Bible stories which captured their interest much more than the stories they heard at school. It was among these children and their parents that the priest became popular and the most respected person in the village.<sup>31</sup>

Although priests were not permitted to work, they were nevertheless heavily taxed, because they were classified as free professionals. According to the Soviet tax system priests could be taxed in more than one way. The taxation of the churches and clergy seems to have been in the hands of the local authorities because some priests were taxed more heavily than others. "In the town of Proskuriv, for instance, the Provost of the cathedral,

Father Okolovsky, had to pay a yearly tax of 5,000 roubles, while his colleague in Zhytomyr had to pay as much as 35,000 - 40,000 roubles.<sup>32</sup> In addition to direct taxation priests were also burdened with indirect taxes. On June 19, 1923 the People's Commissariat of Justice stated that all clergy were on a par with the rest of the citizens with regard to taxation (this included income from property) and that because the priests' tax was paid by the parish they had to pay tax according to the tax scale.<sup>33</sup> Thus income taxes of up to 83 per cent were levied on the salaries of the clergy although the maximum for other citizens was 13 per cent no matter how high their income.<sup>34</sup> By the decree of March 27, 1924 priests were taxed for the protection they received from the State and for the benefit of a settling peace.<sup>35</sup> The village priests were obligated to pay the so-called edinyi sel'sko-khoziaistvennyi nalog (only village tax),<sup>36</sup> a tax on income from land and other sources, but they did not possess any land because it had been nationalized. The decree of May 3, 1924 pointed out that the clergy besides "the only village tax" were also subject to district tax. They were forced to pay tax on their personal income if it exceeded 600 roubles. Priests'

incomes were taxed at a rate of between 5.60 and 13 roubles semi-annually.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, clergy were compelled to pay all the taxes which went to fill local needs.<sup>38</sup> It is no wonder that even the Soviet circular of January 2, 1925 stated that many times the priests were taxed "unjustly and beyond their means."<sup>39</sup> On May 31, 1927 there was an amendment to the priest's taxation system which stated that the tax rate should be from 40 to 60 per cent but should not exceed 75 per cent.<sup>40</sup>

The heavy taxation was not the only predicament that priests faced. The Soviet government also burdened priests with the problem of accomodation. Since the clergy had been expelled from parish residences and their personal estates confiscated on the grounds that they had been "robbed [stolen] from the working people,"<sup>41</sup> priests had to apply for their lodging to the Zhilishchnoe Tovarishchestvo (Rent Committees) as did all Soviet citizens, but the priests were subject to much higher rents than the rest of the citizens. According to the Soviet government scale of rents for July 21, 1924, a worker whose annual income, let us say, was 3,000 roubles would be charged 48 kopecks per square meter<sup>42</sup> of living space per



month, but a clergyman whose annual income was just below 3,000 roubles, he would have to pay 77 kopecks, provided he lived in a city of no more than 40,000 inhabitants; if he lived in a bigger city and earned more than 3,000 roubles annually, he would have to pay up to 4.40 roubles per square meter, and if he lived in Moscow the rate would exceed even that amount. The difference in rents for workers and clergy was also applied in rural areas. The rent for the clergy exceeded from three to five times that for ordinary workers.<sup>43</sup> But, even high rental payments did not secure living quarters in a city for priests. Since they were disfranchised they could be ousted from a city at anytime, whenever their living quarters were needed for somebody else,<sup>44</sup> like a party member or a qualified worker. Many times a priest was not even able to rent a room, but was compelled to rent a part of it. A cult service man, Strakhov, who developed active tuberculosis and required additional accommodation,<sup>45</sup> was denied such a privilege by the Rent Committee because "citizen Strakhov was a cult service man." However, when Strakhov appealed to the People's Commissariat of Justice, he was assigned a separate room, not for his own sake but "to protect others from contamination."<sup>46</sup>

The Soviet government did permit parishes to exist provided they were registered. On the basis of the instruction of the People's Commissariat of Justice of August/24, 1918, no religious congregation could exist unless it had at least twenty members.<sup>47</sup> A congregation that could not find twenty people of the same religious belief could form a religious group,<sup>48</sup> which had the right to apply for a permit in order to get together for worship, but the religious group could not apply to rent a church building. For those congregations that could find more than fifty members, the Instruction of the People's Commissariat of Justice of April 27, 1923 allowed them to organize into religious societies which were entitled to more privileges.<sup>49</sup> According to the explanation of the Instruction issued by the People's Commissariat of Justice on April 11, 1924, the latter form was more or less reserved only for various sects and the Zhivaia Tserkov (Living Church).<sup>50</sup>

All religious congregations regardless of their numerical strength were recognized on a par with lay organizations, except that their members were deprived of the legal rights extended to the members of lay

organizations.<sup>51</sup> The congregations also had to register in a district or provincial office which in turn had the right to refuse such registration.<sup>52</sup> If a registered congregation wanted to have services it had to lease the building and utensils that were needed for the church service. In order to lease a church building each congregation had to elect a responsible dvadtsatka or "committee of twenty." If the membership of this committee dropped below twenty as a result of death, arrest, retirement or change of residence, the congregation was allowed only two weeks in which to find a replacement. If its attempts at recruitment failed, the congregation would be dissolved and the church closed.<sup>53</sup>

In administering parish properties the government recognized the local priests and the committee of twenty that signed the application, but not the Church superiors. The people that signed and their priest were responsible to the government and not to the Church administration.<sup>54</sup> A person who signed for a property had a right to withdraw his name from the list by writing to the Soviet Rabochikh i Krest'ianskikh Deputatov (Council of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies) but this did not absolve him of his responsibility for damages done to national property while he was co-signer.<sup>55</sup>

Despite the fact that churches could be rented from the government free of charge provided that the tenants took proper care of the property, the land itself upon which the building stood was taxable. The land tax was not only inconsistent but also unjust<sup>56</sup> from one church building to another. As Mykula said:

Unsatisfied with having confiscated the churches and all their property, the Soviet Russian government imposed exorbitant taxes on the religious communities often amounting to thousands of roubles. The taxes were not fixed once and for all, or for a definite period of time, but were imposed from occasion to occasion, according to the whims of the Communist authorities... The failure to pay taxes resulted in the church building being taken away and closed for Divine Services.<sup>57</sup>

The rent rate upon the land differed from one province to another by as much as 100 per cent,<sup>58</sup> suggesting that the taxation was illegal. Abuses in taxation were so common, that even the government became disturbed. In order to stop the abuse the Bolsheviki passed a law forbidding the local authorities to tax parishes more than they should.<sup>59</sup>

But not all the churches were for lease. Monastic churches, private chapels, churches that belonged to the army or those which were of archeological, historical or artistic value were not for lease. They were reserved for anti-religious museums.

While the government did not guarantee possession of the building to parishioners, it demanded that parishes repair and restore their churches although it refused to provide the parishes with materials or to allow a parish to buy materials. The Church of St. Catherine in Leningrad was constantly undergoing forced renovation. The government required that parishes heat their churches in winter, but once again the Communists refused to give the parishes a permit to buy fuel from the state.<sup>60</sup>

Beside the heavy rents and renovations that were imposed upon the parishes, each parish was compelled to insure the building and its utensils. On December 20, 1923 the government decided that if the building burned down, even though it was the believers who paid the premiums, the sums paid by the insurance board would be paid to the state, because the church building was state property.<sup>61</sup>

The government also reserved the right to transfer this insurance to fill the "cultural needs of the" province or district in which the church burned."<sup>62</sup> Therefore, a fire represented not a loss of property to the state, but a beneficial coincidence: a fire eliminated a church building and provided money to build anti-religious centres.

Financial burdens were not the only ones that were imposed on the parishes. There were serious restrictions on spiritual life as well. An instruction of the People's Commissariat of Justice on August 24, 1918 specified that all religious rituals on the street or squares were permissible provided that the faithful got a permit from the local authorities, which usually did not dare give such permission. This also included church possessions and the ringing of bells at the time of a funeral.<sup>63</sup> The government also forbade the parish executive to impose pecuniary obligations on their members to support the parish.<sup>64</sup>

The local Soviets hindered religious activities as much as they could, and many times they abused their powers.

The decree on freedom of conscience applied to the individual and parish but not to the life of a Church. Soviet legal experts claimed that every religious congregation, including the local clergy, could only belong to the central church authority of their free will. But the Church as an institution or a bishop was disallowed from giving orders to their faithful, because such an order would infringe upon the Soviet Constitution and the freedom of conscience of the Soviet citizen. This meant that a diocesan bishop could not place restrictions on priests who were guilty of misconduct. According to the Procurator at the trial of the Fifty-Four in Moscow, the existence of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Soviet Russia was illegal.<sup>65</sup>

Izvestiia of May 6, 1922 attacked

the existence of a "special hierarchy" constituting in the nature of an independent State within the territory of the Soviet Russia. Yet, according to the decree separating Church and State, the existence in this country of a "Church hierarchy," as such, is impossible. The decree allows only the existence of separate religious communities, not joined together by any administrative authority and freely electing their clergy, who most certainly must not be confirmed by the "Episcopal Council."<sup>66</sup>

To make the priests' lives even more miserable local authorities forced them "to clean streets and market places and to perform other unskilled labour work in their cassocks" until the government on January 3, 1919 forbade the local authorities to do so.<sup>67</sup> The families of priests were in no better a position than the priests themselves. As long as a priest's family did not reject him its members were persecuted just as severely as the priest himself. Children were the most adversely affected. On December 15, 1923 the "People's Commissariat of Justice issued a circular which stated that since the clergy were classified as "people of free profession they had to pay for the education of their children."<sup>68</sup> If a priest could not pay a fee for his child, the child was ousted from higher educational institutions. The clergy's children were only permitted to attend primary grades free of charge.

