

# THE CATACOMB CHURCH



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## THE CATACOMB CHURCH

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Thou shalt rise up and have pity on Sion, for it is time to have compassion on her, yea, the time is come.  
For Thy servants have taken pleasure in her stones, and they shall feel pity for her dust.  
And the heathen shall fear Thy name, O Lord, and all the kings of the earth  
Thy glory.

*Psalm 101 (Septuagint)*

I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast My name, and hast not denied My faith.

*Revelation 2:13*

ALTHOUGH works such as Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* have once and for all exposed the barely credible extent of the catastrophe that overtook Russia in 1917, the history of the True Church during this period is largely unknown – so successful has the official State Church of the Soviet Union, the Moscow Patriarchate, been, not so much in its denial of the fact of the persecution (for that is evident to all but the wilfully blind), as in its obscuring of the true target of the persecutors – the bishops, priests and laity of the Catacomb Church, the True Orthodox Church of Russia.

But in order to understand how this situation has come about, it is necessary to retrace the main stages in the persecution, beginning with the abdication of Tsar Nicolas II on March 2, 1917.

On that very day, an old blackened icon was discovered in a church in Kolomenskoye, near Moscow, by a pious elderly peasant woman who had twice seen the Mother of God appear to her in her sleep, commanding her to search for the icon among some utensils and dust in the church. Within weeks the icon had been miraculously renewed, revealing in its bright red colours the Mother of God seated on a throne and hold an orb and sceptre in either hand. To the faithful, the meaning was clear: Russia was now ruled by the Heavenly Queen until such time as the Orthodox tsardom might be restored.

On January 25, 1918, Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev was martyred, the first hieromartyr of the Bolshevik revolution. The news was immediately relayed to Moscow, where the All-Russian Church Council was in session. The Council decreed that January 25th should be the day of the commemoration of all the holy new martyrs of Russia.

The first phase of the persecution continued until about autumn of the year 1921. During this period thousands of clergy and laity were tortured, killed or imprisoned. These horrors were carried out by "liquidation squads" or "offices for the separation of Church and State", which were supposed to be implementing the

Bolshevik decree concerning the separation of Church and State of January 23rd, 1918, according to which the Church and all Her institutions lost the rights of a corporation and Her entire property was confiscated by the State.

The Church's response to these acts was swift and decisive. Even before the decree was published, on January 19th, Patriarch Tikhon had excommunicated the Bolsheviks in the following words:

The Holy Orthodox Church of Christ in the Russian land is going through a difficult time. Its public and its secret enemies have initiated the persecution of those who stand for the Truth of Christ. They are bent upon destroying the Work of Christ; in the place of Christian charity they are sowing the seeds of malice, hate and civil war.

The Holy Church of Christ is being subjected to the most ruthless persecution. Its sacraments, which sanctify the birth of men on earth and which bless the holy bond of matrimony are being publicly declared to be unnecessary. The sanctuaries that are worshipped by our people are being taken over by the godless rulers of the darkness of our time. The schools and seminaries that have been supported by the Church are being dissolved while the property of the monasteries and of the Orthodox churches is being confiscated. Where is the limit of the derision of the Church of Christ? How can the flood of Its raging enemies be stopped?

Our heart is filled with deep sorrow. The legacy of the Apostle forces us to direct these words of his at this scum of humanity: 'Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear' (*1 Tim.* 5, 20). Come to reason, you madmen, cease from your bloody actions! What you are doing is worse than cruelty: it is truly the work of Satan for which the fires of hell will be your reward in the hereafter and for which your progeny will be afflicted with the most terrible curse that exists on earth. In accordance with the power invested in us by God we herewith exclude you from the Holy Sacraments. We declare you *anathema* in so far as you are still Christians, even though by birth you are members of the Orthodox Church.

But all of you who are faithful children of the Church – we beseech you to have no truck with the scum of humanity: 'But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person' (*1 Cor.* 5, 13).

The enemies of the Church are usurping power over the Church and over Its property with the force of deadly weapons. You must resist them with the power of your faith. If it should become necessary to suffer for the cause of Christ, we call upon you, the beloved children of the Church, to suffer in community with us as the Apostle has said: 'Who can separate us



from the Love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?" (*Rom. 8, 35*).

But you my brothers, Arch-Shepherds and Shepherds, do not hesitate in your spiritual task, but call up your flock with flaming zeal to protect the Orthodox Church. Call them up to join the ranks of the warriors of faith, to resist brute force with the power of their holy faith. We confidently hope that the enemies of the Church will be put to shame and will be destroyed with the power of the Cross of Christ, for the promise of the Divine Saviour is irrefutable: "Upon this rock will I build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against It" (*Mat. 16, 18*).

The Council responded to the Patriarch's decision as follows:

The blessed Council of the all-Russian Orthodox Church welcomes in love the pastoral letter of the blessed Patriarch Tikhon which punishes the malefactors and unmasks the enemies of the Church of Christ. The word of excommunication was sounded from the height of the Patriarchal throne and the sword of the Spirit was raised against those that heap ridicule upon the conscience of the people. The blessed Council voices its complete conformity with the Father and the intercessor of the Russian Church. It listens to his appeal and is ready to stand for its Christian faith, whatever sacrifices may be necessary. The blessed Council appeals to the whole Russian Church with its Arch-Shepherds and Shepherds to join the Patriarch and not to deliver our faith unto calumny.

Still more important was the Council's response to the decree concerning the separation of Church and State which, "under the guise of taking over the ecclesiastical property aimed to destroy the very possibility of Divine worship and ministration":

All participation, either in the publication of the law so injurious to the Church, or in attempts to put it into practice, is not reconcilable with membership in the Orthodox Church, and subjects all transgressors to the heaviest penalties, to the extent of excommunicating them from the Church (inaccordance with the 73rd rule of the Holy Apostles, and the 13th rule of the Seventh Ecumenical Council).

This decree is of great importance: for it places all those who attempt to negotiate with the Soviet authorities now on the basis of this, relatively the most humane of Soviet laws relating to the Church, outside the Church. For "what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (*II Cor. 6, 14-15*).

The next phase of the persecution began in autumn, 1921, when a terrible famine gripped the Volga region of Russia – the result, partly, of the Bolsheviks' own social and economic policies. The Patriarch issued an appeal for help to all "men and peoples of the universe"; and on February 19th, 1922, he allowed the parishes to donate Church treasures for the sake of the starving, with the exception only of those vessels which were untouchable or consecrated exclusively for Divine service. In Petrograd, Metropolitan Benjamin agreed to the voluntary and peaceful handing over of Church treasures to the State, with the proviso that force would not be used and that members of the Church should participate in the control of their distribution.

At this point the Bolsheviks tried to make use of the situation in their war against the Church, and the Moscow press agitated for the "confiscation of the treasures of the stuffed and fat priests". They were aided by a group of pro-revolutionary clergy in the Church who founded the so-called "Living Church", which tried (unsuccessfully) to take over the Petrograd Metropolitan district. On August 12th, 1922, Metropolitan Benjamin was tried and shot, and this signalled the beginning of a more intense and systematic phase in the persecution of the Church, during which the country was flooded with atheist literature and the Church was denied the possibility of printing a single word in reply.

