

A HISTORY OF THE FALL OF ROCOR,
2000-2007

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*If you see lying and hypocrisy, expose them in front of all, even if they are clothed in purple
and fine linen.*

Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky) of New York (1906)

Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Revelation 3.11; the last words of St. Philaret of New York (1985)

The Holy Flesh hath passed from thee.

Jeremiah 11.15

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INTRODUCTION: THE 1990s

Who hath remained among you that has seen this House in its former glory, and how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes as it were nothing? But take heart now...
Haggai 2.3-4.

The return of the Russian Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) to Russia in 1990 after almost seventy years' exile was undoubtedly one of the most significant events in Church history, comparable to the return of the Jews to Jerusalem after the seventy-year exile in Babylon. And yet this momentous step was taken almost casually, without sufficient forethought or a clearly defined strategy. Hence difficult problems arose, problems that had their roots deep in ROCOR's past history. These problems can be divided into three categories: (A) ROCOR in relation to her own flock at home and abroad, (B) ROCOR in relation to the Catacomb Church, and (C) ROCOR in relation to the Moscow Patriarchate (MP) and the post-Soviet Russian State.

A. ROCOR in relation to herself. The problem here is easily stated: how could the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad continue to call herself the Church *Abroad* if she now had parishes *inside* Russia? After all, her *Founding Statute* or Polozhenie stated that ROCOR was an autonomous part of the Autocephalous Russian Church, that part which existed (i) *outside* the bounds of Russia on the basis of Ukaz № 362 of November 7/20, 1920 of Patriarch Tikhon and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, and (ii) *temporarily* until the fall of communism in Russia. With the fall of communism and the creation of ROCOR parishes inside Russia in 1990-91, it would seem that these limitations in space and time no longer applied, and that ROCOR had ceased to exist as a temporary Church body existing outside Russia in accordance with her own definition of herself in the Polozhenie.

The solution to this problem would appear to have been obvious: change the Polozhenie! And this was in fact the solution put forward by ROCOR's leading canonist, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe). However, the ROCOR episcopate declined that suggestion, and the Polozhenie remained unchanged.

Why? Although we have no direct evidence on which to base an answer to this question, the following would appear to be a reasonable conclusion from the events as they unfolded in the early 1990s. A change in the Polozhenie that removed the spatial and temporal limitations of ROCOR's self-definition would have had the consequence of forcing ROCOR to define herself as *the* one true Russian Orthodox Church, and therefore to remove the centre of her Church administration from America to Russia and enter into a life-and-death struggle with the MP for the minds and hearts of the Russian people.

However, the ROCOR bishops were not prepared to accept these consequences.

After all, they were well-established abroad, increasingly dependent economically on contributions from foreign converts to Orthodoxy, and with few exceptions were not prepared to exchange the comforts and relative security of life in the West for the uncertainty and privations of life in Russia, where, although communism was crumbling, the communist élites were still in place in both Church and State. Of course, the whole *raison d'être* of ROCOR was to return to her homeland in Russia (she was previously called the Russian Church *in Exile*, and exiles by definition want to return to their homeland); and it was in anticipation of such a return that she had steadfastly refused to endanger her Russian identity by merging with other Local Orthodox Churches or by forming local jurisdictions identified with specific western countries (like the formerly Russian schism from ROCOR calling itself the Orthodox Church of America). But generations had passed since the first emigration, the descendants of that first emigration had settled in western countries, learned their languages, adopted their ways, put down roots in foreign soil, married non-Russians (and often, alas, non-Orthodox non-Russians). The exiles were no longer exiles from, but strangers to, their native land...

B. ROCOR in relation to the Catacomb Church. Since 1927, when ROCOR had broken communion simultaneously with the Catacomb Church from Metropolitan Sergius' MP, she had looked upon the Catacomb Church as the True Church inside Russia with which she remained in mystical communion of prayer and sacraments, even if such communion could not be realized in face-to-face meeting and concelebration. Indeed, after the death of Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa, the last universally recognised leader of the Russian Church, in 1937, ROCOR commemorated "the episcopate of the persecuted Russian Church", by which was undoubtedly meant the episcopate of the Catacomb Church. After the war, however, a change began to creep in. On the one hand, news of Catacomb bishops and communities became more and more scarce, and some even began to doubt that the Catacomb Church existed any longer. Thus Archbishop Mark of Berlin declared in the 1990s, when catacombniks were pouring into ROCOR, that the Catacomb Church had died out in the 1950s! On the other hand, some Catacomb priests inside Russia, having lost contact with, and knowledge of, any canonical bishops there might still be inside Russia, began commemorating Metropolitan Anastasy, first-hierarch of ROCOR.

These tendencies gave rise to the not unnatural perception that the leadership of True Russian Orthodoxy had now passed from inside Russia to outside Russia, to ROCOR. Moreover, the significance of the Catacomb Church began to be lost, as the struggle was increasingly seen to be between the "red church" inside Russia (the MP) and the "white church" outside Russia (ROCOR). Of course, the *idea* of the Catacomb Church remained sacred. But the heroes of the past - the great hieromartyrs of the 1920s and 30s - looked more glorious than their present-day followers. And some even began to look on the "catacombniks", not as the True Church of Russia clothed in the purple robes of hundreds of thousands of martyrs,

but as a spent force – or as uneducated sectarians in need of rescue. They looked on the humble catacombniks, serving, not in the splendid cathedrals of the emigration, but in poor, dingy flats, if not as contemptible, at any rate as unimportant. How could the Russian Church, so splendid in its pre-revolutionary glory, be resurrected on the basis of such poverty?

Now it must be admitted that the Catacomb Church was desperately in need of help. After several decades of constant persecution, her population was aging and scattered, with fewer and fewer priests and almost no bishops, while the infiltration of KGB “plants” tended to make different groups suspicious of each other. ROCOR – the one church authority that all catacombniks agreed was true – could indeed provide an inestimable service to them by restoring their apostolic succession, educating a new generation of priests and helping them to adapt to and take advantage of the new conditions of post-Soviet Russia. But much depended on how tactfully this was done. When the first consecration of a bishop for the Catacomb Church was performed by ROCOR on Archimandrite Lazarus (Zhurbenko), it was said that this was done “in order to regulate the church life of the Catacomb Church”. But what precisely did this “regulation” mean? If the ROCOR bishops saw their role as providing help for the catacombniks in the same way as they had helped the Greek Old Calendarists in 1969-71 – that is, by re-establishing them as an independent “sister-church”, to use the phrase of Metropolitan Philaret of New York, – then there was hope for a truly profitable cooperation. After all, it was not only the catacombniks who needed help: since the death of the holy Metropolitan Philaret in 1985, ROCOR was beginning to waver in her own faith and piety. Her members needed, in the words of the Lord in Revelation (3.18) to “buy gold tried in the fire” of persecution – and the catacombniks who had passed through the fire of the Soviet persecution had much to offer and instruct them. However, already at a very early stage the impression was created that ROCOR had come into Russia, not in order to unite with the Catacomb Church and work with her for the triumph of True Orthodoxy in Russia, but in order to *replace* her, or at best to gather the remnants of the catacombs under her sole authority...

Moreover, in the years to come the ROCOR Synod sometimes described itself as the *central authority* of the True Russian Church – in spite of the fact that this “central” authority was based, not in Russia, but thousands of miles away in New York!

C. ROCOR in relation to the MP. The Catacomb Church might have forgiven such arrogance if ROCOR had shown herself capable of fighting resolutely against the MP. But here certain compromising tendencies developed abroad bore bitter fruit that was to lead to schism and the collapse of ROCOR’s mission inside Russia. For the ROCOR bishops proved themselves incapable of making up their minds whether it was necessary to fight the MP or help her, whether she was their friend or their enemy, their beloved mother or their hated step-mother!

The root causes of this indecisiveness go back to the post-war period, when large numbers of Christians fleeing to the West from Soviet Russia were joined to ROCOR. In receiving these Christians, little difference was made between those who had belonged to the Catacomb Church, and those who had belonged to the MP. Some, even including bishops, turned out to be KGB agents, and either returned to the MP or remained as “moles” to undermine ROCOR. Others, while sincerely anti-Soviet, were not sufficiently “enchurched” to see the fundamental ecclesiological significance of the schism in the Russian Church. Thus a certain “dilution” in the quality of those joining ROCOR in the second emigration by comparison with the first – and the problem was to get worse with the third and fourth emigrations of the 70s, 80s and 90s – began to affect the confessing stance of the Church as a whole. Even members of the first emigration had proved susceptible to deception, as when all the ROCOR dioceses in China except that of Shanghai (led by St. John Maximovich) were lured back into the arms of the Soviet “Fatherland” and its Soviet “Church”. It is not surprising, therefore, that later generations, who had only known “Soviet reality”, should be still more susceptible to deception.

Another reason for this diminution in zeal proceeded from the fact that ROCOR did not break communion with the Local Orthodox Churches of “World Orthodoxy” even after all of these (except Jerusalem) sent representatives to the local Councils of the MP in 1945 and 1948. The reasons for this depended on the Church in question. Thus communion continued with the Serbian Church because of the debt of gratitude owed to the hospitality shown by the Serbian Church to ROCOR in the inter-war years. Communion continued with the Jerusalem Patriarchate because all churches in the Holy Land, including the ROCOR monasteries, were required, under threat of closure, to commemorate the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Communion also continued in some places with the Greek new calendarists, who were not only in communion with the MP but members of the ecumenist World Council of Churches, because the Ecumenical Patriarchate was powerful in the United States, the country to which ROCOR had moved its headquarters.

This ambiguous relationship towards “World Orthodoxy” in general inevitably began to affect ROCOR’s zeal in relation to the MP in particular. For if the MP was recognised by Serbia and Jerusalem, and Serbia and Jerusalem were recognised by ROCOR, the conclusion was drawn that the MP, while bad, was still a Church. And this attitude in turn affected ROCOR’s attitude towards the Catacomb Church, which was no longer seen by many, including several bishops, as the one True Church of Russia.

As ROCOR began to lose confidence in herself and the Catacomb Church as the *only* bearers of true Russian Orthodoxy, the accent began to shift towards the preservation, not of Orthodoxy as such, but of *Russianness*. This was bound to fail as a weapon against the MP. For for a foreign Church, however Russian in spirit, to

claim to be more Russian than the Russians inside Russia was bound to be perceived as arrogant and humiliating by the latter (especially in the mouth of an ethnic *German* such as Archbishop Mark of Berlin!). And so the MP was able to mount a successful counter-attack, claiming for itself the mantle of “Russianness” as against the “American” church of ROCOR.

As a result of all this, at the very moment that ROCOR was called by God to enter into an open war with the MP for the souls of the Russian people on Russian soil, she found herself tactically unprepared, hesitant, unsure of her ability to fight this great enemy, unsure even whether this enemy was in fact an enemy. And this attitude guaranteed the collapse of the mission. For “if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will rise up and prepare for battle?” (1 Corinthians 14.8). Looking more at her enemies than at the Lord, she began, like the Apostle Peter, to sink beneath the waves. Many even began to think that it was time to “forgive and forget” and join the MP; for “if you can’t beat them – join them!” And so the MP which, at the beginning of the 90s had been seriously rattled, recovered her confidence and her position in public opinion.

The problems began on May 3/16, 1990, when the ROCOR Synod under the presidency of Metropolitan Vitaly (Ustinov) issued a statement that was in general strongly anti-MP, but which contained the qualification that there might nevertheless be true priests dispensing valid sacraments in the patriarchate. The idea that there can be true priests in a heretical church is canonical nonsense (Apostolic Canon 46, First Canonical Epistle of St. Basil the Great), and Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) immediately obtained the removal of the offending phrase. But the damage had been done.

Then serious problems began to develop between ROCOR bishops living inside Russia who did not recognize the MP and those visiting from abroad who did. In 1993 the first schism took place. This was patched up, but in 1995 there was a second, and the five bishops and thousands of laity led by Bishop Valentine of Suzdal were expelled from ROCOR’s ranks.

In addition three events took place that accentuated the crisis: (i) the adoption of a new ecclesiology, (ii) the return of the KGB to power, and (iii) the MP’s “Jubilee” Sobor of the year 2000.

Let us look at each of these in turn.

1. The Adoption of a New Ecclesiology. In 1994 ROCOR entered into communion with the “Cyprianite” Greek Old Calendarists, so called because of their leader, Metropolitan Cyprian (Kotsumbas) of Fili and Oropo, who had been defrocked by the True Orthodox Church of Greece under Archbishop Chrysostomos (Kiouisis) of Athens in 1986.

The significance of the Cyprianites lay in their espousal of an heretical ecclesiology, according to which heretics remain inside the Church until they have been expelled by an Ecumenical Council. This enabled them to claim that the ecumenist heretics of “World Orthodoxy”, who belonged to the World Council of Churches (WCC), were still inside the True Church in spite of the fact that they were heretics. When ROCOR entered into communion with the Cyprianites, it officially accepted this heretical ecclesiology. This enabled its leaders to affirm that the Moscow Patriarchate, although heretical because of its submission to, and control by, the communists (sergianism) and its membership of the WCC (ecumenism), was still a True Church with the grace of sacraments.

The 1994 decision was far from unanimously approved. At the 1993 Council, when the subject was first discussed, Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) and Bishop Cyril of Seattle spoke against the union, which would contradict ROCOR’s decision of 1975 not to enter into union with any of the Greek Old Calendarist Synods until they had attained unity amongst themselves. However, Archbishops Laurus and Mark said that it was awkward to refuse communion with Cyprian when they were already in communion with the Romanian Old Calendarists under Metropolitan Vlasie, with whom Cyprian was in communion. (This was somewhat disingenuous, since it had been Mark who had engineered the union with the Romanians in the first place.)

At the 1993 Council a commission was set up consisting of Archbishop Laurus, Bishop Metrophanes and Bishop Daniel which prepared the way for the eventual decision to unite with Cyprian at the 1994 Council. However, at the 1994 Council Bishop Daniel continued to express doubts, and Bishop Benjamin of the Kuban, now (in 2011) the second hierarch of the Russian True Orthodox Church, refused to sign the union together with Bishop Ambrose of Vevey. And there were rumours that Metropolitan Vitaly and Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles had signed only under pressure.

The leaders of ROCOR tried to prove that this “Cyprianite” ecclesiology had always been the ecclesiology of ROCOR and of her sister Church in the Soviet Union, the Catacomb Church. But among the many facts that contradicted their claim was a recent major decision of the ROCOR Sobor of Bishops in 1983 under the leadership of the last Metropolitan, Philaret of New York (+1985) – its anathema against ecumenism. No impartial reading of this anathema could fail to come to the conclusion that it anathematized all the ecumenists of World Orthodoxy, including the Moscow Patriarchate. Therefore the decision of 1994, with its acceptance of the Moscow Patriarchate, contradicted the decision of 1983, with its rejection of the Moscow Patriarchate. The future of ROCOR depended on which of these “two traditions” in ecclesiology triumphed, the tradition of Metropolitan Philaret, whose relics were found to be incorrupt in 1998, or the tradition of the new leaders of

ROCOR...

After the decision Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) wrote that the Cyprianites “confess their own and by no means Orthodox teaching on the possibility of the grace-filled action of the Holy Spirit in churches that have clearly become heretical”. Moreover he declared: “In passing this Resolution on communion with the group of Metropolitan Cyprian, our Council has unfortunately also forgotten about the text of the Resolution accepted earlier under the presidency of Metropolitan Philaret, which anathematized the ecumenical heresy... In fact, by not looking into the matter seriously and forgetting about the anathematizing of the new calendarist ecumenists that was confirmed earlier (and perhaps not having decided to rescind this resolution), our Council, however terrible it may be to admit it, has fallen under its own anathema... Do we have to think that our Hierarchical Council has entered on the path of betraying the patristic traditions, or only that out of a misunderstanding it has allowed a mistake which it is not yet too late to correct at the November session in France?”

However, the mistake was not corrected at the second session of the Hierarchical Council in Lesna in November, 1994. Instead, the decision was made to initiate negotiations with the MP. Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles commented on this to the present writer: “ROCOR is going to hell...”

2. The Return of the KGB. The former KGB Colonel Konstantin Preobrazhensky writes: “After the democratic reforms of the 1990s the KGB officers managed to get everything back. All the Directorates of the Soviet KGB are reunited now in today’s FSB, except two of them: the First, which managed intelligence, and the Ninth, which guarded the highest Communist bureaucrats. Both are formally independent, but keep close connections with the FSB... The former First Chief Directorate of the KGB is now called the Foreign Intelligence Service. It is successfully managing the operation ‘ROCOR’” – that is, the absorption of ROCOR into the MP.

The intelligence experts Christopher Andrew and Vasily Mitrokhin confirm this assessment: “Ridiculed and reviled at the end of the Soviet era, the Russian intelligence community has since been remarkably successful at reinventing itself and recovering its political influence. The last three prime ministers of the Russian Federation during Boris Yeltsin’s presidency – Yevgeni Primakov, Sergei Stepashin and Vladimir Putin – were all former intelligence chiefs. Putin, who succeeded Yeltsin as President in 2000, is the only FCD [First Chief Directorate] officer ever to become Russian leader. According to the head of the SVR [Foreign Intelligence Service], Sergei Nikolayevich Lebedev, ‘The president’s understanding of intelligence activity and the opportunity to speak the same language to him makes our work considerably easier.’ No previous head of state in Russia, or perhaps anywhere else in the world, has ever surrounded himself with so many former intelligence officers. Putin also has more direct control of intelligence than any

Russian leader since Stalin. According to Kirpichenko, 'We are under the control of the President and his administration, because intelligence is directly subordinated to the President and only the President.' But whereas Stalin's intelligence chiefs usually told him simply what he wanted to hear, Kirpichenko claims that, 'Now, we tell it like it is'.

"The mission statement of today's FSB and SVR is markedly different from that of the KGB. At the beginning of the 1980s Andropov proudly declared that the KGB was playing its part in the onward march of world revolution. By contrast, the current 'National Security Concept' of the Russian Federation, adopted at the beginning of the new millennium, puts the emphasis instead on the defence of traditional Russian values: 'Guaranteeing the Russian Federation's national security also includes defence of the cultural and spiritual-moral inheritance, historical traditions and norms of social life, preservation of the cultural property of all the peoples of Russia, formation of state policy in the sphere of the spiritual and moral education of the population...' One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Soviet intelligence system from Cheka to KGB was its militant atheism. In March 2002, however, the FSB at last found God. A restored Russian Orthodox church in central Moscow was consecrated by Patriarch Aleksii II as the FSB's parish church in order to minister to the previously neglected spiritual needs of its staff. The FSB Director, Nikolai Patrushev, and the Patriarch celebrated the mystical marriage of the Orthodox Church and the state security apparatus by a solemn exchange of gifts. Patrushev presented a symbolic golden key of the church and an icon of St. Aleksei, Moscow Metropolitan, to the Patriarch, who responded by giving the FSB Director the Mother God 'Umilenie' icon and an icon representing Patrushev's own patron saint, St. Nikolai - the possession of which would formerly have been a sufficiently grave offence to cost any KGB officer his job. Though the FSB has not, of course, become the world's first intelligence agency staffed only or mainly by Christian true believers, there have been a number of conversions to the Orthodox Church by Russian intelligence officers past and present - among them Nikolai Leonov, who half a century ago was the first to alert the Centre to the revolutionary potential of Fidel Castro. 'Spirituality' has become a common theme in FSB public relations materials. While head of FSB public relations in 1999-2001, Vasili Stavitsky published several volumes of poetry with a strong 'spiritual' content, among them *Secrets of the Soul* (1999); a book of 'spiritual-patriotic' poems for children entitled *Light a Candle, Mamma* (1999); and *Constellation of Love: Selected Verse* (2000). Many of Stavitsky's poems have been set to music and recorded on CDs, which are reported to be popular at FSB functions.

"Despite their unprecedented emphasis on 'spiritual security', however, the FSB and SVR are politicized intelligence agencies which keep track of President Putin's critics and opponents among the growing Russian diaspora abroad, as well as in Russia itself. During his first term in office, while affirming his commitment to democracy and human rights, Putin gradually succeeded in marginalizing most

opposition and winning control over television channels and the main news media. The vigorous public debate of policy issues during the Yeltsin years has largely disappeared. What has gradually emerged is a new system of social control in which those who step too far out of line face intimidation by the FSB and the courts. The 2003 State Department annual report on human rights warned that a series of alleged espionage cases involving scientists, journalists and environmentalists 'caused continuing concerns regarding the lack of due process and the influence of the FSB in court cases'. According to Lyudmilla Alekseyeva, the current head of the Moscow Helsinki Group, which has been campaigning for human rights in Russia since 1976, 'The only thing these scientists, journalists and environmentalists are guilty of is talking to foreigners, which in the Soviet Union was an unpardonable offence.' Though all this remains a far cry from the KGB's obsession with even the most trivial forms of ideological subversion, the FSB has once again defined a role for itself as an instrument of social control..."

The central figure in this "spiritualization" but at the same time "re-sovietization" of Russia was Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin. Coming to power on January 1, 2000, he presented himself as "all things to all men": a chekist to the chekists, a democrat to the democrats, a nationalist to the nationalists, and an Orthodox to the Orthodox. Putin's propagandist Yegor Kholmogorov has written: "Putin's power was, from the very beginning, non-electoral in origin, it was not a matter of being 'appointed by Yeltsin', but of what the Chinese call 'the mandate of heaven', an unquestioned right to power..." Putin was indeed resembling a Chinese emperor more than a democratic politician, not only in his political style, but also in his fabulous personal wealth, calculated at \$40 billion...

Putin is no believer. On September 8, 2000, when asked by the American television journalist Larry King whether he believed in God, he replied: "I believe in people..." Moreover, as George Spruksts writes,

"1) he lights menorahs when he worships at his local synagogue;

"2) he has worshipped the mortal remains of Kim Il Sung in North Korea;

"3) he has worshipped the mortal remains of Mahatma Gandhi;

"4) he 'believes not in God, but in Man' (as he himself has stated);

"5) he was initiated into an especially occult form of 'knighthood' (read: freemasonry) in Germany;

"6) he has restored the communist anthem;

"7) he has restored the bloody red rag as the RF's military banner;

“8) he has not removed the satanic pentagram from public buildings (including cathedrals);

“9) he has plans of restoring the monument to ‘Butcher’ Dzerzhinsky [now fulfilled];

“10) he has not removed the satanic mausoleum in Red Square nor its filthy contents.”

Preobrazhensky points out that Putin “began his career not in the intelligence ranks but in the ‘Fifth Branch’ of the Leningrad Regional KGB, which also fought religion and the Church. Putin carefully hides this fact from foreign church leaders, and you will not find it in any of his official biographies... The myth of Putin’s religiosity is important for proponents of ‘the union’. It allows Putin to be characterized as some Orthodox Emperor Constantine, accepting the perishing Church Abroad under his regal wing. For his kindness we should be stretching out our arms to him with tears of gratitude...”