As soon as the Bolsheviks came to power they concentrated their attention upon school children and their education. On October 27, 1917 the Communists issued a decree establishing a new State Educational Committee; and on November 23, 1917 they dismissed the existing State Educational Committee; and finally on December 11, 1917



Lenin signed the decree by which all the schools were nationalized. To curtail the Church's influence in education the government passed a law on February 5, 1918 which stated:

The school is separated from the Church. Religious instruction shall be prohibited in all State and private educational institutions in which general subjects are taught. Citizens may give or receive religious instructions in a private way.<sup>69</sup>

This decree affected the Church in two ways. First, it deprived the Church of the use of schools to train its clergy, psalmists, etc. and secondly, the Church lost its right to give children religious instruction which meant the eventual loss of the faithful. It was only on June 13, 1921 that a decree came out permitting religious instruction in the theological institutions<sup>70</sup> solely "for those individuals over eighteen years of age who are able to discuss religious questions intelligibly."<sup>71</sup> But the very same decree forbade the Church or believers to attract minors into religious societies or to permit their participation in religious rituals of any kind, or to give religious instruction to organized groups of persons below the age of eighteen. Religious instruction could be given to children privately and even then only as long as the group did not exceed three students.<sup>72</sup>

The spirit in which these regulations were applied appears clearly in a reply from the People's Commissariat of Justice of the Karelian autonomous territory to an application made by a town to have religious education restored in its schools. The Commissariat commented:

The idea that man can fulfill his high destiny only on the basis of the Gospel is erroneous. It is obvious that religious education resulted in stupidity. As the Soviet government is responsible for the children of the country, it must prevent the minds of these children from being darkened by religious superstition.<sup>73</sup>

The whole Soviet educational system became permeated with atheism and every teacher was compelled to give anti-religious lessons to the children or to loose his teaching position.<sup>74</sup> The Krasnaia Gazeta (The Red Gazette) of April 6, 1923 wrote:

It is not enough to fight religions in a scientific way in our schools, we must introduce some political element into it! Religion and the Church are bound up with the bourgeoisie - the working class is rising against the bourgeoisie, it must also combat actively and energetically the instrument of its domination.

In this combat what we need is daring and energy. There must be a single proletarian front against religious prejudices. We must destroy the counter-revolutionary Church.<sup>75</sup>

To withhold children from attending school or atheistic instruction was a crime in itself and gave the government the right to take children from their parents and place them with "foster-parents or into public institutions where they will be taught to regard Lenin as their father, Reason as their mother, and Stalin as their Pope."<sup>76</sup> Prohibition of religious instruction for children thus became the basis of the Bolshevik's educational policy. Miss Susan Lawrence, Under-Secretary of the Minister of Health in the Labour Government of Great Britain, and herself an educational expert, visited Moscow in 1923, and made a careful study of education. She wrote:

The schools are as I have said, propaganda schools, framed to include a definite ideal both in politics and religion.

Communism is to be taught and religion is to be exterminated, and the whole program of the schools is to be directed towards these ends. Exactly as the lessons in revolutionary history and elementary economics have as their object the reiteration of a political theory, so the lessons in natural history, the theory of evolution, and the comparative history of religion, have as their object establishing firmly the outlook of the world of say Huxley or Mr. Bradlaugh. It follows, as is always the case with dogmatic education, that there can be no free play of thought, and in particular, there is no room in the system for any teacher who does not think as the State does. A teacher who was not a Communist or who was a professing Christian, I am pretty sure would have to hide his opinion or lose his job...<sup>77</sup>

The Soviet educational system did indeed tolerate only a very narrow range of thought. The government took care that everything that was taught in school and that people read outside school should benefit the Communist ideology. Those books that did not suit Communistic ideas were suppressed. Such suppression applied even to the philosophical works of Plato, Kant and the classical works of Tolstoy.<sup>78</sup> On the other-hand, the works of Tolstoy and Dostoyevskii which were sympathetic to those who were oppressed under the tsarist regime were greatly favoured.<sup>79</sup> The Communist's slogan was: "Concentrate your main attention on the rising generation... Capture the children and religion will die out naturally in the land in a few years."<sup>80</sup> And they did concentrate their effort to educate the children. The government started to produce special Communist children's books, which described Lenin's childhood, communist war heroes, etc... Even classics of children's literature like Krasnaia Shapochka (Little Red Riding Hood) were criticized by Soviet authorities because there was nothing that could instruct the children in the habits of wolves or of little girls.<sup>81</sup> Aside from books,

the government published special periodicals for children. The most important of these was a weekly newspaper for Pioneers (junior members of the Comsomol) called the Pionerskaia Pravda, a kind of junior edition of Pravda <sup>82</sup> in which youth and children reported and denounced their parents and neighbours.<sup>83</sup>

Parallel to anti-religious education, the government constantly conducted "purges" in schools. These "purges" were carefully planned throughout the country. Their aims were to eliminate an undesirable element from the schools and to destroy the faith of the people even if it required the use of force. In schools, religion was constantly and systematically ridiculed as were the children of the believers.<sup>84</sup> These "purges" applied not only to the staff but also to the students, particularly to those of bourgeois, kulak, and clerical descent. In every school or institution frequent investigations were held to see whether any of the employees or students were "outlaws".<sup>85</sup> If such a person was found, he or she was to be expelled or "purged" from work or school because there was no place for such a person or child in the Soviet educational system.<sup>86</sup> Those "purged" from school

who wanted to find work, even unskilled, were refused the right of entering Trade Unions.<sup>87</sup> Usually the "purges" were conducted not by the teachers but by the students themselves, because the latter knew the victims at home. Once a priest's child had been "purged" the students would not leave him alone. The junior and senior members of Comsomol would make it their project to find the child. When they did, they would report at once to the school, institute or work office with a demand to "purge" the individual as the son or daughter of a priest.<sup>88</sup>

The only way a priest's son or daughter was able to receive higher education was to renounce his or her parents. The renouncement had to be public and it had to be printed in the local newspaper. The child had to denounce God and his father as a man who deceived the people by preaching to them about God and eternal life. At the end of the denunciation, the child would appeal to other priests' children to renounce their parents in the name of socialism. The rights of citizenship would be restored to the children who renounced their parents and they would become Soviet citizens in every respect.<sup>89</sup>

The Soviet government used schools not only as institutions of education and indoctrination but also as the primary source of information about the children's parents and their activities. In the schools the children were constantly required to fill in questionnaires. By this means the small children were made to serve the purposes of a spy system. The children had to fill in huge questionnaires, containing many questions relating to the manner of living of their parents. These questionnaires were material for the Gosudarstvennoe Politichiskoe Upravlenie (G.P.U.) (State Political Police) and the children never realized how often they acted as informers against their parents.<sup>90</sup>

Despite all this persecution of the Church, the Soviet government as well as the clergy denied the existence of religious persecution in Soviet Russia. Both the government and the Church officials constantly quoted the "freedom of religion... and the freedom of religious and anti-religious propaganda"<sup>91</sup> in the Soviet Constitution. In the book The Truth About Religion in Russia we read: "hostile elements, under cover of the Church, spread false rumors that the Church in Russia was not free in its inner life"<sup>92</sup> According to Grabbe, on February 15, 1930

Metropolitan Sergii, during one of the most all-out attacks on religion told a group of amazed foreign correspondents that there was no religious persecution in Russia.<sup>93</sup> A. A. Shishkin went even further than that; he denied that "the Soviet government ever offended believers' feelings or limited their religious freedom."<sup>94</sup> If Christians or clergy were imprisoned it was due to their political, counter-revolutionary activities and not to their religious convictions.<sup>95</sup>

Even if one takes the Soviet Constitution literally one will discover that the only freedom that the Church possessed was that of worship. The Church had no right to engage in any missionary activity or even to defend itself against hostile attacks.<sup>96</sup> It is true that Church services could be held freely in designated places of worship provided they were of an exclusively religious nature, but the priests were obligated to submit their sermons to the censor.

In reality the Communist Party carried on vigorous anti-religious propaganda, because the Party believed it stood for science while religious teaching was contrary to science.<sup>97</sup> In the preamble to the decree of December 26,



1922, religion was declared to be "a brutalization of the people," and it was stated that "education was to be so directed as to efface from the people's mind this humiliation and this idiocy."<sup>98</sup> Therefore, religion had to be fought with all the means of modern propaganda for only anti-religious propaganda could undermine the priests' influence over the masses. Stalin in his interview with the American workers' delegation on September 9, 1927 confirmed that religious persecution existed in the Soviet Union. Stalin said:

We are conducting and will conduct propaganda against religious prejudices.

The Party could not be neutral toward religion; the Party was conducting anti-religious propaganda against all kind of religious prejudices, because the Party stands for science while religious prejudices are opposing it. Every religion is contrary to science.

The Party could not be neutral toward the religious prejudices, it will conduct anti-religious propaganda, because this is the true way to undermine the influence of the reactionary clergy who poison the minds of the laboring masses and had suppressed them.

Anti-religious propaganda is the way which will liquidate completely the reactionary clergy.