At the same time, intense pressure was placed upon the Patriarch to silence the hierarchs of the Russian Church in Exile who, at a meeting held in Karlovtsy, Serbia, in November, 1921, had called upon the League of Nations to fight against Bolshevism. During the preceding civil war the Patriarch had already been forced to take a strictly neutral stand, and now he went further, dissolving the Church Councils abroad (although without excommunicating the participants). The émigré hierarchs unanimously (not excluding the later founders of the schismatical "Paris" and "Metropolia" jurisdictions) agreed to ignore this decree on the grounds that the Patriarch had acted under pressure without being able to express his true opinion. They decided to organize their Church life on the

basis of the earlier, unrepealed order of the Patriarch, no. 362 of November, 1920, according to which bishops who found themselves out of communication with the Church's central authority in Moscow were to organize their dioceses independently, meeting together where possible in synods under the presidency of the eldest among them. No judgement was made of Patriarch Tikhon, who was reported to have been very moved by the émigré bishops' understanding and compassionate attitude.

Then, in May, 1923, the Bolshevik government organized a Council of the so-called "Living Church" under the name of the "Second Council of the Russian Orthodox Church". Clergy who attended this "Council" and supported its pro-Soviet resolutions were given every kind of help by the government. Those who remained loyal to the Patriarch, however, suffered every kind of privation. The Council called upon the Patriarch to resign, and threatened that if he did not, eleven priests accused of resisting the confiscation of Church treasures would be executed by the Bolsheviks. The Patriarch did not resign (although the press claimed that he did), and the priests were not executed. The Council also passed certain resolutions of a modernist nature, for example the relieving bishops of their oath of celibacy and allowing widowed priests to marry again. Both these resolutions contravened the Canon law of the Church and aroused the people's deep hostility.

Furthermore, the "Council" claimed to have cancelled the *anathema* against the Bolsheviks, to have deprived the Patriarch of all ecclesiastical and monastic offices, and to have suspended the Patriarchate. Finally, the Patriarch was imprisoned pending trial, and the direction of the Church, as it would seem, was taken out of his hands. With perhaps a third of the churches of the country in the hands of the "Living Church" schism, this was a moment of extreme danger for the true Church of Christ.

But then a miracle happened. For apparently no reason, the Soviet government released the Patriarch from prison. Pressure from the British and American governments may have played a part in this, as well as the Patriarch's personal prestige among the



people; but in the eyes of the faithful there could be no doubt that He Who directs all things with His unseen hand had delivered His faithful servant from prison at the prayers of the people, just as He had once delivered the Apostle Peter.

On his release from prison, on July 15th, 1923, Patriarch Tikhon dissociated himself from, and anathematized, the leaders of the "Living Church", declaring all their acts and sacraments to have been void and without Grace.

Those persons who have organized the self-styled Supreme Ecclesiastical Administration in Moscow, and are on that account guilty in the eyes of the Church, have further aggravated their position by ordaining bishops to the unlawfully usurped dioceses, and have incurred thereby censure according to the 35th rule of the Holy Apostles, which threatens to deprive any person of the holy orders who ordained, or was himself ordained, in a diocese other than his own. And how have they used the unlawfully usurped ecclesiastical authority? They have used it not for the building up of the Church, but in sowing seeds of a destructive schism: in depriving Orthodox bishops of their sees for having remained faithful to their duty and for refusing to submit to them; in persecuting the reverend priests, who in accordance with the Canons of the Church have not submitted themselves to them; they have founded everywhere the so-called "Living Church", which despises the authority of the Ecumenical Church and strives to impair the necessary Church discipline, in order to secure victory for its own party and to carry out by force its objectives, without heeding the voice of the Sober representing all believers. By all these actions they have separated themselves from the body of the Ecumenical Church and deprived themselves of God's favour, which resides only in the Church of Christ. Consequently, all arrangements made during our absence by those ruling the Church, since they had neither legal right nor canonical authority, are non-valid and void, and all actions and sacraments performed by bishops and clergymen who have forsaken the Church are devoid of God's Grace and power; the faithful taking part in such prayers and sacraments shall receive no sanctification thereby, and are subject to condemnation for participating in their sin.

Thereafter the "Living Church" went into a swift decline although the government (and some Orthodox churches abroad) continued to support it for a few more years. Many "Living Church" hierarchs repented and returned to the True Church. Among them was the Metropolitan of Nizhni Novgorod, Sergei, who, after prostrating



himself in the church and asking for forgiveness, was given his 'panagia' back personally by the Patriarch. But the clairvoyant elder, Nectarius of Optina, said of Sergei: "The poison of renovationism [the modernism practised by the "Living Church"] is in him still". His words were soon shown to have been prophetic.

On March 25th, 1925, Patriarch Tikhon died in hospital (poisoned, as many believe). Knowing that the election of a new patriarch in accordance with the Canon law of the Church was a practical impossibility during the persecution, the Patriarch had made a will appointing three hierarchs, the senior of whom who was in freedom at the time of his death was to take over the duties of the Patriarchy until an election could be held. The three hierarchs were: Metropolitan Kyril of Kazan, Metropolitan Agathangel of Yaroslavl and Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsky and Kolomna. Since both Metropolitans Kyril and Agathangel were in exile at the time of the Patriarch's death, Metropolitan Peter took over the duties of Patriarchal *locum tenens*. His faith, like that of his namesake, was to be a rock upon which the waves of his persecutors beat in vain.

The "Living Church" leaders now made overtures of union towards Metropolitan Peter and the True Church, these being supported by intense pressure on the part of the communists. But he stood firm, and on July 25th, 1925, he issued the following declaration:—

All arbitrary acts, everything that was done by the new church party without the approval of the most holy Patriarch now at rest with God, everything that is now done without our approval — that of the guardian of the patriarchal throne, acting in communion with all lawful Orthodox hierarchy — all this has no validity in accordance with the Canons of the Holy Church (Ap. rule 34, Antioch rule 9). For the true Church is one, and the Grace of the most Holy Spirit residing in Her is one; for there can be no two Churches or two Graces. 'There is one Body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one Faith, one God and Father of all' (*Eph* 4: 4–6)".

This was too much for the communists. After other demands of theirs (including a condemnation of the émigré bishops) had been rejected by Metropolitan Peter, they imprisoned him, in December,

1925. There then followed a very confused period of Church history, during which the communists tried hard to find a hierarch who would do their will, while still preserving "a mask of canonicity" (Archbishop Ilarion Troitsky's phrase) which would deceive the masses of the people into following him. One of Metropolitan Peter's deputies was Metropolitan Sergei. But he (at first) stood firm and was arrested in June, 1926. Another was Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd. He, too, was arrested (in December, 1926), after appointing Archbishop Seraphim of Uglich as his deputy.