“For those who claim,” writes Professor Olga Ackerly, “that the ‘CIS is different from the USSR’ and Putin is a ‘practising Orthodox Christian’, here are some sobering facts. The first days and months Putin’s presidency were highlighted by the reestablishment of a memorial plaque on Kutuzovsky Prospect where Andropov used to live. The plaque was a symbol of communist despotism missing since the 1991 putsch, bearing Andropov’s name – a former head of the KGB, especially known for his viciousness in the use of force and psychiatric clinics for dissidents. On May 9, 2000, Putin proposed a toast to the ‘genius commander’ Iosif Stalin and promoted many former KGB officers to the highest state positions...”

“Important to note is that the Eurasian movement, with ties to occultism, ecumenism, etc. was recently revived by Putin, and a Congress entitled ‘The All-Russian Political Social Movement’, held in Moscow in April of 2001, was ‘created on the basis of the Eurasian ideology and *inter-confessional* [sic!] harmony in support of the reforms of President Vladimir Putin.’ The movement is led by Alexander Dugin, a sexual mystic, National Bolshevik Party member, son of a Cheka cadre, personally familiar with the so-called ‘Black International’, advisor to the State Duma, and participant in Putin’s ‘Unity’ movement.”

Banking on the high price of Russian oil, Putin began to rebuild Russia’s economic and military might. But the corruption (often State-sponsored) within the Russian economy hindered the diversification of the economy that he needed. From 2003 Putin moved to reverse the main gains of the liberal 1990s – religious freedom, and a more open and honest attitude to the Soviet past. Churches were seized from True Orthodox Christians and their websites hacked; elections were rigged,

independent journalists were killed, and independent businessmen imprisoned on trumped-up charges. New history books justifying Stalinism were introduced into the classrooms. Youth organizations similar to the Hitler Youth were created. Putin's Russia began to resemble Nazi Germany in the 1930s.

The MP has shown complete loyalty to Putinism, and takes an enthusiastic part in the criminal economy. This is illustrated by the activities of the recently elected patriarch, Cyril Gundiaev, who imports tobacco and alcohol duty-free and is now one of the richest men in Russia. And so it is Putin who personally brokered the union of the MP and ROCOR, an idea first mooted by Archbishop Mark in 1997 and by Archbishop Laurus on July 17, 1999...

3. The MP's "Jubilee" Council. Following the instructions of the KGB, in August, 2000 the MP held a "Jubilee" Hierarchical Council whose main purpose was to remove the obstacles towards ROCOR's unification with it. These obstacles, as formulated by ROCOR during the decade 1990-2000 were: (a) Ecumenism, (b) Sergianism, and (c) the Glorification of the New Martyrs, especially the Royal New Martyrs.

(a) *Ecumenism.* In the document on relations with the heterodox, it was declared that "the Orthodox Church is the true Church of Christ, created by our Lord and Saviour Himself..."; "The Church of Christ is one and unique..."; "The so-called 'branch theory', which affirms the normality and even the providentiality of the existence of Christianity in the form of separate 'branches'... is completely unacceptable." However, wrote Protopriest Michael Ardov, "the 'patriarchal liberals' will also not be upset, insofar as the heretics in the cited document are called 'heterodox', while the Monophysite communities are called the 'Eastern Orthodox Churches'. And the 'dialogues with the heterodox' will be continued, and it is suggested that the World Council of Churches be not abandoned, but reformed..."

The MP's Fr. (now Metropolitan) Hilarion (Alfeyev) explained the origins of the document on ecumenism: "The subject of inter-Christian relations has been used by various groups (within the Church) as a bogey in partisan wars. In particular, it has been used to criticise Church leaders who, as is well known, have taken part in ecumenical activities over many years." In Alfeyev's opinion, "ecumenism has also been used by breakaway groups, such as the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and the Old Calendarists, to undermine people's trust in the Church." Therefore there was a need "for a clear document outlining the theological basis of the Russian Orthodox Church's attitude towards heterodoxy, i.e. the question of why we need and whether we need dialogue with the non-Orthodox confessions, and if so which form this dialogue should take." Fr. Hilarion refused to answer the question whether the Council would discuss the matter of the participation of the MP in the WCC, but said that the patriarchate felt obliged to continue negotiations with Protestant and Catholic representatives in the WCC and to be a part of the ecumenical committee.

After the Council, there was no let-up in the MP's ecumenical activities. Thus on August 18, "Patriarch" Alexis prayed together with the Armenian "Patriarch". And on April 21, 2005, he congratulated the new Pope Benedict XVI on his accession, and expressed the hope that he would strive to develop relations between the two churches. When asked how he evaluated Pope John Paul II's ministry, he replied: "His Holiness' teachings have not only strengthened Catholics throughout the world in their faith, but also borne witness to Christianity in the complex world of today." After ROCOR joined the MP in 2007, the MP noticeably increased its ecumenical activities and its relationship with the Vatican continued to improve...

(b) *Sergianism*. The MP approved a "social document" which, among other things, recognised that "the Church must refuse to obey the State" "if the authorities force the Orthodox believers to renounce Christ and His Church". As we shall see, enormous significance was attached to this phrase by ROCOR. However, on the very same page we find: "But even the persecuted Church is called to bear the persecutions patiently, not refusing loyalty to the State that persecutes it". We may infer from this that the MP still considers that its loyalty to the Soviet State was right and the resistance to it shown by the Catacomb Church was wrong. So, contrary to first appearances, the MP remained mired in sergianism.

Indeed, sergianism as such was not mentioned in the document, much less repented of. This is consistent with the fact that the MP has never in its entire history since 1943 shown anything other than a determination to serve whatever appears to be the strongest forces in the contemporary world. Until the fall of communism, that meant the communists. With the fall of communism, the MP was not at first sure whom she had to obey, but gradually assumed the character of a "populist" church, trying to satisfy the various factions within it (including nominally Orthodox political leaders) while preserving an appearance of unity.

Since Putin came to power in January, 2000, the MP has appeared to be reverting to its submissive role in relation to the Soviets, not protesting against the restoration of the red flag to the armed forces and approving the retention of the music of the Soviet national anthem. There has even been an official justification of Sergianism. Thus on July 18, 2002, the Moscow Synod ratified a document entitled "The relationships between the Russian Orthodox Church and the authorities in the 20s and 30s", which declared: "The aim of normalising the relationship with the authorities cannot be interpreted as a betrayal of Church interests. It was adopted by the holy Patriarch Tikhon, and was also expressed in the so-called 'Epistle of the Solovki Bishops' in 1926, that is, one year before the publication of 'The Epistle of the deputy patriarchal locum tenens and temporary patriarchal Synod'. The essence of the changes in the position of the hierarchy consisted in the fact that the Church, having refused to recognise the legitimacy of the new power established after the October revolution in 1917, as the power became stronger later, had to recognise it as

a state power and establish bilateral relations with it. This position is not blameworthy; historically, the Church has more than once found herself in a situation in which it has had to cooperate with non-orthodox rulers (for instance, in the period of the Golden Horde or the Muslim Ottoman Empire)."

However, Soviet power was very different from the Tatars or Ottomans, and "bilateral relations" with it, unlike with those powers, involved the betrayal of the Orthodox Faith and falling under the anathema of the Church. Moreover, if the Church at first refused to recognise Soviet power, but then (in 1927) began to recognise it, the question arises: which position was the correct one? There can be no question but that the position endorsed by the Moscow Council of 1917-18, when Bolshevik power was anathematized, was the correct one, and that the sergianist Moscow Patriarchate, by renouncing that position, betrayed the truth - and continues to betray it to the present day through its symbiotic relationship with a government that openly declares itself to be the heir of the Soviet State.

(c) *The New Martyrs*. With regard to the New Martyrs, the major problems from the patriarchate's point of view were the questions of the Royal Martyrs, on the one hand, and of the martyrs of the Catacomb Church who rejected Metropolitan Sergius, on the other. Non-royal martyrs killed before the schism with the Catacomb Church could be "safely" canonized. Thus in 1989, the MP canonized Patriarch Tikhon, and in 1992 it canonized three more martyrs and set up a commission to inquire into the martyrdom of the Royal Family, about which an MP publication wrote in 1998: "No less if not more dangerous as an ecclesiastical falsification is the MP's Canonization Commission, headed by Metropolitan Juvenal (Poiarkov), which has suggested a compromise glorification of Tsar Nicholas Alexandrovich: 'Yes, he was guilty of the tragedy on Khodynka field, he hobnobbed with Rasputin, he offended the workers, the country became backward. In general as a ruler of a state he was completely useless. Most important, he brought the country to revolution. But he suffered for Christ...' Such a falsification will only continue that dirty stream of slander which the Christ-fighters began to pour out already long before 1917..."

After nearly a decade of temporising, the MP finally, under pressure from its flock, glorified the Royal New Martyrs and many other martyrs of the Soviet yoke at the Jubilee Council. The glorification of the Royal New Martyrs was a compromise decision, reflecting the very different attitudes towards them in the patriarchate. The Royal Martyrs were called "passion-bearers" rather than "martyrs", and it was made clear that they were being glorified, not for the way in which they lived their lives, but for the meekness with which they faced their deaths. This allowed the anti-monarchists to feel that Nicholas was still the "bloody Nicholas" of Soviet mythology, and that it was "Citizen Romanov" rather than "Tsar Nicholas" who had been glorified - the man rather than the monarchical principle for which he stood.

As regards the other martyrs, Sergius Kanaev writes: "In the report of the

President of the Synodal Commission for the canonisation of the saints, Metropolitan Juvenal (Poiarkov), the criterion of holiness adopted... for Orthodox Christians who had suffered during the savage persecutions was clearly and unambiguously declared to be submission 'to the lawful leadership of the Church', which was Metropolitan Sergius and his hierarchy. With such an approach, the holiness of the 'sergianist martyrs' was incontestable. The others were glorified or not glorified depending on the degree to which they 'were in separation from the lawful leadership of the Church'. Concerning those who were not in agreement with the politics of Metropolitan Sergius, the following was said in the report: 'In the actions of the "right" oppositionists, who are often called the "non-commemorators", one cannot find evil-intentioned, exclusively personal motives. Their actions were conditioned by their understanding of what was for the good of the Church'. In my view, this is nothing other than blasphemy against the New Martyrs and a straight apology for sergianism. With such an approach the consciously sergianist Metropolitan Seraphim (Chichagov), for example, becomes a 'saint', while his ideological opponent Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd, who was canonized by our Church, is not glorified... Metropolitan Seraphim was appointed by Sergius (Stragorodsky) in the place of Metropolitan Joseph, who had been 'banned' by him."

Other Catacomb martyrs were "glorified" by the MP because their holiness was impossible to hide. Thus the relics of Archbishop Victor of Vyatka were found to be incorrupt and now lie in a patriarchal cathedral - although he was the very first bishop officially to break with Sergius and called him and his church organization graceless! Again, the reputation of Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan was too great to be ignored, in spite of the fact that by the end of his life his position differed in no way from that of St. Victor.

Some, seeing the glorification of the Catacomb martyrs by their opponents, remembered the Lord's words: "Ye build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, 'If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets'. Therefore ye bear witness against yourselves that ye are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up the measure of your fathers!" (Matthew 23.29-32).

This blasphemous canonisation of *both* the true *and* the false martyrs, thereby downgrading the exploit of the true martyrs, had been predicted by the ROCOR priest Fr. Oleg Oreshkin: "I think that some of those glorified will be from the sergianists so as to deceive the believers. 'Look,' they will say, 'he is a saint, a martyr, in the Heavenly Kingdom, and he recognized the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, so you must be reconciled with it and its fruits.' This will be done not in order to glorify martyrdom for Christ's sake, but in order to confirm the sergianist politics."

The main thing from the MP's point of view was that their founder, Metropolitan

Sergius, should be given equal status with the catacomb martyrs whom he persecuted. Thus in 1997 the patriarch said: "Through the host of martyrs the Church of Russia bore witness to her faith and sowed the seed of her future rebirth. Among the confessors of Christ we can in full measure name... his Holiness Patriarch Sergius."

By the time of the council of 2000, the MP still did not feel able to canonize Sergius - probably because it feared that it would prevent a union with ROCOR. But neither did it canonize the leader of the Catacomb Church, Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd. This suggested that a canonization of the two leaders was in the offing, but depended on the success of the negotiations between the MP and ROCOR.

The patriarch's lack of ecclesiastical principle and ecclesiological consistency in this question was pointed out by Fr. Peter Perekrestov: "In the introduction to one article ("In the Catacombs", *Sovershenno Sekretno*, № 7, 1991) Patriarch Alexis wrote the following: 'I believe that our martyrs and righteous ones, regardless of whether they followed Metropolitan Sergius or did not agree with his position, pray together for us.' At the same time, in the weekly, *Nedelya*, № 2, 1/92, the same Patriarch Alexis states that the Russian Church Abroad is a schismatic church, and adds: 'Equally uncanonical is the so-called "Catacomb" Church.' In other words, he recognizes the martyrs of the Catacomb Church, many of whom were betrayed to the godless authorities by Metropolitan Sergius's church organization..., and at the same time declares that these martyrs are schismatic and uncanonical!"

For in the last resort, as Fr. Peter pointed out, for the MP this whole matter was not one of truth or falsehood, but of *power*: "It is not important to them whether a priest is involved in shady business dealings or purely church activities; whether he is a democrat or a monarchist; whether an ecumenist or a zealot; whether he wants to serve Vigil for six hours or one; whether the priest serves a panikhida for the victims who defended the White House or a moleben for those who sided with Yeltsin; whether the priest wants to baptize by immersion or by sprinkling; whether he serves in the catacombs or openly; whether he venerates the Royal Martyrs or not; whether he serves according to the New or Orthodox Calendar - *it really doesn't matter*. The main thing is to commemorate Patriarch Alexis. Let the Church Abroad have its autonomy, let it even speak out, express itself as in the past, but only under one condition: *commemorate Patriarch Alexis*. This is a form of **Papism** - let the priests be married, let them serve according to the Eastern rite - it makes no difference, what is important is that they commemorate the Pope of Rome."

It is open to question whether the patriarchate's canonisation of even the true martyrs is pleasing to God. Thus when 50 patriarchal bishops uncovered the relics of Patriarch Tikhon in the Donskoj cemetery on April 5, 1992, witnesses reported that "it was even possible to recognise the face of the Patriarch from his incorrupt visage, and his mantia and mitre were also preserved in complete incorruption. Witnesses

also speak about a beautiful fragrance and an unusual feeling of reverential peace at that moment. But then, as some patriarchal clerics confirm, on contact with the air the relics crumbled, or - as the Catacomb Christians remark - the relics were not given into the hands of the Moscow Patriarchate. Then they buried them in plaster - a blasphemous act from an Orthodox point of view..."

The ROCOR clergy of Kursk wrote about the MP council as follows: "Everywhere there is the same well-known style: pleasing the 'right' and the 'left', the Orthodox and the ecumenists, 'yours' and 'ours', without the slightest attempt at definiteness, but with, on the other hand, a careful preservation of the whole weight of the sins of the past and present".

The "Jubilee Sobor" was final proof, if proof were needed, that the MP had not repented and could not repent unless its higher echelons were removed and the whole church apparatus was thoroughly purged.

The question now was: how was ROCOR going to react?

I. "THE SECOND OCTOBER REVOLUTION"

In October, 2000, a Hierarchical Council of ROCOR took place in New York under the presidency of Metropolitan Vitaly. In almost all its acts it represented a reaction to, and to a very large extent an approval of, the acts of the Moscow council. The most important were three conciliar epistles addressed: the first to the Serbian Patriarch Paul, the second "To the Beloved Children of the Church in the Homeland and in the Diaspora" and the third "To the Supporters of the Old Rites".

The first of these epistles, dated October 26, declared that ROCOR and the Serbs were "brothers by blood and by faith" and that "we have always valued the eucharistic communion between our sister-Churches and the desire to preserve the consolation of this communion to the end of time". And towards the end of the Epistle we read: "We beseech your Holiness not to estrange us from liturgical communion with you".

It should be remembered that this was written only two years after ROCOR had officially reissued its anathema on ecumenism, and only a few months after the Serbian Patriarch himself had said that there was *no* communion between his Church and ROCOR, calling ROCOR a "church" only in inverted commas! Moreover, as recently as September, 2000, the official publication of the Serbian Church, *Pravoslav'e*, had reported that, at the invitation of the patriarchate there had arrived in Belgrade a Catholic delegation, which had made a joint declaration witnessing to the fact that Serbian hierarchs had been praying together with the Catholics for the last three weeks! So, having justly anathematised the Serbs as heretics, and having witnessed the continuation of their heretical activity, ROCOR was now *begging* to be brought back into communion with the heretics!

Why? The reason became clear later in the Epistle: "A miracle has taken place, the prayers of the host of Russian New Martyrs have been heard: the atheist power that threatened the whole world has unexpectedly, before our eyes, fallen! Now we observe with joy and hope how the process of spiritual regeneration foretold by our saints has begun, and in parallel with it *the gradual return to health of the Church administration in Russia*. This process is difficult and is not being carried forward without opposition. Nevertheless, a radiant indicator of it is the recent glorification of the New Martyrs of Russia headed by the slaughtered Royal Family and the condemnation of the politics of cooperation with the godless authorities which took place at the last Council of the Russian Church in Moscow.

"There still remain other serious wounds in the leadership of the Russian Church which hinder our spiritual rapprochement. Nevertheless, we pray God that He may heal them, too, by the all-powerful grace of the Holy Spirit. Then there must take place the longed-for rapprochement and, God willing, the spiritual union between

the two torn-apart parts of the Russian Church – that which is in the Homeland, and that which has gone abroad. *We pray your Holiness to grant your assistance in this.*”

So the ROCOR bishops – this letter was signed by all of them without exception – were asking a heretic anathematised for ecumenism to help them to enter into communion with other anathematised ecumenists – their old enemies in Moscow, whom they now characterised in glowing and completely false terms as if they had already returned to Orthodoxy! Why, then, should the ROCOR bishops continue to speak of ecumenism as an obstacle to union with the MP? As the Kursk clergy pointed out: “It is not clear how long, in view of the declared unity with the Serbian patriarchate, this last obstacle [ecumenism] to union with the MP will be seen as vital”.

The second of the epistles, dated October 27, made several very surprising statements. First, it again spoke of “the beginning of a real spiritual awakening” in Russia. Considering that less than 1% of the Russian population goes to the MP, then, even if the spiritual state of the MP were brilliant, this would hardly constitute “awakening” on any significant scale. However, as Demetrius Kapustin pointed out, the signs of this awakening – the greater reading of spiritual books, the greater discussion of canonical and historical questions in the MP – are not good indicators of real spiritual progress: “It is evident that the reading of Church books can bring a person great benefit. However, a necessary condition for this is love for the truth. The Jews also saw Christ, and spoke with Him, but they did not want humbly to receive the true teaching, and not only were they not saved, but also took part in the persecutions and destroyed their own souls. It is the same with many parishioners of the MP. On reading books on the contemporary Church situation, many of them come to the conclusion that sergianism and ecumenism are soul-destroying. However, these doubts of theirs are often drowned out by the affirmations of their false teachers, who dare to place themselves above the patristic tradition. Satisfying themselves with a false understanding of love (substituting adultery with heretics and law-breakers for love for God, which requires chastity and keeping the truth) and obedience (substituting following the teaching of false elders for obedience to God and the humble acceptance of the patristic teaching, and not recognizing their personal responsibility for their own Church state), they often take part in the persecutions and slander against the True Orthodox. In a word, even such good works as the veneration of the Royal Martyrs are often expressed in a distorted form (by, for example, mixing it with Stalinism, as with the ‘fighter from within’ Dushenov)”. Kapustin then makes the important point that “an enormous number of people... have not come to Orthodoxy precisely because they have not seen true Christianity in the MP (alas, in the consciousness of many people in Russia the Orthodox Church is associated with the MP). In my opinion, the MP rather hinders than assists the spiritual awakening of the Russian people (if we can talk at all about any awakening in the present exceptionally wretched spiritual condition of Russia).”

Secondly, ROCOR's epistle welcomed the MP's glorification of the New Martyrs, since "the turning of the whole Russian people in prayer to all the holy New Martyrs of Russia and especially the Royal new martyrs... had become possible now thanks to the recognition of their holiness by the Hierarchical Council of the Moscow Patriarchate". As if the Russian people had not already been praying to the Holy New Martyrs in front of icons made in ROCOR for the past twenty years!

Moreover, as Protopriests Constantine Fyodorov and Benjamin Zhukov wrote, "the possibility of turning in prayer to the Russian New Martyrs was opened to the people *not by the Moscow Patriarchate (as is written in our Hierarchical Council's Epistle), but by the martyric exploit of these saints themselves, who were glorified by our Church in 1981*. The prayer of the Russian people to these saints never ceased from the very first day of their martyric exploit, but *was strengthened and spread precisely by the canonization of the Church Abroad.*"

Thirdly: "We are encouraged by the acceptance of the new social conception by this council, which in essence *blots out* the 'Declaration' of Metropolitan Sergius in 1927". And yet in the MP's "social conception" Sergius' declaration was not even mentioned, let alone repented of. In any case, how could one vague phrase about the necessity of the Church disobeying the State in certain exceptional cases (which was contradicted on the same page, as we have seen) *blot out* a Declaration that caused the greatest schism in Orthodox Church history since 1054 and incalculable sufferings and death?!

Two years later, as we have seen, in July, 2002, the Synod of the MP, far from "blotting out" the declaration, said that Sergius' relationship to the Soviet authorities was "not blameworthy", so not only has the MP *not* repented for sergianism, but it has continued to *justify* it, contradicting the position of the Catacomb new martyrs whom it has just glorified and who gave their lives because of their opposition to sergianism.

The epistle, which was signed by all the bishops except Barnabas, obliquely recognised this fact when it later declared: "We have not seen a just evaluation by the Moscow Patriarchate of the anti-ecclesiastical actions of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) and his Synod and their successors". If so, then how can we talk about Sergius' Declaration being *blotted out*?!

The third epistle, addressed to the Old Ritualists without distinguishing between the Popovtsi and Bespopovtsi, was similarly ecumenist in tone, beginning with the words: "To the Believing children of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Homeland and in the diaspora, who hold to the old rite, the Council of bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad sends greetings! Beloved brothers and sisters in our holy Orthodox faith: may the grace and peace of the Man-loving Saviour be with you to the ages!"

It was one thing to remove the bans on the old rites, as ROCOR had done in its Council in 1974: it was quite another to recognise the schismatics as Orthodox. And in such terms! For later in the epistle ROCOR compares the persecutions of the Old Ritualists to the persecutions of St. John Chrysostom, and begs forgiveness of the Old Ritualists as the Emperor Theodosius the Younger had begged it of the holy hierarch! But, as Bishop Gregory Grabbe pointed out after the 1974 Council, the sins of the Russian State in persecuting the Old Ritualists in the 17th century should not all be laid on the Church of the time, which primarily condemned the Old Ritualists not for their adherence to the old rites (which even Patriarch Nikon recognised to be salvific), but for their disobedience to the Church. To lay all the blame for the schism, not on the Old Ritualists but on the Orthodox, even after the Old Ritualists had proudly refused to take advantage of the many major concessions made by the Orthodox (for example, the edinoverie) while stubbornly continuing to call the Orthodox themselves schismatics, was to invert the truth and logically led to the conclusion that the Orthodox Church was not the True Church!

