THE FREE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH:

God demands the following three virtues of every baptized Christian: from the soul - true faith, from the body - chastity, from the tongue - truth. (St Gregory the Theologian)


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Introduction

When the Soviet Union fell in 1991, the "second administration" of the Soviet government, the Soviet Moscow Patriarchate, continued to exist virtually unchanged, only changing its political orientation from pro-communist to pro-democratic. At this time the leadership of the healthy ecclesiastical forces opposed to the Moscow Patriarchate (MP) inside Russia was assumed by the Free Russian Orthodox Church (FROC). This article consists of a short history of the FROC and a canonical justification of its independent existence.

1. Origins

The origins of the FROC go back to January 5/18, 1981, when a priest of the Russian Catacomb Church, Fr. Lazarus (Zhurbenko), was secretly received into the West European diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCA) by Archbishop Anthony of Geneva and Western Europe (ukaz no. 648/818/2). Shortly after this, in 1982, another cleric of the West European diocese, Fr. Barnabas (Prokofiev), was secretly consecrated as Bishop of Cannes and sent to Moscow, where he consecrated Fr. Lazarus to the episcopate. The candidacy of Fr. Lazarus had been put forward by the dissident MP priest, Fr. Demetrius Dudko, with whom Archbishop Anthony had entered into correspondence.[1]

On August 1/14, 1990, the Chancellery of the ROCA decided to throw some light on this secret consecration by issuing the following statement: "In 1982 his Eminence Anthony, Archbishop of Geneva and Western Europe, together with his Eminence Mark, Bishop of Berlin and Germany, on the orders of the Hierarchical Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, secretly performed an episcopal consecration on Hieromonk Barnabas (Prokofiev), so that through the cooperation of these archpastors the Church life of the Catacomb Orthodox Church in Russia might be regulated. Since external circumstances no longer compel either his Eminence Bishop Lazarus in Russia, or his Eminence Bishop Barnabas in France to remain as secret
Hierarchs of our Russian Church Abroad, the Hierarchical Synod is now officially declaring this fact."[2]

This was an ominous phrase: "so that... the Church life of the Catacomb Orthodox Church in Russia might be regulated". No indication was given as to why the life of the Catacomb Church needed regulating from abroad, nor how it was proposed that this regulation should be accomplished (apart from the consecration of a hierarch), nor whether the consent of the Catacomb Church to such a regulation had been sought or received, nor what canonical right the ROCA had to regulate the life of the Catacomb Church.[3]

In actual fact the consent of the Catacomb Church, was neither asked nor given.....[4]

Be that as it may, the ROCA now had the beginnings of a secret hierarchy in the Soviet Union. This hierarchy began to act in the spring of 1990, when the first substantial signs of the collapse of Communism and a measure of ecclesiastical freedom were becoming evident. Thus Bishop Lazarus flew to New York, where his consecration was confirmed by the Synod of the ROCA; and believers throughout Russia became aware that the ROCA had entered into combat with the Moscow Patriarchate on Russian soil.

The first parish to leave the Moscow Patriarchate and officially join the ROCA was that of St. Constantine the Great in Suzdal, Vladimir province, whose pastor was Archimandrite Valentine (Rusantsov). As Fr. Valentine told the story: "In the Vladimir diocese I served as dean. I was a member of the diocesan administration, was for a time diocesan secretary and had responsibility for receiving guests in this diocese. And then I began to notice that I was being gradually, quietly removed. Perhaps this happened because I very much disliked prayers with people of other faiths. It’s one thing to drink tea with guests, and quite another.. to pray together with them, while the guests, it has to be said, were of all kinds: both Buddhists, and Muslims, and Satanists. I did not like these ecumenical prayers, and I did not hide this dislike of mine.

"And so at first they removed me from working with the guests, and then deprived me of the post of secretary, and then excluded me from the diocesan council. Once after my return from a trip abroad, the local hierarch Valentine (Mischchuk) summoned me and said: ‘Sit down and write a report for the whole year about what foreigners were with you, what you talked about with them, what questions they asked you and what answers you gave them.’ ‘Why is this necessary?’ ‘It’s just necessary,’ replied the bishop. ‘I don’t understand where I am, Vladyko – in the study of a hierarch or in the study of a KGB operative? No, I’ve never done this and never will do it. And remember that I am a priest and not a "stooge".’ ‘Well if you’re not going to do it, I will transfer you to another parish.’

"And so the next day came the ukaz concerning my transfer to the out-of-the-way place Pokrov. I was upset, but after all I had to obey, it was a hierarch’s ukaz. But suddenly something unexpected happened – my parishioners rebelled against this decision, people began to send letters to the representatives of the authorities expressing their dissatisfaction with my transfer: our parishioners even hired buses to go to the capital and protest.
"The patriarchate began to admonish them, suggested ‘a good batyushka’, Demetrius Nyetsvetayev, who was constantly on trips abroad, in exchange. ‘We don’t need your batyushka,’ said the parishioners, ‘we know this kind, today he’ll spy on foreigners, tomorrow on the unbelievers of Suzdal, and then he’ll begin to reveal the secret of parishioners’ confessions.’ In general, our parishioners just didn’t accept Nyetsvetayev. They didn’t even let him into the church. The whole town was aroused, and the parishioners came to me: ‘Fr. Valentine, what shall we do?’ At that point I told them that I had passed my childhood among the ‘Tikhonites’ [Catacomb Christians], and that there is a ‘Tikhonite Church’ existing in exile. If we write to their first-hierarch, Metropolitan Vitaly, and he accepts us – will you agree to be under his omophorion? The church people declared their agreement. However, this attempt to remove me did not pass without a trace, I was in hospital as a result of an attack of nerves. And so, at the Annunciation, I receive the news that our parish had been received into the ROCA."[5]

On June 8/21, 1990, the feast of St. Theodore, the enlightener of Suzdal, the ROCA hierarchs Mark of Berlin, Hilarion of Manhattan and Lazarus of Tambov celebrated the first hierarchical liturgy in the St. Constantine parish.[6] Then, in February, 1991 Archimandrite Valentine was consecrated as Bishop of Suzdal and Vladimir in Brussels by hierarchs of the ROCA. There now began a rapid growth in the number of parishes joining the ROCA on Russian soil, including many communities of the Catacomb Church. Most of these joined the Suzdal diocese under Bishop Valentine, but many also joined the Tambov diocese of Bishop Lazarus and the Kuban diocese of Bishop Benjamin. The ROCA inside Russia was now called the Free Russian Orthodox Church (FROC).

2. First Signs of Division

Now where truth and Christian piety flourishes the devil is sure to interfere. And at this point he inspired certain hierarchs of the ROCA to hinder the work of the FROC hierarchs by a series of anti-canonical actions.

In 1991 the Hierarchical Synod of the ROCA decided to organize church life in Russia on the principle of non-territoriality. As Archbishop Lazarus explained: "The Hierarchical Synod decreed equal rights for us three Russian hierarchs. If someone from the patriarchate wants to join Vladyka Valentine – please. If he wants to join Vladyka Benjamin or me – please. So far the division [of dioceses] is only conditional – more exactly, Russia is in the position of a missionary region. Each of us can receive parishes in any part of the country. For the time being it is difficult to define the boundaries of dioceses."[7]

This decision led to some conflicts between the FROC bishops, but not serious ones. However, it was a different matter when bishops from abroad began to interfere. As early as July, 1990 Archbishop Lazarus told the present writer that if Archbishop Mark of Germany continued to interfere in Russia he might be compelled to form an autonomous Church. But Archbishop Mark did not stop. He ordained a priest for St. Petersburg, a "Special German
deanery" under the Monk Ambrose (von Sievers), who later founded his own Synod, and in general acted as if Russia were an extension of the German diocese.

In November, 1991 a correspondent of a church bulletin asked Bishop Valentine about Archbishop Mark’s role. The reply was carefully weighed: "When the situation in Russia was still in an embryonic stage, Archbishop Mark with the agreement of the first-hierarch of the ROCA made various attempts to build church life in Russia. One of Archbishop Mark’s experiments was the ‘special German deanery’ headed by Fr. Ambrose (Sievers). Now this is changing, insofar as the situation in the FROC has been sufficiently normalized. From now on not one hierarch will interfere in Russian affairs – except, it goes without saying, the three hierarchs of the FROC."[8]

In 1992, however, Archbishop Mark’s interference did not only not cease, but became more intense, and was now directed particularly against the most successful and prominent of the FROC hierarchs, Bishop Valentine. Thus while calling for official negotiations with the Moscow Patriarchate[9], Mark called on believers in a publicly distributed letter "to distance yourselves from Bishop Valentine of the Suzdal and Vladimir diocese of the Free Russian Orthodox Church", described the clergy in obedience to Bishop Valentine as "wolves in sheep’s clothing", and told them to turn instead to Fr. Sergius Perekrestov (a priest who was later defrocked for adultery before leaving the FROC). A priest of the Moscow Patriarchate interpreted this letter to mean that the ROCA had "turned its back on the Suzdal diocese of the FROC".[10]

In a letter to Metropolitan Vitaly dated December 25, 1992, Bishop Valentine complained that Archbishop Mark’s attacks against him had been distributed, not only to members of the Synod, but also to laypeople and even in churches of the Moscow Patriarchate. And he went on: "On the basis of the above positions I have the right to confirm that after my consecration to the episcopate his Eminence Vladyka Mark did everything to cause a quarrel between me and their Eminences Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin…

"It is interesting that when their Eminences Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin, by virtue of the Apostolic canons and their pastoral conscience, adopted, with me, a principled position on the question of his Eminence Archbishop Mark’s claims to administer Russian parishes, the latter simply dismissed the two hierarchs as being incapable of administration… Then Archbishop Mark began to accuse me of ‘lifting everything under myself like a bulldozer’. Therefore his Eminence Mark chose a different tactic. He wrote a letter to Kaliningrad, calling me ‘a wolf in sheep’s clothing’, and this letter was read out from the ambon in the churches of the Moscow patriarchate.

"Yesterday I was told that his Eminence Archbishop Mark sent a fax to the Synod insistently recommending that his Eminence Barnabas not be recalled from Moscow until a church trial had been carried out on Valentine. What trial, for what? For everything that I have done, for all my labours? Does not putting me on trial mean they want to put you, too, on trial? Does this not mean that it striking me with their fist they get at you with their elbow?"[11]

The reference to Bishop Barnabas is explained as follows. In February, 1992 he had been sent to Moscow as superior of the community of SS. Martha and Mary in Moscow, which was
designated the Synodal podvorye. Then, on August 3, he organized "a conference of the clergy with the aim of organizing the Moscow diocesan organization of our Church. The conference was attended by more than ten clergy from Moscow and other parts of Russia. In his speech before the participants Vladyka pointed out the necessity of creating a diocesan administration which would unite all the parishes of the FROC in Moscow and Moscow region, and also those parishes in other regions of Russia which wanted to unite with this diocesan administration."

"At the diocesan conference… a diocesan council was elected, containing three members of the National Patriotic Front, Pamyat’, as representatives of the laity."[13]

This was a double blow to the FROC. First, the appointment of a foreign bishop with almost unlimited powers in Russia was a direct affront to the attempts of the Russian bishops to prevent foreign interference in their dioceses. The encroachment of the foreign bishops on the canonical rights of the Russian bishops was becoming increasingly scandalous. (According to the holy canons (8th of the 3rd Ecumenical Council, 9th of Antioch, 64th and 67th of Carthage) no bishop can encroach on the territory of another bishop or perform any sacramental action in it without his permission.) Secondly, Bishop Barnabas’ open endorsement of the fascist organization Pamyat’, which organized provocative demonstrations and even an attack on the offices of Moskovskij Komsomolets, scandalized church opinion both in Russia and outside.

On October 25 / November 7, 1992, Metropolitan Vitaly and the Synod of the ROCA acted to distance themselves from the activities of Bishop Barnabas, sending Bishop Hilarion and Fr. Victor Potapov to Moscow to express the official position of the ROCA at a press conference; which duly took place on November 13. However, in February, 1993, at a meeting of the Synod in New York, it was decided to reject this press-conference as "provocative" and to praise one of the pro-fascist priests, Fr. Alexis Averyanov, for his "fruitful work with Pamyat’", bestowing on him an award for his "stand for righteousness". Moreover, no action was taken against Bishop Barnabas, while Fr. Victor was forbidden to undertake any ecclesiastical or public activity in Russia.[14]

The year 1993 brought no relief for the beleagured FROC bishops from their foreign brothers. Thus when the large and prosperous parish of the MP in Naginsk under its very popular pastor, Archimandrite Adrian, applied to come under the omophorion of Bishop Valentine, and was accepted by him on January 18, Bishop Barnabas interfered and suggested they come under his omophorion – which offer was politely but firmly turned down. At the same time the MP circulated an accusation - signed by a woman but with no other indication of time, place or names of witnesses of the supposed crime - that Archimandrite Adrian had raped one altar boy and had had improper relations with another. This accusation turned out to be completely fabricated – the "raped" altar boy wrote a letter of apology to Fr. Adrian and the letter was accepted by the prosecutor in the criminal court. Both youngsters were then sued for stealing icons...

In spite of this, Bishop Barnabas, without any kind of investigation or trial, suspended the archimandrite and wanted to depose Bishop Valentine for accepting such a pervert into his diocese. The Russian newspapers pointed out that Bishop Barnabas seemed to be partially supporting the patriarchate in the struggle for this parish – in which, as Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) pointed out, the KGB appeared also to be operating.[15] Nevertheless, several ROCA bishops
wanted to proceed with defrocking Bishop Valentine; but the decision was made to retire him instead on grounds of his ill-health – a completely uncanonical decision since neither had Bishop Valentine petitioned for his retirement nor had the ROCA bishops investigated his state of health.

But worse was to come. Bishop Barnabas wrote to Metropolitan Vladimir (Romanyuk) of the uncanonical Ukrainian Autocephalous Church seeking to enter into communion with him, and followed this up by visiting him in Kiev. The Moscow Patriarchate gleefully displayed this letter as proof of the ROCA’s incompetence, and it was only with the greatest difficulty (and delay) that the Synod, spurred on by Fr. Victor and Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) outside Russia, and by Bishop Valentine inside Russia, began to extricate themselves from this scandal.

A recent publication summed up Bishop Barnabas’ contribution to Russian Church life in this year: "In the shortest time [he] introduced the completest chaos[16] into the life of the Free Church, which was beginning to be reborn. This representative of the Synod began, above the heads of the Diocesan Bishops of the Free Church in Russia, and in violation of the basic canonical rules, to receive into his jurisdiction clerics who had been banned from serving by them, to carry out ordinations in their dioceses without their knowledge, and finally was not ashamed to demand, at the Council in 1993, that he should be given rights to administer all the parishes of the Free Church in Russia![17] This request was not granted by the Council, the more so in that it learned that ‘the empowered representative of the Synod of the Russian Church Abroad in Moscow’, on writing-paper of the Hierarchical Synod, wrote a petition to ‘the Locum Tenens of the Kievan Patriarchal Throne’, Metropolitan Vladimir (Romanyuk), in which it said that ‘the traitrous Muscovite scribblers hired by the Moscow Patriarchate are trying to trample into the mud the authority of the Russian Church Abroad. In this connection: we beseech you, Your Eminence, through the Kievan Patriarchate headed by you, to give our ecclesiastical activity a juridical base and receive us into brotherly communion.’ Extraordinary as it may seem, the Council did not consider it necessary to defrock its representative, and it was put to him that he should set off for the Holy Land for a mere three months without right of serving – which, however, he did not carry out. This shameful letter was widely distributed by the Moscow Patriarchate, while the ‘Patriarchal Locum Tenens’, delighted by this prospect, invited the First-Hierarch of the Church Abroad to visit Kiev in written form. This letter was also widely distributed."[18]

This was clear evidence, if further evidence were needed, that the interference of foreign bishops in the affairs of the Free Russian Orthodox Church had to be drastically curbed, and that the canonical rights of the FROC bishops to rule their own dioceses without interference from the "centre" (several thousand miles away from Russia!) had to be unequivocally strengthened and protected.