Archbishop Seraphim, however, on being presented with the usual demands and rejecting them, refused also to appoint a deputy to succeed him on his departure into exile. When the astonished magistrate said: "All the others have appointed deputies . . ." he replied: "But I lay the Church in the hands of God, our Lord. I am doing this, so that the whole world may know what freedom Orthodox Christianity is enjoying in our free state."

From then until the unexpected release of Metropolitan Sergei from prison on March 30th, 1927, each hierarch governed his own diocese independently as best he could, in accordance with Patriarch Tikhon's decree no. 362 of November 23rd, 1920. For while the organization of dioceses into Metropolitan districts and Patriarchates is a natural development in the history of the Church, it has never been forgotten that each individual diocese headed by a bishop is a complete Church of God, possessing the fullness of the Grace of Christ. Thus the breakdown of Church organization during times of persecution into a more 'molecular' structure of individual dioceses (which are nevertheless in full communion with each other) is an event both foreseen and blessed by the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

But while the Church was preparing Herself to descend once more into the Catacombs rather than surrender Her spiritual freedom, Metropolitan Sergei, on his unexpected release from prison, was looking in another direction. He began by appointing a

<sup>1</sup> See Lev Regelson *The Tragedy of the Russian Church* (in Russian). Paris: YMCA Press 1977.



"Patriarchal Synod" of bishops loyal to himself and the communist government, although as merely deputy to the *locum tenens* of the Patriarchal throne, Metropolitan Peter, he had no authority to do anything of the kind. Then, on July 16th, 1927, he issued a pastoral letter in which he said that Patriarch Tikhon's attempt to achieve "a completely legal and peaceful existence within the State" had been "frustrated by many circumstances, above all by the activities of the enemies of the Soviet State abroad, who included not only simple believers in our Church, but also Her leaders".

He went on:

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

Now through the formation of a "blessed Patriarchal Synod" our Orthodox Church has not only a canonically legal central administration, but a central administration that is legal also according to the law of the State of the Soviet Union. We hope that this legalization will be gradually extended to the lower administrative units, to the dioceses and the districts. It is hardly necessary to explain the significance and the consequences of this change for our Orthodox Church, Her clergy and Her ecclesiastical activity. Let us therefore thank the Lord, Who has thus favoured our Church. Let us also give thanks before the whole people to the Soviet government for its understanding of the religious needs of the Orthodox population. At the same time let us assure the government that we will not misuse the confidence it has shown us.

In undertaking now, with the blessings of the Lord, the work of the Synod, we clearly realize the greatness of our task and that of all the representatives of the Church. We must show not only with words but with deeds that not only people indifferent to the Orthodox Faith or traitors to the Orthodox Church can be loyal subjects of the Soviet power, but the most zealous supporters of the Orthodox Church as well, to whom the Church with all Her dogmas and traditions, with all Her laws and prescriptions, is as dear as Truth and Life.



We want to be Orthodox, and at the same time to see the Soviet Union as our civil fatherland, whose triumphs and successes are also our triumphs and successes, whose failures are our failures.

This letter, this Judas-like betrayal of the Church into the hands of Her worst enemies, was greeted by the faithful with a stunned silence followed by a torrent of angry criticism. Ninety per cent of parishes simply sent back their copy of the letter with no comment. Many delegations went to Moscow to plead with the Metropolitan, to try to persuade him that no true believer could say that the successes of the Anti-Christian State were his successes and its failures his failures – as if the greatest success of the State would not be to destroy the Church, and its greatest failure, to see Her flourishing!

Sergei has already shown overbearing ambition by his anti-canonical treatment of certain hierarchs. Thus when Metropolitan Agathangel, one of the three hierarchs specifically named in Patriarch Tikhon's will, returned from exile, Sergei refused to hand over the rights and responsibilities of chief hierarch to him. But this latest act was seen as exceeding all previous ones in its attempt to create an unholy and in fact impossible alliance between God and Mammon, Christ and Belial, the Church of Christ and the State of Anti-Christ.

On September 14th, 1927, the imprisoned bishops and priests of the notorious Solovetsky Islands concentration camp managed to smuggle out a message in which they said:

The subjection of the Church to the State is expressed in such a categorical and sweeping form in Sergei's declaration that it could easily be understood in the sense of a complete entanglement of Church and State . . . The Church cannot declare all the triumphs and successes of the State to be Her own triumphs and successes. Every government can occasionally make unwarranted, unjust and cruel decisions which become obligatory to the Church by way of coercion, but which the Church cannot *rejoice* in or *approve* of. One of the tasks of the present government is the elimination of all religion. The government's successes in this direction cannot be recognized by the Church as Her own successes.

The expression of the gratitude of the whole people to the government for its understanding of the religious needs of the Orthodox population . . .



can be understood only as a satire, cannot therefore be meant seriously. Such an expression is not in conformity with the dignity of the Church and justly causes righteous indignation in the souls of all believers . . . The relationship of the government to the religious needs of the Orthodox population has until now consisted only in the persecution of the religious spirit and all its expressions: in the pillaging and destruction of churches, in the closing of monasteries, in the confiscation of relics, in the outlawing of religious instruction, in the removal of all books of religious content from libraries . . .

The pastoral message of Metropolitan Sergei and his synod leads the Church into a pact with the State. It is a political document and was considered as such by its authors as well as by the government. Sergei's action resembles the activities of the "Living Church" and differs from them not in nature, but only in form and scope . . .

Canon law strictly condemns the taking over of ecclesiastical dignity or office through the intervention of 'worldly superiors'. But it is no secret that the members of Sergei's synod have received their appointment from 'worldly superiors'.

Sergei was invested as the first hierarch the first time by Metropolitan Peter. At that time he acted wisely in the administration of the Church, helped by the Grace of God. During the negotiations with the government in 1926 he wrote an acceptable and dignified declaration which he intended to distribute to the bishops in accordance with the traditional methods. The second time, however, he was invested with the rights of the first hierarch not without the intervention of the 'worldly superiors'. Undoubtedly he gained his freedom because the government thought that it could gain greater advantages for its anti-religious activities from him than from the other deputies. Is not this the cause why, within a short time, he committed a whole series of careless, unwarranted, wrongful and uncanonical actions that were rightly condemned by the outstanding arch-pastors and by important personalities from within and without the Church? . . . In order, however, not to increase the number of issues and splits, and since, moreover, Metropolitan Sergei is not publicly preaching a heresy condemned by the fathers, the members of the Orthodox Church should not break with him as the deputy of the supreme hierarch until a new synod has met or until Metropolitan Peter has returned: then Metropolitan Sergei should of necessity be turned over to a canonical court. Now, however, the canonical tie, tenuous as it may be, still binds Metropolitan Sergei to the Orthodox Church – and us to him.

