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Religion, State & Society, Vol. 25, No. 2, 1997

Orthodox Rivalry in the Twentieth Century: Moscow versus Constantinople

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In late February 1996 Patriarch Aleksi II of Moscow formally and deliberately dropped the name of the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople from the 'diptychs',[1] the list of the chief hierarchs of the Eastern Orthodox churches of the world. This act, which amounted to a break in eucharistic and prayerful communion, was the latest development in the difficult relationship between these two Orthodox churches in the twentieth century.

Eastern Orthodox Christianity claims to constitute one Universal Church, corresponding to the Nicene Creed's profession of faith in 'One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church'. Administratively, however, Eastern Orthodoxy is a federation of rather more than a dozen[2] 'local churches', each of which possesses the status of 'autocephaly'.[3] An autocephalous church has two important characteristics: it can elect its own bishops without any need for some other Orthodox authority to ratify the election, and it constitutes what is normally the court of final appeal. To this second characteristic there is a reservation, however.

While these autocephalous 'local churches' are held to be radically equal they have a certain traditional rank and order. In this ordering the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople holds the first place, often defined as *primus inter pares*, the 'first among equals'.[4] It is not at all clear just what primatial rights the ecumenical patriarch[5] enjoys, but Constantinople certainly claims four rights at least:

(i) The patriarch of Constantinople has the right to establish a court of final appeal for any case from anywhere in the Orthodox world.
(ii) The patriarch of Constantinople has the exclusive right to summon the other patriarchs and heads of the autocephalous churches to a joint meeting of all of them.
(iii) The patriarch of Constantinople has jurisdiction, ecclesiastical authority, over Orthodox Christians who are outside the territory of the local Orthodox churches, the so-called diaspora.
(iv) No new 'autocephalous' church can come into being without the consent of the patriarch of Constantinople; this consent should express a consensus of the local Orthodox churches.

As the Ottoman Empire collapsed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,

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so did the territory in which the patriarch of Constantinople had direct jurisdiction. The worst blow came at the end of the First World War, when a Greek–Turkish war was resolved by the deportation of almost all the Greeks from Turkey. Under the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne the Ecumenical Patriarchate has the right to remain in Constantinople (now called Istanbul) but its flock within Turkey probably numbers fewer than 3000 souls. In addition, the ecumenical patriarch has direct jurisdiction on Mount Athos, in several dioceses of northern Greece, and in several of the Greek islands. The largest groups of Orthodox Christians under the direct jurisdiction of the ecumenical patriarch are however the Greek Orthodox of the diaspora: in Western Europe, North and South America, and Australia. These include several million faithful. The Patriarchate of Constantinople is therefore very careful to retain and assert its rights with regard to the diaspora.

The Russian Orthodox Church lost its patriarchate in 1720, by a decision of Tsar Peter I of Russia. The patriarchate was restored only in 1917, after the February Revolution; the first patriarch of Moscow in the twentieth century, Tikhon (Belavin), was imprisoned by the communists. In consequence of the Russian Revolution large numbers of Russian Orthodox hierarchs, clergy and lay people went into exile.

By the beginning of the 1920s, then, both patriarchates were confronted with new conditions, and problems demanding urgent attention.

The 'Living Church'

In the wake of the Russian Revolution Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland succeeded in gaining independence; Ukraine became independent for two years but then became part of the Soviet Union. Within the Soviet Union the Bolsheviks supported some movements for reform of the Orthodox Church; there were several of these groups but they are usually known collectively as the Living Church or the Renovationists. The Living Church claimed to be the legitimate Russian Orthodox Church instead of the Moscow Patriarchate; since it was very difficult for people outside the USSR to obtain reliable information about the religious situation there, several important centres accepted the claims of the Living Church for a time. Even the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople briefly recognised the Living Church in the spring of 1924;[6] when Constantinople learned the facts[7] this recognition was withdrawn, but the Moscow Patriarchate was seriously (and understandably) grieved; the matter has never been forgotten.