However, a letter dated October 2, 1992 from Archbishop Mark to Protopriest Michael Artsumovich of Meudon gave equally clear evidence, if further evidence was needed, that this ROCA hierarch at any rate neither intended to protect the rights of the Russian bishops nor in any way respected either them or their flock: "We are receiving [from the MP] by no means the best representatives of the Russian Church. Basically, these are people who know little or nothing about the Church Abroad. And in those cases in which someone possesses some
information, it must be doubtful that he is in general in a condition to understand it in view of his own mendacity and the mendacity of his own situation. In receiving priests from the Patriarchate, we receive with them a whole series of inadequacies and vices of the MP itself… The real Catacomb Church no longer exists. It in fact disappeared in the 1940s or the beginning of the 1950s… Only individual people have been preserved from it, and in essence everything that has arisen since is only pitiful reflections, and people take their desires for reality. Those who poured into this stream in the 1950s and later were themselves infected with Soviet falsehood, and they partly – and involuntarily - participate in it themselves, that is, they enter the category of what we call ‘homo sovieticus’… In Russia, consequently, there cannot be a Russian Church because it is all based on Soviet man… I think it is more expedient to seek allies for ourselves among those elements that are pure or striving for canonical purity both in the depths of the Moscow Patriarchate and in the other Local Churches – especially in Serbia or even Greece…We will yet be able to deliver ourselves from that impurity which we have now received from the Moscow Patriarchate, and again start on the path of pure Orthodoxy… It is evident that we must… try and undertake the russification of Soviet man and the Soviet church..."[19]

Archbishop Mark gave himself away in this shocking and insulting letter: disdain for the "pitiful" and supposedly long-dead Catacomb Church, disgust with the "impure", "Soviet" Free Russian Church, admiration for the "purity" of the apostate churches of "World Orthodoxy" with their Masonic and KGB-agent "hierarchs". As for the remark – by an ethnic German - about the "russification" of the Russian Church, the reaction in the heart of Holy Russia was one of understandable dismay...

3. The First Separation

Archbishop Mark wanted to rid himself of the "impurity" of the Free Russian Church; he was soon to achieve his aim. For on April 14/27, 1993 Archbishop Lazarus wrote to the Synod that on the basis of ukaz no. 362 of his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon he considered the decisions of the Synod to be "not obligatory for execution for the True Orthodox Catacomb Church". But, he insisted, he was not breaking communion with the ROCA. As a result of this, without consulting either him or his diocese, the ROCA retired him, and the administration of his parishes was transferred to Metropolitan Vitaly.

At this point the first signs of serious dissent with the ROCA’s politics in Russia in the ranks of the ROCA’s episcopate appeared in the person of Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), the foremost canonist of the ROCA and a man of enormous experience in church matters, having been at the very heart of the ROCA’s administration from 1931 until his forced retirement by Metropolitan Vitaly in 1986. In an emergency report to the Synod dated May 16/29, after sharply criticizing the unjust and uncanonical actions of the Synod, he said: "As a consequence of this Archbishop Lazarus has already left us. And Bishop Valentine’s patience is already being tried. If he, too, will not bear the temptation, what will we be left with? Will his flock in such a situation want to leave with him? Will not it also rebel?"
"For clarity’s sake I must begin with an examination of certain matters brought up at the expanded session of the Synod which took place in Munich.

"A certain tension was noticeable there in spite of the external calmness. It turned out that behind the scenes a suspicious attitude towards Bishop Valentine had arisen. Already after the closing of the Synod I learned that several members of the Synod had been shown a document containing accusations of transgressions of the laws of morality against Bishop Valentine. The President of the Synod did not have this document during the sessions but only at the end. It was then that I, too, received a copy of the denunciation from Archbishop Mark, who was given it by Bishop Barnabas, who evidently did not know how to deal with such objects according to the Church canons. I involuntarily ascribed the unexpected appearance of such a document amidst the members of the Synod to the action of some communist secret agents and to the inexperience of Bishop Barnabas in such matters.

"The caution of the Church authorities in relation to similar accusations in the time of troubles after the persecutions was ascribed to the 74th Apostolic canon, the 2nd canon of the 1st Ecumenical Council and especially to the 6th canon of the 2nd Ecumenical Council. At that time the heretics were multiplying their intrigues against the Orthodox hierarchs. The above-mentioned canons indicate that accusations hurled by less than two or three witnesses – who were, besides, faithful children of the Church and accusers worthy of trust – were in no way to be accepted…

"Did they apply such justice and caution when they judged Bishop Valentine, and were ready without any investigation to .. defrock him for receiving Archimandrite Adrian? And were the accusations hurled at the latter really seriously examined?

"Beginning with the processing, contrary to the canons, of the accusations against Bishop Valentine on the basis of the single complaint of a person known to none of us[20], the Sobor was already planning to defrock him without any kind of due process, until the argument of his illness turned up. But here, too, they failed to consider that this required his own petition and a check to ascertain the seriousness of his illness. The intention was very simple: just get rid of a too active Bishop. They didn’t think of the fate of his parishes, which exist on his registration. Without him they would lose it.

"While we, in the absence of the accused and, contrary to the canons, without his knowledge, were deciding the fate of the Suzdal diocese, Vladyka Valentine received three more parishes. Now he has 63. Taking into account Archimandrite Adrian with his almost 10,000 people, we are talking about approximately twenty thousand souls.

"The question arises: in whose interests is it to destroy what the papers there call the centre of the Church Abroad in Russia?

"The success of Bishop Valentine’s mission has brought thousands of those being saved into our Church, but now this flock is condemned to widowhood and the temptation of having no head only because he turned out not to be suitable to some of our Bishops…”[21]
It was in this highly charged atmosphere, with their bishop forcibly and uncanonically retired and the registration of all their parishes hanging by a thread, that the annual diocesan conference of the Suzdal diocese took place from June 9/22 to 11/24. It was also attended by priests representing Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin. Hieromonk Agathangelus read out a letter from Archbishop Lazarus in which he declared that although he had considered the actions of the ROCA in Russia to be uncanonical, he had tolerated them out of brotherly love, but was now forced to speak out against them, for they were inflicting harm on the Church. First, the ROCA did not have the right to form its own parishes in Russia insofar as the Catacomb Church, which had preserved the succession of grace of the Mother Church, continued to exist on her territory. Therefore it was necessary only to strengthen the catacomb communities and expand them through an influx of new believers. Secondly, the hierarchs of the ROCA had been acting in a spirit far from brotherly love, for they had been treating their brothers, the hierarchs of the FROC, as second-class Vladykas: they received clergy who had been banned by the Russian Vladykas, brought clergy of other dioceses to trial, removed bans placed by the Russian hierarchs without their knowledge or agreement, and annulled other decisions of theirs (for example, Metropolitan Vitaly forbade an inspection to be carried out in the parish of Fr. Sergius Perekrestov of St. Petersburg). Thirdly, the ROCA hierarchs were far from Russia and did not understand the situation, so they could not rightly administer the Russian parishes. Thus the Synod removed the title ‘Administering the affairs of the FROC’ from all the hierarchs except Bishop Barnabas, which forced the dioceses to re-register with the authorities - although, while a new registration was being carried out, the parishes could lose their right to ownership of the churches and other property. Moreover re-registration was almost impossible, insofar as it required the agreement of an expert consultative committee attached to the Supreme Soviet, which contained hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate. Fourthly, the ROCA hierarchs had been inconsistent in their actions, which aroused the suspicion that their actions were directed, not by the Holy Spirit, but by forces foreign to the Church.[22] Archbishop Lazarus concluded by calling for the formation of a True Orthodox Catacomb Church that was administratively separate from, but in communion with, the ROCA, on the basis of Patriarch Tikhon’s ukaz no. 362, which had never been annulled.

At the end of the conference it was decided that the Suzdal diocese would follow Archbishop Lazarus’ example in separating administratively from the ROCA while retaining communion in prayer with it. Bishop Valentine expressed the hope that this would be only a temporary measure…[23]

Some FROC priests – notably Protopriest Lev Lebedev of Kursk – while fully agreeing that the ROCA bishops had committed uncanonical acts on Russian soil, nevertheless began to express the view that the actions of the FROC bishops had been hasty and were justified only in the case that the ROCA had fallen away from Orthodoxy, which, as everyone agreed, had not yet taken place. However, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) adopted a quite different position. He pointed out that the claims of the ROCA to rule as opposed to help the Church in Russia contradicted the ROCA’s own fundamental Statute:

"For decades we living abroad have commemorated ‘the Orthodox Episcopate of the Persecuted Church of Russia’. But in our last Sobor we removed from the litanies and the prayer
for the salvation of Russia the word ‘persecuted’, witnessing thereby that we already officially consider that the persecutions on the Russian Church have ceased.

"And indeed, our parishes in Russia are now harried in places, but basically they have complete freedom of action, in particular if they do not lay claim to receive any old church, which the Moscow Patriarchate then tries to snatch. However it does not always succeed in this. Thus the huge Theophany cathedral in Noginsk (with all the buildings attached to it) according to the court’s decision remain with our diocese…

"In other words, we can say that if there is willingness on our side we now have every opportunity of setting in order the complete regeneration of the Russian Orthodox Church in our Fatherland. "The very first paragraph of the ‘Statute on the Russian Church Abroad’ says:

"’The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad is an indivisible part of the Russian Local Church TEMPORARILY self-governing on conciliar principles UNTIL THE REMOVAL OF THE ATHEIST POWER in Russia in accordance with the resolution of the holy Patriarch Tikhon, the Holy Synod and the Higher Ecclesiastical Council of the Russian Church of November 7/20, 1920 no. 362 (emphasis mine, B. G.).

"If we now lead the Russian Hierarch to want to break their administrative links with the Church Abroad, then will not our flock abroad finally ask us: what ‘Episcopate of the Russian Church’ are we still praying for in our churches? But if we took these words out of the litanies, then we would only be officially declaring that we are no longer a part of the Russian Church.

"Will we not then enter upon a very dubious canonical path of autonomous existence, but now without a Patriarchal blessing and outside the Russian Church, a part of which we have always confessed ourselves to be? Will not such a step lead us to a condition of schism in the Church Abroad itself, and, God forbid, to the danger of becoming a sect?..

"It is necessary for us to pay very careful attention to and get to know the mood revealed in our clergy in the Suzdal diocese, so as on our part to evaluate the mood in which our decisions about the Church in Russia could be received by them.

"But will we not see then that it is one thing when the Church Abroad gives help to the Russian Church through the restoration in it of a canonical hierarchy, but something else entirely when we lay claims to rule the WHOLE of Russia from abroad, which was in no way envisaged by even one paragraph of the ‘Statute of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad’, nor by one of our later resolutions?[24]

On October 20 / November 2 (i.e. over eighteen months since the scandals erupted), the Synod decided to withdraw Bishop Barnabas from Russia and to place all his parishes in the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Vitaly (who, throughout the 1990s, has not set foot once on Russian soil, in spite of numerous invitations).[25] All the parishes of the ROCA in Siberia, Ukraine and Belarus were to be entrusted to Bishop Benjamin.[26]
On March 8/21, 1994, in a conference taking place in Suzdal, Bishop Valentine said: "On June 10/23, 1993 in Suzdal there took place a diocesan congress in which resolutions were taken and an Address was sent to the Synod indicating the transgressions, by the above-mentioned Hierarchs, of the Apostolic Canons and decrees of the Fathers of the Church, of the Ecumenical and Local Councils. At the same time they asked that his Grace Bishop Barnabas be recalled, and that Archbishop Mark should ask forgiveness of the clergy and the Russian people for his humiliation of their honour and dignity. If our request were ignored, the whole weight of responsibility would lie on the transgressors of the Church canons. But so far there has been no reply.

"We sent the Resolution of the clergy, monastics and laypeople warning that if there continued to be transgressions of the Apostolic Canons and Conciliar Resolutions on the part of the Hierarchs, with the connivance of the Hierarchical Synod, the whole responsibility would lie as a heavy burden on the transgressors. The Synod did not reply.

"Together with his Eminence Archbishop Lazarus and the members of the Diocesan Councils I sent an address to the Synod in which their attention was drawn to the wily intrigues on the part of those who wished us ill, and asked that the situation be somehow corrected, placing our hopes on Christian love and unity of mind, which help to overcome human infirmities. But in the same address we laid out in very clear fashion our determination that if the Hierarchical Synod did not put an end to the deliberate transgressions, we would be forced to exist independently, in accordance with the holy Patriarch Tikhon’s ukaz no. 362 of November 7/20, 1920, in the interests of the purity of Orthodoxy and the salvation of our Russian flock. The reply consisted in Vladyka Metropolitan threatening a ban.

"I sent a letter to Metropolitan Vitaly in which I besought him earnestly to confirm my status before the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, so that the Suzdal Diocesan Administration should not lose its registration. This time the reply was swift, only not to the Diocesan Administration, but to the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation under the signature of Bishop Barnabas, saying that the Russian Hierarchs were no longer Administering the affairs of the FROC, and that this duty was laid upon him. As a result I and the member of my Diocesan Council began visiting office after office, a process that lasted many months.

"It is difficult for you to imagine how much labour we had to expend, how many written bureaucratical demands we had to fulfil, in order to get our Regulations re-registered. If I had not undertaken this, all the churches would automatically have been taken out of registration and then, believe me, the Moscow Patriarchate would not have let go such a ‘juicy morsel’."[27]

After hearing more speeches in the same vein, including one from Archbishop Lazarus, the Congress made the following decisions: 1. To form a Temporary Higher Church Administration (THCA) of the Russian Orthodox Church, which, without claiming to be the highest Church authority in Russia, would have as its final aim the convening of a Free All-Russian Local Council that would have such authority. 2. To elect and consecrate new bishops. 3. To declare their gratitude to the ROCA and Metropolitan Vitaly, whose name would continue to be commemorated in Divine services, since they wished to remain in communion of prayer with
them. 4. To express the hope that the Hierarchical Synod would recognize the THCA and the consecrations performed by it.

One of the members of the Congress, Elena Fateyevna Shipunova, declared: "It is now completely obvious that the subjection of the Russian dioceses to the Synod Abroad contradicts the second point of Ukaz no. 362. The Russian Church is faced directly with the necessity of moving to independent administration in accordance with this Ukaz. After the sergianist schism Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan called for such a move, considering Ukaz no. 362 as the only possible basis of Church organization. Incidentally, Metropolitan Cyril also indicated to Metropolitan Sergius Stragorodsky that he had to follow Ukaz no. 362 instead of usurping ecclesiastical power. Metropolitan Cyril and the other bishop-confessors tried to organize the administration of the Russian Church on the basis of this Ukaz, but they couldn’t do this openly. Now for the first time the Russian Church has the opportunity to do this. We could say that this is an historical moment. The Temporary Higher Church Administration that has been created is the first legal one in Russia since the time of the sergianist schism. The Centre of Church power ceased its existence after the death of Metropolitan Peter more than half a century ago, but we have not yet arrived at the Second All-Russian Council which has the power to re-establish Central Church power."[28]

On March 9/22 the THCA, which now contained three new bishops: Theodore of Borisovsk, Seraphim of Sukhumi and Agathangelus of Simferopol, together with many clergy, monastics and laity, informed Metropolitan Vitaly and the Synod of the ROCA of their decision.