However, this tie was not to exist for long; for Metropolitan Peter did not return from exile (except for a very brief period in 1935, when Sergei refused to submit to him), Sergei did not



repent, and the Orthodox hierarchs began to take a still more serious view of Sergei's crime against the Church. Thus already in 1927 Bishop Damascene of Glukhov could write in terms implying a complete break with Sergei:

Either the Church is truly the pure Bride of Christ, the realm of truth, in which case truth is the air without which we cannot live, – or else the Church lives in lies and falsehood, no different from the world, which lives in sin. But then everything is untruth – every word, every prayer, every sacrament!

One of the first actually to break communion was Bishop Victor Glazov, who wrote to Sergei on December 16th, 1927:

This sin, as the Word of God testifies, is not less than any heresy or schism, but is rather incomparably greater, for it plunges a man immediately into the abyss of destruction, according to the Unlying Word: "Whosoever shall deny Me before men . . ." (*Matt.* 10:33)

In so far as it has been in our power, we have guarded ourselves and our flock, that we may not be participants in this sin, and for this reason we sent back the "Declaration" itself. Acceptance of the Declaration would have been testimony before God of our disinterest and indifference with regard to the Most Holy Church of God, the Bride of Christ . . .

And what of the future? For the future I would pray the Lord – and not only I, but the whole Orthodox Church as well – that He may not harden your heart, as once He did the heart of Pharaoh, but may give you the grace to acknowledge the sin you have committed and to repent for life. Then all the faithful with joy and tears of thanksgiving to God would again come to you as to a father, pastors as to a chief pastor, and the entire Russian Church as to Her sacred head. The enemy lured and seduced you a second time with the idea of an organization of the Church. But if this organization is bought for such a price that the Church of Christ Herself no longer remains as the house of Grace-giving salvation for men, and he who received the organization ceases to be what he was – for it is written, "Let his habitation be made desolate, and his bishopric let another take" (*Acts* 1:20) – then it were better for us never to have any kind of organization.

What is the benefit if we, having become by God's Grace temples of the Holy Spirit, become ourselves suddenly worthless, while at the same time receiving an organization for ourselves? No. Let the whole visible material world perish; let there be more important in our eyes the certain perdition of the soul to which he will be subjected who presents such outward pretexts for sin.

But if the hardness of your heart has gone far, and there remains no



hope for repentance, even for this outcome we have a text to enlighten us: "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not their uncleanness; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (*II Cor.* 6:17;18).

Bishop Victor and the other vicar-bishops of the Petrograd Metropolitan district, Bishop Dmitri of Gdov and Bishop Sergei of Narva, broke communion with Sergei in November and December of 1927. Then, on Christmas Day, Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd, who had been prevented from entering his diocese by Sergei, wrote in approval of their action: "We have no other means of judging and rendering harmless the recent actions of Metropolitan Sergei, which are contrary to the Spirit and Grace of the Holy Church of Christ . . . than a decisive break with him and a refusal to obey his instructions." Thus was the Catacomb Church formed, recognizing Metropolitan Peter as Her canonical head under Christ; and just as the Birth of Christ was immediately followed by the slaughter of the 14,000 innocents, so the Birth of the Catacomb Church was immediately followed by the most ruthless persecution of Her members.

However, 'birth' is a misleading word, for the Catacomb Church was and is simply the 'old' Orthodox Church of Russia living in the new (for Russia) conditions of the Catacombs. What was really new – in fact, wholly unprecedented – was the sight of an Orthodox chief-hierarchy entering into an intimate union with an openly atheist and anti-theistic regime. Thus he and his synod of twelve bishops (the rest of the 117 hierarchs refused to accept his leadership) became, not the Church *in* the Soviet Union, but the Church *of* the Soviet Union – the Soviet Church, as True Orthodox call it.<sup>1</sup>

The Catacomb Church, by contrast, came to be known as the

<sup>1</sup> As the writer of a *samizdat* document, 'The Church and Russia today', (in *The True Vine*, September, 1972) says: "The true state of affairs is evident to all: this is not only a Church *in the Soviet period* but a Church *of the Soviet State*, precisely a Soviet Church."

True Orthodox Church – even by the communists.<sup>2</sup> She was persecuted, as Arfed Gustavson says, “from the very first day of its existence by the Political Police together with the Bolshevik State Church”.<sup>3</sup> She therefore became the closest type that has yet appeared in history of that woman “clothed with the sun” who flees from the red dragon into the wilderness in *Apocalypse* 12.

The position which the Catacomb Church took towards the Soviet Church has been well described by Gustavson:

The *anathema* pronounced by Patriarch Tikhon against the Soviet government was still in force, since the revocation pronounced by the “Council of the Living Church” was not effective from the point of the Orthodox Church. The official Church had not only entered into a pact with the government that stood under *anathema*, it even subordinated herself to it. Thus the official Church exposed herself to the danger of being affected by that *anathema*. More than this, according to a statement made by Bishop Maxim of Serpukhov in Solovky, the Catacomb Church had in fact placed the Soviet Church under *anathema*. This *anathema* is more than an interdict. Already Patriarch Tikhon had predicted that a critical point would be reached “when the hierarchy of the Church breaks faith with Christ and delivers the spiritual freedom of the Church up to the Soviet government”. The hierarchs who founded the Catacomb Church saw this point actually reached in the declaration of Sergei.

The conclusion to be drawn from these two circumstances is that the official Church led by Sergei and his followers committed the most serious conceivable canonical offence, an offence of such gravity that it was not even among the offenses considered by Canonical law. Canonical law deals with heresies – but a pact with the personified Antichrist exceeds the worst heresies.

It was reasoned, moreover, that the *anathema* had been pronounced against Sergei and his clergy and that accordingly they were *ipso facto* deprived of their clerical offices. Hence all their pronouncements, declarations and decrees from the time of Sergei’s Declaration on were to be considered null and void. An interdict pronounced by Sergei was ineffectual and could not concern the clergy of the Catacomb Church. . . . The Catacomb Church was not willing to recognise the clergy of the official Church as a legitimate clergy at all. (pp. 100–101)

<sup>2</sup> See the article under that title in *The Atheist’s Dictionary* (Moscow, 1975)

<sup>3</sup> *The Catacomb Church* (Jordanville, 1960)



A former member of the Catacomb Church who escaped to the West put it thus:

The Soviet Church has not only broken the holy Canonical Law, she has trampled on the fundamental law of the Russian Orthodox Church, namely the Dogma of the Church . . . This Church has committed something much worse than a transgression of the dogmas and of canonical law: she has betrayed the Holy Ghost . . . An Orthodox Church that subordinates herself to the Soviets and lets herself be reduced to a tool of the global anti-Christian movement is no longer an Orthodox Church, but a heretic corruption of it.<sup>1</sup>

Against this, Sergei argued that he had not spoken heresy, that he was the legitimate deputy of Metropolitan Peter (though in fact Metropolitan Peter repudiated him), and that those who broke from him were therefore schismatics. His argument was well answered by Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd in a letter to a Soviet Archimandrite in 1928. Metropolitan Joseph's words, which were sealed by the blood of his martyrdom ten years later, constitute one of the most moving witnesses to the heroism and faithfulness unto death of the Catacomb Church:

1. I am not at all a schismatic, and I call not to a schism, but to the purification of the Church from those who sow real schism and provoke it.
2. To indicate to another his errors and wrongs is not a schism but to put it simply, it is putting an unbridled horse back into harness.
3. The refusal to accept sound reproaches and directives is in reality a schism and a trampling on the truth.
4. In the construction of ecclesiastical life the participants are not only those at the head, but the whole body of the Church, and a schismatic is he who assumes to himself rights which exceed his authority and in the name of the Church presumes to say that which is not shared by his colleagues.
5. Metropolitan Sergei has shown himself to be such a schismatic; for he has far exceeded his authority and has rejected and scorned the voice of many hierarchs, in whose midst the pure truth has been preserved . . .