Finland

Eastern Orthodoxy has been present in Finland since the tenth century; it is the second largest religious body in the country. In 1892 the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church set up a separate diocese in Finland, with a beautiful cathedral in Helsinki. After the Russian Revolution Finland became independent[8] and the Orthodox in Finland considered it impossible to depend upon the Moscow Patriarchate, because of the persecution in the Soviet Union. They appealed to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In 1923, in response to this appeal, the latter created the Finnish Orthodox archdiocese as an autonomous[9] Orthodox church under the jurisdiction of Constantinople. The Moscow Patriarchate strenuously protested against this act; and it was not until 1957 that it recognised the Finnish Orthodox Church as a part of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.[10]

Estonia

A similar development occurred in Estonia. There are traces of Orthodox Christians in Estonia as early as the eleventh century; as in Finland they are a minority amongst a Lutheran majority. On 14 January 1919 the Red Army murdered Bishop Platon (Kalbusch) of Tartu; his remains are enshrined in his cathedral. The Russian Orthodox Church found normal administration impossible under the early Soviet regime. Since Estonia was independent the Orthodox Bishop Alexander (Paulus) appealed to the ecumenical patriarch; on 7 July 1923 Patriarch Meletios IV of Constantinople accepted the Estonian church, granting it autonomous status, and naming Bishop Alexander metropolitan of Tallinn and all Estonia. In this instance also, the Moscow Patriarchate strenuously protested, and never recognised the Estonian church. Seventy years later, after the fall of the USSR, this issue was to revive.

Poland

The large Eastern Orthodox community in Poland also found it practically impossible to function within the Moscow Patriarchate, and appealed to the Ecumenical Patriarchate to grant autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in Poland. On 13 November 1924 Patriarch Gregorios VII of Constantinople granted this petition, with a *tomos*[11] which not only bestowed autocephaly on the church in Poland but also contained this significant paragraph:

> It is written in history that the forcible separation of the Kievan metropolia together with its subordinated eparchies in Poland and Lithuania from our see, and its annexation to the church of Moscow, occurred contrary to the codes of canon law. By this act, all rights which pertained to the full ecclesiastical autonomy of the Kievan metropolitan, who had the title of exarch to the Ecumenical Throne, were completely abrogated.

With these words the ecumenical patriarch reminded the Russian church that Moscow's jurisdiction over the Metropolitanate of Kiev (including both Ukraine and Belarus') is disputable. Since there has been a strong movement throughout the twentieth century for a Ukrainian Orthodox Church independent of Moscow, these words from Constantinople have alarmed the Russian Orthodox authorities ever since.

Latvia

In Latvia there was also a significant Orthodox community, with about 240,000 faithful (about 34 per cent of whom were ethnic Latvians), 163 parishes and 133 priests. Archbishop Ioann of Riga (an outspoken critic of the religious persecution in the Soviet Union), assigned by Patriarch Tikhon in April 1921, managed to administer the church until his assassination by a KGB agent in October 1934. Orthodox hierarchs came from Estonia and Poland for the funeral; there was now no Orthodox bishop in Latvia. Under the circumstances there was only one possible recourse: the Latvian assembly of Orthodox clergy and laity, supported by the Latvian government, petitioned the Ecumenical Patriarchate to accept the Latvian church and provide a new bishop. On 4 February 1936 Patriarch Veniaminos of Constantinople issued a *tomos* accepting the Latvian church, which consisted of the one diocese of

Riga, and setting forth the procedures for the election of the new bishop.[12]

Archpriest Augustin Peterson was elected, and ratified by the synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. On 29 March 1936 Metropolitan Germanos of Thyateira, Metropolitan Thomas of the Princes Isles, Metropolitan Konstantinos of Irinopolis, Metropolitan Alexander of Tallinn and Estonia and Archbishop Nikolai of Pechory consecrated the bishop-elect as Metropolitan Augustin of Riga and Latvia in the Orthodox Cathedral in Riga.[13] Later that year a suffragan bishop was also consecrated.

The situation of the Moscow Patriarchate at the time was particularly difficult;[14] it is not known whether Moscow made any formal response to the Ecumenical Patriarchate's intervention in Latvia.

Paris

Meanwhile, the situation in the Russian Orthodox diaspora was very complicated and confused. In Serbia a group of exiled hierarchs organised themselves into a 'Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia'; they had the consent of the Serbian church to function on its territory, and attempted to assert jurisdiction over Russian Orthodox ecclesiastical circumscriptions in other countries as well. This group had a strongly monarchist political agenda, which caused Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow to order the 'Synod Abroad', as it is sometimes called, to disband.