Continuing, Stalin remarked that

there were instances when some party members hampered the widest possible development of

anti-religious propaganda. But it was very good that the Party expelled such members, because for such "Communists" there is no place in the ranks of our Party.<sup>99</sup>

At the Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party in December 1927 Stalin also stated that "We have such minuses as a weakening of the anti-religious struggle." He declared that, "all these failings must be eliminated."<sup>100</sup>

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### CHAPTER THREE

#### CONFISCATION OF THE CHURCH VALUABLES AND THE FAMINE

The government did not anticipate that people would resist anti-religious policies so strongly. Direct persecution proved to be not too effective especially at a time when the country's economy was on very shaky ground.<sup>1</sup> To remedy this situation, in March 1921 the Communists inaugurated Novuiu Ekonomicheskuiu Politiku (NEP or the New Economic Policy). But this did not help much in the first year of its existence for 1921 proved to be a very poor year, because the government became involved in a power struggle with the peasantry. In effect, the government confiscated the peasants' surplus crops. Peasants retaliated by not sowing any more crop than was strictly necessary for their own consumption. In addition, the summer of 1921 was a very dry one in the Volga region and in the southern parts of the Ukraine the crop yield was very poor due to lack of rainfall. As a result the Volga and many other districts were struck by a famine which ultimately affected 23 gubernias (provinces), with a

population of over 37 million.<sup>2</sup> To remedy this situation, as early as August 22, 1921 the Patriarch appealed to the Eastern Orthodox patriarchs and autocephalous churches, to the Pope of Rome, to the Archbishop of Canterbury and to the Bishop of New York for help. As for the Russian Orthodox Church itself, the Vse-Russkii Tserkovnyi Komitet (All-Russian Church Committee) was organized to aid the starving population by collecting money and provisions. The government, however, was less interested in availing itself of the services of the Church in fighting the famine than in using the famine in its fight against the Church.<sup>3</sup> Hence, all the sums which had already been collected by the Church Committee for relief were ordered to be turned over to the State Committee.<sup>4</sup> The government also forbade the Church to collect food because it would not be the state but the Church that would gain credit for helping the people survive the famine. At the same time, the situation did not get better but worse: typhus added to the catastrophe of the famine and each day thousands died. The government realized that it would need all the help it could get including that of the Church to combat the famine. On December 9, 1921, unable to cope with the situation, the Presidium of the Vse-Soiuznyi

Ispolnitelnyi Komitet (All-Russian Central Executive Committee) took into consideration the Church's help and published the following:

After reviewing the long list of solicitations from various religious societies asking for permission to make collections for the relief of the starving, the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee decided:

1. To permit the ecclesiastical authorities and the various religious societies to make the collections.
2. To direct the Centropomgol (the Central Committee for Aid to the Starving) to enter into an agreement with the religious societies about the method of collection of contributions, having in view the wishes of the donors.<sup>5</sup>

As the famine became more and more acute some priests and laymen began to demand that the many valuable Church treasures used for decorative purposes in churches<sup>6</sup> be sold for food. Moreover, on January 31, 1922 Izvestiia reported that the Bishop of Saratov, Dosifei, had expressed a willingness to contribute some of the gold and silver Church utensils to combat the famine<sup>7</sup> and on February 10, 1922, Archbishop Evdokim of Nizhnii Novgorod issued an epistle to his eparchy in which he appealed to the people:

It is shame now-a-days to wear gold and jewels when each [ornament] could wipe out the tears of the suffering and save a human being. If we had to bring the Church treasures to the altar of love of our neighbour then we have to lay it down the way our forefathers did.<sup>8</sup>

On February 16, 1922 three congregations in Saratov decided to give all their valuables to the relief fund. They kept only what was needed for the Liturgical Services.<sup>9</sup> This idea of taking the treasures from the churches and of exchanging them for food was not supported by all the bishops, clergy and people. Many opposed this idea. On February 19, 1922 the Patriarch issued a statement permitting parishes to donate Church treasures that were not exclusively consecrated for Divine Services.<sup>10</sup> This seemed to be the maximum concession the Patriarch was willing to make. Then on February 22, 1922 the All-Russian Central Executive Committee passed a law stating that

In view of the pressing need to mobilize all the resources of the nation which might serve as means in the struggle with the famine in the Volga region and for seed for the fields, the V.C.I.K. (All-Russian Central Executive Committee), in addition to its decree concerning the use of objects from museums, resolved:

To instruct the local Soviet, within one month's time from the day of publication of the decree, to remove from Church property, given for use to various groups of believers of all religions, according to inventories and contracts, all

precious articles of gold, silver and precious stones, the removal of which does not essentially infringe upon the interests of the cult, and surrender these to agents of the Commissariat of Finance, especially designating them for the fund of the central committee for famine aid.<sup>11</sup>

The law ordered that the removal of valuables from the churches take place in the presence of the believers into whose care the property had been entrusted.<sup>12</sup>

There was also a note to the decree to the effect that articles of precious metal necessary for the worship of God could be brought back within two weeks by broken metal of the same value.<sup>13</sup> The decree of redemption of the Church utensils applied not to the Church as an institution but to the parishes only. The Patriarch and the Pope had directly approached the Soviet government to provide it with an equivalent of cash in lieu of the consecrated articles which were proposed to be seized but the offers were consistently ignored by the government.<sup>14</sup>

Two days after the decree was published in Izvestiia, Patriarch Tikhon gave his answer to the government by issuing his second circular letter. In his letter the Patriarch denounced the Bolsheviki by declaring that from

the Church's point of view "such an act is sacreligious, and we esteem it our sacred duty to make known the view of the Church regarding the act and to inform our faithful children about it."<sup>15</sup> When some peasants, who had come to ask the Patriarch for his blessing to take treasures from the churches, were refused, one of them remarked that even the tsars had taken Church treasures in time of need.

The Patriarch answered:

the tsars took, but they also gave. And besides, the treasures are in the hands of the faithful, who are sceptical that the valuables will be sold for food to feed the hungry. They believed that the funds from the treasures will go to the army.<sup>16</sup>

In his circular letter the Patriarch explained the reason for his attitude:

we cannot approve the removal of consecrated objects from our churches even though it were by way of a voluntary surrender, for their use for any other purpose than the Divine Service is prohibited by the canons of the Ecumenical Church, and is punishable as sacrilege: in the case of laymen, by excommunication: clergy by degradation from their sacerdotal rank.<sup>17</sup>

The crisis had reached a culminating point. The government decided to crush the Church's opposition. Events started to move very quickly. In the Leningrad Pravda on March 24, 1922 there appeared a letter signed

by 12 people (priests: Krasnitskii, Vvedenskii, Belkov, Boiarskii, and others) who opposed the Patriarch in withholding the treasures from the government. They accused the Patriarch and his followers of counter-revolutionary activities as well as of using the famine as a political tool, and they demanded that all the valuables be turned to the Soviet authorities.<sup>18</sup>

As if to support the Leningrad group, on the very next day Izvestiia published the resolution of the Moscow railway workers who had decided at their meeting that the Church's wealth should be removed from the churches and sold to buy food to feed the hungry.<sup>19</sup> To strengthen the government's position and to split the Church M. I. Kalinin, President of the All-Russian Executive Committee, invited Bishop Antonin to join the Pomgol (the Aid to the Hungry) as the representative of the Church. The latter accepted the invitation.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the government had successfully maneuvered the Church into a false position where it did not appear to be fighting for the defence of the faith against unbelief, but for the retention of its property which the government wanted to use to feed the starving.<sup>21</sup>

On June 19, 1922 Bishop Antonin explained in a message that "... our duty is to stop regretting what we have lost, we should look forward and only then will the government stop restricting us in our duties."<sup>22</sup> In the message he urged the people to give away everything in the churches that was made of gold and silver:

We should feel pity for the starving people not only with words and promises but we should show this pity by doing something. I personally give away my gold cross and from now on I will wear the wooden one.<sup>23</sup>

The idea of using the Church's wealth for famine relief was accepted by many bishops and clergymen<sup>24</sup> and in many places confiscation proceeded without opposition.<sup>25</sup> The Metropolitan of Petrograd, Veniamin was among those ready to give away the valuables.