The defenders of Sergei say that the Canons allow one to separate oneself from a bishop only for heresy which has been condemned by a Council. Against this one may reply that the deeds of Metropolitan

<sup>1</sup> Professor I. Andreyev *Is the Soviet Church Charismatic?* (Jordanville, 1948)



Sergei may be sufficiently placed in this category as well, if one has in view such an open violation by him of the freedom and dignity of the Church, One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic.

But beyond this the Canons themselves could not foresee many things, and can one dispute that it is even worse and more harmful than any heresy when one plunges a knife into the Church's heart – Her very freedom and dignity? . . . "Lest imperceptibly and little by little we lose the freedom which our Lord Jesus Christ, the Liberator of all men, has given us as a free gift by His Own Blood" (8th Canon of the Third Ecumenical Council) . . .

Perhaps I do not dispute "there are more of you presently than of us". And let it be that "the great mass is not for me", as you say. But I will never consider myself a schismatic, even if I were to remain absolutely alone, as one of the holy confessors [St. Maximus the Confessor, in the struggle against Monothelitism] once was. The matter is not at all one of quantity, do not forget that for a minute; "The Son of God when He cometh shall He find faith on the earth?" (*Luke* 18:8). And perhaps the last "rebels" against the betrayers of the Church and the accomplices of Her ruin will be not only bishops and not archpriests, but the simplest mortals, just as at the Cross of Christ His last gasp of suffering was heard by a few simple souls who were close to Him.

Even among those who would not call the Catacomb Church schismatics, there are those who would excuse the Soviet Church on the grounds that some concessions must be made to the communists for the sake of the survival of the Church. However, what survives after such concessions have been made is not the Church, but "a heretical corruption of it", in Professor Andreyev's words. And in any case, these concessions won nothing for Sergei and his successors. During the purge of the 1930s and again in Khrushchev's persecution of 1959–64 the Soviet Church was persecuted almost as much as the Catacomb Church. And the moments of respite, as during the years immediately following the Second World War, were used by the communists for their own purposes – the spreading abroad of the fiction that there was religious freedom in Russia, the using of Soviet hierarchs as agent of Soviet foreign policy on such issues as Vietnam, and the drawing of other Orthodox (and non-Orthodox) Churches within Moscow's orbit.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The manipulation of the World Council of Churches by the Soviet Church for Soviet foreign policy objectives has been well described by Bernard Smith, *The Fraudulent Gospel* (Richmond, Surrey: Foreign Affairs Publishing Co., 1977).

Thus, as "an ordinary Orthodox Christian from the U.S.S.R.," has written, the blame for the deep unhappiness of the official State Church in Russia should not be laid entirely "on external circumstances, on the atheist-persecutors".

The persecutors only began to overpower the Church when Her people began to give in to them, whatever the pious-seeming excuses under which this was done.

It's no use our manoeuvring, there's nothing for us to preserve except the things that are God's; for the things that are Caesar's (if one should really consider it to be Caesar here, and not Pharaoh) are always associated with the quenching of the Spirit. With sorrow we see that the Russian people is now moving towards a spiritual, moral and even physical catastrophe.

When discussing a fact of such enormous dimensions, one must not over-simplify its causes. But among the great number of effective causes, one which is far from being in the last place is the behaviour of the Moscow Patriarchate. When you first hear that "the bishops are in a pact with the atheists for the extinction of the Church", these words seem heartlessly cruel. But when you try to find another formula, you are convinced that the above is, after all, the most exact. How is one further to define the situation, when the majority of the bishops and clergy criminally agree on those regulations "of inner State politics" which clearly lead to the extinction of the Church, and punctiliously stick to all these regulations.<sup>1</sup>

The value of this testimony, coming as it does from an Orthodox living and suffering in Russia now, is very great.<sup>2</sup> But what of the Russian Church outside Russia? Has She been faithful to the witness of the Catacomb Church's martyrs, and heeded the Apostle's injunction: "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them" (*Hebrews 13:3*)?

<sup>1</sup> 'A Letter from Russia', *Russkaya Mysl* (Paris), no. 3143, 17th March, 1977.

<sup>2</sup> A recent émigré, Anatoly Krasnov-Levitin has written: "The number of members of the True Orthodox Church is not subject to reckoning. However, according to information received from members of this Church, it has from eight to ten bishops, about 200 priests, and several thousand laymen. The activity of the True Orthodox Church is strictly persecuted. The regime fears its spread". (*Religion and Atheism in the USSR*, December, 1974); A. I. Demyanov (in *Questions of Scientific Atheism*, Moscow, 1974) gives figures showing that the True Orthodox Church's numbers are increasing.



We have already seen that the Bolsheviks were considerably embarrassed by the émigré Church Council at Karlovtsy in 1921, and that they exerted intense pressure on the Church inside Russia to silence the émigrés' voice. Patriarch Tikhon bent but did not break under this pressure; and as late as September, 1926, Metropolitan Sergei wrote to the Synod-in-Exile:

Your letter gives me a reason to ask a general question: can the Moscow Patriarchate in general manage the Church life of Orthodox emigrants, when in fact there are no relations between us? I think that the good of Church affairs themselves demand that you, in general agreement, create for yourselves a central organ of Church government, with sufficient authority to decide on all misunderstandings and differences, and having the power to suppress all misunderstanding and all insubordination without having recourse to our support. Reasons will always be found to suspect the authenticity of our decisions or to explain them by our lack of information . . .

Thus before the schism of 1927 the Church inside Russia recognized the Church in Exile, and also recognized Her right to manage Her own affairs.

Metropolitan Sergei's letter was in reply to a request by the Synod-in-Exile that he adjudicate in the case of the Synod's dispute with Metropolitan Evlogy of Paris and Western Europe. Metropolitan Evlogy had objected to the Synod's wishing to see the programme of studies of his proposed new theological institute of St. Sergei in Paris. (The Synod rightly suspected the institute of being controlled by the modernist St. Sophia Brotherhood, who promulgated the heretical sophianist doctrines of Fr. Sergei Bulgakov.) When the Synod persisted in their perfectly legitimate request, Metropolitan Evlogy broke away and, in 1927, submitted to Metropolitan Sergei. In obedience to Sergei's demand of May 27th, Metropolitan Evlogy and his clergy then gave personal signatures of loyalty to the Soviet government, where upon the Synod-in-Exile placed him under ban.