The Russian Orthodox archdiocese in France, headed by Metropolitan Yevlogi, with its centre at the beautiful St Aleksandr Nevsky Cathedral on the Rue Daru in Paris, was particularly influential; many Russian refugees came to France. Metropolitan Yevlogi organised the Saint Serge Theological Seminary and a Russian religious printing house with the cooperation of the YMCA; during the interwar period Paris became the most important intellectual meeting-place of the Russian diaspora. Metropolitan Yevlogi maintained a tenuous relationship with the Moscow Patriarchate for as long as possible, but by 1930 this became untenable. Yevlogi had participated in a prayer-service in London for the persecuted Russian church; in consequence the authorities of the Moscow Patriarchate, obviously acting under Soviet pressure, removed him and appointed another bishop – who refused the appointment. After consultations within the diocese Yevlogi decided to make use of the canonical right to appeal to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and went personally to Constantinople to present his case to Patriarch Photios II. The Ecumenical Patriarchate realised the situation of the church in the Soviet Union, and therefore accepted the appeal of Yevlogi; on 17 February 1931 the ecumenical patriarch issued a *tomos* accepting the Russian archdiocese in France and naming Yevlogi patriarchal exarch for Western Europe. This was stated to be a temporary measure, until such time as normal church life and administration were restored in Russia.[15]

The Second World War

As a result of the Hitler–Stalin pact the Soviet Union occupied western Ukraine, parts of Poland and Belarus' and the Baltic Republics (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) in September 1939. At that point the Moscow Patriarchate was at its lowest ebb (there were no more than four bishops outside prison, and probably fewer than 500 functioning churches in the entire Soviet Union outside the newly-occupied territories), but nevertheless the patriarchate[16] asserted jurisdiction in these territories with

considerable success. Moscow ignored the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church and the Autonomous Orthodox Churches of Latvia and Estonia, subordinating all the Orthodox directly to the Patriarchate of Moscow. Metropolitan Nikolai (Yarushevich) took charge of western Ukraine and Belarus'; Metropolitan Sergi (Voskresensky) took charge of the Baltic states. Altogether, the Moscow Patriarchate now had about 4000 functioning parishes.

Bishop Polykarp Sikorsky

These moves by the Moscow Patriarchate constituted an intrusion into the territories over which the Ecumenical Patriarchate had taken responsibility, but the latter does not seem to have reacted immediately; probably Constantinople was mindful of the war situation, and of the grave difficulties facing Orthodox Christians under Soviet administration. One specific matter, however, was to have enduring consequences: the case of Bishop Polykarp (Sikorsky) of Luts'k. He had become bishop in 1932, elected and consecrated by the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Poland. When the Soviet Union acquired Luts'k in 1939 Polykarp remained at his post. The Moscow Patriarchate claims that Polykarp recanted his adherence to the Polish Orthodox Church and accepted the position of bishop of Volodymyr-Volyns'ky in the Muscovite hierarchy. However, Moscow has never produced any documentary proof of this assertion. It is true that Polykarp concelebrated with Muscovite hierarchs, but since he had no reason to consider those hierarchs uncanonical (nor did the Polish Orthodox Church) his concelebrating with them does not compromise him.

When war broke out between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in 1941 Polykarp again remained in Luts'k. He welcomed the German army as liberators from the communists, and with an undetermined degree of consent from the Polish Orthodox Church he became the temporary administrator of the revived 'Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church', for which, together with other hierarchs of the Polish Church, he ordained new hierarchs.

The Moscow Patriarchate was doubly outraged at Polykarp's actions, and invoked the ultimate sanction: by decree of Metropolitan Sergi and the Holy Synod in Moscow Polykarp was degraded from holy orders and reduced to the rank of layman. According to Orthodox sacramental theology any sacraments or sacred rites performed by such a person are nothing but empty, blasphemous rituals, devoid of grace; but this penalty is of no effect if the juridical authority sentencing the offending party does not, in fact, have jurisdiction. Thus Moscow's failure to offer decisive proof that Polykarp had entered the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate in 1939 severely weakens Moscow's later action against him. At the time, Moscow notified all the Eastern patriarchates of Polykarp's 'degradation from holy orders'; Constantinople made no response, probably in view of the ongoing dispute about the status of the Orthodox Church of Poland.

At the end of the Second World War Polykarp and several other Ukrainian Orthodox hierarchs fled to Western Europe, where he continued to head the 'Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church'. Moscow insisted that not only was this an uncanonical body, but that its clergy were not really ordained at all, since Polykarp had purported to ordain and consecrate them after he had been defrocked. Other Orthodox in the diaspora tended to be somewhat more tolerant of the 'Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church', but Moscow remained unreconciled. Polykarp died in 1953; unfortunately the controversy did not die with him.[17]