On March 23 / April 5 the Synod of the ROCA rejected this declaration and the new consecrations, and decided to break communion in prayer with the newly formed Autonomous Church, but without imposing any bans.[29] In this decision the ROCA Synod called itself the "Central Church authority" of the Russian Church, which contradicted both its own Fundamental Statute and the simple historical fact that, as the FROC bishops pointed out, since the death of Metropolitan Peter in 1937 the Russian Church has had no "Central Church authority".[30]

Then, in order to strengthen the ROCA’s hand in the coming struggle with the FROC, Archimandrite Eutyches (Kurochkin) was consecrated Bishop of Ishim and Siberia on July 11/24.[31]

Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), however, who had not been admitted to the sessions of the ROCA Synod, fully approved of the actions of the Russian Hierarchs in a letter to Bishop Valentine dated March 24 / April 6. And on the same day he wrote the following to Metropolitan Vitaly: "We have brought the goal of the possible regeneration of the Church in Russia to the most undesirable possible end. Tormented by envy and malice, certain of our bishops have influenced the whole course of our church politics in Russia. As a consequence of this, our Synod has not understood the meaning of the mission of our existence abroad.

"As I warned the Synod in my last report, we have done absolutely everything possible to force the Russian bishops to separate from us administratively. They have had to proceed from Resolution no. 362 of Patriarch Tikhon of November 7/20, 1920 in order to avoid the final destruction of the just-begun regeneration of our Church in our Fatherland. But our Synod,
having nothing before its eyes except punitive tactics, proceeds only on the basis of a normalized church life. Whereas the Patriarch’s Resolution had in mind the preservation of the Church’s structure in completely unprecedented historical and ecclesiastical circumstances.

"The ukaz was composed for various cases, including means for the re-establishment of the Church’s Administration even in conditions of its abolition (see article 9) and ‘the extreme disorganization of Church life’. This task is placed before every surviving hierarch, on condition that he is truly Orthodox.

"The Russian Hierarchs felt themselves to be in this position when, for two years running, their inquiries and requests to provide support against the oppression of the Moscow Patriarchate were met with complete silence on the part of our Synod.

"Seeing the canonical chaos produced in their dioceses by Bishop Barnabas, and the Synod’s silent collusion with him, the Russian Hierarchs came to the conclusion that there was no other way of avoiding the complete destruction of the whole enterprise but their being led by the Patriarch’s Resolution no. 362.

"Our Synod unlawfully retired Bishop Valentine for his reception of a huge parish in Noginsk, but did not react to the fact that Bishop Barnabas had in a treacherous manner disgraced the Synod, in whose name he petitioned to be received into communion with the Ukrainian self-consecrators!

"I don’t know whether the full text of Resolution no. 362 has been read at the Synod. I myself formerly paid little attention to it, but now, having read it, I see that the Russian Hierarchs have every right to cite it, and this fact will come to the surface in the polemic that will inevitably take place now. I fear that by its decisions the Synod has already opened the path to this undesirable polemic, and it threatens to create a schism not only in Russia, but also with us here…

"There are things which it is impossible to stop, and it is also impossible to escape the accomplished fact. If our Synod does not now correctly evaluate the historical moment that has taken place, then its already profoundly undermined prestige (especially in Russia) will be finally and ingloriously destroyed.

"All the years of the existence of the Church Abroad we have enjoyed respect for nothing else than our uncompromising faithfulness to the canons. They hated us, but they did not dare not to respect us. But now we have shown the whole Orthodox world that the canons are for us an empty sound, and we have become a laughing-stock in the eyes of all those who have even the least relationship to Church affairs.

"You yourself, at the Synod in Lesna, allowed yourself to say that for us, the participants in it, it was now not the time to examine the canons, but we had to act quickly. You, who are at the helm of the ship of the Church, triumphantly, before the whole Sobor, declared to us that we should now hasten to sail without a rudder and without sails. At that time your words greatly disturbed me, but I, knowing your irritability with me for insisting on the necessity of living
according to the canons, nevertheless hoped that all was not lost yet and that our Bishops would somehow shake off the whole of this nightmare of recent years.

"Think, Vladyko, of the tens of thousands of Orthodox people both abroad and in Russia who have been deceived by us. Do not calm yourself with the thought that if guilt lies somewhere, then it lies equally on all of our hierarchs. The main guilt will lie on you as the leader of our Sobor..."[32]

Unfortunately, however, Metropolitan Vitaly was beginning to show the same kind of condescending and contemptuous attitude to the Russian flock which had suffered so much in its struggle for the faith, as Archbishop Mark had been demonstrating for some time. Thus in one letter to Bishop Valentine, after rebuking him for receiving the supposedly homosexual Archimandrite Adrian, he wrote: "We understand that, living in the Soviet Union for these 70 years of atheist rule, such a deep seal of Sovietism and of departure from right thinking has penetrated into the world-view of the Russian people that you, too, were involuntarily caught up by the spirit of this wave..."[33] Perhaps this was the reason why he and his Synod now proceeded to dispense with the Russian bishops without even the semblance of canonical order as if they were so much "Soviet filth", and attempted to rule the flock they so distrusted in the most "hands off" manner possible - from several thousand miles away, declaring that the Centre of Ecclesiastical Administration for the whole of the vast Russian Church resided in an old man in New York who had never set foot on Russian soil!

4. The Second Separation.

In spite of receiving no reply to their repeated requests that the ROCA Synod re-establish canonical order in Russia, Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentine accepted an invitation from Abbess Macrina of Lesna monastery – not, significantly, from the Synod or any individual hierarch – to go to the Lesna Sobor of the ROCA in November, 1994. Here, in spite of a very cold reception, - "both of us," as Bishop Valentine later wrote, "were in fact isolated from the Hierarchical Sobor and its acts" - they asked forgiveness and were again received into communion.[34] None of the outstanding issues dividing the two sides were discussed at that time, but the Russian bishops did manage to ask Bishop Hilarion for explanations of two things that worried them: the ROCA’s entering into communion with the Greek Old Calendarist Metropolitan Cyprian of Fili (which Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) had strongly protested against), and its forthcoming negotiations (at Archbishop Mark’s insistence) with members of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Then they were invited to join the Sobor. However, as they crossed the threshold of the monastery church where the Sobor was in session, the Russian bishops were handed an "Act" – Bishop Valentine later called it an "Act of capitulation" – which had already been signed by all the ROCA bishops and which the two Russian bishops were now told to sign.[35] "When we had cursorily looked through this Act," writes Bishop Valentine, "I began to protest, to which
Archbishop Mark said that if we didn’t want peace and did not want to sign, we could leave the hall." Vladyka Valentine said that both sides had to participate in drawing up such an act, after which Bishop Hilarion, deputy secretary of the Synod, promised "that they would edit the act, taking into account our remarks and suggestions". Then Archbishop Lazarus agreed to sign, and Bishop Valentine, though unwilling to sign, did not want to create a schism among the Russian bishops by not following the lead of his senior, Archbishop Lazarus. So they both signed. Two hours later, overcome by the extreme tension of the occasion, Bishop Valentine suffered a heart attack and was rushed to a hospital in Paris, where he was placed in intensive care.

While Vladyka Valentine was still in hospital and in a very weak condition, two ROCA bishops came to him, gave him communion and asked him to sign two more documents (he does not remember what was in those documents). On returning to Lesna, Vladyka offered a second variant of the Act to Vladyka Lazarus. Lazarus did not want to sign this second variant, but he suggested to Vladyka Valentine that he sign in the capacity of his deputy. So Valentine signed his own variant of the Act and gave copies of it to both Vladyka Lazarus and the ROCA Synod.[36] Bishop Eutyches later witnessed that Bishop Valentine’s proposed changes to the original Act were not accepted by the other bishops at the Sobor.[37]

Another important result of the Lesna Sobor was the decision, on November 17/30, to divide the parishes of the ROCA-FROC in Russia into six dioceses with newly-defined boundaries.[38] This ill-considered decision, as we shall see, was to elicit serious discontent among the Russian clergy because of the threat it posed to the registration of their churches. Bishop Valentine did not sign it – probably because he was already in hospital.

On the same day, still more seriously, the Synod published an epistle declaring that "the time has come to seek living communion with all the parts of the One Russian Orthodox Church, scattered by dint of historical circumstances". This serious compromise in the confessing stance of the ROCA vis-à-vis the Moscow Patriarchate, with which it quite clearly said that it wanted "better relations"[39], was signed by Archbishop Lazarus – but, again, not by Bishop Valentine. It was later to be used by Archbishop Mark as an excuse for his treacherous relations with the patriarchate.

The next day, in two special ukazes, the ROCA confirmed Bishop Valentine as ruling hierarch of the Suzdal diocese and recognized that the accusations of immorality which had been hurled at him two years before, and which Archbishop Mark had insisted on bringing before the Synod, although the canons forbade it, were completely unfounded.[40]

On November 22 / December 5, having returned from hospital in Paris to the Lesna monastery, Bishop Valentine wrote a letter to the Sobor once again explaining the serious problems caused to the FROC by the canonical transgressions of the ROCA. And he appealed to the ROCA bishops to relate to the FROC bishops in the same way that the famous ROCA theologian Archbishop Averky had once (in 1971) recommended that they relate to the Old Calendarist Greeks: "Our interference must be limited to giving the Greeks grace-filled bishops, and then we must leave them to live independently."[41] It was evident that, in spite of the restoration of communion with the ROCA, Vladyka was still deeply worried by the intentions of
the ROCA with regard to the Russian dioceses – a fear that was to prove to be more than justified…

On January 12/25, 1995 there was a meeting of the bishops and clergy of the FROC in Suzdal to discuss the results of the Lesna Sobor. Besides the Act, of particular concern to many of the clergy was the fact that the redefining of the diocesan boundaries proposed at the Sobor would involve the necessity of re-registration for very many parishes. Since they had achieved registration only with the greatest difficulty in the first place, they did not of course welcome this prospect. But more importantly, it would very probably mean that they would be refused any registration, since the Moscow Patriarchate representatives would insist that changing names and diocesan boundaries was unacceptable. This in turn would very likely mean that their churches would be handed over to the patriarchate.

Thus the Moscow Protopriest Michael Ardov said: "Concerning the church building which I occupy, I must say that if I transfer to Vladyka Eutyches [to whom the ROCA had given the Moscow and St. Petersburg dioceses], what will happen? The building is registered with the Suzdal diocese. They tell us that we are in this building unlawfully, and that we still have to secure its transfer to us. It is well know that [Moscow Mayor] Luzhkov is categorically against our parish. They forced us to change our parish rules sixteen times before registering it. Of course, I submit to the Ukaz of the Hierarchical Synod, but I have a request for our bishops: they must take into account that this is not Canada and not America, but a different state, and we have different perspectives."[42]

Several other priests spoke against re-registration for similar reasons.

Towards the end of the meeting, Protopriest Andrew Osetrov posed the following question to Bishop Eutyches: "Which do you consider preferable for Russian believers – the Resolutions of the Hierarchical Synod and Sobor of the ROCA and its First-Hierarch, or the Resolutions of the All-Russian Sobor of 1917-18 and the holy Patriarch Tikhon?"

Bishop Eutyches replied: "Preferable are the Resolutions of living hierarchs, and not dead ones. Even if the Resolutions of the Synod of the ROCA will be uncanonical, for me this has no significance, I must fulfil them."[43]

This summed up the difference between the two sides. For the ROCA (and the Russian Bishops Benjamin and Eutyches) obedience to the Synod was the ultimate value, more important even than the holy canons which every bishops swears to uphold at his consecration. For the FROC bishops, on the other hand, the authority of the ROCA could not be placed higher than the objective good of their own flock, which could be preserved only by faithfulness to the canons of the Seven Ecumenical Councils and the highest authorities in the post-revolutionary Russian Church – the decisions of Patriarch Tikhon and the 1917-18 Council.

The next day, January 13/26, the seven FROC bishops met and decided to put off a final decision on the thorny question of the territorial division of dioceses. When discussion passed to the Act, Bishop Eutyches said that the Act had not been fulfilled by the Russian bishops and refused to take any further part in the Conference. Later, in a letter to Metropolitan Vitaly dated
January 17/30, he wrote that "Bishop Benjamin, convinced that the meeting completely supported Bishop Valentine and was hostile to the Church Abroad and himself personally, left the meeting [on January 12/25]. I participated in the meeting to the end and was struck by the general anti-ROCA mood of the hierarchs, priests, nuns and laymen."[44]

On January 14/27 the Hierarchical Conference (excluding Bishops Eutyches and Benjamin) approved a letter to the ROCA Synod, in which they wrote that the Act approved by the Lesna Sobor "was in extreme need of a series of substantial changes to the points, and additions". Below we quote the Act, together with the comments of the FROC bishops (in italics):

"'We, the Hierarchical Synod of the ROCA, under the presidency of the First-Hierarch, His Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly of Eastern America and New York, and the Most Reverend Hierarchs: Archbishop Lazarus of Odessa and Tambov and Bishop Valentine of Suzdal and Vladimir, taking upon ourselves full responsibility before God and the All-Russian flock, and following the commandments of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, in the name of peace and love, for the sake of the salvation of our souls and the souls of our flock, declare the following:

‘1. We recognize our mutual responsibility for the disturbances that have arisen in the Russian [Rossijskoj] Church, but we consider that certain hasty actions of the Hierarchical Synod cannot serve as justification for a schism in the Russian Church and the establishment of the Temporary Higher Church Administration.’

Comment by the FROC bishops: We definitely do not agree with the definition of the actions of the Russian hierarchs as a schism, for these actions were a forced measure aimed at guarding the canonical rights of the Bishop in his diocese, and the created Temporary Higher Church Administration was formed, not in spite of, but in accordance with the will and ukaz no. 362 of the holy Patriarch Tikhon, at a time when the Hierarchical Synod of the ROCA left the Russian hierarchs without any communications, directives, holy Antimins or holy Chrismation.

If we recognize our mutual responsibility for the disturbances that have arisen in the Russian Church, then it is our right to recognize certain hasty actions of the Hierarchical Sobor and Synod as uncanonical and as inflicting direct harm on the work of restoring true Orthodoxy in Russia, which has served as the terminus a quo for [our] conditional administrative separation and the formation of the Temporary Higher Church Administration.

The concrete intra-ecclesiastical situation has dictated such a course of action on our part, but at the same time we have admitted that administrative independence must in no way automatically lead to canonical and eucharistic independence. Such communion has not been broken by us, in spite of the one-sided decision of the Hierarchical Synod of the ROCA.

‘2. We ask each other’s forgiveness, so that from now on we should not reproach anybody for the actions which lead to the division and the founding of the THCA.’

Comment of the FROC bishops: It is not a matter of reproaches but of the essence of the actions of both sides, which have led to administrative division and the founding of the THCA.
By examining each concrete action, we would be able mutually to understand the depth of the causes, and proceeding from that, calmly and without detriment, remove their consequences in the present.