As clergy of the Kursk diocese pointed out: “The conciliar epistle to the Old Ritualists, in our opinion, is not only an extremely humiliating document for the Orthodox Church, but also contains signs of a heterodox ecclesiology. Effectively equating the Old Ritualists with the confessors of Orthodoxy, the Hierarchical Council, first, leaves them with their convictions, thereby blocking the path to repentance, and secondly, either teaches that outside the Orthodox Church there can exist true confession, or considers that the Church can be divided into parts which for centuries have not had any eucharistic communion between themselves. Both in form and in spirit the epistle in question represents a complete break with the patristic tradition of the Orthodox Church.... It seems that all that remains to be added is the request: ‘We humbly beseech you to receive us into your communion and be united to the Holy Church.’”

The feelings of the protestors was summed up by Fr. Stefan Krasovitsky and Roman Vershillo, who said that a “revolution” had taken place, and that “if we are to express the meaning of the coup shortly, then there took place, first, a moral disarmament, and secondly, the self-abolition of ROCOR as a separate part of the Russian Local Church... Alas, [it] is composed in such a way that it is not actually clear who has really fallen into schism from the Church: we or our errant Old Ritualist brothers!”

For ROCOR the writing was now on the wall. The October, 2000 Council constituted a clear break with the traditional attitude towards the MP and World Orthodoxy adopted by Metropolitans Anthony, Anastasy and Philaret. Only a clear renunciation of that clear break could keep the children of ROCOR within the Church and Faith of their fathers...

The October, 2000 Council was dubbed “the second October revolution” by its critics. And soon, in imitation of the MP’s own behaviour, suspensions and bans were being placed on the dissidents without any pretence of correct canonical procedure. Bishop Gabriel of Manhattan banned Hieromonk Paisius of Richmond Hill, New York; Bishop Michael of Toronto banned Hieromonk Vladimir of Mansonville, Canada; Bishop Agathangelus of the Crimea banned Priest Nicholas Furtatenko of Kiev; and Bishop Eutyches of Siberia banned three priests from St. Petersburg and two from Omsk. It was clear that opposition to the false council of 2000 was increasing both inside and outside Russia. The question was: would this opposition finally break with ROCOR and, together with those who had already broken with ROCOR or been unlawfully expelled from it, form a coherent and united force capable of regenerating the Russian Church?

II. THE FALL OF THE NEW YORK SYNOD

“On November 21 / December 4, 2000,” writes Vitaly Shumilo, “Metropolitan Vitaly, in reply to the numerous appeals, published his ‘Epistle to the Clergy and Flock’ in which he gave his evaluation of the Moscow Patriarchate and its Sobor of 2000, in particular with regard to the canonization in the MP of the New Martyrs and the Royal Family. ‘The Moscow Patriarchate has decided to carry out a political capitulation and to perform its glorification with one aim only: to pacify the voice of its believers and thereby gain some continued existence for itself.’ In his Epistle Vladyka Metropolitan also gives a critical evaluation of the decree accepted by the ROCOR Sobor concerning the creation of a Reconciliatory commission for unity with the MP and recalled how and with what aim Stalin created the contemporary ‘Moscow Patriarchate’. And here he speaks about the Catacomb Church, which did not enter upon the path of serving the God-fighting authorities, and about the Soviet church, which submitted to the authorities: ‘The silent response to this on the part of the believers in Russia was that they began to pray in their homes, and in every such flat a house church with an iconostasis was created... This kind of church exists to this day.’ In his Epistle the First-Hierarch affirmed that ‘our Church, which already now for 80 years has gone along the straight path of Christ, will not deviate into any dubious holes’, and ‘the fact that I have signed this Epistle [the conciliar decision of 2000 –author’s comment] by no means signifies that I agree with every point in it, and I know that there are other hierarchs who thought the same as I’. At the end of the Epistle Metropolitan Vitaly once more declared: ‘And so know, faithful children of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, that our Church has not changed its path, and we also, if we wish to be saved, must go along this path’, and he called on them to remain ‘faithful to the Lord and His Church’.”

The most organized resistance outside Russia came from the West European diocese. The clergy there were unhappy with the appointment of the pro-MP Bishop Ambrose (Cantacuzène) as head of the diocese to replace the anti-MP Archbishop Seraphim, who was retiring. Moreover, on October 17 a letter to the Council of Bishops signed by Bishop Barnabas, 7 archpriests, 7 priests, the Abbess of the Lesna convent and other lower clergy protested against the plans, announced in a letter by two Geneva priests, to transfer the Geneva parish of the Elevation of the Cross to the MP in exchange for “stavropegial” status and administrative and financial independence.

The role of Bishop Ambrose of Geneva in this affair was not immediately obvious. Although he had been conducting negotiations with the MP for the last five years, he appeared at first to distance himself from the two priests. However, on October 27 he was elevated to the rank of diocesan bishop of the Western Europe diocese, and immediately, at a parish meeting, said that he was very happy with the parish council’s decision to join the MP...

There were stirrings in Russia also. On January 21 / February 2, 2001, Bishop Benjamin (Rusalenko) of the Kuban and Black Sea made the first open declaration by a bishop withdrawing his signature from the unorthodox decisions of the Council of the year 2000. In June he was followed by Archbishop Lazarus. Now all the Russian bishops except Bishop Eutyches of Ishim and Siberia were on the side of the protesters.

On February 6-8 there took place a meeting of the Hierarchical Synod in New York under the presidency of Metropolitan Vitaly that confirmed all the decisions of the Council. "We are very upset," said the Synod, "by the disturbances that have taken hold of some parts of our church organism. In connection with this we affirm that we - all the members of the Hierarchical Synod, headed by the president, his Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly, - unanimously stand by the decisions and declarations accepted at the Hierarchical Council and we cannot agree with the attempt to introduce a spirit of doubt and disagreement into our midst."

In response to this, on February 24 / March 9 Bishop Benjamin and the clergy of the Kuban and Black Sea diocese wrote to Metropolitan Vitaly and the Synod, saying: "We insistently ask you to convene a new Council with the participation of clergy, monastics and laity. Because by your decisions you have introduced strong dismay and disturbance into the whole of our Church. We are expecting a positive response to our Address from the next meeting of the Hierarchical Synod. But if our voice is not heeded by the Archpastors, then we shall be forced, in accordance with the holy canons that forbid joint prayer with heretics, to step on the path of decisive actions ('depart from evil and do good')... We have not lost hope that our Hierarchical Synod will review these decisions and by the conciliar mind of the Russian Church Abroad will correct the errors that have been made."

Meanwhile, the clergy of the West European diocese were continuing to refuse to accept Bishop Ambrose's authority. Fr. Nicholas Semeonov of Brussels and Fr. Constantine Fyodorov of the Lesna convent in France were suspended. On February 28, 2001, Bishop Barnabas withdrew his signature from the October Council's letter to the Serbian patriarch. The next day Bishop Ambrose "released the clergy and the flock of the French vicariate [of Cannes] from submission to Bishop Barnabas". Then, on April 24 the ROCOR Synod, on the basis of a report by the Protopriests George Larin and Stefan Pavlenko, suspended the French clergy for their refusal to commemorate Bishop Ambrose, and told them to meet Archbishop Laurus in Munich on May 2. This suspension was signed by Metropolitan Vitaly and Archbishop Laurus, secretary of the Synod. The French clergy, meeting with Bishop Barnabas, unanimously rejected the suspensions as uncanonical, and did not go to the meeting in Munich. But on April 25, Bishop Barnabas was also placed under ban. These acts were signed by Metropolitan Vitaly and Archbishop Laurus.

None of the banned clergy was able to arrive at such short notice for the meeting on May 2. In their absence a broadened Hierarchical Synod confirmed the April decisions to ban Bishop Barnabas and his clergy. On May 5 Bishop Barnabas and his clergy signed an Address in which they evaluated the activity of the Synod and Bishop Ambrose in the last few months. They pointed out that they had made several appeals to the Synod to review the ecumenist and pro-MP activity of Bishop Ambrose and to remove him from administering the diocese. In reply, instead of investigating the complaints and initiating an ecclesiastical trial, the Synod had banned the appellers "until repentance". Referring to Bishop Benjamin's Declaration ("the voice of Bishop Benjamin of the Black Sea and Kuban has sounded out in a confessing manner", they said), the West European clergy appealed to the like-minded clergy and flock in Russia and abroad to unite "and form a powerful opposition to the new course in our Church".

On May 6/19 another Address of the West European clergy appeared on the internet, in which their position was explained and bewilderment expressed with regard to the bans placed on them by the Synod. "The essence of the question is not in some crude and enigmatic disobedience to the hierarchy, but in the acceptance or non-acceptance of the Moscow Patriarchate. The question was clearly put at the Council of the year 2000, which established a Commission for the Unity of the Russian Church and turned to the Serbian 'Patriarch' with a request that he intercede on the path to this unity. The hierarchs deliberately ignore this question and cover it with a supposed violation of church discipline. The appointment of Bishop Ambrose as the ruling bishop, although he is a supporter of rapprochement with Moscow and in spite of all the warnings, has brought the diocese into complete disorder... In recognizing the Moscow Patriarchate as the genuine Russian Church, the hierarchs have condemned themselves as schismatics, falling under the Moscow Patriarchate's condemnation of the Church Abroad." At the end of the Address the banned clergy declared that this kind of action on the part of the members of the Synod "has no real ecclesiastical significance, and all their decisions bear only a party character". The crisis in the West European diocese had reached the point where formal synodical decrees and bans were no longer able to resolve it.

But perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the whole affair was the fact that Metropolitan Vitaly had signed these bans...

On May 22 / June 4 Archbishop Lazarus withdrew his signature from the decisions of the Council of 2000. In his Address (which he had begun in January, 2001, but had been prevented from completing because of illness) he, following Bishop Benjamin, called for an extraordinary Council of ROCOR to review several points in that Council's documents. And he went on: "In no way am I thinking, and never have thought, of leaving ROCOR and causing a schism, but, on the contrary, by this step of mine I guard myself and the flock entrusted to me by the Holy Church from deviating from the only true path of confession along which ROCOR

and RTOC (as two parts of one Russian Church) have unwaveringly gone since the very moment of their origin.”

Archbishop Lazarus also warned against premature breaking with the Synod. He was probably thinking of the action of the Paris Protopriest Benjamin Zhukov, who in the previous month of May, had attempted to have Archimandrite Sergius (Kindyakov) consecrated and had unsuccessfully tried to draw Lazarus into his plot. But he did succeed in enrolling Bishop Barnabas, who travelled with the aim of consecrating Sergius to Mansonville in Canada, but was deterred from carrying out the consecration by Metropolitan Vitaly. However, Bishop Barnabas and Fr. Benjamin went on to register a new church group under the name of “The Russian Orthodox Church in Exile” in the Paris prefecture as a “public, non-commercial corporation.” It appeared that already these two were plotting a church coup, with the replacement of Vitaly by Barnabas as metropolitan and with Zhukov as the real controller behind the scenes...

At this point, Metropolitan Vitaly, seeing the chaos being created in the Church, began to step back from the course he had undertaken together with the other hierarchs. In an epistle dated June 7/20, he rescinded the bans on Bishop Barnabas and the French clergy. He had the right to do this as a *temporary* measure, in accordance with article 38 of the ROCOR *Statute*, pending the convening of a new Sobor that alone could make a final decision. Then, in an encyclical dated June 9/22, which he ordered to be read from the ambon of all the churches, the metropolitan subjected many positions adopted in the recent Sobor to just criticism, and called for the convocation of a new Sobor. Although the metropolitan did not personally repent of his part in the creation of this chaos (as recently as the Synodal session on February 8 he had upheld the decisions of the October 2000 Council), his willingness to review the disastrous decisions of the October Sober was very welcome. On June 25 / July 8 Archbishop Lazarus expressed his “support and profound gratitude” for the encyclical.

However, the encyclical “was forbidden to be read on the orders of Bishop Gabriel” of Manhattan, the deputy secretary of the Synod, who declared that the metropolitan had probably not composed the encyclical but had been pressured into signing it by unknown persons (the first of several such accusations in the months to come). Bishop Gabriel’s claim was supported in letters by Archbishop Mark and Bishop Ambrose. But then Bishop Barnabas weighed in on the side of the metropolitan, pointing out that the encyclical had been thrashed out in the course of three days of talks in Mansonville and expressed the freely expressed opinions of the metropolitan himself.

On July 10, a critical session of the Hierarchical Synod was held. The event turned into a very crude and rude attempt to force the metropolitan to retire – only two or three days before the fiftieth anniversary of his service as a bishop. The metropolitan

said that he could retire only as the result of the decision of a Sobor; but the other bishops said that that was not necessary. The metropolitan then closed the session, declaring that he had nothing in common with the other bishops, and that he would see them at the Sobor.

However, two documents dated the same day and signed, as it would seem, by Metropolitan Vitaly as well as by the other ten bishops, declared that the metropolitan had submitted a petition that he be allowed to retire "in view of age and illness" (he was 92), that his petition had been accepted with understanding, that Archbishop Laurus was appointed deputy of the first hierarch "with all proxy powers" (protocol № 9) until a Sobor could be convened, and that a Sobor to elect a new metropolitan would be convened in October! The decision was taken that "any official documents coming from the Synod without the signature of the deputy of the First-Hierarch, Archbishop Laurus, are invalid (article three of the Act). And it was also decreed that a Hierarchical Sobor should be convened in October to elect a new First-Hierarch (article 4). Archbishop Laurus was appointed Deputy of the First-Hierarch, and his name was to be commemorated in all the parishes after the name of the First-Hierarch...

Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin did not submit to these decrees, and continued to commemorate Metropolitan Vitaly without commemorating Archbishop Laurus.

On July 12 a triumphant liturgy and moleben was celebrated in honour of Metropolitan Vitaly's jubilee, after which a number of hypocritical speeches praising the metropolitan were uttered by hierarchs who had been treating him with such disrespect only two days before.

On July 13 the Synod declared, in an attempt to assuage the fears of Metropolitan Vitaly's supporters: "None of the hierarchs of ROCOR is pushing towards a unification with the MP. There is no pro-MP faction amongst us." The falseness of these words was already evident, but would be demonstrated even more clearly in the coming years...

"Shortly after the forced removal of Metropolitan Vitaly," writes Professor Olga Ackerly, "... the MP began to voice its endorsement: 'We welcome the fact that the more healthy forces in the Church Abroad have predominated and are now for all practical purposes in charge of it.'"

On September 4-5, a Conference of the Hierarchs, Clergy and Laity of the Russian Parishes of ROCOR took place in Voronezh under the presidency of Archbishop Laurus, and with the participation of Bishops Benjamin, Agathangelus and Eutyches. At this meeting the Kursk and Belgorod clergy declared their break of communion with the New York Synod and addressed their bishops - Lazarus, Benjamin and

Agathangelus – with a suggestion that they appeal to Metropolitan Vitaly and Bishop Barnabas that they unite with them on the basis of the pre-2000 dogmatical and canonical position of ROCOR. Bishop Agathangelus reacted by demanding that the Kursk clergy renounce their break of communion with the New York Synod. Otherwise, he would not sign any proposed documents. And he showed the clergy the door... Archbishop Lazarus did not support his colleague's hardline attitude to the Kursk clergy, but agreed with him about not breaking with the Lavrites. Bishop Benjamin adopted a neutral position. Although the majority of the Conference agreed with the Kursk clergy, they now tried to persuade them, for the sake of "the good of the Church" to withdraw their words about a break of communion with the New York Synod. Fr. Valery Rozhnov said that the Synod had fallen under their own anathema. Archbishop Lazarus retorted that nobody had anathematized them. When the Kursk clergy refused to back down, Bishop Agathangelus said that he was not in communion with them. And so they left the meeting... Finally, the Conference accepted an Address to the forthcoming Sobor in which support was expressed for Metropolitan Vitaly's encyclical and for the banned Bishop Barnabas and the West European clergy, while the practice of this kind of ban was condemned. Then, addressing Metropolitan Vitaly personally, the Conference besought him not to abandon his post of First-Hierarchy.

On reading this Address in New York, Metropolitan Vitaly raised his right hand and said: "*There* is the True Church. Here everything is finished..." And on September 8/21 Bishop Barnabas and the West European clergy (including Fr. Benjamin Zhukov) expressed their gratitude to the Russian hierarchs and their complete support for their position.

Bishop Agathangelus signed all the decrees and addresses of the Voronezh Conference, and was entrusted with representing its views to the Sobor in New York. He assured the participants that he would not vote for the new course of rapprochement with the MP, and that if Metropolitan Vitaly refused to take part in the Sobor and left the hall, he would follow him.

However, having arrived in New York, he changed course and joined the uniates. And then, on returning to Russia, he raised a persecution against Archbishop Lazarus and his colleagues. He denounced them to the civil authorities, tried to have their registration rescinded and their churches taken from them. He even tried to seize the church of St. John of Kronstadt in Odessa that belonged to Archbishop Lazarus...

At the first session of the Sobor in New York, on October 10/23, Archbishop Laurus was elected metropolitan – a decision welcomed by "Patriarch" Alexis of Moscow. Metropolitan Vitaly was present at this session, but only in order to hand in the following declaration, dated October 5/18, after which he left the hall:

“Recognizing the depth of the sinful fall of certain members of the Hierarchical Council of our Church in their intensive, but not yet expressed desire to unite with the Moscow Patriarchate, I, with full responsibility before God, the Russian people and my conscience, consider it my archpastoral duty to declare that the coming Hierarchical Sobor, which is due to open on October 23, 2001 cannot be called anything other than a collection of irresponsibles.

“This Sobor undoubtedly intends to discuss questions relating to a possible union with the false-church of the Moscow Patriarchate. The other day I received a ‘Fraternal Epistle’ from Patriarch Alexis II, which, to my profound sorrow, elicited a joyful reaction from many clerics of our Church. They even sent a triumphant address to the Sobor, asking the Sobor to react positively to this epistle of the patriarch. Their address was signed by 18-odd clerics of our Church. But how many more are there who do not dare to express themselves openly? Seeing no other way out of the situation that has been created, and not wishing to bear responsibility for the final destruction of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad that has been entrusted to my care, I declare:

“I consider myself the lawful heir of all the preceding metropolitans of our Holy Church Abroad: first Metropolitan Anthony, then Metropolitan Anastasius, and finally Metropolitan Philaret. I am the fourth Metropolitan of our Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and until the most recent time, I have continued, with the help of God, to lead this ship on the straight path amidst the threatening waves of the sea of this world, avoiding underwater rocks, sudden storms and deep pits that suck ships to the bottom of the sea. Unfortunately, a fateful time has come, when I have understood and appreciated the sad fact that between me and the other hierarchs of our Synod there is no longer oneness of mind and soul. I said this at the last Synod, when after the first session I, distressed and fully conscious of my isolation among the other hierarchs, left the gathering. On this basis and only on this basis, I agreed to retire and will be considered the Metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in retirement. In this Church I was born, was baptized and will die when the time comes.

“I wish to declare for all to hear that as First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, I completely reject and condemn any rapprochement whatsoever and union in the future with the false-church, the Moscow Patriarchate.

“I also wish to declare that I remove my signature from the following documents signed by me:

“1. My signature on the address to the Serbian Patriarch Paul.

“2. My signature on the agreement to form a commission for the establishment of negotiations with the Moscow Patriarchate...”

On the same day Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin again addressed the Sobor and Metropolitan Vitaly personally. They called on the Sobor to review the unacceptable documents accepted in the previous Sobor, and asked the metropolitan not to retire, saying that they recognized only him as First-Hierarch. They said that they were not able, for objective reasons, to be in New York, but were ready to take part in the work of the Sobor by telephone - on condition, however, that all the bishops withdrew their signatures from the documents of the Council of 2000.

On October 11/24, Bishop Barnabas also wrote to Metropolitan Vitaly expressing his support. Before that he and Protodeacon Herman Ivanov-Trinadtsaty had phoned him, appealing to him not to retire. On the same day Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin once again wrote to the metropolitan, asking him to review his decision to retire. Archbishop Lazarus even repeated the request in a phone call to Mansonville. "No," replied the metropolitan firmly, "I am a metropolitan in retirement." "How then is it to be with us now in Russia?" asked the archbishop. "Place your hope on God. God will bless", replied the metropolitan...

On receiving this reply, Archbishop Lazarus decreed that for the time being only the name of the ruling bishop should be commemorated in his cathedral church of St. John of Kronstadt in Odessa. With the retirement of the metropolitan, the ruling organ of the Russian Church now became the Hierarchical Conference of Russian Bishops, first created with the blessing of the ROCOR Hierarchical Council in 1994 with Archbishop Lazarus at its head.

On October 11/24, having discussed the declarations of the Russian bishops, the Sobor in New York elected Archbishop Laurus as metropolitan by a majority of votes and confirmed its adherence to the decisions of the robber council of 2000.

On October 12/25, Metropolitan Vitaly came into the hall, congratulated "the new First-Hierarch Metropolitan Laurus" and said "that he was going into retirement and is handing over the reins of the Church's administration". From what is written in the Protocol, the conversation was friendly. The metropolitan congratulated Archbishop Laurus and wished him "to guide the ship of the Church in the same way that it had always been guided, on the straight path of True Orthodoxy". On his part, Archbishop Laurus "in the name of the Sobor thanked Metropolitan Vitaly for his labours for the good of the Church", and "asked him for his help in bringing order to Church life". The metropolitan once again emphasized that "by reason of his health and in view of his advanced age he could no longer administer the Church. He had never been ambitious. He truly needed rest." The session continued without the metropolitan, and they discussed the participation of Vladyka Vitaly at the enthronement of Archbishop Laurus and the provision of a pension for him in his retirement.

The Sobor wanted Metropolitan Vitaly to hand over all his property in Canada to the Synod. To this end, fearing the interference of his secretary, Liudmilla Rosnianskaia, it was decreed, already on October 11/24, to remove her immediately from the Synodal house, "bringing to an end her position as a servant of the Hierarchical Synod". Then, on the evening of the same or the following day (that is, on October 11/24 or 12/25), she was unceremoniously thrown out of the Synodal building, and the contents of her handbag, containing the metropolitan's Canadian passport, medication and \$20,000, were stolen. The next day, the metropolitan himself fled, first to the house of Fr. Vladimir Shishkov (where Metropolitan Valentine of Suzdal happened to be staying), and then to Canada. The ROCOR hierarchs gave an order to detain him at the border, but he successfully arrived at his Transfiguration Skete in Mansonville. The next day ROCOR sued Fr. Vladimir for assisting in the supposed kidnapping of the metropolitan, and Rosnianskaia was accused of kidnapping him, of giving him drugs to destroy his memory, and of exploiting his senility to her advantage.