Moscow and Poland

As the war in Eastern Europe drew to a close the Soviet Army occupied areas assigned to it in the Yalta agreements. The Moscow Patriarchate followed closely. It again appropriated the Orthodox communities in the Baltic states, assumed jurisdiction over the large Orthodox communities in western Ukraine and Belarus' which became part of the USSR, and gained jurisdiction over the Orthodox in Transcarpathia (transferred from Czechoslovakia to the Soviet Union in 1945), Czechoslovakia and Hungary, where the Ecumenical Patriarchate claimed jurisdiction. In 1948 it manipulated events in Poland so that the Polish government unilaterally removed Metropolitan Dionysius as head of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland, and the remainder of this church 'repudiated' the *tomos* of autocephaly which the Ecumenical Patriarchate had issued in 1924 and requested a fresh grant of autocephaly, this time from the Moscow Patriarchate, which Moscow bestowed on 22 June 1948. Moscow then 'loaned' Metropolitan Makari (Oksiyuk) as the new head of the Polish church. The Ecumenical Patriarchate never recognised these manoeuvres, and continued to list Metropolitan Dionysius as the legitimate head of the Polish Orthodox Church until he died in 1960.

The 1948 Moscow Conference

In February 1945 Metropolitan Aleksi (Simansky) of Leningrad was elected patriarch of Moscow. In May and June 1945 the new patriarch made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land; he visited the Eastern Orthodox patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, but pointedly avoided the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.[18] The Moscow Patriarchate then decided to host elaborate celebrations in 1948 marking the four hundredth anniversary of the autocephaly of the Russian Orthodox Church. Even the date was an insult to Constantinople: in 1448 the church of Moscow unilaterally broke with Constantinople (over the Union of Florence); Constantinople did not recognise Muscovite autocephaly until 1589.

The Moscow Patriarchate made every possible effort to transform the 1948 celebrations into a pan-Orthodox synod and usurp the position of *primus inter pares* in the Orthodox world. Constantinople pointed out that only the Ecumenical Patriarchate may convene such pan-Orthodox synods, and Moscow's attempt did not succeed; none of the four Eastern patriarchs attended at all. The patriarchs of Constantinople and Antioch each sent representatives, but instructed them to take part only in the festivities, not in the consultations. The only Orthodox churches which participated fully were those inside the Soviet-controlled areas of Eastern Europe. Moscow published the proceedings of the conference, but they have no standing in Orthodox canon law.

Autocephaly for Czechoslovakia

In that same year, 1948, the communists came to power in Czechoslovakia. In 1950 the communist government suppressed the Greek-Catholic Church;[19] in consequence the Orthodox Church under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate claimed 400,000 members.[20] The Moscow Patriarchate unilaterally granted 'autocephaly' to the Orthodox Church of Czechoslovakia on 8 December 1951, without reference either to the Ecumenical Patriarchate or to Archbishop Savvatios of Prague, who belonged to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Ecumenical Patriarchate

never recognised this autocephaly; in practice Moscow continued to supply hierarchs to the Church of Czechoslovakia to a significant extent.[21] In popular perception this church was considered very closely tied to the Soviet Union. This impression was strengthened when the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968; several Orthodox priests, in vestments and carrying hand crosses, actually welcomed the invaders.[22]

The Priest who Married after Ordination

In the United States a minor controversy over one particular clergyman[23] irritated relations between Moscow and Constantinople for three decades. A bishop of the Greek Orthodox archdiocese (under Constantinople) in the USA ordained this man as a celibate priest in 1941. In 1946 the priest married, contrary to Orthodox canon law.[24] His bishop, evidently applying the principle of *ekonomia*,[25] permitted the priest to undergo a period of penance and then return to the active priesthood.[26] In itself, this was irregular but not altogether unprecedented.

During his period of penance the priest completed his doctoral studies; when he was permitted to return to the active priesthood he founded a new parish, which has flourished, and became prominently involved in certain pan-Orthodox activities, to the annoyance of higher authorities of the Greek Orthodox archdiocese in the USA. Seeking a means to curtail the priest's activity, these authorities discovered his irregular marital status, and brought the matter directly to the attention of Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople, who issued a solemn synodical decree deposing the man from the Orthodox priesthood. However, both the priest himself and his bishop learned what was afoot, and approached the Moscow Patriarchate's exarch in the USA, Metropolitan Borys (Vik). The original bishop released the priest and his parish to the Moscow Patriarchate, and Metropolitan Borys issued a decree accepting them; all the papers were carefully (and honestly) dated before the decree of deposition was issued in Constantinople. As a result, the deposition of the priest was defective: he had never been officially notified of any ecclesiastical trial against him, nor given an opportunity to defend himself, and on the date when the decree was issued he was not a subject of the Patriarchate of Constantinople at all, but rather a clergyman of the Patriarchate of Moscow. Despite these canonical niceties, the authorities of the Greek archdiocese in the USA were very angry.