‘3. We consider the organization of the THCA to be an unlawful act and abolish it.’

Comment of the FROC bishops: The very formulation of this point seems to us to be faulty in view of the final aim of our joint efforts.

‘4. We consider the consecration of the three hierarchs: Theodore, Seraphim and Agathangelus, which was carried out by their Graces Lazarus and Valentine, to be unlawful. Their candidacies should be presented in the order that is obligatory for all candidates for hierarchical rank accepted in the ROCA, and, if they turn out to be worthy, then, after their confession of faith and acceptance of the hierarchical oath, they will be confirmed in the hierarchical rank.’

Comment of the FROC bishops: We do not agree at all that the episcopal consecrations performed by us were not lawful. The obligatory order for all candidates for hierarchical rank accepted in the ROCA could not be a guide for us in our actions since at that time we were administratively independent of the ROCA. If we approach this demand from a strictly formal point of view, then the Hierarchical Synod should have asked us concerning our agreement or disagreement with the new consecrations, especially the consecration of his Grace Bishop Eutyches – which was not done. In spite of your limitation of our rights, we have recognized these consecrations and are far from the thought of demanding a confession of faith and acceptance of the hierarchical oath a second time, specially for us.

‘5. In the same way, all the other actions carried out by Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentine and the THCA organized by them which exceeded the authority of the diocesan bishops, but belonged only to the province of the Hierarchical Sobor and Hierarchical Synod of the ROCA, are to be considered to be invalid.’

Comment of the FROC bishops: Until the moment that we ceased to be members of the ROCA, and the THCA was formed, all our actions and suggestions were presented for discussion and confirmation by these higher church instances. Having conditionally separated from the ROCA in administrative matters, we were entitled to carry out these actions.

‘6. Archbishop Lazarus is reinstated in the rights of a ruling hierarch with the title "Archbishop of Odessa and Tambov".’

Comment of the FROC bishops: The formulation of this point admits of an ambiguous interpretation and is therefore on principle unacceptable for us. Judging objectively, his Grace Archbishop Lazarus did not lose his rights as a ruling bishop, in spite of the ukaz of the Hierarchical Synod concerning his retirement. The ukaz seems to us to be canonically ill-founded, and therefore lacking force and unrealized. We suggest the formulation: ‘In view of the erroneous actions of the Hierarchical Synod of the ROCA, Archbishop Lazarus is not to be
considered as having been retired and is recognized as having the rights of the ruling hierarch of his diocese with the title (Archbishop of Tambov and Odessa).

‘7. Bishop Valentine will be restored to his rights as the ruling hierarch of Suzdal and Vladimir after the removal of the accusations against him on the basis of an investigation by a Spiritual Court appointed by the present Hierarchical Sobor.’

Comment of the FROC bishops: The given point is excluded, in agreement with the Ukaz of the Hierarchical Synod.[45]

‘8. To bring order into ecclesiastical matters on the territory of Russia a Hierarchical Conference of the Russian Hierarchs is to be organized which does not encroach on the fullness of ecclesiastical power, but which is in unquestioning submission to the Hierarchical Sobor and the Hierarchical Synod of the ROCA. One of the member of the Hierarchical Conference will be a member of the Synod, in accordance with the decision of the Hierarchical Sobor.’

Comment of the FROC bishops: It is suggested that this formulation be changed, and consequently also the meaning of the eighth point: ‘The THCA does not encroach on the fullness of ecclesiastical power. In certain exceptional situations it recognizes its spiritual and administrative submission to the Hierarchical Sobor of the ROCA. One of the members of the Hierarchical Conference will be a temporary, regular member of the Synod, in accordance with the decision of the Hierarchical Sobor of the ROCA and the Hierarchical Conference of the Russian Bishops.

‘9. After the signing of the Act it will be published in all the organs of the church press, and in particular in those publications in which their Graces Lazarus and Valentine published material against the Hierarchical Sobor and Hierarchical Synod of the ROCA.’

Comment of the FROC bishops: The formulation should be changed as follows: After the signing of the Act it will be published in all the organs of the church press, and in particular in those publications in which their Graces Lazarus and Valentine published material explaining certain hasty actions of the Hierarchical Synod and Sobor of the ROCA.’[46]

Now on January 3, Bishop Hilarion on behalf of the ROCA Synod had sent a respectfully worded invitation to Bishops Theodore, Agathangelus and Seraphim to come to New York for the February 9/22 session of the Synod and "for the formalities of re-establishing concelebration".[47] It is significant that the Synod had also invited Bishop Eutyches, who was not a member of the Synod – but not Archbishop Lazarus, who was a member of the Synod, as agreed at the Lesna Sobor.

When Bishops Theodore and Agathangelus arrived in New York, they were listened to and on the next day, in Bishop Agathangelus’ words, "we were handed a ‘Decree of the Hierarchical Synod of the Synod of the ROCA’, in which their Graces Lazarus and Valentine, and also Bishops Theodore, Seraphim and I, were declared to be banned from serving.[48] For Vladyka Theodore and me this was like a bolt from the blue… We were told that the reason for this decision was our supposed non-fulfilment of the conciliar Act, which had been signed by, among
the other Hierarchs, their Graces Lazarus and Valentine. The point was that the conference of Russian Bishops which had been formed in agreement with this same Act had asked for several formulations in the Act to be changed, so as not to introduce disturbance into the ranks of the believers by the categorical nature of certain points. This was a request, not a demand. But, however hard we tried, we could not convince the Synod that none of the Russian Bishops was insisting and that we were all ready to accept the Act in the form in which it had been composed. We met with no understanding on the part of the members of the Synod. Vladyka Theodore and I affirmed in writing that we accepted the text of the Act in the form in which it had been composed and asked for a postponement in the carrying out of the ‘Decree’ until the position of all the absent Russian Bishops on this question could be clarified. In general we agreed to make any compromises if only the ‘Decree’ were not put into effect, because in essence it meant only one thing – the final break between the Russian parishes and the ROCA.

"We gradually came to understand that it was not any canonical transgression of the Russian Bishops (there was none), nor any disagreement with the text of the conciliar Act, nor, still less, any mythical ‘avaricious aims’ that was the reason for the composition of this document, which, without any trial or investigation, banned the five Hierarchs from serving. It was the Hierarchical Conference of the Russian Bishops, which had been established by the Council that took place in Lesna monastery, that was the real reason giving birth to the ‘Decree’. The Sobor of Hierarchs, moved in those days by ‘Paschal joy’ (as Metropolitan Vitaly repeated several times), finally came to create an organ of administration in Russia which, if not independent, but subject to the Synod, was nevertheless an organ of administration. When the ‘Paschal joy’ had passed, the Synodal Bishops suddenly realized: they had themselves reduced their own power, insofar as, with their agreement, Hierarchs could meet in vast Russia and discuss vital problems. Before that, the Church Abroad had not allowed itself to behave like that. And it was this, unfortunately, that the foreign Archpastors could not bear. On receiving for confirmation the protocols of the first session of the Hierarchical Conference with concrete proposals to improve Church life in Russia, the foreign Bishops were completely nonplussed. Therefore a reason that did not in fact exist was thought up – the supposed non-fulfilment of the Act.

"The members of the Synod, exceeding their authority, since such decisions are in the competence of the Sobor, decided, by means of canonical bans, to confirm their sole authority over the whole of Russia – both historical Russia and Russia abroad. The very foundations of the Church Abroad as a part of the Russian Church living abroad were trampled on, and the Synod on its own initiative ascribed to itself the rights and prerogatives of the Local Russian Church.

"It did not even ponder the fact that, in banning at one time five Hierarchs, it was depriving more than 150 parishes – that is many thousands of Orthodox people – of archpastoral care. Cancelling the labour of many years of Hierarchs, priests and conscious, pious laymen in our Fatherland.

"In Russia a very real war is now being waged for human souls; every day is full of work. Depriving Orthodox Christians of their pastors without any objective reason witnesses to the haughtiness and lack of love towards our country and its people on the part of the members of the Synod Abroad. We, the Orthodox from Russia, are called ‘common people’ by Metropolitan Vitaly (thank you, Vladyko Metropolitan!).
"Vladyka Theodore and I were promised that, in exchange for our treachery, we would be confirmed in our hierarchical rank. And it was even proclaimed that we would be appointed to foreign sees. For us personally, who were born and brought up in Russia, this was very painful to hear…"[49]

This act of blackmail – we recognize you if you accept a foreign see, but do not recognize you if you stay in Russia – exposed the complete lack of canonical justification in the acts of the ROCA Synod. Let us recall that: (a) Bishops Theodore and Agathangelus had just been formally recognized as canonical bishops, (b) they had agreed in writing to fulfil all of the ROCA Synod’s conditions, including the signing of the Act without any alterations, (c) they had not been accused of any canonical transgressions, and (d) they had not been subjected to any investigation or trial, as the canons demanded. Their only crime, it would appear, was that they lived in Russia – a novel charge against a bishop of the Russian Church!

On February 11/24 the ROCA Synod issued an epistle which for the first time contained a semblance of canonical justification in the form of a list of canons supposedly transgressed by the five Russian bishops. Unfortunately, they clearly had no relevance to the matter in hand. Thus what relevance could the 57th Canon of the Council of Carthage – "On the Donatists and the children baptized by the Donatists" – have to the bishops of the Free Russian Orthodox Church?![50]

On February 15/28, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) wrote to Bishop Valentine: "I cannot fail to express my great sorrow with regard to the recent Church events. Moreover, I wish to say to you that I was glad to get to know Vladykas Theodore and Agathangelus better. They think well and in an Orthodox manner. It is amazing that our foreign Bishops should not have valued them and should have treated them so cruelly in spite of all the acts and the whole unifying tendency which was just expressed by Metropolitan Vitaly at the last Sobor. The whole tragedy lies in the fact that even the latter wanted to construct everything solely on foreign forces that do not have the information necessary to decide problems which are strange and unfamiliar to them. Therefore they do not want to offer this [task] to the new forces that have arisen in Russia.

"As a result, we are presented with the complete liquidation of these healthy forces. This is a great victory of the dark forces of our Soviet enemies of Orthodoxy in the persons of the Moscow Patriarchate.

"I am glad that you will not give in to them, and I pray God that He help you to carry on the Orthodox cause, apparently without the apostate forces of Orthodox Abroad…"[51]

The next month Archbishop Valentine recounted these events in a Lenten letter to his flock, and continued: "This second instance of administrative pressure on the Russian Hierarchs, and, moreover, in such an undisguisedly cunning form, when flattering mentions and assurances of friendship and invitations came in the name of the Synod of the ROCA, while in fact another attempt to usurp power over the Russian flock was taking place, forces me to make certain clarifications."
"On November 7/20, 1920 the holy Patriarch Tikhon together with the Sacred Synod and the Higher Ecclesiastical Council of the Russian Church passed the exceptionally important Resolution no. 362 concerning the self-governing of Dioceses in the case of the absence of a canonical Higher Church Administration or the impossibility of communicating with it. On the basis of this Ukaz, Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) organized the Hierarchical Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. In Russia on the basis of this Ukaz there was organized the Catacomb or "Tikhonite" Church under the leadership of its inspirer, the holy New Martyr Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd. In its time the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad helped in the establishment of a lawful hierarchy in Russia, consecrating to the Episcopate their Graces Lazarus, Valentine and Benjamin. Instead of expanding the Church in the Homeland, there appeared the temptation of ruling it from abroad, declaring itself the ‘Central Church Authority’, which is what the Hierarchical Synod of the ROCA did in practice in April, 1994 (cf. Suzdal’skij Palomnik, special issue, NN 18,19,20). But then a declaration was made concerning the supposedly ‘unlawful’ creation by the Russian Hierarchs, on the basis of Ukaz no. 362, of a Temporary Higher Church Administration, whereas the Ukaz no. 362 of Patriarch Tikhon of November 7/20 said directly: ‘The care for the organization of a Higher Church authority… is the unfailing duty of the eldest according to rank of the Hierarchs in the indicated group.’

"Intra-ecclesiastical freedom and the dignities of the Bishops based on the Holy Canons do not permit administrotive arbitrariness and do not give the Hierarchical Synod of the ROCA the right to the supreme administration of the Church. And our following of the Canons and Ukaz no. 362, which was specially written for the Russian Dioceses existing in identical conditions, cannot give an excuse to whoever it may be to declare the Russian Hierarchs to be in some kind of ‘schism’. Having neither reasons, nor lawful authority or canonical rights to ‘ban’ the Russian Hierarchs, the Chancellery of the Synod of the ROCA is only witnessing, in the latest incident, to a deep crisis in the administration of the ROCA itself, when the President of the Hierarchical Synod Metropolitan Vitaly is not able to control the resolutions and ukazes issuing from the Chancellery of the Synod. It is impossible to take the documents signed by Vladyka Metropolitan Vitaly seriously when in the course of less than a year their meaning has several times changed to the complete opposite.[52] It is impossible to believe that in the ‘punitive actions’ of the Russian Hierarchs that have now become quite usual there is contained love for Russia, about which the hierarchs of the ROCA speak so eloquently. It is impossible to look on with indifference as, instead of building up the Church in the much-suffering Homeland, they incessantly ‘divide territory’, as a result of which churches of the FROC fall into the hands of the Moscow Patriarchate."[53]

On February 27 / March 12, 1995 Archbishops Lazarus and Valentine and Bishops Theodore, Seraphim and Agathangelus met in Suzdal and re-established the THCA which had been created on March 5/18, 1994. Then they decided: "To qualify the Decree of the Hierarchical Sobor [sic – Synod would have been more accurate] of the ROCA of February 9/22 and the claims contained in it to leadership of the whole Russian Church by the Hierarchical Synod and the First-Hierarch of the ROCA as exceeding their authority and a transgression of the Holy Canons and the Statute of the ROCA. In particular, the 8th Canon of the Third Ecumenical Council has been transgressed, which declares: ‘May the haughtiness of secular power not creep in under the guise of sacred acts; and may we not lose, little by little and without it being noticed, the freedom which our Lord Jesus Christ, the Liberator of all men, has given us through His Blood. And so it
It is significant that it was precisely this Canon that was quoted by Hieromartyr Joseph, Metropolitan of Petrograd, when he laid the foundations for the Catacomb Church in January, 1928. And indeed, the arguments between the ROCA and the FROC increasingly came to resemble the arguments between Metropolitan Sergius and the Catacomb Church, on the one hand, and Sergius and the foreign bishops who separated from him, on the other. The issue in 1928-30, as in 1995, was the question: who, if anyone, had the power to create a central organ of Church administration having full patriarchal power to rule over all the bishops of the Russian Church? Metropolitan Sergius then, like Metropolitan Vitaly today, claimed that he had such power, and proceeded to act with greater fierceness and disregard for the canons than any real pope or patriarch. But the Catacomb bishops then, like the FROC bishops today, claimed that since the death of the last canonical Patriarch and the imprisonment of his locum tenens, Metropolitan Peter, there was no alternative but to return to the decentralized form of Church administration prescribed by the never-repealed Patriarchal ukaz no. 362.