Metropolitan Veniamin, who was known for his good deeds among the people, was probably the only Russian hierarch who had been elected by the people to the Metropolitanship after the Revolution in 1917. As a church leader, he found a modus vivendi with the Leningrad group of priests who dissented from the Patriarch's point of view over donating the Church valuables. He thought that if it were possible to save a few, perhaps only one person, it was worth removing the valuables from the churches



because every effort had to be made to save human life.<sup>26</sup>

In removing the valuables he asked the authorities to abstain from violence and sacrilege and to assure the parish people that the Church's valuables would be used to help the starving. He also asked the government to exempt some of the objects from expropriation. He suggested that privately donated treasures of the same value be substituted for the Church's objects. In his petition to the officials of the Commission for the Aid for the Starving he made four points:

1. The Church is ready to sacrifice her whole property for the sake of the starving.
2. In order to respect the feelings of the faithful the action should be undertaken and have the nature of a voluntary donation.
3. For the same purpose representatives of the religiously inclined populace should participate in the control over the use of the Church treasures.
4. Seizure of the treasures by force should be avoided. If it should take place, however, he would have to condemn every active participant in this action on the basis of his oath as a priest.<sup>27</sup>

He further stated that if the government respected the feelings of the religious, he was ready to remove with his own hands the precious setting of the Icon Mary of Kazan and hand it over to the authorities.<sup>28</sup>

Leningrad officials received the Metropolitan's declaration cordially and were ready to cooperate with him. But when the Metropolitan's delegation arrived in Moscow to conclude the agreement which already had been agreed upon with the Leningrad authorities, the delegation was told that there would not be "voluntary donations" and there could not be any "participation of the faithful" in the confiscation of the Church valuables; Church valuables were to be seized without control.<sup>29</sup>

The central government decided to enforce its decree of confiscation indiscriminately. The police and militia, supported by the army, when such support was necessary, started to remove gold vessels, precious stones that adorned icons, Gospels and richly embroidered and bejewelled capes and stoles. Many times this was done in a very crude and harsh way: "Furniture was smashed and walls broken to discover hidden treasures. Sacred pictures had the portions studded with jewels cut right out, leaving ugly gaps."<sup>30</sup> Such treatment of objects that were sacred to so many people provoked stubbornness and deep resentment not only toward the confiscation of the valuables, but also toward the government as well. Those that confiscated valuables comforted the people by saying: "We are taking your chalices

and valuable crosses just to bring you bread." But not all the people were looking forward to eating food that was bought with the Church's treasures. Some of them reported having said: "We are dying already. Then let the people bury us like human beings... We don't want bread for icons. We had better die."<sup>31</sup>

The refusal of some people to give away valuables was pathetic. Priests tried to stop the officials as best as they could by closing the doors and at times by forming barriers of bodies before the altars. Believers, particularly women, gathered in churches to pray that this desecration might be averted. There were reported to be 1,414 instances of bloodshed during these protests.<sup>32</sup> But nothing helped. Valuables were taken away and the arrests followed.<sup>33</sup>

The Soviet government never disclosed to the public the total sum of confiscated Church valuables, but as of October 1, 1922 Pomgol reported that the local offices of the Commissariat of Finance had received the following: 1,217 pounds avoirdupois of gold valued at 600,000 gold

roubles, 863,913 pounds of silver valued at 18,500,000 gold roubles and 4,248 pounds of other metals valued at 211,563 gold roubles.<sup>34</sup> The sale of the Church's valuables fell short of expectation. After all the gold and silver utensils and ornaments had been melted down into bullion and the coins counted, the whole Church treasure amounted to about 100,000,000 roubles. Although it should be said that the New York Journal of Commerce placed the amount at 314,000,000 gold roubles.<sup>35</sup>

The Bolsheviks justified the confiscation of the Church valuables by saying that the 114,600,000 roubles which they had set aside were not sufficient to quench the famine. But this was not true. The Communists used the famine as an excuse to plunder the Church. Of the amount that was confiscated "the government reported that only twenty per cent was used to combat the famine conditions in 1922-1923."<sup>36</sup> According to an anonymous author, in 1922-1923 some of

the poor and famished were prevented from receiving help from Europe or America. In fact, Soviet Russia, as an economic unit, exported food supplies from the regions stricken with famine.<sup>37</sup>

The famine came to an end in 1923 but the decree regarding Church valuables remained in force until April 8, 1927.<sup>38</sup>

Patriarch Tikhon's refusal to permit the faithful to give away Church treasures might not have hardened the Soviet leaders so much against the Patriarch and the Church had it not been for the Russian emigres who convoked in Karlovtsi, Yugoslavia, at which they denounced the Soviet government and called upon the Russian people to withhold the Church treasures.

The emigres called the Conference in order to regulate their religious life abroad. It was dominated by a violently anti-Bolshevik element of eighteen bishops, clergy and laymen who channeled the supposedly religious conference into a political gathering. In December 1921 the conference was renamed a Sobor so that it would sound more authoritative. Instead of focusing all its efforts on normalizing religious life abroad, this Sobor turned all its energy to politics. At the end of its gathering it adopted three resolutions that greatly affected the Russian Church at home and abroad. These were demands for the restoration of the Monarchy in Russia and for a lawful Orthodox Tsar of the House of Romanov. The Sobor

also asked General Baron Wrangel to hold himself in readiness for the execution of Sobor's program.<sup>39</sup> In addition to these resolutions Metropolitan Antonii Khrapovitskii, the Chairman of the Sobor, published an appeal to the Genoa Conference in the name of all the Russian people. In his appeal he warned the people of the world against recognizing or entering into relationship with Soviet Russia.

As any strengthening of this vile regime would only facilitate the penetration of the Bolshevik infection into other lands. Failure of the Communists to achieve this depended,

1. upon nonrecognition of the Bolsheviks by all governments, and
2. upon the frightful calamities of hunger, cold and epidemics raging over Russia because of the Bolshevik disorders.<sup>40</sup>

In his message the Metropolitan not only advocated the continuation of the quarantine of Soviet Russia but he also pleaded for arms and volunteers to help the Russians drive the Communists out of Russia. He emphasized that one half of the Russian emigres were army officers and soldiers who were ready to fight against the Bolsheviks. "Help them to realize their duty, do not let your loyal ally go down."<sup>41</sup> Metropolitan Antonii also stressed the fact that the famine might be used to

advantage to defeat the Bolsheviks, because the people would not fight for a government that could not provide them with food.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to resolutions and the appeal to the Genoa Conference, the emigre press started to publish articles dealing with the situation in Russia and how the Soviet regime could be overthrown. Other articles urged that the Church treasures be preserved to finance the struggle against the Bolsheviks. In his article Protopresviter Shavel'skii claimed that the Church and the Patriarch would play an important role in the interregnum that would follow the overthrow of the Bolshevik government.<sup>43</sup> Other authors, like Stratonov, believed that the preservation of the Church's wealth would play a significant role at the time of the Bolshevik's downfall.<sup>44</sup>

The Karlovtsi Sobor of 1921-1922 did not help either the Church or the people in Soviet Russia. On the contrary, they were put in a very critical position<sup>45</sup> because emigre leaders showed their interest in the Church only as long as they were able to use it against the Soviet government.<sup>46</sup> The issue of Novoe Vremia in

which the Karlovtsi resolutions and the appeal to the Genoa Conference were published reached Soviet Russia in March 1922. This news closely coincided with the first disorders attempted upon the confiscation of the Church valuables. To the Soviet authorities, the disorders and opposition on the part of the believers seemed to be part of an ecclesiastical plot against the Soviet government.<sup>47</sup> The government promptly seized this opportunity to charge Tikhon with responsibility for the treasonable conduct of the Karlovtsi hierarchs because he was the head of all the Russian Orthodox people at home and abroad.

Patriarch Tikhon in his turn wrote to the Church leaders abroad for an explanation and confirmation of their activities. Their replies were inadequate. Thereupon, he submitted the case to the Holy Synod and the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council which relieved the Karlovtsi hierarchs of their duties. On May 3 he declared that the refugee hierarchs had no right to speak on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church because the Karlovtsi Sobor did not represent the official voice of the Russian Orthodox Church. Patriarch Tikhon with his Synod ordered that the Sobor at Karlovtsi be



dissolved and the Synod was told to collect all the available evidence in order to consider whether to put the members of the Karlovtsi Sobor on trial when the Russian Synod returned to a normal state and could convoke its full membership.<sup>48</sup> On May 5, 1922 the Patriarch ordered Metropolitan Evlogii to close the Karlovtsi administration and to take all the Russian Churches in Western Europe into his jurisdiction.<sup>49</sup>

Although the Patriarch labeled the Karlovtsi Sobor a political one, annulled its decisions and invested all power in Metropolitan Evlogii,<sup>50</sup> this did not stop the Bolsheviks from suspecting the Patriarch of planning a counter-revolution, especially since he refused the Bolshevik's demand to excommunicate all the members of the Karlovtsi Sobor.<sup>51</sup> The Bolsheviks did not accept all this as a concession or a compromise on the Patriarch's part, as M. Pol'skii stated.<sup>52</sup> According to Pol'skii, the Patriarch had no choice other than to denounce the emigres' decisions or to agree with them. To agree with the Karlovtsi Sobor was not only to place himself in the counter-revolutionary camp but also to place the Church as an institution and all its faithful in jeopardy. He would then have to accept the fact that every Orthodox

Christian in his jurisdiction would be considered a prime enemy of the Communists. This would condemn innocent people to death or at least to imprisonment. As one studies the situation it is easy to see that the Patriarch realized that the Bolshevik regime had consolidated its grip on the country and could not easily be overthrown. But he realized all this too late. He was already a marked man.

The government started to collect material to prove that the Patriarch, in opposing the confiscation of the valuables, broke the law for, "to oppose the decrees of the Soviet state was treason against the people."<sup>53</sup>

Since many bishops, clergymen and laymen supported the Patriarch in opposing the confiscation, the government was legally justified in arresting and charging them with counter-revolutionary activities.<sup>54</sup> Patriarch Tikhon was among the first to be arrested and put under house arrest because it was he, as the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, who called upon the people not to surrender the valuables. Whenever the officials came to take the valuables the people not only refused to relinquish the wealth but also violently protested. Cries were uttered: "Kill the Jewish plunderers! Kill the Communists!"<sup>55</sup>

There were also rumors in circulation that the treasures were wanted not to feed the starving but for the Soviet officials themselves who were accumulating the valuables in foreign countries for the day of their expulsion from Russia.<sup>56</sup>

To justify their action in confiscation of the valuables the government told one of the prosecutors to investigate the Church canon law concerning the legality of using valuables for the purpose of saving lives. The prosecutor called upon Bishop Antonin, and the priests Kalinovskii and Ledovskii as authorities on canon law to testify before the court in Moscow. All three agreed that the canons cited by Patriarch Tikhon applied only to cases of putting church plate to personal use, not to using it for aid to the needy. All agreed that the latter was neither sacrilege nor blasphemy.<sup>57</sup>

After this expert testimony, the court next sought to prove that the Patriarch and all those who followed his instructions with regard to the confiscation of the valuables acted not within the Church canon law, but as counter-revolutionaries in league with foreign conspirators. In order to condemn legally all the so-called counter-

revolutionaries, on April 26, 1922 the government staged a trial in Moscow which became known as the Trial of Fifty-Four because there were fifty-four defendants. During the hearing Archbishop Nikander was unexpectedly brought into court from his prison cell and questioned about a meeting he had held with the district priests.