Their anger was compounded when the priest achieved further prominence during his service to the Moscow Patriarchate: he was elevated to the rank of dean, made a mitred archpriest, and awarded the patriarchal cross; several times he represented the Moscow Patriarchate during meetings of the National Council of Churches in the USA. To each such complaint, Moscow's representatives responded by offering photocopies of the canonical release the priest had received from his original bishop, and inviting the Greek Orthodox archdiocese to submit any documentation which might have bearing on the priest's status. The Greek archdiocese never formally submitted such documentation; it has been suggested that their attorneys advised them that were they to do so the priest would have had grounds for a civil suit against the archdiocese, and the archdiocese had already suffered from such litigation in other cases. When the priest died in 1983 the Moscow Patriarchate's Archbishop Clement buried him from his parish church with full ecclesiastical honours; the local Greek Orthodox priest attended the funeral but did not vest and remained in the nave, not in the sanctuary, throughout the service.

The Second Vatican Council and Relations with Old Rome

One of the chief aims of Pope John XXIII in summoning the Second Vatican Council was the promotion of better relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. In this aim Pope John had the strong support of Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople. The ecumenical patriarch did not wish to act unilaterally, however; Athenagoras wanted to be certain that sending observers to the Council would not divide the Orthodox world. For its part, the Moscow Patriarchate seemed strongly opposed to the idea.

The Moscow Patriarchate had never been friendly to the Roman Catholic Church. During the Second World War the Moscow Patriarchate accused the Roman Catholic Church of supporting the Nazis. After the war the Patriarchate was actively implicated in the suppression of the Greek-Catholics in Ukraine and Czechoslovakia, and may have been involved in the Soviet attempts to create a 'National Catholic Church' in Lithuania. At the above-mentioned conference in 1948, and on other occasions, the Moscow Patriarchate frequently attacked the Vatican.[27] Throughout Eastern Europe Catholics had a very difficult life under communist persecution; any rapprochement between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Vatican seemed unlikely. Patriarch Aleksi I of Moscow notified Patriarchate Athenagoras that he believed it would not be appropriate for Orthodox observers to attend the Second Vatican Council; regretfully, the ecumenical patriarch notified the Holy See accordingly.[28]

The next day, the Moscow Patriarchate sent a telegram to the Vatican informing the Holy See that Moscow was despatching two Russian Orthodox observers, Archimandrite Vladimir (Kotlyarov) and Archpriest Vitali Borovoy. Thus Moscow was represented at the first session of the ecumenical movement. And (although certain Catholic ecumenists in Rome hotly dispute this) it is true that the Moscow Patriarchate was Rome's main ecumenical partner in the Orthodox world from the opening of the Second Vatican Council until the collapse of the Soviet Union; several important Catholic ecumenists still strongly favour Moscow. This relationship between Moscow and Rome peaked on 16 December 1969, when Metropolitan Aleksi (Ridiger) of Tallinn[29] announced that the Holy Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate had decided to permit Catholics to receive holy communion in Russian Orthodox churches.[30] As one Orthodox critic expressed it, Constantinople had been mightily upstaged.[31]

Again the Russians in France

As mentioned earlier, the Russian Orthodox archdiocese in France had been under the Ecumenical Patriarchate since 1930, as a special exarchate. At the end of the Second World War Moscow tried to convince this group to return to the Moscow Patriarchate voluntarily, but after some negotiations which at first seemed positive the Russian Orthodox community in France preferred to remain with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Moscow considered this a grievance against Constantinople and continued to demand that the Ecumenical Patriarchate require this community to return to the Muscovite obedience. In 1965, reluctantly and under tremendous pressure from Moscow, Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople notified the Paris Exarchate that it should return to Moscow.[32] Instead, the Paris jurisdiction proclaimed itself an independent archdiocese; after six years the Ecumenical Patriarchate accepted it back again in 1971.[33] At the time of writing, the Russian archdiocese in France remains attached to the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Autocephaly in America

The first Orthodox missionaries in North America (in Alaska) came from the Russian Orthodox Church, and until the Russian Revolution the only Orthodox bishops in North America belonged to the Russian church, although even before the Revolution there were a few parishes of various nationalities which depended directly on their mother churches in their different countries of origin rather than on the Russian Orthodox hierarchs in America.