As a result of these events, through the greed of the Synodal hierarchs, Metropolitan Vitaly was prevented from taking part in the enthronement of Archbishop Laurus and of praying together with the uniate hierarchs. On the day after his departure for Canada there was an earthquake in New York... And on the very night that Metropolitan Laurus arrived in the Holy Trinity monastery in Jordanville, a fire broke out in the monastery... The fire was stopped at the seminary building in which was housed the cell icon of the Iveron Mother of God that had belonged to Metropolitan Philaret.

On November 13, President Putin met Bishop Gabriel, secretary of the ROCOR (L) Synod, and invited him and Metropolitan Laurus to visit Moscow. He must have agreed this invitation with Patriarch Alexis. So with the blessing of the KGB leaders of both Church and State, the real negotiations on union, a process that was called "structuring" by its supporters, could begin.

III. THE CREATION OF THE MANSONVILLE SYNOD

Meanwhile, in Mansonville Hieromonk Vladimir (Tselishev), an ally of Fr. Benjamin Zhukov, finally convinced Metropolitan Vitaly to come out of retirement. According to the witness of Fr. Vladimir, the argument that prevailed with him was the support of the Russian bishops and the question: "Vladyka, to whom are you leaving the Russian bishops and flock?"

This represented a striking volte face on the part of Hieromonk Vladimir. Only a few months before he had dismissed the metropolitan, saying: "there is no more metropolitan" (letter of November, 2000). He said that the metropolitan was no longer able to administer the Church because he was "deprived of orientation and memory" and remained in "an unhealthy state of mind and reasoning (letter of May, 2001). He "completely depended" on his secretary, L.D. Rosnianskaia, who had control of his signature, his writing paper and his seal. "One should have no illusions about this," he wrote (letter of July, 2001). Such inconsistency raised suspicions about Fr. Vladimir's real motivation - suspicions that were to be confirmed quite soon...

Indeed, if the main body of the bishops led by Archbishops Laurus and Mark were preparing a "revolution on the left" against the authority of the metropolitan, there is strong evidence that a "revolution on the right" was also being prepared. The real leader of these rightist revolutionaries was the Paris Protopriest Benjamin Zhukov. In May, 2001, he asked the metropolitan to bless Bishop Barnabas of Cannes (his creature at the time) to consecrate Archimandrite Sergius (Kindiakov) to the episcopate. The metropolitan refused, and Zhukov, annoyed, then tried to persuade Archbishop Lazarus of Tambov and Odessa to carry out the consecration in secret, suggesting that he would become "metropolitan" and "first-hierarch". Lazarus refused, thereby earning the hatred of Zhukov - with dire consequences.

Persuaded by "rightist revolutionaries" such as Tselishev and Zhukov, on October 14/27, the metropolitan issued an "Extraordinary Declaration" on the internet: "In view of the unwillingness on the part of the majority of the bishop to reconcile and pacify the unheard-of disturbance among our clergy and flock, and also taking into account the requests of some of the bishops and many of the children of the Church Abroad, I with all responsibility declare that, in accordance with paragraph 34 of the Statute on the ROCOR, I remove my signature concerning my voluntary retirement and handing over of my powers to Archbishop Laurus. My name must be commemorated as before at services in all the churches of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. In case of unforeseen circumstances, Bishop Barnabas of Cannes is entrusted with temporarily bearing the powers of Deputy of the First-Hierarch of ROCOR until the election of a new First-Hierarch of the Church Abroad by hierarchs who have remained faithful to the Orthodox faith."

This news was greeted with joy, but also with some perplexity, by the opponents of union with the MP. After all, only three days before the metropolitan had refused to revoke his decision to retire even after several earnest entreaties from hierarchs, clergy and laity both within and outside Russia. Moreover, there was considerable concern whether the metropolitan had the right to come out of retirement and resume the leadership of the Church without the decision of a Sobor of bishops. Paragraph 34 of the *Statute* on ROCOR did not provide him with that authority.

The only justification that the metropolitan could give for his action was the fact that he had been coerced to retire in July. As he himself said: "I hereby declare that, at that time [July 2001] I was coerced by violence to put my signature on documents prepared and written by the Synod... I have been the object of outrages and of high and repeated psychological pressures from the bishops. These tortures have exhausted me." That Metropolitan Vitaly had indeed been coerced was witnessed by two participants in the July meeting, Archimandrite Sergius (Kindiakov) and Priest Anthony (Orlov). As against this, however, is the fact that by October the metropolitan appears to have been completely reconciled with his retirement, refused to withdraw it when asked to on many occasions, and voluntarily congratulated Archbishop Laurus on his election as the new metropolitan, reaffirming that he was retiring because of his health and old age and because he "truly needed rest".

"Here it is appropriate to note a similar precedent," writes Vitaly Shumilo: "it was for precisely this reason that the pre-revolutionary Russian Church did not recognize the canonicity of the so-called Belokrinitskaya Old Ritualist hierarchy, which traced its origins to Metropolitan Ambrose of Bosnia and Sarajevo, who was in retirement. The Old Ritualists' references to the fact that Metropolitan Ambrose had been sent into retirement not in accordance with his will, but on the demand and under the pressure of the Turkish government, and that the metropolitan did not recognize the decision of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate - were not accepted by the Holy Synod.

"The fact that Vladyka Vitaly was in the situation of a bishop in retirement is confirmed by consideration of what rights he actually enjoyed in the 'Mansonville Synod of Vicar-Bishops'. With the seizure of power in Mansonville by Protopriest B. Zhukov, Hieromonk V. Tselishev and Priest N. Orlov, Metropolitan Vitaly was de facto retired for the second time (the first time was by the plotters from New York headed by Archbishop Laurus and Archbishop Mark): all the parishes in Canada were removed from the direct administration of Vladyka Vitaly as the ruling Bishop of Montreal and Canada and transferred to the administration of the vicars, who proclaimed themselves to be 'ruling'. From this time and until his blessed death, Metropolitan Vitaly had not one single parish under his administration in Canada. From a canonical point of view, this was a possible situation for a hierarch only if he was in retirement. The remarks that the Metropolitan was weak and unable to

administer the parishes are not honest. If the Metropolitan was not able to administer his parishes, was he able to administer the Church? It is clear that the people who kept the Metropolitan in captivity were inconsistent – not to say, cunning.”

There was a similar canonical problem with regard to the metropolitan’s appointment of Bishop Barnabas as his deputy. Barnabas was under a ban signed by the metropolitan himself. That ban could be removed only by a Sobor of bishops. Therefore the Metropolitan’s decision to appoint him as his deputy without the authority of a Sobor, and later to allow him to ordain bishops and be raised to the rank of archbishop, was uncanonical.

The only way in which what we shall now call ROCOR (V) could correct these canonical deficiencies was to turn to the Russian hierarchs Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin in order to convene a canonical Sobor. For they were in fact the only ruling bishops opposed to the New York synod who did not need a Council of bishops to reinstate them as fully functioning bishops. These bishops were very eager to help in this way. On October 27, the very day of his “Extraordinary Declaration”, they had declared their loyalty to Metropolitan Vitaly. And on October 28th, 29th or 30th they “made their declaration of loyalty to Metropolitan Vitaly by telephone. This phone call was received by Bishop (then Hieromonk) Vladimir in Mansonville in the presence of Protopriest Spyridon Schneider and Priest Andrew Kencis. When Bishop Vladimir finished his phone call with Archbishop Lazarus he enthusiastically proclaimed: ‘Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin are with us, they are commemorating Metropolitan Vitaly.’”

The Mansonville group were happy to welcome the Russian bishops in October, when they were desperately in need of support against the uniate Synod under Metropolitan Laurus (ROCOR (L)). However, the tragedy was that within a few days they no longer felt any need for them and in effect broke communion with them. For Zhukov wanted to rule the Synod on his own; he cared nothing for the canonical scruples of the Russian bishops, who wanted the convening of a canonical Sobor in order to correct the canonical deficiencies of the Mansonville Synod, but wanted with the aid of Bishop Barnabas alone to promote his protégé priests...

“On November 1, 2001,” writes Shumilo, “an event took place that greatly perplexed many Orthodox Christians. On the initiative of the New York Synod, Metropolitan Vitaly, accompanied by police, was forcibly sent to a psychiatric hospital for testing. This was a great indignity for the person of the Metropolitan, a mockery of his rank and age, but Vladyka Vitaly humbly and with dignity bore it all...”

“[On November 3], immediately on the return of Vladyka Metropolitan from hospital, taking advantage of his distraction and under the excuse of ‘saving’ the Church, on the initiative and under the direct pressure of Protopriest V. Zhukov (who shouted down the phone to Bishop Barnabas: ‘Consecrate a bishop

immediately, even if it's with a rope around his neck' – this is witnessed by clergy from France and Russia who were present at the conversation), the Vicar-Bishop Barnabas carried out the consecration of Archimandrite Sergius (Kindiakov). The decision to carry out this consecration was taken hastily, it was not discussed in council, and none of the acting hierarchs was informed about it (not to speak of *the necessity that they should give their written consent* to the carrying out of a hierarchical consecration, as is demanded by the church canons and the Statute of ROCOR, see paragraph 11, and the note to this paragraph, also Canon 4 of the First Ecumenical Council: '... and those who are absent must compose an agreement by means of letters: and then the consecration can take place', etc.). Only one consent was obtained to this consecration, together with the Metropolitan's oral blessing – but not immediately, but after some pressure on him (the decisive argument was: 'You can be arrested and the Church will remain without bishops')...

"As many sources witness, the ninety-year-old Metropolitan, by reason of his health had not been able to serve a liturgy since 1999, was very weak and unable to take full part in the consecration of Archimandrite Sergius. He was present at it clad only in a mantia (this is witnessed by photographs: on them Bishop Barnabas and Bishop Sergius are in full hierarchical vestments, but Metropolitan Vitaly is in a mantia), whereas neither a liturgy nor a hierarchical consecration can be carried out in a mantia. *The consecration of Archimandrite Sergius was carried out by Vicar-Bishop Barnabas on his own...*

"This consecration laid the foundations for the creation of a new church organization – the ROC in Exile (ROCiE, it was under that name that it was registered in France, Canada and the USA)...

"If, taking into account the exceptional circumstances, for the sake of love and peace and with the aim of averting a schism in the Church, it would have been possible, *in a conciliar fashion, with the application of the broadest economy*, to accept the consecration of Archimandrite Sergius at a Hierarchical Sobor with a consequent laying of hands [cheirothesia] on him, then all the later 'Mansonville consecrations' [of Bishops Vladimir, Bartholomew, Anthony and Victor] carried out by Bishop Barnabas and Archimandrite Sergius in secret even from Metropolitan Vitaly (without the participation and contrary to the will of the metropolitan) were *openly unlawful*, and it is impossible to accept them."

On November 5, the Mansonville Synod published an ukaz stating that the metropolitan was now to be commemorated as "First-Hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile". It was decided that the Church should be incorporated under this name (we recall that Zhukov had already done this in France), and Fr. Joseph Sunderland was appointed as legal advisor to carry this out. However, since a change in name usually signifies a change in Church, the ukaz disturbed many believers and was rejected by the Russian bishops. Archbishop Lazarus even orally forbade the commemoration of the metropolitan for a few weeks. But then, on November 20, the Mansonvillians recognized their mistake and reversed their previous decision, restoring the name "Russian Orthodox Church Abroad". As

emerged only later, Metropolitan Vitaly had always been against the change of name. With the original name restored, on November 24 Archbishop Lazarus ordered that the metropolitan's name be commemorated again. Bishop Benjamin issued a similar ukaz.

Also on November 5, the new "Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile" raised Bishop Barnabas to the rank of archbishop with the title "of Cannes and Europe". Strangely, Archbishop Barnabas' signature was not on this document. However, he was all too willing to accept the power it gave him. Thus already on or about November 7, he declared that he would not accept Archbishop Lazarus as senior to himself. And later he claimed that, as deputy to the metropolitan and "Archbishop of Europe", he should have control over the whole of European Russia, thereby excluding Lazarus and Benjamin from the administration of their sees!

Later, the Mansonvillians would describe the meeting at which these decisions were made as "the first Hierarchical Sobor of the regenerated ROCA". And yet much later, on May 20, 2003, they decreed the "establishment of the Hierarchical Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad"! The absurdity of establishing the Synod already eighteen months after "the first Hierarchical Sobor of the regenerated ROCA" appears to have escaped the notice of these "rightist revolutionaries".

After this "first Hierarchical Sobor", Metropolitan Vitaly left Montreal with his secretary, L. Rosnianskaia, who reported him as having been against the consecration of any more bishops after Archimandrite Sergius, "so that they don't say that we bake bishops like pies". He arrived in Mansonville on the evening of November 6. We can imagine his astonishment, therefore, when, that same evening, he saw Hieromonk Vladimir (Tselishev) coming to him with a hierarchical panagia on his breast. For Archbishop Barnabas and Bishop Sergius had ordained him as Vicar-Bishop of Sacramento that day, claiming falsely in the ordination certificate that this had been done with the metropolitan's blessing. The metropolitan refused to recognize this "consecration".

However, as in the case with Archimandrite Sergius, they persuaded him to recognize it "for the sake of the good of the Church". So as to hide the illegality and give the "consecration" an appearance of lawfulness, the signature of the metropolitan was added to the ordination certificate under the printed resolution: "I confirm".

That this consecration was performed against the will of the metropolitan was confirmed on July 12/25, 2004 by Archbishop Barnabas, when he wrote: "I repent of taking part in the consecration of Bishop Vladimir without your permission". He had good reason to repent, for the consecration violated the Sixth Canon of the First Ecumenical Council, which says: "If anyone is made a bishop without the permission of the metropolitan, this Great Council has defined that he must not be a bishop".

This administrative chaos was compounded by yet another uncanonical episcopal consecration. On November 11, Bishops Sergius and Vladimir, without the

agreement or blessing, not only of Metropolitan Vitaly, but also, this time, of Archbishop Barnabas also, consecrated Archimandrite Bartholomew (Vorobiev) as Bishop of Grenada.

Later, on July 12/25 Archbishop Barnabas wrote in his penitential letter to Metropolitan Vitaly: "I repent that I did not express my protest in connection with the consecration of Bishop Bartholomew, which was carried out by Bishop Sergius and Bishop Vladimir in spite of your and my decision". And a lie was added to the lack of canonicity: in Bishop Bartholomew's ordination certificate it was asserted that the consecration had been carried out by Metropolitan Vitaly.

So all three consecrations - of Sergius, Vladimir and Bartholomew - were carried out contrary to the canons, without the convening of a canonical Hierarchical Sobor, by vicar bishops without the participation of the only two ruling bishops of the Russian Church that were not under ban or in retirement (Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin), in two cases against the will of their metropolitan, and in one case secretly from him. We therefore come to the conclusion that if ROCOR (L), at its October Sobor, fell away from the confessing path of the true Russian Church Abroad by its declared intention to unite with the MP and World Orthodoxy, only a few days later ROCOR (V) fell in the opposite direction through its violation of the conciliar norms of the Holy Church as enshrined in the holy canons. Taking advantage of the infirmity of Metropolitan Vitaly and his personal ascendancy over the "Mansonville Synod of Vicars", Protopriest Benjamin Zhukov accomplished a coup d'église that left Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin as the only canonical survivors of the pre-2001 Bishops of ROCOR.

On November 22 a second attempt to kidnap Metropolitan Vitaly and take him to New York was made by Bishop Michael (Donskov) of Canada, as a result of which the metropolitan anathematized him. When the attempt failed (Canadian judges refused to allow the kidnapping), the Synod of ROCOR (L) issued a statement condemning the action and claiming that it had always wanted to persuade the metropolitan to return by peaceful means. Bishop Michael was freed from governing the Canadian diocese and sent to Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville.

On December 7, Metropolitan Vitaly wrote to all the clergy and flock of the Church Abroad: "The supporters and followers of the so-called self-styled Metropolitan Laurus, who tried to seize ecclesiastical power in our Church Abroad, have departed into complete spiritual tracklessness.

"Seeing the disturbances in our Church, I have returned to myself the rights of head of the Church. In reply to this, the Synod, with the participation of Bishops Michael and Hilarion, raised a real persecution against me. I was subject to arrest at the hands of the civil authorities without the slightest indication of any reason for my guilt. Exclusively in order to cleanse the Church from such apostates, with my blessing and participation the ordinations of new bishops have been carried out: Bishop Vladimir of Sacramento and Bishop Bartholomew of Grenada...

“The apostates headed by Archbishop Laurus cannot be considered to be within the bounds of the Church...”

Evidently Patriarch Alexis was speaking the truth when he later said in the media that Metropolitan Vitaly’s removal had been a necessary condition of the rapprochement of the MP and ROCOR...

Let us return to the beginning of November. At that time a group of priests led by Protopriest Victor (Melehov), exarch of the flock of the “Holy Orthodox Church of North America” (HOCNA) in Russia, left HOCNA and were received in their existing rank by Metropolitan Vitaly into ROCOR (V). Fr. Victor was then nominated by Fr. Anatoly Trepachko, and unanimously elected by all the clergy and bishops, as Secretary of the newly incorporated “Russian Orthodox Church in Exile”, while Fr. Michael Marcinovsky was voted Treasurer.

Later, Fr. Benjamin Zhukov, seeing in Melehov a potential enemy to his plans to take over the Synod, inserted the words “in North America (USA and Canada)” after the word “Secretary” on the ROCiE official website, and also fraudulently claimed that he himself had been made secretary of the Synod on November 5.

Having been appointed secretary, Fr. Victor immediately made his presence felt. As Fr. Spyridon Schneider writes: “Within a few days [on November 8] Fr. Victor came to Mansonville,... and asked them to: 1. renounce the MP and Sergianism; 2. renounce any relationship with the Serbian Church, 3. reaffirm the 1983 anathema against ecumenism, and 4. renounce Cyprian of Fili and his heretical ecclesiology which had been accepted in 1994 by the Synod of Bishops. These issues were discussed for about two and one half hours and when the Metropolitan, the Bishops and Fr. Victor were finished with these discussions they were all very happy that complete agreement had been reached. Soon after the meeting a statement was written by Vladyka Vladimir that addressed these four points and faxed to Fr. Victor with all of the Bishops’ signatures including Archbishop Barnabas.”

This “Declaration of the Hierarchical Synod of ROCiE” appeared on the internet, and declared that (i) that ROCiE had no canonical or Eucharistic communion with the Moscow Patriarchate, and (ii) that there would be a cessation of “the badly thought out establishment in 1994 of Eucharistic communion with the Synod of the Resisters under the Presidency of Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropo and Fili”. The latter resolution was signed by “Metropolitan Vitaly, Bishop Sergius for Archbishop Barnabas with his agreement, Bishop Sergius, Bishop Vladimir”. Later Archbishop Barnabas, who had left Canada for France the previous day, declared that he had *not* given his agreement to the placing of his signature under this resolution. However, to the distress of the American clergy, some French clergy began to criticize the condemnation of Cyprian. And on November 7/20 the decree on cessation of communion with the Cyprianites was halted.

But on December 16/29, at a Pastoral Convention of the North American clergy, under the signatures of all the bishops except Archbishop Barnabas, who was not present, the Cyprianite ecclesiology was formally condemned. Barnabas did not protest the decision to break with Cyprian, although he introduced one qualification. However, rumblings of discontent continued from some of the lower French clergy, especially Protodeacon German Ivanov-Trinadtsaty, and two priests with links to the Cyprianites, Michael and Quentin Castelbajac, who joined ROCOR (L). On the other hand, there was support for the decision from others in Western Europe and elsewhere.

The decision to renounce Cyprianism was important, for it signaled a return to the ecclesiology of Metropolitan Philaret, which had been jettisoned when ROCOR joined the Cyprianites in 1994. Formally speaking, it could be argued that this decision was incorrect, since only a canonical Hierarchical Council could overturn the decision of another Hierarchical Council – and, as we have seen, several of the hierarchs at this Council were not canonical, nor were the canonical bishops in Russia allowed to participate. However, it expressed the truth – and that was the main thing.

The opposition of the French had its roots in the fact that they had lived for many years under the omophorion of Archbishop Anthony of Geneva, the most ecumenist hierarch of ROCOR for at least 20 years until his death in 1993, whom even now they called their “great Abba” and “he who restrained [the coming of the Antichrist]”. And Archbishop Barnabas himself had had a very chequered career. Therefore a root-and-branch examination of the past, with repentance for all mistakes, - conducted, moreover, on the initiative of American clergy, some of whom had broken with ROCOR in 1986 precisely because of their opposition to ROCOR’s ecumenist tendencies under Metropolitan Vitaly and Archbishop Anthony of Geneva - was deeply threatening to them.

This led Fr. Victor and the group of North American clergy to call for: (i) the introduction of order into the administrative chaos of ROCOR (V), which required the convening of a Sobor; and (ii) the introduction of a clear ecclesiology which would help to avoid the mistakes in ecclesiology made by ROCOR in the past and provide a firm foundation for her development in the future.

IV. THE RUSSIAN TRUE ORTHODOX CHURCH

Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin, while rejecting the decisions of the Mansonville Sobor of November, 2001 as uncanonical, remained in communion with Metropolitan Vitaly and continued to call for a canonical Sobor in which they would take part. Knowing that this would expose his own nefarious activity, Zhukov tried hard to discredit them and the whole idea of a Sobor. Thus on December 2/15, 2002 he wrote in an "Explanation": "In the conditions that arose at the beginning of 2002, when Archbishop Lazarus was actively trying to acquire the whole of the Russian flock faithful to Metropolitan Vitaly (and consequently the removal of ROCOR from all missionary work in Russia - which was equivalent to its end), the convening of a Sobor became for Her a dangerous undertaking. Only when order would reign in the Church and all her members would know their place, would the participants in the Sobor come with a constructive intention. Then they would be able to say that *truly* "the Grace of the Holy Spirit has brought us together today" and would think, not of themselves, but about the Preservation of the Church of Christ. A hasty convening of a Council would have led to a catastrophe, and for that reason Vladyka Barnabas addressed the Metropolitan with a request that he defer this initiative."

While putting off the convening of a Sobor, Zhukov incited Archbishop Barnabas to seize as much of Archbishop Lazarus' flock as possible. Thus on December 16, 2001 he accepted under his omophorion the Kursk, Belgorod and some of the Voronezh clergy who belonged to Archbishop Lazarus' diocese. Lazarus reacted fiercely. In a telephone conversation with the warden and treasurer of one of the Voronezh parishes, he declared that Archbishop Barnabas was "defrocked", that the new Synod under Metropolitan Vitaly consisted of people unknown to him, who had simply solicited the Episcopal rank, for which reason he did not recognize it, and that in general they should from now on commemorate only him, Archbishop Lazarus. Lazarus' anger was fully justified.