On March 7, 1922, shortly after he had been appointed Archbishop of Moscow, Nikander had called a conference at which he, according to some of the priests at the trial, had read and distributed the Patriarch's proclamation against the confiscation of consecrated articles.<sup>58</sup> In his testimony the Archbishop denied that he had read or had given the proclamation to the priests for dissemination among the faithful. He admitted that he did discuss it at the conference,<sup>59</sup> but pointed out that at the meeting it had been decided to advise the people not to resist the officials over the confiscation of the valuables even if they seized all the articles, including those that were needed in Liturgical Services. The Archbishop explained that he urged the people to use only legal ways of defending the sacred objects. The faithful were asked to petition the government to exclude sacred utensils from the list of requisition.<sup>60</sup>

At the end of the trial Patriarch Tikhon was also brought from his confinement to testify on his own behalf. He was accused of inciting "the people to disobey the government."<sup>61</sup> To which Tikhon replied that the authorities knew very well that in his appeal there was no call for the people to resist the government; he only requested them to preserve the Church's sacredness and asked the Soviet state to allow the people to redeem the Church valuables.<sup>62</sup> The Patriarch also declared to the court that he found himself compelled, in accordance with Church law, to condemn the confiscation of consecrated objects; that, in the event of conflict between civil law and canon law, he considered it was his duty to obey canon law; and that he took upon himself full responsibility for the drafting, publishing and the distribution of his edict of March 2, 1922.<sup>63</sup>

The Bolsheviks were not convinced either by the Patriarch's or by the Archbishop's testimonies. During the trial the Communists believed, or pretended to believe, that religion was practiced for the sake of the clergy's self-gain and for counter-revolutionary purposes. A

quotation from the indictment read at the trial of the Fifty-Four shows the mentality of the prosecution better than any other description would do.

The decree of the Central Executive Committee regarding confiscation of Church treasures called forth a violent protest from that section of the clergy which, having been deprived during the preceding four years of its previous greatness, had already entered several times into strife with Soviet Russia, and had aided the regiments of landowners and capitalists in their struggle with the workmen and peasants of the Red Army... Taking advantage of the famine on the Volga, and relying on old people, fanatics, weak-minded persons, and hooligans, and concealing their selfish objects under the cloak of religion, they are again trying to enter into conflict with Soviet Russia. By proclaiming the Church valuables inviolable, despite the categorical decision of the Soviet power to take these valuables for the purpose of buying bread with them for the hungry, they thereby incited the masses of the people to engage in civil war. The accused could not be ignorant of the fact that the appeal of Tikhon, who openly summoned the people to oppose the civil power, is undoubtedly a counter-revolutionary act, for which reason the charge against them cannot be reduced to a charge of merely resisting the authorities. By refusing assistance to the starving, Tikhon is guilty of another counter-revolutionary act against the Government of Workers and Peasants and of favouring the return of Russia to its former state, in order that he may regain his own lost rights and privileges as well as the abundant wealth which the Soviet power is at present giving to the starving with the object of saving their lives.<sup>64</sup>

The result of the trial was that 11 of the defendants were condemned to death while the rest had the death

sentence commuted to five years imprisonment.<sup>65</sup> When the Patriarch, who had been re-confined to his cell to await his own trial, learned of the sentences he immediately wrote three letters; one addressed to the Council of People's Commissars, one to Kalinin, President of the All-Russian Executive Committee, and one to Kursky, Commissar of Justice. In his letters Tikhon protested that the punishment was out of all proportion to the charges. He pointed out that the people condemned merely fulfilled their duties as his subordinates. He took all the responsibility for opposing the government over the confiscation of the valuables upon himself and asked the authorities to take his life instead of those of his subordinates.<sup>66</sup>

One of the witnesses against the accused and, at the same time, against the Patriarch was the arch-priest Alexander Vvedenskii. This priest had been discontented with the Patriarch and the Church for a long time. In opposition to Tikhon and the Synod he had organized a group of priests and laymen in Moscow as a separate unit of the Orthodox believers with the intention of reforming the Russian Orthodox Church and of taking over its leadership. On his return from the Moscow trial to Petrograd,

he notified Veniamin, Metropolitan of Petrograd, that the latter was no longer in charge of the Petrograd diocese. The notice was rather a surprise to the Metropolitan, because it came from one of his priests who was making himself the administrator of the diocese and attempting to usurp the power of the Metropolitan in an uncanonical way. The action to which Vvedenskii resorted was contrary to Orthodox teaching for it is impossible for a priest to relieve a Metropolitan of his duties. Because of his insubordination, Veniamin excommunicated Vvedenskii from the Orthodox Church until he recognized his misbehavior and repented.<sup>67</sup>

Veniamin's excommunication of Vvedenskii gave the Soviet authorities an excuse to act against him for he had violated the government's law on freedom of conscience. The CHEKA threatened that unless Veniamin at once withdrew his excommunication of Vvedenskii, the Metropolitan as well as the other priests and laymen who supported him would be tried for resisting the confiscation of Church valuables.<sup>68</sup> Veniamin rejected the CHEKA's ultimatum and, within a few days he and his supporters were arrested upon Vvedenskii's instigation<sup>69</sup> and charged with resisting the government over the confiscation of Church valuables.



A Jewish lawyer, by the name of Gourovich, was appointed as the Chief Defence Counsel of the Metropolitan, not only with the agreement of the accused, but also at his own request.<sup>70</sup> The trial started on June 11, 1922 in the hall of the old Nobles' Club in Petrograd. It lasted nearly a month. The accused were charged with counter-revolutionary activities, refusal to surrender the Church valuables and cooperation with the emigre bishops of the Karlovtsi Sobor who were plotting to overthrow the Soviet government.<sup>71</sup>

As head of the eparchy, the Metropolitan took personal responsibility for the excommunication of Vvedenskii but as far as being connected with the emigre counter-revolutionary movement against the Soviet government, or with the refusal to give up the valuables, Veniamin refuted these charges. The Metropolitan said that he had only objected to the indiscriminatory confiscation of the valuables. When documents proving that Veniamin was innocent of opposing the Bolsheviki over the liquidation of wealth were presented by Egorov, a co-worker of Gourovich, Egorov was arrested on the spot.<sup>72</sup>

After the arrest of Egorov, Gourovich personally took over the defence and was easily able to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt the total innocence of the Metropolitan. In summation, he thanked the Orthodox clergy for having defended the Jews in the Beilis trial of 1913 and concluded his speech for the defence with these with these words:

If the Metropolitan is condemned for his faith and for his devoted loyalty to his flock, he will become more dangerous to the Soviet power than he is now. Remember the lesson of a irrefutable law of history: Faith increases and grows on the blood of martyrs.<sup>73</sup>

When the turn came for the Metropolitan to speak he said:

Five years ago I was chosen Archbishop because all the workers and the poor loved me. They loved me because I loved and worked for the poor and the starving. I am not a politician. I did what I did because it was my duty to my God and the Church.<sup>74</sup>

He told the court how on a previous occasion the government had called on him to speak on its behalf to calm the revolting people. He did so, and the revolt came to a halt. "If I am sent to my death," he added, "I will take it that it is the will of God. If it is the will of God that I shall die, I die as a true Christian." The court denounced

and sentenced the Metropolitan and the other defendants to death; later, it was decided to execute only four; Metropolitan Veniamin, Shein, and the two lawyers Novitskii and Kovsharov. The rest were sentenced to imprisonment.<sup>75</sup>

All together there were close to 2,000 trials in Soviet Russia and about 10,000 clergy and faithful were sentenced to death or failed to return from prison.<sup>76</sup> In the Ukraine alone 583 priests were liquidated because the faithful in their parishes resisted confiscation of the valuables.<sup>77</sup> In Kharkiv province within six months, from December 1918 until July 1919, 70 priests were killed.<sup>78</sup>

The Bolsheviks however did not forget the Patriarch. After the trial of the Fifty-Four, the Soviet press started its campaign against him. From all over the country deputations of workers were forwarding to Moscow resolutions in which they demanded the death sentence for the Patriarch. Izvestiia attacked him saying,

Who on February 28, 1918 gave his blessing to the village priests to ring the tocsins, to send messengers from village to village to gather people around each church to cause devastations and rebellions?

The same one, His Holiness Tikhon!

Who in 1921 upon the order of the foreign exchangers, in the vile campaign of the Tsar's General Kozlovskii, caused rebellion in Kronstadt?

Tikhon's steward - priest Sergii!