For the Church-in-Exile refused to accept Sergei's Declaration, and supported the Catacomb Church. Thus Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kiev and Galich, the chief hierarch of the Russian Synod-in-Exile, issued an encyclical on July 22nd, 1928,



in which he said:

The Synod of Moscow has deprived itself of all authority by entering into agreement with atheists, and by permitting, without struggle, the closing and destruction of holy churches and the innumerable crimes of the Soviet government, which openly denies all religion and consequently wages persecution against it. It must be realised that the institution organised by and entering into union with the enemies of God – which Metropolitan Sergius calls an Orthodox Synod – and recognition of which has been refused by the better Russian bishops and laymen, is illegal. It must not be recognised in any way by our Orthodox Churches, by our Synod of Bishops with its flock abroad, and the institutors of the Moscow Synod must be held to be the same kind of apostates from the Faith as the ancient "libellatici", that is, Christians who, although refusing to blaspheme Christ openly and to offer sacrifices to the idols, still accepted false documents from the priests of the idols stating that they were in full agreement, so to speak, with the followers of the heathen religion. These documents spared them from the persecutions of the government, but subjected them to total excommunication from the Church, into which those of them who repented were received only after several (15) years.

Metropolitan Evlogy, however, ignored this encyclical and remained in the Soviet Church until 1930. But then, having disobeyed a directive from Moscow ordering him not to pray for the persecuted Christians in Russia, he found himself under another ban – this time from Sergei. So he turned to the Patriarch of Constantinople and placed his dioceses under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In spite of many attempts at reconciliation, the "Paris jurisdiction" as it is called still remains in schism from the True Orthodox Church, and is now (like the Moscow and Constantinople Patriarchates) in communion with the centuries old enemy of True Orthodoxy, the Pope of Rome.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I. M. Kontzevich ('Antichrist and the present times', *Orthodox Life*, Jan-Feb. 1976)  
"As far as Roman Catholicism is concerned, it long ago set out on the path of modernism and progress, becoming more deeply immersed in materialism – that disease of our era – and falling away from the Gospel's precepts concerning spiritual perfection. In the first place, the dogma of papal supremacy was advanced – something alien to the beliefs of the early Church. It obscures and even takes away all other virtues. Having lost its spirituality, Catholicism now cannot understand the spiritual significance of events and even does not see "the signs of the times" in the terrible persecution of the Russian Church. On the contrary, it is inclined to regard it as an historical occurrence favourable to itself, preparing the ground for the subjugation of the Russian people to the pope."

In 1926, another schism took place from the Russian Church-in-Exile. Metropolitan Platon of Odessa, who was in charge of all the Russian parishes in America, tried to make of his American metropolitan district a self-governing Church having no relationship with the Synod meeting in Karlovtsy. The Synod then placed him under ban and made the only Russian hierarch in America who had withstood Platon, Bishop Apollinary, in charge of all the parishes which remained loyal to the Church-in-Exile. Constantinople also rejected this new Church (in December, 1926). And, more surprisingly, Moscow also placed Platon under ban (in August, 1933), even though Platon recognized Metropolitan Sergei's authority.

In 1935, however, following Metropolitan Platon's death, the American Metropolia was reunited with the Church-in-Exile, only to break away again in 1946. For in November of that year, a wave of pro-Soviet feeling caused by the Soviet Union's triumph in the war with Germany combined with "friendly" visits by certain Soviet hierarchs, resulted in the All-American Council at Cleveland, Ohio, recognizing the Soviet "Patriarch" as its "spiritual father" and breaking relations with the Synod Abroad (whose headquarters were now at Munich). This decision was never actually ratified; for four out of eight bishops rejected the motion, and they with their flocks then formed the Synodal Church in America. Moreover, Moscow's conditions for union were later found to be too stringent by the Metropolia (they should have learned from Metropolitan Evlogy's similar experience). Nevertheless, in 1970, after years of secret negotiations, it was announced that the Metropolia had been granted autocephaly by Moscow, and was now to be called the Orthodox Church of America. In exchange for this so-called autocephaly (which none of the local Orthodox Churches outside the Soviet bloc has recognized), the Japanese parishes of the Metropolia were betrayed to the jurisdiction of the Soviet Patriarch. The American Metropolia is now a tool of the Soviet Church, and shares her master's ecumenist, pro-papist tendencies.

Meanwhile, the Russian Church-in-Exile, while refusing to have any relations with the Soviet Church, was beginning to weaken in



Her doctrinal stand towards Moscow. This was caused, partly by the prevailing ecumenist philosophy of the West, which refuses to see in schism and heresy a definite falling-away from Grace and separation from Truth; partly, by a weakening of hope in the Resurrection of Russia and the destruction of communism; and partly, by a cooling of love for the Catacomb Church, which process was accentuated by the swelling of the Church-in-Exile's ranks after the Second World War by many former members of the Soviet Church who did not fully repent of their membership of that Church. The first clear sign of this weakening was in the "last will and testament" (1964) of Metropolitan Anastasy of Kishinev, chief hierarch of the Synod from 1936 to 1964: "As regards the Moscow Patriarchate and its hierarchs, then, so long as they continue in close, active and benevolent co-operation with the Soviet government, which openly professes its complete godlessness and strives to implant atheism in the entire Russian nation, then the Church Abroad, maintaining Her purity, must not have any canonical, liturgical or even simply external communion with them whatsoever, leaving each one of them at the same time to the final judgement of the Council of the future free Russian Church."

At first sight, this seems both firm and reasonable, but a comparison of it with the statements of such Catacomb hierarchs as Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd, Bishop Victor of Glazor and Bishop Maxim of Serpukhov, immediately reveals an important difference. For they regarded the Soviet Church as already condemned and outside the communion of Christ; whereas Metropolitan Anastasy, nearly 40 years and many martyrdoms later, still refused to judge — which refusal placed the whole canonical status of both the Catacomb Church and the Church-in-Exile apparently in doubt. For if the Church cannot judge the Soviet hierarchs, how is She justified in breaking communion with them? The fact is that by coming under the *anathema* of the All-Russian Council of 1917-18, as well as the Catacomb Church's own *anathema*, the Soviet Church condemned itself. But to speak of its judgement as still in the future is to cast doubt on the validity of those *anathemas*.