A full breakdown in relations between the Russian bishops and the Mansonville Synod was averted after a phone call by Bishop Benjamin to Bishop Vladimir on December 20.

However, this partial reconciliation was accepted only grudgingly by Archbishop Barnabas. Thus in January he wrote to Bishop Vladimir: "It is necessary to stop the organization with Vladyka Lazarus and Benjamin. Now action is being taken to destroy our Church in which these bishops involuntarily participate. Therefore it is necessary to keep them in the most limited rights. I, on the other hand, as the deputy of Metropolitan Vitaly, must be given the broadest care for Russia."

It is necessary to remind ourselves that while remaining in communion with Metropolitan Vitaly, the Russian bishops never accepted the canonicity of the consecrations of the Mansonville vicars. Later Zhukov himself recognized this fact. He said that the Russian hierarchs "did not enter our Church, but attached themselves only to Metropolitan Vitaly". This was quite true. For the "Mansonville

Synod of Vicars” was an uncanonical organization of uncanonically consecrated bishops. At the same time Zhukov accused the Russian bishops of trying “to obtain a Sobor”. A strange accusation! According to Orthodox tradition, all Church conflicts and major Church questions can only be resolved at Councils of Bishops. So trying “to obtain a Sobor” was quite natural and praiseworthy. It was Zhukov’s (successful) attempt to put off the Sobor that required explanation and justification...

On December 15/28 or 16/29, 2001 Metropolitan Vitaly declared at the Pastoral Convention of North American Clergy in Mansonville: “After many long, hard years of trying to manage the Church in Russia from New York, I have learned that it is impossible to manage the Church in Russia from Abroad. We do not know and understand their problems and we do not know their people and possible candidates for the clergy. Without a knowledge of their people and their problems the best that we can do is give them Apostolic Succession and Grace and allow them to organize while maintaining communion with them and praying that they will be able to do something for themselves... There must be a separate administration in Russia, another administration in Europe and a third administration in North America...”

Shortly after this, on December 25 / January 7, 2001/2002, Metropolitan Vitaly issued his “Nativity Epistle and Spiritual Testament” in which he hinted that he was in captivity, and that people should be very careful in trusting everything that was published in his name: “We live in such a time when they can steal men away and in my name begin to try and convince you. Know that from captivity I will not convince you of anything. *Believe only my living word...*”

On January 8/21, 2002 (№835/65) Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin wrote an “Epistle on the Contemporary Situation of the Orthodox Church” to Metropolitan Vitaly. In it they gave a short characterization of the situation of the Church in the contemporary apostate world, beginning from the time of the God-fighting revolution and until ROCOR’s October, 2000 Council. At this Council non-Orthodox decisions were taken on union with the MP and Eucharistic communion with the ecumenist Serbian patriarchate; the council of 2001 did not repeal these decisions, therefore the hierarchs of ROCOR had fallen “under their own anathema” and the 45th Apostolic Canon, which “categorically forbids communion in prayer with heretics: ‘Let a bishop [...] who has only prayed with heretics be excommunicated /.../ from the Church’ - the Epistle said. Also, reasons were given why the falling of the hierarchs of ROCOR into apostasy had become possible: ‘sergianism and ecumenism have poisoned the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad’. The Epistle went on to say: ‘The Holy Patriarch Tikhon, applying all his strength to preserve the Orthodox Church from the blows of the God-fighters, in his God-inspired Ukaz №362 of November 7/20, 1920 foresaw the form that Church administration would take if the activity of the organs of the Higher Church Authority should cease. The essence of this ukaz can be reduced to this: if the activity of the Higher Church Administration ceases [...] the diocesan bishops takes upon himself the whole fullness of power in his diocese until the formation of a free ecclesiastical

administration.

“The Russian Orthodox Church existed on the foundation of this Ukaz. In Russia, after the issuing in 1927 [...] of the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, the Catacomb Church began to be created [...] With the blessing of Patriarch Tikhon and the Locum Tenens Metropolitan Cyril, and also on the foundation of Metropolitan Agathangel’s Epistle of June 5/18, 1922, communities of the True Orthodox Church (TOC) were formed under the leadership of the most eminent hierarchs. These communities preserved original Orthodoxy. They suffered especially terrible persecutions. The Bolsheviks ferreted out the “catacombniks” wherever they could, often with the help of priests of the “patriarchate”, who denounced the true bishops and priests to the “organs”. Those who fell into the camps for belonging to the TOC generally did not come out again.

“The whole episcopate of the Russian True Orthodox Church was destroyed. In spite of this, by 1982 quite a few communities of the True Orthodox Christians remained scattered over the whole territory of the Soviet Union, creating an extensive widowed diocese. Archimandrite Lazarus (now Archbishop) was secretly ordained to the Episcopal rank by a ROCOR bishop who came specially from abroad, to rule this diocese.

“After the fall of the Bolshevik regime, the Russian True Orthodox Church acquired a legal status and was officially registered in the Ukraine (registration №356 of June 19, 1993).

“Until October, 2000 no insoluble problems in administration arose. But after the publication of the documents of the October 2000 council of ROCOR a wave of contradictory ukazy, bans and the most varied kinds of false information was poured out upon the Orthodox living on the territory of the former Soviet Union, and chaos, unclarity and confusion was created in administration.

“We, the Russian bishops, on the foundation of ukaz №362 of November 20, 1920 of Patriarch Tikhon, in connection with the complicated situation in ROCOR, on the basis of multiple addresses of the First-Hierarch of ROCOR Metropolitan Vitaly to the Council of Bishops, in 1998 and 2000, on the provision of independence to the Russian Bishops (of which we are witnesses), and also in connection with all that has been said above, ask the at present lawfully acting Metropolitan Vitaly to provide us with temporary administrative-canonical independence.. We do not refuse to be in spiritual, prayer and Eucharistic communion with those who have not fallen into sergianism, ecumenism or any other heresy, and we also call to repentance all those whom the Lord has not deprived of this great gift.

“We turn to you, beloved in the Lord Vladyko Metropolitan Vitaly. We turn to you as to the eldest First-Hierarch of ROCOR, chosen by lot, who has preserved the purity of Orthodoxy. We raise your all-honourable name in services and ask your blessing on our beginning.”

Since the Russian bishops were never allowed to speak personally to Metropolitan Vitaly, Archbishop Lazarus entrusted this letter to Protopriest

Vladimir, now Bishop Irenaeus, to deliver personally to the metropolitan in Mansonville. Bishop Vladimir refused to allow Fr. Vladimir to see the metropolitan (“you have arrived without warning”), but Vladyka Vitaly, hearing that a priest from Archbishop Lazarus in Russia had come to see him personally, immediately accepted him and gave him hospitality for several days.

In these days Fr. Vladimir managed to convince the metropolitan that Archbishop Lazarus was unanimous with him on all important questions of Church life. So the metropolitan wrote a small letter to Archbishop Lazarus in which he said: “With all my heart I wish you spiritual and archpastoral success in our great common archpastoral stand in the Truth”. Then, three days later, on February 26 / March 11, on the official notepaper of the First-Hierarchy of the Russian Church Abroad, Metropolitan Vitaly wrote to Archbishop Lazarus in his own handwriting: “May God bless you to carry out the consecration of new bishops. You must create your own Hierarchical Synod which would be in concord with our Hierarchical Synod. At the next Hierarchical Sobor I will inform all our hierarchs about this situation. Let us be with Russia of one mind and of one soul, while having separate administrations. Church life itself virtually dictates this to us.”

This was good and important news. And so on April 4/17 - 5/18, at the Second All-Russian Conference of hierarchs, clergy and laity of RTOC in Voronezh under the presidency of the head of the Hierarchical Conference Archbishop Lazarus and his deputy Bishop Benjamin, “the decision was taken, on the basis of the Holy Canons, the Decree of the Holy Patriarch Tikhon no. 362 and the Directive-Testament of Metropolitan Vitaly of February 26 / March 11, 2002, to carry out hierarchical ordinations for RTOC and to transform the Hierarchical Conference of Russian Bishops of RTOC that had been created with the blessing of the Hierarchical Council of ROCOR in 1994 into the Hierarchical Synod of RTOC.”

Maintaining their continued devotion to Metropolitan Vitaly, the Conference reproached Bishop Barnabas for the various anticanonical actions conducted against them in the past, but nevertheless called for peace and cooperation between them.

On April 19, Archbishop Barnabas replied angrily, calling the Conference’s address to him “shame” and “deception”, and saying that the “Lazarite schism foreseen by us is trying to wipe her [ROCOR (V)] finally off the face of the earth”.

On April 20, Metropolitan Vitaly met Bishops Sergius and Vladimir and four North American priests, including Fr. Victor Melehov, in Mansonville. They decreed that “in spite of the fact that his Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly gave his personal agreement, the decision on the creation of an ecclesiastical administration in Russia is in the competence of the whole of the Hierarchical Council. Before and without a conciliar decision, in spite of the 34th Canon of the Holy Apostles [which decrees that nothing should be done by the hierarchs without the agreement of the first-hierarchy, and vice-versa], that is, in view of its uncanonicity, no separate administration in Russia can be formed. Consequently, hierarchical consecrations can take place in

Russia only after a decision of the Hierarchical Council of ROCOR.”

The irony of this statement consisted in the fact that “the Lazarites” had been calling for a Hierarchical Council consistently since the very foundation of ROCOR (V), but Zhukov, followed by his puppet Bishop Barnabas, had always argued against it!

Bishop Benjamin then asked Metropolitan Vitaly: “Should we carry out hierarchical consecrations, or should we refrain from this until a final conciliar decision on the basis of the 34th Apostolic Canon?” He also informed him that Archbishop Lazarus had three candidates for hierarchical consecration and that the consecrations were appointed for Bright Week. Metropolitan Vitaly replied that this question was “exceptionally important and needed a conciliar decision”.

In May Archbishop Lazarus and his Diocesan Council asked again for the summoning of a Council, but with the following “necessary preconditions”: (i) the cessation of all hostile actions and propaganda against the Russian Bishops, and an apology for the latest public insults; (ii) the cessation of attempts to usurp ecclesiastical power by exploiting the difficult position of the first hierarchy; (iii) respect for the rights of the Russian Bishops, including those that were given them by the decree of Metropolitan Vitaly in March; (iv) a clear declaration by the non-Russian bishops whether they were intending to establish a Church in Russia, or join Suzdal or the Greek Old Calendarists.

It should be pointed out that the fact that the Russian bishops were ready to join with ROCOR (V) in a common Council did not mean that they accepted any of the consecrations carried out by ROCOR (V) since they were contrary to the holy canons and the ROCOR’s *Statute*. And so Archbishop Lazarus continued not to recognize the “Mansonville Synod of Vicars”.

Spring passed into summer, and still no Sobor was convened. Finally, in August, despairing of the possibility of the convening of a Sobor that would discuss all these questions as well as the consecration of bishops for Russia, the Russian bishops consecrated four new bishops: Tikhon of Omsk and Siberia, Hermogen of Chernigov and Gomel, Irenaeus of Verney and Semirechiye and Dionysius of Novgorod and Tver. They felt that they had the right to do this, on the basis not only of Metropolitan Vitaly’s blessing, but also of Patriarch Tikhon’s ukaz no. 362 of November 20, 1920.

On August 21, however, Metropolitan Vitaly and four ROCOR (V) hierarchs condemned the consecrations as “uncanonical” and the initiators of it as being “outside the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad”. Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin were then condemned without a trial or summons to a trial. For, as Zhukov argued, “to summon Bishops Lazarus and Benjamin to a Sobor would be a crime against our Church. Since any variant of their presence at the Sobor, whether to recognize or not to recognize the consecrations carried out by them, or for a trial

on them themselves, would lead to the annihilation of our Russian Orthodox Church Abroad.”

So, according to this logic, to expel the Russian bishops through a lawful canonical trial would be more destructive of the Church than to expel them uncanonically and without a trial!

Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin never received official notification that they were banned from serving. They continued to recognize Metropolitan Vitaly as head of their Church, declaring that his signatures were being forged and that he was “in captivity” to Protopriest Benjamin Zhukov and L.D. Rosnianskaia “and in complete isolation from the external world”. The present writer has personal experience of this. In January, 2003, in Mansonville, Rosnianskaia blocked his and Hieromonk Augustine Lim’s access to the metropolitan, although Bishop Sergius of Mansonville had given his blessing...

Having finally succeeded in manipulating the expulsion of the Russian bishops, Zhukov now proceeded to further purges within the church organization that he controlled. The American priests led by Fr. Victor Melehov had been shown alarming signs of a concern for canonical order. So it was now their turn...

The movement to oust Melehov had begun some months before. In June, 2002 he was informed by Bishop Vladimir that he was the secretary only of North America. In July, he was told by Bishop Vladimir that he recalled that Fr. Benjamin Zhukov was in fact the secretary of ROCiE. In September, Fr. Victor made preparations for Metropolitan Vitaly’s visit to Russia, but the visit was stopped by Zhukov. In October, he began to receive anonymous letters telling him that he would be suspended and defrocked.

And so, writes Fr. Victor, “when, in October, 2002, there was published on the official site of ROCOR (ROCiE) the preconiliar report of the secretary of ROCOR (ROCiE), Protopresbyter Victor Melehov, on the situation of the ROCOR, together with a projected confession of faith to be sent to the flock, Protopresbyter Victor Melehov did not only not receive any response from the hierarchs on the ecclesiological questions, but was subjected to reproaches by Bishop Vladimir for publishing this report.

“Some hope that the hierarchs would be able to come out with an Orthodox confession of faith appeared after Bishops Bartholomew and Sergius, at the beginning of November, 2002, in response to the worries of the North American clerics, signed a letter-appeal demanding the immediate convening of a Hierarchical Council, the removal of the commission that was blocking its convening, the resolution of the problem with Archbishop Lazarus and the necessity of the acceptance of a confession of faith by the clergy of ROCOR (ROCiE). Bishops Bartholomew and Sergius also signed the text of this confession of faith. However, after talking to Bishop Vladimir and Archbishop Barnabas, they withdrew their

signatures.

“Bishop Bartholomew decided to compose a new appeal to all the clergy and faithful of ROCiE on the catastrophic situation of ROCiE and the necessity of accepting a confession of faith. This letter of November 13/26, 2002, together with the former text of the confession of faith, was again signed by Bishop Bartholomew. However, on the very day when the letter should have been placed on the official site, Bishop Bartholomew again withdrew his signature, fearing, in his words, ‘to bite the bullet’.

“This letter was nevertheless published on the official site of ROCiE signed only by the secretary of ROCiE, Protopresbyter Victor Melehov, and the dean of the Western American deanery, Protopriest Joseph Sunderland. The confession of faith was signed by these clerics and by Priests Michael Martsinovsky, Andrew Kencis and Mark Smith.

“The letter had not been on the official site of ROCiE for one day before it was removed on the demand of the episcopate of ROCiE, and many learned of its contents from other sources.

“On December 9, 2002, Bishop Bartholomew officially informed us that his signature on the appeal of the North American clerics was invalid and was being removed (and this in spite of the fact that the appeal had been published without his signature)...”

The final act in this shameful episode was the uncanonical expulsion of the still-unyielding American clerics led by Fr. Victor Melehov. It was officially announced on January 18, 2003 that he had never been secretary of the ROCOR (V), that he had been admitted into the Church “by an oversight” and that he was actually a defrocked ex-clergyman. In February, Fr. Victor received a letter from Metropolitan Vitaly, Bishops Barnabas, Bartholomew and others stating that “ROCiE does not know Fr. Victor Melehov”. This was the height of anti-canonical arbitrariness: no trial, no summons to a trial, not even a more or less plausible accusation, but only: “We do not know you”!

Fr. Victor summed up the situation well: “Factually speaking, the ship of our Church is without direction and is being borne along in complete darkness and obscurity... The main aim of the Synod of Laurus - to paralyze the activity of the Metropolitan as First-Hierarch and not to allow the restoration of our Synod - has been attained... Our brothers in France apparently do not even realize that they are in the same camp as the Synod of Laurus and the other opponents of our Church, who are abusing the Metropolitan-elder in every way...”

On June 22 / July 5, 2003, “the canonical organ of administration of the parishes

of RTOC – the Hierarchical Conference of Russian Bishops – was transformed into the Hierarchical Synod of the Russian True Orthodox Church as ‘a small constantly acting council of bishops’ (literally the word ‘synod’ in Greek means gathering, council). The oldest Russian hierarch, Archbishop Lazarus of Odessa and Tambov, was elected as President of the Hierarchical Synod of RTOC.”

On June 24 / July 7, 2005, shortly after the death of Archbishop Lazarus, Bishop Tikhon of Omsk and Siberia was elected first-hierarch of the Russian True Orthodox Church.

V. THE PLOTTERS FALL INTO THEIR OWN PIT

Archbishop Barnabas was now at the height of his power. However, his fall was to be precipitate. Anton Ter-Grigorian writes: "Soon after getting rid of Fr. Victor [Melehov] and the priests and laity who supported him, Archbishop Barnabas lost the need for the all-powerful cleric of his diocese, Protopriest Benjamin Zhukov, who after the 'general victory' over 'the Melehov schism' began to demonstrate too much independence... He was soon distanced from closeness with Archbishop Barnabas, and the closest advisor of the 'deputy of the First Hierarchy' again became Protodeacon German Ivanov-Trinadtsaty."

His power began to slip at the Sobor which Zhukov now graciously allowed to convene from May 3/16 to 7/20, 2003. Three candidates were put forward for the episcopacy: Archimandrite Anthony (Rudej), as vicar of the European diocese with the title Bishop of Balt and Moldavia; Hieromonk Anastasy (Surzhik), as ruling Bishop of the Far Eastern diocese with the title Bishop of Vladivostok and the Far East; and Priest Victor Pivovarov, as a vicar of the European diocese with the title Bishop of Slavyansk and South Russia. These candidacies were confirmed, although Archbishop Barnabas was opposed to that of Pivovarov. He asked instead that the candidacy of Archimandrite Alexis (Makrinov) and Hieromonk Joseph (Philosophov) be considered. He also asked that all priests and laymen coming from the dioceses of Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin should be received by repentance.

On June 26, 2003 Archbishop Barnabas issued an ukaz criticizing Zhukov for anti-canonical behaviour, and demanding that he return his diocesan seal and facsimile signature, which Barnabas suspected he had been using unlawfully. Zhukov rejected the ukaz and flatly refused to give back the seal and signature. Instead, he stirred up such a vicious campaign against the bishop that "six out of the eight 'French' parishes very soon began to demand from the Synod 'the replacement of the Bishop' and even 'the defrocking of Archbishop Barnabas'." Barnabas was forced to leave the parish. Taking advantage of his master's absence, Zhukov summoned Bishops Vladimir and Sergius from Canada, who, on Archbishop Barnabas' canonical territory, and against his will, proceeded to consecrate Fr. Victor Pivovarov - who was not only a KGB agent with the nickname "Ponomar" , but had also been defrocked by his former bishop, Benjamin of the Black Sea, and was considered to be a heretic by Bishop Sergius - and Fr. Anastasy (Surzhik) to the episcopate. Several weeks after this scandalous event, Archbishop Barnabas received his diocesan seal and facsimile signature in the post from Zhukov - they were no longer needed by him!

Zhukov then proceeded to convene a Synod meeting from November 14/27 to 16/29, at which three independent dioceses were formed. The Russian part of

Archbishop Barnabas' diocese was removed from him and divided between Bishop Anthony of Moldova, who took Ukraine, Belorussia, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and Bishop of Victor of South Russia, who took the North-West, the Centre, the Volga and the Southern regions of Russia with Georgia, while "separating those parishes whose priests want to continue commemorating Archbishop Barnabas". As for Barnabas himself, he was confined to Western Europe. Bishop Anastasy's Far Eastern diocese was enlarged to include the Japanese islands, Korea and China (where there were no ROCOR parishes!), while the Siberian diocese (including the Urals district and Kazakhstan) was also entrusted temporarily to Bishop Anastasy.

Then the bishops declared Archbishop Barnabas' acceptance of some Romanian new calendarist parishes into his diocese as uncanonical, removed Barnabas' title of "Deputy of the First Hierarchy", and defrocked one of his clerics, Hieromonk Seraphim (Baranchikov), for immorality.

On November 6/19, 2004 the Synod issued the following anathematization: "To those who affirm the antichristian heresy of Sergianism; who teach that the Church of Christ is supposedly saved by union with the enemies of Christ, and reject the exploit of martyrdom and confession, and construct a false church on the foundation of Judas, and for its sake permit the transgression and distortion of Christian teaching, canons and moral laws; who command Christians to bow down to the God-hating authorities as if they were given by God, and to serve them not out of fear but for conscience's sake, blessing all their iniquities; who justify the persecutions against the True Church of Christ at the hands of the God-haters, thinking thereby that they serve God, as was done in fact by the continuers of the renovationist heresy, Metropolitan Sergius and all his followers - **Anathema!**"

But right-believing anathemas could not conceal the inner corruption of the Synod. For Archbishop Barnabas, the coup de grâce was not long in coming. On December 7, 2003, striking out against his tormentors, he banned Zhukov from serving. However, on January 19, 2004, brushing aside an explanatory letter from Archbishop Barnabas, Metropolitan Vitaly and the North American bishops declared this act to be invalid, saying that Barnabas had "exceeded his rights" (although Fr. Benjamin was a priest of Archbishop Barnabas' diocese, and directly subject to his authority), and placing him "in retirement". On July 8 the Synod banned him from serving. On July 25 he wrote a penitential letter to Metropolitan Vitaly, repenting of many of his acts in the last few years. But this repentance only enraged his enemies. At the November Hierarchical Sobor he was defrocked - naturally, without a trial or summons to a trial...

On January 27 / February 9, 2005 Archbishop Barnabas issued a "sorrowful epistle" in which he said that he did not recognize "the so called 'Mansonville Synod'" as having any power or significance, since "it had shown its complete incompetence and its deeply uncanonical conduct of its affairs". Shortly after this,

Barnabas joined the Synod of Metropolitan Laurus, recognizing the original ban placed on him in April, 2001...

The further disintegration of the Mansonville Synod was now unstoppable. On June 3, 2006 the Synod's official site published a declaration of Zhukov, Bishop Vladimir and Bishop Bartholomew, announcing that power in their Synod had been seized by Archbishop Anthony (Orlov), Bishop Victor (Pivovarov) and a certain Irina Mitse-Goldberg. Anthony declared Metropolitan Vitaly to be incompetent, made charges against Bishops Vladimir and Bartholomew, and took over the Church with Bishop Victor.