According to the ukaz, neighbouring bishops in identical circumstances could voluntarily unite into TCHAs and govern themselves as autonomous Churches until the convening of the next canonical Sobor of the whole Russian Church. But (a) bishops living in different States and separated by thousands of miles of ocean obviously do not live in identical circumstances, and (b) no group of bishops or TCHA has power over any other TCHA, nor can it claim to have rule over the whole Russian Church, so that (c) full patriarchal power can belong only to the future Local Council of the All-Russian Church and the organs elected by it. To these restrictions must be added, for hierarchs of the ROCA, those detailed in its still-unrepealed Statute, that is: (a) the ROCA is only a part of the Russian Church, like any other TCHA or autonomous group of bishops, and certainly not its real centre, as it has recently claimed; (b) its administrative powers extend only over the Church Abroad, outside Russia; (c) it must continue to commemorate "the Episcopate of the Russian Church" – that is, of the Church inside Russia; and (d) even its powers over the Church Abroad are valid only until the fall of the atheist power, when power returns to the Church inside Russia…[55]

Conclusion

Today, three and a half years since the second schism between the ROCA and the FROC, the situation has not changed in essence. Almost immediately after the events of February, 1995, frightened by the threat of defrocking by the ROCA Synod, Archbishop Lazarus and his vicar, Bishop Agathangelus, left the FROC and returned, "repenting", to the ROCA.[56] But what has always, since 1990, been the core of the ROCA-FROC inside Russia, the Suzdal diocese, has remained firm, and has in fact increased in strength.
In accordance with a resolution of the Hierarchical Synod of the ROCA in 1996, the Hierarchical Conference of the Russian Bishops was stripped of what little power it had: its representation in the ROCA was annulled, and not one of the Russian bishops entered into the ROCA Synod. At the same Council meeting Bishop Valentine was defrocked. The FROC, naturally, refused to recognize this decision.[57]

The desertion of Archbishop Lazarus requires some comment. The secret consecration of Fr. Lazarus (Zhurbenko) was the first major mistake of the ROCA inside Russia. It was surprising in that the ROCA might have been expected to consecrate, not the newly appeared Lazarus, but one of the fourteen hieromonks who had been received under the omophorion of Metropolitan Philaret on November 26 / December 7, 1977, after the death of their Catacomb archpastor, Archbishop Anthony Galansky-Mikhailovsky, in 1976. [58] Moreover, there were other distinguished Catacomb pastors with links to the ROCA, such as Fr. Michael Rozhdostvensky (+1988), who would have been eminently suitable candidates for the episcopate.

Besides, the career of Fr. Lazarus himself had not been without controversy. Although he had been reared in the Catacomb Church, and had been in the camps, he had been refused ordination to the priesthood by three Catacomb hierarchs, including Archbishop Anthony Galansky-Mikhailovsky – all of whom he later accused, by a strange coincidence, of being uncanonical. He then joined the Moscow Patriarchate and received ordination there from a certain Bishop Benjamin of Irkutsk. Only a year later, he returned to the Catacomb Church in Siberia, and was instrumental, according to some catacomb sources, in sowing such suspicion against the Catacomb Bishop Theodosius Bahmetev (+1986) that almost the whole of his flock deserted him.[59] Some even accuse him of having betrayed Catacomb Christians to the KGB. Be that as it may – and such accusations are easily made, but much less easily proved – there can be no doubt that a large part of the Catacomb Church distrusted Lazarus and refused to have anything to do with him. This was true both of the "moderates" and the "extremists" in the Catacomb Church, both of the "Seraphimo-Gennadiite" branch, led by Metropolitan Epiphany (Kaminsky)[60], of the "Matthewites" led by Schema-Monk Epiphany (Chernov)[61], and of the "passportless" branch represented by the Catacomb Archimandrite Gury (Pavlov), who, when about to be consecrated to the episcopate in New York in 1990 by the ROCA, categorically refused when he heard that Lazarus was going to be a co-consecrator.[62]

It was true also of Fr. Michael Rozhdostvensky. He was "the initiator of the complete rejection of the then priest Lazarus Zhurbenko because of the latter’s departing to the MP for his ordination. At a meeting of catacomb clergy in the city of Tambov in 1978, in the presence of the still-flourishing Abbot P, Fr. Vissarion and others, Fr. Michael confirmed this position. This decision was supported in those years by all without exception of the catacomb clergy. But later, when Vladyka Barnabas was searching for a worthy candidate for consecration to the rank of Bishop of the Catacomb Church, Fr. Lazarus (then already a hieromonk) craftily suggested the widowed Fr. Michael and himself was called to invite him to be consecrated to the episcopate. On receiving the invitation with the signature of Hieromonyk Lazarus (Zhurbenko), Fr. Michael Rozhdostvensky, naturally, did not go. Vladyka Barnabas was left with neither a choice nor time, and he was forced to consecrate Hieromonyk Lazarus to the episcopate. Fr. Michael’s position in relation to Vladyka Lazarus remained unchanging to the very end of his life [in 1988]."[63]
But not only did the ROCA consecrate Fr. Lazarus instead of eminently more suitable candidates such as Fr. Michael: they used his testimony as their sole guide to the canonicity or otherwise of the other Catacomb bishops in Russia. Thus on May 5/18, 1990 the ROCA Synod reversed the previous decision of the Synod under Metropolitan Philaret to recognize Archbishop Anthony-Mikhailovsky and his ordinations, and told the priests ordained by him "to regulate their canonical position by turning towards his Grace Bishop Lazarus of Tambov and Morshansk". Again, on August 2/15, 1990 another Ukaz was distributed (but not published in the Church press) which rejected the canonicity both of the "Seraphimo-Gennadiite" and the "Galinskyite" branches of the Catacomb Church, causing widespread havoc in both. Thus one "Seraphimo-Gennadiite" priest from Moscow took off his cross, saying that he was not a priest according to the ROCA and went to Bishop Lazarus to be reordained. His flock, suddenly abandoned, scattered in different directions.[64]

The main accusation against the hierarchs of these branches was that they could not prove their apostolic succession by producing ordination certificates, as required by the 33rd Apostolic Canon. This was, of course, a serious deficiency; but in view of both groups’ favourable attitude towards the ROCA, it would seem to have been more reasonable and charitable to have talked with them directly, learned their history and their point of view on the problem, and discussed with them some way of correcting this deficiency without resorting to the punitive measures of a papal curia. And such a charitable, unifying attitude to the various Catacomb groups had been urged – alas, without success - by Bishop Gregory (Grabbe).

As Archbishop Hilarion has recently admitted to the present writer: "The statement which I signed as Deputy Secretary of the Synod was based entirely on the information given to us by Archbishop Lazarus. He reported to the Synod on the different groups of the Catacombs and convinced the members of the Synod (or the Council – I don’t recall offhand which) that their canonicity was questionable and in some instances – their purity of doctrine as well (e.g. imyaboizhnik). The Synod members hoped (naively) that this would convince the catacomb groups to rethink their position and seek from the Russian Church Abroad correction of their orders to guarantee apostolic succession. We now see that it was a mistake to issue the statement and to have based our understanding of the catacomb situation wholly on the information provided by Vl. Lazarus. I personally regret this whole matter very much and seek to have a better understanding of and a sincere openness towards the long-suffering confessors of the Russian Catacombs."[65]

So Bishop Lazarus used the authority of the ROCA to take his revenge on Catacomb bishops who had displeased him and to have himself exalted above the Russian flock in their place.[66] He was therefore the first instrument - and the first beneficiary - of the ROCA’s policy of "divide and rule" towards the Catacomb Church. As such, he could not afford to break his links with the Synod that had promoted him, and ran back to it with his tail between his legs.

But his return to the ROCA has not meant better times for his flock in the Ukraine. Thus Hieromonk Hilarion (Goncharenko), in a petition for transfer from the ROCA to the FROC, wrote: "Vladyka Lazarus together with the Synod Abroad has cunningly and finally destroyed the whole Church in the Ukraine. My former friends and brothers in the Lord have.. turned to me
with tearful sobs and the painful question: 'What are we to do now in the stormy and destructive situation that has been created?'"[67]

Similar disturbances have taken place in other dioceses of the ROCA inside Russia. Thus Bishop Eutyches has been accused of serious dogmatical errors related to ecumenism.[68]

Thus the ROCA, which had a golden opportunity to gather all the anti-MP Catacomb Church forces under its wing in the early 1990s, only succeeded in creating further divisions and weakening the witness of the True Church. The good it did by consecrating such good pastors as Bishop Valentine was almost outweighed by the harm it did by undermining Bishop Valentine and the Suzdal diocese, by consecrating hirelings and wolves who only brought division to the flock of Christ, and by in general acting like foreign dictators reminiscent of the MP hierarchs. Experienced Catacomb Christians soon discerned the signs, and fled from the spirit of sergianism (and ecumenism) in the ROCA as they had fled from it in the MP.

It has been left to the FROC to take up the burden which the ROCA has failed to carry. Thus it is she, rather than the ROCA, which is now gathering the Catacomb Christians under her wing - but without issuing bans against those groups which do not recognize her authority. In accordance with the Patriarchal Ukaz, she has sought friendly relations with, but not administrative rule over, the other truly Orthodox groups in Russia in the spirit of love that must characterize all relationships within the Church. She claims neither to be the one and only Russian Church, nor to be the administrative centre of the Russian Church. But she has pledged to work towards the convening of that future canonical Local Council of the Russian Church which she, like the ROCA in previous decades, recognizes to be the highest authority in the Church and the only competent judge of the actions of all her constituent parts.

What are the prospects of reunion between the FROC and the ROCA? In the present writer’s opinion, this can only take place under one or other of two possible conditions:-

1. A complete change of heart in the ROCA Synod towards the FROC and repentance for its past canonical transgressions, involving: (a) fitting punishment of those who have wrought such havoc in Russia in recent years, especially Archbishop Mark of Berlin; (b) the removal of all bans on the FROC bishops; (c) the recognition of the FROC’s autonomy in accordance with the Patriarchal Ukaz.

Such a change of heart looks unlikely in view of the events of recent years, when the ascendancy of Archbishop Mark over the ROCA Synod has become more and more marked. His shameful negotiations with KGB Agent "Drozdov", i.e. "Patriarch" Alexis Ridiger, in December, 1996, and his part in forcing Metropolitan Vitaly to expel the confessors of Hebron and Jerusalem and apologize before the PLO President Arafat in July, 1997, have shocked the Orthodox world. In the Sobor of May, 1998, after Mark had been removed from the Synod by the First-Hierarch, a golden opportunity presented itself to have this evil genius of the Russian Church finally removed from power; but the opportunity was lost.

And so the ROCA’s drift towards unity with the MP continues unabated; having rid itself of the "Soviet filth" of the FROC, the majority of its bishops are now hypocritically ready to unite
with the "Mother Church" of the Soviet MP. Indeed, having renounced the great majority of the truly confessing Christians in Russia, it is only logical that the ROCA should seek an alliance with the other side, perhaps on the basis of an autonomous status for the ROCA within the Moscow Patriarchate. After all, Church life does not stand still, but continually moves between the poles of good and evil, life and death; so that a movement away from one pole inevitably involves a movement closer to the other pole…

In view of this there remains the other possibility: 2. A schism in the ROCA allowing the right-thinking Christians in it both inside Russia and abroad, to separate from their Sovietizing hierarchs and be reunited with the confessing Christians of other Russian Church jurisdictions. Already there are many members of the ROCA inside Russia who sympathize with, and by no means reject, their brothers in the FROC. Both they and the FROC are suffering persecution from the MP; both they and the FROC have suffered the effects of the ROCA’s maladministration and (in the case of certain hierarchs) outright treachery. It is only logical, therefore, that these two groups, having an identical faith and being "in identical conditions" (to use the language of the Patriarchal Ukaz), should reunite when the time is right – that is, when the complete failure of the ROCA’s mission inside Russia becomes evident to all.

But there must be no forcing, no exertion of power at the expense of love. That is the primary lesson of these tragic years since the fall of Soviet power. "Lest little by little and without it being noticed, we lose the freedom which our Lord Jesus Christ, the Liberator of all men, has given us through His Blood…"

September 26 / October 9, 1998.

Repose of St. John the Theologian.

NB: By November, 2000, the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church had eight bishops, six in Russia, one in the Ukraine and one in Latvia, with about 150 above-ground parishes and 300 catacomb parishes.

APPENDIX 1: LETTER OF BISHOP GREGORY GRABBE TO METROPOLITAN VITALY

Most Reverend Vladyko!

For a very long time now – in fact, since the first days of your leadership of our Church Abroad – I have with great anxiety and turmoil of heart been tracing how quickly she has begun to slide into the abyss of administrative disorder and canonical chaos.
All this time I have suppressed within myself the desire to express openly to you my anxiety for the destinies of our Church Abroad, mainly out of worry that every utterance of mine will be taken by you as an expression of personal offence.

Believe me, Vladyko, although I could not fail to have the feeling of a certain chagrin in relation to members of the Council and you personally, by the mercy of God I have nourished no unfriendly feelings towards anyone. As you yourself know, I have by all means tried, and I am still trying, in the first place to be ruled by the interests of our Church, both abroad and in Russia.

I very much beseech you patiently to listen to my observations concerning the years when I ceased to be secretary of the Synod. Although I no longer bear any formal responsibility for the later destinies of our Church, I cannot look with indifference at what is now happening before my eyes.

Our woes began with the first Hierarchical Council to take place after the death of Metropolitan Philaret….

In order to illustrate the relationship of the members of the Council of that time to myself, please recall the speech made at the banquet on the occasion of your election. Then Protopriest Ioann Legky, as he then was, in greeting you, said that he was glad that in my person you would have such an experienced and faithful assistant as had had your three predecessors.

To my extreme surprise, in looking through the protocols at the end of the Council, I saw that his speech had been received as ‘an insult to the whole Hierarchical Council’. This amazing resolution remained in the protocol as ‘an instruction to posterity’.

At this time you suggested that I keep the parishes in my jurisdiction and add to them some more from Pennsylvania. In accordance with your direction, I then composed a list of the parishes which should enter my diocese. But when I arrived at the session, you detained my report on this matter and sharply attacked me for my ‘bankruptcy’ as an administrator and in effect gave me an ultimatum: either I myself had to put in an application for retirement, or I would be judged by the Council, although it was not known what for. Seeing that both you and the majority of the members of the Council were seeking an opportunity to drive me out of your midst, I made a declaration about my retirement for the sake of ecclesiastical peace, although I felt absolutely no guilt that would have merited a trial or dismissal. It was said that the reason for the Council members’ dissatisfaction was my unskilful administration of affairs in Rome, although at that time I had completely supported the opinion of the person sent there as investigator, Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles.

Only the reposed Archbishop Seraphim of Chicago, in spite of being ill with the illness that led to his death, wrote you a decisive protest against my illegal dismissal from the see of Washington and Florida.

At the same Council there was an unexpected declaration that Archbishop Laurus had been appointed as Secretary of the Synod, and Bishop Hilarion – as his Deputy. This change in Secretary did not figure on the Council’s agenda. I myself had to point out to the Council that in
appointing whoever it may be to a post, one must first make that post free from the other person occupying it. I immediately announced my retirement. However, I could not fail to be worried by the fact – which the members of the Council did not want to take into consideration – that the new Secretary of the Synod would be living 200 kilometres from the Chancellery, while his deputy was a man completely inexperienced in chancellery procedures.