As a secondary result of the Russian Revolution, Orthodox ecclesiastical administration in North America disintegrated.[34] The Greeks, Serbs, Arabs, Romanians and other ethnic groups organised jurisdictions of their own, depending on the mother churches in their home countries (the Greek archdiocese, the largest Orthodox jurisdiction in America, depends directly upon the Ecumenical Patriarchate). What remained of the Russian Orthodox Church in North America (reduced to the large communities of Ukrainians and Carpatho-Russians, since Great Russian emigration to the US before the Russian Revolution had not been numerous) was in chaos. Eventually, from a situation of *sauve qui peut*, several competing jurisdictions emerged; the largest of these, called the Russian Orthodox Greek-Catholic Church of North America, or simply 'the Metropolia', had no direct connection with any Orthodox local church and described itself as 'temporarily autonomous'. In May 1966 this church attempted to seek refuge within the Ecumenical Patriarchate, but Patriarch Athenagoras insisted that the Metropolia had to address itself to the Moscow Patriarchate. In June 1967 the Ecumenical Patriarchate instructed the Greek Orthodox archdiocese in the USA to suspend eucharistic communion with the Metropolia.[35] One assumes that this step was taken in response to pressure from the Moscow Patriarchate.

In 1968 and 1969, therefore, the leaders of the Metropolia entered into negotiations with the Moscow Patriarchate.[36] The result came as a shock to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and to the rest of the Orthodox world: on 31 March 1970 Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad and Metropolitan Irenei of the Russian Orthodox Greek-Catholic Church of North America signed a contractual agreement, under the terms of which the Moscow Patriarchate granted autocephaly to the American church – which changed its name to 'The Orthodox Church in America'.[37]

The Ecumenical Patriarchate, and most of the Orthodox world, perceived this development as a *coup d'église*, and refused to grant formal recognition to this 'autocephalous' church. The patriarch of Alexandria issued a formal letter of condemnation and non-recognition on 16 December 1970;[38] the patriarch of Antioch did the same on 22 July 1971.[39] The patriarch of Jerusalem issued a longer letter on 17 March 1971;[40] this letter was even more critical of the 'autocephaly' as 'more of a commercial agreement, contrary to any kind of ecclesiastical order'. The Church of Jerusalem 'utterly denounces the anticanonical, novel, and self-invalidating autocephaly of the Russian Metropolia in America and considers it non-existent and never proclaimed, and the *tomos* as never having been issued'. On 23 March 1971 Archbishop Ieronymos (Kotsonis) of Athens, a particularly noteworthy Orthodox theologian and head of the Church of Greece, addressed a lengthy analysis of the matter directly to Metropolitan Pimen, *locum tenens* of the Moscow Patriarchate (and later patriarch); he also rejected the 'autocephaly' for America in courteous but uncompromising terms.[41] Even some of the local Orthodox churches in the communist countries (such as the Patriarchate of Romania) declined to recognise the 'autocephaly' of the Metropolia.

At the time, certain hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate offered the view that the Metropolia in the USA could be the nucleus for a united Orthodox Church in North America. Events did not so develop. The Ecumenical Patriarchate adamantly refused, then and since, to recognise the autocephaly of the Metropolia, and took good care to avoid any act which might be construed as recognition.

The Millennium of the Baptism of Kievan Rus'

Several aspects of this affair remain unexplained. Patriarch Dimitrios of Constantinople visited the Moscow Patriarchate in 1987; it was the first time since 1589 that an ecumenical patriarch had visited the Russian church. Everything seemed to go very well; Moscow invited him to return the following year as the guest of honour for the celebrations of the Millennium of the Baptism of Kievan Rus'.[42] Grand celebrations were planned for Moscow, with provincial celebrations in Kiev[43] and other centres. But in the spring of 1988, for reasons which have never been disclosed, Patriarch Dimitrios not only declined to attend in person but refused to send an official delegation, and forbade any hierarchs or clergy who might be going privately to take part in joint services.[44]

Constantinople and Ukraine

As mentioned earlier, Constantinople regards Moscow's claim to jurisdiction in Ukraine as open to question. So far as Ukraine itself was concerned, Constantinople did not interfere, beyond stating that it continued to recognise the Moscow Patriarchate's exclusive jurisdiction within the original territory of the Moscow Patriarchate (that is, the territory of Muscovy as constituted in 1589). As may be noted from the events recounted above, the Ecumenical Patriarchate does not as a rule become involved in disputes elsewhere in the Orthodox world unless it is invited to do so.

After the Second World War Constantinople gave full recognition to only one small Ukrainian Orthodox group in the diaspora: the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of America and Canada. This group had no connection with the Ukrainian autocephalous movement; it had begun in Pennsylvania and was always a simple diocese of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. However, while not actually recognising the Ukrainian autocephalous groups, Constantinople managed to maintain friendly relations with them, providing chrism[45] to the Ukrainian Orthodox hierarchs upon request.