Archbishop Anthony was a married man who, secretly from Metropolitan Vitaly and his own wife, had been consecrated to the episcopate in 2002 in Paris by Bishops Barnabas and Sergius. For two years, this consecration had been a secret, and was only revealed in 2004 on the internet. For a long time Metropolitan Vitaly did not recognize this consecration, but Zhukov finally forced him to give in. Although all the bishops knew that Anthony, as Priest Nicholas Orlov, had been living in a church marriage with his wife at the time of his consecration, they still recognized it, and even, at Zhukov's insistence, raised him to the rank of "archbishop" and "deputy of the First-Hierarch" in place of Barnabas. Anthony's church divorce was formalized two years after his consecration. His civil marriage remained in force...

On June 22, 2006 Metropolitan Vitaly, under pressure from Archbishop Anthony, Bishop Victor and Archimandrites Damascene (Balabanov) and Stefan (Babaev), was invited to the local police station so that he could officially, without outside influence, express his will regarding their presence in Mansonville. When the police officer asked: "Does Metr. Vitaly wish that Orlov, Pivovarov, Balabanov, Babaev and Mitze leave the territory of the Transfiguration Skete?" the metropolitan replied firmly: "Yes, I wish it." Archbishop Anthony tried to persuade the metropolitan to change his mind, but the police officer said: "Enough. The answer has been received." The group were then asked by the police to leave Mansonville before July 25. The next day, June 23, Archbishop Anthony issued an ukaz saying that he counted it "his duty temporarily to take over the administration of ROCOR" because of the poor health of the metropolitan, "who is not able sometimes even to recognize his deputy and bishops" because of the "inconsistence and false ukazy cancelling the previous ukaz signed by the First Hierarch" and because of the "malicious isolation of the First Hierarch".

The disintegration continued. In 2006 Bishop Victor broke from archbishop Anthony and formed his own Synod together with Bishop Damascene (Balabanov). These two were later to split again.... Archbishop Anthony, meanwhile, had taken to calling himself "Metropolitan of Moscow, Los Angeles and all Abroad"!

On September 12/25, 2006 Metropolitan Vitaly reposed. Fr. Spyridon Schneider

writes that this “marked a turning point in the life of ROCiE. When Metropolitan Vitaly reposed... there were four bishops remaining in the Vitaly Synod. Bishop Vladimir of San Francisco and Western America, Bishop Bartholomew of Edmonton and Western Canada (who is in the advanced stages of Parkinson’s disease and has severe dementia), Bishop Anthony of Moldova and Bishop Anastassy of Vladivostok. Bishop Vladimir became temporary acting First Hierarch on the basis of the fact that he, at the age of thirty nine, was the oldest bishop by ordination.

“... In the early winter of 2006 Protopriest Benjamin Zhukov and Bishop Anthony of Moldova sent Protopriest Nicholas Semenov from Brussels to Edmonton, Canada with a document for Bishop Bartholomew to sign. Through intrigue and deceit Bishop Bartholomew, not knowing and understanding what he was signing, applied his signature to this document. The document was an ukaz retiring Bishop Anastassy of Vladivostok. This action was taken in a totally uncanonical and unethical manner, without due process, without a meeting of the Synod, without the presence of the Acting First Hierarch and without following the Regulations which govern the Russian Church Abroad.”

On May 12, 2007, continues Fr. Spyridon, “at a meeting with Bishop Vladimir which included Archpriest Constantine Fyodorov, Archpriest Spyridon Schneider and Priest Andrew Kencis, Bishop Vladimir explained that he intends to call a Sobor of Bishops with the full knowledge and expectation that Bishop Anthony of Moldova and the Secretary of the Synod, Archbishop Benjamin Zhukov, will not attend. Bishop Vladimir explained that he will call the Sobor in Edmonton, Canada so that Bishop Bartholomew... can participate in the first session of the Sobor. Bishop Vladimir further explained that if Protopriest Zhukov and Bishop Anthony do not come to the Sobor, as expected, then Bishop Vladimir, Bishop Bartholomew and Bishop Anastasy will constitute a quorum. Therefore when the meeting is convened the first item on the agenda will be to consider and accept Bishop Bartholomew’s petition to retire from one year ago. This decision will be made with the vote of Bishop Bartholomew. Once Bishop Bartholomew is retired then he will no longer participate, nor will he be counted as a member of the Synod. Consequently, Bishop Vladimir and Bishop Anastasy will then have a two-third majority of the votes which would allow them to go forward with their agenda for the future of the Church. Bishop Vladimir further explained that Fr. Benjamin Zhukov, although he is secretary of the Synod and has always voted in the Synod meetings, will not have a vote because he is a priest and not a bishop...”

Zhukov could never submit to such a demotion. On November 1/14, 2007, at his instigation, Bishop Anthony (Rudej) of Moldova, secretly and on his own, consecrated Archimandrite Seraphim (Skuratov) as Bishop of Birmingham, and then with Bishop Seraphim ordained Fr. Roman Apostolescu as Bishop of Brussels. Zhukov had now created his own “catacomb church” – in the free West!

With the departure of Zhukov from the scene of the Synod he both created and destroyed, we shall end our account of ROCOR (V). The disintegration has continued in recent years, as was only to be expected. For, as the Greek Old Calendarist Confessor Papa Nicholas Planas said, "Whatever has been done uncanonically cannot stand - it will fall..."

VI. HERESY AND CORRUPTION IN SUZDAL

The second bishop to be consecrated for ROCOR inside Russia during the 1990s, after Archbishop Lazarus, was Bishop Valentine (Rusantsev) of Suzdal. Having been unlawfully expelled by the ROCOR in 1996 together with three other bishops consecrated by him and Archbishop Lazarus, and having taken part neither in the dogmatic errors of the shameful October Sobor of 2000, nor in the canonical violations of both ROCOR (L) and ROCOR (V) in 2001, the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church (ROAC) under Metropolitan Valentine was in a relatively strong canonical position at the beginning of the new millennium. However, strong suspicions had often been voiced about the personality and history of the first hierarch himself, who while in the MP had received many medals from the God-fighting state and had two charges of homosexuality against him dropped – through the intervention of the KGB, as many thought. His relatively strong performance in the 1990s had begun to dispel these suspicions; but now a new threat appeared which exposed his real character, and the weakness of his Church organization, in a glaringly unattractive light...

The threat appeared in the form of a group of intellectualist refugees from ROCOR in St. Petersburg, led by the Byzantinist (although some Byzantinists would deny him that title) Basil Lourié. From the beginning of their entrance into ROAC in 1999, this group made no secret of their plans to “reform” it in accordance with their perverted understanding of patristic tradition, which involved: a heretical, Manichaeian approach to marriage and sexuality; an almost Nietzschean fascination with popular culture and rock music and its cult of death and suicide; an extremely negative attitude to the pre-revolutionary Russian Church; a cool attitude towards the Catacomb Church and her martyrs and confessors; a “positive” attitude towards Stalin; an approval of the “name-worshipping” heresy of Fr. Anthony Bulatovich; and several other deviations.

However, Metropolitan Valentine was only too eager to use this group to raise the educational standard of his clergy and the general profile of ROAC in Russian society. He blessed their often interesting, but also often highly controversial publications, especially *Vertograd-Inform* (which began life in ROCOR), which the Petersburg group published in collaboration with other “near-Church” intellectuals, such as Alexander Soldatov (the chief editor), Egor Kholmogorov and Michael Kiselev. And, overlooking Lourié’s unscrupulous use of mafia connections and his uncanonical abandonment of his wife and child, he ordained him to the priesthood.

Alarm-bells began to ring in 2000, when Lourié published a book entitled *The Calling of Abraham*, which claimed that sexual relations in marriage were sinful, and that the celibate and monastics possessed the grace of the New Testament, while the married were merely “Old Testament Christians”. Alarmed by criticisms of this

work, the metropolitan, instead of investigating the book himself and coming to a decision about it in the Synod, blessed the publication of a critique of Lourié's book by four authors (including the present writer) entitled *Marriage, the Law and Grace* (Moscow, 2001).

In the winter of 2000-2001 further alarm was caused when a disciple of Lourié, Hierodeacon Theophanes (Areskin), began a series of lectures to clergy in Suzdal in which he praised the "name-worshipping" heresy of Fr. Anthony Bulatovich, who was condemned by Patriarch Tikhon and the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. The leader of the attacks on Lourié and Areskin was Protopriest Andrew Osetrov, the secretary of the Synod and a close collaborator with Metropolitan Valentine. In March, the metropolitan turned to the present writer, asking him to enter into a dialogue with Lourié in order to ascertain his true views on name-worshipping and other matters, assuring him (Moss) that if he found his (Lourié's) views to be heretical, he would bring him to trial before the Holy Synod.

The dialogue began, and would no doubt have continued peacefully if Osetrov had not brought the issue to a head in a Synod meeting at the end of April, during which, supported initially by the Catacomb Archbishop Seraphim of Sukhumi, he demanded that the metropolitan condemn Lourié. When the metropolitan refused in a particularly crude form, Osetrov left ROAC. The next day, at the glorification of Metropolitan Philaret of New York as a saint of the Russian Church, Archbishop Seraphim served with the metropolitan, demonstrating his loyalty to him for the time being and his separation from Osetrov – probably because Osetrov had not contented himself with attacks on heresy within the Church, but had proceeded publicly to accuse the metropolitan of paedophilia...

Osetrov told parishioners in Suzdal that he had a video film showing interviews of adolescents admitting to intimate relations with the metropolitan. This film turned out to be less incriminating than Osetrov claimed, and would in any case have been inadmissible as evidence in a court of law. More serious was the accusation of the well-respected Hieromonk Paisius (Gorbunov) that he personally had witnessed a homosexual act of Metropolitan Valentine in 1995. Enormous pressure was brought to bear on Fr. Paisius, who repented of his accusation, then reaffirmed it and fled into hiding (with the help of his spiritual father, Archbishop Seraphim).

The metropolitan now demanded the defrocking of those clerics (about five) who accused him of immorality, and eventually obtained the signatures of the other bishops – although Archbishop Seraphim delayed signing for six weeks. Between June and August the Vladimir newspaper *Prizyv* printed a series of eight articles in support of Osetrov's accusations. Fighting to stay out of prison, the metropolitan claimed that *Prizyv* had received direct orders from the Vladimir public prosecutor's office and regional administration to publish "compromising material on Valentine".

In an interview with Keston College's Geraldine Fagan on March 26, 2002, Osetrov "maintained that, since Metropolitan Valentin had actively restored churches whereas the Moscow Patriarchate had been quite incompetent in that area, he had 'enjoyed some kind of protection' from the Suzdal authorities. Fr Osetrov admitted that he himself had been instrumental in maintaining this state of affairs throughout the ten years during which he had worked as synodal secretary to Metropolitan Valentin, initially having been ordained in ROCA. When any accusations against the Metropolitan of homosexual practice - a criminal offence in Russia until 1993 - or sexual abuse were made, he said, he 'arranged everything so that they died away or got lost in bureaucratic channels.' Once he had been removed after protesting that ROAC clergy who preached heresies were not being dealt with, said Fr Osetrov, his protection of Metropolitan Valentin had ceased: 'This time I gathered evidence and sent it to reliable people in the Lubyanka [the headquarters of the FSB] and the Vladimir public prosecutor's office.' Had the affair been left to the Suzdal public prosecutor, he maintained, 'it would have been completely covered up.'

"When Keston asked how Fr Osetrov had managed to serve in the ROAC for ten years without suspecting Metropolitan Valentin, he replied that the accusation of homosexuality (*golubizna*) was commonly used as an easy way of discrediting a person in the Soviet period. While the rumours about Metropolitan Valentin grew from year to year, he said, they were at first vague and he was disinclined to believe them until some of his own children began to relate details they had heard at school. Fr Osetrov said that he then discovered that the Suzdal authorities' protection of Metropolitan Valentin dated back to 1988 - 'I was shocked, both the local police and administration knew everything.' In that year, said Fr Osetrov, local police investigated the then criminal activities of 70 homosexuals in Vladimir region, including then Archimandrite Valentin. An article in the May-September issue of *Suzdal Diocesan News*, partially edited by Fr Osetrov, contains computer scans from the original police files on Criminal Case No. 0543, including various witness statements graphically describing homosexual activity involving Archimandrite Valentin. According to Fr Osetrov, this was why the Moscow Patriarchate attempted to transfer Archimandrite Valentin from the town of Suzdal, in response to which he ultimately left the Moscow Patriarchate. In his view, the only possible reason why Archimandrite Valentin was not prosecuted by the authorities at that time was because 'he was working for the KGB,' who, he said, most probably used his sexual orientation to compromise him.

"When interviewed by Keston on 19 October, ROAC Archbishop Feodor continued to maintain that the allegations against Metropolitan Valentin were being fuelled by an alliance of the Vladimir authorities and the Moscow Patriarchate. The parish priest of Suzdal's Kazan Church, Fr Dmitri Ledko, and Archbishop Yevlogi (Smirnov) of Vladimir and Suzdal were the local Moscow Patriarchate representatives present at the June 2001 meeting aiming to 'sort out Valentin', thought the archbishop. While declining to confirm whether such a meeting had

indeed taken place, Fr Leonid did tell Keston that there were anonymous persons in authority who wished to see Metropolitan Valentin removed, 'without them there would be no court case or publications or anything.'"

Valentine now accepted the help of a very dubious new member of his Church, the "polittechnologist" and close associate of Putin, Gleb Pavlovsky, who had been introduced to him, coincidentally, by – Lourié! Pavlovsky stopped a programme on ORT television attacking Valentine in September, and offered to pay all the expenses of several lawyers who were employed to defend the metropolitan; they were to be supervised by Lourié and his closest associate, Olga Mitrenina. Precisely why Pavlovsky should have chosen to support the metropolitan at this time was not clear: perhaps, it was suggested, he was trying to build up "Suzdal" as a counterweight to the MP, in order to frighten the latter and extract political concessions from it. In any case, what *was* clear was that the metropolitan's accepting the help of such a compromised figure, deeply immersed in Kremlin politics and with a history of betraying dissident enemies of the Soviet régime, could only come at a price. It soon became clear what that price was: the relaxation of pressure on Pavlovsky's "childhood friend", Lourié, and the expulsion – by force, if necessary - of those who persisted in raising the question of Lourié's heresies. A vicious whispering campaign had already been started against Lourié's (and Pavlovsky's) main critic, the layman and editor of the internet server *Romanitas*, Anton Ter-Grigorian. He was even punched outside the church by one of Lourié's cronies, the former parliamentarian Michael Kiselev.

The present writer also experienced pressure in his efforts to clarify Lourié's heresies – a task that had been entrusted to him by the metropolitan himself. In May, 2001, the metropolitan invited Egor Kholmogorov to mediate between Moss and Lourié in drawing up an agreed theological statement on the issue of "name-worshipping". When Moss rejected the statement proposed by Kholmogorov and accepted by Lourié as involving an unacceptable compromise between Orthodoxy and heresy, the metropolitan terminated the theological dialogue between Lourié and Moss.

Then, in July, he issued an ukaz appointing Moss head of a theological commission to investigate the long list of Lourié's blasphemous statements that had caused commotion in the Church – but stacked the rest of the commission with all of Lourié's closest cronies, including Lourié himself, with only one of the six members, Protopriest Michael Makeev, being of undoubted Orthodoxy. Moss refused to accept headship of a commission that would in effect allow those accused of heresy to be judges of their own case, and reminded the metropolitan of his promise that if he (Moss), after the concluding of the now-aborted theological dialogue with Lourié, were to consider Lourié's views heretical, then he (the metropolitan) would bring him to trial before the Holy Synod. The metropolitan angrily rejected any idea of bringing Lourié to account, saying that the issue of "name-worshipping" interested only a few people and would "disappear of itself".

On September 3 Lourié conducted a press-conference in the House of the Journalist arranged by Pavlovsky, in which he fawned before the government, denying the involvement of either the state or the MP in "Osetrovshina" (though this was manifestly untrue), and spoke about "three branches" of Orthodoxy in Russia - the MP, the ROAC and the Old Believers.

On September 5, Metropolitan Valentine was formally accused of "committing forcible acts of a sexual nature", "compulsion to commit acts of a sexual nature" and "enticing minors into antisocial activity" under Articles 132 (part 2), 133 and 151 (part 1) respectively of the Criminal Code. His trial began on 7 February, 2002 in Suzdal District Court, but was adjourned on 13 February until August.

In October, 2001 the metropolitan made an attempt to be reconciled with Moss and Ter-Grigorian and invited them to dinner in Suzdal. However, he then proudly declared that he had been working for Christ's Church for fifty years! When Moss pointed out to him that by his own confession he had left the Catacomb Church at the age of 19 to join the MP, and that it was ROAC's official confession that the MP was a false church, which he had left only in 1990, he became angry and insisted that he had been a true priest while in the MP. In a private conversation the next day, trying to cover up the bad impression he had made the previous evening, he told Moss that Lourié was "not ours", strongly hinting that he was KGB and that for that reason he could do nothing about him. After all, he said, Putin was replacing all the mayors in Russia by communists, and the new mayor of Suzdal was one of them...

The metropolitan then departed for America. But before leaving he accepted from Moss an open letter to the bishops and a few senior priests of ROAC listing all Lourié's heresies and appealing for action to be taken against them. Somehow this letter got into the hands of Lourié's associates, who created a special web-site where the open letter was "discovered" and "announced" by a certain "Sergius Lourié", as evidence of Moss's desire to discredit ROAC publicly - although it was precisely this website that made the matter public! Then, on November 2, Tatiana Senina, another of Lourié's associates, created another website devoted exclusively to propaganda for the heresy of "name-worshipping". Shortly after, on November 7, the anniversary of the revolution, Protopriest Michael Ardov published an open letter against Moss's open letter in *Vertograd*, which, in addition to defending Lourié and "name-worshipping" publicly, made an astonishingly crude and completely slanderous attack on Ter-Grigorian, forbidding him even to enter his church in Moscow.

At this point, if the metropolitan were not to be accused of connivance with the heresy of "name-worshipping", he *had* to renounce Ardov's statement and close down Senina's website. This he did not do. Indeed, since Ardov is a very cautious man, it is very unlikely that he would ever have undertaken such a step without "a

nod from on high" – that is, either from the metropolitan himself, or from those who spoke in his name and by this time had effective control over him, especially Alexander Soldatov, the editor of *Vertograd*.

But now Protopriest Michael Makeev, the second priest of ROAC in Moscow, wrote to the metropolitan saying that he was very unhappy with the heresies in the Church and that he intended to send a letter to that effect to the bishops. Immediately, the metropolitan summoned a meeting in Moscow for the next day, November 15. Present were Archbishop Theodore, Archimandrite Irinarch, Protopriests Michael Ardov and Michael Makeev, Soldatov, Kholmogorov, Ter-Grigorian and others. The metropolitan told all sides to stop quarrelling and to forgive each other. He placed most of the blame for the situation on Moss, who was a "Judas" and "going along the path of Osetrov". No rebuke was given to Lourié, Senina or Ardov. It was agreed that both *Vertograd* and *Romanitas* should remove all polemical articles from their sites - *Romanitas* complied with this order: *Vertograd* did not.

At a session of the ROAC Synod in December, 2001, another attempt was made to stop all discussion of the heresies. In May, 2002 the ROAC Synod at last addressed the question of name-worshipping, only to "deliver judgement of the teaching of Hieroschemamonk Anthony Bulatovich to the competence of a Local Council of the Russian Church". This gave the false impression that Bulatovich and his teaching had not yet been judged by the Russian Church...

On July 26, 2002, Ter-Grigorian was excommunicated "for violation of Church discipline". Later, he was excommunicated six more times and even anathematized! On September 9, 2003, an "Official Communication of the Editors of the *Suzdal'skie Eparkhial'nie Vedomosti*" declared that the reason for his excommunications was his open preaching of Nestorianism, refusal to call Christ God and the Virgin Mary – the Mother of God, a false teaching on the presence of two Persons and two Hypostases in Christ and a false teaching on the deification of Christians. Needless to say, all these accusations were completely without basis in fact.

And so the position of ROAC at the beginning of 2002 had changed radically from a year earlier: her metropolitan was due for trial in the secular courts on the most serious of moral charges; her senior priests in Moscow and Petersburg were publicly proclaiming heresy and were not being rebuked for it; a vicious campaign of slander and intimidation against her "dissidents" was well under way; and her attitude to the Sergianism and the neo-Soviet authorities had notably softened – at least on the part of her spokesmen.

Metropolitan Valentine and his supporters saw his trial as persecution by the MP, as part of a general trend of increasing persecution of the True Orthodox by the official Orthodox Churches. There is no doubt that the MP was interested in

humiliating him, and that Osetrov's campaign against him was malicious. But there is also no doubt that he had a case to answer...

And it was in order to win much-needed friends in high places that in the autumn of 2002, just two days before the first session of the trial of Metropolitan Valentine, ROAC published an "Address to the state leadership of the Russian Federation, the organs of the international community and the rulers of the world" analogous to the "social doctrine" accepted by the MP at its "Jubilee" Sobor, in which it was written that "as in the case of the Christians of ancient Rome or the Soviet epoch, an increase in persecutions on our Church will not lead to our civil disobedience, and still less to a rebellion against the powers that be. We are ready humbly to bear any persecutions, and, to the extent that we are able, to defend our lawful rights." This statement of loyalty to the neo-Soviet regime, upon whose goodwill the fate of the metropolitan now depended, was supposedly signed by a long list of clergy - but many knew nothing about the declaration, and protested the inclusion of their names under such a sergianist document.

Since many clergy, and in particular the Catacomb hierarchs Archbishop Seraphim of Sukhumi and Bishop Anthony of Yaransk, were continuing to be disturbed by the teaching of Lourié and calling for his defrocking, on October 18, at a session of the ROAC Synod he presented a "report" expressing "my deep regret regarding my public statements concerning name-worshipping, which have become a reason for discord within our Church. I hold to the teaching of the Holy Fathers and confess no heresy about the name of God, which would have been condemned by previous Fathers and Councils. I also hold to the resolutions of the All-Russian Local Council of 1917-1918, which were confirmed by two resolutions of the Synod of our Church, in accordance with which the decision on the essence of the question of name-worshipping belongs exclusively within the competence of a Local Council of the Church of Russia". Lourié did not mention, or repent of, any of his other heresies and blasphemies.

The craftiness of this statement is immediately evident from the fact that the All-Russian Local Council of 1917-1918 did not in fact issue any resolutions on name-worshipping - these came both earlier and later.

Further craftinesses were exposed by Protopriest Alexander Lebedev, who wrote: "Very interesting phrasing here that has to be read carefully.

"First of all, Fr. Gregory does not deny that he holds to the teaching of name-worshipping, nor does he state that he considers it to be a heresy. He has always maintained that it was not a heresy and that it was the true teaching of the Holy Fathers.

"The phrasing 'Fathers and Sobors' seems to neatly set aside the condemnations

of the name-worshipping heresy that were made not by 'Sobors' - but by the Holy 'Synod' of the Church of Russia (and Constantinople) and by Patriarch Tikhon.