Of course, a confirmation of this judgement by an All-Russian Council meeting when Russia is freed from the communist yoke would be extremely desirable. But in the meantime the Church can and must unequivocally declare the dividing-line between Herself and Her enemies, making it clear that a body of hierarchs which is in schism, under *anathema*, and (since Moscow's entry into the World Council of Churches in 1960) heretical, cannot compose a true Synod of Bishops nor dispense valid sacraments. The Lord's words "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (*Matthew 7:1*) apply to the judgements of sinful individuals who are prevented from seeing clearly by their sins. They cannot apply to the Church, the Bride of Christ which has neither spot nor wrinkle nor any such thing (*Ephesians 5:27*), and to whose faithful pastors the Lord said: "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (*Matthew 18:18*).

This underlying weakness in Metropolitan Anastasy's position has been vigorously exploited after his death and during the presidency of his successor, Metropolitan Philaret of New York and East America. And so greatly has the pro-Soviet faction prevailed in the Church-in-Exile's counsels that in September, 1976, the Synod of Bishops issued an epistle in which they applauded the work of dissident priests who nevertheless remain in obedience to the Soviet Patriarch in no less glowing terms than their praise of the Catacomb Church. They asked for the priests' prayers and said: "Christ is in our midst! He is and shall be!" which is a clear recognition of the validity of those priests' orders — and a clear betrayal of the Catacomb Church, which has chosen martyrdom rather than be in obedience to the apostate "Patriarch".

At the time of writing (July, 1978) the writing is clearly on the wall for the Russian Church-in-Exile. The pro-Soviet hierarchs, headed by Archbishop Anthony of Geneva, who quite openly recognizes the Soviet "Patriarch" to be a true bishop, appear to have throttled public opposition to their ecumenist, collaborationist policies. A good example of their method of dealing with dis-



sent is their treatment of the English Orthodox parish of St. Michael, Guildford, which we shall examine a little more closely.

In October, 1976, Archbishop Nikodem of Richmond and Great Britain, one of the last of the faithful hierarchs, died; and Archbishop Anthony of Geneva was placed in temporary control of the vacant see. He flew to London to officiate at the funeral where, ignoring the vigorous pleas of the senior Russian priest in England, Archimandrite Nicanor, he allowed Fr. Vladimir Rodzianko and two other heretical priests to concelebrate with him both at the funeral and at the Divine Liturgy. Fr. Vladimir Rodzianko is a priest of the Serbian Patriarchate, which is a member of the World Council of Churches. He also works very closely with the Soviet Metropolitan in London, Anthony of Surozh, and in 1965, he broadcast an appeal on BBC radio to Russia calling on the dissident priests Gleb Yakunin and Nikolai Eshliman to apologise to the Soviet "Patriarch" Alexis – an action which elicited strong protests from believers in Russia.<sup>1</sup>

The parish of St. Michael protested against this concelebration with Fr. Vladimir. Then Archbishop Anthony travelled to Guildford, where he proceeded to defend his action on the grounds that the Russian Church-in-Exile was in communion with the Serbian Patriarchate. He also said that the Soviet "Patriarch" Pimen was a true bishop dispensing valid sacraments and that the Catacomb Church was merely a lower layer, as it were, of the Soviet Church, not a quite separate organism.

Since the parish had only the year before left the Soviet Church and had been accepted into the Church-in-Exile through Baptism, it can be understood why they did not accept this teaching. And when Archbishop Anthony not only persisted in this teaching but again showed high honour to Fr. Vladimir a few days later, they broke communion with him, appealing for judgment to the Synod of Bishops in New York. They based their action on the 15th Canon of the 1st-and-2nd Council of Constantinople (861), which

<sup>1</sup> See Michael Bordeaux, *Patriarch and Prophets* (London, 1969).

commends Christians who break communion with bishops that publicly preach heresy, even before synodical clarification.

For several months the Synod took no action. But after the parish continued to exert pressure, a compromise was worked out: Archbishop Anthony was replaced as guardian of the British diocese by Metropolitan Philaret (although the see remains technically vacant). However, a concession was demanded from the parish in return: that they drop the charge of heresy against Archbishop Anthony, apologise to him, and re-enter communion with him.

The parish did not know that these were the terms until Metropolitan Philaret arrived in Britain for the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God in August. Then they discovered from the new administrator of the diocese, Archimandrite Alexis, that they would be refused communion unless they complied with these demands. The shock was great: for Archbishop Anthony had not repented of his heresy and was still free to pursue his extremely repressive treatment of the faithful in Western Europe (particularly Holland and Switzerland).

Within the next few weeks, however, all the active members of the parish had been induced, under threat of excommunication, to write the required letter of apology. But they did not take back their confession of faith – that Archbishop Anthony was an ecumenist and a traitor to the True Orthodox (Catacomb) Church of Russia – and apologised only for any personal offence they may have caused. However, at the Feast of the Entry of the Mother of God into the temple in November: a part of the parish decide publicly to retract that letter of apology (since it was extracted under duress, and since “personal offence” caused by a confession of the Faith is not something to be apologised for), and broke communion again with Archbishop Anthony. Within two days of their informing Archimandrite Alexis of their decision, they had been excommunicated by him – an action that was later confirmed by Metropolitan Philaret. The parish did not accept this (for an excommunication which is against the Will of God has no validity, according to



St. Maximus the Confessor), and appealed against it to the future Council of the All-Russian Church, to be held when Russia is freed from the communist yoke. For a few months, the parish mentioned the name of no earthly bishop in their public prayers except Metropolitan Theodosius, chief hierarch of the Catacomb Church; but then a bishop of the True Orthodox Church of Cyprus, Metropolitan Epiphanius, heard of their plight, and informed his priest in England to get in touch with them. After writing to Archbishop Anthony and examining the matter carefully, Metropolitan Epiphanius concluded that the parish's case was strong and their excommunication void; and on April 23rd, 1978, the parish heard the news that their application to come under his *omophorion* had been accepted.

The example of St. Michael's parish is not an isolated one. All over the world, in places as far distant as Alaska, Australia and Israel, communities of Orthodox faithful are being threatened, harrassed and finally cut off if they refuse to follow the new Synod line of convergence with the apostate Orthodox. These people's "crime" is their True Orthodox Faith in Christ and their honouring of His martyrs and confessors of the Catacomb Church of Russia, for they hope in the Lord's words: "he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward" (*Matthew 10:42*). Thus they honour such men as hieromonk Michael Yershov, who has suffered for 48 years in Soviet concentration camps and mental hospitals rather than sign a little piece of paper recognizing the legitimacy of the Soviet Church, and refuse to accept that there is another way, equally acceptable to the Lord, of compromise with communism. They know, as the early Church knew, that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church, and that the heroic witnessing to Christ of the Catacomb Church, even if it is ignored by the world, will surely bring forth a rich harvest before the end. And they know that the words of the Truth, Who came into the world that He "should bear witness unto the truth" (*John 18:8*), and by Whose Blood we are bought, are inviolable: "These things saith the First and the Last, which was dead, and is alive, I know

thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich), and I know the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life"