This my very hasty removal from the post of Secretary of the Synod (although it was called different things at different times) after 55 years of service to the Church Abroad must have demonstrated to our enemies that a revolution had taken place among us, which would undoubtedbly be badly reflected on the prestige of the Synod. I myself had to point this out to you in my concern for preserving the dignity of the Synod at the given time. Apparently you yourself felt a certain awkwardness at that time, and you expressed your gratitude to me in a laconical way. It is also worthy of note that I was treated like a guilty chamber-maid precisely in the year in which the Council resolved triumphantly to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the death of Metropolitan Anthony [Khrapovitsky]. The Council completely ignored the fact that I was not only appointed to work in the Synod by the personal desire of the Metropolitan, but also that I was one of his closest and most trusted co-workers.

In view of this, my daughter [Matushka Anastasia Georgievna Shatilova] refused the responsibilities of Record-Keeper of the Chancellery. For the last four decades she had been my unofficial secretary and closest co-worker. She already had enormous experience of work in ecclesiastical administration. In unconditionally accepting her resignation, you thereby deprived the Synodal Chancellery of its main worker.

With my and her departure, the Department of External Relations of the Synod was immediately closed. This Department had been acquiring a greater and greater significance in the eyes of the other Orthodox Churches. Reprints from the "Newsheet" that it published had already begun to appear in the official organs of some local Churches. This was a fresh blow at the prestige of the Synod.

On the disorganisation of our Chancellery I can judge from a series of signs. Thus I was sent from Russia copies of your letters to Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentine. First, I very soon managed to find out that these documents were unknown to both Secretaries of the Synod, to whom I handed over these copies. Moreover, the very subject of these letters, by the delicacy of their content, demanded their presentation by you for discussion in the Hierarchical Synod. But it turned out that the letters were not only dispatched without the knowledge of the Secretaries, but also had a whole series of other defects which quite clearly demonstrated the bankruptcy of your personal Chancellery. Although Russian notepaper was available, the letters to Russia were sent on English notepaper; they not only had no numbers, but even no dates. In the letter to Archbishop Lazarus there was no indication of whom it was being sent to, while Bishop Valentine’s title was incomplete. Finally, the very text of the letters was by no means brilliant grammatically and stylistically. Moreover, it also emerged (which is especially terrible) that at the bottom of both letters was not your signature in your own hand, but a facsimile!

The Synodal House ceased to exist as the centre of our administration. The sessions of the Synods and Councils were usually arranged in any place, only not in the Synodal House.
Besides, you are rarely in New York, Vladyka Hilarion is often away, and the Chancellery in his absence does not function – in our former centre there is often not a single responsible person capable of giving correct information, or of understanding what to do with information received from outside. Often the ‘responsible’ person turns out to be the telephonist on duty at the time.

There have been many complaints against your secretary on the part of clergy visiting the Synod, mainly because of her crudeness and unwelcomingness. I know of cases when she refused to connect you by telephone even with Bishops. I personally have more than once been in such a situation. However, in refusing to connect me with you, she was polite to me. But her often provocative behaviour has drawn censure also on you personally, for much is said and done by her in your name.

The Synodal cathedral, which was always famous for its well-ordered and very majestic cathedral services, has for a long time now not had even one permanent priest. Vladyka Hilarion tries to fulfil the role of such a priest as well as he can. But people who turn to the Synod for the carrying out of needs in his absence are often refused in a less than polite manner.

The constantly changing priests in the cathedral read Church Slavonic with evident difficulty, making mistakes even in often-repeated Saturday Gospels.

Things are no better in the Eastern American diocese. I have often had to hear the complaints of our priests about the fact that since the time you became the head of this diocese there has not been a single diocesan Congress, in spite of the fact that at pastoral congresses you have been asked insistently about this by the father rectors. Many priests feel that you have abandoned this diocese when they learn that there have been diocesan congresses in Canada.

Some have begun to be concerned at the danger of losing the guarantee of keeping their parish property. Thus the property of the Eastern American diocese and of the parish at Glen Cove attached to it has suddenly been declared to be the property of the Hierarchical Synod. For a long time now the Synod has been aiming to close down this parish, and to sell the diocese’s property for its own profit.

As regards our affairs in Russia, you yourself know how many reports I have made on this issue. Not once have I received any kind of reaction, neither from you personally, nor from the Synod Chancellery.

I was particularly distressed by the ban you imposed on me in March preventing me from personally presenting my report to the Synod and from taking part in the deliberations on its contents. This is a completely unprecedented case in the history of the Church Abroad. I do not know of a single case in which a Bishop was refused the right of publishing his report to the Synod.

The actuality of my report has been confirmed by the events that took place one after the other in Russia. A correctly ordered administration should anticipate events, and not simply react to them hastily, which is quite obviously what is happening now. As a result we have brought the matter of the possible regeneration of the Church in Russia to the most undesirable of ends.
Spurred on by envy and spite, certain of our Bishops have influenced the whole course of our Church politics in Russia. As a consequence of this, our Synod has not understood the meaning of the existence of our mission abroad.

As I warned the Synod in my last report, we have done absolutely everything possible to force the Russian Bishops to separate from us administratively.

They have had to proceed from Resolution No. 362 of Patriarch Tikhon of November 7/20, 1920, so as to prevent the final destruction of the just-beginning regeneration of the Russian Church in our Fatherland. But our Synod, having nothing before its eyes except punitive tactics, has proceeded only from the positions of normalised ecclesiastical life. But the Patriarch’s Resolution had in mind the preservation of ecclesiastical construction in completely unprecedented historical and ecclesiastical circumstances.

The ukaz was composed for various cases, including the means of restoring the Church Administration in conditions when it had even ceased to be (cf. article 9) and "the extreme disorganisation of Church life". This is the task placed before any surviving hierarch, provided only that he truly Orthodox.

The Russian Hierarchs felt themselves to be in this position when, for almost two years in a row, their enquiries and requests to receive support against the oppression of the Moscow Patriarchate were met with complete silence on the part of our Synod.

Seeing the canonical chaos caused in their dioceses by Bishop Barnabas, and the silent connivance towards him of the Synod, the Russian Hierarchs came to the conclusion that they had no other way of preventing the destruction of the whole enterprise than by being ruled by the patriarchal Resolution No. 362.

Our Synod unlawfully pushed Bishop Valentine into retirement for accepting the huge parish in Noginsk, which Bishop Barnabas hoped to receive for himself, but did not react in any way when the same Bishop Barnabas treacherously shamed the Synod by petitioning to be received into communion with a Ukrainian self-consecrator in the name of the Synod!

I do not know whether you have read the full text of the Resolution of November 7/20 at a session of the Synod. I myself earlier paid little attention to it, but now, on reading it through, I see that the Russian Bishops have every right to refer to it, and this fact will be revealed in the polemic that will now inevitably develop. I fear that the Synod has already opened the way to this undesirable polemic by its decisions, and it will betoken a schism not only in Russia, but also with us here…

There are things which cannot be stopped, and it is also impossible to walk away from an accomplished fact. If our Synod does not now correctly evaluate the passing historical moment, then its already infinitely undermined prestige (especially in Russia) will be finally and ingloriously destroyed.
For all the years of the existence of the Church Abroad we have enjoyed respect and glory for nothing else than for our uncompromising faithfulness to the canons. They hated us, but they did not dare not to respect us. But now we have shown the whole Orthodox world that the canons are for us just an empty sound and we have become a laughing-stock in the eyes of all those who have any kind of relationship to Church questions.

Look: you yourself, at the Council in Lesna, permitted yourself to say that for us, the participants in it, this was not now the time to examine canons, but we had to act quickly. You, holding the tiller of the ecclesiastical ship, triumphantly, in front of the whole Council, declared to us that now we had to hasten to sail without a rudder and without sails. At that time your words appalled me, but I, knowing of your irritation towards me because I insist that we have to live in accordance with the canons, still hoped that all was not lost and that our Bishops would somehow shake off the whole nightmare of these last years.

Think, Vladyko, of the tens of thousands of Orthodox people we have deceived both abroad and in Russia. Don’t calm yourself with the thought that if there is some guilt somewhere, then it lies equally on all our hierarchs. The main guilt will lie on you, as the leader of our Council. I have had to hear from some Bishops that sometimes the Synod decrees one thing, and then you, taking no account of previous resolutions, on your own initiative either change them or simply rescind them.

And look now, as has already become quite well known, after the stormy March session of the Synod, it dispersed without making a single resolution. During it the question was discussed of banning the Russian Hierarchs from serving. Nevertheless, you demanded that the Secretariat that it send of an ukaz banning bishops who were not even under investigation. Both from the point of view of the 34th Apostolic canon, and from an ecclesiastical-administrative point of view, this is unprecedented lawlessness.

Remember, Vladyko, your reproachful speech against Metropolitan Philaret, when in 1985 you for ten minutes non-stop fulminated against him for transgressing the 34th Apostolic canon. The crimes of Metropolitan Philaret seem to me to be miniscule by comparison with what is happening now. He only occasionally gave awards to clergy of other dioceses at the request of his cell-attendant, but never interfered in the affairs of the dioceses of his brothers. But that is what both you personally and certain of our Bishops have begun to do. Fr. Nikita was not able to get the reposed Metropolitan Philaret to commit those uncanonical acts in which the activity of Bishop Barnabas and certain other bishops abound – with the silent agreement of you as the First Hierarch, who must know all these circumstances well.

Forgive me, Vladyko, if my letter grieves you. My aim is not, and never has been, to wound or offend you. In going through the results of your rule in recent years in chronological order… my aim was by no means to complain about my own fate. You of course must know that I have not once expressed any offence or complaint of a personal character. I write this letter only in order to show you clearly how we have come off the canonical rails since 1985, we have more and more begun to depart from the basic ecclesiastical canons and rulers of our Local Church and now we have reduced all our affairs in Russia and abroad to the saddest condition.
I was a witness of, and participant in, the glorious period in the life of the Church Abroad, and now with pain I look on what I consider to be what is already its inglorious end.

The growth of our parishes abroad has ceased since the death of Metropolitan Philaret. We have no candidates to fill the hierarchical sees, which witnesses to the fact that we are gradually becoming smaller. And now at this portentous moment we are simply renouncing the link with Russia that was established with such labour.

Our Synod must understand that we by our actions have elicited the speedy administrative departure from us of the Russian Hierarchs. It had to happen one way or another on the basis of the Resolution of Patriarch Tikhon of November 7/20, 1920 and of our own "Statute concerning the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad". If we do not now understand this, then we only demonstrate before the whole world our bankruptcy and our failure to understand the whole historic mission laid upon us by the Providence of God.

In their resolution of March 22 the Russian Hierarchs declared that they remained in communion of prayer with us and commemorated you in the Divine services, but we, instead of understanding the unprecedented state of ecclesiastical affairs in Russia, and not thinking about building up the Church or of the tens of thousands of people deceived by us – reply to everything only with canons which were meant to be used in normal conditions.

It is absolutely necessary for you sharply and decisively to turn the rudder of our administration in the direction of keeping the canons, before it is too late.

Vladyko, do not allow your name in the history of the Russian Church to be linked, not with the peaceful construction of Church life, but with its abrupt and shameful destruction both in Russia and abroad.

March 24 / April 6, 1994

APPENDIX 2. ON RECENT EVENTS IN CHURCH LIFE IN RUSSIA AND ABROAD

(The Independent Opinion of Bishop Gregory (Grabbe))

The conciliar decrees on the matter of the Russian bishops that have come to me cannot fail to elicit perplexity in all those who have any acquaintance at all with the canons of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The very fact that Bishops Theodore and Agathangelus were summoned, without the slightest qualifications, to a session of the Synod witnesses to the recognition of their hierarchical consecrations. This is especially obvious if we remember the joyful declarations of the President of the Council [in Lesna, in December, 1994] concerning the decrees that had previously been accepted opening the way to a peaceful resolution of all the problems of the Church Administration in Russia. Bishops Theodore and Agathangelus came to the session of the Synod.
on the basis of precisely this understanding of their status. However, completely unexpectedly for us, the Synod raised the question, not even of whether their episcopate should be doubted, but of banning them from serving with the threat of defrocking five out of the seven Russian Bishops, which, if the Bishops from Russia had entered the ranks of the Church Abroad should have been carried out in the definite legal procedure laid out in the Statute of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. But we should not forget that one of the especially important legal principles of the above-mentioned Statute was that all its rules had in mind only the affairs of the Church Abroad, but by no means the affairs of the Church in Russia. In the whole Statute there is not one word about entrusting the Hierarchical Synod or its President with authority over the Church in Russia. Of course, this does not exclude help for the Church in Russia. However, there is a great difference between help and jurisdiction.

If we turn to the decree of his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon of November 7/20, 1920, there hierarchs are allowed to render help in the forming of a temporary Administration in Russia, but not to assume for themselves ecclesiastical authority over the whole of Russia. It was this kind of help that the Church Abroad rendered when she consecrated Bishops for Russia, because of the communists’ annihilation of the whole lawful Russian hierarchy. That was enough for a beginning.

When local parishes began to appear, together with local legislation concerning them, a series of completely new questions arose. With the growth in the number of parishes in the conditions of competition with the Moscow Patriarchate that had betrayed the truth, problems began to arise that were not always comprehensible for the [bishops] abroad. The administration abroad, not being sufficiently acquainted with all the aspects of Church life in Russia, as often as not was silent, but from time to time took upon itself the labour of issuing decrees for the Church in Russia. Besides this, the Synod Abroad, submitting to the promptings of conscious provocateurs, burned with distrust for the Russian Bishops, while at the same time having no other candidates for archpastoral service. Hence a series of mistakes, and as a result, with the aid of the enemies of the Church, the relations between the Russian hierarchy and the Hierarchical Synod became extremely complicated.

Finally, we see the Resolution of the Synod dated February 9.22 of this year, which simply abolishes the missionary gains in Russia, handing over all the open... parishes that have not taken part in the missionary work to the hierarchy, and even to Vladyka Metropolitan, who has not once been in Russia.

Glory to God, our Russian Bishops remain faithful to the principles of the preservation of Orthodoxy that have guided them in their missionary work. If our Bishops abroad also preserve faithfulness to these principles, then the two parts of the Russian Church can again be united. The erroneous bans on Archbishops Lazarus and Valentine and their vicars cannot be carried out, for they were issued in violation of all the canons of the Holy Orthodox Church and her holy Canons, including the Statute on the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad.

No hierarch who understands his responsibility can take part in the dissolution of the Church discipline that has been formed in the course of past years, substituting anarchy for the order ordained for the regeneration of the Russian Church by the Holy Patriarch Tikhon.
Beloved in Christ Jesus Fathers, Brothers and Sisters, Children of the persecuted and tormented Russian Church!

The Russian Orthodox Church is living through a harsh time, constricted now not by bloody persecutors, but by false brethren, who imitate Orthodoxy and call themselves the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, the supposed successor of the Church of his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon. Its main aim is "to deceive, if it were possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24.24), so that there should be forever lost in our poor Fatherland the feeling of truth and the right understanding of what the Church really is. The gaze of the majority of Russian (rossijskikh) people, deprived in the course of seventy years of the opportunity of confessing the true faith and acquiring the first principles of Orthodox teaching, is directed at externals, at the superficial content of this heretical and traitrous organization. Its influence has now embraced a significant part not only of the Russian (rossijskogo) people, which has lost the foundations of its statehood and nationality, but also a large part of the other peoples of the earth, their views of life and social structures, which gives us the right to speak of it as an institution of the Antichrist[69], who is striving by his speedy coming to take the place of Christ in the hearts and minds of the whole human race.