What are peasants and workers to do? They should resist all these bands of conceited priests. We should burn out with cold steel this Holy counter-revolution.<sup>79</sup>

The State procurator, Tuchkov, started to prepare the case against the Patriarch, who was to face the same charges as all those that had already been tried and condemned for counter-revolutionary activities. But his guilt, according to the government, was even more serious than that of the rest of the bishops because he was their leader and instigator. He was not only accused of obstructing the government in the confiscation of Church valuables, but also of inciting the people in a struggle for the restoration of the tsardom and for the return of the landlords to Russia.<sup>80</sup> These accusations were connected with counter-revolutionary activities because the Patriarch wanted to keep the Church's wealth for the future imperialist regime. The Bolsheviks accused the Patriarch of being in collusion with the emigres for he acted according to the emigres' instructions.

The government had an easy case against the Patriarch. Because he had prohibited the believers from contributing the Church valuables, which by the decree of 1917 did not belong to the Church, but to the people, he had interfered in the government's affairs. Since the Church was not registered as an institution, the Patriarch was acting illegally. By giving orders to the people the Patriarch was breaking the law of the Rights of the Soviet citizen dealing with freedom of conscience. And last but not least, the government condemned the Patriarch and his supporters for placing canon law above the State's law, which also meant that he was acting as a counter-revolutionary.<sup>81</sup>

The arrest of the Patriarch deprived the Church of its administrator, but in spite of all this the Church remained unified and strong. Arrests had deprived the Church of its leaders but the essence of faith remained even stronger in the people than before. By attacking the Church from the outside, propagating atheism, closing churches, by killing and imprisoning clergy, the Bolsheviki were not able to subdue the Church. Now, they decided to bring pressure on the Church from within.<sup>82</sup> At this time it seems that Church affairs were "transferred from the

Commissariat of Justice to the CHEKA, under one Tuchkov who was apparently commissioned to destroy the Church through underground methods.<sup>83</sup> By intimidation and terrorization the Communists forced some bishops and priests into cooperating with the secret police and in- to ruining the Church from within.<sup>84</sup>

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16. Ibid., March 26, 1922; Curtiss, The Russian Church and the Soviet State, p. 113.
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18. Izvestiia, March 29, 1922.
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22. Miliukov, p. 83.
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32. Lisavtsev, p. 97.
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35. Cooke, pp. 151-152.
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40. Ibid., p. 113.
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51. Swan, p. 60.
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57. Izvestiia, May 3, 1922.
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## CHAPTER FOUR

### SCHISM AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST IT

May 12, 1922 could be taken as the day of the formation of the so-called Zhivaia Tserkov or Living Church. Vvedenskii, the priests Kalinovskii, Krasnitskii and Belkov as well as the psalmist Stadnik visited Patriarch Tikhon in prison and asked him to give them permission to enter his office and to organize the Church administration since he was under arrest and was not able to administer the Church properly.<sup>1</sup> In discussion with the Patriarch, according to the statement issued by this group, they blamed the Patriarch for all the disorders in the Church and for the arrest of the clergy. The group accused the Patriarch of adhering to the old times and of supporting a counter-revolutionary policy towards the Soviet government. At the same time, they charged him with sheltering a counter-revolutionary element, which used the Church as a center for resisting the government. They suggested that the only remedy to all this was to call the All-Russian Sobor and to eliminate the Patriarchate

temporarily.<sup>2</sup> The visitors asked the Patriarch to appoint Bishop Antonin "as temporary Acting-Patriarch" in whom the civil power had complete confidence.<sup>3</sup> But the Patriarch refused to comply with their proposal. Then he was told that if he did not comply, the eleven Moscow churchmen condemned in the trial of the Fifty-Four would be shot, while they might be pardoned if he consented. At the end, the Patriarch agreed to appoint Agafangel, the Metropolitan of Yaroslav, who was the second in line as Locum Tenens, as Acting Patriarch, until the Sobor was called.<sup>4</sup>

To strengthen their demands and at the same time to show the Bolsheviki that they were sincere in their efforts to break away from the Patriarch's Church, Vvedenskii and his group of clergy, plus Bishop Antonin, published an appeal "To the Believing Sons of the Orthodox Church" in which they stated that for the past few years the Workers' and Peasants' government had existed in Russia by the will of God. This government had taken upon itself to combat the famine, epidemics and other calamities afflicting Russia while, according to the appeal, the Church not only stood aside in the

struggle for the truth and for the welfare of human beings but also its leaders had upheld the side of their enemies. This was demonstrated by the fact that whenever a favourable opportunity arose, the Church engaged in counter-revolutionary activity which caused blood to flow. In refusing to help the hungry, the churchmen had tried to stage a coup d'état. The appeal alleged that the centre of this counter-revolutionary movement was the Patriarch himself. The people and a good number of priests, however, did not follow him. The people condemned all those "who wanted to use the national calamity for their own political ends."<sup>5</sup> The priests who signed the appeal condemned all those bishops and clergymen who opposed the government over the confiscation of the valuables to save the hungry. In the conclusion of the appeal, the group called for a new Sobor to pass judgment on all those guilty of the ruin of the Church, to set in order the administration of the Church and to re-establish normal relations with the Soviet government. "The civil war of the Church against the state, which is guided by the upper echelon of the hierarchy, should be ended."<sup>6</sup> According to Captain Francis McCullagh, who seems to have had close connections with the Orthodox

leaders at the time, this document had been drawn up by certain Communist laymen, among them one Spitzberg, and was published with all the above signatures before the signatures had been obtained.<sup>7</sup>

On May 16, 1922, the Patriarch wrote a letter to Metropolitan Agafangel in which Tikhon explained to the Metropolitan that because he could not administer the Church, he wished to turn the administration of the Church over to Agafangel until the next Sobor. The Patriarch urged the Metropolitan to come to Moscow immediately.<sup>8</sup>

Vvedenskii and his colleagues did not bother to wait for the Patriarch's approval of their request and on the very day, May 16, they handed Kalinin, the Chairman of the All-Russian Executive Committee, the following declaration:

Herewith, we inform you that in consequence of Patriarch Tikhon having himself abdicated, we have thought it fit to establish a Higher Church Administration which could exercise authority in all Church questions within Russia.<sup>9</sup>

It was evident that Vvedenskii and his supporters were not satisfied with Agafangel as the Patriarch's replacement; on May 18 they went back to Tikhon to ask him to appoint

someone else until Metropolitan Agafangel arrived in Moscow. They promised the Patriarch that they would find some bishop in Moscow to help them work in the chancellery. At the end of the discussion, Tikhon again gave in to their persuasion. Although the Patriarch did not appoint another bishop, he did permit the group to open the Patriarchal chancellery. He wrote at the top of the resolution:

The persons named below are ordered to take over and transmit the Synod affairs to the Most Reverend Agafangel upon his arrival in Moscow... with the assistance of Secretary Numerov; the Moscow diocese to the Most Reverend Innokentii, Bishop of Klin, and before his arrival to the Most Reverend Leonid, Bishop of Vernensk, with the assistance of the Department Chief Nevskii.<sup>10</sup>

A year later the Patriarch, after his release from imprisonment, gave out a statement in which he declared that on the pretext of their anxiety for the welfare of the Church, the priests Vvedenskii, Belkov and Kalinovskii had asked him to entrust them with his office so that they could take care of all the incoming correspondence. Tikhon claimed that he had not told them what they should do if Metropolitan Agafangel could not come to Moscow. Nor did he give them permission to replace the



Metropolitan "because authority which belongs only to the bishop cannot be given over into the hands of a priest."<sup>11</sup> But Vvedenskii and his group had come to an agreement with the Bishops Antonin and Leonid and had organized the so-called Vysshoe Tserkovnoe Upravleniia (High Church Administration), naming themselves members of it.<sup>12</sup>

The above statement is quite in accordance with the information given by the members of the Living Church themselves; the secretary of the Living Church Sobor of 1925, Professor B. V. Titlinov writes:

There can be no doubt that the group which organized the High Church Administration after the abdication of Patriarch Tikhon was never authorized by the Patriarch to do so. The Patriarch instructed the group to play the part of an intermediary passing over the business to others; this is not the very same thing as receiving the authority themselves. The leaders of the Living Church usurped the authority in a revolutionary way, a non-canonical manner, even in an anti-canonical manner.<sup>13</sup>

Vvedenskii confirmed this by declaring that the "Living Church began its existence by breaking with Patriarch Tikhon."<sup>14</sup>

Since the Patriarch had named Metropolitan Agafangel as the official Locum Tenens, the Living Church officials in June 1922 sent to the Metropolitan a deputation headed by the priest P. N. Krasotkin, who demanded that the Metropolitan accept the dogmas of the Living Church and partake in its activities.<sup>15</sup> The Metropolitan not only refused to accept the dogmas, but on June 18 he also issued an epistle in which he expressed his own loyalty to the Soviet government and called upon the people to obey it in good Christian conscience and to attend to their duties in peace and love.<sup>16</sup> In his epistle he condemned the Living Church and at the same time he gave autonomy in the conduct of religious life - not autocephaly as S. Troitskii has stated - to every diocese until the situation was normalized.<sup>17</sup> Metropolitan Agafangel by his act introduced no novelty into the Church's life. He only put into practice what Patriarch Tikhon and the Synod had approved on November 20, 1920.