*(Apocalypse 2:8-10).*



## SOME TRUE ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS OF RUSSIA TODAY (1978)

Metropolitan Theodosius	Chief-hierarchy of the True Orthodox Church in Russia.
Bishop Seraphim Archimandrite Gennadi	Formerly Fr. Gregory Sekach, a priest in the Soviet Church. In 1962, was deprived of registration for "attracting children and young people to church". Joined True Orthodox Church, ran parish in Ukraine. Tonsured hieromonk Gennadi, then archimandrite, by Bishop Seraphim. Sent to Tkvarcheli, Abkhazia, organized secret house churches, monasteries, theological school. Recruited young men and women from various parts of Soviet Union, sent them back as secret monks and nuns. Discovered in 1976, sentenced to four years in forced labour camp. Serving second sentence of ten years, six in prison (Vladimir prison number two, address – 600020, Vladimir, Institution OD-1/ST-2). Under special regime since July, 1972.
Father Bakhrov	Arrested in 1964. Sentenced to seven years.
Monk Mina Bogatyrev	Arrested in 1963. Sentenced to five years in Kazakhstan. Released in 1969.
Varlaam (Grigori Perevyshin)	Arrested in 1964. Sentenced to five years in Kazakhstan.
Alexander Vasilev	Arrested in 1963. Sentenced to three years.
Victor Karlin	

Sergei Kahirin	Arrested in 1963. Sentenced to five years in Kazakhstan. Aged 47 years. He would not work for the State on a kolkhoz and was sentenced as a vagabond. In 1965 he was in exile in Chumikan, Khabarovsk krai. Originally from Malie Ruri, Stavropol krai.
Grigori Nikolayevich Ponomaryov	
Yekaterina Aleshina	Serving second sentence (seven years from 1973) for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda". Believed to be over 50 years old. In Mordovian camp.
Nadezhda Grozena	Born 1911. Sentenced for second time for ten years for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" in 1960, in Mordovian camp.
Alexandra Khvatkova	Born 1910. Resident of Vladimir. Serving third sentence of ten years in strict regime camp (Barashevo, Mordovia). Former terms in Vladimir prison where she was almost permanently in punishment cell. Suffers from nerve disease and is often unable to get up for days and months at a time. Her son is a communist who has rejected her.
Irina Andreevna Kireeva	Born 1912. Resident of Vladimir. Unmarried. Serving second sentence of ten years for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" (in Barashevo). Suffers from terrible headaches due to high blood pressure, but is denied treatment for days on end because she will not sign an official document requesting it. Very easily upset by sufferings of other prisoners.



- Tatyana Karpovna Krasnova** Born 1903. Resident of Vladimir. Serving second term since 1973 – nine years plus three years exile for “anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda”. Considered “especially dangerous”. First term in Kengir, Kazakhstan (released 1955). Has been released from obligation to work because of age. Not fearing death in camp, she is happy that she is leading a true Christian life there.
- Glafira Kuldysheva** Born 1935. Dressmaker, has five or six grown children. Husband considers her to be mentally ill. Refuses to see husband and children. Refuses to bathe on religious feast days and is therefore forcibly dragged to baths by guards. Considered second degree invalid (has rheumatism and edema). Serving long sentence in strict regime camp (Barashevo, Mordovia).
- Maria Pavlovna Semyonova** Born early 1920s. Resident of Ryazan. In 1961, sentenced to ten years for “anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda”. On her release, refused to take certificate of release, passport and money. Then accused by KGB captain of having stolen ten rubles – sentenced again in 1973 to ten years in Barashevo as “especially dangerous criminal”. Denies taking any money. Suffers from scurvy. Refuses to work in camp. In 1975 declared second degree invalid, so punished less.

Tatyana Mikhailovna  
Sokolova

Born 1930. Resident of Gorky. Serving seven year sentence plus three year exile. Has had stroke, considered third degree invalid (works four hours per day). Refuses to work, is constantly put in punishment cell. Often refused medical treatment. Often punished for not standing up when guards disturb her prayers. In Barashevo.

Nadezhda Mikhailovna  
Usoeva

Born 1938. Resident of Vladimir. In 1972, sentenced to seven years in strict regime camp plus five years exile. Refuses to work in camp, for which constantly punished. In 1975, agreed to work for a time, but a few months later discovered sewing anti-government pamphlets into mittens she was making. Sent to prison in Belorussia for this, but within a year returned to Barashevo where she remains.

Mariam Mitrofarovna  
Varseeva

Born 1920. Arrested in Tashkent in 1960. Sentenced to ten years for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda". Believed to have been released in 1970.

Anastasia Volkova

Born 1910. Post-office worker. Unmarried. Serving second ten-year sentence in strict regime camp for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda". Considered "especially dangerous". In Barashevo.

Klavdia Volkova

Serving second ten-year sentence in strict regime camp for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda". Considered "especially dangerous". In Barashevo.



The following is an excerpt from a letter sent from the Soviet Union and dated February 10, 1976. It was originally published in *Der Bot*, February 15, 1976, and translated into English in *Orthodox Life*, July-August, 1977.

"I would like to tell you of what happened here recently.

A sign appeared in the sky over the city of Tambov (south of Moscow).

In a clear sky, in broad daylight, a white hand suddenly appeared, holding a pen with which it wrote the following:

1. The bad leads to good.
2. It is now winter for My people.
3. Days of repentance.
4. Not one righteous soul will remain among the depraved, and not one debauched soul will remain among righteous souls.
5. Be attentive to My salvation.
6. Bring fruits of repentance.
7. Salvation awaits those who fear the Lord.
8. Let there be an awareness of responsibility in all your actions.

*The time is near!*

9. *Truly, I will come . . . I will not delay. Amen.*

The hand wrote for about half an hour. What was written was visible so that it could be read for a period of 3 hours. This appearance attracted everyone's attention and alarmed them. Everyone was very frightened. All traffic stopped."



The Reigning Mother of God

## THE TRUE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ROMANIA

In December, 1978 the author visited the True Orthodox Church of Romania, whose situation resembles that of the Catacomb Church of Russia. Just as the Catacomb Church has no communion with the official State Church of the Soviet Union (the Moscow patriarchate), so the True Orthodox Church of Romania has no communion with the official State Church of Socialist Romania, (the Romanian patriarchate). Nor is she in communion with any of the émigré Russian jurisdictions. Although Bishop Cosmas assured the author that the True Romanian Church has good relations with the communist government, it is evident that the communists are trying to restrict Her uncompromising witness in various ways. The True Romanian Church comprises 3 bishops, about 80 monks, 350 nuns and one million lay people.



The Archangel St Michael  
The Orthodox Foundation of St Michael Guildford

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Although works such as Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* have once and for all exposed the barely credible extent of the catastrophe that overtook Russia in 1917, the history of the True Church during this period is largely unknown, so successful has the official State Church of the Soviet Union, the Moscow Patriarchate, been in obscuring the true target of the persecutors – the bishops, priests, and laity of the Catacomb Church, the True Orthodox Church of Russia. This book traces the history of the Catacomb Church and its fight against both communism and the State-imposed orthodoxy of the Soviet Union.