We must admit that the work of Judas has had great success in recent years. Witness to this is the departure from the Holy Canons of almost all the Local "Orthodox" Churches of the world, and the presence of an extensive net of informants and agents, thanks to which no event in the life of these Churches that have fallen under the influence of the source of world evil is free from control by the God-fighting powers, if they are not directly inspired by them.

Now the turn has come to the last citadel of undamaged Orthodoxy in the free world – the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, now headed by his Eminence Metropolitan VITALY (Ustinov). Unfortunately, Vladyka Metropolitan, having fallen with age under others’ influence, is no longer the leader of the Hierarchical Synod of the ROCA, but only formally occupies this post. As usually happens, the enemy of the human race delivers his main blow at the weak place
in human administration. Deceived and confused, Vladyka Metropolitan fears to change place, fears to go to Russia, and in his own residence fears that he may be poisoned, killed, etc.

Meanwhile, a group of opponents of the commandment of Christ on love, transgressors of the Holy Canons and Resolutions of the Holy Fathers, having united with their pro-patriarchal supporters in the ROCA itself, are in fact leading the matter to a rapprochement with the Moscow Patriarchate, taking into their hands the reins of the Church administration. These so-called "zealots of undamaged Orthodoxy", a part of whom are without doubt agents of the MP, have been joined by well-wishers in Russia. In their number is (the recently consecrated) Bishop Eutyches, who, at the 5th Conference of clergy in Suzdal, spoke about the Holy Canons as of something secondary by comparison with the opinion of the living hierarchs of the ROCA who were in agreement with him.

We must admit that the successes of the dark powers that have been trying finally to destroy undamaged Orthodoxy, have been very great. But this is no reason for the faithful children of the Church of Christ to become despondent or to cease to struggle against these evil forces. The hierarch Ignaty Brianchaninov wrote: "The apostasy is allowed by God: do not try to stop it with your powerless hand. Keep away, guard yourself from it: and this will be enough from you. Get to know the spirit of the time, study it, so as to avoid its influence as far as possible."

Thus it turns out that the Russian [Rossijskaya] Church, having received the re-establishment of its episcopate several years ago from the hands of foreign hierarchs, and thereby acquired the opportunity to develop independently and freely from sergianism and the other sins of the Moscow Patriarchate, is now suffering the most real persecution from these same hierarchs. Moreover, if in the past faithfulness to the Holy Canons was raised in the Church Abroad to the level of primary importance and was the unfailing condition of the choice and realization of the enterprises of Church life, now, some three or four years later, almost every action of the ROCA Synod is a crude trampling on the Holy Canons and on the Statute of the ROCA itself, which declares in its first paragraph that "the ROCA is a part of the Russian [Rossijskoj] Church, temporarily governing itself until the removal from Russia of the atheist Soviet power".

As if without noticing this, the Synod of the ROCA now imposes its will on the Russian believers instead of giving an account, in an atmosphere of love, agreement and respect for the persecutions they have undergone in Russia, to the Orthodox people – the hierarchs, pastors and simple believers who do not recognize the schismatic Moscow Patriarchate. It would be good if the will of the Chancellery of the ROCA Synod were really the will of all the hierarchs of Russia Abroad, a will in agreement with the Canons of the Holy Apostles and Fathers of the Church! But nothing of the sort. The far from canonical decisions of three or four hierarchs take the place of the Sobor’s decisions and resolutions, and, published and distributed through Russia by agents of the MP, they sow division, distrust and enmity in our much-suffering Fatherland.

To our great misfortune and shame, it has already become a habit for the ROCA Synod to deprive bishops of their sees, ban or defrock several Hierarchs at once, not only without trial or investigation, but even without any reason, simply on the basis of slander. They can "see better from beyond the ocean"!, as Vladyka Metropolitan Vitaly expressed it. All this, without any doubt, is one of the greatest achievements of the secret antichristian forces in recent times.
More and more threats are piled on the Russian Hierarchs, Archbishops Lazarus and Valentine, and Bishops Theodore, Seraphim, Agathangelus, Alexander, Victor and Arsenius, by the Hierarchical Synod of the ROCA, by false brothers of the Moscow Patriarchate and by bold enemies of Orthodox teaching. Making use of the ambiguity of the situation, the Moscow Patriarchate, with the help of the authorities, is striving to take away the churches of the Russian [Rossijskoj] Orthodox Church, the Church of God that is free from sergianism, and inspire believing people with the thought that the Hierarchical rank of the Russian Hierarchs is invalid.

It is especially distressing to see that one part of the believers is submitting to this propaganda and is taking steps to embrace the heretical sergianists and transgressors of the Holy Canons. They are taking a step into the abyss of hell, from where "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8.12) are heard.

The most recent Resolution of the Hierarchical Synod of the ROCA forces us once more to remind people of the power of the bans placed by the canons for these transgressions, of which that part of the hierarchs of the ROCA which has ascribed itself the right to speak and act in the name of the whole Church Abroad, is now guilty.

1. If a Bishop receives church servers banned by another bishop as members of his clergy, let him be expelled as a teacher of lawlessness (16th Apostolic Canon).
2. Let a Bishop who dares to carry out an ordination beyond the bounds of his Diocese without the agreement of the Diocese in which the ordination takes place, be defrocked, together with those ordained by him (35th Apostolic Canon).
3. If a Bishop teaches publicly in a city that does not belong to him, let him be removed from the episcopate and do the works of the priesthood (20th Canon of the 6th Ecumenical Council).
4. Let no Bishop dare to move from one Diocese to another. If he decides to carry out Church affairs that do not belong to him, then let everything he has done be invalid and let him be punished for his lawlessness and foolhardy undertakings by speedy defrockment from his rank by the holy council (13th Canon of Antioch; 59th Canon of Carthage).

The Canons demand that every Diocese should preserve in purity and without oppression the rights that belonged to it from the beginning, and if anyone suggests anything contrary to this, let it be invalid (8th Canon of the 3rd Ecumenical Council; 9th Canon of Antioch; 64th and 67th Canons of Carthage). It is precisely these Canons that FORBID the ROCA Synod FROM MAKING ANY ATTEMPT TO RULE the Russian Orthodox Church and call itself the HIGHER CHURCH AUTHORITY!

We call on all the faithful children of the Church of God to firmly remember the covenants of the holy Fathers of the Church and not to give in to any attempts to persuade them, from whatever quarter these may come, to carry out the affairs of Church life in violation of the Holy Canons. Any resolutions of the Hierarchical Synod or of the Moscow Patriarchate which are aimed at interfering in the affairs of the Russian [Rossijskoy] Orthodox Church in the Homeland, are not to be recognized or carried out.
Dear in the Lord Children of the Orthodox Church of God, who remain faithful to the Holy Canons and covenants of the Hierarch Tikhon, Patriarch and Confessor of Moscow and All Russia and of the Holy New Martyrs of Russia! We call on you to cleanse yourselves from sergianism and the other sins of the Moscow Patriarchate that have penetrated the Russian Church Abroad. We have no right to interfere in the affairs of the Dioceses Abroad, but it is painful for us to see how this part of the Russian Church, which preserved, throughout all the decades of atheism in the Homeland, in persecution and dispersion, the light of the Orthodox Faith, is now being subjected to humiliation and mockery according to the will of those who are guilty of the present division, and whose leader is the devil. May the Lord preserve us all.

With much love,

ADMINISTERING THE AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

PRESIDENT OF THE TEMPORARY HIGHER CHURCH AUTHORITY

+Valentine, Archbishop of Suzdal and Vladimir

CONSTANT MEMBERS OF THE TEMPORARY HIGHER CHURCH AUTHORITY

Theodore, Bishop of Borisovsk

Seraphim, Bishop of Sukhumi and Abkahzia.

October, 1995.

Suzdal. [70]

APPENDIX 4. AN ANATHEMA AGAINST THE SERGIANISTS

On the Sunday of Orthodoxy, 1999, the Synod of the FROC (now officially called the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church) declared: "A resolution was passed concerning the hierarchs and representatives of the clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate who received their rank through the mediation of the authorities and organs of State Security. In relation to such it was decided that every year on the Sunday of Orthodoxy ANATHEMA should be proclaimed, using the following text: ‘If any bishops, making use of secular bosses ["nachal’nikov"], have seized power in the Church of God and enslaved Her, let those and those who aid them and those who
communicate with them without paying heed to the reproaches of the Law of God, be ANATHEMA.[71]

APPENDIX 5. EPISTLE OF THE HIERARCHICAL SYNOD OF THE RUSSIAN (ROSSIJSKOJ) ORTHODOX CHURCH TO THE HIERARCHICAL COUNCIL OF THE RUSSIAN (RUSSKOJ) ORTHODOX CHURCH ABROAD

21 August / September 3, 2000. No. 70.

Your Eminence, honourable Archpastors – members of the Hierarchical Council, and also clergy and children and of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad!

The Hierarchical Council of the Church Abroad opens at a time when, on the one hand, the whole world is being shaken by events, each more terrible than the one before – catastrophes, elemental disasters, wars… On the other hand, the whole world is seized by a certain fever for unification: this is observable not only in the political life of the world, but also in its religious life. On the one hand, endless disputes, on the other – a haste to unify everyone and everything: states with states, churches with churches, religions with religions…

The fever for unification that embraces the earthly globe manifests itself in various external forms – sometimes political, sometimes economic, and sometimes also in an ecclesiastical-ecumenical form – but its profound essence remains unchangingly the same…. And in this the zealots of unification place definite hopes on the hierarchs of the ROCA.

But can the Orthodox Church surrender to this spirit of the times – that Church which is unshakably "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2.20)?

"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved", says the holy Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians (I Corinthians 15.1-2). In another epistle, to the Galatians, he says: "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel that what we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1.8). But to those who have preserved the holy gospel there is the promise of being comforted… "by the mutual faith both of you and of me" (Romans 1.12).

If we open the Acts of the Holy Ecumenical Councils, we see that the holy builders of the Church struggled for nothing more than for the preservation and support in its unchanging form of the faith of the fathers. "We pray you that you keep the faith of the fathers unchanged". "We beseech you to investigate the novelty that has been introduced against the former faith" – this is how the zealots of the Orthodox Faith addressed the Holy Councils. And, having investigated the
novelty, and rejected the innovations, and confirmed the Dogmas of Orthodoxy unshaken, the Holy Fathers exclaimed: "Yes, this is the faith of the fathers! This is how we all believe!"

If we open the works of the Russian teachers of the faith that are closer to us, we see the same care first of all for keeping the patristic teaching unchanged. "Human teachings all strive for that which is new, they grow, they develop… Thus is has become a law: forward, forward! But in regard to our faith it was said from on high: stand… remain unmoved. All that remains for us to do is to be confirmed and to confirm others," appealed the noted holy hierarch of the Vladimir lands Theophan, the Vishensky recluse. "… We have to look over all that has passed in order to see whether the order of teachings that was outlined for us has in any way been disturbed." ("On Orthodoxy with warnings against sins against it," Sermons of Bishop Theophan, Moscow, 1991. From his sermons to the flocks of Tambov and Vladimir).

In 1918 "he who restrains" was taken away – and this had fateful consequences not only for Russia, but also for the whole world. Already within two years of the murder of the holy Martyr Tsar Nicholas II, in 1920, the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate in the person of the Locum Tenens of the Patriarchal Throne, Metropolitan Dorotheus of Prussa, issued an encyclical which encroached on the very foundations of Orthodoxy. Heretical communities that have been separated by the Orthodox Church from Her communion were declared to be "churches" having equal rights with her, and Orthodoxy was given the aim of the speediest possible unification with all the apostates.

In contrast to this treacherous document, which marked the beginning of the global apostasy of "World Orthodoxy", in the same year of 1920 the holy Patriarch Tikhon together with the Holy Synod and the Higher Church Council – that is, undoubtedly with the whole fullness of the Central Ecclesiastical authorities of the Russian Church – made a most important resolution, Ukaz no. 362 of 7/20 November, 1920, on the self-definition of dioceses in conditions of possible persecution. The other name for this Ukaz – the Ukaz on decentralization – underlines the fact that the aim of the resolution of the Russian Ecclesiastical Authorities was contradictory to the aim of the encyclical of the Ecumenical throne, which called for the centralization of all confessions of faith.

From now on the broad path and all conditions for unification were created only for the unfaithful: but for those faithful to Christ a violent disunion lay in store: the two parts of the Russian Church were disunited: the one found itself exiled from its native land, while the other was driven into the catacombs by persecutions unprecedented in their ferocity. But in these terrible years the Church of Russia did not cease to constitute one spiritual whole.

The force enabling both parts of the Russian Church to hold out and preserve Their unity in all temptations, especially in the approaching most terrible period – the epoch of the sergianist schism – was their unanimous confession of the faith of the fathers.

"Schism is not antiquity, but novelty", pointed out Theophan the Recluse. This remarkable definition has a universal character and allows always accurately to establish the one who is truly guilty of schism.
By his treacherous Declaration of 1927 Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) opened wide the gates of the Church for renovationism. It consisted in the undermining of the very meaning of the existence of the Church on earth – not as the pillar and ground of the truth and of eternal Authority, but as the weapon of earthly power.

Both parts of the Russian Church – the part in Russia, and the part Abroad – were completely unanimous in their attitude to the Declaration of 1927. The Hierarchical Synod of the Church Abroad, headed by his Beatitude Metropolitan Anthony, broke communion with the schismatic metropolitan and his synod. The bishops in the homeland that were faithful to the Russian Church did the same. The essence of the sergianist schism was very accurately expressed by New Martyr Bishop Victor (Ostrovidov), when he called Sergius an anti-ecclesiastical heretic. The faithful children of the Russian Church did not visit the sergianist churches, they justly made no distinction between sergianists and renovationists. "We shall not go to renovationism," said the Orthodox. Communications were lost with Metropolitan Peter (Polyansky), the lawful head of the Russian Church, who was in prison, and the treachery of his Deputy forced the Church, both in the Homeland and abroad, to be ruled in its canonical existence by Ukaz no. 362 of the holy Patriarch Tikhon concerning the self-definition of dioceses. With the death of Metropolitan Peter (Polyansky), the Central or Supreme Authority of the Russian Church ceased even its nominal existence. Such an eventuality was foreseen by Ukaz no. 362, which contained detailed recommendations for the ordering of the Church which would avoid schism in this event. But through the efforts of Metropolitan Sergius, a dual authority was introduced, and then a false patriarchate (a common phenomenon, alas, in Church history during the periods when heresy was dominant).

From now on the Russian Church trod its path in the conditions of the absence of Central (Supreme) Ecclesiastical Authority. When the last Orthodox churches were closed in Russia in the 1930s, the Russian Church finally departed into the catacombs, preserving communion in prayer with Her half that was abroad and commemorating Her First Hierarchs Metropolitans Anthony, Anastasy and Philaret. Following the spirit and aim of the Ukaz no. 362 of the holy Patriarch Tikhon of 7/20 November, 1920 kept the Orthodox Church reliably free of false strivings for unification.

This was not the case with the sergianist church – it grew strongly into what is now commonly called "official world orthodoxy". The latter was also ruled by a document of 1920, but the document of an opposite tendency – the ecumenical encyclical of the Locum Tenens of the Ecumenical Throne Dorotheus. "World Orthodoxy" became an inalienable part of the ecumenical movement and dragged the sergianist church after it into the abyss. Into the gates opened by Metropolitan Sergius there now poured without the slightest resistance the false teachings by which the enemy of human salvation has, in the course of the whole of his struggle with the Church, and especially in the 20th century, undermined the teaching of Christ.