In case the Holy Synod and the Higher Church Council for unforeseen reasons terminate their church administrative activities... then each bishop takes all the responsibility upon himself within his diocese.<sup>18</sup>

Shortly after the visit of the priest Krasotkin, the Metropolitan was arrested on the usual charge of counter-revolutionary propaganda and exiled with a party of common criminals to Naryn region.<sup>19</sup> Metropolitan Agafangel was imprisoned because of his insubordination to the Living Church, and he was not the only one. The temporary Chairman of the Higher Church Administration, Bishop Antonin, admitted to the correspondent of Izvestiia that the Living Church used oppression. Antonin said: "I receive complaints against it (Living Church)... and from its representatives from all corners. The representatives of the Living Church caused great exasperation to the Patriarchal Church by their threats, denunciations and oppression."<sup>20</sup> Because of false accusations and the use of Bolshevik military aid in taking over the parishes, the people came to believe that the Living Church was not only "a Soviet Church," as admitted by Professor Pitlinov, "but also an organ of the most loathsome CHEKA."<sup>21</sup> The government took almost all the Cathedrals from the Patriarch's bishops and gave them to the supporters of the Living Church.<sup>22</sup> In many districts the priests were given the choice by the police of joining the Living Church or going to prison.<sup>23</sup>

The Living Church had all the support from the government it needed. It had the government press and telephones at its service. Vvedenskii even had a personal car and his supporters could travel whenever and wherever they wanted to, while all this was denied to the Patriarch's Church and clergy. The only explanation as to why the Living Church received so much support was that "up to a certain moment the paths of the Living Church run parallel with the paths of the Soviet policy."<sup>24</sup>

In September 1922 one of the Moscow newspapers stated that the Communists "are... interested in the victory of the Living Church."<sup>25</sup> N. Stephanoff, an ardent Communist leader, after the Living Church coup in 1922 wrote:

One of the first problems of the Living Church was to find the most culpable and to make him responsible for all the spirit of exploitation of the old church. The search was not long. The answer was the learned monastic body. They were the people that furnished the Princes of the Church.<sup>26</sup>

The author emphasized that "the best method of emancipating the masses... from religion and faith in the clergy and their sermons" was by reviewing the Orthodox dogmas. This was exactly what the leaders of the Living Church were doing. The government was glad that the struggle

occurred within the Church; it freed the government forces and relieved the situation.<sup>27</sup>

While the Patriarch waited in prison for his trial he read only the official press which reported just the successes of the Living Church. It was on the basis of these reports that he started to think that the whole Church had gone over to Vvedenskii. He longed to end his imprisonment and to unify the Orthodox people against Vvedenskii and his followers who were breaking the Church's canons. The Patriarch did not know that the Soviet government would not put him on trial, although Krylenko, the leading prosecutor at that time, boasted that the Patriarch's case was already in his briefcase.<sup>28</sup> The Soviet government decided to free the Patriarch because they did not dare to kill him and make a martyr of him in the eyes of the people. The Bolsheviks had already suffered that experience with Metropolitan Veniamin. Krylenko summarized this reasoning very well:

...The case of the chief offender is closed, and it remains only to send it to the Revolutionary Tribunal... [However] on the principle of a careful attitude toward the insufficiently clear understanding of the wide masses of workers and peasants, we leave these persons, our class enemies, in peace...<sup>29</sup>

The truth, however, was that the western countries and the church leaders, under the instigation of Metropolitan Antonii Khrapovitskii, applied strong pressure on the Bolsheviks to release the Patriarch.<sup>30</sup> But the Soviet authorities did not want to release him from prison under international pressure: such release would be a victory for the Patriarch and his Church. The Communists were willing to release Tikhon - on their own terms. The Patriarch had to repent his counter-revolutionary deeds by acknowledging them in writing. The Bolsheviks thought that by repenting, the Patriarch would disgrace himself in the eyes of his faithful and at the same time would give the authorities a pretext for arresting him whenever the government decided to do so.<sup>31</sup> But just before Patriarch Tikhon was released from his imprisonment, an important event took place in the Living Church.

On April 29, 1923, in the Church of Christ the Savior in Moscow, the Living Church held its Sobor which hailed the November Revolution as having

carried into life the great principles of equality in labor which are found in Christian teaching. All the world over the strong strangle the weak. Only in Soviet Russia has war begun against the social lie.

The Sobor affirms that every honorable Christian should take his place among these warriors for humanitarian truth and use all means to realize in life the grand principles of the November Revolution...

The Soviet government is not a prosecutor of the Church. In accordance with the constitution of the Soviet government, all citizens are guaranteed genuine religious freedom of conscience. The decree regarding the separation of the Church from the state guarantees such freedom. Hence churchmen must not see in the Soviet authority the antichrist; on the contrary, the Sobor calls attention to the fact that the Soviet authority is the only one throughout the world which will realize, by government methods, the ideals of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, every faithful churchman must not only be an honorable citizen, but also fight with all his might, together with the Soviet authority, for the realization of the Kingdom of God upon the earth.<sup>32</sup>

At the same time the Sobor excommunicated all the members of the Karlovtsi Sobor and condemned its opposition to Soviet Russia and its appeal for the restoration of the Romanov dynasty.<sup>33</sup> But the most significant decision of the Sobor was, however, to unfrock Patriarch Tikhon, who was still awaiting trial in prison:

The Sobor of 1923 condemns all those who have followed this path and persuaded others to follow them. And this applies, first of all, to the responsible leader of our Church life, Patriarch Tikhon. Whereas Patriarch Tikhon served the counter-revolution instead of sincerely serving Christ, and, since he is the person who was supposed to direct properly

all ecclesiastical life, but on the contrary he led astray the broad masses of the Church, the Sobor regards Tikhon as an apostate from the original commands of Christ and a traitor to the Church. On the basis of the canons of the Church, it hereby declares him to be deprived of his clerical orders and monkhood, and relegated to his original lay condition. "Hereafter Patriarch Tikhon is layman Basil Belavin."<sup>34</sup>

The Sobor of the Living Church also passed reforms: it approved of a married episcopate making Archpriest A. Vvedenskii, who was married, Archbishop of Krutitsy; permitted widowed priests but not bishops to remarry thus readmitting into the priesthood all those who had been prohibited from performing Holy Liturgy on account of having contracted a second marriage;<sup>35</sup> approved monasteries "provided they were working communities, far from city life, and devoted to freedom, love, labor, equality and fraternity."<sup>36</sup> Although the Sobor approved monasteries yet, "in general the Sobor took a highly unsympathetic attitude toward monasteries and specially toward monastic bishops."<sup>37</sup> The Sobor ended its final session on May 9, 1923 in a triumphant mood. Every aim had been accomplished. Now the Living Church was waiting for the trial of Patriarch Tikhon to crown its victory.



But the utterly unexpected happened. On June 16 the Patriarch appealed to the Soviet government to pardon him and to release him from prison. In his appeal he declared that from now on he was separating himself from counter-revolutionary activities and expressed his loyalty to the government.<sup>38</sup> On June 25, 1923 freedom was granted to him.

Despite the fact that the government was successful in forcing the Patriarch to "repent", it failed to separate him from the people. By signing the "repentance declaration" he did not disgrace himself in the people's eyes. His "repentance" had no impact upon the faithful whatsoever. The faithful celebrated his release from imprisonment as if it were the Feast of Easter.<sup>39</sup> After his release the Patriarch tried with all his might to restore order from the chaos in which he found the Church. The resolutions which the Living Church had adopted at its Sobor he refuted with one word by writing on the document "Illegal" and by signing his name with his full title. Those who participated in that Sobor were marked as trespassers of the Church law.

Taking the view that the Living Church was built upon fraud and deception, the Patriarch excommunicated its

members and declared all of its decisions null and void. All actions, including the sacraments administered by priests and hierarchs of the Living Church, he declared devoid of their charismatic character and hence ineffectual. Those that had accepted them had become guilty of a venial sin. The Patriarch called upon the priests and bishops who had turned apostates to do penance and to return to the fold of the One Ecumenical Church.<sup>40</sup> The majority of the clergy of the Living Church heard his call, repented and returned to the Patriarchial Church.

The Patriarch's act of repentance and his release from imprisonment was a great surprise to the leaders of the Living Church. While Tikhon was in prison they could pretend that the Living Church was the only organized Church body active in the territory of Soviet Russia. Upon the Patriarch's release, the Living Church leaders could not make this claim. In order to stop people from abandoning the Living Church they called another council for August 8, 1923 at which all the factions within the Living Church patched up their differences.<sup>41</sup> This was done in order to make the Living Church unified and more appealing to the people. But their effort to save their church did not produce results. Their popularity started

to decline at a rapid pace. The government also came to the conclusion that the Living Church had failed to do its job and terminated its support.<sup>42</sup>

The constant pressure of Tuchkov and Smidovich, the government's representatives, made the Patriarch aware how determined the Communists were to get control of the Church. Tikhon knew that he had the strength not to sign over the Church, but would others, after him, be able to see the clear path and withstand the pressure of the Bolsheviki? The Patriarch remained stable and true to the Orthodox Church until April 7, 1925 - the day of his death. Since the two Metropolitans who were appointed as Locum Tenens first and second respectively were under arrest, therefore, Metropolitan Peter as the last in line took over the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church.