In 1990, after several years of delicate negotiations, these contacts proved successful in Canada, where the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada (the largest Ukrainian Orthodox body in the diaspora) formally accepted the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and was received as a metropolitanate of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Moscow Patriarchate does not appear to have protested, which seems strange.

In 1994, the Patriarchate of Constantinople also received the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA, with dependent dioceses in Western Europe and South America. Most of the hierarchs actually came to Constantinople and concelebrated the liturgy with the ecumenical patriarch on the Sunday of Orthodoxy. This time Moscow protested more strenuously, insisting that the Ukrainian hierarchs were invalidly ordained and demanding that Constantinople rescind the acceptance of this church. Patriarch Vartholomaios responded that Constantinople, not Moscow, had jurisdiction in the diaspora, that Moscow had done nothing positive for the Ukrainian

Orthodox in the emigration but rather had made it difficult for this flock to find a canonical situation, and that whatever might have happened in the 1920s or the years of the Second World War it was unjust to penalise Ukrainian Orthodox Christians of the 1990s on those grounds.

The real issue underlying the quarrel is the church in Ukraine itself. Constantinople has not touched Ukraine directly, but the Ukrainian Orthodox churches in Canada and the USA which are now part of the Ecumenical Patriarchate are in quite open contact with the two Ukrainian autocephalous bodies in Ukraine. In deference to the policy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, actual eucharistic concelebration with the autocephalous bodies in Ukraine is avoided, but other forms of support are maintained publicly. This of course infuriates the Moscow Patriarchate.

The 1996 Break

Despite this history, observers were deeply shocked when the patriarch of Moscow actually ceased commemorating the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople in the diptychs. Each of the previous controversies during the twentieth century had been successfully 'localised'; there was never a moment when the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Patriarchate of Moscow, as such, were out of communion. Now that it has happened, some of Moscow's more enthusiastic supporters are suggesting that the time has come for Moscow finally to gain the quasi-universal primacy of the Orthodox world: that the patriarch of Moscow, rather than the patriarch of Constantinople, should be the *primus inter pares*, and that the 'Third Rome' (Moscow) should replace 'New Rome' (Constantinople).

Moscow has cherished this ambition since the sixteenth century, and is unlikely to succeed. Because the Russian church has the largest number of faithful, and has at times been allied with Russian state power in pursuit of hegemony, the rest of the Orthodox world tends to be wary of the Moscow Patriarchate, and to consider that it is well for Orthodoxy that the primacy should remain with Constantinople, which 'renders service by the strength which God supplies' (I Peter 4:11).

Notes and references

[1] Robert Taft, *A History of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, vol. IV, *The Diptychs* (Rome, Orientalia Christiana Analecta, no. 238, 1991) gives an exhaustive study of the diptychs and their significance.

[2] The number is controversial, as will be seen below.

[3] This Greek word literally means 'self-headedness'.

[4] In principle, and in canonical texts, this first place belongs to the pope of Rome, and the patriarch of Constantinople ranks next to the pope; but since the Eastern Orthodox Church and the pope of Rome have not been in communion for centuries, the pope's primatial function somehow devolves upon the patriarch of Constantinople.

[5] The term 'ecumenical' in the title of the patriarch of Constantinople does not imply universal jurisdiction; he is the 'ecumenical' patriarch because he is the patriarch of the imperial city, and therefore of the Roman Empire.

[6] Patriarch Gregorios VII of Constantinople urged Patriarch Tikhon to resign 'for the sake of peace', and considered that whichever faction the Soviet government was prepared to accept should be recognised by the church. See Anatoli Levitin and Vadim Shavrov, *Ocherki po istorii russkoi tserkovnoi smuty* (Zollikon, Glaube in der 2. Welt, 1977), pp. 310–13.

[7] The 'Living Church' permitted married bishops, among other serious departures from the Orthodox faith and practice.

[8] General Mannerheim successfully defended Finland against an attempted Soviet invasion.

[9] In Eastern Orthodox canonical terminology an 'autonomous' church has a high degree of self-government but still depends upon its mother church in two important ways: the mother church is the appeal court of highest instance; and while the autonomous church may elect its own bishops, the synod of the mother church must ratify the election.

[10] The Finnish Orthodox Church is remarkably active both in pan-Orthodox initiatives and in the ecumenical movement.

[11] *Tomos* of His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Gregorios VII of Constantinople, 13 November 1924.

[12] The text of the *tomos* is in Protopresbyter Alexander Cherney, *The Latvian Orthodox Church* (Powys, Stylite Publishing, 1985), pp. 46–47.