The sergianist church accepted all the most destructive innovations of the 20th century – both communism, and ecumenism, by which it clearly marked its complete attachment to the most terrible schism that has ever tormented the Universal Church.
If Metropolitan Sergius, as the holy new martyrs pointed out, had "distorted the dogmatic face of the Church", then under his successors we must speak no longer of distortion, but of a complete overthrow of the Holy Dogmas, and first of all – of the Dogma of the Church as being one and only one. In consequence of this trampling on the Holy Dogmas there appeared crying violations of the Holy Canons – for example, the categorical ban on joint prayers with the heterodox under threat of being deprived of one’s rank and expelled from the Church.

Is it necessary to cite examples of the excesses of the ecumenists, which are the more blasphemous in that they have been committed in the name of Christ? In 1983 those abroad had the opportunity of seeing on television the raising of a pagan idol by delegates of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, among whom were representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate, while in Russia the "Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate" in its account of this ecumenical Assembly was not ashamed to mention this hideous act in the most positive terms.

After the ecumenical Assembly in Vancouver the Russian Church Abroad, headed by the holy Hierarch Philaret, in its Council in Mansonville in 1983 delivered ecumenism to anathema.

With the fall of the "iron curtain", there finally appeared the opportunity for the forcibly divided parts of the Russian Orthodox Church to unite. But it turned out that in the years that had passed since the death of the holy Hierarch Philaret (1985), too much had changed in the Church Abroad – and a significant part of Her was now under threat of falling under their own anathema.

The concelebrations of clergy and even bishops of the Church Abroad with the clergy and episcopate of the ecumenist Orthodox Churches – which was to have ceased after the Mansonville council of 1983 – again became a commonplace phenomenon. The concelebrations of the majority of the hierarchs of the Church Abroad, not to speak of the other clergy, with the clergy of the ecumenical Serbian patriarchate became a real scourge. And these concelebrations took place in spite of the fact that this patriarchate almost exceeded the Soviet sergianists in ecumenical enthusiasm, while her relationships with her local communists was just as submissive as was that of her Soviet "sister". These concelebrations have not ceased even now, after the recent epistle of the Serbian patriarch to his Muscovite brother, in which he affirms that his patriarchate no longer has communion in prayer with the ROCA.

It was also with a heavy feeling of perplexity that we observed the hasty proclamation, in the Hierarchical Council of the ROCA that took place in 1994, that the ecclesiology of Metropolitan Cyprian of Fili and Orope was identical to the ecclesiology of the Church Abroad. We cannot accept as Orthodox the basic position of this ecclesiology – that the saving grace of the sacraments can supposedly be guaranteed to abide in heretical communities, albeit only up to their conciliar condemnation. One of the Greek metropolitans with his followers calls the hierarchs of "World Orthodoxy" the "sick" members of one and the same Body of Christ – His True Church. One branch is healthy, the other sick. We understand that the ecclesiological resolution of the Council of 1994 is a natural step further downwards after the Nativity Epistle of 1986, which was distributed under the signature of Metropolitan Vitaly, in which the meaning of the anathema against ecumenism accepted in 1983 was restricted, against all logic, to "members of our Church (that is, the Church Abroad)" – as if an anathema applies, not to a heretic, but to a
jurisdiction! But we also saw, and we see to the present day, that there are enough people in the Church Abroad who understand the whole destructiveness of the resolutions, and that these people are trying to correct the mistake of the Hierarchical Council in 1994.

But of course that which we perceive with the greatest heaviness is the ever-increasing tendency of the Church Abroad towards union with the Moscow Patriarchate. It is worthy of note that the very possibility of negotiations with her was sanctioned in principle by the same Council of the ROCA in 1994 which recognized the crypto-ecumenist ecclesiology of Metropolitan Cyprian.

At a time when the Moscow Patriarchate was preoccupied with unity with the Catholics (the Balamand unia of 1993 – this document has not been disavowed: on the contrary, certain of its positions have been widely realized in life) and with the Monophysites (the Chambesy union of 1990; within the bounds of the programme outlined in it the Moscow Patriarchate is now getting very close to the Armenian monophysite church), certain hierarchs of the Church Abroad have been insistently seeking to get closer to the Moscow Patriarchate – even in spite of the fact that the patriarchate takes less and less account of the very existence of the Church Abroad, expropriating her property now not only in Russia, but also abroad. This has delivered a huge blow to the dignity of the Church Abroad and Her hierarchy even in the eyes of "outsiders". But still sadder is the fact that this witnesses to the apostasy of part of the hierarchs of the ROCA from the path bequeathed to Her by the first-hierarchs Metropolitans Anthony, Anastasy and Philaret – that is, to their apostasy from Orthodoxy.

If the other, healthy part of the ROCA does not find within itself the strength to halt the strivings of the apostates, then the final degeneration of the ROCA into a false ecclesiastical organization and Her subsequent dissolution in the ecumenical "great and spacious sea" (Psalm 103:27) of "World Orthodoxy" will become a burning question in the nearest future.

In Russia the stand-off between the Church Abroad and "World Orthodoxy" in the person of the MP has taken a particularly acute form, and therefore the Russian parishes of the ROCA did not have the possibility of waiting many years until the hierarchs abroad re-established Church discipline and were again established on the path of the holy Hierarch Philaret. This was the cause of the break in eucharistic communion between the Russian [Rossijskoj] Orthodox Church and the Hierarchical Synod of the ROCA which took place in 1995. Unfortunately, our actions at that time did not meet with understanding on the part of the clerical leadership of the ROCA, which, contrary to the spirit and the letter of Ukaz no. 362 and its own evident inability to restrain the tendencies towards apostasy from the faith in the dioceses abroad, began to insist on his own full right to realize supreme ecclesiastical authority in Russia.

The five years that have passed since then have shown whether or not we were right in our fears.

Our position remains: faithfulness to the dogmas and holy canons of the Orthodox Church and, moreover, the preservation of the Orthodox Faith without contamination from the ecumenical filth of "World Orthodoxy" and its organic part – the Moscow Patriarchate. It was on this path that Her ever-memorable first-hierarch, the holy Philaret, left the Russian Church
Abroad for us, his successors, and this position of ours is similar to that of the majority of Old Calendarist Greek hierarchs and their flock. We have no "separate" claims in relation to the Moscow Patriarchate: it is no more than a part of the global and now already ecumenical sergianism, which with the same zeal that Metropolitan Sergius once served Stalin now serves the New World Order and the coming unification of everyone and everything. It is in no way worse or better than some Serbian or Constantinopolitan patriarchate. With all these ecumenical jurisdictions the Russian Orthodox Church broke canonical communion under the holy Hierarch Philaret.

If you, your Graces, honourable Archbishops, clergy and laymen, choose to return to the faith of the fathers – the holy fathers of Universal Orthodoxy and the fathers of our Church Abroad – then we shall be together again. Unity of canonical communion will be quickly restored between us, as soon as unity of faith is restored.

But if it is not – if within the Church Abroad there is not found the strength to stop Her slide into the quagmire of "World Orthodoxy", then the end is inevitable: the Moscow Patriarchate will suck up into itself her remains scattered around the world, and the muddy waters of ecumenism will close above Her head forever.

May this not be!

The means of salvation are the same for all times: to hear and to carry out, amidst the wavering, unstable elements of the world, the everlasting voice of the true Mother Church uttered from on high: As you have believed – "in that stand and be saved" (I Corinthians 15.1).

+ Valentine, Archbishop of Suzdal and Vladimir,
President of the Hierarchical Synod of the Russian [Rossijskoj] Orthodox Church

+ Theodore, Bishop Borisovskoye and Sanino

+ Seraphim, Bishop of Sukhumi and Abkhazia

+ Victor, Bishop of Daugavpilis and Latvia

+ Hilarion, Bishop of Sukhodolsk

+ Anthony, Bishop of Yaransk

Protopriest Andrew Osetrov, Secretary of the Hierarchical Synod

REFERENCES
This correspondence was published in the German Russian-language journal Posev (September, 1979, pp. 50-51) and was therefore well known to the KGB, who, it is argued, oversaw this whole process and "secret" consecration. Archbishop Anthony was the most liberal and pro-MP of the ROCA bishops at that time. His continued communion with ecumenists led to many communities in Western Europe leaving the ROCA, and to the break between the ROCA and the Matthewite Old Calendarists in 1976.

"Zayavlenie Arkhiereiskago Sinoda Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi Zagranitsej", Pravoslavnaya Rus', no. 18 (1423), September 15/28, 1990, p. 6.

In 1993 Bishop Lazarus’ clergy asked the ROCA: "We ask you to clearly answer the question: does the ROCA confess that the Catacomb Church is her sister, as she often did earlier, and if she does, then on what basis does the ROCA interfere in the inner affairs of the Catacomb Church?" (Suzdal'skij Palomnik, NN 18-20, 1994, p. 134). A good question, but one which should also have been posed to Bishop Lazarus himself, since his own consecration was the first concrete "interference" of the ROCA in the life of the Catacomb Church, and he could have refused to have anything to do with it.

Matushka Anastasia Shatilova writes: "The ordination papers (including the certificate) for Archim. Lazarus Zhurbenko were signed by: Metropolitan Philaret, Archbishop Vitaly, Archbishop Anthony of Geneva (though whom the appeal was sent) and Bishop Gregory as Secretary to the Synod. The fifth person to know of this case was I, because I typed all the documentation" (personal communication, September 19 / October 3, 2000).


Suzdal’skij Palomnik, NN 18-20, pp. 63-64.

Pravoslavnaya Rus’, N 17 (1470), September 1/14, 1992, p. 12

Pravoslavnaya Rus’, N 18 (1471), September 15/28, 1992, p. 11.


[16] Bishop Valentine’s phrase was: "such disturbance and division of the flock as the atheists and the MP could only dream about" (Suzdal’skij Palomnik, 18-20, 1994, p. 5).


[20] Bishop Valentine’s accuser turned out to be Alexander R. Shtilmark, an assistant of the Pamyat’ leader, Demetrius Vasilyev. His motivation was clear. Later, several of Shtilmark’s relatives witnessed to his mental unbalance. In spite of this, and Bishop Valentine’s repeated protests of his innocence (which appear not to have reached Metropolitan Vitaly) the ROCA, in the persons of Archbishop Mark and Bishop Hilarion continued to drag this matter out for another two years (Reports of Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), Suzdal’skij Palomnik, NN 18-20, 1994, pp. 123, 126).


[22] There were objective grounds for such a suspicion. Thus the protocols of this Council for June 9/22 record: "Hieromonk Vladimir, superior of the Borisovsk church, says that three months before the Session of the Hierarchical Council, his relative said that he should abandon the Suzdal Diocese since they were going to retire Bishop Valentine at the Session of the Sobor in France. She knew this from a party worker linked with the KGB. And three years later he learned that this question had indeed been discussed. He is interested to know how it happened that the GB realized its intention in real life?" (Suzdal’skij Palomnik, 23, 1995, p. 54; letter to the author by Hieromonk Vladimir (Ovchinnikov) of June 23 / July 6, 1993).


[25] Later, on June 26 / July 8, 1994, Bishop Barnabas was forbidden from travelling to Russia for five years (Tserkovnaya Zhizn’, NN 3-4, May-August, 1994, p. 5).


[35] A severely truncated version of this "Act" was published in Tserkovnaya Zhizn’ (NN 5-6, September-December, 1994, pp. 13-14), but the whole "Act" has never, to the present author’s knowledge, been published in the ROCA press, in spite of the decision to do so "in all organs of the church press" (point 9 of the "Act", see below). In fact, Bishop Valentine reported that the ROCA chancellery had told him that the Act would not be published (Suzdal’skij Palomnik, N 22, 1995, p. 12).

[36] This account is based Archbishop Valentine’s own words to the present writer, together with his letter to the Suzdal Council dated January 11/24, 1995 (Suzdal’skij Palomnik, N 22, 1995, pp. 6-10).


This refers to the ukaz dated November 18 / December 1, 1994, quoted above, which reinstated Vladyka Valentine as Bishop of Suzdal and Vladimir. It should be pointed out that Vladyka Valentine had been raised to the rank of archbishop by the THCA in the previous year.

The comments of the FROC were published in Suzdal’skij Palomnik, N 22, 1995, pp. 26-27.


This Decree, dated February 9/22, also stated that the Odessa-Tambov and Suzdal-Vladimir dioceses were declared "widowed" (a term used only if the ruling bishop has died) and were to be submitted temporarily to Metropolitan Vitaly. See Suzdal’skij Palomnik, N 23, 1995, p. 31; Tserkovniye Novosti, N 1A (43), February, 1995, p. 3.


Tserkovniye Novosti, N 1A (43), February, 1995, p. 5.

Suzdal’skij Palomnik, 23, 1995, p. 34.

Vladyka was probably thinking of the incident, a little less than a year before, when Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles declared that in its session of February 21-24 the Hierarchical Synod had banned both Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentine from serving at the same time that Metropolitan Vitaly was writing to Bishop Valentine that he was "in no wise banned from serving" (Suzdal’skij Palomnik, 21, 1995, pp. 28-29).


As Protopriest Andrew Osetrov writes: "The Church Abroad should either transfer its Administration to Russia and no longer call it the Synod of the ROCA (the more so in that one can enter and leave the Homeland now without hindrance), or, if the hierarchs of the ROCA do not want to return to the Homeland, they must recognize their Church administration to be subject to the administration of the Church in the Homeland" (Suzdal’skij Blagovest’, N 3, January-February, 1997, p. 3).


The full text of this resolution was as follows: "There were discussions on the question of the fourteen clerics accepted into communion of prayer from the Catacomb Church who submitted their petitions to the Hierarchical Synod through Archimandrite Michael of the
monastery of St. Panteleimon on the Holy Mountain, which were received on November 26 / December 7, 1977. At that time the Hierarchical Synod of the ROCA in its session of November 26 / December 7, 1977 accepted the following resolution:

"Trusting the witness of the fourteen priests that their reposed leader Archbishop Anthony (Galynsky) was correctly consecrated to the episcopate, and carried out his service secretly from the civil authorities, it has been decided to accept them into communion of prayer, having informed them that they can carry out all those sacred actions which priests can carry out according to the Church canons, and also giving the monastic clerics the right to carry out monastic tonsures. They are to be informed of this in the same way as their address was received."

The following priests were accepted into communion: Hieromonks Michael, Raphael, Nicholas, Nicholas, Nathaniel, Epiphanius, Michael and Sergius, and Abbots Barsonuphius and Nicholas,


[64] Personal testimony of the present writer.


[66] Some years ago, Archbishop Lazarus insisted on renaming his Odessa diocese "the True Orthodox Catacomb Church", thereby laying claim to being the sole heir of the historic Catacomb Church and implicitly separating himself from both the ROCA and the FROC.


[69] This phrase "institution of the Antichrist" was applied by Patriarch Tikhon to the heretical "Living Church" of the renovationists, which his Holiness anathematized and denounced as
graceless on July 2/15, 1923. See Lev Regelson, Tragediya Russkoj Tserkvi, 1917-1945, Paris: YMCA Press, 1977, p. 313. The clear implication here is that the present-day Moscow Patriarchate is the same kind of organization as the "Living Church" – or rather, its direct successor.