"His agreement with the concept that the final resolution of the question belongs solely to the competence of a Local Council of the Russian Church equally neatly puts off this final resolution almost indefinitely, as no full Local Council of the Russian Church is contemplated in the foreseeable future, perhaps decades, perhaps even longer.

"And, finally, although he states that he will himself refrain from any more public statements on this issue, he does not take any of his previous statements back or renounce them, and he does not promise to direct his followers to refrain from continuing to defend name-worshipping..."

On October 30, the Parish Council of the Orthodox Parish of St. Michael, Guildford, England under Hieromonk Augustine (Lim) wrote a letter to the ROAC Synod asking for answers to twelve questions on the faith arising as a result of the various heresies and blasphemies of Hieromonk Gregory (Lourié). Instead of replying, Metropolitan Valentine said that only a larger Synod or the Tsar himself could compel him to reply! Lourié was allowed to present his defence in a "report" to the metropolitan, which drew no comment or criticism from the Synod.

In December, having received no answer to their questions, and seeing that the metropolitan was determined to defend the heretics, who now had complete control of all the official organs of ROAC, the Parish of St. Michael left ROAC. Nine months later, when the Parish was already in another jurisdiction, the metropolitan declared that Fr. Augustine had been banned from serving, and that the present writer was excommunicated because of his supposed opposition to monasticism, which was influenced, according to the metropolitan, by the Jewish Cabbala! The latter false accusation is more than a little curious in that Fr. Gregory Lourié is a direct descendant of the foremost cabbalist of sixteenth-century Europe, Isaak Lourié Levi, and a Jewish influence in his heresies has been suspected...

In July, 2003 the ROAC Synod declared in an epistle: "The old 'Christian world' has gone, never to return, and that which is frenziedly desired by some, the regeneration of the 'Orthodox monarchy' in some country, in which the true faith will reign, must be considered a senseless utopia."

This epistle was almost certainly written by Fr. Gregory Lourié. However, it was signed, according to *Vertograd* for July 30, by the bishops: Valentine, Theodore, Seraphim, Irinarch and Ambrose. Therefore unless *Vertograd* is lying and one or more of these signatures were forged - which is quite possible, since Archbishop Seraphim in particular has said that he never signed certain synodal decrees on name-worshipping which he is quoted by *Vertograd* as having signed, - then we

must conclude that the ROAC has officially rejected the hope of all truly Orthodox Christians in the resurrection of Orthodoxy under an Orthodox Emperor, and in particular the resurrection of Russian Orthodoxy under a Russian Tsar. According to it, the faith and hope of many, many saints and martyrs is a “senseless utopia”, an object of “frenzied” desire that cannot possibly be fulfilled and must be renounced!

In August, 2003, the metropolitan was convicted of paedophilia by the court, and given a conditional four-year prison sentence. The sentence was upheld by the appeal court in the autumn. But in March, 2004 his conviction was expunged. Although there had been no new evidence, and no new trial, *Vertograd* immediately trumpeted this as an acquittal. However, one of the lawyers of the metropolitan himself contradicted *Vertograd*, saying that this legal whitewash was based on the metropolitan’s private acknowledgement of his guilt – and would be removed immediately if he “misbehaved” again...

Opposition to the heretics continued, but in November, 2003 the ROAC Synod was able to silence its critics in a clever way: both Fr. Gregory Lourié and one of his principal opponents, Fr. Roman Pavlov, were “retired”. No matter that de facto this meant that Fr. Roman was able to serve only with the explicit permission of the metropolitan, while Fr. Gregory’s activities and serving were in no way hindered or diminished. From now on, the ROAC was not responsible for Lourié because he had supposedly been “retired”...

Early in 2004 two priests (Protopriest Michael Makeev and Fr. Roman Pavlov) and a parish of ROAC in Moscow, which included the seven-times excommunicated and anathematised Anton Ter-Grigorian, left ROAC. They joined the True Orthodox Church of Cyprus under Metropolitan Epiphanius of Kition. It is reported that many Catacomb Church parishioners were also leaving ROAC at this time...

In March, 2004, the name-worshippers Yegor Kholmogorov and Fr. Gregory Lourié demonstrated that they deviated from True Orthodox teaching in another important way. According to *Vertograd*, they “publicly recognized themselves to be supporters of the Declaration of Sergius Stragorodsky of 1927, distinguishing, from their point of view, the Declaration of Sergius Stragorodsky from ‘sergianism as such’. Yegor Kholmogorov declared the following: ‘The position expressed in the Declaration by the formula [there follows a long quotation from the Declaration, including the most contentious passage about “our sorrows and joys”] seems to me to be absolutely just and faithful to the church-political position in those conditions.’

“Later, Ye. Kholmogorov declared the following: ‘Thus if one considers that sergianism is the recognition of Soviet power as the civil authority in Russia, an authority that could aid the strengthening of lawfulness, the flourishing of the country, etc., then sergianism is undoubtedly a justified church position and there is nothing for which to reproach Metropolitan Sergius.’

“Besides this, Comrade Kholmogorov affirms that Holy Hieromartyr Joseph of Petrograd held to the principles reflected in Sergius’ Declaration on loyalty to the Bolsheviks. While on ROCOR and the Catacomb Church he writes the following: ‘... It is completely incomprehensible why the position of the Orthodox Christian should be that of the political partisan. To justify this political partisanship, both in ROCOR and in the catacombs, completely made, absolutely heretical theories were created that turned a certain part of the catacombniks into a new edition of the Priestless Old Ritualists with their “spiritual antichrist”...’

“Hieromonk Gregory (Lourie) completely agreed with him and declared the following: ‘Yes, it’s something like that. Especially important is the distinguishing between the Declaration and sergianism as such.’

“In his time the chief ideologue of ROAC and the chief editor of Portal Credo.ru, Alexander Soldatov, expressed himself on the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky). In an editorial article for Credo.ru dated September 8, 2003 he referred to Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) as on a par with ‘the great hierarchs of the epoch of the Ecumenical Councils’, while the word ‘sergianism’ he put in inverted commas.

“Earlier, from very many judgements of comrades Kholmogorov, Soldatov and Lourie it followed that they consider sergianism to be an insignificant canonical transgression. But now they speak about it openly...”

In July, 2005 Archbishop Anthony of Yaransk met Fr. Victor Melehov, who had been expelled from ROCOR (V), in Dmitrov. As a result of their meeting, at which the heresies of Lourié were discussed, Archbishop Anthony blessed Fr. Victor to commemorate him alone at the Liturgy. When Archbishop Anthony arrived in Suzdal, Metropolitan Valentine secured the banning of the American priests for creating a faction (Fr. Christopher Johnson was banned for trying to become a bishop!). However, Archbishop Anthony, supported by the Catacomb Bishops Gerontius and Hilarion from the Ukraine, secured the banning of Lourié and the setting up of a commission to investigate “the matter of Fr. Gregory Lourié”.

On September 5, Lourié, 2005 was defrocked – without a trial - by the Synod. The heretic had at length been removed. But the uncanonical manner in which it had been done allowed the heretic to paint himself as a victim. Soon he managed to detach two bishops (Sebastian of the Urals and Ambrose of Khabarovsk) from the ROAC Synod. They soon consecrated him “Bishop of St. Petersburg and Gdov” and made him leader of their group. As Lourié’s influence has waxed, - he now poses as a focus of unity of the different True Orthodox jurisdictions, - so that of Metropolitan Valentine has waned. The only hope for members of ROAC would seem to reside in coming under the omophorion of the only remaining canonical branch of the

Russian Church, RTOC under Archbishop Tikhon of Omsk and Siberia...

VII. THE END-GAME

All this time ROCOR (L) was coming inexorably closer to official union with the MP... In May, 2003 it declared that it and the MP mutually recognised each other's sacraments, which was followed by cases of de facto concelebration. And yet, if the Moscow Patriarchate now recognized the sacraments of ROCOR (L), it had a strange way of expressing it. In 2003, a book published by the Moscow Patriarchate called *Strazh Doma Gospodnia (The Guardian of the House of the Lord)* not only justified the official Church's capitulation to the Soviet regime, but also condemned the confessors in the Catacomb Church and ROCOR who did not capitulate. True, the author, Sergius Fomin, did make the startling admission: "If Metropolitan Sergius, in agreeing in his name to publish the Declaration of 1927 composed by the authorities, hoping to buy some relief for the Church and the clergy, then *his hopes not only were not fulfilled, but the persecutions after 1927 became still fiercer, reaching truly hurricane-force in 1937-38*" (p. 262). But the book as a whole sought to justify Sergius. Moreover, the foreword, which was written by Patriarch Alexis, praised the heroic path taken by Sergius and viciously castigated his critics. Those that did not follow Sergius in his submission to Stalin were "schismatics", who, "not having reconciled themselves to the new government, became a danger just as big as the persecutions." Sergius, on the other hand, received only words of praise, and was credited with averting, "maybe even the destruction of the Russian Orthodox Church itself."

«In 2003,» writes Sergei Chapnin, «Vladimir Putin met the hierarchs of the Church Abroad and in effect showed them that their union with the Moscow Patriarchate was viewed by him not only as an internal church matter, but also as a political task to which the state was not indifferent...» Indeed, the KGB under Putin's direction played a very active part in the whole process. This was acknowledged officially in a letter of gratitude addressed to Putin by the Synod of ROCOR-MP on June 14, 2017.

In November, 2003 a delegation to Moscow led by Archbishop Mark kissed the patriarch's hand and asked forgiveness for any harsh things ROCOR may have said about the MP in the past. Since a great deal had been said in the past, and by all the leaders of ROCOR, such an apology could only be interpreted as capitulation to the MP. Again, on January 26, 2004, Archbishop Mark said in answer to a question about the canonical status of the Moscow Patriarchate: "The Russian people has made its choice. It has recognized the present Russian Orthodox Church in Russia and its hierarchy. We must take account of this in spite of possible objections from members of the Church Abroad. At the beginning of the 1990s we still could not see the processes that were happening in Russia as the people there saw them. Life in Russia went by a different path from how the émigrés presented it..."

In May, 2004 Metropolitan Laurus headed another ROCOR delegation on a two-week visit to Russia. On May 15, the anniversary of "Patriarch" Sergius' death, Patriarch Alexis demonstratively served a pannikhida for the traitor-patriarch, after which he said: "May the Lord create for him eternal and grateful memory". Then, during a liturgy at the Butovo polygon, where thousands of Christians, both True Orthodox and sergianist, were killed and buried, he had this to say to his foreign guests: "Today is the 60th anniversary since the death of the ever-memorable Patriarch Sergius. The time of the service of this archpastor coincided with the most terrible years of the struggle against God, when it was necessary to preserve the Russian Church. In those terrible years of repression and persecutions there were more sorrows. In 1937 both those who shared the position of Metropolitan Sergius and those who did not agree with him suffered for the faith of Christ, for belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church. We pay a tribute of respect and thankful remembrance to his Holiness Patriarch Sergius for the fact that he, in the most terrible and difficult of conditions of the Church's existence in the 1930s of the 20th century led the ship of the Church and preserved the Russian Church amidst the stormy waves of the sea of life."

The idea that those who shared Sergius' position and those who rejected it were equally martyrs is to mock the very idea of martyrdom for the truth. Clearly, therefore, "Patriarch" Alexis, "forgetting" historical facts as accepted even by MP historians, was determined to justify even the most shameful acts of the "ever-memorable" Sergius, claiming that he truly "saved the Church" by his agreements with the God-haters. There could be no doubt, therefore, that he remained a dyed-in-the-wool sergianist. And there could similarly be no doubt that Metropolitan Laurus, in listening to this speech in respectful silence and without interjecting the slightest objection, was a sergianist, too.

The conclusions of the first two sessions of the joint commissions of the MP and ROCOR (in June and September, 2004) were approved in the autumn by the MP Council of Bishops, although very few details were made public. However, on November 1 Patriarch Alexis revealed something, which was published by "Yedinoe otechestvo" under the intriguing title: "Wishing a speedy union with ROCOR, Alexis II emphasises that it is wrong to judge Metropolitan Sergius and his actions". The patriarch was reported as saying: "Two working meetings of the commission of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Church Abroad on the dialogue over the re-establishment of ecclesiastical unity took place, and the projects of the following documents were agreed: on the relationships between the Church and the State, on the relationships between Orthodoxy and the heterodox communities and the inter-confessional organization, and on the canonical status of ROCOR as a self-governing Church." In other words, all the important issues have already been agreed! But what was the agreement? And if it is in accordance with Orthodoxy, why was it not being published?

While every attempt was made to pretend that the MP and ROCOR were negotiating on equal terms, many facts indicated the opposite. Thus when Fr. Constantine Kaunov left the Volgograd diocese of the MP and joined the Siberian diocese of ROCOR under Bishop Eutyches, and was banned from serving by the MP Bishop of Ekaterinburg (under whom he had never served), he was told by Bishop Eutyches that he was banned because he had not submitted to the ban of the MP bishop! In other words, already now, before full, official union, ROCOR priests in Russia were under the power of the MP - with the full connivance of the ROCOR bishops!

On January 24, 2005 Metropolitan Cyril (Gundiaev) of Smolensk, head of the MP's Department of Foreign Relations and the future patriarch, confirmed that the MP did not condemn Sergianism: "We recognize that the model of Church-State relations [in the Soviet period] did not correspond to tradition. But we are not condemning those who realized this model, because there was no other way of preserving the Church. The Church behaved in the only way she could at that time. There was another path into the catacombs, but there could be no catacombs in the Soviet space..."

But there *were many* "catacombs in the Soviet space". And it was precisely the existence of those catacombs, and of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of the Catacomb Church, that gave the lie to the MP's assertion that there was no other way. That other way was the way of Christ, Himself the Way, the Truth and the Life - and for the true Christian there was no other Way!

Meanwhile, Patriarch Alexis officially endorsed the communist view of the Second World War. In February, 2005, there was a "Worldwide Russian People's Council" in Moscow, to which several guests from ROCOR (L) were invited. As Laurence A. Uzzell, president of International Religious Freedom Watch wrote for *The Moscow Times*: "The speeches at that gathering, devoted to celebrating the Soviet victory in World War II and linking it to the Kremlin's current policies, suggest that the domestic church [the MP] is counting on Russian nationalism to woo the émigrés. Especially striking is the distinctively Soviet flavor of that nationalism. The main speeches failed to mention the victory's dark sides, for example the imposition of totalitarian atheism on traditionally Christian societies such as Romania and Bulgaria. Patriarch Alexey II made the incredible statement that the victory 'brought the Orthodox peoples of Europe closer and raised the authority of the Russian Church'. If one had no information, one would think that the establishment of Communist Party governments in the newly conquered countries were purely voluntary - and that what followed was unfettered religious freedom..."

Uzzell continues: "Sergianism is clearly still thriving, despite the Moscow

Patriarchate's occasional abstract statements asserting its right to criticize the state. The Patriarchate's leaders still openly celebrate Patriarch Sergei's memory, with some even favoring his canonization as a saint. With rare exceptions, they still issue commentaries on President Vladimir Putin's policies, which read like government press releases. They seem sure that this issue will not be a deal-breaker in their quest for reunion with the émigrés. Putin's Kremlin will be hoping that they are right."

Matushka Anastasia Shatilova noted: "In the Moscow Patriarchate there can be observed an elemental striving towards the 'glorification' of a series of very dubious personalities, including Ivan the Terrible (seven times married, who killed his own son and sent Maliuta Skuratov to suffocate the holy Hierarch Philip of Moscow for his rebuking of the Tsar's cruelties) and Rasputin (whose 'icons' are even streaming myrrh). The crown of all this is the 'icon' of Stalin, which was put on the "Live Journal" on the internet on June 5. On it this outcast of the human race is portrayed in hierarchical vestments with an omophorion, a Gospel book and a sword in his hands!"

In June, 2005 four documents agreed by the joint MP-ROCOR commissions were published - on the same day that a delegation from the WCC visited the patriarch in Moscow! These documents contained a more or less complete submission to Moscow's commands, including even a justification of Sergius' declaration.

On November 22, 2005 (old style) the Cyprianites, who, while accepting that the MP had grace, still opposed union with it, broke communion with ROCOR (L). In December, 2005 the Hierarchical Synod of ROCOR (L) broke communion with the Cyprianites. The real reason was that the MP had laid it down as a condition for the union of the MP with ROCOR that ROCOR "regulates its relations with groups that have separated from their Local Churches" (Protopriest Nicholas Balashov).

In May a so-called "Fourth All-Diaspora Sobor of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad" was convened by ROCOR (L) in San Francisco. By dint of a great deal of manipulation and the weeding out of dissenters, the Sobor endorsed the union with the MP. Nevertheless, the dissenters who were able to speak at the Sobor were still able to make some telling points, especially about the continuing ecumenism of the MP.

Thus in his report to the Sobor Priest Victor Dobrov said: "Just recently, from February 14-23 of this year in Porto Alegre, Brazil the regular 9th ecumenical Assembly of the WCC took place.

"The Russian Church (MP) at this Assembly was unusually imposing with

more than 20 members in its delegation.

“The Summary Document, adopted and ratified by the participants of this ecumenical Assembly, and particularly by the Moscow Patriarchate in the face of its representatives, is the Document PRC 01.1 entitled “The Teaching on the Church: Called to be a United Church”.

“A careful study of this Document casts doubt on the multitude of statements made by the representatives of the Moscow side, that the objective of the continued membership of the Patriarchate in the WCC is the uncompromising witnessing to the Truth to the heterodox world. Moreover, this document evokes doubt in the Orthodoxy of the confession of the faith of the Moscow Patriarchate itself. The entire adopted Document is heretical from beginning to end, but because of the lack of time for a thorough examination, we will focus only on the most glaring evidence.

“Let us refer to the text of the Document:

“One may call the following assertion in the Document a theological breakthrough, yet it is far from Orthodox thinking:

“‘All who have been baptized into Christ are united with Christ in his body’. (III, 8) (*i.e. in the Church of Christ!*)

“It is completely unequivocal, simple and comprehensible! Since nowhere in the remainder of the Document is it stated that this implies baptism with the obligatory participation of the one being baptized in the Eucharist which is in the Orthodox Church, therefore now there is every basis to consider the Moscow Patriarchate as already being of one body with Protestants...

“Our Orthodox consciousness is amazed and startled by the ecumenical statement adopted by the Moscow Patriarchate on recognizing the grace and genuineness of baptisms carried out in heretical communities!”

The Council declared: “Hearing the lectures read at the Council, the reports made by the Commission on negotiations with the corresponding Commission of the Moscow Patriarchate, and the various points of view expressed during the discussions, we express our conciliar consent that it is necessary to confirm the canonical status of the Russian Church Abroad for the future as a self-governing part of the Local Russian Church, in accordance with the Regulations of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia currently in force.”

A kind of autonomy of ROCOR within MP was granted her – but it was only a fig-leaf to hide her complete submission. The Patriarch still retained veto power on appointments, the Orthodox Church of America remained outside ROCOR’s control, and, most important, full communion with the “Local Russian Church”, i.e. the Moscow Patriarchate, was established.

The declaration went on: “From discussions at the Council it is apparent that

the participation of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate in the World Council of Churches evokes confusion among our clergy and flock. With heartfelt pain we ask the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate to heed the plea of our flock to expediently remove this temptation.

“We hope that the forthcoming Local Council of the One Russian Church will settle remaining unresolved church problems.”

This rather pathetic appeal to the conquerors to heed the “heartfelt pain” of the vanquished was swept aside. Since the union between the MP and ROCOR, the ecumenist activities of “the One Russian Church” has actually increased, especially since the enthronement of Patriarch Cyril (Gundiaev). In any case, since ROCOR did not lay down the renunciation of ecumenism as a sine qua non of union, and only asked that the “remaining unresolved church problems” be settled “at the forthcoming Local Council of the One Russian Church”, that is, *after* union, there was no real pressure placed on the MP: ROCOR had surrendered...

Protests continued to the very end. Thus former KGB Lieutenant-Colonel Constantine Preobrazhensky reminded the ROCOR faithful of what they already knew but had begun to forget: “*Absolutely all* [my italics - V.M.] the bishops and the overwhelming majority of the priests [of the MP] worked with the KGB...” And very near the end, in February, 2007, Fr. Nikita Grigoriev, an instructor at Holy Trinity Seminary, Jordanville, produced one of the most incisive exposés of the Moscow Patriarchate in the whole history of its existence.

But in vain. On May 17, 2007, deceived by the vain hope of retaining some kind of real autonomy within the MP, and suppressing the unassailable evidence that the MP was still sergianist and ecumenist to the core, Metropolitan Laurus signed the union with the KGB-Patriarch while the KGB-President beamed approvingly... The Russian Church Abroad, the last free voice of the True Russian Church, had ceased to exist.

Or so it seemed...

CONCLUSION: THE HOLY REMNANT

*And the Lord said to satan: the Lord rebuke thee, O satan, the Lord rebuke thee Who
hast chosen Jerusalem! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?
Zachariah 3.2.*

As the wise Solomon says, pride goes before a fall (Proverbs 16.18). The fall of ROCOR was the result of pride – pride in her own past virtues, and pride in relation to the other bearers of True Russian Orthodoxy. This is not to say that the achievements of ROCOR were not genuinely great. Apart from providing spiritual food for her own large flock scattered over every continent, and bringing many foreigners to the light of the true faith, she faithfully preserved the traditions of the pre-revolutionary Russian Church that were being destroyed with the utmost ruthlessness in the Homeland, while providing a voice (and, in some cases, an omophorion) for the catacomb confessors. Several of her conciliar declarations – the condemnation of sergianism (1928), the glorification of the New Martyrs and Confessors (1981) and the anathema against ecumenism (1983) – will stand forever as monuments of the faith of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Probably her greatest long-term achievement was that accomplished when she was almost at the end of her strength: her creation of parishes inside Russia in 1990, and her resurrection of the apostolic succession and hierarchy of her sister-church in the Homeland, the Russian True Orthodox Church. Paradoxically, however, it was this final achievement that brought about her downfall; for the task of replacing the Moscow Patriarchate as the dominant confession in Russia was beyond her strength, and the spiritual diseases and temptations transmitted through the first face-to-face encounter with the old enemy in the Homeland since the 1920s shook her faith and determination. Forgetting their duty before God and their flock both in Russia and abroad, the majority of the hierarchs wavered, began to listen to the siren-calls of pseudo-Russian Soviet nationalism, and fell into a false union with the Sovietized Moscow Patriarchate and apostate World Orthodoxy.

This is without doubt a profound spiritual tragedy whose consequences are still reverberating among the Orthodox all over the world. However, “all things work for the best for those who love God” (Romans 8.28), and “the Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble” (Proverbs 16.4). So even in this terrible tragedy there is hidden the hope and the means of spiritual healing and resurrection – ROCOR’s fall by no means excludes the possibility of a recovery. But that recovery must now come primarily from within Russia, and not from abroad, especially since 95% of ROCOR *inside* Russia refused to join the unia with the MP as opposed to 30 % outside Russia. And it must come with a full understanding of the causes of the past failures, and a

determination not to repeat them.