[13] Cherney, *op. cit.*, quotes lengthy newspaper articles of the period describing the ordination service and festivities.

[14] There was no patriarch of Moscow at the time; Metropolitan Sergi was functioning as 'Acting Deputy *Locum Tenens*'.

[15] Mitropolit Yevlogi, *Put' moyei zhizni* (Paris, YMCA Press, 1947), pp. 566–75.

[16] The patriarchate was still led by Metropolitan Sergi, who by this time was styled 'His Beatitude the Patriarchal *Locum Tenens*, Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna'.

[17] Moscow gave its version of Polikarp Sikorsky's career in *Pravda o religii v Rossii* (Moscow Patriarchate, 1942), pp. 128–45.

[18] The 'pentarchy' of Orthodox ecclesiology consists of the pope of Rome and the patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. In the absence of the pope, the remaining four patriarchs constitute the 'pentarchy'.

[19] Michael Lacko, *The Forced Liquidation of the Union of Užhorod* (Rome, Slovak Institute, 1961), pp. 158–85 describes the events in Czechoslovakia in detail.

[20] The restoration of the Greek-Catholic Church in 1968 was to demonstrate the weakness of this claim; after 1968 the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia had at most 50,000 faithful.

[21] The communist government in Czechoslovakia did not permit monastic life, so there was inevitably a shortage of candidates for the Orthodox episcopate.

[22] Michael Lacko, *The Re-Establishment of the Greek-Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia* (Cleveland-Rome, Slovak Institute, 1971), p. 169.

[23] Although this cleric is now dead, one still prefers to avoid identifying him by name.

[24] The Orthodox Church permits the ordination of a married man to the priesthood, but no priest may marry. Thus a man must either be married prior to his ordination to the diaconate, or accept the obligation of never marrying.

[25] The Orthodox canonical principle which sometimes permits exceptions to the strict application of the canons, for pastoral reasons and for the greater good of the church.

[26] The priest in question served the church without financial remuneration, and supported himself by his work as a university professor. Despite the controversy, his priestly service was outstanding and fruitful.

[27] Nevertheless, at the 1948 conference Patriarch Aleksi I of Moscow described Roman Catholicism as a 'sister church' to Eastern Orthodoxy; this term was to take on weighty significance in the Theological Dialogue between Orthodoxy and Catholicism.

[28] Communiqué of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at the start of the Second Vatican Council, 10 October 1962, in E. J. Stormon (ed.), *Towards the Healing of Schism* (Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 42–43.

[29] Now Patriarch Aleksi II of Moscow.

[30] *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, vol. 1, 1970, p. 5.

[31] Father Nicetas Pallasis, *Orthodox Christian Witness* (Seattle), January 1970.

[32] Letters of Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople to Patriarch Aleksi I of Moscow, 10 and 22 November 1965.

[33] A. Kazem-Bek, 'Histoire et situation présente du schisme parisien', *Istina*, Paris, no. 16, 1971.

[34] Funds and direction from the Holy Synod in St Petersburg were cut off. To increase the

confusion Archbishop Yevdokim (Meshchersky), who had been the head of the archdiocese in the USA, joined the Living Church and never returned to America. Archbishop Aleksandr (Nemelovsky) also left America in 1922, and likewise never returned.

[35] Constance Tarasar and John Erickson (eds.), *Orthodox America 1794–1976* (Syosset, Orthodox Church in America, 1975), p. 263.

[36] *ibid.*

[37] Patriarch Aleksi I of Moscow and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church issued the *tomos* of autocephaly on 10 April 1970.

[38] Text in *Russian Autocephaly and Orthodoxy in America* (Orthodox Observer Press, 1972), pp. 45–46.

[39] Text in *ibid.*, p. 47.

[40] Text in *ibid.*, pp. 48–52.

[41] Text in *ibid.*, pp. 53–67.

[42] Saint Volodymyr, grand prince of Kiev, is thought to have been baptised in the year 988 by missionaries from Constantinople.

[43] Ukrainians, both Catholic and Orthodox, were angry that the principal celebrations were taking place in Moscow instead of Kiev.

[44] The Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Bishop Nicholas of Amissos, head of Constantinople's Carpatho-Russian Orthodox diocese in the USA, was to find this restriction embarrassing. Bishop Nicholas had organised a group of pilgrims from his American flock to go to the Soviet Union for the celebrations.

[45] Needed for the celebration of the sacrament of chrismation or confirmation, and for certain other sacred rites such as the consecration of an altar.