After the death of Patriarch Tikhon, the leaders of the Living Church in 1925 made another attempt to save their Church. They called another Sobor for October 2 at which they tried to eliminate all the differences that kept the Living Church and the Orthodox Church apart,<sup>43</sup> but Metropolitan Peter refused to recognize the Living Church and did not participate in their Sobor.<sup>44</sup>

In the meantime, the Bolsheviks had realized that they would not be able to eradicate the Church by closing churches and arrests. Therefore they started to seek another means to subdue it to the government's control. Tuchkov in the name of the government began negotiating with Metropolitan Peter concerning the "legalization of the Church", but Tuchkov in his turn made certain demands. Though these demands are not known in every detail, M. Pol'skii gives them as follows:

1. The issuance of a declaration to be worked out with the government.
2. The exclusion of those bishops from the Church and Council of Bishops whom the government did not approve of.
3. The condemnation of the foreign and refugee bishops.
4. Close contact between Church and the government through the liaison of Tuchkov himself.<sup>45</sup>

Since Metropolitan Peter refused to cooperate with the Bolsheviks he was arrested and eventually died in exile in 1936. Tuchkov also asked Archbishop Ilarion to acknowledge the Living Church as official and canonical, but he too refused on the grounds that the Living Church was headed by self-appointed. Tuchkov quickly replied:

"Wait, I will give you a canonical bishop and if you will not accept him, then there will be no mercy."<sup>46</sup> But before Metropolitan Peter was imprisoned he named and appointed as his Locum Tenens the Metropolitan of Nizhnii Novgorod, Sergii Stargorodskii. The newly appointed Locum Tenens, Metropolitan Sergii, gave in to the pressure of the government after his second arrest.<sup>47</sup> On July 29, 1927 as Deputy of the Vicar to the Patriarchal Throne he issued a pastoral letter to the entire Church in which we read among other things:

.....  
Today fate has determined me, unworthy Metropolitan Sergii, to be a temporary deputy to the highest Hierarchy of our Church. This office obliges me to continue the work of the deceased and to work with all my strength for the peaceful ordering of our Church affairs. My efforts in this direction, which have been supported by the Orthodox arch-shepherds apparently have not remained fruitless. With the foundation of the blessed Patriarchal Synod, the hope is rising that our entire Church administration will receive its due order and structure. We are also confident that a peaceful life and peaceful activity will be possible for us within the law of the State.

Now at the point where we have almost reached the goal of our efforts, the attacks of our foreign enemies do not cease: murders, arsons, raids, assassinations, and other forms of the underground struggle are being witnessed by us all. All this disturbs the peaceful course of life and creates an atmosphere of mutual distrust and all possible kinds of suspicion...

Our application that this Synod be permitted to take up the administration of the Orthodox All-Russian Church has been granted. Now our Orthodox Church has not only a canonically central administration, but a central administration that is legal also according to the law of the State of the Soviet Union...

We must show not only with words but with deeds, that not only people indifferent to the Orthodox Faith or traitors to the Orthodox Church can be loyal citizens of the Soviet Union and loyal subjects of the Soviet power, but the most zealous supporters of the Orthodox Church as well, to whom the Church with all her dogmas and traditions, with all their laws and prescriptions, is as dear as Truth and Life.

We want to be Orthodox and at the same time to see the Soviet Union as our civil Fatherland, whose triumphs and successes are also our triumphs and successes, whose failures are our failures. Every attack, boycott, public catastrophe or an ordinary case of assassination, as the recent one in Warsaw, will be regarded as an attack against ourselves. Even if we remain Orthodox, we shall yet do our duties as citizens of the Soviet Union "not only for wrath but also for conscience's sake", as the Apostle teaches us (Romans 13:5), and we hope that with the help of God and through working together and giving support to one another we shall be able to fulfill this task.<sup>48</sup>

The Bolsheviks had won a complete victory. In the person of Metropolitan Sergii as head of the Church, they had found a hierarch whose position was unassailable canonically and who at the same time was completely subservient to the government. Because of the recognition of the Church by the government and its subservience to it, no priest or

lay member of the Church would now be able to resist Sergii without transgressing against the law of the state and of the Church. The repression of Church opposition became the joint task of the government and the Church authorities. This was precisely the situation that the government strove for after having failed to destroy the Church completely. The Communists now controlled the supreme authority of the Church, and thus they held the entire Orthodox population firmly in their power by means of the authority of the Church.

1. Izvestiia, May 17, 1922.
2. Ibid., May 17, 1922.
3. McCullaugh, p. 38.
4. Ibid, pp. 38-39.
5. Izvestiia, May 14, 1922.
6. Ibid., May 14, 1922.
7. McCullaugh, p. 41.
8. Curtiss, The Russian Church and the Soviet State, p. 132.
9. Emhardt, p. 304.
10. Curtiss, p. 132.
11. S. Troitskii, Chto takoe Zhivaia Tserkov, Moscow, 1928, pp. 7-8.
12. Ibid., pp. 7-8.
13. Ibid., p. 8.
14. Ibid., p. 8.
15. M. Pol'skii, Novye muchenike rossiiskie, Vol. 1, Jordanville, 1949, p. 145.
16. Stratonov, p. 58.
17. Troitskii, p. 9.
18. M. Pol'skii, Kanonicheskoe polozheniia vysshei tserkovnoi vlasti v SSSR i zagranitse, Jordanville, 1948, p. 14.
19. Valentinov, p. 165.
20. Troitskii, Chto takoe Zhivaia Tserkov, p. 10.



21. Emhardt, p. 82.
22. Gidulianov, pp. 236 and 244.
23. Mackenzie, The Russian Crucifixion, p. 114.
24. Emhardt, p. 8.
25. Valentinov, p. 19.
26. Emhardt, pp. 70-71.
27. Ibid., p. 71.
28. Curtiss, p. 98.
29. Ibid., pp. 91-92.
30. Grabbe, p. 22.
31. Ibid., p. 23.
32. Spinka, The Church and the Russian Revolution, pp. 237-243.
33. Curtiss, p. 156.
34. Spinka, p. 242.
35. Ibid., pp. 246-247.
36. Izvestiia, May 6, 1922.
37. Curtiss, p. 156.
38. Shishkin, p. 246.
39. Stratonov, p. 85.
40. K. Zaitsev, Pravoslavnaia Tserkov v Sovetskoi Rossii, part 1, Shanghai, 1947, p. 139.
41. V. H. Lubko, ed., KPRS i radians'ka derzhava pro religiu ta ateistychnu propahandu, Kyiv, 1962, p. 243.

42. Emhardt, p. 75.
43. Shishkin, p. 279.
44. Gordienko, pp. 43-44.
45. Pol'skii, Vol. 1, p. 137.
46. Ibid., Vol. 11, p. IX,
47. Gustavson, p. 58.
48. Ibid., pp. 59-60.

### CONCLUSION

The conflict between the Church and the Soviets was unavoidable since the Bolsheviks wanted to impose an ideology diametrically opposed to Christian teaching upon the people. Before the March Revolution Lenin thought that as soon as the Church was separated from the state and as soon as the Party explained to the people the origin, purpose and role of religion in human life, the people would abandon the Church.

After the usurpation of power Lenin seemed to attempt to follow his theory of treating the Church as any other bourgeois institution by nationalizing its land and property. He considered that if he destroyed its economic base, the Church as an institution would not be able to sustain itself, for the people once freed from oppression and exploitation would not support any institution that did not benefit the workers. The Bolsheviks overestimated their theory. People did not protest against the nationalization of Church lands, but they were determined to remain Orthodox, and they were willing to take upon themselves the financial support of their Church.

The people's active participation in the Church eliminated the previous formalities and thus a truly Christian spirit was reinstituted into the Church.

Many members of the intelligentsia that previously were outside the Church and critical of its inertness came back and strengthened it further.

The Bolsheviki tried to arrest the Church's growth by levying heavy taxes not only on the land upon which churches were standing and the clergy whom the Bolsheviks regarded to be free professionals, but also on all those who helped or harbored priests.

To divert people's attention from religion the Communists also encouraged local branches of the Trade Unions, Red Army and Comsomol to incorporate into their activities anti-religious programmes particularly at the time of the Christmas and Easter holidays. In addition, a great deal of "spontaneous" vandalism was directed against the churches.

Unable to induce people to abandon their Church, the Bolsheviks started to accuse the clergy of being counter-revolutionary and of refusing to help starving people by permitting the confiscation of consecrated vessels that

were used in Liturgical Services.

When direct attacks and persecutions proved unsuccessful, the government tried to destroy the Church from within. After the arrest of Tikhon, the government gave full support to some clergymen who broke away from the Orthodox Church and established the so-called Living Church, but the people refused to follow the Living Church leaders. Most of the faithful regarded them as apostates and as agents of the Communist government.

Finally the Bolsheviks realized that they could not destroy the Church in the Soviet Union. Therefore they decided to subject the canonical bishops to such pressure that at least one of them would change his mind and agree to cooperate with the government. After his second arrest Metropolitan Sergii agreed to cooperate with the Bolsheviks. In July 1927 he issued his letter to the faithful by which he subjected the Russian Orthodox Church to the Bolshevik state. This was a terrible irony because the Communists, who had accused the clergy of being the servants of the tsarist government, resorted to force in order to convince at least one canonical bishop to accept the full control of the Church by the Soviet government.

By surrendering to the Bolsheviks the Church lost the freedom for which it had fought so hard. In tsarist Russia the Church had been subjected to a Christian tsar who used the Church as an instrument to control the people but who at least supported religious institutions. This time it was much worse because the Soviets started to use the Church as an agent of their policy, yet at the same time they strove to eradicate religion and the Church itself from the state altogether.

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