What are the lessons from this tragedy? Briefly, they are: that Soviet power is not from God, but from the devil, and that neither with it, nor with its neo-Soviet successor under KGB agent Putin, is any “symphony of powers” possible; that the Moscow Patriarchate, having sold its soul to the devil in the form of Stalin in the 1920s and not repented of it even after the fall of communism, does not have the grace of sacraments and is no longer an ark of salvation; that ecumenism is “the heresy of heresies”, and union with the ecumenist churches in the World Council of Churches or other ecumenical forums is spiritual death; and that the unity of the Russian people cannot be bought at the expense of the betrayal of God and of the confession of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia.

A further lesson, of a less dogmatic nature but still important, is that the leadership of the Russian Church has now passed from Abroad back to the Homeland. In a sense, this was inevitable, both from a historical and from a canonical point of view. In her early years, the Russian émigrés were always looking to return to the Homeland; they felt themselves and their Church to be truly “in exile”, and the purpose of their lives to be the resurrection of true piety and the True Church in the Homeland. The hope of this resurrection grew fainter with time, but the primacy in the hearts of the exiles of the Church in the Homeland, of which the Church Abroad was merely a part (and rather a small part - merely “a drop in the ocean” in the words of St. Philaret of New York), remained. It was therefore entirely natural that the return of the Church Abroad to Russia in 1990 should be seen as the culmination of her existence, and the struggle with the MP that ensued as “the last battle”.

But from a canonical point of view the whole existence of ROCOR was highly anomalous. A part of the Russian Church that existed outside Russia, throughout the world, and in many places on the territories of other Local Churches, but as an autonomous, self-governing unit - this was an unprecedented phenomenon in Orthodox Church history. Strictly speaking, the existence of such a global, “floating” Church body contradicted the basic territorial principle of Church administration. It could be justified only on the grounds that to merge with the other Local Churches, and still more with the official Church in the Homeland, would be to the detriment of the Orthodox Faith and the spiritual welfare of its flock. This justification was seen as adequate by all zealots of the faith, both Russian and non-Russian - and yet the situation of the Church remained anomalous, and therefore necessarily temporary, requiring a canonical resolution sooner or later. Moreover, the anomaly became still more extreme when the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia became - contrary to the first paragraph of its own *Statute* - also the Russian Orthodox Church *Inside* Russia in 1990. How could the Church *Outside* Russia be at the same time the Church *Inside* Russia?!

The anomaly could be resolved only by transferring the central authority of the Church from Abroad to the Homeland. Such a solution had many obvious and major advantages, whereas keeping the administration of the Church in the hands of hierarchs living thousands of miles away with no knowledge of the conditions in contemporary Russia was a recipe for disaster. This was at least partially recognized by Metropolitan Vitaly himself, when he declared in December, 2001: "After many long, hard years of trying to manage the Church in Russia from New York, I have learned that it is impossible to manage the Church in Russia from Abroad. We do not know and understand their problems and we do not know their people and possible candidates for the clergy. Without a knowledge of their people and their problems the best that we can do is give them Apostolic Succession and Grace and allow them to organize while maintaining communion with them and praying that they will be able to do something for themselves..."

And yet the leadership of ROCOR (V) strenuously resisted bestowing any such autonomy on ROCOR inside Russia, let alone giving the leadership of the Russian Church as a whole to hierarchs inside Russia; and this prideful insistence that the Russian Church can only be governed from Mansonville or Paris must be considered as the main reason for the fall of ROCOR (V).

However, the fall of ROCOR (V), and the emergence of RTOC under Archbishop Tikhon of Omsk and Siberia as the only truly canonical Russian Church jurisdiction, has now solved the problem. The leadership of RTOC always insisted that the Russian Church Abroad and the Catacomb or Russian True Orthodox Church should be seen as separate but closely related organisms, "sister-churches". Even when under extreme provocation, they tried hard not to break the link with Metropolitan Vitaly. But once ROCOR (V) had definitely fallen away, they created a Church structure that was the mirror-image of the old ROCOR. That is, the central leadership of the Church was now permanently *inside* Russia, while the Church Abroad existed as a semi-autonomous body with its own bishop(s) in communion with the main body inside Russia.

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This "ecclesiastical perestroika" had its critics, however, even within RTOC and even within that remnant of ROCOR – about a third of the parishes worldwide – who refused to accept the unia with Moscow. They gathered around the figure of Bishop Agathangelus of Odessa, the only bishop in ROCOR (L) who rejected the unia, and who now proclaimed himself the sole lawful successor-bishop of the old ROCOR. While continuing to live in the Ukraine, he declared that the centre of the Church was still Abroad, and has recently been given the title "Metropolitan of New York".

We have met Bishop Agathangelus before, as the hierarch who, in October, 2001, betrayed his spiritual father and RTOC and “jumped ship”, joining Laurus at just the moment that Laurus fell away from the faith. Little good should have been expected from such a turncoat, and so it turned out. Only three days after the May, 2007, RTOC sent an appeal to Agathangelus to unite with them. But Agathangelus rejected it. In fact, he not only refused to join any of the existing “splinters” (oskolki) that had been saved from the shipwreck of ROCOR: he vigorously claimed that they were all schismatics, that the Lavrite Synod had been the only true Russian Synod until its fall in May, 2007, and even that all the decisions of the Lavrite Synod until that date were valid and correct – including, presumably, all the decisions of the false Council of 2000 and the decision to seek union with the MP!

Agathangelus now proceeded to repeat all the errors of the 1990s that had undermined the strength of ROCOR in the 1990s, beginning with the union with the Cyprianites and the acceptance of their ecclesiology. Thus in November, 2007 he entered into communion with Metropolitan Cyprian and his Synod. The Cyprianites claimed that there had never been a break in communion between them and Bishop Agathangelus, but this was not true, since the Lavrite Synod, of which Bishop Agathangelus was then a member, broke communion with the Cyprianites in 2006. Then, early in December, Bishop Agathangelus consecrated two further bishops for his jurisdiction with the help of the Cyprianite Bishops Ambrose of Methone and George of Alania (South Ossetia) in Odessa: Andronik (Kotliarov) for New York, and Sophrony (Musienko) for St. Petersburg. So the “Agathangelite” Synod, thanks to the Cyprianites, now has three dioceses: one each for the Ukraine, Russia and North America.

Some hailed this expansion of the Agathangelite Synod as “the resurrection of ROCOR”. Did this title correspond to the truth about the Agathangelite Synod? It would have corresponded to the truth only if: (1) the confession of faith of this Synod were purely Orthodox, (2) its apostolic succession were undoubted, and (3) it were the only Synod that could reasonably argue that it was “the continuer of ROCOR”. But the Agathangelite Synod failed to pass this test on all three counts.

1. The Confession of the Agathangelite Synod is not purely Orthodox. The present writer asked the Cyprianite Bishop Ambrose of Methone: “Can we take it that Bishop Agathangelus shares your ecclesiology in all respects? In particular, does he, like your Synod, regard the Moscow Patriarchate as having grace?” His reply (the bishop was speaking only in his own name, not for the whole Cyprianite Synod) was: “*So far as I know, and so far as I have discussed [it] with him, yes.*” We can assume that this was a correct answer, because the Cyprianites and the Agathangelites have remained in communion to the present day without any

quarrels over the faith.

In other words, Bishop Agathangelus recognized the Moscow Patriarchate and the whole of World Orthodoxy to be grace-filled. Moreover, he embraced the false Cyprianite ecclesiology that heretics such as Patriarchs Alexis and Bartholomew were “sick” members of the True Church. The immediate reaction was: had Agathangelus learned nothing from the fall of Metropolitan Laurus? Or rather, did he consider it a “fall” at all, since Laurus, according to his and the Cyprianites’ understanding, was simply returning to union with his “Mother Church”, the Moscow Patriarchate? Did he not understand that it was precisely when ROCOR entered into communion with the Cyprianites, in 1994, that the Synod began negotiations with the Moscow Patriarchate and began its rapid descent into union with heresy?

More recently, Agathangelus and his Synod (ROCOR (A)), while continuing fiercely reject all jurisdictions “to the right”, such as ROCOR (V), ROAC or RTOC, have shown increasing sympathy for jurisdictions located “to the left”. Thus Agathangelus and the deposed Patriarch Irenaeus of Jerusalem, who since 2005 has been living under house arrest, now recognize each other and commemorate each other at the Great Entrance in the liturgy. Moreover, as Protopriest Alexander Lebedev writes, “the liberalism of ROCOR (A) in its reception of communities and clerics serves the aims of broadening its influence and increasing its numbers. In the words of Metropolitan Agathangelus, ‘we take everybody’. The politics of careful examination, which we see, for example, in RTOC, does not permit an increase in the quantity of communities and clerics, while ‘economy’ present many opportunities for this. In unofficial Orthodoxy, besides the ‘splinters’ of ROCOR and the Greek Old Calendarist jurisdictions, which are known for their serious attitude to questions of ecclesiology and faith, there exists an enormous ‘bank’ of jurisdictions and clerics who have dubious canonical origins and a vague confession of faith. In ROCOR (A) they have already shown long ago that in order to broaden their ranks they are ready to us this diverse conglomerate. The first step was undertaken by the newly formed jurisdiction already in 2007, when ‘catacomb hierarchs of the Sekachite tradition’ were received [by cheirothesia] into the ranks of their episcopate. This autumn it became known that ROCOR (A) was reviewing the question of receiving into their ranks the Orthodox Church of Ecuador, whose first-hierarchy, however, earlier managed to join the True Orthodox Church of [the ‘healer’] Metropolitan Raphael (Motovilov)...”

2. The Apostolic Succession of the Agathangelite Synod is doubtful for two reasons: first, because their Cyprianite co-consecrators’ Synod was formed in schism from the True Orthodox Church of Greece under Archbishop Chrysostom (Kiouisis) of Athens, and secondly, because Agathangelus has not yet publicly renounced the false and heretical councils of 2000 and 2001 – and heretics do not have apostolic succession.

3. There are other Synods having an equal, or greater claim to be the "continuer of ROCOR" - especially RTOC. Bishop Agathangelus' claim to be the sole canonical successor of ROCOR is founded on nothing stronger than the fact that he was the last to separate from the Lavrite Synod. But is that anything to be proud of? Is it not rather something to be ashamed of? After all, the Holy Canons - in particular, the 15th Canon of the First-and-Second Council of Constantinople - do not praise procrastination in matters of the faith, but rather praise those who separate *immediately* heresy is proclaimed. And in the case of ROCOR that took place, not in 2007, as Bishop Agathangelus likes to think, but in 2001, if not in 1994...

Bishop Agathangelus' position is similar to that of a person who criticizes those who jump off a heavily listing ship that has been holed below the water-line, and himself "jumps" only when the water has reached his neck... And yet his position is still worse. For he claims that the ship he jumped off, ROCOR-MP, and which is now at the bottom of the ocean of this sinful world, is in fact floating majestically on the surface with Christ Himself at its helm! If that is what he believes, then we are entitled to ask: why did he jump in the first place? And still more pertinently: will he not be tempted at some time in the future to return to that ship, becoming one of those who, "having thrust away a good conscience concerning the faith, have made shipwreck..." (I Timothy 1.19)?

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Let us return, finally, to the one ray of true light to emerge from the dark and stormy history that is the subject of this small book - the emergence of the Russian True Orthodox Church under Archbishop Tikhon of Omsk and Siberia.

This is the only Church body that the present writer can recommend as having preserved both the faith and the apostolic succession of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in the period before it began to fall away, while at the same time preserving the traditions of the Church of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, the Catacomb Church. It is a relatively small Church, and compared with uncanonical bodies such as ROCOR (A), it is growing slowly. However, slow but steady growth is no bad thing after the recent period of extreme turmoil.

Moreover, in its Sobor in Odessa in November, 2008 it demonstrated a model of what true Church Sobornost', or Conciliarity, should be in an age when that quality has been very hard to find. The Sobor issued a large number of documents on a wide range of subjects. And it canonized Metropolitan Philaret of New York and 49 Catacomb confessors, thereby demonstrating its veneration for the faith and piety both of the Russian Church Abroad and of the Catacomb Church.

Let us conclude, then, by quoting one of the Sobor documents, "Definition of the Sacred Council on the Confessional and Ecclesiological Foundations of the Russian True Orthodox Church", a statement of that Faith that alone can serve as the rock on which the future Russian Church will be built:-

"The Russian True Orthodox Church confesses and holds the Orthodox Christian Faith as it has been preserved by Holy Tradition from the foundation of the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church of Christ, and as it was until 1927 in the Local Russian Church, as the Catacomb Church kept it in a confessing spirit, and as the Russian Church Abroad kept it right until the year 2000.

"We believe in the Triune God, the Holy Trinity, as expounded in the Nicaeo-Constantinopolitan Symbol of faith, and in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church vvhich our Lord Jesus Christ founded, and which is the pillar and ground of the Truth (I Timothy 3.15). We believe that the Church is the Body of Christ, a Divino-human organism, in which we, the faithful, constitute Its Body, while the Head of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 1.18). We believe that the gates of hell cannot prevail over Her (Matthew 16.18). Like the Lord Himself, She cannot be destroyed, annihilated or divided, and for that reason does not need to be "saved" by human forces.

"In full unanimity with the Symbol of faith, we confess one baptism for the remission of sins. The Russian True Orthodox Church strictly holds to the ecclesiastical laws which prescribed that it be carried out by three-times and complete immersion in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

"That which the Holy Apostles and Holy Fathers of the Church accepted and confirmed, we also accept and confirm, and that which they rejected and anathematized, we also reject and anathematize, without adding or subtracting anything. And together with the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, we proclaim: "We follow the ancient traditions of the Ecumenical Church, we keep the laws of the Fathers; we subject to anathema those who add or take away anything from the Ecumenical Church."

"The Russian True Orthodox Church is an indivisible part of the Local Russian Church, and governs itself on conciliar bases in accordance with the decree of his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon, the Holy Synod and Higher Church Council of the Russian Church of November 7/20, 1920, № 362. We have canonical succession from the Catacomb Russian Church and the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad as two equal-in-honour and spiritually united parts of the True Russian Church remaining in Eucharistic and canonical communion under different ecclesiastical administrations, as it was in the time of the Holy Martyr Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa, and as was blessed by the last lawful First Hierarch of ROCOR, Metropolitan Vitaly. We confess our spiritual and ecclesiological unity with the Holy New Martyrs of Russia and the Father-Confessors of the Catacomb Church, and also with the First Hierarchs of ROCOR and Her outstanding hierarchs and

pastors.

“Confessing that the Church saves man, and not man – the Church, we reject the sergianism confessed by the Moscow Patriarchate, which is so-called from the name of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky), as a special form of apostasy and ecclesiological heresy. This false teaching is not compatible with the teaching of the Holy Fathers on the Church and on political authority, for sergianism is *the inner preparedness* of the Orthodox Christian for *compromise with antitheism*, and in a broader sense, for compromise with lies, with *any* evil, with the elements of this world. This preparedness proceeds from the heart, from *the spiritual condition* of man himself, and for that reason we affirm that the Moscow Patriarchate is being cunning when it calls sergianism a temporary phenomenon conditioned by a political situation. In raising sergianism – that is, compromise with antitheism – into a *norm* of ecclesiastical life, the Moscow Patriarchate is thereby preparing its flock to recognize the power of the Antichrist as a lawful power, and to accept “the seal on their right hand” (Revelation 13.16). We affirm that true Orthodoxy in our suffering Fatherland cannot be regenerated without a *consciousness* of the sergianist fall and without *repentance for this fall*.

“We are unanimous with the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia and the Catacomb Father-Confessors, and also with the outstanding holy hierarchs and pastors of the Church Abroad, that sergianism is a heresy, which the Moscow Patriarchate that was born from it is “a neo-renovationist schism” which entered into symphony with the antitheist authorities and to which are applicable the definitions and canonical bans of the Russian Church that were laid on renovationism and its hierarchy. Having been formed as a schism, the Moscow Patriarchate unlawfully calls itself “the Mother Church”.

“Our faith in the oneness and uniqueness of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church is incompatible with ecumenism, and for that reason we recognize ecumenism to be a heresy that has trampled on the Orthodox Faith. Confessing our unity with the heritage of ROCOR, we confirm the condemnation of ecumenism made by the Council of the Church Abroad in 1983 and the proclamation of a conciliar anathema on this heresy “and on those who have communion with these heretics or help them, or defend their new heresy of ecumenism”. The participation of the Moscow Patriarchate in the ecumenical movement is not a private apostasy of individual hierarchs, but was *conciliarly confirmed* as the Church’s course in 1961 at the Hierarchical Council of the MP. Having joined the “World Council of Churches”, the Moscow Patriarchate has defined itself not only as “a neo-renovationist schism”, but also as a heretical community that has fallen both under the anathema of the Holy Patriarch Tikhon and the All-Russian Council on the communists and all their co-workers, and under the anathema of the ROCOR Council.

“Also falling under the anathema on the 1983 heresy of ecumenism are all the hierarchs and clergy of the official Local Churches that confess their Eucharistic unity but at the same time participate together in the pan-heresy of ecumenism,

in the acceptance of the new calendar, in modernism, and in the construction of the new world order. For that reason the Russian True Orthodox Church can have Eucharistic communion and unity with none of them; and, following the patristic teaching, it decrees that official World Orthodoxy has fallen away from the Church of Christ, and that its sacraments are *ineffective* [*nedejstvenny*] for salvation. By this we confess the witness of Church Tradition that the grace of the Holy Spirit works in a saving manner only in the True Church of Christ, to which heretics and schismatics do not belong.

“We reject the destructive opinion that heretics and schismatics have not fallen away, but are so-called “sick members of the Church”, in whom the grace of God works in an equally saving manner as on the members of the True Orthodox Church. We confess that all the members of the Church who live in the world and bear flesh are sick through their sins, and only in the True Church of Christ can they receive true healing and salvation. But deviation into heresies and schisms is nothing else than falling away from the Body of the True Orthodox Church. That is why, as the Holy New Martyrs of Russia taught, the Moscow Patriarchate is not the True Church of Christ and its sacraments cannot be effective for salvation.

“However, we do not thereby usurp the Judgements of God and do not boldly declare that the Lord is not able to turn to repentance and save a sincere Christian soul that remains in the official church, but affirm that salvation is possible only through entering the Church of Christ.

“We decree that clergy coming into the True Church from the MP must be received through repentance and the carrying out on them of an additional laying on of hands (*kheirothesia*) by the hierarchs of the True Orthodox Church with the aim of completing the ordinations (*kheirotonia*) that the arriving clergy received from the apostate hierarchy of the MP.

“Concerning the rite of reception from heretical and schismatic communities, the Russian True Orthodox Church, as a part of the once united Local Russian Church, continues to preserve Her heritage, Her historically formed local traditions and conciliar decrees, at the basis of which was laid the principle of ecclesiastical condescension (*oikonomia*), in order that, according to the word of the holy Hierarch Philaret (Voznesensky), First Hierarch of ROCOR, “many should not be driven from the Church”.

“In spite of the fact that there now exists an admissible variety of differences in the rites of reception of laymen practiced by some True Orthodox Churches, we consider that it is necessary to proceed towards the overcoming of these differences, basing ourselves on the dogmatic teaching of the Church. For the time being it is possible to relate to these differences in the rites of reception in same way as did St. Cyprian of Carthage in his letter to Jubian: “But someone will say: what will happen to those who, before this, having converted from heresy to the Church, were received into the Church without baptism? The Lord by His mercy is powerful to give them forgiveness, and not to deprive of the gifts

of His Church those who, having been received into the Church, reposed in the Church”.

“A basis for changing the rite of reception of laymen from the MP could be, for example, facts concerning the open, official concelebration of the hierarchy of the MP with Roman Catholics or other heretics.

“Confessing the RTOC to be the True Russian Church and the canonical successor in law of the Catacomb and Abroad Churches, we do not isolate ourselves and do not dare to think of ourselves as ‘the only true Church’.

“We confess unity of Faith with our brothers, the Old Calendarist Orthodox Christians in Greece and other countries, who reject the unia with ecumenical and new calendarist official Orthodoxy, and who do not accept the heresy of ecumenism either in its open confession or in its hidden form in the teaching on the “sick in faith” members of the Church.

“The Sacred Council of the Russian True Orthodox Church confirms the validity [dejstvennost’] of the decree of the ROCOR Council of August 15/28, 1932, which decreed “the condemnation of Masonry as a teaching and organization hostile to Christianity, and the condemnation also of all teachings and organizations that are akin to Masonry”. In accordance with this conciliar decree, the idea of the “new world order” begotten by Masonry is subject to condemnation, as well as the processes of globalization introduced with this aim in mind, and the systems of global control over mankind that are directed to preparing society for the establishment of the power of the Antichrist in the future.

“Remaining faithful to the heritage of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of the Catacomb Church, we witness that for True Orthodox archpastors and pastors participation in the processes of world apostasy, one of the forms of which is contemporary political activity, is not permitted. In his service the Orthodox pastor must guard his flock from the destructive influence of “this world”, and the official Orthodoxy that goes in step with it, as well as from the imitation artificially generated by it – so-called “alternative Orthodoxy”, explaining to his flock the destructive essence of these phenomena. Both these phenomena, which surround the Church on the left and on the right, derive their origin from one and the same apostate source of this world, and are foreign to True Orthodoxy.

“Following the outstanding holy Hierarchs of the Ecumenical and Russian Church, we believe that the power established by God is the Orthodox kingdom. We sorrow over the loss of this God-given Orthodox kingdom by our ancestors, and pray to the Lord for its restoration. However, we also witness to the fact that a truly Orthodox kingdom can be restored in Rus’ only after the repentance of the Russian people and its return to the True Church, for there can be no genuine repentance, nor restoration of an Orthodox monarchy, in a false church. A monarchy founded with the blessing of the church of the evil-doers will have

craftiness at its very foundation. Such a kingdom is not pleasing to God; even if great and powerful, it will only prepare the ground for the coming of the Antichrist.

“We call on all Orthodox Christians to stand in the Truth, to increase their penitential prayer and union around our Holy Mother - the True Orthodox Church. The spiritual regeneration both of every individual human soul and of society in general is possible only through repentance and the conciliar participation of all of us in the Body of Christ, in Which the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth and Love, acts. The loss by the community of men of true conciliarity [sobornost'] brings with it the loss of participation in the Body of Christ, which means the loss also of the beneficial action upon this community of the grace of the Holy Spirit. This grace-filled action is possible only through the True Church of Christ.

“Understanding this, the contemporary world is trying to substitute artificial spiritual fakes and false-churches for the True Church. For that reason there is nothing dearer for the Orthodox Christian than the genuine regeneration of the True Orthodox Church, the pure Bride of Christ, Who remains faithful to Her Heavenly Bridegroom. Outside the Church salvation and the true spiritual healing of the soul damaged by the passions is impossible. Amen.”

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